



Dear Customer

Falkirk Post Office®
1 Garrison Place, Falkirk, FK1 1AA

Cow Wynd Post Office®
16 Cow Wynd, Falkirk, FK1 1PU

Local Public Consultation Decision

I am writing to confirm that after careful consideration of the feedback received and all other relevant factors, we have decided to proceed with our proposal to merge Falkirk Post Office and Cow Wynd Post Office into one modern new branch at the nearby vacant retail store at Unit 1, Howgate Shopping Centre, High Street, Falkirk, FK1 1HG, which will be run by an experienced retail partner.

Public consultation responses:

During the local consultation period we received 89 individual representations from customers and local representatives. We also held a customer forum to talk about our plans and answer questions. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to let us have their comments and provide information.

The main areas of feedback were around parking and the lack of a safe drop off zone at the Howgate Shopping Centre. Concerns were also raised about disabled access, the location of the new branch and the size and capacity of the premises. There were also comments that the new location is more central and closer to main transport links. There was also some confusion surrounding the impact of this change on collecting mail from the adjacent Royal Mail Delivery Office, and I can confirm all Royal Mail services will remain unchanged and will continue to be available from 1 Garrison Place. 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, when making our decision.

Getting to the new location:

With any relocation we carefully consider factors such as the local terrain, parking and transport links and take account of whether there are any particular local road traffic issues that may negatively impact accessibility.

The new branch is located approximately 370 metres from Falkirk branch and 260 metres from Cow Wynd branch, along hilly terrain. There is a fee paying car park at the Howgate Shopping Centre with 548 spaces and 25 designated disabled bays available – the distance between the car park and new branch is approximately 125 metres. To help customers access the branch, our new operator will engage with the relevant authority at the shopping centre to explore the possibility of offering free parking to disabled customers accessing the branch. Should this not be possible, free disabled roadside parking is available on Vicar Street and Manor Street approximately 60 metres from the Howgate Shopping Centre and Baxter's Wynd approximately 80m away from the Shopping Centre.

Buses are available to and from the surrounding area and the nearest bus stop is approximately 235 metres away.

In conclusion, we remain satisfied that customers in Falkirk will continue to have good access to Post Office services.

What the new branch will look like:

We know that the Post Office plays an important part in the lives of customers, including our older and disabled customers. Our new retail partner regards the Post Office network as a vital part of community services and will refurbish the vacant premises and install a new modern Post Office alongside their retail offer of stationery, gifts and food to go. We'll be working together to ensure there is sufficient room for both Post Office and shop customers. The branch will have its own designated area at the left of the store and customer access both into and within the store will meet Post Office Ltd's own accessibility standards and all applicable legislation.

Externally the store front will include Post Office signage and an opening hours board. There will also be full posting facilities within the new branch. Access into Howgate Shopping Centre is level with automatic doors. Access into branch from the shopping centre will be level with an open entrance during store opening hours and directional signage from the entrance through to the new Post Office area. To make sure there is sufficient space for Post Office customers, including wheelchair users to move around the store and reach the Post Office area without hindrance, the entrance area and shopping aisles will be kept free of obstructions.

The Post Office counter will be built to Post Office specifications and will include lighting to industry standards, low level counters, PIN pads and hearing loops. The new branch will have five serving positions in total which is based on current and future predicted business levels. It will be made up of two open plan, two floor to ceiling screened serving positions and a Post Office serving point at the retail counter. Open plan serving positions are successfully used across the Post Office network, as an alternative to the more traditional positions. There is still a partitioned screen but this is lower, helping to provide a more personal service and discreet conversations when needed.

Following the merger, the main Post Office counters will be open from 09:00 to 17:30 Monday to Saturday. Additionally, the serving position located at the retail till will offer customers a selected range of Post Office products and services, without having to join the main queue. Self-Service Kiosks and tickets for queuing will not be used at the new branch, however, a linear queuing system will be in place to help with queuing, and we successfully operate the majority of our network in this way.

Our overall aim is to grow the availability of our services, particularly in town and city centres, making it easier for existing customers to do business with us and to attract new customers, and so with this in mind we have also recently opened a new branch in Woodburn Street, Falkirk. This new branch will be open Mon - Fri 06:30 - 20:00, Sat 08:00 - 20:00 and Sun 08:00 - 17:00 which means additional service times for customers within the Falkirk area.

I'm therefore satisfied that customer needs will continue to be met. Alongside this, we'll continue to monitor customer usage at the branch following the move and will work with our retail partner to make sure service standards are maintained.

Access to Post Office services:

The same wide range of Post Office services will still be available at the new branch with the exception of an external cash machine, which will continue to be available at Larbert Post Office, 67 Main Street, Larbert, FK5 4AA, which is approximately 2.9 miles away.

We've considered the feedback received during consultation from customers and local representatives very carefully, particularly the concerns raised around future accessibility of our services. With any change it's inevitable, but regrettable, that some customers will be inconvenienced. However, with Woodburn Street Post Office, Camelon Post Office and Laurieston Post Office within a two mile radius of the new branch, there are a number of alternative Post Office branches in the surrounding area, along with good public transport provision.

We are confident that our new branch will have the capacity to meet customer demand and cater for additional customers, offering a wide range of Post Office products and services and providing continued good access to our services.

Staff, who will work exclusively in the Post Office, will be trained to provide information on financial products, including savings and insurances. Product information will also be available for customers to take away with them and our website and specialist customer helplines also provide information on what's available and how to make a purchase.

Further details of the new branch, including opening hours and alternative branches in the area, are provided in the enclosed information sheet.

Customer service training and existing staff:

Our new operator has satisfied us that they are equally as committed to delivering excellent customer service as we are. Any person employed to work in Falkirk Post Office will be trained to the highest Post Office standards. Just as with branches we run ourselves, the branch will receive on-going training on products and services, as well as general operational and service related matters. Post Office will work with our retail partner to provide support, in the same way they already do in existing Post Office branches operated by us or other retail partners.

In respect of our people working at the existing branch, we have a strong track record of supporting our people through change. Staff will be fully supported through the change with a dedicated Human Resources Manager. We will do all that we can to find a solution that works for each individual within the options available.

Conclusion

We believe that merging Falkirk and Cow Wynd Post Offices will allow us to better secure Post Office services in this community for the longer term and help strengthen and secure the Post Office network as a whole. We already run the vast majority of our network on a franchise or agency basis and delivering services through these branches is proven to be successful.

After careful consideration of the feedback received, I am confident that the new branch will be suitably located and that it will continue to meet customer needs and deliver an excellent service, whilst helping to provide future sustainability for the branch and maintaining a Post Office presence in Falkirk.

I am pleased to confirm that the new branch will open at Unit 1, Howgate Shopping Centre on Thursday 25 October 2018. The current branch at 1 Garrison Place will remain open until Wednesday 31 October 2018 after which Post Office services from this premises will cease. As previously advised, Cow Wynd Post Office closed on Thursday 20 September 2018.

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

Yours faithfully



Roger Gale
Network & Sales Director
Post Office Limited

How to contact us:

postofficeviews.co.uk

comments@postoffice.co.uk

FREEPOST Your Comments

Falkirk Post Office information sheet

Address	Unit 1 Howgate Shopping Centre High Street Falkirk FK1 1HG														
Post Office Opening Hours	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <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>Closed</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	Closed
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New Opening times of Post Office service at retail counter	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Mon - Sat</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">09:00 – 17:30</td> </tr> </table>	Mon - Sat	09:00 – 17:30												
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Products & Services	The same wide range of products and services will still be available with the exception of a cash machine. The nearest alternative branch with a cash machine is, Larbert Post Office, approximately 2.9 miles away from Falkirk branch and 2.8 miles away from Cow Wynd branch.														
Serving positions	There will be five serving positions in total; two screened and two open plan and a Post Office serving point at the retail counter. The total number of serving positions has been based on current and future predicted business levels.														
Access and facilities	Access into the new premises will be level with an open entrance. Access into Howgate Shopping Centre is level with automatic doors. Low level serving counters, a low level writing desk and a hearing loop will be available.														
How far away is it?	Approximately 370 metres away from Falkirk branch and 260 metres away from Cow Wynd branch, along hilly terrain.														
Transport & parking at the proposed new premises	<p style="text-align: center;">Parking</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There is a fee paying multi-storey car park at the Howgate Shopping Centre with 548 spaces and 25 designated disabled bays available. The distance between the car park and proposed premises is approximately 125 metres.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Buses</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas.</p>														
Retail	Stationery, gifts and food to go														
Date of change	Thursday 25 October 2018														

Other branches in the area

Woodburn Street Post Office Londis Stores 18 Woodburn Street Falkirk FK2 9DS	Services This branch offers a wide range of services. Route Approximately 1 mile from Falkirk branch and Cow Wynd branch. Transport Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas.														
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Camelon Post Office 254 Main Street Camelon Falkirk FK1 4DY	Services This branch offers a wide range of services including a comprehensive range of Travel Money, Car tax and On Demand travel insurance Route Approximately 1.3 miles from Falkirk branch and 1.5 miles from Cow Wynd branch. Transport Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas.														
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Laurieston Post Office 2 Suilven Heights Laurieston Falkirk FK2 9QF	Services This branch offers a wide range of services including National Lottery. Route Approximately 1.7 miles from Falkirk branch and 1.6 miles from Cow Wynd branch. Transport Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas.														
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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.

postofficeviews.co.uk
comments@postoffice.co.uk
FREEPOST Your Comments
Call: 03452 66 01 15
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.