

18<sup>th</sup> December 2012

Elisa Pruvost  
Floor 2 Dept. Consumer Policy  
Riverside House  
2A Southwark Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 9HA

Dear Elisa,

**Review of Postal User Needs**

The Mail Competition Forum (MCF) would like to thank Ofcom for the opportunity to comment on its Review of Postal User Needs, published on 16 October 2012.

We would like to compliment Ofcom on this comprehensive and informative piece of research, which adds to the debate on the future of the USO (Universal Service Obligation) in a positive fashion.

You raise many questions regarding the future nature of the USO which we believe to be valid and worthy of serious consideration.

For our part, the MCF would like to comment on the general framework within which any debate on the future of the USO will take place.

We would recommend that whatever conclusions are eventually drawn on the nature of future user needs from the USO, the prescribed USO services are kept to the minimum necessary to meet clear user requirements. In re-framing an obligation, and so as not to place an unfair burden on Royal Mail, Ofcom also needs to take account of the use bulk mail customers make of postal services.

We would encourage Ofcom to communicate pro-actively to Government the significant findings from this comprehensive research showing that postal users would willingly accept a lower USO specification than the current 6 days a week, 2- speed service.

The provision of the USO will remain a vital obligation for the Universal Service Provider, and it is crucial that this obligation is specified in a way that makes its delivery relevant, affordable and sustainable for the USO provider.

Any definition of the USO should be set clearly by Ofcom based on its conclusions on what future user needs are. Historically the USO has been defined more by the services supplied by Royal Mail as the USO provider than by a truly independent analysis of user needs.

We believe that by defining the USO independently at a minimum level this will actually assist Royal Mail in the continued provision of a sustainable USO. Additionally it will allow Royal Mail to respond to commercial pressures in a much more flexible and realistic fashion, which will not only be beneficial for Royal Mail, but for the whole of the postal industry, and ultimately for all postal consumers.

[www.mailcompetitionforum.org](http://www.mailcompetitionforum.org)

The views expressed in this letter represent the general views of the Mail Competition Forum and do not necessarily represent the particular position of any individual member organisation.