



NFSP statement on BEIS Select Committee Report: Future of the Post Office Network

The NFSP welcomes the findings of the Select Committee report: Future of the Post Office Network. The Committee has identified many issues that the NFSP has raised publicly in recent years, including the need for improving subpostmasters' remuneration. We are grateful to the Committee for bringing these issues further into the spotlight.

We are particularly pleased that the report has made the connection between the struggle subpostmasters face to earn a living, and the vital social role that post offices play across all corners of the UK.

The NFSP has previously highlighted that many subpostmasters have been considering closing or downsizing their post offices because of challenges with their income, operating costs and the viability of their businesses.

This fact must be considered by Government and Post Office in conjunction with the social role subpostmasters play and the gap they will leave behind in their communities if they resign their position.

It is not simply the case that subpostmasters need to be better rewarded for their work because they deserve it; they also need to be better rewarded for the sake of preserving the services that their communities rely on.

We are pleased that the Committee is joining the NFSP in calling for the urgent extension of Government's post office network subsidy. The network is not currently self-sustaining - therefore subsidy must continue beyond 2021.

It is the NFSP's firm belief that post offices could, and should, be a place for people to access a wide range of Government services. On that basis we welcome the Committee's call for a Government review of the role the post office network can play in providing face-to-face access to Government services.

However, there are two recommendations within the report that the NFSP does not support.

The first is the suggestion that Post Office should explore options outside of its exclusivity arrangement with Royal Mail. The relationship between Post Office and Royal Mail is a cornerstone of subpostmasters' businesses and post office customers' experiences. The introduction of competing mail service providers would create confusion for customers, create additional work for subpostmasters, and potentially create a 'race to the bottom' in terms of price and service quality. The NFSP would prefer to see a continuation of the exclusive relationship between Post Office and Royal Mail - as long as the arrangement includes a fair deal for subpostmasters and a high-quality service for customers.

The second item the NFSP cannot endorse is the recommendation that the Postal Affairs Minister and Post Office involve the CWU in working group discussions on subpostmaster pay (and other issues). The NFSP is already involved in these discussions – we are the representative body for subpostmasters and have 8,000 members. The CWU is not recognised by Post Office as a representative body for subpostmasters and its subpostmaster branch only has around 350 members – many of who are former subpostmasters or are also members of the NFSP (and therefore already represented in discussions by the NFSP). The CWU is not a legitimate representative of subpostmasters and therefore there is no justification for their inclusion in these discussions.

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ABOUT THE NFSP

The National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) is a membership organisation, which represents the UK's subpostmasters. It has more than 8,000 members who operate approximately 9,300 post office branches. It is the only organisation recognised by Post Office Ltd to act on behalf of subpostmasters.

Set up in 1897, it is the collective voice of post office operators, offering members representation, support and solutions to realise the full potential of their businesses.

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