

Sarah Sackman KC MP  
Minister of State for Courts and Legal Services  
UK Government

9 February 2026

Dear Minister,

#### Justice – Cardiff Civil Justice Centre

The Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee was pleased to welcome Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the Hill, the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales, on 2 February 2026 to discuss a range of issues including the operation of the justice system in Wales.

We were interested to hear, during the Lady Chief Justice's opening remarks, about her commitment to pursuing a new Civil Justice Centre for Cardiff, given the "overwhelming" need for a replacement.

Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, as part of the work of the Commission on Justice in Wales, described the Civil Justice Centre in Cardiff as being "unfit for purpose" in 2019. In oral evidence to the Commission, members of the judiciary raised serious concerns about the suitability of the facility and separately described the facilities as a "disgrace" and unable to "fulfil its duties as a court premises".

This Committee has pursued this issue over many years and we have seen very little progress being made. It was therefore sobering to hear from the Lady Chief Justice that the situation in 2026 remains unchanged.

The Welsh Government's Counsel General, at the time, Mick Antoniw MS told this Committee in January 2022, in the context of the potential for Cardiff to lead the way in the field of commercial law, that court infrastructure was "grossly inadequate". In May 2022, the Welsh Government cited the replacement of Cardiff Civil Justice Centre as a priority of their Delivering Justice for Wales work programme, which arose in response to the Commission on Justice in Wales.

However, there has been very little progress since then, despite the Law Society Gazette reporting in February 2025 that £420,000 had been spent on maintaining the building in previous three financial years. The current Counsel General, Julie James MS appeared to acknowledge the position in June 2025 when she referred to the Centre as being in a “parlous condition”.

We note that, in response to media coverage of the session with the Lady Chief Justice, a spokesperson for the UK Government is reported as saying that there was a “planned pipeline of future works to improve the resilience and quality of the court estate” and that it is committed to “working with the judiciary to ensure it was fit for purpose”.

Whilst we welcome the Lady Chief Justice’s remarks that there was a “fresh energy” to address the situation, there remains very little detailed information on what the future is for Cardiff Civil Justice Centre and the pace of change remains unacceptably slow. There will need to be fresh energy from both governments to progress change.

We would be grateful to receive further information on how you are engaging with the Welsh Government, His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service, the Lady Chief Justice, the legal profession and other stakeholders to progress the urgent work required to resolve the issues facing Cardiff Civil Justice Centre specifically, given the urgent need for the replacement of that site.

As well as providing a comprehensive response on the future of the Cardiff Civil Justice Centre, we would also welcome information on other planned works to the judicial estate throughout Wales. Please ensure that your response provides granular detail on the works planned or being considered, with timeframes specified for completing these works.

In order to assist in our timely scrutiny of this matter, we would appreciate receiving a response by Wednesday 4 March 2026.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Hedges". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Mike Hedges

Chair