



# Post Office Act 1969

## 1969 CHAPTER 48

### PART III

#### THE NEW AUTHORITY FOR THE CONDUCT OF POSTAL AND TELEGRAPHIC BUSINESS

##### *The Post Office Users' Councils*

#### **14 The Post Office Users' Councils**

- (1) There shall be established, in accordance with the provisions of this section.—
- (a) a users' council for the British Islands, to be called " the Post Office Users' National Council " ; and
  - (b) a users' council for Scotland, to be called " the Post Office Users' Council for Scotland ", a users' council for Wales and Monmouthshire, to be called " the Post Office Users' Council for Wales and Monmouthshire " and a users' council for Northern Ireland, to be called " the Post Office Users' Council for Northern Ireland " ;

and the Post Office Users' National Council is hereafter in this section referred to as " the National Council" and the councils mentioned in paragraph (b) above are so referred to as " Country Councils".

- (2) The National Council shall consist of—
- (a) a chairman appointed by the Minister;
  - (b) the chairmen of the Country Councils;
  - (c) such other members, not exceeding twenty-six, as the Minister may appoint after consultation with such bodies as appear to him to be representative of the interests of persons likely to be concerned with matters within the competence of the Council;
  - (d) such other members, not exceeding three, as the Minister may appoint without any such consultation;

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and, in appointing members in pursuance of paragraph (c) above, the Minister shall have regard to the desirability of having members who are familiar with the special requirements and circumstances of particular parts of the British Islands.

- (3) Each of the Country Councils shall consist of a chairman appointed by the Minister and such other members, not exceeding twenty-four, as the Minister may appoint after consultation with the chairman and such bodies in the part of the United Kingdom for which the Council is to be or is established as appear to him to be representative of the interests of persons likely to be concerned with matters within the competence of the Council.
- (4) A person appointed to be a member of a council established under this section shall hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of his appointment; but, notwithstanding anything in those terms, he may at any time resign his office by notice in writing to the Minister.
- (5) A person who has held office as a member of a council established under this section shall be eligible for reappointment.
- (6) The Minister and the Post Office may each refer to the National Council, for consideration and report, any matter relating to the services provided by the Post Office.
- (7) In the case of each of the Country Councils, the Minister and the Post Office may each refer to it for consideration and report a matter relating to services provided by the Post Office that affects persons in the part of the United Kingdom for which the Council is established (being persons for whom those services are provided), but does not affect others, but neither shall refer to it any other matter.
- (8) It shall be the duty of each of the Country Councils—
  - (a) to consider—
    - (i) any matter relating to the services provided by the Post Office in the part of the United Kingdom for which the Council is established which is the subject of a representation (other than one appearing to the Council to be frivolous) made to the Council by, or on behalf of, a user in that part of the United Kingdom of those services; and
    - (ii) any matter relating to the services so provided in that part of the United Kingdom which appears to the Council to be one to which consideration ought to be given by it notwithstanding that no representation has been made to it with respect to it;

and, if it is of opinion that action ought to be taken with respect to any such matter, to give to the Minister, the Post Office and the National Council notice of that fact (stating whether or not the matter was the subject of a representation made to the Council) and of the action which the Council thinks ought to be taken;
  - (b) to consider any matter which is referred to it under the last foregoing subsection and to report thereon to the Minister and the Post Office.
- (9) It shall be the duty of the National Council—
  - (a) to consider—
    - (i) any matter relating to the services provided by the Post Office in the British Islands which is the subject of a representation (other than one appearing to the Council to be frivolous) made to the Council by or on behalf of a user of the services so provided in those Islands ; and

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- (ii) any matter relating to the services so provided in those Islands which appears to the Council to be one to which consideration ought to be given by it notwithstanding that no representation has been made to it with respect to it;  
and, if it is of opinion that action ought to be taken with respect to any such matter, to give to the Minister and the Post Office notice of that fact (stating whether or not the matter was the subject of a representation made to the Council) and of the action which the Council thinks ought to be taken ;
  - (b) to consider the subject-matter of a notice given to it in pursuance of subsection (8)(a) above by a Country Council and to transmit to the Minister, the Post Office and that Council its observations thereon ;
  - (c) to consider any matter referred to it under subsection (6) above and to report thereon to the Minister and the Post Office.
- (10) Where it falls to the National Council to consider a matter that affects persons in a part of the United Kingdom for which one of the Country Councils is established, being persons for whom services are provided by the Post Office, but does not affect persons elsewhere for whom services are so provided, it shall be the duty of the National Council to consult with that Country Council with respect to that matter.
- (11) Every council established under this section shall meet when convened by the chairman thereof, but not less frequently than twice a year; and, without prejudice to the discretion of the chairman to call a meeting whenever he thinks fit, he shall call a meeting when required to do so by any three members of the council.
- (12) Minutes shall be kept of the proceedings at each meeting of each of the councils established under this section but, subject to that, each of those councils may determine its own quorum and procedure.
- (13) It shall be the duty of each of the Country Councils to comply with a requisition made on it by the National Council for a copy of the minutes of a specified meeting of the Council.
- (14) Each of the councils established under this section shall, as respects each accounting year, make to the Minister a report on the exercise and performance by the council of its functions during that year and the Minister shall lay a copy of each such report before each House of Parliament.
- (15) Each of the councils established under this section shall be furnished by the Minister with such officers and staff as appear to him to be requisite for the proper discharge of its functions, and with such office accommodation and equipment, and such services, as appear to him to be so requisite.
- (16) The Minister may pay such allowances and remuneration to the chairman of the National Council and the officers and staff of any of the councils established under this section as he may determine and such allowances to the members of any of those councils (other than the chairman of the National Council) as he may determine; and may pay such expenses of any of those councils as he may determine.
- (17) The Minister may pay such allowances as he may determine to members of any body recognised by him, after consultation with the National Council, to be assisting the Council to ascertain the opinion of users of services provided by the Post Office in any part of the British Islands, and may pay such expenses of a body so recognised as he may determine ; but he shall not recognise a body to be assisting the National Council to ascertain the opinion of users of services so provided in any part of the

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United Kingdom for which one of the Country Councils is established except after consultation with that Council.

- (18) Notwithstanding section 1(3) of the Post Office Act 1961, any expenses incurred by the Postmaster General in the discharge, by virtue of section 2(6) of this Act, of the duty imposed by subsection (15) above or the exercise, by virtue of the said section 2(6), of the power conferred by subsection (16) or (17) above shall be defrayed out of moneys provided by Parliament, and moneys so provided for the payment by the Postmaster General of those expenses shall be excepted from the operation of section 1(2) of the Post Office Act 1961.
- (19) The approval of the Minister for the Civil Service shall be requisite as regards the number of persons to be furnished under subsection (15) above and to a determination under subsection (16) or (17) above by the Minister relating to allowances or remuneration, and the approval of the Treasury shall be requisite to a determination under either of the last-mentioned subsections by the Minister relating to the expenses of a body.
- (20) Part III of Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1957 (which specifies offices whereof the holders are disqualified under that Act) shall, in its application to the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, be amended by inserting, at the appropriate point in alphabetical order, the words " Chairman of the Post Office Users' National Council ".

**15 Duty of the Post Office to consult the Post Office Users' National Council about certain proposals**

- (1) Before the Post Office so puts into effect any major proposals relating to any of its main services as to affect the persons for whom they are provided, it shall be incumbent on it, subject to the next following subsection, to refer the proposals to, and consult thereon with, the Post Office Users' National Council.
- (2) The foregoing subsection shall not apply to proposals containing no matter other than such as is requisite to comply with a direction given by the Minister under section 11(3) or (4) or 12 of this Act or matter ancillary to matter such as is so requisite.
- (3) Any question arising whether or not any proposals are major proposals or relate to a main service shall be referred to the Minister, whose decision shall be final.
- (4) The validity of any action taken by the Post Office shall not be impugned on the ground that it was taken otherwise than in pursuance of proposals that had been the subject of a reference under subsection (1) above, but ought not to have been so taken.