



**Ilmington Community Shop, Upper Green, Ilmington
Shipston-on-Stour, CV36 4LE, 25th March 2019**

**Jonathon Bunting,
Smith's News,
Roman House,
Kembrey Park,
Swindon
SN2 8UH**

28th March 2019

Dear Mr. Bunting

Smith's News Delivery Problems

We have been customers of Smith's News since setting up our South Warwickshire community owned and run shop and café in 2015 in the village of Ilmington. We are a co-operative owned by some 380 plus members, most of whom live locally.

We are a modest but so far viable enterprise. We sell many of the products that you would expect to find in a village shop, including newspapers and magazines which attract many regular customers from the village and surrounding area.

Although we have experienced some erratic newspaper delivery issues with Smith's News since opening, such occurrences have become frequent and more extensive in recent months.

These issues include failure to deliver popular newspapers, variations in the numbers of popular newspapers delivered that don't meet our pattern of custom, late deliveries, and failure to deliver, or over supply of, supplements at weekends.

The consistency, timeliness and complete delivery of newspapers and supplements is important. Despite shifts in news consumption towards web-based media, there is still a strong market for the written press in our community. However, for us to meet this demand, sell newspapers, and sustain important custom - and therefore our community enterprise - we need to be reliable in our supply which in turn means Smith's News as our supplier needs to be reliable.

We call your distribution depot in Birmingham when there is a problem. They very often tell us that they will try to get the supplements or whatever to us later in the morning but are rarely able to do.

We have now raised a formal complaint with the recipient of the complaint agreeing that they will speak with the depot to ensure that all parcels are put on the van



together and that drivers ensure that they drop all parcels with us at the same time. However, the problem persists.

We have also suggested some compensation to enable us to provide our loyal customers with a free paper on a weekend to help to keep them with us and regain their trust and confidence. That request is currently outstanding.

Our customers are becoming increasingly frustrated with our apparent unreliability which ultimately means that they will do more of their shopping elsewhere also. Indeed, we are already starting to lose not only the sales of newspapers but others items that any customers would buy at the same time. This is not only financially challenging because we are not inured to well documented challenges currently impacting on retailing, but it is also damaging to the underlying and essential confidence that our community has in us and which sustains their commitment.

It appears that other community shops are experiencing similar difficulties with Smith's News, hence we are copying this letter to the James Alcock, Executive Director at the Plunkett Foundation, the charity that supports rural community enterprises.

We write to you now to request your urgent assistance in resolving this issue. We understand that things can sometimes go wrong but this problem is too persistent.

We look forward to hearing from you with a satisfactory resolution to our problems.

Finally, because the Times and Sunday Times are often one of the newspapers affected by the problems outlined above, we are also copying to Andrew Knight, in his capacity as Chairman of Times Newspapers Holdings but also as a local resident.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Tim Allen

Chair & Company Secretary on behalf of Ilmington Community Shop Limited

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