

Mr Gerry Hayes  
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Alan Bates



19<sup>th</sup> December 2000

**Reference: Horizon Faults**

Dear Mr Hayes

Further to our telephone conversation on the morning of Thursday 14th December after the problems with our balance the previous day, I thought it prudent to confirm the details to you in writing.

The balance at this office on the Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> December was not only very stressful but also very worrying. The evidence that appeared during that day proved beyond any doubt that the Horizon system cannot be relied upon to give 100% accurate figures. The problem which was highlighted to this office that day was with regard to Giro Deposits and at one point the weekly returns were showing a variance, to the addition of the daily returns, of over £6000.

The whole of that afternoon was spent making a number of phone calls to the different helplines, one of almost 1 hour long, and kept two of the three terminals producing nothing but reports, at a peak trading time when we had queues out of the door; though eventually I did manage to track down the majority of the money. That said the cash account for that week is still showing a shortage of £1182.81. I can without any doubt attribute £368.50 of that to Giro items that have been double entered and that I am unable to track because of the way Horizon is set up. Of the remaining £814.31 shortage, I am presuming that £409.15 of that is the shortage from the previous week that has become added to the total. This leaves a difference £405.16 which I am unsure of where it comes from. It may well be a Giro system error as might be the previous weeks £409.15 shortage or it may be something else. Unfortunately the current Horizon system does not let you access previous transactions adequately enough to track problems with shorts or overs at the end of the week.

Having spoken to the local Branch Secretary of the Federation of Subpostmasters on these problems and realising the problems I am experiencing are being found by others around the country I really do believe it would be unreasonable for Post Office Network to hold me liable for losses on the cash account until such time as 100% guarantee can be given about the accuracy of Horizon.

I had been hoping to leave any comments in writing about Horizon until the Office is quieter in January and then write a detailed submission about the cost we have incurred with it (around £1000), the problems with the counter (staff working with money and stamp books on chairs or on the shelf behind them), the very poor layout

of the screen and menus, the slowness of the printers, the lack of report writing facilities, the chaotic end of day and end of week procedures and the problems of having to do 'office work' at a terminal on the counter. Given time I shall produce the report for you.

Please do not think that I am being nothing but negative about the system, I am a firm believer in the way forward being through such a system. But bear in mind my comments are made by someone who has had considerable experience of EPOS systems before joining the Post Office in 1998. I first began working with them in 1986 and have used a variety of systems, I have been involved with running an assessment program on one system and have developed and implemented a large site specific package with a software development company. So I do have some insight into these systems and I would gladly be willing to offer constructive feedback if asked.

With regard to the current deficit showing on our cash account for last week how do you want me to progress this week's balance? Should I just roll it through and see what happens, or what?

I would be very grateful for any guidance or assistance you can offer on this matter.

Your sincerely

Alan Bates  
Subpostmaster Craig-y-Don Post Office