



Dear Customer

**Strandtown Post Office®**  
**34 Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AN**

**Local Public Consultation Decision**

Following local public consultation on our proposal to move Strandtown Post Office, we have been carefully considering all of the feedback we received alongside all other relevant factors. It is clear from the feedback how important a local Post Office is to the local community and we want to be in the best position to secure sustainable access to our services to our customers in Strandtown. Having reviewed our original proposal we believe the best way to do this is to move the branch to Spar, 220-230 Holywood Road, Belfast, BT4 1PD, where it will operate as one of our new local style branches, offering significantly longer opening hours.

We received 60 individual responses from customers and local representatives including the local MP, Gavin Robinson, during the local public consultation period. The main feedback centred on the distance and route to the proposed new location, which was said to be further away from the shopping area on Belmont Road and difficult for some to access and on the impact the loss of the Post Office would have on local retailers in Belmont Road. Other feedback stated that the garage forecourt was busy with limited parking. Some feedback commented that the new location would be easier to access and welcomed the longer opening hours. We also met with Gavin Robinson MP who expressed concerns about the proposed move.

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, when making our decision.

As part of the consultation process, Post Office Ltd also meets with the independent statutory consumer watchdog, which in Great Britain is Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, and in Northern Ireland, the Consumer Council to review all the consultation responses and to ensure all relevant feedback is taken into account. The review and escalation process that exists between both parties led to further detailed discussions with the Consumer Council, who escalated the case as they had significant concerns about access to Post Office services for customers living in the vicinity of Belmont Road.

As part of this analysis, Post Office Ltd and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland visited the area and walked the ground to get a better understanding of local concerns and to ensure that these were fully taken into account before making our decision. Post Office Ltd committed to the Consumer Council to work with the new operator to improve pedestrian and vehicular access to the branch.

By way of background to our proposal, the move of this branch is part of our modernisation and investment plans for the Post Office network. As part of the programme, we asked our Postmasters whether they wished to stay with the network. Our existing Postmaster has expressed a desire to leave the network for some time as they wish to retire so it was important to find a viable and sustainable location for the Post Office. Consequently we have been working locally for an extensive period of time to identify an alternative solution for the provision of Post Office services.

A number of factors are taken into account when considering an appointment including access to the new location, the size of the premises and suitability and business plan of the operator. The new operator at Spar, who was the only applicant to progress through the application process, was successfully appointed following completion of our robust application process. Taking all factors into account, we remain satisfied with the appointment made and believe the new operator will provide an excellent service to the local community.

We appreciate that the proposed premises are located approximately 550 metres from the current 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. I have reviewed this alongside pedestrian access to the new site, however it's important to stress that in this instance we have had to balance these factors against our over-riding need to retain a service in Strandtown. Similarly while I acknowledge the concerns raised about the impact on local retailers, our priority is always to maintain a service to our customers.

In terms of pedestrian access to the new location, there are well maintained pavements, with dropped kerbs and pedestrian crossings along the route from the current site. With the aim of further assisting customers, the new operator will engage with Transport Northern Ireland to request a pedestrian crossing is installed closer to the new site. For those using public transport to access the new branch there is a bus stop approximately 70 metres from the store.

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 forecourt parking with a designated disabled bay at the new premises. I am therefore satisfied that parking at the proposed new branch will continue to meet the needs of customers using the Post Office. Additionally, the new operator plans to mark out a second designated disabled parking bay in close vicinity to the store entrance.

It's clear that the Post Office plays an important part in the lives of customers, particularly to elderly and disabled customers and we want to make our services as accessible as we possibly can. I am pleased to confirm that before the new Post Office opens, the new operator will mark out pedestrian walkways across the garage forecourt to provide a clear route from the pavement to the shop entrance.

The new local style Post Office will operate from two Post Office serving points 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. Full details of the new branch are provided at the end of this letter together with a list of the products and services which will be available.

Access into the store is level and via a wide automatic door 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.

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 be working with the new operator to make sure there is an appropriate level of privacy at the Post Office serving point. For example, we discuss issues like queue layout and asking customers to stand back from the counter whilst they are waiting for service. Similarly with security, as with any other branch in our network there would be strict guidelines and measures put in place to safeguard customers, staff and the cash and stock entrusted to the operator's care.

I have carefully considered our original proposal, the feedback received during the local public consultation period alongside other relevant factors. I am confident that this is the best way to maintain a service to the Strandtown community and that this new way of offering Post Office services will continue to meet customer needs, whilst helping to provide long term viability and future sustainability for the service.

The current branch will close at 13:00 on Wednesday 27 September 2017, with the new branch opening, at Spar, 220-230 Holywood Road, Belfast, BT4 1PD, at 13:00 on Wednesday 27 September 2017. If there are any unforeseen schedule changes which mean these dates change, posters will be displayed in branch to let customers know.

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: 286704

This change to the Post Office network is being carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice for changes to the network, as agreed with the independent statutory consumer watchdog. A full copy of the Code of Practice is available on our website at [www.postofficeviews.co.uk](http://www.postofficeviews.co.uk), or by contacting us at the address provided at the end of this letter.

Thank you for considering our proposal.

Yours faithfully



**Suzanne Richardson**  
**Regional Network Manager**

**How to contact us:**

-  [postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk)
-  [comments@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:comments@postoffice.co.uk)
-  Customer Helpline: 03457 22 33 44  
Textphone: 03457 22 33 55
-  FREEPOST Your Comments

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

This document is also available to view online, to see it – scan here.

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



**To get this information in a different format, for example, in larger print, audio or braille please contact the Customer Helpline on 03457 22 33 44 or Textphone 03457 22 33 55.**

**Strandtown Post Office information sheet**

<b>Address</b>	Spar 220-230 Holywood Road Belfast BT4 1PD														
<b>Opening hours</b>	<table border="1"><tr><td>Monday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Tuesday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Thursday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Friday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Saturday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr><tr><td>Sunday</td><td>06:00 – Midnight</td></tr></table>	Monday	06:00 – Midnight	Tuesday	06:00 – Midnight	Wednesday	06:00 – Midnight	Thursday	06:00 – Midnight	Friday	06:00 – Midnight	Saturday	06:00 – Midnight	Sunday	06:00 – Midnight
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Sunday	06:00 – Midnight														
<b>Distance</b>	550 metres away from the current branch, along level terrain.														
<b>Products &amp; Services</b>	The majority of Post Office products and services will still be available.														
<b>Accessibility &amp; accessibility works</b>	<p><b>Access and facilities</b> The new premises will have a wide automatic door and level access. Internally, there will be a hearing loop and space for a wheelchair.</p> <p><b>Parking</b> There is forecourt parking with designated disabled parking at the new premises.</p> <p><b>Buses</b> There is a bus stop approximately 70 metres from the new location.</p>														
<b>Retail</b>	Convenience store														
<b>Date of Relocation</b>	13:00 on Wednesday 27 September 2017														

**Strandtown Post Office® services available**

**Your Postmaster or our Customer Helpline on 03452 66 01 15 will be happy to help you with any queries about product availability or provide you with details of maximum value of transactions. Customers can also shop online at [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)**

	<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. signed for & Airsure)	✓
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	✓
<b>Bill payments</b>	
Bill payments (card, barcoded or manual)	✓
Key recharging	✓
Transcash (without barcode)	✓
<b>Travel</b>	
Pre-order travel money	✓
On demand travel money	<b>Euros/Dollars</b>
Travel insurance referral	✓
On demand travel insurance	✗
<b>Mobile Top-ups &amp; E vouchers</b>	
	✓
<b>Payment by cheque</b>	
	✓
Products marked ✗ are available at <b>Ballyhackamore</b> Post Office, 276 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3EU	Opening times: Mon – Sat      09:00 – 17:30 Sun                Closed