# UK government's flawed compensation scheme deepens Post Office Horizon scandal injustice



The UK's recent handling of compensation claims related to the Post Office Horizon scandal reveals a government utterly out of touch with justice, as accusations mount regarding the continued suffering of the victims. Sir Alan Bates, a key campaigner in this ongoing saga, has been vocal about the fundamentally flawed compensation scheme, branding it as “quasi-kangaroo courts.” His experience—being offered a mere 50% of his legitimate claim—highlights a broader incompetence in the government's efforts to deliver proper redress.

This situation encapsulates a damning systemic failure, affecting over 900 sub-postmasters wrongfully accused of theft and fraud due to the disastrous Horizon accounting software. Liam Byrne, chair of the Commons Business Committee, has consistently raised the alarm, decrying the government's neglect of calls for an independent and effective compensation framework. "The very system designed to deliver redress now delivers delay," Byrne stated, insisting that the current state of affairs is intolerable and demands prompt overhaul.

The Horizon scandal stands as one of the UK's most shocking miscarriages of justice, with wrongful prosecutions stretching from 1999 to 2015. While a recent High Court ruling compelled the government to organise compensation measures, victims like Sir Alan remain trapped in a labyrinthine process with no fair resolution in sight. Critics have pointed out how the overly bureaucratic compensation scheme often offers paltry sums, rendering it utterly inadequate for those who have suffered so greatly.

Tax expert Dan Neidle has further lambasted the compensation scheme, calling it “rigged” against claimants, with a torturous application process and scant support for victims attempting to navigate it. Alarming reports of coercive tactics discouraging victims from following through on their claims underscore a deeply concerning approach to compensation. Advocates for the victims demand drastic changes to the compensation system to ensure a fair process, stressing the lasting psychological trauma endured by those wrongfully accused due to these systemic failures.

While the government claims to recognise the pain of victims—pointing to a purported £1 billion allocated for compensation as evidence of their commitment—many, including Sir Alan, see these current offers as outright insults. For those who have faced years of distress and loss, the promises ring hollow, indicating a disconnection from the real experiences of individuals seeking justice.

Amidst these discussions looms the continued involvement of Fujitsu, the company responsible for the flawed Horizon system. Though Fujitsu has acknowledged its failures and apologised, pledging financial support for victim compensation, many question the adequacy of mere monetary recompense in addressing the profound devastation inflicted on lives and businesses.

As demands for reform intensify, advocates like Sir Alan Bates maintain the call for an independent body to oversee compensation—a sentiment shared by countless individuals seeking genuine justice. With many victims still grappling with the fallout from this scandal, it becomes increasingly clear that the struggle for accountability and resolution is only beginning. The government must confront the extensive complexities of policies and public discontent, ensuring that genuine justice for victims rises stubbornly to the forefront of its reform agenda.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2060031/ministers-ignored-warnings-unfair-post> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/398ea8cc-aa2d-4dab-b48e-4d980bc20327> - An article from the Financial Times discusses the ongoing struggle of victims of the Post Office Horizon scandal, including Sir Alan Bates, to receive full compensation. Despite a 2019 High Court victory and subsequent political pledges to expedite redress, many victims, including Bates, have yet to receive fair compensation. The article highlights criticisms of the complex and bureaucratic nature of compensation schemes, delays, and low offers compared to the significant financial gains of the scandal's perpetrators. Calls for reforms include establishing a 'centre of expertise' within the government to streamline compensation processes.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/da05e2bdee11f2eeb77eafa59d20c2be> - This article from the Associated Press reports on Fujitsu's apology for the faulty Horizon computer system that led to the wrongful convictions of hundreds of Post Office branch managers in the UK. Paul Patterson, the Europe director of Fujitsu, acknowledged that the company was aware from the start that Horizon had bugs and errors but still assisted the Post Office in prosecuting managers. Fujitsu will provide funds for compensation to the victims. The Post Office, which has set aside approximately £1 billion for compensation, announced it will not pursue further prosecutions and is seeking to replace Horizon. An official inquiry is ongoing to determine the full extent of the scandal and responsibility.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/c47bf239-7ad2-47a5-a77a-afa7495eb63d> - An article from the Financial Times reports on Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch's criticism of the civil service for the slow pace of compensation to victims of the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Badenoch, as Secretary of State for Business and Trade, stated that the ITV dramatization of the scandal increased the urgency for the government to resolve the situation and prioritize compensations. Between 1999 and 2015, about 983 Post Office branch managers were convicted due to a defective IT system from Fujitsu, leading some to use their personal savings to cover the apparent shortfalls. So far, approximately £440 million has been paid to over 3,100 claimants, but victims criticize the process for being slow and bureaucratic. The previous government announced legislation to exonerate the victims and offer them a fixed sum of £75,000. Campaign leader Sir Alan Bates criticized the government's legalistic approach and has rejected compensation offers as insufficient.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/post-office-scandal-horizon-compensation-rigged-tax-b1131670.html> - An article from The Standard discusses claims that the Post Office's compensation scheme for sub-postmasters affected by the Horizon scandal is designed to minimize payouts. Tax expert Dan Neidle argues that the scheme is 'rigged' against claimants, citing factors such as a complex 14-page form without assistance, lack of legal advice during the application process, and the form's design preventing claims for damage to reputation and stress. He also highlights intimidation tactics to silence postmasters and the scheme's tendency to run every possible argument to minimize payouts. A Post Office spokesperson responded by stating that they have openly published data on the progress of offers and payments to claimants and that the scheme is open to late applicants.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/31/post-office-horizon-scandal-alan-bates-rejects-cruel-compensation-offer> - An article from The Guardian reports on Sir Alan Bates' rejection of the government's compensation offer related to the Post Office Horizon scandal. Bates, a former sub-postmaster and campaigner, described the offer as 'derisory' and 'cruel,' stating that it was only about a sixth of what he requested. The scandal, described as 'the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history,' resulted in over 700 post office operators being prosecuted between 1999 and 2015 for theft, fraud, and false accounting due to faulty accounting software. Bates, who was forced to stop running his Post Office branch in 2003, has been leading the fight for justice and compensation. He stated that he would absolutely be turning down the offer and criticized the treatment of victims.
7. <https://time.com/6903537/post-office-scandal-law-convictions-quashed-victims-compensated/> - An article from Time discusses the UK government's introduction of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offenses Bill, aimed at overturning wrongful convictions of Post Office employees caused by faulty software. Described as 'one of the greatest miscarriages of justice' in UK history, the law would clear convicted sub-postmasters and their associates from offenses such as theft, fraud, and false accounting related to the Post Office software between 1996 and 2018. The legislation ensures eligible victims are 'automatically exonerated' and will receive swift financial redress. However, it doesn't cover victims in Scotland and Northern Ireland, prompting criticism from regional leaders. Compensation is also extended to those impacted but not convicted. Over 2,700 postmasters had settled claims, and the government aims to further support those affected. The law follows renewed public interest from a recent TV series and public campaigns.