

Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance

Mr James Arbuthnot MP
House of Commons
LONDON
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Alan Bates

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6th September 2012

Dear Mr Arbuthnot,

Thank you for your letter dated 3rd September 2012 and as you state, we all want the right result from this undertaking. A fair and independent examination of a number of cases will, I have no doubt, highlight the faults with Horizon, but I had understood that these cases were to comprise of both historic and current issues.

In my letter to you dated 13th July 2012, the day after our meeting, I noted the following had been discussed:-

Current Errors

There would be a Post Office supported undertaking by 2ndSight to obtain current errors occurring in Horizon from serving subpostmasters, which 2ndSight would then investigate and track through the various processes. In order to have errors brought to the attention of 2ndSight, Post Office, at the highest level, would state that all those who submitted items for consideration could do so with impunity. Post Office would make all subpostmasters aware of this through their Subspace magazine.

Though not specifically discussed at the meeting, presumably this immunity with the addition of anonymity would be extended to all Post Office personnel involved with Horizon e.g. H.Q., Chesterfield and Crown Office personnel, etc.

In your response letter to me dated 18th July 2012 on this very point you stated:-

Your point about obtaining cases where current errors are occurring was and is a very good one. I shall write to the Post Office and suggest this, asking firstly that individuals might be prompted to come forward via the Post Office's Subspace magazine, and secondly, for some assurances with regard to immunity. I take your point that this immunity ought to be extended to all personnel involved. Thank you for making it.

If the Post Office form of words you refer to in your last letter to me were meant to address this issue, then it is either not very clear or it has been ignored. True, the form of words does cover some of the points, but the key issue of the current errors does not yet seem to have

been included, that is unless I have missed it. Certainly with regard to our independent expert beginning to get involved, they have made it clear that this point is crucial to the investigation.

I believe I have addressed most of the issues you have asked for my thoughts on. Although with regard to your remarks of it not being wise or feasible to dictate to 2ndSight on how they conduct their investigation, this has never been my intention. Whilst I recognise the skill and expertise that both 2ndSight and our expert can bring to the investigation, they do not have the many years of knowledge and experience of working with Horizon and Post Office from the perspective of a user/subpostmaster, and which we would be delighted to assist them with, if they would find that of use.

As you have rightly stated, 2ndSight outlined how they would conduct their investigation at the meeting, although part of that outline was for the investigation of current cases to go hand in hand with the investigation of the historic cases. I can even recall them commenting on how important current error cases were, as they were easier to track down. To that end we have been compiling information on current errors ever since the meeting, but as things stand at present we are unable to forward these details as they are from serving subpostmasters who we have to protect.

Whilst I do appreciate that this is certainly the best chance the Alliance has been offered so far to help our membership get the justice they deserve. I am sure you will appreciate that it would be pointless to lend our support to any investigation that was not open to considering all the facts that could be made available, if the right conditions prevailed.

Yours sincerely

GRO

Alan Bates
Chairman, Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance