

CWU RESPONDS TO BEIS SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT INTO POST OFFICE NETWORK

The CWU welcomes the Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Select Committee Report into the Post Office Network published today following the Inquiry earlier this year. The report sets out some key recommendations including calling on the Post Office and Government to reverse the decision to franchise Crown Offices to failing private retailers such as WH Smith.

Andy Furey, Assistant Secretary said *“The BEIS Select Committee Inquiry gathered oral and written evidence from key stakeholders to examine the strategic direction of the Post Office which is overseen by the Government. This important report highlights the failings of the Post Office’s strategy, which is currently one of managed decline. What we urgently need is a halt to the Crown Office privatisation programme and instead some serious investment in our Crowns. We also need CWU involvement in the Postmasters pay review to ensure they can earn a fair and decent living. Many Postmasters have to survive on less than the minimum wage which is leading to them handing back the keys as they just can’t make ends meet.*

“Despite Government protestations that the Post Office network is in an all-time strong and stable position, the absolute opposite is the case. Recent statistics from Citizens Advice highlight the acute problem – across Great Britain 1 in 12 Post Offices are temporarily closed and 50% of temporary closed rural Post Offices have been closed for more than 2 years. This simply isn’t good enough and there needs to be meaningful investment in both Crown Offices and Postmasters.”

CWU believes the Government needs to make sure the Post Office is more accountable as the so-called “arms length” relationship isn’t working. This has been demonstrated by the Post Office undertaking policies that have led to the decline of the network. The report recommends an urgent review of the Government’s mechanisms for holding the Post Office to account in the future in order to ensure a sustainable Post Office network for the long term. In addition, the report recommends that the Government extends the Network Subsidy Payment beyond 2021 to give certainty for Postmasters.

Dave Ward, General Secretary stated *“As the Committee highlights in this report, Post Offices are an essential public service and the absolute hub of our communities across the country. This Government needs to listen seriously to the recommendations contained within the report and involve the CWU and all key stakeholders in a review of the long term strategy for a sustainable Post Office network. We are therefore calling upon the Government to engage in an urgent review involving all key stakeholders to work up a coherent strategy and vision for the future of this vital public service. This should include an immediate moratorium on Post Office franchising and closures. I have written to the Post Office Minister to request an urgent meeting to instigate these discussions.*

“We will also be calling on the Government to re-commit to the earlier promise of making the Post Office the front office for Government services. The Post Office is the fabric of our society and we must ensure there is a new and innovative strategy based on growth, whilst ensuring decent standards of living for workers.”

Please contact lyoung@cwu.org for further comment