

News story: Crime news: LGFS consultation and fee cut update

From:

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Consultation on reforming payments through the Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme and changing rates for court appointee work is now open.

Proposals to change how payments are calculated for Crown Court work are set out in a 6-week consultation called 'Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme and Court Appointees'.

The consultation opened on 10 February and closes on 24 March 2017. It proposes changing the basis on which LGFS payments are calculated and capping payments to court appointees at legal aid rates.

Second fee cut

The government has said that it is minded not to reinstate the second (8.75%) fee cut for defence litigators that was suspended in April 2016 for a period of 12 months.

This is subject to the outcome of the consultations on proposals for 'LGFS and Court Appointees'.

Partnership working on LGFS

The government wants to work with the Law Society and other representative bodies to reform LGFS so that it better measures the relative complexity of cases.

The idea is to reduce or remove reliance on counting Pages of Prosecution Evidence (PPE). In the short term, the government would also like to act quickly to lower the upper limit for counting PPE.

PPE is no longer seen as the most effective way of assessing how much work a litigator needs to do on individual cases.

Payments to court appointees

The consultation also seeks views on capping payments to court appointees at legal aid rates.

Court appointees are paid at rates that are significantly higher than legal aid rates. This is for carrying out work that is very similar to criminal

legal aid work.

The government view is that these higher rates cannot be justified.

Further information

[MoJ consultation: LGFS and court appointees](#)

Press release: Town's flood gates to be replaced

From:

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Part of:

Environment Agency hosts drop-in event where community can find out more about Yarm flood gates replacement.

Residents in Yarm are invited to a community drop-in this week to find out more about Environment Agency work to replace the flood gates in the town.

The project will start in April and is expected to be complete by June, taking around 12 weeks.

There are 30 flood gates along the flood defence in Yarm, and as part of the work some of the gates may be replaced and others may be removed and the flood wall bricked up, subject to further discussions with residents.

The work will start by replacing the flood gates along True Lover's Walk riverside path, starting with flood gates at West Street and working towards Silver Street.

Residents are invited to find out more at a community event taking place at Yarm Town Hall on Friday 24 February. They can drop in any time between 3pm and 6pm.

Project Manager Neil Smith said:

The gates are being replaced because many of the existing flood gates are approaching the end of their usable life. To maintain the

current standard of protection for the town it's essential these gates are replaced.

By carrying out this work we will ensure the town continues to be protected from flooding from the River Tees in the future. I'd urge residents to come along to the event where they can find out more about the work we are carrying out in the town.

Work is also already underway to carry out improvements at the Boat Landing stage. Some wall coping stones and block paving have been repaired and new handrails will be put up along the waterside of the boat landing in May.

In addition, there will be restoration and repainting of the perimeter fence and replacement of benches and litter bins in the area.

Press release: Green light for North Tyneside sea defence scheme

A revised scheme to strengthen and safeguard sea defences – which has saved more than £1m of public money – has been given the go-ahead.

North Tyneside Council's Planning Committee has approved proposals for the sea defence scheme at the Central Lower Promenade in Whitley Bay, which will protect homes, businesses and the surrounding area.

It means vital work can now get underway to refurbish the structure, which is around 100 years old and is reaching the end of its serviceable life.

Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn said:

This is yet more great news for Whitley Bay. The Central Lower Promenade really needs important structural work to be carried out and the general appearance of the area is in need of improvement.

The scheme promises to achieve just that by strengthening and safeguarding sea defences and giving this stretch of the coastline a major boost. It will also save a significant amount of public money and takes into account ideas and suggestions raised by residents.

The revised scheme, which has received strong public support, involves building a new rear wall and strengthening the existing sea wall on the lower promenade.

It was drawn up after the Mayor decided the original plans and proposed price was unacceptable and a value for money exercise was carried out, which has resulted in savings of more than £1m.

It has also allowed the opportunity to include some suggestions from residents.

The project, which is being funded jointly by the council and partners Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency, will be carried out in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council.

An open space will be created on the lower walkway with new seating, providing a great opportunity for leisure activities and events.

The design also incorporates a commercial opportunity for 'pop-up' style stalls/units on the lower promenade.

The wide upper footway will be refurbished and enhanced while the design also includes the Mayor's commitment to replacing the balustrades.

The work, which is due to be complete in winter 2017, will complement the improvements being made to the Northern Promenade.

The Central Lower Promenade scheme is part of the council's £36m Seafront Master Plan, which aims to breathe new life into the coast between Cullercoats Bay and St Mary's Island.

As part of the Master Plan, restoration work to return the Spanish City Dome to its former glory is continuing apace, a new Premier Inn is nearing completion next door, improvement work – including new surfacing and seating – is taking place along the Northern Promenade, efforts are underway to secure funding to refurbish St Mary's Lighthouse and a number of private sector schemes are also underway.

[Press release: Still time to have your say on plans to widen A12 in Essex](#)

Highways England has held seven consultation events over the last fortnight, with staff available to speak to over 1,853 members of the public who attended.

The events showcased Highways England's plans to widen the A12 between junction 19 (Boreham interchange) and junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange), which will reduce congestion, improve safety and boost the economy. It is part of the Government's record £15 billion investment in England's motorways and major A roads.

Highways England programme leader Richard Hofton said:

I want to thank everyone who has taken part in the consultation so far. We've heard some really interesting views and opinions from people and have encouraged everyone to contribute to our consultation. It is vital that we get that local feedback, as well as from wider stakeholders to help us reach a final decision.

There is still time for you to take part, so I urge anyone who is affected by and interested in our improvement work on the A12 to take part and share your views with us. There are important choices to be made and we are keen to get as many views as we can, so be sure to join in with the consultation so you can help us to make these decisions.

Some 89 per cent of respondents were positive about the events, which were held alongside Essex County Council's consultation into plans for widening the A120 between Braintree and Colchester. The figure rose to 94 per cent satisfaction at Boreham, with residents and other interested parties sharing their views and learning more about both schemes at the events.

Despite the last of these events taking place last Wednesday (15 February) in Chelmsford, the public can still have their say by contributing to the consultation, which will close on Friday 3 March.

All responses to the consultation will help Highways England take the best possible improvements forward. The four options shortlisted in the consultation are:

- option 1 – widening the existing A12 corridor (the online option)
- option 2 – widening the existing A12 corridor between junctions 19 to 22 and 23 to 24 and two new bypasses between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall) and between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)
- option 3 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall)
- option 4 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)

For more information about our proposals and to share your views, [visit the scheme website](#).

Alternatively, you can call the Highways England information line on 0300 123 5000 for further information or write to Freepost A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Press release: Minister for the Middle East visits region for bilateral and regional talks

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Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Tobias Ellwood, will visit the United Arab Emirates today and Saudi Arabia tomorrow.

During his visit to Abu Dhabi, Mr Ellwood will attend the twice-yearly UAE – UK Joint Working Group Ministerial Taskforce with his counterpart His Excellency Dr Anwar Gargash, to discuss cooperation between the UK and UAE in a number of areas including trade, regional issues and UK participation in DubaiExpo2020.

In Saudi Arabia, Mr Ellwood will meet His Excellency Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, among other senior Government representatives, to discuss finding a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, and improving access for humanitarian relief in the country.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Mr Ellwood said:

The UK's partnership with the Gulf is an important one: as the Prime Minister said in her address to the Gulf Cooperation Council, Gulf security is our security, and we will be discussing areas where we can further cooperation. I will also be discussing the conflict in Yemen and making clear that an inclusive political solution is the only way to end the suffering of the Yemeni people. Finding a political way forward will not be straightforward and tough discussions need to be had, but the UK will do everything it can to support that process.

Further information