

Witness Name: Nigel Perry  
Statement No.: WITN07680100  
Dated: 16th February 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF *NIGEL JOHN PERRY*

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I, *Nigel John Perry*, will say as follow:

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am a former employee of the Post Office Counters and held the position of Horizon Field Support Officer.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the “**Inquiry**”) with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 3 January 2023 (the “**Request**”).

#### **BACKGROUND**

3. I joined the Royal Mail at Bedford in 1980 as a Postman, promoted to Postman Higher Grade in 1984. In the same year I applied and passed the entrance exam as a Counter Clerk with Post Office Counters at Bedford. In 2000 applied and seconded as a Postal Officer with Allowance as a Horizon Field Support officer until February 2001, resuming duty at Bedford as a Counter clerk. I left the Post Office in March 2003 to pursue a career as a professional gliding instructor.

4. I received Horizon HFSO training on a three-week course near Watford early 2000. Prior to this had received some basic Horizon training at Bedford but cannot recollect duration/date.
5. I have no documentation or personal records relating to my time as an HFSO on Horizon as I was required to hand in or destroy such documents on completion of the Migration Programme in February 2001. It is 20 years since I retired from the Post Office, so my memory and recall has become diminished.
6. I worked for a Horizon Migration team IP4 based at The Point, St Albans. We migrated Branch Offices and Sub Post Offices from the paper system onto the Horizon system over an area East of a line from Grimsby to Portsmouth. This entailed a lot of driving and overnight stays away from home. Migrating Branch Offices was normally done by two HFSOs due to the number of counter positions and larger stock holding.
7. My daily routine was to leave home and drive to the office being migrated, arriving approximately 17.00 hours. ICL/Pathway the Horizon installers would be finishing the office install. Sometimes due to office design, wiring, carpentry issues the migration might be cancelled at short notice. At close of business the branch manager or Sub postmaster/ Mistress would complete a normal paper balance showing stock and any losses/gains. The paper balance would then be migrated onto the Horizon system showing any historical losses and gains. Some offices were very slow in completing the manual balance despite prompting, as I had at least two hours work to enter the balance onto the Horizon system and complete relevant reports. I was often in these offices till midnight. I had to ensure the Horizon system was ready to go live to the public next day.
8. Some sub postmasters/mistresses were not computer literate and were against change which made migration difficult. As HFSOs we had to show empathy, reassurance and tact to get the office migrated. After successful office migration

we returned next day to mentor the office staff operating and using the Horizon system customer facing. We gave two days mentoring to the staff as they gained confidence in using Horizon in daily transactions. We could only spend two further days at each office as we had to move onto another office due to the roll-out programme with other contractors i.e. the installers As HFSOs we also checked that staff could confidently complete their daily office reports on Horizon. We only migrated the office, the office balance the following week would be assisted by the Retail Network Manager (RNM) and local managers, as we had to move onto another office. See comments para.10

9. If I felt that managers or sub-post officers were struggling to operate Horizon confidently, I reported to their retail network manager mainly by a telephone call, for further training/coaching as required. After each migration the HFSO completed an office report on how the migration went raising any concerns i.e. more training required, excessive losses and gains. These forms I think from memory went to our Head Office. I cannot comment further as to what follow up action occurred.
  
10. I do consider I provided adequate professional advice and assistance on Horizon especially as I only had less than three days on site. I do feel some under-confident sub-postmasters could have done with extra training closer to migration day. When I departed an office, the manager or Sub postmasters were given the Horizon Helpdesk telephone number for any issues, and as said before I would have requested further mentoring at a local level to their managers if I felt they were having difficulty operating. At no time in my stay in offices did any Horizon bugs, defects or software issues become apparent.
  
11. I do not hold any documents or records relevant to the issues being raised by the Inquiry. I never had any software issues migrating the Horizon system. We had a monthly team meeting at St Albans with my team of forty colleagues. I do not recall any operating issues with Horizon being reported at all. Any losses or gains on the paper balance were historical at the time they were migrated onto the

Horizon system declared and in agreement with Branch managers and Sub Postmaster/Mistresses.

12. I was not aware of any Horizon defects prior and during my time on the Horizon project. I only became aware of this years later in the National press and was shocked and dismayed to read about it. In February 2001 we were informed that Horizon had successfully been rolled out three months ahead of schedule. If so, there could not have been any major accounting issues with Horizon as we would not have been able to migrate the offices.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

**GRO**

Dated: 16th February 2023