

BBC PANORAMA AND THE POST OFFICE

I wanted to let you know that next week we expect adverse media coverage (and a debate in Parliament) in relation to the Post Office and our Horizon computer system.

The BBC plans a Panorama programme on June 29 while an MP has secured a short debate in the House of Commons on the same day.

We expect both the programme and debate to include damaging and unsubstantiated allegations about Horizon and the Post Office's approach to prosecutions in those rare cases where there is evidence of branch accounts being deliberately falsified to cover up losses.

We expect allegations to be made which suggest that we pressure people to plead guilty to criminal charges, have not provided appropriate information to investigators, have the ability to remotely access and alter branch accounts and have not investigated whether Horizon could be to blame for losses in branch accounts.

We categorically reject these very damaging allegations, which are made without evidence to support them.

We are not perfect as a business, but we do take our obligations to our people very seriously.

I wanted to reassure you on a number of fronts in relation to this programme. First and foremost, it is important to set out very clearly that:

- contrary to the allegations we expect to be made in the programme, **there is absolutely no evidence that Horizon does not work as it should:**
- indeed it is a robust and successful system. The former postmasters who are complaining represent a tiny proportion of the 500,000 people who have used Horizon, which processes more than 6 million transactions every day, 2 billion every year, since it was introduced
- the Post Office only prosecutes when it is in the public interest to do so: and we only do so rarely – and we cannot prosecute people for making innocent mistakes: **we only prosecute where there is clear evidence which supports a criminal prosecution**

While we have been asked by Panorama to provide an interview to set out our position, we plan to decline to do so. This is because it became clear to us that the programme intends to focus on individual cases and unsubstantiated claims relating to them which should not be debated in public.

Some time ago, and along with the people involved and their representatives, we agreed to respect the confidentiality of individuals involved in this issue. While we would like to comment freely on individual cases, we are not prepared to break agreements we

entered in good faith.

It is also the case that some of the people involved in making allegations against the Post Office have asked the Criminal Cases Review Commission, an independent body, to examine their prosecution case. That is their right and we will co-operate fully with any requests made of us: what we won't do is indulge in a public debate while that review is being conducted.

We have, however, provided the programme and its journalists with huge amounts of information which we hope will be reflected fairly and accurately.

I hope this is helpful. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.