Hathersage Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 11th September to discuss possible action with regards the proposed closure by Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) of branches in our area. Several neighbouring Parishes were represented at this meeting.

The extraordinary meeting was called as the chair of HPC, Cllr. Peter Mander had received many comments from residents raising concerns about the proposed closure.

The areas of concerns raised at the meeting include:

* There will be only one bank branch left open in the Peak District National Park, an area of 555sq miles and the most visited National Park in the UK (second in the world).
* It is assumed that ATM machines will also be removed which will prevent the many visitors to the Park easily withdrawing cash for spending in the businesses which sustain the Park.
* The RBS branch in Hathersage is targeted for closure but by the size of the queues and the time customers must wait to be served there is clearly business available and a need for this branch.
* It is suggested that people will use the Post Office (within the SPAR) in Hathersage should the bank close. This however raises security concerns with higher levels of cash being stored on site and the increased possibility of criminal activity with heightened risk of harm to staff and customers.
* The demographics of the villages in the area is such that there is a high proportion of people in the later stages of life who do not, don’t want to or can’t use on-line banking. There will be nowhere for these people to go to carry out banking transactions or seek help and assistance.
* There are very many small businesses in the area who accept cheques for payments. The nearest bank to Hathersage, for example will be in the centre of Sheffield or Chesterfield. Both destinations would entail half a day to visit and return from. This is time that small businesses do not have and would severely affect the future viability of such businesses.
* RBS customers were informed within the last six months that while branches in Scotland were being closed, branches in England were safe from closure.
* As far as we know RBS is still part owned by the Government, the people of the country. Where then is the public service that should be provided by such an institution?

The up shot of the meeting was that:

* All Parish Councils are asked to make representation to their MP, County and District Councillors to raise concerns about the RBS proposal.
* All Parish Councils are asked to make representation to the Banking Ombudsman or Banking Regulator or both.
* To hold a public meeting in a couple of weeks’ time, to be hosted by Hathersage Parish Council, to which senior representatives of RBS will be asked to attend along with DCC and DDDC councillors.
* An online petition against the closures should be completed by as many people in the area as possible. Looking on line there are many petitions that have been raised for the same issue in other parts of the country, some with hundreds of respondents.