

No. 326/24

4th October 2024

TO: ALL POSTAL BRANCHES

Dear Colleagues

Your Voice in the Workplace –October 2024

Please find attached the October Workplace Bulletin.

We will be sending you out a limited print run (approx. 10 per cent of branch membership) of this Edition, which should reach you by next week for distribution to your reps to take into workplaces.

You also have the link to print immediate copies and/or to print off more copies.

It is crucial that branches are distributing the monthly bulletin in every workplace. The purpose is to ensure members are receiving written content from the union directly into their workplaces, so your role in that process is integral.

Thank you for your support and please contact us with your feedback on the Bulletin.

<https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/08194-your-voice-RMG-issue-8-Oct-2up.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Martin Walsh
Deputy General Secretary (Postal)

Chris Webb
Head of Communications



Clive Penfold with a member at Streatham

STREATHAM DO

After hearing some of the points at the London briefing by Streatham Delivery Office rep Clive Penfold, we visited the unit and met him, his manager Hayley Humroy and local CWU branch secretary Greg Charles.

Streatham has 86 staff in post and serves the SW16 area. At this office, a system was agreed locally between the union and management to reduce the numbers of dedicated parcel routes (DPRs) from seven down to three and to bring all parcel sizes back into core workload.

The idea with this system – which was jointly discussed, eventually agreed and then implemented in April of last year – is for customers to receive all of their mails at the same time and delivered by the same person. And, since it was introduced, attendance patterns have been created which provide a long weekend off every fortnight.

Clive explains: "It's a two-week rotate. Days off on a Monday and Tuesday one week and then a Friday and Saturday off the next week. So, every other week, it's a long weekend."

As part of this re-organisation, six new jobs were created – with 11.30am to 7pm shifts – and five new part-time starters are working 10am to 3pm. Starting times vary for full-time staff, and "we usually get out on Delivery about 9.30am/10am."

The staggered attendances were designed – in early 2023 – with the forthcoming network window changes in mind and the later deliveries which are a business aspiration, it is explained to us.

Greg says: "The question was asked at the briefing: 'Is it still worthwhile to be an employee of Royal Mail?' So, this is an alternative way of doing things. It was jointly designed with Clive and with local management working together and it's good for customers, for the business and for our members."

The system seems popular among members busy sorting in the office. Hayley Tait tells us: "It's good to have the long weekend – some time away from work to spend with the family. It was a bit chaotic before" and her co-worker Augustine Prewpeh agrees, saying: "This way works better."

Joseph Murengeshayi comments: "I prefer an integrated system," while Darren Wheeler says: "I prefer doing it this way. We want to keep the parcels here."

Reflecting on the briefing, Clive says: "Having unit rep meetings in every Division is a really good idea and Martin's 100 per cent right on that. I want our members to be able to get some benefits from all the changes going on and if we can make progress at local level, then hopefully we can all take good ideas from each other."

CWU DEATH BENEFIT

In accordance with the terms expressed in CWU Rule 4.1.11 Branches are advised that from the 1st October 2024 the CWU Death Benefit payment will be increased to £1,084.

Any enquiries regarding this Letter to Branches should be addressed to the Senior Deputy General Secretary's Department on telephone number 020 8971 7237, or email address sdgs@cwu.org



DELIVERING SAFELY - CHECK YOUR VAN

One of our senior CWU health and safety representatives Jamie McGovern highlights the crucial importance of vehicle safety...

'W' e're currently supporting a 12-week plan to improve on road traffic collisions (RTCs) across the UK on the run up to road safety week next month," says Jamie, who adds: "This is always a massively important issue, but even more so as we head into the colder months of the year.

Vehicle safety and general vehicle maintenance and the state of the vans our delivery members go out in is one of the most common complaints from members in offices everywhere. And vehicles which are unsafe, or not roadworthy are one of the most common causes of accidents and injuries affecting workers who drive for a living.



"With the proportion of delivery drivers increasing – many of whom will be new to Royal Mail vehicles and to the habit of driving for work, even those who are experienced private car drivers – it's important that we all keep good safety habits ourselves and help our new colleagues too," Jamie continues.

"It's vital that everyone is carrying out their specified daily and weekly checks before heading out on delivery. There is duty planner time allotted for this each day and always have your PDA (postal digital assistant) with you when you're doing your checks – so that you record them."

DAILY CHECKS:

- Mirrors
- Registration plate
- Brakes
- Horn
- Lights (you can ask a colleague to help with this)
- Tyres (pressure, condition, tread)

WEEKLY CHECKS:

- Oil
- Coolant
- Screenwash

"Once you take out that vehicle, then you are responsible for it – under the law – as if it were your own car," Jamie points out. "So, if your vehicle fails any of those checks – don't take it out and inform your line manager immediately.

"These checks are the single most important safety precaution we can take each day."

- If you have concerns about vehicle safety or maintenance and repair in your unit, contact your unit rep or your branch, who will put you in touch with your area health and safety representative.
- If your vehicle fails its daily safety check – don't take it out until it is rectified.



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

ISSUE EIGHT, OCTOBER 2024



RECONNECTING ACROSS THE UK

Your DGSP Martin Walsh on a new initiative, and gives a big thank you to our departing outdoor secretary...

'H' i everyone, as you'll see on our inside pages, the Postal Department has launched a nationwide series of unit rep briefings. In September, we went to Perth to meet hundreds of reps from all around Scotland and the week after, we held a similar event in central London, where we spoke with representatives from units across the capital.

Our North Wales/North West Division organised a meeting of all their local reps in the summer. It was a great idea and so we asked all of our Divisional leaderships to organise similar events. Unit reps from Anglia and Northern Ireland will get together later this month and details of events to be held at our other four Divisions will be sent out as soon as possible.

It's been great so far. As well as being able to speak face-to-face with workplace representatives and brief them on national developments, the takeover, USO reform, new initiatives and other matters, we've also heard plenty of feedback direct from the frontline. We've certainly had some informative conversations and lively debates. I'm looking forward to the rest of the visits and I'm hoping we'll be able to do this on an annual basis.

If the reps in your Division are meeting up soon, this is your chance to ask your unit rep to raise an issue. And if your rep has already attended their Divisional briefing, feed back your own views and support your rep in what the union is trying to achieve.

And most importantly, if you have any colleagues who have not yet joined the CWU, ask them to scan the QR code on this page and become a member.

USO REFORM AND TAKEOVER NEWS

Your general secretary Dave Ward and I sent out a special communication on this last month and it was the subject of motions to the TUC and the Labour Party Conference. These have been key issues on the agenda at the unit rep briefings so far, and as I've reported, there have been further meetings at senior level on both subjects. We'll be keeping you fully updated as and when any new developments occur.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO MARK BAULCH

Outdoor secretary Mark Baulch has announced that he'll be retiring from the union and I want to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks and those of the Postal Executive for his many years of service on behalf of postal workers. He's been in this post during some of the toughest times we've ever faced as a union and our sincere thanks to him and our very best warm wishes to him for the future.

The election for Mark's successor will be taking place during the coming period. Please look out for further information.



INSIDE: VISITING EVERY DIVISION



A QUICK REMINDER THAT THE CWU POLITICAL FUND BALLOT CLOSES ON 15TH OCTOBER. SO, IF YOU HAVEN'T VOTED YET, PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO DO SO. AND PLEASE VOTE YES.



NATIONWIDE TOUR UPDATE

RECONNECTING IN SCOTLAND & LONDON

Hundreds of CWU workplace reps gathered at Divisional briefings in Scotland and London last month at the start of a nationwide tour...

At the Perth and central London briefings, our DGSP Martin Walsh opened by thanking everyone present for being a CWU workplace rep, commenting that the current period is “the hardest time ever to be a workplace rep” and then launching into a presentation broadly divided into four parts, with breaks for comments and questions from the floor after each segment.

He began with a look back at the bitter 2022 dispute and the reasons why the *Business Transformation, Recovery & Growth* agreement was the only way to go at that time. “It was an unpopular agreement, but it was better than the alternative,” Martin said, explaining that, had the company gone into liquidation, “the Government would only have been obliged to step in and preserve USO mails – which only accounts for 14 per cent of our work.”

NETWORK IMPACTS

Scotland has been the area most impacted by the ending of airmails within Britain – as reported in detail in our July Edition – and not surprisingly, this subject was high on the agenda, particularly at Perth. Martin made the point that the union has made extra efforts to try to mitigate these effects and that he is confident of movement by the company on bringing back the earlier finishing times on Saturdays. A post-implementation review (PIR) has already taken place in Scotland and a further PIR is scheduled for early in the New Year, he explained.

There are also other parts of the UK which have been impacted, including the south west, some coastal areas and parts of the London area, Martin said, as he presented the national picture to the two briefings. He explained that, out of the total 1,286 UK delivery offices, 123 (54 of them in Scotland) have moved more than 60 minutes – up to a maximum of 90 minutes – while 436 offices have been impacted by less than 15 minutes.

Speaking at the London event, assistant secretary Davie Robertson said that, while the company had told the union why it was ending mainland mail flights, its decision to also move away from rail had come as a surprise. “It came out of left field,” he said, adding: “They built a rail terminal at the Midlands Hub – now the biggest operational site in the UK – and had planned to move eight trains per day to Scotland.”

NEW ENTRANTS – FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS

Royal Mail has employed some 17,000 postal workers on unagreed and worse terms and conditions in the period since December 2022, Martin reported, adding that the CWU is more determined than ever to improve these contracts and win a fair deal for new entrants.

“We’ve got to give younger workers hope for the future and we’ve got to change these contracts,” he insisted, to the unanimous approval of both audiences. “They’re not being trained enough, not being given sufficient hours and forced to work too many Sundays. And this is why we’re seeing high attrition rates – currently running at 17 per cent overall – with 25 per cent of new starters leaving the business within their first 90 days.”

The union has launched a reduced contributions rate for new Royal Mail workers on these post-December 2022 contracts and is urging them to join and be part of the fight for a better deal. Martin explained that the CWU wants a clearly defined and agreed pathway to parity with their pre-December 2022 colleagues and has put the issue at the top of its agenda with the current Board, as well as in conversations with the potential new owners.

“We’ve also made this one of our conditions for agreement with the business on the question of USO reform,” said Martin.

TAKEOVER & USO REFORM

“Under this new Labour Government, we have a stronger hand in talks over USO changes and the potential takeover,” our DGSP told reps, reporting that he had told the man leading the bid, Daniel Kretinsky that “there should be no two-tier workforce,” along with a series of other clarifications and commitments that the CWU is seeking.

With Royal Mail looking for the union’s agreement to its proposed USO reforms before submitting its case to industry watchdog Ofcom, and the potential new owner needing to clear the Government’s *National Security & Investment Act* process, the CWU is determined to secure some key guarantees for postal workers going forward. As regards the takeover, Martin said that the position is “no franchising, no outsourcing, no break-up, no compulsory redundancies and no two-tier workforce.”

Our DGSP showed reps some slides detailing the company’s USO reform proposals and explained that some of these changes are being trialled at two operational sites, with further trials provisionally scheduled for the early months of next year and a decision to be made later in 2025. He added that, as part of reaching agreement on these plans, the union wants movement on the network changes – particularly with regards to Saturday finishes – as well as movement on the forthcoming annual national negotiations and on new entrants’ contracts.

He also flagged up plans for a national policy forum to be held in the early part of 2025.

REP TRAINING – WORKPLACE LEADERS

“We want to meet every rep in the UK and we want to do this every year if we can,” said Martin, who talked about the need to train reps – in particular the large numbers of new reps who have not yet been on any courses.

“We’ll be rolling out training for every rep and we’re speaking with Kate Hudson, the CWU national education & training officer, about setting up a series of one-day training courses on Postal Agreements, IR, Conduct, Attendance, and Revisions,” he said.

“Together we can meet and overcome all these challenges. As leaders in your workplaces, you all have a vital role in this.”



“MEETING ALL THE REPS IN THE COUNTRY IS REALLY GOOD. I ALWAYS GIVE CWU FORMS TO NEW STARTERS AND TELL THEM WHAT THE UNION CAN DO FOR THEM. AT OUR OFFICE, WORKLOADS ARE UP, WEIGHTS ARE UP.”

Mark Amuyedo unit rep Brentford DO



“IT WAS GREAT TO MEET UP WITH THE OTHER REPS. BUT AT OUR PLACE THINGS AREN'T GETTING BETTER. IN FACT THEY'RE GETTING WORSE. THE UNION'S DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN BUT IT'S REALLY TOUGH RIGHT NOW.”

Brian Kempton night shift rep Edinburgh Mail Centre



“SCOTLAND HAS BEEN DISADVANTAGED. WE CAN'T HAVE DIVIDE AND CONQUER, OR WHAT'S TO STOP THEM DOING IT TO US AGAIN? IT'S NOT DELIVERY AGAINST DISTRIBUTION. SCOTLAND STANDS TOGETHER.”

Lynn Douglas unit rep Livingston DO



“THE BEST MEETINGS ARE FACE TO FACE, SO IT'S THE RIGHT IDEA OF MARTIN TO DO THIS. I ENJOYED SHARING VIEWS WITH THE OTHER REPS. OUR MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW THE UNION'S STANDING UP FOR THEM.”

Billy Larkin unit rep Beckenham DO

“MARTIN COMING UP SHOWS THE UNION IS FIGHTING OUR CORNER. WE GOT A RAW DEAL IN SCOTLAND AND WE'RE FIGHTING HARD TO IMPROVE THINGS UP HERE. I'M OPTIMISTIC THAT WE CAN MAKE SOME PROGRESS.”

Mark Lamont ADR Grampian and Shetland



Jimmy Kinnear speaking to a member in the office

PERTH DO

Your Voice visited Perth Delivery Office before the briefing and met with unit rep Jimmy Kinnear and area delivery rep Rab Lawson as they spoke with members preparing their duties.

The office serves the PH1, PH2 and PH14 areas and has 141 staff in post, with 43 rural duties and 51 town. “It’s quite a high proportion of rurals for unit this size,” says Jimmy, who adds that the company also has a distribution centre in the city.

“Staffing is a huge issue here,” he continues: “We’ve lost six or seven over the last three or four weeks and as well as going off to other companies, some of them are leaving to go to Distribution or to Parcelforce.”

“Network changes have impacted on us big time. We used to start at 6.52 and now it’s 8.22 and as for getting out on Delivery each morning, the average was around 8.30am, but now it’s after 10am and sometimes later.”

Jimmy tells us that, in his opinion, these changed start and finish times are a major cause of people deciding to leave, while new starters become frustrated over their own terms and conditions as well as what he describes as “not enough training” for them.

Sean McDyer, sorting at his frame, tells us that this will be his last week on Delivery. “I’ve been here six years, but a week on Monday I’m starting work at Parcelforce. I can do a Monday-to-Friday duty there, but here, I don’t finish until about 4pm on a Saturday with the changed times. So, I lose weekend time with my family.

His colleague Donnie Stewart says he will be sorry to see Sean leaving, but that he sympathises with his situation. Donnie goes on to criticise the way new starters are trained here: “When I’m off, some of my Delivery doesn’t get done because people aren’t trained to do rural duties like mine.”

Marlena Gonczarko tells us that she is “not sure if the training is as good now as when I started” and, on the changed shift times, she says: “It can be a struggle at the end of the day and I’ve got small children who have to be picked up.”

Speaking with Jimmy after the briefing event, he said: “It was good to hear from our national leadership and also nice to meet up with reps from all over Scotland - we’re up against many of the similar issues.

“We need progress on these finishing times in particular, but also on new starters and other matters.”