Dear Steve

Thank you for contacting me and raising your concerns about Royal Bank of Scotland bank branch closures.

Yesterday I met with the Royal Bank of Scotland in Westminster to discuss the closure of their branches in Chapel-en-le-Frith and Hathersage.

I shared with them your concerns and those of dozens of other residents who have written to me about the impact of the closures, which will leave High Peak without any RBS branches and very few banks at all.

I urged them to consider the knock-on effect of the closures will have on other already over-stretched banking services in area. The NatWest in Buxton already often has queues, it is not open on Wednesdays and the Post Office in Chapel will struggle to cope with a lot of additional banking transactions.

I am afraid that RBS are not prepared to reconsider the closures at all.  They have already closed 421 branches and made a high-level decision to close a further 54 including the vast majority of their branches in Derbyshire.  There will be only 3 branches left in the whole of Derbyshire as part of a minimal network of around 50 RBS branches across the whole of England and Wales.  Nor are they prepared to deploy any mobile banking services.

As many people pointed out, the government owns a majority of the shares in RBS.  However last May the government refused to use that control to prevent the closure of 162 RBS branches.  I have contacted other MPs affected to see if they are prepared to join a campaign to put pressure on both RBS and the government.

In the meantime, I have asked RBS what they are prepared to do locally to help affected customers and they have agreed:

1. To hold a drop-in session in Buxton on 6 December to provide customers with information about alternative banking options available to them and they will also organise an event in Chapel-en-le Frith. I have suggested venues in Chapel and will let you know when this date is confirmed.
2. They will review the opening hours of the Buxton branch of Nat West and extend them if it sees a considerable increase in customers.
3. They confirmed there are no plans to remove the cash machine on the old NatWest building in Chapel, though the RBS ATM will close when the building does.
4. If you have concerns about how to you will continue your banking locally please contact the Area Director Michael Bescoby on 07774 441 380 or mike.bescoby@rbs.co.uk.

          If you would like me to pass on your correspondence to me for Michael to get in contact with you please
          let me know.

I am very sorry that I was not able to persuade RBS to change their plans.  They have closed 421 branches in the last year, many of them in areas also without alternative banking facilities, and our branches at Chapel and Buxton are part of the final tranche of closing around 90% of all their branches.

Thank you once again for again for contacting me about this important issue.

Kind regards
 Ruth George MP
Member of Parliament for High Peak