



1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
148 Old Street  
London  
EC1V 9HQ  
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E **GRO**

The Rt. Hon James Arbuthnot, MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

4 July 2013

Dear James

Thank you for the meeting yesterday which Alice and I felt was very useful. I thought it would be helpful to follow up by sending you a note of the key points we discussed.

It is worth reiterating at the outset that the Post Office takes its responsibilities in relation to the provision of training and support to our staff and sub-postmasters very seriously. We are committed to continually improving these elements given their critical importance to confidence in our business. The 60,000 people who work on the Horizon system in our branches are the face of the Post Office and as such we are determined to offer them high standards of support.

It is because we take these issues so seriously that we worked with you to commission the review by Second Sight. We would like to again put on record our gratitude to you for working so constructively with us on such a complex and far-reaching issue.

### **The Second Sight review and next steps**

As you know, the draft report due this week represents the conclusion of the interim review by Second Sight into four specific cases. We will of course take on board its findings. In particular we are keen to work collaboratively with the JFSA and sub-postmasters to conclude the review process and identify areas for continuous improvement.

As discussed, to help achieve this aim we propose to create a new body within the Post Office, the Branch User Forum. This Forum would be a permanent addition to our structure and would give sub-postmasters a voice right at the heart of the business.

It would be chaired by a senior member of my lead Executive team and we would be keen to invite the JFSA to be part of the forum. Representative groups such as the NFSP and CWU would also be invited.

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The Forum's first priority will be to work together to bring the Second Sight review to a conclusion. It would then continue as a key outlet for future issues and concerns to be raised and escalated as appropriate through the business.

I hope you agree that this is a significant step for the Post Office and an indication of our determination to do all we can to improve our systems and processes. You indicated that you might mention this proposal to the JFSA and we would be grateful if you were to do so. We could pick this up again when we speak tomorrow.

### **System 'exceptions'**

We discussed the small number of exceptions or anomalies which Post Office had brought to the attention of Second Sight during its review and which had been dealt with in the appropriate way, namely that they were identified, corrected and the sub-postmasters concerned were contacted where it was relevant to do so.

As you acknowledged, such exceptions are common in large scale computer systems such as Horizon – the important thing is that they are handled in an appropriate manner. We will certainly refer to other examples, such as the German one you suggested.

### **Media statements**

We agreed that we will share our planned media statements with you in advance of the publication of the interim report, and that you will do the same in return. The Post Office communications team will be in touch with your office to take this forward.

### **The Horizon computer system and wider support systems**

We also discussed the vital importance of drawing a clear distinction between (i) systemic issues with the Horizon computer system – of which it is our understanding that none have been found – and (ii) the wider support systems. Confusion about this distinction could have a serious impact for the Post Office, sub-postmasters and our customers.

It is therefore essential that this distinction is clearly applied and followed in the Second Sight report and all associated communications.

### **Reviewing the draft report and consultation with Fujitsu**

When we receive the report we will share it with our supplier, Fujitsu, in order that they can assess it for factual accuracy from their perspective, with the aim of getting it agreed with Second Sight so that it can be released to you on Monday. Clearly this is a tight timescale, so we will keep your office up to date with developments.

### **Monday's meeting**

Thank you for agreeing that two Post Office representatives should attend the meeting on Monday. We will let your office know as soon as possible who we plan to send.

**Access to live data**

Finally, during our meeting you also asked us about an email which has been brought to your attention having come up during the review. Second Sight has asked us whether this indicates that the Bracknell test team had access to live data. This is absolutely not the case, as we will explain in more detail in a separate email to your office.

**Conclusion**

James, thank you for your time yesterday and for your assistance and support throughout this process. I will call you tomorrow as agreed to provide an update and I suggest that we also schedule a further call or meeting for early next week, after your meeting with MPs on Monday.

Yours sincerely

Paula Vennells  
Chief Executive