

The Post Office Network

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is 8 March 2007

You may find it helpful to set out your responses to the consultation using this response form.

Name: North Wiltshire District Council Joint Response

Organisation's name and remit (if applicable): North Wiltshire District Council

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Return completed forms (preferably by e-mail) to:

Postal Office Network Consultation
Department of Trade and Industry
Response Centre
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Fax: 00 44 (0) 20 7215 5329

E-mail: dti.enquiries@dti.gsi.gov.uk

Please cross one box from the following list of options that best describes you.

- Individual
- Individual - Subpostmaster
- Small to Medium Enterprise
- Trade Union
- Interest Group
- Regional Organisation
- Devolved Administration
- X Local Government
- Central Government
- Other (please specify) _____

Please feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you wish. It is helpful if you can explain your views as fully as possible in the comments boxes, especially where you disagree with the proposals set out in the consultation paper.

Question 1.

Do you think the Government's forward strategy for the post office network addresses all the key issues and challenges the network faces?

Yes No X No view

Comments
Access should not be the only issue that is considered. Often posts offices are located in village shops which have a social element as well as providing a service. It is likely that if the post office services are withdrawn then village shops will also close also as the post office often makes the shop viable. The benefit of retaining the Post Office network in terms of sustainable communities is recognised in the Governments' Sustainable Communities Bill. Government funding should be focused on the continuation of services in areas with no alternative rather than supporting ventures in areas where there is similar provision by private business.

Question 2.

Are there other significant factors affecting the future of the post office network which appear to have been overlooked in the Government's proposed approach?

Yes X

No

No view

Comments

If there are significant closures or changes to the model of provision, adequate time and funding needs to be provided for the transition process. The focus should be on securing a sustainable future for the network. Alternative delivery models need to be up and running in tandem so there is no gap in service.

Local authorities should be given early warning of closures so that alternative methods of delivery can be investigated and put in place.

It is essential that the local consultation process is undertaken thoroughly to make sure that the needs of those affected are addressed.

Question 3.

Do you have comments on the national access criteria proposed?

Yes X

No

No view

Comments

It is vital that the government define the access criteria and explain its application more clearly. It is likely that the elderly and infirm may have difficulty accessing services under the proposed criteria. In many rural areas there is no public transport for people to use to get to a post office.

Question 4.

Do you have comments on the access criteria proposed for deprived urban and rural areas?

Yes X

No

No view

Comments

There is concern that Post Office Ltd will be required to meet the distance requirements for urban deprived, urban and rural areas on a national basis, taking the population as a whole rather than applying it to specific geographical areas. This means that the only local safeguard is that in any specific post code district, 95% of the population must be within at least 6 miles of a post office. There is a risk of gaps occurring which could have damaging effects on communities.

Question 5.

Do you have any suggestions as to how services might be better delivered through the post office network?

Yes X No No view

Comments

A minimum service range should be maintained in all post office outlet points. These should include postal services, access to the Post Office card account, banking facilities and bill payment.

Question 6.

Do you have any comments on Outreach arrangements as a means of maintaining service to small and remote communities?

Yes X No No view

Comments

This would be a good idea and cost effective. It would not however, address the problem of viability of village shops without the Post office service. The transition process should be managed effectively so there is no gap in service provision.

Question 7.

Do you have comments on the practicality of community ownership of parts of the post office network, which might involve the transfer of assets to community organisations and/or the establishment of local mutual or co-operative organisations to own and run local services?

Yes X No No view

Comments

In Wiltshire there are several very successful community run shops. There is no reason why they could not also run a Post Office service. However, if these arrangements are to be sustainable, it will be important to ensure there is adequate capacity within the community organisation. In North Wiltshire District Council in partnership with the Wiltshire Village Shops project could provide support in the transfer to community organisations.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views.

We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.