

## Industry in Parliament Trust dinner

18.45 - 12 February 2014

Dining Room B, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

### Background

We are a member of the Industry in Parliament Trust and as a condition of our membership we are invited to speak at one dinner.

### About the IPT

The IPT is an independent, non-lobbying, non-partisan charity that provides a trusted platform of engagement between Parliament and UK business. The IPT is dually supported by cross-party representation of senior parliamentarians on its Board of Trustees, and through the patronage of its industry supporters. The IPT is non-party political and works with all parliamentarians and businesses of any sector or size (*IPT website*, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ipt.org.uk/about-the-industry-and-parliament-trust.aspx"](http://www.ipt.org.uk/about-the-industry-and-parliament-trust.aspx) ]).

### What the IPT aims to do

The IPT creates an environment that supports trusted, open and two-way dialogue between Parliament and UK business. IPT platforms engage, educate and inform, create lasting relationships and facilitate the exchange of ideas. Specifically, it aims to:

- Equip parliamentarians from all parties with a greater understanding of commerce and industry through non-partisan platforms.
- Enable businesses of all sizes and from all sectors to develop knowledge of parliamentary and legislative processes.
- Enrich policy debates by deepening the dialogue between Parliament and industry.
- Support the efficient administration of government through our Civil Service Attachment Scheme (ibid.).

### Running order for the evening

- 18.50 – Arrive at Portcullis House accompanied by Jane Hill. Nick Maher, Chief Executive of IPT will greet and escort through to Dining Room B in the Palace and introduce you to Heather Wheeler MP and Professor John Bryson.
- 19.00 – pre-dinner drinks.
- 19.30 – Heather Wheeler MP to call for dinner to begin and opening remarks.
- 19.45 – Starter is served.
- 20.00 – Paula Vennells to speak.
- 20.10 – Entrée served.
- 20.40 – Dessert served, coffee and petit fours served.
- 21.30 – Heather Wheeler MP to draw discussion to a close.

The dinner will be a relaxed roundtable discussion, under the spirit of the Chatham House Rules.

**Attendees** **Numbers of Community branches – have requested.**



#### Heather Wheeler MP – Chair

**Constituency:** South Derbyshire, East Midlands

**Majority:** 7,128

**Party:** Conservative

- Heather Wheeler is a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- She attended the DVLA event in the House of Commons in January 2013 and also a dinner in March 2013, where she sat next to you.
- Heather Wheeler has not opened any modernised branches in her constituency.
- In the South Derbyshire constituency there is 18 open Post Office branches; four of which are in urban areas while the remaining 14 are in rural locations.

- Hatton Post Office branch is a new Local and is located in Goodlife Pharmacy. It opened for business on 6 February 2014.

**Toby Perkins MP**  
**Shadow Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills**



**Constituency:** Chesterfield, East Midlands

**Majority:** 549

**Party:** Labour

- Toby Perkins was previously a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- We announced the relocation of Chesterfield Crown branch into the local WH Smith branch on 4 February 2014. The existing branch will close on 26 March 2014 with the new branch opening the next day.
- Mr Perkins' office has asked about the provision of chairs for customers in the new branch as there are two chairs shown on the plans. Customers are used to the 20 seats in the current branch. We are currently investigating the possibility of additional seating as there is space that could be used.
- There are 12 open Post Office branches in the Chesterfield constituency with 10 in urban areas while two are rural.
- Mr Perkins opened Whittington Moor branch in July 2013 and Inkersall in January 2014. Both are Post Office Main branches.
- There is also a Local branch in Mr Perkins' constituency at Old Whittington.
- Stavely Post Office has been temporarily closed since November 2013.
- Toby Perkins mentioned the UK banking system at the opening he attended in January 2014 and recently issued a press release on the lack of trust, poor service and restriction of lending to SMEs in the sector.

**Graham Stringer MP**



**Constituency:** Blackley and Broughton, North West

**Majority:** 12,303

**Party:** Labour

- Graham Stringer is the former leader of Manchester City Council. He has been an MP since 1997. A former Cabinet Office minister he currently serves on several Select Committees including Science and Technology.
- In Mr Stringer's constituency there is 11 Post Office branches, all of which are urban.
- Mr Stringer is opening Middleton Road branch on 14 February 2014. The branch is an on-site Main conversion and opened at the end of January. It is now open seven days a week with an additional 20 hours a week.
- Moston Lane branch is to convert to a Main Post Office branch, reopening on 28 February 2014.
- Barnes Green Crown Post Office is in Mr Stringer's constituency. The branch was transformed in November 2013.

**Diana Johnson MP**  
**Shadow Minister for Crime and Security**



**Constituency:** Kingston upon Hull North, Yorkshire and Humberside

**Majority:** 641

**Party:** Labour

- Diana Johnson is currently the Shadow Minister for Crime and Security and was a Shadow Home Office Minister from 2010 to 2011.
- The Kingston Upon Hull North constituency has nine open Post Office branches, all urban in location. None have yet been through the Network

Transformation programme although Ms Johnson is keen to open one should the opportunity arise.

- Bransholme Crown Post Office is in Ms Johnson's constituency. The branch is scheduled to be transformed in March and will see the addition of an FS room.

#### **Chi Onwurah MP** **Shadow Minister for Cabinet Office**



**Constituency:** Newcastle upon Tyne Central, North East  
**Majority:** 7,466  
**Party:** Labour

- Previously a Shadow BIS Minister with responsibilities including digital infrastructure and now a Shadow Minister for Cabinet Office.
- Before entering Parliament Ms Onwurah worked for OFCOM as head of telecoms technology.
- The Newcastle Upon Tyne Central constituency has 13 open Post Office branches, all are urban.
- There is one Main Post Office branch at Barras Bridge.
- Blakelaw Post Office is a leavers' case and the original relocation did not

proceed following discussions with Consumer Futures due to the distance and location of the proposed site. The Council would like the branch in their Community hub and discussions are on-going with them.

- North Kenton Post Office branch re-opened on 3 February following a break in service from October 2013.
- It is proposed to relocate Fergusons Lane Post Office branch to a new Local in March 2014.
- Fenham Road Post Office is to be relocated to a new Main branch shortly.

#### **Clive Betts MP**



**Constituency:** Sheffield South East, Yorkshire and Humberside  
**Majority:** 10,505  
**Party:** Labour

- Clive Betts is the chairman of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- There are 14 open Post Office branches in the Sheffield South East constituency, all of these are urban.
- There are three Main Post Office branches in Mr Betts' constituency at Darnall, Frecheville and Woodhouse. Mr Betts opened the Darnall branch in December 2013.
- Mr Betts' political interests include local and regional government, housing, planning, and regeneration.

#### **Guto Bebb MP**



**Constituency:** Aberconwy, Wales  
**Majority:** 3,398  
**Party:** Conservative

- Guto Bebb cites reform of the welfare state, rural development and regeneration among his political interests.
- In the Aberconwy constituency there are 23 Post Office branches. Of these 20 are rural while 3 are urban.
- There are two Post Office Local branches at Dolgarrog and Llanrhos.
- Llandudno Crown Post Office is in Mr Bebb's constituency and is due to be transformed in August 2014 and will see the addition of an FS room.
- There was previously an issue with Deganwy Post Office branch. The

subpostmaster wanted to leave and would shut up shop with no notice for weeks at a time. The branch has now been sold and the issues have ceased.

- Mr Bebb is a Welsh speaker and may be interested in our Welsh Language Scheme that we are currently consulting on. Further information is in annex A.

#### James Morris MP



**Constituency:** Halesowen and Rowley Regis, West Midlands

**Majority:** 2,023

**Party:** Conservative

- James Morris is a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- Before being elected to Parliament he was the chief executive of the local government think tank Localis.
- Mr Morris cites local government and localism among his political interests.
- In the Halesowen and Rowley Regis constituency there are eight Post Office branches and they are all in urban locations.
- There are currently no modernised branches in Mr Morris's constituency but it is proposed that Halesowen branch is to be relocated as a Local model and the consultation has recently concluded.
- Hawne Post Office is to transform to a Main branch and open on 20 February 2014 while Springfield Post Office is to be transformed into a Local branch and open on 3 March 2014.

#### Mark Pawsey MP



**Constituency:** Rugby, West Midlands

**Majority:** 6,000

**Party:** Conservative

- Mark Pawsey is a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- There are 19 Post Office branches in the Rugby constituency. 11 are urban and eight are rural.
- There is one Main Post Office branch in Rugby itself, which Mr Pawsey opened in July 2013. There is also a Post Office Local branch in Abbots Farm.
- Hillmorton Post Office branch is to re-open as a Main branch on 24 February 2014.
- Mr Pawsey attended the Parliament event about the Strategy in December 2013.
- Rugby Post Office is one of the branches in the extended current account trial and Mr Pawsey has expressed an interest in this. He is also interested in learning more about Community branches.

#### Bill Esterson MP



**Constituency:** Sefton Central, North West

**Majority:** 3,862

**Party:** Labour

- Bill Esterson was a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee between 2011-13.
- Mr Esterson has asked five questions in parliament relating to Post Office in the past few months. Transcripts are in annex B.
- There are 12 Post Office branches in the Sefton Central constituency. 11 are urban while one is rural.
- There is one Post Office Main branch at Maghull.
- Deyes Lane Post Office in Mr Esterson's constituency is due to relocate as part of the Network Transformation Programme. It is currently located on a shopping parade and

Mr Esterson has expressed unhappiness at the new location of a single shop with no other retail around it.

- Crosby Village Post Office is a former Crown. About 10 years ago it was taken over and the subpostmaster was given an overpayment on the understanding that it compensated for the lack of existing retail and on the assumption that it would be built up and the overpayment eventually withdrawn. The subpostmaster has failed to build up retail and is relying on the overpayment, which is much smaller than originally. This has impacted on the number of staff and the level of service in the branch. Mr Esterson is aware of the issues here.

### John Pugh MP



**Constituency:** Southport, North West

**Majority:** 6,024

**Party:** Liberal Democrat

- John Pugh is a member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.
- There are 13 Post Office branches in the Southport constituency, all of which are urban.
- There are five Main Post Office branches in the Southport constituency at Bispham Road, Hesketh Drive, Liverpool Road, Lord Street North and Preston New Road.
- There is also one Local branch at Guildford Road.
- Mr Pugh also has one Crown in his constituency. Southport Crown Post Office is to be franchised with the new branch going live in WH Smith on 20 February 2014. The new branch is located upstairs in the WH Smith and Mr Pugh has expressed some concern at the lift facilities as well as the lack of free parking outside the new branch as compared to the old one (parking is an issue in the town). Mr Pugh is meeting the SSM on 7 February to discuss the issues but he is not against the move.

### Alison Sebeck MP

**Shadow Minister for Defence**



**Constituency:** Plymouth, Moor View, South West

**Majority:** 1,588

**Party:** Labour

- Now a Shadow Defence Minister, Alison Sebeck is a former member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee (2009-10) and Shadow Housing Minister (2010-11).
- There are 13 open Post Office branches in the Plymouth Moor View constituency and all are urban.
- The constituency has four Post Office Local branches at Camels Head, Egguckland, Glenholt and Tamerton Foliot.
- Ms Sebeck was concerned about the adoption of open plan working at Tamerton Foliot and the impact on security. She was advised that the branch would operate with enhanced security equipment and security processes to ensure that staff and customers can conduct their business in a safe and secure environment.
- There are also two Post Office Main branches at Southway Drive and St Budeaux.

### Andrew George MP



**Constituency:** St Ives, South West

**Majority:** 1,719

**Party:** Liberal Democrat

- Andrew George is a former Lib Dem spokesman for Food and Rural Affairs (2002-2005).

- In the St Ives constituency there are 43 open Post Office branches. 39 are rural and four are urban.
- In the St Ives constituency there are three Local Post Office branches at Heamoor, Mousehole and Sennen And Lands End. Marazion branch is currently in consultation until the end of February concerning an off-site Local branch.
- There are also two Main Post Office branches at Carbis Bay and St Clare Street.
- Mike Granville and SSM Laura Tarling met with Mr George in 2013 to discuss rural issues as well as Post Office's commitment to maintaining the network. Mr George also recently wrote to Post Office asking about financial support for rural subpostmasters. The correspondence is in annex C.
- Andrew George has raised some concerns previously about the viability of the Local model. He was invited to Sennen Post Office Local in September 2013 to see and talk to a positive subpostmaster that is operating a successful branch.
- St Keverne Post Office is in the St Ives constituency. The subpostmaster had her contract terminated by Post Office. In August 2013 Mr George wrote to Post Office to ask for the subpostmaster to be reinstated as the court cleared her of all charges. The correspondence is in annex D. This case is currently subject to the Initial Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme.
- Penzance Crown Post Office branch is in Mr George's constituency and is due to be transformed in June 2014. It will see the addition of an FS room and self-service kiosks.

#### Neil Carmichael MP



**Constituency:** Stroud, South West

**Majority:** 1,299

**Party:** Conservative

- Neil Carmichael is a member for the Environmental Audit Select Committee and cites rural affairs among his political interests.
- In the Stroud constituency there are 26 open Post Office branches. Of these 20 are rural and six are in urban locations.
- In the Stroud constituency there are three Post Office Local branches at Amberley, Berkeley and Whitminster.
- There are four temporary closures currently in the Stroud constituency. Mr Carmichael has taken a particular interest in Painswick Post Office branch and discussions are on-going with a community group interested in taking it on and are seeking volunteers to help run it. Hardwicke Post Office branch has also attracted local media attention – One Stop may be interested in taking this on.
- Stroud Crown Post Office branch is in Mr Carmichael's constituency and is due to be transformed in March 2014. It will also have its FS room refurbished and several self-service kiosks added.

#### Baroness (Margaret) Prosser OBE



**cr.** 2004

Life peer 2004

**Party:** Labour

- During her career Baroness Prosser held a number of positions with the Transport & General Workers Union rising to Deputy General Secretary.
- Between 2004 and 2010 Baroness Prosser was a Non-Executive Director of Royal Mail Holdings Board.

#### Other Attendees



**Jessica Northend**

Public Affairs Analyst – John Lewis

- Previously worked at Bellenden and Carers UK.

- Information on John Lewis and Waitrose requested from Lillian.
- Key John Lewis financial indicators:  
The John Lewis Partnership
  - Gross sales of £9.54bn, up £811.8m, 9.3%
  - Revenue of £8.47bn, up £706.9m, 9.1%
  - Group operating profit of £452.4m up £59.1m, 15.0%
  - Profit before Partnership Bonus and tax of £409.6m, up £55.8m, 15.8%
  - Partnership Bonus of £210.8m; 17% of salary (equal to nearly 9 weeks' pay)
  - Net debt of £371.9m, down £205.4m, 35.6%



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**Patrick Clift**  
**Head of Communications and Public Affairs – British Property Federation**

- The British Property Federation is a membership organisation devoted to representing the interests of all those involved in real estate ownership and investment.



**Irene Graham**  
**MD for Business Finance and Strategy – British Bankers Association**

- The BBA is the UK's leading association for the banking and financial services sector, representing the interests of more than 240 member organisations with a worldwide presence in 180 countries.
- Irene Graham previously worked at banks including Coutts and Standard Chartered and joined the BBA in 2010.

**Simon Brown**  
**Director – PWC**

- Simon Brown previously worked for the Royal Bank of Scotland and Northern Rock.



**Professor John Bryson**  
**Department of Management – University of Birmingham**

- Professor Bryson has been the Head of Human Geography at the University of Birmingham since 2008
- Prior to that he was Professor of Enterprise and Economic Geography.
- Professor Bryson's areas of expertise include entrepreneurship and enterprise; local and regional economic development; manufacturing; labour market and skills; service economy; business and professional services; design; competitiveness, financial services including community development finance institutions (CDFIs); knowledge economy; small and medium sized firms.

## Economic Indicators

### GDP figures

- On 28 January 2014 the Office for National Statistics released the first estimates for Q4 2013 GDP growth showing a 0.7 per cent increase. Overall growth in 2013 was 1.9 per cent and 2013 was the first year in which the economy grew in all four quarters since 2007.
- Growth is broad based with all sectors, except construction, growing by between 0.5 and 0.9 per cent.
  - Manufacturing grew fastest at 0.9 per cent;
  - Services grew by 0.8 per cent;
  - Agriculture grew by 0.5 per cent; while

- Construction was down 0.3 per cent on the quarter.
- In Q4 2013 GDP was estimated to be 1.3 per cent below the peak in Q1 2008. From peak to trough in 2009, the economy shrank by 7.2 per cent.
- GDP was 2.8 per cent higher in Q4 2013 compared with the same quarter a year ago (ONS, *Gross Domestic Product Preliminary Estimate, Q4 2013*, 28 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/gva/gross-domestic-product--preliminary-estimate/q4-2013/stb-gdp-preliminary-estimate--q4-2013.html"](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/gva/gross-domestic-product--preliminary-estimate/q4-2013/stb-gdp-preliminary-estimate--q4-2013.html) ]).

### Labour Market Statistics

- On 22 January 2014 the Office for National Statistics released the latest Labour Market statistics. Headline figures are:
  - The employment rate for those aged from 16 to 64 for September to November 2013 was 72.1 per cent, up 0.5 percentage points from June to August 2013.
  - There were 30.15 million people in employment aged 16 and over, up 280,000 from June to August 2013.
  - The unemployment rate for September to November 2013 was 7.1 per cent of the economically active population, down 0.5 percentage points from June to August 2013.
  - There were 2.32 million unemployed people, down 167,000 from June to August 2013.
  - The inactivity rate for those aged from 16 to 64 for September to November 2013 was 22.2 per cent, down 0.1 percentage points from June to August 2013.
  - There were 8.93 million economically inactive people aged from 16 to 64, down 22,000 from June to August 2013.
  - Between October to December 2012 and October to December 2013 total pay and regular pay rose by 0.9 per cent (ONS, *Labour Market Statistics, January 2014*, 22 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/january-2014/index.html"](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/january-2014/index.html) ]).

### Inflation

- On 14 January 2014 the Office for National Statistics released the latest inflation figures. Headline figures were:
  - The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) grew by 2.0 per cent in the year to December 2013, down from 2.1 per cent in November.
  - The largest contributions to the fall in the rate came from prices for food & non-alcoholic beverages and recreational goods & services. These were partially offset by an upward contribution from motor fuels.
  - The overall price increase for gas and electricity in December 2013 was slightly larger than the rises a year earlier resulting in a small upward contribution to inflation (ONS, *Consumer Price Inflation, December 2013*, 14 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cpi/consumer-price-indices/december-2013/index.html"](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cpi/consumer-price-indices/december-2013/index.html) ]).

### Other current issues

- **50 pence tax rate.** On 25 January 2014 Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls MP announced that a future Labour Government would re-introduce the 50p top rate of income tax for those earning over £150,000 (*BBC News Online*, 25 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25894312"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25894312) ]).
- **EU immigration.** On 27 January 2014, the Prime Minister said that the numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians arriving in the UK since the last work curbs were lifted are at a 'reasonable level' (*BBC News Online*, 27 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25909991"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25909991) ]).
- **Red tape.** On 27 January 2014 the Prime Minister announced that thousands of rules affecting business are to be scrapped or amended. Mr Cameron told a Federation of Small Businesses

(FSB) conference that more than 3,000 rules will be dropped or changed, saving more than £850 million a year, he told the FSB. They include 640 pages of cattle movement guidance, 286 pages of hedgerow regulations and 380 pages of waste management rules (*BBC News Online*, 27 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25903681"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25903681) ]).

## 2015 general election

Aside from the broad economy, welfare and taxation the 2015 campaign is likely to feature the following issues:

- **Business rates.** The British Retail Consortium is currently campaigning on business rates as they believe that 'There is a growing consensus that the business rates system is no longer fit for purpose. The rates force retailers to pay disproportionately more tax than other sectors, are less competitive than property taxes in other countries, distort occupancy costs and lead to vacant shops'. In the 2013 Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced that business rates would be capped at 2 per cent this year rather than being pegged to inflation (*BRC website*, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.brc.org.uk/brc\\_policy\\_content.asp?iCat=47&iSubCat=696&spolicy=Property&sSubPolicy=Business+Rates"](http://www.brc.org.uk/brc_policy_content.asp?iCat=47&iSubCat=696&spolicy=Property&sSubPolicy=Business+Rates) ]]; *BBC News Online*, 4 December 2013, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25211196"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25211196) ]).

The Autumn Statement did see some announcements on business rates:

- **Business rates: discount** – The government will introduce a business rates discount of £1,000 for retail and food and drink premises with a rateable value below £50,000 for 2 years up to the state aid limits from 1 April 2014.
- **Business rates: reoccupation relief** – The government will introduce a 50 per cent business rates relief for 18 months up to the state aid limits for businesses that move into retail premises that have been empty for a year or more. Businesses which move into empty premises between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 will be eligible for the relief.
- **Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR)** – The government will extend the doubling of SBRR for a further year from 1 April 2014.
- **Small Business Rate Relief on second properties** – The government will relax the SBRR rules to allow businesses in receipt of SBRR taking on an additional property to retain SBRR on the first property for 1 year, with effect from 1 April 2014.
- **Business rates: payment** – The government will allow businesses to pay business rates over 12 months rather than 10 months, with effect from 1 April 2014 (HMT, *Autumn Statement 2013*, 5 December 2013, p. 93, [ [HYPERLINK "https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/263575/Autumn\\_Statement\\_2013.pdf"](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263575/Autumn_Statement_2013.pdf) ]).

The Association of Convenience Stores has welcomed the announcement that 300,000 retail businesses will be eligible for the rates discount of £1,000. They said 'This is a practical and effective measure to support thousands of businesses in high streets and communities throughout the country. The business rates discount will help shops to stay open and encourage investment and job creation. We welcome the fact that the discount will apply equally to petrol forecourts and **post offices** below the threshold' (*Association of Convenience Stores Press Release*, 29 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.acs.org.uk/en/Press\\_Office/details/index.cfm/obj\\_id/125E8AF7-6941-4FD5-BF5BB02FAB446D4A"](http://www.acs.org.uk/en/Press_Office/details/index.cfm/obj_id/125E8AF7-6941-4FD5-BF5BB02FAB446D4A) ]).

There is a current issue where we understand that the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is proposing that external ATMs at non-bank premises should become separately rateable. This has the effect of making ATMs less financially attractive for organisations like Sainsbury's and Post Office to have on their premises. There is also a potential issue of backdating that may be costly. *If this is raised we should emphasise that we are totally opposed and would legally challenge – we see it harming subpostmasters.*

(**Note:** There may be a circumstance whereby VOA could carve out Post Office branches as a special case exemption from the new policy. We shouldn't however divulge this as any such exemption could come under challenge from other retailers such as Sainsbury's. As a result, we advise that you shouldn't get into this issue – and if it arises simply state that at the high level we would be opposed to any implementation.)

- **Future levels of government spending.** On 25 January 2014 Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls MP announced that a future Labour government would balance the UK's books and deliver a budget surplus in the next Parliament. Chancellor George Osborne MP says the Conservative Party want an absolute budget surplus by 2020. The last time the government ran an absolute budget surplus - which means generating more in revenues, including tax yields, than the entire expenditure - was in 2001. Labour's ambition to deliver a budget surplus does not include borrowing additional money for long-term investments, such as a high speed rail link (*BBC News Online*, 25 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25885606"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25885606) ]).

## Other issues

### Scottish independence

- **Mark Carney's visit to Scotland.** The Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, visited Scotland on 29 January 2014. As part of his speech, he said an independent Scotland would need to give up some power to make a currency union with the rest of the UK work. Mark Carney said such a move, proposed by the Scottish government, 'requires some ceding of national sovereignty' (*BBC News Online*, 29 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-25930075"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-25930075) ]).
- **New poll suggests a yes vote is possible.** A New poll suggests that support for Scottish independence has significantly increased. The survey shows that 37 per cent of people will vote yes in the referendum, while 44 per cent will vote no. A further 19 per cent of voters said they do not know how they will vote. The poll was conducted by ICM between January 21 and 24, surveying over 1,000 people over 16. It shows a significant rise in support for a yes vote, compared with ICM's last poll on Scottish independence, conducted in September last year before the publication of the Scottish Government's white paper (*Daily Record*, 26 January 2013, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/independence-referendum-new-poll-shows-3062947"](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/independence-referendum-new-poll-shows-3062947) ]).

### Bank branches

- **Barclays closing 400 branches.** On 28 January 2014 it was announced that Barclays Bank planned to close a quarter of their 1,600 branches in an effort to improve profitability. Other UK banks, including Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland, are expected to follow Barclays' lead by closing branches and encouraging more customers to use new smartphone applications. It is expected that the cuts could prove controversial with politicians and consumer groups, which are concerned about the exodus of banks from the high street (*Financial Times*, 28 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b51cb58e-8845-11e3-85a2-00144feab7de.html"](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b51cb58e-8845-11e3-85a2-00144feab7de.html) ] \ "axzz2sFiVHwkv" ]).

### Europe

- **PM pledges to bring back failed EU bill.** The private members bill for a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union failed to clear the House of Lords but the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, has said that he is committed to holding an in-out referendum in 2017 whether a bill is passed or not. Mr Cameron has also said that he is prepared to use the Parliament Act - a little-used piece of legislation that asserts the primacy of the Commons - to force it on to the statute books (*BBC News Online*, 31 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25977258"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25977258) ]).

### Coalition tensions

- **Appointees to government bodies.** There is a coalition row concerning the Education Secretary's decision not to reappoint Baroness Morgan as the Chairman of Ofsted once her term expires. Baroness Morgan believes that this is because of her links with the previous Labour government where she was Tony Blair's political secretary from 1997 to 2001 when she was made a life peer. The Liberal Democrats are reported to be unhappy with this decision with Education Minister David Laws MP said to be 'furious' with Mr Gove (*BBC News Online*, 2 February 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26005917"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26005917) ]).
- **Top rate of tax.** The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, has said any cuts to the top rate of income tax before next year's general election will only happen 'over my dead body'. Mr Alexander also said the 45p rate was the 'right place to be' and suggested he would veto any Conservative proposal to cut it to 40p (*BBC News Online*, 5 February 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26042265"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26042265) ]).

### National Minimum Wage

- **Chancellor calls for rise.** Chancellor George Osborne MP has said he wants to see an above-inflation increase in the minimum wage. He told the BBC the 'economy can now afford' to raise the rate, currently set at £6.31 an hour for people over the age of 21. The call comes after Labour claims that the economic upturn has not translated into improved living standards (*BBC News Online*, 16 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25766558"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25766558) ]).
- **BIS warn of managing expectations.** On 3 February 2014 it was reported that the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills believed that the Chancellor was wrong to raise hopes that the national minimum wage could be restored to its pre-recession value of £7 per hour before the election. It was reported that there was the belief that there was 'no way' that the Low Pay Commission would sanction such a rise (*Financial Times*, 2 February 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ebd8aba8-8c1b-11e3-bcf2-00144feab7de.html"](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ebd8aba8-8c1b-11e3-bcf2-00144feab7de.html) ] \ "axzz2sFiVHwkv" ]).

### Weather

- **Wettest January since records began.** This year has seen the wettest January in many parts of the country for more than a century, figures show. The Met Office says some parts of England had already seen twice the average rainfall for January by midnight on Tuesday, and more rain is forecast. In Somerset, the military remains on standby to help flooded areas (*BBC News Online*, 30 January 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/25966889"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/25966889) ]).
- **Increased funding for flood defences.** On 5 February 2014 the Prime Minister announced a further £100 million of funding for flood defences and on 6 February 2014 an extra £30 million was allocated for flood repairs and maintenance (*BBC News Online*, 6 February 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26061795"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26061795) ]).

### Females in politics

- **PM criticised for lack of women in the Conservative Party.** At Prime Minister's Questions on 5 February 2014, Mr Cameron faced questions from Ed Miliband MP female equality in the Conservative Party (the frontbench only had men seated on this occasion). This had been prompted by the de-selection of Anne McIntosh MP by her local party in Thirsk and Malton. In response to questioning Mr Cameron said:

*'On the important issue of getting more women into public life—[Interruption.] Yes, this is fantastically important for our country, because we will not represent or govern our country properly unless we have more women at every level in our public life and in our politics. I am proud of the fact that while I have been leader of the party the number of women Conservative MPs has gone from 17 to 48, but we need to do much more. I want this to go further. We have also seen more women in work than ever before, a tax cut for 11 million women, we have stopped pensions discriminating against women and we are putting women at the front of our international aid programmes. Those are the actions we are taking. There is more to do, but we have a good record of helping women in our economy'* (*Hansard*, 5 February 2014, col. 264, [ [HYPERLINK](#) ])

"<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140205/debtext/140205-0001.htm>" \ "14020564000005" ]).

#### **Crossrail announcement**

- **Trains to be made in the UK.** Bombardier has won a £1 billion contract to provide trains for the London Crossrail project, the Government has announced. The company will provide 65 trains for the Crossrail service, which is set to open in 2018. The trains will be manufactured and assembled at Bombardier's plant in Derby. The Department for Transport said Bombardier's contract would support 760 manufacturing jobs and 80 apprenticeships (*BBC News Online*, 6 February 2014, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26063121"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26063121) ]).

## Questions and Answers

### On the Strategy

**Q: Do you agree that if the Government had delivered on the front office for Government then the £640 million of new funding would not be needed?**

The £640 million of additional funding that the Government announced in November 2013 was not in place of Government Services work but to extend the benefits of the Network Transformation Programme to the whole of the network while protecting Community branches. More Government Services work is not a long term, viable way to ensure a sustainable future for the Post Office.

**Q: The Post Office is targeting some branches and persuading the subpostmaster to retire so that the branch can move into a local shop and downgrade the service. How does this fit with being in the heart of communities?**

We need to make sure we create a sustainable Post Office for the future, by transforming the network to better suit customer needs. This means making difficult decisions to ensure we can maintain our presence in communities and on high streets. Where the current branch does not have a private retail business that is suitable for the Local model, we will aim to identify a suitable alternative operator and premises. If this is possible, we will provide a package to the existing subpostmaster for them to leave the business, subject to a consultation on any new location. Under this strategy, no community which currently has a Post Office branch should be left without one as we transform our business

However we will only relocate branches to suitable retailers and premises that can offer the right levels of access, service and standards that our customers expect. Any move will also only take place following local public consultation.

We are committed to turning around the network and ensuring these changes take place as soon as possible to ensure our branches meet the changing needs of our customers and market demands.

**Q: You say that you are securing the network, but branches will close – why is this?**

The changes to the Network Transformation programme do not amount to a closure programme. Our agenda is based on growth and one which will help make the network more sustainable in the future. Our approach is to maintain the network at around its current size. Existing subpostmasters will only be able to leave the network as part of the Network Transformation Programme if we can find a suitable alternative operator and premises. Our proposals aim to ensure the long term sustainability of the network.

**Q: Subpostmasters are telling me that Post Office does not have an attractive model for current or future operators.**

The overwhelming feedback from operators and customers on the new branches has been positive. We have around 1,500 branches already operating the Local or Main model and we have been closely monitoring performance and regularly speaking with the operators. Average waiting times in the new models are low: 2 minute 18 seconds in Main branches and 1 minute 41 seconds in Local branches.

Where a branch converts to a Local branch, they are able to offer products and services that account for well over 95 per cent of the transactions of any other Post Office branch.

For subpostmasters the local model can offer more retail space. This, combined with the Post Office driving footfall over extended hours, has led to increases in retail sales of up around 10 per cent in the Local and Main models.

Customers have been delighted by the extended opening hours – with 19 per cent using local branches outside of normal Post Office opening hours. Overall, it's a really positive picture, with the latest research revealing 97 per cent of customers are satisfied with their experience at new models.

**Q: Do you think that The Post Office could be privatised in the future?**

The position of the Post Office is established as part of the Postal Services Act 2011 which was in turn based upon the Hooper Review. The Act clearly states that the business will remain in public ownership due to our social obligations and as such could not be privatised as the law stands.

**Q: The Government promised over £400 million of Government work in 2010 but it is only worth £130 million – do you agree that the Government has let you down?**

The reality is that we have won a vast majority of the Government contracts that we have bid for in the past four years. However, margins on these contracts are being squeezed by Government aims to achieve best value for the taxpayer. Our new strategy addresses this changing world and you will see our Financial Services and Telecoms business take on greater prominence as we move forward to 2020.

**Q: After franchising Crown branches certain services will no longer be easily available to local people leading to an inferior service and the loss of one-to-one help from specially trained and committed Post Office staff.**

It's in our interests (and those of a potential retail operator) to make sure the new Main (former Crown) branch offers access to the same wide range of Post Office products coupled with good levels of customer service. We will only work with retailers who can demonstrate their commitment and capability to deliver services to those same high standards. Post Office branches operated by retail operators are required to operate and are measured against the same standards expected of our Crown branches.

We undertake regular mystery shopper research at branches across the network. We have every confidence that our customers will receive at least as good if not better service in the new branch. An additional customer benefit is that we expect to see many of these new branches offering extended opening hours on Saturday – many of our existing Crown branches close at lunchtime on Saturday and some do not open at all.

**Q: It is unfair that the Crown network is expected to breakeven by 2015 yet other parts of the network are still able to benefit from a subsidy from Government.**

Whilst there is likely to be some on-going funding for Post Office branches beyond 2015, this will be for small rural communities where the Post Office branch can be the economic lifeblood of that community. But not for town and city centre branches where many of the services we offer are increasingly available elsewhere – through other retailers or online.

Particularly when there is so much pressure on public spending – in welfare, in education, the NHS etc. - we simply can't be reliant on the goodwill of future governments to support Crown branches. Our transformation plans are therefore based on creating a sustainable Crown part of the network that stands on its own two feet, without the need for public funding. It's only through achieving this that we can safeguard its future.

**Q: In the long term, the possibility of a state-backed bank at the Post Office should be explored.**

In its Policy Statement in November 2010, the Government outlined its funding commitments and policy towards the Post Office. They looked at the case for developing new sources of revenue for the Post Office, including the creation of a Post Bank - it concluded that now would not be the right time to do so, suggesting that setting up and capitalising a new bank would be time-consuming and expensive.

We announced an agreement with HSBC, enabling all 9 million HSBC and First Direct personal account customers to access their accounts at Post Office branches from Spring 2013.

This agreement means that 95 per cent of all UK debit cardholders have access to their money at Post Office counters. We would like all banks to offer their customers access via the Post Office.

We already offer a wide range of financial services through our joint venture with the Bank of Ireland UK - we continue to develop that relationship and invest in our branch network. For example we offer extremely competitive mortgage rates, have recently announced our intention to join the Government's Help to Buy scheme and are trialling our current account in 110 branches across the east of England and the midlands.

**On Scotland**

**Q: Will an independent Scotland have Post Office branches?**

We are structured on a UK wide basis with 1,408 of branches in Scotland and those branches are part of our modernisation strategy just like anywhere else in the UK

Clearly the Scottish independence referendum is a matter for the Scottish people. Depending on the result there would need to be wide-ranging discussions to agree on the process to be followed in implementing any changes with all of the necessary legislation that would need to be undertaken to enable this.

At this stage Post Office is not in a position to speculate on what process any possible introduction of independence would follow or the future requirements and frameworks for the provision of Post Office services in an independent Scotland.

## **Annex A - Post Office Welsh Language Consultation**

### **The Welsh Language**

Post Office Ltd is very proud of its long standing commitment to the Welsh language. As a business with an important role in everyday life, we want to offer and facilitate language choice so we can meet the bilingual needs of our customers across Wales. In meeting that responsibility we adopt the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales we will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality.

We have operated a formal Welsh Language Scheme since 1997 as part of the Royal Mail Group business. Now an independent business, Post Office Ltd has produced, in conjunction with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office, a new standalone Welsh Language Scheme.

We are now entering a period of public consultation so that customers, members of the public and other interested parties have the opportunity to provide us with feedback on our draft Welsh Language Scheme. We welcome feedback by email or by letter using the following contact details; Please send comments by email to : [ HYPERLINK "[GRO](#)"]

The postal address is : Post Office Ltd, External Relations, 3rd Floor, Cardiff Mail Centre, 220 Penarth Road, Cardiff CF11 8TA

The consultation period closes on St David's Day, Saturday 1 March 2014.

**Annex B – Bill Esterson MP – recent questions**

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what assessment he has made of the effects on local communities of post office branch closures; [173884]  
(2) what steps he has taken to reduce the number of closures of post office branches. [173885]

**Jo Swinson:** This Government has made a commitment that there will be no Post Office closure programme, planned or otherwise, and is providing £1.34 billion to 2015 to modernise and create a sustainable Post Office network of at least 11,500 branches which is also compliant with the Government-set access criteria. The Post Office network has experienced a high level of stability since 2010, halting over two decades of closures and decline. The size of the network is at its most stable for over 20 years (*Hansard*, 5 November 2013, col. 144WA, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131105/text/131105w0002.htm" \l "13110584001406" \]](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131105/text/131105w0002.htm) ).

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many post office branches were open at the end of (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13. [175579]

**Jo Swinson:** This Government has made a commitment that there will be no Post Office closure programme, planned or otherwise, and is providing £1.34 billion to 2015 to modernise and create a sustainable Post Office network of at least 11,500 branches which is also compliant with the Government-set access criteria. The Post Office network has experienced a high level of stability since 2010, halting over two decades of closures and decline. The size of the network is at its most stable for over 20 years as demonstrated by the annual end March figures in the following table:

	<i>Number</i>
1993	19,958
1994	19,782
1995	19,607
1996	19,414
1997	19,251
1998	19,008
1999	18,775
2000	18,393
2001	17,846
2002	17,584
2003	17,239
2004	15,961
2005	14,609
2006	14,376
2007	14,219
2008	13,567
2009	11,952
2010	11,905
2011	11,820
2012	11,818
2013	11,780

(*Hansard*, 18 November 2013, col. 665WA, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131118/text/131118w0001.htm" \l "1311194002848" \]](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131118/text/131118w0001.htm) ).

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many new post office branches opened in each year from 2009-10 to 2012-13. [176395]

**Jo Swinson:** The information requested is an operational matter for Post Office Ltd. I have therefore asked Paula Vennells, chief executive officer of Post Office Ltd, to reply to the hon. Member directly, and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of the House. However, I would note that the Government is providing £1.34 billion over the course of this Parliament to ensure a post office network of at least 11,500 branches, compliant with the Government-set access criteria, is maintained, and that the network, as a whole, is at its most stable for two decades.

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many post office branches closed in each year since 2009-10. [176396]

**Jo Swinson:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to question 175553 that I am answering today. The Government is providing £1.34 billion over the course of this Parliament to ensure that a post office network of at least 11,500 branches that complies with the Government-set access criteria is maintained. The network, as a whole, is at its most stable for two decades.

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many post office branches were open in (a) 2011-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13. [176397]

**Jo Swinson:** The Government is providing £1.34 billion over the course of this Parliament to ensure that a post office network of at least 11,500 branches that complies with the Government-set access criteria is maintained. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 18 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 665W. That shows the network, as a whole, is at its most stable for two decades (*Hansard*, 21 November 2013, cols 968-9WA, [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131121/text/131121w0001.htm" \l "131121107000306" \]](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131121/text/131121w0001.htm) ).

**Bill Esterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many post office branches closed in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13. [175553]

**Jo Swinson:** At the end of March 2013 there were 11,780 post offices as part of the nationwide network of branches.

The net closure figures shown in the following table for the four years 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 reflect the position at the end of each financial year and predominantly reflect branches which have closed on a temporary basis for a variety of reasons. Where a post office closes on a temporary basis for operational reasons beyond its control, Post Office Ltd makes extensive efforts to identify a suitable applicant or alternative ways of re-establishing service.

	<i>Net closures</i>
2009-10	47
2010-11	85
2011-12	2
2012-13	38

Comparative figures for the previous four years which include permanent closures under the Government-funded Network Change programme in 2007-08 and 2008-09 are:

	<i>Net closures</i>
2005-06	233
2006-07	157
2007-08	652
2008-09	1,615

(*Hansard*, 21 November 2013, col. 969WA, [ [HYPERLINK](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131121/text/131121w0001.htm)  
"http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131121/text/131121w0001.htm" \\  
"131121107000306" ]).

**Annex C – Correspondence with Andrew George MP concerning financial support for subpostmasters.**

[ EMBED AcroExch.Document.7 ]

Post Office Limited  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Bunhill Row Wing  
148 Old Street  
LONDON  
EC1V 9HQ  
Tel: GRO

Andrew George MP  
Member of Parliament for St Ives

**GRO**

Your reference: 13/7.8/ag/umc  
Our reference: PV 1790

29 January 2014

Dear Mr George

**Re: Assistance With Relocation of Post Office®**

Thank you for your recent letter to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive, Post Office Limited. Paula has asked me to look into the position regarding assistance with costs for offices under our Network Transformation Programme and reply.

We recently contacted your office to see if we could identify the branch in question in order to provide a full response, but we understand that the subpostmaster was reluctant for their details to be shared. That is a shame as we really need to understand their specific circumstances in order to advise on investment opportunities but I have set out some general information here in terms of the current position.

We are at present undergoing our most extensive investment and modernisation programme in the history of the Post Office and we are committed to a strategy which will grow and modernise our network by introducing modern retail environments that better meet the needs of our customers with, in many cases, longer opening hours.

Our aim is to develop an agency branch network made up of three branch types:

- **Community Post Office branches** provide a value focal point for local life, serving at the heart of communities that have no other suitable retailer.
- **Post Office Local branches** are integrated into a vibrant and sustainable retail business so they can be offered over the same opening hours. With Post Office and retail businesses complementing each other, a local branch creates a lively centre point for high streets, villages and shopping parades.
- **Post Office Main branches** serving larger numbers of customers, retaining a dedicated Post Office area, a full range of

sales including financial services, customers will be offered the assistance they need in a modern environment.

Each branch type has different investment opportunities, for example, for Community branches we have in place a new £20 million investment scheme; branches converting to a Post Office Local can access up to £10,000 for investment and branches that change onto the Mains format can access up to £45,000 for investment. The specific investment available will depend on the individual circumstances of the branch concerned.

We have recently written to all subpostmasters to provide them with an idea of which category we believe they fall into and to ask them to share some information with us so that we can work with them on developing the future of their branch and to discuss investment with them.

I would therefore encourage your constituent to engage with us directly through that process so that we can address his individual needs, the details on how to do this is in the letter that he would have received. If he does have any questions or concerns he can raise these by contacting our Network Transformation helpline on GRO.

I hope this information is helpful. If you would like to have a full briefing on our business strategy and our network programmes, our Senior Stakeholder Manager for your area, Laura Tarling, would be happy to discuss this with you. Laura can be contacted on GRO GRO or email [ [HYPERLINK "mailto:laura.tarling@postoffice.co.uk"](mailto:laura.tarling@postoffice.co.uk) ] GRO ].

Yours sincerely

**Donna Gilhooly**  
**Stakeholder Correspondence Team Leader**  
donna.gilhooly GRO

**Annex D – Correspondence with Andrew George MP regarding St Keverne  
Post Office**

[ EMBED AcroExch.Document.7 ]

Andrew George, MP

**GRO**

Post Office Limited  
148 Old Street  
LONDON  
EC1V 9HQ

Tel: **GRO**

Your reference: 13/7.8/ag/ume

Our reference: PV 1696

23 August 2013

Dear Mr George

**Re Susan Knight - St Keverne Post Office**

Thank you for your letter of 6 August sent to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive Post Office Ltd. Your letter has been forwarded to me for reply.

I fully understand that you are concerned for your constituent, Susan Knight, and want to make sure that she is treated fairly; however we are not able to give you specific details of this case without the consent of your constituent.

However, in respect of the suggestion that the unexplained losses may have been caused by the Horizon accounting system you will be aware that Post Office has been undertaking an independent review into the Horizon system and associated issues.

Post Office is determined to ensure that Horizon and any associated processes are fair, effective and reliable, and that subpostmasters can have confidence in the system.

In some instances, however, subpostmasters allege that Post Office and Horizon have not met these standards. To address these concerns, Post Office appointed independent forensic accountants, Second Sight, to investigate this situation.

In collaboration with the Justice for subpostmasters Alliance (JFSA) and a group of MPs led by the Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP, Post Office established an Inquiry into Horizon. Second Sight was appointed to lead this Inquiry and has been working with a number of former subpostmasters for over 12 months. A copy of Second Sight's interim report is available at [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.postoffice.co.uk/post-office-statement-horizon"](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/post-office-statement-horizon) ].

Post Office now wishes to offer a Scheme so that individual former subpostmasters have an opportunity to raise their concerns directly with Post Office. In partnership with former subpostmasters, the JFSA, Second Sight and interested MPs, all sides can then work towards resolving those concerns.

The Scheme is to be launched next week and Mrs Knight may wish to use this Scheme. The application form and Scheme details will be available at [ [HYPERLINK "http://www.jfsa.org.uk"](http://www.jfsa.org.uk) ].

Yours sincerely

Angela Van-Den-Bogerd  
Head of Partnerships  
angela.van-den-bogerd

GRO