

£1m on offer for local Post Offices

- ✘ A £1 million fund for 2011/12 to help local post offices diversify their activities has been launched.

The original scheme has seen 49 small post offices around Scotland receiving offers of awards of up to £25,000 , helping them provide new services not available locally, such as the sale of fresh produce, setting up an internet café and expanding the retail operation through a website.

Finance Secretary John Swinney has announced a further £1 million fund for next year during February's Stage 3 Debate on the Budget Bill 2011/12.

He said today:

“Our original diversification fund is now helping to sustain post offices playing an integral part in community life, providing services on which many families and local businesses depend.

“Our spending plans for 2011-12 are firmly focused on doing all we can to sustain economic recovery in Scotland, and building an increasingly supportive environment for small businesses – something which is key to the achievement of our ongoing growth strategy.

“A further 1 million pounds to support local post offices will greatly assist this work and we look forward to seeing applications from around Scotland from subpostmasters looking to pursue new revenue streams such as retailing, selling different goods, or providing a business service not already available in their locality.”

Mervyn Jones, National Federation of SubPostmasters Commercial

Director and Executive Officer for Scotland, said:

“The National Federation of SubPostmasters warmly welcomes the Scottish Government’s decision to extend its 1 million pounds Post Office diversification fund for a further year. Post offices provide vital services to communities across Scotland, and this important scheme offers subpostmasters the chance to introduce new services for their customers and help make their post offices more sustainable.”

Paula Vennells, Managing Director of Post Office Ltd, said:

“Post Office Ltd is delighted that the Scottish Government is continuing to support SubPostmasters through this fund. This will help SubPostmasters in Scotland to diversify and build footfall in their retail businesses, which helps the viability of their overall business including the post office within it, a service recognised by their customers as so vital to each community.”

Applications must be received by July 29 and those successful will be informed in the Autumn.

While the post office and postal services are reserved to the UK Government under the Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Government is committed to strengthening the long-term sustainability of the Post Office network in Scotland.

The 2011-12 fund will operate on a similar basis to 2010/11 – although post offices which received funds this year will not be eligible to apply again. Awards up to 25,000 pounds will be available. The fund is only open to independent subpostmasters.