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To all postmasters, their staff and post office employees,

Following the busy festive season that has just passed, the dedication of Post Office workers across the country has been shown. You and your staff have come out in force to help your customers, providing essential services from banking to postage that have been so crucial in these challenging times. I want to share my heartfelt appreciation to you and your staff for the efforts you have put in over recent months.

The pandemic has highlighted the important contribution post offices make to our communities. However, I know that the recent announcement of a return to a national lockdown in England with similar measures adopted in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, will have impacted many of you.

Since March last year, postmasters and their staff have worked tirelessly to ensure vital post office services continue to be made available to communities across the country, providing a lifeline to customers and businesses. Your efforts continue to be greatly appreciated and valued and I would like to offer my congratulations to Keith Rutherford, postmaster of Colonsay Post Office, who was recognised in the New Year's Honours list.

While the restrictions and precautions are similar to previous lockdowns, this lockdown is different as there is a clear end goal. The fundamental change for the whole country is the progress that has been made on vaccinations. We are now rolling out the biggest vaccination programme in our history and the Prime Minister set out how we plan to accelerate the pace of vaccination to ensure everyone in the top four priority groups is offered a vaccination by mid-February 2021.

I would also like to thank you for following the Government's guidelines as part of the national effort to fight Covid-19. I would urge you to continue to take safety precautions to protect yourselves, your staff and your customers. The Government also recently announced the expansion of community testing across England to help identify more positive cases of COVID-19 and ensure those infected isolate, protecting the key workers like yourselves who cannot work from home and deliver our vital services. We will keep Post Office Ltd and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters updated with further details on how this will run.

I know how tough these months have been on yourselves and your families and there are more challenging weeks ahead. Finally, I would like to thank you once again for delivering essential services and reassure you that the Government is doing everything it can tackle the virus. My team and I regularly engage with Post Office Ltd and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters and will continue to work with them to support you as much as possible throughout these challenging times.

PAUL SCULLY MP

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