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Telephone GRO



Director, News and Current Affairs

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director
Post Office Ltd

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Dear Mark,

Thank you very much for your email of 16 January and I appreciate the constructive spirit in which it was written.

I quite understand that when you are under the media's lens, an issue may seem magnified beyond a size you feel to be appropriate.

I am reluctant, as a general rule, to limit the cumulative effect of editorial decisions made by individual BBC editors on any given day, for reasons which I will explain, although I accept that in the interests of plurality our overall agenda should not be monothematic and, as you indicate, the amount of coverage given to a story over time might sometimes need close scrutiny.

The One Show which you mention, comes from another part of the BBC, rather than News, so I have no say over its content. But the broader point is that our different news programmes and services are aimed at different audiences and the degree of audience overlap between the various outlets you mention - for example Today and Breakfast - is, as you might expect, next to non-existent. In this respect, prominence might be a bigger editorial concern - whether, for example, we had placed a story higher up the running order than its weight should bear.

I take your point about the background to these events, however, and your concern over the level of coverage, and I will ensure that my editors are briefed on, and fully understand, the background you have outlined, and the reason for your disquiet. In particular, I recognise that the Post Office is bound by confidentiality in this matter and cannot speak freely.

In terms of the specific point you make about the apparent tardiness of Breakfast's request for information, I asked its editor, Adam Bullimore, for his response. He says that it is certainly the case that the programme team did not start to look at the story until Friday lunchtime. This is, he says, par for the course as the team has first to plan its Saturday and Sunday editions.

In the end, however, I gather the planning team decided against the story for its own editorial reasons.

I hope this helps to outlines our thinking, and thank you for allowing me to understand yours more fully.

Yours sincerely,

GRO

James Harding
Director, BBC News & Current Affairs