

Dear Sirs

We are residents of Kentmere, Cumbria in a very small group of houses several miles from the nearest village, which now has no bank facilities, and 9 miles from the nearest large village/town. Our only local cash facility is a post office open for 4 hours per week. Notwithstanding the comment at question 3 in the Consultation, Post Office Counters does not allow cash to be drawn on our normal debit card with the Cumberland Building Society, and I expect that similar problems will arise with other institutions that offer current account facilities. Our village has a store with a post office counter (no use to us), and one shop offers cash back in some circumstances. Our nearest 24hour ATM is 9 miles and 25 minutes driving time away. There is an indoor ATM with limited access times slightly nearer. There is no mobile telephone coverage of any description. Superfast Broadband arrived earlier this year.

We accept that the number of transactions we now do with a credit/debit card has increased significantly following the introduction of contactless cards, and our need for cash has declined, even for low value transactions. We have become used to the nearest banking facilities being 9 miles away, but would comment that some banks are now planning further branch closures which will make it necessary to travel to a town centre with all the difficulties of parking and walking. That is possible now but increasing age and infirmity are likely to affect our ability to access a town centre bank in the coming years. We have already switched from a high street bank to the Cumberland Building Society as they operate in many of the smaller villages/towns and they provide more user-friendly counter services.

It is now much easier for a small business/charity to have the facility to accept credit cards, and that has reduced the need for cash. There are still some outlets that do not have such facilities. As most customers now expect everyone to take cards that can pose difficulties especially if there is no readily accessible ATM.

We are also involved in local charities who collect cash. They are beginning to have difficulties with the reverse of access to cash. It is now not possible to deposit cash in many of our small villages as most if not all the major banks have closed their branches. Post Office Counters does accept cash provided that coins are in complete bags – that does not work very well for small businesses and charities that have relatively low levels of activity.

With regard to the costs of access to cash we have always considered that free banking for current account customers is not entirely realistic. There are costs involved in maintaining a banking system. The costs of credit and debit card transactions are largely met by the entities accepting the cards, and organisations that bank cash are generally charged for the service. We see no reason why a reasonable charge should not apply to cash withdrawal, although some outlets charge more than seems reasonable even if most make no charge at the moment. We would prefer the charge to be levied by the institution providing the account, rather than at the ATM, as would bring this cost within the normal arrangements for charges.

Yours faithfully

Peter and Carol Lansberry