

Only three Scottish courts sold in five years after “short-sighted” closures

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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The SNP have been accused of “selling the silverware” of Scotland’s courts for a fraction of their value.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS) began closing one in five sheriff and justice of the peace courts in 2013, despite warnings of an increased workload for those remaining, and inconvenience for victims and witnesses.

According to new information obtained by freedom of information request, it has now emerged that only three of the nine buildings declared surplus have been sold in five years – raising just over £200,000.

Ahead of the resolution of two long-anticipated community ownership bids in Arbroath and Cumbernauld this December, Angus MP Kirstene Hair has slammed the “ill thought out” decision by the SNP Government to endorse closures recommended by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service.

She said:

“The impact of these short-sighted moves is still being felt in towns and Royal burghs across Scotland, five years later.

“The SNP agreed to sell the silverware of historic buildings but have left decaying edifices in the middle of our high streets.

“The SNP’s obsession with centralisation means that witnesses are travelling further to give evidence, sometimes sitting on buses with accused.

“And accused themselves are often being dragged through months of unnecessary adjournments in criminal cases, because there is such a backlog. Their solicitors are toiling.

“A growing number of cases are taking more than six months to conclude in sheriff courts, exceeding national targets.

“The SNP were told that this ill thought out decision was wrong for a number

of reasons, but blundered on anyway.”

Last year, more than 30 per cent of cases failed to hit the 26-week target from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict.

That compares to 73 per cent for the same period the previous year, with eight courts failing to get 60 per cent of cases concluded on time.