POL00363235_050

Mike Granville

From: David Simpson
Sent: 12 October 2011 15:40
To: Mike Young; Paula Vennells; Susan Crichton; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: RE: Horizon - Private Eye
Attachments: Private Eye - Post Office.pdf

Mike, Paula – the new edition of Private Eye has published the letter we sent to them about Horizon integrity.
There is also an anonymous letter from a subpostmaster (probably a former subpostmaster) who has written in support of the magazine's original article. But there is also another letter pointing out that it is "nonsense" for Private Eye to have claimed that POL is the only organisation able to run its own prosecutions.
I've attached a scan of the letters page. We will include the letters in the Newsroom cuttings tomorrow.
David

From: Mike Young
Sent: 29 September 2011 15:57
To: Paula Vennells; David Simpson; Susan Crichton; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: RE: Horizon - Private Eye

David

I just spoken to Susan and we are both comfortable with going with what you suggest.

Thanks

Mike

Mike Young
Chief Operating Officer
Post Office Ltd
148 Old St, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ
GRO or GRO / Mobile GRO
"Delivering a Post Office We Can All Be Proud Of"

From: Paula Vennells
Sent: 29 September 2011 15:28
To: David Simpson; Susan Crichton; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: Re: Horizon - Private Eye

Ok thx

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From: David Simpson
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 04:07 PM
To: Paula Vennells; Susan Crichton; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: RE: Horizon - Private Eye

Paula – thank you. I too understand the point Susan made but Shane and I strongly believe it is important to write to Private Eye. The magazine has made a serious challenge to the integrity of our IT system and we should be seen to be setting the record straight – even if there is some risk the magazine will make a sniping comment on our response.
I'm content with the changes suggested by Rebekah (thank you), pasted below.
Paula and Mike Y, if you are content we should send the letter for publication in Mike's name. Do let me know.
Many thanks,
David

Sir, the Post Office takes meticulous care to ensure the Horizon computer system in branches nationwide is fully accurate at all times. We do this because public money is entrusted to the Post Office and our customers and subpostmasters rightly expect the Post Office to fully account for every penny. We have full confidence in the Horizon system.
There have been a number of cases involving a small fraction of the Post Office network where court action has been taken over missing sums of public money. The courts have consistently upheld the Post Office position that the Horizon system is accurate and reliable. When former subpostmasters have been convicted of false accounting and/or theft, it is, of course, the courts that have convicted, not the Post Office. In some cases, the subpostmaster pleaded guilty; in others, the Post Office had to provide robust evidence otherwise the cases would have failed.
Yours sincerely,

Mike Young
Chief Operating Officer

From: Paula Vennells
Sent: 29 September 2011 12:56
To: Susan Crichton; David Simpson; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: Re: Horizon - Private Eye

Susan, I understand and it's a fine line; but I disagree. We need to be front foot and counter anything that has a reputational impact. It's goal of mine that all press even local press (perhaps esp local press), should be

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scoured for negative comment and refuted.

I would only NOT do so only if in Shane or Alana's view, it is likely to cause more trouble than it's worth.

Paula

Paula

From: Susan Crichton
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 12:08 PM
To: David Simpson; Mike Granville; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Paula Vennells; Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day; Alana Renner
Subject: RE: Horizon - Private Eye

David – thanks for your email and the draft – my own view and experience I would not write, on the basis that this is old news and we do not want to prolong the story. Not sure what other people think.

Susan Crichton
Legal and Compliance Director
Post Office Limited
148 Old Street
London
EC1V 9HQ

Telephone GRO

From: David Simpson
Sent: 28 September 2011 18:35
To: Mike Granville; Susan Crichton; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Shane O'Riordain; Hayley Fowell; Paula Vennells; Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Chris M Day
Subject: Horizon - Private Eye

Mike, Susan, Rebekah, the new edition of Private Eye out today has, as expected, ran an article (attached) about Horizon and the criticisms made by some former subpostmasters. The names of the subpostmasters featured are very familiar and the claims made against Horizon are the same ones we've seen many times before. The article also mentions Shoesmiths and a possible legal action the firm may bring – but Shoesmiths have been saying the same thing since the early part of the year. Disappointingly – but perhaps not surprisingly – Private Eye has not run in full the very short statement we sent to them.

Shane and I have discussed the article. We think we should write a letter to Private Eye for publication making two simple points: the fact that it is the courts not POL that convict people, and (the point we made in our statement) that the courts have upheld POL's position in each court case.

The draft could say:

Sir, the Post Office takes meticulous care to ensure the Horizon computer system in branches nationwide is fully accurate at all times. We do this because public money

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is entrusted to the Post Office and our customers and subpostmasters rightly expect the Post Office to fully account for every penny. We have full confidence in the Horizon system.
There have been a [small] number of cases involving a small fraction of the Post Office network where court action has been taken over missing sums of public money. In every case, the courts have consistently upheld the Post Office position that the Horizon records are accurate and reliable. When former subpostmasters have been convicted of theft, it is, of course, the courts that have convicted them, not the Post Office, which has had to provide sufficiently robust evidence of proof otherwise the cases would have failed.
Yours sincerely,

Could you please let me have your views on the letter? If we are certain of the number of cases that have come before the courts, we could give a number if it is small but I think the difficulty in the past is that the number is not particularly small or we can't be absolutely certain of it. There are also cases where claims about Horizon reliability have been made but the prosecution centres on other issues. If we get an agreed letter, it could be signed by the Network Director, Kevin Gilliland, or Mike Young, Operations Director.

Many thanks,
David

Here is the line we sent to Private Eye last week:

The Post Office is fully confident in the Horizon computer system operating in its branches. This accounting system, and the processes around it, enable our branches to maintain accurate and reliable accounts in all respects, and this has been consistently upheld when cases have gone to court.