



UK Government  
Investments

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Ref: TOB2018/01183  
[www.ukgi.org.uk](http://www.ukgi.org.uk)

Ms Eleanor Shaikh

shaikhspier@GRO

February 2018

Dear Ms Shaikh,

Thank you for your email of 13 January 2018 to Greg Clark MP about Farncombe Post Office. The Minister receives a large amount of correspondence every day and is unable to reply to each one personally. Your email was passed to UK Government Investments, who manage the Government's ownership of the Post Office, and I have been asked to reply.

The Government recognises the important role that the Post Office plays in Farncombe and in communities across the UK. This is why the Government committed in its manifesto to safeguard the Post Office network. Since 2010, the number of branches in the network has been at its most stable for decades due to over £2bn in investment. This investment has delivered the refreshed customer environments, increased opening hours and the efficiency of operation which is needed to succeed in the competitive and changing markets in which the Post Office operates. It has also put the network on a more sustainable footing, removing significant losses from the business and thereby reducing the burden on the taxpayer.

However, while the Post Office is publicly owned, it operates as a commercial business within competitive markets. The Government sets the parameters in which the Post Office operates – including its geographic reach and the key services it offers – and then allows the Post Office to operate as an independent commercial organisation within those parameters. As such, the Government does not play a direct role in the day-to-day responsibilities of the company, including the investigation and suspension of subpostmasters or the operation of IT systems, and cannot intervene in any disputes or litigation in relation to this.

I understand that the Post Office wrote to Jeremy Hunt MP on 14 December 2017 and directly to you on 10 January 2018 on this matter and that they are working hard to resolve the issue with the local subpostmaster and to restore Postal services to the Farncombe community. The Post Office have also assured me that their Horizon system is robust and reliable. It is used by over 11,600 branches for numerous services every day, and has been for a number of years.

Yours sincerely,

*Stephen Clarke*

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