

Press release: £15m government funding to fix court buildings

The extra money, announced by the Chancellor in this year's Budget, will ensure more than 170 wide-ranging improvement works can be undertaken across a number of sites before the end of the financial year.

A number of priorities in courts across England and Wales – from increased security measures to fixing boilers and repairing lifts – have been identified in conjunction with the senior judiciary.

Justice Minister, Lucy Frazer said:

We want to provide the best experience possible for the victims, witnesses, staff and legal professionals who use our courts every day.

That is why this extra funding is so welcome – and why we've worked with the judiciary to make sure we spend it where it is needed most.

Some £4 million will be spent advancing the preparation of capital maintenance projects including replacing the roofs at Snaresbrook Crown Court – the first phase of a longer-term refurbishment programme at the court – and Winchester Crown Court. Other improvements will include new boilers at Newton Abbot, Peterlee and Plymouth Magistrates' Courts, new windows at Barnstaple Magistrates' Court and replacement lifts at Swansea Civil Justice Centre and Thames Magistrates' Court.

An additional £3m will be spent on security related work including installing improved locks and panic alarms, vision panels in doors and improving CCTV in waiting areas where necessary.

The remaining £8m will be spent on facilities management works with a particular focus on improving heating and cooling in court buildings.

This extra funding follows a number of other recent improvements made to the court estate, including:

- Increased capacity at two courts in Swindon following £2.6m of government funding with additional judicial chambers, refurbished office space and a new public waiting room.
- Improvements to the Personal Support Unit at Liverpool Family and Civil Court including increasing its size and configuration allowing more people to be helped.
- Work is underway with the City of London Corporation on the development of a brand-new purpose built combined court, which is scheduled for completion by 2025.

This is alongside the government's ambitious £1bn court reform programme that is bringing new technology and modern ways of working to the justice system. This includes a new fully accessible online civil money claims service giving the public the ability to make a small claim online – with more than 37,000 claims made since its launch in March and user satisfaction at 90% and a new system for applying for divorce online, which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%.