BANKING HUB COMMUNITY REQUEST – KINROSS

Submitted by Jim Fairlie MSP, Pete Wishart MP and Councillor Richard Watters

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1. Introduction

We are writing jointly to present an evidence-based case for the establishment of a banking hub in Kinross. Across the Kinross-shire ward, the withdrawal of banking services has created profound challenges for residents, businesses, charities, and community organisations. This submission sets out detailed demographic, economic, geographic, and qualitative evidence demonstrating that Kinross not only meets the spirit and intention of the banking hub scheme, but in many respects exceeds the need found in comparable towns that have already been approved.

Kinross-shire has lost every bank branch that once served it and it now has no banking presence whatsoever. The limited remaining alternatives are unreliable, insulicient, and are due to be further reduced. The evidence presented here shows clearly that Kinross and neighbouring Milnathort require a banking hub to restore essential financial access, safety, and economic resilience.

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2. National Context – The Decline of Banking Infrastructure

According to *Which?* and the "Better Banking" campaign:

- 5,575 bank branches across the UK have closed since 2015 —
- a rate of 54 closures every month.
- Scotland was the first part of the UK to lose more than half of its branches.
- 597 of 1,073 Scottish branches have now closed or are closing.

Kinross-shire has experienced this decline acutely. Historically, Kinross had four bank branches, and Milnathort had one. By 2020, the Lloyds/Bank of Scotland closure removed the last banking facility in the entire area.

As a result, Kinross-shire now has zero in-person banking provision.

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3. Community Evidence from the Kinross Community Action Plan (KCAP)

The recently completed Kinross Community Action Plan (KCAP) provides one of the clearest and most comprehensive bodies of evidence demonstrating community demand for improved banking services. KCAP was developed across four major strands:

- Business survey report
- Community views survey
- Community profile & stakeholder interviews
- Summary of community voting and comments

Across all four components, access to banking emerged consistently and strongly as a priority issue for the people and businesses of Kinross and Milnathort.

3.1 Community Views Survey

The community views survey recorded dozens of separate requests for improved banking services, most explicitly calling for a banking hub. Comments described the loss of local banking as *“scandalous”* for a town of Kinross’s size, with residents repeatedly raising:

- diliculties accessing cash
- long queues at the Post Olice
- the lack of privacy for sensitive transactions
- safety concerns around local ATMs
- the complete absence of in-person advice or problem-resolution

Residents also emphasised that Kinross’s growing population makes the absence of a bank “unacceptable” and “short-sighted”.

3.2 Business Survey Report

Businesses expressed urgent concerns about:

- the need to travel to Dunfermline to simply deposit cash, which requires two-three buses and takes around 90 minutes for those without a car.
- the operational burden placed on stal time and productivity
- the risks associated with transporting daily takings
- an over-reliance on an unreliable Post Olice
- the lack of access to change, float, and secure deposits

Multiple businesses explicitly called for *"a bank or banking hub"* and warned that continued lack of local facilities would damage business sustainability.

3.3 Community Profile & Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews (including with local employers, retailers, community groups, and service providers) reinforced the seriousness of the issue. Key themes included:

- risks arising from holding cash for extended periods
- barriers faced by older residents and carers
- the impact of travel distance and transport diliculties
- the unmet financial needs of volunteers, charity treasurers, and community groups
- concerns about economic resilience and high street viability

One stakeholder commented that the current situation is "a crazy way to run things", voicing strong support for a banking hub.

3.4 Community Event Voting & Comments

During the community futures event, banking provision was identified as a priority theme, with significant public support. Comments stressed that:

- Kinross should not lag behind similarly sized towns like Criel and Auchterarder, which have banking hub facilities
- modern alternatives (Post Olice, mobile van, online banking) do not meet real needs
- local financial services are essential for vulnerable groups, older residents, and small traders
  a banking hub would help restore high street vitality
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4. Limitations of Current Banking Alternatives

4.1 Post OWice Reliability Issues

While Kinross does have a Post Olice, it is widely regarded by residents and businesses as unreliable, with frequent last-minute closures, stal shortages and inconsistent opening hours. It was recently announced that the Post Olice will no longer be open on Wednesdays (evidence attached). No-notice announcements such as this are very common.

As a result, businesses report that they cannot depend on the Post Olice for day-to-day banking activity.

4.2 Imminent Reduction in Post OWice Banking Services We understand that from 31

December 2025, several major banks will no longer accept
cheque deposits via the Post Olice, including Lloyds, Halifax and Bank of Scotland. This is a major blow for cash-handling businesses, volunteers managing sponsorship, monthly draws, or membership fees, older residents and those who avoid online banking.

The removal of cheque-deposit services eliminates the last remaining method for many people to manage their finances locally.

4.3 Mobile Banking Vans

A single mobile van visits the area once a week. Residents describe it as physically dilicult to access, lacking privacy, and unsuitable for anything beyond the most basic transactions.

Those with mobility challenges, caring responsibilities, or limited transport are disproportionately excluded.

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5. Testimonies from Residents and Community Organisations

(all anonymised)

Residents we have spoken with have shared numerous testimonies, including:

- One resident cannot access the mobile van due to mobility issues and has previously been scammed at a Kinross cash machine, making online banking unsafe. Another has no transport and must take two buses to reach a bank; even a
- brief
  transaction becomes a two-hour journey.
- A community treasurer highlighted that the end of Post Olice cheque deposits will severely alect fundraising, sponsorship income, and community cash handling.

These experiences show that neither online services, nor mobile vans, nor the current Post Olice arrangement meets the needs of our population.

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6. The 1km Radius Criterion: Why It Fails Kinross

We understand that a core banking hub requirement is that 4,000 residents live within a 1km radius of the town centre – an area that normally covers 3.14 km^2.

However, Kinross is geographically unique:

- It is a long, narrow settlement,

- hemmed in by Loch Leven to the east and
- the M90 motorway to the west.

These natural and infrastructural boundaries reduce the 1km catchment to approximately 1 km^2 — one-third of the land area that other towns benefit from.

As a result, only 2,900 adults were counted within the olicial radius, not because the population is smaller, but because the measurement method is unsuitable for the town's shape.

6.1 Business Numbers Were Under-Recorded

We believe the number of cash-handling businesses in the 1km radius was significantly underestimated in the initial LINK assessment. The attached Kinross business directory, up to date as of November 2025, demonstrates a far larger and more diverse local economy, with 71 businesses in total.

6.2 **Kinross and Milnathort Function as One Settlement**

Although historically distinct, Kinross and Milnathort have expanded to the point that they now operate as one integrated town, sharing commerce, transport links, services, schools, economic activity and community groups.

We estimate that Milnathort hosts a further 15–20 additional businesses that rely on banking services and would directly benefit from a banking hub in Kinross. The 1km radius ignores this reality.

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7. Business and Economic Evidence

As the directory shows, Kinross and Milnathort together support a large and diverse business community, including:

- cafés, pubs, restaurants, and hospitality venues
- independent retail businesses
- salons, barbers, and personal services
- garages and automotive services
- dental, optical, and veterinary providers
- sports clubs, community hubs, charity shops

Businesses repeatedly report diliculties arising from:

- the need to travel to Dunfermline to deposit cash
- the time required for staI to leave the premises
- security risks transporting cash
- unreliable Post Olice services
- lack of access to change and secure deposits

Business owners have expressed that the absence of banking services has “let them down” and hinders high street sustainability.

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8. Demographic Evidence – Kinross-shire Census 2022

The 2022 Census data reinforces the need for in-person banking provision:

- Population: 14,119 (9.4% of all Perth & Kinross residents)
- 24.6% aged 65+ — a higher proportion than the national average
- 1,714 single-person households (27.7%)
- Over 20% of residents live with health-related limitations
- 12.5% of residents provide unpaid care, including 2.4% providing over 50 hours per week
- 37.2% of employed residents work from home

- A substantial number are self-employed or have no fixed workplace

These groups are especially disadvantaged by the absence of local banking services.

Travelling to Dunfermline or Glenrothes is not feasible for many older people, disabled residents, carers, single-person households, or those without private transport.

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9. Housing Growth and Community Expansion

Kinross-shire continues to experience significant residential development, including:

- major new housing allocations,
- several hundred additional homes built or approved,
- sustained expansion in both Kinross and Milnathort.

This growth intensifies demand for local services. It is unsustainable for a town of this size and trajectory to have zero banking provision.

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10. Comparable Communities Have Banking Hubs

Similar towns (such as Criel, Auchterarder, and Cowdenbeath) have already secured banking hubs.

Importantly, these towns also have Post Olices, demonstrating clearly that a Post Olice does not disqualify a town from eligibility.

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11. Conclusion

Kinross clearly has the need and demand for a banking hub.

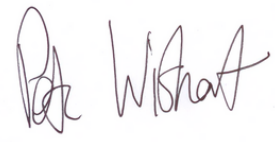
The area:

- has no banking services,
- has an unreliable Post Olice,
- will lose cheque-deposit capability at the end of 2025,
- has a high proportion of older and vulnerable residents,
- has significant mobility and transport barriers,
- has a large business community dependent on cash handling,
- has a growing population and expanding housing base,

  and is disadvantaged unfairly by a 1km circular radius that does not reflect the real shape and size of the settlement.

We therefore strongly urge LINK and the Cash Action Group to recognise these realities and approve the establishment of a banking hub that will restore essential financial access, support local businesses, enable community resilience, and ensure residents can manage their finances safely, securely and easily.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



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