Irish Rural Link
7th March 2017

**Irish Rural Link Express Concerns about Closures of Post Offices and Ulster Bank Branches**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities are greatly concerned about the new report sent to Government today on the closure of up to 80 Post Offices.

The report recommends the closure of up to 80 Post Offices, all of which are in rural areas. Meanwhile a report for Ulster Bank has recommended the closure of 30 Branches; again these will be mainly in smaller towns. The Post Office and the Bank are vital services to many people in rural areas and are often a social outlet for people.

The continued threat to rural services is unacceptable. Every week there are continued threats to services in rural areas, if it is not cuts to bus services, it is Post offices and banks. If these are closed, people will have to travel, often long distance to do their business, which will require more frequent bus services to be put in place. It will also make rural people and smaller businesses more vulnerable, having to withdraw larger amounts of money if can only do banking once a week.

Government are encouraging more people to get pensions and social welfare payments paid into bank accounts and do banking transactions online. However, this is not always possible in rural areas where broadband is not available or signal is very poor.

IRL continue to call for social impact assessments and consultations with local communities on any proposed closures of Post Offices and Ulster Bank Branches.

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For further information, please contact (anytime):
Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 086 2491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 086 1069244

About Irish Rural Link:
Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 500 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level.