

MP AND MSP JOIN FORCES ON RURAL BANK CLOSURES

Corri Wilson MP and Jeane Freeman MSP have spoken out about the arrangements in place following the closure of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) branch in Dalmellington.

While Ms Wilson and Ms Freeman were pleased to have met with RBS and followed through on some of what was agreed, concerns remain. Ms Freeman has now written to the bank with a list of issues, including:

- No access for wheelchair using customers and other mobility challenges to the mobile branch.
- Insufficient information available locally about the new mobile branch which is visiting Dalmellington.
- The ATM in Dalmellington not dispensing £5 notes, despite RBS's previous commitment that it would be reconfigured to do so.

Ms Freeman stated:

"I have been particularly distressed by the case of Ms Sandra Borthwick, a wheelchair using constituent, who had to carry out her banking business sitting on the street in the rain, because she was unable to access the mobile bank. As we move into the colder, wetter months, it is unacceptable to have people standing in the rain, whether because of access or long queues, particularly the elderly and those with mobility issues.

"However, my biggest disappointment overall is that RBS appear to be unwilling to address its national arrangement with the Post Office which, had they done so, would have given their customers the same access to post office banking facilities as customers of other major high street banks."

Ms Wilson added:

"Easy access to banking services is crucial, and something most of us take for granted. But in more rural areas, closed branches represent a serious loss that penalises the poor, the elderly and the disabled, and hits local businesses hard. A total of 112 high street banks have closed in Scotland since July 2015, and the Dalmellington branch is the third to close in my constituency in that time.

"The banks are keen to tell us what they are doing to make banking easier for the towns they are leaving behind, but the harsh reality is that we have empty cash machines and people queuing up in the rain for the privilege of banking out the back of a van. I have already been in contact with the Financial Conduct Authority over this issue, and am looking to the review of the Access to Banking protocol to tackle some of the challenges faced by rural communities left without a bank."

Both elected members have worked with RBS throughout, to try to reduce the impact of the closure of the RBS branch on their constituents.