



BALFRON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Ms. Tara Foley
Managing Director
Bank of Scotland
PO Box 23581
Edinburgh
EH1 1WH

6 March 2020

Dear Ms Foley

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Balftron and other villages in West Stirlingshire to protest at the planned closure of the Balftron branch of Bank of Scotland on 17 August 2020. While we recognise there are many changes in modern banking usage, we believe this decision is wrong-headed and misplaced.

Your Branch Review quotes many statistics to justify your decision. These do not ring true in the experience of long-standing customers in Balftron. We believe that in pursuing this policy based purely on such statistics you are ignoring your role as a socially-responsible organisation with obligations not just to your shareholders, but to the wider community.

Balftron is the hub village for West Stirlingshire, with both High School and Primary School, Police, Health Centre, Library, recycling facilities, petrol station, chemists, dentist, supermarket, Post Office, and a number of thriving small businesses. Its catchment area extends far beyond the village boundaries. The bank has been very much part of its strength. But, along with its neighbouring villages, Balftron is a rural community with poor public transport provision and a population that is proportionately older than other parts of Stirling county. It is also an area where many small businesses and community groups still rely on cash for their existence.

Bank closures are recognised to hurt the elderly, infirm, and rural communities disproportionately. The substitution of a mobile bank whose timetable and location are unspecified does not replace that of a 5-day a week presence staffed by those who are integrated into the community. The option you suggest of the Balftron Post Office cannot offer anything like the same facilities as the bank. It provides no confidentiality and is also not wheelchair accessible. In presenting these alternatives you are not responding to your customers' changing needs, but your own.

We – supported by the 1,363 people in the community who to this date have signed our online and paper petition, 'Save Balfon Bank' – request that you overturn this decision, and that you are brave enough to open a conversation with us about creative alternatives to your existing provision which would better meet both your needs and ours. We note, for example, the creation by Newcastle Building Society of a full-time community branch within the local Library in Wooler, Northumberland. We also note that last year, in response to the adverse social impact on rural communities of the rapid move to a cashless society, the Swedish government intervened to force all major banks to offer cash services throughout Sweden.

If 'By Your Side' is anything more than slick and expensive promotional marketing, then we ask that you genuinely listen to your community, reverse this decision, and engage with us in a meaningful dialogue, side by side.

This letter is also supported by the Community Councils of Killearn and Strathblane.

I look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Cameron', with a horizontal line underneath.

Colin Cameron

Chair, Balfon Community Council

By email: chair@balfoncc.org.uk

By mail: 2, The Old Manse, Station Road, Balfon, Stirlingshire G63 0SX

cc: Alyn Smith MP; Bruce Crawford MSP; Dean Lockhart MSP
Patrick Leavey, Group Public Affairs, Lloyds Banking Group