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The Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP
House of Commons
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11 April 2014

Dear James,

Thank you for your letter of March 26. My apologies for the delay in responding and of course for the fact this will arrive in your office during recess. You will appreciate that you raised some issues which I wanted to think through in detail before coming back to you.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate my support in principle for a final report on the Mediation Scheme, even if it is, as you suggest, in generic terms once the process has been completed. I know we both share this ambition. As Alice and I discussed with you, it is important that the Post Office demonstrates its commitment to transparency and continuous improvement; such a report would help show that is the case.

I am not, however, supportive of a further interim report. This would have the potential to damage the integrity of the Scheme, and more particularly would not be in the interests of applicants given the imperative to allow due process to take its course. As you will remember from our various conversations and as I hope I made clear in the meeting at Portcullis House, the independent Chair of the working group has asked that we maintain the integrity of the Scheme at all times.

On the question of a further meeting with MPs, I was very grateful for the point you made at the March meeting when you said in closing (in response to the comment by Andrew Bridgen MP - 'no point if there is nothing to discuss') that a meeting in July might not be possible. I agree that it will be extremely unlikely we will be able to hold a meeting on that timescale as the Scheme will still be in operation and we would not be able to comment any further than we were able to last month.

I am committed to keeping MPs updated on the progress of the Scheme but fear that fixing a date now might cause further frustration if - as is likely - we are in a position where there is little to say by the time of the meeting. I suggest instead that our offices stay in close contact, as I know they are already, to consider this issue as the Scheme progresses.

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In terms of further cases being raised, whether historical or current, I would be grateful if they could be sent to the Post Office for my attention.

Yours sincerely

GRO

Paula Vennells
Chief Executive