

20 May 2014

Alan Bates
Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance

GRO

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to the Minister which sets out your concerns about the Initial Case Review and Mediation Scheme. I have read it with great care.

I too am concerned at the length of time the investigations are taking. I would have liked to have seen some results by now, but that said, nothing I have heard or seen would indicate that the process is wrong – it is just too slow for my liking and clearly yours as well. But I am not an investigator, and so I am not in a position to judge whether or not the investigations can be speeded up.

Reading your letter, I suspect you think that the Post Office is engaging half-heartedly at best. Have you shared this concern with Sir Anthony and Paula? Surely this would have been a better place to start than an approach to the Minister, who has no operational say over the Working Group, and who has done quite the right thing in directing your concerns back to both Sir Anthony and to Paula. I wonder, did you raise these with either or both of them before you wrote to the Minister?

However frustratingly slowly the investigations are proceeding, the Post Office has clearly invested time and resources into trying to sort this matter out, and is going so under Paula's watch. The resources provided for data collection and investigation may be short of what we would all like them to be, but a budget must be adhered to, and no more so than when it is public money at stake. I do not say this by way of deprecating the loss that individuals have suffered, but I think we ought to acknowledge that a serious attempt is being made to resolve this matter, and perhaps under a different regime at the Post Office, this might never have been mounted.

I have received a letter from Paula who is very clearly exercised about your letter to the Minister. I have responded by, in part, suggesting that perhaps the three of us – you, me, and Paula – might meet to talk this through. Might you consider this?