

Witness name: Gareth Davies
Statement No.: WITN11020300
Dated: 23 May 2024

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

THIRD WITNESS STATEMENT OF GARETH DAVIES

INTRODUCTION

1. I, Gareth Davies, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Business and Trade, Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place, London SW1A 2DY, will state as follows.
2. I make this statement in response to the Inquiry's request for evidence dated 7 May 2024 ("**the Rule 9 request**"), in which the Department for Business and Trade ("**DBT**" or "**the department**") is asked to provide a written corporate statement that identifies:
 - (1) All private secretaries in post from 2000 onwards who acted for ministers whilst they were in the following roles:
 - (a) Minister of State for Competitiveness;
 - (b) Minister of State for e-Commerce and Competitiveness;
 - (c) Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Trade and Industry) (Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs);
 - (d) Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Trade and Industry) (Delivery and Efficiency);

- (e) Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Employment Relations and Postal Services);
 - (f) Minister of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs;
 - (g) Minister for Postal Affairs and Employment Relations;
 - (h) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations, Consumer and Postal Affairs;
 - (i) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Minister for Intellectual Property;
 - (j) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility;
 - (k) Any other ministerial role not listed in paragraphs (a) - (j) above, which had responsibility for Post Office Limited (and its relevant predecessors).
- (2) All private secretaries who acted for Secretaries of State in the following roles from 2000 onwards:
- (a) Secretary of State for Trade and Industry;
 - (b) Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform;
 - (c) Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills;
 - (d) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
 - (e) Secretary of State for Business and Trade;
 - (f) Any other ministerial role not listed in paragraphs (a) - (e) above, which had responsibility for Post Office Limited (and its relevant predecessors).

- (3) All Permanent Secretaries and Principal Accounting Officers within the departments headed by the Secretaries of State identified above from 2000.
3. In respect of all of these officials, the Inquiry has requested that I identify the period of time when they were in post. In respect of private secretaries, I am asked to identify the ministers or Secretaries of State in whose private offices they worked. I understand that the request relates only to those private secretaries who were involved in postal affairs or matters related to the Post Office.
4. I make this statement on behalf of DBT. I have been assisted in its preparation by officials within my department, as well as the Government Legal Department and counsel. The majority of the information set out in this statement is not known to me personally, and I have therefore drawn and relied upon extensive input from colleagues. It is in that sense a 'corporate statement'. Its contents are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
5. I am authorised by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to make this statement.

PRIVATE SECRETARIES

6. A minister's private secretary (often referred to as a PS) is a civil servant who works in a minister's private office. The essential objective of a private secretary is to assist the minister in managing their demanding workload on a day-to-day basis, so the minister can focus on decision-making. They do not hold any policy or decision-making responsibilities themselves, but instead act as a principal

liaison between a department's policy officials and its ministers. Private secretaries are responsible for providing administrative support to the minister to facilitate them in their ministerial role (that is, not in their position as a Member of Parliament).

7. Key parts of the private secretary's role include: managing the minister's diary (in conjunction with a specific diary manager), liaising with relevant policy teams, deciding the papers that should be put before a minister on a given day (principally through the ministerial box) and ensuring deadlines are met, preparing and managing meetings, note taking and record keeping, and logistics.
8. Within a particular private office, there is usually a 'Senior Private Secretary' or 'SPS' who acts as head of the minister's private office, and then more junior private secretaries who hold responsibility within the private office for a particular brief (or briefs) held by the minister. The particular brief which is managed by a particular private secretary will depend on the number of private secretaries within the office, as well as the nature of the minister's role and their overall portfolio. A minister may have multiple private secretaries working with them at a given point in time, and a number of these private secretaries will have had no involvement in the Post Office brief.
9. Due to the nature of their roles as political appointees, ministers can lose or have their position in Government changed when the governing party changes or when a ministerial reshuffle takes place. However, as civil servants, private secretaries generally remain in their role when their minister moves on, and often continue to work with replacement ministers, even if they represent a different political party to the one that came previously.

10. In light of this, it is extremely likely that a given minister and their private secretaries will have commenced and ended their roles at different times, including in circumstances where:
 - (a) a single private secretary will have been in post for a period covering the term of several ministers; and
 - (b) various private secretaries will have commenced and ended employment throughout the term of a single minister.
11. DBT does not hold a list of private secretaries over the period of time requested by the Inquiry. Therefore, DBT officials have sought to identify the relevant private secretaries by:
 - (i) reviewing civil service yearbooks, which were published annually until 2017, and which provide a snapshot of the private secretaries in post at the point when information was collated for publication;
 - (ii) conducting searches within emails and documents held by DBT for the purposes of this Inquiry; and
 - (iii) asking relevant DBT officials to identify relevant PSs.
12. I set out in Appendices 1 and 2 the details of relevant private secretaries as identified by DBT officials in response to the Rule 9 request.
13. There is a possibility that not all relevant private secretaries over the period covered by the Rule 9 request have been identified, for reasons including:
 - (i) that the civil service yearbooks provide a snapshot only and in some cases only mention the Senior Private Secretary; and

- (ii) that relevant private secretaries may not be identified in the emails and other documents which the department has on file as a result of departmental document retention policies.
14. Individuals in post temporarily to cover periods of temporary absence are not identified in the appendices.
15. I understand that departmental officials are reasonably confident that they have identified the vast majority of the relevant private secretaries identifiable from departmental records.

PERMANENT SECRETARIES AND PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING OFFICERS

16. A Permanent Secretary is the most senior civil servant in a government department. They are responsible and accountable for day-to-day management of all the work of their department, as well as the departmental budget. Permanent Secretaries are normally also Principal Accounting Officers (“**AOs**”) for their departments, which entails their being responsible and accountable to Parliament for the use of public money; as relevant to the Rule 9 request, all departmental Permanent Secretaries were also AOs. The duties and expectations of AOs are determined and monitored by HM Treasury through the ‘Managing Public Money’ guidance published by the Government.
17. Like private secretaries, Permanent Secretaries are civil servants. Therefore, Permanent Secretaries are likely to be in post throughout the period of more than one minister or Secretary of State, and their time in office does not generally correspond with the time that a minister holds their post.

18. I set out in Appendix 3 the relevant departmental Permanent Secretaries (not including any 'acting' Permanent Secretaries covering temporary absences of established Permanent Secretaries). Officials have compiled this information from departmental records and other publicly available government information. Due to multiple machinery of government changes, the relevant department with responsibility for Post Office Limited (and its predecessors) has changed throughout the years. Therefore, the relevant Permanent Secretary, for the department with responsibility for the Post Office, has also changed.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: 

Dated: 23 May 2024

APPENDIX 1

Ministerial title	Minister	Ministerial dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
Minister of State for Competitiveness	Rt Hon. Alan Johnson	28 July 1999 – 11 June 2001	Simon Lancaster (memo dated 04/08/99 and 34th civil service yearbook)
Minister of State for e-Commerce and Competitiveness	Rt Hon. Douglas Alexander	11 June 2001 – 29 May 2002	Alison Walker (37 th civil service yearbook)
Minister for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services	Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms	29 May 2002 – 9 September 2004	Alison Walker (38 th civil service yearbook) Mike Warnes (39th civil service yearbook) Colin Cushway, Nicola Barber (corporate memory)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Trade and Industry) (Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs)	Gerry Sutcliffe	9 September 2004 – 10 May 2005	Dominic Scullard (email dated 19/01/05) Sam Myers (42nd civil service yearbook)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Trade and Industry) (Delivery and Efficiency)	Barry Gardiner	10 May 2005 – 5 May 2006	Matthew Clarke (email dated 13/02/06)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Employment Relations and Postal Services)	Jim Fitzpatrick	5 May 2006 – 28 June 2007	Dominic Scullard (email dated 23/08/06) Mark Forde (email dated 31/01/07)
Minister of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs	Rt Hon. Pat McFadden	02 July 2007 – 5 June 2009	Robert Porteous (email dated 25/02/09 and 2009 civil service yearbook) Kate Hall (email dated 04/06/09)

Ministerial title	Minister	Ministerial dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
Minister for Postal Affairs and Employment Relations	Rt Hon. Lord Young of Norwood Green	9 June 2009 - 6 May 2010	Robert Cotes (email dated 20/07/09)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs	Rt Hon. Sir Edward Davey	6 May 2010 – 3 February 2012	Sarah Barraclough (email dated 25/05/10) Amy Jordan (email dated 21/06/10) Jez Williams (email dated 05/07/10) Stephen Parkinson (email dated 21/11/11)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs	Rt Hon. Norman Lamb	3 February 2012 – 6 September 2012	Sarah Barraclough (email dated 27/02/12) Stephen Parkinson (email dated 15/03/12) Marzena Bujalska (email dated 26/04/12) Maria Isanzu (email dated 19/06/12)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs	Jo Swinson	6 September 2012 – 20 December 2013; 30 June 2014 – – 8 May 2015	Claire Rannard (as Private Secretary - email dated 31/10/13 and corporate memory) Claire Rannard (as Senior Private Secretary email dated 13/09/14) Alysa Remtulla (email dated 24/10/14) Emily Cloke (49 th civil service yearbook)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations, Consumer and Postal Affairs (Maternity)	Rt Hon. Jenny Willott	20 December 2013 – 30 June 2014	Claire Rannard (email dated 19/05/14)

Ministerial title	Minister	Ministerial dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
Cover for Jo Swinson)			
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Minister for Intellectual Property	Rt Hon. Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG	17 July 2014 – 17 July 2016	Andrew Smith (email dated 16/07/15) Sophie Munday (email dated 11/05/16) Harriet Smith, Senior Private Secretary (email dated 4 August 2015)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility	Margot James	16 July 2016 – 9 January 2018	Sophia Nikolaou (email dated 26/07/17) Auryn Stevenson Hyde (email dated 04/12/17 and 53 rd civil service yearbook)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility	Andrew Griffiths	9 January – 14 July 2018	Auryn Stevenson Hyde (email dated 29/03/18)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility	Rt Hon. Kelly Tolhurst	19 July 2018– 13 February 2020	Jessica Tysoe (email dated 04/06/19)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets	Paul Scully	13 February 2020 – 8 July 2022	Jessica Tysoe (email dated 14/04/21) Sonny Murphy (email dated 13/11/20) Cora Sweet (corporate memory 07/21-08/23)

Ministerial title	Minister	Ministerial dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
			Francesca Clough, Senior Private Secretary (corporate memory 03/21-09/21) Guy Brindle, Senior Private Secretary (corporate memory, from 09/21)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets	Jane Hunt	8 July 2022 - 8 September 2022	Cora Sweet (corporate memory 07/21-08/23) Guy Brindle, Senior Private Secretary (corporate memory, from 09/21)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Enterprise and Markets	Dean Russell	20 September 2022 – 27 October 2022	Cora Sweet (corporate memory 07/21-08/23) Guy Brindle, Senior Private Secretary (corporate memory, from 09/21)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Enterprise and Markets (in BEIS until 7 February 2023); Parliamentary Under Secretary of State & Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business (in DBT from 7 February 2023 to 26 March 2024); and Minister of State for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business since 26 March 2024.	Kevin Hollinrake	27 October 2022 - present	Cora Sweet (corporate memory 07/21-08/23) Jamie Lucas (current) Guy Brindle, Senior Private Secretary (current)

Appendix 2

Secretary of State	Name	SoS dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry	Rt Hon. Stephen Byers	27 July 1998 – 23 December 1998	Christopher Woolard (memo 23/09/99)
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry	Rt Hon. Patricia Hewitt	8 June 2001 – 5 May 2005	Sarah Hodgetts (email dated 05/03/03) Damian Nussbaum (corporate memory) Angela Pearce (corporate memory)
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry	Rt Hon. Alan Johnson	6 May 2005 – 5 May 2006	Spencer Mahony (email dated 13/05/05)
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry	Rt Hon. Lord Darling of Roulanish	5 May 2006 – 28 June 2007	Megan Bingham-Walker (email dated 07/02/07)
Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	Rt Hon. Lord Hutton of Furness	28 June 2007 – 3 October 2008	Megan Bingham-Walker (email dated 26/07/07)
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills	Rt Hon. Lord Mandelson	3 October 2008 – 11 May 2010	Paul McCaffrey (email dated 04/02/09)
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills	Rt Hon. Sir Vince Cable	12 May 2010 – 12 May 2015	Joanne Crellin, Principal Private Secretary (49 th civil service yearbook) Hannah Wiskin, Principal Private Secretary (51 st civil service yearbook) Emily Hamblin, Senior Private Secretary (51 st civil service yearbook) Elizabeth Elton (email dated 23/07/10)

Secretary of State	Name	SoS dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
			<p>Laura Thompson (emails dated 05/09/11 and 20/02/12)</p> <p>Saskia Bradbury (email dated 29/07/13)</p> <p>Michael Skwarek (email dated 20/12/13)</p> <p>Tara Fernando (email dated 12/03/15)</p>
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills	Rt Hon. Sir Sajid Javid	12 May 2015 – 13 July 2016	<p>George Thomson (email dated 15/07/15)</p> <p>Emma Squire, Principal Private Secretary (52nd civil service yearbook)</p>
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Greg Clark	14 July 2016 – 24 July 2019	<p>Rebecca Lowe (email dated 20 July 2018)</p> <p>Alex Williams, Principal Private Secretary (53rd civil service yearbook)</p> <p>Christopher Perfect, Senior Private Secretary (53rd civil service yearbook)</p> <p>Jacqui Ward, Principal Private Secretary (54th civil service yearbook)</p>
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom	24 July 2019 – 13 February 2020	Rebecca Lowe (email dated 20 Nov 2019)
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Sir Alok Sharma	13 February 2020 – 8 January 2021	Rebecca Lowe (email dated 03 March 2020)

Secretary of State	Name	SoS dates	Relevant Private Secretary name/s
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng	8 January 2021 – 6 September 2022	Jack Crowther (corporate memory) Megan Wilson (email dated 11/02/21) Dr Isabel Webb, Eleanor Potter, and Theo Walsingham, Senior Private Secretaries (corporate memory)
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg	6 September 2022 – 25 October 2022	Catherine Angus (corporate memory)
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Rt Hon. Grant Shapps	25 October 2022 - 7 February 2023	Catherine Angus (corporate memory)
Secretary of State for Business and Trade	Rt Hon. Kemi Badenoch	7 February 2023 - Present	Ellie de la Bedoyere, previous Principal Private Secretary (corporate memory) Rose Lasko-Skinner, previous Private Secretary (corporate memory) Annie Leigh, Principal Private Secretary (current) Jason Cheung (current)

Appendix 3

Permanent Secretary	Dates
Sir Michael Scholar	1996 – 2001
Sir Robin Young	June 2001 – March 2005
Sir Brian Bender	March 2005 – May 2009
Sir Simon Fraser	May 2009 – August 2010
Sir Martin Donnelly	11 October 2010 – 4 September 2016
Sir Alex Chisholm	5 September 2016 – 13 April 2020
Sam Beckett (acting)	14 April 2020 – 19 July 2020
Sarah Munby	20 July 2020 – 6 February 2023
Gareth Davies	7 February 2023 – present