



9 January 2024

Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Dear Lord Chancellor

Post Office Convictions & Compensation

As you give urgent consideration to the question as to whether and how the process for appeals against convictions flowing from the Horizon IT Scandal can be accelerated, you should be in no doubt of today's Post Office's determination to ensure that proper redress is achieved for all of those affected by the business' abysmal behaviour over the relevant time period. We are, individually and collectively, working as hard and as quickly as we possibly can to get compensation to those affected, to support the Inquiry, and to provide Ministers and officials in our sponsoring Department with whatever assistance they require.

We welcome the extraordinary publicity generated by the ITV drama for its ability to reach people who have yet to come forward to appeal their conviction and/or claim compensation and for the spur it has given to looking at ways to accelerate redress for all those affected. However, I would argue that Post Office has a duty to ensure that any decisions which may be taken by Government are fully informed. We also have a duty to the Court in respect of our role as prosecutor in some 700 of those cases which resulted in convictions.

In an effort to fast-track the appeals process ourselves and to encourage people to come forward, we asked our external legal advisers, Peters & Peters, together with Simon Baker KC and Jacqueline Carey KC to undertake a review of all our historic prosecutions. The aim of the exercise was to identify potential appeals against convictions which, following the judgment in *Hamilton*, we would be highly likely to concede in Court. This has enabled us to write, proactively, to a further 30 potential appellants in addition to the 142 resolved cases and the five awaiting consideration, encouraging them to mount an appeal, have their convictions quashed, and obtain appropriate compensation.

A natural corollary of that exercise has been to identify those cases in which, on the information available to us and following the judgement in *Hamilton*, we would be bound to oppose an appeal. Typically, these cases involve convictions obtained by reliance on evidence unrelated to the Horizon computer system. The number of such cases is very much more significant, at 369, with a further 11 still under review. There are another 132 in which we cannot determine the sufficiency of evidence without more information. This clearly raises acute political, judicial, and communications challenges against the very significant public and Parliamentary pressure for some form of acceleration or by-passing of the normal appeals process.

We make absolutely no value judgment about what you and your colleagues determine as the right course of action, but consider it essential for you to understand the very real and sensitive complexities presented each case. We stand ready, together with our legal advisers, to offer you and your officials every assistance as you consider these issues and we can make ourselves available to you and/or your officials at any time.

In the meantime, I attach a note prepared by Peters & Peters which covers this and other issues you may find helpful in your deliberations.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Kevin Hollinrake MP.

Yours sincerely

Nick Read,
Chief Executive, Post Office Limited