

Natwest Reply Regarding the Closure of the Wokingham Branch

I have received the following reply from NatWest in response to my letter about the closure of the Wokingham branch in February 2023.

They have set out the measures they are initiating to assist customers who prefer not to use online banking. NatWest has also confirmed that everyday banking services can be transacted at local Post Offices.



Our Ref: PHO-0343804322
15 November 2022

Sir John Redwood MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

NatWest Group
Executive Office
RBS Gogarburn
Business House B
Ground Floor
Edinburgh
EH12 1HQ
Telephone: 0800 161 5126
EXT:2013
Michael.thorburn@natwest.com

Dear Sir John,

Thank you for your letter addressed to Alison Rose, our Chief Executive. Alison has asked that I reply in my capacity as a Case Manager within the bank's Executive Office.

At the outset, I am sorry that you have had cause to contact us. We strive to deliver an excellent level of service to all of our customers and it is disappointing to learn that some of your constituents feel let down with our decision to close our NatWest branch in Wokingham.

It is always very difficult to make a decision to close a branch, and we have considered this very carefully. Whilst we won't be revisiting the decision, I hope to explain in more detail how we arrived at our decision and the range of alternatives available to our customers.

The way people bank with us has changed dramatically in recent years, with an increased demand for mobile and online services as customers benefit from a faster and easier way to bank. Our video banking service means customers can speak to us, face to face, from the comfort of their own homes and we now conduct 12,000 video appointments with our customers each week, compared to 100 each week in January 2020.

In addition, many customers are choosing digital banking because it makes life easier, but we understand that digital solutions aren't right for everyone or every situation, and that when we close a branch, we have to make sure that no one is left behind. We take our responsibility seriously to support the people who face challenges in moving online, so we are investing to provide them with support and alternatives that work for them.

For many, all they need is a little help, which is why we have a dedicated support line 0800 051 4176 for those customers and our customers who are over 60 years of age. Our Customer Care telephone team and our Customer Support Specialists provide tailored support for customers who require extra help or have more complex needs and connect customers to internal and external experts where appropriate. This phonenumber is open 8am to 8pm seven days a week, with shorter waiting times. Our Customer Care experts can guide customers through how to register and use our online and mobile services.

Banking My Way allows those who want, the opportunity to tell us exactly how we can make their lives easier. It is designed to help our frontline staff, whether that be in branch or telephony, understand customer requirements and how we can support them moving forward. More information about this service can be found by visiting our website:
[Banking My Way | Accessibility | NatWest](#)

Since 2019, we have seen the way in which people living in Wokingham choose to do their banking change. Now 76% customers are digitally active, and as a result, transactions have reduced by 68% with only 1 customer now visiting the branch on a regular weekly basis.

Our telephone banking service provides another alternative to branch banking, and is available 365 days a year. Customers can carry out the vast majority of transactions available at a branch and our telephony staff can also discuss our product range and arrange for a financial review over the phone. Most of our accounts can be applied for and opened in this way, meaning that a trip to the branch is not always necessary.

We have a national agreement with the Post Office to provide our customers with a range of everyday banking services. Customers can pay money in, take money out, check their balances and business customers can get notes and coins. The Post Office has 11,500 branches across the UK and our customers benefit from longer opening hours with many branches open on Sundays. The closest Post Office is Wokingham, 0.07 miles away from the branch; there are 7 Post Offices within 3 miles of the branch.

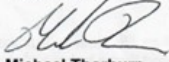
There are also a number of free to use ATMs located within the local area and details of these can be found at www.link.co.uk/ATM-locator, by calling 03457 888 4444 or speaking to a member of staff.

If any of your constituents need extra support, they can contact our dedicated Customer Support Specialists on 0131 380 6528 and a member of the team will be happy to help.

I do appreciate that your constituents will be disappointed by our decision. However, I hope I have made clear our commitment to supporting our customers with alternative ways to bank.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact our CEO, and for giving me the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely



Michael Thorburn
Executive Office