



Ms Mary Creagh MP - Member of Parliament for Wakefield

2 August 2016

Dear Ms Creagh

**Wakefield Crown Post Office® branch
1-3 Providence Street, Wakefield, WF1 3BD**

Decision - move to new premises & branch modernisation

I'm writing to confirm that following a period of local public consultation and review we have made the decision to proceed with the proposal to move the above Post Office into the WHSmith store at Trinity Walk Shopping Centre, Wakefield, WF1 1QS. The branch will be operated by WHSmith High Street Ltd under a franchise agreement.

This change is being made as part of the continuing modernisation of our network, to achieve commercial sustainability and will help us to provide services that will meet customer needs and safeguard future service provision in Wakefield, now and for the long-term.

Public consultation feedback:

During the public consultation period we received 47 individual representations from customers and local representatives. We also held a customer forum to talk to customers about our plans and answer questions.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to let us have their comments and provide information. All the feedback we received helped us to better understand the views of customers and their representatives and this was taken into account along with all other relevant factors, when making our decision.

The main areas of feedback were around the distance to the proposed new location; car parking availability, including disabled parking; the size and ability of the proposed new premises to cope with additional customers; accessibility within the store; the number of serving positions; the loss of the biometric enrolment service and the potential loss of the ATM.

However some customers told us that they liked the longer opening hours, the proposed new location as it was more central and that they would also find parking easier.

We were also asked about the level of investment in the existing branch over the past few years. Much of this work was overdue maintenance, essential improvement to security and upgrading facilities for customers to maintain a safe and professional environment. Some of the expenditure has been on fixtures and fittings which we will be seeking to re-use in other franchised branches.

Past investment in our Crown branches has produced significant benefits for the whole network of 11,500 branches and for our customers, promoting the Post Office brand with new, modern environments on the High Street and helping to reduce losses in our Crown network from £46 million three years ago, to a current break-even position.

However our network cannot be static and investment levels have always taken into account the continual review of our network, to adapt to fast-changing customer demands. Despite some operational changes and new products and services being introduced over recent years, at some of our Crown branches we have not been able to sufficiently reduce the decline in business and the branch cannot be sustained indefinitely as it is.

Getting to the new location:

With any relocation it is inevitable that whilst some customers will have an easier journey to the new location, regrettably others will have further to travel. We carefully considered factors such as the local terrain, parking or transport links when developing our proposal. We also took account of whether there were any particular local road traffic issues that may negatively impact accessibility.

We recognise that due to the shopping centre location and pedestrianisation of the area, car users won't be able to park directly outside the new branch and in light of the feedback received we further reviewed local parking arrangements.

Trinity Walk Shopping Centre has a 1000 space car park, with designated disabled parking and wider parent & child parking bays located on the ground level near Sainsbury's. Parking charges apply to all vehicles, including Blue Badge holders. However the car park offers a maximum of 15 minutes free discretionary parking for dropping off or collecting people from the centre.

Due to the geography of the shopping area, roadside parking is more difficult but on Craven Street, which is to the rear of Trinity Walk approximately 250 metres away, there is a designated disabled parking bay, with space for four cars.

A concern was raised around the reliability of the Trinity Walk Shopping Centre lifts and escalators. Although this is not within our control, we have spoken to the management company, who advised that there are no general problems but individual issues would be resolved as quickly as possible.

We realise that parking close by is important for many people, including disabled people or those with limited mobility. We will be contacting the Council to see if any specific consideration can be given to disabled parking provision or providing a safe drop off point nearer to the branch.

Wakefield is also well served by public transport, with services running to and from the surrounding area. Many routes serving the area around the existing branch run to the bus station, which is approximately 500 metres from the new site. There is also a regular, free bus service (freecitybus) linking key locations around Wakefield city centre, including Trinity Walk, the rail and bus stations. More information on this service and route can be found at www.wymetro.com/BusTravel/freetownandcitybuses/Wakfield

Customers may also be interested to know that Shopmobility Wakefield offer free wheelchair and scooter loan and operate from The Ridings Shopping Centre, approximately 0.4 miles from Trinity Walk. The freecitybus route also stops at The Ridings. More information about the Shopmobility scheme is available at www.ridingscentre.com/visitor-information/shopmobility/

In conclusion, I remain satisfied that customers in Wakefield will continue to have good access to Post Office services.

What the new branch will look like:

We know that the Post Office plays an important part in the lives of customers, including our elderly and disabled customers. We have a long and successful relationship with WHSmith and we'll be working together to provide a new, modern Post Office with sufficient room for Post Office and shop customers.

Customer access both into and within the store will meet Post Office Ltd.'s own accessibility standards and all applicable legislation. Externally the store front will include Post Office signage and an opening hour's board. The entrance into the store is level and the entrance doors will be kept open during opening hours, for ease of access. There will be directional signage, with a clear route taking customers from the entrance door through to a newly designated Post Office area, which will extend along the right hand side of the premises through to the rear.

To make sure there is sufficient space for Post Office customers, including wheelchair users, to move around the store and reach the Post Office area without hindrance the entrance area and shopping aisles will be kept free of obstructions. Aisles will also be widened where needed.

The Post Office counter will be built to Post Office specifications and will include lighting to industry standards, low level counters, PIN pads and hearing loops. There will be space for people to wait for service and customer seating will also be provided.

The number of serving positions is based on current and future predicted business levels and the new branch will have one traditional style, floor to ceiling screened serving position and three open plan positions. Open plan serving positions are successfully used across our Post Office network, as an alternative to the more traditional style positions. There is still a partitioned screen but this is lower, helping to provide a more personal service and discreet conversations when needed. There will also be two self-service kiosks where customers can buy postage, including Parcelforce services and most pre-paid returns, send most items of mail, pay for bills and E-top ups.

Full posting facilities will be available in branch. We have informed Royal Mail about our proposal for Wakefield so they can give consideration to the provision of on street posting facilities in the area.

Following the move, the Post Office will also be open for longer including Saturday afternoon and Sunday providing customers with more flexibility around their visits.

I'm satisfied that customer needs will be adequately met but we will continue to monitor customer usage at the branch following the move and will work with WHSmith to make sure service standards are maintained.

Access to Post Office services and products:

The same wide range of services will continue to be available with the exception of the Biometric Enrolment Service for the Home Office and a cash machine.

In our proposal we advised you that customers requiring the Biometric Enrolment Service would need to travel to Leeds, 11 miles away. In light of feedback received, we have reviewed this further and the service will now relocate to Ossett Post Office, Towngate, Ossett, WF5 9AA, approximately 4 miles away. The new Wakefield Post Office will continue to offer the DVLA Photocard Driving Licence renewal and Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence application services.

For reasons outside Post Office Limited's control, we cannot yet confirm whether or not a cash machine will be available at the new branch. The provision of a cash machine is subject to survey by our cash machine provider, operational considerations and relevant planning permission. If this is not possible or won't happen before the move, personal banking and Post Office Card Account customers can continue to make cash withdrawals free of charge at the main counter. Alternatively Kirkgate Post Office, 190 Kirkgate, WF1 1UE approximately 0.8 miles away, has a 24 hour Post Office cash machine.

Staff, who will work exclusively in the Post Office, will be trained to provide information on financial products, including savings and insurances. Product information will also be available for customers to take away with them. Our website and specialist customer helplines also provide information on what's available and how to make a purchase.

Further details of the new branch, including opening hours, are provided in the enclosed information sheet.

Customer service training and existing Crown staff:

WHSmith already successfully operate over 100 Post Office branches and have satisfied us that they are equally as committed to delivering excellent customer service as we are. Any person employed to work in Wakefield Post Office will be trained to the highest Post Office standards. Just as with branches we run ourselves, the branch will receive on-going training on products and services, as well as general operational and service related matters. Post Office area managers will work with the WHSmith team to provide support, in the same way they already do in existing Post Office branches operated by us or other retail partners.

In respect of our people working at the existing branch, we have a strong track record of supporting our people through change. We will do all that we can to find a solution that works for each individual within the options available.

Conclusion:

After careful consideration of the feedback received, I am confident that the new branch will be suitably located and that it will continue to meet customer needs and deliver an excellent service, whilst helping to provide future sustainability for the branch and maintaining a Post Office presence in Wakefield. The current branch will close at 17:30 on Wednesday 7 September 2016, with the new branch opening at 09:00 on Thursday 8 September 2016.

You can also find a copy of this letter on our website at postofficeviews.co.uk. When entering the website you will be asked to enter the code for this branch: **02332399**.

Yours sincerely



Roger Gale
General Manager – Crown and WHSmith network

How to contact us:

🌐 postofficeviews.co.uk

✉️ comments@postoffice.co.uk

☎️ Customer Helpline: 03457 22 33 44
Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

✉️ FREEPOST Your Comments

We've published our final plan On-line, to see it scan here.

If you don't have a QR code scanner on your phone, you can find one in your app store.



This communication process has been agreed with the independent statutory consumer watchdog, which in Great Britain is Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, and in Northern Ireland, the Consumer Council, and is being carried out in line with our Code of Practice for changes to the Post Office network, which we have agreed with them. If you'd like copies of the Code they are available in branch, by contacting us or on our website – postofficeviews.co.uk. If you think that the process has not been properly followed and wish to make a complaint, then please write to us or email us via the contact details included in our posters and letters and let us know why. We'll examine your complaint and respond to you as soon as we can. We will provide you with the relevant contact points for the consumer watchdog, so if you are still not satisfied when you have received our response, you can ask them for their assistance.

To get this information in larger print, audio or braille, please contact the customer helpline on 03457 22 33 44 or textphone 03457 22 33 55.

Wakefield Post Office information sheet															
Address	WHSmith Trinity Walk Shopping Centre Wakefield WF1 1QS														
Opening hours	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Mon</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tue</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wed</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thu</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fri</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sat</td> <td>09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sun</td> <td>10:00 – 14:00</td> </tr> </table>	Mon	09:00 – 17:30	Tue	09:00 – 17:30	Wed	09:00 – 17:30	Thu	09:00 – 17:30	Fri	09:00 – 17:30	Sat	09:00 – 17:30	Sun	10:00 – 14:00
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Products & Services	The same wide range of products and services will still be available, with the exception of the Biometric Enrolment Service for the Home Office. DVLA and SIA application services will be available. For reasons outside Post Office Limited's control, we cannot yet confirm whether a cash machine will be available at the new branch. The provision of a cash machine is subject to a survey by our cash machine provider and relevant planning permission.														
Serving positions	There will be four serving positions in total; one screened and three open plan. The total number of serving positions has been based on current and future predicted business levels.														
Additional facilities	Two self-service kiosks for mails transactions including Parcelforce, most home shopping returns, E Top-Ups, and a range of bill payments.														
Access & facilities	Access into WHSmith is level, with the entrance doors being kept open during store opening times. Low level serving counters, a low level writing desk and hearing loops will be available.														
How far away is it?	Approximately 500 metres away from the current branch, along mainly level terrain with slight inclines downhill in some sections between the two sites.														
Transport & parking	<p style="text-align: center;">Parking</p> <p>Trinity Walk Shopping Centre car park with 1000 spaces and 22 blue badge bays within 200 metres of the new premises.</p> <p>Disabled parking bay for up to four cars on Craven Street, approx. 250 metres away.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Buses</p> <p>Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas. Wakefield City bus station on Union Street, is approximately 500 metres away.</p>														
Retail	Stationery, books and news														
Date of move	8 September 2016														