

3 June 2008

Hopkins demands answers over new threat to local Post Offices

Keighley and Ilkley Conservative Parliamentary Candidate Kris Hopkins has written to the Prime Minister to demand clarity on the Government's plans for the Post Office network.

Already this year, four Post Offices have been forced to shut in Keighley and Ilkley and another 11 in the rest of Bradford district have been earmarked to suffer the same fate as part of a Labour Government drive to close more than 2,500 branches across the country.

However, it now appears that this number could be considerably higher after Post Office bosses conceded they could not place a cap on the numbers of branches likely to shut.

In a written submission to the Business and Enterprise Select Committee, the Post Office said: "While Post Office Ltd has no plan or desire to see any further reduction in the overall size of the Post Office network, it does not believe it is possible or desirable to set a minimum number of fixed outlets."

Commenting on the news, Cllr Hopkins said it seemed likely that Post Office chiefs were being used by Ministers to prepare the way for much more severe cuts to the network.

"Whilst the Labour Government has been performing U-turn after U-turn in recent months on all sorts of issues, it has been consistent in its desire to destroy our Post Office network," he said.

"Ministers in Whitehall seem unable or unwilling to grasp the fact that local Post Offices are hugely valued community resources, particularly in rural areas such as Keighley and Ilkley. They are also extremely important to our older and disabled residents.

"I am therefore writing to Gordon Brown to insist that he clarifies exactly what his Government's intentions are in relation to further Post Office closures. My view is simple: these closures must cease.

"The Prime Minister keeps telling us he listens to the views of local people and he feels their pain. This is his opportunity to prove it by stopping this disastrous Post Office closure programme."

ENDS