

Note of call between Secretary of State for Business and Trade (SoS) and Henry Staunton.

The below note is of a meeting between the SoS for Business and Trade the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP and Henry Staunton that took place on 27 January 2024. The meeting note has been redacted to remove information subject to Fol exemptions.

Readout: Call between SoS and Henry Staunton (27/01/24)

Attendees: SoS, Henry Staunton, Annie Leigh (listening PS)

SoS informed Henry Staunton (HS) that the government, as sole shareholder, was exercising its power, under the company's Articles to remove him as Chair of the Post Office Board.

SoS apologised that the call was coming at short notice due to desire to speak ahead of the media breaking the story. SoS committed to sending HS a more formal record of the decision in slower time.

HS noted that he was called by a reporter this morning to comment on the story. He reflected his dismay under the circumstances.

HS described some of the events over the last four weeks, reflecting that the Post Office as an organisation is operating in an extremely challenging context.

SoS asked HS what next steps he would recommend the government take. HS recommended the following key actions:

- Commence a discussion with the CEO asking them to stay through the inquiry and in return exploring the possibility of good leaver status.

- Extensive work to ensure that the culture at the Post Office is overhauled.

- HS noted he strongly disagrees with disparaging views of postmasters and called for a more postmaster-centric approach. In particular, HS suggested an oversight committee chaired by two Postmaster Directors, and explore appointing a third in the future.

- Greater support from UKGI, a view that HS said was shared by other board members; and

- An internal person appointed as SID, recommending Andrew Darfoor as a candidate.

SoS noted that she had received a briefing on the governance issues at the Post Office and that the complaints against HS are so serious that the government need to intervene.

SoS and HS discussed the comms for his departure and agreed to work together on a simple form of words.

SoS and HS agreed he would not attend the board meeting on Monday or Tuesday.

SoS concluded the call by thanking HS for his service; expressing her displeasure that the media had broken the story ahead of a lengthier conversation; and noting HS' recommendations for the Post Office going forward.

-Ends-