

Alan Bates  
Chairman  
Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance

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Thank you for your email of 10 March regarding the Post Office mediation scheme.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate that the mediation scheme is independent of Government, and decisions relating to the scheme or its operation are matters for the parties involved and not for the Government.

Post Office announced on 10 March that they would put forward for mediation all cases remaining in the scheme except those that have been subject to a previous court ruling. Post Office will consider cases which have been the subject of court rulings carefully on a case by case basis.

This does not equate to Post Office closing the scheme. Cases which remain in the scheme will progress to mediation as set out above, and more swiftly than under the previous situation where cases would be discussed by the Working Group before proceeding to mediation. Given that all parties involved have expressed concern at the length of time which has been taken to review cases, these changes should be welcome in accelerating the process while ensuring that Post Office meet the commitments they have made to applicants.

As a result of Post Office's decision to mediate remaining cases, I understand that they have indeed given notice of termination to Second Sight. Post Office remain committed to working with Second Sight through the remaining period of their contract, and have stated that they will seek to continue to make available to scheme applicants an independent review by Second Sight (where one has not already been provided). Post Office have also stated they will work with Second Sight to support the completion of their further thematic report in order that it is available to inform the ongoing mediation process.

As you are aware, the Working Group has been in existence for some 18 months now, with an independent Chair in Sir Anthony Hooper, and has been fully involved in developing the mediation scheme, overseeing its operation and making decisions on whether particular cases should progress to mediation. Regarding its closure, given that it no longer has a role in determining whether cases are suitable to go to mediation or not, there is no need for its continued operation.

As I know you are also aware, details of the Working Group and its business are confidential, and I am not privy this information. I am aware from the evidence provided in public to the BIS Select Committee that Second Sight are working on a further thematic report and that this would not be published but would, given the need for confidentiality, be issued to the Working Group in due

course. The details of when the report is due to issue, what it might contain, and when it might be discussed, were confidential to the Working Group. As I have said, Post Office have stated they will work with Second Sight to support the completion of this further report, so that it can be used to inform the ongoing mediation progress.

I am pleased that through Second Sight's report and the subsequent investigations, we can remain confident that there is no evidence of system wide problems with Horizon. I also welcome the changes that Post Office has made and continues to make to ensure it best supports subpostmasters. The priority must be to ensure that those applicants remaining in the scheme can have their cases considered swiftly and fairly, and I am hopeful that all parties involved will continue to work constructively to ensure this can happen.

JO SWINSON