

# Sub-postmasters still going through hell, says Sir Alan Bates

The government is continuing to put Post Office victims through “hell” in their fight for redress, Sir Alan Bates has told Sky News.

More than 240 former sub-postmasters are still waiting for financial compensation years after they won their High Court battle.

Sir Alan’s comments come after another former sub-postmaster, Terry Walters from Wilmslow in Cheshire, died without receiving full financial redress. He is survived by his wife Janet.

Hundreds were wrongly accused of stealing from their Post Office branches between 1999 and 2015 as a result of faulty Horizon computer software.

Post Office campaigner Sir Alan Bates has described government officials as living in “ivory towers totally removed from the hell the victims have gone through day after day, year after year”.

He told Sky News they “haven’t the slightest inkling of what hell they continue to put the victims (through)”.

“It’s all well and good meeting a few of them every now and then, patting them on the head and making noises about how hard they are working to sort everything out,” he added.

“When the figures alone prove how badly they are able to finalise cases – that is unless victims want to sell themselves short for a quick settlement.”

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‘Redress’ to Post Office Capture software victims

Sir Alan wrote to the Post Office minister in January putting forward a proposal to help speed along redress delivered to victims who are part of the Group Litigation Order (GLO) scheme.

On behalf of the JFSA (Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance) he suggested a “compulsory mediation scheme” that could be inserted into the process to “create an opportunity for early resolution”.

In his letter, seen by Sky News, he wrote that this should happen within four weeks from the point at which the initial offer of financial redress is rejected by a victim.

“Key to this proposal,” he continued, “is getting rid of the

lawyers, for a whole host of reasons, not least the ridiculous amount being spent on them...”

He added that their input should be “kept to a minimum”.

Sir Alan said the mediations should also be “time limited” and undertaken by a “party neutral” law firm.

Describing the current situation on redress as “unacceptable”, he wrote: “We are not prepared just to sit back and let time pass as far too many have already died along the way, and this matter needs to be brought to completion now.”

He also described a 40-day “delay” to claims before victims receive their initial offer as “extremely unfair” and projected that at the “current rate” redress would not be paid to everyone until 2027.

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## Post Office scandal children seek justice

Jonathan Reynolds, the business secretary, has since written to Sir Alan following on from his correspondence with the prime minister last year.

In his letter he said it is “likely” that all GLO claims will be “settled this year”.

“Ministers and civil servants in the department (for business and trade) will continue to do everything we can to ensure claims that we receive are handled in a prompt way,” he wrote.

The business secretary added that payments for “complete claims” received by the end of last year are expected to be paid before the end of March.

Sir Alan has previously said that victims may consider further legal action on financial redress and demanded a deadline of March 2025 for payment to all.

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In his letter, Mr Reynolds said that “setting a deadline” would “run counter” to “easing the strain” on the “most vulnerable claimants” who have “found it stressful to engage with the process”.

He continued: “It could be damaging to some GLO members’ mental health and might limit their ability to claim their full redress.”

The secretary of state added that the department shared Sir Alan’s view that the “victims of the horrendous scandal deserve closure as soon as possible”.

In addition, Mr Reynolds invited Sir Alan to a meeting to “discuss any ideas” for “practical ways in which we can

improve matters for the GLO group”.

A spokesperson from the Department for Business and Trade said: “We pay tribute to Sir Alan Bates and the tireless campaigning he has done to get justice for the thousands of innocent postmasters affected by the Horizon scandal.

“Postmasters have already had to wait far too long for justice which is why we are working relentlessly to provide full and fair redress and have doubled the number of payments since July.”