



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
for Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland
Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Our ref: PCC/RM
Date: 3rd December 2025
Name: The Rt Hon. David Lammy MP
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Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I write with sadness, disbelief and not a little anger at the Government's announcement today that the right to trial by jury will be abolished for any offence carrying a sentence of three years or less. This is not an adjustment to tackle delays, nor a pragmatic response to a temporary backlog. It is an act of vandalism against the moral architecture of our democracy. It strikes at a liberty that has shaped English justice for centuries.

Last week I wrote to you, along with others involved in law enforcement, warning that your proposals represented a direct assault on one of the oldest and most sacred rights we possess: the right to be judged by a jury of our peers. You have now considered those criticisms and returned with a plan that is unchanged in every meaningful respect. The objection was never about efficiency. It was about principle. About the belief that no citizen should stand alone before the full machinery of the state without the presence of ordinary people who speak with a moral as well as a legal authority.

There is something chilling about the idea that the state believes justice can be improved by removing the public from it. Twelve good men and women replaced by one tired government is not progress. It is a warning sign of a state that no longer trusts its own people. And it raises a further question: how can a Justice Secretary justify a reform that takes justice out of the justice system?

You yourself once said that jury trials are a fundamental part of our democratic settlement and that removing them is a bad idea. You were right then. What has changed except political convenience? Is this truly the legacy you sought for your political life: to be the minister who presided over the most significant removal of public justice in modern times?

Your so called "swift courts" are not courts of justice. They are rather conveyor belts designed for speed and volume. You propose that volunteer community magistrates, already responsible for the overwhelming majority of prosecutions and clearly stretched, should take on yet more work even as the legal profession warns that the system is close to breaking. You have not strengthened justice. You have moved its burdens from the state onto those least equipped to bear them.

Your reassurance that serious crimes such as murder, rape and robbery will retain jury trials is hollow. Countless offences, including domestic abuse, many sexual offences, assaults, frauds, public order matters and crimes with profound and lasting consequences, will no longer be subject to the scrutiny of a jury. The dividing line you have drawn is arbitrary, mechanical and



morally uncertain.

Worse, you have attempted to justify this constitutional rupture by claiming that defendants are gaming the system by choosing a jury. When a government begins to speak of rights as if they are loopholes, citizens should be afraid. A right exercised is not a trick. It is the very safeguard that prevents abuses of power.

And this is not a temporary move to deal with a backlog. You propose to remove a constitutional safeguard that has lasted for centuries not for a short period of crisis management but forever. Temporary failures of administration are being used to justify permanent reductions in liberty. That is not reform. It marks a shift in the relationship between the state and the citizen and it invites future governments to go further still.

The jury system did not create the backlog. Years of deliberate political decisions did. Sitting hours cut to the bone, court buildings allowed to decay, staff left without support and resources. The public is now being asked to surrender its rights to cover for the consequences of that neglect.

You are proposing to remove the people from their own justice system. You are proposing to turn a public duty into a bureaucratic process carried out behind closed doors. You are asking us to trust a system from which you have deliberately removed the nation's conscience.

No free people should accept this. No responsible minister should endorse it.

I urge you to abandon these reckless plans. Restore confidence by restoring capacity. Repair the courts that you and your predecessors allowed to crumble. Invest in the people rather than silence them. But do not, under any circumstances, destroy the right of the British people to stand before their equals and have their fate decided by twelve citizens who represent the nation's conscience.

Yours sincerely

Rupert Matthews
Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland