

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 30 August 2012 13:09  
**To:** 'paula.vennells [REDACTED]'  
**Subject:** Quick catch-up, perhaps after Monday's Crowns meeting?

Hi Paula,

Sorry to hear that you are unwell, I hope you feel better soon. We had a great session with [REDACTED] earlier.

I was hoping to grab a couple of minutes with you this morning to catch-up on how everything went on Monday. When I was over on Monday afternoon, everything was clearly pretty busy and moving rapidly, and so I didn't think it made sense to try to take up your time. But as things settle down, it would be good to find out how things went with [REDACTED], the team as well as the major stakeholders. Maybe we could grab 5 minutes after the Crowns meeting with Norman on Monday?

These things can never be pleasant, but I hope it went as well as it could have.

All the best,

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 28 September 2012 15:48  
**To:** 'paula.vennells [REDACTED]'  
**Subject:** Monday catch-up

Hi Paula,

I hope all's well. I've just about survived the first week back after my holiday! We're catching up on Monday so I thought it might be helpful to add to your list and jot down the key things it would be good for us to talk through.

- New Minister
- Crowns and pay
- NFSP matters
- Leading from that, Stakeholder Forum preparations
- NTP update
- DVLA
- Project Polo

Have a great weekend.

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 14 October 2012 19:31  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** RE: Proud of our past, present and future

Thanks for this Paula - the ad looks great. I'm now looking forward to catching it in real life, as it were. [REDACTED]

See you on Tuesday.

Will.

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**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]] **On Behalf Of** Paula Vennells  
**Sent:** 12 October 2012 11:07  
**To:** Paula Vennells  
**Subject:** Proud of our past, present and future

Hello

On Sunday 14 October our new advertising campaign launches which will see us back on TV and across the streets of the UK with the aim to surprise and challenge customers to think again about the Post Office.

The new TV ad, which features our very own colleague - Paul Mead, Customer Service Manager - aims to show how relevant we are to customers' lives and how we stand out as an organisation which can be trusted to put them first.

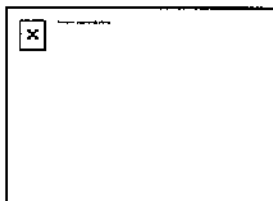
Alongside this we are running an internal, press and media programme to show how the Post Office is transforming, still at the heart of communities, but thriving in a digital world, growing our services and modernising our products and services to provide excellence for our customers.

You can view our new advertising using the details below.

[www.viewheads.net](http://www.viewheads.net)

Username - [REDACTED]  
Password - [REDACTED]

Best wishes



**Paula Vennells**  
Chief Executive  
**Post Office Ltd**  
148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ

020 7012 [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] / Mobile: [REDACTED] / Mobex: [REDACTED]  
Paula.vennells [REDACTED]

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 17 October 2012 11:21  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Stakeholder Forum first meeting

Thanks [REDACTED].

As promised yesterday, I attach a copy of the relevant sections of the Postal Services Act. In particular, as Andy noted, section 7 is important for our "givens".

Best regards,

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]] **On Behalf Of** Paula Vennells

**Sent:** 17 October 2012 09:45

**To:** [REDACTED] Gibson Will (ShEx); [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Stakeholder Forum first meeting



Dear All

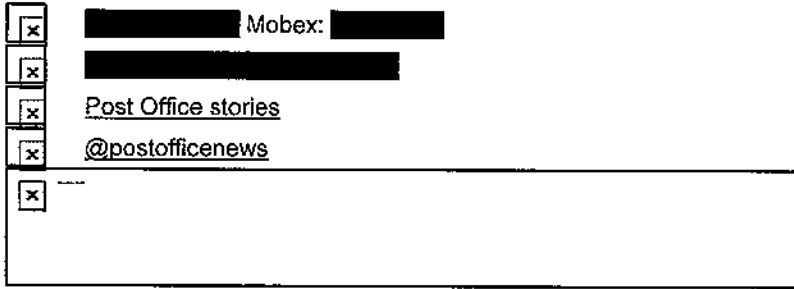
Please find attached a copy of the presentation slides from yesterday's Stakeholder Forum.

Kind regards

[REDACTED] | Assistant to Chief Executive

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 148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ  
 Postline: [REDACTED]



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# Postal Services Act 2011

## 2011 CHAPTER 5

### PART 1

#### RESTRUCTURING OF ROYAL MAIL GROUP

PROSPECTIVE

#### *Ownership of the Post Office*

- 4 Restrictions on issue and transfer of shares and share rights in a Post Office company etc**
- (1) No disposal of the Crown's interest in a Post Office company may be made other than a disposal that—
    - (a) is made pursuant to a direction under subsection (2), or
    - (b) is authorised under subsection (3).
  - (2) The Secretary of State may by order—
    - (a) direct a Post Office company (if it is wholly owned by the Crown) to issue shares or share rights to a relevant mutual, or
    - (b) direct a company wholly owned by the Crown to transfer shares or share rights in a Post Office company to a relevant mutual.
  - (3) A disposal of the Crown's interest in a Post Office company is authorised under this subsection if—
    - (a) the disposal is by way of an issue or transfer of shares or share rights in a Post Office company to a relevant mutual, and
    - (b) the Secretary of State has by order approved the issue or transfer.
  - (4) An order under subsection (2) or (3)(b) is subject to affirmative resolution procedure.
  - (5) No disposal of a relevant mutual's interest in a Post Office company may be made other than a disposal to—

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*Status: This version of this cross heading contains provisions that are prospective.*

*Changes to legislation: There are outstanding changes not yet made by the legislation.gov.uk editorial team to Postal Services Act 2011. Any changes that have already been made by the team appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)*

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- (a) another relevant mutual,
  - (b) the Secretary of State or the Treasury (or a nominee of either of them), or
  - (c) a company wholly owned by the Crown.
- (6) Any disposal in contravention of subsection (1) or (5) has no effect.
- (7) For the meaning of “Post Office company” and “relevant mutual”, see sections 6 and 7.
- (8) In this section any reference to a disposal of a person's interest in a Post Office company is to—
- (a) the issue or transfer of shares in a company the effect of which is to reduce the proportion of the Post Office company owned by the person, or
  - (b) the issue or transfer of share rights to a person the effect of which would be, if the shares to which the share rights relate were issued or transferred to the person, to reduce the proportion of the Post Office company owned by the person.

## **5 Report on transfer of interest in a Post Office company to a relevant mutual**

- (1) This section applies where the Secretary of State proposes to make an order under section 4(2) or (3)(b) (order directing or approving issue or transfer of shares or share rights in a Post Office company to a relevant mutual).
- (2) The Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a report on the proposed issue or transfer before making the order.
- (3) The report must—
- (a) give details of the proposed issue or transfer (including the expected time-scale for the issue or transfer),
  - (b) name the body to whom shares or share rights are proposed to be issued or transferred, and
  - (c) explain how that body meets the conditions set out in section 7.

## **6 Meaning of “Post Office company”**

- (1) In this Part “Post Office company” means a company that—
- (a) is engaged in the provision of post offices,
  - (b) is or has at any time been—
    - (i) a subsidiary of the original holding company, or
    - (ii) in the same group as a company that is or (as the case may be) was at that time designated under this section, and
  - (c) is designated for the purposes of this subsection by order made by the Secretary of State.
- (2) A company may be designated only if, immediately before it is designated, it is wholly owned by the Crown.
- (3) An order under subsection (1) may not be amended or revoked.
- (4) An order under section 93 that appoints a day for the commencement of section 1 (removal of restrictions on ownership of Royal Mail Holdings plc etc) may not be made unless Post Office Limited (registered number 02154540) has been designated under subsection (1).



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appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)*

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## **7 Meaning of “relevant mutual”**

- (1) In section 4 “relevant mutual” means a body in respect of which the Secretary of State considers that conditions A to C are (and will continue to be) met.
- (2) Condition A is that the purpose (or main purpose) for which the body exists is to act for the public benefit by promoting the use by the public of services provided by a Post Office company or at its post offices.
- (3) Condition B is that the members of the body are—
  - (a) persons who have an interest in the use by the public of such services (including employees of the Post Office company and other persons engaged in the provision of its post offices), or
  - (b) persons who act on behalf of, or represent, persons within paragraph (a).
- (4) Condition C is that the body has in place arrangements for the prevention of disposals of property or rights by the Post Office company that would be inconsistent with the purpose (or main purpose) for which the body exists.

**Status:**

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**Changes to legislation:**

There are outstanding changes not yet made by the legislation.gov.uk editorial team to Postal Services Act 2011. Any changes that have already been made by the team appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.

**Commencement Orders yet to be applied to the Postal Services Act 2011:**

Commencement Orders bringing provisions within this Act into force:

- S.I. 2011/2329 art. 2 3 commences (2011 c. 5)
- S.I. 2011/3044 art. 2 commences (2011 c. 5)

Commencement Orders bringing legislation that affects this Act into force:

- S.I. 2012/628 art. 2-8 commences (2011 c. 20)

**From:** Paula Vennells  
**Sent:** 22 November 2012 17:48  
**To:** mpst.swinson [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Letter from Paula Vennells, CEO Post Office Ltd

Dear Jo,

Please refer to letter, together with enclosure.

Kind regards  
Paula

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T 0207 250 [REDACTED]  
E paula.venneils [REDACTED]



Jo Swinson MP  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

22 November 2012

Dear *Jo,*

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to visit us last week. I hope you found the Model Office tour and subsequent discussion useful. From my perspective your close engagement in our plans for transforming the Post Office is absolutely invaluable. I am writing to update you on some of the issues we discussed, and to highlight the particular areas where I would appreciate your further input.

#### Front Office of Government

As we discussed, expanding the range of services we deliver on behalf of central and local government is a key plank of our long-term growth strategy, and has the potential to deliver a triple benefit for taxpayers and citizens of more accessible and convenient services, lower public spending on administration and more sustainable financial foundations to safeguard our network. We are part of the UK's infrastructure, and it is in the collective interest that we are used to our full potential.

But equally, we need to demonstrate to individual departments and local authorities that we represent clear value for money when compared against the best of our private sector competitors. The awards of the DVLA and DWP identity assurance framework contracts were particularly pleasing in this respect, extending our success rate to 10 out of 10 government contracts won over the last two years.

However, there are still substantial untapped opportunities across government, and I am therefore determined to build on this momentum over the coming months. We had a very useful introductory meeting with Danny Alexander in the summer, where he shared our enthusiasm about our potential to support the government efficiency programme, and asked us to develop more detailed proposals. We are therefore preparing a report setting out what we see as the opportunities for the Post Office to enable departments and local authorities to rationalise their own front office estates, by either delivering or hosting face-to-face services on their behalf or by supporting customers to access the growing number of services that are delivered through digital channels.



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We will send you a draft of this report in the next few days, and I would very much welcome your views on both the content and how best to drive this agenda forward within government. We are meeting on Monday evening and so I suggest we cover this topic then.

As we discussed last week, additional focus needs to be given to the challenge of encouraging more local authorities to follow the successful models of joint working which we have developed with Westminster and Kent County Council, amongst others. I would very much appreciate your support in harnessing MPs and local councillors to champion these models. Our round table discussion on 3 December should provide a good opportunity to share ideas on this issue, building on the experience of the Pathfinder councils.

#### Network transformation programme

I appreciated our detailed discussion last Monday on the issues facing the Network Transformation programme. The strong results to date have strengthened my conviction that the new Locals and Mains models provide the right foundations for securing the long-term viability of the Post Office network. Customer satisfaction is running at 93% or higher (compared with 87% for the network as a whole); customer visits are up 15% for Locals in comparison to the flat or declining trend for the rest of the network (and most retail outlets); and crucially from the perspective of our agents, overall retail sales have increased by around 10% on average.

These statistics are supported by the anecdotal evidence on the ground that conversions are helping sub-postmasters to kick-start both their own businesses and their local economies. The funding provided for the Network Transformation programme should therefore be seen as an investment in the UK economy, not just the Post Office.

But as we discussed, while these positive results are generating considerable interest from sub-postmasters, the conversions process is nonetheless a major step for them, particularly in the current economic environment. It is understandable that many agents want to take their time in evaluating the opportunities, especially given the voluntary nature of the programme with no specific deadlines at the individual level.

I am determined to manage these challenges and provide careful stewardship of the public funding that has been provided to support the transformation programme, getting as close as possible to the year-end check point of 1,200 branches committed to conversion, and continuing that momentum in the second and third years. Every step of the conversions process is being programme managed in microscopic detail, and this is supported by clear performance incentives for our field teams to support each individual sub-postmaster through the process. We are updating your officials regularly on the numbers flowing through the pipeline, and greatly value their support and challenge in managing the programme.



Communications and stakeholder engagement

We have developed a detailed, integrated campaign to engage sub-postmasters, the media, MPs and opinion formers in order to advertise the benefits of the Network Transformation programme and our wider plans for modernising the business. I would be delighted if you would be able to lend your direct support in two specific initiatives to this end:

- joining me and George Thomson at one of our seminars with sub-postmasters to answer their questions and concerns about the new branch models - we will discuss with your office some possible dates and locations; and
• engaging MPs at the constituency and national level. Building on the very helpful 'Dear Colleague' letter your circulated last week, we will share with your officials a detailed analysis of the constituency position for network conversions, which we will keep updated as the programme develops. We are also arranging open house sessions for MPs and their researchers early in the New Year, which we will confirm with your office as soon as possible in the hope that you will be able to join us for part of the events.

We will also happily provide you with full support in pursuing any other ideas you have for engaging MPs, the media and other stakeholders.

Further meetings on Post Office issues

Finally, we would be delighted to arrange further briefing sessions with members of my senior team to cover the areas of business which we haven't had the opportunity to discuss in detail as yet. I also suggest we arrange some branch visits which give you the opportunity to see the new Crown, Main and Local models in operation. We will discuss a potential programme of meetings with your office.

Yours sincerely

Paula Vennells signature

Paula Vennells
Chief Executive

- Really looking forward to seeing you on Monday evening. Thanks for making the time. P V

**From:** [redacted] [mailto:[redacted]] **On Behalf Of** Paula Vennells  
**Sent:** 13 December 2012 17:10  
**To:** [redacted]  
**Cc:** [redacted]; Swinson MPST; [redacted]; [redacted]  
**Subject:** Post Office's role in supporting Government efficiency

Please see the attached letter and report setting out the opportunities for the Post Office to support the Government's efficiency programme.

To discuss any meeting arrangements, please contact [redacted] on [redacted].

Kind regards  
Paula

Paula Vennells | Chief Executive

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<input type="checkbox"/>	148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ
<input type="checkbox"/>	[redacted] Postline: [redacted]
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="mailto:paula.vennells@[redacted]">paula.vennells [redacted]</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Post Office stories</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">@postofficeneews</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	---

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E paula.venells [REDACTED]



Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

13 December 2012

*Dear Danny,*

### **The Post Office's role in delivering front office services for Government**

I am writing to follow up our meeting in July where we discussed how the Post Office could support the Government's drive for efficiency savings by delivering face-to-face services on behalf of departments and local authorities.

The essence of our argument is that the Post Office is part of the UK's infrastructure, and it is in the interests of taxpayers and citizens that we are used to our full potential. By expanding the range of public services delivered through us, the Government can unlock the twin benefits of more efficient and accessible services for its customers and more sustainable financial foundations to safeguard our network.

The attached paper is designed to serve as the starting point for a dialogue with you and your colleagues in the Cabinet Office and departments about how to drive forward these opportunities. It sets out three main arguments, summarised below.

#### **1. While the Government has rightly focused on digital by default, it still needs to find a cost effective solution for face-to-face service delivery**

- As the recently published *Digital Efficiency Report* identifies, switching from offline to digital services has the potential to deliver large savings for taxpayers, but these will only be realised in full if action is taken to tackle the high fixed cost base of the Government's front office estate. Even if the most optimistic ambitions for digital take-up are achieved, there will still be a demand for face-to-face services, for example in verifying identity to reduce fraud, or in supporting the large proportion of the population who lack basic digital skills or face other barriers to accessing services.
- Rather than preserve its own front office network in the context of declining customer numbers and diminishing levels of efficiency, central and local government should look for opportunities to outsource or co-locate its face-to-face services with trusted partner organisations, thereby enabling these costs to be reduced and variabilised.



[www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)





## 2. The Post Office is uniquely placed to support this approach

- With over 11,800 branches reaching into every community in the UK, the Post Office is a trusted brand and the UK's largest retail network – bigger than all the banks and building societies combined. Over 99 per cent of the UK population lives within three miles of a Post Office branch, and around 20 million people and half of all small businesses visit us every week. The current investment programme is transforming our network, with modern environments, longer opening hours and cutting edge technologies. Over 750 of our branches are equipped with world-leading biometric data capture technology.
- These capabilities enable us to deliver a wide range of services on behalf of government, including secure payment services, identity assurance and support to customers in completing application forms and accessing online services.
- We have a proven track record in this area. For example, in central government we are managing driving licence applications and car tax renewals on behalf of the DVLA, enabling it to close down all of its 39 front offices and save £25m by 2015. In local government we have enabled Westminster Council to save £2 million by closing its one-stop shops and using local Post Offices to deliver counter services on its behalf. If these models were replicated across central and local government, we could help save hundreds of millions of pounds for taxpayers.

## 3. There is a critical opportunity at this point in time

- There is a key window of opportunity during the first half of 2013 for us to work together in exploring these options in more detail. Alongside your work with departments to finalise their budgets for 2015/16 and to follow up the *Government Digital Strategy* published last month, there may be merit in a dedicated workstream to identify the opportunities for rationalising the front office estate.
- We would be delighted to support this process. In parallel to this, we are reviewing our own long-term strategy for modernising our branch network and digital services, and would be keen to take a collaborative approach so we can shape our investment plans in a way which meets the evolving needs of central and local government.

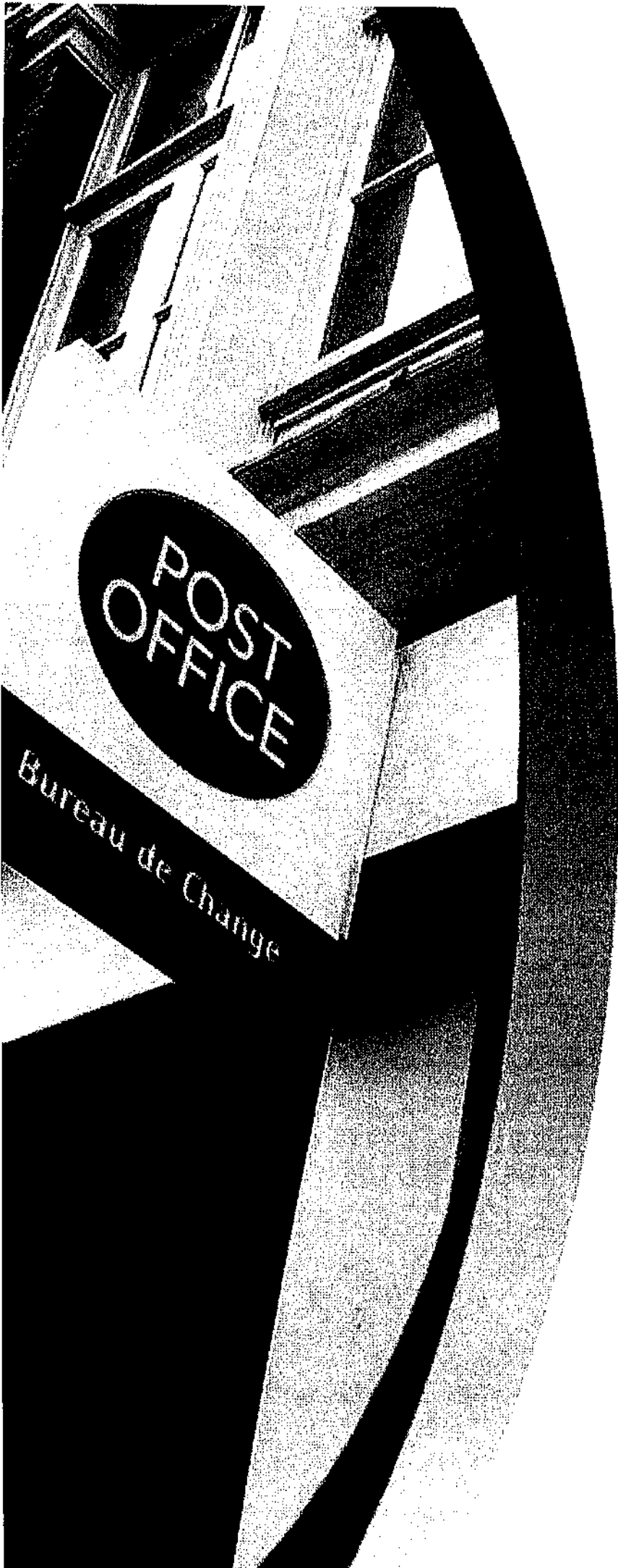
I would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you again to outline the specific opportunities we have identified to support the Government's efficiency programme, and to agree the most productive way for us to work with the Treasury, Cabinet Office and departments in driving this forward.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, and look forward to continuing our engagement with him and the Efficiency and Reform Group in this process. I am also copying it to Jo Swinson, as the Minister responsible for the Post Office, with whom we have discussed our proposals with over recent weeks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula".

Paula Vennells  
Chief Executive



# Face-to-face with efficiency

How a new approach to the front office could help Government deliver better services and save money

"We believe that the Post Office can become a genuine Front Office for Government, acting as a natural home for the delivery of face-to-face government services and helping citizens interact with Government online."

Rt Hon Vince Cable MP

Rt Hon Ed Davey MP

*Securing the Post Office Network in a Digital Age, November 2010*



## 1. Introduction

This paper is intended to serve as the starting point for a discussion on how, by working with the Post Office, the Government could transform the delivery of face-to-face services in a way that makes them more accessible and convenient for customers, while also generating large savings for taxpayers.

The full benefits of the Government's digital by default agenda will only be realised if a cost effective solution is found to deliver those elements of the customer journey that will continue to depend on some form of face-to-face interaction. The size and reach of the Post Office network, our leading-edge technological capabilities in identity services and other areas, and the trust and confidence which the public have in our staff make us ideally placed to meet those customer requirements which cannot be shifted online, enabling central and local government to unlock the substantial opportunities to rationalise its own front office estate.

We want to make a reality of the vision of our network becoming a true front office for government, both to underpin our commercial targets and to reinforce our social role as a cornerstone for communities across the country and a key touch point between citizens and the state.

## 2. The future for the front office

Central and local government currently deliver front office services from at least 4,000 locations across the UK, not including the NHS, schools and police estates. As a result of changing customer behaviours and the active shift by government to more cost effective delivery channels, fewer and fewer people are using these front offices each year. For example, since 2005 HMRC estimates that its enquiry centres have seen a 40 per cent reduction in visits, whilst 80 per cent of tax returns are now filed online. Today, HMRC estimates that its public enquiry centres receive only 6 per cent of all contact with individuals, and 3 per cent of all contact with small businesses (HMRC Customer Insight, 2010/11).

The Government's focus on making services digital by default, outlined in the Digital Strategy published at the end of November, means that the number of people visiting physical front offices will continue falling. The DWP, for example, is aiming over time for 80 per cent of Universal Credit applications to be made digitally. This move to digital services, together with alternative models of delivering job search support, is likely to lead to a long-term reduction in footfall to the Jobcentre Plus network of over 700 offices.

In evidence given to the Treasury Select Committee in 2011, HMRC highlighted how if action is not taken to respond to these changing customer trends it could lead to very inefficient outcomes for taxpayers. One HMRC enquiry centre with an average of four appointments a week was spending £162,000 a year on rent, equating to a cost of more than £800 for each customer contact, not including staff costs. While HMRC is

taking steps to tackle these extreme examples, across central and local government there remain many instances of out-dated and inefficient service delivery models.

This does not mean that there is no longer a role for front office services. Some elements of service delivery will always require a physical interaction, for example in verifying identity to reduce fraud, providing advisory services and improving the accuracy of application processes. And even in an increasingly digital age there is often a need for a human touch. Go ON UK, the charity launched by Martha Lane Fox (of which the Post Office is a founder partner), recently estimated that there are 16 million adults in the UK lacking basic online skills, who therefore need face-to-face help in using digital services. Many customers will also face other barriers to accessing government services, for example in completing application forms, which they need support to overcome.

There are also wider public policy arguments for keeping open a front office network across the country, as the fulcrum for community interactions and the anchor for many local economies.

### 3. The Post Office as a partner

As explained in more detail below, the Post Office's branch network, people and technologies make it uniquely well placed to help public sector organisations meet the challenge of delivering cost effective face-to-face services in an increasingly digital age. We can offer three broad service delivery models that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual organisations, thereby enabling them to rationalise their own estates:

- **outsourcing** – where we take on front office counter and identity services on behalf of government, such as those were already delivering for the DVLA;
- **co-location** – where we offer access to specific central or local government services such as specialist advisors, hosted through our branch network; and
- **assisted digital** – where we can help customers to overcome their barriers to accessing online public services, to ensure no one is marginalised by the migration to digital by default.

#### Our network

With 11,800 branches reaching into every community in the UK, the Post Office is a trusted brand and the UK's largest retail network – bigger than all the banks and building societies combined. 93 per cent of the UK adult population live within one mile of a Post Office branch, rising to 99 per cent in urban deprived areas. Over 20 million people and half of all small businesses visit the Post Office every week.

The current investment programme – the biggest in our history – is transforming our branches, with improved customer service, modern environments and longer opening hours. The days of closure programmes are over.

## Our people

Our trust is of course built on the skills, professionalism and dedication of our staff, many of whom are security-cleared to deal with sensitive transactions and information. We continue to invest in our people to ensure they are equipped to deliver high levels of customer service, ranging from the basic up to the most complex transactions.

As part of our commitment to supporting GoOn UK's drive to improve the nation's online skills, we recently announced plans to help our 8,000 directly employed staff develop the necessary digital skills to support all our customers. We also plan to assess the digital skills of the 45,000 staff in our wider agency network, to identify and address their needs.

## Our technologies

While we are proud of our 377 year history, this commitment highlights how the Post Office is very much a forward looking business. We are investing in our digital and broader technological capabilities in a way that directly complements the Government's own objectives.

For example, our cutting-edge biometric data capture technology is already the cornerstone of our services to the UKBA and DVLA. We are trialling WiFi and Internet access in some of our larger branches, and we are in the process of installing contactless payment terminals at 30,000 counter positions, making us the largest user of this technology in Europe.

## Our services

Bringing these capabilities together enables us to offer an end-to-end suite of transactional services that can provide greater convenience for customers and lower costs for government. This range includes:

- **secure payment services** – we can process transactions via our secure IT infrastructure, working seamlessly with the back offices of partner organisations. We have 30,000 Point of Sale terminals handling 750 transactions a second across our network, and we already provide bill payment services to over 370 local authorities;
- **other counter services** – our staff can deliver a broad range of other over-the-counter services for public sector organisations, such as the parking permit applications, trader vouchers, parking scratch cards and commercial waste sacks that we are already providing on behalf of Westminster Council;
- **supported applications** – we can ensure applications are completed accurately and submitted securely, such as the 'Check and Send' service we provide for the UK Passport Service;

- **identity assurance** – through document checking and the biometric data capture services available in 752 branches, we can help reduce the number of fraudulent applications for services such as benefits, licences and permits. We are a Government-approved provider of identity assurance services, having recently won a DWP framework contract (to support the introduction of Universal Credit) which other departments can utilise; and
- **a digital gateway** – we can support customers who don't have the skills or equipment needed to transact online, and we can provide or host the face-to-face services that are frequently needed alongside digital channels, such as advisory services.

We have a proven track record in all of these areas. In a year, our network supports:

- 120 million cash withdrawals;
- 3 million low income Post Office card account holders;
- 20 million people to buy their car tax;
- 2.6 million customers to check their passport applications (reducing error from 14 per cent to 2 per cent);
- 1 million customers to apply for fishing licenses online, by phone and in branch; and
- more than 700,000 motorists to renew their driving licences through our paperless system, using biometric digital capture services available in 752 branches.

This range of services has already made the Post Office a trusted partner for government and an important part of local communities, helping customers to access the vital public services they need.

## 4. The potential for Government

There are therefore significant opportunities for Government: the continuing need for efficient front office services can be combined with an existing network which can deliver those services from a bed rock of trust and experience, underpinned by leading edge technologies.

So how much could be saved? The Digital Efficiency Report (published in November 2012 to accompany the Government Digital Strategy), estimated that annual savings of between £1.7 and £1.8 billion could be realised for the government and service users as a result of bringing central government transactional services online, with around 12 per cent of those savings (£210 million) coming from accommodation costs. However, as the report itself acknowledges, "in some situations it may be that the overhead costs of, for example, a network of local offices, are not reduced by shifting transactions online, and so digitisation may not on its own release significant savings from estates in all cases".

This is an important point: the full potential of digital by default will only be realised if it is accompanied by a strategy for tackling the high fixed cost base of the Government's front office estate, for example by meeting the on-going demand for face-to-face

services by outsourcing or co-locating with a trusted partner organisation like the Post Office.

If such an approach is taken across both central and local government (the Digital Efficiency Report only looks at the former), then we believe there is the potential to realise far greater savings for the Exchequer, both through the upfront proceeds of asset sales and a reduction in annual running costs. To arrive at a specific estimate of this potential it might be appropriate for the Government Property Unit in the Cabinet Office to conduct an updated audit of the size of the front office estate, its current operating costs and the scope for efficiency savings in the new digital environment.

Separate focus will need to be given to the challenge of how to unlock the opportunities that exist in local government. This should build on the findings of our joint project with the LGA and BIS over the last year to deepen the Post Office's relationships with 25 'Pathfinder Councils', and also on the recommendations of the Westminster Sustainable Business Forum, which conducted a detailed study of the way local government estates are managed. One of its key conclusions was that rationalising front office services would generate both large savings and transformational improvements in the way local services are delivered and co-ordinated:

"One of our main findings is that savings are greatest when all public services are provided from the same location. Coordinating the myriad of service providers is not easy. But the severity of budget constraints means that the status quo is no longer an attractive option, which in turn, may promote change among disparate groups."

*Matthew Hancock MP, Inquiry Chair, Effective Estates Management, Westminster Sustainable Business Forum, 2010*

## Existing evidence

The case for a comprehensive programme of front office rationalisation is strengthened when the existing evidence from organisations in central and local government is considered:

- **The DVLA is saving £25 million a year**  
By 2015, the DVLA will be closing its remaining 39 front office counters, centralising some services, and outsourcing the rest. This is on top of the savings it will make from shifting more transactions online. These savings are 30 per cent higher than the next best option considered (running a lower number of shared front offices with other public service providers). It also provides a better service for customers - driver services previously provided at 39 DVLA offices will soon be available at over 4,700 high street locations.
- **Westminster Council is saving £2 million**  
Westminster Council is saving £2 million by closing its one-stop shops and moving its enquiry and counter services to self-service counters at more than 30 Post Offices. Again this means a better service for customers, who previously had just three one-stop shops to choose from.

- **Kent County Council has estimated £4 million of savings**

Kent County Council is testing the co-location of front offices, by delivering services through 'Gateway Hubs'. They've seen the potential to make savings of £4 million (£3.5 million in staff time and £0.5 million in property) and ongoing savings of £1.1 million every year. They have also estimated social benefits of £20 for each £1 spent on their 'Benefits Gateway' (which focuses on support for redundancy), through shorter waiting times, earlier intervention and less stress or illness.

## 5. Conclusions

The Post Office is part of the UK's infrastructure, and it is in the interests of taxpayers and citizens that we are used to our full potential. We are at a crucial juncture in developing and implementing our long-term strategy for modernising our branch network and digital services. We are therefore keen to take this opportunity to work collaboratively with departments and local authorities to shape our strategy in a way which actively supports them to meet their own efficiency challenges, at the same time as meeting the rising expectations of their customers.

We have already piloted services like print on demand and assisted digital services that could improve front office services, and we are ready to scale up these pilots where there is demand from Government. Working more closely with Government will give us the certainty we need to underpin the business case for investing in opportunities such as assisted digital devices or dedicated meeting spaces to host specialist public service professionals.

A cross-government approach is crucial. All sides would benefit from a commitment across central and local government to work with us on common solutions to front office service processes, as bespoke solutions drive up costs for both the Post Office and the procuring organisation.

The recent DVLA framework contract for front office counter services and the DWP framework for identity services are good examples of the benefits of such an approach, making the procurement of common solutions quicker and easier for all departments.

We look forward to working collaboratively with central and local government to seize these opportunities, to our mutual benefit.



**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 24 December 2012 11:50  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** Merry Christmas

Hi Paula,

Sadly once again this year, we have no Departmental Christmas cards (notwithstanding that our SoS is the owner of both the Post Office and Royal Mail). [REDACTED]

I also want to say thank you to you and the whole POL team for all your work over the past year. It's been an excellent year, with many achievements - separating from RM, Eagle, the establishment of the stakeholder forum, DVLA and the launch of the new advertising campaign. As you know I also think the team's work on Project Rainbow has been outstanding. As you said in your card - a not so dull year!

[REDACTED]

All the best,

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 07 February 2013 10:54  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (ShEx)  
**Subject:** Local Retail Forum

Hi Paula,

Thanks for the voicemail about Mark Prisk's Local Retail Forum. This is a CLG-led initiative rather than a BIS one and we've been doing some digging. Unhelpfully, the BIS retail team (who met the relevant CLG officials recently) were not informed of today's announcement either. We will get in touch with the relevant CLG officials asap to find out more and to seek to involve POL. I've copied in [REDACTED] who will lead on this in the team.

I hope the sessions in the Crowns go as well as possible today. How was the MP dinner last night?

See you soon,

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 07 March 2013 14:45  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Sorry - I'm running about 15 minutes late

I will get my skates on!

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 07 March 2013 15:23  
**To:** paula.vennells [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Sorry - I'm running about 15 minutes late

I'm downstairs, but they can't track down anyone to let me up!

Will.

---

**From:** Paula Vennells [mailto:paula.vennells [REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 07, 2013 02:48 PM  
**To:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Sorry - I'm running about 15 minutes late

I've let Paula know but please be aware that she must leave just before 4pm today.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Assistant to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive

---

148 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HQ

[REDACTED] Postline: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Mobex: [REDACTED]  
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---

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx) [mailto:William.Gibson [REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** 07 March 2013 14:45  
**To:** Paula Vennells; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Sorry - I'm running about 15 minutes late

I will get my skates on!

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 08 March 2013 10:52  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** RE: Yesterday

Hi Paula,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and I agreed a few follow-ups which we'll set in train. We'll meet McKinsey and we also thought it would be a good idea for you to come in to see Jo: (i) at the beginning of April to run through where it looks like we are on year end results and NTP numbers, and recommending a further meeting to talk future strategy in more detail; and (ii) that session at the start of May to talk through where the strategy is coming out (and covering off overlap with development of mutuality).

We should pick up some of the particular network sensitivities we discussed yesterday after we've met McKinsey and heard more about their recommendations.

All the best,

Will.

-----Original Message-----

From: Paula Vennells [mailto:paula.vennells@ ]  
Sent: 08 March 2013 07:06  
To: Gibson Will (ShEx)  
Subject: Yesterday

Will, I just wanted to say that I am sorry we didn't have longer yesterday on such an important discussion. I am sure that [REDACTED] was able to fill the gap more than adequately but that doesn't make up for my short time. (It wasn't bad planning more bad luck [REDACTED])

[REDACTED]

So I wanted to say that if you would like to catch up further over the phone today please say so. Otherwise, I'll pick up with [REDACTED] and progress as you both agreed.

Many thanks for your understanding.

Paula

Sent from my iPad

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**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** 25 March 2013 10:28  
**To:** Swinson MPST  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Post Office meetings

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email and I confirm the two meetings as mentioned below. I will let you know nearer the time who will accompany Paula to each meeting. Perhaps you would be kind enough to reciprocate regarding Jo.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Assistant to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive

---

148 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HQ

[REDACTED] Postline: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Mobex: [REDACTED]

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On 22 Mar 2013, at 18:27, "Swinson MPST" <[MPST.Swinson@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:MPST.Swinson@postoffice.co.uk)> wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

I have been asked to contact you to arrange two meetings with Paula Vennells.

The first is a half hour meeting to discuss an update on the Post Office, which I would suggest takes place on Monday 15 April between 11:00 - 11:30.

The second is an hour's meeting to discuss POL Future Strategy, which I would suggest takes place on Tuesday 30 April 14:00 - 15:00.

Please could you kindly confirm whether these dates/times are acceptable, at your earliest possible convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Kind regards



██████████ | Diary Secretary to Jo Swinson MP, Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs | Department for Business, Innovation & Skills | 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET | [mpst.swinson@bis.gov.uk](mailto:mpst.swinson@bis.gov.uk) | 020 7215 ██████████ | [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 27 March 2013 15:04  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** And there was much rejoicing!

Hi Paula,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

PS I have mentioned to [REDACTED] and the NTP team but I'm not sure I mentioned to you the other day - very well done indeed in breaking through the 1200 number on the NTP conversion contracts. I know there's still a great deal for us all to do, but that's been a really impressive increase in momentum. Please pass this on to Kevin too.

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 02 May 2013 19:22  
**To:** paula.vennells [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Out of Office AutoReply: Thank you

Thanks Paula,

[REDACTED]

I've just got home so tomorrow's good to catch-up. Any time before 12 or after 3 is best.

Will.

---

**From:** Paula Vennells [mailto:paula.vennells@postoffice.co.uk]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 02, 2013 06:12 PM  
**To:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Subject:** Re: Out of Office AutoReply: Thank you

Will, I'll try you some time tomorrow. I hope you've had a good day.

BW Paula

Sent from my iPhone

On 2 May 2013, at 17:34, "Gibson Will (ShEx)"  
<William.Gibson [REDACTED]> wrote:

I am out of the office on Thursday 2 May and will not have access to emails.

Many thanks,

Will.

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 22 May 2013 16:52  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** Catch-up tomorrow

Hi Paula,

[REDACTED] so I'm thankfully turning my  
mind back to work!

I'm due to come over tomorrow morning for our monthly catch-up. I thought it might be a good idea to use a good chunk of it to catch-up on the NFSP conference and Mark's attendance at the Board, and any matters arising out of each. But I also think it'd be good to touch on POCA and the wider work on the strategy/funding. Does that work for you? Is there anything else you'd like us to cover?

All the best,

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 25 June 2013 09:49  
**To:** Paula Vennells  
**Subject:** Jo's news

Hi Paula,

I'm not sure if you or your team will have picked up the news below, but in case not I thought I should forward it. [REDACTED]

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED] (MPST MIN)  
**Sent:** 25 June 2013 08:55  
**To:** SCS Pay Band 2 in core BIS; SCS Pay Band 1 in core BIS (A-L); SCS Pay Band 1 in core BIS (M-Z)  
**Cc:** Perm Sec (BIS); DG only; Swinson MPST; MPST All Staff  
**Subject:** Jo Swinson

I am delighted to say that Jo Swinson is expecting a baby, with a due date of Christmas Day. Jo and her husband Duncan are very excited, and she tweeted her good news this morning:

<https://twitter.com/joswinson>

Jo will take maternity leave, and cover will be provided for her Ministerial role. I will share details of this once it has been agreed.

Please cascade to your teams.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State and Head of MPST |  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills | 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET | 020  
7215 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 25 June 2013 15:42  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** RE: Jo's news

No I haven't mentioned to Alice yet - feel free to pass on.

[REDACTED]

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

---

**From:** Paula Vennells [mailto:paula.vennells@[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** 25 June 2013 15:38  
**To:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Subject:** Re: Jo's news

Thx Will. Great news for them! Btw did you mention to Alice?

[REDACTED]

Paula

Sent from my iPhone

On 25 Jun 2013, at 09:48, "Gibson Will (ShEx)"  
<William.Gibson@[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi Paula,

I'm not sure if you or your team will have picked up the news below,  
but in case not I thought I should forward it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Will Gibson  
Shareholder Executive  
Tel: 020 7215 [REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED] (MPST MIN)  
**Sent:** 25 June 2013 08:55  
**To:** SCS Pay Band 2 in core BIS; SCS Pay Band 1 in core BIS (A-L); SCS Pay Band 1 in

core BIS (M-Z)  
Cc: Perm Sec (BIS); DG only; Swinson MPST; MPST All Staff  
Subject: Jo Swinson

I am delighted to say that Jo Swinson is expecting a baby, with a due date of Christmas Day. Jo and her husband Duncan are very excited, and she tweeted her good news this morning:

<https://twitter.com/joswinson>

Jo will take maternity leave, and cover will be provided for her Ministerial role. I will share details of this once it has been agreed.

Please cascade to your teams.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State and Head of MPST | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills | 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET | 020 7215 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

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**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** 03 July 2013 09:05  
**To:** Swinson MPST  
**Cc:** Gibson Will (ShEx); [REDACTED] (ShEx); [REDACTED] (ShEx); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Phone call Jo Swinson/ Paula Vennells

Hi [REDACTED]

We are indeed moving meetings in Paula's diary so would you kindly confirm whether Jo will call Paula at 13:50?

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Assistant to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive

---

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 02 July 2013 19:53  
**To:** 'MPST.Swinson [REDACTED]';  
**Cc:** 'William.Gibson [REDACTED]'; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED];  
**Subject:** Re: Phone call Jo Swinson/ Paula Vennells

Hi [REDACTED] - I think that should be fine. Paula is in another meeting at that time but we'll look to move things around. Unless you hear otherwise from [REDACTED] first thing in the morning, let's work on that basis.

Will Jo call Paula? Grateful if you could confirm details with [REDACTED] (cc-ed).

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Swinson MPST [mailto:MPST.Swinson [REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 02, 2013 06:23 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Gibson Will (ShEx) <William.Gibson [REDACTED]>; [REDACTED] (ShEx) <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED] (ShEx) <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Phone call Jo Swinson/ Paula Vennells

Hi [REDACTED],

Would Paula be free for a quick phone call at 13:50 with Jo? I know she has her meeting with James Arbuthnott earlier that morning but Jo is unfortunately out all morning at an employment conference so that is the earlier we could do

██████████

██████████ | Private Secretary to Jo Swinson - Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs | Department for Business, Innovation & Skills | [mpst.swinson@bis.gov.uk](mailto:mpst.swinson@bis.gov.uk) | T: +4420 7215 ██████████ | [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

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**From:** Gibson Will (ShEx)  
**Sent:** 03 July 2013 18:07  
**To:** 'Paula Vennells'  
**Subject:** Catch-up

Hi Paula,

Let me know when tomorrow might be good to catch-up. I'm leaving the office now but could do a call on my mobile later if that's preferable. I can give you a read-out of Jo's call with James and I'd be keen for a read-out of your meeting with Second Sight. Also, James suggested to Jo that one of her officials (would be me or [REDACTED]) call [REDACTED] at 2nd Sight. Would that present any issues?

**Will Gibson** | Executive Director | Shareholder Executive  
BIS, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET | 020 7215 [REDACTED] | will.gibson [REDACTED]  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-shareholder-executive](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-shareholder-executive)

PA: [REDACTED] | 020 7215 [REDACTED] |

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