

Thank you for your emails of 18 and 30 September to Adam Crozier concerning the withdrawal of the Sittingbourne Postbus service. I have been asked to respond on Mr Crozier's behalf.

First of all I would like to apologise for the delay in our response and the concern the decision to finish the service has caused. I do understand this will be a disappointment to local people who use the bus, and would like to add my assurances that it is not a decision that has been taken lightly.

The Sittingbourne service has low passenger levels and whilst the financial position is marginal, the key driver for our cessation of the service is our changing operational requirements. We explored the options available to us. These included a review of vehicle downsizing, considerable amendments to the timetable, removal of the standard service timetable in its entirety and it being replaced with a 48 hour 'on demand' service, set against the operational impacts of providing this service within the Kent area. We have made considerable effort to continue with these services.

We communicated to the council having established that, following consideration of all our options we were not in a position to continue providing the service. This included providing the council with a termination notice; we have given an elongated withdrawal period following the notice and the matter of alternative transport now needs to be taken up with the council. The service will end on the 9 November 2009 and I am sorry that we are unable to extend this further.

Royal Mail values highly its role in operating Postbuses in rural areas; however we are not a public transport operator. The management by Royal Mail of these services is something that we were historically able to provide alongside our own delivery and collection requirements. In the non-competitive postal environment we used to operate in, we were happy to provide this solution to suit local circumstances, but with full competition now in place, in many cases we undertake these services in additional to, rather than parallel to our mail delivery and collection operations and in the case of the Sittingbourne service, this is constraining our operational requirements. It is important to emphasise that our core operation is the delivery and collection of mail; we are now in a fully competitive market and must focus on providing a postal service our customers expect and deserve.

Unfortunately we are not able to attend the meeting, but I hope that I have been able to explain our position in this matter. I apologise once again for the concern the withdrawal of the Postbus service has caused. If I can be of any further help do not hesitate to contact me again.

*Assistant to Board Members (Royal Mail)*