

THE MOST SERIOUS FINANCIAL SCANDAL OF MODERN TIMES**15. LLOYDS' INDUSTRIAL FORGERY OF SIGNATURES**¹

Last July, the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)² on fair business banking, Rt. Hon Kevin Hollinrake MP³ and the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Mr Anthony Stansfeld⁴ took evidence that Lloyds Banking Group had forged signatures on an industrial scale on documents it had relied on in court to the Director-General of the National Crime Agency (NCA), Lynne Owens and asked the agency to investigate.

The remit of the NCA is to investigate serious and organised crime, which this clearly represents. However, the Director-General refused to do so and instead, played for time by passing the matter around other agencies. Laws, which every citizen must obey covering the obstruction of justice and misconduct in public office, cannot be applied to the UK's leading crime fighting agency.

Bank signature forgery described⁵

The extensive wrongdoing includes:

- Forged signatures spanning most of the last decade.
- A standard sentence about the lender used in witness statements to secure repossessions & evictions, which appears to be false.
- A standard paragraph used in witness statements to secure repossessions & evictions, which appears to be false in the circumstances of specific cases.
- The fabrication of documents / evidence just before the trial, where the lender failed to create court documents at the correct point earlier in the litigation process.
- False statements and representations to the courts.
- The authorisation of signed "Statements of Truth" on court documents in full knowledge that the documents contained false statements and representations to the court.

US response to signature forgeries

In the US, the discovery of bank signature forgeries involving the use of the same bank employee's signature on court documents led to an investigation by all 50 US state Attorney Generals. This uncovered hundreds of thousands of bank court documents, which carried forged signatures in that person's name, as well as further industrial-scale bank signature forgeries in other names. Local government officials in one US county reported that 74% of a sample of over 6,000 bank court documents had suspect signatures, while another county discovered 25,000 bank court documents with

¹ <https://twitter.com/BankSigForgeCam>

² APPG statement of support for Bank Signature Forgery Campaign dated 1.2.2019.

³ Rt. Hon Kevin Hollinrake to Lloyds' Chief Executive, letters dated 28.3.2019 / 26.9.2019; also to FCA Chief Executive and Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee.

⁴ Statement by Mr Anthony Stansfeld dated 1st June 2020.

⁵ Bank Signature Forgeries Campaign: statements dated 10.7.2019 / 9.9.2019 / 26.11.2019 / 1.6.2020.

suspect signatures going back to 1998.

The Attorney Generals described bank signature forgery as an attack on the "**integrity of our court system.**" The investigation resulted in penalty payments by US banks of \$25 billion and the review of 4mn bank repossessions. A chief executive was jailed, because that bank had a systemic process, by which employees had fraudulently forged signatures in over 1mn repossession cases. Signature forgery by banks against consumer customers was labelled the "**largest consumer fraud in American history**" and the US Department of Justice described the compensation payments by the banks as "**the largest consumer financial protection settlement in US history.**"

UK response to bank signature forgeries

The British response to widespread evidence of bank signature forgery could hardly have been more different.

In the UK, 362⁶ separate crime reports and 19 files of evidence have been provided to the Director-General of the NCA, Lynne Owens, which represents far more than the initial evidence provided in the US. **However, the NCA has preferred not to investigate and to play for time.**

Ms. Owens first passed the matter to Mr Graeme Biggar, the head of the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC), who concluded that the right bodies to make an initial assessment were the FCA and SFO.⁷ Ms. Owens stated that these bodies "will consider whether there are sufficient grounds to open a criminal or regulatory investigation". If proven, the forgery of signatures on legal documents is undeniably a criminal act, rather than merely a regulatory matter. However, the intention of Ms. Owens and Mr Biggar forwarding the matter of the forged signatures to the FCA and SFO for assessment, was to delay any investigation.

Ms. Owens has declined, three times in writing, the request of the Treasury Select Committee to investigate.⁸ Such refusals are believed to be unprecedented.

The Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley repeated that it is the NCA's role to investigate serious organised crime; the role of the FCA is to deal with misconduct, not serious organised crime; and that the SFO does not have the capacity to investigate industrial-scale crime against the public. The SFO's staff budget & capacity appears to be around 12% of the NCA's own budget & capacity.

The NCA's response to serious criminal wrongdoing by banks such as Lloyds has been to cover it up and refuse to investigate and Ms. Owens met the PCC's remarks with a wall of silence. **If you do not investigate and prosecute, there can be no proof of criminal wrongdoing in court. The motivation is as simple, as it is deeply corrupt.**

⁶ Correction from yesterday's press release

⁷ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-did-not-pass-buck-on-bank-forgery-says-national-crime-agency-dc73p2rnk>

⁸ <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/treasury/Correspondence/2017-19/Chair-to-NCA-Director-General-080719.pdf.pdf> ; <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/treasury/Correspondence/2017-19/Chair-to-FCA-Chief-Executive-080719.pdf>