



Information Rights Team  
Post Office Limited  
Ground Floor  
Finsbury Dials  
20 Finsbury Street  
London EC2Y 9AQ

Our reference: FOI2021/00812

Ms Shaikh  
request-789115-8b7f5024@whatdotheyknow.com

25 November 2021

Dear Ms Shaikh,

**Request under the Freedom of Information Act  
FOI2021/00812**

I refer to your recent request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("**FOIA**") as follows:

*"In the Post Office Board Monthly Report of July 1999, an entry 'Harnessing Technology/Automation' appears in a table of POCL's 'overall objectives'. The corresponding milestone for this objective is recorded as:*

- successfully completing the Live Trial of Horizon by the end of September 1999;*
- installing 4,000 post offices with Horizon by the end of March 2000, subject to Government decision'.*

*Please can you disclose documentation which pertains to the Government decision which authorised the rollout of Horizon at this juncture."*

On 1 November 2021, in response to this request, we sent redacted copies of the documents that Post Office Limited ("**Post Office**") considered to be responsive to your request.

On 4 November 2021, you sent an email to Post Office in the following terms:

*"I would just like to clarify:*

*i) What is the reason for redacting documents which are already available to view in non-redacted form at the Postal Museum Archives? (Documents which are referred to in your response as 01.20, 02.20, 0.3, 7.14, 10, 11.26 and 13.30).*

*ii) What is the reason for redacting a document which will be released at the Postal Museum Archive in January 2022 (19.11)? This release date is already beyond the 20 year disclosure time.*

*iii) What is the reason for redacting the name of the Postal Minister, Alan Johnson, in the list of Attendees of the PO Board in its Minutes of 11 January 2000 (19.11)?*

*Given my FOI request relates specifically to the role of government in authorising the rollout of Horizon, I am uncertain as to why this redaction was considered necessary."*

In response to your query as to the reason for redacting documents referred to in points i-ii of your email, the majority of the redactions that have been applied were to material which is outside the scope of the request. These redactions have been applied to material that Post Office considered was not relevant to your request and

therefore not responsive. This conclusion is not affected by whether material is available to view at the Postal Museum Archives.

As mentioned in our response letter of 1 November 2021, the only exemption that has been applied to the documents was the 'personal information' exemption under section 40(2) and section 40(3A)(a) FOIA, which covers personal information of certain individuals in the disclosed documents.

In response to your reference to "*the 20 year disclosure time*" in point ii of your email, we understand this to be a reference to the fact that under section 63 FOIA some exemptions cease to apply when the information becomes a 'historical record'. Originally, a historical record was one over thirty years old. However, this has been amended to twenty years by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. We note that this change is subject to transitional arrangements, so that the period of thirty years was reduced to twenty years gradually between 2013 and 2022.<sup>1</sup>

However, the section 40 exemption for personal information is not one of the exemptions covered by section 63 FOIA. Therefore, the twenty-year time limit is not applicable to personal information redactions made to the documents provided in response to your request (which is the only exemption under which redactions were made, as explained above).

In response to point iii in your email, we can confirm that Alan Johnson was not included in the list of attendees in the minutes of 11 January 2000. His name is mentioned only in the body of the minutes on page 2.

I hope the information I have provided on this occasion is useful, however if you have any queries about this response, please contact me. Do remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Russell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'C' and 'R'.

Chris Russell  
Head of Data Protection & Information Rights & DPO  
[information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:information.rights@postoffice.co.uk)  
<http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/access-information>  
[@postofficenews](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom of Information (Definition of Historical Records) (Transitional and Saving Provisions) Order 2012.