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Sent: Wed 17/12/2014 9:45:56 PM (UTC)
To: Alwen Lyons[]; Paula Vennells[]; Nicholas Kennett[]; Martin George[]; Kevin Gilliland[]; Lesley J Sewell[]; David Ryan1[]; Chris Aujard[]; Neil Hayward[]; Gavin Lambert[]
Subject: Sparrow

Dear all

I wanted to update you on developments with Sparrow.

A parliamentary debate was held today, led by James Arbuthnot MP. This was a 90 minute debate in Westminster Hall, which is one of the debating chambers in Parliament. Around 20 MPs attended the debate.

The format meant that Mr Arbuthnot led the debate by setting out his concerns around the case of his constituent, Jo Hamilton, and his frustrations with our approach to the Mediation Scheme. He was extremely strong in his criticism of the business. He called for a Government inquiry but did not say anything we had not otherwise anticipated.

Around 10 of the MPs present then made short speeches, all extremely critical of Post Office. Ian Murray, the Labour shadow postal services minister spoke for 10 minutes. He was sympathetic to the points raised by other MPs.

Our minister, Jo Swinson, responded in the 10 minutes allowed for a government response and made some important points in our defence.

I will send a full transcript tomorrow.

There has been very limited media pick up this evening though clearly we are monitoring the position carefully. The BBC One Show, as expected, featured the issue in a five minute segment. This did not spring any surprises and featured our position and lines.

There has not been any media follow up at the time of writing and there is limited activity on social media.

We have made our own film about the issue today and will be editing for potential use later in the week through our channels. This is aimed at setting out in more detail the background to the issue and our response. We will make a call tomorrow on next steps, depending on how widely the issue is featured in the media. NBSC is briefed should we receive calls from postmasters.

I hope this is helpful. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions.

Best wishes

Mark

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Sent from my iPhone