

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing in response to OfCom's Review of the Regulation of Royal Mail to highlight the importance of a six day service for our members.

Wales has around 42,000 agricultural holdings, of which some 20,000 are considered to be significant.[1][1] Such holdings are at the economic, social and cultural heart of Wales' rural communities.[2][2].<sup>[3][3]</sup>

The businesses which operate these holdings are subject to strict legal requirements, including those relating to animal welfare, animal identification and movements, feed and food production, and land and water management to name but a few.

Documentation relating to such legislative requirements can mean approximately 3,000 pages of information from regulators arriving on a farm in any one year [4][4], as well as legal notifications with strict response deadlines, failure to respond to which can incur major financial penalties.

Whilst the provision of information online is likely to increase with time, access to broadband remains limited in vast areas of Wales, making paper correspondence essential.

Moreover, as with other areas of the law, legal notifications must be delivered to the doorstep or farm-gate as hard copies, since it would be wholly unacceptable, and presumably illegal in many cases, to make such notifications via text messages or emails.

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[1][1] Farming Facts and Figures, Wales 2015. Welsh Government (June 2015)

[2][2] A Statistical Focus on Rural Wales, Welsh Assembly Government (2001)

[3][3] The Economic Potential of Plants and Animals Not Currently Fully Exploited by the Welsh Agricultural Sector, Central Science Laboratories (2003)

[4][4] Working Smarter: A report of recommendations to the Welsh Government on better regulation in Farming. Gareth J Williams (December 2011)

In addition to official correspondence from Government bodies, rural businesses rely upon the timely receipt of correspondence from other businesses and their agents – for example banks and solicitors – as well as from local health boards and similar public services. Given that farms and rural communities may be significant distances from hospitals, banks, solicitors' offices etc., and in areas where public transport is irregular or non-existent, the timely receipt of notifications by post is essential. In this context, it is also notable that Royal Mail sorting offices, where parcels can be collected following notification, are invariably closer to rural communities than those of other companies, which may be located in cities such as Birmingham or Cardiff which are many hours' drive away.

The maintenance of postal deliveries six days a week is therefore vital for Welsh farm businesses and Wales' rural communities, and whilst the FUW recognises the importance of competition within the postal sector, it is essential that this competition (i) exists within a framework whereby the USO is maintained for rural and urban addresses alike, (ii) is fair, and (iii) does not in any way undermine any businesses which are bound by a USO, thereby leading to a reduction in their ability to fulfil a USO.

Yours sincerely

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**Head of Policy**

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