

Witness Name: Nigel Polglass

Exhibits: NP/01 – NP/07

Dated: 15 September 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF NIGEL POLGLASS

I, **Nigel Polglass**, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. I am the Chief Operating Officer for the Whistl Group. I am a statutory director of the Whistl group of companies, and I have worked for the company in senior roles for over 17 years.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the “**Inquiry**”) with the matters set out in the Section 21 Notice dated 9 September 2025.

BACKGROUND

3. I first became aware from the Inquiry’s Section 21 Notice, that on, or around, 14 October 2023, AR ordered a machete from the website Huntingandknives.co.uk, which is operated by a company called Ageo Wholesale Ltd, and that this order was sent under parcel tracking number H00IEA0123404828.

4. The Inquiry has invited Whistl to comment on these facts and to reply to certain specific questions raised by the Inquiry.

WHISTL'S PARCEL BUSINESS

5. Whistl's parcel business operates in the field of parcel delivery management. That means that we contract with customers to provide them with access to a delivery service and the information that they need to use it. We are not the sellers of the goods in the parcels, nor the actual organisation which despatches the goods in the parcels. In addition, we do not ourselves carry out the 'final mile' delivery (i.e. the actual delivery of the parcel to the door of the recipient of the parcel); that is done by carriers such as Evri, Royal Mail or Yodel which we subcontract.
6. Whistl contracts only with other businesses (and not consumers) in the parcels sector. Our customers are a mixture of businesses that send parcels on their own account (such as online retailers) and other businesses which send parcels on behalf of others (such as other parcel companies, fulfilment businesses, or business outsourcing companies).
7. Delivery management starts with providing the customer with the operational and presentation requirements which the customer needs to follow to send parcels using their chosen carrier. These would include requirements about the way in which goods should be packaged before they are sent or information about any restrictions that a carrier may have in relation to restricted, dangerous or hazardous goods. This information is set out in our customer guide and carrier guide. I have exhibited the customer guide as NP/01 **WHI000002** and the carrier guide as NP/02 **WHI000003**. These were the versions of the customer guide and the carrier guide that were applicable on the date on which the Southport attacks took place. The guides are updated by Whistl when carriers change their services and in addition we conduct reviews during the year to make sure they are up to date. The new versions of the guide are put on our website and given to account managers within Whistl to send on to their customers.
8. For some customers we provide an additional element of service, which is to collect the parcels from the Customer's designated collection points. We bring those items to our depot and receipt scan them into our network. We then either take these items to the

carrier's depot and hand them over for delivery, or the carrier will collect the parcels from our depot for delivery. This additional element of service is referred to as the 'first mile' in the industry. Where we do not provide any first mile service, the carrier will collect parcels directly from the customer and then carry out the deliveries.

9. As part of the set up of any new customer, a link will be created between the customer's order management system and Whistl's carrier management system ("CMS"). To send a parcel, the customer creates the order in its order management system which creates a shipment in the Whistl CMS. This allows the customer to create a delivery label for the item. The shipment will include data about the weight and dimensions of the parcel and the address details for the delivery of the parcel. For domestic shipments, the data for delivery is just the name, address and contact details of the recipient. For shipments to recipients outside the UK, there is an additional requirement to specify the Product Harmonised Code (PHC), a government specified number which is a standardised description of the item, which is used to make customs declarations for that parcel.
10. The CMS transfers the delivery data to the carrier's systems through an application programming interface (API) link between the Whistl CMS and the carrier's IT platform to pre-advise the shipment (i.e. it tells the carrier that a parcel is on its way to them for delivery). Each day, there will usually be hundreds or thousands of these shipments pre-adviced to each carrier by every customer. Tracking information about the parcel (if available) is passed back from the carrier to the Whistl CMS and to the customer showing the progress of delivery.
11. As a delivery management company, Whistl maintains contractual relationships with most final mile delivery companies in the UK. Our relationship with Evri (which was called Hermes at the time) began in 2005. Evri initially provided us with an untracked parcel delivery service for items which were larger than those that we were able to send using our service from Royal Mail. In 2015, Whistl started to access fully tracked services across the full range of services provided by Evri (such as services which give proof of delivery, those without proof of delivery, services with different delivery speeds etc).
12. The Inquiry has provided Whistl with a copy of an unsigned contract from 2023 which I understand Evri have stated is the contract which was in force between Whistl and Evri

in October 2023. The document had been provided to Whistl in February 2023 for review, but it was still under negotiation and its specific terms had not been agreed by October 2023 (and in fact, this document was not agreed afterwards either). The unsigned 2023 contract contains a clause relating to bladed products which was a new clause from Evri and had not been in previous contracts which had been provided to us. Despite the fact that the 2023 document was never agreed, we had been using Evri's services for a long time, and as part of the information that we provided to customers to enable them to use delivery services, we included the restrictions and prohibitions imposed by Evri in its services; these were available from Evri's website and we provided that link to all of our customers so that they could stay up to date with the current restrictions and prohibitions and make the carrier choices accordingly.

SERVICES IN RELATION TO BLADED PRODUCTS

13. The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 ("OWA") imposes certain obligations within a supply chain relating to the sale and delivery of bladed products (which phrase captures a wide range of products including knives and machetes). Within a supply chain, these can be summarised briefly as follows:
 - a the online seller of an item is required to take all reasonable precautions and exercise due diligence to avoid committing an offence under the OWA, which includes carrying out age verification on the buyer of the item;
 - b the seller packs the item into the parcel box itself (or uses a fulfilment company to do so), and the box containing the item needs to be marked to state that there is a bladed product in the parcel;
 - c the company carrying out the delivery (i.e the final mile delivery) needs to carry out age verification of the recipient of the item to ensure that it is not handing the parcel over to someone under the age of 18.

14. In its parcel business, Whistl does not sell the items nor package them for delivery and so is not involved in this part of the supply chain. In relation to delivery, Whistl does not deliver the item to the door nor does it choose which carrier is used. As a delivery

management company, Whistl provides its customers with the restrictions and requirements of the carrier so that the customer has that information when choosing the particular carrier. It is the customer's responsibility to (i) choose a carrier which will carry the goods, (ii) follow any particular requirements (for instance, packaging or presentation) for the goods and (iii) to notify us and the carrier of any special instructions for handling and delivery (such as age verification) in its shipment data.

15. The Inquiry has provided Whistl with an email trail between a member of Parcelhub's team (Matthew Swift) and Evri's sales team which emails are dated between 19 September 2019 and 28 November 2019. I understand that these emails have been provided by Evri as part of their statement. The purpose of these emails was part of a process in which the parcel teams in Whistl and its subsidiary Parcelhub, opened communications with our carriers to find out which of them would be offering services to carry bladed products once the OWA was in force. Since being made aware of this Inquiry, we have conducted a search of Matthew Swift's emails, and at no time had he had any contact with any knife seller, and certainly not any name or company involved in this Inquiry. Similar enquiries were carried with all other carriers to ensure that Whistl understood which carriers were putting in place arrangement to be compliant with the OWA when it came into force.
16. This process was important because, as noted above, the definition of bladed products covers more than just weapons and can include domestic appliances and cooking implements which could still legally be sold online after the OWA was in force using the age verification and labelling processes mentioned above.

IDENTITY OF CUSTOMER, CONTRACT AND ONBOARDING PROCESS

17. Whistl does not, and has never had, any contractual relationship with Ageo Wholesale Ltd or Hunting&Knives.co.uk. They are not our customer and have never been a customer.
18. We have checked our systems, and the parcel tracking number shows that the parcel was sent by Ruach Music Ltd ("Ruach Music") which is a company incorporated in

Northern Ireland under company number NI623194 with its registered address at 10 Nicholsons Road, Kilkeel, Newry BT34 4JN. Our contact there is Stephen Henderson who is also a director and shareholder of Ruach Music.

19. Ruach Music are an online retailer selling items related to guitars such as stands, pedalboards, and guitar accessories (www.ruach-music.com). However, what was unknown to us at the time, but we have learned since receiving the Inquiry's information request, is that there is also another business located at that site which is run by Mr Henderson. This company is called SJ Henderson Fulfilment Limited (company number NI660195) which is in the business of providing outsourced storage, pick, pack and distribution of goods for businesses (www.sjhfulfilment.com).
20. We consider it possible that the parcel in question may have originated from SJ Henderson Fulfilment since they would pack items other than guitar-related products. That would mean that SJ Henderson Fulfilment were using the Ruach Music contract to send items to the recipients.
21. SJ Henderson Fulfilment was not the company with which we contracted. As part of taking on a customer our sales team discuss the types of items that a customer is looking to send, the volume, the dimensions etc so that we can provide them with a price for the services and so that we can give them a range of carriers which are able to deliver their parcels.
22. I exhibit NP/03 WHI000004 a copy of the contract between Whistl UK Limited and Ruach Music which was signed by Whistl on 4 January 2021 and by Mr Henderson of Ruach Music on 7 January 2021. The contract sets out the usual contractual detail such as the services provided, the standard of the services, operational assumptions and prices as well as the terms and conditions on which the services are provided. The carrier options available to Ruach Music under the contract were to send items using Hermes (as Evri was then called), Royal Mail or Yodel.
23. As stated above, the customer guide and the carrier guide set out the operational and presentation requirements and these documents were sent to Ruach Music at the same time. Exhibits NP/01 WHI000002 and NP/02 WHI000003 were the versions which were

current at the time of the Southport attacks. I now exhibit respectively as NP/04 **WHI000005** and NP/05 **WHI000006** the versions of the customer guide and carrier guide which were in force at the time the contract was made (the Customer Guide was sent with the welcome letter (see paragraph 25 below)).

24. The customer guide and carrier guide contain sections relating to prohibited items, dangerous good and restricted items which can be found on p12 of Exhibit NP/02 **WHI000003** and p17 of Exhibit NP/05 **WHI000006**. These sections state that the customer is responsible for ensuring that it follows any requirements relating to these types of goods and provides the link to the part of the Evri website which shows which items can and cannot be sent using the Evri services.
25. The prohibited items list was also stated in the welcome email that was sent to Ruach Music on 6 January 2021, after Whistl had signed the contract. I have exhibited a copy of that email at NP/06 **WHI000008**.
26. The contract gave Ruach Music a range of carriers that they could use for delivery. As mentioned above the choice of carrier is determined by the customer which has the information about the carriers including what they can or cannot send and any other restrictions on items.
27. Ruach Music did not provide us with any special delivery or handling instructions relating to sending a bladed product, and did not choose a carrier which would carry bladed products.

PARCEL TRACKING NUMBER H00IEA0123404828

28. Parcel tracking number H00IEA0123404828 was assigned by the Whistl CMS to a parcel sent by Ruach Music on 23 October 2023. As stated above, the data that we receive about a parcel is provided by the customer through the API into our CMS. A copy of the information from the CMS that we received about this item is exhibited at NP07 **WHI000007**.
29. The data in Exhibit NP/07 **WHI000007** shows three lines of information:

- a The top line identifies the retained information relating to the creation of the shipment. Since this contains personal data, the record is anonymised 90 days after the creation of the delivery label, in order to comply with the requirement for data minimisation under UK data protection laws. However, the anonymised data still shows that the item was addressed to the postcode PR9 8SB in Banks and that it was sent by customer number L12419 (column AH) (which is Whistl's internal account number for Ruach Music). The customer has not requested any special instructions for delivery (such as notification that age verification is needed on delivery) nor is there any instruction related leaving the parcel if there is no answer at the door at the time of delivery (since bladed products should be handed to a person rather than left on the doorstep or in a safe place).
 - b The second line refers to the parcel weights and dimensions (as received through the API from the customer).
 - c The third line refers to the product information provided from the customer. Here the customer has simply stated "Dropship Order" rather than the details of the product. However, as mentioned earlier in this statement, the product description is not mandatory where the item is being delivered within the UK as the information is only used for customs declarations.
30. One further piece of information in first line of data is in column AJ which contains a reference which we assume the customer uses for its own internal purposes. In this case the reference says "Ageo". At the time that word would have had no significance for Whistl. However, in light of the information provided by the Inquiry that the seller of the machete was Hunting&Knives whose corporate entity is Ageo Wholesale Ltd, this reference suggests that the item was being send by Ruach Music for its customer Ageo Wholesale. No information provided by Ruach Music (Descriptions, Special Instructions, PHC etc) identified this shipment as an offensive weapon or even as a bladed product.
31. We have carried out a search of our systems to find any further shipments from Ruach Music which include the reference "Ageo". Of the 30,188 items sent by Ruach Music since 2021, we have found 2,563 items which have this reference. In a number of earlier

shipments the PHC identifies the item as 'for Metalwork'. None of the other shipments give a product description other than "DROP SHIP" or "DROP SHIP ORDER". For each of these shipments we have the same data as described above, which includes postcodes of the recipients of the shipments (but not the name and address for the reasons also stated above). None of these additional shipments were sent to AR's postcode. If it is correct that each of these shipments originated from Ageo Wholesale, we were not provided with any special delivery instructions or other handling instructions. In 2,562 instances, Ruach Music chose Evri as its carrier for delivery with one shipment being sent through Yodel.

DELIVERY OF PARCEL TRACKING NUMBER H00IEA0123404828

32. The parcel was sent using a service which included proof of delivery which requires a photograph of the delivery. Due to the need for data minimisation referred to above, the photograph has not been retained by Whistl. The item (along with all other items from that collection) was collected by Whistl on 24 October and went to Whistl's Belfast depot and was then handed over to Evri on the 25 October. Delivery of this item was made at 9:51 on 26 October on the first attempt.

REFLECTIONS ON THE EVENTS

33. The Inquiry sent its original section 9 request to an email address which is not used in Whistl's business and is not monitored. As a result, we did not know of the Inquiry's questions until we received the section 21 notice in their email of 10.56am on 9 September 2025. We had not previously been contacted by the police during their investigation, and so up to the date of this statement, there has only been limited time to reflect on the events.
34. That said, a number of practical issues arise:
 - a The parcels market involves billions of parcels being sent within the UK each year. The processes involved in sending those items are significantly automated for efficiency and involve relatively little human intervention. They are largely data-driven. Given the low amounts of human involvement in the processes, each

participant in the supply chain is only as good as the data with which it has been provided.

- b In the case of items which are controlled by the OWA, the processes are reliant on sellers, fulfilment companies and final mile carriers carrying out each of their obligations. There is a domino effect that impacts the rest of the supply chain if a party further up the chain does not provide the data that is required. At present, it is only mandatory to include a PHC description in a shipment if it is to be sent outside the UK. An improvement to the process would be for the PHC to be provided for all parcels and for that data to be included in the data that goes into a shipping label barcode. That would enable the machines that sort parcels to be set to reject certain PHC descriptions. Those rejected parcels could then be handled manually to make sure that they are handles according to the requirements for that particular product.
- c On a similar basis, if we had known earlier that there were investigations relating to items sent through the delivery network, then we could have separated our records from the CMS in order to preserve the names and addresses which are otherwise automatically anonymised. The same is true of retaining the photographic data for the delivery of the item. We would suggest that this could be an improvement to current process, and would be happy to work with law enforcement agencies on a process.
- d In addition, if there is any suspicion about the sender of parcels, if we receive an earlier notification, then we can stop services to the customer or provide other forms of assistance to enforcement agencies. In this case, we have immediately stopped our services to Ruach Music, but that could have happened earlier.
- e Whistl already has a mandatory training module for handling dangerous goods for customer-facing personnel and operational colleagues handling parcels. We will review this training programme and make sure that any lessons arising from the Inquiry are incorporated into the training programme.

35. We hope that this work, undertaken at pace, demonstrates our sincerity and thoroughness in responding fully and transparently to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: **Signature**

Dated: 15th September 2025

ANNEX 1

Index to the Witness Statement of Nigel Polglass

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
1.	NP/01 WHI000002	Whistl Customer Guide v1.8
2.	NP/02 WHI000003	Whistl Carrier Guide v2.4
3.	NP/03 WHI000004	Contract between Whistl and Ruach Music
4.	NP/04 WHI000005	Whistl Customer Guide v1.0
5.	NP/05 WHI000006	Whistl Carrier Guide v1.0
6.	NP/06 WHI000008	Copy of welcome email from Whistl to Ruach Music
7.	NP/07 WHI000007	Copy of parcel data from the Whistl CMS