

Debate Pack

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Management culture of the Post Office

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1 Background

On Thursday 8 February 2024, MPs will hold a Backbench Business Committee debate on the management culture of Post Office Ltd in the House of Commons chamber.

Marion Fellows put this topic forward for debate. She said she wanted to keep the Horizon issue in the public eye and allow Members to speak about their constituents' experiences.¹

There was also a [Westminster Hall debate on Post Office Ltd: Management Culture](#), led by Marion Fellows, on 13 July 2023.

1.1 The Post Office

The Post Office Ltd is a company owned entirely by the government.

The government does not have day-to-day involvement in how the Post Office is run but provides some funding, monitors performance and oversees key decisions.²

The Post Office separated from Royal Mail in April 2012.

1.2 Horizon scandal

Most of the current debate about management culture at the Post Office relates to the Horizon scandal, how the Post Office responded to it, or the current ongoing inquiry into the affair.

The Post Office Horizon scandal has been described as the one of UK's most widespread miscarriages of justice.³

A number of postmasters, who run individual post office branches, experienced difficulties with the Horizon Post Office computer system, which was introduced from 1999.⁴ Errors in the system showed false shortfalls on the accounts of postmasters, which the Post Office then demanded they cover.⁵

¹ Backbench Business Committee, [Representations: Backbench Debates](#), Tuesday 23 January 2024

² Post Office Ltd, [Post Office Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23](#) – page 17

³ See for example BBC, [Convicted Post Office workers have names cleared](#), 23 April 2021

⁴ The Post Office, [Horizon IT Scandal timeline](#) [undated, accessed 11 December 2023]

⁵ [HC Deb 23 March 2023 vol 730](#)

The Post Office used information from Horizon to investigate and take action against postmasters and employees.⁶ There were suspensions, prosecutions, bankruptcies, health problems, family breakdowns and suicides:

Some postmasters were suspended (generally without pay) and/or dismissed. Others were prosecuted (by the Post Office itself or by others); some were convicted and imprisoned. Some were made bankrupt (in some cases on the petition of the Post Office: there are allegations that this was done maliciously). Some lost their homes. Some suffered mental or physical health problems as a result of their treatment or of the financial consequences. Some were harried as thieves by their local communities. Some suffered breakdowns in relationships with their partners, children or other families and friends. Several died by suicide.⁷

This has been a long and complicated saga, stretching back over two decades, involving a long campaign for justice, various court cases, compensation schemes and currently a public inquiry.

The ITV drama [Mr Bates vs The Post Office](#), screened in January 2024, has drawn more attention to the scandal.⁸

Questions about Post Office management culture have been raised repeatedly as the Horizon affair has developed.

For example, in one key judgement of the high court case [Bates v Post Office Ltd](#), it was stated that there:

seems to be a culture of secrecy and excessive confidentiality generally within the Post Office, but particularly focused on Horizon.⁹

1.3 Horizon Inquiry

Prime Minister Boris Johnson committed to an inquiry into the Post Office Ltd Horizon IT system in February 2020.¹⁰ The Government announced a review in June 2020, and in September 2020 announced that it would become a non-statutory inquiry, led by retired judge Sir Wyn Williams.¹¹ The inquiry was converted to a statutory inquiry – with powers to compel witnesses to give evidence – in June 2021.¹²

⁶ UCL, [Analysis: The Post Office scandal is not over yet](#), 10 August 2023

⁷ [Explanatory Notes to The Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill, Bill 16 of 2023-24](#), para 3

⁸ BBC, [Mr Bates vs The Post Office: How a TV drama shook up Britain – in just a week](#), 12 January 2024

⁹ High Court, Alan Bates and Others v Post Office Limited, [Judgment \(No.3\) “Common Issues”](#), 15 March 2019

¹⁰ [HC Deb 26 Feb 2020 c315](#)

¹¹ Gov.uk, [Independent review into the Post Office Ltd Horizon IT system](#), 10 June 2020 and [Written Statement HCWS280](#), 10 June 2020; [Written Statement HCWS477](#), 30 Sept 2020

¹² [HC Deb 19 May 2021 \[Post Office Update\]](#)

The Inquiry's role is to produce a summary of the Horizon system's failings:

Sir Wyn is tasked with ensuring there is a public summary of the failings which occurred with the Horizon IT system at the Post Office leading to the suspension, termination of subpostmasters' contracts, prosecution and conviction of subpostmasters. The Inquiry will look to establish a clear account of the implementation and failings of the system over its lifetime (a period of over 20 years).

The Inquiry will gather relevant evidence from affected persons, previous and current subpostmasters and subpostmistresses, Post Office Ltd, UK Government Investment (UKGI), Fujitsu, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), amongst others. It will also consider whether Post Office Limited has learned the lessons and embedded the cultural change necessary from the findings in Mr Justice Fraser's judgments and the impact on affected postmasters.¹³

The inquiry has so far had four phases:¹⁴

- Phase 1 - Human Impact Hearings

See Computer Weekly, [The British people are waking up to the scandal that happened under their noses](#), 18 February 2022 [may require registration]

- Phase 2 - Horizon IT System: procurement, design, pilot, roll out and modifications

See Computer Weekly, [Phase 2 Post Office scandal – “cock-up or cook-up”?](#) 7 December 2022 [may require registration]

- Phase 3 - Operation: training, assistance, resolution of disputes, knowledge and rectification of errors in the system

See Computer Weekly, [Phase 3 Post Office scandal – cover-up a ‘dark chapter’ in government, corporate and legal history](#), 23 May 2023 [may require registration]

- Phase 4 - Action against Sub-postmasters and others: policy making, audits and investigations, civil and criminal proceedings, knowledge of and responsibility for failures in investigation and disclosure

See Computer Weekly, [Post Office scandal: Phase four's rogues' gallery](#), 6 February 2024 [may require registration]

¹³ The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [About the Inquiry](#), accessed 7 February 2024. For more details see the inquiry's [terms of reference](#).

¹⁴ Phases as set out in Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [Public Hearings Timeline](#) [accessed 6 February 2024]. For further information on progress, see Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [Progress Update from Sir Wyn Williams: Chair's update following Phase 4 closing statements on 2 February 2024](#), 2 February 2024. A few Phase 4 witnesses have yet to be heard.

The remaining phases of the Horizon inquiry will also look at areas that relate to Post Office management culture:

Phase 5 - Redress: access to justice, Second Sight, Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme, conduct of the group litigation, responding to the scandal and compensation schemes

Phase 6 - Governance: monitoring of Horizon, contractual arrangements, internal and external audit, technical competence, stakeholder engagement, oversight and whistleblowing

Phase 7 - Current practice and procedure and recommendations for the future¹⁵

Disclosure failures

There have been repeated issues with the Post Office's disclosure of information to the inquiry. Sir Wyn Williams, the Inquiry chair, has described this as "grossly unsatisfactory".

Sir Wyn has emphasised "that the Post Office's prompt discharge of its disclosure obligations is critical and central to the commencement of the next phases of the Inquiry and the efficient and effective conduct of the remaining phase thereafter." He has said that there will need to be close monitoring of the disclosure process for the rest of the Inquiry, in particular that by the Post Office.¹⁶

1.4

Removal of the Chair of the Post Office board

The Chairman of the Post Office, Henry Staunton, was removed from the Executive Board in January 2024. Kemi Badenoch, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, said that "I decided given all of the difficulties the Post Office is having, it's not just about Horizon, it's about the entire business model, how we make it work, that we needed someone who could chair a board that was able to deal with these things effectively".¹⁷

Kevin Hollinrake, the minister responsible for postal services, gave more details in response to an urgent question in the House of Commons at the end of January. He pointed to the need for the Post Office to have strong and effective leadership to deal with the challenges it faces:

The current chairmanship was not proving effective, and we had a difficult decision: change course, or wait and hope that it improves. Given the

¹⁵ From Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [Public Hearings Timeline](#) [accessed 6 February 2024]

¹⁶ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [Sir Wyn issues further statement on monitoring of Post Office disclosure issues](#), 31 January 2024

¹⁷ BBC, [Post Office scandal: Chairman Henry Staunton had to go as it 'wasn't working' - Badenoch](#), 29 January 2024

challenging context for the Post Office and the importance of the role of chair, the Business Secretary took decisive action. I understand that Members would like more details around the decision, especially considering that the Post Office is rightly under heightened scrutiny at this time. I can confirm that there were issues beyond the handling of the Horizon scandal, but as hon. Members would expect, I am not able to comment on the specifics of individual human resources cases.

As the Business Secretary has said, Post Office governance is a priority for the Government. The Post Office is a public corporation; as such, the Post Office board has responsibility for the strategic direction of the company. While there was a clear need for new leadership of the board, we continue to have confidence in the other board members, who are experienced executives with a range of business expertise across the legal, financial, insurance, asset management and pensions sectors; there are two elected postmaster non-executive directors, too.

The Post Office faces unprecedented challenges. It needs to work at pace to deliver compensation to the thousands of postmasters who fell victim to a faulty IT system, as well as to continue the essential work to implement the necessary operational and cultural changes needed in the business. As such, strong and effective leadership of Post Office Ltd is a necessity.¹⁸

The Minister also said that “some of the past conduct and culture of the Post Office has changed” but that “we know that it needs to change further”.¹⁹

1.5

Compensation and related issues

Compensation schemes

Victims of the Horizon scandal are being compensated. This is being done through three main schemes: the Horizon Shortfall Scheme, Overturned Convictions compensation and the Group Litigation Order (GLO) scheme.²⁰

The Horizon Shortfall Scheme

The [Horizon Shortfall Scheme](#) (HSS) is a claims scheme that aims to offer redress for current and former postmasters who had to cover shortfalls that arose from errors in the Horizon system, but who were either not convicted or did not take part in the High Court action (described below).²¹

¹⁸ [HC Deb 29 January 2024 c609](#)

¹⁹ [HC Deb 29 January 2024 c615](#)

²⁰ The Library briefing [Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill](#) has information about other schemes.

²¹ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [Government supports postmasters impacted by Horizon scandal by providing funding for late applications to Historical Shortfall Scheme](#), 6 October 2022; Post Office, [Horizon Shortfall Scheme Eligibility Criteria](#), updated July 2023. Note that the name of the scheme has changed from the Historic Shortfall Scheme to the Horizon Shortfall Scheme.

The Horizon Shortfall Scheme is administered by the Post Office.²²

Dan Neidle, founder of [Tax Policy Associates](#) (a non-profit company that aims to improve public understanding of tax policy), has argued that the scheme is unfair. For example, he suggests postmasters would need legal advice to fill in the complex claim form. The Post Office have said that the scheme was designed to be straightforward to apply to and that incomplete applications are still progressed.²³

Sir Ross Cranston, Independent Reviewer for the GLO scheme (see below), has also commented that the Horizon Shortfall Scheme (HSS) is seen as having fundamental issues:

Sir Ross noted that the HSS was perceived to have structural problems. Regardless of the diligence and professionalism of the HSS Panel the process was tainted by the involvement of the Post Office and issues such as the design of the form and absence of medical and legal advice.²⁴

Overtured convictions payments

[Overtured Conviction compensation payments](#) are made by the Post Office to people who have had a conviction overturned because it involved evidence from the Horizon system.²⁵

Interim payments, currently of £163,000 (previously £100,000), are available to those with overturned Horizon convictions.²⁶ Postmasters are also being offered £600,000 to settle their claim (the total is reduced by amounts already paid in interim payments and partial settlements). Postmasters who do not want to accept the offer can continue with the existing process.²⁷

The government has provided funding to the Post Office for these payments and settlements.²⁸

Group Litigation Order (GLO) scheme

A key step in the Horizon affair was when a group of 555 postmasters and others took the Post Office to the High Court, via a Group Litigation Order

²² Department for Business & Trade and Post Office, [Post Office Horizon compensation data: February 2024](#), updated 6 February 2024

²³ Dan Neidle, [Eight reasons why the Post Office compensation scheme is a scandal](#), 3 June 2023

²⁴ Department for Business & Trade, [Horizon Compensation Advisory Board Report of ninth meeting held on 29 November 2023](#)

²⁵ The Post Office, [Overtured Convictions and Compensation: Information on Progress](#) [undated, accessed 11 December 2023]

²⁶ [HC Deb 18 Sep 2023 cc1131-1140](#); Department for Business & Trade, [Government announces £600,000 of new compensation for every wrongfully convicted Postmaster](#), 18 September 2023

²⁷ Department for Business & Trade, [Government announces £600,000 of new compensation for every wrongfully convicted Postmaster](#), 18 September 2023

²⁸ [Post Office Compensation](#) – Ministerial Statement in the House of Commons, HC Deb 18 Sep 2023 cc1131-1140

(GLO).²⁹ In December 2019, the Post Office settled out of court for £42.5 million plus costs (“the GLO settlement agreement”).³⁰

The Government announced the [GLO compensation scheme](#) in March 2022, aiming to ensure that “postmasters who were part of the GLO and not eligible to seek compensation from the Post Office have access to fair compensation for their Horizon-related losses”.³¹

The scheme is funded and administered by the Department for Business and Trade.³²

In January 2024, the government announced that it will “make people in that scheme an up-front offer of £75,000, which will save them having to go through a full assessment” process. However, “if they believe they are entitled to more, they are welcome to continue with the full assessment”.³³

Compensation delays

Delays in compensation have been a significant issue.³⁴ A lawyer to some of the victims recently pointed to delays in routine correspondence of three to four months for overturned conviction cases, and waits of six months for panel decisions for a small number of cases in the Horizon shortfall scheme.³⁵

The government publishes statistics on the number of compensation claims, offers and payments for each scheme, see Department for Business and Trade and Post Office, [Post Office Horizon compensation data for 2024](#).

Post Office (Horizon System) Compensation Act

The [Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Act 2024](#) received Royal Assent on 25 January 2024. The Act had its Commons stages on 19 December 2023. The Act gives the government the power to make payments under compensation schemes that relate to the Post Office Horizon system, including after a particular deadline for the Group Litigation Order (GLO)

²⁹ [Explanatory Notes to The Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill, Bill 16 of 2023-24](#), para 4

³⁰ [Explanatory Notes to The Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill, Bill 16 of 2023-24](#), para 6. The Post Office have published the [\(Redacted\) Settlement Deed between Post Office Limited and GLO cohort](#) [PDF], December 2019

³¹ Department for Business and Trade, [GLO compensation scheme guidance and principles](#), revised 29 November 2023 – para 1.1.1

³² Department for Business and Trade, [The GLO Compensation Scheme: questions and answers](#), updated 29 November 2023

³³ [HC Deb 10 January 2024 c301](#)

³⁴ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, [Chair’s Progress Update on Issues relating to Compensation: Progress Update from Sir Wyn Williams](#), 15 August 2022, para 133; [The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry First Interim Report: Compensation, 17 July 2023](#), para 147

³⁵ Business and Trade Committee, [Oral evidence: Post Office and Horizon – Compensation follow-up](#), HC 477, Tuesday 16 January 2024, Q5 & 6 – from Dr Neil Hudgell, Executive Chairman, Hudgell Solicitors

compensation scheme has passed. See the Library briefing [Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill](#) for details.

1.6

Other recent developments and issues

A new law to overturn convictions

In January 2024, the government announced that they will be bringing forward a new law, within weeks, to overturn convictions:

The blanket exoneration will overturn hundreds of convictions, brought about thanks to erroneous Horizon evidence, clearing the names of many people who have had their lives ruined. The Government has committed to making sure these convictions are overturned later this year, meaning victims do not need to wait years and years for the justice they deserve.³⁶

This action was supported by the independent Horizon Compensation Advisory Board:

The Board strongly welcomed the announcement which the Minister had made earlier in the day about the Government's intention to overturn criminal convictions arising from the Horizon scandal and to compensate the people involved. It recognised that the action would lead to the acquittal of some guilty people: they believed that this was clearly the lesser of two evils.

The Board considered that this was strongly justified by the exceptional circumstances – the behaviour of the Post Office's investigation and prosecution functions, which the Minister had described as "malevolent and incompetent"; and the severe consequences for the mental health of many of the people affected. [...]³⁷

When this paper was published (7 February 2024), the new bill to overturn convictions had not been published.

Paula Vennells giving back CBE

Paula Vennells, the Chief Executive of the Post Office between 2002 and 2009, has recently said she will give back her CBE.³⁸ This followed a petition that attracted 1.2 million signatures.³⁹

³⁶ Ministry of Justice, [Government to quash wrongful Post Office convictions](#), 10 January 2024

³⁷ Horizon Compensation Advisory Board, [Report of tenth meeting held on 10 January 2024](#)

³⁸ BBC, [Paula Vennells: Ex-Post Office boss handing back CBE over IT scandal](#), 9 January 2024

³⁹ 38 Degrees, [Post Office Scandal: Strip Paula Vennells of her CBE](#) [accessed 4 February 2024]

Fujitsu to contribute to compensation

Fujitsu was the company that developed the Horizon system.⁴⁰

In January 2024, Fujitsu apologised and suggested it would contribute to compensation for Horizon victims:

The Fujitsu Group regards this matter with the utmost seriousness and offers its deepest apologies to the sub-postmasters and their families.

The UK statutory public Inquiry, to which our UK subsidiary is providing full cooperation, is examining complex events that have unfolded over many years, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to this cooperation. Based on the findings of the Inquiry, we will also be working with the UK government on the appropriate actions, including contribution to compensation.

The Fujitsu Group hopes for a swift resolution that ensures a just outcome for the victims.⁴¹

Problems with earlier Post Office computer systems

Problems – sometimes leading to prosecutions – have been reported with computer systems before Horizon was introduced:

- a pilot of the Horizon system
- a system called Capture

Further information is available from Computer Weekly, [Pre-Horizon users contacting lawyers as more Post Office IT horror stories emerge](#), 30 January 2024 and [MP demands answers from government minister over second faulty Post Office IT system](#), 29 January 2024 [may require registration].

Bonus payments and subsequent reviews

In 2023, in the Post Office Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22, the Post Office published metrics on which bonuses for senior leaders were based. One aspect of this, which was marked as achieved, was for:

All required evidence and information supplied on time, with confirmation from Sir Wyn Williams and team that Post Office's performance supported and enabled the Inquiry to finish in line with expectations.⁴²

Following this publication, the Post Office issued a clarification to the report and apology to Sir Wyn Williams on 5 May 2023, stating that:

⁴⁰ The original contract was awarded to ICL, which was largely owned by Fujitsu. See Computer Weekly, [How Fujitsu became a central part of the Post Office scandal](#), 10 January 2024

⁴¹ Fujitsu Limited, [A Fujitsu statement on Post Office Horizon IT](#), 18 January 2024

⁴² Post Office, [Post Office Annual Report & Accounts for 2021-22](#), 1 March 2023

We recognise that by setting this particular sub-metric, and marking it as achieved, we implied that Sir Wyn and his team had agreed to this sub-metric and had commented on the outcome. We wish to clarify that we did not ask for Sir Wyn's agreement to the wording of this sub-metric and Sir Wyn and his team did not give any input into assessing whether it had been met.⁴³

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee at the Post Office commissioned a review of the award of payment, from a non-executive director. The review reported in June 2023, attracting some criticism.⁴⁴

The government commissioned a wider independent review of the governance around Post Office decisions on remuneration.⁴⁵ The Post Office agreed to implement the recommendations in full.⁴⁶

1.7 Post office position

The Chief Executive of the Post Office, Nick Read, has said that he is committed to addressing issues relating to the Horizon scandal:

The Horizon IT scandal had devastating consequences on the lives of people affected. I have met and heard first-hand the moving testimonies from some of the victims and I am in no doubt about the human cost.

The Government's statutory Inquiry, led by Sir Wyn Williams, will determine what went wrong in the years following the introduction of the original Horizon IT system in 1999. Post Office is openly and transparently assisting the Inquiry's work to help provide, as far as possible, closure for those affected.

The future our Postmasters and customers deserve can only be fully delivered with the resolution of past events. That's why I established a dedicated team in the Post Office – the Remediation Unit – to address compensation, appeals of historical criminal convictions and provide full assistance with the Inquiry.

Whilst the Inquiry's work continues, my priority is to ensure that there is appropriate, meaningful compensation for victims. Post Office would not have the financial resources for this without Government and I welcome the funding support they are providing.

We are making substantial progress, with offers totalling more than £130 million, the vast majority of which are agreed and paid.

Past shortcomings must never be repeated. We are making significant changes to our culture and rebuilding trust to forge a new relationship with our current Postmasters, without whom there would be no Post Office.

⁴³ Post Office, [Post Office Annual Report & Accounts 2021-22](#), accessed 11 July 2023

⁴⁴ Amanda Burton, [Review of the Transformation Incentive Scheme \(TIS\). Confidential report to the POL Board: Final 2/6/23](#) [PDF], 2 June 2023; The Post Office Scandal, [The Burton Report](#), 6 July 2023

⁴⁵ [Post Office Executives: Bonuses](#), 10 May 2023, c341

⁴⁶ Simmons + Simmons, [Simmons Post Office review published by Government](#), 16 August 2023

We now have two Non-Executive Director Postmasters, elected by other Postmasters, on the Post Office Board to influence strategy and ensure the business's direction is rooted in the reality of Postmaster business experience. A current Postmaster has been appointed to a new Director role leading our day-to-day relationship with Postmasters.

Operational improvements have also been made, based on Postmaster and branch staff feedback, in every part of the business from initial appointment and training through to daily transactions and accounting. Whilst we recognise there is still much work to do, we have made significant progress.

I know that Post Office is changing for the better and that such past failings must never happen again. Post Office and our Postmasters remain at the heart of communities across the UK. We must put this right.⁴⁷

The Post Office has two pages that set out changes they are making:

- [Changing our culture](#)

Includes the involvement of postmasters in Post Office leadership, what the Post Office is doing to hear from postmasters, and how the Post Office is educating its senior leaders and other colleagues.

- [Improving our systems and processes](#)

Includes for example the replacement of the Horizon system and improved support for postmasters.

⁴⁷ Post Office, [Introduction from our CEO](#), undated, accessed 6 February 2024

2 Parliamentary material

2.1 Written parliamentary questions

There have been a substantial number of written parliamentary questions that relate to the Post Office and post offices – see this link for [a full list of answers to questions since the beginning of 2023](#).

The following is a selection.

- [Post Office: Private Prosecutions](#)

Answered 25 Jan 2024, PQ HL1495

Asked by: Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to bring forward additional legislation to remove the power of the Post Office to bring forward prosecutions.

Answering member: Lord Bellamy | Department: Ministry of Justice

The Post Office scandal is the biggest miscarriage of justice in our history. That is why this Government announced on 10 January its intent to overturn wrongful convictions and ensure swifter access to compensation for hundreds of innocent post-masters and mistresses.

Whilst the vast majority of Horizon cases were prosecuted by the Post Office, some were pursued by other prosecutors, including the Crown Prosecution Service. The Post Office does not have a specific power to bring private prosecutions. It did so under the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, the same right as other third party organisations, such as the RSPCA. The Post Office has not brought any such prosecutions since 2015.

Sir Wyn Williams' Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry is examining in detail the failings that led to the Post Office scandal. It would not be appropriate for Government to pre-empt the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry, which are due later this year, by pursuing changes at this time.

We are, however, examining the wider question of private prosecutions and the Government is therefore committed to looking again at the Justice Select Committee's recommendations in their 2020 report as part of this work.

- [Post Office: Incentives](#)

Answered 17 Jan 2024, PQ 8641

Asked by: Redwood, John

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the Board of the Post Office Ltd on whether Post Office managers received bonuses that were based on profits that were higher due to reclaims from sub postmasters affected by Horizon issues.

Answering member: Kevin Hollinrake | Department: Department for Business and Trade

I hold meetings with the Post Office CEO on a monthly basis where we discuss a range of matters related to Horizon.

What Post Office Limited (POL) did with the monies claimed from postmasters due to errors in the Horizon system is a complex matter. We will approach POL and write when we have seen what information is available and in what form. However, Postmasters who paid Post Office money due to errors in the Horizon system will be paid this back as part of their compensation.

- [Post Office](#)

Answered 16 Jan 2024, PQ 8521

Asked by: Maskell, Rachael

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has plans to strengthen the accountability of Post Office senior managers through the Government's shareholder role.

Answering member: Kevin Hollinrake | Department: Department for Business and Trade

Following the Group Litigation Order court case, the Government has taken steps to strengthen the governance of the Post Office. This has included expanding the Department's Post Office Policy team that works closely with UK Government Investments (UKGI) in advising Ministers on holding the Post Office to account.

The Government has also strengthened and formalised the respective responsibilities of the Post Office, Government and UKGI through a Framework Document published in 2020. The Government also maintains strong oversight of the progress made on resolving issues related to Horizon and will continue to hold the Post Office to account for learning relevant lessons and making tangible changes to the organisation.

The recent issue surrounding senior bonuses at Post Office highlighted a number of corporate governance issues which were the subject of the review undertaken by Simmons and Simmons and published in August 2023. The review made a number of important findings and recommendations, which

Post Office accepted in full. The implementation of these recommendations is a priority and Government is monitoring Post Office's progress closely.

- [Post Offices: ICT](#)

Answered 10 May 2023, PQ HL6844

Asked by: Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to pursue criminal prosecutions against former Post Office senior managers who may have knowingly pursued postmasters for frauds they did not commit.

Answering member: The Earl of Minto | Department: Department for Business and Trade

The Government has set up a statutory inquiry into the Post Office Horizon scandal. Collective and individual accountability for the scandal can only be considered when the Inquiry has reviewed all of the evidence.

2.2

Debates, oral statements, urgent questions, selected oral questions

- [Post Office Ltd](#)

Urgent question on the removal of Henry Staunton as Post Office Ltd chair and wider governance

30 Jan 2024

Lead member: Fellows, Marion | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin

See also corresponding statement in the Lords: [Post Office Ltd](#)

- [Alan Bates and Others v Post Office Limited](#)

24 January 2024

Oral question

Lead member: Lord Sikka | Answering member: Lord Offord of Garvel

- [Post Office Horizon Scandal](#)

Urgent question on compensation and outstanding matters relating to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

10 Jan 2024

Lead member: Davis, David | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin

See also corresponding statement in the Lords: [Horizon: Compensation and Convictions](#) and the urgent question that preceded it: [Horizon: Compensation and Convictions](#).

- [Engagements](#)

Oral question to the Prime Minister in which he announced legislation to overturn convictions relating to Horizon.

10 Jan 2024

Asked by: Lee Anderson | Answering member: the Prime Minister

- [Horizon: Compensation and Convictions](#)

Statement on Post Office Horizon compensation and convictions.

8 Jan 2024

Lead member: Hollinrake, Kevin

- [Debates on the Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill](#)

19 December 2023 to 16 January 2024

- [Westminster Hall debate on Rural Postal Services: Sustainability](#)

25 Oct 2023

Lead member: Stone, Jamie | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin

- [Post Office Compensation](#)

Statement on the latest steps the Government are taking to ensure that swift and fair compensation is made available to postmasters whose Horizon-related convictions are overturned.

18 Sep 2023

Lead member: Hollinrake, Kevin

See also corresponding statement in the House of Lords [Post Office Compensation](#), 19 Sept 2023

- [Post Office Horizon IT Scandal: Compensation](#)

Urgent question in the House of Commons

18 Jul 2023

Lead member: Jones, Kevan | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin

- [Westminster Hall debate on Post Office Ltd: Management Culture](#)

13 July 2023

Lead member: Fellows, Marion | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin ·
Madders, Justin

- [Westminster Hall debate on Sub-postmasters and Sub-postmistresses: Remuneration](#)

23 May 2023

Lead member: Carmichael, Alistair | Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin

- [Post Office Executives: Bonuses](#)

Urgent question on the awarding of bonuses to Post Office executives.

10 May 2023

Lead member: Mr Kevan Jones

Answering member: Hollinrake, Kevin, Department for Business and Trade

See also corresponding statement in the House of Lords: [Post Office Executives: Bonuses](#)

- [Post Office: Horizon Compensation](#)

23 March 2023

Statement by Kevin Hollinrake, Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business

2.3

Written statements

- [Post Office Limited: Additional Funding Update](#), 19 Dec 2023, HCWS155
- [Post Office Limited Update](#), 8 November 2023, HCWS8
- [Tax Exemptions for Post Office Compensation Schemes: Suspension Remuneration Review and the Process Review Scheme](#), 8 November 2023, HCWS10
- [Post Office Limited: Additional Funding Update](#), 20 October 2023, HCWS1081

- [Business and Trade update on trade negotiations, smarter regulation and recent departmental activity](#), 7 September 2023, HCWS1010
- [Finance Bill: draft legislation and tax documents](#), 18 July 2023, HCWS972
- [Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry: Interim Report](#), 17 July 2023, HCWS950
- [Post Office Compensation Update](#), 29 June 2023, HCWS896
- [Post Office Compensation Update](#), 19 June 2023, HCWS860
- [Post Office Horizon Compensation](#), 26 April 2023, HCWS742
- [Post Office: Compensation for Horizon Scandal](#), 23 March 2023, HCWS664

2.4

Committee material

- Business and Trade Committee, [Post Office and Horizon - Compensation: follow-up: Non-inquiry session](#), 16 January 2023
- Business and Trade Committee, [The Post Office: Non-inquiry session](#), 20 July 2023
- Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, [Royal Mail and the Post Office: Non-inquiry session](#), 17 January 2023
- Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, [Post Office and Horizon - Compensation: interim report](#), 17 February 2022, HC 1129 2021–22
- Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, [Post Office and Horizon Compensation: interim report. Government Response](#), 27 April 2022, HC 1267 2021–22

Please see the link for [correspondence involving the Business & Trade committee relating to the Post Office](#) – this includes various updates from the government.

3 Further information

3.1 Media

The Horizon scandal has been extensively covered in the media – see for example the many stories listed under the BBC’s [Post Office Inquiry](#) tag.

Material in Computer Weekly

Computer Weekly have published more than 350 articles on the Horizon scandal, going back to 2009.

They are listed at the end of the latest article:

- Computer Weekly, [Post Office scandal: Phase four’s rogues’ gallery](#), 6 February 2024 [may require registration]

Material by Nick Wallis

Nick Wallis is a journalist who has been reporting on the Horizon affair for many years.

He runs the [Post Office Scandal website](#), which has coverage and comment, and has made [The Great Post Office Trial](#) series for the BBC.

3.2 Library briefings

- [Post Office \(Horizon System\) Compensation Bill](#), 13 December 2023
- [Management culture at Post Office Ltd](#), 11 July 2023
- [Post office numbers](#), January 2023
- [The Post Office](#), October 2021
- [Statutory public inquiries: the Inquiries Act 2005](#)
- [Whistleblowing and gagging clauses](#)

3.3 Post Office

Post Office, [The Horizon IT Scandal](#) – page of links to data and resources. Includes three articles on organisation improvements and wider changes at the Post Office:

- [Introduction from our CEO](#)
- [Improving our systems and processes](#)
- [Changing our culture](#)

See also [Post Office corporate press releases](#).

3.4 Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

[Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry website](#) – includes:

- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [List of issues](#), updated Jan 2022 – includes more than 200 issues
- [News](#)
- [Reports and statements](#)

3.5 Horizon Compensation Advisory Board

The [Horizon Compensation Advisory Board](#) is an independent advisory board of parliamentarians (Lord Arbuthnot and Kevan Jones MP) and academics which oversees compensation related to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

A list of [Horizon Compensation Advisory Board documents](#) is available via their gov.uk page – this includes terms of reference, notes of meetings and correspondence.

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