

Crime news: Crown Court Digital Case System claims work boost

News story

Our caseworkers will gain 'read-only' access to Crown Court Digital Case System files from 16 November 2020 to help improve decision-making on your claims.



Providers are set to benefit from a new approach to Crown Court assessments with our caseworkers being given 'read-only' access to digital case files.

Our need to have this access to help perform statutory duties has been recognised by HM Courts and Tribunals Service.

Similar access arrangements are being made for both the Attorney General's Office and the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

What are the benefits?

Earlier access to online case material held in the Crown Court Digital Case System should improve the accuracy of decisions made by our caseworkers.

It should also reduce billing disputes and the amount of supporting information we ask providers to submit via the Galaxkey file exchange.

When would caseworkers ask for access?

Access may be needed to validate the count of pages of prosecution evidence (PPE). This takes place mostly at the redetermination stage. However, this could be at the point of initial assessment for some claims, e.g. special preparation.

How can practitioners help?

Upon request, providers will be able to use the 'People' function in the DCS to locate a caseworker's e-mail address and authorise access. All caseworkers will have a single 'read-only' role listed.

This approach mirrors the invitations-based mechanism already widely used in the DCS to manage access. Further guidance and resources on asking for and granting access can be found on GOV.UK where you can find training resources.

Is this secure?

Yes, the role accorded to LAA caseworkers confers no editing rights and restricts what is visible to the user. None of the private sections in DCS can be seen, and only “widely shared” comments are viewable.

Further information

CrimeSupport@Justice.gov.uk – to find out more about the changes

[Crown Court Digital Case System guidance](#) – information and support materials about DCS

[Crown Court Digital Case System training guides and videos](#) – see ‘Give or ask for access to a case’

Published 12 November 2020

[Crime news: register for ‘Common Platform’ early adopter rollout](#)

News story

Defence practitioners need to register to use the HM Courts and Tribunal Service ‘Common Platform’ digital case management system in early adopter courts.



Common Platform has begun rolling out to a series of early adopter courts across England and Wales and providers need to register for accounts.

Why is it important to register?

You need to register to access the new ways of working for defence solicitors and barristers in early adopter courts. Your account will allow you to:

- link yourself to a case/defendant so the Legal Aid Agency is informed for payment purposes
- self-serve case materials, including the 'initial details of the prosecution case' (IDPC) and the preparation for effective trial (PET) form in the magistrates' court
- serve documents on the court for common platform cases in the magistrates' court

Where are the early adopter courts?

These are the courts which will test the system before it is gradually expanded across England and Wales:

1. Derby Magistrates' Court and Crown Court
2. Bristol Magistrates' Court and Crown Court
3. North Tyneside, Mid and South East Northumberland Magistrates' Courts, and Newcastle Crown Court
4. Warrington Magistrates' Court and Chester Crown Court
5. Guildford Magistrates' Court/Staines Magistrates' Court and Guildford Crown Court
6. Croydon Magistrates' Court and Crown Court
7. Llanelli Magistrates' Court and Swansea Crown Court

Why is this happening now?

Rollout in early adopter courts is the latest phase in work on the Common Platform digital case management system owned by HMCTS.

The common platform allows users to access and share case information in a secure and user-friendly way.

Rollout will transform the handling of criminal cases for providers, the LAA and our justice partners. These include HMCTS, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the judiciary.

Once live, the system can be used in both magistrates' and Crown Court settings.

Further information

[HMCTS Common Platform account registration for defence professionals](#)

Published 12 November 2020

Highways England welcomes green light for major A303 upgrade past Stonehenge

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has given the formal green light by granting a Development Consent Order for work to start on the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) scheme.

The transformational and sensitive upgrade will tackle congestion on the notorious, traffic-clogged single carriageway section of the A303 route, and the announcement is a significant step towards unlocking economic growth and improving journey times and reliability between the M3 and M5.

For Highways England, the announcement follows this year's completion of the major A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade – eight months ahead of schedule – and the unveiling of a preferred route for the £1 billion A66 Trans-Pennine upgrade.

Highways England Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

The A303 Stonehenge tunnel project is part of the biggest investment in our road network for a generation and we welcome the Secretary of State's decision. This transformational scheme will return the Stonehenge landscape towards its original setting and will improve journey times for everyone who travels to and from the south west.

The £1.7 billion A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down upgrade includes:

- eight miles of free-flowing, high-quality dual carriageway
- a tunnel at least two miles long underneath the World Heritage Site, closely following the existing A303 route, but a further 50 metres away

from the Stonehenge monument, avoiding important archaeological sites, and avoiding intrusion on the view of the setting sun from the stones during the winter solstice

- a new bypass to the north of the village of Winterbourne Stoke
- junctions with the A345 and A360 either side of the World Heritage Site

Derek Parody, Highways England Project Director for the A303 Stonehenge scheme, added:

It is a scheme objective to conserve and enhance the World Heritage Site and this is being achieved through close collaborative working with heritage groups, including English Heritage, National Trust, Historic England and the independent A303 Scientific Committee.

The scheme will not only sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS, it will also have a beneficial effect, and extensive archaeological studies and assessments have been undertaken to provide evidence of the benefits that the scheme will deliver for the World Heritage Site.

The decision represents a major milestone, not only for us as the project team but for all those who have supported this project over a number of years; our stakeholders, the heritage bodies, local and regional businesses and indeed local communities.

The Transport Secretary's announcement follows a rigorous and detailed planning hearing in 2019, and there is now a six-week period in which the decisions may be challenged in the High Court.

In the meantime, Highways England has been progressing the procurement process for the main works contract for the A303 Stonehenge scheme, and is participating in dialogue with three bidders before they submit their final tenders. The preferred bidder is expected to be announced in 2021.

The company, responsible for the country's major A roads and motorways, has also recently awarded contracts for archaeological mitigation work (Wessex Archaeology Ltd) and preliminary works (Osborne Ltd) ahead of main construction.

Fieldwork is due to start in late spring next year, with the main five-year construction phase expected to start by 2023.

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for Highways, said:

We're delighted that, after many years of planning and lobbying by our dedicated officers and members, consent has been granted for the A303 Stonehenge project.

It represents a significant investment in Wiltshire that will boost the south-west economy, unlocking jobs and investment throughout the entire region. We now can look forward to construction beginning, and unlocking all the benefits the scheme will bring to Wiltshire and the south west.

David Tucker, Federation of Small Businesses Transport Chair, said:

This is very welcome news. Upgrading the single carriageway sections of the A303 is key to supporting the south-west economy, particularly as the only alternative route via the M4 and M5 into the region is already heavily used. Investment in improving key links on the country's A roads is a positive and vital way to support our local regional economies.

Charles Routh Wiltshire Team Leader for Natural England added:

We've worked with Highways England to get some really great outcomes for wildlife from the A303 Stonehenge scheme. The verges and embankments will make for a flower-rich, six-mile long, butterfly highway and large areas of species-rich chalk grassland will be created.

Local communities will be able to find out more about the Stonehenge scheme during a series of virtual public information events in early 2021, including information around ongoing ground investigation and ecology surveys. The Sparkford to Ilchester scheme, a further proposed A303 upgrade, is also awaiting a DCO decision next week, following the Secretary of State's revised deadline deferral in the summer. The scheme, further west on the A303 in Somerset, will provide a high-quality three-mile dual carriageway link, including new and replacement slip roads, junctions and road bridges to replace existing junctions and direct access roads.

Galliford Try has been appointed as the contractor to design and build the scheme, and Highways England is currently assessing timescales to start the programme of work, should consent be granted.

A third corridor project, the A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme, has had funding confirmed by HM Treasury for the next development stage and a tender process is progressing following last year's announcement of a preferred route.

Get further information on the [A303 Stonehenge upgrade](#)

Keep up to date via our Twitter feed @A303Stonehenge and the A303 Stonehenge Community Facebook page.

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.

[Contract award – Sellafield Industrial Services Framework](#)

News story

Kaefer Ltd has won a framework to provide key industrial services to the Sellafield site.



The company will supply a range of support including scaffolding, rigging, asbestos removal, insulation, and lagging.

Sellafield Ltd awarded the framework, worth up to £90 million over an initial 3 years, following a competitive procurement process.

This followed the successful completion of a previous framework to provide similar services, also delivered by Kaefer Ltd.

Steve Bostock, Sellafield Ltd site director, said:

Congratulations to Kaefer Ltd. We look forward to continuing our important strategic relationship with the business through the next framework period.

We are entering a crucial period in the history of Sellafield as we

safely and securely complete our operational missions and transition to a full focus on decommissioning and waste management.

Through this framework, Kaefer Ltd will make an important contribution to progressing our mission to make Sellafield safer, sooner.

Chris Foulkes, Kaefer Ltd chief executive officer, said:

We look forward to supporting Sellafield for the next three years and beyond. We remain committed to developing our services and investing in opportunities for local people.

Kaefer Ltd employs more than 350 people in Cumbria.

The company has committed to additional social impact delivery during the period of the framework.

This will include the creation of apprenticeship and graduate opportunities, a schools programme focusing on helping children with special educational needs, and delivery of training for local charities, jobseekers, and small businesses.

Published 12 November 2020

[UK's share of EU financial guarantees](#)

News story

GAD has developed a model which will help the government to implement the financial settlement as the UK leaves the EU.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has built a model to support HM Treasury (HMT) in implementing the financial settlement as set out in the [Withdrawal Agreement](#) with the European Union (EU).

Withdrawal Agreement

The UK and EU reached an agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU on 17 October 2019. It included a financial settlement in recognition of the mutual commitments built up while the UK was a member of the EU. Articles 143 and 144 of this agreement cover the financial settlement in relation to financial guarantees and other financial instruments held by the EU.

These include for example, guarantees on investments made by the European Investment Bank in small and medium-sized enterprises and guarantees made on loans to countries in financial difficulties.

Model purpose

The model is designed to replicate future payment system between the EU and the UK in line with the mechanism set out in the Articles. The model can then estimate the size and timing of those payments to inform forecasts for the Office for Budget Responsibility and HMT accounts.

Actuary Paul Butcher said: "This model from GAD will help the government assess the various guarantee arrangements under the Articles. It covers the payments to cover losses against the guarantees, as well as the return of contributions made into guarantee funds and direct investments.

"This project means that HMT not only has a clearer picture of the likely size and timing of the payments to and from the EU, but the government can also test the outcome under different scenarios."

Expected returns model design

Under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK's share of these guarantees and the associated assets are treated together. Where the UK share of the guarantee funds proves more than sufficient to meet calls on guarantees, then the UK will ultimately receive a net financial benefit. The key driver of the size of the net financial benefit is the size and the timing of the guarantees being called upon. To estimate this, the model calculates the:

- probability of a guarantee being called
- maximum size of the guaranteed amount, if it is called
- percentage of that maximum that is likely to be called upon

This is repeated for all future years until the loans are repaid. This approach could also be used to assess expected payments under a range of financial arrangements, such as other financial guarantees, loan books and insurance arrangements.

Published 12 November 2020