
From: Rod Ismay[/O=MMS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=ROD.ISMAYB8406224-7AE7-4FF1-B8E6-F1A8E506F2E5]
Sent: Thur 22/09/2011 11:54:11 AM (UTC)
To: Hayley Fowell; [GRO]
Subject: FW: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon - latest draft response?

Hi Hayley – here's the suggestion I made to David and Mike. I only emailed them and I suspect from Shane's reply that he had not seen this.
Please do let me know whether anything has now been sent back and what that final version was. Our legal teams had input to it.
Many thanks, Rod

The Post Office is fully confident in the Horizon computer system operating in its branches. This accounting system, and the processes around it, enable our branches to maintain accurate and reliable accounts in all respects, and this has been consistently upheld when cases have gone to court.

Rod Ismay
Head of Product & Branch Accounting, Finance, Post Office Ltd
No 1 Future Walk, West Bars, Chesterfield, S49 1PF
[GRO] with divert to mobile

From: Emily B Springford
Sent: 22 September 2011 10:16
To: Rod Ismay
Cc: Rebekah Mantle
Subject: FW: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

Hi Rod,

Just to confirm, following your conversation with Rebekah yesterday about the Cleveley's case, that there was no judicial comment or ruling about Horizon in that case – we simply had to settle because Fujitsu did not provide us with the necessary documentation. Therefore we do not believe that this undermines the statement suggested.

Kind regards

Emily Springford
Principal Lawyer - Dispute Resolution
Postline [GRO]
Mobex [GRO]

First Floor, 35-50 Rathbone Place
London W1T 1HQ

From: Emily B Springford
Sent: 22 September 2011 10:08
To: David Simpson; Hayley Fowell
Cc: Rebekah Mantle; Mike Granville; Rod Ismay; Susan Crichton
Subject: RE: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

Hi David, Hayley,

I've spoken to Mandy this morning and she confirmed that there has not been any Court decision which accepted allegations of flaws in Horizon.

As I mentioned to Hayley, there was one case, Darlington, in which the Horizon records were illegible: therefore we were unable to prove our loss. The Judge refused to allow us an opportunity to go back to Court and adduce further

evidence. This was not a criticism of Horizon's integrity as such, although it was reported in this way by sections of the media.

Therefore, we would be comfortable with the following response:

The Post Office is fully confident in the Horizon computer system operating in its branches. This accounting system, and the processes around it, enable our branches to maintain accurate and reliable accounts in all respects, and this has been consistently upheld when cases have gone to court.

Kind regards

Emily Springford
Principal Lawyer - Dispute Resolution
Postline **GRO**
Mobex **GRO**

First Floor, 35-50 Rathbone Place
London W1T 1HQ

From: David Simpson
Sent: 21 September 2011 17:59
To: Emily B Springford
Cc: Rebekah Mantle; Mike Granville; Rod Ismay; Hayley Fowell; Susan Crichton
Subject: RE: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

Emily – many thanks for your note. We've not been chased this afternoon by Private Eye for a response so I think it's worth one final check tomorrow morning as early as possible with Alison Bolsover. It is certainly a powerful line to use if we can say the courts have consistently upheld POL's view.

If there is any further information, could you please copy any email to my colleague Hayley (above) as I have a meeting I must go to tomorrow morning at 10am.

Regards,
David

From: Emily B Springford
Sent: 21 September 2011 17:46
To: David Simpson
Cc: Rebekah Mantle
Subject: FW: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

Hi David,

Rebekah and I have spoken about this and we are happy with Rod's wording if the word "vindicated" is replaced by "upheld" – we would like to use your wording but we would need Alison Bolsover to confirm that there have not been any such rulings or decisions; we don't want to qualify it by saying "we are not aware" as it creates the impression that we may not have complete knowledge of past cases. Alison has left for the day, so we think it would be better to use Rob's wording in this instance.

Kind regards

Emily Springford
Principal Lawyer - Dispute Resolution
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First Floor, 35-50 Rathbone Place
London W1T 1HQ


From: David Simpson
Sent: 21 September 2011 16:53
To: Rebekah Mantle
Subject: FW: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

From: Rod Ismay
Sent: 21 September 2011 16:49
To: David Simpson; Mike Granville
Subject: RE: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

What about:

'The Post Office is fully confident in the Horizon computer system operating in its branches. This accounting system, and the processes around it, enable our branches to maintain accurate and reliable accounts in all respects, and this has been consistently vindicated when cases have gone to court'

Thanks, Rod

Rod Ismay
Head of Product & Branch Accounting, Finance, Post Office Ltd
No 1 Future Walk, West Bars, Chesterfield, S49 1PF
 with divert to mobile

From: David Simpson
Sent: 21 September 2011 16:41
To: Mike Granville; Hayley Fowell; Susan Crichton; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Paula Vennells; Chris M Day; Shane O'Riordain
Subject: RE: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon

Mike, many thanks for your response. I'm happy to keep our reply to Private Eye short and tight. However, we do need to say something brief about the fact that the courts have upheld POL's view of Horizon and have convicted a number of people in regard to serious crimes.

Can we not, therefore, add the additional bullet point I suggested – or at least, a variation on it?

David

There have been a number of court cases – involving a tiny fraction of the Post Office network - when claims and assertions against the integrity of the Horizon system have been made. We are not aware of a single instance of a court ruling or decision accepting such assertions or challenges.

From: Mike Granville
Sent: 21 September 2011 14:30
To: Hayley Fowell; Susan Crichton; Rebekah Mantle; David Simpson

Cc: Mike Young; Kevin Gilliland; Sue Huggins; Rod Ismay; Paula Vennells; Chris M Day
Subject: FW: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon
Importance: High

Hayley,

Further to our conversation, and having spoken about this with Susan Crichton – we think that, as the Private Eye journalist at this stage has not asked specific questions to which we can give a specific response, the best course of action may be to keep to a simple high level response. This would be rather than going through all the bullets used last time (which were put together with reference to the cases that were being then cited by the BBC – so for example we had a bullet about training because that was a point that had been raised).

So, pending any specific questions, we wonder whether we should just say;

‘The Post Office is fully confident in the Horizon computer system operating in its branches. This accounting system, and the processes around it, enable our branches to maintain accurate and reliable accounts in all respects’

I'm copying this note around to various parties here in POL – so that they can see that this issue is potentially being raised again in the media.

Thanks

Mike

From: Hayley Fowell
Sent: 20 September 2011 16:55
To: Susan Crichton; Rebekah Mantle
Cc: Mike Granville; David Simpson
Subject: Private Eye inquiry - Horizon
Importance: High

Susan/ Rebekah,

We've received a press inquiry from Private Eye about the Horizon system. The journalist has been doing quite a bit of research speaking to SPMs who have been accused of fraud and their claims that the system is faulty etc. He is now looking for the Post Office's side of the story.

I have pasted below the statement we have been using for inquiries – I need to check this is still relevant. I have pasted an additional line we could include to strengthen our position.

I'm sure you are aware of Private Eye as a satirical magazine, but we need to treat this carefully as they have a history of serious campaigning on behalf of individuals. It's also widely read by journalists so could provoke further interest in this issue.

Please can you review the statement and get back me ASAP. The deadline is tomorrow lunchtime.

Thanks,

Hayley

Hayley Fowell


Senior External Relations Manager

Royal Mail Group

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Post Office Statement

- The Post Office is fully confident that the Horizon computer system in its branches, and all

the accounting processes around it, are absolutely accurate and reliable at all times.

- The Horizon system has been subjected to full, independently-assured, robust testing procedures. The Horizon information security processes meet the relevant industry standards which apply to such organisations as banks and building societies.
- Subpostmasters are given fully appropriate training, typically including classroom training and a further time on site under close supervision and guidance from a Post Office manager. Subpostmasters can also ring a dedicated helpline for advice.
- The Horizon system has operated successfully for over 10 years across the Post Office network, which currently stands at more than 11,500 branches.
- The National Federation of Subpostmasters, which vigorously represents the views and interests of subpostmasters around the entire country, has gone on record on a number of occasions to express its full confidence in the accuracy and robustness of the Horizon system.
- The Horizon system provides detailed records of every transaction, no matter how small or large, in any individual Post Office branch. Separate records of all key strokes in the system are stored in a tamper-proof way..
- The Post Office handles large sums of public money as well as the money entrusted to it by the 20 million people who visit our branches each week. The Post Office rightly makes every effort and takes all reasonable steps to protect the money in its care.

ADDITIONAL MESSAGE

There have been a number of court cases – involving a tiny fraction of the Post Office network - when claims and assertions against the integrity of the Horizon system have been made. We are not aware of a single instance of a court ruling or decision accepting such assertions or challenges.