

Save Your Post Office

2. Letters (Emails) and Petitions

The Personal Letter (and Email)

The personal letter, well written or not, is possibly the best support protest tool you have, but only if there are enough of them sent, and that they contain relevant information. Whimpers about what a nice person the Postmaster is, or that someone will have twice as far to walk to their next Post Office Branch etc will not cut ice.

A personal letter containing relevant information and objections is worth 100 signatures on a petition, and you should do your utmost to get all those that can, to write to PO Ltd, Postwatch, your local MP etc.

Having said that there are more people that will need a little help in starting a letter than those that are accomplished letter writers, and most will fall by the wayside if you do not do something about it. Hence the 'Template Letter' and lists of relevant points that people can include.

Today an email is as good as a letter, but it should be composed in the same way that you would write a letter, and all above applies as much to the email as to a hard copy letter.

The Template Letter (and list of points to include)

The template letter provides the accomplished letter writer with information that they can include in their own letter, and the less able writer a framework in which they can produce a letter. The template letter will also help with composition of an email.

The biggest problem with the 'Template' letter is that it can easily become a glorified 'Form' letter. Whether you provide a blank letter with just the addresses etc in place and a separate list of points to choose from for insertion, or you list the relevant points within the body of the template for people to re-word, there is a tendency for most letters to start looking the same. Unfortunately there is no magic formula to get over this problem – unless you know of one, in which case please tell us so that we can pass it on.

If you make the points too vague, it will put a lot of people off writing; if you make them more clear, then the temptation to just 'copy and paste' gets too strong. Of course, if you are providing 'hard copy' templates, then this becomes less of a problem as it will all have to be written/typed out in full anyway.

The points to raise will be the same as those that will go in your dossier/submission, tailored to suit the recipient.

You will need separate templates for each authority/person that you want to encourage people to write to, Usually 'Post Office Ltd', 'Postwatch', and possibly your local MP, plus any other person or body that you consider worth lobbying.

It is a good idea to save web (or computer) based templates in .rtf (Rich Text Format) as this can be read by any word processing program. If you have the means, then providing .pdf files that can be read with Adobe Acrobat is also a good option. (There are a number of free .pdf making programs available to download from the web).

Follow these links below for sample templates, and to a local website for examples of actual templates (in retrospect they were a bit 'wordy').

<http://www.rippingalevillage.co.uk/Shop-ClosureOfPostOffice-5-Templates.htm>

The Form Letter

These provide a means for people to make a personal mark when they would not write a personal letter. It can also provide a means to 'bombard' a department or person with letters, hence putting pressure on them, especially if it is going to a 'Freepost' consultation address. The same person can send both a form letter

and their own personal letter (and sign the petition). A word of warning – as with petitions, many organisations will try to put you off using form letters. Perhaps they cannot take the pressure.

We would advise making the form letter short and to the point, with space for the sender to put their name and address, the date, their signature and perhaps a space for optional personal comments.

The Petition

This provides a focal point for the community, shows a common resolve, and is a very big stick to wave at Post Office Ltd, especially if the majority of the local community sign it. Having said that, personal letters and emails are more important – the petition should back them (and the submission) up, not the other way around. As powerful as it is, on it's own it will have little influence on PO Ltd.

It is not a good idea to go 'touting' for signatures (except perhaps in your local community or area served by your Post Office) as this can dilute it's worth. There is a big difference between someone who has driven 20 miles to support your campaign, and signatures collected outside the supermarket in your neighbouring town.

Be careful of the wording. The petition will be started at the beginning of the campaign before you have managed to collate all the facts / details. Once a petition has been started YOU CANNOT CHANGE THE WORDING. You have an advantage here as you can gain information from those who have gone before. Those who were in at the very beginning would have missed a number of points (used later in their dossier/submission to PO Ltd) that you will be able to include in your petition. See '1. Submission' for suggestions on the content.

Get the petition to PO Ltd before the end of the 'Consultation Period', preferably as part of your Submission.

10 Downing Street E-Petition – this can be an added bonus to your local petition. If you get over 200 signatures they are bound by their own rules to respond (for what it's worth – but it still makes a mark). Follow this link to a Submission page on a local website containing examples of both a written petition and a 10 Downing Street E-Petition <http://www.rippingalevillage.co.uk/Shop-ClosureOfPostOffice-8-Submission.htm>