



Christopher Leslie MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1A 0AA

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:

26 July 2010

Dear Mr Leslie

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has referred your recent Parliamentary Questions for a direct response from David Smith, Managing Director of Post Office Limited. David is currently away and has asked me to reply on his behalf.

'To ask the Secretary of State, Department for Business, innovation and Skills, what proportion of the network subsidy payment is allocated to (a) rural and (b) urban post offices'.

and

'To ask the Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that post offices comply with the provisions of the disability discrimination acts relating to accessibility'.

In the Government's response to its consultation on the future of the Post Office network published in May 2007 it recognised the social and economic role of post offices and the Government's proposed future strategy for the network was underpinned by a funding package to May 2011 to maintain a national network.

The Government has since shown its support for the network by committing to continue to make a social network payment for 2011-12 of £180million, subject to state aid clearance from the European Commission. Also, the Government and Post Office Limited are working together on the future funding requirements for the network.

The network payment is in place to assist Post Office Limited in meeting its costs in the running of the unprofitable parts of the network, enabling essential services such as cash and banking facilities, pensions and benefits and bill payments, to be provided on a nationwide basis.

This annual network subsidy is a payment to Post Office Limited, it is not allocated out to individual branches directly but supports the loss making branches overall by going towards meeting the costs incurred by Post Office Limited in the running of the network including: fixed payments to branches, cash and stock provision and equipment etc. The annual payment together with the Government's access criteria are designed to provide a framework to ensure that a national post office network is maintained and ensures coverage in both urban and rural areas.



[www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)



Post Office Limited takes its responsibility under the Disability and Discrimination Act very seriously. Post Office Limited is itself responsible for compliance with the Act in respect of access for disabled people to its services at Crown Post Offices and subpostmasters are similarly responsible for DDA to the post office services that they provide. Post Office Limited works with subpostmasters to assist them in identifying any problems at their branches and to support them in making adjustments where possible to assist with DDA. Post Office Limited have set up a fund that contributes towards improvements in subpostmasters premises in terms of DDA.

Additionally, Post Office Limited has recently conducted access audits across the whole of the Post Office branch network. A temporary team of 50 managers visited over 8500 branches and talked with subpostmasters about their plans to improve accessibility within their outlets. As part of the audit information on accessibility and other facilities such as low payment counters, induction loops, alternative languages available, etc, at Post Offices was gathered.

The information on Post Offices can be found at [www.directenquiries.com](http://www.directenquiries.com) and forms part of the national access register that they have developed in conjunction with RADAR and the Employers Forum on Disability. By selecting Post Offices as the featured location and then a geographic area a customer can see the Post Offices in that area and the facilities that are offered, enabling them to make decisions on which Post Office to use. A link to the information is also available through the Post Office Limited website by clicking on accessibility at [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)

I hope this information is helpful to you

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Moores".

Mike Moores  
Finance Director