

Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance

Mr James Arbuthnot MP
House of Commons
LONDON
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Alan Bates

GRO

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Dear Mr Arbuthnot,

Having had the opportunity to reflect upon the meeting at Portcullis House last week, I thought it important to convey to you the concerns that both Kay Linnell and I took from the 2nd Sight report and the briefing document they produced for the meeting.

Whilst every individual's case is extremely important to that individual, it is also doubly so in the weight that it adds to the systemic failures with Post Office and their Horizon system. These are issues which we at JFSA have been raising for years, and having worked closely with 2nd Sight over the last few months, can see that they too have independently arrived at the same conclusions through their analysis of the cases.

We can neither understand why 2nd Sight were so reluctant to bring the systemic failures to the fore at the meeting, nor see why the focus of the investigation has not now been centred on them. These systemic failures are proven facts, and are at the root of most of the SPMR cases. Although from the 2nd Sight briefing document, it seems as though they are only going to be treated as an adjunct to the issue of the cases, to the point of where only the first three they list may be featured in their forthcoming report.

The items I am referring to from their document are:-

1. Transaction anomalies following communications or power failures;
2. Transactions or Transaction Corrections not entered by the Subpostmaster or staff;
3. Missing or duplicated transactions associated with a small number of specific transaction types;
4. Training and Support issues;
5. Limitations in the Transaction Audit Trail available to Subpostmasters;
6. Process issues at the end of each trading period; and
7. The contract between the Post Office and Subpostmasters.

We fully appreciate that more work has to be undertaken to draw together the descriptions of each of the systemic failures recognized so far, and the others known about, but for whatever reason not appearing on the list. Yet the work involved would be minor in comparison to labouring through the individual cases first. These systemic failures are also significantly easier

for others to comprehend without the requirement of an in-depth knowledge of the finer points of Horizon.

It is evident to us, that these systemic failures should now become the yardstick that the individual cases are measured against. This approach would offer a quicker and far more efficient method of addressing the whole issue and would minimise the information required from POL, which is the main cause of the slow progress 2nd Sight has made with the individual cases.

There does seem to be far too much sensitivity in not requiring POL to address these systemic failures now, rather than waiting until a report is produced later in the year. Surely the 2nd Sight regular weekly, and at times daily, updating of POL on issues as they appear, must have brought them to their attention. This alone raises the question as to why POL is continuing with their prosecutions, when it is now so much more obvious that they are standing on very shaky ground. The systemic failures of Post Office and their Horizon system are clearly identified facts, and there is no reason why POL, if they are genuinely sincere about resolving these issues, could not begin a dialogue on a way forward. If only SPMR's had been treated with the same consideration then maybe there would have been no requirement for the current investigation.

If it would assist in any way, both Kay Linnell and I would be willing to meet with either you or Post Office to discuss a more comprehensive list of the systemic failures of the system. It might also offer an opportunity to explore how the whole issue can be resolved without the need to drag it through the courts and the media, with all the damage it will cause to serving SPMRs and their investments, let alone the name of Post Office. There is no doubt that there is now more than enough evidence of the systemic failures of Post Office and their Horizon system, their bullying and abusive use of their powers. Yet it has been Government that has allowed POL to continue in this unchecked manner for many years, behind the standard response "Government has adopted an arm's length relationship with the company (POL)", so heavily quoted in different Minister's responses to MP's and SPMR's.

As ever, we are very grateful and appreciative of your on-going support with this issue and can reaffirm our support with the process to resolve this matter.

Yours sincerely,

GRO

Alan Bates
Chairman, Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance