

CAPOC - Save Your Post Office

3. Getting your local Member of Parliament and your local Councillors on-side.

Though community responses are invited as part of the “consultation” process, PO Ltd will take more notice if your case is backed by a bit of power and authority.

Most of you will know who your MP is, but perhaps not how to contact him/her. At the basic level, you need to know what their politics are – it will make a difference – and something about their interests.

Most have a website giving these details – and many, usefully, include their email addresses and even House of Commons extension numbers - the Commons switchboard won't put you through if you don't have an extension number.

If not, look up the local political associations in your phone directory and ask for their agent or constituency secretary and ask them for these details. You need to create a working relationship with them and their staff, who will almost certainly be the people to pick up emails and phone calls.

Copy any press releases and (almost) anything you send out, to them. And a reality check – some are better constituency MPs than others – let's hope yours is, will get involved and not simply fob you off with one-line responses.

The same applies to local councils whether they're unitary, metropolitan, county, district or parish. All these were supposed to have been consulted during the 2006 national stage of consultation, though in most cases this “consultation” was at best perfunctory and in most cases non-existent.

Again, some basic info will be useful – which party's in control of YOUR council, who's your local Councillor, who's the Leader, which committee or department's dealing with PO closures, do they have community sustainability policies, have they been in contact with PO Ltd, what are they doing, is your Parish Council supportive, or even leading the campaign?

Contacts for councillors and officers at all levels – email addresses and phone numbers – will be essential. Someone in your group needs to keep and update a central contact sheet, make contact with all the above and get them on side.

Most or all Councils at whatever level will almost certainly have a website where you'll be able to find all the information you need. There'll be a section for their press releases too – they might be worth keeping an eye on. If you have someone with media or political experience in your community it would be a good idea to recruit them to your campaign – their experience and knowledge of this level of our democracy will be invaluable.