



Dear Customer

**Harrogate Post Office®**  
**11 Cambridge Road, Harrogate, HG1 1AA**

**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 proposal to move the above Post Office into WHSmith at Victoria Shopping Centre, Cambridge Street, Harrogate, HG1 1TU, where it will be operated by WHSmith High Street Ltd. The branch will have extended opening hours including Sundays.

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 key issues raised in consultation and our response to each key issue 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 new branch will continue to meet customer needs and deliver an excellent service, whilst securing the long-term viability of Post Office services in Harrogate.

The current branch will close at 17:30 on Wednesday 15 May 2019, with the new branch opening at 09:00 on Thursday 16 May 2019.

You can also find a copy of this letter on our website at [postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk). When entering the website you will be asked to enter the code for this branch: **020323**.

Posters will now be displayed in branch to let customers know about this decision.

Yours faithfully

**Roger Gale**  
**Network & Sales Director**  
**Post Office Limited**

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

## **Appendix A – Response to Local Public Consultation**

**Consultation started:** 7 November 2018  
**Consultation ended:** 19 December 2018

### **Consultation responses**

- 59 responses from customers and local representatives
- Andrew Jones MP forwarded on to us, 894 campaign questionnaires that he had received

### **Customer forum event**

Held on 3 December 2018 attended by approximately 80 members of the public.

### **Key issues raised**

- Access within WHSmith
- Getting to the new location
- Staffing
- Customer service
- Products and Services
- Impact on the local community and rationale for the move

### **Response to issues raised**

#### **Access within WHSmith**

The branch will operate from a newly built dedicated open plan Post Office area located on the first floor of the premises to the rear of the store. There are three entrances into WHSmith. From Cambridge Street on the ground floor the entrance is level with automatic doors, the first floor entrance within the shopping centre access is also level, with the entrance being kept open during store opening times and there is an additional entrance from the shopping centre to the rear of the ground floor of the store. Access here is via a small set of steps and a wheelchair stair lift is also available at this entrance.

For customers using the ground floor entrances, the Post Office area can be accessed by a customer lift, an up escalator and stairs. WHSmith have confirmed that the size of the lift meets with all applicable legislation. The lift can carry up to thirteen people and can accommodate pushchairs and wheelchairs. They have confirmed the lift is in good condition and is regularly serviced. If for any reason the lift was out of order, WHSmith would resolve this as quickly as possible to minimise any inconvenience to our customers. Should the lift be out of order and customers are unable to access the first floor, alternative arrangements would be made at the ground floor retail counter and would provide customer access to all of the services normally available upstairs, except for a small number of high value services such as business banking and foreign currency.

Customer access both into and within the store will meet Post Office Ltd's own accessibility standards and all applicable legislation. There will be 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 areas 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. There will be space for people to wait for service and customer seating will also be provided.

We recognise that some customers, particularly wheelchair users and those with limited mobility, would like additional reassurance about how easy it will be for them to move around the WHSmith store and get to the new Post Office area. Therefore, before the move, we'll also be contacting local disability groups to take them through the layout of the new branch.

#### **Getting to the new location**

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. We carefully considered factors such as the local terrain, parking and transport links when developing our proposal. We also took account of whether there were any particular local road traffic issues that may negatively impact accessibility.

The new branch will be located approximately 254 metres from the current branch, along varied terrain. For customers using their own transport there are several car parks in the vicinity of the new premises the nearest being at Station Parade car park, pay and display with 25 spaces and designated disabled bays approximately 20 metres away. For those using public transport to get to the new branch, Harrogate Bus Station is approximately 20 metres from the new location.

### **Staffing**

In respect of the team working at the current branch, we have a strong track record of supporting our people through change. We will do all that we can to find a solution that works for each individual within the options available.

Any person employed to work in the new Harrogate Post Office will be trained to the highest Post Office standards and, just as with branches we run ourselves, the branch staff will receive on-going training on products and services, as well as general operational and service related matters. Post Office Area Managers will work with WHSmith and the branch team to provide support, in the same way they already do in existing Post Office branches operated by us or other retail partners.

### **Customer service**

There will be six counter serving positions which has been based on current and forecast future business levels; four open plan positions and two traditional floor to ceiling screened positions which will also provide travel money services. Additionally there will be three self-service kiosks for mails transactions including most home shopping returns, E Top-Ups, and a range of bill payments. Following the move, the Post Office will be open on Sundays, providing customers with more flexibility around their visits. We will continue to monitor service demand in the Harrogate area, along with customer usage at the new branch following the move and will work with WHSmith to make sure service standards are maintained.

### **Products and Services**

A wide range of services will continue to be available at the new branch, with the exception of a Post Office cash machine. The nearest alternative external Post Office cash machine can be found approximately 2.3 miles away at Starbeck Post Office, 51 High Street, Starbeck, Harrogate, HG2 7LQ. All Post Office branches offer free access to cash for the major high street banks and customers will be able to use their debit card to withdraw cash at the counter of the new branch, during all the extended opening hours.

### **Impact on the local community and rationale for the move**

The Post Office and WHSmith benefit from each other's service range and customer loyalty. We are both an integral part of services provided on the high street across the UK and both absolutely committed to providing excellent customer service. We believe the best approach to retaining this branch, so it can continue to serve its community effectively and sustainably, is to transfer to a third party retailer. WHSmith already successfully operate over 130 Post Office branches to very high standards. We are confident that Harrogate Post Office will meet those same high standards.

## Appendix B

<b>Harrogate Post Office information sheet</b>															
<b>Address</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"> WHSmith  Victoria Shopping Centre  Cambridge Street  Harrogate  HG1 1TU </p>														
<b>Opening hours</b>	<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>10:30 – 14:30</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 – 14:30
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Sat	09:00 – 17:30														
Sun	10:30 – 14:30														
<b>Products &amp; Services</b>	A wide range of products and services will still be available, with the exception of a cash machine.														
<b>Serving positions</b>	There will be six serving positions in total; two screened and four open plan. The total number of serving positions has been based on current and future predicted business levels.														
<b>Additional facilities</b>	Three self-service kiosks for mails transactions including home shopping returns, E Top-Ups, and a range of bill payments.														
<b>Access &amp; facilities</b>	<p>The entrance into WHSmith from Cambridge Street is level with automatic doors, and from within the shopping centre on the first floor access is level, with the entrances being kept open during store opening times. Low level serving counters, a low level writing desk and hearing loops will be available.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Parking</b></p> <p>There are several car parks in the vicinity of the new premises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station Parade car park, pay and display with 25 spaces and designated disabled bays approximately 20 metres away.</li> <li>• Victoria shopping centre multi-storey car park, pay on exit with 776 spaces and 26 designated disabled bays approximately 350 metres away.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Buses</b></p> <p>Public transport available to and from the surrounding areas. Harrogate bus station is approximately 20 metres away from the shopping centre.</p>														
<b>Route</b>	Approximately 254 metres away from the current branch, along varied terrain														
<b>Retail</b>	Cards and stationery.														
<b>Date of move</b>	Thursday 16 May 2019														

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

## **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 closure<sup>1</sup>/ 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 representatives<sup>2</sup>, the Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities<sup>3</sup>, 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 branch<sup>4</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>5</sup> 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**

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</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 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.

<sup>4</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>5</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.