

**DRAFT LETTER FOR THE SIGNATURE OF MR JOHNSON TO
ALL MEMBERS OF THE HORIZON WORKING GROUP**

I propose shortly to convene a further meeting of the Horizon Working Group, and my officials will be in touch within the next few days to agree a convenient date.

Before doing so, however, I need first be clear with all of you that it will not be possible to continue with the Group if there is any recurrence of the series of leaks to the media which have followed our recent meetings. I refer, in particular, to the reports which appeared in the press immediately after our discussion with Jeff Rooker, and to the extensive coverage by Christine Buckley of our paper to the PIU which appeared in *The Times* the day following the circulation of the final draft to members of the Group.

These leaks are, of course, an embarrassment to Government; but more importantly they serve to feed the worries and uncertainties of subpostmasters at what is already a very difficult time for them. By publicly underlining the problems before we are in a position to offer worked-through solutions we risk seriously damaging the network whose future viability our remit charges us with improving.

It is not the purpose of this letter to seek to attribute blame for the leaks that have occurred. As some of you already know, I asked Sir Michael Scholar to make some enquiries within the Department and I am satisfied on the basis of these that the leaks did not originate in this Department. I know that Ian McCartney stressed at the first meeting of the Horizon

Working Group that its proceedings and papers were to be regarded as confidential to members of the Group. From now on, if it proves impossible to respect that confidentiality I shall have no alternative but to disband the Group. I very much hope that this will prove unnecessary, but if it does I will continue a dialogue with each of you individually. The added value from our collective and iterative discussions would, however, be forfeited.

I am sorry to write in such stark terms, but I thought it better to be very clear with you about the consequences which will flow from any further leak of the Horizon Working Group's proceedings or papers.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting which I propose should concentrate on a presentation by the Post Office of its plans, aspirations and timescales for the development of network banking.