

Press Release

Rippingale calls on BERR to halt "scandalously flawed" PO closure programme

The village of Rippingale (Lincolnshire) has uncovered even more evidence that Post Office Ltd. is breaching agreed criteria in its branch closure programme.

And it's calling on the Secretary for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Rt. Hon. John Hutton MP, to halt the whole process for a root and branch review.

Friends of Rippingale PO, the village's anti-closure group has now seen the Memorandum of Understanding between PO Ltd and Postwatch, the PO watchdog - the code of practice for the closure programme.

And it reveals that final closure decisions are being made half way through the public consultation period.

The timetable in the MOU refers to Day X - the launch of the 6-week public consultation - then to "Day X + 3 weeks - final decision making and further review processes involving liaison with Postwatch take place...."

Phil Rippingale (correct) said "This was not news to us - PO Ltd told our sub Postmaster, Simon Deane, a month BEFORE the public consultation was even launched that Rippingale would close and there would be no appeal. But the 2499 other branches in this programme deserve to know that they and their customers are also being ignored and that this much-vaunted consultation exercise is a complete sham. It's a scandal - the whole programme should be stopped for a full review."

Friends of Rippingale PO have previously discovered:

- Crude factual errors in PO Ltd public closure notices
- Serious inconsistencies in how closure criteria have been applied in the district
- Manipulation of access criteria
- Complete lack of PO Ltd business vision in spite of needing to create "a financially stable network."
- Lack of knowledge of County/District Council housing expansion plans in spite of apparently liaising with Local Authorities

The MOU insists on complete confidentiality over information used to reach closure decisions, but in spite of flatly refusing to discuss this information in Rippingale's case, such details are publicly available for many other affected branches on the PO's own website.

And one section - dealing with actual closure dates - has already been contradicted on TV by one of the PO Network Development Managers team.

"It's just a mess," said Phil Rippingale, "and unless villages like ours are given a proper, meaningful say in these closures, it'll mean massive injustice. We deserve to be properly involved and that's not happening at the moment. And if John Hutton had any sense, he'd create breathing space with a review."

Friends of Rippingale Post Office

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