

DELIVERING SUPPORT FOR POST OFFICES

Can England catch up with Wales and Scotland?

For several years there has been a grant scheme in Wales to encourage subpostmasters to develop their businesses and thus help to guarantee the long-term future of the network. Currently the Post Office Diversification Fund for Wales (PODF) provides up to £20,000 for capital investment or up to £15,000 to support revenue expenditure.

Now the Scottish government is offering a similar scheme. Scotland's local post offices can apply for support from their new one million pounds Challenge Fund. The scheme is intended to help local post offices diversify with new business activities and become increasingly sustainable. Applications for awards ranging from £2,500 to £25,000 will be sought over the summer.

Enterprise Minister Jim Mather has said, "Scotland's post offices play a very important part in community life, providing services which many families and local businesses depend on. In our budget for this year, the Scottish Government decided to prioritise economic recovery and, recognising the significance of our post office network, acted to set up a new one million pounds Challenge Fund. We want to see applications from post offices focused on diversifying their business. Our priority is to direct funding to help Subpostmasters develop their enterprise, identifying opportunities for new revenue streams such as retailing, selling different goods, or providing a business service not already available in their locality."

Paula Vennells, Chief Operating Officer for the Post Office, has said, "Post Office Ltd is delighted that the Scottish Government is supporting subpostmasters through this one million pounds fund. The fund will help Subpostmasters to diversify and build footfall in their retail businesses, which in turn will support Post Office services, recognised by their customers as so vital to each community."

When politicians in England talk about supporting local communities, then the Post Office is one of the bedrock services they usually have in mind. In the coming months the RSA will be campaigning forcefully for the good intentions to be translated into action the English side of Offas Dyke and Hadrians Wall.



Scottish Enterprise Minister Jim Mather