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NFSP statement on PO Board Postmaster NED role

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The NFSP wishes to express its reservations about the role of Post Office Ltd (PO) Board Postmaster NED and question what benefit this role has brought to the Network beyond the roles being promoted by PO as evidence of it as a business listening to Postmasters.

Whilst a Postmaster NED can put across their perspective as Postmasters, as serving Postmasters this places any individual in a conflict-of-interest position and therefore unable to vote on many decisions taken by the PO Board as it would be a breach of Companies Act.

Further, given any such individual would be bound by confidentiality, they are therefore muted due to their position and cannot engage fully with their fellow colleagues. Given this restriction on the ability to fully engage with the network, whilst the individual can bring a perspective, it cannot be a perspective fully representative of the whole network and the needs of the whole network. This restriction also creates a lack of transparency around the roles.

The NFSP is aware that there are groups who seek to undermine the selection process by putting forward their preferred candidate. This would call into question the following breaches in the Companies Act:

- *172 Duty to promote the interests of the company.*
- *173 Duty to exercise independent judgement.*
- *175 Duty to avoid conflicts of interest.*
- *177 Duty to declare interests in proposed transactions or arrangements.*

The NFSP uncovered serious questions over the previous selection process and asks what confidence we can have that it will be undertaken correctly this time? Whilst the eligibility criteria to apply for the role will be open, the same cannot be said about the selection criteria. Post Office will be looking for a corporate background, which may not be indicative of the majority of Postmasters, who are successful small businesspeople. This appointment is at Ministerial level, so it is imperative that the process does not damage the reputation of PO any further nor the Minister responsible.

However, it is important that Postmasters, as investors in the business have their voice heard at the strategic level of Post Office. This is why the NFSP is proposing an Oversight Committee, as it would be cleaner and more beneficial to the Post Office Network, the PO, and government.

An Oversight Committee will enable full scrutiny of both government and PO decisions that may have an impact on contract holders within Post Office. Further, it will bring in the much-needed voices of consumer champions given the PO's social purpose at the heart of communities around the country. This Oversight Committee is not designed to remove the need for a Board of Post Office, nor senior management to carry out day-to-day operations but to complement the existing structure as it does in other industry sectors.

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