



Post Office News - November 2017

High impact of post office consultations

Citizens Advice has published new [analysis](#) of the impact of the consultation process for Network Transformation Programme post office changes. It shows that in the past year, Post Office Ltd (POL) delivered improvements or provided reassurances for 9 in 10 post office relocations.

Between 2010 and 2018, up to 7,500 post offices are being refurbished or moved into new premises such as convenience stores. POL seeks feedback from local communities through a formal 6 week consultation process before making a final decision. As the official consumer watchdog for post, Citizens Advice is involved in the consultation process: our expert team looks at the public responses and uses our own evidence and analysis of the local area to review the proposals. We make further recommendations to POL to help improve access for vulnerable consumers.

Citizens Advice's new analysis shows that over the last 5 years, POL has amended proposals and agreed further improvements in 3 in 4 (76%) cases following public consultation. POL has withdrawn 2% of cases due to the significant issues raised following public consultations. This is based on analysis of 1,800 off site relocations. Over 37,000 individuals have responded, and petitions with 33,000 signatures have also been submitted.

Postal strikes averted

Planned postal strikes were averted when Royal Mail [won](#) a High Court injunction preventing a walk out in protest over pensions, wages and jobs. It would have been the first national [strike](#) since Royal Mail was privatised 4 years ago.

Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) have jointly [appointed](#) a mediator to assist with resolving the dispute. The process is expected to last until close to Christmas or later. The CWU is required to

withdraw its strike call until the external mediation process has been exhausted. However, the union [states](#) that “unless [Royal Mail] significantly shifts its position... strike action is inevitable.” Royal Mail [says](#) it is “very committed to working closely with the CWU in order to reach agreement.”

MPs raise concerns over Royal Mail delivery office closures

MPs have expressed concerns about the number of Royal Mail delivery offices that have closed. These offices provide facilities where customers can collect parcels, Recorded Delivery mail and mail sent to a PO box address. In a Westminster Hall [debate](#), MPs said 10% of delivery offices have closed since 2013, resulting in difficulties for vulnerable people and longer journey times to pick up parcels. Concern was also raised about the lack of public consultation about these changes.

The postal services minister, Margot James, said relocations or closures of delivery offices are part of Royal Mail’s ongoing business transformation which aims to increase efficiency and keep costs under control. She also highlighted options for redirecting mail to a post office, although acknowledged there are charges for this service.

Recent Citizens Advice [research](#) finds 1 in 5 (21%) consumers collect undelivered mail order items from a Royal Mail delivery office (and 21% use a post office).

Latest parcel shop innovations

In an increasingly competitive market, the high street parcel service providers continue to develop their service offering.

MyHermes, has announced a new ‘pay and print in store’ [service](#), which enables customers to book and pay for deliveries at a myHermes parcel shop. Previously, myHermes customers had to book and pay for a delivery online and print the label themselves, before taking the package to a parcel shop. MyHermes has 4,500 parcel shops in the UK, based in convenience stores and corner shops.

CollectPlus has launched a ‘social send’ [service](#) which will enable users to send parcels even if they only know the recipient’s email address, messenger details or mobile. When ‘social send’ is selected, CollectPlus automatically sends the recipient a link which allows them to select a delivery location from any one of the 6,500 CollectPlus outlets. The service is aimed at online sellers using mobile marketplaces.

Post developments around the world

- **Ireland** - Irish postmasters [claim](#) that up to 400 post offices (36% of the network) may close, mostly in rural parts of the country. Postmasters are [critical](#) about proposed new contracts which they say require post offices to operate on a solely commercial basis, placing no value on post offices' social function. An Post [said](#) it will ensure that everyone in the country is within a 'reasonable distance' of a post office.
- **United States** - Amazon is launching a new [service](#) that enables couriers to unlock customers' front doors to drop off packages. In 37 US cities, customers can purchase a smart lock and connected security camera allowing Amazon couriers with barcoded packages to access properties. Customers are notified that their delivery has arrived and sent a short video showing the drop-off.

More on Citizens Advice post policy work

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