

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

FOR USE OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OFFICERS ONLY

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUB-POSTMASTERS

REPORT OF THE

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
MEETING**

held on

4th and 5th JUNE 2001

at

**THE GRIMSTOCK COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL
WARWICKSHIRE**

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Report of a Meeting of the National Executive Council

Held on 4th and 5th June 2001
at The Grimstock Country House Hotel, Warwickshire

Present Mr A Butlin - National President and Chairman

Mr M Baker	Mr D Milner
Mrs I Bethell	Mr J Morris
Mr M Challinor	Mr J Peberdy
Mr M Darvill	Mrs S Reeves
Mr J Jannetta	Mr M Roger
Mrs P M Jenkins	Mr J Willshaw
Mr C Jones	
Mr M Jones	
Mrs J Kendall	

<i>In Attendance:</i>	Mr C Baker	General Secretary
	Mr K Davis	Assistant General Secretary
	Mrs K Davis	Assistant General Secretary

Irrelevant

A/1 REPORTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Special Executive Council Meeting held on 13th May 2001
Post Conference Meeting held on 16th May 2001
Executive Council Meeting held on the 4th and 5th June 2001

- The Minutes of these meetings had been circulated and were approved.

DECISION

A/2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORTS

THE GENERAL SECRETARY apologised that he had not got the Resolutions and Action Points to the Committee but confirmed that it would be done in the future. The Decisions were important in the Minutes and that there were records of them.

Irrelevant

1. POST OFFICE BOARD PO BD

1. (a) New Board Member Consignia PO BD

THE CHAIRMAN said he had nothing to add to the papers which had been circulated

THE GENERAL SECRETARY said that he had been contacted by Allan Leighton. He said that he wanted to come and speak at Conference next year. The last conversation that they had had was about a certain Managing Director who did not enjoy everyone's acclaim, whom Allan Leighton had now met and agreed with THE GENERAL SECRETARY that this Managing

Director would not be in his position very much longer. Allan Leighton was a retailer and to have an accountant in charge of a retail industry would not fit well. THE GENERAL SECRETARY thought that he was very turned on and that he meant to make a difference. He said that this man intended to be a real mover and shaker in the Post Office. He said that man was dynamic and they were not used to having dynamic Board members.

MR JANNETTA commented that the man was a non Executive Director and would not have much power.

2. GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS PO PZ

2. (a) Mori Poll Results/Letter from the Prime Minister PO PZ

2 (b) Mori Press Release PO PZ

THE CHAIRMAN said that these two items had been circulated and he had no further comment to make.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

3. (b) Future Campaign Activity

PO PZ 01

THE CHAIRMAN asked where they were all to go from here to make sure the commitments they all wanted were firmly nailed down and, if the previous Government was returned, he thought that there would be a Cabinet reshuffle with a new person in the position. It would be a case of getting them to restate the financial commitment, to stop the Treasury earmarking monies in different directions, to make sure that the bigger cost to them with Universal Bank was going to be there. One of the good signals he took from Stephen Byers, when he addressed Conference, was that money could be available from the start of the financial year April 2002.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY reported that he was seeing the NFWI in Cardiff, and that he had got a big 'thank-you' for them. As far as the campaigning activity was concerned he said they needed to take stock once the new Government was in place – it was an assumption that the Labour Party was going to be returned. If they were, it looked as if Stephen Byers would go to Education; they might well get Lord Gus MacDonald who had responsibility for Transport at the moment. This could be good news, because he could not speak in the House of Commons he could only speak in the House of Lords. This might mean Allan Johnson would be kept on, and he might be promoted with his own ministry. It was important that involvement was retained with a high-powered group of Ministers. If Stephen Byers and Allan Johnson were lost, then they would have to start from the beginning again. The other name which had been linked was that of Alastair Darling.

3. (c) Correspondence with Allan Johnson, MP

PO PZ 01

Nothing to report.

3. (d) Climate Change Levy

PO PZ 01

Nothing to report.

3. (e) Government General Practitioner

PO PZ 01

THE CHAIRMAN reported that it was going to take a long while to get this name from their minds and 'Your Guide' in its place. The most important thing to note was the Pilot was due to take place and everything was working extremely well towards it. Subpostmasters in Leicester were extremely co-operative and looking forward to it. Those who had seen the kit at Conference, one of the things that was perhaps a good message, was that they have had to very much manage down the expectancies of the number of people who were queuing as stakeholders to get on to what was their GGP. It took a long while for the Government to finally give its sanction and were then extremely keen to get it up and running before the General Election.

Dave Waltho and the team were making another bid for more money. The Pilot was going to be a very much shrunken version. Local County Councils, including Leicestershire CC, were saddened that they were not getting half of what they wanted on to it but that was the way it had had to be. They have had regular meetings and the team were managing this very well. There were a number of people who wanted to use the product but they have had to prove the concept, prove it worked, prove that people would pay for it in the future and that was where the work had to go forward. He asked if he could therefore put a health warning around information which had been circulated, because it had got fairly big confidentiality tags.

The project had now been let. The Government 'Gateway' and the Consignia team had let implementation of the project to PON mainly using ex-Horizon people; ICL Pathway and Romec. All the offices in Leicester had been surveyed to see what kind of original kit they would get. They were on to second surveys and all those offices had already been given a survey date, a date for that work to be done and a date when the kit was going to go in. There was a road show in Leicester on 1 April. There was a briefing on 10 June in Leicester. Training slots had been allotted to accommodate staff. The User Group and Focus Groups were working well and they were listening to everyone. They were really going at this with 'can do' mentality.

MRS SALLY REEVES said that at Mr Byers' visit last time he said that they were going to draw down £10 million extra for Government GGP. At that time it was not sure if this was new money or the second year – now obviously this was the second year money that was coming down. Did that mean that the Post Office was then going to have to go out and bid for more money further down the line for the actual roll-out, because that £10 million was slotted in as part of the on-going roll-out money?

The other question she asked was that at the end of the trial period there was an evaluation session. Did they know who the constituent members of this central evaluation team were likely to be, either internal within the Post Office and Government or external bodies as well?

THE CHAIRMAN answered the second point first, there was a User Group which actually consisted of five members of which he was one. This group

met every three weeks and at the next meeting one of the forward Agenda Items was to be how they were going to evaluate it totally. There was external DTI evaluation, there was a company employed to do this. The internal evaluation a) how they got the information from us and b) how the Federation fed into the evaluation process was all in there. GGP considered that the Federation was even more important than PON. They had already done exit interviews with customers at Post Offices in Leicestershire to find out what their expectancy of this would be. The Pilot was due to start on 17 July when four pre-pilot offices were due to go live.

With regard to the money, to his knowledge there was an expectancy as long as there was roll out; he thought that it would become extra money, and that this was what Consignia were expecting.

MR MARK BAKER asked that when they got to roll out would the training be compulsory the same way as it was for Horizon and Customer First etc. and who would dictate where the service went and what level of service went into which office?

THE CHAIRMAN answered that the current situation of training for those Subpostmasters in the pilot was paid for and therefore he had not heard of anyone unwilling to let anyone go. Was it going to be compulsory? The Federation over the years had a theory that training should be mandatory but paid for properly. So whether this was an opportunity for that he did not know. It was at the moment £4.50 per hour which Subpostmasters felt was a reasonable rate and there was £90 rolled into the money for the subpostmaster to be trained. It would be in negotiation for roll out.

The second thing was at what level; currently in the pilot there had not really been too much of what the business wanted, mainly what space was available. The only caveats around the pilot had been what space the subpostmaster was able to give and not the other way round. He supposed the true answer was how well they negotiated the future money as opposed to pilot money and therefore if that was dictated, if their experience of the pilot was wrong and they had to re-think how they got the money for it then that depended of course if it was clients who were paying as opposed to how much Government money was going to be there. There could be a situation where a client would dictate how many he wanted to do something. Something over 90% of the offices in the trial fell in the categories B1 and B2.

MR JANNETTA asked how did the relationship between POPOS panels and GGP equipment fit it? The Post Office had written to Subpostmasters about POPOS panels and those who signed up for POPOS panels, became contracted. Could it be ensured that PON would not become bolshi when the subpostmaster made a choice between a POPOS panel and the space for the kit.

THE CHAIRMAN replied that POPOS did not stand in the way of GGP. There was no argument about this. It had been approached very sensibly. At roll out it would have to be cleared out properly and was still voluntary for Subpostmasters.

MRS JENKINS asked that proper training with proper accreditation was first talked about for GGP. How far was that down the line or was that something which was not going to happen?

THE CHAIRMAN said tomorrow the User Group had been asked to a full presentation training session at Birmingham. He could probably answer this in two weeks time. He was led to understand that there was still a desire to get accreditation.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

6. COUNTER AUTOMATION

PC NW 06 01

Nothing to report.

MRS REEVES reported that at the beginning of the automation of Horizon, an office was allowed to work manually and input later when the system went down. If the system went down and required a replacement part, by a Horizon engineer, irrespective of one or two days, the office closed. There was then a resultant product shortfall in the product payments for that office. Was this the way forward?

THE CHAIRMAN did not know the answer and said that he would try to sort it out whilst at the meeting.

MRS JENKINS stated that the problems experienced with Horizon were raised at Conference. It was promised on the platform that there would be a national forum to look at the problem. Were we any way nearer to getting this set up, and how was it going to work?

THE CHAIRMAN said that they should have a user group, a national forum to deal with Horizon errors and problems with the system. It was an action point from 26 February.

MR JANETTA suggested an idea that if a set Horizon kit could be installed at Shoreham. Nobody at Shoreham had ever worked on Horizon; it could not be beyond the realms of possibility for this to be installed and somebody there trained to use the system.

THE CHAIRMAN stated that this subject had been spoken about before.

Irrelevant

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A/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MR DARVILL mentioned some new rules involving PACE. He was trying to get solicitors to write paper for the Federation to be circulated to the Executive Council. It appeared that if a Subpostmaster was questioned by the Investigation Branch he was told that anything he said would be taken into Court of Law - but unless a Police Officer was present no inference could be taken into a Court of Law – and a Subpostmaster was not entitled to Legal Aid unless a Police Officer was present.

MRS BETHELL said it was her pleasure to be a new Executive Officer asked to give a vote of thanks to the new National President and she extended a warm and genuine thank you to him for the way in which he had chaired the Executive Council Meeting. Executive Officers looked forward to meeting in July to continue their worthwhile and productive debates.

THE CHAIRMAN thanked those present for the help, friendship and generosity they had shown and closed the meeting.

DIANA DENTON
GILL PAYNE

GRO

1. The following information is required for the purpose of the investigation:

2. The following information is required for the purpose of the investigation:

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