
From: Ben Foat[/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=8070ECECB2CC4077A7ECE3486716D2B6-BEN FOAT]
Sent: Tue 23/01/2024 2:04:31 PM (UTC)
To: Karen McEwan[]; Benjamin Tidswell[]; Nick Read[]
Subject: Project Pineapple

Dear Ben, Karen and Nick

Project Pineapple

This note is written you in my personal capacity in respect of my employment position. First of all I want to say thank you for the support that you have each given me in recent days.

As you are aware, the Project Pineapple file note we have been discussing contains very disparaging assertions about me, which as you know I am extremely distressed about. I want to put on record that I strongly reject the assertions in the file note insofar as they relate to me. For example:

1. In response to the assertion "Foat uses his leadership of the Inquiry team as an instrument of power", I have not sponsored the Inquiry work for the Post Office since July 2023, and, following POL's Inquiry solicitors obtaining advice on conflict of interest, I do not attend the Inquiry Steerco meetings and am frequently asked to leave the room at GE meetings on the Inquiry matters. Because of this, I no longer provide any substantive advice in relation to the Inquiry and this has been the case for some time.
2. The note also contains a number of misunderstandings about the operational structure and accountabilities of the Post Office, including:
 - (i) Project Phoenix, for which accountability has rested with the inquiry director since at least July 2023 and which is managed by others in the business through a Panel since at least October last year. I have clear documentary evidence strongly contradicting the assertion that I allowed this project to "go into the long grass"; and
 - (ii) The investigators referred to in the note do not sit in the ACI (headed up by John Bartlett (JB)) for which I am accountable. Stephen Bradshaw is also not a part of the ACI or LCAS function.
3. In relation to my views of postmasters, the file note neither reflect my views of the postmasters and the legal issues nor is it consistent with any advice I have given to Post Office.
4. In relation to the assertion that while I am "at the helm nothing will change", as GC I am an adviser to Post Office. During my tenure, my advice and recommendations have brought about a number of tangible changes.

One of the concerning features of the file note is that it appears to be advocating my removal without any proper process being followed.

Regrettably, I have to raise that this file note comes in the following context. The Chair as you know is being investigated under Project Rose in relation to allegations about his personal conduct, including discrimination. He has been very angry with me on several occasions when I refused to make the investigation "go away". There have been other issues, including the Chair being unhappy that I would not reveal the identity of a whistleblower. In light of this context and the fact that the allegations are baseless, I can only assume that this context is the reason the Chair is advocating for my removal.

I have already raised previously the toll that is being taken on my mental health. It is with a heavy heart, especially given my role, that I feel the need to write in these terms and to ask for your support in seeking to resolve them. I note that Ben was intending to meet with Karen to discuss this last Friday and I would welcome a discussion on the way forward. Karen has directed that I take time off "business as usual" work to focus on document review for the Inquiry (not in response to the assertions made in the file note), but I will of course make time for us to speak.

I would also ask for the Post Office's support in meeting my legal fees in addressing Project Pineapple. In any event, I consider this is covered by the indemnity in my contract of employment, albeit at this stage it is not possible for me to provide a cost estimate for Farrers involvement as the way forward is not yet clear. Please can you confirm you will meet my reasonable legal fees in respect of seeking external support on this issue, separate from the ongoing workstreams to prepare me to give evidence to the inquiry?

Separately, there are a number of important outstanding issues which I would also like to discuss with Nick and seek help in addressing. I will be in touch with Nick and Karen in relation to those.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Ben



Ben Foat (He/Him)

Group General Counsel

100 Wood Street

London

EC2V 7ER

Email:

Personal Assistant:

Email: