

Sally Buchanan
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National Consultation Team
Post Office Ltd
FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM

25th September 2008

Dear Ms Buchanan

With reference to the current consultation on proposed closures of post offices in southern Scotland we would like to make the following comments.

Firstly we are disappointed that the UK Government has set a target for the number of closures across the UK which means that if any one post office currently proposed for closure is saved, another will be pressured to close instead. This seems an insensitive way of planning appropriate service delivery.

We are also disappointed at the brevity of the consultation exercise. The six week consultation period has coincided with the summer holidays making it difficult to obtain views.

Generally we object to the closures proposed for the following reasons:-

- Some proposals (eg Eskdalemuir and Boreland) affect “Rural Service Priority Areas” which were designated in 2006 with the objective of improving services to particularly deprived communities. The proposed actions clearly run contra to this policy.
- Alternative post offices are often considerable distances away at a time of rising fuel costs and lack of regular public transport. This will prevent local people being able to access many of the services which the Post Office provides. This includes cash machines through which several post offices in this region provide access to cash withdrawals without charge.
- Elderly or disabled people, especially those without a car, should not have to suffer the extra cost and inconvenience of having to rely on local bus services or expensive taxi travel in order to access such services.
- For many small businesses the closure programme will have an adverse affect on their viability. Small businesses working from home need a range of services and facilities (eg recorded delivery, proof of postage, correct weight and therefore charge for packages of unusual shape or destinations etc. Time is crucial to running a business and businesses operated in the community can ill afford the additional time and inconvenience required to travel to more distant post offices.
- The outreach proposals, while better than nothing, cannot replace the 5 day week service typically received and this option will significantly reduce accessibility to post office services. We are also concerned that outreach services, once accepted, would be gradually run-down.
- Closing some post offices will have knock-on effects on other services such as shops. Often the two businesses support one another and loss of one will result in the loss of both

to the serious detriment of vital community services in some areas. This is clearly the case for example in Colvend, Creetown and in New Abbey.

As with other rural facilities, once lost a service is very hard to bring back. We would urge that the policy of closing rural post offices is revisited with the aim of thoroughly exploring all alternatives before making a decision to close.

Yours sincerely

Pip Tabor
Project Manager