1		Wednesday, 3 July 2024	1	A.	l do.
2	(9.4	18 am)	2	Q.	Do you see in paragraph 268(iii), it says "POL
3	MR	BEER: Good morning, sir. Can you see and hear us.	3		appointing a criminal with extensive experience to work
4	SIR	WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you very much.	4		alongside Brian Altman QC"?
5	MR	BEER: May I call Tim Parker, please?	5	A.	I do.
6	SIR	WYN WILLIAMS: Of course.	6	Q.	Should have that have the word "silk" inserted between
7		TIMOTHY CHARLES PARKER (affirmed)	7		the word "criminal" and "with"?
8		Questioned by MR BEER	8	A.	Most certainly.
9	MR	BEER: Sir, before I ask questions of Mr Parker, I should	9	Q.	So that, rather than the Post Office appointing
10		say that there is a fire alarm drill today at 10.00 and,	10		a criminal, the Post Office would appoint a criminal
11		in accordance with our usual practice, we're going to	11		silk?
12		sit through it.	12	A.	Absolutely. Correct.
13	SIR	WYN WILLIAMS: Sure.	13	Q.	Thank you very much. Can we go to the last page,
14	MR	BEER: Thank you.	14		please, which is page 136. Is that your signature?
15		Good morning, Mr Parker.	15	Α.	
16	A.	-	16	Q.	
17		BEER: My name is Jason Beer and I ask questions on	17		contents of the witness statement true to the best of
18		behalf of the Inquiry. Can you tell us your full name,	18		your knowledge and belief?
19		please?	19	A.	
	A.	My name is Timothy Charles Parker.	20	Q.	Thank you very much. It's a very detailed witness
20 21	Q.	Thank you. You've provided kindly a witness statement	21	Q.	statement of 136 pages, it will be uploaded to the
22	Q.	for us which is 136 pages long, the URN for that is	22		Inquiry's website and therefore I'm not going to ask you
		WITN00690100. You should have a hard copy in front of	23		
23					questions about all parts of it.
24		you there. Can you turn up, please, page 126. Do you	24	Α.	Okay.
25		have that?	25	Q.	Can I start with your background, please. You were 2
1		Chairman of the Post Office from 1 October 2015 until	1		Sandaa until 2022: is that right?
1			1	٨	Service until 2022; is that right? That's also right.
2		September 2022 so about seven years; is that correct?	2		
3		Correct, yes.	3	Q.	So concurrently with your chairmanship of the Post
4	Q.	You took over after Alice Perkins was Chair of the Post	4		Office for a period of four years?
5	_	Office, albeit there was an interim chair?	5	_	Correct.
6	Α.	That's correct too.	6	Q.	Thank you. Can you tell us in general terms your view
7	Q.	At the same time, I think you were Chair of Samsonite.	7		of the company, the Post Office Limited, that you
8		I think you became Chair of Samsonite in 2014; is that	8		inherited when you took over as Chair in October 2015?
9	_	right?	9	Α.	Yeah. The Post Office has a turnover of just under
10	Α.	I was, in fact, Chair and Chief Executive of Samsonite	10		£1 billion, which makes it a sort of medium-sized
11		from 2008 until 2014 and then I stepped down as CEO and	11		company, but in fact it is an incredibly complex
12		remained as Non-Exec Chair.	12		business: it's complex because it operates a network of
13	Q.	So Chair of Samsonite from 2014 until the present day?	13		around 11,500 sites; it's complex because it has a very
14	Α.	Today, yeah.	14		wide range of products; it's complex also because it
15	Q.	Yes, and so concurrently with your term in the Post	15		deals with cash, and cash has a big security element to
16		Office for seven years?	16		it; it's complex because it's in the public sector.
17	A.	Correct.	17		So this is an organisation that is incredibly
18	Q.	You were concurrently Chair of the National Trust,	18		complicated and at the same time faced some very
19		I think, from 2014 to 2022; is that right?	19		significant commercial challenges. Sorry, I'm going on
20	A.	That's also correct.	20		a bit here but it's quite important that I can set the
21	Q.	So, again, concurrently with you being the Chair of Post	21		scene to the Post Office.
22		Office?	22		This is a business which had absorbed billions of
23	A.	Indeed.	23		pounds of taxpayers money and was still losing money.
24	Q.	From April 2018, I think you were Chair of Her	24		It was a business that faced significant challenges
25		Majesty's now His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal	25		because it had an exclusive arrangement with the Royal
		3			4
					(1) Pages 1

Mail, and the Royal Mail itself was suffering from increasing competition in the parcels market and a declining letters market.

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The Post Office had previously had a significant amount of business from the Government, so driving licences, benefits, that kind of thing. That had all moved online and so the Post Office was bereft a significant chunk of its contribution.

The Post Office had a range of products which it attempted to sell, with varying degrees of success, and it also had a very complex structure in terms of its overheads and management. So when I turned up, I felt and I believed that I could somehow help to improve an organisation that was in -- I don't think it's any exaggeration to say it was in deep crisis.

- 16 Q. Thank you. I think it's right that, before you took up 17 your position, you made enquiries as to the accounts or 18 figures of the Post Office before accepting the role; do 19 vou remember that?
- 20 A. I don't but I probably would have done.
- 21 Q. Let's look at some emails to jog your memory if we can, 22 please. UKGI00019884. If we look at the second page,
- 23 please, and the bottom half of the page. That's it.
- 24 This is an email not sent to or by you, but it's about
- 25 something that you are said to have said. It's from

note that Tim Parker expressed an interest in seeing some more up-to-date figures on Post Office before accepting the role, if he were to be offered it. We believe this is just thoroughness on his part -- he needs to be confident what he is getting into -- and we are following this up with Post Office and with the public appointments assessor so that we can answer his queries ..."

Then I'm not going to read the third paragraph.

- 10 A. Mm, mm.
- 11 What were your concerns about the finances of the Post 12 Office; what were you concerned about getting yourself
- 13 14 A. Well, as I think I've described to you, it was, I felt, 15 in a very difficult situation, compounded by the fact 16 that it relied, obviously, on agreeing financing, 17 usually on an annual basis, with the Government, and 18 needed a subsidy really to keep everything in order. So 19 I mean, I -- I thought it was a difficult situation and 20 it certainly wasn't going to be very easy but I felt 21 that, however things turned out, the Government would 22 obviously need to stand behind the Post Office and so 23 I would be trying to help the Executive Team tackle 24 things from the commercial end of the business with the 25
  - customer and, at the same time, try to manage the

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1 Laura Thompson, who was an assistant director within

2 ShEx, the Shareholder Executive?

- 3 A. Sure.
- 4 Q. It's to the, essentially, private office of the then
- Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, and you'll see it's 5
- 6 dated 17 June 2015 --
- 7 Mm-hm
- Q. -- so three or four months before you took the post? 8
- 9 A. Mm-hm.

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- 10 Q. If we just read it:
  - "We spoke -- Baroness Neville-Rolfe ..."
- 12 Who I think you'll remember was the relevant
- 13 minister at the time?
- 14 A. Mm-hm
- 15 Q. "... met the two appointable candidates earlier today.
- 16 We spoke to the Minister after her meeting. She
- 17 confirmed that she would be happy to appoint Tim Parker
- 18 to the role but did not feel Simon Burke was suitable --
- 19 while he had some very good experience, he did not give
- 20 her the confidence that he would be a strong chair, she
- 21 felt she would need more support from Government in
- 22 steering the business."
  - Then the second paragraph:
  - "I would be grateful if you could therefore seek the
  - Secretary of State's views on the appointment. Please

- Government and its willingness to finance the Post
- 2 Office.
- 3 Q. So is this is an oblique reference, then, to whether the
- 4 Government would continue properly to subsidise the Post
- 5 Office?
- 6 A. Yeah, I believe that post offices are very politically
- 7 sensitive and keeping a network is usually of
- 8 significant importance to ministers. So I always felt
- 9 that, you know --
- Q. If you just pause there. 10
- 11 (Pause for fire alarm test)
- 12 Mr Parker, you just said:
- 13 "I believe that post offices are very politically
- 14 sensitive and keeping a network is usually of
- 15 significant importance to ministers. So I always felt
- 16 that ..."
- 17 A. Yes, and I was going to go on and say so I always felt
- 18 that, although there would be some very difficult
- discussions, the Post Office would always be there in 19
- some form or another. The challenge was to try to, 20
- 21 essentially, make it more sustainable.
- 22 When you were essentially doing this pre-appointment due
- 23 diligence, were any concerns expressed to you about the
- 24 performance and capabilities of the then CEO?
- 25 **A**. I don't recall that being expressed to me at the time.

eeling that Paula is not the
a Post Office) to devotes its
ne Post Office] to develop its
able to establish good working
nson.
le to retain key staff."
nd side, "Performance as CEO and
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o deliver its 2010 strategic
[Government] properly
nts in the [Network
me, requiring difficult revisions
a worrying lack of knowledge
w plan.
agement has caused concern as she
vith personalities and approaches
has failed to build
ectors.
e as CEO has been questioned by
nd by members of the Board."
his view held by the department
ined the company?
oking back from here, this would
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before your actual appointment.
ies about this issue, namely the
and/or the Board's view of her
view of her?
a comment on that? Because
is something I hope might be
whether or not I received
on board a view, it is very
take over as chair, that you are
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egative, of the CEO. This,
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a CEO for over 30 years
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1	doubt and, you know, the starter for ten was actually
2	vou need to look at Paula.

- 3 Q. Okay, that was my next series of questions. When you 4 did become Chair of the business, was anything like this 5 raised again with you by Government or the Shareholder 6 Executive?
- A. Yeah, and, again, I'm sorry at this length of time 7 8 I simply cannot confirm anything.
- 9 Q. Can we move on, please, by looking at UKGI00005361. At 10 the moment, I'm just looking at a series of events that 11 happened before your appointment. If we can go to 12 page 4, please. This is a series of emails that again
- 13 doesn't involve you but there are, within the emails,
- 14 comments/views attributed to you and I want to ask you 15 about them?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. Below this page, there's a note about an upcoming 18 Panorama programme and there was a significant Panorama 19 programme about Post Office and the Horizon system, due 20 to air on 17 August 2015. If we go to the bottom of 21 page 3, please, Alwen Lyons to Richard Callard -- that 22 will be a name familiar to you -- within the Shareholder 23 Executive, exchange an email copied to Ms Vennells.
- 24 "Richard

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"Paula and I are [considering] how and when it is

1 A. I have no idea. I mean, at this stage, I'm not sure 2 what I would have known about Sparrow or indeed what 3 "pretty robust" actually means. I think probably what 4 it means is, you know, I obviously had been briefed up 5 to a point but I wasn't going to say anything negative 6 or positive at that stage because I was very new, and 7 maybe that was interpreted as "pretty robust".

- 8 Q. I was about to ask you: on what basis would you have 9 formed a view two months before you joined the business?
- 10 A. I don't think I would have done.
- 11 Q. Because you hadn't read or received any relevant 12 information, presumably?
- 13 A. I have no idea but, I mean, I'm not a person generally 14 who takes a pre-disposed view to anything until I, you 15 know, have had a chance to understand it properly.
- Q. If we go up the chain, please, to page 1 and the foot of 16 17 the page. Later on the 6th, again, Laura Thompson to 18 Alwen Lyons and Richard Callard:

"I've just come off the call between the Minister and Tim Parker. Nothing significant to report.

"On Sparrow, the Minister informed Tim that she would like him to look at things with fresh eyes when he arrived, which he was happy with. Tim confirmed he would be happy to meet MPs, etc, on the matter but once he was up to speed. The Minister mentioned that

best to brief Tim on Panorama.

"Would you let me know when Baroness Neville-Rolfe is planning to speak to him, as she was going to mention Sparrow. Notification re Panorama would come better after that, as we could refer her to her conversation and offer a more immediate brief if he would like one."

Then further up the page, please, the reply:

"BNR [Baroness Neville-Rolfe] is speaking to him [that's you] at [2.45 today]. I spoke to him ... He is pretty robust on Sparrow (ie if we have done nothing wrong then we stuck to our guns), but is happy to agree for [Baroness Neville-Rolfe] to say to Bridgen and co that the new chair will of course take a critical and independent look at the issue. He did also offer to sit with her in her meeting with Arbuthnot, which was arranged late yesterday for [the 17th] -- we should all mull that one."

So, essentially, consideration is being given as to how to brief you about an upcoming Panorama programme, which is very significant for the business. Do you recall receiving briefings before you formally began your role a couple of months beforehand?

- 23 A. Candidly not, no.
- 24 It's attributed to you that you are "pretty robust on 25 Sparrow"; was that your view?

1 Panorama was happening but it wasn't discussed."

2 Then there's another issue about the Audit and Risk 3 Committee, which I'm not going to ask you about.

4 Do you recollect the Minister, Baroness

5 Neville-Rolfe, asking you to look at things,

6 ie connected to Horizon? That's the shorthand for

7 Sparrow that the Post Office used.

8 A. I don't recall. I mean, I presume this is a fair 9 reflection of what I might have discussed. I mean,

10 I think she would have just notified me it was an issue.

- Q. Do you have a recollection of going into the job with 11 12 a request from the Government to have a fresh look at
- 13 Horizon?
- 14 A. I don't recall whether I, as it were, went into the job 15 but I do know that the letter turned up pretty soon 16 after I arrived.
- 17 Q. So that's the thing that sticks in your memory, the 18 letter from Baroness Neville-Rolfe?
- 19 A. I got a letter and it was clear, you know, "Have a look 20 into these issues". Exactly.
- 21 Q. Okay, we'll come to that in a moment. Can you recall 22 anything as to what the concern was in Government about
- 23 Horizon? 24 Not specifically.
- 25 Q. Can we move forwards, please, to POL00319054 and if we 16

1		go to page 2, please, and scroll down. This looks like	1		system is efficient and robust.
2		the genesis of a briefing note for you about Horizon	2		"It deals with six million transactions every day
3		again, it's called Sparrow in readiness for your	3		and has been used by almost 500,000 people since it was
4		joining.	4		introduced: the vast majority doing so without
5	A.	Mm.	5		difficulty.
6	Q.	We're going to track through what you were told, and if	6		"The Post Office has nonetheless taken its
7		we just read some parts to it, this is Mark Davies; do	7		responsibilities to its people very seriously. It is
8		you remember him?	8		very sorry that this small group of people feel they
9	A.	l do.	9		have been treated unfairly and has gone to enormous
10	Q.	The Corporate and Communications Affairs Director	10		lengths to get to the bottom of their cases.
11	A.	Mm.	11		"It held a review by independent forensic
12	Q.	in the Post Office:	12		accountants, set up a Mediation Scheme overseen by
13		"See below a first draft of a note for Tim.	13		independent mediators and reign investigated every
14		"For the last three years [this is the text of the	14		complaint in huge detail.
15		note] the Post Office has been investigating the cases	15		"We have also asked our external lawyers to review
16		of a small number of postmasters"	16		all the cases involving prosecutions.
17		Then we see somebody has added "I WOULD ADD HOW	17		"Throughout all this no evidence has emerged to
18		MANY":	18		support the very serious allegations being made, which
19		" who have suggested that the Horizon system	19		in some cases have stretched to claims that the Post
20		used in branches might be faulty.	20		Office has abused the prosecution process."
21		"They have suggested it may have caused losses in	21		Over the page:
22		branch which in some cases led to them being prosecuted	22		"We do take forward prosecutions where it is right
23		[again added] (AGAIN MIGHT BE WORTH SAYING HOW MANY).	23		to do so. Post offices are dealing with public money.
24		"No evidence has emerged to support these claims:	24		We would be heavily and rightly criticised if we did not
25		indeed thorough investigation has underlined that the 17	25		deal with the very small number of cases where false 18
1		accounting and theft takes place.	1		as the incoming chair?
2		"But we only prosecute where there is clear evidence	2	A.	I think it's obviously a note that is designed to tell
3		of wrongdoing and we can meet the bar set for bringing	3		a story. And what would I say? I mean, it's a briefing
4		prosecutions: the evidential and public interest tests.	4		note obviously told from the perspective of the people
5		We do not prosecute people for making mistakes. We	5		providing the briefing, which is what usually happens
6		prosecute where people dishonestly cover up the loss of	6		with briefing notes, I have to say.
7		money."	7	Q.	If we just go forward to page 1, please. Just look
8		Then keep scrolling, and the fourth paragraph from	8		briefly at some of the drafting process, foot of the
9		the bottom there:	9		page.
10		"The campaign has secured the support of some MPs	10		Alwen Lyons to Mark Davies and General Counsel, Jane
11		with whom the Post Office has engaged at length which	11		MacLeod:
12		has in turn led to Parliamentary and media activity.	12		"I think this is very clear."
13		"We have been robust in rejecting the serious	13		She has added some points in capitals:
14		allegations made in Parliament and media, particularly	14		"I think this note should come from Jane, or Paula
15		in recent months. The allegations have suggested	15		if she wishes, and be sent via me to start getting him
16		wrongdoing by senior management, bullying, deliberate	16		used [that's you] to that way of communicating and to
17		cover-up and abuse of prosecutor powers.	17		make it as 'normal' as Sparrow can ever be!!"
10		"A Panorama programme is due to be aired on	18		Then scroll up the page:

"A Panorama programme is due to be aired on

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17 August. We have challenged the programme at length but expect it will go ahead. We have provided detail on every allegation put to us. We are not appearing on the programme for interview because the programme is focusing on individual cases and has not provided evidence to support its allegations."

Is this the kind of note you would expect to receive 19

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comments.

"... I would now like ... your comments and whoever is standing in for Rod?

"We need to send a note to the new chairman and

"Clearly this is about the most important note we will send on this issue in the weeks ahead so [we] want

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I have drafted a first go ... and asked ... for

1 it to be spot on! 1 2 2 "Your input very welcome." CCRC." 3 3 When you were joining, was the Horizon issue, the 4 4 Sparrow issue, the most important issue for you? 5 A. I've tried to set the background to the Post Office and 5 6 I would say I can't prioritise things exactly. I would 6 7 say that this is one of, actually, a number of very 7 8 significant and pressing issues. 8 9 Q. If we go forwards, please, to POL00231055, and if we 9 10 just blow that up a little bit, this is a later 10 11 iteration of the note --11 12 A. 12 Alwen Lyons: Mm. 13 Q. -- after an external lawyer, Andrew Parsons, from Womble 13 14 Bond Dickinson -- as I think they were by then -- with 14 15 his comments on it. He makes quite limited comments on 15 information. 16 the note, we can see one on the right-hand side there. 16 17 If we go over to page 2, please -- thank you -- there's 17 Executive --18 some discussion about destruction of material. The note 18 A. Mm. 19 said: 19 20 "We are not destroying any information that we, and 20 21 external lawyers, hold on these cases, as has been 21 A. Mm. 22 alleged." 22 Q. 23 Then he commented: 23 24 24 "[The Post Office] has historically destroyed 25 [information] where it went beyond normal retention 25 1 Then you see the figures have been inserted, 136: 1 2 "... that faults in the Horizon computer system were 2 3 the cause of losses in their branch. Of these 136 3 4 people, 43 have criminal convictions ... 4 5 "However, thorough investigation has not produced 5 6 any evidence to support the claims: indeed it has 6 7 7 underlined that the system is efficient and robust. In 8 the cases involving criminal convictions, nothing has 8 9 medicine to suggest that any are unsafe." 9 10 10 Then it continues as per the previous draft. 11 Again, how would you view a document like this? You 11 12 described it earlier as a story --12 13 Α. 13 14 Q. -- which might, to my ears, sound as if you're being 14 15 wary as to its authorship and it's setting out 15 16 a narrative, rather than be completely objective. Is 16 potentially, you know, any other sort of employment 17 that what you were intending by the word "story"? 17 related issue. A. Not especially. But here's my view, with hindsight, 18 18 19 about one of the main issues with the whole thing, is 19 20 that, as I sort of looked at this, it seemed to me that 20

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it was an issue, but of course you ask yourself the

question: well, on how big a scale is this issue? And

of course, what we have here is the Horizon system deals

with 6 million transactions used by 500,000 people. So

it sounds as if you've got a system doing millions of

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periods which means some info is not available for the Now, of course, you wouldn't see all this background, would you? You wouldn't see the process by which the note was created or, indeed, who had contributed to it, right? Yes, I mean, absolutely. Q. You just get the final product? A. I get the final product. Exactly. Q. Let's look at that, then. POL00174396. 11 August 2015, so nearly two months before you joined the company, from "Please find attached a note from Paula, in advance of the Panorama programme", and then some other So, ultimately, it's a note from the Chief -- being sent to you by Alwen Lyons, the Company If we look at the note itself, POL00174397 -- thank you: "For the last three years the Post Office has been investigating claims made by a small number of largely former postmasters ..." 22 transactions and a few people who are complaining, and that was the sort of perspective that you're drawn to. What -- and I say this in the spirit of, you know, this thing ever happens again -- is had we -- had the thing been put in the context of not just the people who are complaining but the totality of the people who had been prosecuted over, you know, whatever it was, 15 years, that would have put a very different complexion on the note. So if the note had read, you know, that we have 43 criminal convictions related to

these losses but, actually, over the last however many years, so many people have been convicted, that would have told a slightly different story. And I also think that there could have been more to this potentially around how many people had been affected through

So it's -- we've looked at the Horizon problem from the point of view of, well, what was -- you know, did the computer have bugs or whatever? But, actually, another way of looking at it might have been to say: we've got an organisation, over 15 years 900 people have been convicted, or whatever, how does that look? Does that look statistically sensible? We've had, you know, so many people who have been terminated, or whatever,

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1	how does that look, proportionately? So I looked at
2	this, to be honest, and not only did we have millions of
3	transactions but I happened to know over the last you
4	know, there were tens of thousands of postmasters and
5	assistants. So it looked vaguely credible but there was
6	a sort of a problem that affected, relatively speaking,
7	quite a small number of people.

- 8 Q. The reflections that you've just given there, are they 9 things that have occurred to you now in the light of the 10 events which have happened, rather than things that occurred to you at the time? 11
- 12 Well, I didn't have that information at the time and, Α. 13 actually, it was quite late in the day, and I think 14 quite a lot of people at the Post Office were quite 15 surprised by how many people had been prosecuted. And 16 if you look at the sort of list of when the prosecutions 17 occurred, you go back to, I think -- I looked at this 18 list, and it sort of, from -- I think it was '98 or '99, 19 the numbers of people being prosecuted suddenly went up, 20 so it went up from 20 to 50 and, effectively, what 21 you're looking at is a record, from about 2000, I think, 22 roughly speaking, until 2012 or '13, something like 23 that, where roughly speaking 50 people are prosecuted 24 every year.

So my point is, obviously, that's something that

1 sure I would have adduced that it was him who raised it, 2 no.

- 3 Q. I mean, you were told in the covering email, "This is 4 a note from Paula"?
- 5 A. I think so, yeah -- yeah.

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- 6 Would it have surprised you if had been revealed that 7 the note had been drafted by the communications man?
- 8 A. That's an interesting question to which -- I mean, it's 9 very hard for me to say now how I would have felt 10 because, when you're new in an organisation, you're 11 never quite sure, you know, who's got a handle on what. 12 So I think, had I had a list of all the executives and, 13 you know, Mark Davies was identified as the comms man, 14 I might have wondered a bit.
- 15 Q. As it was, you were told this was Paula Vennells' note 16 in the covering email, as we saw. Can we turn, please, 17 Mr Parker to the letter you mentioned earlier from 18 Baroness Neville-Rolfe. POL00102551. This about three 19 weeks before you joined, 10 September 2015 and I'm going 20 to read it all:

"I am writing to you ahead of your taking up the role of Post Office Chairman to confirm our conversation last month regarding the Post Office Horizon system."

I suspect that's a reference back to that mention we saw in that email exchange.

might have raised some question marks. Now, you have to recognise, as well, that the Post Office, you know, it's not selling cans of Coke. It's actually an organisation that deals in cash and so you have to be aware of the fact that, obviously, when people are dealing with cash, there are issues with security and there are temptations to people, and so on and so forth.

Notwithstanding that, I think, had that picture been evident, it might have sort of made people, certainly would have made me, look at this in a slightly different context.

- 12 Q. Would other things that may have made you look at this 13 in a different context include, rather than focusing on 14 the number of subpostmasters that were presently 15 alleging faults being only 136, to look back at the 16 number of subpostmasters over the relevant period that 17 had alleged faults?
- 18 A. I think that's the point I'm trying to make. It was 19 quite difficult to frame the scale of the problem.
- 20 Q. Or mention of the operation of a series of helplines 21 which recorded tens of thousands of complaints of fault?
- 22 That wasn't dealt with, clearly, in this context.
- 23 Q. Did you know at the time that this note had been drafted 24 by the Post Office's communications man, Mark Davies?
- 25 **A**. If it didn't have Mark Davies' name on it, then I'm not

A. Mm.

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Q. "The issues surrounding the Horizon IT System have not been resolved. Indeed, some of the MPs concerned have written to me again following the Panorama programme pressing the case for an independent investigation.

"The Government takes seriously the concerns raised by individuals and MPs regarding the Post Office Horizon system and the suggestions that there may have been miscarriages of justice as a result of issues with Horizon. The Government also recognises the commitment that Post Office have demonstrated to resolving those issues, including through creating a mediation scheme and appointing independent investigators to scrutinise the system.

"As you will be aware, there have been some three years of scrutiny of Horizon and the Criminal Cases Review Commission is considering a number of cases which have been brought to it by individuals, and the Government cannot intervene in that independent process.

"As the sole shareholder of Post Office, the Government wants to make sure that the Post Office Network is successful and sustainable across the country. We recognise that the Post Office is a commercial business and we allow it to operate as such, but of course, we expect it to behave fairly and

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responsibly in doing so. I am therefore requesting that, on assuming your role as Chair, you give this matter your earliest attention and, if you determine that any further action is necessary, will take steps to ensure that happens.

"I look forward to hearing your conclusions and to working with you to secure the future of the Post Office

Then Paula Vennells is copied in.

So this letter, if we go back to page 1, draws to your attention that there were unresolved issues regarding Horizon --

13 A. It does.

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- 14 Q. -- and that those unresolved issues include potential 15 miscarriages of justice?
- 16 Α. Indeed.
- 17 Q. This must be a slightly unusual letter to receive when 18 taking up a new job?
- 19 A. It's very unusual. I mean, I'm not a lawyer, obviously,
- 20 and I think, again, in the spirit of trying to be
- 21 helpful to the Inquiry, I've had sort of legal issues to
- 22 deal with but nothing, you know, on this sort of scale
- 23 that involves activities ultimately that have affected,
- 24 you know, people, contracts, going to jail and all of
- 25 that. I mean, yeah, it's just not usual in the

- 1 and perhaps, you know, in a computer system, means 2
- different things to different people and I think you
- 3 probably had quite a few people pass through here. And
- 4 I think "systemic" became shorthand -- and I was
- 5 probably, you know, affected by this as much as anybody
- 6 to say, yeah, the system worked fine, and how do you --
- 7 what do you mean? It means that there are a few bugs,
- 8 they're not very frequent, they're discovered, and, you
- 9 know, so basically you've got something that's okay.
- 10 That sort of thing.
- 11 Q. So you've got no recollection particularly now, as to
- 12 where you secured the belief from that Post Office had
- 13 a general assumption that there were no systemic issues
- 14 with Horizon and it was robust. Presumably, that would
- 15 include, however, the briefing note that Mark Davies had
- 16 drafted?
- 17 A. Yeah. I mean --
- Q. That must have --18
- A. I honestly can't -- you know, it's just hard for me to 19
- 20 reflect accurately on a generalised picture that I would
- 21 have had at the time. I have probably gone as far as
- 22 I'm able
- 23 **Q.** You were presented with something of two pictures, then,
- 24 would you agree: one a general somebody's within the
- Post Office that there were no systemic issues --25

1 slightest.

2 Your witness statement -- I'm not going to turn it up, 3 I'm just going to read from it -- says at paragraph 28:

4 "When I was appointed as Chair I was aware that 5 concerns had been raised about Horizon, including those

6 relating to Fujitsu. I do not believe that I had

7 detailed knowledge of the specific nature of the

8 complaints at the time and I do not believe I'd formed

9 any views on how to handle the Sparrow issues at the

10 time. However, as I describe below, Jonathan Swift QC 11 and Christopher Knight were being instructed in relation

12 to the Swift Review. My recollection is that there was

13 a general assumption within the Post Office that there

14 were no systemic issues with Horizon, and that it was

15 robust, and this is consistent with the statements made

16 publicly by Post Office at the time"?

17 A. Mm.

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- 18 Q. So, "My recollection is that there was a general
- 19 assumption within the Post Office that there were no
- 20 systemic issues with Horizon"; where did you get that
- 21 belief from?
- 22 A. I can't tell you. I'm looking back, you know, nine
  - years, trying to sort of assess how I felt at the time
- 24 and I think, of course, it comes back to this question
- 25 of: what do you mean by systemic? You know, systemic

- A. Mm.
- 2 Q. -- and the system was robust; and the Government saying
  - the issues around the Horizon IT System have not been
- 4 resolved, we, the Government, take seriously the
- 5 concerns that are being raised, and those concerns
- 6 include potential miscarriages of justice?
- 7 A. I think that's a fair description, yes.
- 8 **Q.** When you joined the company, were there any specific
- 9 discussions that you can now recall -- this is in
- 10 October time -- about Horizon issues, whether as part of
- 11 an induction or otherwise?
- 12 A. Lcan't.
- 13 **Q.** Were you provided with the report or reports by Second
- 14 Sight, either an interim report of July 2013 or two
- 15 final reports in 2014/15?
- 16 A. I can't.
- 17 Q. Were any concerns raised with you upon joining, or
- 18 immediately thereafter, about the use by the Post Office
- 19 of a man called Gareth Jenkins, a Fujitsu employee, as
- 20 a witness in criminal prosecutions?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 **Q.** When did you first learn about the issues that there
- 23 were -- I'm putting it broadly -- with the use of
- 24 Mr Jenkins as a prosecution witness?
- 25 A. Oh, I mean, some -- I mean, way past this sort of

1	timescale.	I mean,	I'm talking	- yeah, I	mean, I	can't

- 2 tell you exactly when but this -- my sort of awareness
- 3 of the definitive situation, I think, where -- of
- 4 Jenkins and evidence and all of that, that was sometime
- 5
- 6 Q. In the context of the Group Litigation, or even later
- 7 than that as part of the criminal appeals to the Court
- 8
- 9 A. I can't tell you, to be honest.
- 10 Q. What did you think upon receiving this letter?
- A. Time to get moving, which I did. 11
- Q. What did you need to move to do? 12
- 13 A. To find somebody -- because I was certainly not equipped
- personally to do this -- but to find somebody to carry 14
- 15 out what I was asked to do.
- 16 Q. Was it always your intention from the start that another
- 17 person would conduct some form of exercise and that
- 18 person would not be you?
- 19 A. Yes. I think so. I think so because there were a lot of
- 20 issues here that I wasn't really familiar with. So
- 21 I'm -- again, I'm not a legal person, I'm not an IT
- 22 person and I'm not somebody who has got a lot of
- 23 experience dealing with this sort of, if you like,
- 24 non-commercial area. So my first instinct, yes, was,
- 25 you know, what sort of person could do this job?
- 1 "... please see below my starter for ten speaking notes 2 for your meeting with Tim Parker tomorrow ... 3
  - "Draft speaking notes ...

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- "[Post Office] can't influence or predetermine the outcome of [Tim Parker's] 'review' BUT
- "It's reasonable to assume that the findings will be challenged unless they deliver what [James Arbuthnot] wants (quashing of convictions and payments of compensation -- see [James Arbuthnot's] attributed comments about the CCRC review of [Josephine] Hamilton's case)
- "However, if the purpose of the review is to instil confidence in BIS ... with the actions taken, it will be creditable if it is:
- "a. undertaken independently from the existing [Post Office] team;
  - "b. logical in its approach; AND
  - "c. delivered against stated objective/s.
- "This will help defend any criticism of the work undertaken (eg that it's 'just another whitewash'), and ideally curtail further involvement."
- Just stopping there, did you understand that there were two alternatives to what the review might seek to achieve; (1) to actually deliver what James Arbuthnot wanted; or (2) instilling confidence in the Department,

- Q. Can we turn, please, to POL00065606 and if we scroll to 1
- 2 the email at the foot of the page, again, an exchange
- 3 not involving you, from Rodric Williams; do you remember
- 4 him?
- 5 A. I remember the name, yes.
- 6 Q. A solicitor in Corporate Services --
- 7
- Q. -- or specialising in Corporate Services within Post 8
- 9 Office Legal. To Jane MacLeod, do you remember her?
- 10 A. I certainly remember --
- 11 That's General Counsel?
- A. I certainly remember Jane MacLeod, yes. 12
- 13 Q. Mark Underwood, do you remember him?
- 14 A. The name rings a bell but not a big one.
- 15 Q. And Patrick Bourke?
- 16 I remember Patrick.
- 17 Q. Performing what function, do you remember?
- A. He was in Jane's team. I don't recall specifically what 18 his role was.
- 19
- 20 Q. In any event, this is a fortnight or so -- yes, it's
- 21 exactly a fortnight -- after that letter of
- 22 10 September, and it concerns speaking notes for a Jane
- 23 MacLeod and Tim Parker meeting on the 25th, so the next
- 24 day. Can you see that?
- 25 **A**. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

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- 1 principally Baroness Neville-Rolfe?
- 2 A. Mm, I think we're talking about -- I mean, it's just my
  - take, looking at this, two different things, here.
- 4 I mean, if you read (2), it says:
  - "It's reasonable to assume that the findings will be challenged unless they deliver what JA wants ..."
  - So that's an observation about findings, isn't it,
- 8 and, you know, finding an assumption that the review
- would lead to those findings, whereas (3) is about the 9
- 10 purpose of the review. And it seems to me that it's,
- 11 you know, it -- one is in danger of sort of confusing
- 12 two things: one is what the review comes to; and the
- 13 other is what kind of review. Now, if you hadn't seen
- 14 paragraph 2, you might say, well, (3) seems, actually,
- 15 it's pretty reasonable.
- 16 Q. Was the review to find out the facts, or was its purpose
- 17 to instil confidence in the Department?
- 18 So, again, if you read (3), it says:
  - "However, if the purpose of the review is to instil in BIS (principally ...) with the actions taken ..."
- 21 So that's slightly different from just general
- 22 confidence. I would see that as -- you know, I could
- 23 read that genuine desire to ensure that whatever actions
- 24 were taken, they looked to be on the basis of the
- 25 a proper independent review.

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- **Q.** What was your purpose in commissioning the review?
- 2 A. So, I had a letter that asked me to look into these
- 3 various issues and my purpose, ultimately, was to find
- 4 somebody I felt qualified to do that and to agree with
- 5 them terms of reference which received to broadly tackle
- 6 the challenge laid down in the letter.
- Q. If we read on: 7

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- 8 "5. Defining the review's scope will be key:
  - "a. What has [Tim Parker] been asked to do?"
- 10 Then over the page:

"If it's unclear, [Tim Parker] should now set out in writing his understanding of the task (ie rewrite the

13 exam question).

"b. What will Tim Parker actually do?

"[Tim Parker] should state what he wants to achieve, ideally by reference to a clear question, eg 'Has Post Office Limited responded to allegations about the integrity of Post Office's Horizon system and related business processes in a manner appropriate for a business which desires to maintain a reputation for high standards ..."

Then there's a comment about a paraphrase of 3.4(e) of the letter of appointment being "clunky":

"[Tim Parker] should be able to demonstrate that he has addressed his stated aim by reference to a logical

- 1 Q. Did you ever think that you would perform any role or 2 were you always of the view this was going to be
- 3 subcontracted out to some other person?
- 4 A. Yes, I felt that the task at hand, carried out by
- 5 somebody independent, because although potentially
- 6 I could be independent, what was quite important here
- 7 was to have not only somebody who was independent but
  - might have a few of the skills around the subject matter
- 9 that I lacked.
- 10 Q. When you were engaging in discussions with, for example,
- Jane MacLeod and Rodric Williams, did you realise that 11
- 12 they may themselves be implicated in the matter to be
- 13 investigated?
- 14 A. So I think that's a fair enough observation but here are
- 15 two things -- and I suppose quite a lot of this Inquiry
- 16 is dealing with this kind of issue, which is, if you are
- 17 board member, a chair or chief executive, to what extent
- 18 are you entitled to assume that your advice is coming
- 19 from people who are, first of all, qualified and,
- 20 secondly, competent? And my take, perhaps naively,
- 21 because, you know, the one thing that I found in most
- 22 businesses is that, although people have got different
- 23 points of view, they're generally trustworthy, is that
- 24 I was being given advice by people who were qualified on
- 25 that basis. And so was my -- you know, was I kind of

method of investigation

2 "both elements should be matters for Tim Parker in 3 his sole discretion as Chairman, eg they are NOT for 4

negotiation with [Post Office, Baroness Neville-Rolfe or the Department, et cetera]."

6 We can read (c).

- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. "6. Given the volume of material, [Tim Parker] is 9 likely to need 'independent professional assistance':

10 "He's entitled to this under [his] letter of

- 11 appointment ...
- "... this could be: 12
- 13 "a solicitor ...
- 14 "a barrister ...
- 15 "a management consultant ...
- 16 "a former civil servant ..."

17 Then the pros and cons are set out for each of them.

18 This plan, it seems, was to have you carrying out

19 the review but assisted by some professional or

20 professionals; do you agree?

21 A. I'm not sure I'd draw that conclusion, actually. If we

22 go -- I mean, I'm not sure even if this piece of paper

23 makes it very clear how, as it were, the workload would

24 be divided between whoever was going to do the

25 assisting, as it were, and myself.

- 1 a little -- did I feel that this advice would somehow be
- 2 potentially tainted? I don't think I did feel that at
- 3 the time, if I'm honest.
- 4 Q. Did the thought occur to you or is that a reflection
  - now, after the event?
- 6 **A.** It's a reflection after the event. I think, obviously,
- 7 after what has happened, it's likely to throw into doubt
- 8 quite a lot of the advice that was given and taken in
- 9 good faith. I mean, if you go back -- am I allowed to
- 10 do this?

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- 11 Q. Yes, you can do whatever you want.
- 12 A. Well, if you go back to the beginning of this note,
- 13 I just want to give you an illustration of that.
- 14 Q. Yes, go back to page 1, please --
- 15 A. So --
- 16 Q. -- and scroll down.
- 17 A. To move up -- scroll up a little bit -- a little bit
- 18 further. I'm not seeing what I wanted to show -- I'm
- sorry, I beg your pardon. Just keep scrolling up. 19
- 20 Q. When Mr Parker says scroll up, I think he means scroll 21 down.
- 22 A. I'm sorry. Yeah. So it's under the "What has TP been
- 23 asked to do?", I think. Number 5, if we move on to
- 24 that. Okay. So, you know, I mean, without the benefit
- 25 of hindsight and with no knowledge of this, you could

read (b) as actually, you know, a pretty fair-minded kind of view on what needs to be done. You should, you know, just read it. It should state what he wants to achieve, ideally by reference to a clear question, and so on, and so on, and so on.

And another factor, I suppose, in all of this, perhaps, you know, wrongly, was that Jane MacLeod joined the Post Office, I think, in 2015. So, you know, I'm not sure -- I sort of felt she was a kind of, you know, she was a fairly new arrival, and she seemed competent, to me. Yeah.

- 12 **Q**. Are you saying that that first bullet point, "TP should 13 state what he wants to achieve, eg ..." --
- 14 **A**.

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- Q. -- and then the exam question is rewritten, you could 15 16 read that in a benevolent way now to be an appropriate 17 question to ask and to answer, or you could read it as 18 a reframing of the issue, so as not to look at the 19 substance of the issues but, instead, to look at the 20 response of the Post Office to the issues? They're very 21 different things, aren't they?
- 22 A. No, I understand your point and, with hindsight of 23 course, you might say, well, the problem with Swift was 24 that it was really just about the complaints. 25 I understand that. But, at the time, it seemed to me,

I should say this is 9 October 2015:

"I am grateful to Jane [Jane MacLeod's] for the following brief summary ...

"Sparrow

"The Minister is under pressure to speak to various parties including representatives Second Sight (forensic accountants) and Sir Anthony Hooper (former Chairman of the Working Group). We believe that as part of your investigation you should meet with each of these parties, and we have therefore recommended to the Minister that she should not meet with them until (at least) the conclusion of your enquiry (I have a call with her this morning and will recommend that she should await the conclusion of your enquiry before deciding whether to meet with them).

"There are number of reasons why we are reluctant for the Minister to speak to these parties (particularly Second Sight) at this point:

"By speaking to these parties, the Minister undermines the rationale for your own independent investigation. Second Sight are active on social media and we believe they would make public the fact of any such meeting. This will only encourage expectation of some form of government intervention. We now have the majority of outstanding (non-criminal) cases scheduled

1 you know, a reasonable place to go.

2 Q. Is that distinction, the one that was just drawn, that 3 what was required by the Minister's letter was to look 4 at the substance of whether the system had integrity and 5 whether the prosecutions made on the basis of Horizon 6 data were safe, is a very different question to 7 examining the Post Office's response in the past to 8 allegations?

9 A. So I think -- I mean, again, with hindsight, you might 10 say, well, the Minister's letter was all about the 11 system and we should have just done an IT check and, you 12 know, a contract check and everything would have been 13 fine, but, actually, the way the Minister's letter read,

14 and the way I interpreted it, and felt we were 15 interpreting it appropriately, was to look into the 16 complaints and the issues raised by the complaints and, 17 essentially, you know, that's where Swift went.

18 Q. Can we move forwards a little bit to the same part of 19 the narrative, but post-appointment, to POL00117516. 20 Bottom half of the page, please, an email to you 21 directly from Paula Vennells, sent by her Executive 22 Assistant:

"Dear Tim

"While you have been away, two matters have arisen affecting Post Office which you should be aware of."

for mediation. Any expectation of government intervention is likely to cause Applicants to withdraw from the Mediation Scheme. I will send you an update ..."

Then the email turns to another topic, like a mobile, which is something, over the page, about an entirely different issue.

8 A.

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Q. So Paula Vennells was seeking to delay the Minister from 9 10 meeting with Second Sight and Sir Anthony until after 11 your enquiry had concluded; did you have a view as to 12 this?

13 A. If I did, I can't recall it now.

14 Q. Did you see the two issues as linked, Second Sight and 15 Sir Anthony, seeing Baroness Neville-Rolfe and the 16 conduct of your independent investigation?

A. Knowing me, probably better than anyone, I suppose 17 18 I would have at the time said to myself, "Look, this is 19 all part of a sort of, you know, the public sector type 20 how do you handle the Minister with this and that?" And 21 I would have said, "Well, if that's a concern and these 22 people have been here for some time and it's to do with

23 these people meeting the Minister, that's the Chief 24 Executive having a view". And it's probably something

25 that I would have said "I'm not" -- you know, I'm going

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1		to focus on what I'm doing and this isn't something I am
2		going to make a particularly, you know, big fuss about.
3	Q.	Thank you. That can come down.

Q. Thank you. That can come down.

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Ultimately, the person that you asked to conduct the review was Jonathan Swift QC, assisted by Christopher Knight, another barrister. Why was a decision taken to make this a lawyer-led review rather than something more

- 9 A. I suppose the answer to that is partly around the 10 framing of the review, back to your previous point about responding to the complaints, and partly, I think, 11 12 because the issues were not exclusively technical and so 13 the -- what was a QC at the time ended up looking at
- 15 **Q.** Were the issues to be considered only legal issues?
- 16 A. Well, I think it's fair to say that, out of the Swift

four strands to the problem, as it were.

- 17 Review, came some recommendations that were not 18 exclusively legal.
- 19 Q. Looking at it at the beginning, rather than at the end, 20 did you think, when you were deciding, "We're going to
- 21 get a lawyer to undertake this task" -- never mind the 22 personality, in fact, involved -- that the issues
- 23 required to be examined were exclusively or
- 24 predominantly legal ones?
- 25 A. I don't think I could comment on whether I had

- 1 help, organise a good sort of report, yeah.
- 2 Q. So it was more that they were independent and that the
- 3 faculties in order properly to investigate the issues, 4 rather than answer a series of legal questions?
- 5 A. I think that's a fair reflection.
- 6 Q. Can we look, please, at the instructions to counsel.
- 7 POL00114270, page 3, please. These are the instructions
- 8 to counsel, in fact, initially to advise in consultation
- 9 on 8 October. So you'd done this quite swiftly,
- 10 ie within a week or so of joining the company?
- A. I got on with the job pretty fast, yeah. 11
- Q. If we just see the authors of the instructions, by going 12
- to page 15, foot of the page. We'll see that they are 13
- 14 co-authored by Jane MacLeod and Rodric Williams and,
- 15 again, I take it that you wouldn't have seen any issue
- 16 with lawyers who were themselves directly involved in
- 17 the underlying events being the ones to instruct
- 18 Mr Swift?
- 19 A. I've answered that question kind of before. I don't 20 think I'd have a different view.
- 21 Q. In your witness statement -- I'm just going to read it, 22 rather than getting it up on the screen -- paragraph 40,
- 23 vou sav:

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"It seemed to me that Post Office's General Counsel understood the complexities of the task when identifying

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1 a specific view but --

- 2 Q. Mr Parker, I'm just trying to pick away a little bit at 3 why a lawyer was chosen.
- 4 A. Okay.
- 5 Q. It could be because there were legal issues to be 6 addressed --
- 7 A. So I --
- Q. -- hold on -- or it could be, "I want somebody with 8 9
- a first class mind who is independent", and it doesn't 10 matter whether or not the issues to be examined are
- 11 legal?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. Can you help us?
- 14 A. Yeah, I'll try. I think I had some CVs and, from what
- 15 I can recall, Jonathan Swift had a very broad range of
- 16 experience and seemed to be a person who was used to
- 17 dealing with a number of different settings and
- 18 I believe, from memory too, that Christopher Knight had
- 19 quite a lot of experience in the sort of -- you know,
- 20 I wouldn't say IT world but he had done work in that
- 21 sort of area
- 22 So I wouldn't say the QC was in the frame just 23 because he was a lawyer. I would say it was a mixture 24 of things. A lawyer is someone who was used to
- 25 investigating and somebody who could, I think, with some

- 1 suitable candidates. Jonathan Swift QC was a senior
- 2 barrister, he had worked as part of the Treasury Counsel 3 team prosecuting complex cases."
  - Did you think he was a criminal barrister?
- 5 A. I can't recall.

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- 6 Q. Presumably, if it's in your witness statement, that is 7 your current memory: that he was a member of the
- 8 Treasury Counsel team that prosecuted cases?
  - A. I presume so, yes.
- 10 Q. If we go back, please, to page 3, please. There's an introduction. We'll see a reference in paragraph 2 11
- 12 to the letter from Baroness Neville-Rolfe asking you to:
- 13 "... determine whether 'any further action is 14 necessary' ... to respond to the concerns about Horizon 15 raised by individuals and MPs. These concerns include 16 that [Post Office's] reliance on Horizon has resulted in
- 17 miscarriages of justice."
  - Then scrolling down:
- 19 "With the assistance of [Post Office's] General 20 Counsel, Jane MacLeod, the Chairman considers this to be 21 a request ..."
  - This was to form the basis of the review, you'll see the words "review" in brackets afterwards:
    - "To review the Post Office's handling of the claimants made by subpostmasters regarding the alleged

flaws in its Horizon electronic point of sale and branch accounting systems, and determine whether the processes designed and implemented by Post Office to understand, investigate and resolve these complaints ... were reasonable and appropriate."

Looking at that now, can you see a shift from the

open question in the letter of 10 September from Baroness Neville-Rolfe to a question that focuses instead on the reasonableness of past processes?

A. I think, with hindsight, it does look that way. At the time -- and again, I'm sorry to keep reminding you, but there are a lot of things going on at the Post Office, and this response to this request at the time seemed to

15 Q. Did you review the instructions at the time?

me to be not unreasonable.

16 A. In what sense? Did I think -- did I -- I mean

17 I looked --

18 Q. Did you look at the document we're now looking at?

**A.** Oh, I see. Was I aware what the review was about? Yes.

20 Yeah. And was I aware that these were the terms of

21 reference and this was the question that was going to be

22 addressed? Yes.

Q. Is it right that you considered the request in the
 Baroness Neville-Rolfe letter of 10 September to mean
 what is in inverted commas and italics?

date. The Chairman therefore requires the assistance of Leading Counsel to provide him with advice on:

"1. The scope of the review and how this is framed;

"2. The process by which the review should be conducted (including what materials should be reviewed and who should be interviewed); and

"3. The nature of his final report to the Minister."

Again, looking at that paragraph there, these seem to be instructions to a barrister to ask him to advise you on scope of the review, how the review should be conducted and what the nature of the report finally to the Minister should be?

**A.** Mm.

15 Q. You're not actually asking him to conduct the review?

16 A. Sorry, what's -- I'm being a bit dense here but --

17 Q. Yes. You could have a set of instructions which say,

18 "Dear Mr Swift, we would like you to carry out

19 an independent review"?

**A.** Mm.

Q. Or you could have a set of instructions which say, "Can you provide assistance on the scope of a review and how this is framed, the process by which the review is undertaken, and the scope of his [ie your] final report"?

A. So, you know, with hindsight, one is apt to see that there are forces at play here trying to subtly shift the emphasis on things and, at the time, at the beginning of this review, it seemed to me that -- and, again, I'm probably not a person who is greatly experienced in setting up reviews -- that a review with a sort of quite a good general brief was capable of going after quite a lot of different areas.

If you look at it, you know, out of that particular group of references, you could see that a good investigator would cover off most of the key points that were at issue, and that was my sort of take. I think, you know, because there's been such a terrible subsequent situation, it's very easy to look back and sort of dissect and say, well, could it have been this or could it have been that? As things looked at the time -- and perhaps I was a little naive about where the advice was coming from but I've mentioned, you know, I've talked about this -- it didn't look a bad set of terms of -- well, not the terms of reference, but it didn't look a bad sort of brief, if you see what I mean.

22 Q. Thank you. If we just continue, paragraph 4:

"In order to be credible, the Review will need to be carried out independently of the team which has been managing [Post Office's] response to these concerns to

A. I think both. I mean, the way certainly I think we set
this up was to say "Look, Mr Swift, we want to conduct
a review. We'd like you to conduct it and I will work
with you on the terms of reference". And I think -I mean, I'm skipping ahead a little bit but, subsequent
to this, we met various people and, as a result of those
meetings, the terms of reference were put together.

**Q.** Can we move forwards, please, to page 15 and under "Instructions":

"Leading Counsel is therefore asked to consider these instructions ... prior to meeting [Post Office's] General Counsel ...

"The aim of the meeting is to settle the Review's scope and agree a process for conducting, concluding and reporting on the Review within the desired time frame.

A further meeting will then be arranged at which Leading Counsel would present this scope and process to [Post Office's] Chairman for his consideration."

By this time, was it always envisaged that Mr Swift, as well as advising on the process issues, would himself conduct the review?

A. I think -- and, again, I'm looking back nine years ago -- that my starting point on this, as I explained, was that I'm probably not the person to actually conduct the review, therefore, you know, it was going to be this

	The Po
1	individual who would actually conduct the review on my
2	behalf. And that made a low of sense, if you think
3	about it, because I had a lot of other things to do and
4	we could actually get the undivided time and attention
5	of a very well-qualified and senior barrister with his
6	assistant to go and do the work, essentially.
7	MR BEER: Thank you.
8	Sir, it's just coming up to 11.15 now. Can we take
9	the first morning break between now and 11.25?
10	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course.
11	MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir.
12	THE WITNESS: Thank you.
13	(11.13 am)
14	(A short break)
15	(11.28 am)
16	<b>MR BEER:</b> Good morning, sir. Can you see and hear us?
17	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you.
18	MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir.
19	Before we move on, Mr Parker, to the review report
20	produced by Mr Swift and Mr Knight itself, can I deal
21	with an event that happened or may have happened in
22	between the commissioning of the review and the
23	production of the report in February 2016?
24	You've explained to us already your desire, in
25	particular in the light of Baroness Neville-Rolfe's 53

1 He says:

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"On 15 September 2015, Ian [Ian Henderson] and I went to Mr Parker's office there we met with him and Jonathan Swift."

Do you remember Mr Swift being there?

- 6 Α. Not precisely.
- 7 "The meeting went on far longer than the pre-booked one 8 hour, Mr Parker having insisted that we stayed longer to 9 answer more questions."

Does that trigger any memory? 10

- A. No, but I think it's probably reflective of the fact 11 that, you know, I wanted to listen to these guys. Yeah. 12
- 13 Q. We have got some emails of 15 December, circulating 14 within Post Office, saying, "They're still in there, 15 they're still in the meeting, it's going on longer than 16 anticipated", and you were going to miss your next

17 meeting?

- Okay. 18 Α.
- 19 Q. He, Mr Warmington, says:

20 "We held nothing back at that meeting. Indeed, 21 [Mr Henderson] later characterised it with the words 'We 22 gave him both barrels'. In practical terms that meant 23 that we went through with Mr Parker and Mr Swift all of 24 the thematic issues that we had covered in our final 25 report back in April 2015."

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1 letter of 10 September 2015 to find out information 2 about Horizon from a wide range of sources.

3 A. Mm, mm.

4 Q. Do you recall meeting Ron Warmington and Ian Henderson of Second Sight in your office in December 2015? 5

6 I know I met them. I don't recall the substance of that 7 meeting, if I'm honest.

Q. Can I just read you what Mr Warmington has said about 8 9 it. This is paragraph 85 of his statement, he said:

10 "In early December 2015 I received a telephone call 11 from the office of the then relatively new Chairman of the Post Office, Tim Parker. He invited me to come to 12 13 his office to help get him up to speed on the Horizon 14 matter."

15 Does that sound likely to be correct?

16 A. Likely.

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17 Q. Thank you:

> "I later learnt that Baroness Neville-Rolfe had, following a meeting that Ian Henderson and I had had with her, suggested to Mr Parker that he should meet with us."

22 Again, can you help us whether that is likely to be 23 correct, ie the idea of the meet came from Baroness 24 Neville-Rolfe?

25 A. Possibly.

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1 Does that trigger a memory in you that they were 2 particularly forceful in what they said to you, ie "We 3 gave him both barrels"?

4 A. I'm sorry not to be of more help but this is nine years 5 ago: the answer is no.

6 Q. He continues:

> "We made it perfectly clear that the rebuttal report that Post Office had immediately issued alongside our final report was utter nonsense and that were he to be deceived into placing reliance on it or, worse still, endorsing it, the consequences would likely be very dire."

13 Do you remember a meeting of that type, ie you had 14 two gentlemen who had been independent investigators 15 coming in and saying words to the effect of "The Post 16 Office rebuttal report" -- ie the rebuttal to their

17 final report -- "ought not to be relied on"?

A. I don't. I think, again, my recollection of this 18 meeting is just not -- I just don't have a recollection 19 20 of it precisely.

21 Q. Do you recollect a meeting in which it was said that if 22 he -- ie you -- was to place reliance on what the Post

23 Office was saying in its rebuttal report, the likely 24 consequences would be very dire or dire?

25 I think all I can tell you -- because, you know, the

- 1 question has been asked three times, more or less -- is 2 that I think Jonathan Swift and I would have listened to 3 what we were told and he would have taken away a lot of 4 the remarks that were made by Ron and Ian.
- 5 Q. I don't think you're in a position to say that what 6 Mr Warmington has said is incorrect. If he had said 7 those things, what would be the consequences for you?
- 8 A. I think my mindset at the time was we're in the early 9 days of putting together this review, I've heard what 10 these guys have got to say and we'll take the thing forward. It's not my, you know -- I don't think I would 11 12 have jumped to the conclusion that everything they say 13 is indubitably correct; I think I would have said "Well, 14 let's do some more work", which is what actually
- 15 happened. 16 Q. le to summarise, you would have seen this as a matter 17 for Mr Swift to bring into account, rather than for you 18 to take any particular action?
- 19 A. I think that's slightly false contrast. I think, at 20 that stage, bearing in mind that I was going to review 21 the eventual output of Mr Swift, he certainly would take 22 away the comments of Second Sight, yes.
- 23 Q. What would you therefore -- if my suggestion involved 24 a slight false contrast -- going to do with what you had 25 been told?

1 when it came to be put together, certainly did not take, 2 if you like, the house view as the only version of 3 events. I think quite a lot of the comments of Second 4 Sight were incorporated into the review itself.

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Q. Let's look at the review itself. POL00006355. I'm not going to go through every paragraph of it, not least of which because it's 66 pages long and that wouldn't be productive. If we could look just a little further down, we'll see the date of 8 February 2016.

If we go forwards to page 2, and just pan out a little bit, we will see the structure, the overall structure, of the report, after some introductions and passages about the scope of the report. It's divided into chapters concerning: Post Office, subpostmasters and the Horizon system; the complaints themselves; the criminal prosecutions; the Horizon system; support provided to subpostmasters; investigations, ie the past scheme investigations; and a summary of recommendations.

If we go forward to page 3, please, and if we just look at the end of paragraph 2, four lines up:

"These matters have been the subject of consideration and investigation by and on behalf of [Post Office] on a number of occasions. The purpose of this review is to consider whether any further action could now reasonably be taken by [Post Office] to

A. I think my mindset, at that point, was to allow Mr Swift 1 2 to do the work and produce the report. I don't think 3 I took out of that meeting -- because actually, as far 4 as I'm aware, I didn't do anything immediately --I don't think I took out of this meeting, "I've heard 5 6 from these people, I'm about to go out and do 7 something"; let's do the report and let's see where it 8

9 **Q.** le the meeting was held in the context of somebody 10 undertaking a review and the person undertaking the 11 review ought to pay regard to what was said, rather than 12 you do anything independently?

13 A. I mean, honestly, I think this is a bit of a hindsight 14 characterisation of a meeting at the time, where I was 15 quite early still in the business and would have just 16 been doing a lot of listening. So I'm not sure, out of 17 it, you know, I -- yeah, I just moved on with the 18 review, yeah.

19 I mean, it can't be every day that you have independent 20 investigators or consultants, management consultants or 21 forensic accountants come in, and if they're correct in 22 what they say, tell you, as a chairman, that you 23 shouldn't be relying on the public facing document that 24 your executives have put out?

25 **A**. No, and I think it's fair to say that the Swift Review,

1 address the matters raised by the [subpostmasters]." 2 Paragraph 3, five lines up from the bottom: 3

"The Legal Department of [Post Office] has been the source of most of the information provided to us, but we have determined what information should be provided."

When the review was being undertaken, did you have 7 a running commentary essentially on it, or did you set the terms of reference as we've seen and then wait for the review to report?

A. I think it -- I mean, again, without wanting to deliver 10 11 a definitive view, I think there was a sort of ongoing 12 discussion. I don't think it was a sort of, you know, 13 "Here's the terms of review, give me a ring in five 14 months' time", or whatever. You know, I think there was

some kind of ongoing discussion. 16 Q. You certainly received a draft report in --

17 A. I did, yeah --

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18 Q. -- January?

19 -- in January, yeah.

20 Q. Did you know that the Legal Department was the source of 21 most of the information provided to Messrs Swift and

22 Knight?

23 A. I think I probably did. Yeah.

24 Q. If we go over the page, please:

> "The purpose of this review was originally described 60

in the following terms", and then we see the quote from the briefing paper we read earlier:

"We have been guided by this. But we have concentrated on whether any further action is reasonable and necessary in respect of these issues. This has highlighted two principal questions:

"What has been done in the 2010-2015 period?

"If there are any gaps in the work done, is there further action that can reasonably now be taken?"

Over the page, please, and look at paragraph 10. Having set out, in summary, the documentation that the authors have reviewed, they set out in paragraph 10 those with whom they met: Lord Arbuthnot; Second Sight; Deloitte; Fujitsu; Angela van den Bogerd; Mr Seller, Ms Dickinson; and Ms Hailstones and Ms Alexander.

Then, if we go forwards, please, it's getting more to the substance, to page 34. You can see on pages 34 and 35 the author's view on one of the issues, namely the sufficiency of evidence to bring charges of theft.

A. Mm, mm.

**Q.** I'm just going to read these passages. The allegation:

"As we understand it ... is that [Post Office] has too readily brought a charge of theft, which is said to be more serious than false accounting, with the aim or effect that the [subpostmaster] is pressurised into

Over the page:

"We note Brian Altman's advice of 8 March that it is not a helpful question to ask whether a theft and false accounting are offences of equal seriousness, both being dishonesty offences with a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, because the seriousness is dependent on the nature of the specific allegation rather than the charge *per se*.

"We entirely accept that the decision to plead guilty is a matter for the defendant alone. Any concerns they have about the legal advice they received at the time is a matter only the defendant can pursue and is not the responsibility of [Post Office] ... it is always open to the defendant to challenge the sufficiency of the evidence disclosed to him or her and seek to have that charge dismissed.

"[Post Office's] position is that its prosecutorial decisions are always taken in accordance with the [Code], which requires that there be sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction, and ... must be in the public interest. [Post Office] that is referred us to the Cartwright King disclosure review exercise, noting that Cartwright King also expressed views in their advice as to whether [Post Office] should oppose any appeal brought, suggesting that they must

pleading guilty to false accounting in the hope that the theft charge is dropped, and because a theft charge would more readily enable [Post Office] to recover its losses. We understand there are approximately 18 scheme cases in which this, or something similar, occurred. We have also read the full trial transcript [of] Seema Misra in which a jury convict the defendant of theft (following a guilty plea to the charge of false accounting).

"Whether [Post Office] had sufficient evidence to bring a charge of theft alongside charges of false accounting is an accusation raised by number of scheme applicants, as well as by Lord Arbuthnot ... it has also been a matter raised by Second Sight ...

"102. We are aware that the suggestion has gained particular traction in scheme case M035 ... In this case certain documents in the prosecution file indicated that the initial [Post Office] Investigators could not find evidence of theft ..."

This the case of Josephine Hamilton, I should say.

A. Mm, mm.

Q. "... (although there was clear evidence of false accounting), but theft was nonetheless charged. We have seen those documents and have noted the absence of clear documented rationale for charging theft."

therefore have considered the evidence involved. [Post Office] has also explained to us that because of these points, and because any review would be carried out with the benefit of hindsight, it will not be an appropriate course of action to review now the prosecution files to reconsider the sufficiency of evidence issue.

"106. We do not agree. We have reached the view that this issue is one of real importance to the reputation of [Post Office], and is something which can feasibly and reasonably be addressed now. It is clear that it is not an exercise which has been carried out so far, and Cartwright King were not asked to consider the sufficiency of the evidence when undertaking their disclosure review."

Skipping a sentence:

"The allegation that [Post Office] has effectively bullied [subpostmasters] into pleading guilty to offences by unjustifiably overloading the charge sheet is a stain on the character of the business. Moreover, it is not impossible that [a subpostmaster] would have felt pressurised into pleading guilty to false accounting believing it to be less serious when they might not otherwise have done so; the phenomenon of false confessions is well known."

I'm going to stop reading there.

That's quite strong language, isn't it? A. Quite strong, yeah. Q. Is this is an example of what you mentioned, I think, in passing earlier, that the review did not universally take on board the Post Office's position? A. I think that's right and I think, in a way, because, as we know the aftermath wasn't necessarily satisfactory, but at the time, it was a good -- for me, a confirmation that to have a qualified barrister look at these things

recommendations about what to do about it.
Q. You said there that the aftermath wasn't necessarily satisfactory, we know. Can you tell us what you are alluding to there?

impact, and as -- if we go further, obviously,

produced a pretty good analysis of the issue, and its

A. Alluding to? Well, I don't want to sort of prejudge,
you know, the discussion but, you know, Swift, in my
view, was quite a good report and contained quite a lot
of good material and, as the litigation unfolded, as we
will discover a few months down the line, effectively
Swift was stopped and repurposed.

So this component of Swift, actually -- you know, again the result with hindsight might not have been satisfactory, because its scope of investigation was limited but, you know, Altman did his review and

those circumstances, that counsel review the prosecution file in such cases to establish whether, applying the facts and law applicable at the relevant time, there was a sufficient evidential basis to conclude that a conviction for theft was a realistic prospect such that the charge was properly brought."

I think you'd agree, they are sensible recommendations, arising directly from the passages that we've just read?

10 A. Yeah, yeah.

**Q.** Can we turn then to page 43 at the foot of the page:

"125. ... the Horizon system does occasionally suffer from bugs which have caused losses in some branches. Those bugs have been generic in the sense that they have the potential to affect any branch, depending on how it is structured. It is often the case that those bugs are identified when [a subpostmaster] draws the attention of [Post Office] and Fujitsu to an odd situation which she cannot explain and which appears to have had caused a discrepancy. We were told by [Post Office] that when carrying out their investigations into scheme cases, investigators were looking out for unusual or unexplained patterns of transactions which might have required further technical

produced his report. So, you know, from the perspective of "Here's the problem" -- which is, you know, charging theft potentially with the pressure to get people to own up to false accounting -- I think Swift more or less got that but it didn't -- you know, again, it translated into the Altman work.

So this component, I think, again, moved the thing forward as you would want it to be moved forward.

Q. Can we turn to the recommendations of Mr Swift's report and I'm not going to, in the way I've just done there,

and I'm not going to, in the way I've just done there,
track the foundation for the recommendation into the
recommendation on every occasion. That was just one
example.

14 A. Yeah, yeah.

15 Q. Page 38, then, please. The recommendations arising fromthat section of the report are:

"(1) [in bold] Legal advice be sought from counsel as to whether the decision to charge [a subpostmaster] with theft and false accounting could undermine the safety of any conviction for false accounting where (a) the conviction was on the basis of a guilty plea, following which and/or in return for which the theft charge was dropped, and (b) there had not been a sufficient evidential basis to bring the theft charge.

"(2) If such a conviction could be undermined in

a wider bug. [Post Office] told us that no instance arose and Fujitsu were not asked to look at the records in any case. Fujitsu confirmed to us that they did not carry out any analysis of scheme records.

"We consider that there is the possibility that an alternative approach to the transaction analysis would have provided greater certainty that there was no bug which had affected some of the scheme branches. We take this view because [Post Office's] approach was necessarily 'bottom up', in the sense that it started from and focused on the specific circumstances of the branch, looking at the transaction logs where necessary to review a particular complaint, be it general or specific."

Skipping over:

"A different, but complementary, approach would have been a 'top down 'analysis of the transaction logs of the scheme branches undertaken by Fujitsu or an independent qualified party to search for patterns of unusual behaviour in individual branches, and across branches, on a purely data-driven analytical basis which might suggest a wider problem, which could then be cross-referenced with the branch fact-specific work carry out by [Post Office] ...

"In our meeting with Deloitte, it was confirmed that 68

examination by Fujitsu to confirm whether there was 67

this type of exercise was something they would have expected could be carried out across the relevant dataset (including non-Scheme branches as a control) to look for oddities or reconciliation errors. We are mindful that external organisations are more likely to suggest possible sources of work they could carry out, but the suggestion aligns with our own view ... which is at least potentially useful to rule out more comprehensively the possibility of a system bug, affecting some scheme cases."

Again, a series of observations or a views that you would consider reasonable?

13 A. I think I probably did at the time, yeah.

14 Q. If we go forward to 53 -- I should have stopped off on
 15 the way at 51, at paragraph 145, just in passing:

"It seems to us that the Deloitte documents in particular pose real issues for [Post Office]. *First*, both the existence of the balancing transaction capability and the wider ability of Fujitsu to 'fake' digital signatures are contrary to the ... assurances provided by Fujitsu and [Post Office] about the functionality of the Horizon system. Fujitsu's comment we quote above seems ... to be simply incorrect, and [Post Office's] Westminster Hall Response is incomplete.

To the extent that [Post Office] has sought to contend

let's see and let's try and understand this theoretical ability, how practical is it, in fact, to remotely access accounts? And that was, you know, what I took away from this, I suppose.

Q. Did you take away from the fact that Fujitsu and Post
 Office's public facing comments had been incorrect and incomplete?

A. Yes, I mean, that's something -- I've looked back at this and I suppose my reaction at the time was essentially to Swift -- and we'll get on to the legal privilege thing in a minute -- was, you know: this is a report, let's -- there are some recommendations, let's actually get to the recommendations and then my hope and intention was to, you know, have the outputs of the report discussed.

Now, we didn't get there, much to my regret, and I think I was probably a little optimistic about how quickly we could get on top of some of these issues and then properly correct the issue, I suppose. But, you know, it was something I was aware of and, with hindsight, perhaps we should have jumped up immediately and said, "Look, you know, there is a theoretical possibility of remote access". And I was assuming, as it turned out probably quite wrongly, that we could do the work on Swift and then say, yes, there is remote

that branch data cannot be remotely 'amended' because a balancing transaction does not amend existing transactions but adds a new one, we do not consider this is a full picture of Horizon's functionality. The reality is that a balancing transaction is a remotely introduced addition to branch records, added without the need for acceptance by the [subpostmaster], which affects the branch's balance; that is its express purpose. [Post Office] has always known about the balancing transaction capability, although the Deloitte report suggests the digital signature issue is something contrary to [Post Office's] understanding."

Just stopping there as I went past, when you received the report, did you know about the remote access issue?

- 16 A. No, I don't think so. I can't be sure but I don't think17 I did.
- Q. Did you know that there was a concern that either the
   Post Office and/or Fujitsu had a facility remotely to
   access branches?
- A. I don't think I did. You know, the remote access issue, of course, has been quite a big element of this whole set of problems, and I think my take on it was, in theory, there is a remote access problem and -- you know, we'll get to the recommendations in a moment --

access and it is theoretically possible, but
 practically, it either is likely, less likely, or very
 unlikely. That was, I think, where I got to with it.

- 4 Q. Where did you get information from that remote access 5 was only theoretically possible?
- A. I think that's what was said here, essentially. That
   was what I took away from it, anyway.
- 8 Q. In any event, let's turn to the recommendations on this9 part of the report by looking at page 53:

"We recommend ...

"(3) [Post Office] consider instructing a suitably qualified party to carry out an analysis of the relevant transaction logs for branches within the scheme to confirm, insofar as possible, whether any bugs in the system are revealed by the dataset which caused discrepancies in the accounting position of any of those branches

"(4) [Post Office] instruct a suitably qualified party to carry out a full review of the use of balancing transactions throughout the lifetime of the Horizon system, insofar as possible, independently to confirm from Horizon system records the number and circumstances of their use.

"(5) [Post Office] instruct a suitably qualified expert to carry out a full review of the controls over

and use of the capability of authorised Fujitsu personnel to create, amend or delete baskets within the sealed audit score throughout the lifetime of the Horizon system, insofar as is possible."

Those two recommendations, you'll see, are speaking about the lifetime of the Horizon system. Did you understand them at the time to mean literally since Legacy Horizon had started --

9 A. Yeah.

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10 Q. -- ie about 2000?

A. I can't tell you. Of course, with hindsight, the 11 lifetime thing actually gets to be quite critical 12 13 because it turns out that most of the real issues that 14 people experienced were with Legacy Horizon, but I'm not 15 sure that really, you know, that really came through to 16 me as a big thing at the time. Yeah.

17 Q. "[Post Office] seek specialist legal advice from 18 external counsel as to whether the Deloitte reports, or 19 the information within them concerning balancing 20 transactions and Fujitsu's ability to delete and amend 21 data in the audit store, should be disclosed to 22 defendants of criminal prosecutions bought by [Post 23 Office]. This advice should also address whether 24 disclosure should be made, if it has not been [made], to 25 the CCRC."

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"[Post Office] commission forensic accountants to review the unmatched balances on [Post Office's] general suspense account to explain the relationship (or lack thereof) with branch discrepancies and the extent to which those balances can be attributed to and repaid to specific branches."

Again, does that fall within the same category that we just discussed, reasonable and grounded in --

A. Reasonable and grounded, I agree.

Q. There's one that I've missed out, (7) I think. If we go forward to page 66, number 7:

"[Post Office] should cross-reference specific complaints about misleading advice from NBSC call handlers with the possible employees who provided that advice and consider their personnel files, where availability, for evidence at to the likelihood that the complaint may be well founded."

So if we just go back to 65 and pan out. The recommendations 1 to 5 are collected together in a summary and then, over the page, we see (6), (7) and (8) collected together.

Overall, would you agree that there was a wide range of work that required to be done arising from the Swift

A. Yes, I think we were talking earlier about, you know,

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Again, upon reading this, you wouldn't have had any 1 2 reason to reject the recommendations?

3 A.

4 Q. They seem reasonable and sensible --

They seemed reasonable and sensible, yes. 5

6 -- and they're grounded in the body of the text --

7 Yeah

Q. -- that preceded them? 8

9 A. Absolutely, yeah.

10 If we go forwards, please, to 64, and paragraph 173:

11 "There is one issue which potentially relates to the 12 scheme cases but which has not, so far as we are aware, 13 been the subject of any specific analysis. That issue 14 was the one raised by Second Sight in their Part Two 15 Report ... and relates to the handling by [Post Office] 16 of unmatched credit balances in its own suspense account 17 (or similarly named account) in respect of third party 18 clients (such as Santander or Bank of Ireland). The 19 point Second Sight raise is that where there are 20 significant sums in unmatched balances, it is possible 21 that at least some of that money would reflect 22 uncorrected transaction discrepancies in particular 23 branches. We consider that this illogically possible, 24 and is at least worthy of express investigation and 25 clarification. Accordingly, we recommend that:

1 the terms of reference and whether it was correctly 2 structured and -- but, actually, I feel with hindsight, 3 again, that Swift was not a perfect piece of work but it 4 wasn't a bad piece of work, and it yielded some good

5 recommendations.

6 **Q.** Would you agree that the review raised significant 7 reputational issues for the Post Office in the light of 8 what it uncovered and the recommendations that it made?

9 A. I think there were some issues that definitely needed 10 addressing pretty -- yeah, pretty urgently.

11 Q. What about my question, Mr Parker?

12 A. Yeah, no, I think that's a fair -- these are all matters 13 with some reputational impact, potentially.

14 Q. Significant reputational issues for Post Office, was how 15 I formulated it, if this was publicly disclosed?

16 A. Yeah, I'm not going to argue about the language. These 17 are important matters, yeah.

18 Sometimes it's important, though, the language.

19 Yes, no, I think you're absolutely right. Let's say 20 reputational issues, yeah, matters.

21 Q. You had a decision to make as to with whom the report 22 should be shared, correct?

23 A. Yes.

24 When the report landed on your desk -- in your inbox, 25

more likely -- did you have a view as to with whom it

- 2 A. I -- that's a very interesting question. So to go back
- 3 into the history of this thing, it was always envisaged
- 4 that the Swift Review would be legally privileged and
- 5 I think that was explained -- I haven't got the papers
- 6 to hand but, somehow, it was envisaged that it would be
- 7 a report from a QC -- at the time -- and it would be
- 8 legally privileged.
- 9 Q. Just stopping there, the report on its face is not
- 10 marked as privileged, is it?
- No, no. 11 Α.

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- 12 The report does not say that it's been provided for the Q.
- 13 purpose of any ongoing litigation?
- A. It doesn't, but my --14
- Q. It doesn't say that it was provided for the purposes of 15
- 16 obtaining legal advice, does it?
- 17 A. No, but whatever was actually on the report, and, you
- know, I'm not looking at whether it's got --18
- 19 I understood, and was advised by General Counsel, that
- 20 it should be legally privileged and I believe that was
- 21 understood also by civil servants at the time as well.
- 22 I may be wrong but, generally, it was understood that
- 23 this would be a piece of legally privileged work with
- 24 a view, once the recommendations had been carried
- 25 forward, to being shared more widely. That was my
- 1 recollection is different from Mr Parker's. Although
  - I agree that I discussed privilege and confidentiality
- 3 when I met him, my recollection is that the Senior
- 4 Independent Director, Mr McCall, asked a question at
- 5 a board meeting as to whether the Board would be briefed
- 6 on the findings of the Chairman's review. I believe
- 7 that, as a result of that question, I provided an oral
- 8 briefing to the Board as to the scope and findings of
- 9 the chairman's review, as well as summary of the further
- 10 work being undertaken following the Chairman's review.
- 11 Although I've not seen any documents which indicate that
- 12 the full report was circulated to the Board, my
- 13 recollection is that I advised the Board that the full
- 14 report was available on request."
- 15 A. Indeed, that's what she put into her witness statement
- 16 and I can only say that there's -- I know which
- 17 particular document it's in but she advised that the
- 18 report should be four copies, I think, none saved to 19
- a hard disk, or whatever, and it was clear. I'm sure 20 she told me, and my recollection I don't think is wrong,
- 21 that this was going to be a legally privileged report
- 22 and that's why it was restricted to four copies only
- 23 that were held within the Legal Department.
  - Her comment -- I mean, the other point to make,
  - I suppose, is because this is of interest, is that, you

- 1 understanding of it.
- 2 Q. You said that there was an assumption. Who held that
- 3 assumption?
- 4 A. When you say --
- Q. An assumption that the report would be legally 5
- 6 privileged, was one of the things that you said. Who
- 7 held that assumption?
- 8 A. That's quite an interesting question and I'm not sure
- 9 I've got a ready answer to it. All I can tell you is
- 10 that my recollection, and certainly what I understood,
- 11 was that the report would be legally privileged. That
- was the advice that I received at the time. 12
- 13 Q. Was that advice orally or in writing?
- 14 A. I can't confirm whether it was oral or in writing but
- 15 I certainly understood that to be the case.
- 16 Who gave you the advice? Q.
- 17 A. The General Counsel.
- Q. Jane MacLeod? 18
- 19 Α. Yes
- 20 Q. Jane MacLeod, in her witness statement -- no need to
- 21 turn it up, it's WITN10010100 at page 100, paragraph
- 22 184 -- says:
- 23 "I am aware from open source material that Tim
- 24 Parker has said that I had advised him not to brief the
- 25 Board on grounds of confidentiality and privilege. My
  - 78
- 1 know, there was no intention to hide the report as such.
- 2 People knew about the report but it was a legally
- 3 privileged document. And, again, you know, it's one of
- 4 my regrets is that I got that advice and I took it, and
- 5 that's essentially how the report was conceived.
- 6 Q. So it was advice from the General Counsel, Jane MacLeod,
- 7 directly to you, the --
- 8 A. Yes, and that sort of privileged --
- Q. Sorry, if I could just finish the sentence. 9
- 10 A. Yes, I beg your pardon.
- 11 Q. That the report, the Swift Report, was a legally
- 12 privileged document?
- 13 A. That was certainly my understanding at the time and
- 14 I believe, in communications with UKGI, it was also made
  - 15
- Q. We're going to come to that in a minute. 16
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. For you, what were the consequences of being advised
- 19 that the report enjoyed legal privilege?
- 20 **A**.
- 21 Q. What did that mean for you?
- 22 A. Yeah, so look, here I am. I've had this report
- 23 commissioned, right. I've got no history of -- you
- 24 know, I wanted to get some kind of result from it. But
- 25 then I get this advice and, as I understood it at the

1		time, the report would be legally privileged, the GC and
2		her team, with others, would take forward the
3		recommendations, and when the recommendations were
4		completed, the outputs would then be shared. That was
5		my sort of view and that's what I expected to happen.
6	Q.	The fact that you were advised that the report was
7		legally privileged, what did you understand as to who
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8 that prevented you from sharing the report with? A. Yeah, I think, again, this is one of the slightly

9 10 unsatisfactory elements of the whole thing, is that I felt, erroneously, probably, it turns out, that 11 12 legally privileged or legal privileged meant that the 13 report, effectively, was circumscribed to only the 14 people who were involved in the legal process. Q. Was that something that you were advised by Ms MacLeod

15 16 or was that something which you assumed on the basis of 17 being told the report is privileged?

18 A. I can't tell you for sure but I think the fact that 19 I was told that the report should only be confined to 20 four copies, I certainly took away from that that legal 21 privilege implied that it was a report that would be 22 held in a very tight knit -- tightly knit group of 23 people, and these were of the four people and they were 24 all people who worked in the GC's department.

25 Q. In practice, did that understanding -- I'll call it --

1 if that was the issue, perhaps could have been shared. 2 And it's just one of those things that, at the time, 3 I was advised and I took the advice. It's one of the 4 unfortunate aspects to all of this, is the extent to 5 which perhaps advice taken from specialists turned out 6 to be something that might have been tested or reviewed 7 in a different way.

8 Q. I'll ask you the direct question: did Ms MacLeod tell 9 you that the fact that the report enjoyed privilege 10 prevented you from disclosing it to the Board?

Α. That was my understanding. 11

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12 Q. Did she advise you directly? 13 A. I can't confirm one way or another. All I can do is 14 look back and say, look, what possible motive would 15 I have had at the time from hiding this report from my 16 fellow Board members, other than receiving advice that 17 I shouldn't share it with my fellow Board members? Bear 18 in mind, I had no axe to grind on this. I had no 19 vested -- any vested interest in trying to protect the 20 Post Office or whatever it had done. It was simply the 21 advice I received and I followed it.

22 **Q.** As part of the quote from Ms MacLeod's statement that 23 I read you, she said:

> "My recollection is I advised the Board that the full report was available on request."

1 that you reached, prevent effective discussion from 2 taking place at the Board of the Post Office if members 3 of the Board could not see the report?

4 A. So I think, whilst being aware of the report, I felt it 5 certainly did, yeah. I mean, my view at the time was 6 that -- and perhaps this was somewhat naive -- that the 7 recommendations would come out pretty quickly and we 8 would be able to talk about, you know, the report as 9 completed. But that didn't happen unfortunately.

10 Q. Did you understand, from what Jane MacLeod advised you, 11 that you were prevented from sharing the report with 12 other Board members?

13 I think that was my understanding, yes.

14 Q. What did you understand, if you did understand it, to be 15 the difficulty in sharing a report with other Board 16 members who themselves would owe a duty of 17 confidentiality and confidence to the company?

18 I thought -- and again, perhaps it betokens a certain 19 lack of experience in this area -- that legal privilege 20 meant a restriction on the circulation of the report, 21 and with, you know, what I've read subsequently, was the 22 report meant for me personally and was it going to be 23 legally privileged for me personally? Could we have 24 shared it? I wish we had, in a way. 25 And I think, you know, a suitably redacted version,

1 Were you present at any Board meeting at which they 2 were told, "If you want the report, you only have to 3

4 A. Well, I presume that, if that's what Jane MacLeod has 5 said, and she attended Board meetings, and I can only 6 think of one Board meeting that I missed in the whole of 7 my time at the Post Office, I probably would have been 8 there, yes.

Q. Can you recall that being said? It's not reflected in 9 10 any of the minutes?

A. I can't. 11

12 Q. What was your understanding as to the fact that the 13 report was said to enjoy legal privilege, insofar as 14 distribution of a copy of the report or sharing the 15 contents of the report with the Minister or Government 16 was?

17 A. I think that was a similar concern and I should say that 18 the legal privilege thing -- I'm now beginning to 19 recollect it a little bit more -- was around the Freedom 20 of Information mechanism. So we had a UKGI Board 21 member, and one of the concerns was that things that 22 were distributed that got into the hands of, 23 essentially, BEIS civil servants, in one form or 24 another, potentially could be disclosed as part of a Freedom of Information request. And that whole sort 25

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of consideration coloured the discussion around Swift and how it was explained, and how it was kind of discussed at the time.

Q. Can we look, please, at POL00103108. An email before the final report is available, it's dated 22 January 2016, between Jane MacLeod and you:

"Tim

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"Following our call with Jonathan Swift today, and ahead of your meeting with Baroness Neville-Rolfe on Tuesday, I have summarised our progress."

I'm going to skip over, for the moment, "How to take forward his recommendations", and just look at "Briefing to the Minister", if we scroll down:

"We also discussed with Jonathan whether there were any limitations from his perspective on the content of your briefing to the Minister. Jonathan confirmed that there were no limitations from his perspective, although he noted that if a physical or electronic copy were provided, this could result in a loss of legal privilege in connection with the document, recognising that in the absence of privilege, the report could be disclosable under a [Freedom of Information] request."

Is that what you were just referring to?

24 A. Yeah.

25 **Q.** "Accordingly, our recommendation is that you provide

limitations from his perspective", on the content of the briefing but, "if a physical or electronic copy were provided this could result in the loss of legal privilege", did you understand that a choice fell to be made from that advice?

A. Yes. I think I probably, to a certain extent -- well, no, actually, looking at it, I think what I understood was that something that was physical, if it was -- if things were put down and written physically or typed physically, that could be subject to a loss of legal privilege. And I suppose, perhaps from that, I sort of conflated, you know, what could I say to the Minister? I don't, you know, did that mean I could only say to her what was in a piece of paper? I don't know.

Q. More specifically, did you understand that you had
a choice to make: I can either brief her orally along
the lines set out in those four bullet points; or I can
give her a copy of the report, and that may result in
a loss of privilege?

A. My recollection, for what it's worth, is that I think we all, including the Minister's civil servants, were kind of not assuming, but felt that this was going to be a document that had legal privilege. So, with hindsight, you're right, there was potentially a decision to be made, but we fell into the "It's

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a verbal briefing to the Minister that in response to the question 'Was there anything further that [Post Office] should do?':

"[1] Jonathan has made a series of recommendations which have been accepted by [the Post Office].

"[2] These recommendations will be followed up as soon as possible.

"[3] In relation to 2 of the IT related recommendations, the scope of work required to discharge the recommend is uncertain, and we will therefore commission work to determine whether the work is feasible.

"[4] We will provide you with regular updates on progress of this work, and you will therefore be able to provide updates to the Minister in future briefings.

"Once the work is completed, we will need to consider whether the Minister requires anything in writing from you and whether any such document would be made publicly available."

20 So this is a reflection of a meeting that I think
21 Jane MacLeod had, or a call that Jane MacLeod had, with
22 Jonathan Swift, and advice as to how you are to brief
23 the Minister. Correct?

24 A. Looks like it. doesn't it? Yeah.

25 **Q.** The sentence, "Jonathan confirmed there were no

legally privileged so we'll do the verbal briefinginstead".

3 Q. Did you realise at the time that there was a choice --

4 A. I don't think so, if I'm honest.

Q. -- ie the fact that it was said to be legally privileged
 dictated the outcome or the treatment --

7 A. I'm afraid a lot flowed from that, you know, it was
 8 a legally privileged document, therefore we had to speak
 9 around it, and how it was summarised on paper needed to
 10 be thought about, yes.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Can I ask you, Mr Parker, at the time,
 was there any discussion about who enjoyed the privilege
 if privilege existed?

14 A. Sir Wyn, I can't, no.

15 **SIR WYN WILLIAMS:** Because it strikes me at least -- and I'm
16 not pretending I'm an authority on this -- that there
17 are only two possibilities, aren't there: either you
18 personally enjoyed the privilege or Post Office Limited
19 enjoyed it?

A. Again, I have to answer you honestly and say my
 knowledge of legal privilege at the time wasn't
 sufficiently sophisticated -- is probably the best
 description I can give it -- to differentiate between
 was it privileged to me or was it privileged to Post

25 Office? I just kind of took legal privilege to mean it

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(22) Pages 85 - 88

was kind of privileged, you know, like, full stop.

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inform Baroness Neville-Rolfe, the Minister, or anyone

2 \$	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, and I'm not really asking you to	2		else within the Department or ShEx, that you wouldn't be
3	address your mind to the distinction, as opposed to	3		providing Government with a copy of the report because
4	whether there was any discussion about that distinction?	4		that was on the basis of legal advice received, that
5 <b>A</b>	A. No, not that I can recall.	5		doing so could result in a loss of privilege? So not
6	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Finally, you'd obviously know from this	6		only was that the reason for acting
7	Inquiry that it's possible for a party who enjoys legal	7	A.	Yeah, I understand
8	privilege to waive that privilege if someone asked them	8	Q.	that was the explanation given?
9	to, like I asked the Post Office in this Inquiry. Did	9		Yeah, so all I can tell you is that I think I'm not
10	anybody, either on the POL Board or in Government or	10		sure what the Minister was told exactly but I have this
11	civil servants, ask you to waive legal privilege, if	11		report and I have absolutely no reason not to show this
12	this document was indeed privileged?	12		to people. I've got no vested interest and so
	A. I can't confirm that because I can't remember, is the	13		I conclude, looking back, that I must have felt that the
14	honest answer to that question. But the fact that	14		advice I'd been given was not to share the report
15	I can only say that, you know, nothing happened in that	15		physically with the Minister.
16	regard, and it doesn't stick in my mind as a topic that	16	Q.	But you've got no recollection whether that was
17	was raised at the time.	17	α.	explained, in terms?
	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So on the state of the evidence at the	18	٨	I haven't, no.
		19		BEER: Thank you.
19 20	moment and things may change, obviously, because we		IVIT	•
20	are going to hear from people who may have a view of	20		Sir, it's 12.25. Can we take the second morning
21	this but at the moment there's nothing to suggest	21	OID.	break until 12.35?
22	that anyone asked that there be a waiver of privilege?	22		WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course.
	A. For my recollection, the answer to that is no.	23	(12	.25 pm)
	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine.	24	440	(A short break)
25 N	MR BEER: A related question to that, Mr Parker: did you  89	25	(12	. <b>36 pm)</b> 90
	MR BEER: Good afternoon, sir, can you see and hear us? SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you.	1 2		We're going to look at that in a moment. There was another document that is redacted.
3 N	MR BEER: Thank you.	3		If we scroll up, please:
4	Mr Parker, can we just look at some documents that	4		"The subject of the meeting is the reporting to
5	were created years later	5		Ministers and Governance in the Company that took place
6 <i>A</i>	A. Yeah.	6		after Tim Parker was appointed Chairman."
7 (	<b>Q</b> in 2020	7		So there's a meeting in 2020 about the reporting by
8 <i>A</i>	A. Mm-hm.	8		you and others to ministers, and governance in the
9 (	Q which speak to the issues that we're currently	9		company back in 2015, essentially:
10	discussing, starting by looking at UKGI00011785. This	10		"The Minister at the time was Baroness Neville-Rolfe
11	is an email from Tom Cooper, who I think you'll know, to	11		who asked him to appoint a QC to review the handling of
12	Sarah Munby, who I also think you'll know. It's dated	12		the Horizon IT dispute"
13	Sunday, 19 April 2020. It says the:	13		That's not entirely accurate, is it? She did not
14	" information attached contains legally	14		ask you to appoint a QC?
15	privileged information.	15	A.	No, that's not entirely accurate, you're right.
16	"Do not forward	16	Q.	" and satisfy himself that issues had been handled
17	"Ahead of our meeting to discuss [the Post Office],	17		appropriately."
18	which I hope is happening this week, I'm attaching the	18		That's more accurate?
19	key documents for us to consider."	19	A.	That's more accurate.
20	If you scroll down:	20	Q.	Then scroll down, "The following documents are
21	"The following documents are attached:	21		attached". It says in the penultimate paragraph:
22	"Copy of the QC's report. Suggest you read the	22		"In addition to the above, it seems that neither the
23	recommendations which are at the back.	23		QC's report, nor the existence or conclusions of the
24	"Copy of Tim Parker's letter to the Minister which	24		follow-up work commissioned to deal with the QC's report
25	followed delivery of the QC's report." 91	25		were known to the Board of the Company or to BEIS."

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1	Is that accurate on your understar	nding?

- 2 A. Not entirely, I don't think. I think in relation to the
- 3 Board, although they didn't see a copy of the swift
- 4 report, I'm pretty sure that Paula Vennells summarised
- 5 the recommendations.
- 6 Q. We're going to come to that in a moment.
- 7 A. I think so, and I think also that, as Jane MacLeod said
- 8 in her evidence, she provided a briefing. So I think
- 9 it's not quite true to say they were unaware of the
- 10 existence or the conclusions of the Board and I would
- 11 say BEIS -- well, BEIS certainly knew about the report,
- 12 I think. Obviously, they didn't see it, but I think
- 13 they were aware of it, yes.
- 14  $\,$  Q. The word "existence" seems to apply to the follow-up
- work, rather than the report itself?
- 16 A. "... nor the existence or the conclusions" --
- 17 Q. Of the follow-up work.
- 18 A. -- "of the follow-up work ..."
- 19 Oh, I see, I see the point --
- 20 Q. It's not talking about the existence --
- 21 A. I understand the point you're making now.
- 22 Q. On your understanding, did --
- 23 A. Yeah, so I think that was part of the consequences of
- 24 the report being stopped, effectively, later in May or
- June, and the work being taken forward under the aegis
- 1 A. At what point in time?
- 2 Q. At any point in time.
- 3 A. I'm not entirely sure anybody has put this point to me,
- 4 actually. I think, certainly when Tom Cooper became
- 5 aware of it, I think he probably had a discussion with
- 6 Ken McCall, and this was the output of the discussion.
- 7 But I can't recall anybody coming up to me in the
  - corridor and saying, "Hey Tim, looking back nine years,
- 9 you made a bit of a decision that was wrong and we
- think's a significant error of judgement, you just about
- scrape by and cling on to your job here"; no, nobody
- 12 said that.
- 13 Q. Never mind corridors, was there anything more formal?
- 14 **A**. No

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- 15 Q. It would have been five years, not nine.
- 16 A. Five years.
- 17 Q. Was there anything more formal by which you were
- 18 chastised essentially, for your decision?
- 19 A. Yes, not that I can recall but sometimes unpleasant
- 20 events are put out of one's mind, so I might have got
- 21 this wrong but I don't think so.
- 22 Q. That's a different issue, whether you got it wrong?
- 23 A. Well, I might have got it wrong, in terms of do
- 24 I remember it, is the point I'm making, yes.
- 25  $\,$  **Q.** I see. The email continues:

- 1 of the General Counsel in the context of the litigation.
- Q. Thank you. Can we look at UKGI00012703. This is
   seemingly a meeting later in the year, this email refers
   to, again circulating within UKGI on 16 September 2020.
- 5 It's not a communication to you but it's about you, and
- 6 I want to ask you some questions:

"Ahead of our call this afternoon, this is just to update you that Ken McCall the [Senior Independent Director] ..."

10 I think the SID, is that correct?

- 11 A. Yeah, the SID, yeah.
- 12 Q. "... has confirmed that, having spoken to other members
   13 of the Board as he deemed appropriate, he does not think
   14 it appropriate to take any action in relation to Tim
   15 Parker's decision-making around the QC's review in 2015
   16 of POL's handling of the Horizon complaints.

"His rationale is the same as reported previously.

Ken [McCall] believes Tim [you] made a significant error of judgement in accepting legal advice that the QC's report and, as a consequence the follow-up work, should not be shared with the Board."

Firstly, was that put to you, that you had made a significant error of judgement in accepting advice that the report and therefore the follow-up work should not be shared with the Board?

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"... he has some sympathy [that's Ken McCall] with the fact that you would have had to take a very strong position against the legal advice at the initial stage of his tenure to achieve a different outcome. Overall, Ken [McCall's] view is that [you have] been a strong force for positive change in the company while [you have] been Chairman and it would be unfair/disproportionate to take action over this specific issue.

"I haven't asked him to put any of this in writing or come in to meet Ministers or officials to discuss, but this is an option if the decision is to take this further at our call ..."

Was that explained to you, that an option was to take formal action against you but, on balance, a decision was taken not to do so because this was early in your tenure. You would have had to have taken a strong position to go against legal advice that you received and that, overall, you have been a positive force for change?

- A. The answer is -- and, again, I'm searching my
   recollection here, because I don't want to give you
   an answer that isn't true. I honestly can't remember
   having a formal discussion about this.
- 25 **Q**. Can we --

A. Can I say something about this because - Q. Yeah, sure.

A. -- I do feel it's quite a fine hindsight judgement to have made that this is a significant error of judgement. I think that Swift was something which produced some good consequences. The first recommendation, the second recommendation, the seventh recommendation and, ultimately, the eighth recommendation were followed through. The work, which no doubt we will discuss later, in Bramble, was also substantially followed through and informed the Post Office's litigation.

And so I fully accept that, had Swift been discussed at the Board, it may have led to a different approach to the litigation.

But I should say that it remains my view to today that, once the litigation has started, or had started, and although I think we'll see it wasn't necessarily handled in the best and cooperative manner, the litigation, the GLO, ultimately proved to be a comprehensive -- what's the best word I can find? A comprehensive settlement of a lot of very complex issues. And I have replayed in my mind, Mr Swift (*sic*), what might have happened had we not, you know, had the GLO and everyone had read Swift and said, "Oh, there's a problem." the problem is that, you know, our contract

wrong, and a very large amount of money is payable to all concerned. And, unfortunately, it's just taken -- following the ultimate settlement in the trials, it's just taken far too long.

Sorry to give you an extensive extemporary on all of that but you can imagine someone who has sat in this seat looks back and says how could it have been better, how could it have been different, how could it have been faster?

- Q. Are you saying by that answer that it needed a group of brave and determined subpostmasters to hold the Post
   Office to account by bringing the Post Office before
   a court, and that the Post Office was incapable often
   doing it itself?
- A. I'm aware that the counter-argument to all of this is that there should -- you know, it should have been something that was resolved inside the Post Office without the recourse to the litigation and, with hindsight, you know, the postmasters, Sir Alan Bates, should never have been required to mount a Group Litigation Order. I understand that. All I'm saying is that, once it was in train, had it been managed a bit better, then a lot of complex issues might have been determined without the delay and without the cost. But a judge review of all these issues, I still think, one

with the subpostmasters is completely wrong, so we'd better tear it all up", and somebody had said, "Oh, by the way the computer system has got a lot of bugs, and it's unreliable".

And I've replayed in my mind exactly what might have happened then, which is that we would have gone to our paymasters, the Government, and said, "We've got a slight problem. Our contract that we've had for a long time is not fair. We've got another problem, which is that our computer system, certainly Legacy Horizon, you know, anecdotally, it's full of bugs", or we got somebody to independently apparently suggest that

My view is that the debate that would have ensued between, you know, "So what is a reliable system?" and "What are the consequences and, therefore, what compensation is due?" and "The contract isn't fair". And so we'll go through all of that. I do believe, whatever the impediments placed in its way -- and maybe it could have been handled a lot better -- but a judge-determined settlement of all these issues has, and should have resulted already, in a comprehensive compensation settlement for all affected.

And the result of all this should have been -- or in my view -- that this whole thing has been completely

- way or another, was the right way to get, you know, an outcome in the end, yes.
- Q. So you are saying that, irrespective of the things that
   we're going through now, even if things had been done
   differently, it would have always have taken a judge to
   hold the Post Office to account?
- A. No, I'm saying -- I think what I'm saying is that a judge -- of course, holding to account -- you're absolutely right, the result of any judgment would hold the Post Office to account. All I'm saying is that it would have been in my view, practically speaking, although I can perfectly accept this isn't the right outcome, but, given where we got to, trying to see if this could have been managed internally to the same result. I'm not sure.
- 16 Q. Can we move forwards, please, to UKGI00019313. This
  17 appears to be, Mr Parker, the culmination of those
  18 meetings that we've just read about happening in the
  19 emails, discussion over what to do with you about your
  20 conduct in 2015/2016, concerning the Swift Review.

It's a letter directly to you from Sarah Munby, then Permanent Secretary at BEIS:

"Dear Tim ...

"As part of our preparation for the BEIS Select

Committee hearing which had been scheduled for March, we

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received from Post Office a copy of the report prepared by Jonathan Swift QC that was commissioned by you at Baroness Neville-Rolfe's request after your appointment as Chair in 2015. We understand from the work done recently by the company and its advisers to look at the history of Horizon that the findings and recommendations by Jonathan Swift were not shared with the rest of the Post Office Board.

"We understand that you were advised at the time by the Post Office's General Counsel that for reasons of confidentiality and preserving legal privilege the circulation of the report should be strictly controlled."

That sentence there accords with what you've told us today, doesn't it?

16 A. I think it does, yes.

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17 "Nevertheless, given the background of Parliamentary 18 interest, the fact that your review was commissioned by 19 the Minister responsible for the Post Office and the 20 potential significance of the recommendations made by 21 Jonathan Swift, we consider it was a mistake not to have 22 ensured that the whole Board had an opportunity to see 23 and discuss the detail of its findings and agree what 24 any next steps should be. With hindsight, this 25 information should have been seen by the Board and we

from the Horizon cases as well as implementing the changes needed to ensure that such issues never arise again", and then a thank you.

So, as far as you're aware, was this the endpoint or the culmination of the consideration by Government as to its approach to your decision not to disclose the report to the Post Office Board back in 2015?

- 8 A. Well, I received this letter -- when is it dated -- at9 some point in --
- 10 Q. October 2020.
- 11 A. -- in 2020 and I haven't heard anything subsequently so
  12 I think you can conclude from that that the answer is
  13 yes.
- 14 Q. That was the end of it?
- 15 A. (The witness nodded)
- Q. Okay. Can I just go back to what you and the Chief
   Executive, Paula Vennells, did say about the report and
   its recommendations at the time, to see, irrespective of
   the approach that BEIS and Government took subsequently,
   what information was disclosed, first by looking at
- 21 POL00158304.
- 22 **A.** And, by the way, may I say something on this letter before we move on?
- 24 Q. Absolutely.
- 25 A. Can we just --

are disappointed that it wasn't."

You mentioned earlier being taken aside in a corridor and being essentially chastised or told off. This is the written equivalent to that, isn't it?

- A. Yes, I think it definitely is, yes.
- 6 Q. "As a rule, we think it is quite difficult to envisage 7 any circumstances where issues of legal privilege or 8 confidentiality should prevent relevant information 9 being shared with a company's Board. You won't need us 10 to remind you of the importance of effective corporate 11 governance and that the role of the Board is to ensure 12 the company's prosperity by collectively directing the 13 company's affairs, while meeting the appropriate 14 interests of its shareholders and relevant 15 stakeholders."

Then there's a counterbalancing point or paragraph:

"Finally, we also recognise that while you have been chair and under Nick Read's new leadership, the Board has instigated a frontally different approach to handling the grievances bought by postmasters affected by Horizon as well as initiating significant changes to the organisation, processes and culture of the organisation. These are to be welcomed and we continue to encourage the company to act quickly and decisively to do what it can to remedy the remaining issues arising

- Q. Go back to the first page?
- 2 A. -- scroll back to the first page if that's all right.
- 3 Q. Then scroll down.
- 4 A. Okay. Let me -- I think again, at the risk of sounding
  5 a little boring on the subject, I think it's important
  6 to place what I would accept with hindsight was
  7 a misjudgement in context.
- 8 Q. Thank you.
- 9 A. So the first point to note is that I'm not a lawyer and
   10 I received very strong legal advice, which I took.

The second point is that I did that in good faith.

I had no reason to deliberately hide this thing or chuck it into the long grass.

And the third point to make is that it's easy, in the context of this Inquiry, to imagine that all the chairman is doing is looking after issues to do with Swift and looking after issues to do with Horizon, and I have to keep reminding you that that is not the case. There is an awful lot going on in this business and an awful lot of stuff that needs addressing. So having had, you know, a slap over the wrists from this, I can perfectly see the response but I think I'd just like you to bear in mind that there is context to these things, and that sometimes it's easy to overlook that.

25 Q. I think that context should include that, when you

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		The Post Om	ce Horizon I	ınq	uiry 3 July 2024
4		started working as Chairman you were working for	4		wrough, that complete what happened here was the
1		started working as Chairman, you were working for	1		wrongly that somehow what happened here was the
2		a minimum of one and a half days a week?	2		result of me not spending enough time at the Post
3	Α.	We can get into a discussion about what makes	3		Office, and I would certainly rebut that suggestion.
4	_	an effective time allocation	4		I would say that I was a very active, energetic
5	Q.	I was just asking a simple question, Mr Parker. When	5		chair who took a lot of time and spent time with people
6		you started, you were on a minimum of one and a half	6		to understand the business, and I certainly don't think
7		days a week?	7		the time, one and a half days, or whatever it is, was
8	Α.		8		the reason why I made this error of judgement, with
9	Q.	Yes.	9		hindsight.
10	Α.	Yes.	10	Q.	•
11	Q.	Then also a question of fact, in November 2017, you	11		This was the note I was going to move to, to look at
12		asked for that to be reduced to two days a month, didn't	12		what was said by you and the Chief Executive about the
13		you?	13		Swift Review at the time. These are speaking notes for
14	A.	I did. Can I also, as you've asked the question about	14		a Board meeting of 22 January 2016, seemingly a speaking
15		time, just explain to you a little bit about the	15		note of Ms Vennells. Can we go forwards, please, to
16		perspective of being a chair and time, and what makes	16		page 6, please, and scroll down, please.
17		an effective chair, based on the experience that I've	17		Thank you. Just there "Sparrow", "Chairman's
18		had. So being a chair is about a number of different	18		Review".
19		things and it certainly is about time spent in	19		Remember, this is 22 January 2016, before the final
20		a business. But it's also about the capacity to	20		report was received on 8 February:
21		understand business problems and the capacity to strike	21		"Jonathan Swift and Christopher Knight, the
22		up effective relationships with the key people in	22		barristers advising Tim Parker on the adequacy of scheme
23		a business, especially the CEO.	23		processes, shared their draft report with the chairman
24		So you asked the question, immediately after this,	24		last week. The report sets out a limited number of
25		about time with a slight implication, I suspect maybe 105	25		recommendations and [Post Office] will, where possible, 106
1		take these forward to demonstrate the highest possible	1		other things, which is reflective of the point you made
2		standards of rigour and fairness in the handling of the	2		a moment ago, Mr Parker, that this wasn't the only
3		Horizon related complaints."	3		issue. If we look at the penultimate bullet point:
4		Is this the kind of information, to your	4		"TP [that's you] updated on the Horizon
5		•	5		investigation. He said that the QC was about to report.
		recollection, that was provided to the Board, ie the			
6		extent of the information provided to the Board about	6		He had found no systemic problem. [Tim Parker] thought
7		the contents and recommendations of the Swift Review?	7		that the issue might have passed its peak interest."
8	Α.	Mm, I think she also had a table of the recommendations.	8		Firstly, did you say that to Baroness Neville-Rolfe?
9	_	But that's it. Yeah.	9	A.	I have no idea. I think I certainly would have
10	Q.	Was it your view that the report did set out only	10		commented that, as far as the computer system is
11		a limited number of recommendations?	11		concerned, coming back to our previous discussion, and
12	Α.	The way it's put there, it's sort of fairly kind of	12		I think it was reflective, broadly speaking, of what was
13		benign. I think it's set out eight/nine eight	13		in Swift, there wasn't a systemic problem, whatever
14		recommendations. I mean, it depends on your language,	14		"systemic" was understood to mean.
15		doesn't it?	15		In terms of the second thing, I think I must have
16	Q.	It might be said that underplays the overall outcome	16		just commented that, in terms of the press, it had at
17	A.	I think that's a you know, it you could say it's	17		that point passed peak interest and that might have been
18		a limited number because there aren't many or you could	18		in response to a question, or whatever. But that would
19		say it kind of gives the impression there's not much	19		have just been me commenting on that.
20		going on. Yeah.	20	Q.	Were they truly the takeaways from the Swift report, as

peak interest; rather than he's made eight recommendations of substance that need taking forwards,

23 24 they pose significant reputational issues, to Post

25 Office?

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"Main points". The first few bullet points concern 107

26 January 2016. Meeting between you, Baroness

Neville-Rolfe, Laura Thompson and Andrew Smith. Then

UKGI00006482. This is a couple of days later,

Q. Let's just look at what the Minister was told,

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reflected there: no systemic problem, issues passed its

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- 1 A. Do you know, I don't know. I mean, I'm not sure what
- the substance of the conversation is, or why, you know,
- 3 why those are the two sentences. I just can't tell you.
- 4 I just come back to what I said, which is that it was
- 5 a report which I think it was -- it wasn't the final
- 6 report at that point, was it? It was --
- 7 Q. No, not by this time.
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. I think the eight recommendations at this time were asthey were to appear.
- 11 A. They were, yeah, you're right.
- 12 Q. Lastly on this, then, before we break for lunch, can we
- look at POL00024913. Thank you. This is a formal
- 14 letter that you sent to Baroness Neville-Rolfe on
  - 4 March 2016. We were looking previously at a Board
- 16 meeting in January and a meeting with Baroness
- 17 Neville-Rolfe in January. This is therefore after the
- 18 8 February 2016 final report had been provided. You
- 19 say:

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- 20 "At our meeting on 26 January 2016, [that's the one 21 we just referred tol I provided you with an update on
- we just referred to] I provided you with an update on the work I have undertaken with the assistance of
- 23 Jonathan Swift and Christopher Knight, both of 11 [KBW]
- 24 Chambers to review the Post Office's handling of
- 25 complaints made by subpostmasters about the operation of
  - 109
- 1 A. That's exactly the case. Yeah.
- 2 Q. The letter continues:
  - "I am, of course, aware that once the additional strands of work I am pursuing are complete, we will need to find an appropriate method of communicating the results of my review to a wider audience."
  - In the first paragraph, you refer to "my initial findings" and in the second paragraph you refer to "my review". Had you made any findings and had you
- 10 conducted a review?
- 11 A. I think that's a little semantic. I mean, it was
- 12 conducted on my behalf and whether I sort of finessed
- the thing to suggest it was only me or my review,
- 14 I certainly took responsibility for it, which is the
- 15 main point, I suspect.
- 16 **Q.** The purpose of asking the question was not to delve into
- 17 semantics but was to understand whether you understood
- this to be your findings and your review, and whether
- 19 you had the opportunity to disagree with anything that
- 20 Mr Swift had recommended?
- 21 A. I think it's fair to say that, as I discussed earlier
- 22 this morning, I thought the Swift Report was a good
- 23 piece of work and it came out with some good, sensible
- 24 recommendations which I supported, and I did discuss the
- 25 report with Jonathan Swift so, at that point, I'm sure

the Horizon software system. I now write to set out further information about the approach to the review, the scope of work undertaken so far, and my initial findings. I also outline my plans to bring the work to a conclusion

"Before doing so, I wish to stress that this update, and the work which underpins it, reports on the legal advice I am currently receiving and is, accordingly, subject to legal professional privilege and provided in confidence."

11 What does that mean, that sentence?

discussions of this thing.

- A. I, again, followed the suggested text around legal
   advice, and there was this concern which I've -- I think
   I've highlighted around, you know, anything that goes
   into the hands of ministers and civil servants is
   potentially disclosable under Freedom of Information,
   and that seemed to be a concern that generally coloured
- 19 **Q.** In fairness to you, this was a letter drafted for you by
  20 Ms MacLeod and the draft of the letter was itself
  21 reviewed by Mr Swift before it was signed, and I think
  22 you were told by General Counsel that the letter had
  23 been amended to reflect amendments that he had

24 suggested. You cover that off in your witness statement

25 at paragraph 65.

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- 1 I felt happy and willing to take ownership of it.
- Q. You say under "Scope of the Review", "My objectives were
   as follows", and then you set out essentially the term
   of reference?
- 5 **A.** Mm.

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Q. Then if we go over the page, please, there is then, over the course of four pages, a summary of the headline findings of the review and the recommendations made against each of them. So, to that extent, the
 Government was informed of headline findings -- I'm not going to go through each of them now -- and the recommendations made.

If we go to the last page, please, page 4. If we just scroll through so you and others can see the detail that was included in the letter going to Government.

Thank you. Stop there. Under "Next steps":

"I have commissioned independent persons to undertake the necessary work. I am satisfied that they meet the standards of expertise and independence appropriate to the tasks.

"I ... share your aim that matters should be drawn to a conclusion as soon as possible consistent with the need for the work that remains to be done to a high standard. I hope that you understand that, particularly in relation to the further testing of the Horizon

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1 system, this work may take some time", there may be 2 a report in May.

Then skipping a paragraph, two matters:

"... as I have noted above, a number of subpostmasters have made applications to the [CCRC] for

the circumstances of their convictions to be looked into

7 with a view to those cases being brought back to the

8 Court of Appeal. That work is ongoing. Second, [JFSA]

is reported to have received funding to instigate civil

proceedings against the Post Office ... at the time of

11 writing, no claim has been issued nor any Letter of

12 Claim been received."

13 A. Mm-hm.

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- 14 Q. So, overall, you were, I think, advised to write
- a letter of this length and detail -- is that right --15
- 16 Α. Yes.
- 17 Q. -- and therefore, happy that this information was not
- itself information which would lose privilege? 18
- 19 A. That's quite an interesting point and I think the -- my
- 20 sense is that this letter was written, yeah, and it's
- 21 quite a good summary, I agree. And -- but I think that
- 22 it's probably trying to go as far as possible to outline
- 23 Swift without necessarily handing the report over.
- 24 MR BEER: Thank you.
- 25 Sir, it's 1.10. Can we break now, please, until
- 1 A. Ah, I'm sure we discussed it and, obviously, we ended up
- 2 with a selection of different people looking after
- 3 different recommendations, as I recall.
- 4 Q. Before coming to the issue of who carried some of the
- 5 recommendations into effect, was there a person who had
- 6 a responsibility for determining whether the
- 7 recommendations were taken forward or not?
- 8 A. As I understood it, the General Counsel.
- 9 Q. You also said that you thought that all of them were
- going to be taken forwards; is that right? 10
- A. Yes. 11
- Q. So she didn't have anything to determine? 12
- A. I didn't think so, no. 13
- 14 Q. Right.
- A. Yeah. 15
- Q. So your understanding was that all eight recommendations 16
- 17 were going to be taken forwards. What role did the
- 18 General Counsel, Jane MacLeod, therefore play?
- 19 Her role was to work with the relevant parties and Α.
- 20 report back to me.
- Q. Is that the role that you delegated to her, then --21
- 22 **A**. Exactly.
- 23 Q. -- rather than deciding which recommendations were or

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- 24 were not taken forwards?
- 25 A. I see your point. As I recall, there wasn't a debate

2.00? 1

- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course.
- MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir. 3
- THE WITNESS: Thank you. 4
- 5 (1.12 pm)
- (The Short Adjournment)
- 7 (2.00 pm)

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- MR BEER: Good afternoon, sir. Can you see and hear us?
- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes. 9
- MR BEER: Thank you very much. 10
- 11 Mr Parker can we turn to the recommendations, the
- 12 eight of them that Jonathan Swift made in his review. 13
- Who in your view was responsible for determining whether
- 14 and to what extent the recommendations should be taken
- 15 forwards?
- 16 A. So this responsibility I delegated to the General
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- 18 Q. Why did you delegate responsibility for deciding which
- 19 recommendations were to be taken forward to the General
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- 21 A. I rather assumed that all of the recommendations were
- 22 going to be taken forward.
- 23 Q. So I asked whose responsibility was it for determining
- 24 which recommendations were taken forward and you said
- 25 you delegated that to the General Counsel?
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- 1 about which recommendations but just to take all of them
- 2 forward with appropriate parties.
- 3 Q. Did it occur to you that the Board ought to play a role
- 4 in deciding the extent to which recommendations were
  - taken forwards and, if so, how they were to be taken
- 6 forwards?

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- 7 A. We had a situation after the report was completed where,
  - as I think I explained, the report wasn't shared with
- the Board and the understanding was the recommendations 9
- 10 would be taken forward, and my plan was to share the
- 11 outputs at that stage. So this was something that went
- 12 straight from the General Counsel to the relevant
- 13 parties, and so the Board was not involved, no.
- 14 Q. Was that a product of the legal privilege issue that we 15 discussed this morning?
- A. It was the product of the perception that I had with the 16
- legal privilege issue, yes. 17
- 18 Q. Thank you. Can we look, please, at POL00103190, and the
- 19 bottom email, please, 13 May 2016, Jane MacLeod to you:
- 20 "Here is my regular fortnightly update on the
- 21 progress of your review and the litigation."
- 22 Is it right that she provided an update regularly to 23
- 24 A. Yes. I mean, I'm sort of drawing that conclusion from 25
  - the first sentence, here.

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1	Q.	Was the relationship between you and Jane MacLeod
2		essentially one-to-one, ie you saw her as driving the
3		recommendations forward as appropriate on your behalf?

A. Yes, I think that's a fair characterisation.

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She says -- we can look at these quickly:

"Helpline -- In relation to the allegation that our Helpline may have provided incorrect advice to the subpostmasters which resulted in a loss to the accounts, Bond Dickinson (the external firm conducting the work) has now completed its investigations. Although some investigations were limited because certain records are no longer available and there were inaccuracies in the information provided by complainants, their draft report reveals that there is no evidence to support the allegations that have been made. We are currently reviewing the report ahead of sharing it with Jonathan Swift to seek his view as to whether it sufficiently discharges his recommend in this areas, but we are confident that it should."

Then:

"Horizon System -- We have had further meetings with Deloitte in relation to the extent of the work necessary to discharge Jonathan's 3 recommendations on the testing of Horizon, and they have begun work on the substantive phase of that work. It is, by its nature, an iterative

Does that reflect the fact that the report had been provided to you in draft in January, in final version on the 8 February, and it was now mid-May, and the work was inchoate?

- 5 A. I think that's true. That's what I was expressing at 6
- 7 Q. Did you pick up from the chain that the recommendations 8 made by Mr Swift were being trimmed?
- 9 A. No. Not especially. Why -- what is behind the --
- 10 Q. Altered?
- 11 A. I don't think so.
- 12 Q. I mean, to take an example, over the page, "Prosecution 13 Practice":
  - "... Swift has confirmed that [Altman] can limit his review to 19 cases presenting specific features and then decide on the basis of those features whether to extend the exercise."

That wasn't of the initial recommendation. The recommendation was to review all of the cases, if you remember the recommendation number 1 and 2.

A. I see your point. I think I would have taken that at 22 face value to mean that she had talked to Jonathan Swift 23 and, between them, they'd taken a view that that was going to respond to the recommendation adequately.

> I hadn't picked up, to be honest, that things were 119

process in that, dependent on early results, further decisions then need to be made on whether or not to explore further ... I have asked the new [CIO], Rob Houghton, to review the process undertaken by Deloitte, to sense check these further decisions.

"Suspense accounts -- ... Deloitte are also conducting the work, into the existence and nature of the relationship between [Post Office's] suspense accounts and specific branch accounts over the relevant period. This is a materially different exercise to the IT testing, and I understand that most of the relevant accounting processes were/are paper-based records and manual reconciliations ...

"Prosecution practice -- Jonathan Swift has confirmed that Brian Altman can limit his initial review to those 19 cases presenting the specific features of double charges in question, and decide on the basis of those findings whether to extend the exercise. That work is ongoing."

If we go back to the top of the page, page 1, you say:

"I think there will be frustration at the time this is taking (indeed I am also beginning to get somewhat frustrated). So what is now the projected timetable for completion on the components of the action list?" 118

being, to use your phrase, trimmed, as such.

- 2 Q. Can we go forwards, please, to POL00241554. We can see 3 at the foot of the page your email, "there will ... be
- 4 frustration", yes?
- 5 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 6 Q. Then top of the page, please. You'll see that Jane 7 MacLeod forwards the email to -- circulates the email to a small team of people: Patrick Bourke, Mark Underwood 8 and Rodric Williams. 9
- 10 A. The very same people who received the copy of the original Swift Report. 11
- 12 So it's the same select few? Q.
- 13 Exactly.

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14 Q. "Please see email from Tim below.

"I think it would be helpful to be able to respond with the status of each of the 8(?) actions that were being carried forward, a description of the remaining work and the expected completion time.

"... we should consider the work being done by Deloitte and how far we want to address the questions posed by Jonathan."

Just stopping there, was it for this small team to decide how far "we" -- presumably the four of them -want to go to address the questions posed by Jonathan Swift?

A. So I think I come back to where I started on this, which is that I assumed -- perhaps wrongly in retrospect -but I assumed that the General Counsel's team were (a) competent, (b) would do things in good faith, and (c) would respond effectively to the recommendations of the report.

Now, you know, when you get to see these emails that are shown to me, or form part of the evidence base which are what's going on, as it were, behind the scenes, it kind of puts a different complexion on things, a little bit. So the reason I mention all of that is that, you know, I'm expressing to you what seemed to me to be the case. Behind the scenes, of course, you find that, you know, the motives for doing things perhaps are not quite as straightforward as one might have imagined.

- 16 Q. There's no suggestion from me, at least, that this email
   17 was provided to you. Was it right for this team to be
   18 seemingly determining whether the recommendations were
   19 taken forwards and, if so, in what way?
- **A.** So in the world that I normally exist in, I have people
  21 working for me, and they have a job to do, and if I ask
  22 them to do a job they understand and it's correctly
  23 specified. Until I got to the Post Office, I think I'm
  24 right in saying that, throughout my career, I have found
  25 that people went and did what was asked of them with
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Again, that's a similar point, ie the team determining value to be obtained from further work, in part based on the extent to which something can be said about the results of it. Does the same answer that you gave a moment ago apply?

- A. I can see your point. If I may make one general observation about this sort of backward-looking, what were people doing eight years ago, type of thing, you can only look at the evidence that you have on a piece of paper and people write sentences which can or cannot reflect truly what was going on. So I'm not here to, you know, doubt what is actually written here. But sometimes things that are recorded don't exactly reflect what people were doing at the time. I don't know in this case but I just think it's worth bearing in mind that you cannot take every sentence that is written and that you read as gospel in this context.
- 18 Q. That's certainly the case: a number of people have sat
   in your chair and said that what they wrote does not
   reflect what they meant at all.
- 21 A. Um, very good!
- Q. Can we move on to POL00103214. Look at page 2, please,and just scroll down. Thank you.
  - It's an email later that month, we were just looking at 14 May, we're now looking at 27 May, to you, and 123

suitable determination and suitable application of their abilities.

And so you -- in retrospect, you might say, well,
these are not the right people because here we are at
the Post Office. But I can only tell you that, under
normal conditions, they should and would have been the
right people and could well have carried out these
recommendations effectively.

Q. Can I ask you two questions arising from that. Do
I take it from that answer that, if you had known that
this small team had taken upon itself the function of
deciding how far to go to discharge a recommendation,

13 you would have had something to say about it?

A. I would have been concerned. I mean, it was
 straightforward, "Here are the recommendations", you
 know, "Let's go and do something about them".

17 Q. The second thing is that you didn't, therefore, know at
 18 the time that this subsurface internal debate within
 19 a select team within Post Office was going on?

20 A. No.

21 Q. The email continues:

"Given the litigation, I suspect there is even less we are going to be able to say about the results of the further work, so we need to consider the value to be obtained from each step."

Ms MacLeod says:

"As flagged at the Board letter this week, I hosted a call with Jonathan Swift today ask what, in his view, would be a reasonable course of action for you to take in relation to his recommendations as to the further lines of inquiry which could be undertaken, now that the [Post Office] faces litigation covering essentially the same ground."

So just stopping there, can you recall who told you and how about litigation being threatened against the Post Office on behalf of subpostmasters?

A. I believe I must have been told, at some point after the
 receipt of the letter of claim -- now the letter of
 claim I think came in the middle of April or end of
 April, something like that.

Q. Can you recall whether you were told that this may have
 an impact on the extent to which the eight Swift
 recommendations could be carried into effect?

A. I can't, to be honest. I can't tell you whether this
 was the first, you know, glimmer of this happening.

21 Q. That's essentially what I'm driving at.

22 A. Honestly, I can't tell you for sure.

23 Q. In any event, Ms MacLeod reports:

"In summary, Jonathan felt that Tony (that should be de Garr Robinson QC] (the barrister retained to advise

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[Post Office] on its defence to the proceedings) should first be requested to advise [Post Office] whether in light of the litigation, the various works teams should be continued, paused or redefined."

That's essentially telling you that she went off to Mr Swift, who said, "Don't ask me in the first instance, go to the person that's conducting the civil litigation, de Garr Robinson QC, and ask him", yes?

- A. That is exactly as I understood with hindsight is what
   happened, yes.
- "We will send instructions to [Mr de Garr Robinson] 11 Q. 12 early next week and expect to have this advice 13 relatively quickly. Once this advice has been received, 14 Jonathan has said that he would be happy to discuss with 15 you how best to take this forward in the context of your 16 review, as well as considering how to position this with 17 [Baroness Neville-Rolfe] and others with knowledge of 18 and interest in the review."

Was this your main means of communication with Jane MacLeod, ie email, rather than attending the office and having meetings?

- A. I'm sure we spoke about it. I'm sure she just sent mean email about it.
- Q. You think there was discussion outside of the email aswell?

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- Q. It contained recommendations that went to the issue of
   uncovering potential miscarriages of justice?
- 3 A. It did.

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- 4 Q. It plainly took a long time to research and complete andit was a comprehensive report, wasn't it?
- 6 A. Mm-hm, indeed.
- Q. Given that one of the reasons for undertaking the review and some of the recommendations from it related to
   matters touching on the safety of criminal convictions,
   did it occur to you that undertaking the recommendations
   through the aegis of civil litigation against the Post
   Office was not the right way forwards?
  - A. So I think we're back to this question of, in this kind of situation, which I had very little experience of hitherto, receiving advice from senior counsel on a legal matter, very strong advice, apparently, I took that advice and I assumed -- perhaps erroneously -- that the General Counsel, who also herself was a lawyer, would have considered and appreciated any implications, ramifications of doing this, in terms of how the Swift Report was carried forward.

So it's a very difficult question because, you know, when you look at these things in hindsight, you say, well, you could have spent some more time discussing it, or you could have had your own view, or you could have

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A. I honestly can't confirm that.

Q. Can we go forward to page 1, please, and scroll down.
 On 10 June, Jane MacLeod writes further to the email
 we've just looked at, and says:

"... we met with Tony [de Garr] Robinson last night to discuss the Postmaster Litigation. In the course of that discussion we asked him for his advice as to whether the work being undertaken for the purposes of your review should be continued.

"His strong advice was that the work being undertaken under the aegis of your review should not continue in the light of the litigation. However, he also recommended that the subject matter of that work should continue, provided it is rescoped and re-instructed for the purposes of the litigation.

"Clearly you will need to inform the Minister and we will prepare a form of words ..."

Over the page, sign-off from Jane MacLeod.

19 Then top of the page 1:

20 "Let us meet to discuss on Thursday."

21 Yes?

22 A. Looks that way, yes.

Q. Now, the Swift Review was a significant piece of work,wasn't it?

25 **A.** It was.

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done this. The problem with experts or specialists is,
how do you judge the view of the specialist? Do you get
another specialist to advise you on the specialist or do
you draw the conclusion that your judgement of the
specialist was wrong and the specialist you got is no
good, or that the General Counsel who was advising you
is somehow incompetent, or the whole bunch of them have

somehow, some rather nefarious underhand objective of
 potentially holding things up?
 I'm not sure. But, at the time, I took at face

value what I thought was good advice and the right
 advice from people who apparently were qualified to give
 it.

Q. So is a summary of that answer that you thought it
 reasonable to rely on the advice of your General Counsel
 who had asked the silk the very question that you needed
 to be answered, and he had provided an advice which was

18 said to be very strong?

A. I am -- all I'm saying -- and you're right, it's not
 a bad summary of my 10 or 12 sentences -- that whether
 it came from Mr Swift or and with Jane MacLeod, they're

22 both lawyers, they both understand what's in the report,

23 they are and were both qualified or -- and certainly he

24 was -- to give a view. Yes.

25 Q. Do I take it that it didn't occur at the time that what

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1	might be in Post Office's narrow interests in the
2	conduct of the civil litigation might not be in the

3 wider interests of wrongly convicted subpostmasters?

- 4 A. So I think we're touching on this question of -- with
- 5 hindsight, of course, it would appear that there were
- 6 motives perhaps underpinning some of the advice or the
- 7 direction of this that were not wholly fair or right or
- 8 in the interests of people who had been wronged. At the
- 9 time, however, it seemed to me that the people giving me
- advice should be and were doing this in good faith, and
- 11 it was the right thing to do.
- 12 Q. Thank you, can we move forwards. POL00242402. If we
- can go to page 4, please, this is a chain that you're
- 14 not copied in on but it attributes to you and to the
- 15 Post Office some beliefs or intentions. So I want to
- 16 ask you about them. It's 8 June now, an email from
- 17 Andrew Parsons, the partner at the firm of solicitors
- 18 that the Post Office was using to defend the threatened
- 19 litigation, to Anthony de Garr Robinson, and he says:
- 20 "Ton
- 21 "I met with the Post Office litigation steering
- 22 group yesterday."
- 23 Just stop there: were you a member of the litigation
- 24 steering group?

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- A. I wasn't.
  - 129
- would be ill-advised. Was that a message that came from you?
- 3 A. You mean this, about magic QC seals and --
- 4 Q. No, put aside the magic QC seal. The description of
- 5 Post Office are looking to us for reasons not to
- 6 complete the recommendations.
- 7 A. Yeah, well, you know, again, as you said at the outset,
- 8 this is something that's going on without my knowledge.
- 9 Q. That was the question --
- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. -- was this going on without your knowledge?
- 12 A. No, and, just to be clear, it was without my knowledge.
- 13 Q. So you weren't looking for lawyers to come up with
- 14 reasons not to do or undertake the Swift
- 15 recommendations?
- 16 **A.** No.
- 17 Q. Do you know who was? It's described here as "POL are
- 18 looking to us".
- 19 A. Yes, I see that. I certainly wasn't part of the "Hey,
- 20 you know, can you get Tony to give us some reasons why
- 21 we should let up on this".
- 22 Q. Yes, some top cover --
- 23 **A.** No.
- 24 Q. -- some legal insurance, or some other such phrases I've

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25 heard in my career. That wasn't coming from you?

- Q. Do you know who it consisted of?
- A. I do. I'd have to have a piece of paper in front of me
   but, in summary, it was a collection of Post Office
  - Executives and specialists and legal people.
- 5 Q. "Their approach to [Jonathan Swift's] recommendations6 has shifted slightly.

"Tim Parker ... feels that he has made a commitment to Baroness Neville-Rolfe ... to follow through on the [Swift] recommendations unless he is presented with a persuasive case not to do so."

Is that accurate, that you felt at this time that you'd made a commitment to the Minister to follow through on the recommendations, unless you were presented with a persuasive case not to?

- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. So that's accurate. Then:

17 "[Post Office] are ... looking to us (and quite 18 frankly you with your magic QC seal!) to give them some 19 reasons for why Tim completing the [Swift] 20 recommendations would be ill-advised."

First, Post Office are looking to us, ie to the lawyers and to Mr de Garr Robinson, to sprinkle some magic dust on the answer --

24 **A.** Mm

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- 25 **Q.** -- for reasons why completion of the recommendations
- 1 A. That wasn't coming from me.
- Q. Did you know, in any way, that there was a group ofpeople within the Post Office looking to stifle or end
- 4 the carrying into effect of the Swift recommendations?
- 5 A. The answer to that question is no.
- 6 Q. If we scroll down:
  - "... the recommendations we are talking about are", and then they're set out, 1, 2 and 3:

"My view [that's Mr Parson's view] is that these three recommendations plainly overlap with the issues in the litigation. I can see three reasons why Tim should not 'conduct' the above investigations:

"1. We, the litigation team, will need to investigate these points ... We will probably need to do this on a different timetable to Tim (we having a degree of time pressure; Tim under less time pressure). We will also probably require a more robust investigation given that these points could be tested in court. Two parallel reviews would be wasteful and could cause unknown complications should they reach contradictory results."

Was any of this reasoning explained to you for not simply carrying into effect the Swift recommendations?

- 24 A. No. I had certainly not this kind of rationale, no.
- 25 Q. "2. If these investigations are conducted by Tim there

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1 is a greater risk that this work is not privileged ... 2 It would be much safer for these investigations to be 3 conducted as part of the litigation."

Was that explained to you?

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- A. No. I think the one -- you know, the one sort of view I had was that this review should be stopped and repurposed as part of the litigation and, because of the litigation, the work would continue to be privileged.
- 9 "3. Even if the risk in 2 above could be guarded Q. 10 against (say by classing it as part of the [Jonathan 11 Swift's] ongoing advice to [Tim Parker] --12 questionable???), I cannot see how [Tim Parker] could 13 disclose the results of these investigations to [the 14 Department] without a risk of waiving privilege 15 (particularly where there is a possibility that 16 [Baroness Neville-Rolfe] may then speak to James 17 Arbuthnot or [Post Office/BIS] could be the subject of 18 a [FOIA] request."

Was that explained to you as a reason for not carrying into effect the Swift recommendations or any of them?

22 Α. No, essentially what I got out of all that was what you 23 saw in, you know, a couple of papers ago, which is the 24 strong -- the -- I can't remember the exact description, 25 but it was something like the "strong advice" -- on the 133

1 last paragraph implicates you, in the sense that it says 2 that you would feel empowered to say, on the basis of 3 legal advice, you are ceasing your review, and that 4 they, the lawyers, are being asked to provide political 5 cover for you, neither of those things are things that 6 you asked for?

- 7 A. No. I got the advice and then used it, you know, used 8 the advice to essentially communicate with BEIS.
- 9 Q. So you weren't --
- 10 A. It wasn't -- I didn't feel empowered myself. I wasn't 11 aware of being empowered, because, you know, I wanted 12 a reason to go and tell BEIS the thing was being 13 discontinued. I received that advice and, as a result 14 of getting that advice, I went and then communicated it 15 to the civil servants and onwards to the Minister.
- Q. Can we move forward, please, to POL00242552. 16

If we just go to page 3, please. Just to remind you, the foot of page 3:

"we met with Tony Robinson [sic] to discuss the Postmaster Litigation."

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Second paragraph:

"His strong advice was that work being undertaken under the aegis of your review should not continue ..."

24 Yes --

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A. Yes. 1 strong advice of senior counsel, the work should be 2 discontinued and repurposed. I can't remember the exact 3 form of words but that is the advice that I received.

4 Q. "If we can give [Post Office] a piece of advice that 5 says [you] should stop any further work, [you] would 6 then feel empowered to say to [the Department] that, on 7 the basis of legal advice, he is ceasing his review. 8 I'm conscious that this feels somewhat unpleasant in 9 that we are being asked to provide political cover for 10 [Tim Parker]. However ... shutting down [Tim Parker's] 11 review is, in my view, still the right thing to do."

> The way that last paragraph reads, would you agree, is it implicates you somewhat in the making of the

15 A. Well, I mean, I certainly was not aware of all of this 16 stuff going on, as it were, and it certainly looks 17 a little bit like, you know, these guys are marionettes 18 and I'm doing my little thing in response to bits and 19 pieces that they're putting forward. And that's, you 20 know, very disappointing with hindsight because you --21 as I was explaining earlier, you expect to get advice 22 from lawyers in good faith, you know, good motives and 23 a good rationale, and I assumed that was what I was 24 getting. 25

Q. So, directly to answer my point, to the extent that this

1 Q. -- 10 June? Then page 2 at the bottom, please, 14 June, "See below", that's that chain, and your reply saying, 2 3 "Let's discuss on Thursday". Jane MacLeod and Rodric 4 Williams and Patrick Bourke in email discussion: 5 "... Any approved messaging we want to get across?"

Did you know that the small select team were formulating messaging for you?

8 A.

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9 Q. Up the page, please:

10 "In terms of messages to Tim and from Tim to [Baroness Neville-Rolfe], I think we're going to have to 12 address the issue head on: the litigation makes the 13 Review irrelevant since the issues to be considered will 14 be put to a higher standard of testing in the courts 15

16 Was that ever explained to you, that the review was 17 now irrelevant?

- A. I can't remember that it was explained in those terms, 18 19
- 20 Q. Because of, it is said, a higher standard of testing in 21 the courts; that wasn't ever explained to you?
- 22 A. I can't be sure. I mean, I think the main reason this 23 ended up where it did was the advice I referred to 24 earlier, which is the strong advice from external

25 counsel.

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Whether or not this was added, you know, as a sort of rationale, I can't be sure.

3 Q. The email continues:

> "... to continue would be fruitless since we couldn't use its output, senseless in terms of expenditure, and present unnecessary risk to the organisation's legal position."

Were those reasons for the review being irrelevant put to you?

10 A. No.

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Q. "It is, to my mind, in any event, now clearer than ever that Review (or indeed any other exercise not involving a third party adjudicator (not mediator)) just isn't capable of putting these issues to bed in the minds of some. That does not need to be pitched as a bad thing: yes, it frustrates the Review and is 'uncomfortable', but it has the clear merit of being independently determined and final. Indeed, before you joined I was racking my brain, with others, about how we might find a way of getting these cases or one of them to the court. None of this [is] new, but I do think the trick will be in the 'sell'. Anyway that's my view ..."

Was it explained to you that the view was irrelevant because it wasn't capable of putting issues to bed in the minds of some?

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a very large volume of contemporaneous material that explains your conduct and the conduct of those around, you.

4 A. Mm, mm.

> Q. Just a few topics, if I may. Firstly, can we look, please, at the one of the first excursions into court and the outcome of it, namely the strikeout application, by looking at POL00103351, and look at the foot of the page, please. We're now in October 2018. It's an email to you, copied to others, from Jane MacLeod and she says:

"I understand Tom Cooper has recommended you read the judgment from the hearing last week."

It's attached:

"We received the decision on Monday evening and the decision rejects our application for strikeout of the significant parts of the evidence ['contained', I think that should say] in the claimants' witness statements.

"The application was decided on case management grounds for which the managing judge has considerable discretion; applying that discretion, the managing judge set a very high threshold for strikeout, and concluded that we had not established to the necessary standard that the claimants' evidence could never be relevant to the case, given the number of Common Issues; the

A. All of these ruminations which is from -- is it Patrick Bourke?

3 Q. Yes, this is --

4 A. Patrick Bourke -- you know, I had, as I've explained 5 twice -- the way it was represented to me was that 6 de Garr Robinson, who was the senior counsel, advised, 7 on strong advice, that the report should be discontinued 8 and repurposed. I can't ever remember receiving all of q the -- you know, the product of this kind of thought 10 piece or whatever, you know, justificatory type logic, 11

12 It might not just be a thought piece of justificatory Q. 13 logic, it might be revelatory of the true reasons 14 operating on some people's minds for not continuing with 15 the Swift recommendations and they were instead badged 16 up to you as needing to be stopped because a silk had 17 said so in strong terms?

18 A. You know, it looks that way, doesn't it?

19 Q. Thank you very much. They're the only questions I'm 20 going to ask you about the Swift Review.

> Can we turn to a separate topic, please the conduct of the Group Litigation. You've addressed this in very considerable detail in your witness statement and, therefore, I'm not going to ask you about a lot of it because you have exhibited to your witness statement 138

'considerable legal analysis' each will require; and what our case on those issues is ... he confirmed that he will apply properly the law on admissibility when it comes to trial, and the November 2018 Common Issues Trial will not rule on matters which concern Horizon or whether Post Office actually 'breached' its obligations to the claimants (matters to which most of the disputed evidence goes and which will be dealt with in later trials).

"As previously advised, this is consistent with the managing judge's approach of wanting to give the claimants their 'day in court' while applying the orthodox legal position. That said, we lost the application and can expect the claimants to be awarded their costs when that question is dealt with on the first day of the trial (estimated to be £120,000).

"In deciding the application, the managing judge was critical about conduct of the case (see particularly paragraphs 55-57), including intimating that we were not acting go relatively and constructively in trying to resolve this litigation (which criticism was levelled equally between the parties); and that we had impugned the court and its processes by making the application for improper purposes. This response is extremely disappointing given the approach that we have been

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adopting, and his challenge as to the purpose which we had applied for strike out is at odds with comments he made during the various procedural hearings over the past year. Nevertheless, we are refining our preparation for trial -- including our reactive communications plan -- in the context of the judge's remarks."

Then back to page 1. You say:

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"Thanks ... I've read the judgment, and the judge does seem to be somewhat negative about our efforts to take out elements of the evidence, even if he does acknowledge that both sides have been uncooperative with each other in the management of the case. My worry is that some of his points at the end betray what looks like an inherent dislike of our 'aggressive' approach to the individual claimants as well as an 'aggressive' approach to litigation, as well as a rap over the knuckles regarding what the judge sees as using negative PR as part of our argument. Interesting to know whether this initial response from him suggests any change of tack on our part."

So I think would it be fair to say you were concerned about the judge's criticism of the Post Office?

25 A. Yes. Was this -- just to be clear, was this the case

1 I was asking the question.

2 Q. So you say at the end:

3 "Interesting to know if this initial response from 4 him suggests any change of tack on our part."

Is that a question back to Jane MacLeod?

- 6 Α. Yes. I think -- you know, and obviously -- without 7 wanting to sort of immediately prod and say, "Look it 8 looks like you're wrong", I'm inviting a comment.
- 9 Q. That leads me to the question: what role did you play, therefore, in setting or amending the Post Office's 10 11

strategy in the Group Litigation?

- A. So I think you'll see, I don't know if there's another 12 13 email chain subsequently, where the point is made to 14 Jane, and there are various responses around a change of 15 tack, et cetera, et cetera. Somewhere, I think.
- Q. I think that's much later. 16
- 17 A. Is it? I'm sorry, there's so many documents it's hard

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- 19 Q. Yes.
- 20 A. So I'm not -- I mean, I can't tell you, if we don't have 21 any documents, exactly what the output of this was. At 22 this stage, you know, there's obviously some concern, 23 but -- and the point has been made. I'm not quite sure 24 what happened as a consequence of me inviting some kind

25 of response here. 1 management conference number 2? I'm just trying to, you

2 know, get the chronology. So we had case management

3 conference number 1, at which point he was quite

4 critical of both parties, who he said were being

5 uncooperative.

6 Q. I think that was in March '17?

7 And this is number 2. is it?

8 Q. I don't think it's CMC number 2. I think's a separate 9 strikeout application.

10 A. Okay, so progressively the judge, as I read things,

11 became more critical and what began as a sort of fairly

even-handed criticism of both parties, I think, by this

13 time he, you know, had started to become somewhat

14 critical of the Post Office, and that's why I suspect

15 I asked, you know, "So what do people think of this,

16 actually?"

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17 **Q.** The words that were reported to you and which appear in the judgment -- namely that the Post Office had made the 18

19 application for "improper purposes" -- are quite strong,

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21 A. They are, and also, one of our people apparently -- this

22 is the PR reference -- I think said something like they

23 felt some of the additional evidence could potentially

24 damage the reputation. I can't remember what the -- so

25 I knew what the issues were and that was really why 142

1 Q. So back to the question of what role did you perform:

2 you weren't a member of the litigation steering

3 committee?

4 A. Well, by this time, I may be wrong, this is 2018 --

5 Q. October '18.

6 A. -- we had formed the Board subcommittee and so I'm not

7 quite sure whether this is in the context of the

8 executives or whether this is something that was going

through the Board committee. I would presume that this 9

10 was an exchange between myself and the executives.

11 Q. Is that because of those that are copied in on it?

12 A. I'm assuming that, yeah.

13 Again, approaching the question from a different

14 perspective, who determined the Post Office's litigation

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16 A. So, at that point, we had a board subcommittee and the

17 arrangement was that the executives managed the

18 day-to-day elements of the litigation and were required

19 to escalate any significant decisions to the Board's

20 subcommittee.

21 Q. Did Government have any role in the strategy that the

22 Post Office took to the litigation?

23 A. Well, Tom Cooper was a member of the Board subcommittee, 24 and one of the key reasons he was a member of the Board

25 subcommittee was because he was the BEIS representative

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1		on the Board.
2	Q.	Can we turn forwards, then, to POL00103352, foot of the

page. Same day, 18 October, 10.30:

"Tim

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"Have you seen the judgment from the other day? It's worth a read."

Then further up the page, your reply, same day, at 2.00:

"I've now read it. Judge is critical of both parties, but already sense he is not well disposed to us -- the word 'aggressive' is used a couple of times in connection with us, in relation to the inadmissible evidence claim, and the treatment of [a subpostmaster]. The tone of his comments on the comments at the end, on the Common Issues trial, and the purported objection on our part for PR reasons, is definitely not helpful. I've asked for an update on whether this ruling and its tone, suggests any change of tack."

- 19 A. Yes, so that was the chain that I was referring to 20 earlier, where I think we picked up, you know, the 21 critical comments of the judge, and at that point was
- 22 asking, "So, guys, what are you going to do about this?" 23 Q. So what happened as a result? You've asked directly 24 Jane MacLeod, copied to Paula Vennells, does what has
- 25 happened on this occasion, resulting in the publication 145

1 committee as appropriate.

- Q. We shouldn't see this kind of communication as the -a means at which strategy was decided or carried into effect?
- 5 A. Well, I suppose in a way you've got myself, Tom Cooper 6 and I'm not sure if, at some juncture, Ken McCall, who 7 was the -- another member of the committee -- would have 8 been involved in this, but, I mean, it at least is being 9 dealt with and two significant members of the committee 10 are aware of it.
- 11 Q. Thank you. Can we move forwards, please, to March 2019, 12 to look at the recusal application. Can we start by looking at POL00023898, and look at page 2, please. 13 14 An email of 15 March 2019 from Jane MacLeod to you, Tom 15 Cooper and Alisdair Cameron. She says:

"As flagged on the Board call on Tuesday, we have sought further advice on appeals and as to whether we have grounds to request the judge to recuse himself on the grounds of bias."

So I think the Board call previously was the Tuesday of that week:

"We sought advice from Lord Neuberger who stepped down last year as President of the Supreme Court (and ... was the highest judge in the [United Kingdon]). We sought his views as to whether the draft judgment

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1 of this judgment, suggest a change of tack? UKGI have 2 sent the same judgment to you, saying it's 3 an interesting read. You've replied saying exactly what

you've done. What happened?

6 I don't know if someone can bring it up, but there is a subsequent email chain and someone has spoken to Jane, 7 8 and I think it was Paula Vennells summarised a list of 9 outputs from that discussion, which -- I can't remember 10 which document is relevant to this. But there is one.

A. Yeah, so Tom and I were colleagues on this committee and

11 Q. I will endeavour to search for that whilst other people 12 ask you some questions because I don't have it at my 13 fingertips at the moment.

> So is the answer, then, that the primary vehicle for setting the strategy was the subcommittee?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. But there were back channels of communication, such as 18 this one, in which members of the subcommittee 19 communicate?

20 A. Yes, I think the broad -- I can't remember the -- there 21 is a document somewhere with the terms of reference of 22 the subcommittee and, from memory, it makes fairly clear 23 that the management of the litigation is by the 24 subcommittee and executives, who manage the thing on 25 a day-to-day basis, need to escalate matters to the 146

demonstrated the following grounds for appeal:

"Whether the injured has correctly interpreted and applied the law as to construction of a document or application of a principle of law;

"Whether there are grounds to argue that findings have been made as a result of serious procedural irregularity (which goes to the admission of, and reliance on, among other issues, inadmissible evidence);

"(most urgently) Whether Mr Justice Fraser demonstrated grounds on which we could apply for him to recuse himself.

"The test for recusal is 'whether the fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts, would conclude that there is a real possibility that the [judge] was biased'.

"Attached is Lord Neuberger's preliminary [note] ([the note he refers to is] put together by David Cavender summarising the key extracts of the judgment and trial transcript). As you will see in paragraph 5 [he] states that although he has only looked at the issues very cursorily 'at least some of them raise quite significant points on which the [Post Office] has a reasonable case, and at least on the face of it, some points on which the [Post Office] has a pretty strong

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1 case'.

"... he suggests that if we wish to rely on the ground of procedural unfairness at an appeal, then 'Post Office has little option but to seek to get the judge to recuse himself at this stage' and in paragraph 20 that if we fail to act promptly ... we 'risk being held to have waived [our] rights, or at least weakened our position on the recusal issue'."

There is a timetable.

The risks are:

"[If] The application is successful and the ... trial is adjourned ... we proceed with an appeal on the Common Issues Trial ... and a new judge is put in place

"The application is unsuccessful ... then it is likely that the judge is further antagonised, however he will be aware that the Common Issues trial is progressing which includes 'procedural unfairness' assertion. Possible impact in that scenario is that the judge is more cautious to as behaviours to (possibly) [Post Office's] benefit."

Over the page:

"The theoretical downside to a recusal application is that it fails and that Fraser remains the judge at Trial 3 which will require multiple findings of fact 149

many postmasters had been convicted and, in the same way, in a funny kind of way, this -- if I had had some meaningful statistics, I think if all of us had had some meaningful statistics about how often judges are recused, we might have looked at this in a slightly different way because I have a suspicion it isn't very often.

And I think one of the problems was that, you know, if you take advice out of the context of the frequency of the events you're trying to evaluate, you sometimes end up with a slightly distorted view of things. And so, you know, my gut feel -- and I'd had something to do with judges -- was this, you know -- I was a little bit uneasy. I have to say.

- 15 Q. What was the cause of your unease?
- A. Simply the fact that, you know, it's quite a big deal to
   get a judge to accept that they had made a judgment that
   was wrong on technical grounds.
- Q. Can we go forwards, please, to POL00103446, and scroll down to the foot of that page, please. Thank you.
   Slightly difficult to decode exactly what's going on but it's an email to you of 16 March, and Jane MacLeod says:

"Below is my high level summary of the call today."

If we go to the foot of that page there, where the summary begins:

which are more tricky to appeal.

"We should also not proceed with this course of action unless we are prepared to appeal a decision by him not to recuse himself.

"... I propose today to brief a further senior silk (probably Lord Grabiner) to act on the recusal application ...

"Next steps

"... this is clearly a Board decision and we would need to give the Board time to consider the options ..."

Then some practical arrangements given that LordNeuberger was in Argentina.

Do you recall the issue of the recusal of Mr JusticeFraser being raised in this way?

15 A. Yes.

Q. What was your initial reaction, if you had one, to the
 suggestion that the Post Office should apply to a judge
 to recuse himself on the grounds that he was apparently
 biased?

**A.** If I'm honest, an element of unease. In a way, this
21 is -- it's a bit analogous to what I mentioned at the
22 outset of today, which is one of the things that would
23 have held to frame this kind of decision and, indeed,
24 the decision that were made at the beginning of this
25 thing, would have been to know, for example, exactly how

"Participants: Kelly Tolhurst MP, Tom Cooper (UKGI), Gavin Lambert (BEIS), [you], Al Cameron, Jane MacLeod ..."

Then the text of Jane MacLeod's high level summary commences, and it goes over the page, and if we go to page 3, please, and if we look at the second bullet point down.

"TP [that's you] replied that we have a Board call on Monday evening at which we will discuss issues around the judge's bias and how that could impact subsequent trials. Although his [your] initial reaction is that this is not something the Board is likely to want to do, the Board must act in the best interests of the company so we need to consider that option seriously. If we are to make the application, we understand that it must be made urgently and should not be delayed", et cetera.

Firstly, why were you having a meeting or a call with Kelly Tolhurst MP about, amongst other things, the judge's recusal?

A. Well, by that time -- so just to give the background, so Tom Cooper was a member of the Post Office litigation subcommittee and, by that time, because not least the judgment in the Common Issues trial had been received, and it was so damning, by that time, I think the department was becoming worried, concerned and wanted

a higher level of involvement. And Kelly Tolhurst was a relatively new -- because it was a fairly actively fast resolving door over there -- she was the relatively new Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at what was called BEIS at that time, I think.

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So the reason she was involved was that, you know, Tom, I think, felt it was necessary to get the Minister directly aware and involved in potential decisions that were being made around the judge's recusal.

- 10 Q. What part did Government therefore play in deciding 11 whether to apply for the judge's recusal?
- 12 My assumption is -- and I've no means of telling from Α. 13 this or indeed where I sit now -- is that Tom Cooper's 14 role was as the Department's representative on the Board 15 and this Board subcommittee. As it happens, he recused 16 himself from the decision because -- I can't remember, 17 there was, you know, some reason about the executive and 18 the judiciary, and stuff like that but, essentially, you 19 know, he would have been the conduit through which 20 I would have assumed we were getting a departmental
- 22 Q. Why did Post Office need a departmental view on whether 23 to apply for a judge to recuse himself?
- 24 Well, I think this was simply an example of where A. 25 matters had got very serious. So you have to see things 153
- 1 But just to stop there, that was because of your role as 2 Chair of HMCTS?
- 4 I would have been involved in that discussion and, you 5 know, I'm not trying to back out of this thing. So we 6 had advice from two sources. We had advice from

A. At HMCTS. But, put that to one side, I was there and

- 7 Neuberger and we had advice from Grabiner. Grabiner's
- 8 advice was pretty strong, actually. I think he said
- 9 something along the lines of we had a duty, almost, to 10 ask for the judge's recusal, and --
- 11 Q. Stopping there, what did you understand -- you're right,
- 12 he did say that -- what did you understand him to mean 13 by that the Post Office was under a duty?
- 14 A. I can't recall the detail exactly but the way the advice 15 was framed was that, you know, we kind of almost -- to 16 ensure the -- you know, the business of the 17 administration of the law required us, where we thought 18 something had been incorrectly managed, for whatever
- 19 reason, we needed to act upon that. Q. Just stopping there, and can I put two potential 20 21 hypotheses to you in terms of the Post Office was under
- 22 a duty to apply: one could mean that the Post Office
- 23 was, as a matter of company law, its directors, it owed
- 24 a duty to make the application in discharge of its
- 25 duties to its shareholder?

- 1 in the context of the litigation producing an output
- 2 from the first trial that was a loss on virtually every
- 3 count, and our sole shareholder beginning to get
- 4 concerned, from all sorts of points of view, not least,
- I imagine, they could see that there would be 5
- 6 a significant reputation, significant cost, all sorts of 7 things.
- 8 Q. Was it right that your initial reaction, as is recorded 9 here, is that this, ie applying to recuse the judge, was
- 10 not something that the Board was likely to want to do? A. For the reasons I was trying to express earlier, I think 11
- 12 most of us -- I'm trying not to be overly complimentary,
- 13 Sir Wyn, most of us think that judges usually get it
- 14 right and, you know, have an inherent respect for the
- 15 judiciary. So it would have excited a certain amount of
- 16 unease in most people, I think, to suggest that, you
- 17 know, the judge had got it wrong.
- 18 And was biased? Q.
- 19 Or was -- and/or biased.
- 20 Q. What changed, to your understanding, from your unease at
- 21 making the application and your reporting that this was
  - 22 something that the Board was not likely to want to do,
- 23 to the making of the application?
- 24 A. So the first point I should make, you know, is that
- 25 I also recused myself from the decision --

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- 1 A. Mm.
- 2 Alternatively, it could mean that, if you wished to win
- 3 this litigation in the final result, procedurally, you
- 4 are under an obligation to take this point now and not
- 5 wait until you appeal the substance. Can you recall
- 6 whether you formed a view as to in what sense you were
- 7 under a duty to make the application?
- 8 A. Honestly, I can't, at this distance. But I think --
- 9 I don't want to make too much of this duty thing.
- 10 I think we just got advice from two very, very senior
- 11 lawyers and felt, on balance, that advice should be
- 12
- 13 Q. So, in answer to my question, the thing that changed was
- 14 legal advice from two very senior lawyers, one of whom
- 15 said that the Post Office was under a duty to make the
- 16 application?
- That's a fair description of what happened. 17 Α.
- 18 Thank you very much.
- 19 The last topic, please. You told us earlier that 20 you were not aware of concerns being raised about the 21 Fujitsu employee, Gareth Jenkins, giving evidence in 22 court in Post Office prosecutions that may have been
- 23 false or incomplete --
- 24 A.
- 25 Q. -- until much later on?

		The Pos
1	Α.	Mm.
2	Q.	You couldn't remember when.
3	Α.	Mm, mm.
4	Q.	Can I ask directly, then, that we look at POL00006357.
5		Thank you.
6		If we just go to the last page, which is page 14,
7		and the foot of the page, we can see this is an advice
8		of 15 July, written by Simon Clarke, in a firm of
9		solicitors that the Post Office used, Cartwright King,
10		to advise it on matters relating to the prosecution of
11		subpostmasters.
12	Α.	Mm.
13	Q.	If we go back to page 1, it's advice on the use of
14		expert evidence relating to the integrity of the Fujitsu
15 16		Services Limited Horizon system.  If we just look at page 13, please, and the author
17		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
18		says: "What does all this mean? It means that
19		[Mr Jenkins] has not complied with his duty to the
20		court, the prosecution or the defence
21		"38. The reasons as to why [Mr] Jenkins failed to
22		comply with his duty are beyond the scope of this
23		review. The effects of that failure, however, must be
24		considered
25		"[1] [Mr] Jenkins failed to disclose material known
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1		Lastly:
2		"Where a convicted defendant or his lawyers conside
3		that the failure to disclose the material reveals
4		an arguable ground of appeal, he may seek leave of the
5		Court of Appeal"
6		When were you first made aware of the existence of
7		this advice by Simon Clarke concerning Gareth Jenkins?
8	A.	Oh, well, I mean, probably in reading this in detail,
9		when I actually got all of the I can't remember,
10		I think it must have been in my bundle, but I mean
11		certainly years after the event. I mean, one of the
12		things that struck me was I don't think Swift was shown
13		this.
14	Q.	Correct.
15	A.	Yeah, so, you know yeah. I mean, I can't tell you
16		exactly when but, suffice to say, I would imagine,
17		post-the trials, probably.
18	Q.	By the trial, do you mean the Horizon Issues trial?
19	A.	Or both I mean, you know, the point I am making,
20		I think, is it I would have known about this at the
21		point at which we were reviewing stuff after the

23 **Q**.

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litigation, yeah.

So, too late for it to matter then?

Too late for it to matter then, yeah.

What was your reaction on being provided with a copy of

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to him but which undermines his expert opinion ... in 1 2 plain breach of his duty as an expert evidence. 3 "Accordingly [his] credibility as an expert witness 4 is fatally undermined ... 5 "[3] ... in those current and ongoing cases where 6 [he] has provided an expert witness statement, he should 7 not be called upon to give that evidence ... 8 "[4] Notwithstanding that the failure is that of 9 [Mr Jenkins] and, arguably, of Fujitsu ... this failure 10 has a profound effect upon [Post Office] and [Post 11 Office] prosecutions, not least because by reason of [Mr] Jenkins' failure, material which should have been 12 13 disclosed to defendants was not disclosed, thereby 14 placing [Post Office Limited] in breach of their duty as 15 a prosecutor. 16 "[5] By reason of that failure to disclose, there 17 are a number of now convicted defendants to whom the 18 existence of bugs should have been disclosed but was 19 not. Those defendants remain entitled to have 20 disclosure of that material notwithstanding their now 21 convicted status." 22 Penultimately: 23 "Further, there are also a number of current cases 24 where there has been no disclosure where there ought to 25 have been." 158 the advice, or having it summarised to you? 2 Well, this is one of the things where, again, I think, 3 when you've looked at a lot of the documents that we 4 have reviewed today, it's hard not to draw the 5 conclusion that decisions might have been different, had 6 a lot of these things been known at the time and, you 7 know, this whole terrible raft of events, I think, in 8 part, is because, as problems build up over time, the 9 wall against breaking them down gets higher and higher, 10 and this was just part of the wall, and it didn't break down, really, until we got to the litigation, I suppose. 11 Q. Can we look, please, at POL00167395. These are minutes 12 13 of a Board meeting held on 19 November 2020 by 14 conference call, and you'll see that you are present. 15 It's a special meeting concerning the CCRC and 16 you'll see that there's quite the cast list. 17 A. Mm. Q. If we scroll down, and scroll still further, and then 18 over the page. Second paragraph on that page: 19 20 "Brian Altman informed the Board that a layer of 21 complication had been added to the court proceedings 22 yesterday." 23 Then scrolling down, please. That paragraph refers 24 to essentially the disclosure within the proceedings and

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outside the proceedings of the Clarke Advice, okay?

- Α. Mm-hm, mm-hm. 1
- 2 Q. That's the earliest that we can see that a reference was 3 made to the Clarke Advice in any Board meeting.
- 4 A. Mm-hm.
- 5 Q. You wouldn't presumably be in a position to say, "No, we 6 were told about it much earlier"?
- 7 A. No.

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8 Q. I mean, lastly on this point, if we look at 9 UKGI00017966, thank you, this is a reply of the Post 10 Office to Tim McCormack, one of his searching Freedom of

Information requests. He says:

"Good to see the new spirit of openness in action yet again this morning with the publication of redacted copies of Board Minutes.

"Could you therefore provide me with copies of all board minutes in which is mentioned the Clarke Advice or Clarke Review."

So he's after that information.

- 19 A. Yeah.
- 20 Q. Then looking at the bottom paragraph there:

"Post Office Limited has conducted reasonable and proportionate searches and has identified two sets of minutes in which the ... Clarke Advice was mentioned: the minutes of a meeting on 19 November", which is the one that I just took you to.

very serious problems which I and the Board were contending with. The context I give you on this is that I believe, in 2021, we had 60 Board meetings, something like that, to do with the fallout from this whole thing.

So whether anything happened as a consequence of this, I can't tell you for sure. What I can tell you is that the amount of time and work and effort that I and other Board members put into trying to essentially reconstitute this whole business from top to bottom might have allowed one of these things to sort of, you know, just evaporate without anything happening as a consequence.

So I can't tell you for sure what happened but I can tell you this was an incredibly, incredibly busy time. You have to remember, if you take an organisation and within the space of six months you find out that the whole basis on which your business has been conducted was wrong, you find out that your -- the whole basis of how you are somehow operating has to be changed. The amount of work to try and put things right, correctly so -- I mean, all of these things needed putting right -- but the workload was just immense and all time consuming.

And, whatever, you know, I can tell you the new CEO and the new team were making strenuous efforts to try to 163

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. "... and the minutes of a meeting on 4 February", which 3 was obviously later in 2021.
- 4 So it seems that the Post Office rather agree that 5 the earliest mention of the Clarke Advice of July '13 to
- 6 the Board was 19 November 2020.
- 7 A. Mm-hm
- 8 Q. When it was revealed to the Board, the Clarke Advice, 9 did anything happen as a result?
- 10 A. That's -- I can't answer that question, I think,
- 11 because --
- Q. I'm thinking --12
- 13 A. It's a very -- it's --
- 14 Q. -- Mr Parker, something like "Well, hold on, I've been
- in position now" -- speaking from your perspective --15
- 16 "for five years or so" --
- 17 A. And how come I didn't know about --
- Q. -- "I commissioned this guy called Jonathan Swift to 18
- 19 look at things" --
- 20 A. All right, I get the gist of your question. All right.
- 21 So, look, this is 2020 or '21 or something like that.
- 22 Q. Yes, November 2020, earliest mention.
- 23 A. Again, I have to put in context some of my answers here.
- 24 Previous context I have given you is the Post Office
- 25 wasn't just about Horizon. There were a lot of other 162

1 put things right. So that's the context I would give, 2

I suppose.

3 MR BEER: Tim Parker, thank you very much for answering my 4 questions.

There are some questions from Core Participants.

6 Could we take those, please, at 3.30, sir.

- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes. 7
- MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir. 8
- 9 (3.18 pm)

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- 10 (A short break)
- 11 (3.30 pm)
- MR BEER: Good afternoon, sir, can you see and hear us?
- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I can. Thank you. 13
- 14 MR BEER: I'll just wait for the room to settle down
- 15 a little.

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- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. 16
- 17 MR BEER: Sir, the questions are, to start with, from
- 18 Mr Henry up to 30 minutes; Mr Stein up to 10 minutes,
- and then Ms Patrick, up to 10 minutes. 19
- SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right, thank you. 20

## Questioned by MR HENRY

- MR HENRY: Mr Parker, together with Ms Page, I represent 22
- 23 a cohort of Core Participants, including Seema Misra,
- 24 and Mrs Oyeteju Adedayo. I want to start off with some
- 25 general questions, if I way.

The first is the Sir Anthony Hooper argument. Did it ever occur to you that the SPMs who ended up being prosecuted or milked for shortfalls were hardworking people trying their best to put food on the table for their families in their own self-reliant way and therefore why would they resort to stealing from their own businesses?

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A. I think the way you put the question, there is -- with hindsight, it would appear that -- and this was the scale point I was trying to make earlier, which is that, if I had seen, I think, at the outset, how many people had been convicted and how many people had been terminated or had an employment issue because of apparent shortfalls, I think the scale of the problem would have been apparent. And I think part of the lack of response, or immediate response, partly came from the apparent scale, if you like, of how many people there were relative to the population of subpostmasters. But you're absolutely right, I mean, you know, when do you start to question whether people are honest or not?

How many people do you need in a population before you think, well, can't be the case they were all crooks, or whatever?

Q. Well, I'm going to come to that and, fortuitously, that was my second point because, when notifying the 165

done and we did all of that, the way the problem appeared to me was that there were 130 people, I think, going through mediation or 136, and there were 23 cases that were going through the CCRC.

What I was trying to say earlier was that I actually didn't become aware of just how many of these people had been convicted until quite late in the day and you might say, well, why didn't you ask? And that is the point I was trying to make. With hindsight, we could, and perhaps this question should have been asked: that I know 23 people are going through the CCRC but can you tell me, please, how many people have been convicted over the last 15 years?

And that, you know, might have precipitated a totally different response to this thing because, as I was trying to explain earlier as well, you can look at it through the lens of was the computer system reliable, or you could look it through the lens of how come so many people have been convicted, and how does that compare with the average for people being convicted in a retail business, for example, which is one of the questions I ended up asking.

So I know it's an unsatisfactory response to you and your clients but, if this thing ever happened again and, you know, the issue was some people have been convicted,

1 Government of the liability regarding convicted

2 subpostmasters -- so not dealing with civil, but purely

3 criminal -- in your letter to the Secretary of State,

4 you mention that 959 cases had been identified in which

5 Horizon evidence had been used to secure a conviction.

6 Do you remember that letter?

A. Well, when was that written, please?

8  $\,$  **Q.** Well, we'll put it up on the screen. It's POL00031104,

9 and you can see it's 29 April 2020.

10 A. Yeah.

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11 Q. If we scroll down -- I can never get it right either,

12 whether it's down or up -- but you'll see that there is

13 a reference to 959 cases, it's the penultimate line on

14 the screen.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. So I am going to describe it as the epidemic of theft

17 and false accounting. Do I take it from your answer,

18 your previous answer, that you never questioned the

19 conventional wisdom that this huge portion of

20 subpostmasters was dishonest, and that this

21 statistically significant number of allegedly dishonesty

22 subpostmasters did not make sense?

23 A. Mm, the point I was trying to make earlier, and maybe

24 I didn't make it clearly enough, was that when we --

when I turned up and I asked for the Swift Report to be

1 one of the first questions to ask is, well, out of

a population of how many, and how many other people have

3 been convicted who aren't complaining, or aren't going

4 through mediation?

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5 Q. So do I take it, again, that that work, that statistical

6 analysis, came far too late?

7 A. I'd have to agree with you on that.

8 Q. I want to move on to a different subject and

9 I appreciate that you were very much, as it appears,

reliant on experts but the recusal decision to unseat

11 Mr Justice Fraser, did you, notwithstanding the advice

12 you received, take into account or recognise the impact

that would have had on the subpostmasters' ability to

14 secure an outcome in their favour? In other words, did

15 you reflect that, if you had been successful, that would

16 have killed the claim stone dead?

17 A. So I think one of the paradox -- well, it's not

18 a paradox, exactly, but, as I said at some point today,

19 it always seemed to me that, had this been managed in

a more cooperative manner, the civil proceedings, it

21 could have, and perhaps should have, ended up with

22 a judge-determined set of decisions around the contract

and the reliability of Horizon. Of course, what

24 happened was it was an adversarial combat and each side

was trying to win, and the recusal was one decision that

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could have stopped your client's case dead, I'm sure there were other things that, had they lost, would have ended up with a termination to the claim, for example, you know, if the judge had decided in the Common Issues trial substantially not to change the agency arrangement, that might have changed things as well. So my take on it is you're right, you know, had that -- had the recusal thing been successful, it could have stopped the case dead. I mean, I -- again, it must seem, perhaps, somewhat naive in retrospect but I -- my intention, and I had hoped, with these proceedings, that we would fight, you know, a sort of fair battle, and I think the -- one of the issues was the legal teams got into a sort of "we want to win" litigation, without -at virtually any cost.

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And we got into a situation where people were doubling down and the recusal thing, to me, was a doubling down thing in retrospect. So, you know, for me, this is one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of the whole GLO.

**Q.** Do I take it that you felt that you had, as Chair, lost control of the litigation because, obviously, these things were being done ostensibly, shorthand, in your name but you appear to, by your answers, suggest that the lawyers had got out of control and that they doubled

because, today, I was toying with making an opening statement: stand up and say I'm deeply, deeply sorry, as many people have done. And there ensued a discussion with people, should I do this, because, you know, I would like to say sorry. And the response I got was that, well, you could do this, but actually, you know, people have got tired of that and it all rings a bit hollow and you probably are just going to annoy people more than really give them any sense of your real desire to say sorry.

And I'm afraid, in these circumstances, it's very hard to either prove that your sorrow and apology is genuine, it's hard to find language which, if you attempt to express it in the extreme, just sounds as if you're being hyperbolic and simply trying to get effect. So there is no satisfactory answer to this. There is no real way to say sorry in a convincing way because the people who have been affected just feel the damage has been done, and you're scrambling to sort of fill a small gap in that sort of failure to accommodate. So I don't think a good letter could have been written. I don't think any letter would prove to be satisfactory. And it's not easy, when you've got a lot of people who are

So I know that's an unsatisfactory answer, but I'm 171

1 down and it had been adversarial and that you had, 2 together with your colleagues, nothing to do with it?

A. So, look, Mr Henry, it's not my intention to release myself from responsibility for these events. When you're the Chair, you, you know, the buck stops with me. So for me to try to characterise this as "Oh, it's all down to the lawyers and its nothing to do with us", that's certainly not my intention.

I think what I'm trying to highlight is, in the balance between the client and the lawyers, sometimes the shift goes too much in one direction and, instead of being, you know, the dog, it's the tail that starts to wag the dog, a bit. And I think the tail was wagging the dog a bit when we got to this. The recusal thing, as I said, I think I had misgivings about it at the time and it's -- again, I tried to make the point. I don't know how many just are recused but I imagine it isn't very many.

19 Q. Now, Mr Parker, moving on again to a separate topic, and 20 I assure you that there is some purpose to it, when you 21 sent out letters of apology subsequent to the Horizon 22 Issues judgment, reflecting on this now, Mr Parker, was 23 that performative or was that a genuine expression of 24 contrition?

25 A. So, the subject of apologies. It is quite interesting

1 trying to express the reality of the situation.

**Q.** When you signed those letters, though, did you remain of 2 3 the view, even after the Horizon Issues judgment, that

4 the subpostmasters who had been prosecuted or pursued in

5 the civil forum were guilty/liable? I mean, I'm trying

6 to ask you to reflect on how hard it was to let go of

7 the idea that the subpostmasters who had challenged and

8 who had taken on the Post Office weren't at it?

9 A. I see the point to your question and my view is that, 10 once we had reached the end of the trials, the game was

11 up, as it were, and it was time to just, you know --

12 I've tried, you know, when you get a business that is so

13 upside down in terms of its structure and its

14 relationships, I can see why you're asking the question

15 but, from my standpoint, you know, I felt the game --

16 you know, we just needed to change completely and, with

17 the new Chief Executive and the team, we have tried, or

18 we did until I left in 2022.

19 Q. So you don't believe that a mindset of blame still persists? I know you left in 2022 but you don't believe 20 21 that a mindset of blame will persists within the

22 organisation?

23 A. I can't speak for an organisation. I can only speak for 24 myself and I would say that Nick Read and his team have, 25 at all levels, made a huge effort. Now, that isn't to

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say that some of the people who were working at the time of these events are still at the Post Office, because it's impossible to run an organisation, just clear everybody out, as I hope, you know, is obvious. But the mindset has been completely changed and I would say, when you have such a huge shift in culture to make, it's never made overnight. I mean, this is -- you have to appreciate it's one of those slightly irritating aspects of these sorts of events, is that trying to put them right is no easy matter. And it requires determination at the top.

And believe me, after the trials, I and the rest of my Board, and Nick and his team have done, I feel, as much as they can. The one area that I simply cannot speak for is money, because money unfortunately -- once the fact that there was a huge liability at stake, the money is no longer a matter for the Post Office, it's a matter for the shareholder.

18 19 Q. I see. Well, I'm going to now go to a specific example 20 where I suggest, you see, the mindset hasn't changed. 21 Taking Mrs Adedayo's case, what is your view on the Post 22 Office's recent written submission to the Inquiry, 23 effectively branding her a criminal, despite her 24 conviction having been quashed? I mean, you may not be 25 aware of it but I can put it up on the screen, if you 173

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, if it helps, Mr Henry, I think it's fair enough.

MR HENRY: So be it, sir.

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Can I go to time, please, now, and I've got, having dealt with some general questions, some specific issues. Throughout your tenure, you had many competing obligations devouring your time and you wouldn't be human if, from time to time, forgive the expression, they were distracting you. You would agree?

9 A. Actually, I've got a slightly different view to that. 10 11 I would say one of the strengths of having multiple 12 appointments is that you have got exposure constantly to 13 what is going on in a range of different activities. 14 And that actually means that you are well acquainted 15 with the business world and other worlds, actually, in 16 what's going on. And so I would say -- and I've tried 17 to explain earlier that, you know, being an effective 18 chair is partly to do with time but it's also to do with 19 judgement, and I think one's judgements and one's 20 involvement are actually improved by having a range of 21 different things to do.

22 Q. That, curiously -- and I'm sure that you weren't 23 plagiarising it -- was Mr Leighton's similar explanation 24 for the competing demands. But you have said yourself 25 it wasn't just about Horizon. There was an awful lot of

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1 like. But I quote:

> "The Inquiry will be aware that this [that is Mrs Adedayo's case] is the sole case study where the Post Office does not accept that the conviction was

6 Do you unreservedly reject that victimisation? 7 A. First of all, we haven't got the letter yet and, 8 secondly, unless I have got all the facts at my 9 disposal, Mr Henry, I don't think you can expect me to, 10 you know, deliver a black and white response on this. 11 I'm no longer, obviously, at the Post Office, which 12 precludes me a little bit from knowing what all the 13 background is.

14 Q. Well, Mr Parker, her conviction was guashed and the Post 15 Office still brand her a criminal. I mean, surely can 16 you not reflect upon that and distance yourself from it 17 and repudiate it?

I think I'd love to be able to just say, yes, Mr Henry Α. it's absolutely right, your client -- you know, I'm absolutely with you. Honestly, I haven't had the background and I simply, much as I would love to sit here right now and say yes, I would prefer to see the background first before delivering an opinion. And I hope anybody in my situation would see that's not unreasonable.

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1 stuff going on, awful lot of stuff going on in the 2 business, and what I'm trying to suggest to you is that, 3 to reduce your time at this critical stage before the 4 GLO, must ultimately be viewed as a serious error of 5 judgement. What do you say to that? 6

A. I say, actually, I gave -- and as far as I'm concerned, Mr Henry, I gave all the time and attention that I could and needed to at the Post Office and I think if you talk to colleagues, look at the Board effectiveness reports, 10 just do a general trawl, go and talk to people at the 11 Post Office, you will find that I was well acquainted 12 with what was going on. I was always well briefed. 13 When I was in a meeting, I paid very close attention to 14 the facts that were under consideration. I chaired 15 meetings well. So, no, I don't accept that assertion, 16 actually.

17 **Q.** I'm going to deal with this very quickly, Mr Parker, but 18 you are familiar with -- and you have seen, of course, 19 in the pack that was sent to you -- a number of emails 20 from Mr Tim McCormack?

21 **A**.

22 Q. What I'm suggesting to you is that, because of the 23 enormous burden on your shoulder, not just simply from 24 the Post Office but other competing demands, this 25 affected your ability to grip it personally and get

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involved in what he was saying in a meaningful way, and so, therefore, you were channelling his requests onto other people who were not serving your interests. In fact, they were delaying, denying and stonewalling Mr McCormack. Now, would you like me to deal with the emails in detail or --

- 7 A. Yeah. I understand because I've read the emails --
- 8 Q. You've read the emails?

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9 A. -- and I understand the point you're making. And I've 10 tried to explain earlier that, when I joined the Post 11 Office, and bearing in mind most of these emails were 12 probably around April 2016 and July, or whatever, 13 I think that's right, I assumed -- perhaps, with 14 hindsight, incorrectly -- that the people who were 15 advising me were honest, you know, were competent, 16 et cetera. And in virtually every other company I have 17 been in, when I get a sort of email or letter that which 18 comes in, which is essentially about a legal matter and 19 says, you know, in capital letters "I will say, you 20 know, what's going on, and take it away and give me some 21 background".

> And I understand the point you're making but I can honestly tell you, Mr Henry, that whilst, you know, it might appear that we should have grappled with Tim's points and really concentrated on them, and it's very

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Office was being prepared -- I'm going to call it a grooming pack, prepared by Mark Davies -- that they were trying to get you on side and that, notwithstanding your genuine desire to be independent, notwithstanding the fact that you had no axe to grind, that gradually you were compromised and, to use the analogy of the wall, you became immured in prejudice; what do you say: the institutional prejudice of those people that you relied upon and trusted who surrounded you? A. What I will say is this: behind a set of events that we have been discussing today are a complex mixture of interactions between people. Some self-consciously driven in a particular direction, others not. Others just being part of it, and so, whilst your characterisation, I think, probably has some truth to it, matters are far more complicated than that, and I would say, in some respects, yes, the wool might have been pulled over the eyes and, in other respects not, sometimes happened, and sometimes didn't. But there isn't -- you know, it is very unsatisfactory but it's like, you know, here's a set of wrongs, and we put them right, and how did the wrongs happen and, exactly, you

And the root causes of this thing of course, at the end of the day, probably reside in the software. The 179

know, where are the root causes?

unsatisfactory, looking back, to see that it was handed over to a bunch of people, that we -- you know, arguably weren't going to handle it well -- those were the circumstances at the time.

I'm not trying to get out of responsibility here.

Some mistakes in that respect were made but I honestly wouldn't say that was a function of me not having enough time, as such.

- Q. If it wasn't a function of you not having enough time
   then why would you not wish to go to the ends of the
   earth to establish whether or not an innocent woman had
   been imprisoned?
- 13 A. Because this was an individual case, which I think was 14 going through the CCRC. I can't quite remember the 15 context and, actually, I have tried to grapple with this 16 thing, largely through the collection of issues that 17 were brought together, and you're right; I mean, perhaps 18 had one rushed after the Misra case, there might have 19 been some progress. I can't honestly tell you. But if 20 what you're implying is that somehow, you know, because 21 I didn't deal with this thing, we didn't really do 22 anything, didn't really care about this, didn't try to 23 resolve it, I don't think that's really fair.
- Q. What I'm trying to suggest, you've talked about the wall
   being built, we've seen how your reception into the Post
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root causes of the problems we talked about today reside in the process of investigation.

The individuals -- and this is the point I was trying to make, you know -- a lot of the problems that we have looked at happened between 2000 and 2010, quite historic, and trying to overcome history in a business, when history is so damaging, is a tough thing to do.

Q. All the more reason, therefore, for people who feared
 what impact that could have on the GLO to keep it
 battened down, to keep it hermetically sealed so that
 none of that would escape; do you see?

A. I do, I understand the point you're making and I tried to express this earlier, which is it's got a slightly unsatisfactory tinge to it because, of course, it implied that Sir Alan and the JFSA team had to spend money and had to get support to mount the GLO. But the GLO, although one might have a lot of aspects of dissatisfaction about the way it was run, actually did end up with a judge making determinations which will change the Post Office forever and, actually, set up a situation in which your clients, in time, should be properly compensated because the -- there's been an absolute clarity in terms of what -- which -- you know, what was responsible for what.

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- Q. Now, Mr Parker, I have to be brief, and I don't want to 1 2 be unfair to you but I've only got couple of minutes 3 left, so I just want to ask you if you feel that the 4 answer you gave to Mr Beer about this really had to be 5 resolved, as it were, adversarially was somewhat 6 fatalistic and that more could have been done to strive 7 to see the other side and to strive for settlement,
- 8 without having to enter into the quagmire of litigation. 9 A. Yeah. I mean, look, there's no satisfactory answer to 10 this. I played out -- so if there had been an early 11 settlement, I could easily imagine a situation in which 12 your clients will be worse off because, instead of 13 waiting until the end when it was absolutely determined 14 by the judge that Legacy Horizon was not robust and, you 15 know, Horizon Online wasn't robust, you could have ended 16 up in a situation where, mm, computer system quite 17 robust. This is the point I was trying to make earlier, 18 where I played out -- so the post -- I know -- I'm not 19 trying to escape, you know, responsibility but if we'd 20 sort of said, "Well, you know, we think we've got 21 a problem with the computer system, it's not reliable", 22 the moment you start to get to a "there could be

well, what's involved? 181

miscarriages of justice", "there could be a huge

liability here", then the question starts being asked:

- 1 have been attempting to deliberately somehow undermine 2 a situation that had been, you know, effectively 3 determined as a result of the trials. I just don't know 4 where that comes from, honestly.
- 5 Q. Finally, do you recognise the suggestion that the Board 6 looks at lawyers purely from this perspective: they see 7 lawyers -- this is Rodric Williams, speaking on behalf 8 of the Board -- as interchangeable tools for optics, 9 legal advices, polluted product for the Post Office 10 because of the High Court litigation; is there any 11 suggestion that you and your colleagues did see lawyers 12 as marionettes?
- 13 Α. Sorry, what's the point you're trying to make?
- Q. Well, the Board is reported to have told the lawyers not 15 to advise on safety and Rodric Williams goes on to say 16 "the Board sees lawyers as interchangeable and tools for 17 optics". You said that you didn't see lawyers as
- 18 marionettes but, I mean, this suggests that perhaps if
- 19 this note is a fair reflection of your point of few,
- 20 that you did?

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- 21 A. Is this a Rodric Williams note, is it? I don't think 22 Rodric really reflects an awful lot of certainly what 23 I think or what the Board thinks.
- 24 MR HENRY: Okay. I think I've run out of time so I'm going 25 to stop there.

Q. Final question, please, and I have to compress two documents, but there are two documents noted by Peters &

2 3 Peters, it would seem, but involving number of lawyers,

4 and one reference is POL00337435, it's dated 24 January

5 2020, and so that's long after the Horizon Issues

judgment. You are not present, Mr Parker, but you and

7 Mr Cooper, it is said, wanted to take pot shots at Seema

8 Misra. Do you have anything to say about that? Do you

9 recall any research that have been done on what

10 claimants, convicted claimants, have said in open source

11 material to try and trawl to see if they had made

12 previous inconsistent statements so that their

13 credibility, even after the Horizon Issues judgment but

14 before the criminal appeal, could be impugned? Do you

15 remember anything of that nature?

16 A. I don't and, funnily enough, this document appeared 17 fairly late in my bundle. I did have a look at it, and 18 it is apparently a sort of abbreviated description, 19 isn't it, of a barristers' meeting, I think, yes.

20 Q. Yes.

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21 A. Well, look, somebody writes "taking pot shots", I don't 22 know what that means to you but it's a fairly colloquial 23 sort of -- I don't know what they were trying to express 24 but I'd love to have Tom Cooper in the room here but 25 I can assure you, neither of us and -- you know, would

1 Thank you, sir.

THE WITNESS: Thank you. 2

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Henry.

Questioned by MR STEIN

5 MR STEIN: Mr Parker, my name is Sam Stein. I ask questions 6 on behalf of a large group of subpostmasters and 7 mistresses and people that worked in Post Office 8 branches.

9 You will recall, having dealings in at least 2019, 10 with a Mr Swannell. At the time, he was the Chair of 11 the Shareholder Executive and that was later renamed. 12 into UKGI, which is the UK Government Investments.

13 Okay.

14 Now, when you get to the end of 2019, there were 15 discussions that touched on the question of settlement; 16 do you recall that?

17 A. Mm mm

18 Q. Okay. Now, help us please a little bit with this. 19 Mr Swannell will be giving evidence next week, I think 20 on Tuesday, and his recollection is of having had a word 21 with you, sometime in June 2019, whereby you thought the 22 estimate of the amount involved in the settlement might 23 well be something in the order of 100 million.

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25 Q. Now, contextually, we know that the settlement was in

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- 1 the order of, essentially, 50 million, a bit over.
- 2 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 3 Q. Okay?
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. Now that's quite a big difference?
- 6 A. Yeah, mm.
- 7 Q. But the 100 million, was that what you thought it was
- 8 worth or was that what you were told this may well come
- 9 to?
- 10 A. Honestly, I'd like to see the papers because it's quite
- 11 hard for me, 2019/20, 100 million, I'd love to be able
- 12 to give you a definitive answer but I can't on that.
- 13 Q. But do you have a recollection because it's only his
- 14 statement where he refers to this. I'm not sure we have
- 15 papers that refer to this. Do you have a recollection
- 16 as to whether there was any particular barrier, as
- 17 an example, to 100 million or --
- 18 A. Well, okay --
- 19 Q. -- that was being discussed?
- 20 A. -- all I will say to you and, again, I'm not trying to
- 21 escape responsibility, liability, or whatever, is that
- 22 whatever discussions happened post-the litigation, the
- 23 whole -- the money only comes from one source and,
- therefore, you know, whether the Post Office quotes the
- 25 number or there's another number, ultimately, the
  - are subsequently contradicted by someone else, so
- 2 I can't give you a definitive answer to this, honestly.
- 3 Q. But you're not saying no. What you're saying is you
- 4 can't really remember; is that fair?
- 5 A. That's exactly what I'm telling you, yeah.
- 6 Q. Okay. I'm going to go, therefore, to a document you've
- 7 looked at with Mr Beer a little earlier. Can we go to
- 8 POL00174397, please. I'd like to go to page 2, once we
- get to the document. So do you recall, quite early on
- 10 in the questions being asked by Mr Beer, that he was
- 11 discussing with you this note, which is a note that was
- 12 meant to have emanated, as you understood it, from Paula
- 13 Vennells, okay?
- 14 A. Mm, mm.

- 15 Q. It's a briefing document of some type, setting out some
- 16 of the concerns at that time. Now, you've said
- 17 repeatedly a word you use is context, so let's
- 18 understand the context of things. So the context of
- 19 this note is you come into a business that's overall in
- 20 crisis, you agree?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22  $\,$  Q. Yes. Fundamentally, this is a problem business, in
- 23 terms of needing to be turned around, yes?
- 24 **A**. Yes.
- 25 Q. Okay. You've been chosen over another possible

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- decision isn't going to be made really in the Post
- 2 Office
- 3 Q. Right. So, essentially, you're saying, by that point --
- 4 A. By that point.
- 5 Q. -- it's for the Government, as the shareholder --
- 6 A. The Post Office could not probably run, and I may be --
- 7 maybe it can now but, certainly in my time there,
- 8 I don't think it could have run as a standalone
- 9 business. It needed constant support from the
- 10 Government.
- 11 Q. All right.
- 12 A. And, therefore, any additional cash requirements was
- 13 always going to be an incremental Government decision,
- 14 one way or another.
- 15 Q. So before I move on to another topic, your recollection
- of the figures in relation to the settlement was (1) the
- 17 money was always going to have to come from Government.
- 18 Yes; is that right?
- 19 A. Ultimately, yes.
- 20 Q. And, secondly, Mr Swannell's recollection of discussions
- 21 around 100 million and, in fact, it being considerably
- less than that, clearly demonstrates that there had been
- 23 discussions at potentially quite a bit of a larger
- 24 figure at some point?
- 25 **A.** Look, I don't want you to put words into my mouth that
- 1 candidate as being the right individual to have a go at
  - doing that, yes --
- 3 A. Yes

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- 4 Q. -- and you wanted to find out more about what's going
- 5 on?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 **Q.** Again, you're saying yes, you're agreeing; is that
  - right?
- 9 A. Yes. I'm just wondering where this is going.
- 10 Q. Well, let's see where it's going in a moment.
- 11 **A.** Yeah.
- 12 Q. We know also from your evidence that you said that the
- 13 whole basis of the business and the way it was being
- 14 conducted, you've referred to that being questioned in
- the litigation, because it's about the Horizon system.
- 16 **A.** Yes.
- 17 Q. Okay? So when you came in to the Post Office, in the
- 18 role that you took over, you must have realised quite
- 19 rapidly that questions regarding the Horizon system
- 20 integrity were also questions that were threatening the
- 21 whole business; is that fair?
- 22 A. Looking at this, as I've tried to explain, in scale
- terms, it didn't look that big, in relation to the
- 24 population of subpostmasters, the number of people who
- 25 were complaining, the number of people who were

- convicted. And so -- and most of these issues were to do, obviously, with what you would call historic

  Horizon. So, from my perspective, you know, we had a set of issues that were people who'd had historic problems with Horizon, and then there was Horizon as an EPOS system, which operated post offices, effectively.
  - And the two things were slightly, you know, one is sort of business as usual, the other is a whole set of issues that people had had with the system historically.
- So this -- as I tried to explain earlier, this was one of a number of problems.
- 13 Q. Right. Now, you've said that a number of times. That's14 your context point: number of other problems dealing
- 15 with the business. But this is about the Horizon
- system. It's questioning the integrity of the system;
- 17 you agree with that?
- 18 A. A component of it is, yes.
- 19  $\,$  Q. Let's have a look at how serious this was, then. We can
- go perhaps to the bottom of page 2, if we may, please,
- 21 I think we're there already, and fourth paragraph from
- the bottom. Just go up a little bit. Yeah. We see the
- 23 bottom. That's it.
- 24 A. Yes.

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- 25 **Q.** Right. We can see that the references here are 189
- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Now, accepting your point, which is that, in your mind,
- 3 you've got the problem which is you think may well be
- 4 largely historical, may be an older part of the system.
- 5 **A.** Mm.
- 6 Q. Okay, but this is in fact actually questioning the
- 7 integrity, not only of the Horizon system but also of
- 8 management --
- 9 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 10 Q. -- at the very time you're coming into it?
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. So it's raising the very question that Mr Beer was
- talking about with you, which is, well, hang on are the
- 14 people around you people that you can trust, right?
- 15 **A.** Um --
- 16 Q. Serious allegations.
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. In fact, allegations that, if true, would be the death
- 19 knell of the business that's already in crisis.
- 20 A. Well, I'm not sure I would go that far but you're right21 to highlight that. Yes.
- 22 Q. Okay, well, let me highlight then and see if I can be
- 23 right about something else. Page 1, third paragraph
- 24 down, please. Now, I use the term paragraph, the three
- 25 main paragraphs from the top under "Note for Tim

- 1 obviously to the JFSA complaint --
- 2 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 3 Q. -- we see the BBC Panorama programme --
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. -- and we see references to MPs that are also engaged.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. If we scroll a bit further down, please -- my fault,
- 8 let's go up again.
- 9 Fourth paragraph from the bottom. Okay, the one
- 10 that starts:
- 11 "We have been robust in rejecting the serious
- 12 allegations made in Parliament ..."
- 13 Is that right?
- 14 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 15 Q. "... made in Parliament and media, particularly in
- 16 recent months."
- 17 Then it goes on to talk about the issues that
- 18 concern:
- 19 "... the campaign's allegations have grown to
- 20 include suggestions of wrongdoing by senior management
- 21 ..."
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. "... bullying, deliberate cover-up and abuse of
- 24 prosecutor powers."
- Now, these are serious allegations.

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- 1 Parker", okay? So it says this:
- 2 "The Horizon system deals with six million
- 3 transactions every day and has been used by almost
- 4 500,000 people since it was introduced. It is currently
- 5 used by 78,000 people working in Post Office branches,
- 6 is independently audited and meets or [excels] standard
- 7 industry accreditations."
- 8 Let's take that apart. Did you receive the
- 9 independent audit of the Horizon system at this time?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. Did you ask for the independent audit of the Horizon
- 12 system at this time?
- 13 **A.** Which independent audit system are you referring to?
- 14 **Q.** Well, go back to the third paragraph from the top, the
- 15 one I read out:
- 16 "The Horizon system deals with six million
- 17 transactions every day and has been used by almost
- 18 500,000 people since it was introduced. It is currently
- 19 used by 78,000 people working in post office branches,
- 20 is independently audited ..."
- So stopping there for the moment. Did you see the independent audit at this time?
- 23 A. So, essentially, I --
- 24  $\,$  Q. It's a bit of a "yes" or a "no" question.
- 25  $\,$  A. No, can I just finish, please? I think I'm entitled to

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1		that. I understand the question that you're asking.	1		taken that might have landed us in a different
2		Essentially, I didn't ask for the independent audit.	2		direction? And maybe you're right. Maybe there was
3			3		an audit. We could have asked for it, I could have
		This was something, obviously, that's been put into the			
4		brief. Now, I'm not quite sure, can you just explain to	4		asked for it and it would have said this is okay, and
5	_	me where you're going? Where	5		or, you know, it would have been something that was
6	Q.	I'm asking the simple question, I suspect answer is	6		inadequate. I'm not entirely sure. And, with
7		either yes or no. It looks like it's no. Did you see	7		hindsight, there are many things that we could have
8		the independent audit? The answer appears to be no, you	8		done.
9		didn't; is that fair?	9		Swift, which we discussed extensively, whilst not
10	Α.	Well, you know, if somebody says something is	10		being perhaps brilliant and perhaps a bull's-eye and
11		independently audited, that can mean a number of	11		perhaps spot on, covered off a lot of the bases and, if
12		different things. It can mean somebody has gone in and	12		the question you're asking is, you know, is there
13		looked at it or it can mean that there's a I don't	13		something that definitively could have been done that
14		know, but if you're asking had I got the independent	14		would have pushed us in another direction? I'm not
15		audit? No.	15		entirely sure.
16	Q.	Did you ask for it?	16	Q.	Mr Parker, I'm asking about your decision making. I'm
17	A.	I don't think I could have done.	17		asking about your responsibilities.
18	Q.	All right, why couldn't you have done, Mr Parker?	18	A.	Yes.
19	Α.	Do you know	19	Q.	I'm asking questions that go to whether and to what
20	Q.	Is that you saying you didn't have the power to	20		degree that you have made mistakes; do you understand
21	A.	No.	21		that?
22	Q.	or are you saying you just didn't?	22	A.	I entirely understand that.
23	A.	No, this was a brief that I received, and we've looked	23	Q.	So your answer to my question to the independent audit
24		at this Sparrow brief and it's you know, earlier.	24		was this, "I don't think I could have done". Now, I'm
25		And this is all about so what actions could have been	25		trying to find out now, from my follow-on questions,
		193	20		194
		l. all. and l. al. and an annual districts because the annual and a state of	4		II. As a Associate and the second sec
1		whether that means you didn't have the power to do it or	1		" to set up a scheme which, where appropriate,
2		whether you just didn't do it, which?	2		offered mediation", et cetera.
3	Α.	I think I could have had the power, in theory,	3		All right? Now, reminding us of the timing of this,
4	_	I suppose, to do many things.	4		this is at 2.15, at the time that you're engaged in
5	Q.	Right.	5		dealing with matters, all right? We know that what this
6	A.	And we, you know as I said, I didn't ask for the	6		must appear to be is Second Sight, which is back to
7		audit and it you know, I don't know what this was	7		2013, so it says:
8		referring to. We moved on to Swift.	8		"We commissioned a review by independent forensic
9	Q.	Okay. Now, it then goes on to say in this paragraph:	9		accountants"
10		" and meets or exceeds standard industry			
11		and meets of exceeds standard industry	10		Did you ask to see that?
		accreditations."	10 11	A.	
12		•		A.	Did you ask to see that?
12 13	Α.	accreditations."	11	A. Q.	Did you ask to see that? The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole
	A.	accreditations."  Did you ask for those?	11 12		Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.
13	A. Q.	accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is	11 12 13		Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and
13 14		accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago.	11 12 13 14		Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant
13 14 15		accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago. Do you recall seeing the standard industry accreditations for the Horizon system?	11 12 13 14 15	Q.	Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant review"?  I can't tell you exactly when I saw it.
13 14 15 16	Q.	accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago. Do you recall seeing the standard industry accreditations for the Horizon system? I don't think anybody plonked them on my desk, no. But	11 12 13 14 15	Q.	Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant review"?  I can't tell you exactly when I saw it.  Right. So what we have established, in your evidence
13 14 15 16 17 18	Q. A.	accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago. Do you recall seeing the standard industry accreditations for the Horizon system? I don't think anybody plonked them on my desk, no. But I'm not entirely sure. I don't think so.	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Q.	Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant review"?  I can't tell you exactly when I saw it.  Right. So what we have established, in your evidence with Mr Beer, first of all, and obviously with me as
13 14 15 16 17 18 19	Q.	accreditations." Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago. Do you recall seeing the standard industry accreditations for the Horizon system? I don't think anybody plonked them on my desk, no. But I'm not entirely sure. I don't think so. Two paragraphs down, "We commissioned", it starts; do	11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	Q.	Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant review"?  I can't tell you exactly when I saw it.  Right. So what we have established, in your evidence with Mr Beer, first of all, and obviously with me as well, what we have established is that you came in, you
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13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	Q. A.	accreditations."  Did you ask for those? I can't tell you right now because, you know, this is a long time ago. Do you recall seeing the standard industry accreditations for the Horizon system? I don't think anybody plonked them on my desk, no. But I'm not entirely sure. I don't think so. Two paragraphs down, "We commissioned", it starts; do you see that one there? Further down, "We commissioned" thank you very much it's got a little yellow dash to the left of it:  "We commissioned [past tense] a review by	11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	Q. A. Q. A. Q.	Did you ask to see that?  The Second Sight report, we saw as part of the whole setting up of the Swift Review.  Did you see it as part of this? Did you get this and say, "I need to see the independent forensic accountant review"?  I can't tell you exactly when I saw it.  Right. So what we have established, in your evidence with Mr Beer, first of all, and obviously with me as well, what we have established is that you came in, you were given this briefing and then you decided that you needed to have somebody else look at these issues, and that was then Mr Swift  Yes.

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- Q. Okay, got it. Do you accept that what you should have 1 2 done, have been more hands on, saying, "Let's have 3 a look at this stuff myself, I want to see it on my 4 desk, I want to talk to the IT people, maybe talk to 5 Fujitsu"; do you accept that you could have gone more
- 6 into this yourself? 7 A. I have tried to explain earlier, I think, that, whilst 8 you might say the Swift Review was inadequate and we 9 should have gone straight to the IT system and done 10 an audit, that is one of a number of possibilities. And 11 what I tried to do was to get somebody who could look at 12 the range of issues and the Horizon system was one of 13 them. So, you know, as -- if I had seen, I suppose --14 and I mentioned this earlier -- the scale of the thing, 15 that might have been different but I responded to this, 16 honestly, in the best way that I thought I could and 17 I felt Swift was a pretty good response, initially.
- 19 Sparrow briefing, I can see your point. 20 Q. You see, one way to look at the difficulty with the 21 amount of time that you were spending on this, is that 22 you were part-time and your decisions were part baked.

Now, we know, with hindsight, we go down a sort of

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23 A. Yes. 24 Q. Do you understand that, Mr Parker? You've said 25 repeatedly that the time issues, this is the same amount

> of matters it deals with and the number of users it has, will occasionally discover bugs, errors or glitches in the way that it works."

Then you continue the quote:

"Some of those bugs may impact on the financial position of a branch, either positively or negatively. We do not understand POL or Fujitsu to suggest anything otherwise."

Now, Mr Parker, we're learning from the Swift Review that this system, the Horizon system, may in fact cause negative impacts on the financial position of a branch. Did you not think to yourself, "Hang on, that sounds remarkably like the people that had been making all that noise from the JFSA", and decide there and then to do something about it?

15 A. So Swift, I felt, covered off a range of issues and 16 covered them off quite comprehensively, and I took away, 17 18 perhaps wrongly, that Swift, whilst it wasn't a green 19 light, was not a red light either, and what you've done 20 today, I think, has sort of picked up on a number of 21 points which, with hindsight, we might have gone after. 22 And this is one of the frustrations and difficulties of 23 looking at something like this, over a long period of 24 time, with a great deal of complexity and, you know, I could reel off a bunch of other things I could have 25

1 of sort of time that you might spend with other 2 businesses, that the role of the CEO is like that, that 3 you have a direction, rather than necessarily getting 4 down to the grips with the nitty-gritty all the time 5 type role. 6 A. Mm, mm. 7 Q. But this isn't the National Trust, is it, Mr Parker?

8 This is the Post Office, responsible for prosecuting its 9 own staff members. Don't you think that more time 10 should have been spent by you getting to grips with 11 these very issues? A. I don't accept that. I gave sufficient time and 12

13 attention to the Post Office, I'm sorry. 14 Q. Our time is limited now myself, in relation to questions

15 and I'm --16 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: You've already taken double the allocation, Mr Stein, so one more question.

18 MR STEIN: Only one more minute. You say this in your 19 statement, paragraph 59, this is in relation to the 20 Swift Report or Review and you quote in your statement 21 part of the Swift Review, where it says this, in 22 relation to bugs -- so paragraph 59, page 27 of your own 23 statement -- all right? Swift Review:

> "It seems to us entirely unremarkable that the Horizon system, which is enormous in terms of the range

done that would have ended up with probably a quicker situation.

But I come back to the point I made earlier, which is that the extent of the issues that we had arrived at meant that, no matter how unsatisfactory, the ultimate determination of the reliability of the computer system and the contractual position with subpostmasters has facilitated a long-term solution to this problem.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you. 9

MR STEIN: Thank you for your indulgence. No further 10 11 auestions.

12 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: That's fine.

Ms Patrick?

## Questioned by MS PATRICK

15 MS PATRICK: Thank you, sir.

Mr Parker, my name is Angela Patrick. I represent 16 17 a number of subpostmasters who were convicted, and have since had their convictions quashed, including 18 19 Mrs Hamilton, who I'm sure you can see sitting beside

20 me. 21 A. Yeah

22 **Q.** You might be glad to hear that I only want to look at 23 one issue. I want to turn back to the follow-up to the 24 Swift Review and I actually only want to look at one

25 example, and that's the advice of Mr Altman, then QC now 200

- 1 KC, produced on 26 July 2016 for the Post Office in 2 response to the Swift Review.
- I want to start, just to look a little bit at whatyou say in your witness statement about that advice,
- 5 just to refresh your memory. I'm not proposing to turn
- 6 your witness statement up, in case you need me to
- 7 refresh your memory. If you do, say so.
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. In your witness statement, you say -- at paragraph 113,
- 10 for those following along -- that it's likely you would
- 11 have briefed in on that advice from Mr Altman --
- 12 **A.** Mm
- 13 Q. -- but you can't recall now what you would have thought
- 14 about it.
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. Now, just to clarify, do you think you did see a copy of
- 17 the advice or is it likely that you didn't?
- 18 A. I mean, I'd like to be able to confirm to you one way or
- 19 another, but I honestly can't.
- 20 Q. No. But you recall that it's likely you would have been
- 21 briefed?
- 22 A. Yes, let's say -- let's work on that principle, if you
- 23 want to take your point further.
- 24 Q. It's not a principle. I'm going on your evidence from
- 25 your witness statement, Mr Parker --
  - 201
- 1 Q. You can't, I assume, recall whether the briefing would
- 2 have covered whether the review, the advice, had been
- 3 narrowed to report only in eight cases?
- 4 A. I can't.

- 5 Q. If you had known and you'd been told at that time,
- 6 having read the Swift Review and what he'd recommended,
- 7 that you go back and look at all the cases, if you'd
  - read at the time that he was only going to look at eight
- 9 cases, in fact he could only analyse three, would that
- 10 have caused you any concern?
- 11 A. Well, it's funny you should mention that because I read
- through the documents again and I was struck a little
- bit that, you know, the case population wasn't enormous.
- 14 I did note that.
- 15 Q. If you'd seen it at the time, maybe it would have caused
- you to ask, "Hang on a minute, can we really rely on
- 17 these headline conclusions"?
- 18 A. Well, I've tried to explain that I think one of the core
- 19 issues with this thing was putting -- was percentages of
- 20 the populations of people that were actually looked at.
- So, you know, as we've discovered, a huge number of
- 22 people --
- 23~  $\,$  Q.  $\,$  If I can stop you there, Mr Parker. Whether it was 136  $\,$
- or it was 900-odd, if you were getting, I'd like to say,
- 25 probably expensive legal advice --
  - 203

- 1 **A.** Yeah.
- 2  $\,$  **Q.** -- and, in your witness statement, you say you'd
- 3 probably have been briefed by General Counsel?
- 4 A. Probably.
- 5 Q. Now, elsewhere in the witness statement, you reflect on
- 6 the advice, reading it now, having been provided with
- 7 it -- and you can't remember if you had it at the
- 8 time -- and you reflect on the broad conclusions, and
- 9 you note that there are some criticisms that Mr Altman
- 10 made that went beyond the scope of his instructions.
- 11 I just want to ask you about a couple of things, two
- 12 things, from the advice.
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. First, in your witness statement, you note that he
- 15 reviewed eight files --
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. -- and he considered three cases.
- 18 **A.** Yeah.
- 19  $\,$  Q. Yeah. Now, Mr Beer took you this morning to some
- 20 correspondence, which you didn't see, narrowing the
- 21 scope of Mr Altman's instructions to cover 19 cases, if
- 22 you remember. You hadn't seen that. Did you know at
- 23 the time, if you can remember, that the scope of his
- 24 advice had been narrowed still, to eight cases?
- 25 A. Honestly, I don't know and I can't tell you.
  - 202
- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. -- from a criminal silk, on the advice of Mr Swift, on
- 3 whom you were relying, that all the cases should be
- 4 reviewed --
- 5 A. Yeah.
- 6 Q. -- and you were being told that only eight cases were
- 7 being looked at and, in fact, he was only going to
- 8 analyse three, would that not have set up a red flag for
- 9 you?
- 10 A. Well, I said I looked back at the advice and it -- you
- 11 know, you're right to point it out. At the time, it
- 12 seemed relatively reassuring, yes.
- 13 Q. But, if you had seen it, would you have not said, "Hang
- on a minute, we're only looking at eight cases"?
- 15 A. I might have done, yeah.
- 16 Q. Okay. Does that help with your memory as to whether you
- 17 read it or didn't read it at the time?
- 18 A. Honestly not, no.
- 19 Q. Okay. Turning to the second thing I wanted to ask you
- about. Now, Mrs Hamilton was one of the three cases.
- 21 A. Yeah.
- 22 Q. I only want to look at one part of the advice which
- 23 deals with the circumstance of Mrs Hamilton's plea only
- 24 being accepted on the condition related to repayment of
- 25 money.

Α. Yeah 1

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2 Q. It's at POL00022854, and I want to look at page 27. If 3 it's okay with you, Mr Parker, for time, I'm just going 4 to take you to the two paragraphs that I want you to 5 look at. You can trust me that it's the advice. If 6 somebody can bring that up, I'd be grateful.

> I want to look at page 27, and it's paragraphs 106 and 107. Thank you. I'll just take it briefly. I'll read it so everybody knows what I'm talking about. He savs:

"The proposal here, however, ultimately to invite the court to order the count be left [that's the count of theft to be left on the record] on the file as a condition of repayment was highly unusual if not exceptional, and was, it seems to me, fraught with difficulty, despite the judge approving this course.

"First, the effect of the arrangement was that the prosecution was in effect allowing Mrs Hamilton to buy her way out of a charge upon which the in-house lawyer and counsel had advised there was [sufficient] evidence. Second, the question might be asked why if the prosecution felt the evidence was sufficient to support the count of theft it was content to drop it for repayment of the losses. Third, if Mrs Hamilton did have a tenable defence to the count of theft (although 205

- 1 memory -- can you recall if it recorded any discussion
- 2 of any specific matters or criticisms that ought to be
- 3 considered for referral to the CCRC?
- 4 A. No, I can't.
- 5 Q. You've spoken today about the advice you were given on 6 privilege in this civil litigation.
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. Did that briefing, or any advice you can recall being 9 given around the time of this advice, cover the Post
- 10 Office's continuing obligations on disclosure as
- a prosecutor? 11
- 12 A. I can't. I'm sorry.
- 13 Q. At this time, when you were being briefed, or when you
- 14 read this advice, you would have been aware, I think,
- 15 that the rest of the Board wouldn't have read the Swift
- 16 Review or its recommendations; is that right?
- 17 A. Possibly. Why?
- Q. Well, you knew that they hadn't. Only the four internal 18
- 19 staff had been given it. You had a copy. It was being
- 20 controlled. You knew the rest of the Board hadn't seen
- 21 the Swift Review; is that right?
- 22 A. I'm sorry, what's the point you're making, though?
- 23 Q. I'm asking you a question --
- 24 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Never mind about that, Mr Parker. Just
- 25 say "yes" or "no".

- 1 I have seen no defence statement providing any defence,
- 2 and doubt a defence statement was ever served) then it
- 3 might be argued that the suggestion she should repay the
  - losses in return for the dropping of the theft count,
- 5 which was an idea originating with the prosecution,
- 6 placed undue pressure on her, despite the fact that she
- 7 was represented, and despite having pleaded guilty to 8 false accounting."
- 9 Now that's an important, serious criticism, isn't 10 it. Mr Parker?
- A. Yes. I mean, he goes on. I mean, it's quite hard for 11
- 12 me to comment on this. There's a lot going on on this
- 13 paragraph. There's a lot going on on the whole page,
- 14 and I haven't got the whole document at my disposal. So 15 to ask me to comment, you know, on a specific case,
- 16 I think is -- unless we have proper time, and I'm not --
- 17
- 18 Q. I simply wanted to ask: did you see this at the time or
- 19 were you briefed on it; and would you, if you had been,
- 20 have considered it a serious matter?
- 21 A. So I can't tell you if I saw it and, before opining on
- 22 how serious a matter I would have considered it, I'd
- 23 have to look at the whole document again.
- 24 Q. Okay. Did your briefing at that time -- I know that you
- 25 can't remember it, but just to try to prompt your
- 1 Okay, yes.
- MS PATRICK: Yes, so you knew? 2
- 3 Α.

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- 4 Q. So, at that point, nobody else on the Board could have 5
  - judged if Mr Altman had or had not done what Mr Swift
- 6 had recommended, could they?
- 7 A. Well, I'm not sure who the Altman advice was shared
  - with, actually. This was one of the outputs of the
- 9 Swift Review.
- Q. That's why I put the question the way that I did. You 10
- had seen both the Swift Review and were being briefed, 11
- 12 or had been shown, a copy of the Altman advice. You
- 13 were uniquely placed. Nobody else could compare the two
- 14 and say, "Well, Mr Altman has kind of not done what the
- 15 Swift Review expected him to do". You were the only
- 16 person that was in the position to do that, apart from
- 17 staff: is that fair?
- A. Yeah, I think at the time I just took this advice, which 18
- 19 seemed to me to be an adequate response on the first and
- 20 second recommendation. I think, you know, I wasn't busy
- 21 comparing things, it just looked to me -- and I was --
- 22 I think I was told -- I think I was told at the time,
- 23 this met the brief.
- 24 Q. Well, Mr Parker, I'm not trying to be flippant here but
- 25 you said comparing one thing or the other. This is

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1		a very serious question of whether the Post Office had	1	A. I believe I did, at the time.
2		met its prosecutorial duties to people who it had	2	Q. You can't recall now if you ever saw a copy of the
3		convicted of criminal offences.	3	Altman advice?
4	A.	Mm, mm.	4	A. I can't for sure.
5	Q.	So being the only person on the Board who could assess	5	Q. Can you recall if you asked to read it for yourself?
6		whether or not the advice that the Post Office had	6	A. I cannot. I'm sorry.
7		commissioned was actually what it sought to obtain, put	7	MS PATRICK: Thank you, Mr Parker.
8		you in a particular position. Did that, at the time,	8	Thank you, sir. I have no more questions.
9		cause you to think that you really ought to be looking	9	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms Patrick. Is that it,
10		really critically at the advice the Post Office was	10	Mr Beer?
11		being given?	11	MR BEER: Yes, it is, sir.
12	A.	I can't honestly tell you.	12	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, thank you, Mr Parker, for making
13	Q.	Okay. Today you've relied a number of times on a belief	13	a full and detailed witness statement and for answering
14		that legal advice given to you was competently given in	14	questions during the course of today. I'm very grateful
15		good faith. Did you owe any responsibility to the Board	15	to you.
16		and to the business and the Government Shareholder to	16	THE WITNESS: Thank you.
17		actively question or challenge that advice you were	17	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: We will resume I believe, next Tuesday;
18		being given?	18	is that correct, Mr Beer?
19	A.	I think, as I explained earlier, to challenge advice of	19	MR BEER: Yes, 9.45, please, sir.
20		specialists invites the question, you know, how do you	20	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Very well, 9.45 next Tuesday. Thank you.
21		challenge a legal opinion, and I don't have an easy	21	MR BEER: Thank you, sir.
22		answer to that.	22	(4.36 pm)
23	Q.	But, at a minimum, you would have had the responsibility	23	(The hearing adjourned until 9.45 am
24		to at least properly consider the advice you were being	24	on Tuesday, 16 July 2024)
25		given in good faith; is that fair? 209	25	210

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