

Post Office Closure Programme – Edinburgh, The Lothians & South of Scotland
26 proposed closures
32 proposals to replace post offices with outreach services

Post Office Ltd's six week public consultation on post office closures in Edinburgh, The Lothians, and South of Scotland, commenced on 19 August 2008. Post Office Ltd has proposed the closure of **26** branches in this area, replacing a further **32** branches with outreach services. This will leave in place **295** post offices continuing to serve customers in the plan area. I thought it would be helpful if I set out Postwatch Scotland's initial views on the proposals, and our role in the weeks ahead.

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

- Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale
- East Lothian
- Edinburgh East
- Edinburgh North & Leith
- Edinburgh South
- Edinburgh South West
- Edinburgh West
- Linlithgow & East Falkirk
- Livingston
- Midlothian

Eleven weeks before the start of public consultation, Postwatch Scotland received Post Office Ltd's plans for this area on a confidential basis. We scrutinised these and commented on their proposals. As a result of this engagement, Post Office Ltd has amended the list of post offices it is proposing to close in this area. As prescribed by the United Kingdom Government, our focus was on whether Post Office Ltd's proposals met the minimum access criteria for post offices, which aim to ensure communities are within a reasonable distance from a post office. We also examined whether local factors – such as public transport arrangements, relevant topographical features, demographics and the impact on the local economy – had been properly considered.

Following our scrutiny of the proposals, Post Office Ltd has made a number of adjustments to the plan. We welcome these changes. However, we still have some concerns. (Full details can be found in our letter to Post Office Ltd which is on Postwatch Scotland's pages of our website www.postwatch.co.uk). Our final position will be informed by customers' responses to Post Office Ltd. We are therefore keen that customers express their views on these proposals.

Postwatch Scotland wants customers and their representatives to express their opinions about **all** Post Office Ltd's proposals. In particular we urge representatives and customers to give their views to Post Office Ltd on how they will access alternative post offices in the event of Post Office Ltd's proposals going ahead – in particular we would suggest that they provide Post Office Ltd with factual information about the impact for them of increased distance to travel and the availability of public transport to reach alternative post office branches. We also want customers to give their views to Post Office Ltd about the ability of remaining post offices to accommodate the increased numbers of customers in the event of Post Office Ltd's proposed closures.

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

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

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

Tricia Dow, Postwatch Scotland, 9 -10 St Andrews Square, Edinburgh, EH2 2AF

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

Kind regards,

Professor Alan Alexander FRSE
Chair
Postwatch Scotland