Witness Name: Richard Coleman

Statement No.: WITN06470100

Dated: 16 March 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF RICHARD COLEMAN

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I, RICHARD COLEMAN, will say as follows…

INTRODUCTION

1. I am currently a Minister of Religion within the Church of England. I have been in this role since May 2011.

2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 17th January 2023 (the "Request").

3. The Request relates to matters that took place more than 15 years ago. Where I was involved in these matters, I have tried to recall events to the best of my ability, but my recollection is very limited.

BACKGROUND

4. From April 1990 to June 1998 I worked for ICL in Cardiff as a hardware engineer. In June 1998 I transferred to the Fujitsu 3rd line software support team ("SSC") in Bracknell. In September 2005 I left Fujitsu to train to become a Minister of Religion within the Church of England.

5. During my time in the SSC I was one of a number of support personnel working under Mik Peach, the SSC Manager. It was part of our role to try and provide solutions to issues that arose to the development team for them to validate and then supply the actual fix. This also involved on occasion working with the testing team to track down bugs as well as validating fixes from development. I don't recall any interactions personally with the development team, and whilst I don't recall any specific incidents, I do recall working with the testing team on occasion to resolve a problem.

6. Mik gave us particular areas to focus on. Mine were the back end databases in the datacentres at Bootle and Wigan that were used to configure Post Office counters. Another large part of my role was in the building and configuring of workstations for new staff coming into the SSC, as well as working with Steve Parker to maintain and develop our internal website which was used as a central resource by other teams within Pathway, which included the Known Errors Log ("KEL") database, as well as other documents.

KEL SYSTEM

7. The Known Errors Log ("KEL") database was a collection of HTML documents stored on the SSC internal website, and was the means by which information on work arounds and solutions to issues were provided to 1st and 2nd line support. They were also used to specify the evidence we needed in order to investigate issues further should they crop up again.

8. I believe KELs had 4 major sections: What the customer reported, an explanation of the problem, the solution to the problem, and any evidence that we required to help us resolve the problem. There would also have been options to add tags to the KELs, for example for a particular product or software release.

9. To search the KEL database the support team would connect to the SSC website and select the "Search the KEL database" link which would then display a page where they could type in any words to be searched for. There would also be a number of options that could be selected to allow easy targeting of searches to, for example a particular product or release, in order to help the support teams find the information they needed.

PINICL AND PEAK SYSTEMS

10. PinICL was the system used by the support and development teams to record and manage calls. I do not recall any issues with it that prevented me from doing my job, but there clearly were issues with it as PEAK was developed to replace it, and I recall John Simpkins being heavily involved in its development. I don't recall ever using it and so cannot comment on it.

11. Before her retirement, Barbara Longley was the PinICL administrator for most of my time in the SSC, and she had a list of products and abilities for each member of the SSC and she would assign calls as per their skill set and workload. I do not recall who took over from Barbara when she retired, nor do I recall how PinICLs were prioritised.

12. The closing of calls would depend on the reason why the call had been raised in the first place and whether that call needed to be passed on to another team. For example, where a bug had been identified then I believe calls would only be closed once a solution had been identified and the fix had been tested and made available. Sometimes duplicate PinICLs would be raised for the same problem and they would be closed as duplicates. There were a range of codes used when closing calls to, I assume, enable management to gather statistics on the types of calls that were being raised and why they were closed. I recall that there was at least one team, though I do not recall the name of the team, where we had to close the call on PinICL with a particular response code for it to be passed on to them.

SSC

13. I was a member of the SSC from June 1998 to September 2005 working with, I believe, about 20 to 30 colleagues.

14. The role and purpose of the SSC was to handle software issues that could not be handled by 1st or 2nd line support. As we had access to the source code when we identified a bug we were also expected, if possible, to provide a potential fix to the development team who would review the code and then supply the actual fix that would be released to the counters. We also worked with the testing team using their test rigs to investigate issues and at times to assist them in testing fixes provided by development. I do not recall what other teams there were within the support services structure.

15. Mik Peach was the SSC Manager. Steve Parker, John Simpkins and Pat Carroll were the senior engineers who had worked on the project for many years and their knowledge of the various systems was invaluable.

16. I was not involved in the recruitment of personnel and so can not comment on what qualifications or experience Mik required when looking to appoint people, but the majority were experienced developers.

17. I recall going on a Visual Basic training course, but I do not recall what other training I received. We were expected to read the documentation provided by

development and by other SSC members for the various products that we were tasked with learning. We were also required to train others, that Mik identified, in our own areas of responsibility so that knowledge was shared around the SSC.

18. My own area of expertise was the configuration databases in the data centres, ACDB and OCMS were two of them, if I remember correctly.

19. As far as I can recall we were expected to carry out our work with due diligence and where possible to correct the issue and to close calls accurately with the correct response code. There were times when an issue would cause a red alert and there would of course be pressure to meet the SLA. However if we were unable to meet the SLA, which may involve a financial hit on Fujitsu, Mik always handled that pressure from senior management so that we could focus on getting the incident resolved, and to accurately document the issue and its resolution both in the PinICL and in a KEL.

20. As far as I can recall the SSC had a good working relationship with all the other support teams, and I don't recall there being any issues with SMC and the volume of calls raised.

IDENTIFICATION AND RECTIFICATION OF BUGS, ERRORS OR DEFECTS

21. A number of the bugs listed in Appendix 2 of *Bates and others v Post Office Limited (No. 6) "Horizon Issues"* [2019] EWHC 3408 (QB) that I have been

asked to comment on relate to Horizon Online of which I have no experience as I only worked on what has come to be known as Legacy Horizon and so I am unable to comment on those bugs. This leaves bugs 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 23, 24, 26, and 27.

22. Having reviewed the Technical Appendix supplied to me which goes into detail on these bugs, whilst I recognise the majority of bugs I do not believe they were ones that I investigated, and so can not comment on that, or if or when they were reported to the Post Office, SPMs, etc. I do not recall being involved in the investigation of calls to do with the branch accounts as there were others, such as Anne Chambers and John Simpkins, who tended to handle those types of calls. But once a solution had been identified I would expect to have been allocated one or more calls and would simply have followed the solution or work around as recorded in the relevant KEL. For the bugs listed above I do not recall what those solutions were or how they were to be actioned, or indeed whether I actioned any calls on them.

23. As far as I can recall, when a bug was identified the SSC would look to provide a solution to the development team. If it was not possible for the SSC to posit a solution the call may still be sent over to development with all the evidence that we had collected for them to provide a solution, or the call would be closed and a KEL created detailing the evidence we would require to investigate further. Any solution from development would then be passed to the testing team who would then test that it did actually fix the bug as recorded in the PinICL. Once the fix had passed the testing team it would then

be distributed to the Post Office counters. I do not recall the mechanism by which that was done.

24. Whilst we might suggest a possible work around, I can not comment on why a work around would be used instead of implementing a fix as those sorts of decisions were not taken by the SSC. As far as I can recall, work arounds would only be implemented with the agreement of development and the Post Office, and I would expect that agreement to be recorded in the PinICL and KEL.

25. I don't recall any procedures or policies in place restricting what we could tell SPMs in relation to bugs, nor do I recall any pressure placed upon me or my colleagues not to pass information to SPMs or the Post Office. Whilst I did speak to SPMs I do not recall any of those conversations. We were expected to fully record our findings in PinICL. How or when, or indeed if, that information would be passed on to the Post Office would be for management to decide.

26. As already mentioned, although we were aware of various SLAs, and we were expected to do our best to meet those SLAs, I believe it was more important to Mik Peach, as SSC Manager, that we identify the cause of the error and provide a solution than it was to meet any particular SLA.

27. I do not recall investigating any problems with Riposte itself, and as far as I'm aware they would have been investigated as any other problem and any

potential solution developed by the SSC would have been passed on to development in the usual way for them to raise the issue with Escher.

28. Again I do not recall there being any pressure placed on us to avoid finding bugs, errors or defects. When a call was passed to us we were expected to investigate and resolve the issue and to record our findings in the PinICL and KEL as appropriate.

REMOTE ACCESS

29. Normally we would access the Riposte messagestore on the Correspondence Servers and we had workstations specifically for that which were on a completely separate network to the workstations we used to access PinICL and email, etc. Access to the Correspondence Servers would either be via a Windows Command window or through one of the tools developed internally by the SSC.

30. I do not recall remote access onto a Post Office counter being a common function as the Riposte data we would need to look at for most problems would normally be replicated to the Correspondence Servers, which we would access. However, I believe there would be times when we would need to access files directly on the counter which were not replicated to the Correspondence Servers, such as the Windows Event logs, which we would need to look at if we suspected a hardware issue for example.

31. Physical access into the SSC was restricted with card keys that were separate from the rest of the building so only the SSC had access to the floor we were on. I do not recall what other security measures were in place or what audit data was automatically captured when using remote access.

32. In terms of editing or deleting data, the design of the Riposte messagestore was such that we could not edit or delete individual items of data within the messagestore. Any such attempt would have caused Riposte to stop working and to generate alerts. What we could do was to delete the entire messagestore on a counter and then allow Riposte to rebuild it from the transactions that would be stored on the other counters within the Post Office. We could insert new transactions into the messagestore via the Correspondence Servers which would then replicate to the counters, but would only do so when authorised by the Post Office, and it would be recorded that we were doing that in the PinICL. I believe we put the PinICL call reference into the messagestore messages that we inserted. I do not recall if, or how, that would be relayed to the SPM.

GENERAL

33. I can not comment on the training that SPMs received in the use of the system as I was not privy to that information. Nor was I aware of what advice was being given by 1st and 2nd line support. And given the passage of time I do not recall specific incidents to enable me to comment on what changes

would have helped improve the advice and assistance received by SPMs or

what the causes of those problems were.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: GRO

Dated: 16 March 2023