

In strictest confidence

Draft Communications: Application for Group Litigation Order - January 26

Paula's CEO report (written):

- Application for the dispute to be heard via a 'Group Litigation Order ('GLO') will be heard on Thursday 26 January. POL will be consenting to the matters being heard under the GLO procedure, although there are a number of aspects of the procedure that need to be agreed. We expect that the postmasters will present any outcome as a victory for them. Accordingly we propose to respond positively to the effect that *[wording to be agreed "The Post Office welcomes the Court's decision that the dispute should be heard under the GLO provisions as this offers the best opportunity for the matters involved to be heard and resolved"*.
- We expect to be able to update the Board by email on Thursday as to the outcome of the application, and a verbal update will be provided at the Board.

Email Briefing to the Board & GE after the hearing:

- As expected the Court today ordered that the matters in dispute with Postmasters should be heard under the GLO process.
- [anything else depending on detail of order]
- As expected, the postmasters have briefed the media to the effect that this is a victory for them, and [PO has responded positively welcoming the Court's decision]
- A verbal briefing will be provided at the Board on Tuesday.

Email briefing to L300 and other relevant POL staff (Thursday) including multiples team, network team, call centres, field advisors, NFSP etc :

- You may see reference in the press or receive queries from postmasters regarding a Court hearing today between Post Office and a group of postmasters who are continuing claims concerning Horizon. .
- At the hearing, both Post Office and the postmasters agreed that the matters in dispute will be heard via a court proceeding known as a 'Group Litigation Order' (GLO), a procedural tool that enables the Court to manage litigation affecting multiple parties.
- It will be some time before the substantive issues in dispute are heard by the Court. Nevertheless, the Post Office welcomes the Court's decision that the dispute should be heard under a GLO as this offers the best opportunity for the matters in dispute to be heard and resolved. We will not be commenting externally beyond this. Any media enquiries should be referred to the Post Office press office on xxxxx and postmaster queries about Horizon should be handled through normal business processes.

Board briefing

We will need to spend some time crafting the brief to the Board and considering the questions that they will raise. I suspect these will include:

- What are the next steps?
- How long will it take?
- Why aren't we considering settling?
- What are the risks ...?
- What is it going to cost?
- How damaging is the [adverse] publicity?

- Is this damaging the business (ongoing risk to new postmasters wanting to operate a branch, etc)?
- Anything else?

Media line

The Post Office welcomes the Court's decision that the dispute should be heard under a Group Litigation Order as this offers the best opportunity for the matters involved to be heard and resolved.

Response to all further questioning: The Post Office does not comment on litigation whilst it is continuing.

Social media

Recommend no response unless (unlikely) very significant.

Potential response tweet if it is: We welcome Court decision – best way for dispute to be heard and resolved.

For most additional questions we can say that it is not appropriate to comment whilst the litigation is continuing but we might be asked about whether we remain confident in the system for example and also about settlements under the scheme (much material of course already in public domain):

Additional reactive questions and answers:

Q. How many cases did you settle via the mediation scheme you ran and how much was the total settlement?

A. The Post Office went to enormous lengths to address the complaints of all 136 applicants accepted into the scheme. The applicants were assured of confidentiality and this is also a requirement of the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) who were appointed to oversee mediations. However, information that is not confidential – including the number of cases resolved through mediation – is in CEDR's final report which we published at the time.

Q. XXXXX (e.g. union) claim that your system is not reliable and there are still many examples of postmasters losing money or suffering other issues. What's your response?

A. Horizon is used by around 78,000 people and processes six million transactions at 11,600 branches every day. Post Office continues to have confidence in the robustness of the system.