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Sent: Fri 05/12/2014 9:54:26 AM (UTC)
To: Belinda Crowe; [GRO]
Cc: Patrick Bourke; [GRO]; Tom Wechsler; [GRO]; Rodric Williams; [GRO]
Subject: Urgent BBC

Hi there

I will pop up now to discuss this but full details re BBC plans below.

Rod – Mark has asked that I get a legal view.

Mel

Hi Ruth

Yesterday I had a conversation with your colleague Gabrielle O'Gara (apologies if I have got the spelling wrong) requesting an interview with Paula Vennells or a senior nominee within the Post Office. In the course of our conversation I explained there appears to have been a significant development in the attitude of various MPs towards the Complaint Review and Mediation scheme. I am not exactly clear on what that development is, but I understand it will be known soon.

We are preparing a piece for the One Show which will go out next week. The story is likely to be picked up before then by BBC network news.

In the One Show piece we will interview a former Subpostmaster - Susan Knight in St Keverne - who was accused of theft by the Post Office. She was subsequently completely exonerated, yet she has lost her job, her business, her place in the community, is now living below the bread line and is having to sell her house. Whilst we were there she received a notification that her water supply was in danger of being cut off. Yet she is an innocent woman.

In order to ensure Ms Knight's position on the mediation scheme is not in jeopardy, we have not discussed the mediation scheme at all - we simply wanted to hear about her experience of running the village Post Office and her treatment at the hands of the Post Office and the legal system.

In our One Show piece we will also interview a barrister who is an expert in computer systems. He will say the idea that computer systems are faultless is a nonsense, and that relying solely on their output for criminal investigations (as the Post Office has done in a number of cases) can result in miscarriages of justice. He has been taking a close interest in Horizon and will state his professional opinion on Horizon during our piece. He is unlikely to be complimentary.

We have been in contact with a number of former SPMRs who all claim their innocence, yet most or all have been sacked/forced to resign by the Post Office. Many have been prosecuted, some have criminal convictions, some have been sent to prison. In the cases we are looking into, the common thread is a complete absence of any evidence of deliberate wrongdoing, let alone proof of criminal activity. Some have compelling evidence they are innocent of any crime or negligence. Some also have clear evidence of inexplicable errors made by Horizon.

The BBC, through various outlets, has made repeated requests for interview by the Post Office over the integrity of the Horizon system. These interview requests go back as far as the Taro Naw programme in 2009, my own broadcast on BBC1's Inside Out South in 2011, Matt Prodger's interview requests for BBC News in 2012 and 2013, the request by Taro Naw in 2013 and my request to you earlier this year.

To the best of my knowledge the Post Office has never allowed itself to be properly held to account in a formal recorded interview over the integrity of the Horizon system and/or the way it goes about prosecuting its Subpostmasters. This, in itself, speaks volumes.

I would like to reiterate my interview request with some urgency. **We would have to have it recorded by Monday evening.** We can get a camera crew anywhere reasonable in the UK at reasonable notice, and of course we can make one available at the weekend.

I called Ms O'Gara on your office phone number [GRO] at around 2.30pm yesterday afternoon and have not yet received a response. I think it is immensely important to get the Post Office's perspective on the integrity of the Horizon system, its treatment of Subpostmasters having problems using the Horizon system (including and with specific reference to Susan Knight) and any latest developments in the relationship between the Post Office and MPs over the mediation scheme. If you wish to discuss the exact terms of reference of the interview before it takes place, I would be willing to listen to what you have to say.

Please email me or call me on [GRO] if you require any further information or wish to discuss where and when the interview with Ms Vennells will take place.

Thank you

Nick Wallis
BBC