

13 February 2015

Julie Coulter
The Consumer Council
Elizabeth House
116 Holywood Rd
Belfast BT4 1NY

Dear Julie,

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Citizens Advice Service (Citizens Advice in England and Wales and Citizens Advice Scotland) to respond to the consultation for the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) Business Plan 2015-16, with particular reference to the strategic objectives relating to postal services and the Post Office network.

As the statutory representative for consumers of postal services across England, Wales and Scotland, we work closely with CCNI¹ to conduct research and evidence postal user needs and deliver strategic projects that contribute to improving the operation of the postal market for all consumers, assessing the value of postal services across the USO, mail and parcels. Similarly, we regularly work across UK nations to further consumer objectives relating to monitoring Post Office modernisation programmes; and evaluating and representing current and future post office consumer needs.

We have continued to engage with the CCNI Post Team regarding our respective work streams, and as part of our 2015-16 work planning have identified strategic objectives of importance which are noted in the CCNI Business Plan. In particular these include:

- assessing future scope for the Universal Service Obligation (USO) with consideration of the impact of end-to-end postal competition on the USO
- identifying future consumer needs from the USO for UK postal services,
- examining the effectiveness of the cross-border parcel market in meeting consumer needs and improving cross-border trade,
- ensuring consumer concerns identified in respect of proposed changes to Post Offices under the Network Transformation Programme are addressed,
- assessing the effectiveness of the Post Office Network Transformation Programme and,
- monitoring Post Office Limited's compliance with communication and consultation processes outlined in the agreed Code of Practice.

¹ On 1 April 2014, Consumer Futures (previously Consumer Focus) – the statutory representative for consumers of postal services across the United Kingdom became part of the Citizens Advice Service and the responsibility for post in Northern Ireland transferred to the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

We look forward to working with CCNI on these shared objectives over the coming year.

Should you wish to further discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours,

Xanthe Couture

Policy Manager

Postal Services

Citizens Advice

Eilidh MacDonald

Policy Officer

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