



Marion Fellows MP  
Member of Parliament for Motherwell and Wishaw  
House of Commons  
SW1A 0AA

8 June 2020

Dear Ms Fellows,

I am writing further to your recent questions to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). As your questions relate to operational matters for the Post Office, I have been asked to reply. The questions and their responses are set out below.

***How many post offices are temporarily closed in each council area of (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England. (48505)***

As you are aware, since 2012 our focus has been on successfully maintaining a branch network of over 11,500 Post Offices. In consistently maintaining the size of our network, it is very important to note that we have never included temporarily closed branch details within this number.

When managing a branch network of this size, inevitably there are branch closures that occur for reasons beyond our control. This can be as a result of the resignation or retirement of a postmaster (where a replacement has not come forward), fire or flood and more recently during the Covid-19 pandemic where Post Offices have had to temporarily close as postmasters and their staff have gone into isolation, become unwell or where premises have been restricted for public access.

Following a branch closure and where we believe that there is continued demand for Post Office services in that area, our aim has been to restore a sustainable, permanent Post Office. We advertise the opportunity and encourage local businesses to apply for the service. If we aren't able to restore services the location is classified as temporarily closed. Over time circumstances can change and as Post Office services are restored the number of temporary closed branches also changes.

Unfortunately we do not hold Post Office data by council area as per your request. However, in line with previous data requests, I have provided details of the number of temporary closed branches within our branch network by region as of 31 March 2020.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Temporary closed Post Office branches @ 31 March 2020*</b>
East Midlands	88
Eastern	109
London	67
North East	38
North West	111
Northern Ireland	41

Scotland	161
South East	153
South West	104
Wales	111
West Midlands	95
Yorkshire & the Humber	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>1199</b>

*\* Includes temporary branch closures from previous years and excludes Covid-19 impact following lockdown measures from 23 March 2020*

***What assessment he has made of the effect on the level of viable Post Office branches of WHSmith's recent fall in revenue. (47340)***

WHSmith Group has been a strong partner for Post Office for over 10 years and their High Street business has been resilient to the challenges in retail over recent years. WHSmith Group reported £93m of trading profit in the first six months of their financial year (to the end of February 2020), including £44m of trading profit in their High Street business.

WHSmith Group entered the Covid-19 crisis from a position of strength and they were also quick to react in order to preserve their strong financial position for the future. This included securing additional investment from shareholders, lending from banks and eligibility for the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic WHSmith Group has continued to operate over 300 stores, including 203 stores that provide Post Office services.

WHSmith do not foresee any risk to our partnership but as with all our partners, we will continue to have dialogue with WHSmith Group on a regular basis and we will continue to monitor their financial stability as the situation with Covid-19 develops over the coming months.

***How much has Post Office Limited paid towards the apprentice levy in each of the last five years. (48508)***

We commenced paying the Apprenticeship Levy in May 2017. As requested I have provided below a summary of our contributions we have made up to April 2020.

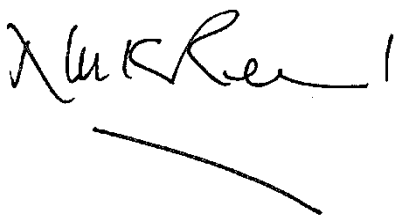
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Declared</b>	<b>10% government Top Up</b>	<b>Total Paid *</b>
May 2017 – December 2017	£802,473.00	£69,127.16	£760,398.72
January 2018 – December 2018	£999,398.00	£87,458.69	£962,045.59

January 2019 – December 2019	£891,900.00	£78,443,68	£862,880.46
January 2020 – April 2020	£189,714.00	£16,664.47	£183,309.25
<b>Total Paid:</b>	<b>£2,883,485.00</b>	<b>£251,694.00</b>	<b>£2,768,634.02</b>

*\* Total minus % deductions for colleagues located within devolved countries.*

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Read  
Group Chief Executive Officer

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