

The Campaign (CCBS) is a voluntary coalition of national charities and similar bodies. Full details can be found by visiting our website www.communitybanking.org.uk

CCBS's submission is concerned with questions BS3 and DS5 of the consultation.

As a major part of our work we see it as our role not just to resist bank branch closures but to put forward solutions to the problems caused. Foremost amongst these is the shared branching concept, also known as community banks and banking centres. A shared branch is a neutral environment capable of providing basic transactional banking services on behalf of a number of competing banks (and building societies) without compromising the consumer's right to choose a particular banking relationship.

The concept has been academically validated in the UK as "operationally feasible and financially viable" and operates successfully in the USA. It has not been trialled in the UK where the dominant banks, over protective of their brands, have to date resisted it. However the need for it is growing as technology and behavioural developments benefitting the majority dictate the closure of individually branded branches in larger and larger communities, especially those with a high proportion of the financially excluded and/or financially unsophisticated.

Whilst in more affluent areas we would expect the banking centre to house sales and service personnel from a number of participating banks, in communities with low sales potential, because of size or relative poverty of population, the community bank or banking centre could be the natural home for money advice services--generic financial advice and/or debt advice--on a full or part-time basis, with appointments being booked by the neutral counter staff in the latter case.

CCBS believes that such a location, visited regularly for routine banking, should be a natural choice for locating face to face generic advice. Credibility would be undoubted and neutrality guaranteed.

A brief description of the shared branch concept can be downloaded from the Articles pages of www.communitybanking.org.uk

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