

Annex 14B: Policy On Postage Stamps

I. Policy

1. Policy responsibility for the issue of postage stamps in any UK Overseas Territory rests with the Government of the Territory concerned. However, designs must be submitted to the Palace for approval prior to issue. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) liaises with Overseas Territories' governments and advises the Palace on matters relevant to their issue.

2. Primary FCO concerns are:

- to protect Her Majesty's interests overseas, eg by ensuring that the stamps act as a symbol of the UK's relationship with the Territories concerned
- to protect the dignity of the Crown, eg by avoiding the risk of public embarrassment which could arise from the design of postage stamps or their use for improper purposes
- to help to maintain the good reputation of postal administrations in the UK Overseas Territories and
- subject to the above, to assist in securing the maximum economic benefit from the sale of stamps for the territory concerned.

3. The sale of stamps to collectors represents a source of revenue to UK Overseas Territories. Stamp issues can also enhance their international standing and their tourist market. The most economic benefit can be achieved for UK Overseas Territories by attracting the long term interest of serious philatelists. This can be done by ensuring that:-

- stamp designs are of high quality
- issues are limited
- subjects are normally relevant to the Territory concerned and that
- denominations are related to postal needs and would not be seen by serious collectors as an attempt to exploit them.

II. Royal Approval and Related Matters

4. All UK Overseas Territory postage stamps should bear The Queen's Portrait/Silhouette or the Royal Cypher and designs must be approved by Her Majesty The Queen. Procedures should be set in place in each UK Overseas Territory to ensure that the Governor / Administrator or Commissioner endorses future stamp designs. (In Bermuda, proposed stamp designs are approved by the Cabinet before being sent to London. In Gibraltar's case, all proposed stamp designs which have been approved in principle the Iberia Team are sent to Royal Households Secretariat (RHS) for submission to the Palace. Any designs which Gibraltar may have doubts about are submitted through Iberia Team for evaluation). The proposed stamp designs should then be submitted to the Royal Households Secretariat (RHS), Protocol Directorate in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, who will consult the appropriate FCO geographical department before forwarding them to the Palace for Royal Approval. No stamps may be issued by the UK Overseas Territories without Royal Approval.

5. Designs which, in the opinion of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, do not meet the criteria set out in this document will be referred back to the Government of the Overseas Territory (or agent) concerned for discussion. Any design which in itself, or because of the circumstances in which the stamp would be issued, could be held to exploit the Monarchy for commercial purposes or otherwise to bring the Monarchy into disrepute will not be forwarded for Royal Approval.

6. No public announcement of the details of a proposed stamp issue should be made until Royal Approval has been granted.

7. Only Portraits and Silhouettes (Queen's Head) which Her Majesty The Queen has specifically approved for postage stamp purposes may be used. The Queen's Head and Royal Cypher must be placed prominently on the stamp, normally in either the top right or top left corner. If The Queen's portrait or silhouette is used, it must always face into the stamp. Positioning The Queen's Head or Royal Cypher at the base of the stamp should normally be avoided unless the stamp design restricts its placement at the top right or left hand corner of the stamp. Equally, The Queen's Head or Royal Cypher should not normally be placed in a subordinate position, eg under the monetary denomination or the name of the territory. The Queen's Head or Royal Cypher must also be of sufficient size to avoid appearing insignificant to the rest of the stamp design. As certain restrictions apply to the representation of Her Majesty The Queen or other Members of the Royal Family (past or present) on stamp designs, the prior advice of the FCO should be obtained in cases of doubt.

8. Overseas Territory Governments should seek Royal approval for new stamp issues in good time. Deadlines for Royal approval should not be set.

9. Applications for Royal approval should usually signify the number of denominations to be used. Finished artwork (no larger than A4) should be submitted to The Queen along with, where necessary, an explanation of any unusual features

incorporated in the design or of the occasion to be commemorated. Finished artwork is inspected personally by Her Majesty who takes great interest in the stamp proposals for the Overseas Territories.

III. Procedure, Choice Of Themes, Frequency And Face Value Of Issues

Overseas Territories Governments should ensure that their postal administrations (and agents) comply with the requirements of the [Universal Postal Union Letter Post Manual](#) and conform to the [Philatelic Code of Ethics](#) produced at the 1999 Beijing Congress of the Universal Postal Union.

Size and Shape of Stamp Designs

The size and shape of UK Overseas Territories' stamps should conform to the guidance issued in Article RE 306 of the Universal Postal Union Letter Post Manual, ie their vertical or horizontal dimensions should be not less than 15 mm and not more than 50 mm and their shape should normally be square, rectangular or triangular.

Territory Designations

12. Stamps of UK Overseas Territories should bear the name of the Territory on each stamp.

Subjects of Stamp Designs

13. The subjects of stamp designs should normally relate to the Overseas Territory in question. Such subjects can be of an historical, geographical, economic, constitutional or thematic nature. Since there can be difficulty in identifying subjects for stamp designs, Territories can use designs that commemorate anniversaries of general international interest or depict other themes, but discretion should be exercised: collectors could otherwise become disenchanted with postal authorities which regularly issue stamps with little or no relevance to the territory concerned.

14. In the past, it was the convention that no living person other than Royalty should be featured on UK Overseas Territories stamps in common with the practice for UK and Commonwealth stamps. In 2001, however, HM The Queen agreed that living persons may be depicted so long as:

- they are neither immediately identifiable, nor a public figure nor associated with political or religious beliefs, or
- they are the subsidiary image, or
- they are part of a larger group involved in a single achievement.

Definitive Issues

15. Postage stamps are primarily intended for the pre-payment of postage. Article 6 of the Universal Postal Union Letter Post Manual states that "only postal administrations shall issue postage stamps attesting payment of postage according to the Acts of the Union".

16. It is practice that a new definitive issue should not be released for sale until the current definitive issue has been on sale for five years.

17. It is also practice that themes for definitive issues should relate to the issuing Territory.

18. The number of values should be determined by genuine postal requirements. There should be no need to exceed 16 denominations.

Special and Commemorative Issues

19. The terms "special" and "commemorative" are used to describe postage stamps other than definitive issues. Certain issues are also called "thematic" (such as birds, trains, etc) which attract particular collectors who might otherwise have no interest in a particular territory's stamps.

Frequency of New Stamp Issues

20. The maximum number of such issues (other than definitive issues) in a given territory should not normally exceed nine in any calendar year. There is no requirement to reduce the number of such special issues in the year that a new definitive issue is released.

Withdrawal of Stamp Issues

21. 'Commemorative' or 'special' stamps should normally be withdrawn from sale three to six months after the date of issue, or when stocks are exhausted, whichever may be the sooner. Such stamps may, however, remain available for supply on demand in the Philatelic Bureau for one year after the date of withdrawal from sale over the counter. 'Omnibus' issues may remain on sale at the Post Office/Bureau for up to 12 months to take account of stamp dealers' continuity programmes.

Face Value of Postage Stamps

22. In periods of inflation, the face value of stamps may need to change frequently. But, the face value of a definitive issue should not normally exceed the equivalent of £20 nor should the total face value of commemorative or special sets issued in any one year normally exceed the equivalent of £30.

IV. Employment Of Agents

23. UK Overseas Territories without the resources themselves to arrange and supervise the design and production of postage stamps, and their sale in overseas philatelic markets, may choose to appoint agents. But as commercial agents may also deal in stamps, which may give rise to a potential conflict of interests incompatible with the best interests of the Overseas Territories, care should be exercised by Overseas Territory Governments when appointing such agents. Governors should ensure that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is consulted in such circumstances before any decision is taken in order to ensure that any wider implications are properly taken into account by the territory government concerned.

V. Marketing

24. It should be the responsibility of the appointed agents, when acting for the government of the issuing Territory, to organise sales outside the Territory in such a manner as to produce the optimum revenue consistent with securing and retaining the goodwill of collectors and dealers.

- adding new denominations to commemorative issues which have already been on sale for some time so that purchasers of the original issue have to buy the additions to complete their sets
- the indiscriminate issue of souvenir or miniature sheets
- making the purchase of popular stamp issues conditional upon the buying of given quantities of less popular stamps
- using designs aimed at attracting thematic collectors without regard to the relevance of the designs to the country of issue
- sales of stamps to dealers at below face value
- date stamping mint stamps and selling below face value
- introducing bogus errors to create rarity value and
- regularly overprinting unsold remainders of a stamp issue and releasing them as a new issue.

26. These practices often produce tempting profits in the short-term but only at the expense of long-term revenue. Experience has shown that unwarranted increases in the cost of collecting a territory's stamps will eventually turn away the regular collector who will be unable to afford the stamps or will resent being exploited.

27. It is the responsibility of the Overseas Territories Government, through their postal authorities or their agent, to secure any necessary copyright clearance for the design of stamps produced for an Overseas Territory and to respect intellectual property rights as they may relate to the design of Overseas Territories stamps.

VI. Distribution Of New Postage Stamps

28. When stamps are ready for distribution, the security printers should, under the terms of their contract with the OT Government, send to the Territory concerned the quantities required for local use. At the same time the printers should send to the agents the agreed quantity for sale by them on behalf of the postal administration concerned. OT postal administrations are also responsible for ensuring that the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union is supplied, usually through the security printers as part of their contractual obligations to the Overseas Territories government, with sufficient numbers of specimen stamps for distribution to the member nations, including the Royal Mail plc (formerly the British Post Office), to fulfill the requirements of the detailed regulations of the Universal Postal Union Convention.

29. Corner blocks of four stamps from each printing, showing where indicated all Plate Numbers in use, should be sent to the Palace for the Royal Collection, and one example of all printers' proofs for each issue, First Day Covers, miniature sheets, stamp booklets and reel stamps where applicable.

VII. Withdrawal And Invalidation Of Stamps

30. The date of release of new definitive postage stamps should be publicised in advance and the old definitive issue may remain on sale alongside the new stamps for a limited period of three months. Commemorative and definitive stamps of the same denomination may be sold concurrently. Old patterns of embossed stationery, and stamps in roll or book form, may also be sold for a limited period after new definitive stamps have been issued.

31. Agents should be advised, preferably not less than one month beforehand, of the date on which a stamp will cease to be sold in the Post Offices of the Territory so that the sale of that stamp to dealers may be discontinued from the same date. When stocks of stamps are required to be destroyed, this should be done under the supervision of a responsible officer and an affidavit of destruction retained. In normal circumstances stamps should be invalidated five years after they are withdrawn from sale. Notice of invalidation should be given in the Official Gazette and should normally take effect no less than six months after the date of publication. The notice should provide for a period of grace (no less than six months) during which holders of invalidated stamps may exchange them for equivalent stamps in the current series.

VIII. Services To Collectors And Dealers

32. Accounts and Credit Facilities: Provided that the accounting arrangements are adequate, deposits from collectors or dealers can be accepted to cover the cost of future purchases or of standing orders. It would be imprudent to supply stamps on credit. Arrangements for handling remittances received by post must be secure. Forms issued to the public for ordering stamps by post should usually stipulate that remittances should take the form of banker's drafts, money orders or crossed postal orders. Cash remittances need not be rejected, but the senders should be informed of the normal form of payment.

33. First Day Covers are used to mark the day of issue of new postage stamps. They must be postmarked with great care. A small charge may be made to cover the cost of the extra work involved. The value of the stamps used, however, is often much higher than the postage rate, making the service profitable in itself, in which case the handling charge may be waived. Advance orders for first-day covers to be made up at Post Offices should be encouraged. Normally first-day covers are addressed and "peel-off" labels may be used for this purpose. They should pass through the post in the ordinary way. However, if the originator so wishes, a quantity of covers for a single addressee may be enclosed in one outer cover for a single addressee to protect them from damage and simplifying handling.

34. Cancellations of Stamped Envelopes: Some collectors send stamped and addressed covers in bulk to Post Offices for cancellation and return through the post. This is normal practice. Stamps should, however, only be cancelled in the Territory concerned.

35. Cancellation of Stamps to Order: Sheets of mint stamps that have been cancelled without being used can be sold commercially, even though stamps thus produced are not strictly authentic. Under no circumstances should sheets of mint stamps be printed with any form of cancellation as part of the printing process. If "cancelled to order" stamps are made available, they should only be date stamped during the currency of the issue and with date stamps which are in general use at the time. "Cancelled to order" stamps should never be sold for less than face value.

36. Post Office Recommendations of Agents to Dealers or Collectors: Members of postal administrations should not assume the responsibility of recommending private persons or firms to act as agents for dealers and collectors.

37. "Postage Due" Labels: "Postage due" labels may be sold through a philatelic bureau, authorised agent or from the Head Office of the Postal Administration.

38. Other overprinted Stamps: The production of Official, Specimen and OHMS stamps raises a number of difficulties and can lead to malpractice. Such issues should therefore not be made.

39. Overprints used, for example when stocks of certain value stamps are running low, must not have a face value in excess of that already shown on the original stamp i.e. a £5 stamp can be overprinted with a lower value but not vice versa.

Overprints may also be used to celebrate a specific occasion when there is insufficient time to produce a special commemorative stamp issue.

IX. Glossary Of Terms

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP: a stamp specially issued to commemorate a specific occasion/event and on sale for limited period of time.

DEFINITIVE STAMP: a stamp on sale for a period of four to five years and available to cover all postage requirements.

CONTINUITY PROGRAMME: a programme specifically operated by a stamp dealer aiming a collection of stamps on a particular theme (e.g. aircraft/ships) at customers. These are normally purchased in instalments over a period of time.

THEMATIC: a stamp design illustrating a specific theme (e.g. Train, Ship, Plane, and Royalty).

DENOMINATIONS: the face value of the stamp.

BOGUS ERROR: the introduction of deliberately produced errors on stamps, which may be sold at a higher price than the face value.

REMAINDERS: the balance of stock remaining after an issue has been withdrawn from sale.

SPECIMEN STAMPS: stamp sometimes overprinted with word 'SPECIMEN' and used for distribution purposes.

A full glossary of philatelic terms may be found in the book 'PHILATELIC TERMS ILLUSTRATED' written by James Mace and published by Stanley Gibbons Publications Ltd under their item number 2740.