

Consultation on the Jurisdiction of the County Court - Increasing the County Court Limit

March 2010



The current financial limits of the County Court were set some 16 years ago on the 1 September 1993. On 3 March 2010 the Northern Ireland Court Service (NICS) launched a consultation proposing a change to the financial limits of the County Court. Within the consultation paper proposals are also made for the reform of the financial limits of the District Judges Court and the Small Claims Court.

Within the consultation document there are three different proposals in respect of the County Court jurisdiction:

1. The most modest proposal is an inflationary increase from £15,000 to £25,000. NICS are of the opinion that this would have the least impact on court business.
2. The second proposal, and the preferred option of the NICS's, is an increase from £15,000 to £50,000. The NICS are of the opinion that this would represent the most "meaningful reform" with the potential to improve the level of service to the public in terms of convenience, accessibility and affordability.
3. The most radical proposal is that of an unlimited Jurisdiction of the County Court. This would mean that the jurisdiction of a case would be based on its complexity rather than its value.

There are also three proposals on the table to increase the financial limit of the District Judges Court. Firstly an inflationary increase from £5,000 to £7,000, or an increase to £10,000 or finally an increase to £15,000, which is the NICS's preferred option.

The current Small Claims limit of £2,000 was set in 2001 and NICS have made two proposals; an inflationary increase to £3,000 or a more substantial increase to £5,000 either immediately or in stages. NICS's preferred option is an increase to £3,000.

The consultation closes on 26 May 2010.

If you feel that this may affect you or your business please contact Lisa Boyd or another member of the Litigation Department who will be happy to help you.

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