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The Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
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4 April 2012

Dear Oliver

I understand you raised a query on the robustness of the Post Office Horizon system yesterday with Moya Greene. I am grateful to Moya for passing this query on to me.

The Post Office takes very seriously any perception that there is an issue with the accuracy of the Horizon system: there isn't. The Horizon system has been rigorously tested using independent assessors and robust procedures.

Therefore when queries are raised, my team will work with Subpostmasters to help identify the problem. Very often the 'missing' funds are a keying or balancing error that can be put right, and training given to ensure it doesn't happen again. These checks and procedures resolve virtually all discrepancies satisfactorily. However, in some cases, which fortunately are very few and far between, we have had to prosecute Subpostmasters for theft or false accounting and provide evidence which substantiates our legal position. In every instance, the courts have found in our favour. This is a particularly difficult and sensitive situation when it arises.

As I think you are aware, your colleague James Arbuthnot raised a similar query on behalf of one of his constituents at a recent meeting with Alice Perkins, the Post Office Chairman. James also wanted to understand the wider issues raised by the action group Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance.

Alice has since invited James to our head office, where we can show him in detail how the Horizon system works. I would like to extend the same invitation to you, either with James or independently.

My office will be in touch to arrange a meeting but, in the meantime, if you could provide me with details of the Post Office in your constituency that is encountering problems, I will ensure we look into it as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

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Paula Vennells
Chief Executive