



St Leonards On Sea Consultation Submissions



St Leonards On Sea TN37 6AA

Number of Completes: **180**

Address: **12-14 London Road, St Leonards On Sea, East Sussex, TN376AA**

Type: **Main Offsite**

Start Date: **28/06/2017**

End Date: **09/08/2017**



Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments

Although I would prefer the post office to continue in its present setting, I have no objection, in principle, to the proposed branch modernisation with your new retail partner [REDACTED]

There must be more automated services for simple tasks such as buying stamps, handing in cheques for banks

Very happy with the proposed opening hours.

Please retain the current post office in its current state. We don't want it to change as the staff are very efficient, knowledgeable and helpful with the full range of traditional post office services, unlike the limited and very slow service offered by the Hastings branch that has changed for the worse just to save money on staff, it seems, as the knowledge they have does not compare to the professionalism of the previous proper post office in Hastings it replaced! Keep our public services for the people not for profits! Recall the loss of so many railway stations, now regretted as we struggle to cope with all passengers on our current reduced service on less tracks / stations! Thank you!

I strongly object to the proposed re-location of our post office. I use the post office personally and professionally a great deal. The post office is integral to our community, take it away/ move it /down grade it into a convenience store and something gets lost. In Hastings and Silverhill both the local post offices have been moved into shops or garages. I also recently visited Norwich, a city with a down graded post office in WH Smiths, It doesn't work! The queue was unbelievable and clogged up the greetings card aisle. The one in Silverhill is a petrol station! The Hastings branch in WH Smiths is badly designed and impersonal. I like the staff at St Leonards Post office, the queue moves quickly and they have a good range of services including check and send, passport photo's and foreign currency, its brilliant having this in walking distance. Please don't let this go ahead

Please, please, PLEASE don't close our London Road Crown Post Office in St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex. We're a community that has had a tough time for years, high unemployment, social problems and a sad looking street of shops and businesses that have struggled to survive. However, things are really starting to change, the Co-Op has recently shown confidence by renovating a parade of unused premises into a shiny new store on London Road just up from where the Post Office currently stands. New businesses, shops, galleries and restaurants are opening every month. If the Post Office was to close its Branch, a purpose built PO designed in the 60s, you would be leaving a physical and emotional scar on this now fantastic and thriving community. We don't need more convenience stores or betting shops, we need a community with solid businesses providing jobs and services. The banks are closing everywhere around us, now the Post Offices too? You have a duty of care and a social obligation not to close this branch. I don't know if this will reach a sympathetic ear, but at least I feel I've tried.

I am writing to strongly express my opposition to the downgrading of our Crown Post Office. We have already lost our Post Offices in Hastings town centre and in Silverhill, St Leonards. This leaves us without access to many important services and is I believe to the detriment of local residents and local businesses. Added to that we are already saturated with convenience stores - why on earth do we need another one? At a time when our town is finally showing signs of turning a corner, to remove this vital community hub seems to me a damaging and backwards step.

Dear Post Office, I have heard today that the Post Office in London Rd, St Leonards-on-sea is to be turned into ANOTHER convenience store for the area. St Leonards has no need for YET ANOTHER convenience store, indeed, the multitude of convenience stores will be quite inconvenient to anyone looking for somewhere to send a letter, parcel, looking for a bureau de change, collecting benefits or pension or needing the services from which our community currently benefits. What would be most convenient - and not just that, but essential to those who are at most need - is a Post Office. A proper Post Office with proper, trained Post Office staff. For those with limited mobility, and those with little time, an alternative Post Office is a bus ride or drive away, meaning extra cost, time and needless effort. Please, please, don't close this valuable asset to the town. Please let us keep our Post Office as it is and DON'T LUMBER LONDON ROAD WITH ANOTHER CONVENIENCE STORE!!!!

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I most strongly object to the downgrading of the Crown Post Office in London Road St Leonards. I wish to object as part of the consultation process. The downgrading of the Post Office will cause significant harm to local businesses and to the local community. I urge you to reconsider your decision and to maintain this vital community resource.

I am incensed at your plans to replace the existing Crown Post Office with a Sub Post Office within a 'Convenience Store'. The only convenience will be to yourselves – forget the local community, they don't matter! The surrounding area has made enormous strides over the last few years to improve itself, and become a vibrant and welcoming asset within the local community. The same community that is now being dealt a body blow by the projected closure of one of the biggest assets to the community in the area. Within the last five years HSBC and Lloyds have withdrawn much needed banking facilities from the immediate vicinity, as have NatWest a short distance away. Nationwide is a Building Society and does not cater to all of the needs of the client base – it was designed to do so. We are over supplied with Convenience Stores - within 150 to 200 yards of the existing Post Office building can be found five Convenience Stores, plus a Co-op and Spar – the local economy would be hard pressed to support yet another store – it's very survival would more than likely lead to the closure of an existing facility, and if it didn't survive, then we would also lose the Sub Post Office. It might make economic sense to 'the men in grey' at the Post Office but that is short term thinking. We need to retain a dedicated Crown Post Office in St Leonards, one that provides the same level of expertise, and standard of service, unhampered by the restraints of operating within the confines of an unwarranted/unwanted multi purpose grocery store.

I've been trying to complete your survey but the link is not compatible with a mobile phone and half the screen has been lost. I completed 57% because I didn't need the headings but could get no further. I'm writing to request we keep the St Leonard's PO services as they are. Well used and a hub for our community and local business. We do not need a convenience store or newsagent when others immediately around are struggling/closing.

Please leave the post office as it is now.

As a taxpayer I wish to object in the strongest possible terms about the disgraceful proposed downgrading of the St Leonard's Crown Post Office. By MODERNISATION it is clear you mean the complete downgrading of our excellent Crown Post Office into a CONVENIENCE store (of which we have far too many in St Leonard's already), which will not provide anything approaching a full service! As a local person I already know the value of it to local businesses, the elderly, infirm and vulnerable. We need to preserve the skills, knowledge and jobs of our excellent staff at the St Leonards London Rd branch. Foreign visitors to St Leonard's and locals rely on the exchange facilities that this post office provides, and the service is key to the current fragile economic recovery in an area that was hit hard by successive difficult times over the last twenty years. It is shortsighted in the extreme to follow up on these proposals; I have written to my MP Amber Rudd outlining my grave concerns about this issue.

I have read the letter and consultation documents and have the following concerns: 1. Will the same services be offered as are currently offered at the new office specifically to do with identity evidencing for both passports and DBS checks. 2. Will all the serving positions be open at peak times. These were the same issues that I raised when the main Hastings Post Office moved into WH Smiths in the town centre. 2 years on and I am sorry to say that the promises that were made to my residents at the time have not been adhered to. There are almost never more than 2 possibly 3 windows open at any time and the queues at peak times go through the shop - taking on average 30 minutes per customer to access the front of the queue. When I went there to get my identity evidenced for a DBS check I was told I could not do it at that branch and they sent me to St Leonards!! If we lose this facility then it means travelling to Eastbourne as the current nearest Crown Post Office which is unacceptable. Cllr Judy Rogers, Hastings Borough Councillor Caste Ward.
cllr.judy.rogers@hastings.gov.uk

I write to inform you that I'm against the closure of my local post office on the following grounds. I use it! It's has always afforded me competent and friendly service. It seems busy. There is a lack of banking facilities in the area, a gap the post office can help to plug, I bet there are people around who don't know that. It forms part of the community. We don't need another down market, so called convenience store around here and it's clearly not what people want. I'm yet to hear any justification for the proposed closure. I look forward to hearing from you.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am voicing my indignation at the above proposal. It is a very well used PO and for the people who live in the surrounding area, it is now the closest PO. There are numerous convenience stores in the same road and surrounding roads. We do not need another. It will harm local businesses and the regeneration of the town. For a few more opening hours on a Saturday, it isn't worth it. There must be something else that can be done. Please reconsider the damage you are doing.

I am writing in support of the campaign to keep the above mentioned post office open. This office provides a crucial service to the local community and serves the growing number of small businesses that are building on their success through their online presence. Should this office close it would impact in community surrounding it in a disproportionate way. The post office must ensure that it continues its commitment to the community. If this office closes you will see greater competition for providing the services that the post office provides across the country, and will be the beginning of a slow demise of your business across the U.K. Please make sure this does not happen !

The potential closure of the Crown Post Office in London Road is of grave concern to both myself, and the local community. Although it is planned to replace this within a local Convenience Store - someone evidently hasn't bothered to investigate the local area. Within 150 - 200 yards of the existing Post Office building there are 5 convenience stores as well as a newly refurbished Co-op and Spar. The existing Post Office is one of the biggest amenities for a community that has seen the closure of HSBC, Lloyds and Nat West in the last few years. The local economy would be hard pressed to support yet another convenience store, but would be totally lost without its Crown Post Office, and its current employees. London Road, Norman Road and Kings Road have made great strides over the last few years in the re-generation of the area offering a range of shops and services and in establishing a community - at the heart of which sits the Post Office offering all the services a thriving community needs! We need a Post Office, where we can be expected to be served by the existing dedicated staff with all their expertise and local knowledge but not another convenience store !

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSALS FOR LONDON ROAD ST LEONARD BRANCH CLOSURES. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE THE SAME WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IS FULLY MET. ALL USERS EXPECT THAT PROMISE TO BE FULFILLED 100%. A WRITTEN LIST OF PRESENT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AND A WRITTEN LIST OF FUTURE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SHOULD BE IDENTICAL. PLEASE PUBLISH BOTH TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT A WATERED DOWN SYSTEM WILL NOT HAPPEN OR WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SLIDE INTO PLACE.

The great architecture of the Welfare State which made Britain universally admired across the globe is progressively being dismantled. The erosion of essential services in the form of Crown Post Offices is one example among many. We are faced with this possibility in St Leonards. What is especially sad is that the St Leonards area is one of social disadvantage and neglect where essential services such as those provided by the Post Office are especially important. Local shopkeepers and concerned residents are trying valiantly to create a positive energy around regeneration and economic upturn in St Leonards. The authorities seem to care little. The effective loss of the St Leonards Post Office will deal a devastating blow to these efforts and send out a profoundly negative message to the community and to those who might be proposing to purchase businesses or property in the area. Sadly we now seem to live in a nation where there is a callous lack of concern for those struggling at the margins, such as many St Leonards residents, and all notions of a public service are subjected to the imperative of profit.

I am writing to strongly register my objections to the proposed replacement of our St Leonards Crown Post Office with a sub post office franchise. I do not agree that your proposed changes are an improvement. We already have more than enough newsagents and convenience stores in central St Leonards and have no need of another one especially at the cost of losing Crown Post Office facilities. I have witnessed the closure of the fine Crown Post Office building in Hastings which has now stood empty for many years and the subsequent disastrous franchise arrangement with WH Smith. In my experience the queues are long, the counters are understaffed and the machines often don't work. Both times I have visited recently the young inexperienced and no doubt poorly paid staff were almost in tears with the almost impossible task of trying to deliver an effective service with such limited space and resources. I would urge you to reconsider your decision and leave our post office alone.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

We have a Crown Post Office on London Road in St Leonards on Sea. Our community is strongly opposed to this closure because: - it is now the only Crown Post Office in this part of East Sussex - the Hastings Post Office has already been closed - it is a vital service for a growing community, including small businesses and independent traders - staff will lose their jobs - we will lose staff expertise Please listen and Do Not Close Our Post Office

I have used this Post Office for the last 30 years and have always found the staff knowledgeable and efficient. The wide range of services has been very useful. I also used to use the old Hastings P.O in Cambridge Road, this has unfortunately been shoe horned into the W.H.Smith's store. Since this move has taken place I have stopped using it because of the excessive queuing. This does not bode well for the popular St. Leonard's branch. Is this to be the decline of an historic and loved institution to be sold along with the magazines and cigarettes ?

Please do not close St Leonards Post Office and making a sub P.O franchise. The main P.O at St Leonards is the only real P. Office left in the whole of this large area of Hastings. The Hastings Office should never have been closed and put in WH Smith. This serves a big area and is hardly what one expects in the 21 Century. Now that most little sub-offices have closed it is most important to keep at least one proper main Post Office so please heed the people it serves and keep St Leonards Post Office as it is. It does a very good job

Please do not change the Post Office from a 'Crown Post Office'. Please do not offer newsagent services. We need and want the full range of Post Office services that a dedicated post office can provide.

I fully approve of all of your plans for the modernisation of the Post Office here in St Leonards On Sea. I only have one query. It is this: How long will the Post Office be closed for the changes to be effective? I look forward to your comments in due course.

I am writing to ask you to keep the main post office in St. Leonards-on-Sea open. The proposal to downgrade our Crown PD will cause the loss of jobs and significant inconvenience to local residents who rely on the services the PO provides.

I DO NOT WANT MY LOCAL POST OFFICE TO CLOSE - BUT what concerns me is the proposal to have it located in a NEW convenience store/tobacconists/confectioners. There are already at least 7 stores within a quarter of a mile and another one is not needed. It will affect the livelihoods of the others & particularly a small paper shop/tobacconists/confectioners.

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Comments (continued)

St Leonards On Sea Post Office® 12-14 London Road, St Leonards On Sea, TN37 6AA 004925 Proposed branch modernisation I object to the proposed changes on the following basis - The term 'modernising' is misleading used as a cover up for the plan to 'downgrade'. The local community who are the post office customers do not want any change to this post office branch as they are extremely happy with it just the way it is. The staff are well trained & excellent at their jobs. The proposed changes would see them lose their jobs, this is entirely unacceptable. The loss of post office trained staff would impact on the level privacy that counter staff at present provide. Staff without this training will not be able to provide same guarantee of privacy handling packages & documents. This is an area of high unemployment & it will be difficult for them to find new jobs. This area has a large number of self employed residents & small to large local businesses. There are numerous large business parks within this area. They entirely depend on this post office & its current facilities. Any change to this would be detrimental to local enterprise & income. This is an area of deprivation, business enterprise needs all the assistance it can get. This proposal would be a major set back for business. The change of use would change our high street. The current post office business model & building is seen as an asset to the style of the high street. There are already at least six shops within a few feet of the post office building already running as newspaper shops & convenience stores. We do not want another newspaper shop / convenience store. The local council have attended local campaign meetings, officers have stated that Hastings Brough Council object to the changes. The head of the council Peter Chowney is not in favour of this change. The proposal would mean greater queues for your customers. The proposal gives no information on the terms of the lease or partnership with [REDACTED] You have not provided us any indication of how long this 'partnership' will run. You give not provided any information about the terms of this 'partnership'. What happens if this new business model fails? You provide no guarantee on the post office remaining on its current site for any definite period of time? You give no indication of plans for change down the line, can the services be downgraded even further in coming months or years? You provide no information regarding your long term plans for the site & whether you plan to sell it ,or, keep it as a long term investment for the post office. The overall greyness of your proposal is a great concern. It lacks vital information for the community, your customers. This proposal appears highly misleading for St Leonards Post Office customers. Yours sincerely, [REDACTED]

I saw a poster outside London Road, St. Leonards Post Office and I like to make some comments. When I saw a petition in a local shop urging people to sign to save the Post Office I did so immediately. Please do not close our Post Office and give it over to a corner shop franchise. There are more corner shops in this part of town than you can shake a stick at. We have no Banks and we need a dedicated Post Office. The Post Office building in town (Hastings) has been sold and is and has been for a long while, empty. It was perfect. It was large enough to cope with Christmas queues and suited the town by its size. However, it moved into a corner of W.H. Smith. (Whose idea was that, I wonder?) It isn't ideal there as on a busy day (perhaps it is Pension day) quite often the queue will curl from one end of the shop to another getting in the way of ordinary shoppers. Post Offices are your business and you should know how to run them so please don't let yet such an important part of St. Leonards be beholden to yet another corner shop, whose aim in life is to sell even more alcohol, be in charge of our Post Office. Your customers are a mile away from corner shop customers. Please don't let it happen.

I am very much against the downgrading of St Leonards Post Office to a Convenience Store as a sideline. This is the last main Post Office in this area which serves a large number of people. Sub Offices cannot deal with all Post Office business and now that the Hastings Main Post Office is included in W H Smith (which should never have been closed considering it serves a very large area) it all seems yet another retrograde step in our lives today. The only sub office which serves this area is more often shut than open and without any main Post Office where can we go to find all the services which the main Post Offices provide. Not what one would expect in this day and age. So please do not let this very good and efficient Post Office become yet another Convenience shop. And incidentally, there are many such Convenience shops in this area, and I would not have thought another was at all necessary.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Our post office is not unprofitable, and is staffed by properly paid workers with a great deal of expertise, which we do not want to lose. St Leonards is a large town, with very specific profile. Central St Leonards, where the Post Office is situated, is a mixed area with some of the most extreme deprivation in the country, and as such it needs investment and regeneration, and to maintain and improve its employment and wage levels, rather than having money sucked out in the form of private profit. It has a large disadvantaged population, a growing number of fledgling small/online businesses, and, for the greater part of the year, many language students. Its central shopping streets have all the signs of a struggling community, including empty shops and cheap convenience stores, making yet another retail outlet selling confectionary and tobacco superfluous. What we do need is what the Crown Post Office provides very adequately now: a place staffed by knowledgeable workers of long experience, who are professionals that we can trust with our private information. There are many in the community, including the foreign students and small businesses, who are dependent on our Post Office for its many services, including banking, foreign currency and foreign currency exchange, internet services, passport and driving license services, as well as the speedy and reliable postal services. Our Post Office and the people who staff it, who all of us who use the Post Office have come to know, are, in many ways, the centre of a fragile and continually struggling community that is trying to maintain its sense of stability. However adequate [REDACTED] services might be, and taking your word that he will continue to provide all the services listed above, I do not think that in the case of St Leonards this unnecessary intervention will aid the fragile cohesion of our community.

I wish to register my strong protest and vehement objection to the threatened closure of the Crown Post Office in London Road, St Leonards and its reduction to a counter in a Convenience Store (we already have a surfeit of these!): this Post Office is a valued and indeed vital institution in the area, which is rapidly becoming denuded of other financial providers, and has a high population of residents who have difficulty reaching an alternative Post Office in Hastings or Bexhill. It is also an important support for the many small local businesses in the nearby streets. The proposal to reduce it in status from Crown and thereby severely limit the services available to locals and visitors alike is a serious threat to the life of the area, and to the already limited facilities available locally. I call upon you to review this proposal and reconsider the future of our Crown Post Office.

I am writing to object to the downgrading of the above post office to a private enterprise. This goes against all promises to keep the Crown post offices as public ventures - albeit within a Ltd company structure. I would like to hear your reasons for the proposed change and why you are trying to avoid involving the residents in the decision making process. In earnest expectation,

Will the banking side continue? There are now no banks in St Leonards (only the Nationwide) Will passports and driving licence applications continue? Will there be a passport booth? Will there be a foreign currency exchange available? This is not only useful for people going on holiday, but for the many foreign language students in the area – so they can then spend money in the local area. If the ‘modernised/downgraded’ PO service fails, will we lose the full range of Post Office services that are initially promised – and/or lose the Post Office altogether? Will the current staff keep their jobs? We appreciate the wide knowledge base of the current staff. Will staff training be as good at a franchised PO service? Will staff pay and conditions be reduced? Why us? We are the only Crown PO in Hastings and St Leonards – there is a population of 92,000 which use the Crown PO. Seaford population is 20,000. St Leonards is a large town, not a village with a single PO/village shop. We already have multiple convenience stores and stationery outlets. We believe that our Crown PO makes a profit – so why try to cut it? We know that in towns that lose their Crown Post Office, footfall drops and sales from other shops also drop. St Leonards is deprived. We need a full Post Office service to help drive the economy – not a newsagents which will compete with surrounding shops. Who owns the building? What is above the PO? Who will be responsible for maintenance of the building Is it listed? Will the Post Office sell the building? How can it do that if it is the peoples/Government owned? Who is [REDACTED] Why did he not come to the public meeting held this week? What will be the ‘terms of engagement’ that [REDACTED] has to agree to providing? Will the proposed service be as good for confidential services? (passports, driving licences etc.) where secure information is disclosed.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am concerned about the reduction in screened positions, with only one in the proposed new branch people will be forced to use the non screened positions or face long waits. I worry it will disadvantage people in wheelchairs or who need a hearing loop or carer as it is not clear that this single traditional screen will be accessible and big enough for 2 people to access at the same time. I feel it will put off people using banking and bureau de change services as even if they are available I would not use these services from a retail shop, whereas I would trust traditional Post Office staff because of their years of experience. I think the proposed change will negatively impact the local economy because of the loss/ downgrading of these services. I do not think St Leonards has capacity for another newsagents, one closed just a few years ago and this will put pressure on the current local newsagents. I am concerned about the POs long term future and what will happen should the proposed new owner decide to cut services in the future. I would like to know what reassurances you can give that services will be protected in future years.

As a resident as a small business in St Leonards on Sea, I am appalled at the suggestion that you are considering removing the Crown Post Office. There is no other financial facility that we can use and the expertise and helpfulness of the staff is a credit to the Post Office. This why people travel by car and by bus to visit The Crown Post Office here. We have a special need in St Leonards - it is the focal point of the community - this is the reason that thousands have signed the petition to keep the Crown Post Office open. The facilities in WH Smith Hastings are woeful. The Hastings WH Smith type of branch does not have the full postal services that businesses, residents and visitors require. This type of service is inadequate for our town's needs. Downgrading the Crown Post Office services into a convenience store and newsagent is simply not acceptable. There are too many convenience stores in the retail landscape – Marine Court, Norman Road, London Road and Kings Road all have a more than adequate number of convenience stores. What the town clearly does not need is yet another convenience store selling tobacco and alcohol from its shelves, it needs its Crown Post Office to remain. We already shop in our preferred convenience stores, who would shop at this one? Without the Crown Post Office consumer footfall will drop and our retail and commercial businesses will suffer, the town will go backwards. It is the Post Office's responsibility to continue to provide its outstanding service, employ the excellent team, so the town does not close down too. I ask that you take my comments very seriously indeed during this consultation period and take the correct decision to retain the Crown Post Office here.

I am writing to express my objection to the decision to close the Post Office in London Rd, St Leonards On Sea, East Sussex. I am concerned that this will mean that only selected services will be available and we will have to go to the already over-stretched Post Office in in WHSmiths, Hastings.

I think it is a big mistake to downgrade our post office. The post office serves a local need and should not just be about profit. Many self-employed people and small businesses rely on it for posting large items and banking money and ordinary people for getting their passport applications checked. and other services. There will be no crown post offices in Hastings at all if this one goes. The post office brings people to central St Leonards and so contributes to the hub of shops in the area.

I refuse to let you downgrade my local Post Office. We need a post office with full services and not another convenience stores with the inevitable sub standard PO services. I suffered such examples of this over recent years living in Manchester. If u go ahead I will boycott all non po services in the new version.

I feel the Post Office in St Leonards on Sea should not be downgraded from a Crown Post Office. It is very important to the local community, many people are furious and upset that this change has been proposed and they want things to stay the same. The Post Office is an essential service for this community.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I picked up your leaflet about proposed changes from the Post Office in St Leonards. Although the leaflet explains what you plan to do, you have not explained why you are doing this. I can only think of two possible reasons:- either the branch is losing money, which seems unlikely as I believe the Post Office owns the building and therefore does not have to pay rent for it, or else the branch is not used very much, which is not the case as there are usually many customers making use of its services. The only other reason which comes to mind is that you wish to extract rent and franchise payments from [REDACTED]. In my opinion there is no need for such changes. There is nothing wrong with the St Leonards Post Office as it is. I use it for sending small parcels, paying bills, obtaining foreign currency for holidays, etc., and many other people do the same. Local businesses rely on its services, particularly now that the HSBC and Lloyds banks have closed their local branches. The staff are always helpful, friendly and knowledgeable, and obviously very well trained for their jobs. I see that [REDACTED] intends to sell newspapers, and I have heard that he also proposes to sell confectionery, i.e. to turn the Post Office into a kind of convenience store. There is no need for any of this as there are several convenience stores nearby where all these things can be obtained, particularly as an excellent new Co-op store has recently opened just a few doors up the road. The St Leonards Post Office provides an essential public service to the local community and I urge you to abandon these proposals and leave it exactly as it is.

I'm writing in regards to the potential modernisation of the London Road St Leonards Post Office. Having already suffered the loss of the Hastings Post Office locally, and the closure of the Eastbourne Post Office which I use for work I am extremely concerned to be losing another Post Office to modernisation. In both the Hastings & Eastbourne examples the new merged in store Post Offices at WH Smiths offer greatly reduced services, longer waiting times and a much more confusing experience, certainly for pensioners. It is my understanding that this Crown Post Office will be converted into a convenience store, with a smaller Post Office inside of it. There is absolutely no need for another convenience store in that area. There is one opposite the Post Office, one to the left of that, a newly renovated Co-Op a few doors up, a newly converted Spar a few doors up from that and more stores dotted around the immediate area. I urge this move be re-considered for the benefit of the local community, as in my mind the proposed changes are purely made for the benefit of a few peoples wallets.

Please find below my comments on why I as a small business owner working & residing in St Leonards On Sea wholly disagree with your proposal to 'modernise' my local post office. St Leonards On Sea is an area of deprivation. Local business depends upon a full & reliable service from our crown post office. It should remain as it is. The changes will mean well trained professional post office staff will lose their jobs. The changes will mean new staff will not be so well qualified & unable to offer the high level of privacy & security that the current staff do. St Leonards On Sea is a deprived area & we demand a full high service from our post office. It is of huge importance to our area & local economy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The area of 'St Leonards Central' where the post office is located has struggled in recent years with gangs of wayward teenagers causing petty street crime. There is a problem with misuse of alcohol & unsocial behaviour. Our community needs to protect our high street from unsuitable changes. It is imperative that we demand best service from our shops to help ensure continued healthy prosperous change to this area.

St Leonards On Sea has a significant existing and long-term problem with alcohol abuse and related high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. The town centre are has recently had to introduce Public Space Protection Orders as the latest measure to tackle seafront and street drinking – of which the junction of London Road and Norman Road where the post office is located is a main focal point. This area is already saturated with convenience stores, newsagents and other low-grade retail outlets and it would be nothing short of disastrous for the Post Office site to go the same way.

I don't believe the proposed arrangement would provide the same range and level of post office services as currently. The Post Office is well used and always busy. There is no information regarding the need for a change in the current arrangements. There is no information regarding the job security of current Post Office staff. We need the full range of services of a Crown Post Office, there are a large number of small businesses that rely in the Post Office. We don't another newsagent with a few post office services instead. Please look after your staff and the respect the needs of the local community.

I'm not happy about it. The current P.O is provides a very good service at the moment and you are putting that service at risk by proposed changes. I have had experiences before with these contracted out P.O. services where I've found them to be unreliable, even to the point where the person running it has been out at a time when the Post Office counter should have been open. [REDACTED]

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Frankly, people in St Leonards are puzzled by the Post Office's wish to downgrade the post office here, and would like the opportunity to hear your explanation for the Post Office's proposal to transfer the building and the post office to [REDACTED]. People would like clarity about: the finances of the current branch; any guarantees that have been sought or agreed about services and about the employment of current staff; the rationale for franchising; and other issues.

I oppose these changes. I note that your branch information leaflet states on the first page that the changes are proposed, and if carried out will result in services being offered by your new retail partner. On the second page, however, you state that the change to a retail partnership is not open to public consultation. This is distinctly misleading, and begs the question as to what is the purpose of the consultation? It is merely a PR exercise to explain a done deal, not true community involvement in the decision-making process. The present Post Office facility is often crowded, with long queues - in fact it is rare for there to be no-one, or only a couple of customers, waiting. We have many foreign students in the summer months who all want to send messages home, creating log-jams; we have many small entrepreneurial businesses, and growing numbers of such, who rely on the Post Office to send out orders. As a local resident I use it regularly for the full range of its services, even though I also receive ordered goods by courier - there is room for both! As an area of high deprivation we have large numbers of elderly and disabled residents who use mobility aids and scooters, and families with multiple small children who use mammoth twin or triplet buggies. I fail to see how these are to be accommodated in the 'shopping aisles' to which you refer in your description of the new arrangement, nor how the reduced number of service tills will result in quick and convenient access for the customer. As for the retail offer; [REDACTED] may well have achieved respectable sales in other locations since 2010, but there is no evidence that this will be the case here in St Leonards. If your team have visited the site, it cannot have escaped your notice that there are already at least 7 outlets for tobacco and confectionary within 50m; we do not need another one. As I say, it is an area of low income and high deprivation; shops that offer these goods are cynically profiting from the poorest in society, and you should be ashamed to be associated with their proliferation. In addition, what sort of forward projection is possible for these two commodities when Government policies militate against the population continuing to smoke and consume large quantities of sweet confectionary? What safeguards are there that the post office services will continue even if [REDACTED] realises that his business is not as profitable as he expected? What are the arrangements over the building itself and the land to the rear for associated post office activities? Are they to remain the property of Post Office Limited, and be held leasehold, or is their sale intended? The building is an important piece of the history of St Leonards, representing the rebuilding of the town after bomb damage in WWII, and as such is architecturally of its time, linking with the other three corners of London Road and Norman Road that were built by a single local builder. Any change to it, including removing the imposing wooden external door to the main office area would be strongly opposed. In sum; there will not be adequate room for PO customers there will not be adequate service points for PO customers there is no local need or requirement for another tobacco and confectionary outlet the future of the building is possibly at risk. This is a bad move; do not do it. It is not worth it just for a few extra hours on a Saturday.

The SERVICE which is provided by the existing Post Office in St. Leonards is second to none. To integrate a Post Office service into a 'convenience store' (five of which already exist in the close vicinity) will result in job losses for Post Office staff and inadequate service for Post Office users, which include many local businesses. This is already evidenced in the location of a Post Office counter in W.H. Smith in Hastings Town where customers experience long queues and inadequate staffing. The businesses in the London Road area of St. Leonards are working hard to maintain and improve a pleasant community which serves its residents well. To downgrade a crown Post Office to yet another newsagents/convenience outlet will benefit no-one except the incoming proprietors. Apart from the visual impact of such a change, signalling that London Road is on the decline, there will be increased traffic congestion resulting from deliveries of goods at all times of day. Enough is enough. It is time to consider how to enhance people's lives by providing good service, rather than discard their needs in favour of profit.

Loss of crown post office in this area would affect people badly. the area is run down economically and socially. the post office as it stands is a focal point for the community at large, replacing it with a newsagents with limited postal facilities will leave people stranded, isolated abandoned which will bring about an increase in poverty and poor health., There are currently four newsagents in this postcode, opening another one will effect there turnover causing further closure and more shops to stand empty.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I cannot see that proposing to put this Crown Office into private hands has anything to do with modernisation at all. It is basically privatisation of a national asset and public service via the back door. Having visited other branches that have ceased in their present capacity and either been taken into a retail premises (or, as is the case with this proposal, the retailer has taken over the Post Office premises) you simply do not get the same standard of advice and service. This is because the staff do not stay on. Why? Because, I suspect, that they aren't taken on under the terms of TUPE - so their pay, holidays, sick leave and pensions are not safeguarded. So what you are doing, in fact, is making a lot of highly-trained and professional staff redundant at the same time. This is not only a disservice to your loyal staff, but a disservice to the public, who will get bad advice. I heard a complaint at the branch now housed in WH Smith (Hastings) that someone, despite using your Check and Send service and paying for it, had had their passport application returned - because it was wrong. The details were not complete - but the PO clerk had not noticed it. That could have resulted in someone not being able to take their holiday and all the expense/loss of money that that could have entailed. I am not at all convinced that the Post Office's policy to do away with Crown Offices is anything other than a cynical cost-cutting and service cutting exercise. We have seen nothing but the denudation of public services over the years as everything from Water supplies (which none of us can do without) to the Royal Mail have been sold off. These we all collectively OWNED, but were not given a share in the profit of the sales. In fact, all that has happened is that prices have increased as shareholders want their cut. Privatised services have not benefited the public, they have had a negative impact on what is provided to us. All that is happening here is that the government wants to dump its responsibilities for providing this great public service, available throughout the country. It is no use trying to sell it to us with extended opening hours - for what is the use of that when there is still a cut-off for Royal Mail collections? All it means is more things sitting around in the office, with the possibility of being stolen. I do not know what the views of your staff are concerning this, but I know that the overwhelming tide of public opinion co-incides with my own. You cannot get a good service unless you have well-trained, good and loyal staff. You don't get that without good terms and conditions, employer responsibilities and remuneration. That's not going to be provided by a tobacconist's, or any other form of retail outlet. The Post Office is so much more than a retail outlet and as far as our local branch in St Leonards on Sea is concerned, the public here are very much behind keeping the branch open, in its existing form.

Please don't shut this Post Office. I am disabled and my bank has just closed down a few doors up causing me severe difficulty. To have this Post Office at London Road close to would be devastating for me and the whole community in St Leonards on Sea. I cannot carry large parcels or know of another Post Office to accept posting letters at 6.00pm. If there is any alternative to saving the Post Office money then please do that rather than closing this valuable service in St Leonards. Thanking you in anticipation.

Longer opening times would be good but are not on offer. The current post office staff are hopeless so anything would be better!

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am deeply concerned that the Post Office is pushing forward its plan to privatise St Leonards Crown Post Office. This goes against assurances that Crown Post Offices were sacrosanct when the Royal Mail was privatised at a loss to the public purse by the coalition Government, and the Post Office was left to survive on its own. St Leonards Crown Post Office offers banking services to the community in an area where we have lost two banks in St Leonards in the past decade. Footfall from people visiting the Post Office also helps the local economy with many people spending money in local shops. This is an area that has needed and received regeneration money and any change at all to the Post Office service could present a tipping point to the local economy, particularly at this time of economic uncertainty with Brexit. It is a very negative proposal and very unwise and the people of St Leonards do not want it. We have also seen the appalling service and queues from another local Crown Post Office in Hastings that was franchised and moved in to WH Smith. This has proved to be a disaster for post office customers in Hastings. I would like the following questions answered if possible. 1. Is the St Leonards Crown Post Office profitable? 2. Is the consultation a genuine consultation with local views being the deciding factor concerning any decision about the future of our Crown Post Office? 3. Upon what terms is [REDACTED] being offered a franchise? 4. [REDACTED] 5. How can the Post Office guarantee the same level and quality of Crown Post Office services in St Leonards by a franchisee for the foreseeable future? 6. What benchmarks and performance management systems are in place to monitor and assess future service delivery? 7. What procedures are in place legally to enable the Post Office to withdraw the franchise from a failing franchisee and restore Crown Post Office services in the event of such a failure? 8. What legal requirement is there upon the Post Office to provide a Crown Post Office service to us? 9. Why did the Post Office not advertise widely about the tender process from the outset but presented it as a fait accompli? 10.. There is a strong feeling locally that residents have been treated with disdain by the Post Office; that we have been under informed and ignored. We believe that it is only because we are making a noise, that the Post Office is now responding. The fact that there is an under-publicised consultation meeting to be held on August 3rd when many people will be away on holiday, is a case in point. Additionally, very few people knew about this meeting until a resident brought a letter from our MP Rt Hon Amber Rudd, to a public meeting organised by residents on July 17th, a meeting the Post Office refused to attend, This August 3rd consultation was not widely advertised either. Can you justify your poor public affairs procedures, your processes and timetable and the lack of advertising for this meeting?

the Community needs this main post office in order to get a full quick service, the area has been regenerated, new business people need the main post office and not the sub post office. We don't need another newsagent/sweet shop in the area, there are already 6/7 in the area. We don't want to queue for 30 minutes to get a parcel posted! or to get one stamp! This post office is part of the community., The staff are friendly and knowledgeable.

1 Why is this branch being tendered for takeover when it's a highly viable business? 2 Why didn't St Leonards branch get a 12 week consultation period like other branches? It's been 6. 3 Our local community need the Post Office to remain a full service Crown Post Office not a kiosk style or Sub Post Office owned by a newsagent .It's not appropriate given we have no less than 6 newsagents and tobacconists within a few feet of our PO. We need postal pension and banking services not more places to buy sweets. 4 Why does your consultation pamphlet inside the branch say we have time to comment and ask questions and yet no ability to influence or change the Post Office decisions? It's not a consultation if that's the case.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

The PO comments form states the following - 'Do you have any comments about the proposed change' 'Are there any other local community issues specific to the area of St Leonards On Sea which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change.' The form gives no further detail on what comments you take on board. My comments about [REDACTED] & planned changes to our local Crown Post Office seem entirely relevant ? You have failed to explain my query about why the form misleads with its information about [REDACTED], the partnerships/relationships prior to 2010 & why you do not provide his full proper name. [REDACTED]. On top of this you give no information about lease terms of the partnership & long term plans for the site. You provide no guidance about what local community issues you consider relevant. You are grossly misleading your valued customers by not providing proper information. You are grossly misleading your valued customers by not providing proper detailed guidance about how they go about making their comments. It makes it a farcical time wasting exercise. The 'modernisation' plans will change our high street with negative impact to both the residential & business community. In another set of comments lodged online I pointed out that the proposed business would fail as within 500yards of this area there is already a glut of newsagents & convenience stores competing for trade. These stores already have loyal customers [REDACTED] will struggle to make his business operate in a profitable way. On top of this there is a campaign in St Leonards to boycott his newsagent/convenience goods should the proposed changes go ahead. This campaign has growing support with numerous residents & business owners signing pledge certificates. The Post Office is planning to close the West St Leonards post office in coming months. This will put a far greater strain on the queues at the London Rd branch. It demands the Crown Post Office remains so it can provide efficient prompt service to its clientele. Long queues will have dire negative impact on all, in particular local businesses & the elderly who are physically unable to queue. This will not be any store of convenience, it will be a failing newspaper shop with long queues for the counters for PO services. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As I explained the area surrounding the London Road Crown Post Office has a well known problem with misuse of alcohol & juvenile crime. You offer me no proper information about the specific terms of your lease with [REDACTED]. This provides me with no reassurance that [REDACTED] will be a competent partner. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Surely it must be as people are responsible for handling legal documents & cash. This must be even more important for the owner/manager. Please explain in detail how training differs between [REDACTED] staff & the Crown Post Office staff ? What is the PO's stance on the sale of alcohol at the St Leonards store ? Have you been in contact with St Leonards On Sea community policing team & councillor Mr Trevor Webb to seek comments them about local community issues specific to the area in particular alcohol misuse & crime inc juvenile crime ? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. You are now proposing he manages three stores in different locations where he cannot be onsite daily to ensure their proper running [REDACTED]. Your reply fails to offer me any reassurance that there is any robust business plan in place. The business model of newsagent or convenience store' will fail for reasons stated. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] What firm guarantees can you provide your St Leonards On Sea customers with that this is a secure long term fail safe partnership & business plan. [REDACTED] that will impact in a negative way on our community? I will be attending the meeting on Thursday & shall expect far better detail on information about [REDACTED], his business credentials & his modernisation plans for the London Road Crown Post Office. In the meantime I would be grateful to you for a far more detailed response to my comments.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am seriously concerned about the proposal to close the Public Crown Post Office in St Leonard's. The Post Office is a very much used and valued service in St Leonard's. St Leonard's has a wide range of residents - with areas of deprivation and residents that do not have access to Bank Accounts. The increase in bank closures locally mean an increased use and an increased need for the Post Office. There is an extensive range of small business who will suffer without the presence of a Post Office. With so much online shopping now there is a massive increase of parcels - which we need the Post Office service. Plus all the usual over the counter services - Renewal of Passports and Driving Licences. It is my belief that a minimalist Post Office service within a store, like the arrangement that has taken place with the Main Post Office in Hastings Town Centre has not worked and it is the Public that has suffered the consequences. Losing the Crown Post Office at St Leonard's will be a disaster for the area and for the residents of St Leonard's.

The whole St Leonards community are against the closure of this branch. It is incredibly important to the lifeblood of the town - especially as the whole area is undergoing regeneration. The Co-Op has just invested in expanding its store - not shutting it down. The proposal to modernize the branch is not sustainable - there are enough convenience stores in the area - with the Co-Op yards away being just one. Listen to the local people!

This is a terrible idea. There are far too many convenience stores in St Leonards already, one more is not needed or wanted and it will surely, as no doubt the Post Office intends, fail within a few years. Losing the Crown PO in Hastings was a huge blow, the new WHSmith service is appallingly slow and understaffed and there is no indication that ST Leonards will be any better managed. The existing PO is staffed by knowledgeable people paid a proper wage, able to communicate with the local people effectively, surely you must be able to find a way to make the premises more profitable without downgrading the service provided. How long does the franchisee have to continue to offer the full range of services? We now have no PO in West St Leonards either so how long before the large, and deprived, community of St Leonards is forced to travel to the next town to use a proper full Post Office?

1. I am pleased that the post office is not closing. 2. I am concerned that the revised post office will be swamped by other commercial considerations. That there will be insufficient space and serving positions for demand, such as has resulted in the central Hastings post office move to within WHSmiths. 3. This area already has too many small convenience stores selling the same products, and does not need another one. 4. Alternatively, a stationary store, like WHSmiths would be a much better partner, especially as this area lost its only stationary store a few years ago. 5. The existing staff are really good at their job, and I hope that they can be re-employed in the revised branch.

I object strongly to your proposal to close down st leonards crown post office and sell the building to [REDACTED]. we have no need of another retail newsagent in our town centre especially one run by someone who has no intention of living in the town. your proposal constitutes a downgrading of public service provision in an area of extreme economic deprivation. the st leonards crown post office closure will lead to a significant drop in footfall in our high st. many people travel in from out of town to use the crown post office service because they prefer it to the post office franchise provision in other areas e.g. Hastings town centre and Silverhill. I urge you to reconsider. Yours sincerely [REDACTED]

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Post Office Limited is proposing to sell the premises of St.Leonards post office to [REDACTED]. During the recent consultation at the Victoria Hotel on Thursday 3rd August it became apparent that this decision had not only already been made, but may have already been signed. It must be emphasised that the property of St.Leonards PO belongs to the commons, managed on everyone's behalf by Govt. departments elected by the people. As stakeholders, we need to be asked permission to sell our property. This has not happened. It is also apparent that the premises have neither been maintained to an adequate level and, more importantly, have not been utilised in generating commercial activity. The upstairs floor has been disused for 10 years, I'm led to believe. It feels that the drawn-out process of running a business down in order to then claim lack of viability to support wholesale off-loading has been used by the PO Ltd. Yesterday's so-called consultation did nothing to change this view. Myself and many others in this community do not want our property sold off. We want to see a real effort made to include the local community - business and customers - in a proposal that keeps the building away from the risk of becoming another McDonalds, serving unhealthy, expensive fast food. In the Modernisation Proposal (which I notice has no referable reference code... [REDACTED] is going to sell confectionary and tobacco. At a time when our govt. is pressing for a reduction in obesity, coronary disease, lung cancer etc.., you are proposing adding sweets and fags to the shelves of our PO. Gee, thanks! Is that really as far as the imagination goes?? The truth is that the PO Ltd wants to realise some windfall £££s from selling off more public property. I personally will not allow this, and many here feel the same. We want to see a real effort by the PO Ltd to involve local business and communities in truly modernizing the premises to accommodate true local needs. We will not let this pass.

The proposed changes do not appear to benefit the community in general as regards service and value for money, they appear to favour a few business people, perhaps, which is completely wrong. The current setup seems to be working for many people and I think this would worsen with the proposed changes.

I totally disagree with the proposed changes, and pledge to Continue to support the local community's need for this resource to remain as it is.

This crown post office is due to be sold to a gentleman who wishes to turn it into a combined PO and convenience store. I am disabled and rely on the excellent service given by the St Leonards Crown Post Office and I object most strongly to having my post office downgraded in this way. The area around is full to bursting with convenience stores - I have counted 12 in the Kings Road, London Road area of St Leonards, including a Co-op that has just expanded its premises only a few doors away. If the new owner is thinking of making a profit in that way he will be sorely disappointed. We don't need ANY MORE 'convenience stores. We need a post office, nothing more nor less. I suspect, however that after his obligations to the lease have been fulfilled after five years, the new owner will sell the building and we will be left with a tiny counter in one of the remaining convenience stores. My mobility is very limited and this is very important to me. I implore you not to let the community down in this way! I understand that this Crown Post Office is so valuable to the community as it is, that it actually turns a profit. It makes no sense to sell it to someone who will only close it down - and he will, I can guarantee it. Our communities are under pressure in these times of austerity and it would be a crying shame if the Post Office didn't stand up and support us. Come and have a look; come and see - we DON'T NEED ANY MORE CONVENIENCE STORES!! Please listen to your loyal local customers.

I am opposed to the change to the Post office in London Rd because regardless of the services that the proposed franchise will offer, this is a public asset that is being sold off. If a new owner can propose to turn this business into one which is profit making by adding stationary, newspapers and magazines, surely the PO could do the same. Could they also include using the upper floor to offer housing, business or studio space for rental income?

I think it's a great idea [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Also, the current PO is run poorly, so I hope there will be a new, customer focused direction.

The local St Leonards Post Office provides a service to our community. It would be an irreversible mistake to close it down.

I am completely opposed to the proposed franchise. This is a crown post office and needs to remain as such for the benefit of the community. There is no support in the town for this. [REDACTED] has only recently started running post offices, with Seaford and Newhaven only agreed in the last year. What happens if his business model fails, our post office would also close. The proposal is for a corner shop, not a post office. Shame on you.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

This proposal has been ill thought through. St Leonards does not need another newsagents and I fail to see how the new Postmaster will be able to succeed in making a profit this way if Post Office Ltd haven't. I am extremely concerned over the ambiguous timescale for which the new Postmaster would be required to use the building (which he would be the freeholder of) as a post office (is it 5 years or 10?, the meeting failed to answer this). What will happen to this building (previously owned by us, the public) should the new Postmaster wish to sell it as it will be a lot more valuable without a post office in it and could be developed into flats quite easily. The consultation yesterday was misleading from the outset; people were still under the assumption that the could have any influence as to what happens in the future when in reality it was more a case of should the new Postmaster sell sweets or magazines. Understandably the attendees were frustrated and PO Ltd reps were not able to answer the most basic of questions. A complete farce.

The community really needs a proper post office in st leonards. The one in hadtings is really unsatisfactory. It's an essential part of our community and its closure will affect jobs and businesses. I always go there. Please don't close it.

This is the main post office accessible for miles around. The only one that also had any kind of experienced staff. It puts yet more strain on us low income folk that can't travel so easily. Stop selling out to money makers and start standing up for the community.

I work in St Leonard's and often have to get change here , and send parcels etc . We have such a lack of purposely run business such as the post office but understand that post office had to change , but I do think this is the wrong decision, the post office will be second fiddle to the whims of the knew partner relying on sales of goods that are already abundantly provided for in St Leonard's . I do feel that there has been a lack of imagination regarding this site and it's more about how much money can be made in selling off property rather than how to grow the post office overall . I would have thought with so much at stake more effort would have been sort from experts who deal expanding business instead of asset stripping . With so many banks moving to Internet and closing branches the post office could have picked up local business and sold more postal related items from local artists, little gift shop within the building, art and design products . Making it more desirable to visit overall a real community asset instead of yet another newsagent who may or may not make any money .

It spells the end of a post office service I and many others rely on. There is no guarantee off a full counter service after five years. This has not been an open and transparent process around the selling of the building or the service's future

This is now the only Crown Post Office in the area, the proposed downgrade is a significant loss to the town. It is surrounded by convenience stores & newsagents, the proposed change is entirely negative. I and most of this community are alarmed by this and confused at the myopic reasoning behind it. The current retail offer in the Post Office is appalling, poor overpriced selection. Why don't you improve what you have rather than depriving us of a proper post office. If what has happened in Hastings is anything to go by, this will not be a success and we will all miss our excellent Post Office.

It is important to the community to have a central main post office. People come to the town to use it and use the local shops whilst there, often spending half an hour or so just browsing and making purchases they may not necessarily have made. Don't punish the little guys, independence not retailers just to benefit the supermarket/superstores.

I want to retain a full service post office in st Leonards on sea.

I am deeply concerned about your proposal to convert St. Leonards Post Office into a franchise operation not just because the Post Office belongs to all of us as citizens and I do not accept that you have any right to surrender that asset to the private sector. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am opposed to the proposal.

I object to the closure of a Crown post office. We already have many newsagents and supermarkets in the immediate vicinity. We only have one Crown post office, which is vital for the St Leonards community..

DO NOT CLOSE THIS POST OFFICE OR REPLE IT WITH A ZAKAT OUTET

I am strongly against the changes as St Leonards is the only Crown Post Office in the area and there really is no need for another newsagents in this street. I fear vital services will be lost not to mention the loss of an important community hub.

St Leonards has become a fragmented community, divided between upmarket cafes, restaurants and galleries - and a huge number of scuzzy convenience stores, with people begging and doing drugs in front of them. We have lost the banks which helped bring people into the centre. The existing Crown Post Office provides a much-needed community service right in the centre. We should be regenerating around this vital hub, not downgrading it.

I think changing the post office is London Road St Leonards is absolutely absurd! You do not have any right to surrender that asset to the private sector! The post office in Hastings town centre is a total joke, this is a franchise post office and is run with skeleton staff and currently doesn't have a manager, the poor staff there are at their wit's end. The queues in there are always long, you are usually waiting a good 25 mins before you are served as they have only 2 staff serving and one in the travel money kiosk. Before jumping into radical ideas and decisions wouldn't it be a better idea to actually get the main town post office running as a post office? because currently it is a total shamble, i paid for a service called Drop And Go there where you put credit onto a card and fill out a manifest which you attach to the items you want to post, and you simply drop-and-go and it gets processed, well, you would think so, i sent some packets off to be posted on a Monday, and had some on the Tuesday and the Wednesday, on the Wednesday i noticed one of my packets had not been sent yet and asked why it was not sent as i have already provisionally paid for postage and the service via my drop and go account. I was told none of my packets had been sent this week as they didn't have the time to send them and was told to leave them, didn't even get an apology, so what is the point in paying into a service if it isn't being processed when you bring them in?? I do no know why the post office was meddled with in the first place, we the general public have a right to a post office that is run by the post office and not by some Newsagent franchise! The people of St Leonards need their own post office, it would be totally unreasonable to close this branch or turn it into a franchise! The Post Office belongs to all of us as citizens of this town and I do not accept that you have any right whatsoever to surrender that asset to the private sector without firstly addressing the public about this.

. I have never seen such a poorly staffed post office such as Hastings, this seriously needs to be looked into, it is not fair on the citizens of this town to have to put up with such a bad service.



Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am not happy about the proposed changes to our post office in St. Leonards. Our community needs the post office to remain a Crown Post Office. We are already well served by other shops and services providing newspapers/sweets/tobacco products and another outlet is unlikely to be profitable. From the experience we have observed when you closed the Hastings branch, we know your proposals will not benefit our community. The iconic Hastings building remains empty and deteriorating (Shame on you). All the experienced staff have left. To obtain service, one has to queue for up to half an hour - even more at busy times - continually knocked by retail customers and then are serviced by people who have not been adequately trained and are not in receipt of proper employment benefits - pension rights etc. WE DO NOT WANT THIS TO HAPPEN TO THE ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA BRANCH. Much of the counter work is of highly confidential nature, particularly for elderly pensioners like myself [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Crown Post Office is supposed to be a service for its customers. Making a profit should not be your major concern. From the avoidance techniques used by your representative at the supposed consultation meeting on 4th August, it is obvious that our branch at least breaks even and probably is profit-making. If you are anxious to make even more money, why don't you renovate the first floor of the building and make it available as lettable office space? Please leave our Post Office Branch as it is, a pleasant working environment providing a safe, confidential, helpful service to its customers with hardworking, friendly and helpful staff. It is perfect as it is.

"" The continuation of Crown Post Office Services in St Leonards is absolutely vital.

The post office is absolutely the hub of life in central St Leonards. I am opposed to its closure & seeking a retail partner. If the Post Office really want to make an effort to make an apparently loss-making post office sustainable, then look at enhanced retail, and why have you just abandoned the upper floor, rather than letting it out or indeed, developing it for housing? Contact Letstoshare.co.uk, a local firm who do this with properties in Hastings & St Leonards.

I am appalled at the plans for St Leonard's Post Office. The suggested changes would have a serious detrimental effect upon this community. This post office is always extremely busy, often with queues at opening, and is a vital service. St Leonard's is a relatively deprived area, with high level of poverty and a large proportion of residents who are elderly, disabled or otherwise disadvantaged. The post office is the hub of their lives. These people rely heavily upon the kind and knowledgeable service of the excellent counter staff who are always friendly, cheerful and willing to go the extra mile. To replace this vital hub with a general store [in an area where there are a multitude of small grocery shops] would be nothing short of social vandalism.

It's the only Crown Post Office in the area. We want to keep the full range of services, including a photo booth, and we want it to be EASILY ACCESSIBLE to all. There are 3 newsagents and 3 supermarkets within walking distance that sell newspapers, and stationery / greetings cards retailers. Do we need any more shops selling tobacco, sweets or alcohol? St Leonards Crown Post Office is more than a mailing house. It is a social community service provider. For many elderly members of St Leonards it is an information centre, a place to communicate with staff who are paid to listen, explain and advise without bias towards a specific product or service. DO NOT LET IT GO.

It is a central P.O. that is vital in providing services across the whole community. Many residents due to poor health and age are unable to physically get to other P.O. counterservices and to remove this would cause difficulties for them. It is uncommon for there to be no queues which demonstrates how well this P.O. is used and the service is always friendly and efficient.

I am totally against the sale of the Post office building, which has been part of our community for over 60 years. We do not need another newsagent in the area, we already have over seven outlets for newspapers and sweets within a 5 minute walking radius of the Road, another one is not going to enhance the area. I will not be using the retail side of this business. This area has now started to pick up, New business's. entrepreneurs working from home, wanting a fast and efficient service, which we always get from the polite, friendly staff in London Road. If this changes to a sub post office, it will have a negative effect on the customers that use the post office, not everyone has time, to stand around for half an hour, waiting to be served, as this will surely happen. If anyone has used the sub post office in Hastings W.H.Smith will tell you, it is a slow process!!

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I use the Post Office for Driving Licence, passport, posting letters and many other items. It is the only good one in the area, Bexhill is the next the one in WH Smith always has queues. My mother who is 84 in November uses it too. I recall it being open as a child and it has played a vital role in the local area for many years. Any replacement will be at the detriment to the area.

I would like to register my objection to the closure of our Crown Post Office. This will leave the whole of Hastings and St Leonards without proper Post Office provision and represents a significant downgrade of facilities, with no guarantee that the current level of service will continue to be available. I am also objecting to the proposal that the building - the property of the taxpayer - be sold off to [REDACTED] rather than leased. Finally, I am also opposed to the opening of yet another convenience store in an area which is already saturated with shops of this type.

I note that customers are one of the PO's stakeholders but not worthy, it appears, of being consulted about the plan to transfer services at the St Leonards Crown office to a 'retail partner' - presumably that is because it is presumed they would not accept the plan. The plan is put forward as being in the customers' best interests but how can the PO know what the customers' best interests are if it doesn't come and talk to us? Or does it think it knows better than what their interests are? I see this proposal as a downgrade of the service which holds out no guarantee that services will be maintained over the long term.

This area of St Leonards on Sea is already saturated with convenience stores that sell tobacco and alcohol and these proposed changes will mean another one of these stores open. I am against these proposals, it will take away business from local traders who over the past few years have really worked to transform the area and encourage local economic growth and move slowly away from the high levels of deprivation the area finds it self in. The post office itself is always very busy with long queues and perhaps with proper management from Post Office it could be as successful and thrive just as much as some other local business have with far less capital at their hands.

The loss of a Crown Post Office would be highly detrimental to the area. Where this has happened elsewhere it has lead to inferior levels of service.

We would hate to see the post office go. We need it in our business. A lot of our clients use it before or after their appointments too. And that would be a shame because they'd go elsewhere effecting our business And we've heard about the selling alcohol to underage too witch is disgusting

I would love the Post Office in St.Leonards-on-sea to stay a crown post office. I definitely think we have people specially coming to the area to use the only crown post office in Hastings and St.Leonards. The staff are so helpful. This post office can be very busy at certain times of the day. I use it often to bank for my business. My family have had a shop in the area for 25 years.

I write to you as [REDACTED] We have been behind the campaign to stop the closure of the St Leonards Crown Post Office. We will also be behind the campaign to stop businesses and locals using the down graded post office services if this does come to pass. St Leonards on Sea is one of the most deprived areas, not just of East Sussex, but of the UK. Over the last decade the two financial service providers have left the area and for many the Post Office is the only centre for local financial transfers. St Leonards Crown Post Office is more than a mailing house. It is a social community service provider. For many elderly members of St Leonards it is an information centre, a place to communicate with staff who are paid to listen, explain and advise without biase towards a specific product or service. Hastings Independent is aware of [REDACTED] plan to run Post Office services as a franchise for 5-10 years. He's to buy the entire freehold building from PO Ltd who say that currently they are operating at a loss, so it seems he's buying it purely for the building. There are many businesses selling cards, tobacco and stationary locally so he has not seen a gap in the market. No, just a cash cow he can run into the ground and then redevelop right in the heart of the town centre. Why won't the Post Office Ltd listen to the community who have proactive ideas include the sale of local relevant goods in the current Crown PO shop. Hastings and St Leonards on Sea are infamous for their historic pirates and smugglers.. The area still attracts many! The community spirit that rebuilt a Pier from it's ashes will not tolerate an investor that puts nothing back. The area is on the up and many developers are circling above St Leonards looking for cheap investments. Don't allow [REDACTED] to rip the heart out of our town centre for his own financial benefit.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Please don't close the St Leonard's on Sea Post Office in London rd in St Leonard's, East Sussex. London Rd St Leonard's is a deprived area in a Super Output Area defined as deprived by the European Union. It is one of the poorest areas not just in the UK but in the EU. Many people who are excluded from normal financial services rely on this Post Office to collect benefits and to pay bills using meters cards and key meters. Losing the Post Office would be devastating.

Regarding the potential closure of my local Post Office, I wish to state my opposition to the proposed move. The Post Office is a vital part of the economic life of St Leonards. It is always busy and is as I understand it profitable which is a rarity. Downgrading the branch makes no sense and will adversely affect the residents of St Leonards.

I object to this change. St Leonards is currently the only Crown PO in the town, the one in Hastings town centre having shut some time ago. We do not need more shops selling 'confectionary [sic], tobacco and stationery' in St Leonards, which will compete with those already struggling to make a living. Hastings PO is now in WH Smiths and it is absolute chaos at times, particularly at Christmas, with queues around the shop. Why do we need the same in St Leonards? There are lots of small businesses in the area which rely on a decent post office service. If the service is not profitable there are options that could be explored (for instance turning the upstairs into flats) which would enable the service to bring in more money but to remain a Crown post office

I am writing in response to your consultation and proposals for the downgrading of St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards on Sea. I have the following comments: 1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation. There is nothing modern about reducing service, driving down wages and inconveniencing customers, whilst pursuing profit above all other considerations. It happens every time our public assets are sold off at fire sale prices, such as the privatisation of Royal Mail. 2. While I have nothing against [REDACTED] personally - some of his post offices in smaller localities apparently provide satisfaction to customers - St Leonards is entirely different, being a large town with serious deprivation - in central St Leonards in particular. Many vulnerable people do not qualify for regular bank accounts and rely on the Post Office for their banking needs. Our many small independent businesses also need full banking services since all our banks have closed. Many creative makers and online traders also require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long queues at inadequate service positions. 3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by your actions. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen. 4. I have no confidence in [REDACTED] assurance that he has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. This sale of public property is asset stripping of the worst kind. What is to stop him from deciding a post office does not bring in enough money and changing the business down the road? I suspect he simply wants the building and will be able to redevelop or sell it on at a large profit in a few years time. Meanwhile we will have lost the heart of our community. 5. You are abandoning your responsibilities towards your staff, some of whom have worked there for over twenty years. I very much doubt that [REDACTED] will employ them with the same salaries and conditions. Since he is reducing the number of serving positions he will clearly not reemploy them all. What will happen to their pensions? 6. Finally, the consultation yesterday was a sham. Telling people about a done deal is not consulting them. There was insufficient notice given. We only found out its date on 17 July when someone received a response from the MP. The notice in the post office did not go up until at least a week after that. The hotel on the seafront is a good ten minutes walk from the post office, not helpful for those with mobility issues. By holding it on a Thursday afternoon and with no sign outside or in the hotel foyer, nobody would have found the venue had campaigners not been outside to help them. Attendees said they found out about it from our leaflets, not from your inadequate publicity. All of this confirms what I suspect was a deliberate effort to push these changes through with as little publicity as possible. In light of all this, the consultation period must be extended to allow everyone to have their say. Such a major change should not be rushed. In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. If it goes ahead I have pledged to boycott all non post office goods - as have well over 100 others. [REDACTED] business will not succeed and he would do well to reconsider. I demand you listen to the community and reverse your decision. I insist you keep it as a Crown Post Office.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I write to express my dismay at the proposed closure of this Post Office. This is the only Crown Post Office in the area, where we, the residents, have access to the services only a Crown Post Office can provide, including the vital banking services. There are already many convenience stores selling stationery and newspapers within a few yards of the Crown Post Office. Yet another place selling such items will simply weaken an already fragile local economy, and this alone would constitute an act of vandalism by the Post Office. But there are many other compelling reasons to retain this Post Office, not least among these that this is our only local Crown Post Office since the irresponsible closure of the corresponding office in Hastings, an action perceived by everyone here, including councillors of all political persuasions, to have been disastrous - with the current provision at WH Smiths proving to be totally inadequate, and the original post office building still empty and unused. Your assurance that post office services will be continued by the proposed franchisee [REDACTED] is strongly undermined by your refusal to clarify the terms of his contract; but it is perfectly clear to us that he will be able to close the post office after a period of time - perhaps five years - and having bought the building on very favourable terms, will then be in a position to sell it or develop it for his own profit and advantage, with further resulting damage to the local community for which this Post Office is so important. You argue that the post office is unprofitable; but this is a matter for you properly to address by developing better business practices and supporting the post office, rather than simply discarding the building as you have decided to do, and this without any valid public consultation - just a profoundly insulting charade last week, on 3rd August, which has upset the local residents, who can now safely infer a very deep level of contempt for their concerns, and which reflects very badly upon your own modus operandi. At this 'consultation', it became clear that the decision had been made already and that the service of a post office could end after five years due to unsustainability, death of the franchisee or other circumstance. It was also clear that the position would then be irrevocable, with nothing the community could do at that point to stop the Post Office being further downgraded and moved out of the current building, and nothing to stop the current proposed franchisee, [REDACTED], from buying the building and using it for development as a primary purpose. You and your representatives have invoked both FOI and 'commercial sensitivity' to stonewall requests for details in this 'consultation', with resulting frustration of people attending it in the mistaken belief that the Post Office wanted to hear their concerns and would take these into consideration. [REDACTED]

Thus, the Post Office, as well as removing a fundamentally important locus of community, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. We suggest that the Post Office should reverse this decision forthwith, and instead begin to treat the local community as a friend rather than an adversary; to carry out real consultations rather than deceitful 'pretend' consultations which are in fact presentations of decisions already made with no regard to the wishes of local residents and their fully supportive councillors of all political affiliations; and to find ways in which the Post Office could in fact make the Crown Post Office here more sustainable. We have a rich seam of expertise in our community, and it is well within our competence, if not that of the Post office, to come up with ideas for extending the business success of our post office. The report of the meeting held at The Royal Victoria Hotel on 3rd August includes these comments: "in a bravura performance of bland and patronising obfuscation, the Post Office representatives of the faceless Corporate management flatly refused to answer any questions that were not supportive of and inclusive of their own agenda. This is to asset-strip their bricks and mortar and offload their responsibilities to run Crown Post Offices. It is to be deeply regretted that they did not choose a different approach, which could have seen us working together to make our Post Office a vibrant and profitable hub of the community. The building has an upper storey that is empty and could be developed. As Peter Chowney [leader of Hastings Borough Council] commented, it would be in the best interests of the whole community to ensure that the building was put to good use and that the Council worked with the Post Office to ensure that both the building and a Crown Post Office service were made sustainable for the whole community." I look forward to your reply and urge whoever is responsible to reconsider this reckless and indeed contemptuous policy of the destruction of local Crown Post Offices and all that is associated with their activity and fundamental function in a community-based democratic society which holds this public good at its heart.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

This post office is the only one near me which is easily wheelchair accessible. The other branches are at the back of pokey newsagents which are difficult to maneuver in. They also seem to have inconsistent opening hours and I've seen other customers struggle with faulty hearing loop systems. I fear that this is the future of this particular branch. I would like the post office to invest in and modernise their own crown branches instead of franchising out where there is little assurance that the branch will remain easily accessible to wheelchair users and Deaf or hard of hearing people. I also feel that the nature of this consultation has been aloof and disingenuous on the part of the post office. It has not been widely publicised and by holding the consultation so close to the final deadline has made it difficult for those with no internet access to feedback their concerns. I am deeply disappointed. I believe that the services offered by the new franchise will not meet the current range and a community with some very isolated people will become more disparate. I have joined the boycott which promises not to buy non post office goods from the new owners store if the franchise does go ahead. But I would urge the post office to rethink their offer of franchising and instead invest in their own branches.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Dear [REDACTED] I have already written to you with my comments, but feel I have to write once more following a number of revelations, culminating in the 'customer forum' that took place on Thursday last week. 1. The 'consultation' process was not followed properly followed. It is clear from my dealings with the Public Affairs Team that they have no interest in public opinion and do their best to keep the whole process as opaque as possible. My first encounter with them was during the Lancing Customer Forum where it was clear that their sole function was to dissipate any opposition by smooth talking and half-truths. This led me to investigate their website in which they clearly state that this is their aim, to 'handle' 'local noise'. It was this attitude that got me involved in the first place. I was therefore not surprised to be told by a local resident that information about the consultation process had not gone up in the Post Office on the due date, thereby leaving less time than allocated. But it was the excuse given at the 'customer forum' for lack of wider publicity that was truly shocking; they claimed that they did not have sufficient funds for advertising more widely. I have since visited the website of the Citizens Advice Bureau which clearly states that many, if not the majority, of the 'customer forums' do not follow the correct procedure. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/policy/policy-research-topics/post-policy-research-and-consultation-responses/post-policy-research/communicating-change-how-post-offices-inform-customers-about-branch-changes/> 2. The consultation process is designed to give the customers as little say as possible, so even by following the correct procedure, it is almost impossible for the Post Office to gauge public opinion. I was involved with the campaign throughout the consultation process and was constantly struck by the lack of understanding of what was happening amongst members of the public. It therefore became the job of the campaign organizers, using their own resources, to do the job of informing the public. Having a cut-off date for feedback of one week after the 'customer forum' is particularly cynical and has made it almost impossible to capitalize on the publicity that this event generated – not through the efforts of the Post Office, but by campaign organizers. Even local newspaper coverage does not come out until a week later. In your reply to my previous comments you said: 'Please be assured we take consultation seriously.' My concern is that the Post Office does not take the consultation seriously. 3. I was shocked at the revelation at the customer forum that the freehold was being sold to [REDACTED]. Clearly this information would have had a huge impact on public opinion and withholding it until the last minute once again created a lack of transparency. I suspect that it is not even legal to sell off a freehold that is owned by the public in such a cavalier way without even having a proper, open tendering process. If this goes ahead the Post Office will have lost all control of what happens to the building in the future and St Leonards may not only lose their post office, but also an iconic building. 4. I have already mentioned that half-truths we are fed by the Public Affairs Team. Unfortunately, it is not easy to fact check everything they say. However, it is clear that our elected representatives also have a problem with what they are told (or not told) by the Post Office. So Tim Loughton MP is upset that he was not informed in advance about what would be happening in Lancing; Iain Duncan Smith MP says he was reassured about a sub post office being closed by being told that the Crown Post Office could take the business only for that to close eight years later; Stella Creasy MP is concerned about the deteriorating service in franchises with WH Smiths despite assurances from the Post Office that these are great; Ian Murray MP feels that the process is 'managed decline' despite fanfares from the Post Office of modernization; David Winnick MP compares consultation with the Post Office to consultations in North Korea; Albert Owen MP was reassured by the Post Office that Crown Post Offices were the hub of the area only for them to be closed down. All these comments were made in 2017. Perhaps the clearest one from 2013 is the following from Danny Kinahan MP: 'The Post Office is not listening, but it needs to.' 5. Whatever the half, truths, what I can confirm was what [REDACTED] said at the 'Customer forum'. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Public Affairs Team said that they had a 'robust system of check in place'. That of course means nothing, apart from having a system of checks [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 6. I realize that the Post Office will say it is doing the best for a modern Britain. But an article in the Guardian (3 August 2017) takes that down completely: 'The British are now world-beaters at paying other people to rip them off. We are number one at handing over cash to "investors" who do no investing, to "entrepreneurs" who run monopolies – and who then turn around and tap us up for a bit more on the way out.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/03/britain-world-beater-ripping-off-citizens-rail-fares-water-energy-bills> I hope you will take these comments seriously. Public assets are an important part of what makes Britain today. There might not be many left but we need to keep them. The majority of people voted in the EU referendum to take back control; although I do not agree with the Brexit campaign as a whole, retaining the assets that belong to the citizens of this country is certainly something that gets my vote. Regards, [REDACTED]

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

In the past, St Leonards town centre has suffered from significant economic deprivation, poor local facilities, a depressed property market, poor quality housing, and a limited range of shops and businesses. However, over the last few years, its prospects have begun to change. Significant economic regeneration has taken place, led by the council and other local partners. The range of shops and local businesses has improved in particular, with a now thriving range of cafes, boutiques, galleries and a range of creative cultural businesses supporting regenerated housing and a re-invigorated local economy. The Post Office has been at the heart of this regeneration, supporting these new businesses and providing the services they need, especially since all local bank branches have now closed. The post office is also particularly important to the most vulnerable sections of the community who find it difficult to travel further afield – St Leonards still has a high number of low income households, people from minority ethnic groups, older people, and disabled people living nearby. I understand that the franchise will offer a full range of post office services, exactly the same as is on offer now. However, the proposed franchising of the post office is likely to lead to the loss of dedicated, highly skilled and knowledgeable workers. This is particularly important as the existing post office serves a diverse and multi-cultural community. The number of counters is also going to be reduced significantly, which is likely to lead to more queues. However, I have further concerns about the proposed franchise. The franchisee will be buying the freehold of the property, and will be required to maintain post office services in the building for only five years. After this time, the building could be converted or sold on. It's highly unlikely that the proposed business model, whereby a retail operation will accompany the post office counters selling stationery, confectionery and newspapers could be profitable. There are many shops in St Leonards already selling those commodities. We understand that the franchisee will not be applying for an alcohol licence. This is welcome, and such an application is likely to be vigorously opposed by Hastings Council, as St Leonards Town centre is part of alcohol saturation zone, where sales of high-strength alcoholic drinks in particular have led to anti-social behaviour in the past. However, if the retail business is unsustainable (and it's difficult to imagine how it possibly could be sustainable) then it's possible that the franchisee could decide to apply for an alcohol licence to make the business sustainable. I understand that this could not be ruled out under the terms of the franchise agreement. But with an unsustainable business model, it's very unlikely that the post office franchise and its supporting retail operation would run for more than the minimum five years. After that, the building could be sold and converted (potentially as housing) at a significant profit. That, I believe, is the most likely outcome, and would lead to the entire loss of post office services from Central St Leonards. I don't see how that could be ruled out. I do not believe that sufficient effort has been made either to find a franchisee with a sustainable business model, or to make the post office sustainable without seeking a franchise partner. For example, the building is seriously under-used. The whole of the upper floor is empty. The space could be used as office or business accommodation (which is in demand in St Leonards) or indeed converted into housing either for rent or sale. Proper use of the building could have made the post office building overall sustainable, and indeed profitable. Hastings Council would have been willing to talk to the Post Office about such proposals, and how the council could help with that – and indeed still would be. But the Post Office has not approached the council to explore any of these ideas. Nor has enough effort been put into seeking alternative franchisees with a potentially better business model. A local consortium of businesses and residents have expressed an interest in running the post office, but at no time did the post office openly seek franchisees, or make it clear how bids to run the franchise could be made. Finally, I do not believe that the consultation has been carried out in accordance with the Post Office's own Code of Conduct on post office closure consultations. The Code states: We want to make our consultation process simple and clear for all our customers. Each individual consultation will explain the proposed change and the reason for the change. We will then ask specific questions on which we would like your feedback. This will make sure that we get the best information available locally before we make any final decisions. But at the local consultation session held at the Royal Victoria Hotel, those present were repeatedly told that the decision to franchise the post office had already been made. This would seem to be in contravention of the code. Overall then, the proposed franchise model for St Leonards post office should be suspended for the following reasons: • It would lead to a poorer service and jeopardise regeneration of Central St Leonards; • The post office would only be guaranteed for five years; • The post office has not adequately explored alternative ways to keep the post office open; • The business model proposed by the franchisee is not sustainable; • The post office has not done enough to encourage other franchisees to bid to run the post office. Hastings Council would then be happy to talk to the Post Office about how we could work together to achieve a better, sustainable, and permanent post office in Central St Leonards.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I write again as a concerned resident and small business regarding your proposed downgrading and sell-off of the Crown Post Office property at St Leonards on Sea, specifically:- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The selling of the freehold of the building and your arrangement with the proposed franchisee will only last for 5 - 10 years. The proposed ground floor plan has 2 counters, meaning that several of your superb post office staff will lose their jobs. The West St Leonards post office at 15 Bexhill Road, West St Leonards has closed. There is no consumer need for the proposed retail offering the franchisee is planning. St Leonards has 10 convenience stores and there is tobacco, stationery, cards and sweets readily available in our town. The business will not add anything to our retail landscape nor bring customers into our town - quite the reverse, therefore this business will fail. The town needs its Crown Post Office and with some advice from local residents and local business advisers it could be made more profitable. It is evident from a business perspective that your short-term strategy is to close our Crown Post Office and downgrade it. The long-term strategy is to close the downgraded post office and convert the building into property. Then St Leonards on Sea will be without a post office function. I ask you to reconsider this proposal with urgency.

I strongly oppose the conversion of St Leonards Crown post office from a Crown post office to a franchise. I think there had not been adequate note taken of local feeling on this matter. The s strong concern there are not adequate safeguards in place yo ensure the PO is not downgraded in the future and too much rests on the private business plans of the nee franchise owner. There is a difference between a 'consultation' where proposals are presented yo the public and the public's comments are taken on board and can affect the outcome and an 'engagement' where the public are told about changes and the public's views do mot change the outcome.

There is univerasl opposition to your plans for the Post Office here in St Leonards, which I am sure you are aware of. I know this is a 'done deal' and you are going ahead with the franchise despite there being no need for this kind of retail in the area. For what it is worth, I just wanted to say that you are missing out on an opportunity to work with a passionate and committed community to provide a solution that would work for everyone. This is a service that should benefit the community for the foreseeable future not just be an opportunity for a businessman to acquire a freehold property. I fear you may have underestimated the strength of feeling about this issue in the community.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed changes regarding the above facility. In particular I object to: 1) the transfer of the freehold of the building into private hands with no long term safeguards as to its future use. 2) the proposed replication of retail facilities that are already abundant in the immediate area. 3) the loss of a Crown Office in an area of social deprivation and the impact of this on the local regeneration plans. 4) the constant lack of precise information on the grounds of 'commercial confidentiality'. 5) a poorly run 'consultation' period in which all significant publicity has had to done by campaigners rather than the Post Office. [REDACTED]

The post office building is an under-utilised asset. Why hasn't the upper floor already been used in a way to make the site more sustainable, if that is the aim of the franchising plans? My chief objections to the current plans for a franchise are these: 1) The building should continue to be a public asset, rather than sold to an investor lik [REDACTED] and the upper floor used for regeneration-funded community projects or housing. This is a poor area and asset-stripping is inappropriate. 2) The area doesn't need another news agent. It does need the above. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There are other objections--eg that post offices in retail outlets are often unpleasant and poorly managed, but these will suffice. Please respect our wishes as a community.

I have been following the campaign to Save our Crown Post Office, signed petitions and attended the demonstration and consultation at The Royal Victoria Hotel. I believe along with many our Crown Post Office should remain in London rd and serve our community as it should, not as another shop selling sweets, cigarettes etc as well...with a post office counter....It is not even guaranteed the new owner will keep it as a postoffice (with shop) St Leonard's already have many shops right in the vicinity of the Post Office selling similar/same goods as he is proposing!! We do not need anymore, thank you! KEEP OUR POST IFFICE A CROWN POST OFFICE

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Further to the consultation last week, I write again as a concerned resident and small business regarding your proposed downgrading and sell-off of the Crown Post Office property at St Leonards on Sea, specifically:-
2. The selling of the freehold of the building and your arrangement with the proposed franchisee will only last for 5 - 10 years. 3. The proposed ground floor plan has 2 counters, meaning that several of your superb post office staff will lose their jobs. 4. The West St Leonards post office at 15 Bexhill Road, West St Leonards has closed. There is no consumer need for the proposed retail offering the franchisee is planning. St Leonards has 10 convenience stores and there is tobacco, stationery, cards and sweets readily available in our town. The business will not add anything to our retail landscape nor bring customers into our town - quite the reverse, therefore this business will fail. The town needs its Crown Post Office and with some advice from local residents and local business advisers it could be made more profitable. It is evident from a business perspective that your short-term strategy is to close our Crown Post Office and downgrade it. The long-term strategy is to close the downgraded post office and convert the building into property. Then St Leonards on Sea will be without a post office function. I ask you to reconsider this proposal with urgency.

I would just like to voice my opinion regarding the proposed closure of our Crown Post Office. The post office is incredibly important to the local population. We are served by extremely knowledgeable and helpful, professional staff. There are numerous independent businesses in the area that depend on the PO to keep their businesses running smoothly. St Leonards is an up and coming area, with people relocating here from London. New businesses are springing up regularly as happens when a place is regenerating, and people are investing in the area. The Co-op for instance, has just decided to expand its store to almost double the original size, recognising that there is the customer base here. It is a great shame that the Post Office cannot also recognise and reward its customer's loyalty! We have several Newsagents/convenience stores etc within yards of the Post Office, and do not need another.

Or is it most likely that after five years, he will simply turn the building into luxury flats, and we will lose the Post Office altogether? My money is on this option. Please reconsider this decision.

I just wanted to voice my opinion on keeping the St. Leonard's post office open! Not only is it the ONLY post office in the area that has not become a franchise in another commercial property but it's easily accessible for all, it provides most of the elderly in the area access to their bank accounts and also offers most services run by the post office. I have used a post office franchise nearby and my parcel was lost, I have paid more for services that were cheaper in a standard, non franchise post office and I have had to wait extensively in queues because there is not enough space or staff to meet demands. St Leonard's is a heavily residential area that USES this post office to its full potential! Please reconsider!

I believe the proposed changes are not in the interests of either local residents or local businesses or other stakeholders in the area. I run a business at Kings Road, St Leonards on Sea, having previously been the Shopping Centre in Hastings and in that position I witnessed the closing of the nearby Crown Post Office in that Town Centre earlier this decade. The Post Office relocated into WH Smith and the resulting melee and queuing difficulties during busy periods caused pandemonium. Both the Post Office function and the retailer performance suffered, however distantly satisfied in principle the decision makers were. Keep this key focal point in St Leonards open and keep it as it is. Don't let short term savings and profit focused attitudes such as yours cause the slow recovery in our deprived area to stumble!

You have already closed West St Leonards P.O! We do not wish to lose our CROWN P.O in London Rd. We shall fight to save it!

I am against our Post Office being franchised off. It is now the only Crown Post Office in the Borough of Hastings and it serves a very large area for all the services it provides. Consumers use it from Hastings and beyond as it is the only proper fully staffed branch that provides a decent service. We do not need another Newsagent as there are several in the area. If the proposed new owner has done a business plan and thinks he can make a profit, then why can't Post Office Ltd use his expertise and employ him as a consultant? LEAVE IT ALONE!

The sham process of your so called consultation has been completely unacceptable and has raised many suspicions and questions left unanswered for the community effected. We look forward to the anticipated debate in the national press and amongst ministers which we expect to ensue.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Dear Sir / Madam, I attended the 'Consultation / User Forum' arranged by the Post Office, last Thursday evening, 03 August 2017, in St Leonard's where the Post Office document, 'Proposed branch modernisation' was available. Upon reading it I learned that the Public Consultation period had started some time ago, on the 28 June 2017, and that the Public Consultation would end very soon, on 09 August 2017, (ie in less than a week after the meeting !). I could not help but think that the real name of the document is 'Proposed branch privatisation'. Way back in the timeline, why didn't the Post Office offer the community the opportunity to suggest ways that the building, could be used, (including the floors above the ground floor), and that would generate revenue for Post Office Ltd? The PO could retain it's Crown status and the staff could keep their jobs whilst the building be modernised and used by local business persons, artists etc. The retail section of the shop, in addition to the usual PO stationery items, could sell locally produced items; crafts, knitwear, books, candles, jewellery, honey, there are so many makers / creators / authors / artists here, and these are just examples. Upstairs could be rented out as studio or office space. Rather than selling up to make a quick profit, Post Office Ltd could remain in the heart of St Leonard's and be a 'flagship' model of what a modern PO can be. I am sure that there are many other ideas being sent to you so please do consider halting the sale and giving the St Leonard's community a chance to work with you on this. Modernisation without privatisation makes sense for all parties. I want the building to PO to remain under the current ownership with Crown status. I would like the staff to be able to keep their jobs and to not have the looming issue of lower wages, loss of pension, loss of union membership etc when the TUPE expires. I would like to see the building looking smarter and I would love for the entire building to be utilised, it's ridiculous that in such a prime location there is empty space. I believe the St Leonard's Crown Post Office is now the only one with Crown status in the whole of Hastings, St Leonard's and the surrounding area. Over the last year I used the West St Leonard's PO a couple of times and I could not believe how awful the place was, it was so run down it was almost derelict and at the meeting someone said that it closed recently- what was the reason for the closure? The Hastings PO is now in WH Smiths whilst the fantastic old PO building stands empty – why is that? The staff in the WH Smith PO are not as experienced as those in the proper PO and the self service machines are often not working so the queues are awful. The Silverhill (sub?) PO recently closed and is now in the BP Petrol garage and getting across the forecourt to get into the building is rather dangerous, they need a zebra crossing or some way of giving pedestrians priority, especially the elderly or disabled. I don't want these issues in St Leonard's. The 'consultation' closing date should be extended, as many local people are unaware that this is happening to our local Post Office and therefore have not been able to contribute to the 'consultation'. Why wasn't the 'Consultation' meeting held much sooner? It should have taken place nearer to the end June or start of July rather than early August especially as this is a time when many people are away on holiday. It appears that the Post Office have deliberately scheduled this meeting late in the 'consultation' timeframe and have kept the entire 'proposal' as quiet as possible. Why didn't the Post Office post about the 'consultation' on social media? There are many local Hastings and St Leonard's pages on Facebook. Why didn't the Post Office get this run as a story in June in the local press, eg Hastings and St Leonard's Observer or the Hastings Independent Press? Why didn't the Post Office take out an advertisement in June in the local press, eg Hastings and St Leonard's Observer or the Hastings Independent Press? At the meeting I discovered that [REDACTED] plans are to take over the franchise of the Post Office, and continue (by contractual agreement) to provide the services offered currently, as well as trading as a newsagent, tobacconist, sweet shop. There are around three newsagents and three local supermarkets in the immediate central St Leonard's area that already sell newspapers, tobacco and sweets, so I don't see how [REDACTED] would be able to make a viable business, especially as lots of local people have pledged to boycott non Post Office Products if he takes on the franchise. It was unclear if [REDACTED] would be contracted to run PO services for five or ten years. Post Office should let the community know the facts around this. I urge the Post Office to NOT sell the freehold building to 'new retail partner', [REDACTED], (or any other private investor), contracted to run a PO franchise in the building. What happens when the contract expires? [REDACTED] would I imagine sell the building for redevelopment. What would happen then to the PO? The Leader of the Council, Peter Chowney, told the meeting that the continuation of the Crown Post Office status was raised at a full Council meeting and was passed unanimously. The PO representatives at Thursdays meeting agreed to send Peter Chowney a copy of the minutes / notes from the meeting. When will these notes be sent out to him? I have heard that in Reading, Berkshire, the Council took up the offer of becoming a partner in their town centre post office though that possibility was not suggested to Hastings Borough Council by Post Office Ltd. Why wasn't Hastings Council given this opportunity? I have also heard that Bridgend in south Wales has successfully kept its Crown Post Office as the result of a community campaign. Please listen to our community. Yours sincerely, [REDACTED]

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

St. Leonards on Sea is a struggling town which has recently been on an upwards trend. There are many new businesses opening and new people moving in which is pushing up property prices. At last - positive signs. The run down exterior of our Post Office has not contributed to the look of London Road. Why did you let it become so scruffy? Now you want to sell off the building - which is not yours to sell! It belongs to all of us. The gentleman who will buy it can then become very rich in a few years time. The last thing St. Leonards needs is yet another newsagent's shop with sweets and tobacco. The Post Office management team has obviously not visited the area. All the local ethnic minorities seem to have opened such shops --- none selling anything useful. Our nearest bank closed down some time ago. Now you people want to leave us too. How could you let us down so badly?? Finally, a big thank you to the staff at London road branch. They have given a great, friendly and helpful service. We do not want to see them go either.

I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes to St Leonards Crown Post Office. This is the only Crown Post Office in the area and provides a wide range of key services which it is vital to retain including Bureau de change, Passport Services, Photo Booth and trained staff. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I am also concerned that the consultation process is occurring after the decision to tender the building had been made. As far as I am aware, it is proper procedure for the local council to be consulted on matters of selling off public assets within the Borough and this procedure was also not adhered to.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Way back in the timeline, why didn't the Post Office offer the community the opportunity to suggest ways that the building, could be used, (including the floors above the ground floor), and that would generate revenue for Post Office Ltd? The PO could retain it's Crown status and the staff could keep their jobs whilst the building be modernised and used by local business persons, artists etc. The retail section of the shop, in addition to the usual PO stationery items, could sell locally produced items; crafts, knitwear, books, candles, jewellery, honey, there are so many makers / creators / authors / artists here, and these are just examples. Upstairs could be rented out as studio or office space. Rather than selling up to make a quick profit, Post Office Ltd could remain in the heart of St Leonard's and be a 'flagship' model of what a modern PO can be. I am sure that there are many other ideas being sent to you so please do consider halting the sale and giving the St Leonard's community a chance to work with you on this. Modernisation without privatisation makes sense for all parties. I want the building to PO to remain under the current ownership with Crown status. I would like the staff to be able to keep their jobs and to not have the looming issue of lower wages, loss of pension, loss of union membership etc when the TUPE expires. I would like to see the building looking smarter and I would love for the entire building to be utilised, it's ridiculous that in such a prime location there is empty space. I believe the St Leonard's Crown Post Office is now the only one with Crown status in the whole of Hastings, St Leonard's and the surrounding area. Over the last year I used the West St Leonard's PO a couple of times and I could not believe how awful the place was, it was so run down it was almost derelict and at the meeting someone said that it closed recently- what was the reason for the closure? The Hastings PO is now in WH Smiths whilst the fantastic old PO building stands empty – why is that? The staff in the WH Smith PO are not as experienced as those in the proper PO and the self service machines are often not working so the queues are awful. The Silverhill (sub?) PO recently closed and is now in the BP Petrol garage and getting across the forecourt to get into the building is rather dangerous, they need a zebra crossing or some way of giving pedestrians priority, especially the elderly or disabled. I don't want these issues in St Leonard's. The 'consultation' closing date should be extended, as many local people are unaware that this is happening to our local Post Office and therefore have not been able to contribute to the 'consultation'. Why wasn't the 'Consultation' meeting held much sooner? It should have taken place nearer to the end June or start of July rather than early August especially as this is a time when many people are away on holiday. It appears that the Post Office have deliberately scheduled this meeting late in the 'consultation' timeframe and have kept the entire 'proposal' as quiet as possible. Why didn't the Post Office post about the 'consultation' on social media? There are many local Hastings and St Leonard's pages on Facebook. Why didn't the Post Office get this run as a story in June in the local press, eg Hastings and St Leonard's Observer or the Hastings Independent Press? Why didn't the Post Office take out an advertisement in June in the local press, eg Hastings and St Leonard's Observer or the Hastings Independent Press? At the meeting I discovered that [REDACTED] plans are to take over the franchise of the Post Office, and continue (by contractual agreement) to provide the services offered currently, as well as trading as a newsagent, tobacconist, sweet shop. There are around three newsagents and three local supermarkets in the immediate central St Leonard's area that already sell newspapers, tobacco and sweets, so I don't see how [REDACTED] would be able to make a viable business, especially as lots of local people have pledged to boycott non Post Office Products if he takes on the franchise. It was unclear if [REDACTED] would be contracted to run PO services for five or ten years. Post Office should let the community know the facts around this. I urge the Post Office to NOT sell the freehold building to 'new retail partner', [REDACTED] (or any other private investor), contracted to run a PO franchise in the building. What happens when the contract expires? [REDACTED] would I imagine sell the building for redevelopment. What would happen then to the PO? The Leader of the Council, Peter Chowney, told the meeting that the continuation of the Crown Post Office status was raised at a full Council meeting and was passed unanimously. The PO representatives at Thursdays meeting agreed to send Peter Chowney a copy of the minutes / notes from the meeting. When will these notes be sent out to him? I have heard that in Reading, Berkshire, the Council took up the offer of becoming a partner in their town centre post office though that possibility was not suggested to Hastings Borough Council by Post Office Ltd. Why wasn't Hastings Council given this opportunity? I have also heard that Bridgend in south Wales has successfully kept its Crown Post Office as the result of a community campaign. Please listen to our community.

I am writing to you again with further comments about consultation for St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards - On - Sea. I sent you an email last Wednesday in response to your reply. I have yet to hear back from you.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I'm writing to make comment and complain about the way your faux consultation process has been handled. I feel this is a very real conspiracy of privatisation by stealth and underhand practices. Seeing as your office's pamphlet at the London Rd branch said that nothing we said or did would change the PO Ltd's decision to modernise by way of franchising, and downgrading its services by selling off public assets and handing over buildings my community desperately needs at the heart of our town, to gain greater income for your Directors and Shareholders, I feel it's insulting to call your Public Forum meeting held at Royal Vic Hotel on 4th August a Consultation. Here are my points: 1 - The consultation pamphlet arrived on the counters one week after the date printed on the pamphlet (26th June) which took us into almost the 2nd week of July. This cut down the amount of time the community could exercise their right to reply. 2 - The pamphlet was worded strategically I believe, by your marketing teams, to deliberately dissuade the public from thinking there was any point attending - you set it out as a fete a complit. - That nothing we say or do will change the course of action. And then, in the same pamphlet it also paradoxically contradicted itself by asking the public to comment and feedback any feelings by August 9th. Confusing and misleading. Most people will have quite rightly assumed nothing they'd do or say would make any difference to the cause. 3 - The pamphlets were originally only displayed in one place as you entered. You wouldn't see it unless you needed to sit and rest by the door. It wasn't displayed at every counter until about a week before the 4th August but we didn't know when the meeting would be held at that point. Again - more tactics to ensure the least amount of people attended as possible. 4 - The large A2 poster giving final details of the Forum meeting at the Royal Victoria Hotel was posted up about a week before the meeting took place (4th August) - hardly any time for word to get out. It was only through a MASSIVE flyer and leafleting campaign and social media campaign by 10 or so residents that word got out. If you had really wanted the public's opinion you should have posted adverts in the Local Observer newspapers and the Hastings Independent. Or used the local radio. You did none of these things. So based on this, we can conclude that it wasn't meant to be a CONSULTATION.

I'm a St Leonards resident and I've just heard your planning on selling off the post office and it's going to become a shop with a small post office counter. This will be really bad for the area. I know there are a huge amount of people here that think this is a terrible idea, and are planning on boycotting the shop. Is there anything that can be done at this stage?

I am protesting at the back door privatisation of the St Leonards-on-Sea Crown Post office.

The proposed transfer of St Leonards-on-Sea Crown Post Office to retail entrepreneurship is something you should decide against. The local consultation showed strong opposition. The quality and continuity of P O services – and their range – are all very uncertain. Do you agree that queueing times will deteriorate? St Leonards-on-Sea wants its Crown Post Office. In Hastings about a mile away, postal facilities left the old building in Cambridge Road which was then offered commercially by BNP Paribas, a byword for dubiety. The main postal outlet there now is a corner of W H Smith — and highly unsatisfactory it is too. (Additionally there's a post box inside rather than outside the local Morrisons: how customer friendly is that? Set that against your 'more than 82,000 extra opening hours for customers'.) Please do not do it, or downgrade the service. Why was advertisement of the proposed change of status so minimal? It will do important damage to the St Leonards community and its small-business economy, just when both are improving and increasing demand for your services. In the event that the PO becomes a private outlet, you can be sure that many will stay away. Your 'consultation' is an unsatisfactory exercise. For an abundance of good reasons, Hastings Borough Council passed a rare unanimous motion in favour of retaining Crown P O status for St Leonards. In what circumstances would you change your minds?

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

Hastings Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to object to the proposed changes to St Leonards Crown Post Office for the following reasons: The proposed changes will disproportionately affect vulnerable sections of the community, as St Leonards has a high number of low income households, people from minority ethnic groups, elderly, and disabled people living nearby. The council and its partners have spent a number of years supporting the regeneration of St Leonards; this includes attracting new businesses to the area. The committee believe the post office's proposal will put this progress at risk. Many of the business located in the area are small, independent companies. These businesses rely on the post office for their day to day banking activities etc. The proposals will make it more difficult for businesses to carry out these activities, which may mean they choose to relocate to other areas. High levels of deprivation remain in many parts of St Leonards. The existing post office provides a valuable resource for local residents, who may not be able to access these services elsewhere. A number of banks have recently closed their branches in St Leonards. This means the post office is now the only place to provide banking services in St Leonards. □ The franchise of the former Hastings Crown Office has resulted in increased queing and wait times for customers. The proposal may lead to the loss of dedicated, highly skilled and knowledgeable workers. This is particularly important as the existing post office serves a diverse and multi-cultural community. The committee does not feel other potential management options to keep the existing Crown Office open were fully explored before the existing proposal was recommended. The committee therefore asks that the Post Office reconsider its proposal.

It is madness to lose control of the Crown Office at St Leonards on Sea. Shutting the Hastings Post Office (and leaving a useless building boarded up) was a bad enough blow to the area; with the subsequent semi-permanent queues of disgruntled locals, and tourists alike, stuck in a non-air-conditioned shop (W H Smith and Sons) where the self service postage machines are always boarded up and the 4 counter positions are never manned fully. The queue barriers snake round tables of special offer W H Smith remainder books, so DVLA and passport queries, and people posting gifts/ eBay traders are muddled with customers weaving pushchairs through the crowds. It is not as if the hundreds of thousands of citizens of the thirteenth most deprived region of the UK are well served by sub offices. The West St Leonards shop has recently shut and so there are almost no sub offices with parking for the disabled available now. In Silverhill/Hollington the sub office is within a BP garage. In Ore the Post Office counter has just two counters despite the large number of users (3 Primary schools, part-time branch Library and a Secondary school being local to it) and they have dirty great double yellow lines all through the Old London Road, so dropping off a user and then picking them up becomes almost impossible. The one beacon has been the Crown Office at St Leonards. It is well served by buses. It is possible to park on local side streets. It is possible to buy stamps and post parcels. The staff has a high retention rate and so local advice is usually timely and welcomed. The Job Centre and Benefits office are local to the St Leonards Post Office (as is the Citizen Advice) and the Warrior Square train station is (admittedly up hill) less than a mile away. To convert the crown office (with the status and pride that that should engender) to a seedy open-all-hours mini-mart that sells stamps and chucks parcels into a filthy corner, with no confidential chance to explain passport or benefit redemption queries (or even trained staff to ask) is a serious blow to the area. Believe me, there are already Turkish, Polish and a couple of other one stop fleapits along Norman Road - one more poorly cleaned, cluttered, convenience stores will not be an asset to tourists or locals.

I am writing to urge that the St Leonards Crown Post Office be retained in its current form for the benefit of local residents, the Post Office employees and the many visitors that this seaside town attracts. I am concerned that it is the only Crown Post Office in the area with the Hastings Crown Post Office having recently closed. The West Marina Post Office also closed this week and we have also lost White Rock Post Office amongst others in the past few years. Public assets are owned by us the public and it is a disgrace that they be sold without proper consultation prior to decision making. There are already at least three newsagents and three supermarkets within short walking distance that sell newspapers, stationery, and greetings cards making the proposed decision purely political and policy driven rather than responding to the needs of local people. I urge that the decision to franchise this valued and valuable essential local asset be reconsidered with the interests of people rather than profit. You will, I'm sure, be aware that there is huge local support for this Post Office as the well-attended 'consultation' session at The Royal Victoria Hotel proved. I hope that on this occasion you do not choose to ignore powerful public opinion.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

The community was not properly and adequately informed that someone had been found who wanted to buy the building and franchise after the initial notification that the PO Ltd was seeking a franchise partner. The Borough Council was misled by the correspondence that was sent to it. Nevertheless an all - party vote opposed selling off the London Road Post Office in 2016. In terms of the Post Office Code of Practice, which itself is now out of date, since it refers to a regulatory authority abolished in on 1 April 2013 and replaced by Citizens Advice, various groups and individuals should have been advised in advance of the consultation. The procedure was not followed. Disability organisations were not informed as specified in the code of practice. The excuse that the PO could not afford to take an advert out in the local press is disingenuous given the £1.43bn Government grant to assist the PO restructuring. The area has been slowly regenerating with EU, Central and Local Government grants and a great deal of voluntary sector energy, work and contributions. It does not need a post office in yet another convenience store it needs the only Crown Post Office in a conurbation of 90,000 people. The sub-post office in West St Leonards is closing or has closed putting a greater demand on this Crown Post Office. All the local high street banks have been removed and only two ATMs are available to those who feel intimidated taking cash out in shops that sell alcohol. The two are at the Post Office and Nationwide. It was unreasonable of the PO representatives not to state if this Crown Post Office is making a loss, or simply Crown Post Office. The community has had no opportunity to put forward an alternative proposal, ie a not for profit social interest company set up through raising local shares and through crowd funding.s generally. This is not commercially sensitive information as was stated.

I am extremely disturbed by the so called consultation about the selling off of this valuable community asset. I am shocked at the consultation taking place over the summer when many, including myself, are away; but I am most shocked by the fact that this is actually a sham consultation about a decision that has already made. I used to be responsible for consultation on regeneration for a London Borough: this is not consultation by any definition. At best it is information sharing. Presuming that you are genuinely interested in the views of local residents (and I live in Pevensey Road, about 5 minutes' walk away), I urge you to stop the current process and genuinely engage with the local community and the Borough Council. Together we can easily come up with proposals and actions that would make this a profitable venture and keep the Crown PO services, with its well trained staff. There is no need to have yet another convenience store or to transfer our asset to an individual, let alone one whose past conduct has been, shall we say, less than exemplary. I'm sure that others will raise other specific issues but my main response is that you simply STOP, go back to the drawing board and genuinely involve us. Yours with deep concern and considerable fury.

Please can someone respond to my questions below. I understand the agreed sale price of the building and the freehold appear to be less than the market value of the building. Please can you confirm if State aid is being offered to the purchaser from the Post Office with regard to the sale of the site. Is the Post Office following any of the best practice principles set out by the European Commission when it comes to sale/disposal of publicly owned land and property, specific to the sale of this building and it's freehold? Considering that there appears to be a deal agreed between principle between the Post office and the buyer, these questions should be relatively simple questions to answer.

I am writing to you in response to the recent activity that surrounds the sale of the Crown Post Office site in London Road, St Leonards on Sea (above reference). Initially I understood that the Post Office were presenting franchise opportunity to the community at this site, but based upon meetings and subsequent communication from last Thursday's consultation, I know understand that the franchise opportunity also is now to include the sale of the freehold and the attached building on the site. I would like to ask; Is the Post Office offering State aid to the purchaser related to the sale of this building and it's freehold? Is the Post Office following any of the Principles set out by the European Commission when it comes to best practices related specifically to the sale of this building and it's freehold?

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am writing in response to your consultation and proposals for the downgrading of St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards on Sea. I have the following comments: 1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation. There is nothing modern about reducing service, driving down wages and inconveniencing customers, whilst pursuing profit above all other considerations. It happens every time our public assets are sold off at fire sale prices, such as the privatisation of Royal Mail. 2. Many vulnerable people do not qualify for regular bank accounts and rely on the Post Office for their banking needs. Our many small independent businesses also need full banking services since all our banks have closed. Many creative makers and online traders also require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long queues at inadequate service positions. 3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by your actions. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen. 4. I have no confidence in [REDACTED] assurance that he has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. This sale of public property is asset stripping of the worst kind. What is to stop him from deciding a post office does not bring in enough money and changing the business down the road? I suspect he simply wants the building and will be able to redevelop or sell it on at a large profit in a few years time. Meanwhile we will have lost the heart of our community. 5. You are abandoning your responsibilities towards your staff, some of whom have worked there for over twenty years. I very much doubt that [REDACTED] will employ them with the same salaries and conditions. Since he is reducing the number of serving positions he will clearly not reemploy them all. What will happen to their pensions? In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. If it goes ahead I have pledged to boycott all non post office goods - as have well over 100 others.

(1) THE NON-CONSULTATION 'CONSULTATION' This is the CONTRADICTION at the heart of the sham 'Consultation'. The decision has been made, and the 'consultation' is simply to discuss the arrangements in the new retail store. (What's Next? - PO Proposed branch modernisation document. Signed, but UNDATED) Also there is NO mention of any (real?) 'Consultation' Meeting in this document - only three dates are given: 'Local Public Consultation starts 28 June 2017; Local Public Consultation ends 9 August 2017; & Proposed Month of change November 2017'. There's NO mention of the 3 August Meeting. Why not? Post Office Ltd did not turn up to the 17th July Public Meeting. At this Meeting, [REDACTED] showed us a letter from Amber Rudd MP informing him that there was to be a 'Consultation' in the Royal Victoria Hotel on 3rd August. This was the first time anyone had heard of this 'consultation' [REDACTED] St Leonards Crown Post Office) tells me that they only put up a Notice on the door, and left out leaflets on their counters. about the Royal Victoria Hotel Post Office Ltd 'Consultation' - just 10 days before the Meeting on 3rd August. Why so LATE? And so LITTLE ADVERTISED? (2) However, the two emails that [REDACTED] (of Post Office Ltd) sent to [REDACTED] on the eve of the 'Consultation' Meeting (3 August) present an interesting FURTHER CONTRADICTION. [REDACTED] stresses the fact that the Meeting is to be a (real) 'Consultation' - the word 'consultation' is mentioned four - or more - times in each email. [REDACTED] private emails were clearly TOO LATE for the MANY who would have been PUT OFF coming to the 3 August Meeting - knowing full well it was NOT a real Consultation. That is, a meeting where there is 'a Discussion and An Exchange of Ideas which may Change a Decision' (what is generally understood by the word 'consultation'). There's Strong Evidence of Post Office Ltd's (i) Lack of Proper Vetting, (ii) Sham 'Consultation', Ignoring the Local Public's Interests & (iii) Not Following the Usual Practice of the Open Sale of a Public Asset (a Crown Post Office). We do not need another convenience store that sells newspapers, tobacco, etc. An hour's on-the-spot research would confirm this for you. Nor do we need a Post Office that is open for five more hours on Saturday. Well, ask us... The Crown Post Office's performance and worth is vital to the Well Being of the St Leonards Community. Yes, it could easily be improved - a ten year old could tell you that. Why doesn't it sell reasonably priced stationary, cards people want of buy, have free computers, a creche, a community notice board, have student internships, let out the rooms upstairs, with classes, and so on. All this can be easily done to make the Post Office profitable. St Leonards Businesses and Community will combine to improve our Crown Post Office - Our Common Wealth. It's a simple as that. Just give us the opportunity.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

The recent public User Forum on August 3rd at the Royal Victoria Hotel in St. Leonards, Hastings indicated that the Post Office Limited has very little respect for the people who both use and own the company. The property that currently houses the Post Office on London Road, St. Leonards, is also owned by the general public. There are a number of questions that need to be answered by you: Why has the Post Office Ltd left the upstairs of the property unused for ten years, when it could have been used to generate income? It became very obvious during the forum that decisions had already been made after virtually no effort to consult the public. It was also obvious that those running the meeting were picking easy questions that didn't challenge them, rebuffing those questions that needed proper answers and refusing to give any information about how decisions had been made, any financial information about the profitability of the local PO and or any business projections. It would be viable to conclude that one of the reasons that PO Ltd is so desperate to sell the property and relinquish responsibility of the day-to-day running of the business is a lack of will and ability. Why be involved in running a business if all you can come up with is to sell it off?? This is, pure and simple, asset-stripping. It's lazy and incompetent. We do not want our property sold. Simple as that. It is not yours to sell. You are custodians and managers, not corporate executors. We will seek to have this process stopped and for the current PO Ltd board explain why they are acting with impunity with others' property without sufficient permission. We will not allow this to go through.

I don't think the consultation was well organised or publicised. Having the User Forum less than a week before the consultation period ends means VERY little time for people to think and respond. The consultation period has also clashed with a period of holiday, and there was very little publicity of WHEN and WHERE the User Forum would be held. I only found out via the response from our MP to a friend who had written a letter of concern. I would not have known about it otherwise, and I am sure I would not have been alone. To include a sentence in your "Proposed Branch Modernisation" document (note, not a 'consultation document') that says: "Although the decision to change the way we operate the branch, so it is run by our new retail partner, is not a matter for public consultation..." does not encourage people to bother feeding back to you. I have spoken to several people who have said "it's a done deal" and one person who said "I can't be bothered to tilt at windmills". Post Office Limited has positively discouraged the community to want to engage in any dialogue, or feel that they have any input into the decisions that appear to have been made already. At the User Forum, we asked for the financial information to be shared, but it was not. We were told at the User Forum that St Leonards Post Office has been losing money, but I've also heard that it is a profitable Crown Post Office. If Crown branches are now breaking even after being loss-making, that's positive! Personally, I do not see how you can expect a privately franchised business to make money if the Post Office cannot. There is no market for yet another outlet selling newspapers, tobacco and sugary treats in our very well provided for High Street. What we need is a Post Office that can cope with the demands of the domestic and business population. There are already long queues in there. IF the new layout is implemented, the space for people to queue will be half the size. And this will not be as accessible for wheelchair users and those with impaired mobility. Do you know that Hastings Borough Councillors are unanimous in their support of keeping our Post Office a Crown Post Office? Was HBC properly engaged with about your plans? When I attended the User Forum at about 5.30 on 3 August, there were no plans available showing the proposed layout. I've since seen a poor photograph of one (included in the article – see link at the end of this email) and the amount of space allocated for retail leaves the space for Post Office services cramped. There is bound to be some shrinkage of current staff, and golden handshakes offered. Is there a guarantee that [REDACTED] will employ the same number of staff and pay them the same wages? I believe that the wages paid to the workers at the Hastings downgraded branch is significantly less than the wages paid when it was a Crown Post Office. Can you share these figures publicly so we know the reality of the situation? There are genuine concerns about confidentiality in an open counter situation. There are also worries about the automated Postal Machines breaking down (as they constantly do in the Hastings branch) which lead to greater queues and double-demands on counter staff. This was the biggest shock of the User Forum. I got the feeling that the people presenting the User Forum did not want to reveal that the sale of the building to [REDACTED] is all but signed off. I am SO shocked by this. I am REALLY worried that whilst he will maintain a service during a period that he is contractually obliged to do, at the end of that period, he would be free to sell the building as a piece of prime commercial/residential real estate, and at that stage we would end up with a counter service in one of the local mini-marts. What controls can be put in place to stop this? I would like to see the building registered as a Community Asset. I do not feel that your consultation – or your plans for selling off our Crown Post Office – are in the interest of our community.

In about 12 years time I shall be hoping to start drawing my pension. What do you, honestly, think my chances are of being able to do this at the Post Office in London Road if you proceed with your current plans for that branch? Seriously,

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Comments (continued)

I would be grateful if you would confirm that the transfer of our Crown post office services to a franchise partner will be for a 10 year year contract and that the current staff will be offered positions elsewhere within the service.

I WOULD LIKE TO STRONGLY EXPRESS MY DISAPPROVAL OF YOUR PLANS TO REDUCE DRAMATICALLY THE FACILITIES PROVIDED BY OUR CROWN POST OFFICE IN ST. LEONARDS ON SEA, EAST SUSSEX. LEAVE IT ALONE. I HAVE BEEN TO MEETINGS AND I SEE THAT THERE WILL BE NO ADVANTAGES TO US, YOUR CUSTOMERS.

The information was not clear or accessible across the community. Many elderly and vulnerable members of the community would simply not have been able to access the information in the pamphlet by the way it was presented and printed. Post Office Ltd have disregarded diversity and accessibility. As they did in the venue they booked for the customer forum / consultation last Thursday 3rd August 2017. During the Campaign we have heard from local people who prefer to come to St Leonards Crown Post Office for the lack of queues, the better access and space provision (local buses stop a few hundred metres away, the train station at St Leonards Warrior Square is about a 5 minute walk) and the expert and knowledgeable service by staff, numbering seven in total, most of them with about 20 years' experience. These excellent staff, whom I have witnessed giving highly professional service to one and all, explaining with patience and care the specifics of this or that postal option to an elderly or vulnerable customer, handling rude or difficult customers calmly and quietly, so that order is preserved for the benefit of all. They create an atmosphere of trust and reliability. These staff will more than likely not retain their jobs with the same pay, conditions and pension benefits. They and the postal consumers and community of St Leonards will have been done a great injustice. And now West St Leonards Post Office has closed. Apart from the lack of communication with the community regarding this very significant proposed change, the refusal by both Post Office Ltd and their "new retail partner" [REDACTED] to attend a community meeting organised by the Campaign members and well attended by the community on 17th July 2017, has created a poor impression of both Post Office Ltd and their "new retail partner". The town has more than enough newsagents and stationary shops. Within a one to three minute walk of 12 – 14 London Road. We have no need for any more. Indeed it's hard to see where the extra business would come from given that this area of retail provision is adequately covered. We have an excellent Crown Post Office. We do not want one that offers a lesser service in a lesser space. The "modernisation" that is trumpeted by Post Office Ltd and the government is no such thing. It is privatisation, the selling off of our publicly owned assets by a government engaged in short term financial escape routes and it is a lie to call it modernisation. What do you mean by this term? If you mean that it is an improvement, as some of your literature states, it is so clearly not! You are not giving us anything we don't have already. You are planning to give us less than we have already. If you mean that the fabric of the building will be repaired and restored and some cheap plastic counter units and shop fitting carried out - we are not interested! The St Leonards Post Office is constantly used and busy. It does a good job, we need it to continue as it is. I sincerely hope that you will consider my concerns and strong opposition to the proposed change to St Leonards Crown Post Office, to [REDACTED] being the owner / "retail partner" of the Post Office and the freeholder of the building and the inevitable downgrading of the service and the unattractive external appearance of the building that would ensue under the proposed ownership and changes. This Network change rolled out by the coalition government is part of a wider, national disgrace that many people feel strongly about – the wholesale sell-off and privatisation of so many publicly owned assets and services.

I never use the new facility at Hastings since the disastrous move to WH Smith, the office at West St Leonards is seedy and unfit for this or any other century. Unless you provide a facility on a par with Bexhill I can only see me ceasing to be a customer of yours on all possible future occasions. At times the current site is over-crowded and now you are trying to squeeze other trades into the same space. YOU HAVE NO FUTURE!

I am contacting you regarding the plans to downgrade the St Leonards Post Office. I attended the consultation on 3 August and was disappointed that there were not any floor plans to look at. However, I understand that although there will still be a bureau de change it is not clear where in the store this will be. I am especially concerned that there will not be a secure space for this kind of transaction or for people using basic bank account services. I would like to know how this will meet local needs and what kind of equality impact assessment has been done on the proposed changes. I would like to know why Post Office can't improve the branch itself and why the St Leonards consultation is not listed on the Current consultations on the Post Office website and finally why there were no signs at the venue on 3 August to indicate it was the venue for the consultation as it was hard to find.

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Comments (continued)

I think most people attending the so-called 'Consultation' about our Crown Post Office at the Royal Victoria Hotel yesterday were not satisfied with what happened. They smelt a (large!) rat. They were subject to a bizarre public relations exercise on the part of Post Office Ltd. In fact, we know now it's a fait accompli - a Done Deal. To put it mildly, it's a fib to call what we witnessed a 'consultation'. Despite the Meeting's strongest practical and logical objections to their plans, the Post Office Ltd were not listening. They will go ahead with the sale. Apparently, we must accept an inferior Post Office service... (1) It's probable that [REDACTED] has already signed the the contract that gives him the Crown Post Office building (about 400,000 pounds) and the Post Office Franchise (about 300,000 pounds). Someone should not be allowed to asset strip our Common Heritage. (2) Importantly, how can the Post Office Ltd say that they are acting in our 'best interests' when they haven't asked us anything before 3 August? They insist that they have to come to their decision in six days (9th August). Despite our strong objections to their plans, they will not consider a time extension. Why not? (3) It's clear that Hastings Council were not properly informed about the fate of St Leonards Crown Post Office. (The Council say they cannot ACT until the Post Office Ltd decision has been made - after 9th August) (4) Why can't Post Office Ltd simply improve St Leonards Crown Post Office's current services? Counter services apart, a ten year old could tell you that things need improving to make it a real Community Hub - what most people want - like free computers, a creche, reasonably priced stationary, cards by artists people want to buy, a community information board, an so on. The Crown Post Office should liaise with the community to improve its services.

Observations on the way Post Office Ltd's operate: CONSULTATION 'I am all for Consultation, but as far as the Post Office is concerned there is as much as there is in North Korea' (David Winneck MP) (Felt a bit like North Korea in the Royal Victoria Hotel yesterday...) MANAGED DECLINE - Away with Crown Post Offices, Our Commonwealth/ the Collective Commons 'Closing down flagship branches [Crown Post Offices], getting rid of experienced staff and putting counters into the back of a W. H. Smith, or a Bargain Booze outlet, is surely not a plan for greater innovation, which I think is what our constituents want to see' (Tim Loughton MP, April 2017) *** In 2007, Alan Cook, PO Managing Director, pledged to INVEST in the 373 remaining Crown Post Offices. [REDACTED] reminded us that Alan Cook soon left the Post Office with a million pound payoff... Crown Post Offices are 'a precious national asset' - 'long under exploited - in the best sense of the word' (Norman Lamb, Postal Affairs Minister, 2012) Crown Post Offices now number less than 300. But have long been declared 'absolutely sacrosanct'. Many people of St Leonards have now shown what they feel about their Crown Post Office - it's sacrosanct too. *** Crown Post Offices are Ours - To Be Improved, Not Downgraded & Commercialised. Let the People of St Leonards and the Hastings Borough Council decide how we make the Crown Post Office financially viable. This is not difficult - let me assure you. Why do you think that the Post Office hasn't make a Profit? The Crown Post Office means more to us, than any outsider. It's CLEAR there was MISUNDERSTANDING when you put the Post Office out for 'franchise' in July 2016. The FUTURE of OUR Crown Post Office should be OURS. We ask you for the Opportunity to Co-operate with it, or Help Manage it

Why has the Post Office Ltd left the upstairs of the property unused for ten years, when it could have been used to generate income? It became very obvious during the forum that decisions had already been made after virtually no effort to consult the public. It was also obvious that those running the meeting were picking easy questions that didn't challenge them, rebuffing those questions that needed proper answers and refusing to give any information about how decisions had been made, any financial information about the profitability of the local PO and or any business projections. It would be viable to conclude that one of the reasons that PO Ltd is so desperate to sell the property and relinquish responsibility of the day-to-day running of the business is a lack of will and ability.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I have lived in St Leonards since 2001 and use post offices about four times a week. I realise that things have to change - the premises has valuable retail space which the Post Office is unable or unwilling to develop themselves. It is the choice of new 'retail partner' that is giving cause for concern. The 'retail partner' intends to run a newsagent, selling papers, confectionary, tobacco and stationery items. In the immediate vicinity of the Post Office there are already eight outlets selling these items. People are buying fewer newspapers, smoking less and writing less with traditional methods. Has the Post Office considered how their new 'retail partner' is going to make his business pay? What happens if he doesn't and decides to close it and move on? We need a Crown post office in the area because the downgrading of the Hastings PO into a branch of W.H. Smith has been a disaster. I have recorded the following over the past few years: 1. Self service machines never in use. 2. Queues usually doubling back on themselves and sometimes stretching to the door. 3. Staff unprofessional - there's prolonged gossiping with customers regardless of length of queue and staff have been allowed to personalise their sales positions. 3. On three occasions I have been given the wrong price for postage - always priced up, never down. 5. Opening hours depend on W.H. Smith and have been known to close for book promotion. Apart from locals, Hastings attracts many visitors from Northern Europe and this branch is a disgrace to the town and the Post Office brand. I discussed this at length with one of the area management team at the public consultation on 3rd August. I was told that improvements had been made; in particular, the self service machines were now in use. They were not and up to yesterday (8th) still weren't. It's hard to be optimistic about the future of St Leonards PO when the area management is so unaware of what is going on in the branches. Before rushing into a deal with a new 'retail partner' for St Leonards, might it not be a good idea to get the Hastings PO working professionally and consistently first? It would also give the management team more time to find a more suitable 'retail partner'.

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Comments (continued)

I write to express my strong objection to the proposed closure of the St Leonard's Crown Post Office. Since the closure of the Hastings Crown Post Office some years ago, St Leonards is now the only Crown Post Office in the area, serving a large community that relies on the specialist services it offers, including vital banking services. If Hastings and St Leonards were no longer to have a Crown Post Office then residents, who include considerable numbers of elderly people as well as many with very limited financial resources, would be forced to travel to the nearest alternative in Eastbourne, which is a costly and time-consuming journey by public transport. The closure of the Crown Post Office in Hastings and its replacement by an in-store franchise in W. H. Smiths has turned out to be very unsatisfactory; it is widely agreed by the elected representatives of Hastings Borough Council of all political persuasions that the Post Office made the wrong decision (not least of which is that the Hastings Crown Post Office building remains empty to this day), and they wholeheartedly back up the residents' determination to save the St Leonards Crown Post Office for the community. The grounds being offered for the transfer of St Leonards Crown Post Office to a franchisee are simply unconvincing. There are already a large number convenience stores selling stationery and newspapers within a few yards of the Crown Post Office, and the imposition of another will not only weaken an already fragile local economy, but potentially threaten the livelihoods of many people in the area - something for which the Post Office can offer no justification morally, and certainly not on economic grounds. Not only this, but the commercial and ethical grounds for your proposal are very worryingly opaque. The proposed franchisee [REDACTED] clearly has no interest in the local community (he seems to be a serial buyer of post offices of which the Post Office wishes to disburden itself) and your assurance that post office services will be continued by him in the long terms is strongly undermined by your refusal to clarify the terms of his contract. It is perfectly clear to me that he will be able to close the Post Office after a period of time, presumably around five years, having bought the premises for a knock-down price, will then be in a position to sell it or develop it for his own profit and advantage, with further resulting damage to the local community for which this Post Office is so important. You argue that St Leonards Crown Post Office is unprofitable; but this is a matter for you properly to address by developing better business practices and supporting the Post Office, rather than simply discarding the building as you have decided to do, and this without any valid public consultation. The profoundly insulting charade that took place at the Victoria Hotel on 3 August was frankly insulting to residents who came along believing that they were being consulted, when in fact, you seemed to be informing them of a fait accompli, demonstrating contempt for their concerns and further casting doubt on any good faith that you may wish to demonstrate in this matter. At this 'consultation' it became clear that the decision to sell had been made already and that the service of a Post Office in St Leonards could end after five years due to 'unsustainability', death of the franchisee, or other circumstances. It was also clear that the position would then be irrevocable, with the community having no chance at that point to stop the Post Office being further downgraded and moved out of the current building, and also nothing to stop the current proposed franchisee, [REDACTED], from buying the freehold on the building and using it for development as a primary purpose. At last Friday's meeting, you and your representatives invoked both FOI and 'commercial sensitivity' to stonewall requests for substantive details about what was being proposed, an outrageous insult to the intelligence of those who came along in good faith and resulting in well-founded anger as they realised that the Post Office had no interest in hearing their concerns nor had any intention of taking them into consideration. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I would like to suggest that the Post Office reconsider its decision and lift the imminent threat to St Leonards Crown Post Office. Instead, it should begin to treat the local community as a friend rather than an adversary; to carry out real consultations rather than deceitful 'pretend' consultations which are in fact presentations of decisions already made with no regard to the wishes of local residents and their fully supportive councilors of all political affiliations; and to find ways in which the Post Office could in fact make the Crown Post Office here more sustainable. We have a rich seam of expertise in our community, and it is well within our competence, if not that of the Post office, to come up with ideas for extending the business success of our Post Office. As Peter Chowney, leader of Hastings Borough Council, commented, 'it would be in the best interests of the whole community to ensure that the building was put to good use and that the Council worked with the Post Office to ensure that both the building and a Crown Post Office service were made sustainable for the whole community'. I look forward to receiving your response to this objection, hoping that reflection and reconsideration will prevail over a decision that is not being made in the interests of anyone in the local community, but appears only to serve those of the Post Office and its chosen beneficiary, [REDACTED].

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Comments (continued)

I object to the sale of the post office because the proposals as outlined do not guarantee that the post office once sold will not at a later date cease to become a post office. This is because the building is being sold forcing the purchaser for only 5 or 10 years only (I don't know which) to keep the building as a post office. Thereafter, the purchaser will most likely find it more financially advantageous to get rid of the post office and open up another shop, or otherwise convert the building. At the consultation, the post office reps were at pains to state that the post office is not financially viable. The proposed purchaser's plans to make it profitable by installing newsagent concessions look somewhat laughable considering there are already 4 other news agents on the same short street. The proposed purchaser also admitted during the meeting that he has not seen the financials the post office have so he is buying without understanding the profit/loss. It is pretty clear that the real reason the purchaser is buying is not to run a post office, but to wait for the 5-10 years to be up and make a fat profit on the building. Now that may not be his plan, but he would be a poor businessman not to think of that. And, of course, every year hence, the greater the building price goes up for resale. He'll be a poor businessman not to sell it in 5-10 years time. St-Leonards-on-Sea needs a post office and the 'modernization' provides no guarantee it will still have one in the future. My wife uses the post office to send mail order gifts. Having to drive to another post office will add hours to her working week. This translates into less business and hurts our bottom line in an area that is struggling. It is clear the post office is trying to make it look like it is making a profit by selling its assets. But this is like mortgaging cards in Monopoly - it won't work. The post office as a government public service is fundamentally never going to be as profitable as whatever the purchaser might want to do with it once the 5-10 years is up. Selling it off just reduces the floorspace of any future post office until finally it does become profitable once people are having to queue up for an hour to send a parcel. This is obviously what is going on and it insults intelligence to pretend this is not the case. It is also disingenuous to pretend to elderly people who attend the meeting and might not be aware of these things that a) this is not the case ; b) not to even mention it (it had to be teased out by some questioning). The post office appears to have failed to make any risk assessment for what happens should the purchaser resell in 5-10 years. It should have and made it public. It is not informed consultation otherwise. I urge you to abandon the sale as is. It benefits no-one: not my wife as a regular user, not the community, not even the post office. It only benefits the businessman buying it and perhaps the bonuses of the top people at the post office. It certainly does not benefit the public who are the owners of the post office and your stakeholders.

Hello. I am about to start running a small business selling personalized gift soap. I am a young mum and have relatively little time. Every minute counts! The post office is a crucial part of the business plan as it is mail order based. I anticipate visiting 2-3 times a week to send parcels. I am concerned that, as has been shown with similar post office sell-offs elsewhere, this will result in a poorer service and me queuing up for longer. I have very little time and believe this has significant potential to damage a business I have spent so much time planning. The consultation documents provide no reassurances that this post office sell-off will be no different from the others. The consultation talks about plans but there is nothing in there forcing the purchaser to do a complete refurbishment i.e. once it is sold, he can renege and there is only so much you can do. WH Smith in Hastings is a disaster, for instance. My father-in-law eventually abandoned the post office in Mayfield for a similar reason: ill-staffed and queues too long. He got a franking machine and started moving over to couriers. My business is too small for franking machines and couriers so I have to use the post office. I am also concerned that the post office might be sold on in the future once the contractual period forcing the building to be used as a post office expires. This was not in the modernization consultation and is an important risk element. I urge you to reconsider your decision to sell the post office as I believe it will negatively affect my planned business. Thankyou.

I am writing to complain about the intention to close our Crown Post Office here in St. Leonards on Sea East Sussex and to replace with a joint enterprise of newsagent plus post office. This town needs a 'proper' post office which is easily accessible to all. Cramming a busy post office into a newspaper/confectionery/other outlet is unacceptable. I protest in the strongest terms.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I write to express my dismay at the proposed closure of this Post Office. This is the only Crown Post Office in the area, where we, the residents, have access to the services only a Crown Post Office can provide, including the vital banking services. There are already many convenience stores selling stationery and newspapers within a few yards of the Crown Post Office. Yet another place selling such items will simply weaken an already fragile local economy, and this alone would constitute an act of vandalism by the Post Office. But there are many other compelling reasons to retain this Post Office, not least among these that this is our only local Crown Post Office since the irresponsible closure of the corresponding office in Hastings, an action perceived by everyone here, including councillors of all political persuasions, to have been disastrous -with the current provision at WH Smiths proving to be totally inadequate, and the original post office building still empty and unused. Your assurance that post office services will be continued by the proposed franchisee [REDACTED] is strongly undermined by your refusal to clarify the terms of his contract; but it is perfectly clear to us that he will be able to close the post office after a period of time - perhaps five years – and having bought the building on very favourable terms, will then be in a position to sell it or develop it for his own profit and advantage, with further resulting damage to the local community for which this Post Office is so important. You argue that the post office is unprofitable; but this is a matter for you properly to address by developing better business practices and supporting the post office, rather than simply discarding the building as you have decided to do, and this without any valid public consultation - just a profoundly insulting charade last week, on 3rd August, which has upset the local residents, who can now safely infer a very deep level of contempt for their concerns, and which reflects very badly upon your own modus operandi. At this 'consultation', it became clear that the decision had been made already and that the service of a post office could end after five years due to unsustainability, death of the franchisee or other circumstance. It was also clear that the position would then be irrevocable, with nothing the community could do at that point to stop the Post Office being further downgraded and moved out of the current building, and nothing to stop the current proposed franchisee [REDACTED], from buying the building and using it for development as a primary purpose. You and your representatives have invoked both FOI and 'commercial sensitivity' to stonewall requests for details in this 'consultation', with resulting frustration of people attending it in the mistaken belief that the Post Office wanted to hear their concerns and would take these into consideration. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We suggest that the Post Office should reverse this decision forthwith, and instead begin to treat the local community as a friend rather than an adversary; to carry out real consultations rather than deceitful 'pretend' consultations which are in fact presentations of decisions already made with no regard to the wishes of local residents and their fully supportive councillors of all political affiliations; and to find ways in which the Post Office could in fact make the Crown Post Office here more sustainable. We have a rich seam of expertise in our community, and it is well within our competence, if not that of the Post office, to come up with ideas for extending the business success of our post office. The report of the meeting at The Royal Victoria Hotel on 3rd August includes these comments: "in a bravura performance of bland and patronising obfuscation, the Post Office representatives of the faceless Corporate management flatly refused to answer any questions that were not supportive of and inclusive of their own agenda. This is to asset-strip their bricks and mortar and offload their responsibilities to run Crown Post Offices. It is to be deeply regretted that they did not choose a different approach, which could have seen us working together to make our Post Office a vibrant and profitable hub of the community. The building has an upper storey that is empty and could be developed. As Peter Chowney [leader of Hastings Borough Council] commented, it would be in the best interests of the whole community to ensure that the building was put to good use and that the Council worked with the Post Office to ensure that both the building and a Crown Post Office service were made sustainable for the whole community." I look forward to your reply and urge whoever is responsible to reconsider this reckless and indeed contemptuous policy of the destruction of local Crown Post Offices and all that is associated with their activity and fundamental function in a community-based democratic society which holds this public good at its heart.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I attended the 'consultation' meeting that was held at the Victoria Hotel last week and heard your 'proposals', which amount to the downgrading of the St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards on Sea, from a Crown Post Office - owned by the public, to a retail unit. Your staff were there merely to fire fight our comments throughout the time allotted, so that you could say you had consulted the community, when the major decisions that will affect everyone in St Leonards had already been made. All you offered was a so called 'opportunity' for us to comment on a few aspects of the interior of the retail unit for a deal that you had already made with [REDACTED]. This is not good enough. We have not been adequately consulted on the main issue of removing our Crown Post Office, which we strongly object to. Hastings Post Office has already been removed and the St Leonards Post Office is now the only professional post office in this area of East Sussex. I reiterate the following comments, made by a friend, in response to your 'proposal':

1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation. There is nothing modern about reducing service, driving down wages and inconveniencing customers, whilst pursuing profit above all other considerations. It happens every time our public assets are sold off at fire sale prices, such as the privatisation of Royal Mail.
2. While I have nothing against [REDACTED] personally - some of his post offices in smaller localities apparently provide satisfaction to customers - St Leonards is entirely different, being a large town with serious deprivation - in central St Leonards in particular. Many vulnerable people do not qualify for regular bank accounts and rely on the Post Office for their banking needs. Our many small independent businesses also need full banking services since all our banks have closed. Many creative makers and online traders also require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long queues at inadequate service positions.
3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by your actions. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen.
4. I have no confidence in [REDACTED] assurance that he has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. This sale of public property is asset stripping of the worst kind. What is to stop him from deciding a post office does not bring in enough money and changing the business down the road? I suspect he simply wants the building and will be able to redevelop or sell it on at a large profit in a few years time. Meanwhile we will have lost the heart of our community.
5. You are abandoning your responsibilities towards your staff, some of whom have worked there for over twenty years. I very much doubt that [REDACTED] will employ them with the same salaries and conditions. Since he is reducing the number of serving positions he will clearly not reemploy them all. What will happen to their pensions?
6. Finally, the consultation was a sham. Telling people about a done deal is not consulting them. There was insufficient notice given. We only found out its date on 17 July when someone received a response from the MP. The notice in the post office did not go up until at least a week after that. The hotel on the seafront is a good ten minutes walk from the post office, not helpful for those with mobility issues. By holding it on a Thursday afternoon and with no sign outside or in the hotel foyer, nobody would have found the venue had campaigners not been outside to help them. Attendees said they found out about it from our leaflets, not from your inadequate publicity. All of this confirms what I suspect was a deliberate effort to push these changes through with as little publicity as possible. In light of all this, the consultation period must be extended to allow everyone to have their say. Such a major change should not be rushed. In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. If it goes ahead I have pledged to boycott all non post office goods - as have well over 100 others. [REDACTED] business will not succeed and he would do well to reconsider. I demand you listen to the community and reverse your decision. I insist you keep it as a Crown Post Office.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

To whom it may concern I am writing to strongly object to the proposal to downgrade St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards on Sea for the following reasons: 1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation as stated. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by the plans. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen. Further to this, many creative makers and online traders in the area require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long(er) queues at inadequate service positions. 4. There is no assurance that the new owner has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. 5. The consultation process was not adequate. telling people about a done deal is not consulting them. There was insufficient notice given. the notice in the post office did not go up until late July. The hotel on the seafront where it took place is a good ten minutes walk from the post office, not helpful for those with mobility issues. By holding it on a Thursday afternoon and with no sign outside or in the hotel foyer, nobody would have found the venue had campaigners not been outside to help them. Attendees said they found out about it from campaigner leaflets, not from your publicity. In light of all this, the consultation period must be extended to allow everyone to have their say. Such a major change should not be rushed. In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. Please listen to the community (your customers) and reverse your decision - keep St Leonards PO as a Crown Post Office.

I moved to St Leonards in 2014. One of the reasons influencing my move was the location of the post office for my business at the bottom of my road. On average I need it twice every week to send business letters. I have a successful art and design business. I very much hope you realise that to reduce it's services to operate within a retail outlet will create long queues and create a lot of upset amongst residents in this town that is undergoing significant change and growth. It just makes no sense.

I am writing at my disgust regarding the closure of St Leonards Post Office in East Sussex. As an owner of a small independant business on Kings Rd, I am horrified that this service is going to be downgraded to a glorified newsagents. Seaside towns such as ours are being regenerated with lots of brilliant and serviceable new businesses coming to the area. For us and many other businesses to succeed, wholesale and online orders are an imperative part of our business structure. Therefore it is vital that we have a fully operational post office to help us thrive in this community. I currently use this post office daily as do many locals. The post office is a hub for the community. The staff in there are very professional, friendly, fully trained and extremely helpful. They know most of their customers names and take an interest in their lives, be it to ensure a parcel gets there safely, a passport application has been filled in correctly, or to help someone pay their bill. They actually care and see it as a massive part of their job. To see the service diminished and downgraded makes me so angry. Our town has a resurgence of new businesses, cafes and young families that are helping regenerate an area that has in the past been overlooked and ignored. A post office is intrinsic in helping this regeneration continue. Everyone needs this post office functioning exactly as it is. I urge you strongly to reconsider your decision.

St.Leonards on Sea Crown Post Office must be saved.The community need it and rely on it.It is the hub of the community and must stay.Selling it off is a crime.Listen to the residents anger and stop this unacceptable decision.Wake up and see how valuable it is to us.Shame on you if you ignore our needs.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I would like to add my voice to those of many other regular Post Office users and supporters in our community. I have run a mail order business, used the currency facilities, renewed my passport with checking help from the very well informed, patient and experienced staff members at this branch. I now deposit cheques at the counter and use my card to withdraw cash in a secure off-street environment that I can trust. It is very wrong to assume that we can manage without this Crown Post Office in this area and that selling off the franchise and the valuable property asset is acceptable. It most definitely is not. St Leonards is still an area of deprivation but one which has turned a corner and at last after many many years the area is "coming up". There has been a lot of investment, new shops and a vibrant creative community is thriving in the area. Property prices have risen dramatically which is clearly the reason why the Post Office Ltd has decided to jump ship and sell a prime redevelopment site. All the new owner will have to do is hang in there for 5 to ten years and B I N G O - full house! I wrote to the home secretary, our MP Amber Rudd and she too was very worried to hear of your plans. She responded stating her determination that any reduction or downgrading of the services that the branch currently provides would be unacceptable signed off with the following sentence: "The continuation of Crown Post Office Services in St Leonards is absolutely vital" How can you guarantee this once you have sold the franchise? I attended the meeting at The Royal Victoria Hotel on 3rd August and the representatives of the Post Office could not wait to leave. They told us that the purchase had already been approved. There was no public consultation. They listened wearily to the passionate speakers and brought the meeting to a very prompt close. Please do not ignore our community. We have newsagents, confectionary and tobacco and alcohol sellers aplenty in St Leonards - across the road, up the hill, around the corner and along the next street - ten or more shops in fact - but only one Post Office.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am appalled that the Post Office has decided to downgrade the Crown Post Office in St Leonards, with no community consultation for this decision. The so called 'consultation' at the Royal Victoria Hotel last week was a meaningless sham. In place of our Post Office which serves the community very well, you have already decided that we will have yet another newsagent which sells alcohol when we have about six in close vicinity. I have looked at the plan for the new facility and there is not enough room for the queue of customers that will be coming for postal services to fit in the space. Please can you re-visit the decision and leave our Post Office as a Crown Post Office. In addition to the above, I agree with the following comments, made by a friend, in response to your 'proposal': 1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation. There is nothing modern about reducing service, driving down wages and inconveniencing customers, whilst pursuing profit above all other considerations. It happens every time our public assets are sold off at fire sale prices, such as the privatisation of Royal Mail. 2. While I have nothing against [REDACTED] personally - some of his post offices in smaller localities apparently provide satisfaction to customers - St Leonards is entirely different, being a large town with serious deprivation - in central St Leonards in particular. Many vulnerable people do not qualify for regular bank accounts and rely on the Post Office for their banking needs. Our many small independent businesses also need full banking services since all our banks have closed. Many creative makers and online traders also require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long queues at inadequate service positions. 3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by your actions. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen. 4. I have no confidence in [REDACTED] assurance that he has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. This sale of public property is asset stripping of the worst kind. What is to stop him from deciding a post office does not bring in enough money and changing the business down the road? I suspect he simply wants the building and will be able to redevelop or sell it on at a large profit in a few years time. Meanwhile we will have lost the heart of our community. 5. You are abandoning your responsibilities towards your staff, some of whom have worked there for over twenty years. I very much doubt that [REDACTED] will employ them with the same salaries and conditions. Since he is reducing the number of serving positions he will clearly not reemploy them all. What will happen to their pensions? 6. Finally, the consultation was a sham. Telling people about a done deal is not consulting them. There was insufficient notice given. We only found out its date on 17 July when someone received a response from the MP. The notice in the post office did not go up until at least a week after that. The hotel on the seafront is a good ten minutes walk from the post office, not helpful for those with mobility issues. By holding it on a Thursday afternoon and with no sign outside or in the hotel foyer, nobody would have found the venue had campaigners not been outside to help them. Attendees said they found out about it from our leaflets, not from your inadequate publicity. All of this confirms what I suspect was a deliberate effort to push these changes through with as little publicity as possible. In light of all this, the consultation period must be extended to allow everyone to have their say. Such a major change should not be rushed. In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. If it goes ahead I have pledged to boycott all non post office goods - as have well over 100 others. [REDACTED] business will not succeed and he would do well to reconsider. I demand you listen to the community and reverse your decision. I insist you keep it as a Crown Post Office.

I am writing to register my objection to the sale of the St Leonards-on-Sea Crown Post Office for the following reasons: 1. It is a busy Post Office offering a range of services to the community. There is no reason to sell it off or change it. 2. Local people and businesses need the full range of services, including banking (our banks have all closed), passport services, foreign currency, insurance, and expert postal advice. 3. It employs a lot of really expert and well trained staff - why cause them to lose their jobs? [REDACTED] 5. He is planning to turn it into a convenience store with a downgraded Post Office inside. Have you been to St Leonards-on-Sea? We have literally dozens of convenience stores. Why on earth do we need another? I will definitely not shop at this new one - I don't know anyone who will. Please, please put a stop to this sale. We love and need our Crown Post Office. Please don't sell it.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I'd like to express my concern at the potential closure of our local Crown Post Office in St Leonard's. It is a key part of the community that serves many, many residents and local businesses. It is clear that the community wishes that the Crown Post Office remains and is NOT sold to a businessman. I think it's disgraceful that you are considering selling this off when so many people need it and want it to remain. Will you listen to those voices? It's apparent that closing one much needed service as this would have very far reaching consequences in the community - and I think people are sick of this kind of decision being made when it is NOT what we want to happen. Please do take note of the petition and the emails and the protests of the people speaking their minds - we deserve to be listened to and not fobbed off for the sake of simply making a quick sale!

I strongly oppose the current plans to sell off the St Leonards Post Office to a private developer. The current Post Office is a valuable resource for the community and is the only local Crown PO - all the other nearby post offices have been downgraded to counters in retail shops and do not provide the same level of service as St Leonards. I understand that the developer would be free to cease providing any PO services after a few years and in the meantime would turn the post office into a mini-market - which are already plentiful in St Leonards with no need for yet another one.

Hastings Council fully supports the continuation of a Crown status post office in St Leonards. I don't feel that alternative options for modernisation have been fully explored and I urge you to reconsider the current proposals.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I am angry and frustrated at the proposal to downgrade St Leonards Crown Post Office as well as the way in which Post Office Ltd have handled, or rather, not handled the process to date. I went to the so-called consultation last Thursday 3rd August at the Royal Victoria Hotel in St Leonards On Sea. I learned that the proposed change is going ahead regardless of the strong opposition to this by the community here. There is even a new retail partner appointed who is poised to take over. This was not a consultation and it was misleading to call it one, as the leaflets and posters in the Post Office have done. [REDACTED], the Post Office PR person at the meeting, was not at liberty, as she kept telling us, to answer many of our questions. The requirement to inform the community of its intended change to our Crown Post Office was complied with by Post Office Ltd by posting a notice of this intent on its own website in July 2016. We were told this after repeated questioning by members of the community that were present in the very packed meeting room. It is clear that this notice on the Post Office's website would not have been seen by the vast majority of any community in the country. A total farce. There was general disbelief when this information was extracted. Decent members of the public find it hard to believe that deception on this scale regarding a community service can be allowed to take place. There is a healthy regeneration ongoing in St Leonards thanks to the hard work of many expanding independent businesses and the encouragement and support of Hastings Borough Council, whose excellent leader, Peter Chowney, was present at the meeting, along with other Councillors. All 32 Councillors of Hastings Borough Council support the campaign to save St Leonards Crown Post Office as an integral part of our community, in its present form. The community appreciates the services of the excellent, experienced staff who provide a professional and caring approach. There are no longer any banks in St Leonards. Any banking related matters required for personal or business usage are in general available through our Crown Post Office. This is a vital resource. I do not wish to have our Crown Post Office and the matters that are dealt with there, which are often of a personal, confidential or financial nature, [REDACTED]. All of his other businesses supply alcohol. This area has a zero tolerance policy where alcohol is concerned and there are many vulnerable people who contribute to the problems here with alcohol. Our Post Office is run in a calm and efficient manner, by responsible and reliable people. That is how I wish it to continue for the good of our community and the wellbeing of all who use the postal services. [REDACTED] plans to run a low grade newsagents alongside the downgraded postal service that he will be providing. There is no need for another newsagents in the town. We have several. We have a very good post office, we do not want a downgrade to happen to that service. Who would? Would anyone in Post Office Ltd themselves wish for this in their own communities? Does it actually make any sense to anyone why anyone would want a service that is less of a gold standard service than the one they currently benefit from? Some years ago, Hastings Borough Council unanimously opposed the proposal by post office Ltd to change Hastings Post Office from a service in a dedicated building to a small counter in a cramped space in W H Smith. Whenever I have had to use the Post Office in Hastings it has been an inferior service and experience compared to our service and facilities here in St Leonards. Post Office Ltd ignored the wishes of the community in Hastings as well as the decision of all the HBC Councillors then and it seems that it is going to do the same where St Leonards Crown Post Office is concerned. It might be argued that this is a network programme of change that has been and is being rolled out across the country. If Post Office Ltd have been as stealthy in their information giving as to their proposals with all of these changes as they have been with us, it is no surprise that they have, in general, been successful in carrying out their sell-off and downgrade to the detriment of the good people of this country. Despicable. The proposed change by Post Office Ltd to St Leonards Crown Post Office is completely unnecessary as far as the community is concerned. We are proud of our Post Office and its staff. They meet all our needs; business and personal. How dare Post Office Ltd try to take away this excellent service, [REDACTED], sell him the freehold of the building, in which he is only obliged to run a Post Office for the next five years, or possibly ten, this was not made clear, following which he will without a doubt sell the building to make a great deal of money - thereby removing any Post Office service whatsoever in St Leonards - because of course he would make a great deal more money by selling the building without a Post Office. How dare they expect the community of St Leonards to accept this sell-off and land grab? Would anyone in their right mind accept such a proposal? All this underlines to me is the complete disrespect and disregard that Post Office Ltd have for all of us here. I am seventy years old, still active and busy in my personal and family life. I truly never thought that such a thing could be allowed to happen - a town's Crown Post Office to be sold off in such an irresponsible, underhand and tacky manner. There was a time when community services and a Crown Post Office stood for something. There must be staff in Post Office Ltd who remember a time when standards mattered. How can they stand by and see this happening to a service that they must, at one time, have valued? And stand by and see communities like ours be treated so shabbily? They should join us and make a stand. Say enough is enough. Stop the privatisation by stealth and the selling off of institutions we hold dear. Institutions that matter to the fabric and wellbeing of our community, our country. I will not stand by and see the destruction of the [REDACTED] St Leonards Crown Post Office. I oppose it wholeheartedly. I have signed a Pledge, along with over a hundred others, to say that we will not buy anything in the business that [REDACTED] will run, if this change goes ahead despite the opposition of the community and all 32 Councillors of Hastings Borough Council.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I write to state my utter objection to the proposed changes to the St Leonards post office branch. Not only will many of your loyal and fantastic staff loose their jobs but the location will cease to serve it's community. I would encourage you to visit St Leonard's and witness how overrun we are with convenience stores and newsagents. At last count - approximately 8 in two virtually adjacent roads! I am particularly concerned as to the proposed franchisee's motives behind acquiring the aforementioned building - does [REDACTED] truly want to run a post office or is he waiting to utilise the building (which would be very profitable in the current climate!) ?! I would urge the Post Office to retain this Branch as given the community feeling against the proposed changes I do not feel [REDACTED] would be able to serve the community of St Leonard's in any way.

Our unique town needs its HEART. Please leave ST LEONARDS CROWN POST OFFICE alone! The consultation process has been a farce and the local people object.

I am writing in response to your consultation and proposals for the downgrading of St Leonards Crown Post Office, London Road, St Leonards on Sea. I have the following comments: 1. Privatisation of a public service is not modernisation. There is nothing modern about reducing service, driving down wages and inconveniencing customers, whilst pursuing profit above all other considerations. It happens every time our public assets are sold off at fire sale prices, such as the privatisation of Royal Mail. 2. While I have nothing against [REDACTED] personally - some of his post offices in smaller localities apparently provide satisfaction to customers - St Leonards is entirely different, being a large town with serious deprivation - in central St Leonards in particular. Many vulnerable people do not qualify for regular bank accounts and rely on the Post Office for their banking needs. Our many small independent businesses also need full banking services since all our banks have closed. Many creative makers and online traders also require complex postal services for deliveries to their customers and rely on the expertise of St Leonards' trained staff for advice. They need fast efficient service, and as sole traders can't afford to have to wait in long queues at inadequate service positions. 3. Recent regeneration efforts in Central St Leonards will be seriously jeopardised by your actions. Footfall has been shown to fall after the downgrading of post offices and 40% of businesses within half a mile struggle and close within 18 months. St Leonards cannot afford for this to happen. 4. I have no confidence in [REDACTED] assurance that he has a contract to run the post office with all the current services for ten years. His priority will be making a profit. Since the Post Office is selling the freehold of the building to him, they will have no control over anything he does. This sale of public property is asset stripping of the worst kind. What is to stop him from deciding a post office does not bring in enough money and changing the business down the road? I suspect he simply wants the building and will be able to redevelop or sell it on at a large profit in a few years time. Meanwhile we will have lost the heart of our community. 5. You are abandoning your responsibilities towards your staff, some of whom have worked there for over twenty years. I very much doubt that [REDACTED] will employ them with the same salaries and conditions. Since he is reducing the number of serving positions he will clearly not reemploy them all. What will happen to their pensions? 6. Finally, the consultation yesterday was a sham. Telling people about a done deal is not consulting them. There was insufficient notice given. We only found out its date on 17 July when someone received a response from the MP. The notice in the post office did not go up until at least a week after that. The hotel on the seafront is a good ten minutes walk from the post office, not helpful for those with mobility issues. By holding it on a Thursday afternoon and with no sign outside or in the hotel foyer, nobody would have found the venue had campaigners not been outside to help them. Attendees said they found out about it from our leaflets, not from your inadequate publicity. All of this confirms what I suspect was a deliberate effort to push these changes through with as little publicity as possible. In light of all this, the consultation period must be extended to allow everyone to have their say. Such a major change should not be rushed. In conclusion, I object in the strongest possible terms to this proposal. If it goes ahead I have pledged to boycott all non post office goods - as have well over 100 others. [REDACTED] business will not succeed and he would do well to reconsider. I demand you listen to the community and reverse your decision. I insist you keep it as a Crown Post Office.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

I oppose these changes. I note that your branch information leaflet states on the first page that the changes are proposed, and if carried out will result in services being offered by your new retail partner. On the second page, however, you state that the change to a retail partnership is not open to public consultation. This is distinctly misleading, and begs the question as to what is the purpose of the consultation? It is merely a PR exercise to explain a done deal, not true community involvement in the decision-making process. The present Post Office facility is often crowded, with long queues - in fact it is rare for there to be no-one, or only a couple of customers, waiting. We have many foreign students in the summer months who all want to send messages home, creating log-jams; we have many small entrepreneurial businesses, and growing numbers of such, who rely on the Post Office to send out orders. As a local resident I use it regularly for the full range of its services, even though I also receive ordered goods by courier - there is room for both! In this area of high deprivation we have large numbers of elderly and disabled residents who use mobility aids and scooters, and families with multiple small children who use mammoth twin or triplet buggies. A number-cruncher may say that there are X square feet of space wasted at the northern end of the shop, but this is not wasted space — it is used for private conversations between staff and customers, and also provides space for friends and family of those queuing for service to wait without clogging up the queuing area. I fail to see how these all these are to be accommodated in the 'shopping aisles' to which you refer in your description of the new arrangement, nor how the reduced number of service tills will result in quick and convenient access for the customer. As for the retail offer; [REDACTED] may well have achieved respectable sales in other locations since 2010, but there is no evidence that this will be the case here in St Leonards. If your team have visited the site, it cannot have escaped your notice that there are already at least 7 outlets for tobacco and confectionary within 50m; we do not need another one. As I say, it is an area of low income and high deprivation; shops that offer these goods are cynically profiting from the poorest in society, and you should be ashamed to be associated with their proliferation. In addition, what sort of forward projection is possible for these two commodities when Government policies militate against the population continuing to smoke and consume large quantities of sweet confectionery? What safeguards are there that the Post Office services will continue even if [REDACTED] realises that his business is not as profitable as he expected? Are there limitations in place to prevent him from applying for an alcohol license like the majority of the 7 other similar retailers within 50m — how much alcohol can one deprived ward need? Was the retail offer put out to tender, or did [REDACTED] come forward for this site on his own initiative? If so, why has it not been subject to competitive tender? What are the arrangements over the building itself and the land to the rear for associated Post Office activities? Are they the property of Post Office Limited, and are to be held leasehold, or is their sale intended? Or are they in third party ownership — in which case, what safeguards are there in place to protect the site for continued use as a Post Office? The building is an important piece of the history of St Leonards, representing the rebuilding of the town after bomb damage in WWII, and as such is architecturally of its time, linking with the other two corners of London Road and Norman Road that were built by a single local builder. Any change to it, including removing the imposing wooden external door to the main office area would be strongly opposed. In sum; there will not be adequate room for PO customers there will not be adequate service points for PO customers there is no local need or requirement for another tobacco and confectionery outlet the future of the building is possibly at risk. This is a bad move; do not do it. It is not worth it just for a few extra hours on a Saturday. The local community should have been involved at a much earlier stage, to provide a creative solution that suited our community. Put it on hold, and see what the locals come up with, not some person building up a portfolio of shops with PO services across the southeast.

I'm writing to let you know how disappointed I am at hearing the Crown PO will possibly disappear from St Leonard's. I'm a local resident and frequent user of the PO. It really is a valued PO and team used by many businesses and residents. On a further note the community really does not need another newsagent/corner shop. There are 5-6 places I can buy a newspaper and convenience goods within a stones throw of the PO. Please keep St Leonards Post Office Crowned. Our town is a unique small community & the post office & the great staff are at the heart of our town. The proposed Retail Partner is unsuitable as on the road where the post office is are 6 convenience stores plus a Co-op & a Spa. We need a Crowned Post Office not a convenience store that sells stamps. What has made matters worse is that the consultation process that has taken place seems to be after a decision has been made which is not what should have happened. Thank you for your kind attention. I hope you reconsider the plan for St Leonards Post Office.

Please write below any feedback or general comments you would like to make about the proposed change.

Comments (continued)

St Leonards Crown post office needs to be kept open. Since the one in Hastings has closed it now serves a huge amount of people. The building itself is in a prime position and I understand you can make money from it's sale. However you could also develop the upstairs floors into residential spaces. The rent from these would add to the profit you are already making at the post office. It seems to have been handled in a very underhanded manner. At first we were led to believe that the new owner would acquire a 5 year lease but the post office would continue to own the building. Now at the last minute, we hear the building is being sold off. St Leonards is an unusual area with a lot of deprivation, people need to be able to access their post office locally. There is a real lack of banks in the area, surely that is an opportunity for you to make more money too. It feels as if this is being sold for political reasons, not financial as there are opportunities for you to increase profits

I write on behalf of Hastings Independent, the local Hastings newspaper with a 15,000 readership across Hastings and St Leonards on Sea. We have been following the situation regarding the so called 'modernisation' of the Crown Post Office in St Leonards on Sea very closely. It is clear that the term 'modernisation' is simply spin in order to misrepresent the plans to downgrade the services on offer and minimise the space for PO services within the retail unit. After 5-10 years your 'new retail partner' [REDACTED] can redevelop the property situated in the heart of St Leonards town centre. It would seem that the Post Office has thought little about the importance of the commercial / banking services much needed by St Leonards on Sea SME's as this deprived area of Hastings has no bank. Additionally the Crown Post Office delivers many local services to the elderly and infirm who are unable to travel into Hastings town centre. The St Leonards on Sea Crown Post Office is central to the requirements of the community. In one of the most deprived areas of the UK, many still have little access to the internet or have the skills to utilise it. Hastings Independent will continue to campaign against these proposals and will back the local campaign to boycott the branch should this downgrade be successful.

Given the choice I would rather keep our post office as it is - offering the same level of service with the same number of counters and run by the crown post office. It seems a haphazard plan to franchise it out to an untrained shop owner who couldn't possibly offer the exact same level of service (in the short and long term) to the St.Leonards community who use this public service, including myself.

I am writing to you in relation to the planned changes to the Crown Post Office on London Road, St Leonards on Sea in my constituency. It has been reported that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Street drinking and anti-social behaviour are issues that we feel very strongly about in our community, and where progress has been made by initiatives such as reduce the strength and more police vigilance, particularly against under age sales. It is critical that changes to the Post Office in the heart of our town do not reverse the trend that has been achieved. I would be grateful for your comments in response to these reports. While it is right that the Post Office should seek to remain commercially viable, so that it can have a sustainable future in its current location, I believe the continuation of our Post Office services in St Leonards is absolutely vital to the town.

we have received 492 campaign letters in 7 different formats.

Are there any other local community issues which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change

Comments

No
No
Yes! Restricted services for older people re the limited options provided by the 'modernised' post offices!
Hastings and St Leonards needs a proper Crown Post Office. Please do not remove the last facility we have.
As I said before, the livelihoods of other stores could be affected
St Leonards has lost its two banks during the last year, making the Post Office the place the many foreign students depend on to exchange money, so this is a service that must be maintained. Likewise, there are many elderly people and people of limited mobility that rely on its banking services.
See my previous points. St Leonards is a deprived. A Crown Post Office is an economic driver.
The local people need a Post Office, just as it is. If it is down graded and the new proprietor starts to sell other products, this will affect local shops selling the same items. Many people gave signed a petition saying they will not buy the products, even if they continue to use the post office services. This change is not popular and a campaign is developing to oppose it with voracity.
The Post Office is an important Community Resource and visitors to the Post Office also help attract custom to local businesses. We have enough convenience stores already. Your staff are part of the local community and they need their jobs.
the loss of jobs to the Post Office staff!
There are many people in the area who are disadvantaged with little money to spare they rely on the post office as do the many people in the area who have mobility scooters.
There are many local businesses that rely on this branch; it is always crowded, no matter what time of day, or time of year - although at Christmas, queues are out of the door. With many banks having closed their on-street branches, businesses and the public alike also rely on this branch for banking services. I need not mention the OAPs and benefit claimants who visit the branch; I am sure many of them get good advice from the counter clerks.
Local racists and politicians don't like the man who is proposed to take over.
The Local other business
Once your franchisee finds he can't be profitable with his convenience store and the PO closes, how will the deprived and vulnerable inhabitants of St Leonards access PO facilities? Many people here are homeless, very poor, and they can't afford to travel to the next town to use a PO
The St.Leonards branch already has good disabled access and sits at an easily accessible location for the community. We don't need another newsagents.



Are there any other local community issues which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change

Comments (continued)

The position of the post office is vital to the	Best functioning of the community including the disable.
If the proposed franchise is not successful or profitable, would we still be in danger of losing the post office service?	We would then lose an essential community asset which many people would struggle without. Local businesses rely on postal services in order to deliver goods to their customers. The post office brings people in to use other shops and businesses in the area.
No.	
It will affect the whole community.	Without the facilities currently offered by the post office businesses will move away and the town centre will die.
A significant number of people (regular customers of this branch) have signed a pledge stating they will not use this branch should the proposal go ahead. This is not a case of false promises, there is a genuine community campaign going on here and it will lead to a loss of business for PO Ltd.	
Jobs and businesses	
We need to see familiar brands and stable businesses on the streets. It boosts confidence. No more boarding up and selling out.	
With lots of banks closing it would be so nice to have face to face advice on business and domestic accounts I feel it will be a loss as run as a shop people don't have the confidence in the post office a sad loss to all the community	
The main post office in the town centre has already closed leaving a far inferior service with long delays, difficulty in accessing with the nearest car park being more expensive, the staff have a poor knowledge of their role	
No but thereare lots of small businesses around here who will hate you forever for this cynical decision.	
Community	
The proposed changes with the inclusion of a convenience stationers selling papers cigarettes etc is not needed in the area.	
As I understand it [REDACTED] is proposing to run a newsagent within the building in what is already a saturated market? How then does he expect to make a profit and if he does it may well be at the expense of staff jobs in existing rivals	
Closing this Crown Post Office obviously destroys the Society in which it is situated, otherwise you wouldn't be asking the question ..	
Yes it would affect the people of St Leonards, the post office situation is poor as it is without having yet more disruption to the system, the post office works well, if its not broken don't fix it, its been there for the last 57 years why change it now!	



Are there any other local community issues which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change

Comments (continued)

St. Leonards already has plenty of retail outlets providing newspapers/sweets/tobacco. Another outlet is like to harm local traders. St. Leonards is undergoing exciting regeneration. We have many new, young businesses which rely heavily on access to post office services. From viewing the experience in Hastings where queues are excessive. with waiting times often half an hour and more, this will not help our regeneration. Time is money.
Loss of local jobs. Taking the heart out of an area that desperately needs the Crown Po st Office to stay. Local business need informed and trained post office staff, when it becomes a franchise there will be a loss of professionalism and information and services, the same in all the other franchises like Hastings WHSmith. The franchises in my experience have nothing like the expertise or customer service of a proper post office. The other franchises are not putting the community needs first. Please do not sell off our Crown Post Office. You have not approached the local community to see how we could be involved in order to turn the profit margin around. The upstairs of the building has not been used and would be an asset. local makers could use the building to sell there wares around the post office services. What about an investment in the community of St Leonards rather than lowering our morale even further by selling off thi wonderful building.
See first statement
The people who most need the service: the elderly, frail, disabled and mentally ill of the area, would no longer be able to access the full range of post office services.
It's the only Crown Post Office in the area. We want to keep the full range of services, including a photo booth, and we want it to be EASILY ACCESSIBLE to all. There are 3 newsagents and 3 supermarkets within walking distance that sell newspapers, and stationery / greetings cards retailers. Do we need any more shops selling tobacco, sweets or alcohol? St Leonard's Crown Post Office is more than a mailing house. It is a social community service provider. For many elderly members of St Leonard's it is an information centre, a place to communicate with staff who are paid to listen, explain and advise without bias towards a specific product or service.
It is in an ideal location for all local users and local services/events. You will be removing vital services to a community that needs them and will further disadvantage those who are reliant on P.O. counterservices
As i said , we do not need another newsagents, the area is regenerating, at the moment we have far too many shops that sell food, tobacco, sweets and alcohol, what we need is our Post Office! not a sub post office
There is a substantial older community in the area and any alternative may well be to their detriment. Any other provider will be smaller and inevitably will lead to queues forming at busy times. The building is a land mark as well. The range of services will sadly decline.
I believe the closure of the Crown Post Office will have a negative knock-on effect on other local businesses and compound the downgrading of our local shopping area already under way thanks to the closure of bank branches. This has a disproportionate impact on older residents and those without transport.
Hastings has already had its post office removed and amalgamated with a WHSmith and customers there receive an absolutely disgraceful service. Many people now go to St Leonards just to go to a proper post office. Footfall in the local area will decrease if the changes go ahead.
Health of local economy
Unfair competition with other local retailers. Inadequate access. Local businesses wasting time in queues.



Are there any other local community issues which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change

Comments (continued)

As outlined in my previous answer, I believe that the franchising of this store will lead to a decline in accessibility for wheelchair users. I am not satisfied with the accountability process that the post office has in place for it's franchise owners and we cannot be assured that the new owner will not simply sell up in a couple of years time for a profit. Where will we be then? There are also a great many new independent businesses starting in the area who use the post office to send off orders. We are a growing community and I fear that limiting the services available to the community will stunt it's promising growth,

What will be disadvantaged by this proposal:- The vitality of the town. Staff jobs. Elderly, vulnerable, disabled and visitors to the town having access to the post office. The downgrading will affect local retail, commercial and home businesses.

Large numbers of people rely on the PO.

See previous para, but most issues come to light AFTER an event such as this when its too late to do anything about them

Many people with disabilities use this Post Office instead of the one in WH SMITHS in Hastings town center as access is not suitable, there aren't enough staff and there always long queues.

Damage to small businesses in the short term and the possibility of there being no post office at all in 5 / 10 years when this building could quite easily be sold by the ' franchisee ' as residential at a fat profit.

St Leonard's On Sea is an up and coming area with many visitors and holidaymakers coming here throughout the year BUT with so many retailers already offering newspapers, tobacco and sweets in the area, we really don't need another shop selling this unhealthy stuff, we need something positive, progressive and community focussed.

This area has a higher than average proportion of people with disabilities, figures from the Census 2011 show more than one in four people in Central St Leonards had a limiting long-term illness <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=> so the need for an accessible Post Office is essential. Car ownership is also relatively low (56% of households have no access to car or van) - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=> so accessing alternative facilities is extremely difficult. Foreign language students form a key part of the local economy and the Crown Post Office is the only site which currently offers money changing facilities in the Town Centre.

It was agreed by all that last Thursday's consultation meeting was a complete farce. There was no information given that offered any reassurance over the future, it did the opposite. The PO reps appeared to have zero knowledge of the London Road site, as it was only a 5min walk a way the least they could have done was spend 20 mins out of their schedule prior to the meeting going up there. It was as though they are travelling at fast speed from one town to another giving the same PR small talk with no consideration or understanding of each town or village. It is cheap business & insulting to a community to be fobbed off in this way. I would also like to note that your proposed timing of November for the partnership change over seems particularly bad timing. This will clash with the business time of the year for the PO with Christmas mail. [REDACTED] has plans to renovate the interior & this may incur a period of closure ? You have just closed the West St Leonards PO, so that will place an even greater strain on the London Road Post Office especially over the Nov - Dec calendar period. This appears to be yet another flaw within your business plan ?

I do not believe PO Ltd has any of our communities' best interests at heart nor do I feel you have any intention of wishing the Crown Post Office to remain in our town. Your total disregard for our opinion in your handling of this consultation process has shown that. Our local community needs the Post Office to remain a full service Crown Post Office not a kiosk style or Sub Post Office owned by a newsagent. Reverse your decision with regards St Leonards London Road.

Are there any other local community issues which you believe could be affected by or affect the proposed change

Comments (continued)

This is a massively important community resource. The building is a public asset and there is NO public support for this move. I understand that the building would become a local mini-market, which a small post office counter. Has the half-wit who dreamt up this plan visited the area? It is full of mini-markets and small supermarkets. We do not need another one. What is needed is a fully functional Crown Post Office. I can only conclude that this proposal has nothing to do with serving the public better, and everything to do with maximising profits for somebody.
N/A
N/A
N/A
N/A
You are not proposing a move so why ask this question?
N/A
No.

