

From: The Rt. Hon. James Arbuthnot, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

28 January 2015

Adrian Bailey  
Chairman  
Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

*Dear Adrian,*

I would be grateful if the enclosed documents and this letter were to be accepted as written evidence to the Committee's inquiry into the Post Office Mediation Scheme on Tuesday 3 February 2015.

For the past four years I have led a group of over 140 MPs all of whom have at least one constituent who was a SubPostmaster or SubPostmistress who has been affected by the matter the Post Office Mediation Scheme was established to address. Two constituents of mine were affected (so far as I know – there could have been more) and one is a participant in the Scheme.

Oliver Letwin and I persuaded the Post Office to address this matter and it was with our agreement that the Mediation Scheme was set up. Over this period I have met repeatedly with senior Post Office personnel, including the Chief Executive Officer, the independent investigators at Second Sight, and Alan Bates of the Justice for SubPostmasters Alliance. I had great faith and hopes that the scheme would serve all participants well: it would provide redress for those individuals who believe they have been wrongly accused, and sometimes convicted, of false accounting and fraud and it would offer the Post Office the opportunity both to put matters right where mistakes had been made and retain its good reputation. I am afraid that my faith has disappeared.

I would like to submit a number of documents for the Committee's consideration.

1. A letter from the CEO of Post Office Limited to me of 28 November 2014. This letter followed a meeting she and several personnel from Post Office attended in my office at the House of Commons with a group of concerned MPs to discuss the increasing

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dysfunctionality that meetings of the Working Group of the Mediation Scheme seemed to be demonstrating. The MPs proposed that the Working Group should work on the presumption of accepting the recommendations of Second Sight, rather than being used by Post Office lawyers to reject cases for mediation.

2. My letter to the CEO of Post Office Limited, Paula Vennells, of 8 December 2014. This letter provides background to the establishment of the Mediation Scheme and describes the reason for my deciding to withdraw my support. I have had no reply to the substantive points in this letter, although I have (like other MPs) received an offer from a PR man working for the Post Office to have a meeting to discuss my constituent's case.
3. Printed copy of the Adjournment Debate that was held in Westminster Hall on 17 December 2014 on this matter (weblink to Hansard: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141217/halltext/141217h0001.htm#14121741000002>)

I am happy to provide more details if required and am grateful to the Committee for their willingness to consider this important matter.

*Yours ever*

**James**