

Ofcom want to protect local post boxes

✘ Ofcom has just introduced [increased protection](#) for consumers against the removal of post boxes in rural areas, and that covers those in Edinburgh too. The new rules mean that everyone should have a post box within half a mile of a postal address. Does this affect you? Has a post box near you been removed recently? Or indeed has a new one been installed? If so then let us know. It intrigues us that even some post offices, such as that in the St James Shopping Centre, does not have a post box outside it which can be used when the shopping centre is open but the post office closed. There are others of course within walking distance.

Ofcom already requires Royal Mail to provide a sufficient number of post boxes in appropriate locations to meet the needs of UK postal users. Specific criteria on the location and density of post boxes set out how Royal Mail must meet its obligation.

Prior to the announcement, the previous criteria applied in only 61 of the 121 postcode areas in the UK. Those excluded postcodes mostly covered rural areas, but some major cities such as Belfast, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Swansea were also not protected.

Following consultation, Ofcom has now increased regulatory protection for post boxes by introducing new criteria that will apply nationwide for the first time.

Claudio Pollack, Ofcom Consumer Group Director, said:- “Our decision means that consumers and businesses, particularly in rural communities, will benefit from extended protection for post boxes.

“It’s vital that everyone has suitable access to post boxes

and, for the first time, protection will apply across the UK.”

New criteria to protect post boxes

Users of post boxes in rural areas and those in previously excluded urban areas will be afforded greater protection against the removal of post boxes under the new rules. The requirements now specify that:

- there must be a post box within half a mile of at least 98% of ‘delivery points’ (usually the letter box of an address) nationally; and
- for the remaining 2% of delivery points, Royal Mail must provide sufficient post boxes or other means of access to the universal service (e.g. collection on delivery³) to meet the reasonable needs of those users, having regard to the costs and operational practicalities of doing so.

These requirements are in line with the levels of post box access already provided by Royal Mail, and will ensure Royal Mail continues to provide sufficient post boxes in the future.