

Cameras to broadcast from the Crown Court for first time

- Judges' sentencing remarks to be broadcast
- Public able to watch online
- Move welcomed by national broadcasters

The Crown Court (Recording and Broadcasting) Order 2020 will allow cameras to broadcast the sentencing remarks of High Court and Senior Circuit judges in some of the most high-profile courts across the country, including the Old Bailey.

Proceedings are currently broadcast from certain Court of Appeal cases. Extending this to the Crown Court means the public will be able to hear judges explain the reasons behind their sentences for the most serious offences.

Filming will be restricted to sentencing remarks only and no other court user – including victims, witnesses, jurors and court staff – will be filmed.

Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

This government, alongside the judiciary, is committed to improving public understanding of our justice system and allowing cameras into the Crown Court will do just that.

It will ensure our courts remain open and transparent and allow people to see justice being delivered to the most serious of offenders.

Today's legislation follows a successful three-month pilot that allowed not-for-broadcast sentencing remarks to be filmed in eight Crown Courts and has been welcomed by ITN, Sky and the BBC.

John Battle, Head of Compliance at ITN, said:

This is a landmark moment and an important day for open justice and transparency of our legal system. For the first time the public will see images of proceedings in the Crown Court on television news.

This change will help a wider audience to see and understand the criminal justice process for themselves.

John Ryley, Head of Sky News, said:

The filming of judges sentencing remarks in the Crown Court is a great day for transparency in our courts. This is a further step in helping the public to understand the constraints under which judges work and the complexities of many of the biggest criminal cases.

This has been a long campaign by the three main broadcasters working together.

Fran Unsworth, Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC, said:

Today's announcement comes after a great campaign by the BBC, ITN and Sky to allow filming of judges' sentencing remarks in the Crown Court and is a momentous day for transparency in our justice system.

By opening up the courts, our audiences will be able to further their understanding of the criminal justice system and witness the judicial process for themselves.

This provision is part of the government's wider court reform and digitalisation programme, using technology and modern ways of working to increase access to justice for people up and down the country.

Notes to editors

- An affirmative SI will be laid in the House of Commons on Thursday, 16 January. Timescales for it coming into force will depend on the passage of the legislation through Parliament. All Crown Court staff who will be involved with this work will receive training and new guidance before filming commences.
- Broadcasters will only be able to film High Court and Senior Circuit judges sitting in the Crown Court and will need to obtain permission from the judiciary in advance.
- Filming will be subject to the usual reporting restrictions and appropriately edited before leaving the courtroom. In the case where filming is to be broadcast live, there will be a short delay before broadcast to avoid any breach of reporting restrictions or any other error.
- HMCTS will retain copyright of the footage, and HMCTS, MoJ and Judicial Office will be able to access any footage taken by broadcasters.
- The full sentencing remarks of any case broadcast will be hosted on a website to which the public has access.
- Filming is already permitted in the Supreme Court, however this is carried out by the court itself and separate from this contract.