



PE1524/E

Ned Sharratt
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
The Scottish Parliament
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**Director of Development
Scottish Court Service Headquarters
Saughton House
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BY EMAIL

2 October 2014

Dear Mr Sharratt,

PE 1524 – free wifi in Scottish Public Buildings

I am responding to your letter of 6 August 2014 to the Scottish Court Service (“SCS”) to seek its views on Petition 1524:

“calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to issue a code of practice setting out a minimum standard for wifi connections provided by public authorities to members of the public; and to urge all Scottish public authorities to provide wifi connections that meet this standard in all their public buildings”.

We offer the following comments.

Firstly, as a general proposition, the SCS’s IT strategy is completely aligned with the vision in the Scottish Government’s *Digital Strategy for Justice* to have modern, user-focused justice systems which use digital technology to deliver simple, fast and effective justice at best cost¹. While this will rely principally on our own private local and wide area networks, use of the internet will also be fundamental to delivering this.

We are currently in the process of a major upgrade to our IT infrastructure to ensure we have high speed connections across all our courts; and, as noted in the *Digital Strategy*², by the end of 2016 the SCS will have introduced wi-fi in all court buildings. This will have appropriate security safeguards to allow both secure and non-secure network traffic³.

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00458026.pdf> - at page 4.

² See page 7 of the *Digital Strategy*.

³ See the SCS’s [Business Plan 2014-2015](#) at page 15 (digital innovation).

Secondly, we welcome the discussion prompted by the Petition in terms of thinking about the merits of having common minimum standards for access where public authorities provide wi-fi for use by the public.

As a contribution to that discussion, we would point out that the technical requirements of access may well vary between different types of user. In the context of the courts, certain users such as agents (where use is permitted within the court room) may need wider bandwidth and access than members of the public going online within a public waiting area might. Moreover, use of the internet may be inappropriate - or indeed not permitted - in particular contexts or areas such as in the public gallery of the court room, or during jury deliberations.

It would be important to be clear therefore what matters any standards should cover (i.e. technical and/or use), and what should be a matter for the discretion of the relevant public service provider.

I hope this is helpful. Let me know if you require anything further.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Robert Sandeman
Director of Operations Development