

Message

From: Melanie Corfield **GRO**
on behalf of Melanie Corfield **GRO**
Sent: 05/12/2014 17:05:59
To: Mark R Davies **GRO**
CC: Chris Aujard **GRO**; Belinda Crowe **GRO**; Tom Wechsler
GRO; Patrick Bourke **GRO**; Ruth X Barker
GRO; Rodric Williams **GRO**
Subject: RE: BBC - One Programme coverage

Thanks Mark

If everyone is now ok with the response I will send to Nick shortly.

Rod – will let you know when I push the button so you can follow up with the letter.

Mel

From: Mark R Davies
Sent: 05 December 2014 16:57
To: Melanie Corfield
Cc: Chris Aujard; Belinda Crowe; Tom Wechsler; Patrick Bourke; Ruth X Barker; Rodric Williams
Subject: Re: BBC - One Programme coverage

sorry, now pasted below with my chnges

Nick

Thanks for your enquiry re an interview with Paula Vennells. The position on this hasn't changed – as we said before, the Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme is continuing and Post Office remains rigorously committed to its obligations of confidentiality to those involved.

We cannot, in any circumstances, discuss individual cases publicly. In any event it would not be in the interests of applicants or the Scheme to talk about matters which may be the subject of confidential mediation discussions.

At the appropriate time we will be very happy to discuss the scheme and wider issues, although we will never be able to discuss individual cases.

As before, we do want the opportunity to consider providing a statement that will not breach our obligations and duties. We remain very concerned about serious, unsubstantiated accusations and speculation about the integrity of the Horizon system and alleged miscarriages of justice being presented as fact. We would want to understand exactly what you plan to publicise before deciding whether to do so.

We will be writing to you separately shortly about those accusations but it remains the case that issues touching on a criminal conviction and its safety can only be addressed by the Courts.

Draft Statement

Post Office has always considered it to be in the interests of everyone, subpostmasters, staff, customers and the business to identify whether there is any problem with the Horizon system. It underpins the work of subpostmasters and employees, fulfilling six million transactions every working day for customers in communities throughout the UK. After more than 21/2 years of investigation and independent review, the fact that no systemic fault with Horizon has been found is welcome news for the [x] people working in our network and our [x] customers who rely on the Post Office to deliver essential services.

Post Office established an independent review of Horizon and then established an independent Scheme to oversee the review of individual complaints, which included providing funding for applicants to seek professional advice to make their complaint against Post Office.

Post Office is continuing to investigate each complaint. It is hard to see what more we could reasonably do. However, Post Office will not discuss individual cases or matters which are potentially subject to the confidential mediation process. We cannot do so even to respond to generalised unsubstantiated allegations.

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director
Mobile: GRO

Sent from my iPad

On 5 Dec 2014, at 15:53, "Melanie Corfield" GRO wrote:

Hello both

Attached is:

1. A draft press office response to Nick Wallis at the BBC and a draft statement that we can review later for use as and when necessary.
2. A draft letter from Rod to Nick about evidence disclosure.

For ease of reference I have pasted Nick Wallis' email below.

Our intention is to send the press office response just ahead of the legal letter re disclosure of evidence.

Grateful for comments.

Mel

Yesterday I had a conversation with your colleague Gabrielle O'Gara (apologies if I have got the spelling wrong) requesting an interview with Paula Vennells or a senior nominee within the Post Office. In the course of our conversation I explained there appears to have been a significant development in the attitude of various MPs towards the Complaint Review and Mediation scheme. I am not exactly clear on what that development is, but I understand it will be known soon.

We are preparing a piece for the One Show which will go out next week. The story is likely to be picked up before then by BBC network news.

In the One Show piece we will interview a former Subpostmaster - Susan Knight in St Keverne - who was accused of theft by the Post Office. She was subsequently completely exonerated, yet she has lost her job, her business, her place in the community, is now living below the bread line and is having to sell her

house. Whilst we were there she received a notification that her water supply was in danger of being cut off. Yet she is an innocent woman.

In order to ensure Ms Knight's position on the mediation scheme is not in jeopardy, we have not discussed the mediation scheme at all - we simply wanted to hear about her experience of running the village Post Office and her treatment at the hands of the Post Office and the legal system.

In our One Show piece we will also interview a barrister who is an expert in computer systems. He will say the idea that computer systems are faultless is a nonsense, and that relying solely on their output for criminal investigations (as the Post Office has done in a number of cases) can result in miscarriages of justice. He has been taking a close interest in Horizon and will state his professional opinion on Horizon during our piece. He is unlikely to be complimentary.

We have been in contact with a number of former SPMRs who all claim their innocence, yet most or all have been sacked/forced to resign by the Post Office. Many have been prosecuted, some have criminal convictions, some have been sent to prison. In the cases we are looking into, the common thread is a complete absence of any evidence of deliberate wrongdoing, let alone proof of criminal activity. Some have compelling evidence they are innocent of any crime or negligence. Some also have clear evidence of inexplicable errors made by Horizon.

The BBC, through various outlets, has made repeated requests for interview by the Post Office over the integrity of the Horizon system. These interview requests go back as far as the Taro Naw programme in 2009, my own broadcast on BBC1's Inside Out South in 2011, Matt Prodger's interview requests for BBC News in 2012 and 2013, the request by Taro Naw in 2013 and my request to you earlier this year.

To the best of my knowledge the Post Office has never allowed itself to be properly held to account in a formal recorded interview over the integrity of the Horizon system and/or the way it goes about prosecuting its Subpostmasters. This, in itself, speaks volumes.

I would like to reiterate my interview request with some urgency. **We would have to have it recorded by Monday evening.** We can get a camera crew anywhere reasonable in the UK at reasonable notice, and of course we can make one available at the weekend.

I called Ms O'Gara on your office phone number GRO at around 2.30pm yesterday afternoon and have not yet received a response. I think it is immensely important to get the Post Office's perspective on the integrity of the Horizon system, its treatment of Subpostmasters having problems using the Horizon system (including and with specific reference to Susan Knight) and any latest developments in the relationship between the Post Office and MPs over the mediation scheme. If you wish to discuss the exact terms of reference of the interview before it takes place, I would be willing to listen to what you have to say.

Please email me or call me on GRO if you require any further information or wish to discuss where and when the interview with Ms Vennells will take place.

Thank you

Nick Wallis
BBC

<Nick3.docx>

<Letter to Nick Wallis BBC re evidence 05 12 14.docx>