

RIPPINGALE POST OFFICE



Enclosure 5

Correspondence with Politicians and Local Authorities



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

www.pm.gov.uk

From the Direct Communications Unit

30 October 2007

Dear Mr Carbines Evans

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter regarding the Post Office.

The Government recognises the important social and economic role of post offices, particularly in rural and deprived urban communities. That is why the Government is determined to maintain a national post office network allowing people to have reasonable access across the whole country and has put in place a new policy and financial framework to achieve this.

New technology, changing lifestyles and a wider choice of accessing services mean that people are not visiting post offices as often as they used to. The network's losses are now running at almost £4 million a week, double what it was two years ago and that will increase further unless action is taken. The Government has been investing substantial sums in the post office network, totalling £2 billion since 1999. We have decided (subject to European State Aid clearance) to extend that support to 2011 with the provision of up to another £1.7 billion additional funding.

This funding will support a new strategic framework for the Post Office. There will be clearly defined minimum access criteria to safeguard rural, deprived urban and remote coverage. This will ensure that the vulnerable communities most in need of post office services will be protected. The network will be supplemented by 500 new and innovative Outreach locations, operated in partnership with other local services such as in pubs, village halls, churches or in mobile post offices, which will mitigate closures, primarily in smaller and more remote communities. Nevertheless, to ensure sustainability, there will need to be up to 2,500 compensated post office closures within the defined access criteria.

Post Office Limited (POL) is responsible for implementing the programme at a local level. They plan a rolling programme of around 50 local consultations on detailed area plans, based on groups of Parliamentary constituencies. It will take around 18 months to complete, starting July 2007. The Government does not have a role in proposals or decisions for individual post offices.

As well as the numeric access criteria, it is recognised that, in drawing-up implementation plans, POL will need to take into account local factors affecting ease of access, such as local geography: rivers, mountains etc. POL will also be required to consider the availability of public transport and alternative access to key post office services, local demographics and the impact on local economies. POL has stated that no area will be subject to more than one round of closures and area proposals will be developed with the participation of sub-postmasters, local authorities and Postwatch before POL carry out local consultations, which will provide everyone with the opportunity to raise any specific concerns over particular proposals.

The Government's policy framework, now in place, will enable POL to evolve to meet changing customer expectations and rise to the on-going challenges of doing business in today's marketplace – whilst ensuring the provision of a truly national network.

I hope this information is helpful. Thanks for taking the time to share your concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S Caine'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

S CAINE

Mr S J Carbines Evans

QUENTIN DAVIES MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mrs S.J. Carbines-Evans,
Seraphina Cottage,
Kirkby Underwood Road,
Aslackby,
Sleaford,
Lincs. NG34 0HN

30 October 2007

Mrs. Carbines - Evans,

Thank you for your recent letter about the proposed closure of Rippingale Post Office. I quite agree with you that this will have a devastating effect on the village.

I have already held a meeting with the representative from the Post Office and have written to both the Chief Executive and to Mr Mark Partington, the individual responsible running the consultation process, as well as to Postwatch. I have discussed the matter with the Sub Postmaster and have undertaken to do all I can to see off this ill-conceived plan to close Rippingale Post Office.

With all best wishes.

*Yours sincerely,
Quentin Davies*



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mrs Janet Ward,
8 Blanchard Close,
Rippingale,
Bourne,
Lincs. PE10 0TJ

30 October 2007

Dear Mrs. Ward,

Thank you for your recent letter about the proposed closure of Rippingale Post Office. I quite agree with you that this will have a devastating effect on the village.

I have already held a meeting with the representative from the Post Office and have written to both the Chief Executive and to Mr Mark Partington, the individual responsible running the consultation process, as well as to Postwatch. I have discussed the matter with the Sub Postmaster and have undertaken to do all I can to see off this ill-conceived plan to close Rippingale Post Office.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Quentin Davies



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr and Mrs K Cotton,
22 Pinfold Road,
Rippingale,
Bourne,
Lincs. PE10 0TB

30 October 2007

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Cotton,

Thank you for your recent letter about the proposed closure of Rippingale Post Office which I have only just received. I quite agree with you that this will have a devastating effect on the village.

I have already held a meeting with the representative from the Post Office and have written to both the Chief Executive and to Mr Mark Partington, the individual responsible for running the consultation process, as well as to Postwatch. I have discussed the matter with the Sub Postmaster and have undertaken to do all I can to see off this ill-conceived plan to close Rippingale Post Office.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Quentin Davies

I have of course transmitted your letter to the Prime Minister and to David Cameron as you requested.

QUENTIN DAVIES MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Agency Correspondence Team Leader,
Post Office Ltd.,
National Consultation Team,
Free Consultation Team.

31 October 2007

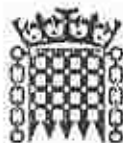
Jean Seaton

Thank you for your response dated 26 October to my letter to Mr Partington.

Your response does not address the points I made in my letter dated 18 October in relation to the Ryhall Road, Stamford and the Rippingale branches in my constituency. These are matters of the gravest concern to my constituents in these areas.

I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss this with Mr Partington himself and I will ask my secretary to contact his office with a view to arranging this.

*Yours sincerely,
Quentin Davies*



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Mark Partington
Network Development Manager
PO Box 2060
Watford Mail Centre
WD18 8ZW

31 October 2007

Dear Mr. Partington,

I refer to my letter of 18 October about two post offices in my constituency: Ryall Road, Stamford and Rippingale, in which I raised a number of technical and procedural issues in the context of their proposed closure. I was therefore disappointed to receive a standard response from your "Agency Correspondence Team Leader" which failed to address my points. I enclose a copy of my response to that.

In the light of the importance of these issues to my constituents, I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss matters directly with you and I will ask my secretary to contact your office with a view to arranging this.

Yours sincerely,
Quentin Davies

FORPO Enc 5.2

My ref: MH/LQ
Your ref:

County Offices
Lincoln
LN1 1YS
Tel: 01522 552082
Fax: 01522 552072

7th November 2007

Mark Partington
Network Development Manger
C/o National Consultation Team
FREEPOST
Consultation Team

Dear Mr Partington

RIPPINGALE POST OFFICE

I write to request that Post Office Limited reconsider their proposals for Rippingale Post Office.

I fully support the comprehensive submission by the friends of Rippingale post office, in the interests of brevity I will not rehearse them in this letter but refer you to the points that they make.

Since the announcement there has been a genuine and large upsurge of Community support for Rippingale Post Office and concerns for the future if these proposals are enacted.

300 people attending a street rally with The M.P, 100 people participating on a three mile march, over 1000 signatures on a petition, and 780 e-mail petition to Downing Street from a 1000 adult catchment population demonstrates very clearly the strength of feeling and give confidence for the future if the post office is saved.

However - should the Post Office element be removed from the business or made financially unviable it is very likely that the shop will not survive with all the socio-economic difficulties that will follow.

The Government makes it clear that it expects Post Office Limited "to ensure that no particular group of people is significantly more disadvantaged than any other".

If as a consequence of these proposals the people of Rippingale lose their only shop and service centre with limited public transport etc they clearly will be significantly more disadvantaged and therefore the Post Office is acting beyond the remit of Government criteria. In addition the Government has stated that "it expects closure to match the willingness of sub post masters to retire" again this is not the case in Rippingale.

There are also I believe some factors which have been overlooked so far by Post Office Limited.

Rippingale is designated as a Local Service Centre in South Kesteven, emerging Local Development Framework which will mean that the village will be allocated substantial additional housing in the near future.

The recent substantial increase in trade by the shop which is being sustained and continues to grow. The Post Office calculations were based on out of date data over a limited period

The inadequate availability of public transport of the proposed alternatives Post Office is suggesting which will severely disadvantage those who have accessibility problems and are vulnerable.

The proposed outreach if it can be delivered (which is highly questionable considering the minimal remuneration likely to be proposed) will seriously inconvenience customers and severely compromise the vulnerable. Reduced hours and reduced range of service will increase costs and reduce the viability of many small local businesses and increase the carbon footprint.

The brevity of the consultation period combined with the lack of transparency behind the decision does not give confidence that there is a genuine willingness to consider these concerns objectively. There is also concern that the closure/outreach programme has not followed the criteria laid out by Government.

In conclusion, recent weeks have demonstrated strong community support and customer loyalty, a sound and promising business future for a co-located Post Office and shop.

To ignore such a situation would bring into question the genuineness of the consultation exercise and damage greatly the reputation of an organisation which is after all wholly owned by the Government and therefore citizens of this Country.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Martin Hill
Leader of the Council & Councillor Representing Rippingale.

consultation@postoffice.co.uk

Ms. Shirley Goodchild
Regional Manager, Postwatch Midlands
c/o Regional Support Team
28 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W EKK

FORPO Enc 5.3

7th November 2007

I am the Conservative prospective parliamentary candidate for Grantham and Stamford and hope to replace Quentin Davies as MP at the next election. I enclose a copy of my letter to Mark Partington of the Post Office about the proposed closure of sub-post offices in this constituency.

Your chair, Millie Banerjee, stated that Postwatch wanted to ensure that the consultation process was "meaningful and accessible to all". She also said that "Postwatch will be active in scrutinising Post Office Ltd's proposals, ensuring consultations are conducted properly, and raising concerns where appropriate."

I cannot see how a consultation can be called 'meaningful or accessible to all', when the Post Office refuses to share with the public the impact of each branch on its overall finances. We are told that the closures are necessary to cut the Post Office's losses. If the consultation were being 'conducted properly', surely the Post Office would have sought to justify each of its planned closures with reference to the figures relating to each specific branch? That would also have given each community an opportunity to develop a plan to put more business through their local branch and thereby ensure its survival.

I believe that the consultation process being undertaken by the Post Office is a sham. I urge you to support my demand that final decisions be deferred and the consultation extended until after residents have been given an opportunity to understand the scale of the losses which each branch is inflicting on the Post Office and to consider ways that each community can better support this vital local resource.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Boles
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Grantham and Stamford

Mr. Mark Partington
Network Development Manager
P.O. Box 2060
Watford Mail Centre
WD18 8ZW

FORPO Enc 5.3

7th November 2007

I am the Conservative prospective parliamentary candidate for Grantham and Stamford and hope to replace Quentin Davies as MP at the next election. I would like to object in the strongest possible terms to your recently announced plans for the closure of sub post offices in the constituency.

It is quite clear from your own report that the decision to close 2,000 sub-post offices and to replace 500 more with wholly cosmetic 'outreach' services is a political one, driven by the Labour Government's lack of understanding for rural areas and its unwillingness to support vital services in villages and market towns.

You have failed to provide any financial information to demonstrate that each of the sub-post offices affected by your plans currently loses money for the Post Office. The Post Office is publicly owned and should be accountable to the British people. How can you expect people to understand or accept your decisions if you refuse to share such basic information as the revenues and costs accruing to the Post Office from each branch?

You have ignored critical factors that make it likely that revenues at a number of the affected branches will grow in the next few years e.g. plans for substantial new housing developments in Grantham and Rippingale, and plans for further retail and industrial development next to the Ryhall Road branch in Stamford.

You have also failed to assess the feasibility of getting to alternative branches by public transport. For many of the village communities that will be affected, public transport is effectively non-existent. Do you expect the elderly, the infirm and mothers with small children to walk three miles each way along a busy A road?

In view of these multiple flaws in your approach, it would be high-handed in the extreme for the Post Office to proceed with the closure plans. I demand that all decisions are deferred and the consultation is extended until after residents have been given an opportunity to understand the scale of the losses which each branch is inflicting on the Post Office and to consider ways that each community can better support this vital local resource.

If you insist on sticking to your published timetable, you will be demonstrating that behind the marketing puff about the people's post office lies an organisation that has no regard at all the people of Lincolnshire or for basic principles of honesty and transparency.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Boles
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Grantham and Stamford

Lincolnshire Liberal Democrats

The Federation of Liberal Democrat Local Parties in the County of Lincolnshire

**Vice chair:
Peter Morris
1 South Parade
SPALDING
Lincolnshire
PE11 2YJ**

7 November 2007

Mr J Latham
FORPO
18 Miller's Close
Rippingale

Dear Mr Latham,

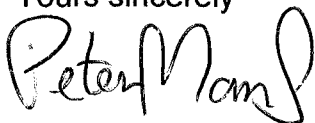
Rippingale Post Office

Liberal Democrats fully support the campaign to retain the existing sub post office in Rippingale as part of the Post Office network.

We do not believe that the proposed Outreach service would satisfy the needs of Rippingale or the surrounding villages for which Rippingale is the nearest post office facility which is open normal business hours.

We believe that post offices should be the social hub of a community and consider that it wholly wrong remove services from sub post offices without encouraging them to develop new facilities to reflect the needs of the 21st century.

Yours sincerely



Peter Morris