

'Flat Pack'

Post Offices Post office

In recent years the Post Office has been closing down a number of smaller offices, typically those located in rural areas. How do people in these areas use postal services without having to travel the distance to their nearest large town? The solution it seems may lie in the portable 'flat pack' Post Office that can be set up in minutes at any location with a phone line.

The scheme has already been piloted successfully in the south west of Scotland and looks set to be the solution of choice for future post office services in rural areas. The system is already being used in the remote Scottish villages of Crocketford, Haugh of Urr, and Twynholm – all of which lost their physical Post Offices 2 years ago.

So how does it work? A clerk from the nearest official post office visits the remote locations in the region for about 90 minutes each at various times in the week, setting up the 'flat pack' post office which fits neatly into a small bag and takes just a few minutes to set up. Dismantling the flat pack, travelling to the next location, and setting up again can all be accomplished within 45 minutes.

The flat pack itself consists of a laptop computer, chip and pin pad, and various forms and documentation. The system has encountered some opposition, with some villagers expressing concern at the downsizing of services and reduced opening

hours. But on the whole, the flat pack system means villagers in remote areas can still benefit from usual post office facilities capable of handling all the usual transactions.

With the threat of further small branch closures looming, it seems likely that the flat-pack post office will be the way to maintain a service in rural areas.

