



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

**TO THE OCCUPIER:
IMPORTANT INFORMATION
FROM YOUR MP**

Dear Resident,

I am writing to update you on the Post Office in Wedmore.

The situation is that the proposed move has been abandoned because the application from Wedmore Village Stores has been withdrawn. First impressions will be that this is good news but I would strongly caution against celebration.

Post Office had concluded from their consultation that the move to the Village Stores was acceptable despite the village speaking so overwhelmingly against it in the public meeting and in your contributions to the consultation. I was deeply disappointed and very angry that they had come to that conclusion but we should take it as indicative of their commitment to transforming their network no matter what opposition they meet locally.

That means that we should see the abandonment of their plans as temporary. Post Office will continue to seek a new postmaster in the village, willing to operate under their new contract.

The existing postmaster has confirmed to me that he does not wish to continue operating in Wedmore although he has no plans to close until an alternative postmaster is recruited. Similarly, the Village Stores have no plans to reapply unless it is to protect their own business by denying another convenience store the opportunity to come to the village with the Post Office and National Lottery services provided within.

Both businesses are behaving perfectly legitimately – it is of course for them to choose what is in their best interests. Therefore it seems to me that given Wedmore Village Stores are primarily concerned with protecting their place as the village's convenience store and the current postmaster does not wish to continue under the new Post Office contract; the village might consider seeking to run the post office as a community enterprise.

These things are always easier said than done and volunteers would be needed to take this idea forward. However, Wedmore would not be the first village to do this and I would assume that it is a course of action that would be attractive to almost all stakeholders.

I intend to discuss this in more detail with Post Office, the Royal Mail, Wedmore Parish Council and the landlord of the current site. If you would be interested in taking the idea forward, please let me know and I will facilitate a meeting of those interested in looking at this option.

I stress that whilst the immediate proposals have been abandoned, I think it would be wholly wrong to blame Wedmore Village Stores for applying and/or to celebrate them withdrawing from the process. Post Office's intent remains unchanged and as a community, we will need to work together to come up with an alternative that works for all.

*Yours faithfully,
James Heappey*

Member of Parliament for the Wells Constituency