

## Message

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**From:** Paula Vennells [GRO]  
on behalf of Paula Vennells <[GRO]>  
**Sent:** 21/02/2019 14:36:07  
**To:** Mark R Davies [GRO]  
**Subject:** Re: Board GLO Sub Committee

Good note. Thx

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**From:** Mark R Davies  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2019 2:19:17 PM  
**To:** Paula Vennells; Cooper, Tom - UKGI; Alisdair Cameron; Tim Parker; andrew.parsons; Jane MacLeod; Ken McCall1  
**Subject:** Re: Board GLO Sub Committee

Dear all

Just to underline Paula's points (and I'm sorry I wasn't able to join the call).

Our external communications strategy on this is to minimise negative coverage by holding the robust line we have deployed throughout. In doing so we have thus far succeeded in minimising coverage in the mainstream media. Throughout the trial we have been measuring sentiment among external audiences - the trial has had no discernible impact in terms of increasing external interest in the issue.

There are a group of journalists who have staked their professional reputations on campaigning on behalf of those who have now taken us to court. They - and one in particular - drive most of the periodic increases in external coverage. We have sought to engage with this group but there is an unwillingness to engage with our side of the story. That is regrettable, of course.

Beyond this group, mainstream media covering this story has included the Financial Times - it's coverage has been fair and balanced - and the Daily Mail, which has focused on individual cases which, for good reason, we have not commented on. This is all the more important in terms of the legal processes which are underway.

Private Eye has also featured the issue regularly, claiming Post Office has knowingly covered up evidence of what it calls the "deeply dodgy" Horizon system. We believe the content in Private Eye is almost certainly provided to it by one of the "campaigning" journalists who have staked their reputation on proving that Post Office has conspired to see otherwise innocent people jailed or penalised.

By holding our line, and not giving the story further oxygen, we prevent the issue going beyond the channels above and while of course it is uncomfortable when we face negative coverage it has never reached the stage of a media onslaught as seen on other such issues facing organisations such as ours.

I am by no means complacent: we are daily on our guard against the risk of that, and our strategy and positioning is tested by our external advisers, who are highly experienced in dealing with issues such as this (as is our in house team).

As Paula has said we have and will take steps to challenge and rebut inaccurate representations, while we also brief journalists on background about the nature of the claims against us. It is worth stressing that whenever Paula or other senior colleagues meet journalists from the business and finance pages, this is never an issue upon which they want to focus.

I'm away from the office on leave at present but will of course get our lines and Q&A to you all.

I hope this is helpful: always happy of course to discuss in more detail.

With best wishes  
Mark

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**From:** Paula Vennells <GRO>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2019 1:21 pm  
**To:** Cooper, Tom - UKGI; Alisdair Cameron; Tim Parker; andrew.parsons; Jane MacLeod; Mark R Davies; Ken McCall1  
**Subject:** Re: Board GLO Sub Committee

Hi Tom,  
Yes we defend robustly but we avoid adding extra coverage.

As before we hold the ground: the system is robust. And not comment any further during the trial. So 'aggressive' no, robust - absolutely no question.  
We are trading well. We will continue to trade well. The system (enhanced since 2010) works and the trial doesn't change that. A very firm line.

I will pick up and Jane and Mark and Al and we will get back you with the plans (and lines/Q&A as I said on the call).

The strategy has worked well so far, which is to minimise coverage in mainstream media. Therefore, we don't engage in any public debates, we have strong lines but we add no oxygen by commenting or engaging. This is not new news despite how the claimants will present it as that; our approach is to curtail interest as much as possible.

And of course, we will respond differently if circumstances dictate. We will be all over it.

Your questions re how far we can go 'legally' are important. We have used injunctions and demanded apologies in the past. They are both to be used but with caution. They gain more coverage, which is not always balanced. But they are tools in the box. (Portland are very experienced at this too - it is about judgement and if/when to make the call.)

I'll pick up with Mark, Jane and Al next week.

Paula

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**From:** Cooper, Tom - UKGI <GRO>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2019 12:47 pm  
**To:** Alisdair Cameron; Paula Vennells; Tim Parker; andrew.parsons; Jane MacLeod  
**Subject:** Board GLO Sub Committee

Jane

One follow-up question from the call.

To what extent can the court protect POL against journalists overstating the evidence re Horizon? If a journalist writes that there is evidence of systematic problems with Horizon when in fact no such evidence exists, will the court help us?

Seems to me it's extremely important to have a press strategy that seeks to stop misrepresentation by journalists and seeks to protect POL's business today against the implication that the current system doesn't work properly.

Grateful if you could come back to us on that.

Tom

**Board GLO Sub Committee**

Scheduled: Thursday, 21 Feb 2019 from 11:00 to 12:00

Location: WallaceSpace, 18 Clerkenwell Green, Clerkenwell, London EC1R 0DP / Level 2 - Copper Room /  
Dial in details

Invitees: Alisdair Cameron, Mark Underwood1, Anthony de Garr Robinson, Paula Vennells,  
CompanySecretarial, Ken McCall1, Tim Parker, Rodric Williams, Andrew Parsons, Rob Houghton, Jane  
MacLeod, Veronica Branton, Angela Van-Den-Bogerd

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