

Retired High Court judge to lead Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

- Sir Wyn Williams will lead the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, which will start its work immediately
- inquiry will establish a clear account of the implementation and failings of Horizon over its lifetime
- it will also now gather available relevant evidence from this period from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Retired High Court judge Sir Wyn Williams will chair the government's inquiry into the Post Office Ltd Horizon IT dispute, which begins work this week.

Sir Wyn, who has over 28 years' judicial experience, will head up the non-statutory inquiry, which aims to ensure there is a public summary of the failings that occurred at Post Office Ltd, and to make sure something like this cannot happen again.

It follows Post Office Ltd reaching a settlement of £57.75 million in December 2019 to conclude a long-running civil court case brought against it by a group of postmasters over issues related to its Horizon IT system.

The terms of reference for the inquiry have been expanded following feedback from former postmasters since they were first published in June.

As well as establishing exactly what went wrong at Post Office Ltd, the inquiry will also assess whether lessons have been learned and concrete changes have taken place or are underway at Post Office Ltd.

Postal Affairs Minister Paul Scully said:

The Horizon dispute had a hugely damaging effect on the lives of postmasters and their families, and its repercussions are still being felt today.

It is essential that we determine precisely what went wrong at the Post Office during this period, so we can ensure the right lessons have been learnt, and establish what must change to make sure this cannot happen again.

That is why, having listened to former postmasters, we are expanding the scope of our inquiry to ensure it gathers evidence to build on Mr Justice Fraser's findings, and have invited a retired High Court judge with a wealth of experience to lead it.

Sir Wyn Williams said:

I am very much looking forward to chairing this inquiry.

I am determined that the inquiry will provide the forum for a thorough and rigorous examination of all the evidence presented and that a report will be produced which all participants in the Inquiry and the wider public will recognise as having addressed the terms of reference constructively and in detail.

I fully understand that my engagement with participants in the inquiry will be crucial to achieving my aims.

The final terms of reference include a new commitment to build upon the findings of the court case by establishing a clear account of the implementation and failings of Horizon over its lifecycle.

To achieve this, the inquiry will obtain all available relevant evidence from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu and BEIS from the period in question.

Among other things, the inquiry will examine the governance and whistleblowing controls now in place at Post Office Ltd and whether they are sufficient to ensure that the failings that led to the Horizon case do not happen again.

It will be able to make any recommendations it sees fit.

Both Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu, which supplied the Horizon system, have committed to fully cooperate with the inquiry.

Sir Wyn biography

Sir Wyn Williams was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1974 and appointed Queen's Counsel in 1992. He was appointed a Recorder of the Crown Court in 1992 and a deputy High Court Judge in 1999. He took up a full-time judicial appointment on 1 April 2004 when he was made a senior circuit judge and the specialist Chancery Judge for the Wales and Chester Circuit. In January 2007 Sir Wyn was appointed to the High Court and immediately upon appointment he was authorised to sit in the Administrative Court. Between 1 January 2012 and December 2015 he was a presiding judge for Wales becoming the Senior Presiding Judge in January 2014. Although Sir Wyn has retired as a full time judge he is authorised by the Lord Chief Justice to sit in retirement when required in the Court of Appeal and in the High Court.

Following his retirement from the High Court Bench Sir Wyn was appointed as the first President of Welsh Tribunals. He was also appointed as a Judge of the Courts of Appeal of Guernsey and Jersey. Since his retirement he has also been actively involved in arbitrating and mediating sports related disputes. Between September 2012 and July 2016 Sir Wyn was the Deputy Chairman of the Boundary Commission for Wales; between 2013 and his retirement in 2017 he was the Chairman of the Wales Committee of the Judicial College. In 2013 Sir Wyn was elected to a fellowship of The Learned Society of Wales in recognition of his services to the law in Wales.

Notes for editors

To reflect the additional focus of Sir Wyn's work to that announced in June, it will be called an inquiry, rather than a review. The inquiry will be non-statutory.