

6 August 2007

Keighley and Ilkley marched to front of queue for Post Office closures

Kris Hopkins, the Conservative Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Keighley and Ilkley, has attacked the Government for forcing the constituency to be used as a “guinea pig” for its plans to close Post Offices across West Yorkshire.

Last year Trade and Industry Secretary Alistair Darling, now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced his intention to oversee the closure of up to four post offices in Keighley and Ilkley - reducing the number to just 22.

The plan, confirmed in May, is part of a wider strategy to close more than 2,500 Post Offices across the country by the end of next year, on top of the 4,000 already shut down since Labour came to power in 1997.

It has now emerged that Keighley and Ilkley will be the only part of West Yorkshire forced to take part in the first wave of consultations beginning in September after Post Office Ltd – the body charged by the Government with handling the closures - decided that Keighley and Ilkley must go through the process with Parliamentary constituencies in North and East Yorkshire.

It has also transpired that, for this to happen, Bradford will become the only administrative district in the country to be split up for the purpose of the consultation; every other constituency that makes up Bradford district will join the rest of West Yorkshire in taking part in the second wave of consultations next year.

Cllr Hopkins said he was “appalled” by what he described as the “victimisation of Keighley and Ilkley.”

He commented:

“This news is nothing short of an all-out Government attack on the people of Keighley and Ilkley and in particular on the elderly and disabled citizens who use our local Post Offices most.

“Post Offices are the lifeblood of communities like ours and the closure of a significant number of our outlets will cause untold damage to many people’s lives.

“The Government has already been through one sham consultation which concluded that the 2,500 Post Office closures, including four in Keighley and Ilkley, would go ahead as planned.

“Now we are told that the constituency has been singled out, marched to the front of the queue and forced to act as a guinea pig for the rest of West Yorkshire.

“It also means that Keighley and Ilkley’s Post Offices will be made to close before any others in the sub-region.

“It is an appalling development and I intend to oppose the process and the victimisation of Keighley and Ilkley with all my energy.”

Last Friday, Cllr Hopkins met with Andrew Cathey, sub-postmaster at Silsden Post Office, to discuss the Government’s plans.

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