

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Thursday 6 March 2008

at 6.00 p.m.

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors Akers-Belcher, Brash, RW Cook, S Cook, Fleet, Flintoff, James, Laffey, A E Lilley, G Lilley, A Marshall, Plant, Preece, Shaw, Simmons and Wright.

Resident Representatives: Jean Kennedy, Iris Ryder and Linda Shields

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
3. **MINUTES**
No items
4. **RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**
No Items
5. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**
No Items
6. **FORWARD PLAN**
No Items

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7. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

No Items

8. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS

No Items

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Post Office Limited Network Change Programme – Formal Consultation Process (12 February 2008 to 26 March 2008):

9.1 Evidence from Post Office Limited:-

- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Manager*
- (b) Verbal Presentation from Representative(s) of Post Office Limited

9.2 Post Office Network Change Programme – *Head of Community Strategy*

9.3 Evidence from Key Witnesses:-

- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Manager*
- (b) Verbal Evidence from Sub postmasters in Hartlepool;
- (c) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Public;
- (d) Verbal Evidence from Elected Members who serve on Hartlepool Borough Council's Cabinet;
- (e) Verbal Evidence from Ward Councillors of Hartlepool Borough Council;
- (f) Verbal Evidence from representatives of Parish Councils in Hartlepool;
- (g) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Hartlepool Partnership;
- (h) Verbal Evidence from Members / Resident Representatives of the North, South and Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forums;
- (i) Verbal Evidence from Key Officers of Hartlepool Borough Council; and
- (j) Written Evidence for Postwatch Northern England.

PLEASE NOTE VENUE

10. **CALL-IN REQUESTS**

11. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Friday 14 March 2008 at 1.30 pm in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre**

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

6 March 2008



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: Post Office Limited Network Change Programme –
Evidence from Post Office Limited

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of this Committee that arrangements have been made for representatives of Post Office Limited to be in attendance at today's meeting to deliver a presentation as part of the Post Office Network Change Programme's formal consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 By way of background information, Post Office Limited is required to fulfil the Government's requirements of reducing the overall size of the Post Office Network. In practice this means that Post Office Limited are proposing to close a number of branches in Hartlepool, namely Elwick Road, Hart and Raby Estate Branches as outlined within their Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond (**Appendix A refers**).
- 2.2 The Council's approach to the Post Office Network Change Programme's formal consultation process has been twofold, firstly a Public Meeting was held on 29 February 2008 to ensure the views of local people were taken into account before any decisions are made by Post Office Limited and secondly, the involvement of this Committee to assist in the formulation of the Council's formal response to the consultation process.
- 2.3 As such arrangements have been made for representatives of Post Office Limited to be in attendance at today's meeting to outline their Area Plan

Proposal together with reasoning behind the Post Office Branches proposed for closure in Hartlepool.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Committee consider the evidence of Post Office Limited, to assist in the formulation of the Authority's formal response to be considered by Cabinet prior its submission to Post Office Limited.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523 087
Email: charlotte.burnham@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used on the preparation of this report.



Post Office Ltd

**Network Change
Programme**

**Area Plan Proposal
Cleveland with South
Durham and Richmond**

Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Proposed Local Area Plan
 3. The Role of Postwatch
 4. Proposed Outreach service Points
 5. List of Post Office[®] branches proposed for “Outreach”
 6. List of Post Office[®] branches proposed for closure
 7. List of Post Office[®] branches proposed to remain in the Network
- Frequently Asked Questions Leaflet
 - Map of the Local Area Plan
 - Branch Access Reports - information on proposed closing branches and details of alternative branches in the Area

1. Introduction

The Government has recognised that fewer people are using Post Office[®] branches, partly because traditional services, including benefit payments and other services are now available in other ways, such as online or directly through banks. It has concluded that the overall size and shape of the network of Post Office[®] branches (“the Network”) needs to change.

In May 2007, following a national public consultation, the Government announced a range of proposed measures to modernise and reshape the Network and put it on a more stable footing for the future. A copy of the Government’s response to the national public consultation (“the Response Document”) can be obtained at www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page36024.html.

Post Office Ltd has now put in place a Network Change Programme (“the Programme”) to implement the measures proposed by the Government. The Programme will involve the compulsory compensated closure of up to 2,500 Post Office[®] branches (out of a current Network of 14,300 branches), with the introduction of about 500 service points known as “Outreaches” to mitigate the impact of the proposed closures. Compensation will be paid to those subpostmasters whose branches are compulsorily closed under the Programme.

To support the necessary changes to the Network and put it on a more stable footing and to support the reshaped Network of the future, the Government has proposed an investment of up to £1.7bn as a funding package.

The majority of Post Office[®] branches - more than 80% - will not change as a result of the Programme. Post Office Ltd is seeking to implement those changes that do take place as efficiently and sensitively as possible.

One of the key ways in which Post Office Ltd will make sure that people continue to have the best possible access to Post Office[®] services is by applying the minimum access criteria prescribed by the Government in the Response Document:

Nationally:

- 99% of the UK population to be within 3 miles and 90% of the population to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office[®] branch.
- 99% of the total population in deprived urban¹ areas across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office[®] branch.
- 95% of the total urban² population across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office[®] branch.
- 95% of the total rural³ population across the UK to be within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office[®] branch.

¹ Deprived urban – The most disadvantaged urban parts of the UK based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (top 15% Super Output Areas in England, 15% of Data Zones in Scotland and 30% of Super Output Areas in Wales and Northern Ireland).

² Urban – A community with 10,000 or more inhabitants in a continuous built up area.

³ Rural – A community not covered by the definition of Urban above.

In addition, for each individual postcode district:

- 95% of the population of the postcode district to be within 6 miles of their nearest Post Office[®] branch.

Changes to the Network can only take place within the prescribed access criteria.

In order to deliver the changes set out in the Response Document, Post Office Ltd has divided the UK into 47 areas ("Areas"). For each of these Areas Post Office Ltd will develop a local area plan proposal ("Area Plan Proposal") which will set out the changes that it proposes to make within it. The Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond has been developed and in this booklet you will find information on the changes proposed for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond. Full details of the Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond are available on our website www.postoffice.co.uk/networkchange or by contacting us at the address given below.

When developing the Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond, Post Office Ltd analysed a number of factors. These included the proximity of the Post Office[®] branches proposed for closure to other nearby branches, the number of customers currently using a particular Post Office[®] branch, the size and ability of nearby branches to absorb extra customers, and the commercial implications of any decision for Post Office Ltd.

Post Office Ltd has also taken into account obstacles such as rivers, mountains and valleys, motorways and sea crossings to islands in order to avoid undue hardship to customers. In addition, the availability of public transport, alternative access to key Post Office[®] services (such as cash withdrawals, bill payments, mail services), local demographics and the impact on local economies have all been considered. Post Office Ltd has sought information from a number of external organisations and people, including subpostmasters, local authorities and regional development agencies to assist with this process.

Postwatch, the independent consumer watchdog for postal services, has worked with us in assessing the options for change during the period leading up to the publication of the Area Plan Proposal. Post Office Ltd has also engaged with other stakeholders, including relevant MPs.

Local Public Consultation

Each Area Plan Proposal is subject to local public consultation to ensure that the views of local people are taken into account before any final decisions are made by Post Office Ltd.

The local public consultation on the Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond will commence on 12th February 2008.

The local public consultation will last for a period of six weeks and the closing date for feedback is 26th March 2008. Exceptionally in this instance we have extended public consultation by 2 days to allow for the holiday period over Easter. Please send your views and comments in writing regarding access to future Post Office[®] services in this Area to the address detailed below (payment of postage is not required to a Freepost address). Please note that your comments will not be kept confidential unless you expressly ask us to do so by clearly marking them 'In Confidence'.

Adrian Wales
Network Development Manager
C/o National Consultation Team
FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM

Email: consultation@postoffice.co.uk
Customer Helpline: 08457 22 33 44

2. The Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond

Post Office Ltd is acutely aware of the concerns that changes – including closures – affecting Post Office[®] branches in the Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area will cause. In fulfilling the Government's requirement to reduce the overall size of the Post Office[®] network ("the Network") – and to do so in a way which creates similar results across the UK as a whole, and ensures that no group of inhabitants at an area level is overall significantly more adversely affected than any other – we are proposing to retain a total of 196 Post Office[®] branches across the region, but to close 37 existing branches, as well as establish 2 outreach service points which would use innovative ways to continue to provide Post Office services in some areas where the existing branch is proposed for closure.

If these proposed changes take place, Post Office Ltd will remain the largest retailer by network size in the area, and will still have more branches open than the number of branches of major banks and building societies combined. Ninety nine per cent of the population will see no change to the branch that they currently use or will remain within one mile of an alternative outlet.

At present the area's 0.9 million residents are served by a total of 233 branches. Usage of Post Office[®] branches is falling, in line with national trends, as more customers access services at other places, make more use of the internet and have their Government benefits paid directly into bank accounts.

This Area Plan Proposal supports achievement of the national accessibility criteria set by the Government, forms part of an overall reduction in the number of branches by up to 2,500 across the UK and does not disproportionately affect the inhabitants of the area relative to other parts of the UK.

In addition to meeting these criteria, when preparing this Area Plan Proposal Post Office Ltd has considered factors relating to geography, the availability of local transport and alternative access to key Post Office[®] services, local demographics and the impact on local economies. All branches, where changes are proposed, have been visited by members of Post Office Ltd's staff to make sure that local factors that needed to be considered in developing an Area Plan Proposal have been assessed first hand.

Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond communities are diverse in nature – densely populated urban areas around Middlesbrough, Darlington and Hartlepool to sparsely populated areas within the North Yorkshire area. Across the area, 39% of the population live in rural communities and 61% in urban towns and cities. In order to meet the Government's access criteria and avoid undue hardship, Post Office Ltd is proposing a future Network in the region comprising 83 branches in urban towns and cities and 113 branches in rural areas.

The needs of those living in communities defined as deprived have been carefully considered in this Area Plan Proposal, reflecting the specific national criteria set by the Government to give greater safeguards on the accessibility of branches in these communities. Some 30% of the region's total population live in deprived communities, 24% of them in urban areas and 6% in rural areas.

Post Office Ltd has engaged with various stakeholders when preparing this Area Plan Proposal. We have consulted with the independent consumer watchdog on postal services, Postwatch, and have asked all local authorities within the Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area to provide information and views relevant to the factors which we are able to consider. Our aim throughout has been to minimise the impact, as far as possible, on our customers and to produce the most effective overall proposal for the future.

In our conversations with stakeholders we have been made aware of regeneration plans for up to 2021 which affect areas within the overall proposal, and we have taken these into consideration when constructing the Area Plan. These include submissions from Easington District Council, Stockton –On-Tees Borough Council; Sedgefield Borough Council; Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council; Hartlepool Borough Council; North Yorkshire County Council and Richmondshire District Council. Our proposed Network for the Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area takes account of the locations affected by these and other schemes, their likely implementation timescales, and has regard to the needs of the communities affected by these changes. We will keep provision under review should demand increase beyond anticipated levels in the future.

Richmondshire District Council, Hartlepool Borough Council and Sedgefield Borough Council have all advised us of future plans for work on, and investment in, major road schemes. Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council has also advised us of the Tees Valley Bus Major Scheme over the next 3-5 years. The input that we have received regarding public transport provision does not suggest any proposed reduction in current provision which could leave branches significantly less accessible for particular communities, or make it more difficult for customers to access alternative branches than at present.

In finalising the Area Plan Proposal all branches were carefully considered against the Government's minimum access criteria which Post Office Ltd must meet, and has had regard to the other factors that we must consider. 25.6% of the initial Area Plan Proposal has been changed as those factors were reviewed and as information from stakeholders was considered and assessed.

Future service provision:

The Area Plan Proposal envisages a Post Office[®] Network of 196 branches in the Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area, which ensures that Post Office Ltd would comply with the minimum access criteria set by the Government. For 92.5% of customers this would mean no change to the Post Office[®] branch that they currently use.

The network now proposed for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond continues to offer better access to services than that of any similar organisation, while accepting the Government's decision to reduce overall branch numbers. Subject to the Government's overriding criteria, we have considered geography, transport provision, demographics and local economic impact where appropriate. We are pleased to maintain 36 branches that support the only essential retailer in their community and 57 that provide the only access to cash in a particular community.

The Area Plan Proposal includes provision of Post Office services through innovative outreach solutions in 2 locations. In each instance the outreach solution would be located within the same community as an existing Post Office branch and provide Post Office services for a designated number of hours per week. Possible types of outreach service in the Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area could include a mobile service visiting small communities at set times, a hosted service operated within third party premises for restricted hours each week or a partner service within the premises of a local partner (such as a pub landlord).

Outreach services are proposed in some rural areas within the Richmond constituencies.

Post Office Ltd understands the importance of its role in both urban and rural communities and is keen to continue to provide access to services for as many customers in as many of these communities as possible. We have also considered the relative convenience of alternative branches for those customers whose closest branch is proposed for closure.

Of the 7.5% of customers who use a branch that will close, 6.5% would have access to Post Office[®] services within one mile as measured by road distance (0.9% being within half a mile of their nearest alternative). In total 99% of the population will either see no change, or will be within one mile of an alternative branch.

Next steps....

During the local public consultation, which will last for a period of six weeks, we will seek views on the proposed future service provision in the region as outlined in this Area Plan Proposal.

Subject to the conclusion of the local public consultation period and after consideration of feedback received, no changes would be implemented before June 2008

Post Office Ltd is at a crucial point. Customer numbers are falling, customer habits are changing and many of our traditional services are available elsewhere. It is essential that the changes, which include a reduction in the number of branches, are made if the Network is to have a sustainable future. We therefore welcome your views and comments regarding access to future Post Office[®] services in this area. In particular we ask for your views on accessibility to the nearest Post Office[®] branch.



The consumer watchdog

Postwatch is the independent watchdog for postal services, created by the Postal Services Act 2000. Postwatch is working with Post Office Ltd and local communities throughout the programme to help secure the best possible outcome for customers.

What Postwatch will do

Postwatch operates through nine regional and national committees across the UK. Postwatch's role during the programme – prescribed by government - is to scrutinise Post Office Ltd's proposals and give feedback, ensure local consultations are meaningful, and that Post Office Ltd's decisions are sensible and in line with government criteria.

Each Postwatch regional office investigates Post Office Ltd's closure proposals. Postwatch receives area plans in advance of public consultation, allowing the time to examine proposals, and Post Office Ltd the chance to refine their proposals before going to public consultation.

Once public consultation is underway, Postwatch works to raise awareness of local consultations, and encourage participation. Postwatch will also work to ensure the minimum access criteria set out by the government are maintained.

Where Postwatch thinks proposals are unsatisfactory, they will work with local communities and Post Office Ltd to address these problems. There is an agreed review mechanism between Postwatch and Post Office Ltd for such instances. It is important to note that Postwatch does not have a power of veto on Post Office Ltd's decisions.

Further information

Postwatch and Post Office Ltd have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding, which sets out in detail the role Postwatch will play in the Programme. This is available on the Postwatch website at www.postwatch.co.uk.

4. Proposed Outreach Service Points

Outreach service is an innovative way to continue to provide Post Office[®] services in some areas where we may need to close a Post Office[®] branch. The outreach service will be located within the same community as the current Post Office[®] branch and provide Post Office[®] services for a designated number of hours per week.

There are four possible types of outreach service:

The Mobile Service is a travelling Post Office[®] situated within a van operated by the core subpostmaster or his assistants that will visit small communities at set times and days each week to deliver certain Post Office[®] products and services to customers.

The Hosted Service is a fixed site Post Office[®] branch from which the core subpostmaster or his assistants transact certain Post Office[®] products and services during restricted hours each week. The premises are owned by a third party, for example, a shop or community centre.

The Partner Service is a fixed site Post Office[®] where a local partner (such as a pub landlord), appointed by the core subpostmaster, transacts certain Post Office[®] products and services from the partner's own premises during the opening hours of the partner's business.

The Home Service is a service for very small communities whereby the core subpostmaster delivers a reduced range of Post Office[®] products and services which are ordered over the telephone by customers. The products may either be delivered to the customer's home or at a local drop-in session. There will not be a physical Post Office[®] building in the community.

For each of these services an established subpostmaster (known as the "core" subpostmaster) will travel into a nearby community to provide a local Post Office[®] service; in addition to running their own Post Office[®] branch.

Over the past 18 months, 70 Outreach access points have been trialled. These services have been provided by 28 core branches, and this also draws on our experience of successfully operating over 250 'satellite' branches since 2000.

Post Office Ltd is proposing to introduce a number of Outreach service points as part of this Area Plan and is actively working to develop suitable proposals for the branches proposed for replacement Outreach services detailed within this booklet.

We would therefore like to seek views from our customers and their representatives on the Hosted Services proposed for Osmotherley and Swainby. Full details of the proposed new services are provided overleaf.

Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area plan - Post Office branches proposed for Hosted service

Post Office® Osmotherley branch

The Top Shop, 15 North End, Osmotherley, Northallerton, DL6 3BA

Post Office Ltd is proposing to close Osmotherley Post Office® branch on a permanent basis and to mitigate the impact of the proposed closure we propose to put in place a Hosted Service, as detailed below from June 2008:

Proposed outreach service:

<p>Outreach Service Point Osmotherley Village Hall South End Osmotherley Northallerton DL6 3BL.</p> <p>Opening times 8 hours per week. Exact opening times to be confirmed.</p> <p>Services The same range of services will continue to be available with the addition of DVLA, Passport checking and On demand bureau de change facilities, but excluding On Line Lottery facilities. Customers can still collect benefits in cash using our everyday banking services or Post Office® card account.</p>	<p>Access and facilities The proposed location has a ramp at the entrance.</p> <p>Transport There is roadside parking available nearby.</p> <p>Route The proposed Hosted Service will be sited 180 yards from the current Osmotherley branch along sloping terrain.</p>
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Access to services outside these times:

<p>Northallerton branch 156 High Street Northallerton North Yorkshire DL7 8JU</p>	<p>West Rounton branch Garden Cottage West Rounton Northallerton North Yorkshire DL6 2LW</p>	<p>Romanby branch 2 The Green Romanby Northallerton North Yorkshire DL7 8NR</p>
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Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area plan - Post Office branches proposed for Hosted service – continued:

Post Office® Swainby branch

90 High Street, Swainby, Northallerton, DL6 3DG

Post Office Ltd is proposing to close Swainby Post Office® branch on a permanent basis and to mitigate the impact of the proposed closure we propose to put in place a Hosted Service, as detailed below from June 2008:

Proposed outreach service:

<p>Outreach Service Point Whorlton Village Hall High Street Swainby Northallerton DL6 3EH</p> <p>Opening times 7 hours per week. Exact opening times to be confirmed.</p> <p>Services The same range of services will continue to be available with the addition of DVLA, Passport checking and On demand bureau de change facilities. Customers can still collect benefits in cash using our everyday banking services or Post Office® card account.</p>	<p>Access and facilities The proposed location has a step at the entrance.</p> <p>Transport There is roadside parking available nearby.</p> <p>Route The proposed Hosted Service will be sited 180 yards from the current Swainby branch along level terrain.</p>
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Access to services outside these times:

<p>Hutton Rudby branch 38 North Side Hutton Rudby Yarm North Yorkshire TS15 0DA</p>	<p>Stokesley branch Co-Operative Retail Services Ltd 44 High Street Stokesley Middlesbrough Cleveland TS9 5DQ</p>	<p>Great Broughton branch 50 High Street Great Broughton Middlesbrough Cleveland TS9 7EG</p>
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**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches proposed for Outreach**

Branch Name	Address	Town/City	Postcode	Constituency	Local Authority	Proposed Outreach Hours
Osmotherley	The Top Shop, 15 North End, Osmotherley	Northallerton	DL6 3BA	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Hambleton District Council	8
Swainby	90 High Street, Swainby	Northallerton	DL6 3DG	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Hambleton District Council	7

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches proposed for Closure**

Branch Name	Address	Town/City	Postcode	Constituency	Local Authority
Bolam	School House, Bolam	Darlington	DL2 2UP	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
Boldron	Kilmond View, Boldron	Barnard Castle	DL12 9RF	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
Hutton Magna	Plum Tree Cottage, Hutton Magna	Richmond	DL11 7HQ	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
Jubilee Fields	38 Coronation Avenue	Shildon	DL4 2AD	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Sedgefield Borough Council
Kirk Merrington (Temporarily closed)	14 Front Street, Kirk Merrington	Spennymoor	DL16 7HZ	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Sedgefield Borough Council
Leeholme	95 Leeholme Road, Leeholme	Bishop Auckland	DL14 8HL	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Wear Valley District Council
Page Bank	Jesmond House, Whitworth	Spennymoor	DL16 7QY	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Sedgefield Borough Council
Romaldkirk	The Kirk Inn, Romaldkirk	Barnard Castle	DL12 9ED	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
South Church	94 St Andrews Road, South Church	Bishop Auckland	DL14 6RY	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Wear Valley District Council
Toft Hill	149 Toft Hill	Bishop Auckland	DL14 0JB	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
Tudhoe Colliery	18 Attwood Terrace	Spennymoor	DL16 6TD	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Sedgefield Borough Council
Winston	3 Richardson Close, Winston	Darlington	DL2 3RQ	Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council / Teesdale Borough Council
Cleveland Terrace	17-19 Cleveland Terrace	Darlington	DL3 7HD	Darlington	Darlington Borough Council
Hopetown	7 Brinkburn Road	Darlington	DL3 6DR	Darlington	Darlington Borough Council
Milbank	37 Pierremont Crescent	Darlington	DL3 9PB	Darlington	Darlington Borough Council
Elwick Road	79 Elwick Road	Hartlepool	TS26 9AU	Hartlepool	Hartlepool Borough Council
Hart	1 Front Street, Hart	Hartlepool	TS27 3AW	Hartlepool	Hartlepool Borough Council
Raby Estate	43 Chatham Road	Hartlepool	TS24 8QQ	Hartlepool	Hartlepool Borough Council
Roman Road	41 Roman Road	Middlesbrough	TS5 6DZ	Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough Council
Charltons	Charltons	Saltburn-By- The-Sea	TS12 3DA	Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Moorsholm	44 High Street, Moorsholm	Saltburn-By- The-Sea	TS12 3JH	Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Lazenby	Lazenby Post Office, 23 High Street, Lazenby	Middlesbrough	TS6 8DY	Redcar	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Park Avenue	Park Avenue	Redcar	TS10 3NE	Redcar	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Brompton	2 Northallerton Road, Brompton	Northallerton	DL6 2QN	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Hambleton District Council

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches proposed for Closure**

North End	47 High Street	Northallerton	DL7 8EG	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Hambleton District Council
Seamer	29 The Green, Seamer	Middlesbrough	TS9 5LS	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Hambleton District Council
Waitwith	Plumor Road	Catterick Garrison	DL9 3DQ	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Richmondshire District Council
West End Richmond	1 Reeth Road	Richmond	DL10 4EH	Richmond (Yorks)	North Yorkshire County Council / Richmondshire District Council
Croft	12 Tees View, Hurworth Place	Darlington	DL2 2DH	Sedgefield	Darlington Borough Council
Heighington	Village Hall, Darlington Road, Heighington Village	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 6RB	Sedgefield	Darlington Borough Council
Hutton Henry	Front Street, Hutton Henry	Hartlepool	TS27 4RH	Sedgefield	Durham County Council / Easington District Council
Simpasture	5 Simpasture Gate	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 5HH	Sedgefield	Durham County Council / Sedgefield Borough Council
Cowpen Estate	29 Cowpen Lane	Billingham	TS23 4AP	Stockton North	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Thorpe Thewles	The Post Office, Thorpe Thewles	Stockton-On-Tees	TS21 3JP	Stockton North	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Wolviston Court	4 Clifton Avenue	Billingham	TS22 5DE	Stockton North	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Long Newton	The Wilson Institute, Village Hall, Darlington Road, Long Newton	Stockton-On-Tees	TS21 1DD	Stockton South	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Oxbridge Lane	81 Oxbridge Lane	Stockton-On-Tees	TS18 4AR	Stockton South	Stockton on Tees Borough Council

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches to remain in the Network**

Branch Name	Address	Town/City	Postcode
Acklam	271a Acklam Road	Middlesbrough	TS5 7BP
Albert Road	66-70 North Road	Darlington	DL1 2EQ
Aldbrough St John	Aldbrough St John	Richmond	DL11 7ST
Appleton Wiske	Front Street, Appleton Wiske	Northallerton	DL6 2AA
Askrigg	Main Street, Askrigg	Leyburn	DL8 3HG
Aycliffe	1 The Wynd, Aycliffe	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 6JT
Aycliffe Trading Est	St Cuthberts Way, Aycliffe Industrial Estate	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 6DX
Bainbridge	Riverside House, Bainbridge	Leyburn	DL8 3EF
Barnard Castle	Galgate	Barnard Castle	DL12 8BE
Barton	31 Silver Street, Barton	Richmond	DL10 6JH
Bellerby	Myrtel House, Bellerby	Leyburn	DL8 5QN
Billingham	Crown Buildings, Town Centre	Billingham	TS23 2LR
Birchington Avenue	47 Birchington Avenue, Grangetown	Middlesbrough	TS6 7HX
Bishop Auckland	28-29 Victoria Avenue	Bishop Auckland	DL14 7JH
Bishop Middleham	19 Bank Top, Bishop Middleham	Ferryhill	DL17 9AW
Blackwell	98 - 100 Carmel Road South	Darlington	DL3 8QN
Boosbeck	The Post Office, Boosbeck	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 3AB
Borough Road	171-173 Redcar Lane	Redcar	TS10 2EJ
Bowes	Manor Cottage, Bowes	Barnard Castle	DL12 9HN
Branksome	118 Whitby Way	Darlington	DL3 9UH
Brompton-On-Swale	41-43 Richmond Road, Brompton-On-Swale	Richmond	DL10 7HF
Brookfield Gardens	The Oval, Brookfield	Middlesbrough	TS5 8HP
Brotton	The Post Office, Brotton	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 2SP
Broughton Avenue	36 Broughton Avenue	Middlesbrough	TS4 3PZ
Butterknowle	Diamond Inn, Butterknowle	Butterknowle	DL13 5NX
Byers Green	85 High Street, Byers Green	Spennymoor	DL16 7NX
Carlin How	The Post Office, Carlin How	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4AB
Carlton	1 Westgarth, Carlton, Stockton	Stockton-On-Tees	TS21 1DZ
Catcote Road	64 Catcote Road	Hartlepool	TS25 4HD
Catterick	29 High Street, Catterick	Richmond	DL10 7LL
Catterick Garrison	Spar, Hildyard Row	Catterick Garrison	DL9 4DH
Chilton	4 Durham Road, Chilton	Ferryhill	DL17 0EX
Church Street	48 Church Street	Shildon	DL4 1DY
Cockerton	21 West Auckland Road	Darlington	DL3 9EL
Cockfield	77 Front Street, Cockfield	Bishop Auckland	DL13 5DQ
Cockton Hill	116 Cockton Hill Road	Bishop Auckland	DL14 6DG
Cotherstone	Teesdale Supply Store, Cotherstone	Barnard Castle	DL12 9PG
Coulby Newham	Unit 16, Parkway Shopping Centre, Coulby Newham	Middlesbrough	TS8 0TJ
Coundon	34 Collingwood Street, Coundon	Bishop Auckland	DL14 8LG
Crathorne	Crathorne	Yarm	TS15 0BA
Crescent Road	119 Crescent Road	Middlesbrough	TS1 4QS
Darlington	Crown Street	Darlington	DL1 1AB
Dormanstown	11 Ennis Square	Redcar	TS10 5JZ

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches to remain in the Network**

Dumbarton Avenue	141 Dumbarton Avenue	Stockton-On-Tees	TS19 0LN
Durham Road	60 Londonderry Road	Stockton-On-Tees	TS19 0DJ
Easington	11 Lambert Terrace, Easington	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4NP
East Cowton	East Cowton	Northallerton	DL7 0BP
East Witton	22 East Witton	Leyburn	DL8 4SH
Eggleston	Eggleston Village Hall, Folly Bank, Eggleston	Barnard Castle	DL12 0BQ
Eldon Lane	16 High Street, Eldon Lane	Bishop Auckland	DL14 8TD
Elwick	33 The Green, Elwick	Hartlepool	TS27 3EF
Eppleby	The Green, Eppleby	Richmond	DL11 7AZ
Escomb (mobile service)	Escomb	Bishop Auckland	DL14 7SY
Eston	87 High Street, Eston	Middlesbrough	TS6 9JD
Evenwood	7 Swan Street, Evenwood	Bishop Auckland	DL14 9RN
Ferryhill	2 Eldon Terrace	Ferryhill	DL17 0AW
Finghall	Hargill House, Finghall	Leyburn	DL8 5ND
Fishburn	10 Front Street, Fishburn	Stockton-On-Tees	TS21 4AN
Forest In Teesdale	High Force Gift Shop, Forest in Teesdale	Barnard Castle	DL12 0XH
Gainford	22 High Green, Gainford	Darlington	DL2 3DL
Geneva Road	377 Geneva Road	Darlington	DL1 4HG
Gilling Road	34 Gilling Road	Richmond	DL10 5AN
Gilling West	Gilling West	Richmond	DL10 5JF
Grange Estate	28-30 Grange Avenue	Stockton-On-Tees	TS18 4LT
Great Ayton	3 Park Square, Great Ayton	Middlesbrough	TS9 6BP
Great Broughton	50 High Street, Great Broughton	Middlesbrough	TS9 7EG
Greatham	4a Woodbine Terrace, Greatham	Hartlepool	TS25 2ET
Grove Hill	426 B&C Marton Road	Middlesbrough	TS4 2PT
Guisborough	47 Westgate	Guisborough	TS14 6AF
Hamsterley (mobile service)	BT phone box 01388 488211, Pavement left of Rose Cottage, Hamsterley	Bishop Auckland	DL13 3PT
Hardwick Estate	8 High Newham Court	Stockton-On-Tees	TS19 8PD
Harrowgate Hill	313 North Road	Darlington	DL1 2JR
Hartlepool	Hartlepool Post Office, 123-124 Shopping Centre, Middleton Grange	Hartlepool	TS24 7RQ
Haughton-Le-Skerne	47 Haughton Green	Darlington	DL1 2DD
Hawes	Town Foot	Hawes	DL8 3NH
Hemlington	33 Viewley Centre, Hemlington	Middlesbrough	TS8 9JH
Heugh	31 Northgate, Heugh	Hartlepool	TS24 0JX
High Clarence	1 Clarence Road	Middlesbrough	TS2 1TD
High Etherley	93 Low Etherley	Bishop Auckland	DL14 0EX
Horndale	112 Silverdale Place	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 7DZ
Hunton	Hunton	Bedale	DL8 1PX
Hurworth	1 The Green, Hurworth	Darlington	DL2 2HA
Hutton Rudby	38 North Side, Hutton Rudby	Yarm	TS15 0DA
Ingleby Barwick	Unit 4, Greenside, Ingleby Barwick	Stockton On Tees	TS17 0RR

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches to remain in the Network**

Ingleby Cross (serve and store)	Ingleby Cross, Blue Bell Inn, Ingleby Cross	Northallerton	DL6 3NF
Ingleton (mobile service)	BT Pole - DP28, Pavement outside School House, Front Street, Ingleton	Darlington	DL2 3HS
Kepwick	The Gables, Kepwick	Thirsk	YO7 2JW
Kildale	Kildale	Whitby	YO21 2RG
King Oswy Drive	81 King Oswy Drive	Hartlepool	TS24 9PF
Kirkby Fleetham	3 Forge Lane, Kirkby Fleetham	Northallerton	DL7 0SA
Lanehouse Road	Costcutters, 118 Lanehouse Road, Thornaby	Stockton-On-Tees	TS17 8EA
Leeming Bar	Wensleydale Railway PLC, Leeming Bar Stn, Leases Road, Leeming Bar	Northallerton	DL7 9AR
Leyburn	10 Market Place	Leyburn	DL8 5BG
Lingdale	15 High Street, Lingdale	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 3DZ
Linthorpe	5 Chipcase Road	Middlesbrough	TS5 6DD
Liverton Mines	Liverton Mines, Graham Street, Liverton Mines	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4QR
Loftus	86 High Street, Loftus	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4HG
Low Row	Hill End	Richmond	DL11 6NA
Lowfields Estate	19-21 Kingsway Avenue, Lowfields Estate	Middlesbrough	TS6 0AT
Marshall Avenue	Brambles Farm	Middlesbrough	TS3 9AX
Marske By The Sea	107 High Street, Marske By The Sea	Redcar	TS11 6JL
Marton In Cleveland	Unit 1 Marton Est Square, Stokesley Road, Marton	Middlesbrough	TS7 8DU
Melsonby	2 East Road, Melsonby	Richmond	DL10 5NF
Mickleton	Mickleton Village Hall, Mickleton	Barnard Castle	DL12 0JY
Middleham	The Key Centre, Park Lane, Middleham	Leyburn	DL8 4RA
Middlesbrough	59-61 Grange Road	Middlesbrough	TS1 5AT
Middlestone Moor	21-23 Central Drive, Middlestone Moor	Spennymoor	DL16 7DJ
Middleton In Teesdale	29 Market Place, Middleton In Teesdale	Barnard Castle	DL12 0QA
Middleton Road	103 Raby Road	Hartlepool	TS24 8DT
Middleton St George	5 The Square, Middleton St George	Darlington	DL2 1EG
Middleton Tyas	The Memorial Hall, Middleton Tyas	Richmond	DL10 6QY
Morton On Swale	Morton On Swale	Northallerton	DL7 9RF
Mowden Park	100 Fulthorpe Avenue	Darlington	DL3 9XT
Nether Silton (serve and store)	Silton House, Nether Silton	Thirsk	YO7 2JZ
New Marske	22 Dale Street, New Marske	Redcar	TS11 8EJ
Newsham	Newsham Village Hall, Barningham Road, Newsham	Richmond	DL11 7QT
Newton Aycliffe	1 Beveridge Arcade	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 4EJ
Newton Le Willows	4 James Terrace, Newton Le Willows	Bedale	DL8 1SQ
Norfolk Place	9a Norfolk Place	Middlesbrough	TS3 7PB
Normanby	23 High Street, Normanby	Middlesbrough	TS6 0NH
North Ormesby	31 Market Place, North Ormesby	Middlesbrough	TS3 6HR
North Road	69 North Road	Wingate	TS28 5AP
North Skelton	17 Vaughan Street, North Skelton	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 2AR

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches to remain in the Network**

Northallerton	156 High Street	Northallerton	DL7 8JU
Norton	5 - 9 High Street, Norton	Stockton-On-Tees	TS20 1AA
Norton Hill	264-268 Norton Road, Norton	Stockton-On-Tees	TS20 2BX
Nunthorpe Station	91 Guisborough Road, Nunthorpe	Middlesbrough	TS7 0JS
Orchard	26 Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe	Stockton on Tees	TS16 0EH
Ormesby	4a Cargo Fleet Lane	Middlesbrough	TS3 0LW
Ovington	Ovington	Richmond	DL11 7DA
Owton Manor	68 Owton Manor Lane	Hartlepool	TS25 3AU
Owton Manor West	Owton Manor West, 228 Owton Manor Lane	Hartlepool	TS25 3QD
Penrith Road	3 Langley Court	Middlesbrough	TS3 7JE
Piercebridge	32 The Green, Piercebridge	Darlington	DL2 3SH
Portrack Lane	34 Portrack Lane	Stockton-On-Tees	TS18 2HS
Redcar	13a Cleveland Street	Redcar	TS10 1AA
Redhill Road	35 Redhill Road	Stockton-On-Tees	TS19 9BX
Redmire	Briar Close, Redmire	Leyburn	DL8 4EG
Reeth	The Post Office	Richmond	DL11 6SE
Richmond	6 Finkle Street	Richmond	DL10 4QB
Rift House Estate	138 Oxford Road	Hartlepool	TS25 5NH
Rimswell	1 Rimswell Parade	Stockton-On-Tees	TS19 7LB
Romanby	2 The Green, Romanby	Northallerton	DL7 8NR
Roseberry Square	23 Roseberry Square	Redcar	TS10 4EL
Rosehill	8 Lyttleton Drive	Stockton-On-Tees	TS18 5LE
Sadberge	Sadberge	Darlington	DL2 1RU
Saltburn-By-The-Sea	10 Station Street	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 1AA
Scorton	High Row, Scorton	Richmond	DL10 6DH
Scruton	6 Meadow Court, Scruton	Northallerton	DL7 0QU
Seaton Carew	50 Elizabeth Way, Seaton Carew	Hartlepool	TS25 2AX
Sedgefield	5a Front Street, Sedgefield	Stockton-On-Tees	TS21 3AT
Shildon	Steve & Sukis Mini Market, 36 Redworth Road	Shildon	DL4 2JJ
Skelton In Cleveland	129-131 High Street, Skelton In Cleveland	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS12 2DY
Skerne Park	57-59 Coleridge Gardens	Darlington	DL1 5AL
Skinningrove	Skinningrove	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4BE
South Bank	Unit 3&4, North Street, South Bank	Middlesbrough	TS6 6AA
Spennymoor	Co-op Store, Oxford Street	Spennymoor	DL16 6YQ
Springfield	168 Thompson Street East	Darlington	DL1 3EW
Staindrop	4 Front Street, Staindrop	Darlington	DL2 3NH
Stainton	11b Hemlington Road, Stainton	Middlesbrough	TS8 9AG
Station Road	30 Station Road	Billingham	TS23 1AB
Stillington	Stillington Post Office, Redmarshall Street, Stillington	Stockton On Tees	TS21 1JS
Stockton On Tees	90 High Street	Stockton-On-Tees	TS18 1AD
Stokesley	Co-operative Retail Services Ltd, 44 High Street, Stokesley	Middlesbrough	TS9 5DQ
Thames Road	82 Thames Road	Redcar	TS10 1PP

**Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond area -
Post Office branches to remain in the Network**

Thoralby	Thoralby	Leyburn	DL8 3SU
Thornaby	7 Appleby House, Thornaby	Stockton-On-Tees	TS17 9EX
Thornlaw	4 Stanley Terrace, Thornley	Durham	DH6 3ES
Tindale Crescent	26-27 Tinsdale Crescent	Bishop Auckland	DL14 9SX
Toronto (mobile service)	Toronto	Bishop Auckland	DL14 7RS
Trimdon Grange	4 Redesdale Court, Trimdon Grange	Trimdon Station	TS29 6LE
Trimdon Station	1 Station Road West	Trimdon Station	TS29 6BP
Trimdon Village	31a Church Road, Trimdon Village	Trimdon Station	TS29 6PY
Victoria Road	143 Victoria Road	Middlesbrough	TS1 3HS
Victoria Street	86-88 Queen Street, South Bank	Middlesbrough	TS6 6HT
Walkerville	11-12 The Broadway	Catterick Garrison	DL9 4RF
West Auckland	48 East Green, West Auckland	Bishop Auckland	DL14 9HJ
West Burton	West Burton	Leyburn	DL8 4JL
West Cornforth	1 High Street, West Cornforth	Ferryhill	DL17 9HN
West End	2 Parker Terrace, Ferry Hill	Ferryhill	DL17 8JY
West End	14 West Road, Loftus	Saltburn-By-The-Sea	TS13 4RW
West Rounton	Garden Cottage, West Rounton	Northallerton	DL6 2LW
West View	21 Brus Corner	Hartlepool	TS24 9LA
West Witton	Withywood Stores, Main Street, West Witton	Leyburn	DL8 4LP
Whale Hill	254 Birchington Avenue	Middlesbrough	TS6 8BL
Wheatley Hill	11 Granville Terrace, Wheatley Hill	Durham	DH6 3JQ
Wingate	Front Street	Wingate	TS28 5AG
Wingate Lane	1 Wingate Lane, Wheatley Hill	Durham	DH6 3LP
Witton Park (mobile service)	Witton Park, (outside Albion Cottage 5 Main Street)	Bishop Auckland	DL14 0DX
Wolviston	14 High Street, Wolviston	Stockton on Tees	TS22 5JX
Woodham	Unit 2, St Elizabeths Close, Woodham	Newton Aycliffe	DL5 4UE
Woodland	Village Stores, Woodland	Bishop Auckland	DL13 5RH
Yarm	Unit 5, Fairfax Court	Yarm	TS15 9QZ
Yarm Road	218-220 Yarm Road	Darlington	DL1 1XD

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

6th March 2008



Report of: **Head of Community Strategy**

Subject: **POST OFFICE NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a background to the Post Office Network change programme and consultation process, and also to outline the findings the Hartlepool Post Office study carried out on behalf of the Hartlepool Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Government has recognised that fewer people are using Post Office branches and has concluded that the shape and size of the overall network of Post Office branches needs to change. As a result Post Office Ltd has put in place a "Network Change Programme" which will involve the compulsory compensated closure of up to 2500 branches, with around 500 of these being replaced with more efficient ways of serving the local community. The United Kingdom has been divided into approximately 50 Areas. For each area an Area Plan will be prepared detailing what changes Post Office Ltd are proposing for that area. Each Area Plan will undergo 6 weeks of local public consultation before a final decision is made by Post Office Ltd.

To make sure that the views of local people are heard, Post Office Ltd are holding a local public consultation process, the period of which commenced in Hartlepool on the 12th February 2008, on the release of the Area Plan. The consultation period will be open for 6 weeks.

The Area Plan proposed three Branch closures, namely; Raby Estate Post Office (Chatham Road), Elwick Road Post Office and Hart Village Post Office.

- 2.2 Given the tight timescale for responding to the Area Plan Proposal, it was felt important for a small amount of research be carried out locally to provide solid evidence to support any submission the Hartlepool Partnership wished to make to the consultation.

The Partnership commissioned consultants ERS to carry out a study to review the following:

How Hartlepool's Post Offices measure against the Government's national accessibility criteria:

- 99% of the UK population to be within 3 miles and 90% of the population to be within 1 mile of their Post Office outlet
- 99% of the total population in deprived urban areas across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office outlet
- 95% of the total urban population across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office outlet
- 95% of the total rural population across the UK to be within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office outlet
- In addition, for each individual postcode district:
95% of the population of the postcode district to be within 6 miles of their nearest Post Office outlet

The report also identified what services are currently delivered within our post offices and the alternatives (if any) within the particular locality.

- 2.3 Research took place in autumn 2007 and included desk based research and interviews with postmasters. In summary, the study identified a number of Hartlepool's Post Offices would not meet the Government's criteria and would be at risk of closure. A summary of the report findings around the 3 Post Offices proposed for closure by Post Office Ltd, and also 5 others which were thought to be at risk under the accessibility criteria, is laid out below. Local indicators highlighting Job Seeker allowance (JSA) claimants, population at retirement age, single parent households, households without a car, working age population and Index of Multiple deprivation ranking are also provided for each Post Office locality. The full version of the report can be found on the Hartlepool Partnerships website under the 'news' item.

3.0 POST OFFICES IDENTIFIED FOR CLOSURE

3.1 Raby Estate Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Raby Estate 43 Chatham Road Hartlepool TS24 8QQ Dyke House Ward	0.4 Miles Middleton Road 103 Raby Road Hartlepool TS24 8DT	Car Tax Only do some foreign currencies	5,750

Indicators	Dyke House %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	6.1	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	14.6	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	15.3	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	54.8	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	35	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	100 (rank)	1806 (rank)	N/A

The Raby Estate Post Office lies within the disadvantaged Dyke House ward of Hartlepool. The working age population receiving benefits is nearly three times the national average and car ownership is extremely low compared to Hartlepool and national averages.

The Post Office is based within an independent retail store with four staff. The postmaster indicated that the store would close if the Post Office function was not retained.

Should this PO close there will be approximately 634 addresses over 1 mile away from nearest PO. Of these 634 addresses, 144 are from the Lower Layer Super Output Area¹ 2006 which is ranked as in the bottom 22.27% of most deprived areas within England (Index Multiple Deprivation 2007). However under both Employment Deprivation and the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain this particular SOA falls within **the most deprived 10 %**

3.2 Elwick Road Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Elwick Road 79 Elwick Road Hartlepool TS26 9AU Stranton Ward	0.4 Miles Rift House Estate 138 Oxford Road Hartlepool TS25 5NH	N/A	4,995

¹ Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. There are 3 layers of SOA. Lower Layer SOAs have a minimum population of 1000.

Indicators	Stranton %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	8.2	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	18.0	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	12.8	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	60.3	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	38.7	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	55 (rank)	1806 (rank)	N/A

Elwick Road Post Office is Co-operative owned and lies within one mile of four other Post Offices in the area. During the course of the study it was not possible to ascertain the future viability of the shop if the post office function was to close. The one mile catchment area of this branch is also covered by other post offices.

3.3 Hart Village Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Hart, 1 Front Street, Hart, Hartlepool TS27 3AW Hart Ward	1.4 miles. King Oswy Drive, 81 King Oswy Drive, Hartlepool, TS24 9PF	Car tax Passports	5,785

Indicators	Hart %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	1.8	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	14.2	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	6.6	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	17.3	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	10.7	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	2194 (rank)	1806 (rank)	N/A

During the course of the study it was identified that there was also a strong customer base from the Bishop Cuthbert estate as well as Hart village. Customers from the Bishop Cuthbert area were driving approximately 1 mile to access the Post Office. The shop has good parking facilities which was said to encourage people to drive. The postmaster stated that the store would close if the Post Office contract was cancelled, and as the only shop in village this would have an adverse impact upon the less mobile members of the community.

Hart is an affluent area with very low numbers of benefit claimants and households without cars which would allow the population to travel to the next nearest Post Office at King Oswy or the town centre. The low levels of older people living in the ward would also point towards a relatively mobile community who could access other Post Offices relatively easily.

Hart Post Office lies within a rural location and is within 3 miles of other post offices as laid out within assessment criteria.

4.0 POST OFFICES NOT IDENTIFIED FOR CLOSURE WHICH WERE THOUGHT TO BE AT RISK UNDER THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

4.1 Greatham Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Greatham, 4a Woodbine Terrace, Greatham, Hartlepool TS25 2ET Greatham Ward	1.3 Miles Owton Manor West, 228 Owton Manor Lane, Hartlepool TS25 3QD	Car tax, Passport services	2 135

Indicators	Greatham %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	2.0	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	22.6	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	7.2	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	21.0	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	13.6	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	2157	1806 (rank)	N/A

Greatham Post Office is situated in the outlying village of Greatham. The village is relatively wealthy and has low numbers of benefit claimants compared to Hartlepool averages.

9.2

The village also has high levels of car ownership even when compared to the national average. As is the characteristic of many of Hartlepool's outlying villages, there is a higher concentration of people who are retirement age or above than the town average with the sub postmaster estimating that 80% of the customers are elderly or disabled. This is reflected by most customers walking to use the Post Office although the village is served by a regular bus service also. The study also identified that some residents from the Fens estate travel to use the Greatham Post Office.

The closure of this Post Office would potentially have a significant detrimental affect upon the elderly and less mobile members of the community. It is anticipated that the retail element of the Post Office would struggle to continue if the Post Office was closed which would take away a source of shopping for the community with limited alternative retail provision in the village. The Post Office also acts as the main source of money for people in the village although with the card account review this is likely to change nevertheless and irrespective of the review of post offices. The postmaster highlighted that the post office is embedded within the community and is involved with local charities as well as serving the nursing home locally. The Post Office also covers part of a deprived area which could not be covered by another Post Office (although it should be noted that this part of the SOA has no residential use).

4.2 Elwick Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Elwick , 33 The Green, Elwick, Hartlepool TS27 3EF Elwick Ward	1.8 miles Hart, 1 Front Street, Hart, Hartlepool TS27 3AW	Car tax Passport services	1,860

Indicators	Elwick %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	0.8	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	22.6	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	3.0	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	6.8	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	11.8	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	3468 (rank)	1806 (rank)	N/A

Elwick Post Office lies on the outskirts of Hartlepool and serves a small population in the Elwick ward of approximately 1800 people. Although having comparatively one of the largest percentages of older people in Hartlepool,

the population is affluent with very few claiming benefits and very low numbers of households are without a car. The post office is attached to the local village shop. During the course of this study no view from the postmaster was ascertained as to the future viability of the shop if the post office function was closed. It is areas such as Elwick that the criteria for coverage falls short of considering the elderly population who would have to travel by bus or other means to the next nearest alternative.

4.3 Middleton Road Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Middleton Road 103 Raby Road Hartlepool TS24 8DT Stranton Ward	0.4 Miles Hartlepool 123-124 Middleton Grange Middleton Grange Hartlepool TS24 7RQ	Car Tax Passport Checking Foreign Currency	4,995

Indicators	Stranton %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	8.2	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	18.0	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	12.8	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	60.3	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	38.7	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	55 (rank)	1806 (rank)	N/A

A large percentage of Middleton Road's customer's (40%) were said to be elderly or disabled and used the Post Office primarily for accessing their pension and incapacity benefits. As the percentages of benefit claimants are much higher than the Hartlepool average, many use this post office to access benefits through the card account. The postmaster indicated that most of the customers tend to be from the immediate vicinity with a number of customers also coming from the new estates to the west off Hart Lane.

Of those who use the Post Office, most either come via the bus or walk as parking within the area is not considered good and the majority of residents within the ward do not have a car (60.3%). The postmaster indicated that the impact on the local community of closure would potentially be significant. The postmaster indicated that many of the retail business adjacent to the post office would also close if the post office was closed.

This Post Office covers a large proportion of deprived urban areas to its north, although its one mile catchment area is covered by the post offices at Raby estate and Middleton Grange.

4.4 Rift House Estate Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Rift House Estate, 138 Oxford Road, Hartlepool, TS25 5NH Rift House Ward	0.4 Miles Elwick Road, 79 Elwick Road, Hartlepool, TS26 9AU	Checking service for driving licence, certain currencies	5,895

Indicators	Rift House %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	4.0	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	24.6	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	12.3	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	48.5	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	26.1	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	388	1806 (rank)	N/A

The Rift House Estate Post Office is situated in an area where there is a relatively high density of Post Office coverage. It is within one mile of the town centre Post Office. The Rift House ward in which the Post Office is situated has the highest proportion of population which is over the retirement age in Hartlepool which is reflected by the postmasters' opinion that around 40-50% of their customers were elderly. The area served by the post office has low car ownership.

The postmaster identified the importance of the card account as a source of money for people in the community with many feeling pressured into using banks. The local community were cited as the main users although a patronage was extended from a wider geographical area of up to two miles to use the Car Tax and currency services. People access this Post Office through a mixture of bus, car and on foot although parking in the area is relatively poor.

The postmaster indicated that if the post office closed it was likely that the surrounding shops would be adversely impacted as people tend to spend the money collected from the post office in the immediate vicinity. Due to its close proximity to other alternative facilities all of the Rift House Post Office one mile catchment population is covered by other post offices.

4.5 Owton Manor West Post Office

Name/ Address/Ward	Nearest alternative	Any services not provided	Population (ward 2006)
Owton Manor West , 228 Owton Manor Lane, Hartlepool TS25 3QD Owton Ward	0.6 Miles Owton Manor, 68 Owton Manor Lane, Hartlepool TS25 3AU	N/A	5,915

Indicators	Owton %	Hartlepool %	Great Britain %
Total JSA claimants (September 2007)	6.4	4.1	2.2
Population Retirement age+ (2006)	16.1	19.0	18.6
Single Parent Households (2005)	19.9	10.5	8.8
Households without a car (2001)	56.8	39.3	26.8
Working Age Pop rec. Inc. Benefits %	37.7	23.0	13.3
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Estimated National Rankings	93	1806 (rank)	N/A

The Owton Ward in which Owton Manor West Post Office is situated has a very high concentration of single parent households and more than 50% of the households are without a car. Owton ward is one of the most disadvantaged wards in Hartlepool. During the course of this study no view from the postmaster was ascertained as to the future viability of the shop if the post office function was closed.

Owton Manor West is in relatively close proximity to the Owton Manor Post Office and which covers the majority of the Owton Manor West Post Office 1 mile catchment area.

5.0 FURTHER INVESTIGATION

- 5.1 To assist with the formulation of the Authority's formal response to the Post Office consultation, further work is currently being undertaken to investigate any potential oversights in the Post Office Ltd proposals. This report will take into consideration public transport links, demographics, socio economic issues and future regeneration in and around the 8 Post Offices identified within this report. The findings will be presented to Cabinet on the 17th of March.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That Members of the Forum note the content of the report and where appropriate seek clarification.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 No background papers were used in preparation of this report

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SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

6th March 2008



Report of: Head of Community Strategy

Subject: **POST OFFICE NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME,
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide further information, in addition to the original report, on the 3 Post Offices identified for closure within the Post Office Area Plan and the remaining 5 Post Offices deemed at risk within the study commissioned by the Hartlepool Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Representatives from the Post Office met with the Mayor and Council Officers on the 13 February to discuss the Post Office Area plan. It was agreed that the Community Strategy team would provide further information to that already ascertained within the study carried out by ERS. The additional information would focus around the 3 Post Offices identified for closure by Post Office Ltd and the 5 remaining Post Offices deemed to be at risk within the ERS study.

Data on car ownership, lone parent families, people with long term limiting illness, elderly population (over 65) and people with a current Bank or Building Society account is provided and was sourced through Experian. The additional information gathered is outlined below within this report.

3.0 POST OFFICES IDENTIFIED FOR CLOSURE

3.1 Raby Estate Post Office

The Raby Estate Post Office lies within the Dyke House / Stranton / Grange Neighbourhood Renewal area. There is a population count of 31,091 (23,487 Adults) within a one mile catchment area of the Raby Estate Post Office.

Car ownership within this catchment area is low at 36% compared to 44% nationally, this equates to approximately 15,000 people not owning a car within 1 mile of this Post Office. The next nearest branch is Middleton Road 0.5 miles from the Raby Estate branch.

Approximately 7,500 people (24%) suffer from long term limiting illness compared to 18.5% nationally. There are 8,392 families living within the

catchment area with 22 % of these being lone parents against a national average of 16.5 %. There is an elderly population of approximately 4,650 (15%), this measures against a national average of 16%.

The percentage of people having access to a bank or building society account within the 1 mile catchment area of the Raby Estate Post Office is lower than the national average (95 % against national average of 97.5%). This equates to a figure of up to 1170 people relying on the Post Office card account to access their benefits / pension.

The Hartfield retirement village which is scheduled for completion in 2008/09 falls within the 1 mile catchment area of the Raby Estate Post Office. There are 214 apartments and 28 bungalows within this development giving an estimated elderly population increase within the 1 mile catchment area of up to 480 people. There are also a further 98 dwellings under construction as part of the ongoing Middle Warren development. The retirement village and the new dwellings also fall within the one mile catchment area of the West View and King Oswy branches.

3.2 Elwick Road Post Office

The Elwick Road Post Office lies on the Boundary of the Hartlepool NDC area and the Rift House / Burn Valley Neighbourhood Renewal area. There is a population count of 29,247 (22,117 Adult) within a one mile catchment area of the Post Office. Car ownership is low at 36% compared to 44% nationally, this equates to approximately 14,000 people not owning a car within 1 mile of the Elwick Road Post Office. The next nearest branch is the Rift House estate branch 0.5 miles away, to which there is no direct bus service. The nearest branch on a bus route is Middleton Grange.

Approximately 7,000 people (24%) suffer from long term limiting illness compared to 18.5% nationally. There are 8,190 families living within 1 mile of the Elwick Road Post Office, with 22% of these being lone parent families measured against 16.5% nationally. There is an elderly population of around 4,650 (16%).

The percentage of people within the one mile catchment area accessing a bank or building society account is below the national average (95% against 97.5%) This equates to a figure of up to 1031 people relying on the Post Office card account to access their benefits / pension, within one mile of this Post Office.

There are six care homes within the immediate vicinity of the Elwick Road Post office with an overall total capacity of 132 people.

3.3 Hart Village Post Office

The population count within a one mile catchment area of the Hart Village Post office is 2,898 (2180 adult population) This will increase on completion of

the Middle Warren estate. A further 315 dwellings are under construction or have Planning approval and will all be within 1 mile of the Post office.

Car ownership is 52% compared with 44% nationally, this equates to 1046 people not owning a car within 1 mile of the village post office. The next nearest branch is the West View Post Office at 21 Brus Comer. This Post Office is 2.19 miles away from the Hart Post Office with an hourly bus service to and from Hart. King Oswy Post Office is 2.35 miles away and has no direct bus service to and from Hart.

People suffering from long term limiting illness is 14% compared to the national average of 18.5%. The percentage of elderly people within one mile is 7%, lower than the national average of 16%. The percentage of people having access to a bank or building society account is almost 100 %, higher than the national average of 97.5%.

4.0 POST OFFICES NOT IDENTIFIED FOR CLOSURE WHICH WERE THOUGHT TO BE AT RISK UNDER THE ASSESEMENT CRITERIA

4.1 Greatham Post Office

There is a population count of 4,693 (3,766 Adult) within a one mile catchment area of the Greatham Post Office. Car ownership is at 48% which equates to 1,964 people not owning a car within 1 mile of this Post Office. The next nearest branch is Owton Manor 1.2 miles from the Greatham Post office.

The percentage of people suffering from long term limiting illness is 23%, higher than the national average of 18.5%.

The percentage of elderly people within 1 mile of the post office is 18%, higher than the national average of 16%.

The percentage of people having a bank account is 97%, lower than the national average of 97.5%.

4.2 Elwick Post Office

There is a population count of 677 (567 Adult) within a one mile catchment area of the Elwick Post Office. Car ownership is 61%, higher than the national average of 44%. The next nearest is Hart Village; however this branch is proposed for closure. The closest remaining branch is Middleton Road 3 miles away.

The percentage of people suffering from long term limiting illness is 20%, higher than the national average of 18.5%.

The percentage of elderly within the population is 22%, higher than the national average of 16%.

The percentage of people having a bank or building society account is almost 100% against the national average of 97.5.

4.3 **Middleton Road Post Office**

The Middleton Road Post Office borders the Hartlepool NDC area and the Dyke House / Stranton / Grange Neighbourhood renewal area. There is a population count of 29,521 (22,458 Adult) living within a 1 mile catchment area of the Middleton Road Post Office. Car ownership is at 35% against the national average of 44%. This equates to 14,597 people not owning a car within 1 mile of the post office. The next nearest branch is Middleton Grange 0.75 miles from the Middleton Road branch.

The percentage of people suffering long term limiting illness is 25%, higher than the national average of 18.5%. The elderly population is 15% against the national average of 16%.

The percentage of people having a bank or building society account is 95% lower than the national average of 97.5. This equates to up to 1077 people relying on the Post Office card account to access their benefits / pension, within 1 mile of this Post Office.

4.4 **Rift House Estate Post Office**

The Rift House Estate Post office borders the Hartlepool NDC area and the Rift House Neighbourhood Renewal area. The population count within a mile catchment area of the Rift House Estate post Office is 29,881 (22,667 Adult). Car ownership is at 36%. This equates to 14,507 people not owning a car within 1 mile of this Post Office. The nearest Post Office is Elwick Road, however this branch is proposed for closure. The next nearest is Catcote Road 0.75 miles away.

The percentage of people with a long term limiting illness within one mile of this post office is 25% (7,450 people), against the national average of 18.5%.

There are 8,439 families living within one mile of this post Office, with 22% being single parent families, higher than the national average of 16.4%.

There is an elderly population of 17 % (5,050 people), higher than the national average of 16%.

The percentage of people having a bank or building society account is 95% against the national average of 97.5%. This equates to up to 1108 people relying on the Post Office card account to access their benefits / pension, within 1 mile of this Post Office.

4.5 Owton Manor West Post Office

There is a population count of 18,594 (14,268 Adult) within a one mile catchment area of this Post Office. Car ownership is 36%, this equates to 9,131 of people not owning a car within 1 mile of this Post Office. Owton Manor Post Office is the next closest at 0.75 miles from the Owton Manor West branch.

There are 5,671 families living within one mile of the Post Office with 21.74% of these being lone parent families against a national average of 16.40%.

There are approximately 5000 people (27%) with a long term limiting illness, significantly higher than the national average of 18.5%. 18% of the population are elderly higher than the national average of 16%.

94% of the population within one mile of the Post Office have a bank or building society account, lower than the national average of 97.5. This equates to up to 856 people relying on the Post Office card account to access their benefits / pension, within 1 mile of this Post Office.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Members of the Forum note the content of the report and read in conjunction with the original report, and, where appropriate seek clarification.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 This report builds on the information gathered from the initial study carried out by ERS into Hartlepool's Post Offices. This report can be found on the Hartlepool Partnership website under the 'News' item.

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SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

6 March 2008



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: Post Office Network Change Programme –
Evidence from Key Witnesses

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of this Committee that arrangements have been made to enable those key witnesses in attendance at today's meeting, to provide verbal evidence as part of the Post Office Network Change Programme's formal consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 By way of background information, Post Office Limited is required to fulfil the Government's requirements of reducing the overall size of the Post Office Network. In practice this means that Post Office Limited are proposing to close a number of branches in Hartlepool, namely Elwick Road, Hart and Raby Estate Branches as outlined within their Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond.
- 2.2 The Council's approach to the Post Office Network Change Programme's formal consultation process has been twofold, firstly a Public Meeting was held on 29 February 2008 to ensure the views of local people were taken into account before any decisions are made by Post Office Limited and secondly, the involvement of this Committee to assist in the formulation of the Council's formal response to the consultation process.
- 2.3 In light of the sensitivities surrounding the proposed Post Office closures in Hartlepool, it is highly likely that those key stakeholders who were unable to attend the Public Meeting on 29 February 2008 may be in attendance at today's meeting to share their views. Therefore to assist in the smooth operation of today's meeting, arrangements have been made

for those individuals in attendance to submit verbal evidence to the Committee, in the following order of priority:-

- (a) Verbal Evidence from Sub postmasters in Hartlepool;
- (b) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Public;
- (c) Verbal Evidence from Elected Members who service on Hartlepool Borough Council's Cabinet;
- (d) Verbal Evidence from Ward Councillors of Hartlepool Borough Council;
- (e) Verbal Evidence from representatives of Parish Councils in Hartlepool;
- (f) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Hartlepool Partnership;
- (g) Verbal Evidence from Members / Resident Representatives of the North, South and Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forums;
- (h) Verbal Evidence from Key Officers of Hartlepool Borough Council; and
- (i) Written Evidence from Postwatch Northern England.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Committee consider the views of those individuals in attendance, to assist in the formulation of the Authority's formal response to be considered by Cabinet prior its submission to Post Office Limited.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used on the preparation of this report.

postwatch

Joanne Smithson
Head of Community Strategy
Hartlepool Strategic Partnership
Hartlepool Borough Council
Bryan Hanson House
Hanson Square
HARTLEPOOL
TS24 7BT

18 February 2008

Dear Ms Smithson,

Post Office Closure Programme – North East Plan 1 Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond

Post Office Ltd's six week public consultation on post office closures in Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond commenced on 12 February 2008. Post Office Ltd has proposed the closure of 37 branches in this area, with a further 2 branches to be replaced by outreach services. A total of 196 post offices will remain unchanged and these, together with the proposed outreach services, will continue to serve customers in the area. I thought it would be helpful if I set out Postwatch Northern England's initial views on the proposals, and our role in the weeks ahead.

Post Office Ltd's public consultation in this area covers and has affected the following Westminster parliamentary constituencies:

Constituency	MP
Bishop Auckland	Helen Goodman
Darlington	Alan Milburn
Hartlepool	Iain Wright
Middlesbrough	Stuart Bell
Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland	Ashok Kumar
Redcar	Vera Baird
Richmond	William Hague
Sedgefield	Phil Wilson
Stockton North	Frank Cook
Stockton South	Dari Taylor

Eleven weeks before the start of public consultation, Postwatch Northern England received Post Office Ltd's plans for this area on a confidential basis. Two weeks after we received the proposals, Post Office Ltd started confidential commercial discussions with the sub-postmasters concerned.

Customer complaints T 08456 013265
Postwatch Northern England, Devere House
Vicar Lane, Little Germany, Bradford BD1 5AH
F 01274 730372
E north@postwatch.co.uk W www.postwatch.co.uk

Postwatch has scrutinised and provided initial comments on these proposals. As a result, Post Office Ltd has made amendments to their original plan. As prescribed by the Government, our focus has been on whether Post Office Ltd's proposals meet the minimum access criteria for post offices, which aim to ensure communities are within a reasonable distance from a post office. We also examined whether local factors – such as public transport arrangements, relevant topographical features, demographics and the impact on the local economy – had been properly considered.

We welcome Post Office Ltd's changes to their original plan, and we believe the proposals meet the minimum distance criteria set by Government. Nonetheless, there are still several aspects of their proposals that we are concerned about. Specifically:

- the proposed closure of two branches on the north side of Northallerton in the Richmond Constituency, leading to further congestion at the main Northallerton Post Office at the southern end of the long High Street
- the impact on staffing levels and levels of service at the Hartlepool Crown office with the closure of two sizeable branches within a mile of this office
- the possible loss of last remaining shops in some of the villages identified for closure of their post office
- we do not believe Post Office Limited has fully addressed the possible impact on local economies surrounding some of these proposed closures in particular those offices serving those living in or close to urban deprived areas, for example, Hoptown PO in the Darlington Constituency, Simpasture PO in the Sedgefield Constituency and Cowpen Estate PO in Stockton North Constituency

We have raised these issues with Post Office Ltd and we will continue to do so during public consultation.

We also have concerns about access, DDA compliance, capacity and retail standards issues at a number of the branches to which customers will be expected to migrate. We have also raised these issues with Post Office Ltd.

However, this is only our initial view. Our final position will be informed by customers' responses to Post Office Ltd. We are therefore keen that customers express their views on these proposals.

Postwatch Northern England wants customers and stakeholders to express their opinions about **all** Post Office Ltd's proposals. We will be working throughout the consultation period to ensure the exercise is meaningful. Post Office Ltd should use

the consultation as an opportunity to engage with customers – to set out clearly the proposed changes, and be responsive to feedback. Likewise, we will be working to encourage customer participation to be constructive, as this will help secure a better outcome for customers. At the end of the consultation period, we will write to Post Office Ltd to set out our final view. This letter will be publicly available on our website www.postwatch.co.uk.

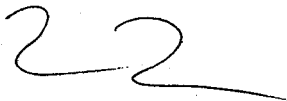
We hope you will be able to give your views on the proposals to Post Office Ltd. This can be done by writing to **National Consultation Team, Post Office Ltd, FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM**, or emailing consultation@postoffice.co.uk.

If possible, we would be grateful if you could also provide Postwatch Northern England with a copy of your response, either via email: north@postwatch.co.uk or by post:

Postwatch Northern England
Devere House
Vicar Lane
Little Germany
Bradford
BD1 5AH

If you have queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Judith Donovan CBE
Regional Chairman