

**SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD**

**8<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2008**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY  
P. GRAHAM**

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# **1 POST OFFICE LTD** **AREA PLAN PROPOSAL FOR SOUTH AND WEST WALES**

## **Purpose of the Report**

To receive a presentation from representatives of the Royal Mail, Postwatch Wales and the National Federation of Sub Postmasters on Post Office Ltd's network change programme, its Area Plan Proposal for South and West Wales and the specific proposals for Neath Port Talbot.

## **Post Office Ltd**

In May 2007, following a national public consultation, the UK Government announced a range of proposed measures to modernise and reshape the Post Office Network and put it on a more stable footing for the future. Post Office Ltd has now put in place a Network Change Programme to implement the measures proposed by the Government. This involves the compulsory compensated closure of up to 2500 Post Office branches, out of a current network of 14,000 branches, with the introduction of 500 outreach service points to mitigate the impact of the proposed closures.

The Government has prescribed minimum access criteria which the Post Office must apply to the programme:

- 99% of the UK population to be within 3 miles and 90% of the population to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office branch;
- 99% of the total population in deprived urban areas across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office branch;
- 95% of the total urban population across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest Post Office branch;
- 95% of the total rural population across the UK to be within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office branch;
- 95% of the population of a postcode district to be within 6 miles of their nearest Post Office branch.

Post Office Ltd has also taken account of the following factors in developing the Network Change Programme:

- The proximity of nearby branches to those proposed for closure;
- The number of customers using particular branches;
- The size and ability of nearby branches to absorb extra customers;
- The commercial implications of any decision for Post Office Ltd;
- The availability of public transport;
- Alternative access to key Post Office services such as cash withdrawals;
- Local demographics;
- The impact on local economies.

The Royal Mail representatives will explain the Programme in more detail and how they have applied the above criteria and factors in developing their South and West Wales proposals.

### **Postwatch Wales**

Postwatch is the independent watchdog for postal services. Postwatch is working with Post Office Ltd and local communities throughout the Change Programme to help secure the best outcome for customers.

Prior to the start of the public consultation Postwatch received the Post Office's plans for South and West Wales on a confidential basis. Postwatch has scrutinised the proposals, provided initial comments and has had constructive discussions with the Post Office. They focused on the Government's minimum access criteria and examined other local factors such as public transport arrangements, topographical features, demographics and the impact on the local economy. Following this scrutiny, the Post Office made adjustments to the proposals, which were welcomed by Postwatch.

Postwatch still have some concerns and welcome customers and their representatives giving their views and providing information about the practical difficulties facing customers in accessing services if their local branch closes.

Post Office Ltd also started confidential commercial discussions with affected sub postmasters prior to the public consultation period.

## **Neath Port Talbot**

Post Office Ltd proposes closing 8 Post Office branches in Neath Port Talbot. These are:

Aberdulais PO, Ger-yr-Afon, Cefn-yr-Allt, Aberdulais  
Abergwynfi PO, 69 High Street, Abergwynfi  
Cwmgors PO, 17 Heol y Gors, Cwmgors  
Cymmer Afan PO, 128 Margam Street, Port Talbot  
Jersey Marine PO, 11 School Road, Jersey Marine  
Leonard Street PO, 1 Leonard Street, Neath  
Maesyffynnon PO, 1/2 Chain Walk, Glynneath  
Neath Abbey PO, 19 New Road, Neath Abbey

The branch access reports in respect of these branches are attached at Appendix 1. These reports give information about branch proposed for closure and the alternative branches for customers. The information includes details of the local population, hours of opening of the branch, the average number of customers per week, access arrangements, public transport, etc.

There are no proposals for any outreach services for Neath Port Talbot in the current proposals.

## **The Council's Response**

Officers are currently preparing the Council's formal response to the Post Office's proposals, which must be submitted by 14<sup>th</sup> July. The response will be informed by an analysis of the technical details presented in the plan together with other relevant demographic information; by today's discussion and debate; and, by information provided by elected Members representing the affected wards.

## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Branch Access Reports

**Recommendation:**

That the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, be granted delegated authority to determine the Council's final response to the Post Office Ltd's programme .

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To facilitate the submission of the Council's response by the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008 deadline.

**List of Background Papers:**

Area Plan Proposal for South and West Wales – Post Office Ltd  
Letter from Postwatch Wales – June 08

**Wards Affected:**

Aberdulais, Blaengwrach, Coedffranc West, Cymmer, Dyffryn,  
Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Gwynfi, Neath North

**Valley Strategy:**

Neath Valley, Upper Amman Valley, Afan Valley

**Officer Contact:**

Philip Graham, Head of Corporate Strategy  
01639 763171  
[p.graham@npt.gov.uk](mailto:p.graham@npt.gov.uk)

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

### 1 **POST OFFICE LTD** **AREA PLAN PROPOSAL FOR SOUTH AND WEST WALES**

#### (a) **Implementation of Decision:**

The decision proposed is an urgent one for immediate implementation , subject to the consent of the relevant Scrutiny Chair (and is not therefore subject to the call –in procedure )

#### (b) **Sustainability Appraisal:**

##### **Community Plan Impacts**

Economic Prosperity	-	negative impacts
Education & Lifelong Learning	-	no impact
Better Health & Well Being	-	negative impacts
Environment & Transport	-	negative impacts
Crime & Disorder	-	negative impacts

##### **Other Impacts**

Welsh Language	-	no impact
Sustainable Development	-	negative impacts
Equalities	-	negative impacts
Social Inclusion	-	negative impacts

#### (c) **Consultation**

There has been no requirement under the constitution for external consultation on this item.