

16/170508

## ITEM 3 APPENDIX I

Meadow House,  
Gosforth,  
Seascale,  
Cumbria.  
CA20 1AH  
16th. April 2008

re. Closure of Gosforth Post Office

Dear Mr. White,

I am very concerned at the closing of the Post Office in Gosforth and do hope that suitable premises will be approved to accommodate this essential service before too long. This closure affects everyone, from young families to senior citizens. The nearest alternative is three miles away at Seascale and is not suitable for the following reasons:

1. There is no convenient bus service to Seascale.
2. Taxis are expensive. (£10 per round trip)
3. To collect his pension weekly, it would cost a senior citizen a week's pension per year to use the Social Car Service.
4. Parking at Seascale is inadequate, particularly as the entrance to Seascale Post Office is at a bus stop.
5. In young families where the car is used for travelling to work, the Post Office is unaccessable during working hours and the road is totally unsuitable for pedestrians, especially those with prams.
6. Several business people in the village are also experiencing problems for the above reasons.

Surely a village the size of Gosforth (pop. 1,300) justifies a Post Office? I suggest that it is vital to the economics of the community and the sustainment of the region.

Yours sincerely,

*Arne Williams.*

# GOSFORTH . PARISH . COUNCIL

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Mr R Lyndt  
National Consultation Team  
Post Office Ltd  
Freepost  
Consultation Team

## Ref Closure of Gosforth Post Office

Dear Mr Lyndt

The decision to close Gosforth Post Office has caused widespread anger and dismay, not only within the village, but also within the wider valley community who use Gosforth as a service centre. At a well-attended Parish Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> April the Parish Council was assailed with a number of examples where the closure would cause difficulties for considerable numbers of residents. While the Parish Council recognises that Post Office Ltd has to do something to reduce its costs it feels that the closure of Gosforth PO will not only contribute very little, if indeed anything, towards that goal but will have so many negative effects that the overall costs to the community as a whole will be substantive, far-reaching and have serious long-term effects on its viability.

This letter is by way of an initial response to the news of closure. The Parish Council is trying to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further with a Post Office Ltd representative (via Julia Young). It is also working with County and District councillors to formulate a plan to reverse the decision for closure. The outcome of either or both of these actions may well require further correspondence.

The Parish Council wishes that the following comments will be taken into account in making your decision:

1. It is believed that the decision to include Gosforth PO in the list of closures was opportunistic, advantage being taken of a situation caused by the resignation of the existing temporary Post Mistress, a not altogether satisfactory appointment, which was made we are led to believe, at the instigation of Post Office Ltd. This belief is borne out by the activities of Mr D Armstrong, the Field Change Advisor who, having worked with a member of the Parish Council and a local business, had already identified and approved as suitable, an alternative site very close to the original location.

The announcement to include Gosforth came out of the blue and clearly was unknown to Mr Armstrong. This is borne out by a letter to the Parish Council dated 12<sup>th</sup> March from Natasha Stanyon, Business as Usual Change Manager, in reply to a previous letter from the Parish Council requesting that Gosforth branch should be retained. The letter from Ms Stanyon stated categorically that it remained the intention of Post Office Ltd to maintain a service in the locality. However once the decision had been to close the Gosforth branch further progression of the new site was suspended, Mr Armstrong being unable to proceed. The fact that Mr Armstrong and other members of the National Consultation Team did not know that the Gosforth branch was included, and hence was wasting his and everybody else's time is

an indication that the internal communications system within Post Office Ltd needs improving substantially. How much could that save Post Office Ltd? There was also no communication between Post Office Ltd and the Parish Council, details of the closures being obtained from BBC News. For a business for which communication is a core part Post Office Ltd seems to have a strange manner of communicating.

2. Insufficient recognition has been given to the lack of and inconvenience of public transport. The only realistic alternative for Gosforth residents would be Seascale and the bus service is not user-friendly. Users would have an extremely long walk to catch the bus, long stretches being along roads without footpaths, and with poor street lighting. There is no shelter at either end, access on and off the bus is difficult for many, and impossible for those infirm or disabled. In addition the present bus service is under review by the operator and the County Council, and if past experience is a guide is likely to be reduced further in frequency. The Parish Council considers the suggestion by Post office Ltd. that Calderbridge and Holmrook are also alternative facilities which Gosforth residents could use is unreasonable, bearing in mind the proximity of both premises to the A595 (rapidly becoming one of the nation's notorious roads for accidents) and a lack of safe parking - it is most unlikely that any resident would consider using public transport to access either of these facilities.
3. A substantial proportion of the population of Gosforth village, in particular the estates of Denton Park, the Meadowfield complex and Fell View - mainly retired people, are within a relatively short walking distance, for the most part on footpaths, of a Post Office sited in the village. Post Office Ltd appears to want to ignore both the needs of, and the income generated by this 'captive' group of customers. It is in fact, for most of these residents, a lesser distance to walk than it is to drive.
4. The access arrangements at the alternative locations, assuming the closure of Gosforth PO, are significantly inferior to either the original (Lakeland Habit) or the proposed site (The Hobby Shop). In the case of the Lakeland Habit site Post Office Ltd facts are clearly in error as access for the disabled is available. Access to the proposed new site is in fact easier as it is all at ground level. Internal space restrictions at 2 of the 3 alternatives means that accommodation within the premises is so limited that more than 3 or 4 customers make the premises crowded, with others having to stand outside. Another point to be made is that a Post Office in Gosforth would be open 5 full days per week (0900-1700) plus Saturday mornings (0900-1230); 2 of the 3 alternatives do not meet anything approaching this level of service. For users not using public transport, parking at all of the alternative sites is extremely limited and at 2 of them downright dangerous, being within feet of the A595. Gosforth has a significant amount of free off-street parking within the village centre for those who choose to, or have to drive.
5. Removal of the Post Office from Gosforth will without argument result in a substantial number of extra car journeys, wherever the residents choose to access a Post Office. It may well cause families to invest in 2 cars. Because of the previously stated lack of and inconvenience of public transport, breadwinners of working families inevitably have to use a car to get to work. Hence, during the working day, should access to the Post Office be required, another car may be seen as the only reasonable option. Any increase in the number of cars would exacerbate existing parking and traffic problems, with the corresponding elevation of risk to car occupants, and would substantially enhance the carbon footprint. Surely this is in contravention of the Government's commitments to climate change.

6. The Parish Council considers that Post Office Ltd have seriously underestimated the number of people who need access to Gosforth Post Office. Gosforth businesses, including the Post Office, not only serve the village needs but provide services for a much wider and dispersed community. Both the Wasdale and Eskdale valley residents use Gosforth as a service centre. In the context of the proposed round of closures, closure of Gosforth Post Office will cause the maximum disruption to the greatest number of people. What Post Office Ltd does not appear to recognise is that in rural communities such as Gosforth a Post Office is an integral part of village infrastructure; together with the other facilities eg. Bank, free parking, public toilets (including Disabled), shops, cafes and pubs these provide an essential link in satisfying not only the local residents needs but also those of tourists for which many local businesses depend.
7. As part of the process of rural diversification several small businesses have set up in the surrounding area. They rely on the Post Office for the despatch of many packages, both small and large. The use of public transport is just not feasible for such businesses. Most rural businesses work at the margins of profitability and the additional transport costs, or alternatively the use of a carrier other than Post Office Ltd, may well be the ultimate cause of further decline in rural enterprise in this area. The Government says it is committed to sustaining rural communities. Quite how the closure of a vital link in the community such as the Post office assists that requires some explanation.

The Parish Council respectfully requests that the above comments are considered carefully and that the decision to close Gosforth Post Office is reconsidered.

Yours sincerely

D A Polhill



Clerk - on behalf of Gosforth Parish Council

Date: 20th April 2008

PS. Copies of this letter are being sent to:

Postwatch

Copeland Borough Council *via N. White* ✓

Cumbria County Council *via N. Clarkson* ✓

Mr J Reed MP.

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