



Department for Business & Trade

Richard Foord MP
House of Commons
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By email: richard.foord.mp@parliament.uk

Kevin Hollinrake MP
Minister of State

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Your ref: RF8512

08 May 2024

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your email of 19 January on behalf of your constituent, Mr. Barry Fielding of The Copse, Charmouth Road, Raymonds Hill, Axminster, Devon EX13 5SZ, regarding the pending closure of Raymonds Hill Post Office. I apologise for the delay in response, your correspondence has only recently been brought to my attention amid the high volume of correspondence we've received since the ITV drama on the Post Office scandal aired.

Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities across the UK. For this reason, Government has provided over £2.5 billion in funding to support the Post Office network over the past 10 years and is providing a further £628 million for the Post Office between 2022 and 2025. Government protects the sustainability of the branch network by providing this funding on the basis that Post Office meets its minimum access criteria, which ensures that 99% of the population live within three miles of their nearest Post Office. The post office network continues to meet and exceed Government-set Access Criteria at a national level.

There are over 11,500 post office branches in the UK therefore it is inevitable that with a network of this size, there will be variations in the number of branches open at any one time: as postmasters move on, branches close and new ones open. Government fully appreciates the impact a post office branch closure can have on a community. We know it can be disruptive.

The reasons for a branch closure are normally outside the control of Post Office, but in such instances Post Office works to restore service to the community. The time this can take will vary depending on the individual local circumstances in each case. While the post office network can fluctuate between areas and regions, Post Office works with communities to ensure that service is maintained. Additionally, the Government-set Access Criteria ensures that however the network changes, services remain within local reach of all citizens.

My officials have contacted Post Office Limited about the closure of Raymonds Hills Post Office, referenced in your correspondence. Post Office have conveyed that Raymonds Hills Post Office closure is due to circumstances beyond their control. In these challenging economic times, Post Office asserts that they must use their available funding to benefit the maximum number of customers across the network to ensure that they are providing sustainable services able to meet evolving customer needs.

Regrettably the Post Office is not currently advertising the opportunity however they have cited the current provision of local services in Uplyme and Axminster meets customer access and demand - the branches and distances are listed below:

1. **Uplyme Post Office**, Lyme Road, Uplyme, Lyme Regis, DT7 3UY; located approximately 2.1 miles away from Raymonds Hill branch.
2. **Axminster Post Office**, West Street, Axminster, EX13 5NU; located approximately 2.2 miles away from Raymonds Hill branch.

I hope my response proves helpful to you and your constituent Mr Fielding.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin', written in a cursive style.

KEVIN HOLLINRAKE MP
Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business
Department for Business and Trade