



Dear Customer

Alston Post Office®
Front Street, Alston, CA9 3HP

Local public consultation decision

I'm writing to confirm that following a period of local public consultation and review we have made the decision to proceed with the move of the above Post Office into The Crown at Front Street, Alston, CA9 3HR, where it will be operated by a retail partner and change to one of our local style branches .

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, in making our decision. A summary of the feedback is enclosed along with an information sheet providing further details about the new branch.

After careful consideration of the feedback received, we remain confident that the layout and location of the new branch will continue to meet customer needs and deliver an excellent service, whilst securing the long-term viability of Post Office services in the local community.

The current branch will close at 12:30 on Saturday 22 February 2020, with the new branch opening, at The Crown, Front Street, at 13:00 on Monday 24 February 2020. If there are any unforeseen schedule changes which mean these dates change, posters will be displayed in branch to let customers know.

During transfer of the branch customers requiring Post Office facilities may use any convenient Post Office service. Details of two alternative Post Office branch are provided below for your convenience:

- Garrigill Post Office, Garrigill, Alston, CA9 3DS
- Nenthead Post Office, Vicarage Terrace, Nenthead, Alston, CA9 3PL

This information is also available on the Post Office Consultation Hub at: postofficeviews.co.uk

We're carrying out this notification in line with our Principles of Community Engagement. A copy is available at the end of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Kenny Lamont

Kenny Lamont
Regional Change Manager

postofficeviews.co.uk

comments@postoffice.co.uk

FREEPOST Your Comments

To get this information in a different format, for example, in larger print, audio or braille call 03457 22 33 44 or Textphone 03457 22 33 55.

Appendix A

Response to Local Public Consultation

Consultation started 11 October 2019

Consultation ended 22 November 2019

Consultation responses

- 45 responses from customers and local representatives

Key issues raised

- Location
- Premises and Access
- Parking
- Space
- Staff, Privacy and Queues
- Products and Services

Response to issues raised

Location

We recognise that some customers may have concerns about carrying out their Post Office business in a different type of environment from what they are used to. In making the decision following public consultation we have had to balance the comments and concerns raised against the need to ensure a commercially viable and sustainable service into the future. Like many high street retailers, we've had to develop our ways of working so that we can maintain Post Office services for our customers. The move of the Alston Post Office into a retail environment alongside the introduction of one of our local style branches will help secure the long term future of Post Office services to the community in Alston.

Premises and Access

The new premises are located in the heart of the heritage conservation area in Alston, next door from the previous branch, along hilly terrain. Currently there are steps at the entrance, I'm pleased to confirm that the new operator will be making adjustments to improve access for customers. A portable ramp will be available for any customers who are unable to manage the steps. A signage will be installed to let customers know that the portable ramp is available at the entrance and explaining how to request it. When the new Post Office opens a bell will also be installed for customers to ring for assistance and both this and the signage will be accessible to wheelchair users and customers with mobility issues. Subject to the heritage conservation requirements, a grabrail will also be provided to assist customers to negotiate the step.

Parking

Whilst I have considered the concerns raised about parking in the area surrounding the new location, generally, this is a problem faced in many locations nationwide and the availability of parking spaces is outside the direct control of Post Office Limited. As the branch is moving a very short distance parking remains the same with a free car park directly outside the proposed premises. I am therefore satisfied that parking at the proposed new branch will continue to meet the needs of customers using the Post Office. Some concerns were raised about parked cars blocking access to the new premises and the new operator has engaged with the local authority for the provision of hatched markings near the entrance, however this is not been possible due to heritage conservation status of the area. There is a walkway to the front of the building that leads to the car park.

Space

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 operator 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.

Staff, Privacy and Queues

Staff will be fully trained with staffing levels aligned to meet customer demand particularly at peak times. We will also be working with the new operator to make sure there is an appropriate level of privacy at the Post Office serving point. For example, we discuss issues like queue layout and asking customers to stand back from the counter whilst they are waiting for service. Similarly with security, as with any other branch in our network there would be strict guidelines and measures put in place to safeguard customers, staff and the cash and stock entrusted to the operator's care. Also staffing levels are aligned to meet customer demand particularly at peak times.

Products and Services

The new local style Post Office will operate from a Post Office serving point located at the retail counter, enabling customers to carry out a wide range of Post Office products and services alongside retail transactions. I am also pleased to let you know that we are enhancing the range of products which will be available at the new branch and customers will still be able to transact manual banking, Royal Mail and Parcelforce International Services. Additionally cheques will continue to be accepted as a method of payment. The full range of Post Office products and services are available at Penrith Post Office and Haltwhistle Post Office.

While the new branch will not have a cash machine, cash withdrawals can be made at the counter free of charge and customers will continue to have access to Post Office card account and everyday banking services throughout the extended opening times provided by our new operator. In the meantime and if required, Post Office card account customers can also access 24 hour ATM facilities at Haltwhistle Post Office branch.

The change also means that local residents will benefit from significantly longer opening hours, including Saturday afternoon, Sunday opening and longer opening times throughout the week, allowing customers to spread their visits and access our services seven days a week and at times that suit them better. 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.

The local format provides a more viable and sustainable operating model and this will help maintain Post Office services in local communities. The Post Office transactions through the local style branch are designed to be quick and efficient to operate to enable fast and effective customer service - in many cases the transactions are automated making the service easy for customers and operators and helping to alleviate queuing. I can confirm that the new branch will still accept international parcels up to 2kg, printed papers up to 5kg and larger parcels or those services not offered will continue to be available at Penrith Post Office and Haltwhistle Post Office.

In response to customer enquiries regarding the sorting office, I can confirm that Royal Mail will also be moving the sorting of mail to the Brampton Delivery Office, however you will still be able to pick up undeliverable mail from the new Alston Post Office.

Appendix B

Alston Post Office information sheet															
Address	The Crown Front Street Alston CA9 3HR														
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>10:30 – 15:00</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	10:30 – 15:00
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Sun	10:30 – 15:00														
Distance	Next door from the current branch, along hilly terrain.														
Products & Services	A wide range of products and services will be available.														
Serving positions	There will be a Post Office serving point provided for use at the retail counter and available during shop opening hours.														
Accessibility	<p>Access and facilities Currently there are steps at the entrance to the proposed premises with a wide door. A bell and signage will be installed at the entrance to the proposed premises and a portable ramp will be available upon request. Internally, there will be a hearing loop.</p> <p>Parking There is a car park outside the proposed premises with a designated marked disabled bay.</p>														
Retail	Confectionery and Stationery Retail Store														
Date of move	13:00 on Monday 24 February 2020														

Alston Post Office® services available	
For information about product availability call 03457 223344 or to provide you with details of maximum value of transactions please speak to the operator. Customers can also shop online at www.postoffice.co.uk	
	New branch
Mail	
First & Second Class mail	✓
Stamps, stamp books (1 st class 6 & 12 only, 2 nd 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	✓
Withdrawals, deposits and payments	
Post Office Card Account	✓
All personal and business banking cash withdrawals, deposits, balance enquiries & enveloped cheque deposits (card, barcoded or manual).	✓
Postal orders	✓
Moneygram	✓
Change giving	✓
Bill payments	
Bill payments (card, barcoded or manual)	✓
Key recharging	✓
Driving	
Car tax	✓
Licences	
Rod fishing licences	✓
Travel	
Pre-order travel money	✓
On demand travel money	Euros
Travel insurance referral	✓
Mobile Top-ups & E vouchers	✓
National Lottery Terminal	x
Payment by cheque	✓
Other Products are available at Garrigill Post Office, Garrigill, Alston, CA9 3DS	
Opening times:	
Mon, Wed, Thu & Fri	09:00 – 12:30 13:30 – 17:30
Tue & Sat	09:00 – 12:30

Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office network

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 **Notify** - where we are informing customers of changes around:

- Opening hours
- Temporary closure¹/ temporary service interruption
- Re-opening of a temporarily closed branch in the same site
- Opening a new branch unrelated to a previous closure
- Location used by a Mobile Post Office within a community

We will display a poster in branch (or nearby if appropriate) to notify customers of the above changes, providing four weeks' notice. Where four weeks' notice is not possible, we will provide notice as soon as we are able to. For temporary closures we will include details of the nearest alternative Post Offices and our customer helpline/textphone.

We will **Engage** - where we are seeking feedback on a decision that has been made on:

- Re-opening of a temporarily closed branch in a new location (where the branch has been closed for more than three months)
- Franchising of a Directly Managed branch in its existing site

While the decision to proceed will have already been made, we will welcome suggestions about specific aspects of the change such as access arrangements and the internal layout. We will provide four weeks' notice or, where extenuating circumstances prevent this, we will provide as much notice as possible.

During this period we will display a poster in branch and provide information online. We will contact locally elected representatives², the Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities³, providing clear information on any changes to services or access arrangements at the branch. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.). We will publish the outcome of the engagement online and in branch, providing a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each and any changes made to our original plans.

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

- Permanent closure of a Post Office branch⁴
- 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-week⁵ local public consultation, informing customers, locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities 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, Citizens Advice 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, Citizens Advice 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
comments@postoffice.co.uk
FREEPOST Your Comments
Call: 03457 22 33 44
Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

¹We will provide an update to locally elected representatives if the status of the temporarily closed branch has not changed after 12 months.

² Locally elected representatives include but are not restricted to the Member of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, or Northern Ireland Assembly, Local Authority Chief Executive, Ward Councillors, Parish or Community Council.

³ 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 2 and 3 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.