

No. 094/24

8th March 2024

TO: ALL POSTAL BRANCHES

Dear Colleagues

POSTAL WORKPLACE BULLETIN – ISSUE TWO

Please find attached and in the link below, issue two of our workplace bulletin for members in Royal Mail Group.

It is crucial this is printed and distributed in every workplace in the UK. As we have previously communicated, support from CWU HQ is available for printing. Please email Marcia Murray mmurray@cwu.org if you require assistance with this.

<https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/08066-your-voice-in-the-workplace-RMG-02.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Dave Ward
General Secretary

Martin Walsh
Deputy General Secretary Postal

Chris Webb
Head of Communications



YOUR VOICE IN THE WORKPLACE



FOR CWU MEMBERS WORKING IN RM GROUP AND THE WIDER P&L SECTOR...

ISSUE TWO, MARCH 2024

WE'RE BUILDING BACK – STEP BY STEP

Your DGSP Martin Walsh updates on the key industrial issues....

There are number of issues on which we have reached a Joint Statement with the company over the past month.

These include:

1 Restoring quality of service – This statement agreed to have 24 delivery units reviewed at national level, 120 delivery units reviewed at ROD and divisional level and then over 160 units reviewed at area level. This work has already commenced, and some units have started to address resourcing and revision-related problems. This Joint Statement also stopped the introduction of circa 250 table-top delivery revisions. This is work is in progress and we need to make sure we are addressing quality of service at all levels of the union.

2 Supernumeraries – We reached a Joint Statement which ensured that supernumeraries were no longer sent outside their mail centre to a redeployment pool. This also created a pathway to resolving supernumeraries via bump VRs and standing down agency to create duties for the supernumeraries. We also agreed that there will be a re-sign either triggered by the network review, a realignment revision, or because of the Midland Hub taking work from mail centres.

We have agreed to explore a more employee-friendly way of looking after those individuals who are surplus. In the original MTSF agreement there was a job shop process which eventually ceased. However, most companies have some kind of system which helps surplus employees, unfortunately the then Royal Mail management introduced a method centred on forcing individuals out of Royal Mail which was unacceptable.

3 Seasonal Variations – We secured an agreement with Royal Mail which allowed for our full time members, for a period of eight weeks, to work two hours less per week and part timers 50 minutes less for February and March. This meant that some of the time worked at 39 hours could be repaid. We also agreed that any individual who had 39 hours leave taken off them would get two hours back in annual leave for any weeks they took off during the 39 hour period. All delivery employees will work a further 11-week period during the summer at 35 hours for a full timer and 50 minutes less per week for a part timer. From the week leading up to Black Friday, and for a period of five weeks, staff will work at 39 hours. At this point all hours would have balanced.

4 Network – Royal Mail were always going to cease the use of airplanes to fly mail around England, Scotland, and Wales. They do not need agreement to cease using planes in the same way as when they ceased to have the Travelling Post Offices on trains. Their original plan was to move all start times by three hours including in mail centres. Within the National agreement the commitment was achieved that meant most delivery units would be under an hour and a default position of 90 minutes.

The current headlines are:

- 1000 Delivery units – change is below 60 minutes
- 360 Delivery units – less than a 15-minute change
- 610 Delivery Units – less than a 30-minute change
- 82 per cent of Delivery Units – last letter by 15:30
- 96 per cent of Delivery Units – last letter by 16:00

There are 234 delivery units which are currently over 60 minutes, 123 in Scotland, 54 in London, seven in South East and others in Portsmouth, Hereford, Worcester and the Cambridge area.

A Joint Statement was reached which allowed these 234 units to take a 15-minute meal relief between Wave One and Wave Two arrivals. If this is taken, it would reduce the finish time by 15 minutes. This would cap the move to a 75-minute maximum rather than 90 minutes.



We have also agreed that a post-implementation review will take place after 12 weeks to see if further mitigation can take place and we're continuing to work with Royal Mail to see if we can find pragmatic solutions which mitigate the start and finish times. In addition, we are discussing whether Monday and Saturday start and finish times could be further reduced.

This is a massive issue and lots of work is being undertaken ranging from a network review, processing realignments and the exceptions process. We will communicate further over the next two weeks on this issue.

We are also in negotiations on Fleet Pay and there is a proposal on the table which Royal Mail is costing up and considering.

Further discussions are happening on new entrants and a range of other issues, which we will further update on in due course.

INSIDE:
'SUPERNUMERARIES IN
MAIL CENTRES'

BACK:
'IMPORTANT TRIALS
COMING UP IN DELIVERY'

Join the
union



FOCUS ON MAIL CENTRES



MAIL CENTRES – SOLID PROGRESS ON SUPERNUMERARIES SITUATION

CWU national officer Davie Robertson uses a phrase describing the combined effect of several stormy weather conditions to explain the supernumeraries crisis that hit mail centres over the past year...

Imposed revisions, falling workload and the new super-hubs were the 'perfect storm' that caused the problems our members have faced across the Processing function," he says. "It's been the toughest year in Royal Mail Group as a whole – and in mail centres the biggest problem members have had to face has been the issue of supernumeraries.

"But due to the extremely persistent and dedicated work of local reps and the work that's been done at national level resulting in the February Joint Statement, we're now able to start to get back to some sense of normality, with agreed procedures and practices," he added.

Across the UK's mail centres as a whole, the numbers of workers put into this 'surplus' or 'displaced' category last year reached several hundred as a consequence of those three key factors of imposed revisions, falling workload and the creation of the super-hubs.

The effects have varied from site to site, with the two most impacted units being Peterborough and SMMC (South Midlands Mail Centre in Northampton), where the numbers placed arbitrarily into this 'supernumeraries' (SPNMs) category were the highest.

Luke Smith, the area processing rep (APR) at Peterborough, explains that "the company imposed new optimised duty sets – based wrongly on the lowest basic week – and that put 94 of our Processing workers into this category."



Davie speaking with Ernie Orviss, Luke Smith and Sean Courton at Peterborough

This caused huge upset to the individuals concerned, people who had worked for the business many many years all of a sudden being told that they were surplus to requirements. Luke and other reps at the site talked of members becoming angry or at times tearful when expressing their concerns at the sudden uncertainty and related worries about potential effects on their families and household budgets.

"Ernie Orviss, who was APR then and has recently retired, and myself and the other reps here worked as hard as we could, by whatever ways we could find, to reduce the numbers of people in this situation," says Luke, who lists the various alternatives that were sought for these members.

"Our colleagues in Distribution were very supportive in trying to identify potential vacancies for Processing members, and also there's a

delivery office attached to this unit, so we did what we could to try to match people with jobs there as well – but also there were buydowns, Direct VRs and then Bump VRs, which altogether helped to gradually bring that initial figure of 94 down."

At the time of writing, there were five remaining SPNMs at Peterborough, with an agreement that four of those will be redeployed into new duties when four respective VR bumps take place at the end of March.

"I'm continuing to try to find an alternative role agreeable to this remaining person," says Luke, adding: "It's better to have the February Joint Statement going forward, as this provides some reassurance that proper procedures will be followed. But there are still serious concerns ahead, particularly with the realignments that are coming up."



SMMC safety rep Msharma Habimina (left) and Paul Bosworth (right) with concerned members

Davie Robertson says: “Luke and Ernie and the other reps at Peterborough have done a remarkable job in resolving so many of these SPNMs on behalf of members. And it’s also worth mentioning that as well as the emotional impact on the members themselves, these reps have stood up strong in this situation and have, at times, borne the brunt of some of these frustrations and anxieties expressed by members.

“Our reps deserve a lot of praise for their sheer dedication and hard work.”

At Northampton, APR Paul Bosworth says that the same imposition of new optimised duty sets initially placed some 260 Processing workers into this category and that, in his experience, he had “never known a situation so bad where it seemed that staff who are very loyal and committed to being a part of RMG found themselves in a situation where they felt discarded.

“Some members became ill due to the situation, there were formal grievances submitted and there are a couple of ETs going on now. In all my time as a rep, this was the first time I’ve felt ineffectual,” he says, explaining how some of the emotional turmoil reported by members had also impacted on him and his team of reps.

“We desperately wanted a resolution to the issue and we wanted to make sure that the process was done fairly and in line with MTSF (*Managing The Surplus Framework – the longstanding national agreement for dealing with these issues across RMG, which the company pledged to continue with in last year’s BRTG national agreement*)

Davie Robertson explains that “not only was accordance with MTSF specifically referred in BRTG, it has also now been re-emphasised again in the February Joint Statement (JS), which addresses our concerns that the wrong procedures were being followed on this initially by the business.

“Another key point of the JS is that people affected will no longer have to leave their own unit to attend the redeployment programme and will be offered vacancies within the site and surrounding offices as they arise.”

Paul Bosworth continues: “With the help and support of my sub-APR Becky Leach and the other reps here, we’ve managed to get the numbers of SPNMs down to around 80. Bump VRs haven’t started here yet, so we’re hoping we can resolve significantly more numbers of members’ situations when those get going.

Davie Robertson says: “Here again I’ve got to pay tribute to Paul and the reps at SMMC – a unit which has been in the eye of the storm in many respects and where members have really been through a tough time.

“We’re certainly not out of the difficult period by any means and there are big challenges to come. But with the February JS – which is signed off by myself and by our DGSP Martin Walsh for the union and by COO Alistair Cochrane and OD Ricky McAuley for the company – we’ve taken a significant step forward.”



Above and below left, more of the members affected by the supernumeraries issue



“We’ve got a new Mail Centre Manager in here and with the JS and also the reference to reducing agency resource, we’re beginning to feel a little hope that a semblance of normality can return, that we can back in the room and resume proper dialogue.

“Pre-dispute, SMMC led the way in some respects on creating innovative duty sets including four-day working roles that provide long weekend breaks between attendances etc and we want to be building duty sets that are fit for purpose, clearing mail and benefitting members in terms of work-life balance.”

“WE’RE NOT OUT OF THE DIFFICULT PERIOD AND THERE ARE CHALLENGES TO COME, BUT WE’VE TAKEN A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD.”
Davie Robertson, National Officer

GEOGRAPHICAL PREP FRAME CHANGE/LOOP PLANNING BEING TRIALLED

Dover D. O.
article



later this month, 21 delivery offices all around the UK will be commencing an agreed trial of a new and different indoor design and method, replacing the current way that individual RM2000 'per-walk' sorting frames are configured, with a continuous frame layout across the unit segmented into loops, writes CWU Outdoor Secretary Mark Baulch...

This concept was tested out on an ad-hoc basis at a handful of units by the company without national agreement last year and so some members may be aware of this idea, which has been previously referred to as either 'Blueprint' or Ringwood'.

Last Autumn's Edition of the old Voice magazine featured an article on this from Dover Delivery Office and for anyone who missed that article, there's a link from the QR code on this page to that feature.

Since that time, there have been more formal and structured talks between the CWU and the business, establishing a proper framework and terms of reference and the method is now officially entitled 'Delivery 2.0'. It's not exactly the same as the Dover Trial – so please read the QR-linked article with that caveat – but its essential principles are there.

From a CWU perspective, our concerns centre around the need to maintain 'walk ownership' along with continuity of customer

service, and of course ensure that workloads are fairly distributed, with full involvement of the union at all appropriate levels. It's critical that change moves forward in an agreed and structured manner.

Notwithstanding the agreed introduction of Seasonal Variation, we do of course share the company's stated aims to meet the variations in

while also keeping workloads fair on a planned basis, then we would see that as a success.

And in terms of fair workloads, these 21 units will also be undertaking geo-route outdoor revisions.

Another key reason why the business wants to trial changing the internal office design is to maximise the space available for parcels – the growth area of our sector. And we share that aim as well. Going hand-in-hand with this Delivery 2.0 trial will be the testing out of several parcel placement methods as well, which is something that has, so far, only been tried out in a 'non-live' environment at the walk bundling centre in Swindon, but which is being worked up by a small joint sub-team including senior management and Postal Executive nominees.

In the next Edition, we hope to be able to bring you a detailed feature article reporting on these trials in progress and, in the meantime, I'd like to thank those units taking part and express our hope that this trial will prove to be a success.



workload, to ensure peaks and troughs can be accommodated and to meet the USO obligations and QoS standards. If this method can do this,

1ST CLASS CREDIT UNION – FOR POSTAL WORKERS

An update from 1st CCU head of member services Luke McGilvray...

Life has been tough for everyone over the past few years, particularly where money is involved. The Cost-of-Living Crisis, fuel crisis, inflation, and much more have placed a massive strain on every household budget across the country.

With credit union members in the postal sector facing similar difficulties we had to make some changes. We offered flexible payment holidays, out of policy withdrawals from savings to support our members, revamped our lending policy to ensure members could afford the loan approved for them, encouraged members to save regularly while offering members to pause their savings commitments if they were struggling, and much more.

We are a collective at 1st Class, that means helping each member as much as possible. Where help cannot be provided in house we always signpost to the best next step.

ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTIONS BELOW

Do I save regularly? If not, what happens when a life emergency happens? Could I start saving regularly? Do I want to be part of a co-operative that benefits not only myself and my family but also my fellow colleagues? If so, join our credit union today.

Would I borrow from a business who cares? Would I borrow from someone who answers the phone when I call them? Would I like a human decision on a loan? Is it important to me that I know what the business stands for when I borrow from them?

If so, join our credit union today by scanning our QR Code or visiting our website.



WORKING TOGETHER

We are delighted to say our relationship with the CWU Trade Union has lasted for over a decade. Our staff are now proud CWU trade union members and many of our board have served as reps for numerous years. Thank you for your continued support of the trade union and its affiliated credit union. CWU's members are our members.