
From: Mark R Davies [GRO]
Sent: Wed 24/07/2013 7:20:38 AM (UTC)
To: Alwen Lyons [GRO]
Cc: Martin Edwards [GRO]; Susan Crichton [GRO]
Subject: Re: Post Office Horizon Inquiry

Hi

Sure, but he is obviously naive about process if he thinks he can play us off against the minister so transparently. I think it would be perfectly reasonable to say that we have been asked for our comments on his letter to the minister: not to confront him but to make him aware that things are not so straightforward that he can say one thing here and another thing there.

Mark

Sent from my iPhone

On 24 Jul 2013, at 08:01, "Alwen Lyons" [GRO] wrote:

The problem we have is that he doesn't know we have seen the letter and we need to be careful that the Minister is not seen to aligning with us by asking us to help her respond.

I think we need her to go back saying amongst other things that she has been told that he is now involved in designing the process going forward. And that she is pleased about that etc

Susan I think we do need to explain to Alan face to face the process we go through before prosecution, but let's make sure we are getting it right first

Thanks

Alwen

Alwen Lyons
Company Secretary
[GRO]

Sent from Blackberry

From: Mark R Davies
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2013 06:55 AM
To: Alwen Lyons
Cc: Martin Edwards; Susan Crichton
Subject: Re: Post Office Horizon Inquiry

We also need to front Alan Bates up - he needs to know that if he writes to BIS in this fashion we will be consulted - he can't play it all ways.

Mark

Sent from my iPhone

On 23 Jul 2013, at 21:13, "Alwen Lyons" [GRO] wrote:

It is disappointing that he felt he had to write this email to Jo whilst we were still trying to organise the mediation process. He is at a workshop on Thursday but surely can not be PA of the process whilst undermining it in this way.

I agree we should have a meeting with Will to explain what is actually going

Thanks
Alwen

Alwen Lyons
Company Secretary

GRO

On 23 Jul 2013, at 18:20, "Martin Edwards" wrote:

GRO

Hi Susan/Alwen - I think a meeting with Shex within the next week would be a good idea - we obviously need them properly briefed so they handle the JFSA, MPs and other stakeholders properly. Let me know who you think should attend, probably needs at least one of you (and I'd be happy to join too).

Paula and I also have our monthly catch-up with Will tomorrow (at 12.30), so we'll give him a high level update on where we are with the process. Let me know if there is anything specific you think we should be saying to him. Are there any particular areas where we need BIS support?

Can discuss in the morning if easier.

Thanks,
Martin

From: Martin Edwards
Sent: 23 July 2013 17:51
To: 'Whitehead Mike (ShEx)'; Susan Crichton
Cc: Gibson Will (ShEx); Batten Peter (ShEx); Alwen Lyons
Subject: RE: Post Office Horizon Inquiry

Thanks Mike, I think a meeting would be useful. We'll get back to you with some suggested times.

In the meantime, please could you send us a copy of the letter to Alan Bates dated 11 July which he refers to below?

Many thanks,
Martin

From: Whitehead Mike (ShEx)
Sent: 23 July 2013 12:04
To: Martin Edwards; Susan Crichton
Cc: Gibson Will (ShEx); Batten Peter (ShEx)
Subject: FW: Post Office Horizon Inquiry

GRO

Martin/Susan

The email letter below from Alan Bates at JFSA to Jo Swinson raises a number of issues which it would be helpful for us to discuss with you before drafting a reply. I think a meeting within the next week or so might be the best way forward, given the range and complexity of some of the issues raised. Useful if you could suggest some suitable date(s).

Regards

Mike

Mike Whitehead
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Shareholder Executive
Royal Mail and Postal Services
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
GRO

From: Alan Bates GRO
Sent: 18 July 2013 08:27
To: Swinson MPST Correspondence
Subject: Post Office Horizon Inquiry

Dear Minister

Many thanks for your letter dated 11th July, where you confirm that further cases can be put forward for review.

I recently wrote to those MPs who raised questions after your statement informing them of the extent of those further cases as we at JFSA currently see it, and thought you may find it of use to have the same information as there only ever seems to be 47 cases commented about.

The 47 cases referred to in the report, comprises of:-

1. Cases that were raised by serving subpostmasters in response to an article advertised through Post Office. It was published 14th January 2013, and it was 1 item in a 28 page edition of Post Office's branchfocus, an internal magazine circulated weekly to all post offices containing business update information (a pdf of that edition is available if requested), what appeared is below:-

Reporting Horizon concerns

As you may have heard, Post Office is working with independent forensic experts, 2nd Sight, and the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance (JFSA), to review reported concerns that have been raised about the Horizon system.

The Post Office and JFSA have signed an agreement to ensure that any agent, contractor or employee with any evidence can feel free to report their observations.

If do you have evidence that you think would be helpful to the review, please contact the JFSA on: GRO or GRO

Please submit any evidence as soon as possible and no later than 28 February 2013.

From the 14th January to the 28th February, 80 enquiries were received by JFSA from serving subpostmasters, of these, 15 were not applicable to the Inquiry, and of the 65 left, 28 cases were sent through to 2nd Sight as being the least complex and the most suitable cases relating to areas 2nd Sight were investigating at that time. From the 28 cases, 2nd Sight selected 14 for further investigation.

Furthermore JFSA also referred 5 historic cases to the investigation, and those, added to the 14 cases from serving subpostmasters, make up the 19 JFSA referred cases, and form part of the 47 cases.

2. MP referrals - 28 cases had been received at the time of the closure for submission of evidence to the Inquiry, although more have been received since.

Therefore the 47 cases referred to comprises of 28 MP referrals and 19 JFSA referrals. But 47 cases is not the final number of cases involved with this issue, there are many more and these can be found in a variety of places.

- Shoosmiths Solicitors, who have been registering people with the aim of a group action against Post Office in this matter. They have approximately 120 cases and will include many of the MP referred cases.
- JFSA, we have different sections of membership, but those who currently believe they have a case against Post Office number approximately 150, although more are joining weekly. The majority of these cases are registered with Shoosmiths but there are other solicitors involved.

The question is how many more will appear as the issue receives more media coverage and where more cases will appear in the weeks, months and years to come?

As an ex subpostmaster and regularly conversing in confidence with many serving subpostmasters, I need to make you aware of a problem that affects a number of serving subpostmasters around the country. Below, I have inserted extracts from just two subpostmasters' emails that I have recently received, omitting any identifying information, but they illustrate the problem better than I can:-

"Over the last 15 months alone, February 2012 - May 2013, more than £39,000 is deemed to be my shortfall, an average of £600 per week. This surely cannot be correct, but the notifications from the Post office state this is the case.

The worry has affected my well-being and plans for retirement have had to be postponed. I have not had a break in my business hours for more than four years, to keep a tight rein on the office. The financial strain on myself and my family is devastating and continues on a daily basis."

"I have only just read about the Post office finally admitting there may be problems with the Horizon system and called for current users experiencing problems to come forward without fear of reprisals, but with the Post office already prosecuting a large number of postmasters causing bankruptcy the loss of their businesses, prison etc. without a second thought, will anyone else come forward risking exactly the same treatment, as all the prosecuted postmasters could not explain the losses how would any other postmaster be able to explain the losses.

I for one cannot afford to trust the post office, I would lose my business and be sent to prison for the same problems the prosecuted postmasters had, as I have not got the money to pay back or could possibly raise it and could not explain the losses. This has been going on for 3 years and a nightmare but I am too afraid of losing everything I have worked for. My shop is just ticking over in this recession and I am managing to survive, the risk is too great with no confidence in the integrity of the post office and I suspect there are very many more like me."

I have no doubt at all, that there are many serving subpostmasters who, like those above, find that Post Office have left them nowhere to turn and are just keeping their fingers crossed that 'audit' do not turn up. These, unfortunately, are the future membership of JFSA.

With regard to 2nd Sight and the Inquiry, I think I have made this comment to you before but I will repeat it. Whilst we, JSFA, have no problems at all with 2nd Sight being involved, we very concerned that they are being paid by Post Office and seem to be working with their hands tied. A point that was demonstrated at the MP meeting in Westminster when 2nd Sight presented the Interim Report and Post Office sent a solicitor to 'note' 2nd Sights

comments.

As I have previously mentioned to you, we, JFSA, felt the Interim Report had been ironed flat. If the Inquiry is to succeed it has to become truly independent and be seen to be as such, which under its current arrangement it is not. If there is anything you can do to bring this about, I believe it would speed up the process greatly and bring significant new clarity to its findings.

In the last two days I have heard, and I may be wrong, that Post Office now wants the whole review to be completed by October instead of just reporting back to MPs on the progress over the summer. If that is correct, and I know the figures I have given you above are correct, how are the two man team at 2nd Sight to achieve that, when under the control of Post Office not a single case has been completed in the last year?

I appreciate that you can only make statements on the information you are given, so if in the future we can offer a perspective other than Post Office's, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Alan Bates
Chairman
Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance

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