

MP Drop-in Session

Wednesday 10 December, 16.00 - 18.00

Dining Room B, House of Commons

This briefing comprises:

- **Background**
- **List of acceptances**
- **Horizon: details of business improvements**
- **Constituency issues raised by MPs on acceptance list.**
- **Update on Post Offices on the Parliamentary Estate**

Background

We have invited MPs to join us to find out what investment in the Post Office means for their constituency.

We will have a sheet for each MP/constituency with NT/CT numbers and branch names.

The following banners will be displayed in Dining Room B

- Christmas infographic with UK-wide NT stats
- Keep Calm and Carry On Banking ad.

Jo Swinson will look in between 4.30pm and 5.30pm.

Acceptances

Name	Party	constituency	Comment
Alan Reid	Liberal Democrat	Argyll and Bute	Active member of All Party PO Group, POCA PQs
Andrew Bridgen	Conservative	North West Leicestershire	Horizon campaigner
Andrew Gwynne	Labour	Denton and Reddish	
Andrew Jones	Conservative	Harrogate and Knaresborough	
Andrew Stunell	Liberal Democrat	Hazel Grove	
Angus MacNeil	Scottish National Party	Na h-Eileanan An Iar	
Ann McKechin	Labour	Glasgow North	
Anne McGuire	Labour	Stirling	
Bill Wiggin	Conservative	North Herefordshire	
Brandon Lewis	Conservative	Great Yarmouth	Minister for Housing, DCLG
Caroline Nokes	Conservative	Romsey and Southampton North	PPS to Mark Harper at DWP
Catherine McKinnell	Labour	Newcastle upon Tyne North	Shadow Treasury Minister, junior but wide ranging role across Treasury briefs

Christopher Heaton-Harris	Conservative	Daventry	
George Young	Conservative	North West Hampshire	
Grahame Morris	Labour	Easington	
Guy Opperman	Conservative	Hexham	
Iain McKenzie	Labour	Inverclyde	
Ian Davidson	Labour/Co-operative	Glasgow South West	
Ian Murray	Labour	Edinburgh South	Shadow Postal Affairs Minister
James Arbuthnot	Conservative	North East Hampshire	Horizon campaign
Jason McCartney	Conservative	Colne Valley	
Jim Fitzpatrick	Labour	Poplar and Limehouse	
Jo Swinson	Liberal Democrat	East Dunbartonshire	Postal Affairs Minister
Jim McGovern	Labour	Dundee West	
Jim Shannon	DUP	Strangford	
John Pugh	Liberal Democrat	Southport	
Lindsay Roy	Labour	Glenrothes	
Lorraine Fullbrook	Conservative	South Ribble	
Mike Gapes	Labour/Co-operative	Ilford South	
Nigel Adams	Conservative	Selby and Ainsty	
Paul Beresford	Conservative	Mole Valley	
Peter Aldous	Conservative	Waveney	
Phil Wilson	Labour	Sedgefield	
Richard Graham	Conservative	Gloucester	Joint chair of All Party PO Group, very supportive
Robert Flello	Labour	Stoke-on-Trent South	
Robert Smith	Liberal Democrat	West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine	Member of All Party PO Group
Robin Walker	Conservative	Worcester	PPS to Liz Truss at DEFRA, BIS Select Committee Member
Ronnie Campbell	Labour	Blyth Valley	
Rosie Cooper	Labour	West Lancashire	
Sammy Wilson	Democratic Unionist Party	East Antrim	
Therese Coffey	Conservative	Suffolk Coastal	Government Whip Very supportive
Tim Loughton	Conservative	East Worthing and Shoreham	
Alan Haselhurst	Conservative	Saffron Walden	
Angela Watkinson	Conservative	Hornchurch and Upminster	
Chris Ruane	Labour	Vale of Clwyd	
Jake Berry	Conservative	Rossendale and Darwen	PPS to Grant Schapps, Tory Party Chairman

James/Jim Paice	Conservative	South East Cambridgeshire	
Karl McCartney	Conservative	Lincoln	
Luciana Berger	Labour/Co-operative	Liverpool Wavertree	
Martin Vickers	Conservative	Cleethorpes	
Mike Crockart	Liberal Democrat	Edinburgh West	

Horizon

Key messages in separate document.

Branch User Forum

- Following the publication of Second Sight's Report last year, Post Office created a new Branch User Forum as a way for subpostmasters and others to raise issues and insights around business processes, training and support,
- This feeds directly into the organisation's thinking at the highest level.
- One of the tasks for this forum is to review support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of the Post Office.

Improvements to training and support already introduced

- The content of the training provided to new postmasters has been refreshed with more focus on balancing and how to look for discrepancies when they occur within branch. A further review of this is being undertaken as part of the on-line training scheduled to go live in pilot in January 2015.
- A revised balancing guide has been produced to help new postmasters balance their accounts correctly; this is a hand-out from the initial training provided to new postmasters and assistants where appropriate. A further best practice guide to identify discrepancies in branch has been produced. This is a hand-out at on-site training for new postmasters and follow up visits where branches are experiencing balancing difficulties. A further review of this is being undertaken as part of the on-line training scheduled to go live in pilot in January 2015.
- A refreshed approach to supporting branches with discrepancy issues has been introduced by the Branch Support Team. Where NBSC is unable to resolve a caller's query/issue the Branch Support Team is able to provide more in depth telephone support to the branch. This team will also assess whether on-site additional support or further training is required and will organise if appropriate.
- The volume of calls from branches is now assessed by the Network Business Support Centre (NBSC) with the branches that have a higher than average call volume being proactively contacted by the Branch Support team to understand the reason for the high level of calls; establish what extra support can be offered and whether any changes need to be made to training etc. The response has been positive from the branches contacted to date.
- Compliance testing is a precursor to new Subpostmaster training and is an annual regulatory requirement for all branch staff. Traditionally this training and testing has been delivered by

paper workbooks. After a successful pilot, this is now being provided on-line to the branch network. User satisfaction in the pilot scored very highly at 88%.

Training and support improvements in development

- On line training is currently being developed for new postmasters that will reduce the requirement for classroom training and enable postmasters to complete the training when it's convenient for them and at their own pace
- Competency will be assessed throughout the on-line training with the requirement for additional training assessed on completion of the initial training. The on-line training is being developed and tested by current postmasters and branch staff and will launch in pilot in January 2015.
- The on-line training will be available to all branch staff to enable refresher training to be accessed by experienced branch staff and as a training package for postmasters to access for new employees.
- A new approach has been developed to analyse the calls received by NBSC identify the root cause of the issue; to identify the solution for the branch in the first instance and implement wider business changes if appropriate eg content of and method of delivering new product training

Recent constituency issues

Bill Wiggin, North Herefordshire

- Letter of apology sent to MP by NT Area manager regarding Moreton on Lugg Post office which had converted to a local but letter had not been sent confirming (hence apology).
- A very large rural constituency. There are currently 6 branches temp closed
- Additionally he raised some concerns regarding the planned changes to opening hours for an outreach (Mordiford) – hours reduced BUT days adjusted to suit local requirements (to include market day). Knock on impact to Woolhope outreach (change of day). Reduced hours at Mordiford based on reduced customer sessions.

John Pugh, Southport

- Southport Crown franchise – was a very involved and attended forum and private briefing with SSM and accepted invite for a branch visit following franchise. This was a WHSmith franchise and the only one in the first phase to be on an upper floor. Lift refurbished, maintenance contract and provision for serving disabled customers in the event of a lift breakdown were all noted.
- There was an issue around data protection following on from the franchise when contractors clearing out the crown branch disposed of sensitive waste. This was front page news locally including a quote from the MP. SSM sat on the resolution team conf call and handled stakeholder enquiries – all affected people contacted and letters of apology set.
- Has a home shopping return trial in his constituency.

Robert Fello, Stoke-on-Trent South

- Has a home shopping return trial in his constituency.
- one long-term temporary closure – wood Farm closed since 2009.
- 6 branches are in the leavers process.

Robin Walker, Worcester

- Dines Green - branch relocated to a portacabin to enable the council to develop a new retail centre. Reopening planned for Jan 2015 but the developer has recently stated that this will be delayed. Initial suggestions was Feb 15 but likely that this will be later than this. This has been a long standing issue which also involved a precautionary suspension of the spmr and has since been operated by a temp spmr who will be appointed once the building is ready. A success story in many ways, not least because it is the result of partnership working with the Council resulting in the provision of a temp unit to ensure continuity of service.

Luciana Berger, Liverpool Wavertree

- Fairfield – was originally progressing as a BAU case as was/is a temporary closure and an applicant successfully interviewed. Due to PNOs high start up costs, he sought grant funding via a growth fund through the Council. Unfortunately this delayed the project and instead of it progressing as a SPSO, it had to progress as a new model local. Normally this would be fine BUT due to the risk assessment it had to be a two position screened local branch. As there is no solution for this currently and a trial/pilot is underway, the project could not proceed. Previous discussions around this original proposal were favourable and meeting held with MP and Councillors - MP was happy to officially open the branch. SSM has written to model owner seeking a solution and has updated MP.
- Old Swan Crown branch was a CTP franchise proposal – this has recently been withdrawn from the franchise programme and is now an invest branch. MP is aware.

Jim Shannon, Strangford

- Is becoming frustrated by the lack of pace in getting two branches in his constituency open. West Winds (modelled as a Community) and Greyabbey.
- We are still waiting on all the financial details from the new operator in West Winds. The new operator has sat on this for about 6 weeks. March opening at the very earliest.
- A new operator for Greyabbey has been appointed. This follows us letting the previous sub-postmistress go. She had been robbed several times and was regularly not turning up to open the branch. The new operator has about £8k of enabling works that need to be completed and given the fact that her income is likely to be around £2k she is now reluctant. The NT team are seeing if they can free up any funds to allow this to take place.

Andrew Gwynne, Denton and Reddish.

- There is an active Flag Case from Mr Gwynne. He has nominated Denton as the shabbiest branch in Britain. Our response is pending.

Andrew Stunnell, Hazel Grove

- Has raised a generic enquiry about NT and the way it's being implemented.

Rosie Cooper, West Lancashire

- Raised a query about product range in Locals.

Jason McCartney , Colne Valley

- Salendine Nook – following conversion to the Local Model the agent had been campaigning for a second terminal in his branch. He has a back office terminal for mails but wanted a second position in the retail area. His customer sessions are 956 a week and don't warrant the second terminal. We have sent the Retail and NT Teams in to work with him to provide support and how to make the most of the back office terminal and given him advice on his retail and promoting services such as Drop and Go.
- The MP launched a hosted outreach service for us at Netherthong in January 2014. Unfortunately the agent ceased the service a few weeks later as she couldn't manage the outreach and her core branch. We have been unable to find a new core subpostmaster.

Post Offices in the Parliamentary Estate

- The Palace of Westminster currently incurs no costs for these 3 Post Office counters (Central Lobby, Members' Lobby, Portcullis House). The approximate cost of service provision is £383,000, the bulk of which relates to staffing. Revenue generated is approximately £116,000 leaving a deficit of approximately £267,000. Business is very slow after 19.00, averaging fewer than 5 customers per hour until close of business.
- We're working with the ShEX team, and the Palace of Westminster Administration and Facilities Team to review the overall service offered and how this will be managed under the terms of a new and bespoke contract.
- The intention is that the current POL service will continue but at no cost to Post Office P&L by invoicing The Palace of Westminster for all costs less any income generated.
- Our preferred solution is consistent with the over-arching objective of achieving a commercially sustainable Post Office, and the same approach has been taken with the authorities of The Scottish Parliament.
- This means that whilst a degree of additional service is provided beyond that of a standard Post Office; POL do not bear the losses of the branch.