



Dear Customer

**Local public consultation – Decision**

**Alness Post Office  
39 High Street, Alness, IV17 0PT**

We are writing to update you that, for operational reasons, the above branch closed temporarily on Thursday 31 August 2023. Please accept my apologies for the late notification on this occasion.

We are working to restore Post Office services at Alness and I would like to confirm that your new Post Office branch is scheduled to open at 13:00 on Friday 24 November 2023, at the new premises: Alness Newsagents, 56 High Street, Alness, IV17 0SG, where it will be operated by a retail partner.

We apologise for any inconvenience this temporary closure may cause locally. In the interim, customers requiring Post Office facilities may use any convenient Post Office service. Details of three alternative Post Office branches in the area are shown below for your convenience. The latest available branch information can be found on our website, [www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder)

This information is also available on the Post Office Consultation Hub at: [postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk)

We're carrying out this notification in line with our Principles of Community Engagement. An extract relating to Consultation is available at the end of this letter.

We would like to thank you for your patience at this time.

Yours faithfully

*Kenny Lamont*

**Kenny Lamont  
Network Provision Manager  
Post Office Limited**

[comments@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:comments@postoffice.co.uk)  
[postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk)  
FREEPOST Your Comments

**To get this information in a different format, for example, in larger print, audio or braille call 03452 66 01 15 or Textphone 03457 22 33 55.**

## Alternative branches

Some branches may need to make changes to their opening hours. The latest available branch information can be found on our website [www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder)

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### Invergordon Post Office

83 High Street  
Invergordon  
IV18 0AB

#### Services

Offers the same services, with the addition of National Lottery.

#### Opening times

Monday	09:30 – 13:00
Tuesday	&
Wednesday	14:00 – 17:30
Thursday	09:30 – 13:00
Friday	09:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:30
Saturday & Sunday	Closed

#### Access

This branch has a wide door and level access at the entrance.

Internally, there is a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.

#### Getting there

This Post Office service is located approximately 3.5 miles away from the closed Alness branch, along varied terrain. Time restricted roadside parking is available along the High Street with designated disabled bays. There is a regular bus service available between the closed Alness branch and this Post Office service. The nearest bus stop is approximately 130 metres away.

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### Ardross Mobile Post Office

At the Car Park  
Ardross Community Hall  
Ardross, Alness  
IV17 0XW

#### Services

Offers Vehicle Tax, Euros and Dollars On Demand Travel Money.

#### Opening times

Tuesday	11:00 – 11:30
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#### Access

There is a step into the Mobile vehicle, but an electronic tailgate is available to facilitate easy access for wheelchair users and those with disabilities. Internally, there will be a hearing loop.

#### Getting there

This Mobile Post Office service is located approximately 3.2 miles away from the closed Alness branch, along varied terrain. Parking is available at the Ardross Community Hall car park. There are local buses serving in the surrounding area.

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### Evanton Mobile Post Office

At the Car Park  
Balconie Street  
Evanton, Dingwall  
IV16 9UB

#### Services

Offers Vehicle Tax, Euros and Dollars On Demand Travel Money.

#### Opening times

Tuesday	08:45 – 10:45
Thursday	12:15 – 14:15

#### Access

There is a step into the Mobile vehicle, but an electronic tailgate is available to facilitate easy access for wheelchair users and those with disabilities. Internally, there will be a hearing loop.

#### Getting there

This Mobile Post Office service is located approximately 4.3 miles away from the closed Alness branch, along varied terrain. Parking is available at the Balconie Street car park. There is a regular bus service available between the closed Alness branch and this Mobile Post Office service. The nearest bus stop is approximately 250 metres away.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Response to Local Public Consultation**

**Consultation started** 16 June 2023

**Consultation ended** 28 July 2023

#### **Consultation responses**

- 39 responses from customers and local representative

#### **Key issues raised**

- Distance
- Counters and Space
- Privacy, Security and Staff

#### **Response to issues raised**

##### **Distance**

Customers welcomed and supported the move because the new location is more centrally located on the High Street and offers convenient access to Post Office services. Some customers raised concerns that they will have further to travel to access Post Office services. With any relocation it is inevitable that whilst some customers will have an easier journey, or find the premises are closer than at present, regrettably others will have further to travel. We can only apologise for this, and we remain confident the move will not significantly impede customer access to Post Office services.

We can confirm the new branch will be located on the same High Street, approximately 70 metres away from the current branch, along level terrain. We believe this relocation is the most effective way to secure the long-term viability of Post Office services in Alness. We can confirm pedestrian access to the new location, there are well maintained pavements, with dropped kerbs along the route from the previous site.

##### **Counters and Space**

We recognise that the Post Office plays an important part in the lives of our customers, particularly to the older and disabled people and we want to make our services as accessible as possible. We are pleased to confirm that before the new Post Office opens, access will be level with wide doors at the entrance to the new premises. Internally, there will be a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.

Internally, the new branch will be in line with Post Office specifications, making sure there is sufficient space for the Post Office service to operate alongside the retail offer. We will be working closely with the new postmaster on the internal layout and some fixtures and fittings will be re-aligned or removed to make sure there is clear access into the premises, ensuring the entrance, aisles and the waiting area are kept free from obstructions and adequate room is provided for customers and a wheelchair to move around without difficulty.

The new local style Post Office will operate from two Post Office counter positions located alongside the shop counter enabling customers to carry out a range of Post Office products and services alongside retail transactions. The Post Office transactions are designed to be quick and efficient to operate to enable fast and effective customer service and helping to reduce queuing. Following the new branch will still cater for the majority of Post Office products and services, and the small number of services that will not be offered will continue to be available at Invergordon Post Office which can be accessed by a direct bus service. Full details of the new branch are provided at the end of this letter together with a list of the products and services which will be available.

### **Privacy, Security and Staff**

Although the local style format is a different way of offering Post Office services, it does not compromise the professional service standards that we provide at all of our branches. We will also be working closely with the new operator to make sure an appropriate level of privacy is provided for Post Office customers. For example, we discuss issues like queue layout and asking customers to stand back from the counter whilst they are waiting for service or handing a receipt that contains any financial information face down. Open plan working also lends itself to more discreet conversations as customers don't have to raise their voice to be heard.

The staff training approaches used are of the same high standard as those undertaken in all our branches. This includes respecting customer confidentiality and adhering to the stringent security procedures which will be put in place to protect staff and customers. Additionally, any staff that will handle Post Office transactions will also have completed compliance training for a number of areas, including Data Protection and Mail Handling.

The move of this branch aims to secure Post Office services to the local community for the longer term by providing a more reliable and commercially viable service. Several factors are taken into account when considering an appointment, including access, the size of the premises and the suitability of the host retailer. The processes we follow are established and robust and the new operator was successfully appointed following the completion of our rigorous application process.

## Appendix B

### Alness Post Office Information Sheet

**Alness Newsagents**  
**56 High Street**  
**Alness**  
**IV17 0SG**

#### **New opening hours**

Monday - Friday	09:00 - 17:00
Saturday	09:00 – 14:00
Sunday	Closed

**Some branches may need to make changes to their opening hours.**  
**The latest available branch information can be found on our website**  
[www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder)

#### **Products & Services**

A similar range of products and services will still be available, with the addition of National Lottery, Euros and Dollars On Demand Travel Money, however excluding a comprehensive range of Travel Money, Passport Check & Send, and On Demand Travel Insurance.

#### **Serving positions**

There will be two Post Office serving points at the retail counter.

#### **Access**

Access will be level with wide doors at the entrance to the new premises.  
Internally, there will be a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.

#### **Getting there**

The new branch will be located on the same High Street, approximately 70 metres away from the previous branch, along level terrain.

Time restricted roadside parking will be available outside the new premises and along the High Street with designated disabled parking bays.

#### **Retail**

Newsagents (CTN)

#### **Date of opening**

Friday 24 November 2023 at 13:00

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## Alness Post Office services available

**For information about product availability call 03457 223344.**

**For details of maximum value of transactions, please speak to the operator.**

	New branch
<b>Mail</b>	
First & Second Class mail	✓
Stamps, stamp books (1 <sup>st</sup> class 6 & 12 only, 2 <sup>nd</sup> class 12 only)	✓
Special stamps (Christmas issue only) & postage labels	✓
Signed For	✓
Special Delivery	✓
Home shopping returns	✓
Inland small, medium & large parcels	✓
Express & contract parcels	✓
British Forces Mail (BFPO)	✓
International letters & postcards (inc. Tracked & Signed)	✓
International parcels up to 2kg & printed papers up to 5kg	✓
Parcelforce Worldwide International parcels	✓
Articles for the blind (inland & international)	✓
Royal Mail redirection service	✓
Local Collect	✓
Drop & Go	✓
<b>Withdrawals, deposits and payments</b>	
All personal and business banking cash withdrawals, deposits, balance enquiries & enveloped cheque deposits (card, barcoded or manual).	✓
Postal orders	✓
Moneygram	✓
Change giving	✓
Bill payments (card, barcoded or manual)	✓
Key recharging	✓
<b>Driving</b>	
Vehicle tax	✓
<b>Travel</b>	
Pre-order travel money	✓
On demand travel money	Euros & Dollars
Travel insurance referral	✓
On demand travel insurance	x
Passport Check & Send	x
Mobile Top-ups & E vouchers	✓
National Lottery Terminal	✓
<b>Payment by cheque</b>	✓
<p>Products marked <b>x</b> are available at <b>Invergordon</b> Post Office, 83 High Street, Invergordon, IV18 0AB</p> <p>Opening times:  Mon to Wed 09:30 – 13:00 &amp; 14:00 – 17:30  Thu 09:30 – 13:00  Fri 09:30 – 13:00 &amp; 14:00 – 17:30</p>	

## **Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office network (extract)**

A full version of this document is available on our Consultation Hub - [postofficeviews.co.uk](https://postofficeviews.co.uk)

We are committed to engaging and supporting our customers and their representatives as we make changes to the Post Office network. The following principles will be adopted when communicating about changes to your local Post Office branch.

We will **Consult** where we are seeking feedback on proposals prior to a decision being made on the:

- Permanent closure of a Post Office branch<sup>1</sup>
- Permanent relocation of a Post Office branch (including the franchising of a Directly Managed branch to a new site)

We will carry out a six-week<sup>2</sup> local public consultation, informing customers, locally elected representatives<sup>3</sup>, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities<sup>4</sup> of the proposal. This information will also be made available online and for a Directly Managed branch a press release will be issued to local media. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.).

The consultation will ask specific questions on areas where we would like feedback on access to Post Office services and will confirm when the change will happen if the decision is made to proceed. We will provide clear information on any changes to services as well as access to and into the new branch.

We welcome all feedback with the following factors being taken into account in making our decision, which we expect to make within four weeks of the close of consultation:

- Customer access to, into and inside the new or alternative branch/branches with particular regard to vulnerable consumers
- Any local community issues which could be affected by or affect the proposal

At the end of the consultation process we will write to locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and respondents to the consultation (where practical) to confirm our decision and provide a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each. This information will be made available online and in branch (where possible).

**These Principles have been agreed with Citizens Advice, Consumer Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland; the independent statutory consumer watchdogs.**

What to do if you feel these Principles haven't been followed:

Please get in touch so we can investigate your complaint. We'll explain in our reply whether we believe we have followed our Principles of Community Engagement and will provide you with the contact details for the relevant consumer watchdog (Citizens Advice, Consumer Scotland or the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland) if you're not satisfied with our response. The watchdog will independently assess whether we have followed the Principles of Community Engagement process (rather than the decision itself) and recommend any actions with respect to the complaint.

**Postofficeviews.co.uk**  
**Call: 03452 66 01 15**

**Comments@postoffice.co.uk**  
**Textphone: 03457 22 33 55**

**FREEPOST Your Comments**

<sup>1</sup> There may be a small number of cases where due to circumstances outside our control we have no option other than to permanently close a branch in a particular location. In these cases, the consultation will seek feedback on alternative Post Office service provision in the area.

<sup>2</sup> If the consultation includes more than four weeks in July in Scotland and Northern Ireland or more than four weeks in August in England and Wales, we will extend the period by one calendar week. We will not start any local public consultation during the two-week period which includes the Christmas and New Year bank holidays.

<sup>3</sup> Locally elected representatives include but are not restricted to the Member of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament, or Northern Ireland Assembly, Local Authority Chief Executive, Ward Councillors, Parish or Community Council.

<sup>4</sup> Selected charities are local Citizens Advice, Age UK, Northern Ireland's Disability Action and Northern Ireland's Rural Community Network. All parties referred to in <sup>3</sup> and <sup>4</sup> above are encouraged to share all information with local groups and organisations who they believe have an active interest in changes to their local Post Office.