Witness Name: Brendan Marc West
Statement No.: WITN5734001
Exhibits: **WITN5734002 - 005**
Dated: 13 May 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRENDAN MARC WEST

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 May 2021.

I, Brendan Marc West, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Brendan Marc West. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960 and my address is GRO-C Hants GRO-C.

2. I retired around 3 to 4 years ago after being made redundant in my role as a global programme manager in technological design for Honeywell for whom I had worked for many years. I am separated from my wife and I have no children.

3. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together.

4. I would like to say that I suffer from brain fog and I have a very poor memory. Therefore, I have found it difficult to accurately recall dates and even periods as to when certain events took place. I have been assisted by some medical records that I have exhibited in this statement where relevant.

Section 2. How Infected

5. I joined the army aged 16, on 17 August 1976. I trained as a vehicle mechanic at Arborfield with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). Following my basic, trades and specialist training, I was posted to Soest, West Germany in 1978, where I served in the British Army on The Rhine (BAOR). At the time I had a very good level of health and fitness, enjoying running, cycling and other sports.

6. On 7 August 1979 I was involved in a hit and run road traffic accident. I was walking beside the road near my barracks when I was hit by a car. After this first car hit me, I was lying in the middle of the road when a second car ran over my chest and legs. The person driving the second car stopped to help me, which in hindsight probably saved my life. The driver of the first was never traced, I do not know how much effort was put into this by the German Polizei. I do know at the time that the IRA had active cells in West Germany (as it was then) and military personnel were being regularly targeted in garrisons, close to barracks where they were obviously in the British armed services. I cannot say in my case if this was such an incident but I have always had my suspicions.

7. I was initially taken to a Belgian military hospital, following which I was transferred to a civilian German hospital called Marien Krankenhaus (German for hospital), where I was put in intensive care. I do not remember being in the Belgian military hospital as I was in a coma for between 10 and 14 days. I am unsure whether this was a medically induced coma or otherwise.

8. The next thing I remember was awaking in the intensive care unit at Marien Krankenhaus. A few days after being stabilised there, I was transferred to British Military Hospital (BMH) Iserlohn on 10 September 1979.

9. At BMH Iserlohn I was identified as having the following injuries, amongst others; an open chest wound, superficial facial laceration, large wound left groin, fracture left forearm and fracture right femur lower third. This was recorded in my in-patient record showing my treatment history from BMH Iserlohn through to my treatment at Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital (QEMH) Woolwich, which I exhibit as **WITN5734002**.

10. Also, within this exhibit (**WITN5734002**) is a note that reads 'As a result of a left femoral artery thrombosis and severe injuries to the left shin, a through knee amputation was performed on 28/09/1979.' The operation to amputate my left leg was performed at BMH Iserlohn, some 3 to 4 weeks after the accident, at which stage I weighed around 5 and a half stone.

11. Whilst under the care of BMH Iserlohn I can remember having numerous drips attached to me. I can't be sure what was in the drips as I didn't pay much attention, I just remember there being a lot of them. I simply assumed that they contained blood as my leg had been amputated. I was also loaded up with drugs so I was not in my right mind, a bit vague and consequently my memory surrounding this is somewhat blurred.

12. After my amputation, I was Casevac'd (casualty evacuation) by airplane from Germany to England - probably an RAF base and then helicopter from there to QEMH Woolwich. I was admitted to QEMH Woolwich on 10 October 1979 where I stayed until being discharged on 18 February 1980. I was then admitted on the same day to the Joint Services Medical Rehabilitation Unit (JSMRU) in Chessington.

13. In total, I spent 31 days at BMH Iserlohn, 130 days at QEMH Woolwich and 280 days at the JSMRU in Chessington. My patient military record

(**WITN5734002**) shows that I was treated for a total of 457 days, so I am able to deduce from that, that the treatment I received at the Belgian military hospital and the Marien Krankenhaus totalled 16 days. I have no documents or records pertaining to my treatment at either the Belgian military hospital or Marien Krankenhaus.

14. After 4 months of rehabilitation at the JSMRU in Chessington, I was fitted with my first prosthetic leg. After being discharged from Chessington on 18 February 1980, I was taken to Arborfield where I was medically discharged on 15 December 1980. I did not receive any offer of financial support, nor did I receive a pension or lump sum. It was a very heartless and blunt discharge. I was naturally on crutches with one prosthetic left leg and a smashed right knee and they made me walk around the camp carrying kit unaided.

15. After being medically discharged from the army I went to live with my parents. My Dad was in the RAF based somewhere in Lincolnshire, before we moved to Lancashire. I lived with them for around 4 or 5 years.

16. I began working again in 1984 after I retrained in TV and electronics at Portland College, Mansfield. I also worked at Bury Technical College, before I embarked on a career as a computer programmer and then in IT and programme management. I have worked and lived in GRO-C GRO-C, GRO-C and GRO-C. My work took me to many countries and I lived in Dubai for around 18 months.

17. I met my wife in around 1985. We lived together for a number of years before marrying around 12 to 15 years ago. We separated 7 years ago though we remain married. I would describe our relationship as 'distant' but amicable.

18. I had my right knee replaced around 15 years ago. This was caused by damage after the road traffic accident, including tendon damage. When I went for this operation I was told that I had a fatty liver but nothing seemed to be done about it. It was more of a remark than a medical

diagnosis. I had the same knee replaced again 2 years ago. None of the medical procedures that I went through over the years had anything to do with, and neither was anything done to identify the cause of my fatty liver.

19. For the last 8 years or so I have been constantly fatigued, on occasions extremely so and generally unwell. When I explained this to my GP, I had blood tests, the results of which showed issues with my liver enzymes. I also had my endocrine system investigated due to my episodes of exhaustion, but this showed no abnormalities.

20. During the lockdown, on 19 January 2021, I decided to donate blood. The last time I had done so was back in 1989. I had donated blood on just this occasion prior to doing so in January this year.

21. After making my blood donation, I received a letter dated 25 January 2021 from NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) informing me that my blood had tested positive for HCV antibodies. I exhibit this letter as **WITN5734003**. Upon reading this, I was angry and distressed. I had heard of hepatitis, but not hepatitis C specifically. All I knew was that it damaged the liver.

22. In the same letter, I was provided with a phone number to call so that clinical staff could explain to me what exactly HCV is and what it entails. Within the same letter, I was advised that it would be better to speak with them first before consulting with another doctor as the results would not yet be in my GP's records. NHSBT sought my consent to inform my GP, which I gave.

23. I phoned the number provided by NHSBT and spoke to a nurse. We had a brief conversation and the nurse warned me not to share the fact I had HCV publicly, I believe because of the stigma surrounding it. The information given to me was all very vague, and it was implied that I should be careful with regard to the risks of transmitting the virus to others, rather than it being explicitly stated. I was advised to inform

anyone who I had been in sexual contact with and advise them to get tested. I was also told how HCV is contracted, with the nurse mentioning needle use, sex and blood transfusions as possible causes. I was given a lot of information, much of which I quickly forgot due to my poor ability to retain what had been said.

24. I received a letter dated 05 February 2021 from Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust inviting me to a fibroscan on 01 March 2021 which I exhibit as **WITN5734004**. I attended this fibroscan appointment at Aldershot Centre for Health where I also had my first face-to-face consultation with a medic concerning HCV.

25. At this consultation I was again given a lot of information verbally about HCV and I was also told about the English Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS). I struggle to remember a lot of this conversation because of my memory loss, so it was not particularly helpful to receive all this information verbally, especially as it was in person and I could have been given written material. I get very frustrated and it upsets me that I am unable to remember these discussions and events.

26. I received a letter dated 12 March 2021 from Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust containing the results of my fibroscan. I exhibit this letter as **WITN3754005**. The fibroscan showed that I have a fatty liver. Within the narrative of Valerie Duckhouse's report (hepatology nurse specialist), she mentions that she consulted with me about how much alcohol I drank. I would like to say that Valerie Duckhouse's summation of what I said about my alcohol consumption, is not an accurate reflection. I have in the past drunk regularly but not to the degree where it was ever a problem. Prior to me giving up drinking completely after my diagnosis in January this year, I maybe drank up to 3 bottles of wine per week. I wish to emphasise that Valerie Duckhouse has been excellent with my care and very supportive. This is a point of disagreement and not a criticism. I believe it is a misinterpretation of the conversation we had. I do not believe that it was done deliberately for any malicious or disingenuous reason. I would not want this to be brought up with her.

27. This same letter includes Valerie Duckhouse's assement that 'given the severity of his injuries at that time it is possible that he received multiple blood transfusions, not only in the local German krankenhaus but also in the German British Military hospital. With that in mind I have suggested that he contacts the NHS Business Services Authority to disc uss whether he is eligible for an ex gratia payment, as it has been suggested the blood he received whilst an inpatient while in BMH Germany originated from the UK'.

28. The letter also mentions that apart from having my ear pierced in a reputable shop, that there were no other risk factors that would have resulted in my having contracted HCV

29. Also, within this letter Valerie Duckhouse wrote that she would keep a close eye out for my HCV viral load and if it is evident that I have active HCV, she would look to make a decision with regard to treatment. The letter goes on to say that there was evidence of significant scarring of my liver and that this would need to be monitored every 6 months for the rest of my life.

30. After the scan and upon receiving this letter, I had blood tests that confirmed on 09 April 2021 that I have active HCV. Subsequently, Valerie Duckhouse told me over the phone that my viral load of 471,000 and she said that this indicated that I have had the virus for many decades.

31. On 30 April 2021 I had a telephone call with the Valerie Duckhouse - an update consultation on my condition, where the possibility of HCV treatment was discussed. I believe it was decided on this date, with the support of Valerie Duckhouse, that I should start treatment on 06 May 2021.

32. I started a 12 week course of Zepatier treatment on 06 May 2021, which was only last week. This involves taking one tablet daily. I will have blood tests at weeks 2, 4, 8 & 12, the first of which is on 19 May 2021. I will

also have calls with Valerie Duckhouse, the first of which is on 21 May 2021.

33. I only started the treatment 6 days ago so it is clearly early days. So far I have experienced some mild side-effects, such as fatigue and nausea. I also feel a little 'vague' and a bit foggy, but it is nothing too serious.

Section 3. Other Infections

34. I have no other infections as a result of receiving an infected blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

35. I believe that I consented to all testing and treatment for HCV.

Section 5. Impact

36. My diagnosis had a significant impact on me psychologically. At first it caused me to feel anger and distress, and I found it very difficult to tell people about it. I had to inform any previous sexual partners that I was still in contact with. It was difficult to tell my wife, from whom I am separated. I had to explain how it had come from blood or blood derived products that had been given to me all those years ago, although she understood this. GRO-C GRO-C

37. Other than medics, I have told maybe ten people, all those that I would consider close friends. I am concerned that people may make assumptions about me and my behaviour when I tell them I have HCV and that I have to quickly add that a blood transfusion was the cause of my infection. I feel that there is a requirement for me to explain how I got HCV, otherwise I feel that people will assume that I am dirty. The general

reaction to me telling people has been fine, and I would say that attitudes have changed in the last 20 years. However, I still feel unable to tell certain people as I believe they would be judgmental about me. My good friends know I have been ill on and off for a number of years they understand better than most.

38. I have had to stop taking statins to control my cholesterol because of my Zepatier treatment, which could affect my health in another way. I have not yet been to the dentists since my diagnosis with HCV, but I intend to inform them when I do.

39. Last Saturday, on 08 May 2021, I had to call the paramedics out as I had done something to my back and was unable to move. I was forced to explain that I have HCV. As a result of my Zepatier treatment the type of painkillers that I could be administered was severely restricted. For example, I am unable to take non-steroidal anti-inflammatories. The paramedics themselves were brilliant and they had no issue with the fact that I have HCV.

40. The fact that I cannot take these painkillers does impact because I take non-steroidal anti-inflammatories for pain relief related to my joints and the results of being hit by the car in Germany. I can take paracetamol but they are not much use in safe doses.

41. I had my gall bladder removed around 2002, which according to the Hepatitis C Trust is common amongst HCV sufferers. It is listed on their website as one of the health impacts that I now realise could have been caused by my HCV infection.

42. I have suffered with joint pain for many years, although this is perhaps not surprising considering my leg amputation. I have also suffered with tiredness and brain fog for a number of years. I get mentally tired easily and I have to manage my expectations as to what I can do and for how long. The process of giving this statement has wiped me out.

43. I have had a reasonably successful career and I have always worked hard. However, I believe this has been hindered by the side-effects of my HCV infection, although I did not know this to be the cause at the time, I can look back now and link it to the fact that I have had HCV for such a long time. My boss was putting me forward for a more senior position within Honeywell but I decided to turn it down as I didn't feel I had the energy or mental sharpness to perform to the levels that would have been required. I just would not have had the stamina. I regret this but I know it wouldn't have been possible for me to deal with the hours and stress involved with a more senior position, with much overseas travel. I now realise that HCV was the cause of the way I was feeling.

44. For a number of years, I was Honeywell's Europe, Middle East and Africa IT Leader. I was also a global programme manager for technological design, and I was responsible for the IT staff in the Middle East. I had a budget of $4.5 million. As my health began to worsen and I suffered with exhaustion, I didn't feel that I had the physical and mental capacity to take on a more demanding and challenging role. I think I would have gone for the more senior role if I had the physical capacity, but I knew at the time that it would make me ill. This would have been worth 4 to 5 times more than my previous salary, and the expectations upon me would have reflected this. I regard this as a missed opportunity.

45. I used to exercise and work hard, but it is difficult owing to my amputation and all the pressure I put on my joints. It was with both shock and relief when I was diagnosed with HCV as it shows that my illness wasn't my fault. On the other hand, I felt a lot of anger as I believe it should have been detected sooner. My fatty liver was known about a long time ago, I am not a medic, so I didn't know what that meant, it was never explained to me but that should have been investigated much earlier. HCV has severely damaged my liver and my health in the intervening years.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

46. I have not faced any difficulties in obtaining treatment, care or support as a result of my infection with HCV.

47. I have not been offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with HCV.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

48. I was informed about the English Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS) by Valerie Duckhouse at my very first consultation. I have since completed the form and passed it on to the consultants for them to finish. Once complete, I intend to send a final version to EIBSS for their consideration.

49. I have applied for all my medical records from my treatment after the road traffic accident in 1979. I was told that army veterans' medical records are stored in an archive in Glasgow. I am still awaiting the outcome of this request for my medical records.

Section 8. Other Issues

50. I am a member of the British Limbless Ex Services Mens Association (BLESMA). After my diagnosis with HCV I wrote to the head of welfare at BLESMA and suggested that they should investigate other members who were treated during the 70s & 80s to make sure they don't have hepatitis. It has been a silent disease for far too long.

51. I am providing this statement in the hope that it helps the Inquiry more than for any other reason.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed GRO-C

Dated 13/05/2021