



Dear Customer

**Staplehurst Post Office®**  
**3 Milestone Buildings, High Street, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, TN12 0AB**

**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: Spar, 9-11 The Parade, Staplehurst, TN12 0LA.

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 17:30 on Thursday 22 April 2021, with the new branch opening, at: Spar, 9-11 The Parade, Staplehurst, TN12 0LA, at 13:00 on Friday 23 April 2021. 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 branches are provided below for your convenience:

- Headcorn Post Office, 28 High Street, Headcorn, TN27 9NE
- Marden Post Office, High Street, Marden, TN12 9DP

This information is also available on the Post Office Consultation Hub at:  
[postofficeviews.co.uk](https://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

***Jason Collins***

**Jason Collins**  
**Network Provision 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](https://postoffice.co.uk/privacy)

## **Appendix A**

### **Response to Local Public Consultation**

**Consultation started** 08 December 2020

**Consultation ended** 19 January 2021

#### **Consultation responses**

138 responses from customers and local representatives

#### **Key issues raised**

- Social Distancing
- Distance
- Parking
- Access and Internal Space
- Security and Privacy
- Staff Training

#### **Response to issues raised**

##### **Social Distancing**

The UK is currently experiencing a public health emergency as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and as such, it is critical that we as a business take a range of measures to keep everyone safe. Please be assured that Post Office Ltd has been working hard to follow Government guidelines and we have supplied branches with the Personal Protective Equipment that they require to make branches a safe environment for their customers and staff. Post Office Ltd will continue to work safely during this pandemic, ensuring as many people as possible visiting our branches comply with social distancing guidelines.

Post Offices are designated an essential service, providing a unique service for a range of necessary activities and we are following the governments guidance on social distancing to support the safety of our staff and customers. As the situation changes we continue to update staff and customers with practical instructions to allow them to stay safe whilst serving the needs of their communities. We remain committed to providing essential services to our communities whilst keeping our colleagues and customers safe.

We're confident that our Postmasters and their staff are acting in accordance with the official advice and we're doing everything we can to keep our branches open and safe.

##### **Distance**

The new premises are located approximately 110 metres from the previous site. 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. In terms of pedestrian access to the new location, there are well maintained pavements, with dropped kerbs along the route from the current site.

##### **Parking**

Parking and peak time traffic congestion are problems faced generally in many locations nationwide. Whilst the availability of parking spaces is outside the direct control of Post Office Limited. A further review of parking has been carried out and has confirmed that parking is available outside the new premises.

### **Access and Internal Space**

Access at the new location will have a wide automatic door and level access at the entrance.

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 and a wheelchair to move around without difficulty.

### **Security and Privacy**

Although the local style format is a different way of offering Post Office services, it does not compromise the professional service standards that we provide at all of our branches. We will also be working closely with the new operator to make sure an appropriate level of privacy is provided for Post Office customers. For example, we discuss issues like queue layout and asking customers to stand back from the counter whilst they are waiting for service or handing a receipt that contains any financial information face down. Open plan working also lends itself to more discreet conversations as customers don't have to raise their voice to be heard.

### **Staff Training**

The staff training approaches used are of the same high standard as those undertaken in all our branches. This includes respecting customer confidentiality and adhering to the stringent security procedures which will be put in place to protect staff and customers. Additionally, any staff that will handle Post Office transactions will also have completed compliance training for a number of areas, including Data Protection and Mail Handling.

## Appendix B

<b>Staplehurst Post Office information sheet</b>															
<b>Address</b>	Spar 9-11 The Parade Staplehurst TN12 0LA														
<b>Opening hours</b>	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td>Mon</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Tue</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Wed</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Thu</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Fri</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Sat</td><td>07:00 – 23:00</td></tr> <tr><td>Sun</td><td>08:00 – 22:00</td></tr> </table>	Mon	07:00 – 23:00	Tue	07:00 – 23:00	Wed	07:00 – 23:00	Thu	07:00 – 23:00	Fri	07:00 – 23:00	Sat	07:00 – 23:00	Sun	08:00 – 22:00
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<b>Distance</b>	Within 110 metres of the previous branch, along level terrain.														
<b>Products &amp; Services</b>	A wide range of products and services will still be available.														
<b>Serving positions</b>	There will be one Post Office serving point provided for use at the retail counter and available during shop opening hours.														
<b>Accessibility</b>	<p><b>Access and facilities</b></p> <p>The new premises will have a wide automatic door and level access at the entrance.</p> <p>Internally, there will be a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.</p> <p><b>Parking</b></p> <p>Parking is available outside the new premises.</p>														
<b>Retail</b>	Convenience store														
<b>Date of opening</b>	Friday 23 April 2021														

**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.**

**Staplehurst Post Office® services available**

**For information about product availability call 03457 22 33 44. For details of maximum value of transactions, please speak to the operator.**

	<b>New branch</b>
<b>Mail</b>	
First & Second Class mail	✓
Stamps, stamp books (1 <sup>st</sup> class 6 & 12 only, 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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	✓
<b>Withdrawals, deposits and payments</b>	
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 (card, barcoded or manual)	✓
Key recharging	✓
<b>Driving</b>	
Car tax	✓
<b>Licences</b>	
Rod fishing licences	✓
<b>Travel</b>	
Pre-order travel money	✓
On demand travel money	<b>Euros/Dollars</b>
Travel insurance referral	✓
<b>Mobile Top-ups &amp; E vouchers</b>	
Mobile Top-ups & E vouchers	✓
National Lottery Terminal	✗
<b>Payment by cheque</b>	
Payment by cheque	✓

Products marked ✗ are available at **Headcorn** Post Office, 28 High Street, Headcorn, TN27 9NE

Other Products are available at **Marden** Post Office, High Street, Marden, TN12 9DP

## **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.