

RIPPINGALE POST OFFICE



Enclosure 6

Media Coverage

Friends of Rippingale Post Office Media Coverage

Week 1

Monday 1st October

**The campaign team is assembled, the
paper petition is on the shop counter
and the campaign web-page is set up.**

Tuesday 2nd October

the first meeting of FORPO takes place

Wednesday 3rd October

**The Downing St. petition goes online
Week 1 press release is issued**

Wednesday 3rd October (cont)



**Sub-postmaster Simon Deane records interviews
with Hereward FM and BBC Radio Lincs.**

**Radio Lincs breakfast show – lead bulletin item 7:00am
Live Interview with Martin Hill, Lincs CC Leader 7:10am
lead bulletin item 8:00am**

**lead programme slot – Live interview with PO Minister,
followed by Simon Deane live at 8:10am**



**Simon Deane records interview with
Lincs FM for next day breakfast news**

Thursday 4th October



ITV Calendar News record in village.

Friday 5th October

**Coverage in Calendar lunchtime news
3 minute item leads Evening news edition**

Week 1 Press release

Friends of Rippingale Post Office

Threatened closure of Rippingale PO a double disaster for the village

The Post Office Ltd has announced the compulsory closure of the local PO in the village of Rippingale near Bourne. - a double blow for the village which is just coming to terms with the closure last month of its Primary School.

Local residents have said "enough is enough," and formed an action group to campaign for their Post Office to remain open.

Phil Rippingale (correct) for the Friends of Rippingale Post Office said
"We don't understand on what basis Post Office Ltd came to this decision – the figures don't add up.

And local bus services simply can't meet the needs of people without a car to get to the alternatives suggested by Post Office Ltd. – Pointon and Folkingham. We now discover that Folkingham PO is also to close, which tells you something about the quality of Post Office Ltd information – and where are THEY now going to go for PO services? The closure of our local school has put more people on the road already – I don't know what this latest news will do for the Government's carbon footprint policies.

But the worst thing is where this leaves the old and those without their own transport – where and when are they going to get their pensions, pay their Council tax and utility bills, buy stamps and send their letters and parcels. There are also several businesses in the village which rely on Post Office services .

PO Ltd have offered four alternative services – a mobile shop which comes at set times, what's called a Hosted Service and a Partner Service in local premises such as the pub, or a Home Service – where people can order services by phone. We don't regard any of these limited services as viable alternatives to what we have now – an excellent and heavily used Post Office, through Simon Deane, in our village shop, at the centre of our community.

And it's not just our village – Aslackby, Dunsby, Dowsby and Kirby Underwood are all officially in the customer area of Rippingale Post Office."

The Friends have organised a petition against the closure, are appealing to villagers to write to Post Office Ltd, to their MP, to the Prime Minister and David Cameron. A public meeting is being planned and other action considered.

02.10.07

Contacts – Phil Rippingale – 01778-440204 - philrippingale@btinternet.com
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Stamford Mercury

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2007

Serving Bourne 50p



New starters get to grips with school

Turn to page 4



Schoolboy's fight for vaccine

Turn to page 5

Anger as four village branches are facing the axe

Villagers fight to save post offices

To protest against the closures write to Post Office network development manager Mark Partington c/o the National Consultation Team, marking the envelope Freepost Consultation Team or e-mail network.change@postoffice.co.uk. There will also be a link on the Mercury website www.stamfordmercury.co.uk



Don't shut me down - Simon Deane sub-postmaster at Rippingale
Photo: SM-B103307, 905JJ

by Gary Vyne

VILLAGERS are fighting to save their post office just one month after losing their school.

Rippingale post office faces the axe as part of a nationwide cull of branches.

And three other branches in the area at Fotheringham, Castle Wyham and South Witham are also facing the axe.

People in Rippingale have formed an action group to campaign for their post office's future.

Simon Deane only took over the branch last month and has been left shell-shocked by the news.

He said: "I'm extremely upset by the decision. I only bought the post office in June and now it's all gone wrong."

The decision to outstrip the post office for closure follows the county council closing down Rippingale Primary School, where Mr Deane was vice chairman of governors.

"This is a double tragedy for my family," he said.

Mr Deane is unsure whether the shop could continue without the post office, admitting it's a "grey area".

Paul Rippingale, a member of the newly-formed Friends of Rippingale Post Office, said: "We don't understand on what basis the Post Office came to this decision - the fight doesn't end up."

"The worst thing is when this leaves the elderly and those without their own transport - often and when are they going to get their pensions, pay their council tax and utility bills,

buy stamps and send their letters and parcels?"

"And it's not just our village - Ashleby, Dunby, Gwenty and Kirby Underwood are all in the customer area of Rippingale Post Office."

The four post offices under threat could be replaced by a mobile post office, a service in a pub or a telephone ordering service for villagers.

Mr Rippingale added: "We don't regard any of these limited services as viable alternatives to what we have now - an instant and hourly used post office, through Simon Deane, at the village shop, at the centre of our community."

The action group has organised a petition and are appealing to villagers to write to Post Office Ltd, to their MP Quentin Davies, to the Prime Minister and Conservative leader David Cameron.

A public meeting is being planned and there is an online petition on the Downing Street website at <http://petition.parliament.gov.uk/rippingale>

• More on page 3



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Stamford Mercury 5th October Front Page

The Local

Established 1989: Issue 924 Friday, October 5, 2007 40p

for Bourne, The Deepings and surrounding areas



Bourne club uses flower power for All Charities Fair

PAGE 4



Joining World's Biggest Coffee morning for charity

PAGE 9

SAVE VILLAGE POST OFFICE

Protest group's petition to keep vital community service has 200 signatures



■ Simon Turner of Rippingsale Post Office

By AMY MORRISH

A campaign has been launched to save one of the three post offices threatened with closure in the Bourne area.

Rippingsale, Folkingham and Castle Bytham post offices could all permanently shut in January but residents in Rippingsale have formed a protest group and launched a petition, which already has 200 signatures.

The post office in Rippingsale is part of the village shop, run by Simon Turner, who said: "For the sustainability of Rippingsale it has to stay open."

Managers of the Post Office plan to close hundreds of post offices to improve profitability, but Mr Turner said: "Our post office is getting busier month by month."

In July Rippingsale Primary School closed and Phil Rippingsale, of the

newly-formed Friends of Rippingsale Post Office, said: "The closure of our local school has put stress on the road network."

"The worst thing is when this leaves the elderly and those without their own transport. Where and when are they going to get their pensions, pay their council tax and utility bills, buy stamps and send their letters and parcels? There are several businesses in the village which rely on post office services."

Jim Latham, also a member of the group, said the group's petition has been approved by Downing Street for its website.

The group is appealing to residents to write to Post Office Ltd, the Prime Minister and opposition leader David Cameron. A public meeting is planned.

Staff at Folkingham Post Office declined to comment but Jenny Appleby, from Peintan, who regularly visits Folkingham, said: "It is the hub of this big village and I think it should be kept open."

Jan Hansen, from Folkingham, said: "It's in the community where people meet on a daily basis. It will be a negative and a sad loss of a valuable service."

Post Office Ltd has proposed a mobile service called Outreach to replace the post offices. It would serve Rippingsale for up to 12 hours a week and Folkingham for 11 hours.

Mark Partington, the company's development manager for the East Midlands, said: "We believe these proposals offer the best prospect for a sustainable way forward for post office services."

But Mr Turner said: "During the course of a day we have 300 customers with 50 per cent of them using the post office. Closure poses the threat of losing our shop."

There will be a six-week consultation period before a final decision is made.

To sign the petition, visit <http://petition.post.gov.uk/rippingsale>.

Do you support Friends of Rippingsale Post Office? Write to The Local, West Street, Bourne, email news@bournelocal.co.uk or comment at bournelocal.co.uk.



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Bourne Local 5th October Front Page

It's not just a post office, it's a vital part of our community



People being in Premier Court, Grantham, are fighting to save Brook Street Post Office. House manager Liz Kent is pictured with them adding her signature to the petition. Photo: SIMON KID

By Jo Hall

jo.hall@granthamjournal.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS have started fighting to keep Post Office branches in the Grantham area open.

Neighbourhood housing manager near Brook Street Post Office, in Grantham, Jane Campbell, a petition to save the branch which is threatened for closure.

Princess Court house manager Liz Kent said: "This is something we feel very strongly about."

"I think people rely heavily on the Post Office. If Brook Street closes, those who cannot walk all the way up the High Street will probably not go out now."

"The worse it is that only the old and this would leave them isolated."

Direct consultation the 31 Wil-

berth road, Coynes Bar, Wootton Bassett and Wootton Bassett and they will fight to prevent the closure and

THE REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED CLOSURES

● The Government has decided to reduce the UK-wide network of Post Offices by 2,500 from its current level of 14,000.

● Losses are running at £100 a week and the closures are intended to help stem the losses.

● Government figures have shown many rural branches are unprofitable as they are only used by small

numbers of people.

● Postholders have blamed the Government for undermining them by withdrawing their service from Post Offices, for example benefit payments, causing less people to use the branches.

● The first closures can be expected in January 2008, with all completed by the end of that year.

are making other arrangements for support.

An action group to fight the closure of Kingsley Post Office has been set up. Members have started a petition, are planning a public meeting and urging villagers to write letters of protest.

Under the plan, villagers' access to postal services could be re-

duced to only 1.7 hours a week.

Group representative Phil Rippington said: "This is a disaster for the village which is just coming to terms with the closure of its primary school."

With 11,000 residents, County Council and the Coynesside All-Party group. Disappointment at the proposals and Grantham

MP Quentin Davies added his support to the campaign to save rural branches.

He said: "I am totally opposed to closing village Post Offices. They are an essential part of village life and their closure would cause enormous problems for people without cars."

Mr Davies said he would need to see usage figures for seven branches before supporting the campaign to save them.

Postmaster Mike Riddley, who runs Brook Street PO, has signed a confidentially agreement keeping his firm's name secret, but said the plans are "very disappointing".

● To sign friends of Kingsley Post Office's website to keep the branch open visit <http://www.postofficegrantham.co.uk>

● To see a video of campaigners asking about why the Post Office should be saved visit the Journal website at www.granthamjournal.co.uk

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FIGHT CLOSURES

THIRTEEN Post Office branches in the Grantham area are earmarked for closure or replacement with a reduced service under proposals announced on Tuesday.

And the Journal is leading the fight to save them.

We are asking readers to complete a letter to the Post Office known why the threatened branches are so vital to our communities and why they should reconsider. The Post Office revealed its list of branch closures as it opened a six-week public consultation on its plans for the East Midlands. Some 77 branches in the region face closure.

● Branches under threat in the Grantham area are: Brook Street, Grantham, Hill Avenue, Grantham, Old Somerby, Allington, Birkston, Brent Brougham, Castle Bytham, Colton Bassett, Fellingham, Herby, Rippington, South Witham and Wootton Bassett-by-Belvoir. All these village branches, except Old Somerby, are proposed for replacement by an

"outreach solution", which could take the form of a mobile service visiting villages or a hosted service operating in other premises like pubs. Some villages could have as little as five hours' service a week.

Post Office's network development manager for the East Midlands Mark Partington said: "Taking the decision

to close any Post Office branch is always very difficult."

The consultation ends on November 12.

● To make your feelings known collect one of our letters from the Journal office in High Street or download one from our website www.granthamjournal.co.uk

● When you have filled it in and signed it, send it to Network Development Manager, c/o National Consultation Team, FREEPOST Consultation Team.

● Alternatively, e-mail consultation@postoffice.co.uk

● Correspondence should be marked "confidential" if you do not wish your comment to be published.



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'It would be a tragedy to lose our post office'

JOURNAL readers have got in touch to express their disappointment at plans to close 13 Post Offices in the area.

Princess Court resident Christine Cooper, 65, says Brook Street Post Office regularly not only for herself but for her friends too. She said: "It would be a tragedy if it had to close."

"I am partially sighted and to walk up to the main Post Office would be a trial for me."

"That office is so busy now, what is it going to be like when it has to do business for all the Post Offices they are going to close?"

Shirley Kent, who lives on Wootton Bassett, has been

using the threatened Post Office in Hill Avenue for 27 years.

She said: "This leaves only Princess Drive, and the main Post Office in town which takes an age to be served in a hurry."

"Residents of Hill Avenue's catchment area will also possibly lose their local shop as well. It seems that the two post

offices that are both well used and easy for people to park at are the ones under threat of closure."

"Instead of being able to deal with the post office without adding to the volume of traffic in the town, and the parking problem within it, it will only serve to make it worse."

COLLECT A LETTER FROM THE JOURNAL OR GO TO: WWW.GRANTHAMJOURNAL.CO.UK

Week 2

Monday 8th October
second meeting of FORPO

Wednesday 10th October
Week 2 press release issued



Simon Deane records interview with Hereward FM



Jim Latham records interviews with Lincs FM and Rutland radio

Thursday 11th October



Jim Latham records interviews with BBC Radio Lincs

Friday 12th October



Jim Latham records live interview for BBC Radio Lincs breakfast news

Week 2 Press release

Friends of Rippingale Post Office (Draft PR2)

Closure plan ill-conceived, dishonest, based on inaccurate out-of-date information, contradicts Government & Post Office policy and ignores County development plans

Post Office Ltd. plans to close the PO branch in the village of Rippingale in Lincolnshire have been attacked by a residents' group set up to fight the proposal. The announcement was made on October 1 and leaflets left for residents made it clear a final decision would be made after a six week consultation period.

But it's been revealed that a month earlier, PO Ltd. managers told the Rippingale sub-postmaster that his branch would definitely close, in spite of the consultation exercise and introduced him to two potential "Partners" under their new "Outreach Service" – the suggested means of providing limited PO services after closure.

One potential partner made what can only be described as an insulting offer for the present sub-postmaster to operate a part-time counter in his own shop for her.

The same leaflets informed local residents that they could also use another nearby branch in Folkingham if Rippingale were to close. The trouble is that Folkingham branch is on the same closure list. Similar leaflets left at Folkingham branch told their residents that Rippingale would be an alternative branch for them.

Phil Rippingale (correct) from the Friends group said "If Post Office Ltd got that sort of basic information so badly wrong, we had to ask ourselves what else was wrong. As we started checking various documents, it only got worse."

In December last year the Government launched a national public consultation on changes to the Post Office network. The Department of Business' own response to that consultation introduced minimum access criteria "in particular to protect vulnerable consumers in deprived urban, rural and remote areas."

Criteria included "Nationally, 99% of the UK population to be within 3 miles of their nearest PO outlet," "95% of the total rural population to be within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office outlet," and "the availability of public transport."

The PO local closure leaflet for Rippingale gave the next nearest outlet as Pointon, a village 3.8 miles away. That's wrong – the nearest is the village of Morton. The Post Office say Morton is 2.5 miles from Rippingale – wrong again – it's over three miles. And it's almost impossible to reach either Morton or Pointon by available public transport – one service runs once a week, the other runs every day but would mean a three hour wait to return.

The real alternative for the elderly, disabled, the young, family carers and those without a car, is a more than six-mile round trip walking down the busy A15. Without any ill-will to those who live in Pointon or Morton, Rippingale residents can only wonder about those "clear cut access criteria" when they look at a map –

Week 2 Press release (cont)

Pointon is just a mile from their next nearest branch at Billingborough and Morton is only two miles from the main Post Office in Bourne. On the same principle Thurlby is under 2 miles from Bourne – they're ALL keeping their Post Offices.

Both the DTI response and the PO closure notice emphasize that the programme was introduced against a backdrop of "falling customer numbers." Rippingale Post Office may be one of the few branches recording increasing business.

The store and its PO counter were refurbished last year and have seen a 20% increase in business since the present sub-postmaster Simon Deane took over 4 months ago. He cannot access PO counter sales – they're all electronic - but has asked PO Ltd to open their books to him. The PO say fewer than 400 customers a week used the counter between March 06 and March 07.

But Simon has recorded the numbers of customers coming to the store since he took over and reckons the number is far in excess of 400. Both he and Rippingale residents want to know whether, or by how much, their PO is losing money.

The Post Office also only records "customer sessions," whether they are buying a single stamp or multiple items.

As a condition of his taking over the branch, Post Office Ltd. removed Simon's "Payzone," service by which local residents recharged electricity meter cards. This cut his potential turnover by 10%, on the grounds that it competed with the PO's own service – though they offer no such similar system. Those customers now have to recharge their cards elsewhere or go without lighting, heating and cooking.

The Rippingale group is also aware of recent Lincolnshire County Council and South Kesteven District Council discussions about selected housing development areas. They've defined areas with what they call "essential services," including a full time Post Office, as priority areas for future development. Rippingale is one of only 15 villages listed.

Phil Rippingale said "The scale of incorrect information, contempt for the public consultation process, manipulation of their own, Government-set criteria, lack of enterprise when they need to increase business, not cut it back and lack of appreciation of future development, beggars belief. This mess is what Rippingale will suffer for. There's a high level of elderly, infirm and those with no personal transport in our village. The PO counter supplements the store and if it closes, the future of the store will be in doubt. If we lose that, the heart of the village will be gone, leaving many isolated in their homes or burning fossil fuels to reach the services they want and need. We deserve to be given the information PO Ltd used to reach this decision – we want to know if Rippingale is a loss-maker for PO Ltd and how it compares with other POs in the immediate area."

On Friday October 5, Simon Deane had a preview of the closure on the first full day of the postal workers' strike. "Most people assumed we were closed too and it's been dead – if this is what it'll be like, then our store couldn't survive."

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Jim Latham 01778-440025 (pref.) Mob. 07971-579977 sec@bjtc.org.uk

of several village post offices -



Rippingale Post Office postmaster with members of the Post Office Action Group. From left - Amanda Deane, Simon Deane - postmaster, Phil Rippingale, Jim Latham, John Warman, Mike Hallas. Photo: 69255A-5

Close us down? Not without a big fight!

THE announcement of the possible closure of Rippingale Post Office has forced villagers to form an action group.

The Friends of Rippingale Post Office have created an e-petition to campaign for their post office to remain open.

They feel this is a double blow for the village following the closure of Rippingale Primary School earlier this year.

The plan is to replace the branch with a 13 hour a week outreach service. The alternative branches selected by Post Office Ltd are Pointon and Folkington - but Folkington has also been proposed to be replaced with an outreach service.

Friends representative Phil Rippingale said: "We do not understand on what basis Post Office Ltd came to this decision, the figures do not add up.

"Local bus services simply cannot meet the needs of people without a car to get to the alternatives suggested by Post Office Ltd.

"The closure of our school has put

Rippingale

more people on the road already.

"But the worst thing is where this leaves the elderly and those without their own transport.

"Where and when are they going to get their pensions, pay their council tax and utility bills, buy stamps and send their letters and parcels?"

Residents in Aslockby, Donsby, Dowsby and Kirby Underwood will also be affected by the closure of the Rippingale branch.

The Friends group are urging people to write to Post Office Ltd, Quentin Davies MP, to Gordon Brown and David Cameron.

To show your support through the e-petition visit <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Rippingale>

● RIPPINGALE Postmaster Simon Deane and his wife sold their house in Rippingale where they had lived for two-and-a-half years to take on the post office in June.

He said: "I am devastated not just on a personal level but for the community. It is a massive blow.

"We knew about the possibility of branch closures when we took the business on but we were given the assurance that Rippingale would be very unlikely to close because the next nearest branch is more than three miles away, we have just had a refurbishment and we are very busy serving between 250-300 customers a day with 50 per cent using the post office.

"We are one of very few post offices which is open from 6am-8pm."

He said the shop and post office business has doubled over the last 12 months.

The outreach hours would be 13 hours a week. Mr Dean said the post office business at the moment equates to 20-25 hours a week.

He is uncertain whether the shop will be able to continue on its own and said it would not be viable for him to operate the outreach service from the shop.

Stamford Mercury

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2007

Serving Bourne 50p

Win a free manicure
every month for a year!

See page 21



Fun at the sheep fair,
even without any sheep!

See pages 30 and 31



With your support, we'll win our fight

Village postmaster optimistic branch can be saved



Meet the man who aims to be Bourne's next MP

The Conservatives have chosen Neil Sainsbury as their candidate for Stamford in the next general election.

He has already added his support to the fight to save post offices threatened by closure, but says

his main priority is to get local issues sorted behind the Conservative cause.

Our features writer Brian Martin met Mr Deane, a 47-year-old businessman this week.

Read his full report on page 2.

WITH your support we can keep the service running – that's the message from Rippingale Post Office which is facing closure.

The branch is among 380 under threat, but dissenting businesses and residents have made their voices heard in an uncertain terms.

An action group has been set up and with a population of about 1,500, more than 600 people in Rippingale have signed a petition demanding the post office stays open.

About 250 people are expected to present at the village forum where Mr Quentin Davies makes a visit.

It's been a lesson for sub-postmaster Simon Deane who only took over the service in July. He says the support has been overwhelming and is hopeful the petition will have the desired impact.

He said: "Personally I'm optimistic that we can turn this crisis. The response we've had from people in the village has been phenomenal. We're delighted with the support."

Last week the Post Office announced it would close branches in Rippingale, Gable Betham, Uffington, South Witham, Fellingham and two in Stamford, one of which, in Milling Road, has already shut.

More closures nationwide are expected to be announced in the coming months at the Post Office loses its share 2,500 branches by 2009.

There are just four weeks for people to give their views about the closure to the Post Office.

Last week's announcement provoked anger among many Rippingale customers who are demanding to know how they will be able to get access to a postal service elsewhere.

The friends of Rippingale Post Office has visited the Post Office. It says leaders contacted received stood the Rippingale

Continued Page 2

Workers plan new strikes

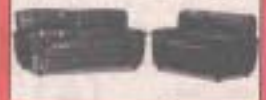
POSTAL services are set to be hit by five days of strike action, unless an agreement between workers and Royal Mail can be agreed by Monday.

There were no deliveries at collection on Monday and Tuesday following disputes over pay and working hours. A Communication Workers Union spokesman said everything was being done to resolve the issue but strike action was still due to start on Monday and last until Friday.

A Royal Mail spokesman declined to comment on any future strikes but yesterday said: "Currently all our postal workers are back at work and the strike action is over at the moment."

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Stamford Mercury 12th October Front Page

Hundreds of villagers sign up to save their post offices

● From page 1

branch was taking in less than 400 customers a week and that they would be able to access a service in Folkingham which is also facing closure.

Mr Deane is adamant more than 400 people come in and use the service each week.

Phil Rippingale, of the group, said: "If Post Office Ltd got that sort of basic information so badly wrong we had to ask ourselves what else was wrong."

A spokesman for Post Office was not prepared to comment on the information given but said he hoped people would get across any concerns they had to the head office during the consultation period.

Mr Davies will be appearing at Rippingale Post Office tomorrow at 9.30am.

He said: "I want to see the people for myself and see what the strength of

feeling in Rippingale is. It's up to the people to make sure they come along if they feel strongly about this."

The new Tory candidate Nick Boles is also expected to visit the post office tomorrow.

He said: "It's happened with the hospitals, now it's spread to the post offices."

"We want services that are personalised and local. The Government is subjecting the Post Office to commercial pressures, which is disgraceful."

To sign the Rippingale petition, visit: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/rippingale/>

Campaigns are also well under way to save other village post offices.

A committee has been formed in Castle Bytham, following a meeting on Tuesday attended by more than 100 people who don't want their service taken away.

The group is promising to do all it can to protect its post office.

Spokesman Charlotte Thurman, landlady at the Castle Inn, said: "We're meeting this week to discuss our plan of action."

"We're looking to come up with different schemes to get our point across."

At South Witham more than 100 people have put their name to a petition asking the Post Office not to close their branch.

Sub-postmaster Gordon Andrew said: "My feeling is that a village of this size does need to have a post office or at the very least one that's part-time."

"Local businesses use our services and you also have people using eBay who need packages weighing."

"And with new dwellings being built in the village more people are going to need the post office."

● Letters - page 12

The Mercury is urging readers to speak up about the planned post office closures. Write to Post Office network development manager Mark Partington c/o the National Consultation Team, marking the envelope Freepost Consultation Team or e-mail

How to have your say

network.change@postoffice.co.uk

To help you, we have put a ready-made protest letter on our website, www.stamfordmercury.co.uk

Download a copy now, fill in

your details and send to the address shown.

You can also join the debate on the planned closures at www.stamfordmercury.co.uk Speak up now - before it's too late!

Stamford Mercury 12th October
Page 3 (continued from Front page)

Campaigners fight to save post office

By AMY MORRISH

Bourne MP Quentin Davies will meet campaigners fighting to save Rippingale post office tomorrow.

More than 600 people have already signed a petition to save the post office and Mr Davies called for people to support the campaign.

Mr Davies said: "I am deeply concerned at the prospect of Rippingale losing its post office.

"I'm looking forward to visiting the post office and meeting as many of its customers and supporters as possible on Saturday morning and I will discuss what I can best do to help save the post office.

"My plea to everyone in the village is to use the postal facilities as much as possible so that we can show the best possible rise in the turnover figures."

Simon Deane, sub-postmaster of Rippingale Post Office and owner of Rippingale Stores, hopes more than 200 people will be at the post office to show support tomorrow morning.

He said: "I'm delighted he's coming. It gives the opportunity for him to see



● Meeting at Castle Bytham. Picture supplied

what we provide and why it works.

"People have been coming in just to sign the petition. The response is the best in the whole country."

Staff at Rippingale say that response to the closure plan, through letters and emails has been "phenomenal".

The Post Office believes it has to make changes nationwide to remain competitive but Jim Latham of the Friends of Rippingale Post Office, described the closure plan as "ill-conceived" and "based on inaccurate out-of-date

information".

Meanwhile Mr Deane claims the postal strike has shown his business would suffer if the post office side was closed.

He said: "Most people assumed we were closed too and it's been dead – if this is what it will be like, then our store couldn't survive."

To support Rippingale Post Office visit www.rippingalevillage.co.uk

● What do you think about the proposed post office closures? Write to The Local, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire, PE10 9NE or email news@bourne



■ Simon Deane at Rippingale Post Office.

local.co.uk

● Folkingham and Castle Bytham post offices also face closure and this week more than 150 people met at Castle Bytham Village Hall to begin the fight to save their post office.

An action plan is now being drawn up by residents but group member Charlotte Thurman declined to comment further this week. To support Castle Bytham Post Office visit www.thebythams.org.uk

Villagers slam branch closure plans as 'dishonest'

A CAMPAIGN group fighting the closure of Rippingale Post Office, near Grantham, has attacked the plans, calling them "ill-conceived, dishonest and contradictory".

Friends of Rippingale Post Office says it has uncovered a series of errors in basic information and claims Post Office has already made up its mind to close the branch. They demand the company opens up its books to prove Rippingale is a loss-making branch.

Phil Rippingale, from the group, said: "The scale of incor-

rect information, contempt for the public consultation process, manipulation of their own Government-set criteria, lack of enterprise when they need to increase business and lack of appreciation of future development beggars belief.

"We deserve to be given the information PO Ltd used to reach this decision."

The group claims Rippingale PO has seen a 20 per cent increase in business since postmaster Simon Deane took over four months ago, but Post Office says the branch is losing

money.

Villagers have been told they can use Folkingham Post Office if their branch closes, but this is on the same list of closures announced last week. The group says people in Folkingham have been told Rippingale would be their alternative branch.

The group says if the closure programme goes ahead, elderly, disabled and young families without their own transport will be forced to make a six-mile round trip on foot along a busy road to Poynton or Morton.

A spokesman for Post Office

said: "When applying these (Government) criteria we will consider the proximity of branches proposed for closure to other nearby branches; the number of customers using a particular branch; the size and ability of nearby branches to absorb extra customers and the commercial implications of any decision for Post Office Ltd."

● More than 600 people have signed a petition to save Rippingale Post Office in a week and more than 100 have signed an on-line petition at <http://petitions.pmi.gov.uk/Rippingale>

Politicians join the campaign

LABOUR MP Quentin Davies and Conservative candidate Nick Boles will visit Rippingale tomorrow morning to meet campaigners. The pair, who will visit the village separately, have both pledged their support to

save rural Post Offices.

● HARBY Post Office, in the Vale of Belvoir, is not on the list of closures as reported in last week's Journal. It is, in fact, the branch at Harby, near Newark. We apologise for the error.

Grantham Journal 12th October

Week 3

Saturday 13th October

Quentin Davies MP and Nick Boles, newly-selected Conservative PCC for Grantham and Stamford, visit the Post Office on Saturday 13th October to voice their support for our campaign

Tuesday 16th October



Simon Deane and Jim Latham record interviews with BBC Radio Lincolnshire



Simon Deane interviewed by Hereward FM

Wednesday 17th October

Rippingale marches 3 miles to Morton P.O.



Jim Latham records live interview for BBC Radio Lincs breakfast news

ITV Central Lead on lunchtime bulletin
ITV Central 2nd Lead on evening bulletin
ITV Calendar News lead on lunchtime bulletin
ITV Calendar News 3rd lead on evening bulletin
BBC Look North lunchtime and evening features

Week 3 Press release 1

Friends of Rippingale Post Office

More than 200 wait in the rain for Quentin Davies and Nick Boles

More than 200 Rippingale (Lincolnshire) villagers waited in the rain on Saturday morning (October 13) as Quentin Davies, MP for Grantham and Stamford, and his probable successor, Nick Boles, visited their threatened Post Office.

The two attended separately and both spoke privately to Sub-Postmaster Simon Deane, then to members of the anti-closure campaign group, and to customers and villagers.

Both were applauded as they said they would do all in their power to prevent the closure.

Mr Davies is due to meet a senior member of the Post Office management team to discuss closure plans. He answered questions from customers, including two on horseback, and said that he'd been impressed by the way the village was pulling together to keep their PO open - Rippingale was by far the most vociferous village fighting closure proposals in the constituency.

Mr. Boles, the new Tory PPC for Grantham and Stamford, said closing the PO would tear the heart out of Rippingale. He'd seen evidence of the damage such closures caused in his parents' village in Devon. He added that he would do his best to join a planned protest walk by Rippingale villagers next Wednesday (October 17).

NB1 – details of the planned protest walk down the A15 from Rippingale to Morton are on a separate Press Release to follow shortly.

NB2 – we have (still) pix of the crowd and each of the visitors available if you were unable to attend – please contact John Warman - 01778-440139.

Contacts – Jim Latham - 01778-440025/07971-579977
Phil Rippingale - 01778-440204

Week 3 Press release 2

Friends of Rippingale Post Office Press Release

Nick Boles may join protest walk on Wednesday October 17

If Rippingale Post Office were to close, the nearest alternative is Morton – more than 3 miles away – down the busy and potentially dangerous A15 - no paths and heavily used by cars, heavy goods vehicles and farm traffic.

Most people who live in Rippingale could drive to Morton but many are without personal transport and available buses only run on Thursdays. So this Wednesday villagers plan to walk to Morton to focus attention on just how daft the PO Ltd proposal is. And the new Tory PPC for Grantham and Stamford, Nick Boles, says he'll do his best to join them. Martin Hill, leader of Lincolnshire County Council will definitely be one of the walkers.

Friends of Rippingale PO are appealing for as many people as possible to join the protest - over 100 people are expected to make the walk.

Phil Rippingale from the campaign group said, "It doesn't matter if they're not fit enough to complete the walk – that makes our point even more strongly – if they can only make it to the end of the High Street or in a mobility scooter, they'll still be VERY welcome. We'll have transport available to pick them up and bring everyone home – even those scooters if they run out of power. We would like some of them at least to complete the trip and buy a stamp at Morton PO, then we'll take them back home by car, though if our PO were to close we'd be talking about a 6 mile round trip."

Lincolnshire Police will attend to provide safety cover and will have police vehicles both ahead and behind the walking group, as well as Community Officers walking with them..

They will monitor traffic and allow any build-up to pass safely.

Phil Rippingale said "We want everyone to act responsibly if they join the walk – we do NOT want any accidents – particularly in the worst sections of the route – Ringstone Hill/Dunsby Wood and the approach to Morton – both are very narrow.

He appealed to walkers to dress sensibly for the weather and wear suitable footwear for a three mile walk.

The protest starts at 10.30 am this Wednesday (October 17) at Rippingale Post Office.

Directions – Rippingale is on the A15 north of Bourne in Lincolnshire – from the south take the first signposted turn to the right into the High Street, down to The Bull public house - please park vehicles in the The Bull car park. From the north come down the A15 from Folkingham and take the second signposted turning left into the High Street and please park vehicles in The Bull car park. From the Bull, turn right keeping the churchyard on your left and take the first turning left – Middle Street - and you'll see the village store and PO – it's about 150 yards.

Contacts – Phil Rippingale – 01778-440204 philrippingale@btinternet.com

Jim Latham – 01778-440025/07971-579977 sec@bjtc.org.uk

Simon Deane (sub Postmaster) – 01778-4400635 sadeanes@supanet.com

Friends of Rippingale Post Office – FORPO@RippingaleVillage.co.uk

Week 3 Press release 3

Friends of Rippingale Post Office

Nick Boles confirms he'll march with anti-closure protesters

Nick Boles, new Conservative PPC for Grantham and Stamford, has confirmed he'll join a march by Rippingale (Lincolnshire) villagers protesting against the planned closure of their Post Office.

Mr. Boles has called the closure "vandalism," and, when he visited Rippingale on Saturday, said it would "tear the heart out of the village."

The march leaves Rippingale at 10.30 am on Wednesday (October 17), heading more than three miles down the busy and potentially dangerous A15 to Morton, the nearest alternative PO if Rippingale were to close.

More than a hundred people, including Mr. Boles, are expected to join the walk.

Phil Rippingale for the Friends of Rippingale Post Office said "this is terrific news – this level of support is hugely encouraging in our fight to persuade PO Ltd that they've made a serious mistake.

The high proportion of elderly, disabled and those without personal transport will have little option but to walk to Morton PO – it's narrow, busy with cars, heavy goods vehicles and farm traffic and has no pavements – it's dangerous and our once-a-week bus service doesn't begin to meet the potential demand. Wednesday's walk will draw attention to just how daft the PO Ltd closure plan is"

The march will also be joined by more than half the members of Rippingale and District WI.

Details of how to reach Rippingale, where to park etc are on our previous Press Release, sent out yesterday.

Contacts – Phil Rippingale – 01778-440204 philrippingale@btinternet.com
Jim Latham – 01778-440025 (in London all day Tuesday but available on 07971-579977) sec@bjtc.org.uk

Simon Deane (sub Postmaster) – 01778-440634 sadeanes@supanet.com
Sylvia Stewart (WI President) – 01778-440160



MP Quentin Davies appears alongside postmaster Simon Deanes to speak to the crowd gathered outside Rippingale Post Office on Saturday.

Photo: SM-B101307_016aw

MP 'determined' to help save post office

by **VICTORIA FEAR**
victoria.fear@jpress.co.uk

VILLAGERS in Rippingale came out in force at the weekend to support their post office which is under the threat of closure.

A total of 250 people out of the 969 residents in Rippingale went along on Saturday to tell MP Quentin Davis that the village post office is a lifeline they cannot afford to lose.

Rippingale and Folkingham post offices are among 2,500 branches nationwide earmarked for closure under the Post Office's Network Change programme.

Rippingale residents have started a campaign to retain their post office.

They will be walking to their nearest alternative in Morton tomorrow in a bid to highlight how impractical using that post office would be.

Mr Davis, MP for Grantham and Stamford, has vowed to take their

cause to Post Office Counters and urged villagers to continue to use their post office.

Mr Davis told villagers gathered outside Rippingale Post Office on Saturday: "I am amazed by the tremendous support here."

"We have a quarter of the village here."

"I am determined to do my part to save the post office. It is a very serious matter for the future of the village and particularly for elderly and disabled people."

Speaking before the meet-

ing postmaster Simon Deanes said that the post office is well used.

He said: "I am overwhelmed by the level of support."

"This is an important service in the village and it is essential that it stays. So many people use it."

Mr Deanes urged villagers to join the campaign to keep the post office issue as high profile as possible.

■ Protesters are to meet outside the premises at 10.30am tomorrow to walk to the neighbouring post office at Morton.

Lincolnshire Free Press 16th October

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Message - Heather Gaddady's placard makes her point

We'll fight to the end

POST office campaigners have vowed to hold more protests to save their village branch after a successful demonstration.

More than 100 people marched three miles from Rippingale Post Office on Wednesday to vent their anger at the proposed closure of the service.

They rode ponies, strolled with dogs and pushed and shopped supermarket trolleys and they were determined to show Rippingale post office should not be closed.

From buses to area to steady persistence, they looked to the post office at Norton, their nearest

Pledge made after post office march

branch if Rippingale goes. They were accompanied by a police escort as they headed the busy A15.

The walk took 75 minutes and most of the walkers arrived elated in the hope that they might, just might, have helped to avert the closure.

Phil Rippingale, one of the organisers, said: "It's been a brilliant day and we will do it again if it makes the Post Office see sense."

Main reaction on the walk - page 3
Protesters meet MP - page 2

Young mum killed in ditch crash horror

THE best friend of a woman killed in a car accident has paid tribute to a "bubbly and popular" person, who was "the life and soul of the party".

Jenny McLaughlin, 28, the mother of a nine-year-old boy, died after mounting support in her car when it went into a drainage ditch by the side of a road in Tonger Hill, near Spalding on Saturday morning.

The driver, Natalie Duff,

31, of Bellingham Street, Stamford, says she will never be able to forget Jenny's outgoing spirit, which always lit the spirit of everyone around her.

She said: "She was a fantastic girl and she always had the ability to cheer up others. She was just so popular."

Jenny, of Thorney Close, Bourne, was well known in Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping. After being brought up near

London she moved to Stamford and studied at Stamford College. She worked at Womers in Bourne before recently beginning a new job, selling insurance for a firm in Nottingham.

She was set to move to Gutterton yesterday with her son Jack, and partner Bill Mackinnon.

A funeral service for Jenny is being held in Easthampton Park Crematorium near Rockingham on Thursday at 11.30am.



The GOOD LIFE
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Starts on page 35



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Stamford Mercury 19th October Front Page

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Double delight as two events benefit
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Fight to save Rippingale Post Office



MP Quentin Davies speaks to the crowd gathered outside Rippingale Post Office at a protest against the closure of the post office
 Photo: SRA-B101307_0320w

Villagers meet MP to call for support

by Gary Vyss

MORE than 200 villagers met in Rippingale on Saturday morning to make their views clear to MP Quentin Davies over the threat to close their post office.

They stood outside Rippingale Post Office in the pouring rain and pleaded with their MP Davies to do everything in his power to keep their local service up and running.

Mr Davies, along with new Conservative MP candidate Nick Bates, showed up in the village on Saturday and both were greeted with an avalanche of protest, petitions and questions from a concerned crowd.

Both politicians gave a signal of their intent by putting their names to a campaigning petition.

Sub-parliament Simon Chase said he has been encouraged by the high level of support the post office has received. He said: "We're thankful that Quentin Davies and Nick Bates have taken the time to offer us their support. Bourne grateful for any promise they can apply to the Post Office."

Staff, customers and volunteers are going all out to ensure their post office does not become a casualty of the proposed cuts.

Quentin Davies called the commitment of Rippingale residents "quite astounding".

Mr Davies predicted "a devastating blow" to the community if the post



Outrage - resident Annette Lamb voices her concerns to Mr Davies
 Photo: SRA-B101307_0110W

office closed. "I am doing everything possible to gain a reprieve," he said.

"I am meeting Post Office external affairs manager Matt Skelton this week and if the result is not satisfactory I will pursue the matter further still."

To put your name to the petition, go to <http://petition.parliament.gov.uk/rippingale>.

More details of the campaign can be found at the website, www.rippingalevillagers.co.uk

The post offices under threat in the Stamford and Bourne areas are Rydal Road, Stamford; Blithing Road, Stamford; Rippingale; Castle Bytham; South Witham; Fellingham; and Ullington.

Closure plan is ludicrous, say residents

VILLAGERS claim their threatened post office means all the criteria required to keep it open.

Castle Bytham businessman Charlotte Thurman, of the Save Our Post Office Action Group, said: "The independent watchdog Postwatch demands that the Post Office must consider the points before deciding to close a post office."

"Judged by any one of the criteria

Castle Bytham post office should remain open."

Mrs Thurman said the fact that the Post Office was recommending an alternative facility which would involve a 44-mile round trip and a day's journey by public transport illustrated how ludicrous its decision was. "It is the last for 14 other villages and public transport within a 10-mile radius is almost non-existent," she

added.

Tolke group member Martin Fothergill described the Post Office management as "incompetent". He said a 14-hour bus out-ride service was not acceptable as an alternative.

"The fact that South Kesteven District Council has designated Castle Bytham as a village ripe for expansion raises questions of any closure decision," he said.

County's rallying cry for protests

PEOPLE throughout Lincolnshire are being urged to protest en masse about proposed closures.

With 2,500 post offices threatened with closure over the next 18 months, county council leader Martin Hill (Con) wants everyone affected to take full advantage of the six-week consultation period.

Con Hil, ward member for Fellingham Road, said: "I have told the Post Office the thompson is totally inadequate for people to make a reasonable response."

He has also written to the Government Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. He said: "The county council has been working hard over many years to improve residents' access to services and the threatened cuts are of great concern to all of us."

The Mercury is urging readers to have their say.

Write to Post Office network development manager Mark Parkinson c/o the National Consultation Team, marking the streetscape Prospect Consultation Team or e-mail satw@postoffice.co.uk

To help you, we have put a ready-made letter on our website, www.stamfordmercury.co.uk

Campaign continues

SUPPORT is growing to keep the Rydal Road sub-post office in Stamford open.

A 4,000-name petition is being sent to the Post Office and popular Peter Sarsini has expressed his thanks for the support.

St George's ward town councillor Bob Jones (Lab) said more than 2,000 letters had been distributed.

He said: "We are anxious to keep this post office and shop open because they provide such a marvellous service."

No to Sundays

ROYAL Mail will stop Sunday collections from October 28. It warned a 44% competitive postal market for the decision, saying it would be made more efficiently. It says customer demand for Sunday collections was limited and announced the loss of one per cent of all mail posted each week.

Fight to save Rippingale Post Office



Joining in - John Warren with sub-postmaster Simon Dwyer
Photo: SM-8101707_013js



Busy road - protesters stand on the verge to allow traffic to pass
Photo: SM-8101707_041js



Political backing - Tory general election candidate Nick Hales and county council leader Martin Hill
Photo: SM-8101707_046js

On the march!

THEY marched, walked and hobbled more than three miles to save their local post office - then said they would do it again.

The march on Wednesday morning took 75 minutes and most of the walkers arrived drenched in the hope that they might, just might, have helped to achieve the impossible - save Rippingale post office from closing.

Phil Rippingale, of the Friends of Rippingale Post Office, said: "This was a real community effort, with many with postboxes walking alongside protesters."

"We've shown the Post Office we're not taking closure threats lightly. Whatever happens we're not going quietly."

Rippingale is one of 280 branches in the East Midlands, Yorkshire and West which the Post Office revealed it was proposing to close over the next year.

Also under threat in the Stamford and Soham area are Hyball Road and Farning Road in Soham, Ovington, Louth, Bytham, South Witham and Hattingsham.

The Post Office is running a consultation until November 12 before deciding which branches will actually close.

More proposed closures are expected as the Post Office looks to shed 2,000 branches by 2020.

Rippingale sub-postmaster Simon Dwyer walked with his children George, 11, and Ffyn, eight, while wife Amanda drove a support van. He joined the Friends of Rippingale Post Office and said resistance to their



Making a point - Jean and Peter Pick with their hard-hitting message
Photo: SM-8101707_022js

support. He said: "We only took over the business in June so I have no idea what we'll do if we have to close."

Morton counterpart Steve Miles, who is married to Betty and has two children Jacob, six, and Emma, one, said he had every sympathy. "Thankfully we're staying open but nobody, particularly if they're elderly or disabled,

should be expected to travel for essential services."

One of the oldest walkers was Rippingale born-and-bred Florie Clark, 80. She said: "We're a tough lot and I enjoyed the walk. I pray it makes a difference. If it doesn't, I'm ready to walk again!"

The walk emphasised how long it would take for Rippingale villagers, many of

them, elderly, to get to Morton, the nearest option.

Mr Rippingale said: "The Post Office has proved almost impossible to contact but they must take note of our protest. The shop petition collected 750 names, with a further 200 on a Dimpley Street petition. We're taking this fight to the Government."

Lincolnshire County Council leader Martin Hill (Cons) and Grantham and Stamford Conservative General Election candidate Nick Hales were also on the walk.

Grant Hill, who is ward member for Rippingale, said: "The Post Office has completely ignored community representations."

"None of the threatened post offices are vital to the elderly and in profit."

Mr Miles called the proposed Rippingale closure an act of "sabotage," adding: "The Government is clearly getting the Post Office to do its dirty work for it; they can anyone say a £2m loss justifies closure when much more than that is being spent on IT systems that don't work?"

A police spokesman said the protesters contacted them. Two officers and six community support officers went along to ensure safety and monitor disruption to traffic. Protesters were told to allow traffic to pass. A police car was at the start and back of the march.



The end - the protesters arrive in Morton
Photo: SM-8101707_060js

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■ Fighting to save Rippingale Post Office – protesters march to Market. Photo: SA 8007602_0529



**Men
bare all
(almost)
for charity
calendar**

PAGE 5

People march to save post office

By PAUL CLARK

Residents went on the march to send a clear message that Rippingale Post Office should not close.

Around 100 people walked from Rippingale to Market on Wednesday – symbolising the journey people would need to make for post office services if the village branch shuts.

The protest march came days after an estimated 250 people gathered outside Rippingale Post Office to hear MP Quentin Davies pledge his support to the campaign to save it.

Mr Davies said at the meeting on Saturday: "I am determined to do my part to save the post office."

"It is a very serious matter for the future of the village. I am amazed by the tremendous support."

Nick Boles, Conservative Parliamentary candidate for Bourne, Grantham and Stamford, joined the march.

He described the planned closure, part of a nationwide Post Office proposal to shut 2,000 rural offices, as "an act of vandalism".

He said: "It does not seem to fit the criteria for closure and is striking at the heart of the community."

On Wednesday protesters were escorted by police along the A15.

Afterwards Rippingale

postmaster Simon Deane said: "To get 100 people in the middle of the week is phenomenal."

"It is more than I thought would be able to come."

"Quite a few motorists looked on and waved in support."

Protesters included people in wheelchairs and riders on horseback.

Mr Deane said that not all elderly protesters could complete the march, demonstrating that forcing Rippingale residents to use Market Post Office was unrealistic.

He said: "We left with about 100 people and finished with 80. So many people are reliant on transport."

He insists the Rippingale branch is proving and that the Post Office has failed to

explain the closure decision.

He warned that closure of the post office would threaten the future of the village shop in a village that only this summer lost its primary school.

Mr Deane said: "Fifty per cent of customers use both the post office and shop."

"Neither could support itself without the other."

A petition supporting the campaign to save the post office now has more than 800 signatures.

Phil Rippingale, of Friends of Rippingale Post Office, said: "This level of support is hugely encouraging in our fight to persuade Post Office Ltd that it has made a serious mistake."

■ Turn to page 2 for more protest pictures

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■ On the A15 - Friends of Rippingale Post Office won the support of many motorists. Photo: SM 8/10/07, 30p

Leader of council joins campaign

By PAUL CLARK

The leader of Lincolnshire County Council joined protesters fighting to save Rippingale Post Office.

Rippingale is one of 40 branches due to close in Lincolnshire following a recent Post Office assessment and two protests took place in the village this week.

Council leader Martin Hill joined a march from the village to Market where the nearest post office will be at Rippingale's church on Wednesday.

Mr Hill said: "Lincolnshire County Council values the important role that post offices play in providing sustainable communities, a social role as well as financial and postal services."

He encouraged residents to "demonstrate their community's need for an accessible post office service" and to make their voice heard.

He said: "The consultation period from the Post Office is

not long enough for people to get together a reasonable response."

"The proposals will have a negative impact on Lincolnshire's rural and urban areas and we all need a more adequate timetable to demonstrate this in our region."

"In some cases there will be opportunities for replacement services, such as mobile post offices, where a food is identified."

"However, we are concerned that some of these represent a loss in two hours per week and will endeavour to look at these accessibility issues."

"The county council understands the impact of these closures on Lincolnshire's rural and urban areas and will work with communities and Post Office Ltd to identify potential solutions."

■ If you will be affected by the proposed closures, you can take part in the Post Office's consultation by writing to Neighbourhood Development Manager, c/o National Consultation Team, FREEPOST Consultation Team or email: consultations.postoffice.co.uk and clearly mark your communication "Rippingale".



■ Nick Baker (Cory candidate) and Martin Hill (county council leader) and Kirby Underwood resident join the march. Photo: SM 8/10/07, 30p



■ Protesters gather in Rippingale to march in support of the village post office. Photo: SM 8/10/07, 30p

Parcel scam warning

Lincolnshire Police and Trading Standards issued a warning yesterday about a postal scam that targets people expecting a parcel delivery.

A card is posted through the door from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that it was unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to call 0202 001 1111 to arrange a date to receive it.

Police warn NOT to call this number - it is a scam designed to steal money. If you call the number and you start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £75.

■ If you do receive a card with these details, contact Royal Mail Fraud on 0300 284666.

Harvest

A celebration of Lincolnshire's harvest will be at 5pm on Sunday at Lincoln Cathedral.

NFL regional director Richard Fidler said: "Lincoln Cathedral provides a superb location for the harvest celebration."

In this year of Food and Farming in Education, the farming industry will be spreading the message to as many schools as it can reach, engaging with teachers and students on meaningful projects and journeys of discovery associated with the UK food chain.

Witnesses

Some residents who were in a position to see the arrival of a man who took cash from the car. The woman who lived at Nottingham's Queen's Medical Centre and later disappeared.

The incident took place between 1.40am and 3.15am. Full details are available online at www.bourneonline.co.uk.

The incident took place between 1.40am and 3.15am. Full details are available online at www.bourneonline.co.uk.

Family folk

A family folk music night will take place at Wake House, North Street, Bourne, on Saturday, October 27, at 7.30pm.

It will be an opportunity to see a local performance of The Keepers and dog dancing demonstrations.

Refreshments will be provided by 1st Bourne Scouts. Although no alcohol will be served, guests can bring their own.

Tickets cost £3 (concessions £10 with all proceeds to Wake House). Book by calling 01778 583517 or email jingjive.burton@bt.com.

Protestors march miles in the fight to save their Post Office

By Jo Hall

jo.hall@granthamjournal.co.uk

A HUNDRED villagers started from Rippingale, along the busy A15 road to Morion on Wednesday to highlight the treacherous three-mile journey they would have to make if their Post Office is forced to close.

Protesters campaigning against the proposed closure carried placards demanding the Post Office is kept open. The marchers included men, women, children, the elderly and infirm, people in wheelchairs, dogs and even horses.

Joining them was leader of Lincolnshire County Council Martin Hill and newly-elected Conservative councillor Nick Boleas, who said closing the Post Office would "rip the heart out of the village".

Co-organiser Phil Rippingale, from the Friends of Rippingale Post Office campaign group, said: "The nearest bus is from Bittles."

"This has shown the Post Office we're not making this decision quietly."



Campaigners approach the busy A15 which they would have to cross to get to their nearest Post Office.

And we'll be back for more."

The march to Morion Post Office, which would be the nearest branch if one at Rippingale and Folkingham were to close, took place under police escort along the busy A15.

The road has no footpaths and

villagers have complained that Post Office should be forcing them to make this treacherous journey on a high-speed route in westerly winds.

Also on the march was postmaster Simon Davies, his wife Amanda and their children George and Poppy.

Simon said: "I haven't a clue what we would do if we had to leave but this magnificent show of support has given us new hope. Let's hope the Post Office gets the message."

● To see a video of the protest march visit www.granthamjournal.co.uk

BRANCHES EARMARKED FOR CLOSURE

- Brook Street, Grantham
- Hill Avenue, Grantham
- Old Somerby
- Allington ● Barkston
- Brant Broughton
- Castle Bytham
- Colston Bassett
- Folkingham ● Rippingale
- South Witham
- Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir

Village closure plan is 'ludicrous' say group

CAMPAIGNERS to save Castle Bytham's threatened Post Office have called plans to close their branch "ludicrous" as villagers will be forced to make a 44-mile round trip to access their nearest service.

Recently the Post Office recommended Knapton as the nearest service although there are branches closer to the village.

Villagers claim the proposal ignores every single criteria outlined by watchdog Postwatch when deciding on whether a branch is viable or not.

Cherlene Utman, who runs the Castle Inn, is a member of the newly-formed Save Our Post Office Action Group.

She said: "The fact the Post Office is recommending an alternative facility which is a 44-mile round trip and a day's journey by public transport illustrates how ludicrous this decision is."

"They have ignored every criteria set out by Postwatch. One wonders if the families are in charge of the decision."

Join the fight

HANDS OFF OUR POST OFFICE

THE campaign to save 12 Post Offices in the Grantham area has gathered momentum this week.

We asked Journal readers to let Post Office bosses know exactly what you think of plans to close branches or downgrade services - and 1,800 letters have now been taken from the Journal office and Post Offices. There are only four weeks left to make your views heard and help save the threatened Post Offices before the consultation period ends on November 12. To take part in the protest, pick up a letter from the Journal office, in High Street, or download one from our website at www.granthamjournal.co.uk.

After you have filled it in, send it: FREEPOST to Network Development Manager, c/o National Consultation Team, FREEPOST Consultation Team. You can also e-mail consultation@postoffice.co.uk



Cartoon by Terry Shelton

Politicians add their names to the protest



Conservative Party candidate for Grantham and Stamford Nick Boleas adds his voice to the protest. Photo: SM-BBC7207_064

POLITICIANS are stepping up the fight to help save rural Post Offices in the Grantham area.

On Thursday evening, more than 200 people stood outside Rippingale Post Office to pour their rain and pleaded with their MP Quentin Davies and newly appointed Conservative candidate Nick Boleas to do everything in their power to keep their service up and running.

They have been left devastated after Post Office included Rippingale on a list of branches earmarked for closure or reduced service a fortnight ago.

Labour MP Mr Davies and Mr Boleas visited the village separately. They were greeted with an avalanche of protests, petitions and questions from a concerned crowd and both put their names to

the campaigners' petition.

Sub-probationer Simon Davies said he's been encouraged by the high level of support his Post Office has received. He said: "We're thankful they've taken the time to offer us their support. We're grateful for any pressure they can apply to Post Office."

Elsworth, MP for Stamford and North Hykeham Douglas Hogg has written to the Post Office demanding to know the figures behind the proposals. He has asked for details on branches in Allington, Barkston and Brant Broughton.

● To put your name to the Rippingale petition, go to <http://petitions.petitioners.co.uk/Rippingale>. More details of the campaign can be found at www.rippingale4life.co.uk



Labour MP Quentin Davies signs the petition to keep Rippingale Post Office open.



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The true cost of closures

Subpostmasters threatened with closure claim their profits and the benefits they provide to older people have been miscalculated, writes **Peter Simmonds**

The Post Office last week named the first 180 branches it has earmarked for closure as part of its drive to trim the service of 2,500 branches by the end of 2008.

Some 77 branches in the East Midlands, 58 in Kent and 45 in East Yorkshire, Bassetlaw and North Lincolnshire, are on the list. Another 35 were named as branches which could be replaced by "outreach solutions" – reduced services run from shops, pubs, village halls or mobile offices.

Government figures state that the service is losing £4m a week and being used by four million fewer people than in 2005. But do these facts justify a vast programme of closures in a postal system that has been part of British life since the 17th century?

"There are a lot of other things the government could cut back on instead," says Pat Shelton, manager of the listed Jet Garage in Bunny near Nottingham. "The Post Office is still a vital public service. Especially since they took on a lot of the banking, lots of people don't want to go into town so they can go to a Post Office."

It is not just the branches' profitability and customer numbers that were taken into account in the closure decisions, but also the government's key rule that after the cuts 90% of the UK population should still be within one mile of its nearest branch and 99% within three miles.

Many subpostmasters are not happy with these criteria. Amanda Rayner, subpostmaster and newsagent at the listed branch in Blyton near Gainsbo-



Petitioners congregate outside Rippingale Stores to show support

"I don't really hold out much hope. They say these things are going out to consultation, but it has already been decided"

Amanda Rayner, subpostmaster, Blyton

rough, believes she will have to close her shop if her branch goes.

"The village is not just losing its post office, it will also lose its only shop," she says.

Rashima Masrani of Bidborough Stores in Tunbridge Wells says: "They haven't thought about the older people who can't walk very well. There are two post offices, each around three miles away, but one has no parking and the buses are every two hours. The other is in the middle of nowhere and there is no bus."

Mrs Masrani feels let down by the way in which her branch was assessed, as she believes she has not been given enough time to prove that her branch can be run efficiently.

"We only took over last year," she says. "The Post Office people who interviewed us said they could not see any problems in the immediate future. We bought the shop and the bank lent us money based on what was coming in."

Simon Deane of Rippingale Post Office and General Stores in Lincolnshire, says: "This store had a refit in the middle of

the period when they were taking their figures. Since then we are way ahead of their profitability targets. We also know the Post Office has got its facts wrong. We are 3.2 miles away from the nearest Post Office, not 2.5 as it states."

The closures are subject to a six week public consultation period, giving subpostmasters until 12 November to plead their cases.

With the National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSM) accepting what Post Office staff are briefed to refer to as "network re-invention" it is left to the individual branches to carry the fight.

"I can't believe what the NFSM has said," Mrs Shelton says. Every office *Retail Newsagent* spoke to was preparing to fight for its life through petitions, email campaigns and local MPs, but they are doing so with contrasting attitudes.

"I don't really hold out much hope," says Mrs Rayner. "They say these things are going out to consultation but it has already been decided".

Mrs Masrani says: "We will carry on with the business, but it will be a big blow. We are studying the market to see if there is anything we can do instead."

A bullish Mr Deane, who has already enlisted local MP Quentin Davies and featured on local television news, says: "If anybody is going to survive then it's going to be us."

How effectively this first wave of threatened branches fight their corner will be vital in testing the government's resolve and finding out if the writing really is on the wall for many local post offices.

Week 4

Monday 22nd October



**ITV Calendar News and BBC Look North
include shots of march in daily bulletins**

**BBC Look North refer to Rippingale
in two-way interview with P.O.Spokesman**

Wednesday 24th October



**BBC Radio Lincs record interviews
for 25th October at Post Office user
profiles press briefing**

Press releases for week 4 issued

Week 4 Press release 1

PROFILES

Elderly/Disabled

Rose Doncaster, (73) Dovecot Estate, Rippingale.

Rose is a familiar sight in the village, zipping round on her mobility trike.

She led last week's protest march from Rippingale to Morton – "but I couldn't do that trip by myself, if our Post Office closed."

Rose visits Rippingale PO two or three times a week – she picks up her pension, pays all her bills – electricity, water, phone – and would pay her tv licence there "but they took that away."

"I don't where I would go or what I would do if they closed the Post Office – the bus is no good to me and it only runs once a week anyway. I haven't any other transport to call on."

Business

Glen Cooper (40) and Kate Parker (37) – SL Autos, Main Road (A15) Rippingale.

Glen and Kate run a second hand car parts business. They have a family of four.

One or the other of them use Rippingale Post Office every day with 40-50 parcels per week.

They have a courier service daily for the heavier items like a gearbox, but the lighter items go by post because it's cheaper. Glen says "second hand cars mean the customer's working to a budget – if I had to courier everything it would probably put a couple more pounds on a £10 bill and they'd go elsewhere – I'd go out of business."

He's worked out that if he had to go to the next nearest PO, he'd be doing an extra 6 miles a day by car, 30 miles a week, 1500 miles a year, more outgoings in time, fuel, wear and tear on his transport – probably another £2k a year in overheads and the equivalent of 3 days a year he's not working productively.

Couple with one car

Paul Boyall (37) and Lisa Kell (36) Middle Street, Rippingale.

Paul and Lisa have three children ranging in ages from 17 to 2 and Lisa's expecting another child soon. They have one car but Paul has to use that to get to work, leaving Lisa and her youngest child isolated in their home. She gets to do her big shop at the week-end but uses the village store and PO regularly. "If the Post office closed and that meant the store closing, I don't know what I'd do – attempting to shop by bus into Bourne once a week with a two year old doesn't bear thinking about, but with the new baby as well, I'll be stuck."

Young Couple with no transport

Stef (33) and Michelle (27) Clarke, Middle Street, Rippingale.

Stef and Michelle have three children ranging from 8 to 3 – two of them have special transport to take them to school. They have no car and have to rely on public transport to get out of the village – a once a week bus service to Bourne or to Grantham, 15 miles away.

"We use the Post Office in Rippingale almost every day to withdraw money, pick up child benefits, pay all our bills, and while we're there we use the shop – it has everything and is often cheaper than the big supermarkets," said Stef. "What we'd do if they close I just don't know – we'd be stuck. If we had to walk to Morton or Pointon, it would have to be with the kids – there are no pavements and they're busy, dangerous roads – we couldn't do it. Even if we use the bus, we have to go to our Post Office to draw money out for the trip."

Week 4 Press release 2

Open letter to Mark Partington, Network Development manager, PO Ltd.

Michael Legg, Network Project Team Supervisor, Postwatch
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 Mr. Partington,

The village of Rippingale in Lincolnshire is throwing down a challenge to you to address a public meeting on November 6 in our village hall and to come clean over information used to reach your decision to close our Post Office.

We don't want just anyone from the team of "Network Development Managers," or one of the "National Consultation Team," or one of the PO "External Relations Team," – we want you, Mark Partington, from the "Network Implementation Team," based in Bristol.

You will know that we have already drawn attention to the litany of errors, dishonesty, bad faith, manipulation of access criteria, out-of-date and inaccurate information, lack of business vision and ignorance of County and District housing expansion plans, displayed thus far in the closure process.

As the people who are going to suffer the consequences of a decision we believe has already been reached, in spite of what's claimed to be a public consultation exercise, we have no faith whatsoever that other vital local factors such as availability of public transport, local demographics or impact on the local economy, will be treated any differently.

We believe our Post Office, where business has increased significantly this year, since complete refurbishment, could be a healthy asset in the national Post Office future.

And we simply cannot understand why Rippingale is on the closure list when at least three others in the district patently fail to meet Government-set access criteria. Consultation is a two-way process. We believe we have the right to be told the truth and that Post Office Ltd. - subsidised by taxpayers' money – our money - should come out from behind its wall of anonymity, meet real people, open its books and justify its decision.

The recently launched Post Office tv campaign claims, "We have the trust of the public – we can't let 'em down," – a line used with no apparent sense of irony whatsoever. The people of Rippingale say that you, Mr Partington, have a few amends to make before you earn their trust, but you could go at least part of the way by facing us in our Village Hall on November 6.

Jim Latham
017788-440025/07971-579977
24.10.07.

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Protesters throw down gauntlet to Post Office

Protesters at Rippington have thrown down a challenge to the man responsible for the plan to close its post office.

They have invited Mark Partington, the post office network development manager, to address a public meeting at the village hall on November 6. Residents want the man who signed the closure

plan to face them and explain how he reached his decision.

Phil Rippington, of Friends of Rippington Post Office, said: "We don't want just anyone from the team of network development managers, or one of the national consultation team, or one of the Post Office's external relations team. We want Mark Partington."

Friends of Rippington Post Office believe many errors are included in the

report, which was used to decide the village post office's fate.

Campaigner Jim Latham said that many in the group believe the decision has already been made, despite the official consultation period.

He added: "We believe our post office, where business has increased significantly this year since company refurbishment, could be a healthy asset to the national Post Office future."

"We simply cannot understand why Rippington is on the closure list when at least three others in the district patently fail to meet Government set criteria."

She Rippington said: "We believe we have the right to be told the truth and that Post Office Ltd - subsidised by taxpayers' money, our money - should come out from behind its wall of anonymity, meet real people, open its books and justify its decision."

No final decisions

The Local challenged the Post Office about claims that Rippington Post Office, scheduled for closure, saying it was a growing business.

But a Post Office spokesman refused to comment, saying: "We are not in a position to comment on the finances of individual offices as this is commercially confidential."

"Our proposals for Post Office services in Rippington involve the creation of a new 'outreach' type branch in the area."

"It does not mean the community will lose their Post Office service completely, simply that it will change."

"The fact is that for many post offices, customer numbers are falling and the level of services are increasing to unsustainable levels. In some areas, for example, every single transaction, even buying just one stamp, costs £17 of taxpayers' money."

"Our proposal for Rippington involves opening hours that are far more reflective of customer demand."

"Our proposal retains a service within the village and should not force anyone to travel unnecessarily."

"The details of outreach will be finalised after the end of the public consultation."

Commenting on the impact post office closures can have on the shops they serve, he said: "We are looking at a process that would make it more sub-postmasters aware of other opportunities that may exist."

"All sub-postmasters whose offices are closed will receive compensation; based, on average, on 20 months' remuneration for their business."

"The final decisions will be made on the proposed closures until the public consultation is complete."

MP: 'Fight proposals'

Downing MP John Hayes has called on his constituents to defend their post offices after an announcement that a consultation process for closures will begin in June 2013.

Claiming up to six post offices in his constituency could be at risk, Mr Hayes said: "As with most Government inspired consultations these days, I am concerned that decisions may have already been taken on which local branches are to close in our area with the Government just going through the motions."

"I can assure all my constituents that I will be at the forefront of the battle to save our local post offices from closure."

How closures will affect you

Elderly and disabled resident



Rose Doncaster, of Denest Estate, Rippington, is 72 years old and is a familiar sight in the village, sitting round on her mobility bike.

"I don't know where I would go or what I would do if they closed the Post Office," she said. "The bus is no good to me and it only runs once a week anyway. I have no other transport to rely on."

She led last week's protest march from Rippington to Merton but said: "I couldn't do that trip by myself, if our Post Office closed."

Rose visits Rippington Post Office two or three times a week

where she picks up her pension, pays all her bills - electricity, water, phone - and would pay her 15 licence "but they took that away."

"I don't know where I would go or what I would do if they closed the Post Office," she said. "The bus is no good to me and it only runs once a week anyway. I have no other transport to rely on."

■ Left: Rose Doncaster relies on Rippington Post Office to collect her pension. Photo: SA 8152457, 2043

Some of the people most affected by the planned closure of Rippington Post Office have spoken out this week. The quartet featured on this page each have different reasons for needing the post office in the village. They represent different walks of life but one thing unites them - they all argue strongly that it must be saved...

Couple without own transport

Sheel (55) and Michaela (57) Clarke, of Middle Street, Rippington, have three children aged five to eight.

"The family has no car and relies on public transport to get out of the village."

"We use the post office in Rippington almost every day to withdraw money, pay up credit benefits, pay all our bills and, while we are there, we use the shop."

"It has everything and is often cheaper than the big supermarkets," said Sheel. "What we would do if they close I just don't know."

Businessman and woman

Glen Cooper (40) and Kate Parker (37) run St. Anne's, a second-hand car parts business in the Main Road (A15), Rippington.

"They have a family of four and they use Rippington Post Office every day with 40 to 50 parcels a week."

"They can use a courier service for heavier items like a gearbox, but lighter items go by post because it is cheaper."

Glen said: "Second-hand cars mean the customer is working to a budget. If I have to courier everything it

would probably put a couple more pounds on a bill and I would be out of business."

He has worked out that if he had to go to the next nearest post office, he would be doing an extra six miles a day by car. That's 36 miles a week and 1,900 miles a year.

In terms of fuel and wear and tear on his transport, he estimates it would cost him another £2,000 a year in overheads and in terms of time the equivalent of three days a year.

■ Kate Parker - Her business with Glen Cooper could be ruined if the post office closes. Photo: SA 8152457, 2054



Pregnant mum

Paul Royall (37) and Lisa Kell (36), of Middle Street, Rippington, have three children aged two to 11.

Lisa is expecting another child soon but Paul has to use their car to get to work, leaving Lisa and her youngest child isolated at home. She does her main shop at the weekend but uses the village store and

post office regularly.

She said: "If it closed and that led to the store closing I don't know what I would do."

"Attempting to shop by bus into Bourne with a two-year-old doesn't bear thinking about."

■ Right: Lisa Kell queues at Rippington Post Office with Kate Parker. Both only on the service. Photo: SA 8152457, 2055



Villagers tell how they would suffer if their post office was forced to close



Rippingle villagers are supporting the campaign to save their Post Office.

By Jo Hall

jo.hall@granthamjournal.co.uk

VILLAGERS have been speaking out about how their lives will be affected if Rippingle Post Office is forced to close under plans announced by Post Office earlier this month.

The branch has been the subject of a huge campaign by Friends of Rippingle Post Office, a group which has organised a protest march and petition and gained support from politicians and villagers in a bid to keep it open.

The group says the elderly, disabled people, young families, businesses and people with no transport will be hardest hit by the planned closure.

Pensioner Rose Doncaster, who lives in the village, told the post office to pick up her pension and pay her electricity, water and phone bills.

The 73-year-old said: "I don't know where I would go or what I would do if they closed the post office. The bus is no good to me and it only runs once a week anyway. I have no other transport

Kate Parker, who runs St. Anne, off the A15 at Rippingle, says the office is their lifeline and she needs it.

She, who sends 40 to 50 parcels weekly, says her car runs from the post office every week, and "Social fund can wait the customer's working is a budget. If I had to consider everything it would probably put a couple more pounds on a £10 bill and they'd go elsewhere - I'd go out of business."

The estimates going to the next nearest post office would add another £2,000 in overheads to his business with more miles on his car and fuel costs, and would cost three days' productivity a year.

Families with limited or no transport have said they are not prepared to make the journey to Poleson or Morton along the A15 on foot.

Paul Russell and Lisa Red, who have three children and are expecting another, have one car, which Paul uses to go to work.

Lisa said: "If the post office closed that would mean the store closing. I don't know what I'd do. Attempting to shop by bus takes once a week with a two-year-old doesn't bear thinking of."



Pensioner Rose Doncaster says she would be affected if her local office closed.

BRANCHES EARMARKED FOR CLOSURE

● Brook Street, Grantham ● Hill Avenue, Grantham ● Old Somerby ● Allington ● Barkston ● Brant Broughton
● Castle Bytham ● Colston Bassett ● Folkingham ● Rippingle ● South Witham ● Woolthorpe-by-Belvoir

Campaigners challenge Post Office boss to face them

CAMPAIGNERS have challenged Post Office's network development manager Mark Partington to attend a public meeting in Rippingle in 11 days.

They want Mr Partington, who is heading the public consultation on planned post office closures in the area, to reveal the information used to come up with the proposals.

Phil Rippingle, from Friends of Rippingle Post Office, said: "We believe we have the right to be told the truth and that Post Office, subsidised by taxpayers'

money, should come out from behind its wall of anonymity, meet real people, open its books and justify its decision."

As the Journal went to press yesterday, a Post Office spokesman said Mr Partington had not received the invitation, which was emailed on Wednesday morning. He said: "Once he has received the invitation he will consider it and reply in due course."

The meeting will be held at the village hall on the evening of Tuesday, November 6.

Don't leave it too late to make your voice heard

THERE are less than two weeks left of the public consultation on Post Office closures.

About 2,000 Journal readers have already had their say on the plans to close 12 branches in the Grantham area and the campaign to save them has continued this week.

To add your voice to the campaign, get involved by picking up a letter from the Journal office, in High Street,

or download one from our website at www.granthamjournal.co.uk

After you have filled it in and signed it, send it FREEPOST to Network Development Manager, c/o National Consultation Team, FREEPOST, Canadon Vale.

You can also e-mail consultation@postoffice.co.uk. The consultation ends on November 12.

HANDS OFF OUR Journal CAMPAIGN POST OFFICE

600 sign petition ... just in case

SIX hundred Post Office customers have signed a petition opposing any future moves to close their branch in Canby.

Postmistress Allison Martin started the petition several months ago in anticipation of the closure plan announced earlier this month.

Although Canby is not on the list of branches earmarked for closure, a notice has been placed in the Post Of-

fice saying the branch's future viability is being considered.

The petition has been sent to Post Office to make villagers' feelings known and villagers are encouraged to take part in the consultation, which ends on November 12.

The branch serves several villages, including Frinton, Fulbeck, Brantdon, Carlton Scroop, Hough-on-the-Hill and Cuckney.

Protest march planned

PEOPLE concerned about the planned closure of post offices in the Grantham area are being invited to join a protest march next month.

Campaigners fighting the closure of Brook Street Post Office are planning a demonstration outside the branch on Monday, November 5.

Many of the protesters will be from nearby sheltered housing complexes, including Sleepy Lane, Premier Court and Spire View.

They will protest at 8.30am and say anyone is welcome to join them.

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Week 5

FORPO team start drafting the dossier that they will hand over to Network Consultation team and Postwatch.

Post Office Ltd. decline to attend public meeting but agree to private meeting with FORPO

Week 5 Press release 1

Press Release

PO bosses for face-to-face meeting with protesters Assurance that Rippingale closure decision is NOT a done deal

Senior managers from PO Ltd have agreed a face-to-face meeting with villagers protesting about the planned closure of their local post office.

And they've given an "absolute assurance" that they have not already reached a decision about closing Rippingale Post Office (Lincolnshire).

Friends of Rippingale Post Office had invited Mark Partington, who signed the East Midlands PO closure plan as the PO Network Development Manager and who also runs the PO Network Implementation team, to a public meeting in their village hall next Tuesday (November 6).

Mr. Partington declined that invitation, but suggested a private meeting with Friends the day before (November 5). This "would address some of (Rippingale's) concerns and re-state that we will be retaining a service in the village and trying to allay any other concerns."

Phil Rippingale (correct) for the Friends said "We were concerned that the meeting would just be about the merits of Outreach schemes, which simply do not meet the needs of our village and if this were the case, were ready to turn down the PO invitation ourselves. But we asked them directly to assure us that, contrary to inaccurate, confusing and self-contradictory public closure information, no decision had yet been reached about closing Rippingale PO. The answer was 'absolutely not.' We then asked them if we produced a case, including a business case, for keeping Rippingale open, it would be considered and if accepted would take us to the next, closure review, stage, the answer was 'absolutely yes'. We think this represents some progress."

Time and venue of Monday's meeting will be kept confidential pro tem, but the Friends will make themselves available for interview and/or comment, if required, shortly after it finishes. Details will follow.
Martin Hill, Leader of Lincolnshire County Council will attend as one of the Friends.

The public meeting in Rippingale Village hall will go ahead if only as an update briefing for villagers, but the Friends are now inviting Postwatch, Quentin Davies MP, Nick Boles Conservative PCC for Stamford and Grantham and others as guests. It's likely to be a crowded meeting (8 pm Tuesday November 6, Village Hall, Station Street, Rippingale) and discussions will be relayed outside by PA, to people unable to squeeze inside.

Jim Latham – 01778-440025/07971-579977

Phil Rippingale – 01778-440204

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Week 5 Press release 2

Press Release

MP to join face-to-face meeting between Rippingale villagers and PO Ltd

Post Office Ltd has invited Quentin Davies, MP for Stamford and Grantham, to join a private meeting arranged between themselves and villagers protesting about the proposed closure of their PO branch.

Friends of Rippingale Post Office arranged the face-to-face meeting for next Monday (November 5) as the next stage in their battle to persuade PO Ltd and Postwatch that the case for proposed closure was deeply flawed.

Mr Davies has publicly lent his support to only two groups protesting about closure plans of their local post offices – Rippingale is one of them.

Phil Rippingale (correct) for the Friends, said “Mr Davies’ presence will add strength and credibility to the case we shall be making to PO Ltd at Monday’s meeting.”

Contacts: Jim Latham 01778-440025/07971-579977
Phil Rippingale 01778-440204

No decision made to close post office

By PAUL CLARK

Rippingale campaigners who demanded to meet senior Post Office managers have won an agreement to discuss the planned closure of the village branch.

And the Post Office has given the Friends of Rippingale Post Office an "absolute assurance" that it has not

already reached a decision about closing the village branch.

The protest group had invited Mark Partington, who signed the East Midlands Post Office closure plan, to a public meeting at the village hall on Tuesday.

Mr Partington declined that invitation but suggested a private meeting with the group on Monday.

Campaigner Phil Rippingale said: "We were concerned that the meeting would just be about the mer-

its of outreach schemes, which simply do not meet the needs of our village.

"If this were the case we were ready to turn down the Post Office invitation.

"But we asked them directly to assure us that no decision had yet been reached about closing Rippingale Post Office. The answer was 'absolutely not'.

"We then asked them if we produced a case, including a business case, for keeping Rippingale open it would be considered and, if

accepted, it would take us to the closure review stage. The answer was 'absolutely yes'.

"We think this represents some progress."

The public meeting in Rippingale Village Hall will go ahead as an briefing for villagers but the Friends of Rippingale are inviting Postwatch, MP Quentin Davies, Conservative candidate for Stamford and Grantham Nick Boles and others as guests. The meeting begins at 8pm and will be relayed outside if necessary.

Outreach services inadequate, claim

Outreach services which could replace Rippingale Post Office were described as inadequate by a businessman who uses them elsewhere in Lincolnshire.

Dave Robertson said: "It is a very limited service. It is no use to business.

"There was a round of clo-

sures four years ago and our post office was replaced with an outreach service. Now the office which provides that service could close."

Mr Robertson claims more than 50 offices in the county are under threat and has set up a petition similar to the one in Rippingale.

He said: "These closures are really the thin end of the wedge. We need to get people to sign up even if they are not directly affected themselves. It could be them in the next round.

"It's only a couple of clicks on the Internet."

■ The two online petitions

are at rippingalevillage.co.uk and petitions.pm.gov.uk/lincolnshirepos/

Readers of The Local can also have their say online at bournelocal.co.uk or write to The Local, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire, PE10 9NE, or e-mail news@bournelocal.co.uk

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Private talks on closure

A CAMPAIGN group for Rippingale's postal service is set for showdown talks with Post Office bosses.

Senior Post Office managers, including Mark Partington, who signed a closure plan for post offices in the East Midlands, will have a face-to-face discussion about proposals to close Rippingale post office.

According to the Friends of Rippingale Post Office, the management officials visiting for talks have given an "absolute assurance" that they have not yet made a decision for the village business.

The private meeting is being held on Monday, with both parties keeping the time and location confidential.

County council leader Martin Hill will attend as one of the Friends.

Phil Rippingale, of the campaign group, says he is confident the Friends will have their voice heard.

He said: "We asked them directly to assure us that no decision had yet been reached about closing Rippingale post office. The answer was 'absolutely not'.

"We then asked them if we produced a case for keeping Rippingale open, it would be considered and if accepted would take us to the next, closure review stage. The answer was 'absolutely yes'. We think this represents some progress."

A public meeting on the post office is being held in Rippingale Village Hall on Tuesday at 8pm. The Friends are inviting Postwatch, Quentin Davies MP and Conservative parliamentary candidate Nick Boles.

Stamford Mercury 2nd November

