

CH/JMW

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8 August 2006

Mr A Crozier  
Managing Director  
Royal Mail Headquarters  
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148 Old Street  
LONDON  
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Dear Adam

### **Customer Service At Harrogate Delivery Office**

I refer to the recent decision taken by the Royal Mail to reduce the opening hours of the Collection Service at the Claro Road offices in Harrogate.

Harrogate Borough Council at its meeting held on 19 July 2006 considered a Notice of Motion in the names of Councillors Reg and Pat Marsh in relation to the reduced opening hours now in operation at the Sorting Office. The Notice of Motion submitted to Council for consideration read as follows:

“Claro Road Sorting Office previously opened from 7 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday for the collection of undelivered mail. The Post Office has decided to drastically reduce the opening hours to 7 am to 12.30 pm, Monday to Saturday.

Taken together with the reduction in the number of local post offices in recent years, this is a totally unacceptable reduction of service.”

This Council therefore asks the Chief Executive to write to the National Head of the Post Office:

- ◆ Deploring the decision to cut the opening hours at Claro Road Sorting Office;
- ◆ Asking him to consult fully with HBC and with residents about the opening hours that are actually needed by users;
- ◆ Asking him to implement the opening hours so determined.

The Council referred this Notice of Motion to the Leader of the Council. Accordingly the Leader held a meeting with Councillors Reg and Pat Marsh to discuss their concerns and indeed the concerns of their constituents. It was then agreed that I write to you to express the concerns now held by this Authority with regard to the reduction in opening hours and service levels for residents and businesses within the Harrogate District.

For information, the Council's Assistant Economic Development Officer has taken the opportunity to discuss this issue with Mr Paul Wilkins, the Sorting Office Manager who was able to provide background to the historical service concession provided to residents of the district over the last number of years. It is the view of this authority that the reduction in opening hours will continue to present difficulties for the districts residents and businesses alike.

You may not appreciate that the Harrogate District covers a large geographical area and therefore it can be difficult for those residents living in the district's rural areas who, in addition to this recent service reduction, must also contend with rural public transport issues. These issues translate into to far less opportunity for residents to collect their mail. The Claro Road site is not located in a central part of Harrogate and does not feature on any existing bus route making the collections office even harder to reach for those without a car. There are now complaints being received by the Council's Elected Members from people unable to gain access to their own mail for periods of up to 5 days (leading to additional problems with banking facilities) and who have subsequently been unable to contact the sorting office by telephone. For example residents living in rural areas who work in Harrogate (indeed anyone working would experience the same problem) are finding it impossible to collect mail during a working day since their lunch hour (their only opportunity) is insufficient to make the journey to the sorting office and back to work again have to make an extra journey on a Saturday morning to collect their mail. In any event the sorting office is unavailable to most people since it now closes at 12.30pm. It has been suggested that consideration is given to alternatives to the new sorting office opening hours, for example 3 full days opening rather than 6 half days or a variation of hours, some days 9 – 12 and other days 12 – 6. I should very much like to hear your views in this regard.

In addition our members and local residents hold the view that the problems mentioned above are exacerbated by slower response times from staff in the sorting office together with longer queuing times for those collecting their mail.

The reduction in opening hours serves only to compound these issues and therefore there are growing numbers now of the opinion that the level of customer service and service provided by the Royal Mail are at an all time low.

I look forward to hearing your views on this matter and your assurance that consideration will be given in the future to improved and more efficient procedures.

Yours sincerely  
Chief Executive  
PM Walsh

Cc: Mr P Wilkins, Sorting Office Manager, Royal Mail Delivery Office, Claro Road, Harrogate  
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