



[REDACTED]

Date
22 May 2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00015

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 4 January, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”). We apologise for the delay in responding.

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some of the information you have requested. Your questions are shown verbatim in bold below, and we have provided the information we hold in relation to these.

“I politely request that you forward to me the following information as per Freedom Of Information Act 2000.

- 1. How many postmasters, including sub postmasters, were prosecuted for financial discrepancies, theft, fraud, false accounting and any other financial mismanagement between the years of 1987 and 1998?**
- 2. Please include those privately prosecuted by the Post Office and all other prosecuted by all other organisations, including, but not limited to the CPS and DWP/DHSS.**

We have interpreted “prosecuted” as any case about which Post Office is aware which resulted in a decision to charge an individual. All such cases have been included, regardless of outcome, including acquittals, convictions, possible convictions, prosecutions that were discontinued or dropped for other reasons, as well as unknown post-charge outcomes. It excludes all cases that did not result in a

decision to charge (e.g., investigations that resulted in no further action or that resulted in a caution).

You have requested information about those prosecuted for “*financial discrepancies, theft, fraud, false accounting and any other financial mismanagement*”. There is limited information held for the period 1987 to 1998 which will enable Post Office to determine the specific offences that were prosecuted during this period.

Based on the limited data available to us as of 21 May 2024, in the period of 1987 to 1998, 102 cases involving postmasters (by which we include sub postmasters as well as other individuals whose roles at the time were unknown) were commenced that resulted in a prosecution for financial discrepancies, theft, fraud, false accounting offences, and other financial mismanagement.

Overall, given the historical nature of the data concerned, with some dating back 37 years, we cannot be certain about the accuracy or completeness of the information we have provided, including the specific allegations for which the suspects were prosecuted in every case.

Please note that Post Office continues to receive material from third parties regarding prosecutions and convictions. Consequently, the numbers provided in response to this request are subject to change and are correct only as of 21 May 2024, based on current information known to Post Office.

3. **Please include these numbers per annum please, not bulked together as in the published details post 1999.**
4. **Please provide me, from those numbers prosecuted, the results of said prosecutions. Guilty or Not Guilty or in the case of Scotland, Not proven.**

I am requesting numbers, statistics from prior to 1999 and from when the General Post Office ceased to exist and became a State Owned Private Company Limited by Shares. I.e. 1987. POST OFFICE LTD

Please see the table in the Annex at the end of this letter, which includes the yearly breakdown of the 102 prosecutions.

5. I request full information on the meaning of State Owned Private Company Limited by Shares in respect of POST OFFICE LTD and details of audited accounts for each year spanning 1987 - 1998. A link to said information will be acceptable to me.

I appreciate that this information will take time to collate and collect. However, I do request that this information be provided at your earliest opportunity and request that your organisation comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in terms of transparency and accountability.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.”

Regarding the first part of question 5, relating to “full information on the meaning of State Owned Private Company Limited by Shares in respect of POST OFFICE LTD”, we confirm that Post Office is not a public company within the meaning set out in the Companies Act 2006. Instead, Post Office is a private company, limited by shares, all of which are held by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, UK Government (“**Secretary of State**”). As the Secretary of State is Post Office’s sole shareholder, Post Office is considered fully owned by the state.

Please note also that Post Office is classified as a public non-financial corporation under the Office for National Statistics national account system with the Department for Business and Trade its sponsoring department. Its ownership, legal framework and government classification is set out in section 1, paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 of the Post Office Limited: Shareholder Relationship Framework Document available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-limited-shareholder-relationship-framework-document>.

Regarding the second part of question 5, relating to details of Post Office’s “audited accounts for each year spanning 1987-1998”, the information is freely available on the Companies House website at the following webpage:

<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02154540/filing-history?page=4>.

As the information is reasonably accessible to you by other means, under section 21 of the FOIA, Post Office is not required to provide a copy of the information with this response.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

Post Office Limited is committed to protecting your privacy, information about how we do this can be found on our website at www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy



Annexe

| Year | Prosecutions* | Convictions | Possible Conviction | Acquittals | Case Dismissed / Discontinued | Defendant Absconded | Prosecution – Outcome Unknown |
|--|---------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1987 | 2 | 2 | | | | | |
| 1988 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| 1989 | 0 | | | | | | |
| 1990 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| 1991 | 4 | 3 | | | | | 1 |
| 1992 | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| 1993 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| 1994 | 4 | 3 | | | 1 | | |
| 1995 | 2 | 2 | | | | | |
| 1996 | 10 | 10 | | | | | |
| 1997 | 25 | 22 | | 1 | 2 | | |
| 1998 | 44 | 41 | | | 2 | 1 | |
| During the 1990's but where exact year cannot be established | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Total | 102 | 90 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 |

* Number of postmasters prosecuted for financial discrepancies, theft, fraud, false accounting and any other financial mismanagement