

Nick Read
Chief Executive at The Post Office Ltd
Finsbury Dials,
20 Finsbury St,
London
EC2Y 9AQ

Cc: CJ Lang and Son

00/June/2021

Dear Mr Read,

RE: Closure of Balintore Post Office

All here undersigned were deeply distressed to discover that the Post Office in Balintore is set to close. We have copied in CJ Lang and Son – who are the wholesaler for Balintore's SPAR, which hosts the Post Office – for reference.

We urge you to reconsider this decision in light of local feeling and indeed, local need. What is more, we would like to invite you to Balintore to see our community for yourself. It is not until you visit us here in the Highlands that you discover we are in a unique position that requires specialised attention. It would be our pleasure to discuss the future of our post office with you, the Balintore Community Council, and Jamie Stone MP at your earliest convenience. Mr Stone has even offered to accommodate you and the highest level of Highland hospitality will be offered.

The rural community of the Seaboard Villages depends on its Post Office. It provides essential postal, banking, pension and many other services to those who cannot access services further afield. The next nearest available full Post Office facility being a 14-mile round trip in Tain. This is not feasible for many residents without a car. Local bus services are irregular in 'normal' times; at present, due to COVID, public transport is especially reduced.

As you will see from the comments of residents below, it will also be a major blow for elderly people – many of whom do not drive – and many of the small businesses in our community. Employment and enterprise are fundamental to keeping the Highlands going. Depopulation is a curse in communities like ours and you have the power to help us keep people here and indeed, encourage young people who grew up here and left to return to the place they call home. Without crucial amenities like the Post Office, Balintore is not a viable option for many people to continue living and working in.

Ballintore Community Council reached out to residents for their views to be included in this open letter. Please see them enclosed below – it is vital their views are considered by you in any decision making process regarding the closure of this local amenity:

"This is a major blow to this rural community. I use the Balintore Post Office regularly, and it will be a big loss. It will be a particularly hard blow for elderly residents and those without cars. It is bad enough to start closing the counter at 3 pm because of Covid, never mind closing down altogether. I hope the decision can be reversed."

Robert Mackenzie

"We need this facility. We do not all have cars, and going to Tain is not always an option. The service is excellent; please do not close it. The whole community needs the Post Office."

Catherine Maclean

"Please keep the PO counter open at Balintore. Rural Post Offices are a lifeline to small communities with residents often unable to use public transport to other branches. Balintore PO (pre-covid) had excellent late-night hours. It was excellent for my small business to be able to access PO counter services. Please reconsider!"

Isla Scaman

"What a disastrous decision for a small local community that depends on this post office. I hope this decision can be reversed for the people in the Seaboard Community and beyond."

Kerry Vass

"Disastrous idea. This service is used by the wider community and is an asset to the village and the shop. The service provided is superb and greatly helps to support the local economy."

Leigh Mackenzie

Thank you for taking the time to read our open letter. We look forward to your response as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact Jenny McCann or Jamie Stone MP on the following details to make an arrangement.

Yours sincerely

Jenny McCann

Chair of the Balintore Hilton Community Council

Jamie Stone

MP for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross