1	Tuesday, 4 July 2023	1		present this morning and they will continue to
2	(10.00 am)	2		attend from time to time.
3	MR BEER: Just so everyone knows, we're waiting for	3		I'm sorry I won't be able to do that but
4	the Chair to come online.	4		obviously I will review that once we get into
5	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I should be online, actually.	5		the autumn and hopefully I will be fully
6	I have started oh.	6		recovered.
7	MR BEER: Perfect, we can now see and hear you, sir.	7		Just two minor points about the timetable.
8	Can you see and hear us?	8		Tomorrow, if we may, could we start at 10.15,
9	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I can indeed. Yes.	9		Mr Beer. That's simply to facilitate an early
10	MR BEER: Good morning to you. Can I call Mr Ben	10		morning medical appointment of mine. Then on
11	Foat, please?	11		26 July could we finish by 2.00 pm, again to
12	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, just before you do that,	12		facilitate a medical appointment for me.
13	there's just one or two things I'd like to say,	13		Then one other announcement, in a sense
14	if I may, Mr Beer. The first thing I'd like to	14		unrelated, but related to the fact that I held
15	do is to thank all those who were kind enough to	15		a hearing on the 23rd or was it the 27th
16	send messages of support to me via the Inquiry	16		anyway, in late April, about compensation.
17	during my recent illness. That was very kind	17		Obviously, in the normal course of events,
18	and I much appreciated it.	18		I would have produced either an interim report
19	The second thing I'd like to say is that	19		or a progress update, as I promised I would at
20	this four-week session will, I hope, continue	20		the end of the hearing. The current position is
21	uninterrupted by any ill health on my part but	21		that I fully intend to produce an interim report
22	I have been advised that I should conduct the	22		before Parliament rises on 20 July and I can't,
23	hearings remotely, so that, unfortunately,	23		at the moment, see any reason why I shouldn't be
24	I won't be able to pay visits from time to time	24		able to do that.
25	to the Inquiry. I believe the assessors are	25		With those announcements, can I turn to this
	1			2
1	morning's hearing. My understanding, Mr Beer,	1		witness statement that you have previously
2	is that you are going to question Mr Foat. It	2		provided. You should have in front of you
3	is only you who will be questioning him and	3		a hard copy of that witness statement in your
4	then, at the end of that session, I'll simply	4		name, dated 21 June 2023. If you turn to the
5	decide what should happen next and, thereafter,	5		last page of it, page 19, is that your
6	we shall commence Phase 4 with, I think,	6		signature?
7	Mr Ferlinc to give evidence; is that correct?	7	A.	The version that I have in my notes says GRO but
8	MR BEER: Yes, it is, sir, save that Mr Ferlinc	8		that would be where my signature was placed.
9	pronounces his surname it is pronounced in	9	Q.	Thank you. Yesterday, Herbert Smith Freehills,
10	that way, we found out this morning.	10		the Post Office solicitors, kindly wrote us to
11	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, I'm very sorry for	11		pointing out a correction that you wish to make
12	mispronouncing on the first attempt but I shall	12		to paragraph 14(a) of the witness statement. If
13	remember in the future how to pronounce his	13		you turn that up, please. That's at the top of
14	name. Thank you.	14		page 5.
15	MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir. So Mr Foat,	15	A.	Correct.
16	please.	16	Q.	In the fourth line, a date is given as 22 August
17	BEN FOAT (affirmed)	17		2022. Would you like to amend that to 12 August
18	Questioned by MR BEER	18		2022?
19	MR BEER: Good morning, Mr Foat, as you know, my	19	A.	That is correct.
20	name is Jason Beer and I ask questions on behalf	20	Q.	Then something that I'd spotted, if you look at
21	of the Inquiry. Can you give us your full name,	21		page 1, paragraph 3, second line, a request
22	please?	22		"pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006,
23	A. Benjamin Andrew Foat.	23		dated 5 June 2022". Should that be 2023?
24	Q. Thank you for coming to the Inquiry today to	24	A.	Correct.
25	assist us in our work and thank you for the	25	Q.	Save for those two directions, are the contents
	3			4

- 1 of that witness statement true to the best of 2 your knowledge and belief?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. For the purpose of the transcript, and it's 5 already being displayed, the URN is POL0011816

4ds. That can come down from the screen, thank

7 you.

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I'm only going to ask you questions today about a limited range of disclosure issues arising from the disclosure to the Inquiry, on 30 May this year, of an appendix to a prosecution policy had contained racist and offensive identity codes. In particular, I'm not going to ask you about the substance of the issues arising from that disclosure. They will be addressed with other Post Office witnesses when the opportunity arises in Phases 4, 5 and 6 of the Inquiry and we're going to ask you to return at a later stage of the Inquiry to ask you questions about your role in other events that the Inquiry is examining, principally

Can I make two points clear before I ask the substance of my questions. It's right, isn't it, that you're giving evidence today following

- 1 A. Correct.
- 2 Q. You're the general counsel to Post Office
- 3 I imited --
- 4 A. That is correct.
- 5 Q. -- and you're a member of the executive team of
- 6 Post Office Limited?

Phases 5 and 6.

- 7 Α. Correct.
- 8 Q. Is that sometimes called the Group Executive?
- A. The General Executive. 9
- 10 Q. General Executive, thank you.
- 11 Is that the most senior leadership team within the Post Office that's accountable to the 12
- 13 board?
- 14 A. Correct.

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- Q. How long have you been group general counsel? 15
- A. Approximately four years, since 1 May 2019. 16
- 17 Q. In short order, what does your role as general
- 18 counsel involve?
- 19 A. Ultimately, I'm responsible for instructing the
- 20 legal department and the law firms and,
- 21 therefore, managing legal services to the
- 22 company. In addition to that, there are other
- areas of responsibility as well, such as 24 compliance, and I'm the chairman of a subsidiary
- 25 company with the Post Office.

- 1 the service of a Rule 9 Request, so a request
- 2 for evidence addressed to the Post Office
- 3 pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006
- 4 and, therefore, you're giving evidence on behalf
- 5 of the Post Office in a representative capacity
- 6 not a personal capacity; is that right?
- 7 A. That is correct.
- 8 Q. Does it follow that you are, in part, reliant on
- 9 information given to you by others in order to
- 10 write your witness statement and in order to
- 11 answer my questions today?
- Significantly so, yes. 12
- 13 Q. The second point of clarity that I'd like to
- 14 make clear before we get to the substance of the
- 15 questions: none of my questions are designed to
- 16 obtain from you any information which the Post
- 17 Office continues to assert a claim to legal
- 18 professional privilege over; do you understand?
- 19 Α. Understood.
- 20 Q. So please bear that in mind when I'm asking the
- 21 questions. Can I start with your background,
- 22 please. You're a lawyer by profession; is that
- 23 right?

- 24 A. That is correct.
- 25 Q. You have legal qualifications?

- 1 What role did you perform in the Post Office
 - before becoming group general counsel?
- 3 A. Legal director.
- 4 Q. For how long were you legal director?
- 5 A. I was appointed in August 2016.
- 6 Q. Before that, did you work outside the Post
- 7 Office or within the Post Office?
- A. Prior to that, I commenced employment at the 8
- 9 Post Office on -- in August 2015 in the capacity
- of Head of Legal for Financial Services. So 10
- I was dedicated to the Financial Services team 11
- at Post Office. 12
- 13 Q. So August 2015 to date, the role as a lawyer
- 14 within the Post Office, being promoted to legal
- 15 director and then promoted to general counsel in
- 16 May 2019?
- 17 A. That's correct.
- Q. As group general counsel, what role specifically 18
- do you perform, insofar as the Post Office's 19
- 20 engagement with the Inquiry is concerned?
- 21 **A.** So ultimately, obviously, there is a board that
- 22 makes decisions and certain decisions are
- 23 delegated to the General Executive and, in this
- 24 particular case, there is a General Executive
- 25 subcommittee that makes the decisions. Part of

- 1 my responsibility is making sure that the
- 2 provision of legal advice and services is given
- 3 to the company.
- 4 Q. You've previously made four interim disclosure
- 5 statements to this Inquiry and previously
- 6 a witness statement. This is your second
- 7 witness statement; is that right?
- 8 A. That is correct.
- 9 Q. Do you consider that the Post Office acts under
- 10 a duty to be candid with and to assist the
- Inquiry? 11
- Absolutely. 12 A.
- 13 Q. That, amongst other things, fulfils a commitment
- 14 which a series of very senior Post Office
- 15 executives have made publicly and to the
- 16 Inquiry?
- 17 Α. Correct.
- 18 **Q.** You've been general counsel since May 2019.
- 19 That was just after a huge disclosure exercise
- 20 had been completed in the Group Litigation; is
- 21 that right?
- 22 A. I recall that the -- what was referred to as the
- 23 "Common Issues judgment" had been handed down
- 24 I think approximately March 2019. The Horizon
- 25 Issues trial was halfway through at that point.
- 1 What about you? Did you superintend, in any
- 2 way, those exercises?
- 3 A. I didn't actually do the disclosure exercises
- 4 myself. Obviously, that is undertaken by the
- 5 relevant lawyers in the external law firms. As
- 6 part of the Hamilton judgment, it's obviously
- 7 a very complex criminal process and so it was
- 8 necessary to appoint external criminal lawyers
- 9 to advise the board. It's not part of the role
- 10 of the general counsel to make decisions in
- 11 respect of that but certainly to support the
- 12 board receiving advice in respect of what is
- 13 required for disclosure.
- 14 Q. Do you understand that one of the very things
- 15 that this Inquiry is investigating is how it
- 16 came about that, in very many criminal
- 17 prosecutions brought by the Post Office, there
- 18 was what was described by the Court of Appeal as
- 19 "pervasive failures in disclosure for over
- 20 a decade"?
- 21 Correct. Α.
- 22 Q. And that we are investigating what the Court of
- 23 Appeal described as POL's, the Post Office's,
- 24 "approach to investigation and disclosure being
- 25 driven by what the Post Office considered to be

- 1 There were basically a series of trials that
- 2 were to occur in respect of the GLO, which is
- 3 the name that -- was the programme that was
- 4 managing that matter.
- 5 Q. Did you play any part in the disclosure exercise
- 6 for the purpose of the Group Litigation?
- 7 Α.
- 8 Q. Did you play any part in the disclosure exercise
- 9 that occurred in the run-up to what I'm going to
- 10 call the Hamilton appeals?
- A. The Court of Appeal -- correct, at that stage 11
- I had become the general counsel. But 12
- 13 previously, the GLO, as we refer to it, was
- 14 managed in a separate programme and that didn't
- 15 come through my line of responsibility as legal
- 16 director. Obviously, when I became general
- 17 counsel, that changed, and initially HSF were
- 18 appointed in or about, I think, April 2019.
- 19 What about the Hamilton appeals to the Court of
- 20 Appeal Criminal Division? Did you participate
- 21 in any way in the disclosure exercises for the
- 22 purpose of those appeals?
- 23 A. Yes, I was general counsel at that time. Peters
- 24 & Peters and HSF, the two law firms, were
- 25 involved in that process.

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- 1 in its best interests rather than that which the
 - law required"?
- 3 A. Correct. That's a reference to the historical
- 4 practices and I think specifically in -- the
- 5 judgment referred to the investigation practices
- 6 that were conducted at that time.
- 7 Q. Well, and the disclosure practices?
- 8 A. Indeed.

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- 9 Q. And that we're investigating the underlying
- facts which the Court of Appeal described in 10
- 11 relation to disclosure as being "failures that
- 12 were so egregious that a prosecution in any of
- 13 the Horizon cases was an affront to the
- 14 conscience of the court"?
- 15 A. That is correct.
- Q. So, against that background, where the Inquiry 16
- 17 is investigating the Post Office's past
- 18 disclosure failings, which led to wrongful
- 19 convictions and to imprisonments, do you agree
- 20 on behalf of the Post Office that disclosure in
- 21 this Inquiry must be punctilious, it must be
- 22 prompt and it must be complete?
- 23 A. Correct. Post Office is absolutely committed to
- 24 making sure that there is full disclosure. If
- 25 I could just say, you know, genuinely, everyone

1 in the teams, in the different law firms, are 2 working incredibly hard. I recognise that there 3 are a number of areas where we have fallen short 4 and I do apologise to the Inquiry and especially 5 to the Core Participants. But, genuinely, the 6 team are working incredibly hard to make sure 7 that we do the full disclosure that we must do, 8 and remediate any issues that do come to light.

9 Q. How many people within the internal Post Office 10 Legal Support division, if I can call it that, are working on Inquiry disclosure? 11

So within the Post Office internal team, it has 12 Α. 13 varied over the years, depending -- as the 14 Inquiry has evolved. It will have varied from 15 anywhere, I think, between four to what 16 I understand is now eight lawyers. Of course, 17 there are many issues that the Inquiry lawyers 18 must attend to in addition to disclosure.

19 Q. You're assisted, I think, by Herbert Smith 20 Freehills, HSF as you referred to them already. 21 They're the Post Office's recognised legal 22 representatives in the Inquiry presently? 23 A. That is correct.

24 Q. Can you give us a similar figure, please, of how 25 many were working or have been working --

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exercise that you've referred to previously in relation to the Hamilton judgment.

Subsequently to that, in January 2022, Peters & Peters also undertook in advance of the Rule 11 and 14 requests, again looking through the data repositories of Post Office, which I should say is complex and vast, and they were trying to ascertain and get as many of the relevant documents, or rather responsive documents, so that when the Rule 11 and Rule 14 requests came in, Post Office was able to search

12 13 Q. Are you satisfied that everyone within each of 14 the teams that you've just mentioned understands 15 that this Inquiry is itself investigating 16 pervasive disclosure failures that lasted over 17 a decade, that sent people to prison?

A. Yes. I do believe everyone that is working at 18 19 HSF, at Peters & Peters and Post Office, we 20 recognise that this is an extremely serious 21 issue

22 Q. And that, therefore, the Post Office's 23 disclosure obligations in this Inquiry are 24 heightened because we're investigating the issue 25 of non-disclosure?

2 Inquiry? 3 A. Indeed, my understanding is that 46 lawyers are 4 working specifically on these disclosure and remediation issues. I'm happy to come back and 5 6 give an exact figure but that is my

I imagine that waxes and wanes as well -- on the

7 understanding based on what I've been told. 8 Q. Same question, please, in relation to Peters &

9 Peters?

10 A. I think it is much smaller. Again, I'd want to 11 come back but my understanding is that there are at least five. 12

13 Q. Can you explain briefly, please, the role that 14 Peters & Peters presently perform? A. Sure. As part of the disclosure process, what 15

16 Peters & Peters, and indeed Post Office, sought 17 to do was to make sure we could collate all 18 relevant materials so that, when Rule 9 requests 19 came through, the organisation would be in 20 a position to be able to respond to those. So 21 back in 2020, Peters & Peters were looking at 22 what was called the post-conviction disclosure 23 exercise and, as part of that exercise, they 24 were searching through repositories of 25 information, and that was part of a disclosure

Quite.

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2 You mention in your witness statement a unit 3 within the Post Office called the Central 4 Investigations Unit. What function or functions 5 does the Central Investigations Unit perform, so 6 far as concerns this Inquiry?

So the Central Investigations Unit was a unit that was relatively recently established. Following the criticisms that were contained in 10 the Hamilton judgment, which referred to 11 investigations and disclosure not being 12 satisfactory. The Central Investigations Unit 13 was established to make sure that good 14 investigation practices occur across the 15 organisation.

16 So it's what I call a second line of defence 17 function, in that when issues arise within the organisation that require an investigation, the 18 19 Central Investigations Unit make sure that those 20 issues are investigated appropriately, according 21 to industry standards.

22 Q. A line of defence against who?

23 A. Sorry, I used the expression "the second line of 24 defence". It's a compliance concept: three 25 lines of defence. So, in summary, the first

- 1 line of defence is usually the business that
- 2 does the activity; the second line of defence is
- 3 an assurance function, so that can commonly
- 4 include a legal department, compliance function,
- 5 an assurance function; and then the third line
- 6 of defence is an audit function.
- 7 Q. What function do they perform specifically in
- 8 relation to the disclosure exercise being
- 9 undertaken for the purposes of this Inquiry?
- 10 A. In what respect?
- 11 Q. That's my question. Do they perform any
- 12 function in relation to the disclosure exercise
- 13 that's being undertaken for the purposes of this
- 14 Inquiry?
- 15 A. Not specifically, unless there is a particular
- 16 issue that is raised and referred to them, and
- so, in this context, given appendix 6 and the
- 18 failure to disclose, they are involved, together
- 19 with Jeremy Scott-Joynt KC.
- 20 Q. I'm not sure he's a KC.
- 21 A. Oh, apologies.
- 22 Q. I think he's only 2018 call. So I'm not sure
- 23 that he will have quite achieved the status of
- 24 King's Counsel yet.
- 25 A. Apologies. In any event, he's of counsel that
 - 17
- 1 files of investigation in the case of those
- 2 suspected of criminal offences? So there's
- 3 a suite of documents, of which there are eight
- 4 in number?
- 5 A. Correct. It's not the Central Investigations
- 6 team but it was the Security --
- 7 Q. Yes, I said security team?
- 8 A. My apologies. Security Investigations Team.
- 9 Q. The document we're currently looking at on the
- 10 screen, is this the first in the series of eight
- 11 documents?
- 12 A. I understand that to be the case.
- 13 Q. Thank you. I'm not going to delve into the
- 14 substance of the issues, as I've said already,
- but, in order to provide some understanding of
- 16 the documents we're about to look at, can you
- 17 assist us with what your understanding is of
- 18 what this document is, the front of the suite of
- 19 eight.
- 20 A. So my understanding is that this document was
- 21 used previously when Post Office conducted
- 22 prosecutions. It was used in two ways. One was
- 23 a working document and, in the second respect,
- 24 it was to act as a compliance check. So when
- 25 I referred to a second line of defence before,

- 1 is providing oversight to that investigation
- 2 team, together with an organisation, ETICA, to
- 3 investigate.
- 4 Q. With that background, can we turn to the issues,
- 5 then, please. Can we start by looking at
- 6 POL00115668 -- sorry POL00115669. Right, that's
- 7 going to be difficult. Have you got in your
- 8 bundle in front of you -- sir, I think it's in
- 9 your tab B11, in volume 1 -- a colour document
- 10 called "Security Operations Team, Case
- 11 Compliance". If you haven't, please do borrow
- mine. I wonder if it could be walked down to
- 13 you.
- 14 Ah, yes. We've now got it on the screen.
- 15 A. Sorry, is the document A3? POL00038452?
- 16 Q. No. It's on the screen now.
- 17 A. Okay.
- 18 Q. Is it right that that for a period of time, the
- 19 length of which has yet to be established and is
- 20 presently being investigated by the Project May
- 21 investigation team that you have just mentioned,
- 22 that the Post Office maintained and operated
- a suite of documents, there are eight of them,
- that gave guidance to members of its security
- 25 team as to the construction and completion of
 - 18
- 1 my understanding is that the document was to be
- 2 used both in terms of undertaking the
- 3 prosecution work but also as a quality check.
- 4 Q. So it's how to structure case files, offender
- reports and other documents within the case file, and then there's a score on the right-hand
- 7 column, which, if we just scroll down we can
- 8 see, adds up to 100. If we scroll back up
- o cos, addo up to 100. Il wo colon back up
- 9 again, presumably these were marked -- so look
- 10 under "File Construction", to take
- an uncontentious one, fourth row. The author of
- the document must use the correct font for all
- reports, namely Chevin light 12, which is
- 14 a font, and if they do that, they score
- 15 0.5 per cent, yes?
- 16 A. Correct.
- 17 Q. Is it your understanding that sitting behind
- this first document, for a period of time which
- 19 is yet to be established, was a series of other
- 20 documents that fed into or assisted the
- 21 completion exercise contemplated by this
- 22 document?
- 23 A. I understand that is the case.
- 24 Q. Thank you.
- 25 A. There are connected documents.

1	Q.	Yes, so there are some documents that are	1		appendices A, B and C."
2		connected to, that help you to do the things	2		Yes?
3		that this requires?	3	A.	Correct.
4	A.	That's my understanding.	4	Q.	Then another document that's sat behind that
5	Q.	Thank you. Now, amongst the documents that sit	5		first coloured Excel document we looked at, can
6		behind or sat behind that first document, can we	6		we look at POL00094200.
7		look at them, please. POL00115670, thank you.	7		Again, a Post Office document headed up
8		You'll see this is entitled:	8		"Security Operations Team", with the subject of
9		"Post Office Limited	9		"Summarising of Tape Recorded Interviews":
10		"Security Operations Team	10		"The purpose of the document is to advise
11		"Compliance.	11		Security Managers to changes in the requirement
12		"Guide to the Preparation and Layout of	12		for summarising tape recorded interviews."
13		Investigation Red Label Case Files	13		Yes?
14		"File Construction and Appendices A, B & C."	14	A.	Correct. I recognise that as appendix 7.
15		So it's a document of the Post Office and,	15	Q.	So we're looking at a series of documents that
16		in particular, its Security and Operations Team,	16		sat behind that first Excel document. Can we
17		yes?	17		turn to POL00115672.
18	A.	Yes.	18	A.	I should just add, when I say I recognise that
19	Q.	Then we can see the purpose of the document by	19		as appendix 7, I recognise that now, obviously,
20		reading at the foot of the page the	20		not at the time.
21		introduction:	21	Q.	Yes. POL00115672. Again, another document in
22		"The aim of this document is to give	22		the suite that sits behind the Excel. If we
23		guidance to Security Operations Managers and	23		just scroll down to look at the document as
24		Team Leaders on the current compliance standards	24		a whole, what do you understand this document to
25		for the preparation of red label case files and	25		be, or the purpose of this document to be?
		21			22
1	Α.	So starting on the first page, it's	1		documents, please. POL00115674. This was
2	Λ.	an investigation template that the Security	2		another of the series of documents that sat
3		Investigations Team would have used in the	3		behind or was related to the first document that
4		course of their work when they were	4		we saw, yes, the Excel document? It's part of
5		investigating and considering prosecution.	5		the suite and it contains a description of seven
6	Q.	So if we go back to the first page, please.	6		identification codes, correct?
7	α.	Thank you. We can see that it's in the style of	7	A.	Correct.
8		a template this one is blank and it	8		I should say I'm going to read out some of the
9		requires data to be entered in when a person is	9	α.	identification codes on the document as they are
10		being considered for prosecution, essentially,	10		printed. They are racist and offensive but I'm
11		yes?	11		going to read them out.
12	Α.	Correct.	12		Identification code 1: the document says
13	Q.	You see in the top right, underneath the	13		that you are a "white skinned European type" if
14	α.	heading, it says, "Identification Code". Do you	14		you're British, French, German, Swedish, Polish
15		understand that to be a reference to a series of	15		or Russian, yes?
16		numerical codes that correlate to an assessment	16	A.	Correct.
17		of a person's racial or ethnic identification?	17	Q.	
18	Α.	Correct.	18		are Greek, Cypriot, Turkish, Spanish, Italian,
19	Q.	So the author of the document, the person	19		Sicilian or Sardinian, yes?
20	٦.	filling out this template, had to enter an ID	20	A.	Correct.
21		code	21	Q.	You are a "Negroid type" if you are West Indian,
22	Α.	Correct.	22	٠.	Nigerian, African or Caribbean?
23	Q.	for the suspect?	23		You are "Indian/Pakistani type" if you're
24	Α.	That's correct.	24		Asian.
- · 25	Q.	Can we look at another of the series of	25		You're "Chinese/Japanese type" if you're
-		23			24

		Maiayan, Japanese, Fillippino (Sic), Burnese,	1		we can see who it is norm, thank you. It's norm
2		Siamese, or from Mongolia or Mongolian, perhaps.	2		the Inquiry, it's addressed to the partner then
3		You're "Arabian/Egyptian type" if you are	3		handling matters at Herbert Smith Freehills, and
4		Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan or North African.	4		it's dated 28 February 2022, so it is a letter
5		Or you're not known, ID code 7.	5		addressed to your recognised legal
6	A.	That is correct.	6		representatives from the Inquiry. We can see
7	Q.	So there was a correction of eight documents	7		from the heading what the request is about:
8		sitting behind the first one that we saw, the	8		"Request for information pursuant to Rule 9
9		guide; the guidance summarising the completion	9		of the Inquiry Rules 2006 Request number 11
10		of tape recorded interviews; the ID code	10		Matters arising from Board Minutes (excluding
11		template which required you to enter an ID code	11		Project Sparrow minutes)."
12		in; and then this identification code or ID	12		You referred earlier to Rule 9(11) and
13		codes document.	13		Rule 9(14). Were you using that as shorthand
14		That can come down, thank you.	14		for the way in which the Inquiry styles its
15		Can I turn to the question of disclosure of	15		requests? They are each sequentially numbered.
16		that material to this Inquiry?	16		This was the 11th in the series and there's
17		Can we begin, please, by looking at	17		a summary of what it was about in that heading.
18		a request made by the Inquiry to the Post Office	18	A.	That is correct.
19		for the disclosure of documents dated	19	Q.	So when you refer to Rule 9(11) that's what this
20		28 February 2012 (sic), INQ00002007.	20		is about.
21	SIR	WYN WILLIAMS: Could you give me the date of	21	A.	Correct.
22		that document again, please, Mr Beer?	22	Q.	So it's a request made pursuant to Rule 9 of the
23	MR	BEER: Yes, 28 February 2012 sorry, 2022!	23		Inquiry Rules 2006 and, for those not familiar,
24	SIR	WYN WILLIAMS: That's what confused me.	24		that's the provision, is this right, by which
25	MR	BEER: Yes, 2022. If we just scroll up just so 25	25		the Inquiry formally requests the disclosure of 26
1		documents from the Post Office and others?	1		a response was due by 31 March 2022, so it gives
2	A.	That is right.	2		a month to reply to the request?
3	Q.	If we scroll through the document, please.	3	Δ	Correct.
4	Œ.	You'll see that there's information about other	4		The Post Office responded to Rule 9(11) part 15
5		things and then, if we stop there, request 15	5	α.	on 14 May 2022 by disclosing some documents to
6		within Rule 9(11) was a request for disclosure	6		the Inquiry and, amongst those documents that
7		of:	7		were disclosed, was one document that's relevant
8		"The Minutes of the Audit, Risk and	8		to the present issues. Can we look, please, at
9		Compliance Subcommittee of the 11 February 2014	9		POL00038452. Thank you. This is a version of
10		refer to a report which outlined the	10		the guidance that we just saw. Can you see
11		proposed changes to the prosecutions policy and	11		that?
12		a paper to explain the most appropriate way to	12	A.	
13		communicate the prosecutions policy."	13	Q.	
14		Then this:	14	α.	"Security Operations Team
15		"Please provide copies of the same and	15		"Compliance
16		copies of <u>all</u> iterations of the prosecutions	16		"Guide to the Preparation and Layout of
17		policy since 1999 that are in POL's custody or	17		Investigation Red Label Case Files.
18		control."	18		"Offender reports & Discipline reports."
19		So it's that last sentence that's the	19		So it's by no means exactly the same as the
20		operative one, is that right, Mr Foat, "copies	20		guide that I showed you earlier but, in very
21		of <u>all</u> iterations of prosecutions policy since	21		broad terms, fulfils the same purpose as the
22		1999 that are in POL's possession or control"?	22		guide that we just saw, namely to give guidance
23	A.	Correct.	23		on the construction of files and the contents of
24	Q.	I'm not going to turn it up now, if we go to the	24		prosecution files.
25		last page of the letter, we can see that	25	Α.	
		27			28

1	Q.	So, in response to request 15 in our Rule 9(11),
2		we received this document?

- 3 A. Correct.
- 4 Q. Correct? Now, I think you agree, Mr Foat, that
- 5 the documents which ought to have been disclosed
- 6 in answer to the request were the suite of
- 7 documents that we've just been discussing?
- 8 A. Correct.
- 9 Q. Therefore, including the other iteration of this
- 10 guide, but also all of the other documents that
- 11 I showed you, including the ID codes document
- 12 containing the racist and offensive identity
- 13 codes?
- 14 A. Yes. Correct. The suite of documents should
- 15 have been provided.
- 16 Q. That should have been provided to us in the
- 17 spring of 2022?
- 18 A. I think the -- certainly, the policy documents
- 19 absolutely needed to be provided. I read them
- as being both the request 11 and the request 14
- 21 as requiring the full suite of documents to be
- 22 provided.
- 23 Q. Okay, we'll take that shortly in the interests
- 24 of time. There was a follow-up request in
- 25 August 2022. Request 14, so Rule 9(14), and
- 1 platform. So within the context of this
- 2 Inquiry, it contains the data repositories of
- 3 the Post Office, which contains, I understand
- 4 54 million documents.
- 5 Q. So it's a commercially available, purchasable,
- 6 e-disclosure platform?
- 7 A. Correct.
- 8 Q. You continue:
- 9 "Those searches were designed to identify
- 10 responsive documents in a database that contains
- 11 millions of documents. The CCRC database is
- 12 hosted on Relativity by POL's eDiscovery
- 13 provider, KPMG, together with other databases
- 14 that hold POL documents. The CCRC database
- 15 contains materials collated for the purposes of
- 16 the criminal appeals. Searches were and are run
- 17 across this database for the purposes of
- 18 disclosure in accordance with POL's
- 19 post-conviction disclosure obligations, to
- 20 conduct document reviews, and to identify and
- 21 produce documents to the Inquiry."
- 22 If we move down to paragraph 17, you say
- 23 a document, which you've called Appendix 3,
- that's the guide, yes?
- 25 **A.** Yes.

- 1 you're saying that would have captured all of
- 2 the documents. I'm not going to quibble with
- 3 you over which was the trigger, whether it was
- 4 9(11) or 9(14), but, by the middle of 2022 we
- 5 should have had the suite of full documents?
- 6 A. Yes, correct.
- 7 Q. Sorry, the full suite of documents?
- 8 A. Correct.
- 9 Q. Can I look at now why we didn't get them?
- 10 A. Yes, sure.

- 11 Q. Can we look at your witness statement, please,
- page 5, paragraph 16. Thank you, it's page 5.,
- paragraph 16, at the foot of the page. You deal
- 14 with them compendiously. You say:
 - "Requests No 11 and No 14 sought POL policy
- 16 and procedure documents relating to POL's
- 17 conduct of criminal investigations and
- 18 prosecutions. To identify such arguments,
- 19 [Peters & Peters] and [Herbert Smith Freehills]
- 20 ran search terms across a Relativity database
- 21 which I will refer to as the CCRC database."
- 22 Just stopping there, "Relativity database",
- can you explain what a Relatively database is,
- 24 please?
- 25 A. It's an eDiscovery, electronic disclosure

30

- 1 Q. I'm going to call it the guide:
- 2 "[The guide] was responsive to the search
- 3 terms run by [Herbert Smith Freehills] across
- 4 the CCRC database for the purpose of Request
- No 11. The other appendices were not produced
- 6 for the following reasons:
 - "Copies of appendices 1, 2, 4, and 5 [they
- 8 are other of the suite of eight documents that
- 9 sat behind the Excel] belonged to the same
- 10 'family of documents' as [the guide]."
- 11 Yes.

7

14

19

- 12 A. Correct.
- 13 Q. "... (ie [those documents] were all contained in
 - a zip [file] that was attached to an email dated
- 15 7 March 2013 that was sent by a POL Security
- 16 Team manager)."
- 17 A. Correct.
- 18 Q. "Although they belonged to the same 'family of
 - documents', Appendices 1, 2, 4 and 5 were not
- 20 produced at the same time as [the guide] because
- 21 they were not responsive to the search terms so
- they were not reviewed for the purpose of
- 23 responding to Request No 11."
- 24 Yes?
- 25 A. That's correct.

1	Q.	To summarise what you're saying is that, for the
2		purposes of responding to request 11, search

3 terms were used, ie words --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- were used. They only picked up the guide

6 document. They didn't pick up any of the other

7 documents?

8 A. Correct.

9 $\,$ **Q.** And that, although the guide document was within

10 a family of other documents, those other

11 documents were not disclosed?

12 A. Correct.

14

13 Q. Then if we go down to (b), you say:

"Appendices 6, 7 and 8" --

15 Appendix 6 is the ID codes document that

16 contains the racist and offensive language?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. "... were not responsive to search terms and

19 were not within the 'family of documents' and it

20 was not apparent at the time that they belonged

21 to the suite of documents."

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Can I ask you some questions from what you're

24 saying here. So an email has been sent on

25 7 March 2013 that contained Appendices 1-5 as

33

1 I understand why, from what they have told me,

2 the reason for that is because it wasn't

3 responsive, so they didn't look into the family

4 of documents.

5 Q. So because --

8

16

18

6 A. Just factually speaking.

7 Q. Yes. So because there wasn't also a hit in the

other four appendices, we're not going to look

9 to see what those appendices contain to see

10 whether they touch upon or are relevant to the

11 document that does contain the hit --

12 A. That is correct.

13 **Q.** -- even though they're within a family together?

14 A. Yes. That is correct.

15 Q. Was that guidance -- was that the guidance that

was given, that you -- because there are no hits

in another part of the family, you don't look at

the other part of the family?

19 A. I would need to take that question away. I am

20 not aware. I do know that there are cases

21 where, even though there aren't those hits, the

22 family documents would be checked, but it would

23 depend on the relevant request, it would depend

on the suite of documents that was contained, so

25 I imagine a zip file. But I'm not instructed

1 a zip file, yes?

2 **A.** Mm-hm.

3 Q. The guide document was Appendix 3, and that

caused a hit to a search term, yes?

5 A. Correct.

4

6 **Q.** Only Appendix 3, the guide, was disclosed to us,

7 but not the other four documents in the family?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. What guidance was given to your document

10 reviewers about what they should do with

11 documents that are within a family of documents,

12 ie documents which are linked to one another,

when only one of them is responsive to a search

14 term?

25

15 A. So there is guidance that's given to the

16 reviewers. There is both a first tier and

17 a second tier review. Reviewers are encouraged,

18 if they do have any queries, to raise them. My

19 understanding is that -- to the approach to

20 family of documents is that they would look at

the relevant context, the relevant request, and

22 determine whether or not the family of documents

23 should be looked at.

24 In this particular case, they didn't look at

what I call Appendix 1, 2, 4 and 5, and

34

1 with that particular detail.

2 Q. Have any changes been made to any guidance that

3 did exist on how to treat families of documents

4 since this episode has unfolded?

5 A. Since this has occurred, yes. So most recently,

6 HSF have gone through -- obviously to date there

7 has been roughly disclosure of 117,000

8 documents. HSF have identified that there are

9 approximately 30,000 documents that would be

10 family documents of the 117,000. They've

11 then -- obviously that's just responsive, that's

12 not necessarily relevant.

They've then gone on to identify that there

14 would be approximately 1,500 documents that are

relevant, of which I understand less than 700

16 would be relevant to Phase 4.

17 **Q.** The phase that we start in about an hour's time?

18 A. Correct.

13

19 Q. Have you investigated the content of the

20 instructions that were given to document

21 reviewers that enabled them to discard other

documents within a family, on the basis that the

23 other documents didn't themselves respond to

24 a search term?

25 A. That is an ongoing question for remediation.

1	Q.	Would you agree that the approach of only
2		disclosing documents within a family if they are
3		themselves responsive to a search term is
4		a rather mechanistic approach to a disclosure
5		exercise?

A. I do agree. It's obviously a very difficult
exercise to be managing a repository of
54 million documents. Of course, the reviewers
don't know of the relevant documents. So they
are -- there's a number of processes that go on.
So search terms is one way. But there are other
avenues that are also done to try to identify

the documents. But I accept your premise.
Q. It's rather mechanistic because it focuses on -the use of search terms will turn over or
potentially turn over the documents and only the
documents that are responsive to our search
terms and not apply a human mind to the
documents that accompany or are related to that

21 A. Understood.

document?

20

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22 Q. So if there was, for example, an email attaching
 23 two documents, two Word documents, asking for
 24 views from two people and they set out opposing
 25 views on an issue, if one of the attachments was

occasion and why it occurred?

2 A. Yes.

Q. Is it your understanding, on this occasion, that
the reviewer did not look in any of the other of
the suite of documents in the zip file to see
whether they are responsive to the request that
was made?

8 A. That is so.

Q. They didn't apply a human mind to it?

10 A. I can't comment as to what was in their mind but11 what you have said is factually accurate.

what you have said is factually accurate.
Q. But is it an outlier, is what I'm driving at?
Is it somebody made a mistake or is it because

of the instructions they were given were faulty?

15 "If you've got an email that's got two

attachments, ten attachments, have a look,

17 reviewer, to see whether the entire suite of

18 documents should be disclosed". Was that

19 instruction given?

A. I don't think the instruction was given, and my
 rationale for saying that is there were cases
 there they did check. But I take your point and
 accept that the approach taken in this
 particular case was that, had the family

25 documents been checked, then it would have

1 worded in a way that was responsive to your

2 search terms, and the other one wasn't, on this

3 approach, the reviewer would only look in the

4 document that was responsive to the search term,

5 and wouldn't look in the other document?

6 A. Factually, that's what happened in this7 particular situation. I think the broader issue

8 is around the de-duplication --

9 $\,$ **Q.** I'm going to come to that in a moment. I'm just

10 looking at what the reviewers did, if they're

11 confronted with an email, it's got two things

12 attached to it, they get a hit for one document

13 because a word has been used --

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. -- they are not instructed. That's part of
16 an email chain. There are two documents
17 attached to the email. Have a look yourself in
18 the other document and see whether it responds
19 to the request?

A. I think they are and, in certain cases, they
 have done that. I would like an opportunity to
 perhaps bring back that guidance and --

Q. This is your opportunity, Mr Foat. We have
 asked you to set out in writing, in your 19-page
 witness statement, what occurred on this

38

identified documents Appendix 1, 2, 4 and 5, but twouldn't have identified appendix 6, 7 and 8.

3 Q. When would appendix 6, 7 and 8 have been4 identified?

5 A. Those documents would have only been identified
 6 in the -- by the de-duplication process.

7 Q. Can you explain what the de-duplication process8 is please?

9 **A.** Sure. When providing documents to the Inquiry,10 obviously in a massive repository in

11 an organisation, there may be duplicates of

documents. So rather than actually provide

13 literally the same document, there is a process

14 called de-duplication. Now, in this particular

15 case, where the error occurred, is that instead

16 of --

17 Q. Sorry, can I interrupt: the second error.

18 A. Yes, correct. Where the error occurred, or
19 second error, was that when you de-duplicate,
20 you should de-duplicate if they're identical.
21 In this case there were other attachments that
22 were de-duplicated. So if I could perhaps

23 explain that more clearly.

So when you have -- and we talk about families of documents. So when you have what's

1 called a primary or parent document, so a cover 2 email, and it contains a series of attachments, 3 so you might send photographs of plants, which 4 are the attachments. What happens in what's 5 called the top-line de-duplication process, if 6 you have an attachment, an email that -- sorry, 7 you have an email, which is your parent document 8 and then you have, let's say, three attachments 9 which have three different plants -- insert 10 whatever sort of plant you want -- what should normally happen is that, where you have 11 12 literally the exact same replica of that, so 13 there is another version that is identical, that 14 has exactly the same cover email with the same 15 attachments of those three plants, that would 16 then be de-duplicated and that's called the 17 top-line methodology.

> That didn't happen here. What happened in this particular case is that, where there were versions -- so instead of having an exact replica of the cover email with the three different attachments, where there were versions where there was the cover email but, let's say, four plants that were attached to the email, the item line methodology that was used meant that

a family, I'm not going to look at the family.

That document itself is also a part of other

2

3 families but, because I've already decided to

4 disclose that single document, the guide, I'm 5

not going to look at other families in which

6 that document appears.

- 7 Yes, that's the first point, in respect of the 8 approach to family documents.
- Q. Yes. 9

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- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. But you're not going to look at the appearance
- 12 of that document elsewhere in the document
- 13 universe because it is assessed to be
- 14 a duplicate?
- 15 A. Correct.

23

- 16 Q. So I missed the opportunity to see in what
- 17 context the document appears in all of those
- 18 other places in the document universe?
- Yes, had the de-duplicate process been the 19 Α.
- 20 accurate process, it would have led to the
- 21 identification of all of the documents.
- 22 Q. So you're missing the opportunity to see whether
- that document appears in another family, and 24 where in the family it appears, and whether
- 25 other documents in those other families also
 - 43

it would consider them as the same when they 1

2 were not. And they would therefore de-duplicate

3 and, therefore, that is why the Inquiry did not

4 get to see and, indeed, the reviewers didn't get

5 to see Appendix 6, 7 and 8.

6 Q. You describe that in paragraph 18 of your

7 witness statement on page 7, at the top of the

8 page you say, "Copies of Appendix 3" that's the

9 guide, yes:

10 "Copies of Appendix 3 exist in duplicate, 11 and near duplicate form in the CCRC database ...

some of those duplicate versions of Appendix 3 12

13 have family documents ... The duplicate versions

14 of Appendix 3 were tagged as 'duplicate' by

15 POL's eDiscovery provider, KPMG, and so they

16 were considered unnecessary to review."

17 That's a shortened way of explaining what 18 you just said, yes?

19 A. Yes, apologies.

21

8

20 Q. What you're just saying here is, as I've put to

you, there's a double error. There's the one

22 we've spoken about already, but what you're

23 describing that the Post Office did, and its

24 document providers did, is, I find a document

25 that's responsive to a search term, it's part of

42

1 need to be disclosed?

2 Yes, working it backwards. Correct.

3 Q. The guide to which Appendix 3 -- so the guide,

4 which is Appendix 3, was itself undated, wasn't

5 it. There's no date on it.

6 A. Yes, I believe so.

7 Yes, it's undated. Wouldn't it be important,

therefore, to disclose the email of 20 March

9 2013 to show that that document and the other

10 four documents which were part of the family

11 were in circulation at that point, March 2013?

12 A. Yes, but they weren't responsive. But I agree,

13 they ought to have been but, factually, they

14

weren't responsive.

15 Q. Because all we get is a free-floating appendix

that could be a year old, it could be 50 years 16

17 old. We don't know the date of it. So having

the email that says "This was sent between A and 18

B on 7 March 2013", shows that it was at least 19

20 in circulation then?

21 Of course --

22 Q. It helps to try to date the document, doesn't

23

24 A. Indeed, and for which I can only apologise. To

25 be fair to the reviewer, of course, if the

1		documents weren't responsive, they themselves	1		findings".
2		wouldn't have known.	2		You tell us, from paragraph 36 onwards,
3	Q.	But this document was responsive, wasn't it, the	3		things that have now been done in the light of
4		guide	4		the revelation of the problem, the
5	A.	Oh, sorry, the guide was	5		non-disclosure problem.
6	Q.	But the email to which it was attached wasn't	6	A.	Correct, the point why I reflect is that, whilst
7		itself disclosed?	7		there have been examinations, there have been
8	A.	Correct.	8		a number of steps that have been taken,
9	Q.	All we got was an undated document?	9		obviously before now, in order to secure
10	A.	Correct.	10		documents and to speak to people. So that's
11	Q.	Can we look at a similar problem, please, and	11		just the point that I was attempting to clarify.
12		turn to paragraph 44 of your witness statement,	12	Q.	
13		which is on page 15. You say:	13	A.	But, yes, obviously since 30 May there has been
14		"An examination of emails obtained from the	14		an examination of all of this to remediate the
15		historic Security Team's archive has been	15		issues as quickly as possible.
16		carried out."	16	Q.	
17		Just to date this exercise, this is part of	17	٦.	been done now, now that the non-disclosure
18		the post-revelation of the problem clear-up	18		problem has been pointed out, yes?
19		exercise; is that right? What you're referring	19	A.	
20		to happening in paragraph 44?	20		relevant documents were collated and put on to
21	Α.	Apologies. If I could just have a moment to	21		Relativity and it was done initially through
22	۸.	read the context?	22		the in 2020 in the post-conviction
23	Q.	Yes. If you go back to the heading, to	23		disclosure
24	α.	paragraph 36. It says:	24	Q.	
25		"Investigative steps and preliminary 45	25	Ψ.	paragraphs 44(a) to (e) were, in fact, on 46
1		Relativity at the time that the searches in	1		to compliance checks. This process is due to
2		March and then August 2022 were carried out?	2		commence in June and is designed to raise
3	A.	Correct.	3		standards of files submitted (including their
4	Q.	What I want to understand is why they weren't	4		contents reports, taped summaries, appendix
5		turned up in March and August 2022. So in	5		enclosures, recoveries, stakeholders, etc) and
6		paragraph 44, you set out a series of emails,	6		ensure there is a consistent approach across the
7		which you say are from the historic Security	7		team. It is also probably an opportune time
8		Team's archive. There are five of them, but (a)	8		given that we have recently recruited new people
9		and (b) are essentially the same chain. So	9		to the team.
10		there are four email chains.	10		"I've associated relevant documents that
11		I just want to go through them, please. Can	11		feed into the compliance process. Please
12		we start, please, with POL00118096. Thank you.	12		familiarise yourself with these documents."
13		If we can scroll down, please. I'm sorry,	13		Then there will be some meetings and the
14		just to the bottom of the first page. Thank	14		dates are set out. If we just scroll up we can
15		you.	15		see a forwarded email of August 2011 attaching
16		You can see it's an email dated 23 May 2011,	16		the compliance zip that Mr Posnett referred to,
17		from Dave Posnett, who was an accredited	17		yes?
18		financial investigator in the Security	18	A.	Correct.
19		Operations Team, to a wide group of people,	19	Q.	So you've got an email of May 2011 from Dave
20		correct?	20		Posnett of the Security Team to a wide range of
21	A.	Correct.	21		people in the Security Team attaching a zip file
22	Q.	He says, under the subject, "Casework	22		about case compliance. Now, that zip file
23		Compliance":	23		contained a series of documents. Can we look,
24		"Most of you are aware that case files	24		please, at POL00118101. We can see it's the
25		submitted for legal advice will become subject	25		guide, yes?
		47			48

- A. 1 Yes.
- 2 Q. So the guide would have been responsive to the
- 3 search terms in the same way as Appendix 3 was
- 4 and produced a hit, yes?
- 5 **A.** The guide, which is Appendix 3, was responsive.
- 6 Q. Yes. So if a search had been undertaken using
- 7 those search terms, this guide, being
- 8 an attachment to this email, as part of a zip
- 9 file, would also be responsive?
- 10 A. I don't think the email would have been
- responsive, but the guide, Appendix 3, yes. 11
- What is displayed to the reviewer when they get 12 Q.
- 13 a hit?
- A. They have a list, there's a whole list of 14
- 15 documents that they have. So they would have to
- 16 click in to it to actually see the relevant
- 17 document.
- 18 What is displayed to the reviewer to show them Q.
- 19 that it is part of a family of documents?
- 20 There is -- my understanding is that there is
- 21 an icon that they would have to click into to
- 22 link it into the family document.
- 23 Q. So just --
- 24 A. But I don't think -- and I'm happy to check
- 25 this, but I don't think that email would have
- 1 important, isn't it, because the email shows who
- 2 was distributing it, the email shows to whom it
- 3 was distributed. The content of the email shows
- 4 an instruction. "You must comply with this, and
- 5 you're going to be audited for your compliance".
- 6 They're all relevant things that we get from the
- 7 email that we don't get from the guide? 8
- Of course, and I recognise that. I think 9 factually what happened here is that, because
- 10 the cover email, if you like, wasn't responsive,
- 11 it was sitting -- I imagine it would have been
- 12 sitting in the family documents but it was not
- 13 checked. That is plainly wrong and so
- 14 I acknowledge that point but, just factually,
- 15 that's why I don't think that email was picked
- 16 up at that point.
- 17 Q. Can we look, please, at POL00118104. This was
- 18 also an attachment to Mr Posnett's email, the
- 19 racist and offensive ID codes document, and so
- 20 this was part of the family too, agreed?
- 21 Α. Agreed.

A.

- 22 Q. So if we got the email, we would know that it
- 23 was Mr Posnett, on 23 May 2011, distributing to
- 24 a wide variety of people within the security and
- 25 operations team saying, "You've got to comply

- 1 been responsive because, looking at the email,
- 2 it doesn't contain any of the search terms.
- 3 Q. No, but if the guide contained a responsive
 - search term, the reviewer can click the icon to
- see which email this was an attachment to? 5
- 6 A. Correct.

4

- 7 Q. So what are they told, the reviewers? Are they
- 8 told to do that, to check the email? Because,
- 9 if they'd done that on this occasion, we would
- 10 have seen that this guide, also undated, was in
- 11 circulation in May 2011, wouldn't we, and we
- 12 would that have seen who was circulating it?
- 13 Yes. The reviewer does a linear review.
- 14 Q. What does that mean?
- 15 A. Well, in the sense -- it's sequentially. So
- 16 they don't necessarily know all these documents
- 17 exist. It's just the documents that come up
- 18 that are responsive, and then they will go
- 19 through them and my understanding is that, where
- 20 it is responsive, they would check the family
- 21 documents.
- 22 Q. So what has happened here, then? Because we've
- 23 got an email from Mr Posnett to a whole bunch of
- 24 people in the Security Team saying "You need to
- 25 comply with this compliance document". That's
- 1 with these racist and offensive ID codes and
- 2 you'll be marked down if you don't". That's
- 3 relevant information for us, isn't it?
- 4 A. Correct, and had the approach to search terms,
- 5 family documents and de-duplication been right,
- 6 it would have been identified.
- 7 Because one of the things that POL has said in
- 8 response to this part of the scandal within
- 9 a scandal within a scandal, is these are
- 10 outdated documents, they're from the past. But
- 11 as we pick away at this, we might find that, by
- 12 looking at the emails, that, in fact, they were
- 13 in circulation until quite recently, might we,
- 14 if we get the emails?
- 15 Well, there is -- my understanding is that they
- are historic in nature. My belief about that, 16
- 17 and that they with us necessarily be so because
- 18 the Post Office stopped prosecuting and has not
- 19 prosecuted, and that policy came in 2019.
- 20 I recognise the racist and unacceptable language
- 21 that's contained within that document and for
- 22 which I can only apologise to see that. That is 23 certainly not consistent with my values and nor
- 24 the current Post Office. I accept that is
- a document that clearly was in existence at that 25

1		time.	1	Q.	Then if we go to page 1, we can see somebody
2	Q.	It wasn't just in existence, was it? It was	2		called Andrew Wise, who was in Security
3		being circulated and saying, "You must comply	3		Operations North, forwarding that email in
4		with its terms and if you don't, you'll be	4		October, the end of October 2012, forwarding the
5		picked up for non-compliance"?	5		last attachment, the Compliance zip file, to
6	A.	In 2011	6		a group of people who I think were in Security
7	Q.	Yes.	7		Operations in the north of England:
8	A.	that appears to be the case.	8		"Hi All,
9	Q.	Okay, let's go on, please. Can we look, please,	9		"I am assuming that most of you (if not all)
10		at POL00118110. Can we start by looking at the	10		have seen the case compliance info before. Now
11		second page, please. Just scroll down, please.	11		that everyone is up and running and progressing
12		It's from Mr Posnett again, dated 27 April 2012.	12		cases I thought it would be a good time to
13		Do you see that?	13		refresh on the compliance checks."
14	A.	27 April, correct.	14		So he's forwarding a zip file too. So it's
15	Q.	An email to a wide variety of people in security	15		forwarded again the year after we've just looked
16		operations team, again. Subject is "Case	16		at it by Mr Posnett and then in October 2012, by
17		Compliance". He says:	17		somebody else within Security and Operations.
18		"All,	18		Can we just look at a couple of the
19		"The compliance checks on submitted offender	19		attachments within this zip file. POL00118124.
20		interview case files will continue in 2012/2013.	20		It's the guide again, yes? So the email that's
21		Associated are all the supporting documents	21		being sent around as a compliance requirement in
22		needed, which have been amended where	22		April and October 2012 amongst the zip file
23		appropriate."	23		includes the guide.
24		Can you see that?	23		Then POL00118128. Another part of this zip
	٨	•	25		·
25	Α.	Correct. 53	25		file being sent around within POL in April and 54
		Outsile on 0040 in the president and effective ID	4		Alexander and a second a second and a second a second and
1		October 2012 is the racist and offensive ID	1		the various setting up of the data repositories
2		codes document.	2		and the PCDE work review and the review that was
3		So would you agree that the email that	3		done by HSF and Peters & Peters with their
4		I showed you of April and October 2012 was	4		search terms, they had also interviewed Andrew
5		relevant information for the Inquiry to receive?	5		Wise and had also taken all of the relevant
6	Α.	Agree.	6		materials from his laptop. And so my
7	Q.	Because it shows that, again, the compliance	7		understanding is that they would have been
8		guide and this document were being circulated	8		they are on Relativity but, because of the
9		with instructions to security teams that they	9		search terms, families and, specifically in
10		will be audited against their compliance with	10		this, the de-duplication, they it wouldn't
11		their terms?	11		have been picked up to the reviewer.
12	A.	Yes, certainly I understand, under request 14,	12	Q.	I just want to press you on that. In
13		which included guidance, that it ought to have	13		paragraph 16 of your witness statement no
14		been disclosed.	14		need to turn it up you say that the pool
15	Q.	So looking at the April 2011 and now the April	15		within Relativity of material that was looked at
16		and October 2012 emails, all three of which had	16		for the purposes of these two requests was the
17		the guide and the racist and offensive ID codes	17		CCRC?
18		document attached, can you explain if it was the	18	A.	Mm-hm.
19		pool of documents over which the search was run	19	Q.	This material appears not to be within that
20		that caused them not to be included, or the	20		pool. So was that the problem, looking at too
21		de-duplication exercise that you referred to	21		small a universe, or was it the de-duplication
22		that caused them not to be included in material	22		exercise that meant that this material was
23		sent to the Inquiry?	23		included and, therefore, even though there may
24	A.	My understanding is it's the de-duplication	24		have been a hit against it, was not disclosed to
25		exercise. I say that because, in addition to	25		us?
		55			56

- A. My understanding is that it would be the
 de-duplication exercise.
- 3 Q. On what basis do you reach that understanding?
- 4 A. Sure. Because the -- I agree, it wouldn't
- 5 necessarily be picked up in the CCRC or the PCDE
- 6 exercise, but that isn't the only database that
- 7 sits within Relativity. So Relativity, as
- 8 I said, has over 54 million documents. The CCRC
- 9 database has over 5 million documents. There
- 10 are over 160 different data repositories within
- 11 Relativity, as well as all of the mail boxes.
- 12 And so, whilst I accept that these emails may
- not have been picked up in the CCRC database, my
- 14 understanding -- but I'm happy to be corrected
- on the point -- is that it wouldn't have been
- 16 identified because of the de-duplication error.
- 17 But I'm happy to take that away and report back
- 18 to the Inquiry.
- 19 Q. If we just look, then at paragraph 16 of your
- witness statement, which is on page 5, you say
- 21 in the second line:

- 22 "To identify such documents,
 - [Peters & Peters] and HSF ran search terms
- 24 across a Relativity database which I will refer
- 25 to as the CCRC database ... The CCRC table is
 - 57
- 1 Posnett sent through to me". Can you see that?
- 2 A. Yes. Thank you.
- 3 Q. Attached to that email, so we're here now in
- 4 July 2016, I'm not going to turn them up in the
- 5 interests of time. Take it from me that the
- 6 attachments to that included the guide and the
- 7 racially offensive ID codes document. So this
- 8 email, if this had been disclosed to us, would
- 9 have shown that in 2016 the guide and the
- 10 racially offensive ID codes document were still
- 11 in circulation amongst, at least, these two
- 12 people.
- 13 A. Correct.
- 14 Q. So can you help again as to why the
- 15 de-duplication exercise had the effect of
- 16 excluding the emails from disclosure to us?
- 17 A. Because where you have -- the Relativity system
- 18 gives a preference to various versions of the
- 19 documents and the preference that it would take
- 20 normally is at the time. So that's the first
- 21 point. The second point is that, on this
- 22 particular case with the email, because the
- 23 email itself wasn't responsive, it wouldn't have
- 24 been picked up. So the search terms --
- 25 $\,$ **Q.** The search term would have hit the guide --

- 1 hosted on Relativity by POL's eDiscovery and
- 2 provider KPMG ... The CCRC database contains
- 3 materials collated for the purposes of the
- 4 criminal appeals. Searches were and are run
- 5 across this database", et cetera.
- 6 It only refers to the CCRC table there,
- 7 rather than other parts of the document universe
- 8 within Relativity. So I'm trying to establish
- 9 whether that's the problem or the de-duplication
- 10 exercise, which you have attributed the blame
- 11 to
- 12 A. Yeah. As I said, I'm happy to come back to it,
- having taken instructions. But my understanding
- with these requests is that the documents that
- 15 weren't disclosed ultimately, in all cases, had
- the de-duplication been correct, then those
- 17 appendices would have been disclosed but I'm
- 18 happy to come back and report back to the
- 19 Inquiry with specifics.
- 20 Q. Can we look at a third email, please.
- 21 POL00118129. Much narrower distribution between
- 22 Andrew Wise and Helen Dickinson, Mr Wise being
- 23 a security manager in Chesterfield. Here is all
- 24 the Dave Posnett stuff -- sorry, that "Dave
- 25 Posnett sent through to me", "the stuff Dave
 - 58
- A. Absolutely, yes.
- 2 Q. -- and the reviewer could see an icon --
- 3 A. Yes
- 4 Q. -- that linked that to this email?
- 5 A. Yes, and it's the same family issues document
- 6 that we have discussed.
- 7 Q. So I'm going to press you again --
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. -- why is it that a reviewer would not go back
- and look at the family of which the document for
- 11 which they had a hit was a part?
- 12 A. Because in this particular case, they weren't
- 13 responsive.
- 14 Q. That's not really an answer though, is it?
- 15 Because if they're responsive, they are going to
- 16 consider them for disclosure anyway. We're
- 17 looking at a different issue, namely you have
- 18 a document which is part of a family --
- 19 **A.** Mm-hm.
- 20 Q. -- why do you not look at the rest of the
- 21 family, because it provides context, colour,
- 22 assistance, to this Inquiry, doesn't it?
 - 23 A. Sure, and I accept that. Just factually
 - 24 speaking, my understanding is that although the
 - guide -- so Appendix 3 -- was identified, this

1 particular email wasn't. Now, there are 2 a number of reasons why that didn't. So, given 3 that, on the face of this document, it doesn't 4 appear to contain any of the search terms, it 5 would seem to me that it therefore wasn't 6 responsive, because of the approach that was 7 taken with family documents, meant that such 8 documents therefore wouldn't have been disclosed 9 and if there was multiple copies of this, it may 10 not have been disclosed on that basis.

> So I accept your premise that it should have been disclosed but, factually, that's the explanation that I have for why it has not been disclosed, from those that were managing and overseeing this process.

- 16 Q. Isn't it blindingly obvious, though, that where 17 you turn up a document that's undated, you would 18 see which documents were associated with it, in 19 order to try to date it and see who was passing 20 it around within the organisation?
- 21 A. They may not have seen this cover email. I take 22 your point --
- 23 Q. Because they didn't look.
- 24 Α. Quite.

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25 So what's been done to improve that situation?

> from POL three documents at 10.30 in the evening, I think, relevant to Mr Ferlinc, who is giving evidence in a minute. That's what this

4 situation has caused.

A. I appreciate that and, on behalf of Post Office and myself, I absolutely apologise. We are on it, though. We are remediating it. We're wanting to make sure that we are transparent. I think one of the things that we have done throughout this process is that, when these issues have been identified, I've always ensured 12 that we be completely transparent with the 13 Inquiry, that we disclose the issues, we 14 disclose our approaches to ensure that there is 15 that transparency and that we quickly remediate

> I think it's fair to say these issues need to be seen within the greater context of this extremely complex and large-scale disclosure exercise.

20 21 Lastly, please, can we look at POL00118137. If 22 we go to the second page, please. We can see 23 that this is an email exchange of 21 May 2019. 24 If we just scroll down so we can see who Dimitri 25 Wren was: an associate paralegal with Womble

the situation, as quickly as possible.

I appreciate that we're now going to get 1,500 1 2 documents for the hearing that starts in 3 26 minutes.

4 A. Correct. So -- and, look, I appreciate there have been a number of areas which haven't been 5 6 done to the standard that we would expect but we 7 are quickly remediating them. In respect of the 8 search term issues, new modified search terms 9 have been designed and are being run. In 10 respect of the family documents, as I explained 11 before, we have already remediated that process. 12 We understand that there are 1,500 documents, of 13 which less than 700 will be relevant to Phase 4. 14 I take your point that Phase 4 starts today.

15 Q. We've already had Phases 2 and 3.

16 A. Understood, and so the approach that we would 17 take is to ensure that we prioritise the documents that are relevant to Phase 4, so that 18 19 we can make sure that they are given to the 20 Inquiry prior to the witness giving evidence. 21 And of course, we will work with the Inquiry to 22 make sure that they are prioritised in that 23 order. 24

Q. I mean, that's very kind but it leads to the 25 situation where, last night, Mr Blake received

Bond Dickinson. If we scroll up, please, Dimitri Wren says:

> "I am assisting Mandy with disclosure queries and in this case, SharePoint document instruction. Our data analyst has advised that the following SharePoint documents are password protected and they require a password to access them ..."

Then over to the first page, please, and scroll down, please. Mr Wise, a security manager:

"Some of the documents we provided to Bond Dickinson are password Protected ... I have tried the usual 2 security passwords we use however these do not work as the documents are from before they can [sic] into use.

"Would you have the passwords for these documents, they are the ones you collated on to SharePoint."

So this is May 2019. It looks like, for a disclosure exercise, the documents are being accessed.

Scroll up, please.

You'll see that there is a zip file as an attachment, yes? I'm not going to go through 64

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1		them again. The guide is one of the documents	1		2008 and to 2011, under the Freedom of
2		within the zip file, as is the racially	2		Information request?
3		offensive ID codes. So it looks like they were	3	A.	That is correct.
4		being considered, is this right, for disclosure?	4	Q.	The Post Office and that FOI request on 19 May
5		Would this be in the Group Litigation Order,	5		2023, so about a month later, by disclosing all
6		May '19?	6		documents within the suite of eight?
7	A.	My understanding from Womble Bond Dickinson, as	7	A.	Correct.
8		part of the ongoing investigation that we're	8	Q.	The ID codes document that we have seen does not
9		undertaking, is that this email was associated	9		detail the quality and compliance assurance
10		with the further issues trial. So the further	10		processes itself, does it?
11		issues trial was a third trial that had been set	11	A.	No.
12		down, which did not ultimately eventuate.	12	Q.	It just contains some ID codes?
13	Q.	So is the answer the same: that the guide and	13	A.	Correct.
14		the other suite of documents, including the	14	Q.	So why was it disclosed to Ms Shaikh as part of
15		racially offensive ID codes document, wasn't	15		a family of documents that detailed a quality
16		disclosed to us, even though the guide would	16		and compliance assurance process but not to the
17		have produced a hit, being an attachment to this	17		Inquiry?
18		email, because of the de-duplication exercise?	18	A.	Um
19	A.	Correct.	19	Q.	Why was it picked up? This a family of
20	Q.	Okay, that can come down.	20	٠.	documents, which is all about compliance and
21	Ψ.	It's right, isn't it, that Eleanor Shaikh	21		assurance. We need to disclose all of them,
22		made a request on 10 April 2023 for documents	22		even though this individual one is not on its
23		which detailed the quality and compliance	23		face.
24		assurance processes for investigations which	24	A.	The answer is because the FOIR team wrote to the
25		were implemented by Post Office Security Team in	25	Λ.	Security Team member, Andrew Wise, so you may
		65	20		66
1		recall his name from a number of the documents	1		So I take your point. I'm merely just
2		that you've just shown me. Andrew Wise,	2		trying to explain why the FOIR situation why
3		immediately in being informed as to the scope of	3		the documents were disclosed under FOIR, and why
4		the relevant FOIR, namely the quality assurance	4		that was an easier process than the process that
5		and the audit, knew exactly and could pinpoint	5		we undertake in terms of disclosure to the
6		immediately that those were the documents that	6		Inquiry. I absolutely accept they should have
7		would be responsive to that particular request.	7		been disclosed to the Inquiry.
8	Q.	So even though we'd asked for prosecution	8	Q.	I have shown you four occasions that emails
9		policies and prosecution guides, that same	9		circulated the guide and the racially offensive
10		exercise wasn't gone through?	10		ID codes document, amongst quite a wide group of
11	A.	Quite. But there is a different process that	11		people. Can we look at paragraph 40 of your
12		necessarily went through, in terms of the	12		witness statement, please, which is at the foot
13		Inquiry. So in terms of the FOI request, it was	13		of page 13. You say in your statement:
14		able to be sent to someone who immediately	14		"Email searches have so far identified 23
15		already knew of the existence of the document,	15		occasions on which Appendix 6 [that's the
16		and could identify it and produce it. Obviously	16		racially offensive ID codes document] was sent
17		in	17		as an attachment within the Security Team
18	Q.	Can we have some of that treatment too, please?	18		between 2012 and May 2019."
19	Α.	Of course and you do. But in order to provide	19		So in addition to the four that I've pointed
20		a large-scale disclosure exercise, where there	20		out, there are another 19 circulations; is that
21		is the 54 million documents, in this particular	21		right?
22		case, obviously, the reviewers, unlike Andrew	22	A.	Correct.
23		Wise, didn't they don't know of the	23		That goes right up to May 2019?
		·			

terms, until they do that review.

document's existence until they do the search

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1		witness statement, from 23?	1	remediation in terms of the witnesses in
2	A.	Not that I am aware of. There are a number of	2	Phase 4.
3		steps that we're taking to verify that number	3	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: What's the timescale for you
4		but I don't have any updated figure on that.	4	completing that work, realistically, Mr Foat?
5	Q.	What assurance or guarantee can you give to the	5	A. Sir, I don't have any precise instructions on
6		Inquiry, to the other Core Participants and to	6	that point but save to say that certainly the
7		the public, that what has occurred in this	7	search terms and the family documents will be
8		instance, a serious failure in POL's disclosure,	8	shortly done, I understand, in a matter of
9		will not happen again?	9	a fortnight or so. The de-duplication issue,
10	A.	Well, firstly, I recognise that, clearly, as	10	I am just not instructed at this time to give
11		we'd discussed today, that there are a number of	11	a time frame.
12		areas where we have fallen short and I genuinely	12	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Because I am concerned that w
13		apologise for that, I think we have taken	13	are rapidly approaching a period when, quite
14		immediate steps to remediate the issue. We are	14	justifiably, many people will be taking their
15		on it. We have already modified the search	15	holidays and the like and, therefore, there is
16		terms. We have already gone through the family	16	the possibility of the remediation steps which
17		documents approach. We are working through the	17	you wish to take being prolonged and, so far as
18		duplication de-duplication approach, which we	18	can be avoided, I want to avoid that.
19		know is not across all Rule 9s, for instance.	19	So I would like you, not now in the witness
20		But we are genuinely working through the	20	box, but shortly after you've ceased giving your
21		issues to remediate them as quickly as possible	21	evidence, to discuss so that as fully as may be
22		to be completely transparent with the Inquiry	22	and to write to me giving me a pretty precise
23		with where we are and, as I mentioned before, we	23	timetable of what we're looking at.
24		do want to support the Inquiry to be able to	24	A. I absolutely will do that, sir, and, in
25		continue its work and therefore prioritise the	25	particular, if it would help the Inquiry, to
		69	20	70
1		provide a direct report also from the people who	1	discuss whether with everyone involved whether
2		are directly undertaking the remediation to give	2	we need to start at 12.15 and sit a little later
3		that clarity, not just in terms of the scope of	3	or whether 12.05 is all right.
4		the remediation steps but also the dates in	4	MR BEER: Sir, thank you very much.
5		which we expect that to be completed.	5	(11.50 am)
6	SIR	R WYN WILLIAMS: All right. I'm not saying that	6	(A short break)
7		my request to you is the only request I'll make.	7	(12.07 am)
8		I want to reflect upon the evidence you've given	8	MR BLAKE: Thank you very much, sir. Can I now ca
9		and discuss it with my team, who I may yet issue	9	Mr Ferlinc.
10		directions in writing, putting it neutrally, to	10	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course.
11		assist you, to comply, putting it more	11	MARTIN CHARLES GEORGE FERLINC (sworn)
12		aggressively, to make you comply with a pretty	12	Questioned by MR BLAKE
13		tight timetable.	13	MR BLAKE: Thank you very much. Can you give you
14	A.	Thank you, sir.	14	full name, please?
15	MR	BEER: Sir, thank you very much. They're the	15	A. Martin Charles George Ferlinc.
16		only questions I ask Mr Foat.	16	Q. Thank you, Mr Ferlinc. You should have in front
17	SIR	R WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Beer.	17	of you a witness statement. Do you have that,
18	MR	BEER: Sir, apologies to the shorthand writer.	18	or at least a bundle containing your witness
19		We've gone straight through deliberately. Might	19	statement behind tab A?
20		we take a 15-minute break now until 12.05.	20	A. Okay, if I can find that one. Yes, I have it in
21	SIR	R WYN WILLIAMS: Of course. If it helps, I am	21	front of me.
22		prepared to sit a little later this evening so	22	Q. Thank you very much. Can I ask you that
23		that we don't rush to start now, so that the	23	statement is dated 11 May 2023?
24		shorthand writer can have more of a break.	24	A. Yeah.
25		I'll leave that in Mr Blake's hands to	25	Q. Can I ask you to turn to the final page, that is

page 28 --1

- 2 A. Okay.
- 3 Q. -- just before we get to the index. Is that
- 4 your signature there?
- 5 A. It's my signature, yes.
- 6 Is that statement true to the best of your
- 7 knowledge and belief?
- 8 A. It is.

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- 9 Q. Thank you very much. For the purpose of the
- 10 transcript, that is URN WITN08610100. Thank you
- very much. 11
- 12 That can come down. Thanks.
- 13 Thank you, Mr Ferlinc. I'm going to start
 - with your background. You were employed by what
- 15 I will refer to as the Post Office or POL from
- 16 1979 to 2011, albeit it was known through
- 17 a number of different names throughout that
- 18 period; is that right?
- 19 Α. Correct.
- 20 Q. You started as a counter clerk after the
- 21 completion of your A levels?
- 22 A. Correct.
- 23 Q. Amongst your early roles you were a Crown Office
- 24 branch manager?
- 25 A. Yeah, in the mid-1980s, I believe.

1 Separate to that team were regional 2 auditors. They were largely people who had 3 counter office background experience, didn't 4 have auditing qualifications and were separate 5 from the internal audit team, so you had these 6 two teams together. So around about 1998, the 7 National Audit Team, which was the Post Office's 8 internal audit team, decided to review the 9 structure, the processes, the policies, that the 10 regional audit teams had in place. I was 11 working, as you said, in the Midlands region and 12 was seconded to National Audit to take part in 13 this review.

> So that review looked at every aspect of the regional audit teams, there were seven regions, and the outcome for that review, which took a few months, was to develop this new team called the Network Audit Team, and the idea was that that team would slot under the national audit team, so forming one auditing body with the internal auditors effectively managing the old regional audit teams. So that sort of summarises that project.

23 24 Q. Thank you very much. Was that in any way linked 25 to the rollout of Horizon, which we know was in

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- 1 Q. From 1989 onwards, you worked in various audit
- 2 related roles?
- 3 A. That's right.
- 4 Q. 1989, you were audit manager in Nottingham?
- A. That's right. Audit manager in Nottingham. 5
- 6 Q. In 1993, the Post Office was restructured into
- 7 seven regions, and you became audit manager for
- 8 the Midlands region and then the regional audit
- 9 manager in 1995?
- 10 A. Correct.
- 11 Q. In 1998 or 1999, there was a review that you
- have detailed in your witness statement. It was 12
- 13 a review of the structure. Can you briefly tell
- 14 us the purpose of that review and its outcome?
- 15 A. Yeah. I'm not entirely sure of the timeline.
- 16 It could have been 1998 when it started and 1999
- 17 when it finished. Essentially, at the time, so
- 18 around about 1998, there were two auditing
- 19 departments within Post Office. So you had
- 20 a Post Office internal audit team, which
- 21 comprised around about 30 members of staff,
- 22 based in Chesterfield or London, largely
- 23 managerial grades, largely with internal audit
- 24 qualifications, and that team basically audited
- 25 head office functions.

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1 the '99 period?

- 2 A. I don't believe it was. There wasn't, to my
- 3 knowledge, any link at all.
- 4 Q. In 1999 or thereabouts, you became Head of
- 5 Network Audits, so you were the head of that new
- 6 team --
- 7 A. That's right.
- 8 Q. -- of network auditors. I think there came
- a point in time where what you've described as 9
- 10 the National Audit Team separated out and went
- to the Royal Mail --11
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. -- and the network team stayed with the Post
- 14 Office?
- 15 A. Yes, so as I mentioned, the idea was for this
- new Network Audit Team to slot under the 16
- 17 National Audit Team. I'm not sure of the time
- 18 frame but a short period after that team was
- 19 devised, the internal audit team -- and there
- 20 was one in Post Office Counters, Royal Mail and
- 21 Parcelforce, were moved into Royal Mail Group
- 22 and the decision was taken that, even though
- 23 that team would move to Royal Mail Group, the
- 24 Network Audit Team would still stay within Post
- 25 Office Limited.

- 1 Q. You became part of what we know as the Security
- 2 and Investigations Team, initially; is that
- 3 right?
- 4 A. Yes, not immediately. So initially, because
- 5 this team was sort of left without a home, it
- 6 was given a temporary line within the Finance
- 7 Directorate and then it went to the Operations
- 8 Directorate and then, shortly after, it was
- 9 moved to a Security and Investigations team
- 10 which itself was undergoing a review of its own
- 11 structure.
- 12 Q. Slightly confusingly, following one of these
- 13 reviews, your team became called, I think, the
- 14 National Audit and Inspections Manager -- or you
- 15 became the National Audit and Inspections
- 16 Manager?
- 17 A. Yes, when I've gone through my own memories I've
- 18 struggled to work out at what point these role
- 19 names changed but, yes, National Audit and
- 20 Inspections Manager -- the inspections bit was,
- 21 once we came under the Security Team, we also
- 22 looked at physical inspections while we were at
- 23 branches. So my team would go to branches and
- 24 include now a physical inspection of security,
- 25 physical security. So that's why the team was
 - 77
- 1 interpretations. So one of the aims of this new
- 2 team was to bring some consistency to the
- 3 operations. So it was a centralised, managed
- 4 team, albeit with resource placed around the UK.
- 5 Q. Perhaps taking this out of turn -- and we will
- 6 come to it -- but did that in any way affect the
- 7 way that auditors related to the subpostmasters,
- 8 for example? Did it break up any of those
- 9 personal relationships that may have existed
- 10 when it was operating at a regional level?
- 11 A. Only in the context of -- because we had less
- resource, this team of 103, for the Network
- 13 Audit Team, probably would have been about
- 14 150/160 in the seven individual teams. So
- 15 there's less resource out in the field and
- 16 therefore less local resource. So perhaps the
- 17 local auditors wouldn't be from somewhere you
- were as familiar with, if you were at a branch.
- 19 **Q.** That change in resource happened when, the late 20 1990s?
- 21 A. Yeah. And I would just add to that, you know,
- from the creation of that team of 103/104, the
- 23 numbers were always coming down. So there were
- 24 less and less staff in that team over the next
- 25 six to eight years.

- 1 then expanded to be called Audit and
- 2 Inspections.
- 3 Q. During that period, the core work that you were
 - managing was branch auditing?
- 5 A. Absolutely, yeah.
- 6 Q. I think you first reported to Tony Marsh, who we
 - will hear from tomorrow, and, at some point, it
- 8 moved to Rod Ismay, who we have already heard
- 9 from.

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- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. How big was your team?
- 12 A. When it started, so when it was created in 1999,
- 13 I believe it was 103 or 104, of which probably
- 14 about 10 or 11 people were in a core admin team
- in Chesterfield. So the remaining 90 people
- would be dotted around the UK, in various little
- places to be able to go locally to branches to
- 18 audit them.
- 19 Q. So you described the early days of your work,
- 20 you were in the regions. It was separated by
- 21 regions. Was it now focused, concentrated, on
- 22 a national team?
- 23 A. Yes. So before this new team, there were seven
- 24 regional audit teams doing things differently,
- 25 with subtly different practices and different
 - 78
 - Q. I think you've said in your witness statement
- 2 there were issues -- or there weren't new staff
- 3 coming in because your team was actually getting
- 4 smaller?

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- 5 A. Yeah, I mean, the broad policy at Post Office at
- 6 the time was that there was no compulsory
- 7 redundancy. So if any reductions in staff
- 8 occurred, then those displaced staff would be
- 9 found a new home. And I forget the term used
- 10 for those people but, essentially, if a vacancy
- came up in my team, we would be expected to fill
- that vacancy with a displaced, surplus person
- from somewhere else. But I don't recall many
- 14 vacancies happening because of this constant
- 15 reduction in staff.
- 16 Q. You've also mentioned in your witness statement
- 17 about looking back, a lack of people with IT
- 18 expertise, for example. Was it difficult to
- 19 bring those kinds of people in because of those
- 20 difficulties --
- 21 A. Because of those restrictions. I think, to be
- fair, we're going back to 1999/2000. For most
- of my team, arguably all of my team, they
- 24 probably hadn't even touched a computer since
- about 1995 -- or before 1995. So most people

- 1 didn't have much IT background anyway, sent 2 an email, used the Word document. So it was 3 very much about learning on the go.
- 4 Q. Because new members weren't joining that team, 5 you weren't getting people with more recent
- 6 expertise?
- 7 A. Exactly.
- 8 Q. You continued in that role until 2006 or 2008, 9 you're not entirely sure of the precise date --
- 10 A. Yeah. Can I just clarify that. I think,
- 11 reading through some of the other documentation
- 12 that I've seen now in more detail, I think it
- 13 might be that I changed role in 2006 but that in
- 14 2008 the auditing teams were moved into the
- 15 Network Directorate. So I think there was
- 16 a two-year span where I reported to Keith
- 17 Woollard and, by 2008, the auditing arm of my
- 18 team moved, organisationally.
- 19 Q. Thank you. You became compliance risk and
- 20 assurance manager?
- 21 A. Yeah.
- 22 You've said that involved providing management
- 23 information on compliance audit activity. Very
- 24 briefly, can you tell us what that involved?
- 25 Α. Yeah, I mean, essentially, that time in Keith

- 1 changed, but I think Sir Mike Hodgkinson was
- 2 chairing it at some point, Alan Cook was
- 3 chairing it at some point, and then at each of
- 4 those meetings people would be invited,
- 5 depending on the subject of the day, to present
- 6 something or talk about something or be
- 7 questioned about something.
- 8 Q. That committee had a link to the board of POL?
- 9 A. To the Executive Team, which in turn had a link 10 to the board, yes.
- Q. Thank you. I just want to take you to your 11
- 12 witness statement, paragraph 90 to 92. That's
- WITN08610100. Thank you very much. It's 13
- 14 paragraph 90 to 92. That is page 27. I'll read
- 15 that out, that says at 90: 16

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"With the exception of issues encountered during a communication failure/power outage at a branch, for which there are fall back processes, I did not have nor was I aware of any concerns regarding the robustness of the Horizon system during my time working for Post Office.

- 22 Any issues I had heard about seemed to be
- 23 considered as related to in-branch/user error. 24 "As I did not have any concerns, there was 25
 - no communication decision to make.

- 1 Woollard's team, there's a greater focus on
- 2 compliance risk with regulatory obligations, so
- 3 anti-money laundering, providing assurance to
 - Bank of Ireland and other partners, NS&I, DVLA.
- 5 So my role was to use the audit findings, albeit
- 6 the auditors were no longer reporting to me, but
- 7 to use their findings on compliance activity to
- 8 provide assurance to our clients and partners.
- 9 Q. You were on something called the Post Office 10 Risk and Compliance Committee?
- 11 A. Yes. On it, I attended many of the meetings,
- 12 probably not all of them.
- 13 Q. I think you took minutes of those meetings, did
- 14
- 15 A. Again, I think probably minutes is -- perhaps
- 16 I took notes and that was not at every meeting.
- 17 So I think the responsibility for those minutes
- 18 or notes was shared with someone from Security.
- 19 Q. Thank you. We'll look at some minutes in due
- 20 course but can you give us some examples of the
- 21 types of person that sat on that committee, how 22 high up in the company they were, for example?
- 23 A. Well, it was a subcommittee of the Executive
- 24 Team. So it would include directors from the
- 25 Team. It would also be chaired, over time it

- 1 "I was not aware of any instruction given to
- auditors to disregard possible problems with 2
- 3 Horizon as a possible cause for discrepancies,
- 4 noting that I did not have direct contact with
- 5 branch auditors after those roles moved
- 6 (organisationally) into the Network
- 7 Directorate."
- 8 So in none of the roles that we have already 9 discussed, so from heading the Network Audit to
- 10
- your involvement in the Post Office Risk and
- 11 Compliance Committee, in the latter half of the
- 12 first decade of the 2000s, did you hear anyone
- 13 raise issues with the robustness of Horizon?
- 14 A. I guess it depends on, you know, the definition
- 15 of robustness. I think there were glitches and 16
- there were the occasional things that came to light, such as screens freezing or amounts being 17
- 18 stuck in suspense. These, from my position at
- 19 the time, seemed to affect individual branches
- 20 rather than being systemic across the whole of
- 21 the network, which is what I would have expected
- 22 from a system that wasn't robust.
- 23 Q. So if we look at paragraph 90, for example, you
- 24 talk there about a communication failure and
- 25 a power outage of a branch --

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1		Yeah

- Q. -- what you might understand is a hardwarefailure or something along those lines?
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- Q. What you don't mention there is bugs, errors orother defects.
- 7 A. Okay. I mean, in terms of bugs, I suppose, from
- 8 my perspective at the time and even now, would
- 9 be that any software will have some bugs.
- 10 That's why we have software updates and fixes.
- 11 So I think there's always a sense of there might
- 12 be some issues in the system but they are being
- 13 fixed with the software updates, but nothing
- 14 from my perspective that made me feel that the
- 15 system wasn't robust. And I don't remember
- 16 people talking in those terms either.
- 17 Q. They may not have been talking in terms of
- 18 robustness --
- 19 A. Okay.
- 20 Q. -- but are we to take it, from what's written
- 21 there and from your oral evidence, that you were
- 22 aware, in general terms, that there were bugs,
- 23 errors and defects but that your view was that
- they were corrected by updates?
- 25 **A.** They were corrected in some form or other. So
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- 1 was being corrected. It was a known problem and
 - someone was looking at it, was perhaps the
- 3 assurance, for want of a better word, that I was
- 4 given.

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- 5 Q. The someone, who would that be? Would that be
- 6 Post Office, Fujitsu, Helpline?
- 7 A. Combination of both. A combination of the two
 - helplines, so initially Horizon Support or NBSC.
- 9 Q. I want to ask you, before we get on to specific
- 10 examples, just some very basic questions,
- 11 because you're going to be the first of our
- 12 policy witnesses and we will hear from people
- who were on the ground but I'll start by asking
- 14 you the basics of auditing. When one things of
- 15 auditors, you think of, for example,
- 16 an accountant who signs off a company account.
- 17 Can you tell us about the job of a Post Office
- 18 branch auditor? Because you've distinguished
- 19 between the network or the branch auditors and,
- 20 for example, the national auditors?
- 21 A. Yes, so using your example, I'd say the auditors
- 22 were more like stocktakers, that they would go
- 23 to a branch to physically count, broadly
- 24 speaking, cash and stock and some other items,
- and validate that they were there, in comparison

- 1 updates or a manual workaround. So there were
- 2 issues, individual issues that had been reported
- 3 but, as I said, nothing to me that made me feel
- 4 like this was a systemic problem across the
- 5 whole estate.
- 6 Q. Where were you receiving that information from,
- 7 so the fact that these issues were corrected,
- 8 for example?
- 9 A. I guess in terms of audit activity, so, you
 - know, as an audit activity, it might be a case
- 11 of "This is an issue that's being resolved", or
- 12 "This is an issue that's currently happening to
- me because I've got an amount in suspense that
- doesn't -- shouldn't be there". So probably
- 14 doesn't -- shouldn't be there. So probably
- from audit activity would be the main source.
- 16 **Q.** When you say "audit activity", do you mean
- 17 branch auditors on the ground reporting back to
- 18 you?

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- 19 A. Yeah, through their audit reports.
- 20 Q. The fact those issues had been corrected, was
- 21 that coming also from the auditors or was there
- someone else in the company who was reassuring
- you that those kinds of bugs were being --
- 24 A. I mean, that's a good question, I'm not always
- 25 entirely sure there was always that sense of it
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- 1 to what should be there.
- 2 Q. Were they accountants or people with particular
- 3 qualifications?
- 4 A. No, as I mentioned earlier, this resource was,
- 5 broadly speaking, a set of staff that came from
- 6 a counter experience, Crown Office background,
- 7 without any auditing qualifications. I'm not
- 8 aware of any single member of the team that
- 9 would have had an auditing qualification.
- 10 Q. Can you tell us the difference during your
- 11 period of involvement between an auditor and
- 12 an investigator?
- 13 A. Okay. So there were two separate roles and two
- 14 separate teams. As I mentioned in the
- organisational structure, there was a point when
- the audit and investigation teams reported to
- 17 Tony Marsh, Head of Security and Audit, but
- prior and after that, we separated into
- 19 different areas as well.
- 20 But to answer the question, the auditor's
- 21 role was to go out there and to verify that
- 22 assets were at the branch and, where they
- 23 weren't, over a certain amount of discrepancy,
- 24 there would be kind of a line drawn and then the
- 25 investigation team would be involved. So they

1		would come to the branch and start to
2		investigate the matter further, in addition to
3		the Network Management Team. So there was like
4		two reporting lines at that point, one would go
5		to Network Management to make decisions,
6		contractual, and the investigators would be
7		involved in making more in-depth investigations
8		into potentially what the cause of the
9		discrepancy was.
10	Q.	We've heard at some points, particularly in the
11		Human Impact evidence that we heard in Phase 1
12		of this Inquiry, evidence about auditors and
13		investigators attending a branch together. Did
14		you have experience of that?
15	A.	Absolutely. So ordinarily what would happen,
16		for a routine audit and what I mean by
17		routine is we're going there without expecting
18		to find any problem, issue, discrepancy and,
19		when we do, we report it up to Network and
20		Investigations and, in those cases, people from
21		Network and/or Investigations would then come to
22		the branch. But, also, there will be types of
23		audits which will be requested by the
24		investigation team. So the investigation team
25		may be doing some work, understanding there's 89

investigation team decided what to do, then that responsibility line for me was quite clear. But I can understand from a human impact point of view it may feel quite intimidating to be faced with two activities at the same time.

Q. Was there any separate guidance for when

7 an auditor was present at the same time as
8 an investigator, when there was an investigation
9 going on, as to how the auditor should conduct
10 themselves?

A. How should they conduct themselves?

Q. Well, did they have any training on investigation methods or Police and Criminal
 Evidence Act or continuity of evidence, or anything like that?

A. No, I mean, they performed their role as they were required to do and then at that point, as
I said, if there was a requirement to pursue the matter further, the investigation team would pursue it. I think the only overlap would be
the investigation team might ask the auditors to obtain extra reports. But that would be it.

Q. We'll go on to talk about the kinds of reports
 that auditors could obtain. Could we first look
 at POL00085769, please.

a potential risk at this branch, they would arrange what would be called a special audit, and they would ask us to turn up at this branch on a certain day, and they would be there.

Often, they would be waiting outside until we finished the audit of accounts and once we finished the audit of accounts, they would then make the decision as to whether to pursue the matter further. I don't remember, but I may be wrong, that auditors and investigators would turn up at the same time. There may have been an occasion when that happened but, generally speaking, the auditors would arrive, perform their task and then, if required, the investigation team would come in.

investigation team would come in.
Q. Looking back, can you see any problem with the

auditors and the investigators being in the branch at the same time, from the perspective of the subpostmaster?

A. It might feel quite intimidating and it might feel like almost being -- like they'd been set up. But I think, from our perspective, from my perspective, as long as there was clear, defined responsibilities that we pursued our role up to this point and then at that point the

A document will be brought onto screen.

It's a 2011 document, October 2011. So you probably weren't involved at the time. This is a "Business Loss Programme Board Report". But it's page 9 I'd like to look at. It's just a description of the role of audit -- thank you

very much. So it says there:

"Although often spoken of as if it were a fraud prevention device, audit is in reality simply a means of checking whether the assets within a branch correspond to our record of assets. Where there is a discrepancy it is not necessarily possible to say how that difference arose."

15 Is that something you would agree with, that16 description?

A. Let me just read it again. I would agree with
it. Maybe the first sentence "often spoken of",
I'm not sure "often", but certainly sometimes
spoken as a fraud detection device.

Q. Reading that, was the essence of an auditor's
job, essentially, to check whether X equalled Y
in the branch?

24 A. Yes, so, you know, both before and after Horizon
 25 we would, my team would go in and essentially

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2 what should be there so that would be creating 3 a cash account of sorts and that would be 4 essentially their job, stocktaking activity. 5 Looking into why the difference arose was not 6 really part of the auditor's function? 7 A. Not really. I think it would be a case of, if 8 there was a discrepancy, there would be 9 an effort to identify why that might be. So, 10 for example, I've audited branches in the past. My first reaction would be: have I done 11 12 something wrong? Have I got the wrong figures? 13 Have I missed something off? So I think 14 initially, there I would be to make sure they've 15 got everything, had they concluded everything. 16 They would probably -- not probably, they would 17 talk to the person in charge, and say, "Look 18 this is our current position, can you shed any 19 light on it?" So not interviewing, as such, but 20 just establishing have we got everything we need 21 to have? Often that would then translate to 22 yes, I know about this, or a case of "I've no 23 idea". 24 At that point -- sorry, the auditors would 25 then, again, just go through some of the

verify that the physical assets matched up to

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involvement in the closing of the branch, but kind of a technical movement of cash and stock, or transferring it to somebody else.

So sometimes, it wasn't so much the branch was closed but maybe the subpostmaster was precautionarily suspended and an interim subpostmaster was found, so rather than having to close a branch, an option could be just to transfer the assets to this interim subpostmaster.

Q. Who would make that decision? 11

"This is my role".

A. The decision would always be made by the 12 13 Network.

14 Q. Do you think it was clear to subpostmasters,

15 managers, et cetera, of that delineation? A. I think with hindsight, probably not and 16 17 I think -- I know there are occasions when I've 18 heard of -- and particularly subpostmasters, but 19 also Crown Office staff, as well, had complained 20 about the conduct or behaviour of an auditor, 21 and when I found out the person's name I've 22 realised, well, it wasn't an auditor, it was 23 an investigator. So clearly, there wasn't 24 a communication to the subpostmaster to say, 25

1 information that's available on site. But at 2 that point, if there is a significant 3 discrepancy, it would then be flagged up on this 4 escalation process.

5 Q. Thank you. That can come down.

> In your experience, was the line between those who were auditors and those who could, for example, close a branch or pursue criminal action, in comparison to those who could just carry out that sort of pure mathematical calculation, was that clearly delineated?

Just to be clear what you mean about closing the 12 13 branch. Do you mean the decision to close 14 a branch or the act of closing a branch?

15 Q. Either or both. 16 A. Okay, the decision to close a branch was never 17 the responsibility of the audit team. So any 18 decision to close a branch would be at the 19 network, possibly with investigation input, but 20 the network management would decide whether, on 21 the basis of our findings, it was necessary to 22 close the branch. If the decision was to close 23 branch, then my audit team would effectively 24 produce the final cash account, remit the items 25 that were in hand. So yes, there would be some

1 I believe that auditors would go into 2 a branch and make it clear "We're here to audit 3 the branch". I don't know what process took 4 place when the investigators came in and whether 5 those lines were blurry. So from 6 a subpostmaster's point of view, they've got 7 four people in the branch, they're all part of 8 the same team, perhaps, from their perspective. 9 Q. Thank you very much. I'm going to take you to

11 and I wonder if you can assist us. It's 12 POL00084978. You may have seen this in your 13 bundle. If we could -- thank you very much, if 14 we could just look at 1 to 4, so exactly where 15 you are currently on the screen.

an illustration of the divisions of the roles,

16 A. Okay.

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17 Q. Using this illustration, is it right to say that if there was a discrepancy, then it's notified 18 to the contract advisor, investigation team, and 19 network compliance manager. I mean, that's 20 21 essentially what you've already told us this 22 morning --

23 A. Yeah.

24 -- that the job of the auditor --

25 A. This a flowchart for the team after 2008 but

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- 1 I think, broadly speaking, that would be the 2 flow prior to it, as well.
- 3 Q. Is that irrespective of how the discrepancy 4 arose?
- 5 A. I guess it depends on the Network's
- 6 decision-making process. So they will be told
- 7 "This is a discrepancy, it's X amount". There
- 8 may or may not be a reason at that point. So it
- 9 may well be there's already been an admission or
- 10 this figure in the balance snapshot or the
- office snapshot doesn't equate to this other 11
- 12 figure. So they will be given some fact-finding
- 13 outputs, I suppose, to make the decision. But
- 14 sometimes, as you have kind of alluded to, it
- 15 wouldn't be clear. It wouldn't be clear they'd
- 16 was a loss due to a known error or something in
- 17 the account which didn't look right. It just
- 18 wouldn't be clear. So irrespective, that figure
- 19 would be related to the Network Team to make
- 20
- 21 Q. Thank you. If we turn over the page, it will
- 22 identify there what then happens. Can you, if
- 23 you're able to, briefly walk us through the
- 24 process that's outlined there from the Audit
- 25 Team's perspective? If it doesn't reflect what
- 1 What this box, this explainer, doesn't seem to
- 2 show, is what to do if a discrepancy is
- 3 unexplained. Was there a focus on that
- 4 particular type of issue? Was there enough
- 5 training, for example, or explanation to the
- 6 audit team as to what to do in those
- 7 circumstances?
- 8 A. No, I think -- and I think with hindsight there
- 9 probably should be more guidance in training
- 10 but, essentially, what would happen is, if
- 11 there's a discrepancy, and it can't be
- 12 identified for any other -- for any reason, then
- 13 it would be reported for someone to make
- 14 a decision. Probably what should have been
- 15 happening was to look in more detail and,
- 16 certainly, if an investigation team wasn't
- 17 involved, because they would normally start to
- 18 delve more into detail. So there would have
- 19 been probably more guidance to the auditors to
- 20 say, "This is what perhaps you could look for",
- 21 and I don't know there was and there should have
- 22 been
- 23 Q. This really matches the explanation you
- 24 previously gave that an auditor was there to see
- 25 if X matched Y, not to look into Y --

- 1 happened when you were there, then please tell
- 2 us any differences.
- 3 A. Yeah, I think the one thing that strikes me as
 - probably not as I would remember it, is on the
- left-hand side there's a diamond shape towards 5
- 6 the middle. It says, "Are there financial
 - irregularities or suspicious circumstances?" and
- 8 then there's a drop down to a box at the bottom
- 9 saying "Seek proposals to make good
- 10 discrepancy".
- 11 In my mind, we wouldn't do that. In my
- 12 mind, if there was any known issue, and
- 13 certainly admission of theft, for example, or
- 14 any other suspicious activity, we wouldn't seek
- 15 proposal to make it good. That again would be
- 16 left with the Network Management Team to decide
- 17 how they want to proceed. So that looks
- 18 slightly out of kilter with what I would
- 19 remember of the process when I was there.
- 20 Q. But, essentially, it leads down to the contract
- 21 advisers?
- 22 Yes.
- 23 Q. You used the words "known issues" a couple of
- 24 times.
- 25 A. Okay.

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- I saw them as fact finders. They gathered the
- 2 facts as they saw them and provided that
- 3 information to make a decision.
- 4 Q. Thank you. I'd like to now look at how often 5
 - audits took place.
- 6 That can come down. Thank you.
- 7 You've explained in your statement that,
- 8 prior to 1993, audits were scheduled on
- 9 a cyclical basis. Can you briefly explain --
- 10 I appreciate that's a long time ago now, but --
- 11 **A.** Did I say 1993?
- 12 Q. I believe you did. But if it's not, then please
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- 14 In my head it's 1999, but --Α.
- 15 Q. Well, I think it moved to something called
 - a frequency basis on 1999. It's a little
- 17 unclear in the witness statement, that's why --
- A. Okay, let me try and clarify it then. When 18
- 19 I joined the audit team in 1989/1990, branches
- 20 were essentially audited on a frequency basis.
- 21 It was either every 12 months, 27 months,
- 39 months. So basically one, two, three years, 23 with some exceptions, the exceptions being if
- 24 they were known as being high risk. And the
- 25 high risk was quite crude at that point, it was

- the previous audit finding a high risk issue to
 consider or were there lots of error notices?
 So, apart from those two factors, broadly
 speaking, branches were audited on this cyclical
 basis, one, two, three years.
- 6 Q. Is that every branch?

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7 A. Every branch, Crown Office, every branch. So, 8 at that point, there would have been about 9 20,000 branches, so every branch filtered into 10 these three categories of frequency. You're right about the 1993, to some degree. So in 11 12 1993, the National Audit Team, the Post Office 13 internal audit team, developed a risk model 14 which was put out to the seven regional audit 15 teams to use. So the National Audit Team 16 developed the model but it was deployed, 17 operated by the regional audit teams.

And that had essentially a number of metrics that identified the risk of branches. That was used from around about 1993 to 1999. As part of the review of regional auditing to 1999, it became clear that that risk model was felt flawed, in as much as the high-risk models -- the high-risk branches in that model tended just to be the biggest branches. So all the Crowns

auditing in Scotland would be doing the same thing as people auditing in Cornwall. So that, essentially, was the purpose.

Also, going back to pre-1995, we didn't have computers. We didn't have Word documents. So a lot of the process was just local knowledge. You knew it or you didn't know it and it wasn't really documented in how to do an audit. So as we became more automated or using computers more, there was a desire to put things on paper to both provide that consistency of approach but also have it documented for new people, not that we got many, but to enable them to understand "Well, how do I do my work?" It's all laid out.

- 15 Q. So it's purpose was for the network field team
 rather than for, for example, individual
 branches?
- 18 **A.** Yes.
- Q. Can we look at POL00084650, please. Thank you very much. This is Chapter 1 of the *Audit Process Manual*, "Audit Plan and Scheduling", and is this the chapter that sets out how audits were scheduled? I appreciate this is dated a bit later on but, in essence, I think --

25 **A.** Yes, it's three years after I left that sort of 103

and all the big branches were always filtering
to the top and it was therefore difficult to
maintain this frequency because all the
high-risk branches were tending to be bigger
branches.

So as part of that project in 1999, the
 frequency approach was removed in place of just
 purely risk model selection.

- Q. Thank you very much. We're going to look at something called the audit process manual.
 I think you've described in your witness statement there was a policy manual and a process manual; is that correct?
- 14 A. Yes

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- 15 **Q.** What was the purpose of the audit process16 manual?
- 17 A. The audit process manual was really a guide to 18 auditors in how to perform their work. So going 19 back to the point of we've got seven regional 20 audit teams, which also was the basis of having 21 32 district teams prior to that, all operating 22 in different ways, different practices. So in 23 designing this new Network Audit Team in 24 1999-ish, the audit process manual was designed 25 to bring some consistency so that people
- 1 area but, equally, the layout, the set-up, the 2 content, is broadly the same.
- Q. Thank you. The various versions are at the
 bottom of this page, so we have an original
 version in 2002.

Can we turn to page 3, please. It's paragraph 2.1 on page 3. So 2.1 and 2.2 refer to something called the "Financial Branch Performance Profile", can you talk us through that? Is that what you were talking about when you said the system changed or was it something different?

- 13 Α. Well, it's 2011, it's not a term I would know. 14 But I suspect it's similar to the risk model 15 that I would have known. And that risk model 16 changed its name over time. At one point, it 17 was called the Financial Audit Risk Model, 18 acronym FARM. There was another acronym of 19 ALARM, which I can't remember now what that 20 would stand for but, basically, those were 21 financial risk models. I suspect, I'm looking 22 at 2.2, the sort of metrics within it, it looks to be the same. It's just a different name.
- to be the same. It's just a different name.
 Q. So you've explained that, early on, there were regular, scheduled audits of all post offices

- but then it went to a risk-based model that wasmultifactorial?
- 3 A. Yeah.
- Q. What was the purpose behind that? Was it toreduce the number of audits, ultimately, that --
- 6 **A.** I think it's because there were audits being
- 7 reduced. So because of headcount reduction,
- 8 cost reduction, the level of staff was reducing
- 9 all the time, there was a need to make sure the
- 10 resource that we've got available is utilised as
- 11 much as we can. So the idea was to target our
- 12 resource to where we felt there was the biggest
- 13 risk.
- 14 $\,$ Q. In addition to that model, whatever the model
- may have been called at the relevant time, there
- 16 were other bases for carrying out an audit?
- 17 A. Yes
- 18 Q. I think one was robbery or burglary, a plannedaudit.
- 20 **A.** Yes.
- 21 Q. I think if we look at 3.7, so that's over the
- page, in fact page 5. There's something called
- 23 random audits.
- 24 A. Yes, I was going to mention that.
- 25 Q. Yes.

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- well, they were kind of event driven. So, you know, a burglary happens, we have to go and attend today. A transfer is scheduled for next Tuesday, we're planning to go next Tuesday. So they were always announced visits. The person at the branch would know that we were coming,
- 7 whereas the random audits, the risk profile
- 8 audits, would be unannounced activities.
- 9 Q. Thank you very much.
 - Can we now talk about information that's available to the auditors themselves in the branch. Can we look at POL00084801, please. So this is sticking with the *Audit Process Manual*. But this is Chapter 3. Do you recall in your time how many chapters there were of the *Process*
- 16 Manual?

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- 17 A. I'm sure there's an index somewhere in the
- 18 documents I've seen, but quite a few.
- 19 Q. So we're here Chapter 3, "Performing a Branch
- 20 Audit", is that also aimed at the Network Field
- 21 Team itself?
- 22 A. Yeah, I think the whole Process Manual's
- 23 individual chapters are all designed internally
- 24 with members of the team.
- 25~ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ This one is a 2010 version, version 5.1, but am

A. Because I'd kind of omitted that in the previous

- 2 explanation, that, yes, we have a risk model
- 3 approach that replaces the purely cyclical
- 4 approach, but there was always a considered risk
- 5 of if we only ever audit the branches with the
- 6 highest risks, there may be some branches who
- 7 may never see us, even though on the profile it
- 8 looks like the risk is quite low.
- 9 So the idea was two-fold with the random
- 10 audits, was to (a) make sure that there's always
- 11 a chance that any branch could be audited
- 12 because, from a pure random sample, you know, it
- 13 could be audited tomorrow. But, also, it gave
- us a baseline measure. It enabled us to say,
- 15 right, if we just purely audit on a random
- 16 basis, this I what we're likely to find, and
- 17 compare that to the risk indicators.
- 18 **Q.** In terms of numbers, what kind of numbers are we
- 19 looking at for random audits or percentages,
- 20 versus planned --
- 21 A. It was 5 per cent, so whatever the numbers were,
- 22 I think it was always designed as being
- 5 per cent of the total plan being random
- 24 selected. Just to pick up on the robbery and
- 25 burglary, those sort of activities and transfers

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- 1 I right in saying that from 1999 onwards, there
- 2 was some form of --
- 3 A. Yeah, so in 1999 or thereabouts this *Process*
- 4 Manual was designed. It was -- you know, it
- 5 evolved over time but yeah, there was always
- 6 a manual of this format from 1999 onwards.
- 7 Q. Thank you. Could we look at page 3, please. At
- 8 2.1, it sets out three different types of audit,
- 9 a financial assurance, both FAA and Tier 2;
- 10 a compliance audit; and a follow-up audit. Are
- 11 those the delineations that you recognise or was
- it something different?
- 13 A. Yes, yes.
- 14 Q. Can you briefly take us through the difference
- 15 between the three or, in fact, four different
- 16 types of audit?
- 17 A. So in terms of the top bullet point, Financial
- 18 Assurance and Tier 2, I don't know the timeline
- of when this changed but there came a point,
- again with the headcount reduction, with the
- 21 less and less resource but still the same level
- of branches to go out to, a decision was taken
- 23 to perform what's called a Tier 1 audit,
- 24 a Financial Assurance Audit, so the first part
- of the audit would be to verify the high value

items, so all the cash, high level items of stock, against what should be at the branch.

And if that didn't reveal any concerns or discrepancies, that would be the end of the financial audit. If there were any concerns it would then be extended to Tier 2. Tier 2 was basically a previous audit, a full financial audit. So the Financial Assurance Audit was just simply just check the key high risk value items are at the branch: if they are, move on; if they're not, do a full audit.

- if they're not, do a full audit.
 Q. So I have understood correctly that at the same time the frequency of audits was reducing because of the reduction in headcount, for example, there was also a change in the depth of the basic audit?
- 17 A. Yes, as I say, I don't know the timeline but 18 when this Financial Assurance -- I'd say 19 mid-2000s, but I'm guessing, but certainly there 20 was a point where there was this challenge of 21 reducing headcount, how do we perform the same 22 level of activities? The only way to do it 23 perhaps would be to reduce the activity over 24 more branches rather than having a full audit at 25 less branches. Do you want me to go on to the

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- Q. In your view, was there sufficient resource and time to now dedicate -- or auditor's time to compliance issues, as well as the financial assurance issues?
 A. I think with hindsight, it was quite demanding, for an auditor to go into a branch and look at all of those aspects. Sometimes they had to
 - defer the compliance activity because the financial activity had taken so long or sometimes, for example, if a subpostmaster wasn't at the branch, then there wasn't much merit in performing the compliance activity and we'd probably arrange to come back at a convenient time for both of us.

But yeah, there was quite a lot of activity to perform, but the financial audit always took place first. So that was the priority before the compliance activity kicked in.

- 20 Q. Just before we finish for lunch, can you tell us21 about the follow-up audit and what that was?
- A. Probably less clear about the follow-up auditbut I guess what would happen is that if --
- Q. We can turn to -- if we scroll down, it mayassist.

1 next two bullet points?

2 Q. Yes, thank you very much.

A. So compliance auditing. If I take you back to
1999, a long way, but at that point, the audit
was, basically, just a financial audit, and
a view on security. So is the parcel hatch
secure? Are alarms tested? Things like that.

8 Going to 2000 and beyond, as we took on more 9 products and more clients and became more 10 involved in regulatory affairs, we had a role to 11 perform compliance audit activities. So when 12 an auditor went in, by and large they'd do both 13 audits on the same event. So they'd do the 14 financial audit. Once that had been completed, 15 they would then move into the compliance 16 auditing activity. So there was a range of 17 compliance audit tests to be completed across 18 a range of different aspects. So it could be 19 anti-money laundering requirements, it could be 20 DVLA's requirements. There's a range of 21 product-based requirements. So they would be 22 doing some testing to respond to these 23 compliance activities and that would be part of 24 the same report, but it would be -- it would go 25 off in different chance in terms of how it would 110

- A. Oh, okay.
- 2 **Q.** To 2.6.
- 3 A. Okay. It's answered there for you, then.
- 4 Basically, that's -- when we went to a branch,
- 5 and particularly with compliance activity, if
- 6 there were issues that needed to be addressed,
- 7 the follow-up activity was to go back at a later
- 8 point to ensure that those points had been
- 9 addressed
- 10 MR BLAKE: Thank you very much. I have a few more
- 11 questions on this document relating to the
- information that was available to an auditor but
- 13 I think, given where we are on the time, we'll
- 14 break now for lunch until 2.00 and we can come
- 15 back to the same document.
- 16 **A.** Okay.
- 17 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right, that's good. So I'll
- see you all at 2.00. Thank you very much. Talk
- 19 about anything except your evidence, all right?
- 20 **THE WITNESS:** Fine. Thank you.
- 21 (12.57 pm)
- 22 (The Short Adjournment)
- 23 (2.05 pm)
- 24 MR BLAKE: Good afternoon, sir.
- 25 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.

MR BLAKE: We've had some difficulty with the 1 2 transcription. Everybody in this room will have 3

live transcription. It may be that you, sir, do

not have live transcription but a full

5 transcript will be available at the end of the 6 day if you don't have it.

7 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Don't worry about me. I prefer 8 to read it afterwards anyway.

MR BLAKE: Thank you.

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Mr Ferlinc we left off on the Audit Process Manual and it's POL00084801, Chapter 3 "Performing a Branch Audit". Can we go to page 11 of that. If we could scroll down to 8.2, there's a section in this manual that addresses Horizon reports. Does this set out what reports an auditor would have available to them when they conducted an audit?

- 18 A. Can you just confirm which section you're 19 looking at?
- 20 Q. Yes, absolutely. So if we have a look, for 21 example, at 8.2.4, it says there:

"The following report printouts must be obtained from the Horizon system, examined and filed with the working papers in line with the current retention process ..."

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We're going to hear in this phase about issues with what we know as Fujitsu ARQ data. That is 3 Fujitsu-held transaction data from Fujitsu's raw audit trail. Was ARQ data provided to Post

5 Office branch auditors?

- 6 A. Not to auditors. That would have been obtained 7 by the investigators.
- 8 Q. Was any other Fujitsu audit data held by 9 Fujitsu, such as product of the raw audit trail or later the audit table provided to auditors? 10
- A. I'm not aware of that. My recollection is the 11 12 only information that the auditors accessed at 13 the branch were on the Horizon System at the 14 branch that a manager level access could also
- Q. Was consideration given or are you aware of any 16 17 discussions relating to the obtaining of that 18 kind of audit data from Fujitsu for auditors, 19 for example, in the case of a serious dispute
- 20 about a transaction with a subpostmaster? 21 A. This goes back to the investigation team having 22 access to that data. I think there came 23 a point -- and I'm not guite sure who made the 24 decision or when the decision was made -- but 25 that ram data would be made available to

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A. Okay. On my screen, it goes down to three 1 2 bullet points, is that all there is?

3 Q. No. It scrolls over the page. Perhaps you can 4 talk us through, using this document or just your own recollection, the kinds of reports that 5 6 an auditor would be able to have access to?

7 A. I'm going to say essentially everything that the 8 manager in charge of the branch would have 9 access to. So we're talking about reports that 10 identify which stock units are at the branch in 11 use, we're talking about transfers between those 12 stocks, remittances in and out of the branch, 13 an office snapshot or a balance snapshot which 14 will highlight at any moment in time what should 15 be in the branch and how the balance position 16 should look like.

17 So I think that virtually all the reports 18 that the auditors would have access to would be 19 accessible to the person in charge of the 20

21 Q. Am I right in saying they would either have the 22 subpostmaster log-in themselves or they would 23 have their own log-in to access those reports on 24 the branch's own system?

25 A. Correct.

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investigators rather than auditors, having that fine line between who is using that data. So even though, in Fujitsu's terms, it might be available to a PO internal auditor, we would define it as investigators would use that data for investigation purposes, rather than auditors.

And as I said to you in response to a question earlier today, I think with hindsight there may have been some guidance, training that could have been provided to auditors to access that data, use the data, particularly when the discrepancy perhaps wasn't serious enough to involve an investigator but may have been a discrepancy that worried the branch.

Q. So we talked earlier about, for example, the 16 17 auditor checking whether X equals Y. Is it fair 18 to say that they didn't have sufficient 19 information to identify why X didn't equal Y?

20 A. If X didn't equal Y, it wasn't clear what the

21 difference would be. So there could be a number 22 of reasons and it was often difficult to 23 establish what that reason could be.

24 Q. Was it because nobody thought of transferring 25 that kind of information to branch auditors or

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- 2 that information, for example, from Fujitsu?
- 3 A. I'm not sure at the outset whether it was
- 4 envisaged that auditors would have that access
- 5 to the data and whether it would be too complex
- 6 for them to analyse. As I said, that may be
- 7 when the decision was made to push that avenue
- 8 towards the investigators to perform that role.
- 9 Q. Were you aware of any difficulties in
- 10 investigators obtaining that information?
- Only in terms of I believe they had a level to 11 Α.
- 12 which they could make request they could only
- 13 have so many requests in a particular period,
- 14
- Q. Thank you. We will come on to look at some 15
- 16 documents in that regard.
- 18 policy and can we look at POL00088867, please.

I'm going to move on now to the security

- 19 We spoke before lunch about the difference
- 20 between a process document and a policy
- 21 document. Is this what you had in mind when you
- 22 referred to a policy document?
- 23 A. Yes.

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- 24 Q. Can you just outline for us, using this as
- 25 an example, what the difference is between
 - 117
- 1 document because if we scroll down to the bottom
- 2 but keeping that table that we can currently see
- 3 at the bottom, slightly below that, it actually
- 4 refers to it being version 2.0 January 2004,
- 5 albeit we saw at the top it said version control
- 6 1.7, September 2003. I don't know if that
- 7 assists or doesn't assist?
- 8 Α. Just an admin error, I guess. I think this is
- 9 just the latest version of similar policies that
- 10 were badged under different areas and it goes
- back to the fact that in this period, 2003, the 11
- 12 audit team reported to Tony Marsh's security
- 13 team. So I think he probably took policies that
- 14 were drawn by me and had them under his
- 15 ownership.
- Q. So would the words that are used in this policy 16
- 17 be your words?
- A. I would expect them to be my words with input. 18
- I mean, as you can see from the top there, 19
- 20 there's quite a few people who would have input
- 21 to the policy.
- 22 Q. At this stage, you were audit and inspections
- 23 manager and that was, as you've explained, part
- 24 of the security team.
- 25 A. Yes.

- 1 a process and a policy?
- 2 A. I guess a policy would probably be more for
- 3 a wider audience than -- whereas the Process
- 4 Manual was simply for auditors to work to, the
- 5 Policy Manual would have a wider remit.
- 6 Q. Who would you have in mind for this particular
- 7 policy?
- 8 A. I mean, it says in terms of the audience there
- 9 but basically that group of people, people in
- 10 the retail line and the network, including
- 11 agents -- well, Transaction Processing, Product
- 12 and Branch Accounting, as it became known.
- 13 So quite a wide distribution? Q.
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- 15 Q. This one is written by yourself, you're listed
- 16 there as the author. Was that a significant
- 17 document for you, as far as you were concerned.
- 18 I think from my recollection and it does say
- 19 "Version control ... Replaces all previous
- 20 versions", I think there were different
- 21 varieties of this policy, of a losses policy
- 22 that was born in the late 1990s, and I think
- 23 this probably -- if I look at the timeline here.
- 24 Q. If we scroll down it may assist, actually,
- 25 because there's some slight confusion in the
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- 1 Version 1.2 there refers to amendments following
- 2 discussions with the NFSP and the policy being
- agreed with the NFSP negotiators. Can you 3
- 4 assist us with why it would be shared with the
- NFSP? 5
- 6 A. I think the previous policies were, maybe as
- 7 a matter of courtesy, but also in terms of
- 8 engagement and input. I don't personally recall
- 9 the meetings but there would have been meetings
- 10 to have had that -- I'm guessing, I suppose --
- 11 yes, the involvement would be agents or
- 12 implicated by the policy and, therefore, the
- 13 Federation would --
- 14 Q. That was typical, was it, of these kinds of
- 15 policy documents, that they would be agreed with
- 16 the NFSP?
- 17 Α. Yes

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- Q. Can we look at page 4, please, which is the 18
 - introduction and purpose. Looking there,
- perhaps the second substantive paragraph or your 20
- 21 own recollection, can you summarise for us
- 22 briefly the purpose of this policy?
- 23 A. I guess it goes back to the original policy, as
- 24 I said probably late 1990s, which I think, from
- 25 recollection, was a policy that was developed in

1 the Midlands region of the seven regional teams 2 and then, when those regions were effectively 3 expanded into a new organisational structure, 4 that policy was redesigned into a business 5 policy and, similar to the regional audit 6 structure review, I think it was designed to aid 7 some consistency in decision-making and 8 interpretation of existing policies. 9 **Q.** If we scroll down there's section 2, prevention

- 10 of losses and, in essence, it says there that there should be good accounting practices to 11 12 prevent losses in branches. That's the most 13 effective way of reducing losses; is that a fair 14 summary?
- Yes. 15 Α.
- 16 Q. It's over the page to section 3 that I would 17 like to spend a little bit of time on this 18 afternoon. Can I ask you to look at the first 19 two paragraphs there and to read those perhaps 20 to yourself and to take us through those first 21 two paragraphs; what do you understand, in 22 summary, that to mean?
- 23 A. If a subpostmaster can identify an error, knows 24 that it is likely to lead to an error notice or 25 a transaction correction and can sort of

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- 1 A. That's how I would read it, yes.
- 2 Q. If we look at that from another way round, if 3 there was an unknown error, so a bug, error or 4 defect that wasn't known to the NBSC, is it 5 right to say that the subpostmaster would have 6 to make good that discrepancy?
- 7 A. I think that's how I'd interpret it.

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Q. If we move down to the sixth paragraph, which 8 9 begins "To give":

> "To give authority to hold losses within the suspense account, even with evidence of the error, is against the principle of right first time. Granting authority to hold amounts in suspense should, therefore, always be considered to be the exception the rather than the norm. Agents are expected to address the underlying cause of misbalancing and must expect that any subsequent errors of a similar nature will be referred to the retail line for corrective action."

So it seems there that agents are expected to address the underlying cause even if that is, for example, a technical fault?

24 A. Yes, I think at this stage we probably -- it was 25 written on the basis of a transactional error 123

1 substantiate that, then that would provide them 2 with the circumstances where they could seek 3 authority to hold them in suspense. 4 Q. Looking at that second paragraph, it says there:

"Under circumstances where the exact cause 5 6 of the loss is known and a compensating error is 7 expected to be returned, losses may be held in

8 the suspension account ..."

9 Am I to read into that that losses can only be held in a suspense account if the exact cause 10 11 is known?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. If we look at then the third paragraph, it says:

14 "Before moving a specific accounting 15 discrepancy to the suspense account, authority 16 must be sought from the Agents Debt Team 3 via 17 the [NBSC]. If there's no clearly defined 18 evidence of a known error (and, therefore, no 19 error notice likely to be issued) authority will 20 not be given."

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. So, again, reading that it seems that, if there 23 isn't a clearly defined evidence of a known 24 error, authority won't be given to transfer into 25 the suspense account; is that correct?

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- 1 that was made at the branch -- either the 2 subpostmaster knew about it or they didn't know 3 about it -- as opposed to a system error.
- 4 Q. If it was applied to a system error, it's 5 a little harsh, isn't it?
- 6 A. Yes. I mean, as I said, this was probably 7 written at a time when it wasn't considered that there were to be bugs or glitches in the system 8 9 which would cause those types of errors.
- Q. Is that because it was likely to have been 10 11 drafted in the very early stages of Horizon or 12 drafted by --
- 13 The policy initially was written pre-Horizon and 14 a lot of these -- if you compare previous 15 versions, you will probably find a lot of 16 similarity in the language used.
- 17 Q. So some of the pre-Horizon language would have 18 been copied in to this without thought being given to bugs, errors and defects? 19
- 20 Α. Possibly, yes.
- 21 Q. If we go over to page 8, please, there is a 22 section on Horizon Issues, so presumably that is 23 a new section post the implementation of Horizon
- 24 or rollout of Horizon, or certainly in the
- 25 development -- at least the development stages

1		of Horizon?	1		the NBSC. If the agent feels that the issue is
2	A.	Yes.	2		not being resolved, they should flag the issue
3	Q.	I'm going to read to you I will take each	3		up with NBSC. If a known system error has
4		paragraph separately. The first is:	4		caused a shortage, the agent should be given
5		"If an agent feels that an error has	5		authority to hold the loss in suspense until the
6		occurred via the Horizon system, it is essential	6		system error has been reconciled and an error
7		that this be reported to the Horizon System	7		notice issued."
8		Helpdesk. The HSH will only consider the	8		Now, this was drafted or produced in 2003.
9		incident for further investigation if the branch	9		We know from the <i>Bates and Others</i> litigation the
10		has evidence of a system fault. If no evidence	10		group action, and the judgment of Mr Justice
11		is available, the case will not be investigated	11		Fraser that there are a number of bugs, errors
12		and the agent will be held responsible for	12		and defects prior to that date. So in 2000
13		making good the loss."	13		there was the Callendar Square bug; there was
14		How would a subpostmaster be able to show	14		something called the data tree build failure
15		that there was a system fault?	15		discrepancies in 1999 and 2000; there were
16	A.	I don't know that they could.	16		Girobank discrepancies in 2000; counter
17	Q.	Do you think it was fair to place that kind of	17		replacement issues in 2000 and 2002; phantom
18	Œ.	a burden on a subpostmaster?	18		transactions in 2001, that's something that
19	A.	Looking at it now, absolutely not.	19		I will come back to; reconciliation issues in
20	Q.	I'll read the second paragraph:	20		2000 and 2002; something called concurrent
21	Œ.	"System faults are very rare and are	21		log-ins in 1999 and 2000.
22		normally identified after full investigation has	22		So where did the line that system faults are
23		been undertaken. All known system errors are	23		very rare come from?
24		managed through the Network Support Problem	24	A.	I'm not entirely sure and, having read it myself
25		Management. Access to Problem Management is via 125	25	Λ.	in preparation for my witness statement, it 126
1		wasn't clear to me where that language came	1		four of the last five names, I don't recall what
2					
2		from, going back to the input, or where that	2		their roles were.
3		from, going back to the input, or where that input would have come from.	2	Q.	their roles were. We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony
4				Q.	
		input would have come from.	3		We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony
4		input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at	3 4	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document?
4 5		input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect	3 4 5	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done.
4 5 6		input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So	3 4 5 6	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information
4 5 6 7		input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within	3 4 5 6 7	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in
4 5 6 7 8	Q.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people	3 4 5 6 7 8	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly,
4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	A.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the
4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to
4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Q.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Q.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think you may have drafted, having been provided that	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that I can't recall where that information came from.
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4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	A.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think you may have drafted, having been provided that information or do you think that's somebody else's drafting? It feels like part of the business input I would have been told system faults are very rare.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	A. Q. A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that I can't recall where that information came from. Do you remember any discussions about that wording? No, no. Can we look back again at page 8, please.
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4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	A. Q. A.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think you may have drafted, having been provided that information or do you think that's somebody else's drafting? It feels like part of the business input I would have been told system faults are very rare. And who by? I'm not sure. If you go back to the input, it might help.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	A. Q. A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that I can't recall where that information came from. Do you remember any discussions about that wording? No, no. Can we look back again at page 8, please. Sticking to that second paragraph, we have, in that first sentence, "normally identified after a full investigation has been undertaken".
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	A. Q. A.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think you may have drafted, having been provided that information or do you think that's somebody else's drafting? It feels like part of the business input I would have been told system faults are very rare. And who by? I'm not sure. If you go back to the input, it might help. So perhaps if we look at page 1, in the middle	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	A. Q. A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that I can't recall where that information came from. Do you remember any discussions about that wording? No, no. Can we look back again at page 8, please. Sticking to that second paragraph, we have, in that first sentence, "normally identified after a full investigation has been undertaken". Again, was that something that you would have
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A. Q. A.	input would have come from. Some of those glitches/bugs you named, at the time I wasn't aware of them and so I suspect other people probably weren't aware of them. So even though there were possibly people within Fujitsu and Post Office that were, many people were not. The language, the specific words "system faults are very rare" was that something that you think you may have drafted, having been provided that information or do you think that's somebody else's drafting? It feels like part of the business input I would have been told system faults are very rare. And who by? I'm not sure. If you go back to the input, it might help. So perhaps if we look at page 1, in the middle of the page there's "Business input".	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A. Q. A. Q.	We have there Assurance, Tony Marsh. Would Tony Marsh have read and signed off this document? Absolutely. Well, he should have done. Where would you likely have received information about the operation of the system: so faults in the system? Are you able to assist broadly, even if it's not a name of an individual the department that might have contributed to that I can't recall where that information came from. Do you remember any discussions about that wording? No, no. Can we look back again at page 8, please. Sticking to that second paragraph, we have, in that first sentence, "normally identified after a full investigation has been undertaken". Again, was that something that you would have drafted?

25

and Branch Accounting Team, the last -- well,

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accuracy of that statement?

12

- A. I guess talking to those people who were giving 1
- 2 the input and also, you know, talking to, in
- 3 this case, Tony Marsh, the business owner of the
- 4 policy.
- 5 Q. Are there any specific discussions that you
- 6 recall regarding that, whether it's in relation
- 7 to the production of this policy or just, in
- 8 broader terms, that somebody providing you with
- 9 reassurance that system faults are very rare and
- 10 normally identified after full investigation?
- A. I think there were just business messages coming 11
- 12 out from top-down to say "Horizon's been
- 13 a success", you know, "these millions of
- 14 transactions are being performed", and so it was
- 15 kind of a message coming through various
- 16 channels that were saying "If there are any
- 17 system issues that you are hearing about,
- 18 they're very rare".
- 19 Q. You say "top-down". I mean, we've discussed
- 20 earlier you are involved in, say, the Post
- 21 Office Risk and Compliance Committee?
- 22 A. Mm-hm.
- 23 Q. Do you think that was a message that was being
- 24 reached by that committee or being passed down
- 25 by that committee?

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- 1 Under this policy, rightly or wrongly, that's
- 2 what it says.
- 3 Q. Second, that if they didn't have evidence of
- 4 a system fault it wouldn't be investigated by
- 5 the Helpdesk, and that's the first paragraph
- 6 that we see there, the final sentence?
- 7 A. I'm not sure that's true but that's what the
- 8 policy says.
- 9 Q. Is there something you have in mind?
- No, I'm just thinking that there may well be 10 A.
- 11 things that subpostmasters are not aware of
- 12 being investigated. That's the only thing I can
- 13 think of.
- 14 Q. But applying that policy, if there was a system
- 15 fault and if they didn't have evidence, it
- 16 wouldn't be investigated?
- A. Yes, if they believe a system fault is to blame 17
- 18 and they don't have a reason for it or can
- provide evidence for it, that policy would 19
- 20 suggest it wouldn't be investigated.
- 21 Q. Third, the way that they were directed to
- 22 address this was through the NBSC; is that
- 23 correct?
- 24 Can you repeat your question?
- 25 Certainly. So they were -- if we look at the 131

- I can't recall at those committee meetings ever 1
 - having discussion about Horizon issues at all.
- 3 I may be wrong but I can't recall those
- 4 discussions. I think the messages I'm talking
- 5 about were top-down are just messages from
- 6 directors of the board and the ET.
- 7 Q. And you say "passed down". How would it have
- 8 been transferred, that information?
- 9 A. Just through various channels. I mean, they
- 10 would have workshops where they would have
- 11 leadership senior managers attending, giving key
 - messages for the next year. That could have
- 13 been a key message from those workshops.
- 14 Q. Do you remember the names of any individuals who
- 15 you can recall having given those messages?
- 16 I can't. Α.
- 17 Q. I just want to sum up what we've been through in
- 18 relation to this particular policy and I'm just
- 19 going to put a few points and it may be that you
- 20 can just answer these yes or no. If you need to
- 21 give more detail then feel free but I think it
- 22 may be that they can be answered just yes or no.
 - Is it right to say that, under this policy
- 23 24 the burden was on the subpostmaster to show that
- 25 there was a system fault?

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- page before -- sorry, page 5, it was the third
- 2 paragraph there, subpostmasters will be asked to
- 3 direct this to the NBSC.
- 4 Sorry, it's the third paragraph before 5
 - moving.

1

- 6 A. Yes, I think if there was any issue of any
- 7 description that the branch wanted to raise, it
- 8 would always go through the NBSC initially.
- Q. Fourth, that the subpostmaster would have to pay 9
- 10 the shortfall if they couldn't prove that there
- 11 was a system fault?
- 12 A. Mm-hm
- Q. Is that correct? 13
- 14 That's a correct assumption from how this reads.
- 15 Q. Fifth, that only if there was a known system
- 16 error could the loss be held in the suspense
- 17 account?

23

- A. Yes, correct. 18
- 19 Q. And sixth, that the working assumption, as we've
- 20 seen on the next -- on section 6, was that
- 21 system faults were rare and would have been
- 22 identified, and that's not just in the policy or
- written in the policy but, by the sound of it, 24 that is the general working assumption?
- 25 A. I think at that stage that was the general

2

1 working	assumption.
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- 2 Q. Does it follow then that, if there was
- 3 an unknown error, a subpostmaster would have to
- 4 pay up?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. And that there was a reliance on the NBSC to
- 7 identify known errors?
- 8 A. Or to at least log the issue and whatever
- 9 resolution policy they had in place to put in
- 10 place.
- 11 Q. If we look back at section 3 and the authority
- 12 to hold losses, is it right to say that the
- 13 ability to hold apparent losses in the suspense
- 14 account was intentionally restrictive?
- 15 A. Yes, I think initially, again going back to
- 16 pre-Horizon days, it was often used for the
- 17 wrong reasons and they had lots of amounts being
- 18 held in there. So it was used or was supposed
- 19 to be used for specific cases where there were
- 20 known errors awaiting transaction corrections or
- 21 error notices.
- 22 Q. Ultimately, following the evidence that you've
- 23 already given, it wasn't for the auditor to look
- 24 into any of this because the auditor's job was
- 25 principally to look and see if X equalled Y?
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- 1 what they were due to do. So if the
 - subpostmaster said "I believe this is the reason
- 3 why", I would expect the auditors to log in that
- 4 report.

2

- 5 Q. Surely there would have been a conversation on
- 6 occasion between auditors and subpostmasters
- 7 about what the policy says or about the Post
- 8 Office's approach to --
- 9 A. I think the only time the contractual obligation
- 10 would come up is if there is a shortage and the
- 11 subpostmaster would probably know their
- 12 contractual obligation without the auditor
- 13 having to remind them of it.
- 14 Q. Looking back now at that policy, do you think
- that the approach that was taken under that
- 16 policy to subpostmasters was fair?
- 17 A. No, absolutely not because, as you have
- highlighted or alluded to, the onus in this policy was upon subpostmasters to prove
- policy was upon subpostmasters to provesomething that they could not prove or probably
- 21 could not prove. So it doesn't feel fair.
- 22 Q. Thank you. I'm going to change the subject
- 23 slightly now and look at the IMPACT programme,
- 24 very briefly. It's related because we've spoken
- 25 about discrepancies and how they went into the

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- A. If you are talking about an audit discrepancy,
- absolutely. So the auditor would find the
- discrepancy, if there was one, and then there
- 4 could be a number of reasons why there was
- 5 a discrepancy. The subpostmaster would be
- 6 expected to make good, unless they could
- 7 identify this is the reason why.
- 8 Q. This policy, was that information that was being
- 9 communicated to subpostmasters by auditors?
- 10 A. I think not necessarily the policy but,
- 11 historically, there had always been, within the
- 12 subpostmaster's contract, two or three
- 13 paragraphs, maybe more, that outlined the
- 14 contractual obligations. I think auditors
- 15 always have that phrase in mind from the
- policy -- sorry, from the contract, rather than
- 17 necessarily the policy that's here.
- 18 **Q.** The burdens in terms of identifying known errors
- and, for example, the assumption that system
- 20 faults were rare, do you think those were
- 21 messages that were communicated to
- 22 subpostmasters by auditors on visits?
- 23 A. I don't believe they would have talked about
- 24 Horizon issues being rare, they wouldn't have
- 25 talked about those issues. Fact-finding was
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- 1 suspense account when, for example, there was
- 2 a known error. Do you recall that changing
- 3 under what -- I think you have referred to it as
- 4 the branch trading. I think we call it the
- 5 IMPACT programme?
- 6 A. Yes, I think when I saw that in the bundle
- 7 I wasn't entirely sure what that referred to
- 8 but, for me, I think IMPACT related to a weekly
- 9 balancing programme moving into a monthly branch
- 10 trading programme.
- 11 Q. So the removal of a suspense account is -- do
- 12 you have a phrase for it or --
- 13 A. What phrase would you like me to give you?
- 14 Q. You refer to "branch trading". Is that
- 15 something set different?
- 16 A. No. Branch trading is just, as I said, the
- 17 evolution of weekly cash accounting. The
- 18 suspense account, in terms of IMPACT, I think
- 19 the plan was to remove that, partly to avoid
- 20 amounts being put in there without authority.
- 21 Q. Were you involved in that programme?
- 22 A. Not as such but I remember having a meeting to
- 23 discuss how that would affect branches and, from
- 24 my point of view, how auditors would see the
- 25 difference.

1	Q.	Can	you	briefly	summarise	your	views	on that?
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- 2 A. I think at the time I was assured that
- 3 transaction corrections, I think that's part of
- 4 the evolution from error notice to transaction
- 5 corrections that transaction corrections would
- 6 always be provided with evidence that cannot be
- 7 disputed, effectively, and, on the very rare
- 8 occasions that there was no evidence or
- 9 insufficient evidence, there was a channel for
- 10 that to be disputed. I'm not sure with
- hindsight that that was, you know, the way 11
- 12 things went and I was assured at the time but,
- 13 subsequently, I think there was still cases of
- 14 transaction corrections being issued without the
- 15 appropriate evidence.
- 16 Q. Do you recall who those discussions were with
- 17 and who assured you?
- 18 A. It's very strange. I can visualise being in the
- 19 room with a member of the Product and Branch
- 20 Accounting Team. It could be one of two names
- 21 but I can't be -- you know, I can't be certain
- 22 who it was.
- 23 Q. We've heard from somebody called Susan Harding?
- A. It wasn't her. 24
- 25 Did Susan Harding or any of her team ask you for
- 1 bundle. It's an email to Lynn Hobbs. Do you
- 2 remember who Lynn Hobbs was at all?
- 3 A. Yes, I remember Lynn.
- 4 Q. What was her role?
- 5 A. I know she was a senior manager within the
- 6 Network Directorate. I can't remember her
- 7 precise role title.
- 8 Q. How about John Breeden?
- 9 A. He worked for her in her directorate.
- Can I ask you to look at the second paragraph 10 Q.
- 11 and perhaps read that to yourself and I'd just
- 12 like you to talk us through the views that are
- 13 expressed there from yourself. (Pause)
- 14 A. Okay.
- 15 Q. Can you assist us with why you're referred to
- 16 there?
- A. I'm not entirely sure and I think I've seen 17
- 18 a similar note in another part of the bundle 19
- with my reference named and I think in that 20 case -- because here it says "totally against"
- 21 and in that case it said something similar but
- 22 different in wording. I'm not sure why.
- 23 I'm not sure whether my name was used to
- 24 endorse their approach or to back their approach

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25 or to say that I was an obstacle to their

- 2 Well, the person I think it was was called Marie

your views on that programme?

- Cockett. She may have worked within that team 3
- 4 and I remember having a meeting with her to talk
- 5 through how this would work.
- 6 **Q.** Do you recall the use of the "Settle Centrally"
- 7 button to fill the void left by that programme
- 8 because we've spoken about the suspense account
- 9 and the use of it for known errors. Were you
- 10 aware of the "Settle Centrally" button to be
- 11 used to, in effect, fill that void?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. What was your view on that?
- 14 A. Again, it was supported by being assured that
- 15 transaction corrections will be supplied with
- 16 evidence. So if they were provided with
- 17 evidence that was satisfactory then why wouldn't
- you settle centrally, if that was your chosen 18
- 19 option to do so. I think the gap for me is
- 20 that, if there wasn't evidence, then what would
- 21 you do?

2

- 22 Q. Can we look at POL00105418, please. It's
- 23 page 15. This is a number of different
- 24 documents of -- it's page 15 that I'd like to
- 25 look at. This is a document that was in your
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- 1 approach. I can't read from that paragraph what
 - my reference was there for.
- 3 Q. Are you able to assist us with how it happened
- 4 that something that was established in the
- 5 policy, in terms of treatment of cash account
- 6 losses policy and the use of a suspense account
- 7 for known errors, for example, how that became
- 8 seen after the IMPACT programme and replaced by
- 9 the "Settle Centrally" button, how the use of
- 10 that "Settle Centrally" button became somehow
- 11 inherently suspicious to the Post Office?
- 12 A. I'm not sure I would see it as suspicious but,
- 13 equally, it could still be open to abuse where
- 14 people click on the button just to get it out of
- 15
- Q. Do you think there was a change in attitude at 16
- 17 any point?

25

- Possibly so. I mean, over time, people change 18
- 19 roles, people change views. So I'm not entirely
- 20 sure, and obviously the system has changed. But
- 21 yes, I think it may well be that it was
- 22 considered that, a bit like the suspense
- 23 account, it was open to being abused.
- 24 Do you have any views on that now?
 - A. To be honest, it's difficult to go back to that

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(35) Pages 137 - 140

1		time frame to think through what I was thinking	1		relates to the Two Ball Lonnen Post Office in
1		time-frame to think through what I was thinking			
2		and I know my name's been quoted. I don't	2		Newcastle. I apologise if my pronunciation of
3		personally remember a conversation with John	3		that is incorrect.
4		anyway, but I suppose it reflects that my	4		You have been provided with a number of
5		concern would be, if you remove that facility to	5		different documents in that respect and I'm
6		settle centrally, then there's no transparency	6		going to start with POL00104600.
7		in what's going to happen because, if you	7		Do you remember and I'll take you to the
8		haven't got the facility to say "I'm going to	8		document in due course but you are mentioned in
9		accept it", even if that's not what you do,	9		one of these documents. Is this an issue that's
10		there's no record of what happened in that	10		broadly familiar to you, even if it's just
11		situation.	11		because we've provided you with the documents
12	Q.	You were aware presumably that the "Settle	12		recently?
13		Centrally" button was used by people both who	13	A.	I remember the name of the branch. I don't
14		did accept but also those who didn't accept the	14		remember the detail and, even having looked
15		amount?	15		through the thread of emails, the actual issue
16	A.	Well, it definitely could be, yes.	16		itself, you know, isn't particularly familiar.
17	Q.	One of the purposes of that was to enable the	17		But the branch's name is so clearly there is
18		subpostmaster to balance?	18		some information that was available to me at the
19	A.	Exactly.	19		time.
20		I'd like to move on now to bugs, errors and	20	Q.	My purpose for taking you to this incident is
21		defects. We started today, this morning, by	21		there are a number of ways in which is the issue
22		looking at what you wrote in your witness	22		was dealt with that I'd like to ask you about
23		statement about that and we discussed it, and	23		and it may refresh your memory of particular
24		there's one particular incident that I'd like to	24		issues that cropped up and this is just really
25		talk to you about this afternoon, and that	25		being used as an example. This document here is
23		141	23		142
		forms 4 April 0000 as the the scale in the life			idealife and a second and a second as a second
1		from 4 April 2000, so that's early in the life	1		identify any system problems for the errors.
2		of Horizon, and I think you've already explained	2		The worst of the two is Two Ball Lonnen with
2		of Horizon, and I think you've already explained who Lynn Hobbs was?	2		The worst of the two is Two Ball Lonnen with an outstanding loss of"
2 3 4	A.	of Horizon, and I think you've already explained who Lynn Hobbs was? Well, she worked as a senior manager in the	2 3 4		The worst of the two is Two Ball Lonnen with an outstanding loss of" Now, I think that figure is, in fact,
2 3 4 5		of Horizon, and I think you've already explained who Lynn Hobbs was? Well, she worked as a senior manager in the network, yes.	2 3 4 5		The worst of the two is Two Ball Lonnen with an outstanding loss of" Now, I think that figure is, in fact, incorrect and we'll see why but I think that's
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		the system migrates. So i think there was	,		that sentence The Netall Network Managers
2		always a sense of that change over from a manual	2		knowledge of the system was extremely limited".
3		system to the Horizon System could bring up some	3		I think at that period in time, I think the
4		issues.	4		knowledge of the system was limited for a lot of
5	Q.	If we look at the final couple of sentences in	5		people in the Post Office, auditors, trainers,
6		that paragraph, it says:	6		investigators. I think we were learning as the
7		"In the case of both offices the Helpdesk	7		system was rolled out.
8		suggested that the system was experiencing	8	Q.	Thank you. The final paragraph there says:
9		problems which would eventually be resolved and	9		"I do not believe we should write off almost
10		an error notice would be generated. RNMs"	10		£70k [that's why it may be 64,000 rather than
11		What is RNMs?	11		640,000] without evidence that the system
12	A.	It's an acronym for Retail Network Managers, so	12		somehow 'created' these errors and they are just
13		it was, at that point, the sort of the liaison	13		'paper errors'."
14		between Post Office and the branch, each branch	14		Can we go to another document, same topic,
15		was assigned, I guess, a Retail Network Manager.	15		it's POL00104596. We're still in 2000 here,
16	Q.	So:	16		June 2000, and can we turn over the page,
17		"[Regional Network Managers] knowledge of	17		please, to page 2, from Keith Baines to Lynn
18		the system was extremely limited and these	18		Hobbs:
19		assurances were therefore accepted and the	19		"For Two Ball Lonnen, should the
20		offices allowed to carry the amounts in their	20		investigation include the [£19,000] in
21		suspense accounts."	21		outstanding error notices, or just the [£45,000]
22		If we scroll down	22		authorised cash shortage?"
23	A.	Can I just interrupt there?	23		At that time, we can see Keith Baines was
24	Q.	Absolutely.	24		head of Horizon commercial. Can we go back to
25	A.	It's just useful to say you've just read out 145	25		page 1, please, and have a look at the bottom of 146
1		that page.	1		both Chris Paynter and Martin Ferlinc I have
2		Lynn Hobbs says:	2		been unable to find anyone in Audits who has any
3		"Keith	3		recollection of having received information
4		"I would like to include both as the errors	4		about them."
5		in P&As occurred during the same period as the	5		Just pausing there, do you remember being
6		shortages which the office is claiming are due	6		chased at all about this? You don't know?
7		to the system and which we think may be down to	7	A.	No, sorry.
8		in-house fraud."	8	Q.	"I have received copies of an audit summary for
9		Pausing there, do you remember was it common	9		each office for audits carried out on
10		for branches to be complaining that errors are	10		[13 April]."
11		due to the system?	11		Again, pausing there: audit summary what do
12	A.	I'm not sure common but it had been heard.	12		you understand by an audit summary?
13		I had from auditors feedback to say there was	13	A.	I'm assuming that she means an audit report for
14		a discrepancy and the subpostmaster believed it	14		the branch. Just going back to your previous
15		to be a system error.	15		comment, did I recall being chased? I'm not
16	Q.	So that, in fact, is April 2000 and then it's	16		entirely sure what I'm being chased for. It
17		the first email in this chain at the top of the	17		says not being able to find anyone in Audits who
18		page where we're in June 2000. So that's	18		has any recollection of having received any
19		a couple of months later and this is where your	19		information about them, them being the two
20		name is mentioned. So Lynn says:	20		branches, I'm assuming.
21		"Keith	21	Q.	Yes.
22		"We discussed these two offices at our last	22	A.	But I'm not sure what sort of information she is
23		meeting and you said you would send me the	23		expecting.
24		information forwarded to Audits. I have not	24	Q.	So you don't remember the incident and also you
25		received anything to date and despite trying 147	25		don't 148

- No, but I do remember -- I don't remember the 1 Α.
- 2 second branch's name but the Two Ball Lonnen,
- 3 I do remember the name and I can't think why
- 4 that would come to light.
- 5 Q. The audit summary, though, is that something
- 6 that would be you could produce in branch from
- 7 the Horizon System?
- 8 A. No. As I say, I think this is a written report.
- 9 I'm guessing what she means by an audit summary,
- 10 I can't think of anything else other than
- an audit report. So at the end of each audit, 11
- 12 the auditor would write a report in Word and
- 13 email it to Network Management and, in the case
- 14 of a subpostmaster at the time, it would be sent
- 15 by post to them.
- 16 Q. So an audit summary wouldn't, for example,
- 17 identify the cause of an issue if it was, say,
- 18 a technical issue?
- 19 A. All it would say is this is the discrepancy and
- 20 where it can be identified what the discrepancy
- 21 is, so it might be a case of there's a £15,000
- 22 discrepancy, 10,000 is cash inflation, 3,000 is
- 23 incorrect foreign currency listings. So it
- 24 would break down what was known but then it
- 25 would also have, you know, unknown discrepancy.
- 1 possible cause.
- 2 Q. "I thought this was what we discussed in terms
- 3 of obtaining information from Pathway which
- 4 would only normally be available if we suspected
- 5 a fraud. What I have received from you is
- 6 a list of the calls made to the Horizon System
- 7 Helpline on behalf of the office over the period
- 8 since Go Live. I assume the information I have
- 9 received is available basically that touch of a
- 10 button rather than as a special request which we
- 11 may have to pay a special payment for. I'm
- 12 sorry to say that I don't feel I am any further
- 13 forward with these offices."
- 14 So it seems as though Lynn Hobbs is trying 15 to get to the bottom of the discrepancy, has
- 16 been provided with something equivalent to what
- 17 you, as an auditor, may have been able to obtain
- 18 from the system itself?
- 19 A. I'm not sure whether this is referring to the
- 20 ARQ data, because she refers to the data only
- 21 being available -- I can't find the words now --
- 22 if we suspected a fraud. So that's where the
- investigators would be involved and they would 23
- 24 have the route to obtain that detailed
- 25 transactional data.

- Q. So it would give you the numbers but not the
- 2 cause of the discrepancy?
- A. Exactly. 3

- 4 Q. This email continues:
- 5 "It is now over a year since these offices
- 6 went live and we really do need to resolve these
- 7 shortages (not surprisingly the subpostmaster
- 8 who has about 10 offices in my area is unhappy
- 9 with what he perceives the lack of progress).
- 10 Can you forward the information sent to audits
- 11 to me and confirm who in audits is dealing with
- 12 this."
- 13 I'm going to take you to another document in 14 the same chain POL00104597. 20 June 2000. I'm
- 15 going to read to you from that first paragraph.
- 16 It says:

1

2

- 17 "I was looking to have their transaction
- 18 information interrogated to try and understand
- 19 how the errors could have occurred."
- 20 Pausing there, so they are looking into how 21 they have occurred. At that stage, was that the
- 22
- job of the Retail Network or the Head of the
- 23 Retail Network, for example?
- 24 A. I don't believe so and I do not know how it
- 25 would be possible to be able to eliminate every
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 - Q. So the complaint is that she's received a list of the calls made to the helpline but not
- 3 something more substantive from Fujitsu?
- 4 A. I think what Lynn makes there is a valid point,
- 5 that there's a gap in the process there, in that
- 6 if a discrepancy involves an investigation, then
- 7 that triggers off obtaining more detailed data.
- If it doesn't, then there's a gap because 8
- 9 nobody's pursuing that data.
- Q. Absolutely, and that was precisely the question 10
- 11 that I was leading to, which is, looking back at
- 12 your time where you have the job that was being
- 13 carried out by auditors, do you think that there
- 14 was a missing job description effectively which
- 15 is a more technical auditor or someone with
- 16 technical knowledge who could investigate
- 17 technical matters?
- A. If I could go back 20 years I'd do some things 18
- 19 very differently and I'm just highlighting on
- 20 some of the things here. So, yes, absolutely
- 21 a gap between the discrepancies involving
- 22 investigators or not and I think there could
- 23 have been and should have been a role for 24 auditors to fill that gap but it needs the
- 25 technical expertise, which wouldn't have been

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1 there. Lynn also mentions about getting details 2 of logs to the Horizon Helpline but also for 3 NBSC. You know, we could and should have been 4 able to access that information. So when we 5 identified an audit loss of X amount, we could 6 then say "But this branch has been reporting 7 issues for the last 20 weeks" and, for whatever 8 reason, we either didn't feel that was 9 available, that data, or what had been --10 I don't know what the reason was but, for me, there's a gap there in terms of being able to 11 12 identify that sort of information that could 13 have been available. 14 Q. Thank you. I'll take you just to one or two 15 more documents in this chain before we end that

> We're still in June 2000 and Keith Baines is there emailing Lynn Hobbs. He says:

particular example. POL00104597.

"In order to get detailed information from the system, either special audit functions can be used at the outlet, or -- for older data -a request has to be made to Pathway by our internal auditors. There's a documented process for this, which from a PO point of view is 'owned' by audit."

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40 days, or something like that, and then any data beyond that period of time would not be accessible in the branch. So you would have to request it from Fujitsu or Pathway, in this case.

Q. I'm going to read on. It says:

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"The process envisages an auditor visiting the outlet in the first place to examine the data held locally -- auditors can log on with a special password that gives them access to additional reports not available to other users."

Do you think this might be a misunderstanding of the auditor's role or do you think this is an accurate description of what an auditor could have done?

A. I'm wondering whether it's a misunderstanding of me, either now or then, as to what an auditor can access because my understanding was that an auditor could access everything that a manager at the branch could access. This is suggesting that there's additional activity that they could access, and I don't know whether that's true or whether my memory's failing me, but I thought that auditors could only access

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1 So where it's talking audit there, that's 2 not talking about network audit, which is your 3 team, that's talking about the --

4 A. I am confused because I wasn't sure whether that meant the investigation part, because they will 5 6

trigger off the request, or whether it meant --7 and it would now be Royal Mail internal audit.

8 I personally feel it would mean the

9 investigators.

10 Q. So it may be that audit is being referred to 11 there but, in fact, they mean investigators or

what was your reading of that? 12 13 A. I think in the original documentation from 14 Fujitsu, it referred to Post Office internal

15 auditors, without perhaps using our structure of 16 where we draw a line between audit finishing and

17 investigation starting.

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18 Q. It seems there a rather binary choice, that if 19 it is current it can be obtained from Horizon 20 and only if it's older data can a request be 21 made to Pathway. Is that a distinction that you 22 remember at all?

23 A. Yes, in the sense of, at the branch, data was 24 available and I can't remember how many days but 25 perhaps for a trading statement's worth of days,

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1 what a subpostmaster or a branch manager could 2 access themselves.

Q. Then, in the third paragraph, he says:

"Then, if access to centrally archived data is required, the auditor will complete a specification form setting out the data required -- eg what data types, what period et cetera. Pathway can cope with a maximum of 7 requests per month; my understanding is that a request could cover more than one outlet, so to maximise the use of the limited number available a co-ordinated approach is desirable. For each request Pathway will extract the relevant records from their data warehouse. The data is provided more or less in its raw, unprocessed form, so interpretation will take time and need someone with a thorough understanding of the audit trail specification."

So, again, he's referred there to auditors completing a specification form? A. So either, as I said, I'd misunderstood this and actually there was a facility for auditors to access information beyond what is available to the branch or this refers to investigators. It talks about a maximum seven requests per month

1		and I don't know if that ties in with the	1		achieved it but, equally, I don't feel that we
2		requests for ARQ data that investigators say	2		had it.
3		they can only have so many requests. I don't	3	Q.	Can we look at POL00093128, please. This is
4		know if it's per month or whatever.	4		still with Two Ball Lonnen. Here we're in
5	Q.	Do you recall that limitation on the number of	5		August 2001, so quite a considerable time later,
6		reports that could be obtained from Fujitsu?	6		and this is an email from the Retail Line
7	A.	I don't remember the number but I know there was	7		Manager and he says:
8		a limitation.	8		"It may help you to understand my concern if
9	Q.	Do you recall POL's approach to that limitation?	9		I explain that there is an ongoing dispute about
10		Were there concerns about the limited number or	10		shortages at this office"
11		was it just accepted?	11		The Subpostmaster is blaming the Horizon
12	A.	I don't recall whether after that number there	12		System for the shortages.
13		was a charge. There might have been the ability	13		Then we have reference there to concerns,
14		to have more than that number but chargeable.	14		the issue concerning advice given by the Post
15		I don't remember POL's approach to that.	15		Office Helpline to the OIC I presume that's
16	Q.	And the reference at the end of this email:	16		officer in the case?
17		"The data is provided more or less in its	17	A.	Officer in charge.
18		raw, unprocessed form, so interpretation will	18	Q.	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
19		take time and need someone with a thorough	19		somebody you recall?
20		understanding of the audit trail specification."	20	A.	I think that's the person in charge of the
21		From the evidence that you've given today,	21		branch, the branch
22		it doesn't seem as though that is the kind of	22	Q.	They wouldn't be referred to as the OIC, would
23		job that could have been done by an auditor?	23		they?
24	Α.	No, we didn't have that skillset to perform that	24	A.	"The advice given by Post Office Helpline to
25		sort of role. Not to say we couldn't have	25		the [Officer in Charge] Tracey Dowson"
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		Co the officer in charge being the person in	4		atill we awayyana ha asid it yyaa a abaat fisyysa
1		So the officer in charge being the person in	1		still no answers, he said it was a ghost figure
1 2		charge of the branch.	1		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures
	Q.				in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself
2	Q.	charge of the branch.	2		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures
2	Q.	charge of the branch. The officer in charge of investigating the branch?	2		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself
2 3 4		charge of the branch. The officer in charge of investigating the branch? No, no, no. Or you are saying it's	2 3 4 5		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself on the Thursday morning. "'After the phone call he told me he had spoken to his Manager and that they were happy
2 3 4 5 6 7	Α.	charge of the branch. The officer in charge of investigating the branch? No, no, no. Or you are saying it's Because it's a nominee subpostmaster it's not	2 3 4 5		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself on the Thursday morning. "'After the phone call he told me he had spoken to his Manager and that they were happy it would show as a shortage the next week, the
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	A. Q.	charge of the branch. The officer in charge of investigating the branch? No, no, no. Or you are saying it's Because it's a nominee subpostmaster it's not a subpostmaster, it's a nominee they will	2 3 4 5 6 7 8		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself on the Thursday morning. "'After the phone call he told me he had spoken to his Manager and that they were happy it would show as a shortage the next week, the explanation given is that it was a ghost figure
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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	A. Q. A.	charge of the branch. The officer in charge of investigating the branch? No, no, no. Or you are saying it's Because it's a nominee subpostmaster it's not a subpostmaster, it's a nominee they will have their own branch manager, for want of a better phrase, the term "Officer in Charge" is just referring to that person, the person in charge of that branch. Can you just remind us why there would be a nominee subpostmaster. So nominee subpostmaster would I can't think of a particular company involved but it would be a company that would have perhaps 300 or 400 branches under their name, and so they would be the nominee subpostmaster, even though they've got 300 or 400 branches. So at each of their branches they would appoint/employ a manager to run their branch. I'm just going to read from her report. She	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23		in the system. I proceeded to roll the figures over as told and that Carl would contact myself on the Thursday morning. "'After the phone call he told me he had spoken to his Manager and that they were happy it would show as a shortage the next week, the explanation given is that it was a ghost figure that had got into the system but they did not know how'." Now, did you ever hear the term "ghost figures"? I don't recall hearing it at the time. I've heard it since and, obviously, since I've left the Post Office and this trial I've heard those terms but I don't recall at the time hearing those terms. If we scroll down in the message from the Retail Line Manager he says: "Clearly remarks about 'ghost figures in the system' attributable to our own staff are not likely to inspire confidence in Horizon and in this case may prove very damaging."

1	Α.	Right.

- 2 Q. Were these kind of issues reaching your desk?
- 3 A. No. The emails that you show me, I've not had
- 4 sight of those emails and particularly those
- 5 emails where my name's been inside them.
- 6 I would have expected to have had some
- 7 visibility copied into those emails.
- 8 Q. Did you see it as part of your function to draw
- 9 together themes from various audits, words that
- 10 were used, such as ghost transactions, or themes
- of bugs, errors and defects that may have been 11
- 12 raised by subpostmasters?
- 13 A. I think there should have been a greater role in
- 14 bringing together themes. As I said to you
- 15 earlier, I think we could have had a role in
- 16 looking at the logs of calls made to NBSC and
- 17 trying to analyse what sort of calls are being
- 18 made. Having said that, I would expect NBSC and
- 19 their management to be doing that as well to be
- 20 able to say "Look, we've had all these calls in
- 21 the last month, these are the issues". They may
- 22 have been doing that but the outputs were not
- 23 reaching my desk.
- 24 MR BLAKE: I think that might be an appropriate
- 25 moment for a break. I only have about

1 all?

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- 2 A. I'm not sure if -- there's three paragraphs
- 3 there and it says "Closed" afterwards. I'm not
- 4 sure if that's just the whole action has been
- 5 closed, in which case there seems to be
- 6 a summary of the analysis done. But, as
- 7 I touched on before and you've highlighted,
- 8 I think there needed to be greater analysis
- 9 done. One of the things that I feel was
- 10 missing, perhaps, was to look at sort of
- 11 post-event analysis.
- 12 What I mean by that is, if we have a branch
- 13 where a subpostmaster is accumulating losses 14
 - week, after week, after week and that results in their suspension and someone else takes over the
- 16 branch, I think it was a big gap to look at the
- 17 branch performance with the new person in charge
- 18 because, if those losses continued, that would
- 19 suggest, well, perhaps it's nothing to do with
- 20 the subpostmaster, there's something in the
- 21 branch that needs to be looked at.
- 22 Conversely, if the losses suddenly stopped,
- 23 that might also give some information as well.
- 24 I don't think that analysis was ever thought
- 25 through at the time to look at branches' 163

- 1 15 minutes' worth of questions after the break.
- 2 There will be some questions from other Core
- 3 Participants but, sir, are you content for us to
- 4 take a 15-minute break now?
- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I am. That's fine. 5
- 6 MR BLAKE: Thank you very much.
- 7 (3.08 pm)

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- (A short break)
- 9 (3.25 pm)
- 10 MR BLAKE: Can we now look at POL00021420.
- 11 Mr Ferlinc, we were talking before the break
- 12 about the need for some sort of macro analysis
- 13 or drawing together various strings. I'm now
- 14 going to move on to your time on the Risk and
- 15 Compliance Committee. I think you said this
- 16 morning you attended or went on the committee or
- 17 something along those lines.
- 18 I attended many if not most of the meetings but
- 19 I don't think I was considered a member.
- 20 Q. This particular example is 22 March 2006 and, if
- 21 we turn to page 3, it has your name -- it
- 22 appears that that's one that you weren't -- you
- 23 didn't attend but it does refer to you or,
- 24 certainly, you're not listed in the members in
- 25 attendance. Is this something you recall at
 - 162
- 1 performance after a change of ownership.
- 2 Q. Why not?
- 3 A. I'm not sure. I look at it today and think that
- 4 feels so obvious as a piece of activity to have
- 5 done and relatively simple. If you look at 80
- 6 branches, potentially those 80 branches would
- 7 have ended up with new people in charge to sort
- 8 of track their performance over the next
- 9 6/12 months to see is the profile of the
- 10 branch's performance the same or different and
- 11 what does that tell us? I just think that was
- 12 a lost opportunity.
- 13 Q. So if we look at this as an example, the kind of
- 14 macro-analysis that was taking place was, for
- 15 example, analysing 80 branches with the largest
- 16 shortages --
- 17 Α. Yes
- 18 Q. -- rather than looking at follow-on from
- 19 suspension or looking at particular bugs that
- 20 had been referred to by different
- 21 subpostmasters?
- 22 A. It would just have been simply a bit of number
- 23 crunching, identifying that these branches had
- 24 a similar sort of profile, so they might have
- 25 all had information in the risk model that

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2 declarations or it could have been they were all 3 rural branches. I guess that's what the 4 analysis would have looked at, at that stage. 5 Can we look at POL00021421, please. This is Q. 6 another meeting of the Risk and Compliance 7 Committee on 6 September 2006. You're listed on 8 this occasion as in attendance. If we look at 9 the summary action points, and it's 0904, it

suggested there was an issue in cash

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savs there:

"To analyse those branches where a financial irregularity has been revealed during 2006/7, to ascertain if there are any common profiles."

Your name is there as the lead on that.

A. I think, again it probably just goes back to what I said before. I think this was looking at the profiles of those branches where there was an irregularity. So was there a particular stream in the risk model that suggested that was a concern, were there different types of that branch also in the risk model that we should target. Basically, I think that links to the previous activity.

Q. There were annual reviews. I mean, if we look
 at POL00033398, for example, I won't take you to

being able to cover as many or carry out many audits as they previously had.

Is funding or the sufficiency of the numbers of your team in any way to blame for that lack of analysis or is it something else?

A. I think a couple of things. I think yes, absolutely, costs reduction, head count reduction throughout the 2000s put pressure on, you know, limiting resource with increased amounts. So as we went into financial services, there were more demands on compliance activities. So you got those two pressures of more auditing requirements, product managers wanted their products audited against limiting resource and then we got the skillset.

So I would have liked to have seen a broader wider skillset, more qualified skillset, which challenged against the headcount reduction. So those kind of two aspects created the challenge.

20 Q. Did you raise those concerns with anybody?

21 A. I would have raised it with my line manager.
22 I think everybody, though, was in the same
23 position, you know. My line manager was under

24 pressure to reduce resource. Everybody across

25 the business had those challenges.

aller 167 any particular pages but, I mean, you did
 produce reviews. Why didn't those reviews

3 address those kinds of issues?

4 A. I think this particular review on the quality 5 auditing was triggered by the movement of the 6 audit teams to the network. I personally had 7 expressed a reservation of the move to 8 a directorate, in terms of potential conflict of 9 interest, auditors auditing branches where they 10 might have also trained the same branch. So, as 11 part of that, I think to mitigate that concern, 12 there was a sense of, well, let's go and do 13 a piece of work to see whether there's any

I think I might have mentioned in my statement at some point, probably the mid-2000s when I was heading the auditing team, my team was reviewed/audited by the internal audit team. So it's kind of followed that theme of someone auditing the auditors.

concern about the auditing quality.

Q. If I was to draw the themes together from some
 of your evidence today, certainly when you began
 you talked about the size of the team and it
 reducing over time, especially in the late 1990s
 onwards, and you've talked about auditors not

Q. When you refer to your line manager, do you mean Tony Marsh or Rod Ismay?

3 A. At that time it would have been Keith Woollard.

4 Q. The very final document I am going to take you5 to, I think, post-dates your time. It's

6 POL00086765.

7 I don't know if this is a document familiar8 to you at all?

9 A. Only because I have seen it in the bundle. But10 it was guite a long time after my time.

11 Q. If we look there, there is an analysis of the
12 audit team and the second bullet point on the
13 left-hand side, it says:

"Audit activity is restricted to the checking of cash and stock and the validation of procedural compliance questions."

17 Is that something that you agree with as18 a concern?

A. Yes, this is another review of the -- I'm
 assuming this is the internal audit team
 reviewing the auditors. But, yes, in terms of
 that paragraph, audit activity was very much
 focused on asset verification and compliance

24 procedural checks.

25 Q. The asset verification would have made sense

1		pre-Horizon because you're counting physical	1	A.	Well, in terms of too again, I don't know
2		numbers that are in stock in a branch but did	2		what the management information is looking like.
3		that make less sense post-Horizon?	3		There was a bit more than statistics when I was
4	A.	I don't think so because there still needs to be	4		involved but I don't know what it looked like
5		some assurance that the cash is at the branch.	5		in what period is this? Is it 2013? Not
6		There still needs to be some assurance that our	6		sure it says.
7		assets are safeguarded. So I don't think it	7	Q.	I don't think it says the date. If we go to
8		follows that there's less validity.	8		page 3, please, and the bottom of page 3 that
9	Q.	Was the audit team ill-equipped for the	9		addresses number 4. It says there:
10		additional challenge of Horizon data from	10		"The Auditing effort in Network is primarily
11		Horizon?	11		focused around checking cash and testing counter
12	A.	As I said earlier, across the board, I think	12		staff compliance with statutory and contractual
13		there were challenges with a group of personnel	13		requirements.
14		who hadn't grown up with technology at their	14		"The Network Support Team is made up of
15		finger tips and learning, you know, quite	15		approximately 220 FTE that are utilised to
16		steeply in this learning curve.	16		conduct a mix of audit work and training. The
17	Q.	If we look on the right-hand side under	17		majority of staff are drawn from Post Office
18		"Weaknesses", if we look at number 2:	18		Counters, although some have been
19		"Poor management information, only	19		subpostmasters. All new staff receive detailed
20		statistics of visit numbers get reported."	20		induction training [this is over the page],
21		Number 6:	21		however, based on our review, none of the staff
22		"Currently not a professional audit	22		have any formal audit qualifications, nor do
23		service."	23		they have any professional audit training or
24		Are these concerns that you recognise at	24		experience prior to their appointment."
25		all?	25		Are those concerns that you shared or share
		169			170
1		now?	1		common view that was shared prior to me leaving.
2	A.	Absolutely. As I said earlier, our team was	2	MR	R BLAKE: Thank you. There will be questions from
3		filled with resource, purely based upon	3		other Core Participants but is there anything,
4		a background of counter and to some extent cash	4		having seen all of that and all the evidence
5		centre experience. But post-Horizon, and	5		we've been through today, anything that you
6		I mentioned in my witness statement or	6		would like to raise with the chair?
7		pre-Horizon that was quite a valuable resource,	7	A.	I don't think so.
8		people who knew how counters worked they knew	8	SIF	R WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.
9		how the cash account worked, they had been	9	MR	R BLAKE: Sir, do you have any questions before we
10		working in branches. Post-Horizon, they didn't	10		move to Core Participants?
11		know how Horizon worked other than the training	11	SIF	R WYN WILLIAMS: No, thank you, no.
12		they were afforded.	12	MR	R BLAKE: Thank you. I will start with Ms Page.
13	Q.	Finally, in that second box about halfway down,	13		Questioned by MS PAGE
14		it says:	14	MS	PAGE: Hello, it's Flora Page. I'm representing
15		"No detailed issue or trend information is	15		a number of subpostmasters.
16		produced to better inform management of possible	16		I want to ask you particularly about Nichola
17		systemic issues, strengths of weaknesses of	17		Arch it's probably not a name that you know but
18		control or management of risk across the	18		she was a subpostmaster who was amongst the same
19		business or within areas/regions."	19		very early pilot as the Two Ball Lonnen branch.
20		Again, is that something that I think you	20		So in that very, very early stage, long before
21		would agree with from the evidence you have	21		most of the rest of the network received
22		given to me?	22		Horizon, she and the Two Ball Lonnen branch were
23	A.	As I said, this is, what, five years after the	23		both in that first wave.
24		audit team left me and two years after I left	24		Just like them, she suffered doubling up
25		the business but I think it feels like a fairly 171	25		problems. The same sort of problems if we 172

dig down into that Two Ball Lonnen correspondence, what we see is a doubling up problem and she experienced that in that same wave of rollout.

But when her branch suffered doubling up, she was prosecuted. Now, her branch was a single or a "singleton", as I think they were sometimes known, whereas, of course, Two Ball Lonnen was part of this big chain and it seems that, as a result of being part of a big chain, Two Ball Lonnen got completely different treatment.

Do you think that there is a risk or a likelihood that subpostmasters who ran single offices were treated less fairly because they were small, less noticeable, more easy to run over, as it were?

A. I'm not sure that's case and I can understand
why that might be perceived that way. I think
my concern, if I can just sort of broaden that
point, I think, is that the people who ran
offices their own, singletons, I don't think the
support structure was there, particularly in
terms of Horizon rollout.

If I'm working at a Crown Office and my

MR STEIN: Mr Ferlinc, I have a few questions to ask of you. Can I ask though to go back to a document that Mr Blake showed you, I think, about five minutes ago.

Frankie, if I give you the reference number, it's POL00033398.

Mr Ferlinc, I represent a large number of subpostmasters and mistresses and I'm instructed by a firm of solicitors called Howe+Co. So we should have on the screen --

I believe I have the number right, POL00033398.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: No, it's a different number,

Mr Stein, on the screen, on my screen anyway.

MR STEIN: Sir, I agree. I think we are just

MR STEIN: Sir, I agree. I think we are just tracking down the right one. Yes, we have it. Thank you very much.

So this is a document, we can see,
Mr Ferlinc we have your name there. The date is
February 2011 "Assurance Review: Quality of
Auditing". Now, if we can just go please
through to page 4 of that document to start off
with, just helping us with the presentation of
this, these appear to be in slide format is this
a presentation or a draft of a presentation?

branch has been rolled over to Horizon, I've got people around me to talk to, "I'm having a problem with this transaction, what do I do?" When you're a single subpostmaster, you're on your own and, yes, you've got a phone call but it's not the same thing as having someone to turn to. So I think just side-stepping your question in itself, I think there was perhaps a lack of support and understanding of how single subpostmasters needed to be supported differently.

So I understand that view, potentially, of how multiples/nominee postmasters were perhaps treated differently but I think, actually, I think single subpostmasters should have been treated differently in being given more support.

17 Q. In a way, you seem to be agreeing with what I'm
 18 saying, in that they received the same support
 19 that multiples maybe did get and the Crown

20 Offices maybe did get?

A. Yes, absolutely.

22 MS PAGE: Thank you.

23 MR BLAKE: We have questions from Ms Patrick and24 Mr Stein.

Questioned by MR STEIN

A. Yes, it's the way that reports -- it was just
 the theme at the time. A lot of reports were
 written in a PowerPoint fashion, partly it's
 a reporting mechanism but also it enables it to
 be presented.

Q. Okay. If we look at that page, which is page 4,and we go to the middle of the page it says:

"The key findings from this review that require further review or attention relate to the following issues ..."

So if we centre ourselves on the date, this is 2011. You have spoken to Mr Blake more generally about the process of audit and the difficulties that you've discussed with him. So let's just have a look at some of the details that are being expressed here:

"Branches selected randomly for audits are not done on the basis of random sampling methods."

So if we unpick that, it doesn't sound as though there are random audits; is that right?

A. Okay, so up until 2008/2009 maybe, there was a method for truly selecting random branches for audit. I believe that this is saying that, after that, they weren't strictly random, there

- 1 was some bias to the sample of random. So it
- 2 might be that they chose random but because they
- 3 didn't have the resource in a particular area,
- 4 they excluded that area from random sampling.
- 5 Q. Right. Because if you don't have random
- 6 sampling, then, as you're aware from having
- 7 worked in audit for years, biases can creep in?
- 8 Absolutely, and that was the message we wanted
- 9 to put across. Up until 2008/2009, I was
- 10 satisfied that there were true random sampling
- methods applied. After that time, there wasn't. 11
- But if it wasn't random, then who is doing the 12 Q.
- 13 selection of the places of the post offices that
- 14 should be targeted for auditing? Who is doing
- 15 that?
- 16 A. Well, it would be the selection team within the
- 17 audit team or whatever that team was called at
- 18 the time but they weren't applying true random
- 19 sampling methods. They were adding a bias to
- 20 that method. So they were choosing 5 per cent
- 21 but they were skewing the sample by excluding
- 22 certain areas from the population.
- 23 Q. So just help us a little bit more with this.
- 24 When you say excluding certain areas of the
- 25 population, what are we talking about? Are we
- 1 review of a team that I was not managing. I was 2
 - reviewing an auditing activity. This was not my
- 3 team, this was the team underneath the network
- 4 that was performing training and auditing
- 5 activities, and I was reviewing the quality of
- 6 that activity.

8 share because these are negative findings from

These are negative views that we probably

- 9 the review.
- 10 Q. But, as against the positive findings on the
- 11 same page, the negatives do appear to be rather
- 12 more, how can I put it, negative. They don't
- 13 seem to be balanced by the positive findings?
- 14 A. There were more negatives than positives.
- Whose failure is this? Is it yours because you 15
- 16 are not maintaining oversight as the managerial
- 17 level or is it the team's? Who is the failing?
- A. It's the team leader of the Network Audit 18
- Support Team. 19
- 20 Q. Who was?
- 21 A. I beg your pardon?
- 22 Q. What's the name of this team leader?
- 23 A. I don't know the name of the team leader.
- 24 Q. Now, earlier in your evidence, you were
- 25 discussing with Mr Blake another document that

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- 1 saying that they chose, I don't know, one
- 2 particular town over another or they chose --
- 3 A. I can't remember the detail. All I can remember 4
 - is that the sampling methods were flawed.
- 5 Q. You will forgive me saying this doesn't sound
- 6 like it's a good idea, if you are introducing
- 7 something which is skewering, effectively, the
- 8 results because --
- 9 A. I'm agreeing with you. My finding is this was
- 10 a negative aspect that needed to be addressed.
- 11 Okay. Let's see if it gets better or worse.
- Okay. 12 A.
- 13 Q. Bullet point 2:
- 14 "Team members seem to lack awareness of how
- the Branch Profile works, and therefore, why 15
- 16 they are auditing a branch."
- 17 This seems to be a bad thing on its own but
- 18 in combination with non-random sampling it seems
- 19 to make it worse; do you agree?
- 20 I agree. This is my report and I highlighted
- 21 these issues.
 - 22 How is it that you've got members of the team
 - 23 that seem to lack awareness of how the branch
- 24 profile works and why they are even there?
- 25 Right can I just take a step backed. This is my

- you had dealt with. I'll just put this up on
- 2 the screen for the moment just so we identify
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- Frankie, it's POL00088867.
- 5 You recall this document. You were asked
- 6 a number of questions about it. The matters
- 7 that I just want to draw your attention, just as
- 8 a reminder, this version is dated, it seems,
- 7 September 2003. You will see that is the 9
- 10 fourth entry down, thank you, and that the
- 11 author is you, Martin Ferlinc, National
- 12 Audit & Inspections Manager, and its owner is
- 13 described Tony Marsh. Just help us understand
- 14 the connection between the author here and the
- 15 owner. You write the thing, yes. What does
- 16 "owner" mean? What does that mean in terms of
- 17 the Post Office?
- A. He owns the policy, he authorises the policy, he 18
- gives oversight to the policy. 19
- Q. Does that mean that, in terms of your drafting 20
- 21 of this, it then goes to Mr Marsh and Mr Marsh
- 22 then approves it for further work or use within
- 23 the organisation?
- 24 A. Yes --
- 25 Q. How does that bit work?

1	Α.	There's normally an assurance process on thi	is
---	----	--	----

- 2 first table. It seems to be missing from this
- 3 particular document but there's normally
- 4 an author, an assurance process and an owner.
- 5 So, normally, an assurance process would look at
- 6 it and critique it and give feedback and the
- 7 owner would sign it off.
- 8 Right. So somewhere, assuming this went
- 9 further, this particular policy would go to
- Mr Marsh, the Head of Security, yes, and he 10
- would then sign it off and then that becomes the 11
- 12 embedded document within the organisation; is
- 13 that right?
- 14 Α. Yes
- Q. Can we just understand other thing, which is the 15
- 16 relationship between you as the National
- 17 Audit & Inspections Manager and Tony Marsh, Head
- of Security. Does that mean that the Audit and 18
- 19 Inspections part of POL at this time were under
- 20 control auspices of Head of Security or
- 21 Security?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. So Security Department, it's not just checking
- 24 to make sure the windows are closed and that the
- 25 fire alarms are on, and things like that. This
 - 181
- 1 to Alan Barrie, the Operations Directorate there
- 2 was a decision made that -- security
- 3 investigations, I think, has always been
- 4 together from when I joined Post Office,
- 5 I think. Those two teams were always together.
- 6 And the idea from Alan Barrie was that there was
- 7 a natural synergy for Audit to be under Tony's
 - command. That would have been around about
- 9 2000/2001 perhaps.

- 10 Q. Okay. So we can take from your evidence that
- 11 the contents of this document, which you
- 12 described in your evidence today looking at it
- 13 with Mr Blake, parts of it were unfair. We can
- 14 take that this document was something that was
- 15 known about to Mr Marsh, Head of Security?
- A. Yes. Just to clarify, I feel it's unfair now. 16
- 17 Whether I felt it was unfair at the time is
- 18 a different situation because I don't think at
- 19 that time, I believed that there were systematic
- 20 problems at branches involving Horizon. Now,
- 21 clearly it does appear unfair.
- 22 Q. Let's take that on then. Let's go back to the
- 23 time when you are writing this in 2003. We can
- 24 look at the parts of it but you appear to be in
- 25 agreement that this is saying that

- correct?
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4 A. Not of the system. Tony Marsh was the Head of

is the type of security that relates to the

proper functioning of the system; is that

- 5 Security, Investigations and Audit. So the
- 6 personnel that reviewed security policies in
- 7 branches, investigation policies and now the
- 8 audit and procedural inspection policies.
- 9 Q. When you say investigations, investigations
- 10 means the investigations into the possible
- 11 offences that may have been committed by
- 12 subpostmasters?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. So it's bringing together audit, which is
- reviewing the quality of the operational systems 15
- 16 and giving an oversight of that and a result in
- 17 relation to that, as well as investigating?
- 18 A. Those three teams Audit, Security (physical
- 19 security) and then Investigations, which may
- 20 have been called internal crime or external
- 21 crime, they all were separate entities under
- 22 Tony's ownership.
- 23 **Q.** Who had brought them together under Tony's
- 24 ownership?
- 25 From my recollection, because I used to report
- 1 a subpostmaster who's experienced a loss that
- 2 they've got no explanation for, there's no other
- 3 explanation for it, you've got nothing to say
- 4 that it's system fault, then tough. Their
- 5 problem, they've got to pay?
- 6 A. Yes.

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- 7 Q. Does that sound like it seems fair to you at the
 - time, in September 2003?
- 9 A. At the time it must have done but it doesn't
- 10 seem fair now.
- 11 Q. If you owned a shop Mr Ferlinc and someone came
- 12 to you and said "Well, look, mate, the situation
- 13 is this, that there's some money gone missing
- 14 here, can't say it's your fault but you've got
- 15 to pay up", does that sound like that's fair to
- 16 you now?
- 17 A. It depends on how it's gone missing.
- Q. Well, you don't know. This is what is being 18
 - said in this document. It doesn't matter how
- 20 it's gone missing. It's not been proven to be
- 21 the fault of the subpostmaster.
- 22 A. But equally then, there are other things that
- 23 could have happened. It could have been
- 24 an error. If you look at the amount of
- 25 transaction corrections, the number of error

1		notices, there are so many errors that were	1		suggestion, which is that you are saying has got
2		being made and are probably still being made,	2		something to do with the contractual
3		there could be members of staff employed by the	3		requirements or you are saying this is the way
4		subpostmaster who may be taking money from them,	4		it always was, was at the something that you had
5		there could be procedural security faults. So	5		been told about, that you had been told by
6		someone might just put their hand round the till	6		a manager about by somebody else saying look
7		and swipe some money. There's so many potential	7		Mr Ferlinc this is the way it works. Is that
8		losses that could have occurred.	8		something you were told?
9	Q.	Yes, but I'm not even too sure you have actually	9	A.	When I joint the Post Office, when I joined the
10		mentioned any of those being the fault of the	10		audit team, the contract very clearly stated
11		subpostmaster but, yet, your document is saying	11		that liability.
12		they have got to pay up?	12	Q.	Right. Now, just reminding ourselves that the
13	A.	But contractually they are liable for losses	13		date of this document is 7 September 2003 I am
14		through negligence and carelessness and error.	14		going to take you to a different document, which
15	Q.	And you think that only sounds unfair now,	15		is a Fujitsu document.
16		Mr Ferlinc?	16		Frankie, it's FUJ00098169.
17	A.	No, I'm saying if they are negligent, if they	17		This is, as you can see, this is the front
18		are carelessness, if they've made an error	18		page of this document, "Fujitsu Services input
19		then it's appropriate that they would be liable	19		to Feasibility Study". This essentially is at
20		for the losses. I think what I'm saying now is	20		the starting point of the IMPACT study, the
21		that any errors relating to system issues would	21		IMPACT programme?
22		not have been fair.	22	A.	Okay.
23	Q.	Help us a little bit more with this. I am going	23	Q.	If we can go then to page 6 of this document
24		to take you to another document in a moment but	24		page 6 on Relativity pagination, please,
25		just help us a bit more with this. This 185	25		Frankie and then I'm going to be referring to 186
1		the fourth and fifth paragraph on that page, so	1		about.
2		the one at the starts "Fujitsu Services is	2		Then page 34, please, Frankie.
3		pleased to submit this document".	3		So the paragraph I'm identifying here is
4		So for clarity, Mr Ferlinc, I am not	4		3.2.4 "Project 4 Branch Liability
5		expecting you to have seen this document or,	5		Management":
6		indeed, have been aware of it at the time.	6		"Within the 'Accounting, Reconciliation and
7		I just want to concentrate on the fact that this	7		Settlement, including Debt Recovery and Branch
8		is a 2003 document, this is earlier to your	8		Control' area of the business the following key
9		document and I want to see what's coming	9		business priorities have been identified:
10		together in relation to this. This is saying	10		"Simplify identification of debt.
11		this:	11		"Reduce the amount of reconciliation.
12		"Fujitsu Services is pleased to submit this	12		"Increase the amount of debt recovered"
13		document developed as an input to the Post	13		Then the fourth bullet point:
14		Office E2E feasibility study [that's End-to-End	14		"Put the emphasis on clients and customers
15		feasibility study] and looks forward to	15		to validate the data."
16		continued joint working in the development of	16		Now, do you agree that, in the context of
17		effective systems to support the Post Office	17		what we're talking about here, the clients and
18		business. All pricing and timescales assume	18		customers to validate the data, we're talking
19		this approach.	19		about the subpostmasters and mistresses in the
20		"This paper sets out Fujitsu Services	20		branches?
21		approach to the systems re-architecture,	21	Α.	
22		explains the design aims, outlines indicative	22		be the people that we're managing products for.
23		pricing and offers a proposed implementation	23	Q.	
24		plan."	24	Α.	
25		So that, in summary, is what this thing is	25		clients is DVLA, NS&I.
_		187	_5		188

- 1 Q. We can read on:
- 2 "Simplify branch processes by reducing the
- 3 amount of paper.
- 4 "Centralise/consolidate agents debt.
- 5 "Enable matching of cash at branches with
- 6 settlement with client."
- 7 A. Client is DVLA, Alliance & Leicester; that's
- 8 what a client is.
- 9 Q. So you don't believe that this applies to the
- 10 branch offices?
- 11 A. There might be aspects of it that do but those
- 12 things you pointed out don't.
- 13 Q. I see. Now, we understand that the position in
- 14 relation to the IMPACT system at the time was
- that there was a need at the time, 2003, for the
- 16 Post Office to make more money. It was
- 17 essentially having financial difficulties. Is
- 18 that something you're aware of?
- 19 A. Well, I mentioned throughout my presence today
- 20 that there was a theme of reducing costs.
- 21 Making more money is just the other side of that
- 22 coin
- 23 Q. Right. Where this is enabling matching of cash
- 24 at branches was settlement with client, what's
- 25 that refer to? What do the branches refer to?
- 1 data that's provided from the clients.
- 2 Q. Right. But then this document from Fujitsu is
- 3 seeking to suggest that clients and customers,
- 4 they've got to validate the data. What does
- 5 that mean to you?
- 6 A. It doesn't mean anything to me. Maybe Fujitsu
- 7 haven't understood the terminology that Post
- 8 Office would use.
- 9 Q. I see. Well, let's try it another way round.
- 10 How would a subpostmaster, going back to our
- 11 earlier discussion in relation to losses, how
- 12 would they be able to find the evidence that
- relates to the operation of the Horizon System?
- 14 What access did they have?
- 15 A. The same access that an auditor would have in
- 16 terms of access --
- 17 Q. The same access as who?
- 18 A. The same access as an auditor would have such as
- 19 all the transaction reports that come out of
- 20 Horizon; so transaction logs, summaries that
- they would get out of the system.
- 22 Q. So you think that the branch managers in the
- 23 individual branches had the same access as the
- 24 audit team?
- 25 **A.** That was my understanding at the time and it is 191

- 1 A. Can you just point out which point you're
- 2 referring to.
- 3 Q. That's, I think, the seventh bullet point down.
- 4 A. I'm not sure how that links, the matching of
- 5 cash with settlement with client. I've no idea.
- 6 **Q.** You don't think this might relate to
- 7 subpostmasters?
- 8 A. It's talking about settlement with the client.
- 9 So I don't understand how it links with
- 10 a matching of cash.
- 11 Q. Well, what are these branches being spoken about
- 12 here then?
- 13 A. I didn't write the document. I don't know what
- 14 it means. It doesn't make any sense to me.
- 15 Q. I see. Well, let's just go with the "put the
- 16 emphasis on clients and customers to validate
- 17 the data"; is that something you're familiar
- with in relation to the operation of the Horizon
- 19 System that whoever is operating the system
- 20 they've got to validate the data?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Why doesn't that make any sense to you?
- 23 A. Because Products and Branch Accounting would be
- 24 matching the data. They'll be matching the data
- 25 that they get from branches to Horizon with the
 - 190
- 1 my understanding now that the branch manager has
- 2 the same access level as the auditor. That
- 3 might be a false memory but that is my memory.
- 4 Q. This question of what they had access to, the
- 5 branches, is quite important; do you not agree?
- a stationed, to quite important, do you not agree
- 6 That if they --
- 7 A. lagree.
- 8 Q. I'm just trying to understand what the audit
- 9 process was, though. Did you not make sure that
- 10 the branch managers and mistresses had access to
- 11 the same material or is it just something you're
- thinking, well, that probably happened or it
- 13 should have happened. Which?
- 14 A. They would have had the same access. I think
- 15 what I'm not sure about is whether auditors had
- 16 additional access to additional reports.
- 17 Q. There seems to be -- if you draw back from your
- 18 evidence, there seems to be a few things that
- 19 are quite problematic. You're talking about
- 20 a contractual obligation on subpostmasters and
- 21 mistresses to make good losses, yes?
- 22 **A.** Mm-hm.
- 23 $\,$ **Q.** That's your first -- is that an assumption you
- 24 made or that was what you were told?
- 25 $\,$ **A.** It's what I read in the contract manual.

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	_	V	4		and the state of t
1		You read that in the manual?	1		what was going on with the Horizon System and
2	Α.	In the subpostmasters' contract, I seem to	2		that we just nailed them for the money anyway?
3		remember section 12 to 15 had details about the	3	A.	No, I think what I said before is that these
4		liability that subpostmasters had for losses	4		system errors weren't visible. They weren't
5	_	through negligence, carelessness, error.	5	_	things that I was aware of at the time.
6	Q.	Right. Well, what about trying to prove a loss	6		When were you aware of
7		when it's the system that's come up with it?	7	A.	,
8	Α.	I agree. If the system's created a loss, it's	8		media reports following, you know, the
9		very difficult for either party to be able to	9		mid-2010s.
10		prove it.	10	Q.	You were aware of some errors with the system.
11	Q.	If the pressure on the subpostmaster and	11		You've not said it was perfect.
12		mistress is that they've have got to, as this	12	A.	Hey, it wasn't perfect and no system is perfect.
13		document appears to be saying, they've got to	13		As I said, every software system will have bugs
14		validate the data, they've got to actually show,	14		and quirks and they are fixed.
15		you know, where the problem is, if it's a system	15	Q.	So who told you day-to-day, week-to-week of the
16		error then how are they meant to do that?	16		errors? What reports did you get?
17	A.	As I said, I agree with you. If there's	17	A.	I didn't get any reports.
18		a system error, it wouldn't be easy for either	18	Q.	Did you investigate? Did you
19		party to be able to say this is an error that's	19	A.	I didn't.
20		been caused by the system.	20	Q.	as an example, in whatever way you could,
21	Q.	Mr Ferlinc, when did it come to you that this	21		give Fujitsu a ring or ask to visit them and
22		was a bit of a problem? This has only come to	22		consider with them how they deal with
23		you before giving evidence that you thought,	23	A.	No.
24		well, bit of a pity these subpostmasters and	24	Q.	You don't feel that that's something of
25		mistresses didn't really weren't aware of	25		a failure?
		193			194
1	Α.	I think with hindsight there were many things	1	MF	R BLAKE: Thank you very much, sir. We're back at
2	_	that could have done differently, absolutely.	2		10.15 tomorrow morning with Mr Marsh.
3	Q.	In hindsight? This was a failure at the time,	3		R WYN WILLIAMS: Very good. See you all at 10.15.
4		Mr Ferlinc, a failure by you and your department	4	(4.0	07 pm)
5		actually not grasping the nettle and not	5		(Adjourned until 10.15 am the following day)
6		actually look at what problems lurked behind the	6		
7		scenes. Do you not agree?	7		
8	Α.	No, I don't agree because at the time my team's	8		
9		responsibility was for validating assets at	9		
10		branches and that's what the team delivered.	10		
11	O.	You don't feel it was your responsibility just	11		
12	٠.				
	٠.	to keep your eyes closed, Mr Ferlinc, and just	12		
13	Ψ.	to keep your eyes closed, Mr Ferlinc, and just sort of barrel on regardless?	12 13		
	Α.				
13		sort of barrel on regardless?	13		
13 14	A.	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was	13 14		
13 14 15	A.	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was doing.	13 14 15		
13 14 15 16	A. MR	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was doing. STEIN: Excuse me one moment.	13 14 15 16		
13 14 15 16 17	A. MR	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was doing. STEIN: Excuse me one moment. Thank you, sir.	13 14 15 16 17		
13 14 15 16 17 18	A. MR SIR	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was doing. STEIN: Excuse me one moment. Thank you, sir. WYN WILLIAMS: All right. Is that all the	13 14 15 16 17 18		
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13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24	A. MR SIR	sort of barrel on regardless? Not at all. I didn't feel that's what I was doing. STEIN: Excuse me one moment. Thank you, sir. WYN WILLIAMS: All right. Is that all the questioning, Mr Blake? BLAKE: It is, yes. WYN WILLIAMS: Right. Well, thank you very much, Mr Ferlinc, for coming to give evidence and answering a great many questions and for answering them, so far as I'm concerned, at	13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24		196

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