



[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Date  
19 November 2025

Post Office  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 7ER

Your Ref:

Classification:  
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

## Freedom of Information Request – FOI2025/00707

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (**"Post Office"**) on 29 September 2025, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**"FOIA"**). We previously extended the deadline of this case on 27 October 2025, in order to consider the public interest for section 43 of the FOIA, relating to commercial interests.

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

**"please can you supply details of press releases,Board minutes and Post Master Panel meetings that contain details of who applied for some or all of these Branches?1)Did the NFSP/Retail apply for any or express interest?2)Did Tesco,Ryman and WH Smith apply or show interest3)Did any SPM NEDs apply or show interest?4)Did the CWU apply or show interest?4)Did any VOTP Committee members apply or show interest?"**

We requested clarification on 30 September 2025, and you replied to our email on 1 October 2025, as follows:

**"Dear information.rights,Thank you.I refer by most recent to the 108 branches that DBT announced £75 million in funding over two years on April 28TH 2025.I simply wish to know two distinct groups and did they apply for Branches,if yes when and how many.Group One is the big three Companies named by POL as being interested,WH Smith,Ryman and Tesco.Group Two is those people and bodies that claim to represent**

**SPM.CWU,VOTP,SPM NEDs,Chair of SPM panel,the NFSP? I put a caveat on the NFSP as it seems to have at least three Companies anyone of which might have expressed an interest or indeed a member might have, [REDACTED] for example.Did anyone from the NFSP express an interest and like wise did any individuals who make up the VOTP Committee express adesire to take on some former Crowns from this tranche of 108 to be given away(that is correct isnt it,no franchise fee or payment was required?)”**

To confirm, we will answer the questions in your original email of 29 September 2025 and use the further email you sent on 1 October 2025, as the context to our answers.

We can confirm that we did not locate any Post Office Board Meeting minutes that detail who expressed an interest in, and / or, who submitted a bid to franchise any of the Directly Managed Branch (“**DMB**”) network.

We can also confirm there are several press releases on the Post Office corporate website relating to the proposed franchise plans of the 108 DMBs, and we have provided the links to each one below:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-first-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-497742>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-second-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-497953>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-third-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-498783>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-four-directly-managed-branches-in-partnership-with-tgjones-499641>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-two-directly-managed-branches-in-partnership-with-ryman-499643>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-sixth-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-499656>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-seventh-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-499791>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-eighth-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-500000>

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/media-centre/#/news/post-office-details-proposed-franchise-plans-for-ninth-and-final-tranche-of-last-remaining-108-directly-managed-branches-500172>

As the information is reasonably accessible to you by other means, under section 21 of the FOIA, Post Office is not required to provide a copy of the information with this response.

Regarding whether any of the companies named in your original email of 29 September 2025 submitted a bid to franchise any of the DMB network, and, if so, how many, Post Office neither confirms nor denies whether we hold the information that you have requested as section 43(3) of FOIA, relating to commercial interests, applies. This is because such confirmation or denial would reveal commercially sensitive information about a third-party company.

We consider that confirming or denying whether the requested information is held would be likely to prejudice the interests protected by section 43(2). Section 43(3) of FOIA provides that the duty to confirm or deny does not arise if the confirmation or denial that would have to be given, to comply with section 1(1)(a) of FOIA would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the matters mentioned in section 43(1) or 43(2).

Revealing this information (if held) would damage the working relationship between Post Office and current or future third-party companies. If these companies were to believe that business-sensitive matters will be made public by Post Office, it may dissuade them from continuing to work with Post Office, which would harm the commercial interests of both parties.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption, and, therefore, as required by the FOIA, we have considered the following arguments to determine where the balance of public interest lies.

We recognise that there is a public interest in understanding more about the franchising of the Post Office DMB network, as this would help promote transparency and provide reassurance about the way Post Office conducts its business. We also understand the public interest in information concerning details of whether specific third-party organisations submitted a bid to franchise any DMBs, again for the aforementioned reasons in this paragraph.

However, there is a strong public interest in neither confirming nor denying whether the information is held, as to confirm whether information is held would prejudice the commercial interests of both Post Office and third-party organisations it works alongside. Disclosing whether or not we hold information would harm the relationship with our third-party suppliers, as they would not expect Post Office to speculate in an information request response, on any potential bids they may or may not have submitted for the DMB network. This is particularly when bearing in mind that a disclosure under FOIA is into the public domain and these third-party companies are not subject to the FOIA. Such disclosure would be likely to lead to a less open and trusting relationship between parties, which could in turn lead to a less profitable business for Post Office.

We also consider that any postmaster(s), which include third-party companies, should be free to express an interest in applying to run a branch or branches, without this being speculated about publicly. If we were to confirm or deny whether any companies bid for these DMBs, it would be likely to discourage others from bidding in the future. This in turn may either lead to the closure of a Post Office branch, or it may lead to a less profitable business if there are fewer competitive bids.

As explained above, whilst there is a public interest in confirming whether or not information is held, we consider the balance of the public interest lies in favour of maintaining the use of the neither confirm, nor deny limb of this exemption. For the avoidance of doubt, this response should not be taken as an indication that information in scope of your request is held by Post Office.

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

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/>

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