

GIFFORD COMMUNITY COUNCIL Special MEETING
Monday 7 July 2008, held in Gifford Village Hall
Minutes

1. Present	John O'Connor (JOC - Chairman), Elizabeth Whiteford (EW – Treasurer), David Betts (DB), Margaret McDougall (MMcD), Margaret Maslowski (MM), Julian Tennent (JT), Cllr. Paul McLennan (PM), Cllr Ludovic Broun-Lindsay (L B-L), Cllr. Sheena Richardson (SR), and 36 members of the public	Action
2. Apologies	Andrew Gilmour, Ian Johnston, Jane Steven, Liz Stewart	
3. Post Office closure	<p>JOC welcomed the councillors and members of the public attending the meeting. He was pleased to note the large attendance of the public for this special open meeting on the possible closure of Gifford Post Office (PO).</p> <p>He reported, that he had received an e-mail from Mr. Alan Little the Deputy Chief Executive of Lothian Borders and Angus Co-Operative Society setting out the reasons for his fear of the closure of Gifford Post Office, and stating the Co-op's opposition to any such course.</p> <p>He asked Councillor Paul McLennan to comment. Councillor McLennan gave an account of a meeting about 10 days ago with Post Office representatives. He said that the Post Office were not interested in petitions, but rather in facts and arguments, which lent weight to the case against closure, as judged against the Post Office's own criteria.</p> <p>He promised to help us with some statistical information regarding the number of old people and of disabled etc. He stated, that difficulty of access through lack of public transport to the nearest Post Office in Haddington would be a consideration.</p> <p>He stated, that East Lothian Council is opposed to all Post Office closures in its area.</p> <p>He stated, that of around 14,000 Post Offices in the UK only about 4,000 are not loss making, and that our MP Anne Moffat had with the Labour Parliamentary Party, voted in the Westminster Parliament for Post Office Ltd's post office closure programme.</p> <p>He stated, that there would be on 19 August the announcement of the post offices targeted for closure and the beginning of a 6 week consultation period, although extremely seldom did Post Office Ltd. change its mind.</p> <p>He stated too, that there might be money available from the Scottish Government to assist in keeping Post Offices open, and perhaps even some small amount of money from East</p>	

	<p>Lothian Council.</p> <p>He stated, that Post Office Ltd. were likely to propose closure, with a van service, or reduced opening hours, as an alternative to the existing arrangement, and that this could be implemented as early as December, although Post Office Ltd. had not been forthcoming in providing dates to East Lothian Council. He stated, that Post Office Ltd's plans seemed to be based purely on commercial economies.</p> <p>JOC stated, that any reduced service such as by a van would lead to "death by a thousand cuts", and that Gifford had 50% more than the national average in the over 60 age group.</p> <p>Councillor Sheena Richardson reported that Humbie Post Office was a non-profit community entity receiving financial support to stay open.</p> <p>Councillors Ludovic Broun-Lindsay and Sheena Richardson joined in the deep discussion which followed.</p> <p>It was stated, that we needed to increase the usage of the existing arrangement in the Co-oP.</p> <p>Concern regarding disabled provision at Haddington Post Office was expressed, and JOC stated that he had visited Haddington Post Office, and found that there is NO disabled access to the building, and a so-called disabled provision, which is so bad, that we know, that some disabled persons resident in Haddington choose not to use the Haddington Post Office, but rather to drive the 5.5 or so miles to Gifford to do their Post Office business, because Gifford Post Office (and the Co-oP shop) does have a good disabled provision.</p> <p>JOC stated, that disabled provision at Haddington Post Office involved the use of a push-button from wheelchair on the pavement outside the building. This pushing of the push-button would sound a buzzer in the managerial office, and a Manager would then come out onto the pavement, and there (with both the Manager and the customer being in public without privacy, singled out from able-bodied customers, and unprotected from the elements and whatever hail, rain or snow and gale, might obtain at the time) interview the person, who had rung the buzzer. The Manager would subsequently deal with his or her requirements by going into the building, and making his or her way through two security doors to the "behind the counter" area, and transacting the business, before retracing his or her steps back to the customer waiting on the pavement, and handing over change etc.</p> <p>A disabled resident reported that the disabled cannot pay by card, at Haddington Post Office, as there is no portable PIN/card machine, and anyway, that she would not use it, if</p>	
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	<p>there was, because of the lack of security of such machines!!</p> <p>Comment was made, that the bus service to Haddington was very poor.</p> <p>Comments were made on physical security of any alternative, the costs of moving to an alternative, and postulated threats to the viability of the Co-oP shop itself.</p> <p>After discussion it was resolved as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To express strong opposition to any proposal to close Gifford Post Office.2. To set up a sub-committee with the power to act for it in relation to the closure of Gifford Post Office and the power to co-opt, and to seek out relevant expertise available to it in its area. Its members would be JOC, AG, EW, Liz. Stewart Stewart, and Jane Steven. Quorum is two members.3. To research the information to prove, that Gifford Post Office meets all the criteria required by Post Office Ltd. for the retention of Gifford Post Office.4. To be generally as ready as possible to resist any proposal announced on 19 August for the closure of Gifford Post Office.5. It appealed to residents to continue using Gifford Post Office, including for taxing cars, paying bills etc. <p>The meeting then closed.</p>	
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Signed by John O'Connor
13 October 2008