

3. Post Office (Amendment) Bill 2013 – First Reading approved

Mr Corkish to move:

That the Post Office (Amendment) Bill 2013 be read a first time.

The President: Item 3, the Post Office (Amendment) Bill 2013.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

This Bill amends the 1993 Post Office Act. It was commissioned by the board of the Post Office after discussion, and in conjunction, with the Department of Economic Development. The Department undertook the public consultation over the proposed legislative changes and published the results. Following this process the Bill was amended to take account of the responses received, which has resulted in the Bill in front of you today.

It is an enabling Act, providing clarity to the Post Office on what activities it can undertake, having the same duty and similar powers to the Act which it updates, and which have stood the test of time.

The Bill extends the scope of the Post Office's powers to cover wide areas of logistics, communications and financial services so that it can operate with a degree of freedom, similar to that enjoyed by other postal undertakings in the British Isles and Europe. The Post Office has diversified its services, and this will continue to be important, not least to take account of developing technologies and markets, in particular opportunities offshore. New activities as pursued by the Post Office in recent years have been vital to protecting the future of the Post Office, the services it provides, and in providing opportunities to generate wider economic benefits for the Island.

It is important that Members are clear over the need for and the intended purpose of the Bill: the fact that the Post Office has been successful in the past does not indicate it can stand still.

The Bill has three clauses, clause 2 containing the main changes to the Post Office Act.

Madam President, I beg to move the First Reading of the Post Office (Amendment) Bill 2013.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Crowe.

Mr Crowe: I beg to second, and reserve my remarks, Madam President.

Mr Downie: Madam President?

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Downie.

Mr Downie: Yes, thank you, Madam President.

I wish to speak in support of the Bill. There is no doubt about it that, in this day and age, it is vitally important that an organisation like the Post Office keeps itself up to date with changes in the marketplace, and continues to provide a good and valuable service to the local... both business and the community it serves.

We seem to be on a fairly regular basis now bringing in legislation such as this, to continually update what the Post Office does, and you have to look at that on the background of the whole way the communications network and systems have changed, in such a short time.

I would assume that the Bill that is before us today, in a few years' time we will be looking at replacing it with something else, because technology has moved on. But I think it is vitally important that the Post Office remains viable. Sadly we have seen in other jurisdictions where they have not moved as quickly as they could have done, they have been sold off. There is still a

misunderstanding about what is going to happen with the Post Office in the UK, as we know that has been sold off. I think it would be detrimental to the UK in general, if a lot of the services that the Post Office currently provides just disappear.

In a small community like ours, I think it is vital that we have a Post Office that is bang up-to-date, provides a first-class service for the business community, and at the same time looks after all the various issues that we have to deal with on a regular basis.

I support the Bill.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Butt.

Mr Butt: Thank you, Madam President.

I would just like to ask one question of the mover, acknowledging the Post Office has been very successful of recent years, and it does need to expand and develop services which this Bill seems to provide the ability to do so. But I just wondered, is this a precursor in any way to an eventual privatisation? Is that the reason for this Bill, or is it just to expand the services which the Post Office can undertake?

Thank you.

The President: The mover to reply.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

Can I thank the seconder, and Mr Downie for his support, understanding as he does the tremendous amount of changes that the electronic age has brought. When this Act was first put together, there was no Internet. So this is modernising terminology, if you like. So I thank Mr Downie for his support.

In answering Mr Butt, this in no way conflicts with corporatisation or privatisation, this is purely amending the existing Bill confirming the vires of the Post Office.

Mr Butt: Thank you.

The President: The motion, Hon. Members, is that the Post Office (Amendment) Bill 2013 be read a first time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

That concludes consideration of our Order Paper, Hon. Members. The Council will now adjourn until the Tynwald sitting on 18th February, and thereafter to the sitting in this Chamber on 25th February.

Thank you, Hon. Members.

The Council adjourned at 10.50 a.m.