



Dear Customer

**Biddenden Post Office®
High Street, Biddenden, Ashford, TN27 8AL**

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 Local Village Store at 2 High Street, Biddenden, Ashford, TN27 8AH, where it will be operated by a retail partner.

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 17:00 on Tuesday 21 May 2019, with the new branch opening, at Local Village Store, 2 High Street, Biddenden at 13:00 on Wednesday 22 May 2019. 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 an alternative Post Office branch is provided below for your convenience:

- Headcorn Post Office, 28 High Street, Headcorn, Ashford, TN27 9NE

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

Emily Dobson

**Emily Dobson
Area Network Change Manager**

postofficeviews.co.uk

comments@postoffice.co.uk

FREEPOST Your Comments

Post Office Limited is committed to protecting your privacy. Information about how we do this can be found on our website at postoffice.co.uk/privacy

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.

Appendix A

Response to Local Public Consultation

Consultation started 18 December 2018

Consultation ended 29 January 2019

Consultation responses

- 36 responses from customers and local representatives

Key issues raised

- Route & Location
- Premises
- Space
- Parking

Response to issues raised

Route & Location

The proposed new premises are located across the road within 25 metres from the current site along level terrain. With any relocation it is inevitable that whilst some customers will have an easier journey to the new location, regrettably others will have further to travel.

Premises

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 branch into a retail environment alongside the introduction of one of our new style local models will help secure the long term future of Post Office services in the local area.

Space

Internally, the new branch will be built in line with Post Office specifications, making sure there is sufficient space for the new style local Post Office to operate alongside the retail offer. We will be working closely with the new operator on the internal layout to make sure there is clear access into the premises. Aisles and the queuing area will be kept free from obstructions and adequate room will be provided for customers to move around and access Post Office services without difficulty.

The new local style Post Office will operate from a Post Office serving point located at the shop counter, enabling customers to carry out a wide range of Post Office products and services alongside retail transactions. 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.

Parking

While I have considered the concerns raised about parking in the area surrounding the new location, it is fair to say that this is a problem faced generally in many locations nationwide. As I am sure you will understand the availability of parking spaces is outside the direct control of Post Office Limited. However I have conducted a further review of parking and I can confirm there is there is a public car park with disabled parking across the road within 25 metres. I am therefore satisfied that parking at the proposed new branch will continue to meet the needs of customers using the Post Office.

Appendix B

Biddenden Post Office information sheet															
Address	Local Village Store 2 High Street Biddenden Ashford TN27 8AH														
Opening hours	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Mon</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Tue</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Wed</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Thu</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Fri</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Sat</td><td>07:00 – 18:30</td></tr> <tr><td>Sun</td><td>08:00 – 12:30</td></tr> </table>	Mon	07:00 – 18:30	Tue	07:00 – 18:30	Wed	07:00 – 18:30	Thu	07:00 – 18:30	Fri	07:00 – 18:30	Sat	07:00 – 18:30	Sun	08:00 – 12:30
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Fri	07:00 – 18:30														
Sat	07:00 – 18:30														
Sun	08:00 – 12:30														
Distance	Across the road within 25 metres away from the current branch, along level terrain.														
Products & Services	A wide range of products and services will still be available.														
Serving positions	There will be a Post Office serving point provided at the retail counter and available during shop opening hours.														
Accessibility	<p>Access and facilities The proposed premises has a wide door and level access at the entrance. Internally, there will be a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.</p> <p>Parking There is a public car park with disabled parking across the road within 25 metres.</p>														
Retail	Convenience store														
Date of move	13:00 on Wednesday 22 May 2019														

Biddenden 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	Express 24 & 48
British Forces Mail (BFPO)	✓
International letters & postcards (inc. signed for & Airsure)	✓
International parcels up to 2kg & printed papers up to 5kg	✓
Parcelforce Worldwide International parcels	x
Articles for the blind (inland & international)	✓
Royal Mail redirection service	✓
Local Collect	✓
Drop & Go	✓
Withdrawals, deposits and payments	
Post Office Card Account	✓
Personal & Business Banking cash withdrawals, deposits & balance enquiries using a card. Also enveloped cheque deposits and barcoded deposit slips.	✓
Postal orders	✓
Moneygram	✓
Change giving	✓
Bill payments	
Automated bill payments (card or barcoded)	✓
Key recharging	✓
Driving	
Car tax	✓
Licences	
Rod fishing licences	✓
Travel	
Pre-order travel money	✓
On demand travel money	Euros/Dollars
Travel insurance referral	✓
On demand travel insurance	x
Payment by cheque	
Mobile Top-ups & E vouchers	✓
Car tax only	
Products marked x are available at Headcorn Post Office, 28 High Street, Headcorn, Ashford, TN27 9NE	Opening times: Mon – Sat 09:00 – 17:30

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
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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.