

Immediate Release

18<sup>th</sup> May 2007

**SOAMES CALLS ON SECRETARY OF STATE TO SAFEGUARD  
POST OFFICE FACILITIES FOR GROWING MID SUSSEX  
POPULATION**

In response to a statement made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Alistair Darling MP, on the 'Post Office Review' in the House of Commons yesterday, Nicholas Soames said;

**Mr. Nicholas Soames (Mid-Sussex) (Con):** *I welcome the decision of the Post office to retain the Crown post office in Haywards Heath. First, in examining proposals, will the Secretary of State consider adding to the demands on the Post Office those of demography? In my constituency, the age profile is getting older and older, and post offices are greatly valued by elderly people, and young families. Secondly, as the Government dismantle the social infrastructure in the south-east, such as accident and emergency departments, while imposing bigger and bigger unwanted developments in places such as East Grinstead, will they make sure that there are sufficient post offices to cope with the demands of young families and elderly people in the future? [17 May 2007 : Hansard Vol 460, No 92 Column 760-1]*

Speaking after the statement Mr Soames said; "The Secretary of State has now confirmed that 2,500 Post Office branches across the country will close. Whilst I accept consumer habits have changed with the development of internet services it is my view that the social value of the Post Office network cannot be undermined. The network touches 24 million people every week and the Government has to recognise its part in undermining the sustainability of the network as it has withdrawn **key** Government services."

“As the All-Party Trade and Industry Select Committee recently reported the Government must ensure that sub-postmasters have the maximum possible freedom to offer a range of products and services and they need to have a fresh look at Post Offices as one-stop government ‘shop windows’.

Nicholas Soames made a written submission to the Government’s consultation on the future of the Post Office network in support of Post Office facilities across Mid Sussex.

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## **Notes**

The Secretary of State’s full statement can be accessed via the link below:-

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070517/debtext/70517-0006.htm#07051782000006>

The Secretary of State will give Members of Parliament advance notice of area proposals. Each plan will be subject to a six-week public consultation.

The *Post Office Network* Consultation opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006 and closed on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007. The report and Government’s response can be downloaded via the link below:-

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page36024.html>