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**Defence Statement.
(CPIA 1996 (Section 5(5)))**

To the Prosecutor:	Post Office Ltd
To the Court:	Liverpool Crown Court
Calendar Number	T2012 0936

Charge: False Accounting.

REGINA

V

ANGELA MARY SEFTON

This Defence Statement relates to the accused.

No admissions are made as to the prosecution case and the following information is given on the precondition that the Prosecutor is able to prove every fact in issue, without seeking to rely on this Defence Case Statement.

The general nature of the defence is set out as below.

1. It is accepted that the defendant was employed by Mr Ali Asker as a sub post office assistant at the Fazakerley Post Office, Liverpool, and had been for about 20 years.
2. It is accepted that neither sub postmasters nor their assistants are employed by the Post Office.
3. The defendant agrees that one of the customers she dealt with was a charity called Animals in Need, who relied entirely upon the use of paper slips whenever they paid cash deposits into their Bank, which was Santander.
4. It is agreed that the defendant Anne Nield telephoned the Post Office Security Department on the 05/01/12 and spoke to a security manager Mr Bradshaw, and as a result an audit was carried out at that branch the following day.
5. The defendant asserts that significant shortages/losses had been a common experience in the past. Losses started to occur from 2005. The defendant had to make good a great deal of those losses out of her own pocket, but as the losses increased the defendant could not afford to repay them from of her own resources.

6. It is agreed that as the losses increased over time the defendant delayed paying in an increasing number of deposits, and used the money from the most recent deposits to cover the oldest deposits which were still outstanding. The inevitable consequence was that a customer's account was credited much later than should have been the case.
7. The defendant accepts that by the time of the audit 40 deposit slips dated between 02/09/11 and 02/12/11 had not been acted upon. Their total value was £34,115.50.
8. The defendant agrees that until the call was made on the 05/01/12 she had not alerted the Post Office to these losses because she felt frightened about the scale of the problem, and feared the wrath of the sub postmaster who had been in trouble with the police over allegations of violence made against him in the past. She was also aware that he had recently bullied and intimidated her co-accused Anne Nield.
9. The defendant denies that she has acted dishonestly and only suppressed the 40 slips attributed to Animals in Need because she was trying desperately to make good the losses. In doing so she denies any intention to make a gain or cause the complainant a loss.
10. The defendant does not accept that her co-accused has acted dishonestly either, and points out that others such as Mr Asker in particular has had the opportunity and the wherewithal to have brought about these losses.
11. The defendant also prays in aid of her defence the fact that the Post Office computer system known as Horizon installed sometime in 2005 has been the subject of criticism in the press. A firm of solicitors in the Midlands Shoosmiths is acting on behalf of over a 100 sub-postmasters who in the past have wrongly been accused of fraud and false accounting, and have been compelled by the Post Office to repay significant sums of money, or face criminal prosecution presumably. At the heart of their complaint is the fact that the Horizon computer system is to blame for these apparent losses due to some form of technical malfunction.

The accused does not give notice of alibi.

The accused seeks disclosure of the following matters which may undermine the case for the prosecution or assist the defence.

1. All notes, statements and other materials concerning any other suspect in this case and in particular Mr Ali Asker.
2. All such notes, statements and other materials relating to any other witness spoken to by the Post Office or the police in relation to this case.
3. Details of any complaints made to the Post Office regarding the operation of the Horizon computer system from 2005 onwards, and details of the steps taken to deal with those complaints.

4. It is believed that certain Members of Parliament have become involved on behalf of their constituents and possibly on behalf of complaining sub postmasters generally in connection with the apparent problems arising out of the Horizon computer system, and therefore disclosure is sought of a list of those MP's. This would be of great assistance in enabling the defendant through her solicitor to contact them and obtain further information as to the present state of play in the investigation of those complaints by senior officials in the post office.

Signed

GRO

Dated 18/7/12

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