



Dear Customer

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

Local public consultation

We are proposing to move the above Post Office branch to a new location – Local Village Store, 2 High Street, Biddenden, Ashford, TN27 8AH and change to one of our new local style Post Office branches.

Why are we moving?

We're proposing this move as part of the ongoing modernisation of our branch network. We are confident that introducing a local style branch alongside a successful retail store is the most effective way to safeguard sustainable Post Office services in the local community into the future.

Your new Post Office branch

Customers would access Post Office services at a low-screened, open-plan, modern serving point that's part of the retail counter. Working with the postmaster, we'd adapt the current store layout, fixtures and fittings to accommodate the Post Office till if needed. The branch will offer a wide range of Post Office products and services over longer opening hours, so customers can access their Post Office when it's convenient. Customer satisfaction with local style branches stands at 96 per cent, and nearly 20 per cent of local branch customers visit outside traditional opening hours.

Consulting on the proposed new location

We're carrying out a local public consultation and we'd welcome your views on the proposal. We welcome feedback and comments that can help inform our plans, particularly on the following areas:

- How easy is it to get to the new location?
- Are the new premises easy for you to get into and is the inside easily accessible?
- Are there any other local community issues affected by the move?
- If the move were to proceed is there anything we could do to make it easier for customers?

An information sheet is enclosed that provides more details about your proposed new branch. For further information or to share your views, please visit our Consultation Hub via the link below, then use the search function to find the consultation for this branch either by branch name, postcode or the unique branch code 122925

postofficeviews.co.uk

If you're a local representative, it would be helpful if you could share this information with any local groups or organisations that you know within the community, for example on noticeboards, local charities and in GP surgeries, to help our customers and your constituents understand what is happening to the Post Office in Biddenden. If you would like a supply of these posters please let us know.

Dates for local public consultation:

Local Public Consultation starts	18 December 2018
Local Public Consultation ends	29 January 2019
Proposed month of change	February/March 2019

We are committed to engaging with and supporting our customers and their representatives as we make changes to the Post Office network. This consultation process is being carried out in line with our Principles of Community Engagement which have been agreed with Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland - the independent statutory consumer watchdogs. A copy is available at the end of this letter.

Thank you for considering our proposal. Any information we receive will be considered as we finalise our plans. At the end of the consultation we'll let you know our final plans by displaying a poster in the branch or if you are a local representative I'll be in touch again.

Yours faithfully

Emily Dobson

Emily Dobson
Area Network Change Manager

postofficeviews.co.uk

comments@postoffice.co.uk

Call: 03452 66 01 15

Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

FREEPOST Your Comments

**Please note this is the full address to use
and no further address details are required.**

Want to tell us what
you think right here
and now? Scan here.

If you don't have a QR
code scanner on your
phone, you can find
one in your app store.



Items sent by Freepost take two working days to arrive, so responses by Freepost should be sent in sufficient time to arrive before the end of the consultation period. Working days do not include Saturdays or Sundays. Responses received after the deadline will not be considered.

**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.**

Biddenden Post Office information sheet

	Current Post Office location	Proposed new Post Office location																												
Address	High Street Biddenden Ashford TN27 8AL	Local Village Store 2 High Street Biddenden Ashford TN27 8AH																												
Post Office Opening hours	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Mon</td><td>08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Tue</td><td>08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Wed</td><td>08:30 – 13:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Thu</td><td>08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Fri</td><td>08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Sat</td><td>08:30 – 12:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Sun</td><td>Closed</td></tr> </table>	Mon	08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00	Tue	08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00	Wed	08:30 – 13:00	Thu	08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00	Fri	08:30 – 13:00 14:00 – 17:00	Sat	08:30 – 12:00	Sun	Closed	<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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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 would 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																													
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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.

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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.