



The Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MBE VR MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Date
15 November 2023

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London, EC2V 7ER

Dear Minister Tugendhat,

Thank you for your letter regarding Post Office services in Edenbridge. I wanted to write to you personally to apologise to you and your constituents for the temporary loss of Post Office services in Edenbridge. I appreciate your concern about the situation.

As you know, Edenbridge Post Office closed on 2 November due to the resignation of the Postmaster. Paydens, who previously operated the branch from their pharmacy, gave notice to leave in February 2023, at which point we advertised for applicants for the Post Office and visited Edenbridge to assess interest with local businesses.

Two businesses started the application process in July 2023. Unlike the situation in Tonbridge, the applicants had identified premises for the Post Office, and we believed there was sufficient time to appoint a new Postmaster before the branch closure in November. Although we are actively supporting the applicants for Edenbridge through the process because we want to appoint a Postmaster as quickly as possible, there have been unforeseen delays with the applications that are beyond Post Office's control.

As soon as we were aware there would be break in service, we considered whether a temporary branch in Edenbridge was a sustainable option to maintain services. A temporary branch requires funding, premises, and a Postmaster to provide the service, and as you know a decision was made in September to explore the provision of a temporary branch. I wanted to thank you for your support and suggestions to identify potential temporary premises for Edenbridge Post Office. My team have visited Edenbridge and engaged with the owners of the Bridge Café and Rugby Club. We also contacted the Eden Centre and, although initial discussions were inconclusive, they have recently been in touch again and a meeting is planned with the Estate Manager this week to explore the possibility of using the premises.



With regards to funding, Post Office and Postmasters are operating in a challenging economic climate with difficult trading conditions, which I hope you will appreciate given the pressures on the public purse currently. The limited Government funding we have available to maintain the branch network must be allocated carefully to provide sustainable services in locations with the highest need. However, I am pleased to say that, following a review, funding has been allocated for a temporary service in Edenbridge until a permanent Postmaster is appointed to ensure the community can continue to access Post Office products and services.

As soon as we can confirm a temporary Postmaster, further conversations can continue with the premise owners to secure the service. Please be assured that we are working to appoint a temporary Postmaster as quickly as possible as we approach Christmas.

With regards to meeting you in Edenbridge, I am afraid that my diary is particularly busy this side of Christmas as we approach the busiest time of the year for the business, which I hope you will understand. However, if you would still like to arrange a meeting in Westminster, Jack Foden, our Head of Public Affairs, would be happy to meet you should you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Read".

Nick Read

Chief Executive, Post Office Limited



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