

## Latest news on Natwest

Sue Clegg and Roger Upton (Radcliffe) and John Cottee and Sam Boote (Keyworth) met Ken Clarke MP on 28 February to discuss the NatWest bank closures and to see whether there is a way forward.

Ken was well informed on the general subject of bank closures and on our local situation, and he has already had a word with Eric Pickles (Secretary of State for Communities). However, Ken seemed to be resigned to the inevitability of bank closures, as traditional branches are being overtaken by technology. We all agreed (with some regret) that the probable way forward is for each local community to rely on its post office (if it has one) to provide a range of postal and banking services. Unless the Government has a change of heart and decides to intervene in the provision of local banking services (something that it has consistently refused to do, even with the mostly state-owned RBS/NatWest), village branches are yesterday. With the Government under some obligation to get the best possible price when eventually selling RBS back to the private sector, this is not going to change.

We discussed the needs and wishes of our respective communities, and we pressed strongly for the provision of ATMs and post offices that are fit for purpose when bank branches are gone. This means:

Radcliffe: retention of the ATM at the bank building (as promised) and provision of a facility for private discussion at the post office.

Keyworth: provision of an ATM at the post office or a nearby shop, and upgrading of the post office to enable it to cope with the influx of bank customers and to provide the full range of normal retail banking transactions; this might include (for example) relocating the post office to the (soon to be former) NatWest premises.

Both: encouraging the post offices to be fully geared up for bank business, including the training of staff.

Ken agreed to seek a response from Eric Pickles and also to have a word with Vince Cable (Secretary of State for Business), who has already met the banks to press them about their responsibilities to rural communities. We also presented Ken with copies of the petitions from Radcliffe (626 signatures) and Keyworth (1474), and John reported that he had given copies of both petitions to RBS while he was in Edinburgh recently - this followed the presentation of the original petitions at the recent meetings with bank representatives.