

Arjuna Krishna-Das <arjuna.krishnadas@greenparty.org.uk>
Sent by: [REDACTED]
02/05/2010 14:37

To
a.lovell@natlotcomm.gov.uk
cc
Peter Brooker <peterbrooker@paypoint.co.uk>
Subject
Re: How safe are the local shops and post offices in your
constituency?

Dear Annette

As Green Party parliamentary candidate (and a resident of) Hertsmere, I object to Camelot's plans to extend their services to bill payment. I agree with Peter Brooker/PayPoint's case, below, that integrating bill payment services with lottery sales would encourage poor people who cannot afford it to gamble, and also that this would be an abuse of Camelot's monopoly.

Yours
Arjuna Krishna-Das

On 30 April 2010 13:55, Peter Brooker <peterbrooker@paypoint.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Arjuna

I know this must be an incredibly busy time for you but I wanted to bring to your attention an issue that has the potential to create significant local concern.

You might have noticed activity in the press and Parliament around the proposal by National Lottery operator Camelot to mix gambling with the cash payment of utility and other bills at the same Lottery terminals in local shops.

The National Lottery Commission is currently consulting interested parties on whether Camelot's plan should be given the go ahead.

Electronic payment terminals are often a lifeline for many vulnerable and financially disadvantaged sections of society, allowing them to pay their bills locally. The average transaction value is just £12, which suggests that heating and electric meters are usually pre-paid on a just-in-time basis. There is real concern that offering the prospect of a Lottery win in such circumstances could put many customers in harm's way.

Terminals are also extensively used to top up their phones by young people who are often not of the legal age to play the Lottery.

Why is this a local issue? Because these low-paid and vulnerable groups rely on small, local shops and sub-post offices to make these essential payments. And because Camelot's plans to leverage its privileged and protected monopoly position will have a disastrous impact on those very same shops, especially those currently without a Lottery terminal.

These shops will lose one of their few competitive advantages over the major superstore groups and, as customers take their business to shops and superstores with Lottery terminals, many of the small convenience stores and sub-post offices in Hertsmere, many run by local families, will go out of business.

What makes this even more devastating for sub-postmasters in your constituency is that Camelot is planning to work with Post Office management to provide its bill payment service. So, while the Post Office HQ won't suffer, the 12 sub-post offices in Hertsmere are being allowed to wither away and leave your constituents with even fewer branches.

And to top it all, the amount raised for good causes by Camelot could even fall as operational issues and single queues for bill payments, mobile phone top-ups, Lottery tickets and scratchcards all come together at critical times ahead of the three weekly draws.

Although the consultation period ended on 26 April, it isn't too late to make your feelings known. I urge to you to reject the proposals by:

- issuing a local media release highlighting your solidarity with local shops and Post Offices
- writing to Annette Lovell, Deputy Chief Executive, at the National Lottery Commission, 101 Wigmore Street, London W1U 1QU (a.lovell@natlotcomm.gov.uk)
- making representations to Ben Bradshaw, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport.

Let me know if you need further information on the potential impact of these changes in your constituencies.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Taylor
Chief Executive
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