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Message

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**Subject:** RE: Book  
**Attachments:** Lt to Calum Greenhow 16.7.20.pdf

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**From:** Peter Hall  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 6, 2021 4:22 PM  
**To:** Nick Wallis <GRO>  
**Subject:** RE: Book

Hi Nick

Thanks for this – we appreciate you being open about this.

As I wrote previously, we won't debate many/most of those key points about the NFSP's behaviour in the past. I can provide some further information on some of the points raised below:

**PO's use of the NFSP during the GLO.** The NFSP was not aware that PO intended to use its name during the Common Issues trial – had we been consulted on this we would have requested that they keep our name out of it. I outlined in my last email below that the NFSP is in an imperfect situation and that was also the case in 2018 too. As incoming CEO Calum inherited the situation left behind by George Thomson – a situation with a lot of history and a lot of baggage (for want of a better way of describing it). With the GLO approaching, the NFSP under new management felt that the most appropriate course of action was to observe and make decisions based on the outcome. This was not an easy decision to make but at the time it was determined to be the least problematic. Bear in mind that the NFSP was not (and still isn't) popular with JFSA and we felt that any NFSP input or comment would not have been welcomed. As the Common Issues trial progressed the NFSP were brought into it by PO and by JFSA. The extent to which the NFSP featured in the Common Issues judgment was unexpected and is a source of frustration because we were not able to provide clarification – as a result the judgment contains statements about the NFSP that are inaccurate. I'm being brief here and I'm conscious that there's a lot crammed into these few sentences so let me know if you'd like more detail on any of the above.

**Mark Baker/Wendy Buffrey.** We are saying that because Mark submitted receipts for his visits with Wendy, the NFSP was helping her. It's important to keep in mind that there was a time when Mark Baker was a key figure and senior leader in the NFSP. Mark was active at the top table of the NFSP for a decade. He was Executive Officer for the South West region and a member of the Executive Council, a member of NFSP Ltd Trading, a member of the Board of Trustees, and the NFSP forum moderator. A visit from Mark Baker (evidenced by expenses claimed) in 2009/10 was definitely a visit from the NFSP. So how does that fit in with Wendy Buffrey's testimony that Mark told her he wasn't supporting her in his capacity as an NFSP representative? We can only speculate.

In terms of the feedback Wendy Buffrey received that she wasn't eligible for support from the NFSP because she was suspended – we included this in our submission to the BEIS committee in 2020:

“Wendy Buffrey has stated that after being suspended by PO for a £36,000 discrepancy identified during an audit she called the NFSP for assistance but was told that, because she was suspended, she was ineligible for help. As far as we are able to tell, this has never been NFSP policy and so why this information was given is unclear to us. An NFSP member that has been suspended by PO in the present day would be eligible for support – just as Wendy Buffrey would have been eligible for support back in 2008-2010. Unfortunately, no further information is available on the time or date of this call or to whom Wendy Buffrey spoke and so we cannot provide any further comment beyond the apology that NFSP CEO Calum Greenhow extended to Wendy Buffrey during the Committee Hearing on 10 March.”

We simply don't know why Wendy Buffrey was told this, or who was responsible. But we do know that she received support from the NFSP at investigation hearings on three occasions.

**Challenging PO and PO responses.** As I told you and as we've told the BEIS committee and the ongoing Wyn Williams Inquiry, we have appraised the NFSP's behaviour in the past and clearly more could and should have been done. We're currently working to ensure we are prepared in case the Williams Inquiry wishes to see any records of the NFSP's activities in relation to Horizon. This work is ongoing but there are many instances on file where the NFSP challenged PO on individual cases and on Horizon in general. PO were always adamant that Horizon was not to blame – and this was at times discussed in formal meetings between PO and the NFSP's Negotiating Committee with evidence of user error / poor practice provided by PO. We all know now about the lengths PO went to in protecting their narrative on Horizon –we firmly believe the NFSP was subject to the same behaviours, something we have been saying since the Horizon Trial verdict.

**Nick Read response to Calum's letter of 9 July 2020.** Please find attached.

As ever, I hope that's all of interest and value. We're happy to talk of course. Please note I'm on leave (again!) for the rest of the week, back on Monday 12 July.

All the best

Peter

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**From:** Nick Wallis <[redacted] GRO>  
**Sent:** 04 July 2021 13:36  
**To:** Peter Hall <[redacted] GRO>  
**Subject:** Book

Hi Peter

I hope all is well. I am coming to the finishing stages of the book and I am aware we haven't communicated properly for a while.

As you know my motivation for the book is to be as fair and accurate as possible. I have made trenchant criticisms of the old NFSP regime based on reports from Subpostmasters and the NFSP's own public statements on Horizon, which were publicly positive about Horizon throughout the Post Office's prosecution spree, and actively dismissive of the JFSA, negative media reports and any Subpostmaster complaints from 2009 to 2019. You will remember the NFSP pointedly didn't support the Subpostmasters in the GLO, and allowed its name to be used by the Post Office as an endorsement for the PO's own position on Horizon for a decade.

I don't doubt that the NFSP has done some good over the last 22 years, but this book is about the Horizon scandal and everything is therefore viewed through that lens.

In a recent-ish email you said "Calum and I would appreciate a conversation with you ahead of any on the record interviews. I won't go into detail here other than to say that there are some materials we would like to share and discuss with you. We've done a lot internally over the last year or so to get to grips with what the NFSP did and didn't do over the period in question. We'd hope you would be interested in this and I will put together a further email on this as soon as I can."

And I think your email below reflects the above. I've finally had a proper read of it (Bob read it properly for the purposes of the R4 doc) and the attachments, and I will now take the time to read individual NFSP rep accounts submitted to the inquiry. I am very grateful to you for supplying it to me.

Because I don't have sight of the receipts Mark Baker submitted, I obviously can't tell how it shows any other NFSP rep was being helpful to Wendy Buffrey, unless you are telling me that because Mark was submitting receipts when visiting Wendy the NFSP was helping her. I have in the book, included her testimony, told to me and then repeated to Parliament that she was told by the NFSP that because she's been suspended she was no longer considered a member and couldn't be helped, so it would be good to have a response from the NFSP that I can understand, because at the moment you seem to be disputing her wider account of not being helped. Once I have that I can go back to Wendy and see what she says about it.

I have made it quite clear in my book that NFSP reps on a local and area level could and did help Subpostmasters with varying degrees of success. The fault lies at the top. Had the NFSP listened to its individual members and publicly started raising concerns about Horizon this scandal would have been out in the open far sooner. The NFSP's silence between 2000 and 2009 and then very clear public support for the Post Office's position (and I have press statements to this effect going back to 2009), allowed the Post Office's activities to go on unchecked. It is likely it also actively dissuaded journalists from covering the story because we get a lot of our information and corroboration from unions. The NFSP has therefore made a significant contribution to one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in British legal history. You could argue the NFSP has less responsibility because it was not the decision-maker in the investigations and prosecutions themselves. I think that is counterbalanced by the fact the NFSP exists to protect its members, and in that respect it failed abjectly, by publicly supporting the Post Office's position for 20 years.



You're right - I really don't have any desire or intention to get involved in any squabbling between the CWU or the NFSP, and thanks for laying out the number of prosecutions of Crown Office workers. I will be careful to note the number of Crown Office shortfall-related prosecutions which fell under the CWU's responsibility. I have described Mark Baker in my book as a hero, though. I know of at least two people who credit him with saving their lives. If there are any other similarly heroic members of the NFSP who have done anything like what he has done, travelling round the country challenging the Post Office's oppressive regime with regard to Horizon (and with similar testimonies from grateful Postmasters), I would very much like to meet them.

I have no doubt Calum and his leadership team are now keen to ensure the NFSP is on the right side of history, and I note with interest everything that has been put in place since the GLO judgments. I'd be particularly interested in reading any response from Nick Read to the letter Calum sent re compensating the GLO claimants. I don't think I need to interview Calum again for the book as I have his 2020 interview and the NFSP's already published words to draw on to illustrate the changes in the NFSP's position.

Best

Nick

On 16 Apr 2021, at 20:59, Peter Hall <[GRO](#)> wrote:

Hi Nick, hi Bob

I had hoped to get this over to you sooner, so please accept my apologies.

First thing to mention is that we forwarded your message to Colin Baker at the beginning of this week. I'm wondering if you have heard back from him?

The main focus of this email is to give you an insight into our perspective on the historic behaviour of the NFSP. Nick, you mentioned the other day your observation that Calum "recently disavowed the old regime in its entirety" – which I assume is based on the email we sent to NFSP members recently on Nick Read's introduction to the PO Financial Statements.



The fact is this isn't a new position for us. We've been saying similar things for some time – starting as far back as the NFSP conference in May 2019. I've attached a few items here which will help demonstrate this. I know that there's not really any such thing as 'off the record', but I'd ask that you don't share any of this – at least not until such a time that we've been able to discuss further.

**Response to BEIS Select Committee Post Office and Horizon Inquiry 2020.** In this submission we outline the findings of a frank appraisal of the NFSP's behaviour in the past and explain how we have already and continue to change as an organisation. The submission also contained in Appendix A examples of actions taken by the NFSP to challenge PO on the reliability of Horizon and protect NFSP members' interests. And in Appendix B, in response to the statement made by Wendy Buffrey during the oral hearing on 10 March 2020 that the NFSP were not prepared to help her, we provided expense forms from a former NFSP Executive Officer as evidence that Wendy Buffrey's NFSP representative did in fact attend three separate investigation meetings with PO to support and represent her. Of course, we have no evidence of the quality of support that was provided at the time.

The NFSP Board also submitted a joint response to the Inquiry, as did several NFSP representatives and members of staff who provided support to members in dispute with PO historically (these are signposted in our response to the current Horizon Inquiry, which is also attached).

Please note that the main NFSP submission has not been published on the Inquiry website even though it was submitted some time ago – hence the contents are not yet in the public domain. The Committee were apparently concerned that the expense forms submitted were a problematic from a data protection perspective and so they did not publish the submission. The NFSP followed the ICO's guidance in determining whether or not to submit these expense forms to the Inquiry and so we disagree with the Committee's decision. However, in the interests of risk management (!) we have not shared these expense forms with you in the attached.

**Response to the Horizon Inquiry 'Call for Evidence' (Feb 2021).** As well as a further appraisal of the NFSP's behaviour in the past we focus on what we are doing in the here-and-now to support our members and challenge PO. We continue to engage with the Inquiry in the hope that it will generate recommendations that will benefit all current and future subpostmasters. This hasn't yet been published by the Inquiry (but we expect it will be soon) and so isn't in the public domain either.

**Letter to Nick Read (July 2020).** As you'll see, Calum wrote to Nick Read urging him to take action to ensure all GLO claimants are appropriately compensated. This included the suggestion to modify the terms of the Historical Shortfall Scheme to include GLO claimants. This is also not in the public domain.

With all that in mind, I will attempt to summarise what is a hugely complicated situation – with the caveat that we would like to discuss all this further... In a recent email to me you wrote that the NFSP's "refusal to deal with the horrors of what was happening to its members between 1999 and 2019 is obviously a stain on the organisation."

We have no doubt at all that the NFSP didn't do enough to challenge PO in private and publicly on the reliability of Horizon and its approach towards prosecuting subpostmasters. Similarly, there are individual subpostmasters who didn't get the help they expected from their trade union in Horizon-related disputes with PO and that is deeply regrettable. We are also hugely frustrated by the former General Secretary's words at the 2015 Select Committee hearing. As far as we are concerned, none of that is up for debate.

However, it simply isn't the case that the NFSP didn't act at all or refused to help individuals who came seeking help with a loss in their branch. We have evidence that the NFSP did take action and challenged PO – who always denied there were problems with Horizon. And we have evidence that NFSP representatives supported a great many individual subpostmasters over the period in question.

Clearly it wasn't enough though, and clearly the NFSP was on the 'wrong side of history' by not supporting JFSA and because of the position taken at the 2015 Select Committee. But we want you to understand that the picture is not as black and white as you have painted it, and not as black and white as much of the public discourse on the issue would have it.

On that note, we want to address some of the misinformation about the NFSP that exists. I suspect you don't want to get drawn into the conflict between the NFSP and the CWU – and I could hardly blame you. The fact is that we don't want to be drawn into it either and we usually do what we can to distance ourselves from the conflict, which is extremely one-sided in nature.

The CWU regularly attempts to undermine the NFSP and this has been the case since Mark Baker left the NFSP in the early part of the last decade (on that note, the reasons for his departure are outlined in this Trade Union Certification Officer judgment [HERE](#). It related to a disagreement about the Postal Services Act and Network Transformation, rather than anything to do with Horizon as reported [HERE](#)).

The NFSP's relative silence publicly about the reliability of Horizon and the plight of the members of JFSA created a vacuum that others were able to fill with information about what the NFSP was/wasn't doing for several years. Some of this information is true, but (as Calum would say) it's by no means 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'.

We have written to the Chair of the BEIS Select Committee on two occasions, pointing out where inaccurate information about the NFSP has been formally submitted to the Committee. But the fact is, we stand to gain very little from engaging publicly with much of the discourse out there. There are some things about the past that we will never seek to defend, and we would never wish to undermine any of the victims of Horizon by debating their experiences either directly or indirectly, even those who were never members of the NFSP (the expense forms relating to support provided to Wendy Buffrey are the only exception to this). On many issues - not just those relating to the Horizon scandal - even if we disagree with or can prove that something is inaccurate, the horse has already bolted. And for the avoidance of doubt, we aren't an aggrieved party here - we take it on the chin and are working to make sure we are better than our predecessors.

So why are we engaging with you and why are we sharing this with you?

One reason is that we want you to be aware of what we've established in appraising the NFSP's behaviour of the past. Although, we realise that it doesn't necessarily change much at all – whatever the NFSP did do, it wasn't enough. Perhaps it serves as additional context for PO's behaviour in pursuing subpostmasters and its denial that there were problems with Horizon.

The other reason is about the support we provide to NFSP members now. We have learned from what the previous leadership did/didn't do and have made changes to the way we operate as outlined in the attachments. Our communications to NFSP members encourage them to be active in the NFSP community and to contact us if they need help with anything relating to their post office – including issues with Horizon, losses of cash or stock etc. I will gladly share our bi-monthly magazine with you so you can see what this looks like. From our perspective it is vital that subpostmasters aren't put off from contacting the NFSP if they need help, because we can help them – and I think this is something we would want to talk to you about. The ongoing public interest in the Horizon scandal is entirely legitimate but from one (extremely parochial) perspective, it presents ongoing opportunities for those who wish to undermine the NFSP. We appreciate that isn't your problem, but we (NFSP) are in an imperfect situation and what matters most to us is subpostmasters knowing they can come to us for help. What does this mean in practice? I don't know, but we'd be grateful to talk to you about it.

Thanks and all the best

Peter