

## **Labour MP Urges Bank to Rethink Closure Plan**

LABOUR MP Allison Gardner has urged the NatWest bank to rethink plans to close its Longton branch in June.

Dr Gardner, who represents Stoke-on-Trent South, said news of the planned closure had come as a 'devastating' blow to residents and businesses.

In a letter to NatWest's Chief Executive, Paul Thwaite, she said the closure would be "a real inconvenience for residents - and particularly the elderly and disabled - who will have to travel to the other nearest NatWest branch in Hanley."

News of the NatWest closure comes only months after the Halifax and TSB banks both shut their Longton branches last year.

There are fears that the impact of three bank closures within a year could also undermine the strenuous efforts that are helping to revitalise the town centre, she added.

"In recent months we've begun to see these efforts pay dividends and it's vital that business confidence is maintained," she said.

"I realise that, like all businesses, banks have to keep pace with changing trends and it's true many people nowadays prefer to use electronic services.

"But that doesn't apply to many of my elderly constituents who are not comfortable with new technology and prefer to rely on face-to-face contact when doing their banking," she added.

In her letter, Dr Gardner urged the NatWest chief to take serious account of the impact of the closure and provide an assurance that the branch would remain open "for the foreseeable future."

Ends