

Working Group
Initial Complaint Review and
Mediation Scheme

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Your reference : MCB2014/08461



I am replying to your letter following the Working Group meeting last Thursday, at which there was discussion of the letter sent by Alan Bates to you and dated 16 April 2014.

As the independent chairman of the Working Group it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the criticisms made by Alan of the Post Office's historical or current approach to the Horizon related issues raised by subpostmasters.

Dealing with the first bulleted point made on page 2 of the letter, it is for the Post Office to decide whether it wishes to permit late applicants to apply to enter the scheme. I understand that the Post Office is currently considering the issue and will report to the Working Group this coming Thursday.

As to the second bulleted point, the scheme envisaged that the Post Office would discuss applications from serving subpostmasters with them. However the Working Group has monitored the progress of those discussions on a weekly basis.

As to the first paragraph at the top of page 3 concerning final case reports, the Post Office completed 20 reports by the 17th of April. However, following discussions at a Working Group meeting, Post Office agreed to make clearer their opinion on the cause of the losses claimed by the subpostmasters to be the responsibility in whole or in part of the Post Office. One finalised report was made available on the 24th of April and Second Sight's draft opinion on the issues raised by that case was discussed at last week's meeting. The Post Office had by the 2nd of May made available 12 reports for consideration by Second Sight.

Alan criticises the quality of the Post Office reports. To the extent to which Second Sight is not satisfied with the quality of the Post Office report in any individual case, then the Working Group expects Second Sight to comment accordingly in its report.

There have unfortunately been delays in the progress of the Scheme. The applicants' professional advisers and the Post Office have been granted extensions of time by the Working Group. The cases have turned out to be more complex than anticipated. That said, the Working Group discusses the progress of the scheme every week.

I did not know that professional advisers have been agreeing supplementary conditional fee agreements with some applicants. It has been made clear to the advisers that their expected role is to bring clarity and detail to the claims made by their clients but not to carry out an investigation. Both the Post Office and Second Sight will carry out investigations. I have asked for more detail about the conditional fee agreements.

I hope this is helpful to you.



Sir Anthony Hooper

Chair of the Working Group

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