

## CWU pressure secures public inquiry into Horizon scandal

Postal, Post Office (PO), Postmasters March 2 2020



**Growing calls for a full investigation into the appalling treatment of postmasters by Post Office bosses has forced the Government to act.**

In response to MPs from across the political divide, specifically in his answer to a Prime Minister's Question from Labour's Jarrow MP Kate Osborne last week, asking him to commit to launching an independent inquiry into the Horizon affair, Boris Johnson said: "I am happy to commit to getting to the bottom of the matter in the way that she recommends."

The announcement was welcomed by other MPs, Lucy Allan (Conservative, Telford) saying: "There is a groundswell of support building in parliament for the Government to take steps to help clear the names of Post Office workers wrongly convicted of theft based on the Post Office's flawed Horizon computer system."

And the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Post Offices Gill Furniss (Labour, Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough) also voiced her backing for the planned investigation, paying tribute to the "hard-fought campaign of hundreds of sub-postmasters and members of the APPG from all parties."

In his response, CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey pledged that the union will now "push for the inquiry to happen without delay and for an independent chair to be appointed, who must have



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“We will do all that is necessary to ensure this matter is not swept under the carpet, that Postmasters get justice and those guilty parties who inflicted so much pain on innocent and hard-working people are brought to account.”

Two months ago, the Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance won a full apology from the Post Office and £58 million compensation for the 557 ex postmasters involved in the group litigation, after a long-running legal battle going back several years.

A computerised accounting system – Horizon – was introduced by the Post office back in the late 1990s to be used by postmasters around the country. The system soon began to indicate serious financial irregularities in post offices – but rather than fully investigate the reasons for this, the company immediately moved to disciplinary actions, dismissals and even prosecutions of postmasters, explains CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey.

It became evident that these discrepancies were due to an inherent fault within the Horizon system itself, and not postmaster behaviour, but the business refused to step back from its actions – and the Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance, began its long legal battle on behalf of the 557 individuals impacted in this matter.

At one of the court hearings last November, Lord Justice Coulson was so shocked at the actions of the Post Office that he likened them to a ‘mid-Victorian factory owner’.

Turning down an appeal by the Post Office against a ruling that had been made against them, Justice Coulson said: “The Post Office describes itself as ‘the nation’s most trusted brand’. Yet this application is founded on the premise that the nation’s most trusted brand was not obliged to treat their sub-Postmasters with good faith, and instead entitled to treat them in capricious or arbitrary ways which would not be unfamiliar to a mid-Victorian factory-owner.”

The apology and compensation offer to the 557 individuals came soon after this, and, while welcoming the development at the time, Andy Furey made the call for a full inquiry.

In the midst of the general election campaign and its immediate aftermath, Andy noted that this ‘national scandal’ had largely gone ‘under the radar in the current circumstances’



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concerns and will call for a comprehensive investigation in the form of a public inquiry’.

- **For further details, please see these articles from [Computer Weekly](#) and [The Mirror](#)**

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