

**DORSTONE PARISH COUNCIL**

Church House,  
Dorstone,  
Hereford.  
HR3 6AW.

Mark Partington,  
Network Development Manager  
National Consultation Team

Dear Mr Partington,

**Post Office Area Plan Proposal For Herefordshire**

I refer to the public consultation over the POST OFFICE facilities required at Dorstone Herefordshire. To ensure the best available local knowledge is available for the correct decision to be made I submit this letter on behalf of Dorstone Parish Council.

**Location.** Dorstone is a rural parish of approximately 300 adult residents situated in West Herefordshire, 15miles from the City of Hereford. The nearest main shopping centre is Hereford, for the motorist the nearest fuel stations are about 12miles from the centre of Dorstone. The parish extends over a wide area, with parishioners upto 3 miles from the village centre. In extreme weather conditions, flooding/winter storms the village or outlying parts have been cut off. The village is served by an infrequent bus service, nearest village is approx 3.5 miles away, mobile phone reception is nil to very poor, approx one third of the population (Post Office figures) are retired.

**Current Facilities**

When the services of the Post Office were threatened previously an enthusiastic group of people would not give up. A site was obtained in the village centre upon which a purpose built building was erected, which was financed by members of the community with grant aid. These facilities have been an immense benefit to the community which include disabled access and parking adjacent. Currently the post office is open 9-12.30 Monday to Thursday with an average number of counter sessions 50-99.

This initiative was highlighted in the House of Lords on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2000

"But it is village shops and post offices which are bound to be the main focus of our concern. I particularly want to draw attention to what I believe is a remarkable success story about a

village shop and post office and to try to draw some conclusions from that story. Let me take your Lordships for a moment to the village of Dorstone in the Golden Valley, west of Hereford, under the Black Mountains. It has a population of about 250 in the village centre and also in farms and cottages scattered far up into the hills. Its village shop closed just over five years ago. The post office, which had been located in a private house, had closed before that. There was a general sense of gloom, as in many villages.

But a small and enthusiastic group of people would not give up. They were determined to get back their post office and a shop as well if it was humanly possible. By making ingenious and imaginative use of a range of funding sources, they managed to achieve their ambition, and last year a brand-new purpose-built shop and post office with disabled access and proper parking was opened with due ceremony by one of the oldest inhabitants of the village. Money for that came from the Rural Development Commission, as it then was, from the village focus budget of Herefordshire council, from local contributions in £15 shares and £25 debentures, non-returnable and paying no dividend, bought by local people who made up the Dorstone Village Shop Association, which is in legal terms a provident association. But most of the money—around half at least—came from the European Objective 5b fund.

.....It has proved to be of immense benefit to the community and is very much appreciated.”

**Proposed Outreach Service** The documentation indicates this is to be run by Dorset Mobile Service, hours of opening 4 per week, on two consecutive days of two hours which are not normal pension days. The facility is to be provided on the privately owned car park adjacent to the existing post office.

Alternative facilities at Peterchurch have very little parking outside the shop/post office, yellow lines restrict the amount of parking spaces. For disabled no lowered kerb is available, access inside the shop to post office is difficult due to layout.

Whilst there is a limited bus service considerable time/inconvenience to parishioners using alternative facilities will result in a 1.5 hour wait.

Hay on Wye Post Office has limited on street parking adjacent to facilities, car park is a little distance from post office however this is closed on Thursdays. Preston on Wye & Eardisley Post Offices are not within reasonable distance of Dorstone.

#### **Factors to Consider following Consultation**

- 1) Excellent purpose built community owned existing facilities for all users
- 2) Increase cost/environmental impact to parishioners who have to use alternative venues
- 3) Reduction in hours available to parishioners requiring post office facilities
- 4) Outreach two consecutive days, those who require the facilities will be very limited in their business/personal life in sending mail/parcels which require correct postage etc.
- 5) Increase environmental impact, both by the Post Office & parishioners
- 6) Consideration if reduced hours are required discussing with the existing Post Mistress.

- 7) Consider a proactive new contract with the Post Mistress that sets the number of hours the Post Office serves the community but allow the Community/Post Mistress to decide when these should be.
- 8) Increased risk to users of the outreach service due to limited parking at the car park, which an increase in use will result in a short period of time the service is available.

Dorstone Parish Council therefore request that following the consultation DORSTONE POST OFFICE should remain in the facilities provided by the community. The service provided by the post office is that appropriate to the facilities available and the needs of the community.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Hendy

Parish Clerk

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2008