

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Residents anger at postal delays in Corringham

4:09pm Monday 28th February 2011

RESIDENTS have expressed anger at the Royal Mail because post was delivered after they went to bed.

Terry Lindsay, 68, of Fairview Avenue, Stanford-le-Hope claims for the past two weeks her mail has been delivered after 8pm.

She said she called the Corringham sorting office and was told the disruptions were due to expanding routes and cutbacks in the use of vans for deliveries.

Mrs Lindsay, who has lived in Thurrock for 20 years told the Gazette: "I don't think the postmen can cope. I was also told if they don't deliver all their letters, the managers then go and deliver the rest of the mail after 5pm.

"We used to get our post between 10am and 11.30am, but it is getting later, it is a bit of a joke. The service has been very bad, and some days we don't get letters at all.

"I know the service is changing, but it should be changing for the better, not the worse. Getting post in the middle of the night is unacceptable. Sometimes I am left waiting all day for parcels because I use E-Bay alot, it is very frustrating."

A spokesman for Royal Mail said: "We apologise to customers who have been affected in parts of Stanford-Le-Hope by changes made to our local operation.

"While this has disrupted some services, all the mail in Corringham is being delivered to all addresses on a daily basis.

“Changes to local delivery practices in some areas are part of Royal Mail’s commitment to modernising the business.

“We aim to underpin the future of the business and the highly valued one-price-goes-anywhere universal service.

“We always welcome hearing from any customer who has a concern or a query about the service and we would urge them to contact us.”

Call the customer services department on 08457 740740 or via the website at www.royalmail.com

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Page last updated at 16:32 GMT, Monday, 28 February 2011

2. Plans for a £19m postal museum in Swindon are scrapped

Artist's impression of the proposed British Postal Museum & Archive
The British Postal Museum was to be sited in the historic former GWR Chain Testing Works in Swindon

Plans to build a new £19m museum in Swindon have been scrapped.

The British Postal Museum and Archive (BPMA) had planned to make Swindon's Railway Works Conservation Area the home of a new British Postal Museum.

But after "undertaking extensive feasibility work" the trustees have decided not to continue with the plan.

Tim Ellison, BPMA project manager said: "Nothing against Swindon - the BPMA remain convinced that Swindon offers a fantastic option for the museum."

"But unfortunately last week we had some very disappointing news regarding our funding expectation for the project and it was deemed that the project in its current form in Swindon was no longer viable," he said.

The decision to axe the scheme comes despite the BPMA announcing early last year a successful first-round pass for a grant of £2.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The organisation is blaming the "current challenging economic climate" and "significant changes" to funding expectations "particularly from corporate supporters" in the last six months for the decision.

"Royal Mail is our principal funder and were behind the project and we actually had backing for the project," said Mr Ellison.

"I can't give the exact details but one of the key funding elements has fallen through and it's left a substantial gap which we didn't feel it was possible to fill."

The National Postal Museum near St Paul's Cathedral in London closed down in 1998.

Since then the museum's extensive collection has been in storage in "far from ideal" conditions split between an underground boiler room in London and a museum store in Essex.

Last year, following a 10 year site search for a new £19m accessible and permanent museum, the Grade II listed Chain Test House in Swindon was selected as an "ideal home".

"There's no alternative that Swindon has been dropped for - we were fully committed to Swindon and we're very disappointed not to be renovating the Chain Test House," added Mr Ellison.

"We've worked really hard since the end of September to make Swindon a reality and to be honest at the moment it's very much back to the drawing board."

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3. Postal Service to study proposed merger of Gary and South Bend processing ops

The U.S. Post Service (USPS) has announced plans for a study of the possible consolidation of some operations of the Gary Processing and Distribution Center into the South Bend center.

"The study, known as an Area Mail Processing study (AMP), involves a review of the mail processing and transportation operations to determine capacity needs at a facility in order to increase efficiency and improve productivity," USPS said in a statement released on Friday.

"The need for the study comes as the Postal Service faces one of the most difficult challenges in its history," the statement said. "The current economic downturn and continued Internet diversion have lead to a drastic decline in mail volume, with the loss of nearly 26 billion pieces in the past year. Mail volume is projected to fall another 11 billion pieces in the coming year. Even when the economy fully recovers, the Postal Service does not expect mail volume to return to previous peak levels, and is projecting annual deficits for the foreseeable future."

“As a result of the volume loss, we have more facilities, equipment, and people than we need to process a declining volume of mail,” said Lynn Smith, manager of the Greater Indiana District. “We have to reduce the size of our network because we are no longer receiving enough revenue to sustain its cost.”

“One way to do that is to consolidate operations,” Smith said. “That is why we’re doing this study. Consolidating processing operations and placing our people where we need them makes logical business sense given the economic realities. We’re only doing what any company would do when it’s hit with a 13 percent decline in its business in one year.”

If the results of the study supports the business case for changing mail processing operations, USPS will hold a public meeting to allow the community to ask questions and provide feedback. “This input will be considered in the final proposal,” the statement said.

“I want to assure everyone that we will not make any changes to our operations that would cause delays in your mail service,” Smith said.

Comments may be submitted to Consumer Affairs Manager, 3939 Vincennes Road, Indianapolis, IN 46298-9631.

Posted 2/28/2011

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4. Postal Mail to New Zealand Stopped

February 28, 2011 by bernews · [Leave a Comment](#)

Minister of Trade, Economy and Industry Kim Wilson advised that in the aftermath of the earthquake which hit Christchurch, New Zealand on 22 February, 2011, all postal deliveries to and from the city and its vicinity have been discontinued until further notice.

A spokesperson said: “Customers can therefore expect lengthy delays inbound and outbound mail to this jurisdiction. The Bermuda Post Office apologises for any inconvenience to the public as a result of the disruption in the New Zealand mail service.”

Australia’s “The Age” reports that: “The confirmed death toll from the Christchurch earthquake rose to 154 overnight and is still expected to reach more than 200. The city continues to be rocked by aftershocks, including one with a magnitude of 3.9 last night and another of 3.7 at 7.40am local time this morning.”

5. DEMO: Why Manilla is the Postal Service's worst nightmare

February 28, 2011 | Owen Thomas

Going PostalManilla is one of 53 companies chosen by VentureBeat to launch at the DEMO Spring 2011 event taking place this week in Palm Desert, Calif. After our selection, the companies pay a fee to present. Our coverage of them remains objective.

Born out of one of the U.S. Postal Service's biggest customers comes a threat that could speed the mailer's inevitable death: Welcome Manilla, a startup backed by magazine publisher Hearst, which aims to put your bills online.

No, really. Online bill pay has been a pipe dream since before the Internet hit mainstream consciousness a decade and a half ago. From nascent 1990s-era dial-up services well into the broadband age, though, most consumers have opted to keep getting paper bills. If you've tried to pay a bill or update an account online, you know why: Banks, utilities, magazines and other bill-senders for the most part offer unnavigable Web 1.0 design nightmares and overkill security that makes remembering logins and passwords a headache.

Today at the DEMO Spring 2011 conference in Palm Desert, Calif., New York-based Manilla unveiled a service for managing household accounts. I've tried it, and it may just be sexy enough to get users to nail their mailbox closed for good.

Hearst digital executive George Kliavkoff, who's been leading the startup as interim CEO after a career that's included stints at RealNetworks, MLB Advanced Media, NBC, and online-video site Hulu, is similarly taken: He's announcing today that he's becoming the startup's permanent CEO.

Here's how Manilla works: You type in the name of a business. If Manilla recognizes it, you're prompted to add your login credentials if you have them, or create an online account if not. (For businesses Manilla doesn't know how to handle, it logs suggestions from users to add them.) Manilla then connects with the business, either through back-end server connections or by logging in on the user's behalf, a process known either as "screen scraping" or "Web extraction" depending on who's talking. It then displays reminders of upcoming bills and archives paid bills and other messages forever. And along the way, it quietly stops those paper bills from coming.

Yes, there are potential security concerns, but screen scraping has been practiced by similar account-aggregation sites for more than a decade and is now well-understood by most players. Manilla says it has a full-time employee devoted to security and good relationships with financial institutions. It may nevertheless have a challenge convincing mainstream consumers of the process's safety.

I ran into trouble adding my Citibank accounts, but it turned out that was Citi's fault, not Manilla's, as the bank's systems were experiencing outages. The main letdown was when I tried to add my magazine subscriptions. I subscribe to a half-dozen titles. Not a single one was connected with Manilla. Kliavkoff said his team is working on adding more.

My main complaint with the service is that it's too secure. The signup process has persnickety requirements for passwords that I don't believe add substantially to security while adding to user frustration. Recent research has shown that fussing over whether a password has capital letters or numbers doesn't add substantially to security. Kliavkoff told me that this was a battle he lost with his security team. (George, let me give you the same advice I regularly dish out to my writers: Just win.)

The major win for me and Manilla came when I added my electricity and garbage bills. Since I was logged into those sites anyway — I rarely visit them, typically receiving a paper bill and then paying the bill online through my bank instead — I signed up for automatic payments. That, in turn, is how Manilla plans to make money.

Why is Hearst backing this mail-killing business, since — for now, at any rate — it sends magazines through the Postal Service? Along with those lucrative, ad-laden magazines, Hearst sends some 500 million pieces of transactional mail a year — bills and renewal notices, Kliavkoff explained. And that's just one biller: Think of the bank and credit card statements, utility bills, and other account notices companies send out. A typical bill costs a company 73 cents to send.

Most account-aggregation sites make money by analyzing consumers' spending and then suggesting that they switch to a cheaper provider. You can imagine why billers aren't thrilled about sharing their customer relationships with those sites. Manilla doesn't allow competitive offers on its site. Instead, it charges billers a small monthly fee for every user who switches from paper to online billing.

Kliavkoff expects to yield \$2 to \$3 in revenue a month from a typical Manilla user at very high margins. He wouldn't say exactly how much he aims to charge billers, but based on some other estimates he provided, I believe it's somewhere between a nickel and a dime per user per month. Comcast and Citibank have agreed to come on board, he told me.

Currently, Manilla is owned 100 percent by Hearst. Kliavkoff wouldn't say if he plans to raise outside money, but he points out that when he ran Hulu, its TV-network investors sold 10 percent of the company to Providence Equity Partners. I'll read that as a statement that he's open to taking someone's money. In the meantime, I recommend that you sign up for Manilla and see who's taking your money. You might save a few trees — and your sanity.

[Image via Ideasincirculation.com]

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