

Witness Name: Carl Creswell

Statement No.: WITN11730300

Dated: 12 November 2024

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

THIRD WITNESS STATEMENT OF CARL CRESWELL

I, Carl Creswell, will say as follows.

FULL, FAIR AND PROMPT REDRESS

1. I am Director, Post Office Policy and Business Engagement, in the Department for Business and Trade. I have prepared this third statement following my oral evidence at the Horizon Inquiry on 6 November, in order to assist the Inquiry in relation to the Department's role in providing redress for those affected by the Horizon scandal.
2. Having listened to subsequent oral evidence sessions at the Inquiry, I wanted to write to ensure there is clarity in relation to the answers that I gave on one point in my evidence: i.e. the emphasis given to promptness in our approach to redress payments to victims of the Horizon scandal.

3. On Friday 8 November, Mr Stevens put the following question to my Minister, Gareth Thomas MP: 'The Inquiry has been told previously that the Government's policy is to provide full, fair and prompt compensation. Do you agree, as suggested in Carl Creswell's evidence to this Inquiry this week, that Government policy now elevates promptness of compensation over fullness and fairness?'
4. This question has made me concerned that Counsel to the Inquiry has interpreted my words as saying that – following Ministerial steers – my team and I have moved to a position where fullness and fairness of redress are no longer as important as before.
5. I would like to make it clear that, when I talked about increasing the focus on 'promptness' of redress, I was not saying that I thought the Department had taken steps to 'under-deliver' on fairness or fullness of redress. My point, as I said during the session, was that 'the political desire was actually to try to target more **full and final** settlements because that was bringing closure to those individuals and giving more demonstrable progress' [emphasis added]. There was more emphasis on prompt redress, but not at the expense of the emphasis on full and fair compensation.
6. When Sir Wyn Williams asked me whether I was saying that I was being asked to put an 'emphasis on "prompt"', I interpreted that as being one of relative priority compared to the previous approach (i.e. we were being told to give it greater emphasis, during the autumn of 2023, than we were giving it prior to that point). As current and former Ministers have made clear in their evidence

to the Inquiry, it continued and continues to be important that we enable victims to have access to full and fair redress.

7. In summary, my understanding is that it has always been Government Ministers' objectives to ensure fair, full and prompt redress across the schemes. Where it has become apparent that one of those objectives is not being met, the Department has sought to address it (e.g. when it became clear that the tax treatment of settlements on the Horizon Shortfall Scheme was not delivering fair outcomes). We similarly worked with the Advisory Board to ensure that fairness was highlighted more firmly in the GLO scheme guidance and principles. Likewise, at the point when Ministers asked officials to pursue the fixed sum intervention, our understanding was that the ask was for full and fair redress to be achieved more quickly, not only for the Department to prioritise 'quick' redress. I therefore do not believe that we were being asked to raise an individual objective above and to the detriment of the others.

8. I would be happy to provide any further evidence on this point if the Inquiry would find this useful.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

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