

**Leader of the Council**  
Councillor R.J. Phillips

Jim Fitzpatrick, MP,  
Parliamentary Under Secretary for  
Employment Relations and Postal Services,  
Department of Trade and Industry,  
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5th January, 2007

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick,

## **POST OFFICE CLOSURES AND THE RURAL SUBSIDY**

I write to you as Leader of Herefordshire Council to express my deep concern about the proposed closure of around 2,500 Post Offices and the potential that may have on some outlets in our County. I am somewhat astounded that a government that emphasises a great deal on the importance of communities and neighbourhoods should consider such drastic measures, which can only lead to exclude certain vulnerable sectors of our community.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 includes as one of its domains Barriers to Housing and Services. In Herefordshire 74 out of the 116 super output areas fall within 25% of the most deprived in terms of geographical barriers to services. 54 areas fall within the 10% most deprived in relation to this sub-domain in the County. 72% of the population live within 2km of a Post Office, a figure which is below the national and regional average and this is further exacerbated by the fact that only 31% of the population live within 4km of a Bank, and 56% of the population live within 4 km of a Cashpoint.

The County has the lowest wage levels in the West Midlands and a large proportion of our population live on fixed or low incomes. The closure of rural post offices and the services they provide would have a considerable impact on the quality of life and service provision to the Council's population.

I would support a wider and more active role for rural post offices and would urge the government to increase the accessibility of services through them whether benefits, administration and collection, or through increasing the number of private banks who allow their customers access to their accounts via Post Offices.

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I believe there is a sustainable future for Post Offices in the vast majority of rural communities and I would seek assurance from you that where proposal to keep open these offices which would otherwise close by establishing co-location or shared services that this be given serious consideration.

I would urge you to look at pilot projects and properly evaluate them and undertake a rigorous process of "rural proofing" before any closures are contemplated.

Yours sincerely,

**R.J. PHILLIPS**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**