



CRC 4/07

Thursday 17 May 2007

A framework for the future of the post office network

Following the Secretary of State's announcement on the future of the Post Office network, the Commission for Rural Communities is pleased that the Secretary of State has taken on board our concerns that the access criteria proposed should be extended beyond simple geographical criteria and that the Post Office will now be required to consider the availability of public transport, alternative access to key post office services, local demographics and the impact upon local economies.

We are disappointed however that the period for local consultation remains at 6 weeks which, we believe, does not give sufficient time for adequate consideration by local communities. We would like this to be doubled to 12 weeks, so that communities and their representatives can understand all the options for the future.

Stuart Burgess, Chair of the CRC and Rural Advocate said: "I welcome the Secretary of State's statement after this long period of uncertainty over the future of the Post Office. It is essential now that rural communities are closely involved in planning the delivery of Post Office services in their areas in the future. In the meantime, we will continue to press the government and the Post Office to maintain the policy of no avoidable closures until agreed future arrangements are in place. These should include a whole range of different ways of delivering these essential services to rural people, including outreach services, mobile Post Offices and services in village halls and pubs.

"We at the Commission will continue to support local communities and work with the government and the Post Office to find solutions that meet the needs of rural people for essential Post Office services."

ENDS

For further information please contact Nick McClelland, Commission for Rural Communities, on 020 7932 5814 or 07900 608 045.

Notes to editors

1. The Commission for Rural Communities was established initially as an operating division of the Countryside Agency in April 2005, and became an independent body on 1 October 2006, following the enactment of the NERC (The Natural Environment and Rural Communities) Act 2006. Our role is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of people living and working in rural England, with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage.

We have three key functions:

- Rural advocate: the voice for rural people, businesses and communities
- Expert adviser: giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally

Further information about the Commission for Rural Communities and it's work can be found at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk