

POSTAL NEWS

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1. U.S. Postal Service - Declining Mail Volume

06 March 2008 by Sarah Sharp - © Hellmail.co.uk

A fight back on Junk Mail by some 18 states in the US, as well as declining mail volumes has created a £1 billion deficit for the U.S. postal service.

A decline in mail volume, particularly from domestic mail users, has seen postal operators increasingly reliant on Junk Mail but with real concerns over the quantity of paper being used that stretches the recycling capability of many towns and cities, many see the Junk Mail era as a short-lived one.

The U.S. could see more post offices located in other outlets to reduce costs, a trend already being established in the UK.

Increased competition in the U.S. is also putting pressure on the U.S. postal service. Rivals such as German-based DHL, FedEx, UPS and others are all contributing to a gradual decline in profitability and the U.S. postal service is urgently looking at ways to curb spending including reduced overtime and using more part-time workers.

Steve Lawson, editor of Hellmail.co.uk said:

"Whilst the internet age has transformed the way we all communicate and do business, it has undermined the role of postal services to such an extent that few of us actually post many letters now. The problem is a global one, not made easier by deregulated postal markets and greater competition for what were once public-sector services."

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2. US Postal News - Prescott To Join IPDSA

06 March 2008 by David Lynch - © Hellmail.co.uk

Charles A Prescott is to serve on the International Postal and Delivery Services Advisory.

Prescott, DMA's vice president has been invited to join the committee by the United States Department of State. It will provide foreign policy advice on international as well as private-sector postal services.

The next key meeting will be on March 26th at the State Department.

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3. ING, TNT end postal banking JV; both to take restructuring costs UPDATE

March 05, 2008: 02:48 AM EST

AMSTERDAM, Mar. 5, 2008 (Thomson Financial delivered by Newstex) -- ING Groep NV (NYSE:ING) and TNT NV said they have agreed to unwind their joint venture Postkantoren BV, a move which will see ING's Postbank services transferred to ING's retail banking outlets away from TNT Post branches.

ING said the Postbank services currently offered in 250 main TNT post offices will be transferred to 283 ING branches.

TNT said it will now open 750 new sales outlets in Dutch shops, adding that services at 1,850 shops will remain unchanged, lifting its total retail outlets to 2,600.

It added that ING and TNT will continue to work together at 550 of TNT's 2,600 locations in shops.

ING will take a provision of 87 mln eur for restructuring costs in the first quarter of 2008 and expects to generate additional pretax earnings of 68 mln eur per year as of 2012.

The Dutch bancassurer also plans to make an investment of 175 mln eur to expand and enhance its full service branches over a period of five years.

In a separate statement, TNT said it will take 70 mln in restructuring costs before taxes in 2008.

The Dutch postal group expects the expansion and modification of its retail network from 2009-12 can be achieved with a slightly cash positive balance.

TNT added that as a result of the restructuring it can raise its previously communicated targeted savings to 395 mln eur from 370 mln in the period 2007-15.

TNT said the ending of the Postkantoren joint venture with ING will lead to 1,850 job cuts at Postkantoren.

TNT Post and Postbank said they will provide financial resources for Postkantoren to assist all employees into new jobs, avoiding forced redundancies as much as possible.

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4. North Essex 'has worst postal service'

05 March 2008 | 07:54

THE standard of the postal service in the Colchester area has been branded “completely unacceptable” after it was revealed to have the poorest first-class delivery rate in England.

Figures released by Royal Mail have revealed the CO postcode, which covers most of north east Essex including Colchester and Tendring, is second only to the remote Shetland Islands for having the worst delivery record in the UK for the first three-quarters of 2007-8.

North Essex MP Bernard Jenkin said he was “outraged” by the news that the delivery rate was 17% below the minimum target and that he would be contacting the Government immediately to ensure the poor performance was investigated.

He said: “Everybody knows the postal service is getting worse and worse but it's an outrage that Colchester is quite worse than most other areas.

“It's completely unacceptable and I will be writing to the minister responsible for postal services to ask them what action will be taken.

“Whether it is trains, roads, the NHS or dentists, the public services in this country are getting worse under this Government - despite all the extra tax we pay.”

Only 75.8% of first class letters were delivered on time in Colchester and the news was not much better for customers in Chelmsford after the CM postcode area was ranked third worst for its poor performance.

Representatives from Postwatch, the postal service watchdog, are set to meet senior figures from Royal Mail next week to discuss the matter.

Linda McCord, Postwatch East's regional manager, accepted that the figures were affected by the industrial action that took place last autumn but said there were still serious concerns about standards in the region.

She said: “Chelmsford and Colchester have failed for a few quarters now. We were planning to meet with them (Royal Mail) before and these figures have made us even more concerned.

“Customers pay to have their mail delivered the next day and therefore they expect that it will be. They should be able to rely on that.”

Against a target of 93%, across the UK only 83% of first-class stamped mail was delivered next day on average and Royal Mail is likely to miss 10 of its 12 annual licence targets when the year ends - the worst annual performance since 2003-4 when it missed all of its licence targets.

Royal Mail said the national figures reflected the impact of last year's strike action, which ended in October, and said it was now looking at ways to deliver a “consistent” service.

Ninian Wilson, Royal Mail's operations director, said the new figures contrasted with the target-beating performance delivered across “almost every aspect” of the service before last year's strike.

She said: “With the strike behind us and a wide-ranging agreement on modernisation in place, we are now focused on delivering once again consistent, high quality of service to all our customers.”

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