

Message

From: Mark R Davies [GRO]
on behalf of Mark R Davies [GRO]
Sent: 05/12/2014 13:02:11
To: Belinda Crowe [GRO]
Subject: Re: Urgent BBC - update

Yep - something like "when appropriate we will be very happy to discuss the scheme and wider issues"

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director
Mobile [GRO]

Sent from my iPhone

On 5 Dec 2014, at 12:57, "Belinda Crowe" [GRO] wrote:

Yes but perhaps not him? We've a draft which we're fiddling with which Mel will send you shortly.
Best wishes
Belinda

Belinda Crowe

148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ

GRO

belinda.crowe [GRO]

From: Mark R Davies
Sent: 05 December 2014 12:55
To: Belinda Crowe
Cc: Melanie Corfield; Patrick Bourke; Tom Wechsler; Rodric Williams; Angela Van-Den-Bogerd; Belinda Crowe; Chris Aujard
Subject: Re: Urgent BBC - update

Thanks Belinda. I think it really important in our response from Mel to BBC that we make clear that we will absolutely speak to them at the appropriate time - this is not that moment. Mark

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director
Mobile [GRO]

Sent from my iPhone

On 5 Dec 2014, at 12:46, "Belinda Crowe" [GRO] wrote:

All, thought it might be helpful if I sent an update on where we are with this:

Background to the Ms Knight case:

Prosecution: This is one where we took action to prosecute but then offered no evidence at the hearing. Therefore a verdict of not guilty was recorded.

The MP in the case subsequently wrote to POL. Tom has emailed separately about that correspondence (just for info). It's unhelpful in that the applicant's advisor has made much of that correspondence and it may be an angle. However she did admit false accounting. We cannot comment in any event (regardless of any 'Scheme' confidentiality requirements the DPA would preclude it).

Scheme: The case is in the Scheme. The applicant has had her POL investigation report and also Second Sight's draft report. SS conclude (and the applicant will know this) that the losses in branch could be down to, among other things:

- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Her inadequate controls
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Her weak understanding/abilities iro accounting processes
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Theft by third parties (SS claim this to be a strong possibility)

Note: POL is likely to agree to mediate this case

Agreed – for the moment, but keeping under review – handling plan

- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Decline interview request – short response
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Write more formally about 'disclosure' and any other legal angle
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Generally not rise to this or any other approaches
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Consider a statement after any programme airs depending on the content/coverage
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Engage as required (off the record) with media outlets if picked up more widely (Mark has already done a bit of groundwork on this with BBC)

Actions in hand:

- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Rod is:
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]--> drafting a note about the requirement to disclose evidence of unsafe convictions
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Running the request past Camerons – our media lawyers
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Mel is:
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Drafting a response for Nick Wallis
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Drafting a statement for issue after media coverage (which might also be used as a script for an interview – with Mark – if decided one is necessary)
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Mark is:
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->Considering draft update for the Board/ExCo so they are prepared if there is any media activity

Please let me know if you have any questions/comments/additions.

Best wishes
Belinda

Belinda Crowe

148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ

GRO

GRO

From: Melanie Corfield
Sent: 05 December 2014 09:54
To: Belinda Crowe
Cc: Patrick Bourke; Tom Wechsler; Rodric Williams
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 Prodder'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