

AI refers

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Post Office Ltd  
c/o National Consultation Team  
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WD18 8ZW

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

E-mail:

Your ref:

Our ref:

Cllr Mrs J Geddes

CR7/GN02/SH

11 November 2003

Dear

## POST OFFICE CLOSURES – STANWIX BRANCH

As a Carlisle City Councillor representing Stanwix Urban Ward in which the sub-post office is due for closure I would like to make you aware of the following facts:

There are 1,700 pensioners in Stanwix of which 676 are between the age of 75 and 90 and 76 are over the age of 90 all of which I consider to be vulnerable people.

Of the 2879 properties in Stanwix 319 are entitled to Council Tax benefit.

Of 8170 people who opted to pay their Council Tax at Post offices, 200 of these opted to pay at Stanwix Post Office.

In addition more than 1,000 students attend Cumbria Institute of the Arts which is in close proximity to the Stanwix Post Office many using the banking and bill payment facilities.

Approximately 1500 children and young people who will be eligible for child benefit payments, parents who contact the child benefits centre to register their request for a Post Office card account are actively discouraged in doing so.

The proposed branch closure leaflet detailing how far it is to the next nearest branch quotes 0.8 / 0.9 / 1.2 miles along "undulating terrain" which the Oxford Dictionary states "gentle rise or fall", obviously no-one from the Post Office has walked up Stanwix Bank

which is considerably challenging to the fit and healthy. I note that the Scotch Street post office is 0.4 of a mile to the main Warwick Road post office and although I understand this is a very busy branch I wondered why this branch was retained when services were easily accessible from the main post office.

A big worry of the people of Stanwix is the fact that the sub-post office is the anchor unit in an area of retail outlets, which benefit from the footfall to the post office. Will they survive when the post office has gone? The post office service if it were to include car tax payment facility would considerably improve the business.

Although the current Post Master is willing to retire, there is a possible solution, John Rogers of Stanwix News has said that he would be willing to take on the Post Office business in his current premises in order to retain the facility as he feels that it is essential to the people of Stanwix.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Mrs J Geddes

Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder

**Copies to:** Post watch, 28 Grovenor Gardens, LONDON, SW1W 0TT

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Your ref:  
Our ref: 95039

13 November 2003

Dear Councillor Geddes

## Proposed Post Office Closure- Stanwix branch

Thank you for contacting us about the proposed closure of Stanwixx Post Office. As the independent consumer watchdog, Postwatch wants to understand your concerns and is keeping a very close watch on all post office closure proposals.

I will pass your comments on Stanwix Post Office to our Network Advisor who is happy to hear from local consumers.

As this post office closure is still in public consultation until 11<sup>th</sup> December 2003. After this time Post Office Ltd will make a decision on the future of this branch.

I enclose an information sheet detailing Postwatch's policy on Post Office Closures, including points that are taken into account when deciding if the closure should be opposed.

Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Network Reinvention Assistant

*Postwatch was set up by Parliament to further the interests of all postal services users. Under the Code of Practice negotiated between Postwatch and Post Office Limited, we are consulted on all post office closures, relocations and conversions. For more information go to [www.postwatch.co.uk](http://www.postwatch.co.uk)*

Customer complaints T 08456 013265  
Postwatch Northern England, Devere House  
Vicar Lane, Little Germany, Bradford BD1 5AH  
F 01274 230042  
E [north@postwatch.co.uk](mailto:north@postwatch.co.uk) W [www.postwatch.co.uk](http://www.postwatch.co.uk)

The Consumer Council for Postal Services



## **Why isn't Postwatch opposing all closures?**

With or without the urban reinvention programme, subpostmasters will leave the network. The real question is should Postwatch stand by and let this happen or should we take an active role in a programme of managed change?

This is a chance to look at an area and its post office provision in a systematic, logical and analytical way. Post Office Ltd must concentrate on taking poorly located and under-performing branches out of the network.

Up to £30 million will be available to subpostmasters in the form of grants to improve the remaining branches. Post Office Ltd expects the amount of a typical grant to be between £5,000 and £10,00. Investment in the remaining offices can make them more attractive and accessible and we will be lobbying hard to make this happen.

A more detailed Postwatch brief on this issue is available on our website – [www.postwatch.co.uk](http://www.postwatch.co.uk) - under policy documents - "The Urban Network Reinvention Programme".

## **Post Offices in urban deprived areas**

Post Office Ltd has said it is very unlikely to close a post office in an urban deprived area unless there is an alternative within half a mile. Postwatch recognises that post offices in urban deprived areas are especially important to their customers. We will examine any proposals in these areas very carefully and will campaign against a closure if it leaves local people without access to postal services.

## **Temporary Closures**

From time to time post offices close because the subpostmaster retires or resigns. These types of closure are temporary and in most cases Post Office Ltd is able to reopen or relocate the post office within a short period.

Postwatch monitors this process and ensures the Code of Practice (on post office branch relocation, closure and conversion) is followed.

## **Rural post offices**

The Government has asked Post Office Ltd to do all it can to prevent closures of rural post offices. We firmly support this policy. A Post Office Ltd team of Rural Transfer Advisors help retain or reopen post offices in rural areas when the subpostmaster resigns or retires or wants to use the property for other uses.



We are pleased to note that the annual rate of rural post office closures has slowed and that there have been quite a number of reopenings.

Sometimes it is very difficult to find anyone prepared to run a post office in an area. In this case we would ask the post office to provide alternative access through satellite or mobile post offices

There are also a number of schemes and grants available to support rural post offices but Postwatch believes more help from the Government is urgently needed and it has been clear since the Cabinet Office Report in June 2000, that Government financial support for rural post offices would have to be made available.

## **POST OFFICE CLOSURES**

### **Urban post offices**

Post Office Ltd tells us there are too many urban post offices competing for too little business. Subpostmasters aren't making enough money and are shutting their shops. Post Office Ltd says that by closing some post offices the remaining ones in an area will be strengthened and will stay in business.

Postwatch is aware that every closure of a post office inconveniences its customers. However, we recognise that change is necessary if we want to ensure that in the long-term there is a network of viable post offices providing customers with good access to postal services.

Postwatch therefore plans to examine every proposed post office closure. We will need to be reassured that there are other post offices in the locality that customers can get to without major difficulty and that they provide good facilities and services.

We have agreed with Post Office Ltd that it will consult widely on each of its closure proposals to ensure that customers' interests are represented.

### **What Postwatch will do**

Postwatch does not have the power to overturn a Post Office Ltd decision but we will be fully consulted and have our views taken into account.

For every planned closure, Postwatch will investigate all relevant factors including:

- accessibility of nearby post offices;
- transport links;
- customer services provision at nearby post offices including disabled access/facilities and product availability; and
- ability of nearby post offices to handle increased customers numbers - counter positions, queuing, etc.

Postwatch will strongly oppose Post Office Ltd closure proposals if customers face excessive difficulty accessing postal services. However, we will not oppose all closures on principle.

Postwatch will also, where necessary, press for improvements and upgrades to post offices near the closing branch to enhance customer service and make postal facilities more accessible.