

Horizon Compensation Advisory Board
Secretariat: Department for Business and Trade
Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP,
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
By email

22 October 2024

Dear Lord Chancellor,

Post Office Convictions: Capture

I am writing as Chair of the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board, on behalf of myself and colleagues: The Rt Hon Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom, The Rt Hon Lord Beamish, and Professor Richard Moorhead.

You will be aware that Parliament decided on a cross-party basis to overturn the convictions of some 900 former sub-postmasters and mistresses in the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024. The awful saga involved both the unreliable Horizon software and egregious behaviour of Post Office investigators and management.

The reasons for legislation were obvious injustice and the need for speed, as the victims had been victims of injustice originating too many years ago, many were suffering ongoing trauma, and many are of advanced age.

You will also be aware that it has recently come to light that a cohort of former sub-postmasters and mistresses were also subjected to injustice (wrongful prosecutions, convictions, investigations, bankruptcies and repayment requirements) arising out of the Capture software that was used from 1992 to 1999 before Horizon. We have read the Kroll Report and media stories of the terrible experiences of individuals, and seen statistics about the number of Post Office investigations and prosecutions from the 'Capture years'. Sickeningly, the evidence about the behaviour of Post Office investigations and management is the same as what took place in relation to the Horizon victims. The Horizon and Capture situations seem to us to be indistinguishable.

Inevitably, through no fault of the victims, evidence is scarce about what took place between two and three decades ago. But justice requires to be consistently and swiftly delivered. We cannot see that the Court of Appeal's process or presumptions will assist in delivering justice in these cases. We find it impossible to distinguish between the injustice suffered by the Horizon victims and the Capture victims. The Capture victims deserve particular speed in response in view of their greater duration of suffering and their advancing age.

We urge you to ***overturn all the Post Office-driven convictions from the Capture period by legislation as soon as possible.***

Yours sincerely,

Chris Hodges

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cc Gareth Thomas MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports)