

Michael Legg, Network Project Team Supervisor, Postwatch
cc Roseleen Bonner, Regional Executive, Postwatch
David Cameron, MP, HM Opposition Leader
Quentin Davies MP
Nick Boles, Conservative PCC, Stamford and Grantham
Martin Hill, Leader, Lincolnshire County Council
Peter Morris, Vice Chair, Lincolnshire Liberal Democrats
Mark Partington, PO Network Development Manager
Matt Silcock, PO Senior External Relations Manager
Michael Dalton, PO External Relations Team
Press, Radio and TV

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter - we will make sure that the village knows you have responded to theirs and will place your reply on the village website, with copies on display at the village store and Post Office, Village Hall, Doctor's Surgery and The Bull public house, together with copies of this response.

We are naturally disappointed that Postwatch has no power to overturn PO Ltd's final closure decision, but completely accept your assurance that you will investigate and challenge their proposals and have agreed a rigorous consultation process.

That said, I must tell you that we think PO Ltd. have misled the people of Rippingale, have already made up their minds about the closure, have entered the consultation process in a mood of complete bad faith and cynicism and that, in spite of your good offices, the consultation process is a sham.

The fact that PO Ltd. made it clear to our sub-Postmaster, Simon Deane, they had already reached their decision a month before the so-called "public consultation" was even launched on October 1 – that the decision was for compulsory closure with no appeal - tells us all we need to know about their whole approach to this exercise.

The fact that they told him the consultation exercise was solely to determine which type of Outreach the village would prefer, not to discuss the closure of the branch, showed complete contempt for the village and the whole concept of the consultation process.

The fact that by then introducing him to potential Outreach partners way back in September shows their real aim - to put pressure on sub-Postmasters to maintain services but slash their income by nearly 90%.

The fact that they made such basic errors in the closure notices they gave to villagers in Rippingale, saying that Folkingham (also on the closure list) would be our next nearest PO, and vice versa, tells us everything we need to know about the care they've taken over collecting and assessing information about this area.

The fact that access criteria have been manipulated to Rippingale's disadvantage leaves us with no confidence at all that other local factors, such as public transport availability, demographics and impact on the local economy will be treated any differently.

The fact that their footfall figures are out-of-date and inaccurate tells us that they have little or no real interest in growth and solutions for future profitability.

The fact that the closure plan centres on compulsory instead of voluntary closures, in spite of the Post Office Minister's quoted view about the numbers of sub Postmasters leaving the

network, demonstrates their preference for the easy option and lack of thought about the future structure and performance of the network.

The fact that they refuse point-blank to show us their figures or discuss them with us, tells us about their arrogance and complete lack of interest in service to communities. If it weren't so pathetic, the line in the new multi-million pound "People's Post Office," tv advertising campaign – "we have the trust of the nation – we can't let 'em down," would be amusing.

The fact that they know nothing about Lincolnshire County Council's development plans for our village, comes as no surprise.

We note, in the only response so far from the PO Consultation Team, on ITV Calendar and Central East news programmes on October 17, that Michael Dalton from their External Relations Team not once mentioned the consultation exercise.

He spoke almost exclusively about replacing existing services, though on September 28 a PO spokesman was quoted in the Stamford Mercury as saying "We will only take formal decisions after we have taken on the public's opinions."

Mr Dalton also made a very revealing slip of the tongue – "but we are going to change...or we are proposing to change the way we offer that service."

Those interviews can be viewed and heard online via ITV Local – or we'd be happy to provide you with transcripts.

The above is not intended to take anything away from Postwatch aims and objectives, which we applaud, but we hope it will provide some grounds for understanding our own subsequent cynicism.

Jim Latham

Friends of Rippingale Post Office

20.10.2007

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