

Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance

Paul Scully MP
Minister for Postal Affairs
The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria St.
LONDON,- SW1H 0ET

15 June 2020

Reference: Alan Bates & Others and Post Office Limited, Repayment of Court Case Costs

Dear Minister

Despite not receiving a reply from you to my letter dated 1 April 2020, it seems I must write again to restate our position that BEIS and Government still owes the claimant group the costs of the court case against Post Office Limited, which continues to accrue interest at 8%. I will not restate the reasons behind this debt, they have been fully explained in previous correspondence.

Recent comments in the House of Commons only reinforce the enormous value to Government of the work we had to undertake due to the failures of DTI, BERR, BIS & BEIS. Recognition of the value of that work has also been made in previous correspondence from your office, as I have pointed out to you in the past. This is work that the 555 in the claimant group have each had to pay £86,000 on top of having their lives ruined, and I am sure you will understand why we will never give up fighting to recover this. Fortunately, and as you are aware, we have growing political and media support which will ensure this matter is kept on the top of your desk until it has been resolved to the satisfaction of the group.

Whilst mentioning the group, I would like to draw your attention to a comment made during last week's Urgent Question in the House of Commons. The MP Darren Jones worryingly stated *'The sub-postmasters who have suffered such a depth of injustice, such a wide range of harm, will no doubt welcome the news today of the Minister's inquiry'*. I am not sure how he can make such an assumption despite being the newly appointed Chair of the BEIS Select Committee, although as he used to work for Post Office's legal firm until a few years ago, possibly old contacts have assured him of that.

In order to test his claim, I sent an email to everyone in the group asking if there was anyone who agreed with his sentiments, and if so, to let me know. Not one person has come back to me with support for his statement, and as you are aware, there are over 500 in the group. So as far as your

proposed 'review' goes, based upon the feedback from the group, I think it is fair to say not one victim is prepared to take part. I will go further than that, and confirm that the JFSA will not engage with the 'review' and if permission is sought from our legal teams to take part, it will be refused. I have also received confirmation from Second Sight that they too will not take part. But I can assure you that once a judge-led public inquiry is announced, all would be supportive of that.

Without any doubt, the lack of management of Post Office over the years by DTI, BERR, BIS & BEIS has been an utter disaster, which so far has cost each of the 555 claimants £86,000. Your 'review' only considers whether, going forward, Post Office has learnt lessons from the past, and we are not interested in that. As it stands, Post Office Limited will never be able to move forward whilst we, and our political and media supporters, can see the group is still suffering from such a huge financial penalty.

At present, our only route to pursue recovery of this penalty is to expose the failings in Government over the years, in much the same way as we did with Post Office in the courts. You need to understand the problem from our point of view. After the way we have all been treated over the years, we need the security of the judiciary being in charge of any inquiry to ensure the real truth is exposed; it is the only time it ever has. Until such time as that occurs we have to explore other routes to expose the truth, and to that end, we are currently fundraising on CrowdJustice in order to make a submission to the Parliamentary Ombudsman over the maladministration of Government when purporting to oversee and manage the Post Office.

Once again an enormous financial burden is being placed on the group, and whilst most of the group did receive some money after they had paid costs from the Settlement, the majority, because of what Post Office did to them, owed much of that money to banks, friends, family and moneylenders, so have finished up with nothing. And now, in order to fund the Ombudsman submission, many are having to borrow money yet again; and you could stop that, as by agreeing to a judge-led inquiry there may be no need to follow the Ombudsman route. That is, if it is not too late to stop it.

At such time as you want to discuss the mechanism for the repayment of the costs incurred by the group or discuss the scope of a judge-led inquiry, I would be delighted to confer further with you.

Sincerely



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