

Government reveals plans to divert thousands of civil legal disputes away from court

- Claims under £10,000 would be diverted automatically to mediation
- 272,000 more people every year could be helped to resolve disputes outside court
- Move would free up vital court capacity to deal with more complex cases quicker

Ministers have published a blueprint for major reforms to the civil justice system which seeks to save people the cost, time and stress of lengthy courtroom battles.

It will see mediation made compulsory for small claims of up to £10,000, such as disputes over goods and services. People would be referred automatically to a free hour-long telephone session with a professional mediator provided by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) before their case can be progressed to a hearing.

During the session the parties involved will speak separately to the mediator to see if there is a common ground between them. If a solution is brokered, both parties will agree over the phone for it to be made legally binding through a settlement agreement.

It is expected that up to 20,000 extra cases every year could be settled away from court under these proposals – sparing people the time and cost of litigation. This would also free up vital court capacity with up to 7,000 judicial sitting days being available to help reduce waiting times for more complex cases which require a hearing. Overall around 272,000 people should be able to access the free mediation.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy QC said:

Millions of businesses and individuals go through the civil courts every year and many of them simply do not need to.

Mediation is often a quicker and cheaper way of resolving disputes and under our proposals this will be free of charge for claims up to £10,000.

This could also help free up vital capacity in the civil courts to deal with more complex cases quicker.

The proposals are set out in a Government consultation published today. They form part of wider efforts to promote the use of mediation and help people resolve their disputes away from the courtroom – with Ministers committed to making these services a key part of the justice system.

The move follows a government call for evidence which examined how dispute resolution services, such as mediation, could be used more widely to resolve disagreements away from court. It found that mediation often offered faster, cheaper and more flexible solutions, but more needs to be done to encourage its use.

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) National Chair Martin McTague said:

We support a more accessible, fair and affordable dispute resolution system. These proposals are a step in the right direction to help speed up access to justice, and to avoid expensive litigation for small claims.

Automatic or mandatory mediation has been in use in three Canadian cities in Ontario for over 20 years, and a recent survey of Ontario Bar Association members showed that 90 percent of respondents favoured expanding it further.

Jennifer Egsgard, an executive member of the Ontario Bar Association's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section said:

A major early study on Ontario's mandatory mediation programme showed that it significantly reduced the time taken to dispose of cases, decreased costs to litigants and led to a high proportion of cases being completely settled earlier in the process.

It also found that both the people and lawyers involved in these cases experienced considerable satisfaction with the process.

The Government welcomes views from court users, mediators, the legal profession, the judiciary, the advice sector, and anyone with an interest in the resolution of civil disputes.

The consultation will last 10 weeks and a response will be published in due course. The proposals would not include personal injury or housing disrepair claims.

New government plans to fire up innovation in 5G and 6G as UK and South Korea launch telecoms technology partnership

Universities and telecoms firms have been invited to apply for up to £25 million to research and develop the next generation of 5G and 6G network equipment as part of new government plans to unleash innovation in the sector.

The Future Open Networks Research Challenge will enable academics and the industry to conduct early-stage research into open and interoperable telecoms solutions, such as Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN), for use in 5G and future networks such as 6G.

The government is accelerating the development of this technology – which allows operators to mix and match equipment rather than relying on a single supplier when building or maintaining networks – as part of its £250 million Open Networks R&D Fund. It aims to build more secure and resilient broadband and mobile infrastructure by boosting competition and innovation within the telecoms supply chain.

It comes as £10 million has been awarded to launch the UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN), a new body dedicated to boosting creativity in the country's telecoms supply chain.

The UKTIN will act as an information and ideas hub for industry and academics looking to access funding or R&D testing facilities and opportunities to collaborate on developing new mobile and broadband technology. Digital Catapult, CW (Cambridge Wireless), University of Bristol and West Midlands 5G are announced today as the winners of the competition to set up and oversee the network.

In a further boost to the industry, the UK will also invest £1.6 million in a joint-funded £3.6 million competition with the Republic of Korea to collaborate on a world-first R&D project to accelerate the development of Open RAN technology.

Each country will fund a group of several companies to work together to accelerate the development of technical solutions to improve power efficiency in Open RAN networks. Power consumption is a major operating cost, so the work will support wider adoption of Open RAN technologies, reduce operating costs and support net zero ambitions.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

The seamless connectivity and blistering speeds of 5G and then 6G

will power a tech revolution which will enrich people's lives and fire up productivity across the economy.

It's why we're investing millions and partnering with international allies to unleash innovation and develop new ways to make these networks more secure, resilient and less reliant on a handful of suppliers.

Chief Executive at Mobile UK Hamish MacLeod said:

Mobile UK welcomes today's announcement. A strong, diverse mobile ecosystem in the UK will be a cornerstone of the country's future prosperity and well-being.

The measures announced today offer further opportunities to build on the UK's thriving R&D into advanced telecoms, and enabling operators to access more diversity in the supply chain while enhancing security and innovation.

Future Open Networks Research Challenge

This scheme will fund several consortia of universities and suppliers to conduct early-stage research and development of telecom solutions sustaining openness and interoperability for 5G and future networks such as 6G.

These early-stage projects will draw on the UK's impressive depth of research, development and industrial capability to ensure that open and interoperable telecoms solutions become commercially viable and suitable for inclusion in future telecoms standards.

£25 million will boost skills of the next generation to enter the workforce, enhance educational capabilities, and bring expertise to a broader range of universities and businesses that will support the UK to grow presence and influence within the global supply chain.

UK Telecoms Innovation Network competition winners

The UKTIN, first announced in March, aims to make the UK the easiest place in the world to access and take part in telecoms R&D. It will guide businesses and researchers looking to access funding or testing facilities in the UK and enable the best use of public and private investment in R&D, as well as ensuring that knowledge is effectively and efficiently shared across the telecoms industry.

UKTIN is expected to be up and running in September, at which point it will begin to take over from UK5G to help organisations get the most out of what the UK has to offer.

On behalf of the winning UKTIN consortium, Jeremy Silver, CEO of Digital Catapult said:

With the UK Telecoms Innovation Network, we have an exciting opportunity to transform UK telecoms into a growing, resilient, secure and globally significant sector. The UK has many strengths but our ecosystem across research, development and innovation is fragmented. I am proud to be joined by a strong consortium of partners (Digital Catapult, Cambridge Wireless, University of Bristol and WM5G) who each bring their own expertise and experience that will prove vital in coalescing and expanding our ecosystem and driving future UK capabilities”.

UK-Republic of Korea Competition Launch

This competition is open to applications from consortia with two or more members from relevant industry, academic or public sector organisations, with funding available for activity taking place in the UK.

Bids must be submitted by noon on 20 September 2022. Application guidance is available on gov.uk.

Ends

Notes to editors

- More information about the [Open Networks R&D fund](#)
 - More information about the [Future Open Networks Research Challenge](#)
 - Consortia applying for the Future Open Networks Research Challenge should be led by universities with participation of at least one large vendor, and can also include mobile network operators and other industrial partners. Proposals must be submitted by 03 October 2022, but consortia can submit an optional expression of interest (EOI) until 12 August 2022 to receive feedback from DCMS on their proposed research ideas. Application guidance is available on gov.uk.
 - The UK government is providing up to £1.6 million funding for the UK-ROK competition (to be matched by industry) and ROK £1.5 million (with £0.5 million from industry). Projects are expected to run until March 2024.
 - Enquiries for the UK Telecoms Innovation Network should go to enquiries@uktin.net.
-

Joint Statement on the Execution of Pro-Democracy and Opposition Leaders in Myanmar

Press release

A joint statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union, and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, the UK and the US.



The Myanmar military regime's executions of pro-democracy and opposition leaders are reprehensible acts of violence that further exemplify the regime's disregard for human rights and the rule of law.

We urge the regime to release all those unjustly detained, grant full and independent access to prisons and fulfill its obligations under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Five-Point Consensus to seek peace through dialogue, not further violence.

We support the people of Myanmar in their aspirations for freedom and democracy and call on the regime to end the use of violence, respect the will of the people, and restore the country's path toward democracy.

Our thoughts and condolences are with the bereaved families and loved ones as they grieve those unjustly put to death. We remember and mourn all lives lost in Myanmar in the aftermath of the coup.

Published 25 July 2022

Lesotho: call for bids for provision of Assistive Technology

World news story

The British High Commission is inviting local NGOs and established community-based organisations to bid for funding for the sustainable provision of Assistive Technology to people with disabilities.



Overview

The British High Commission Maseru is inviting NGOs working with communities in Lesotho and established community-based organisations to bid for small grant funding of up to M100,000, for the sustainable provision of Assistive Technology to people with disabilities in Lesotho.

The bidding process is competitive. Only the strongest bids will be selected.

The deadline for submitting bids is Sunday, 7 August 2022.

Selected projects will be informed by Monday, 15 August 2022. Implementing organisations will be required to attend a preparatory seminar. Project activity should start in early September 2022 and all activity must be completed by 1 February 2023. Funding will be paid on completion of all activities and project reports.

Objectives

All projects must lead to sustainable improvements in the provision of assistive technology in Lesotho. For example, this could be through changes in policies/ practices; development of low-cost alternative technologies; or additional training that will lead to improved maintenance of devices, or enable better use of existing resources.

The grant will not support the direct external purchase of Assistive Technology (AT) devices for individuals.

Selection criteria

Bids will be judged on:

- potential impact (including the scope of the project and the likelihood of achieving that impact)
- evidence that the bidding organisation has strong links with the target communities and relevant prior experience
- value for money
- sustainability, including the potential for the project to be scaled up or replicated elsewhere
- the capacity of the bidding organisation, including a track record of previous successful projects
- proper presentation of project objectives and budget

A project bidding form can be obtained by emailing BHC.maseru@fcdo.gov.uk. Project forms must be returned to the British High Commission by Sunday, 8 August 2022. Project bids received after this date will not be considered.

Published 25 July 2022

[Working with partners on the ground and at the UN on a constructive way](#)

forward for Libya

Thank you President. Thank you Martha for your briefing today. I would like to pay tribute to Stephanie Williams' dedication to her role and welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to find a new Special Representative. I will make four points.

Firstly, the UK is concerned about the recent violence in Tripoli and Misrata. Preservation of peace has been one of the successes of the past two years. There needs to be de-escalation to ensure this relative peace continues.

Combined with the protests that took place earlier this month, these events demonstrate the urgent need for the delivery of a Libyan-led and -owned, inclusive political process. And Libyan parties need to compromise and agree a pathway to achieve parliamentary and presidential elections.

Secondly, we urge Libyan actors must refrain from the politicisation of state institutions, including the National Oil Corporation. The Libyan people need to see the full resumption of oil production and the equitable distribution of the state's oil wealth. However, this should not come at the expense of the integrity and independence of the National Oil Corporation, or jeopardise Libya's progress towards stability, sovereignty, and national unity.

Thirdly, it is imperative, as you said Martha, that authorities respect and protect human rights across Libya. The United Kingdom remains very concerned about human rights abuses and violations identified in the latest interim-report of the Fact Finding Mission, and recent crackdowns on civil society.

Libyan authorities must build and deliver mechanisms for the safeguarding of human rights and enable civil society to flourish as a key component of accountability.

Lastly, the UK welcomes Operation Irini's interdiction of a vessel carrying military vehicles intended for Libya and underscores all member states' responsibility to comply fully with the UN arms embargo on Libya.

In conclusion, the UK reaffirms its readiness to work with Libya and all international partners on a constructive way forward, both on the ground in Libya and in the Council.

Thank you.