



Dear Customer

Wingate Lane Post Office®
1 Wingate Lane, Wheatley Hill, Durham, DH6 3LP

Branch Temporary Closure

We are writing to inform you that, regrettably, following the resignation of the postmaster and the withdrawal of the premises for Post Office use the above branch closed temporarily on 7 December 2019. Please accept my apologies for the late notification on this occasion.

I would like to assure you that we are currently investigating the options available which will enable us to reinstate a Post Office service to the local community. In exploring this, it is important that any future service is sustainable for the person operating the service, and for Post Office Limited.

Looking after a nationwide network of Post Office services, we have a responsibility to make sure every service makes the best possible use of resources, while ensuring that customers can still access our products and services. I can assure you that we will continue to work to find a solution that will provide a Post Office service to the local community.

If you have any questions you would like to raise about this matter, please write to me via the National Consultation Team at the address shown at the end of the letter. Please note that your comments will not be kept confidential unless you expressly ask us do so by clearly marking them "In Confidence".

Any future changes to service provision would be handled in line with our Principles of Community Engagement. A copy is available at the end of this letter.

We will display posters in the branch to inform customers.

If you are 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 the local community. If you would like a supply of these posters please let us know.

We would like to apologise for the inconvenience the temporary closure may cause. We hope that our customers will continue to use Post Office services and full details of alternative Post Office branches in the area are shown at the end of this letter.

If you are a local representative, we will write to you again once we have any news about our plans for future service provision.

Yours faithfully

Gail Burnett

Gail Burnett
Area Network Change Manager

How to contact us:

comments@postoffice.co.uk
postofficeviews.co.uk
FREEPOST Your Comments

Alternative branches:**Wheatley Hill Post Office**

26 Alexandra Terrace
Wheatley Hill
Durham
DH6 3JW

Services

The same range of services will continue to be available with the addition of Car tax, Euro/Dollar Travel Money however excluding National Lottery.

Access and facilities

This branch has a wide door and level access at the entrance.

Opening times

Monday	07:00 – 21:00
Tuesday	07:00 – 21:00
Wednesday	07:00 – 21:00
Thursday	07:00 – 21:00
Friday	07:00 – 21:00
Saturday	07:30 – 21:00
Sunday	08:00 – 20:00

Transport/parking

Roadside parking is available nearby. There is a frequent bus service available between Wingate Lane branch and this Post Office service. The nearest bus stop is 150 metres away.

Distance

This Post Office service is located approximately 0.7 miles away from Wingate Lane branch, along varied terrain.

Thornlaw Post Office

4 Stanley Terrace
Thornley
Durham
DH6 3ES

Services

The same range of services will continue to be available with the addition of Euro Travel Money.

Access and facilities

This branch has a wide door and level access at the entrance.

Opening times

Monday	08:00 – 18:00
Tuesday	08:00 – 18:00
Wednesday	08:00 – 18:00
Thursday	08:00 – 18:00
Friday	08:00 – 18:00
Saturday	08:00 – 12:30
Sunday	Closed

Transport/parking

Roadside parking is available nearby. There is a regular bus service available between Wingate Lane branch and this Post Office service. The nearest bus stop is 89 metres away.

Distance

This Post Office service is located approximately 1.7 miles away from Wingate Lane branch, along varied terrain.

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.

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.

Delete following pages not part of letter

APPENDIX – REASONS FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE

Resignation/Retirement

Following the resignation / retirement of the postmaster / operator of the Partner service and the withdrawal of the premises for Post Office use

Core postmaster has resigned their Hosted / Outreach service only

We are writing to inform you that, regrettably, the postmaster from XXXX branch has decided to resign from operating a Hosted / Outreach service at the above location. This service will, therefore, be closing temporarily on Day Month Year.

Additionally, Post Office XXXXXX Hosted / Mobile / Partner service, which is currently operated by this postmaster will also cease operating, on a temporary basis, from this date.

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End of contract/ Redevelopment / Lease expiry (ensure arrangements are not commercially sensitive)

due to our contract with the existing postmaster coming to an end / as part of the redevelopment in the area / the expiry of the lease / they intend to withdraw Post Office services from the above site at the end of their lease period, and despite our best efforts to maintain a Post Office counter service at this location,

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Temp Agent resignation Pro-active / Re-active

We are writing to inform you that the above branch will be closing / closed temporarily on Date Month Year. As you may be aware, this branch / service has been operated on our behalf by a temporary agent following the resignation of the previous postmaster / since our contract with the former postmaster came to an end. Unfortunately, our agent is no longer able to provide a service at the premises / however, the premises have now been withdrawn for Post Office use.

Please accept my apologies for the late notification on this occasion.

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Agent/Partner withdrawal at end of contract

Our current partners, NAME OF PARTNER IE MORRISONS, have advised us that they intend to withdraw Post Office services from the above site, at the end of their current contract. Although this is disappointing, we fully recognise that this is a commercial decision that NAME are entitled to make. This above branch / service will, therefore, be closing temporarily on Date Month Year.

Or
Our current partners, NAME OF PARTNER IE MORRISONS, have recently advised that they intend to withdraw Post Office services from the above site on Date Month Year (following their plans to close this particular store - if appropriate).

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Following commercial transfer of the premises

Following the resignation of our current partner, XXXXX, and the commercial transfer of the business, we have been notified by the new owners, XXXXX, that the premises will no longer be available for Post Office use / use as a Post Office branch. This branch / service will, therefore, be closing temporarily on Date Month Year.

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Damage to property –

- following a fire at the premises
- following severe flooding at the premises
- due to the premises experiencing sudden structural damage

Robbery -

- following a recent incident
- due to damage caused to the premises following an incident at the branch,

Death of postmaster – (ensure appropriate to detail)

- Sadly the postmaster at XXXX branch recently passed away. Subsequently this branch closed on Date Month Year

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2nd & 3rd PARAGRAPH – When we want to explain that we are close to agreeing a solution to the closure

The provision of a Post Office service to our customers in the local community is important to us, and I can assure you we are currently investigating the possibility of restoring a service to this area in the near future. I hope to be in a position to advise you of future developments shortly.

In the meantime, I would like to apologise for any inconvenience the temporary closure may cause. If you have any questions you would like to raise about this matter, please feel free to contact our National Consultation Team at the address shown below. Please note that your comments will not be kept confidential unless you expressly ask us do so by clearly marking them "In Confidence".

The provision of a Post Office service to our customers in xxxxx is important to us and I can assure you **we are working hard to restore a service to these** communities as soon as possible. **I am pleased to tell you that we have identified a nearby postmaster who is willing to operate the services on our behalf and we are currently in discussions with him, I hope to be in a position to advise you of our future plans for service provision shortly.**

In the meantime, I would like to apologise for any inconvenience the temporary closure may cause. If you have any questions you would like to raise about this matter, please feel free to contact our National Consultation Team at the address shown below. Please note that your comments will not be kept confidential unless you expressly ask us do so by clearly marking them "In Confidence".

I can assure you that we are working to resume Post Office services at XXXXX (Branch name) and I would like to apologise for any inconvenience this temporary closure may cause to people locally. In the interim, we hope that our customers will continue to use the Post Office and full details of alternative services in the area are shown at the end of this letter.

Loss of Hosted premises but Core still available

I am writing to inform you that our current partners at **Name** Post Office have recently advised us that they will be closing the retail business at this site, which will mean that the Post Office will temporarily close on **Day Date Month Year** at **Time**.

Our postmaster who operates the service on our behalf is keen to continue to provide a service to the local community and we are therefore currently seeking alternative Host premises from which to operate the Post Office. I'm sorry for any inconvenience the temporary closure may cause.

The provision of a Post Office service to our customers in the local community is important to us, and we will continue to work hard to restore services in the area as soon as possible.