

**Post Office Ltd demonstrates "unbelievable incompetence."**  
**Contradictory, disorganised and confusing announcements mislead village**

After a day of see-saw emotions, angry villagers in Rippingale condemned Post Office Ltd for their "unbelievable incompetence and the complete shambles," caused by announcements about their PO branch closure.

At 9am yesterday (Tuesday December 11) notices for public display arrived by special delivery to their village shop and sub Post Office.

An hour later 80 villagers gathered outside the shop to hear whether their campaign to keep the branch open had been successful or not.

Friends of Rippingale Post Office read out the poster to the crowd. It said "The decision on the future of this branch is on hold as a result of a request from Postwatch, the independent watchdog. Following this request, a further review will take place and a final decision will be announced as soon as possible. We expect the further review process to be concluded in the next few weeks."

One of the Friends, Phil Rippingale, said "Last week more than 800 supporters from Rippingale and the surrounding villages received emails from Downing Street. Amongst some questionable figures and the brush-off - was special mention of a new stage of closure review. This had been announced in the House of Commons on November 29 by the Post Office Minister Pat McFadden. He said that if PO Ltd and Postwatch disagreed over any closure plan, it would go to the PO Chairman Allan Leighton for final decision."

Last week, Mark Partington, PO Network Development Manager, rang Rippingale's sub-Postmaster, Simon Deane, and told him that Rippingale's case would go to further review and the result would be known in 4-6 weeks time. This information would be given to the Press, embargoed to 10 am yesterday.

Phil Rippingale said "The crowd at the village store were pleased that at least we seemed to have made some progress and we could now lobby even harder, at a higher level, for a reprieve. It was only after the crowd began to drift away that journalists who'd been present began to get calls from their offices, saying Rippingale was listed for closure and all that was open for review was the level of "Outreach" service on offer. What was on our poster and what they were told by PO Ltd completely contradict each other - it's just unbelievably incompetent. It was a complete shambles. The news was greeted with absolute fury by villagers - some were so angry they couldn't speak. Later on Mark Partington appeared on TV to confirm the Outreach story, something never mentioned in his phone call last week. We think we've been misled right the way down the line and we're now considering our next steps - this campaign is not over by a long way."

Jim Latham, Friends of Rippingale Post Office  
01778-440025/07971-579977  
12.12.07