

Message

From: Parly Unit - Others [GRO]
Sent: 09/03/2015 16:15:34
To: Swinson MPST [GRO]; Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
[GRO]; Neville-Rolfe MPST [GRO]; Franklin-Wallis Hannah
(Communications) [GRO]
CC: Callard Richard (ShEx) [GRO]
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Laura

Title before 5.30pm please.

Can you keep me updated on progress?

Regards

Louise Stevens | Parliamentary Branch | MPST | Department for Business, Innovation & Skills [GRO]

See the [Parly Unit intranet site](#) for information about working with Parliament.

Please note: in line with Cabinet office guidance MPST does not keep records of Ministerial business. Responsibility for storing records sits with the relevant departmental team. Please ensure you are familiar with what records you need to be keeping and are storing them appropriately

Please note my working pattern is Monday – Thursday (Friday non working day)

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

From: Swinson MPST
Sent: 09 March 2015 16:06
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive); Neville-Rolfe MPST; Franklin-Wallis Hannah (Communications)
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); Parly Unit - Others
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Laura – we need confirmation of the grid slot before we lay the title

Claire

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 09 March 2015 16:05

To: Swinson MPST; Neville-Rolfe MPST; Franklin-Wallis Hannah (Communications)
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); Parly Unit - Others
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Hi Claire

Thanks very much for this. I am checking on the point about prosecution and will get back to you.

Yes, I think that's right in terms of next steps. Parly, have we laid the WMS title yet?

Thanks

Laura

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director | Shareholder Executive

GRO

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

From: Swinson MPST
Sent: 09 March 2015 16:01
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive); Neville-Rolfe MPST; Franklin-Wallis Hannah (Communications)
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); Parly Unit - Others
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Thanks Laura – Jo has now approved the text of the WMS and has also had sight of the text of Paula's letter. Reading her letter did prompt Jo to ask for a reminder (for her background info) of whether POL has special powers to prosecute over and above that of a private citizen – do you know the answer please?

So I think we are now just waiting for the final signed letter to come through and for confirmation of the grid slot before we lay the WMS title. Hannah could you update us on progress on the grid slot please?

Thanks,

Claire

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 09 March 2015 14:35
To: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Cc: Swinson MPST; Callard Richard (ShEx); Parly Unit - Others
Subject: FW: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme
Importance: High

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Hi Charlie

cc. Claire

We spoke just now about this WMS that Jo Swinson is due to lay tomorrow regarding the Post Office's mediation scheme for their Horizon system. We need the WMS to be repeated in the Lords in the Baroness' name, so that we can lay a copy of the letter from Post Office's CEO in the libraries of both Houses.

I attach the most recent submission to Jo Swinson on the issue – you'll note that Jo has decided she would like to lay a WMS. The current draft of the WMS, and some reactive-only press lines, are also attached. These are with Jo at the moment for clearance. We don't yet have a copy of the Post Office CEO's letter, but we should get this later today.

As I explained, this is a very complicated issue, and one which has been going on for quite a while. To reiterate, the reason we are laying a WMS is because of the interest in Parliament on this issue – several MPs have raised individual cases, there is a group of MPs campaigning on this (led by James Arbuthnot MP) and the HoC BIS Select Committee recently conducted an evidence session on this. However, the scheme is independent of Government and a commercial matter for Post Office.

Below is some more background on the issue, for the Minister's information.

Do let me know if you need any more information. The WMS is due to be laid **tomorrow** (Tuesday 10 March) although we are still finalising a grid slot.

Many thanks

Laura

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director | Shareholder Executive

GRO

As background, the majority of Post Offices are operated by subpostmasters – usually independent businesspeople (or multiple retailers e.g. WHSmith) who contract with Post Office Limited to provide post office services, a bit like a franchise agreement.

Following complaints about the Horizon IT system (used in all Post Office branches), the Post Office commissioned an independent firm, Second Sight, to examine the system. Second Sight published their report in July 2013. Whilst the report made clear that there was no evidence of system-wide problems with Horizon, Post Office acknowledged that the report raised questions about the training and support offered to some subpostmasters and made plain its determination to address them, by:

- Establishing a Working Group to review cases;
- Appointing an independent chair for the process; and
- Creating a branch user form to create a feedback loop for users.

These measures are now in place, with Sir Anthony Hooper (a former member of the Court of Appeal in England and Wales) chairing the working group which consists of Post Office and the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance. The group oversees cases through an independent review and mediation scheme. It is important to stress that despite further investigations in to individual cases since July 2013, it continues to be the case that there is no evidence of system wide problems with the Horizon system.

The system processes 6 million transactions every working day across a Post Office network in excess of 11,500 branches. Nearly 500,000 users have used Horizon since it was introduced in 2000, serving millions upon millions of customers, meaning that the c150 subpostmasters in the scheme represent a very small minority with complaints.

The mediation scheme is independent of Government and details of individual cases within the scheme are confidential.

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)

Sent: 04 March 2015 14:38

To: Swinson MPST GRO

Cc: Cable MPST; Hancock MPST.; Clark MPST; SPAD Cable MPST; SPAD Hancock MPST.; SPAD Clark MPST; Perm Sec (BIS); Russell Mark (ShEx); Odgers Anthony (ShEx); Callard Richard (ShEx); McInnes Tim (ShEx); Baugh James (ShEx); Murphy Christina (Communications); Franklin-Wallis Hannah (Communications); Holmes-Skelton Georgina (MPST); Parly Unit - Others

Subject: [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL] Submission on Post Office Horizon mediation scheme

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL

Claire

As discussed (and with thanks for the extension to the box deadline) please see attached submission for Jo Swinson on the Post Office mediation scheme. I'd be grateful if this can go in the Minister's box today flagged for her urgent attention – in particular, we would welcome her early steer on whether she agrees with the decision not to table a WMS for the day of this announcement.

Hannah in Comms has agreed our recommendation of a reactive, BIS-spokesperson line only.

Georgie – I'll be in touch separately about the WMS point.

Thanks

Laura

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director, Post Office Network Team | Shareholder Executive

BIS, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET | GRO | GRO | GRO

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-shareholder-executive

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is making a difference by supporting sustained growth and higher skills across the economy. BIS: working together for growth

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE:COMMERCIAL