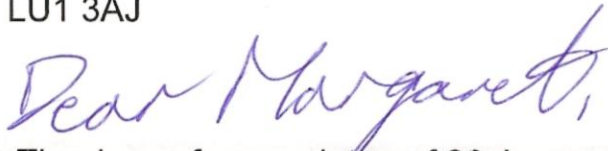


Pat McFaddenMinister of State for Business
Enterprise & Regulatory ReformMargaret Moran MP
Constituency Office
93 Castle Street
Luton
LU1 3AJ

Our ref: DP/119296

Your ref: KING012/060081



21 March 2009

Thank you for your letter of 28 January, on behalf of your constituents, about the closure of Slip End Post Office.

The Government values the role of the Post Office, and wants to ensure that it has a sustainable future. We are investing up to £1.7 billion in the network until 2011, including a £150m annual social network payment to support non-commercial sub post offices, in urban as well as rural areas, from April 2008. The decision to award the contract for the successor to the Post Office card account to the Post Office will further help to secure that future.

Around 75% of sub post offices operate at a loss to (Post Office Ltd) POL because the payments they make to sub postmasters, taken together with the associated network support costs, are higher than the revenues generated for POL by those offices. Therefore, offices can be profitable to sub postmasters, particularly when any associated retail business is also taken into account, but still be loss making for POL. In order to restructure the network in a balanced way and meet the access criteria, some busy offices which make losses for POL but have alternative branches nearby have had to be closed.

The Government has introduced clearly defined national access criteria to maintain a national network and protect vulnerable consumers in deprived urban, rural and remote areas. We would expect that in areas where post offices branches have closed, customers would seek to combine trips to the post office with other journeys for work, leisure or a wider range of goods or services, thus limiting the environmental impact. The access criteria also take account of local demographics which means that POL will need to consider introducing new post office outlets to respond to increases in customer demand as a result of population growth in particular areas. The new access criteria mean that there will be a strategically-planned post office network in this country for the very first time.

With regard to the closure of Slip End Post Office, POL carefully considered all the representations received during the six-week public consultation period but decided to proceed with the closure of the branch. Slip End Post Office was a very small branch with low customer numbers (averaging 100-199 customer sessions per week). Both alternative branches (at Markyate and Farley Estate) are within two miles and car ownership is higher than average in the area. There is a limited bus service between Slip End and Markyate. I also understand that there is a non-fee charging ATM 200 yards away from the Markyate branch.

The network change programme is implemented by POL at a local level and Ministers play no part in decisions on individual post offices.

The network change programme has placed the network on a far firmer footing than before. The challenge is now for the Post Office to innovate so that more people want to use post offices as an outlet of choice.

The Government is examining ways in which the Post Office can increase the range of financial and Government services it provides. The Post Office itself is keen to seek new business and is in discussion with a number of stakeholders about new services it can offer.

*Yours sincerely,
Pat McFadden*

PAT McFADDEN

Response from Steve Barrett:

Email: steve.barrett@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Sorry for the delay in replying.

Speeding vehicles in the Slip End area are regularly targeted for enforcement action. In 2008, 27 separate enforcement visits were made by the police resulting in proceedings against 394 drivers. Slip End Parish Council are working with Beds County Council Highway Dept. and other partners to consider longer term speed reduction measures.

Local Safer Neighbourhood Officers have been working throughout the village to reduce the amount of parking complaints around the lower school and at junctions due to the ignorance of drivers blocking pavements etc. They have written letters to the parents of children from the lower school, put up posters in pubs and at junctions and carried out school patrols to advise drivers about their parking. Those who fail to heed warnings will receive a fixed penalty ticket.

The standards of the "Policing Pledge", aims for the police to reach members of the public living in rural areas like Slip End requiring immediate response within 20 minutes. This standard is being met 92% of the time. Officers are not necessarily deployed from Leighton Buzzard Police Station and are as likely to be patrolling much closer to the village.

Thanks

Insp. Steve Barrett