
From: Neville-Rolfe MPST[/O=BIS PRODUCTION/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=6F2B04F873D84BADB6A80D880A549FC3-ROLFEMPST]
Sent: Tue 29/09/2015 8:33:59 AM (UTC)
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive) [GRO]
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx) [GRO]
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot
Attachment: Post Office Horizon note to Mr Letwin.docx

Hi Laura

BNR now feels it is best just to make key points, some of which she has added, and to delete several of the others. As this will end up being looked at by senior people, she also feels we shouldn't just use initials but Mr Letwin, Mr Arbuthnot (his name until ennobled) and Baroness or Lady Neville-Rolfe. She is also keen that we format it carefully. I attach a word document version taking all this into account. Below are the Minister's substantive changes (she uses capitals instead of tracked changes) so you can more easily see what's been changed. I have highlighted the two main bits where we need your input in the attached, but please also review generally and let me know whether the attached is good to go from your perspective.

The Minister is content with the Bridgen letter and if Letwin wants to add the 'review' term BNR is happy to agree to that in due course.

Thanks
Harriet

Note to Oliver Letwin's office

When BNR and OL spoke on Monday 14 September about the Post Office, BNR explained that she was meeting James Arbuthnot (JA) the following Thursday (17 September) and would update OL following that meeting. OL WANTED TO KNOW JA'S REACTION TO THE IDEA OF A REVIEW BY MR TIM PARKER, NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE POST OFFICE, WHICH HE HAD AGREED WITH BNR WAS A GOOD WAY FORWARD.

JA's main ask was for BNR to agree to meet Second Sight, the firm of forensic accountants who had been employed by Post Office to look into the Horizon IT system and the cases that had been brought forward by individuals to the mediation scheme. JA felt this would help the Minister understand the issue better, and was only fair to hear their side of the story HAVING HAD BRIEFING FROM POST OFFICE EXPERTS AND ?THE SUBPOSTMASTERS?. BNR agreed to consider this, and officials are considering options.

OMIT Other points made by JA in the meeting (which BNR will consider):

*) JA and BNR agreed that the CCRC's (IN FULL) investigations would be important and should be allowed time to conclude, although JA raised (OMIT a couple of concern) DOUBTS about whether the CCRC would resolve the issue IF THERE WAS A FINDING IN FAVOUR OF THE POST OFFICE(OMIT: he had heard suggestions that POL were not providing paperwork, and also that individuals may have been technically guilty of e.g. false accounting but had been treated unfairly by Post Office) THE MAIN CASE IN HIS CONSTITUENCY, MRS... ,IS BEFORE THE CCRC AND WAS NOT THE SUBJECT OF MEDIATION AS SHE HAD ALREADY BEEN FOUND GUILTY IN COURT OF FALSE ACCOUNTING WHICH HE FEELS WAS UNJUST.

JA informed BNR that he planned to make his maiden speech in the House of Lords on this subject. (MOVED)

(* JA was concerned that there might be evidence that Fujitsu (providers of Horizon) could remotely alter balances, and suggested BNR discuss this with Second Sight if she meets them

- * JA recognised that Post Office had a role to protect public funds, but felt they had got the balance wrong between this duty and what he saw as their duty of care to subpostmasters
- * JA acknowledged that not all of those in the scheme had been mistreated by Post Office and that some were indeed probably guilty of fraud or theft)

OMITBNR explained that she had written to Post Office Chair-elect Tim Parker asking him to review this matter when he takes up his role.)

ON THE REVIEW JA had some concerns that Mr Parker AS THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE POST OFFICE might not be sufficiently objective to provide(OMIT truly)independent scrutiny. He suggested an alternative would be former Court of Appeal judge Sir Anthony Hooper, who previously chaired the Working Group on this matter. BNR said she would consider meeting him but noted that he had previously refused to meet Ministers on this subject when he was in post as independent Chair.

BIS are considering next steps including whether BNR should meet Second Sight. BNR still expects Mr Parker to consider this matter when he starts his role next week, and looks forward to hearing his views. BNR will reply to Mr Bridgen's email shortly ON THE LINES ATTACHED

The Government's position is that the processes already in train (CCRC investigations; remaining mediations; MR Parker's review) should be allowed to complete before any further action is considered, and that many of these issues can only be resolved through the proper judicial channels.

AS THIS IS POTENTIALLY A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE GOVERNMENT I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR VIEWS BEFORE I WRITE.

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 24 September 2015 11:13
To: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx)
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

Hi Harriet

Please see attached a fuller note for BNR to consider. It might be worth topping and tailing it, for example flagging that this is being provided to OL as he is a Minister, and that BNR remains happy to speak to him again etc. Let me know whether any questions (or if you think there is anything in here she will not like). It could potentially be trimmed down if need be but this gives the whole picture I think.

L

Note to Oliver Letwin's office

When BNR and OL spoke on Monday 14 September about the Post Office, BNR explained that she was meeting James Arbuthnot (JA) the following Thursday (17 September) and would update OL following that meeting.

JA's main ask was for BNR to agree to meet Second Sight, the firm of forensic accountants who had been employed by Post Office to look into the Horizon IT system and the cases that had been brought forward by individuals to the mediation scheme. JA felt this would help the Minister understand the issue better, and was only fair to hear their

side of the story. BNR agreed to consider this, and officials are considering options.

Other points made by JA in the meeting (which BNR will consider):

- JA and BNR agreed that the CCRC's investigations would be important and should be allowed time to conclude, although JA raised a couple of concerns about whether the CCRC would resolve the issue: he had heard suggestions that POL were not providing paperwork, and also that individuals may have been technically guilty of e.g. false accounting but had been treated unfairly by Post Office
- JA was concerned that there might be evidence that Fujitsu (providers of Horizon) could remotely alter balances, and suggested BNR discuss this with Second Sight if she meets them
- JA recognised that Post Office had a role to protect public funds, but felt they had got the balance wrong between this duty and what he saw as their duty of care to subpostmasters
- JA acknowledged that not all of those in the scheme had been mistreated by Post Office and that some were indeed probably guilty of fraud or theft

BNR explained that she had written to Post Office Chair-elect Tim Parker asking him to review this matter when he takes up his role. JA had some concerns that Mr Parker might not be sufficiently objective to provide truly independent scrutiny. He suggested an alternative would be former Court of Appeal judge Sir Anthony Hooper, who previously chaired the Working Group on this matter. BNR said she would consider meeting him but noted that he had previously refused to meet Ministers on this subject when he was in post as independent Chair.

JA also informed BNR that he planned to make his maiden speech in the House of Lords on this subject.

BIS are considering next steps including whether BNR should meet Second Sight. BNR still expects Mr Parker to consider this matter when he starts his role next week, and looks forward to hearing his views. BNR will reply to Mr Bridgen's email shortly [can attach if appropriate]. The Government's position is that the processes already in train (CCRC investigations; remaining mediations; Tim Parker's review) should be allowed to complete before any further action is considered, and that many of these issues can only be resolved through the proper judicial channels.

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director | Shareholder Executive

GRO

From: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Sent: 23 September 2015 15:31
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx)
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

She will be gone by 4 but I will email it to her. Should be fine.
Thanks
Harriet

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 23 September 2015 14:51
To: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx)
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

That should be fine – any particular time? If we can have until 4pm that would be SUPER helpful....

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director | Shareholder Executive

GRO

From: Neville-Rolfe MPST

Sent: 23 September 2015 14:46
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

Hi Laura

I quick update on timing as I flagged to Andrew (who is with the Minister) that you guys were stretched with  He says she would want to see something tomorrow afternoon if possible. Let me know if any problems.

Thanks
Harriet

From: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Sent: 23 September 2015 10:13
To: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); SpAd Javid MPST; Javid MPST
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

Hi Laura

BNR thinks the note to Letwin is disingenuous: she feels we should give him the whole picture as he is a Government Minister possibly including options explaining that Arbuthnot wanted her to see second sight. She has asked that we square with Letwin first and then think quickly about the Bridgen reply. Please could you consider these comments and suggest a revised note to Letwin?

Thanks
Harriet

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 17 September 2015 18:57
To: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); SpAd Javid MPST; Javid MPST
Subject: RE: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

Andrew, Harriet

Further to my email below, I said I would suggest revised wording for the reply to Bridgen. See below.

I suggest you run this past the Minister to make sure she is happy with the small revisions. If she is content, suggest you send as a courtesy to OL's office a short note updating him on the meeting along the lines of the following.

Note to Oliver Letwin's office:

When Baroness Neville-Rolfe spoke to Oliver Letwin on Monday she agreed to update him on her meeting with James Arbuthnot, which took place on Thursday afternoon.

It was a helpful meeting, where Mr Arbuthnot explained a number of his concerns about Post Office. The Minister informed Mr Arbuthnot that she had asked Post Office Chair-elect Tim Parker to review this matter when he takes up his role on 1 October, which Oliver Letwin had thought a sensible idea. Mr Arbuthnot noted the Minister's arguments, but was concerned that Mr Parker might not be sufficiently objective to provide truly independent scrutiny. He made some suggestions as to alternatives, which the Minister will consider.

Nevertheless, the Minister has asked Mr Parker to consider this and will look forward to hearing his views in the first instance. She will consider further the other suggestions made by Mr Arbuthnot in the meeting.

The Minister will reply to Mr Bridgen with the following response [attached].

The Minister would like to thank Oliver Letwin for the helpful phone conversation on Monday and to invite him to stay in touch if he has any further concerns.

Reply to AB:

Dear Andrew / Kevan / Oliver

Thank you for your email of 24 August regarding the Post Office Horizon system.

You'll know from our previous correspondence that the Government has given this matter serious consideration and understands the concerns of individuals who feel they have a grievance. Several cases have been resolved to date through mediation, and there are additional independently-assured processes in place to enable individuals to resolve their differences with Post Office Limited or seek redress. Individuals with Court judgements against them can apply to either the Court of Appeal or the Criminal Cases Review Commission – and in the case of the latter, I am aware some individuals have already done so. The Government cannot intervene in that independent legal process.

Your email mentions two specific concerns, regarding the suggestion of remote access to transactions on Horizon, and the reports by Second Sight. These issues have been raised both during the BBC Panorama programme and also prior to its broadcast. The Government has received assurances from Post Office that it takes very seriously the concerns raised on Panorama and elsewhere, and investigates every allegation that is made.

Following your latest letter I have now written formally to Tim Parker, the new Chair of Post Office Limited, asking him to ensure he gives this matter his earliest attention when he takes up his role next month. You made a couple of suggestions, but Mr Parker has a strong background working in a range of complex organisations, both as a senior executive and as a Chair. I am sure that he is the right person to look in this matter fully with a fresh pair of eyes.

Following your suggestion, I had already arranged to meet James Arbuthnot and that meeting took place this week. It was a useful meeting, touching on a number of the issues that you highlighted, and I will consider carefully the points that have been raised.

I look forward to discussing progress with you in due course.

Regards etc.

Laura Thompson | Assistant Director | Shareholder Executive

GRO

From: Thompson Laura (Shareholder Executive)
Sent: 17 September 2015 16:41
To: Neville-Rolfe MPST
Cc: Callard Richard (ShEx); SpAd Javid MPST; Javid MPST
Subject: Actions from BNR meeting with James Arbuthnot

Andrew

I think we have the following actions from the Minister's meeting with James Arbuthnot earlier today – please let me know if there is anything else:

- Letter to Andrew Bridgen: I will update, placing the Arbuthnot meeting in the past and making it more of a “holding reply”, and send you a revised version tonight. Letter will be copied to Tim Parker
- I will provide some suggested wording for your office to send to Letwin's office as an update
- We will provide advice to BNR for her return from travel on:
 - Whether she should meet Second Sight
 - Whether she should contact Sir Anthony Hooper
 - Whether there are other options such as use of advisors
 - This advice will be cleared with legal etc.
- James Arbuthnot indicated he would make his maiden speech on this so we will keep an eye out for that after he is introduced on 20 October. BNR may be able to secure advance notice and/or early sight of his speech.
- We will see if POL have a copy of the Panorama programme, and I will provide a transcript, as soon as possible.

Could you let me know when BNR will take her next box for that advice in the third bullet?

Thanks
Laura

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

BIS, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET |

GRO

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GRO

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