

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Statement of Approach 003: the People Surveys, Independent Adviser appointment, and updates to information handling & publication approach



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Introducing Statement of Approach 003

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (“the Inquiry”) via Statement of Approach 003 provides updates and information regarding:

- The launch of the People Surveys to further understand the service offer and institutional setting at Post Office Limited (“POL”) and the relationship and experience of postmasters and employees/contractors of POL.
- A separate and discrete Whistleblowing Survey to assess perceptions and experience of raising concerns in or about POL, Fujitsu, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and UK Government Investments (UKGI).
- The appointment of an Independent Adviser.
- Updates to the Inquiry’s information handling and publication approach (“the records inventory and schedule”).

The Inquiry’s progress to date is overviewed in **Annex A**: the general update.

The People Surveys

The People Surveys will explore the current service offer from Post Office Limited (“POL”) to postmasters. The People Surveys will hear from both post office employees and current serving postmasters. This will be via direct engagement including:

- Online focus group sessions;
- Anonymous online forums; and
- Telephone interviews.

The People Surveys will support the Inquiry’s understanding of the institutional setting and the experience of postmasters and employees/contractors at POL as the company seeks to respond to the findings of the Horizon judgments and implement the measures set out in the Settlement Agreement, which includes the Historic Shortfall Group (scheme).

The People Surveys aim to assess whether lessons have been learned and that changes have taken place or are underway at the Post Office Limited.

The People Surveys programme

Segment date	Organisation	Survey methods	Area of exploration
Segment 1: week commencing 12th of April 2021	The Communication Workers Union (“CWU”) members and Other Postmasters invited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone appointments by invite or request to Secretariat • Focus group by invite or request to the Secretariat • Anonymous online forum (opens 13 April for 3 weeks): https://45092875.xleap.net/polforuma 	The Settlement Agreement: Schedule 5 the plan for improvement and Schedule 6 the Historic Shortfall Group.
Segment 2: week commencing 19th of April 2021	The National Federation of SubPostmasters (“NFSP”) members and Other Postmasters invited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone appointments by invite or request to the Secretariat • Focus group by invite or request to the Secretariat • Anonymous online forum (opens 20 April for 3 weeks): https://45092875.xleap.net/polforumb 	Accounting practices and dispute management more generally at the Post Office.
Segments 3 & 4: weeks commencing	POL employees & teams invited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone appointments by invite or request to the Secretariat 	

Segment date	Organisation	Survey methods	Area of exploration
26 th of April and 3 rd of May		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live online forums for general staff and middle management (focus groups) by invite only.	

The timeline and eligibility requirements for participation in the People Surveys

The People Surveys will run from the 12th of April 2021 to the 7th of May 2021.

Postmasters and Postmistresses

The People Surveys will hear from **current serving postmasters or postmistresses** who have:

- experienced any balancing issues and/or shortfalls in their branch since January 2020 to date; and/or
- postmasters/postmistresses whose contracts have either been suspended or terminated since January 2020 to date.

As well as **postmasters or postmistresses who have applied to the Historic Shortfall Group (Scheme)**.

For prospective eligible participants please contact the Secretariat by **20th of April 2021** at: posecretariat@postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk

Post Office Limited Staff

The People Surveys will look to hear from POL employees who work on the following areas or have the roles described below:

- Managing branch accounting shortfalls or balancing issues (helpdesk and case handlers);
- Post Office Ltd management accounting including central cash reconciliation processes;
- Training and audit;
- Sales and area managers; and
- Contract managers who have managed suspensions, terminations and/or contractual disputes since January 2020 to date.

For prospective eligible participants who are POL employees please contact the Secretariat by **20th of April 2021** at: posecretariat@postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk

Reporting on the People Surveys and participant anonymity

Participants in the People Surveys will not be named, and their input only recorded for the Inquiry's internal purposes. A public record of the Surveys will be made available at the Inquiry's end in the form a separate and discrete summary report. Individual participants in the Surveys will not be referenced by name in the report.

The Whistleblowing Survey

Separate and discrete from the People Surveys, there will also be a short online Whistleblowing Survey which will be available on the Qualtrics platform. The online Survey will be an opportunity for employees and representatives of the organisations (POL, UKGI, Fujitsu and BEIS) to share information about the experiences of processes for raising concerns (i.e., whistleblowing) specifically in the context of issues caused by the Horizon IT system. Matters raised must be related to failure to comply with the law and/or proper organisational procedures; miscarriages of justice; health and safety; environmental damage and covering up wrongdoing associated with the previous or other points.

The timeline and for participation in the Whistleblowing Survey

The link to the online Whistleblowing Survey is now available. Please [complete the survey here](#). The survey link will be open until 7 May 2021.

Respondents will be able to submit anonymously to the Whistleblowing survey. However, should anyone wish to speak further with the Inquiry regarding Whistleblowing, they may do so by contacting the Secretariat by 7 May 2021 at: posecretariat@postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk

Reporting on the Whistleblowing Survey and participant anonymity

Participants in the Whistleblowing Survey will not be named, and names (if provided) will only be recorded for the Inquiry's internal purposes. An anonymised public record of the Survey findings and responses will be made available at the end of the Inquiry in the form of a separate and discrete summary report. Individual participants in the Whistleblowing Survey will not be referenced by name in the report.

Appointment of an Independent Adviser

As set out in the Inquiry's terms of reference the Chair of the Inquiry (Sir Wyn Williams) may be supported by up to four independent advisers. The first independent adviser to the Chair has been appointed: a digital consultancy.

The procurement of these specialist digital services was undertaken via a commercial framework agreement, and a successful bid was made for the services of "independent adviser" to the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry.

The digital consultants' ("Solirius") contract with the Inquiry commenced on 5 March 2021. Their role is to produce an interim report to the Chair by May 2021 and a final report later this year. **Annex B** provides an extract from the Solirius corporate curriculum vitae. **Annex C** provides extracts from the Specification produced for the procurement of the digital consultancy.

Information Handling & Publication: updates

The Inquiry's approach to information handling and publication is updated as follows:

- Annex A of Statement of Approach 002 is now amended at paragraphs 15 and 16; and
- The inventory and schedule for logging and/or publishing information received by the Inquiry. The rows of the table below update the inventory and schedule set out in Statement of Approach, which is available at the Inquiry's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020>. The updates advise that certain records will be logged on the Inquiry's [records webpage](#), when and the publication status these records will receive when they are logged.

Evidence base A: oral contributions	Logged on the Inquiry's records webpage	To be published during the inquiry ("live") or at report stage ("end")	Publication status to be assigned	Timeframe for publication after receipt	Where to locate record(s) on the webpage
Public hearings stage 2: hearing from institutions	Yes	Live	Available	Within 30 days	Recordings and transcripts to be uploaded to the section <i>Video or Sound Records</i> .
Private 1-2-1 hearings with Chair	Yes	End	Available anonymised and/or redacted where participants consent	On day of the final report publication	Recordings and transcripts to be uploaded to the section <i>Video or Sound Records</i> . "Meetings and Engagements scheduled" in the Supporting documents section.

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Evidence base B: Written text or literature	To be logged on the inquiry's collections page (Y or N)	To be published during the inquiry ("live") or at report stage ("end")	Publication status to be assigned	Timeframe for publication after receipt	Where to locate record(s) on the webpage
The People Surveys Report(s)	Yes	End	Available but anonymised; or redacted	On day of the final report publication	Record to be published in the <i>Reports</i> section.
The Whistleblowing Survey report	Yes	End	Available but anonymised; or redacted	On day of the final report publication	Record to be published in the <i>Reports</i> section.

Annex A: General update on the Inquiry's progress

The Inquiry has, until now (April 2021):

- Published Statement of Approach 001, which is available at the Inquiry's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020>
- Published Statement of Approach 002, which is available at the Inquiry's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020>
- Published today Statement of Approach 003.
- Completed a public call for evidence which ran from 01/12/2021 - 23/02/2021. The Inquiry will publish the call for evidence responses at the end of the Inquiry.
- Held stage 1 hearings ("hearing from those impacted"): which listened to the experiences of those impacted by the Horizon dispute in focus group sessions and heard from individuals privately to gain an understating of the human impact, and the processes that led to the impacts.
- Published a webpage on Gov.UK – [The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry records and evidenced received](#) - where relevant records received or created by the inquiry will be logged and, where appropriate, published. This webpage includes the recordings and transcripts of the Stage 1 hearings and written human statements.
- Established the criteria, in the Statement of Approach 002, for publication status (available, anonymised, redacted or not available for public viewing) and explained when each status would apply. Created a records inventory and schedule where timeframes are detailed for the logging and/or publication of information and records on the abovementioned webpage. The records inventory and schedule has, as of this Statement of Approach, been refreshed and updated.
- Published an information handling protocol, which is available at the Inquiry's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020> (see Annex A of Statement of Approach 002 paragraphs 15 – 16 now amended).
- Published a privacy statement, which is available at the Inquiry's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020> (see Annex B of Statement of Approach 001).
- The Inquiry will issue Statement of Approach 004 in May which will set out the details of the Stage 2 Hearings that will commence in June 2021.

Annex B: Independent Adviser Appointment Corporate CV (extract)

Solirius Consulting Limited

Solirius was founded in 2007 to help clients deliver digital solutions that solved complex business problems. Solirius have since worked on a diverse range of projects with private and public sector clients and built a reputation for providing high quality, honest and trusted advice at a fair price.

We are known for our holistic approach to client projects, ensuring we build a complete solution and provide client support at every stage of the technology delivery lifecycle from expert strategic advice through to highly skilled delivery teams.

Our team

We have built a team of consultants who bring their enthusiasm, skill and technical knowledge to our client work. Our consultants are experts in their respective fields and continue to develop their knowledge of emerging technologies. As a company we remain technology agnostic, working with a broad range of technologies and vendors.

We are organised into 5 practices which allow us to provide an end-to-end service to our clients:

- Technology Consulting
- Software Engineering
- Delivery Consulting
- Business Consulting; and
- Testing and Quality Assurance.

Annex C: Digital Consultancy Specification

Extracts from the Specification:

Introduction and summary of requirements

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry is looking to appoint an independent advisor by way of a digital consultancy, to support and advise the Chairman (Sir Wyn Williams) in the evaluation of certain digital aspects (and relevant associated business processes) and the development of recommendations for the Post Office Limited's IT system: Horizon.

Aims and objectives

Specifically the digital consultancy acting as an independent advisor will assist the Chairman to:

- Understand and acknowledge what went wrong in relation to Horizon, and identify what key lessons must be learned for the future.
- Establish a clear account of the implementation and failings of Horizon over its lifecycle.
- Assess whether the processes and information provided by Post Office Ltd to postmasters are sufficient to enable postmasters to run their businesses
- Assess whether Post Office Ltd has delivered or made good progress on the organisational and cultural changes necessary to ensure that a similar set of circumstances regarding IT deficiencies, processes and significant adverse impact on individuals does not happen in the future.

Methodology and Outputs Required

The outputs/products required of the consultancy will be:

- An interim report to the Inquiry Chair due in May 2021 (phase 1). The report is to highlight in relation to Horizon (1) what is working well, (2) what should be stopped, (3) what could be done differently. The report should include reference to both technical aspects of Horizon and the relevant business process (including relevant staff capability) necessary to support optimal functioning of the system by those who use it on a daily basis in post offices and at other more senior levels for business planning, monitoring, strategic financial and other management purposes.
- Develop the lines of questioning and enquiry for the Stage 2 which are relevant to the Horizon IT system and associated business processes (phase 1)
- Support the development of the Chair's Final Report (phase 1 and 2) through:

- i) analysis of source materials and commissioning reviews to further develop the Inquiry's information requests in developing its evidence base. Testing and interpreting this evidence.
- ii) attend or commission relevant meetings and engagements with stakeholders (the Post Office Limited, Fujitsu, Postmasters (current or former), and other stakeholders as appropriate. iii) providing advice and steers on chapters of the Chairman's final report relevant to the supplier's expertise through establishing and developing emerging relevant themes and trends; and
- iv) advising on recommendations and relevant chapter development of the Chairman's final report.

Annex D: Q&A

Q1: The Inquiry has stated that there will be People Surveys, why is there a separate survey for Whistleblowing?

The Inquiry recognises the sensitive nature of whistleblowing matters and therefore has created a separate (as well as anonymous) survey through which respondents can share their views. The Whistleblowing survey will be specifically targeted towards employees and representatives of the key organisations, POL, Fujitsu, BEIS and UKGI.

Q2: Why is the Inquiry providing an update on information handling when this was already covered in SoA 002?

The Inquiry has clarified in this statement that the People Surveys and Whistleblowing Survey summary reports will be made available to the public at the end of the Inquiry. The reports will not name individual participants.

Records of private hearings will be made available in redacted form should consent by the participant of the private hearing be provided. The records will be published at the end of the Inquiry.

The upcoming Stage 2 hearings will have both recordings and transcripts available to the public within 30 days of the individual hearings.

Q3: Why are the first Independent advisers appointed digital consultants?

The Inquiry has appointed digital consultants to support and advise Sir Wyn the Chair on the relevant parts of the Inquiry's terms of reference, specifically those relating to Horizon Issues. It is important to Sir Wyn that relevant subject matter experts are consulted and engaged in his Inquiry. Solirius consulting have been appointed to deliver relevant advice and guidance.

Version history

Version number	Date	Changes made
2.0	19 April 2021	Link to the Whistleblowing Survey added on page 8.

This publication is available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020

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