Written Answers

Dr Sarah Wollaston Totnes

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the implications for his policies are of the call by the Association of Convenience Stores for the Government to review the costs, income and viability of rural post offices on its Rural Shop Report 2017, published in January 2017.

Margot James Under Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility

The Government entrusts the Post Office's management to keep the health of the network under review in order to meet the commitment we have set to maintain the network at over 11,500 branches. The commercial agreements it has with subpostmasters, rural and urban, covering costs and revenue form a key part of ensuring the health of the network. While these arrangements are commercially sensitive between both parties the evidence of their success is in the fact that that the network is at its most stable in decades.

Dr Sarah Wollaston Totnes

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans for the increase in Post Office outreach services in rural communities over the last five years to continue; and if he will make a statement.

Margot James Under Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy keeps the state of the network under review including the provision of rural services through outreaches. Outreaches are provided so Post Office can maintain access to communities, most often in rural areas, where the old post office has closed. These provide a regular part time service, with hours tailored to the levels of demand in the community. They provide a welcomed link to the network for many isolated communities.