



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Ross Maxwell McEwan
Chief Executive Officer
National Westminster Bank plc
135 Bishopsgate
London
EC2M 3UR

HW/JW

6 December 2016

Dear Mr. McEwan,

I was very disappointed to learn from Hollie Voyce of the Bank's plans to close the Bearsted branch on 5 June 2017.

Bearsted is a thriving village with a population of over 8000, surrounded by smaller parishes whose residents come into Bearsted to use its facilities. I find it somewhat surprising that NatWest, which is the only bank with premises in Bearsted, has chosen to close its branch at a time when the number of older people and the size of the small and medium sized business sector are growing.

As you know, many small businesses deal in cash and cheques and the loss of this branch will adversely impact on their operations. I appreciate that there is a facility for making payments in the Post Office next door, but this is often very busy and the closure of the Bank will not help those who need to undertake transactions speedily.

The practice of banks including NatWest closing branches in villages over recent years has removed a vital service for many vulnerable people and small businesses. The stock response appears to be to signpost customers to facilities in town centres, thus adding to congestion as it requires people to travel to access facilities that they used to enjoy in their own village. Simply referring customers to online support removes the face to face interaction upon which so many vulnerable and small business customers depend.

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If you would like to find out more about what I am doing in Faversham and Mid Kent, you can sign up to my newsletter on my website.

All personal information will be treated as confidential, but the MP may allow access to it by authorised staff, and may pass it on to official agencies where it will help your case. The MP may contact you from time to time to keep you informed. Please let her know if you have any problems with these arrangements.

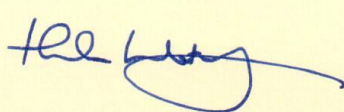


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I am glad to hear that you are carrying out a survey of your customers. It would be helpful to know if the feedback you receive from the customer survey is likely to lead to a rethink.

I would be grateful if you could advise me on the role of the proposed "Community Banker". For instance, will this be a person who will visit more vulnerable people at home, or act as a signposting facility for branches that remain open? How will they support business customers? How will existing and new customers make contact with this person/office?

I would like to be able to assure my constituents that they will still be able to access banking services locally.

Yours sincerely 

Helen Whately MP
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