

Note of meeting following Adjournment debate on Post Office Horizon IT System

Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG – Minister for Intellectual Property

Andrew Bridgen MP

Kevan Jones MP

Mark Davies – Communications Director, Post Office Limited

Patrick Bourke – Programme Director, Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme, Post Office Limited

Laura Thompson – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Andrew Smith – Private Secretary

Baroness Neville Rolfe introduced the meeting and outlined the context in which the meeting has been called referring to her wish to get to the bottom of the issue. She had written to Andrew Bridgen prior to the meeting and highlighted the need for confidentiality. While individual cases were confidential, Post Office Limited was happy to discuss them with MPs and their constituents.

Both MPs outlined their concerns, predominantly relating to a few examples of unnamed individuals, which focused on –

- 1) The length of time that this issue had been live and their view that Post Office had acted with a lack of transparency in dealing the claims that there had been problems with the Horizon IT system.
- 2) The way in which Post Office Limited had used their powers of prosecution. Particularly the level of evidence required and the manner in which they had treated individuals where charges had been dropped.
- 3) The mediation scheme. Particularly the length of time taken and the fact that they believed cases were not being resolved in a satisfactory way.
- 4) Concerns that there had been miscarriages of justice where people had been advised to plead guilty to false accounting by their legal representatives.
- 5) Concerns that Second Sight (the forensic accountants who undertook the independent reviews) should not have been paid by Post Office and were in some way being “gagged”. Andrew Bridgen noted he had raised this point with the Rt. Hon. Oliver Letwin MP at the outset of the scheme and asked for Second Sight to be paid for by Cabinet Office.

The MPs also stated that they were asking the BIS Select Committee to investigate this matter further. Andrew Bridgen had invited Iain Wright MP (the Committee Chair) to the meeting but he was unavailable.

Post Office responded to the points and there was a frank discussion about the points raised above. The meeting was a difficult one with points repeated on both sides but a number of follow up actions were agreed.

Actions

- 1) **Baroness Neville-Rolfe encouraged both MPs to meet with Post Office along with their constituents to discuss their concerns. Both said they would speak with their constituents about the offer.**

- 2) **Baroness Neville-Rolfe will meet with James Arbuthnot to discuss background issues, and will consider whether it is appropriate to meet any other individuals resolved in the scheme (such as former Court of Appeal judge Sir Anthony Hooper, who chaired the Working Group on the mediation scheme)**
- 3) **Post Office will write to both MPs to address any general points raised and to reiterate the offer to meet and discuss the individual cases.**