



[Redacted]

Date  
24 May 2024

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Post Office  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

**Classification:**  
Public

Dear [Redacted]

## Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00577

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 8 April, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”).

In your email you have requested the information shown verbatim in bold below:

**“At the end of the financial year 23/24, please could you provide:**

**1. What is the number of individual postmasters (post office contract holders) that currently operate post offices?**

**2. How many of each type of branch are there in the post office network? I.e. Mains, locals and so on**

**3. Please can we know:**

- a. The exact number of open and the exact number of closed branches, and**
- b. The number of branches that are closed by type, i.e. mains, locals and so on**

**4. How long have these temporary closed branches been closed for, how many have been closed for:**

- a. Over 1 month**
- b. Over 3 months**
- c. Over 6 months**
- d. Over 1 year**
- e. Over 2 years”**

We can confirm that Post Office does hold the information you have requested.

**1. What is the number of individual postmasters (post office contract holders) that currently operate post offices?**

The number of individual Postmasters who currently operate Post Offices as of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 was 3,966. Please note that this figure is not audited. Please also note this number excludes Post Offices operated by our retail partners and Post Office's Directly Managed Branches, and that Postmasters may operate more than one branch.

**2. How many of each type of branch are there in the post office network? I.e. Mains, locals and so on?**

Looking at your request, we can confirm that the number of each branch type in the Post Office network will be published on our corporate website here: <https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/key-reports-statements/network-report/>. Therefore, we are not obliged to provide information if the information held is intended for future publication and as such this information is exempt under section 22(1)(a) of the Act.

- 1) Information is exempt information if -
  - a) The information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not),
  - b) The information was already held with a view to such publication at the time when the request for information was made, and
  - c) It is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).

Section 22 allows for circumstances when it is reasonable and correct for public authorities to delay the provision of information until it is made generally available through publication.

You can find our latest published numbers on our Network Report, page 25 - Post Office branches by model types in March 2022 and March 2023:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/media/313jxie/network-report-2023-final.pdf>

**3. Please can we know:**

- a. The exact number of open and the exact number of closed branches, and**
- b. The number of branches that are closed by type, i.e. mains, locals and so on**

Under section 16 of the FOIA, duty to provide advice and assistance, we can advise that Post Office reports on branches that are open / trading. In our Network Report as of March 2023, there were 11,684 branches open. The most up to date, audited figures as previously mentioned can be located here:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/media/313jxiee/network-report-2023-final.pdf>

The Network Report also includes information about branch changes, including changes in the number of Post Office branches by model types in March 2022 and March 2023.

**4. How long have these temporary closed branches been closed for, how many have been closed for:**

- a. Over 1 month**
- b. Over 3 months**
- c. Over 6 months**
- d. Over 1 year**
- e. Over 2 years”**

Post Office reports under the Provision 11 of the Postal Services Act 2011 on our branch network and customer accessibility. Therefore, the information you have requested is not recorded information we hold in this format.

Although your request can be in the form of a question, rather than a request for specific documents, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”) does not oblige an authority to answer a question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment that is not already recorded, which applies to the question you have raised.

We would like to also refer you to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance on how to access information from a public authority, which can be found at the following link: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information/>

However, as part of our duty to advise and assist under s.16 FOIA, Post Office confirms that we are in the process of replacing the classification referred to as: 'Temporary Closed'. Temporary closed branches are not counted in our network numbers and consequently this term is confusing. Often demographic change or the opening of nearby, new branches meant that a replacement was no longer required for a 'temporary closed' branch. Therefore, as agreed with our consumer champion, Citizens Advice, we have changed how we communicate and classify branch closures going forward. When a branch closes, we will state if this is a permanent closure or a closure that we are seeking to replace. We will communicate this, as we do with all branch closures, via our public consultations that follow our Principles of Community Engagement, as agreed with Citizens' Advice, a link to which is provided below:

[https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/principles-of-community-engagement/user\\_uploads/principles-of-community-engagement\\_june-2018-2.pdf](https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/principles-of-community-engagement/user_uploads/principles-of-community-engagement_june-2018-2.pdf)

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing [information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:information.rights@postoffice.co.uk).

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
[www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints)

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team

[information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:information.rights@postoffice.co.uk)

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

**Post Office Limited is committed to protecting your privacy, information about how we do this can be found on our website at [www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy)**