



Glenda Jackson MP
25th February
Post Offices Closures

My view of Westminster over the past month has been courtesy of the Parliamentary TV channel, due to the replacement of an outworn hip, for a brand new one. Thank God for the NHS!

The major issues have been, as they still are, the temporary nationalisation of Northern Rock and the Lisbon Treaty, the latter crawling through line by line, with little meeting of minds between those who view the E.U. as some malevolent force, with, I hasten to add, no evidence to support their phobias, and those, happily, the majority, who value the E.U. and value even more the UK's positive attitude towards it.

But, the major issue in the constituency is the proposal to close 171 Post Offices in London, three in Hampstead and Highgate.

This news was announced in the consultation document produced by the Post Office and launched on February 19th. The consultation, which will close on April 2nd will last just six weeks, in contrast to what is deemed to be best practice - nearly twelve weeks.

Mayor Livingston has confirmed that he will consider mounting a legal challenge by way of a judicial review, on what is in my view, a clear attempt by the Post Office to push through plans, which if carried out will wreak real damage, both socially and economically.

The proposals to close another three offices in Hampstead and Highgate beggars belief. Since we lost the sub Post Office on Haverstock Hill the offices at both Hampstead Village and Finchley Road have increased queues and decreased services, and the proposed closures of England's Lane, South End and Highgate High Street will make this situation infinitely worse.

What is more, these closures will have a considerable impact on some of the most vulnerable in our community. This we know from the report produced by a Scrutiny Panel held by the then Labour controlled Camden Council in 2003, when the last rounds of closures were in train, which detailed the deprivation the then closures would impose, but also made innovative recommendations to maintain a service.

From direct representations, I also know just how much harm the closures can bring.

For the elderly, the disabled and families with small children, all of whom value the Post Office and its services, distance in a constituency such as ours, with its extremely hilly terrain, can be, indeed is, a real barrier. Furthermore, to close the proposed offices, all serving what are essentially urban villages, will also have an effect, and not to their benefit, on the other small but important businesses in the area.

Subsequently, I have written to the Post Office, urging them to reconsider their plans for closure, and have copied my letter to Postwatch.

Having failed, despite their promises and undoubted attempts to replace our lost office in Haverstock Hill, and knowing as they must, that neither individually nor collectively, Hampstead Village of Finchley Road will be able to cope with all the additional pressure on their services, the Post Office must think again.