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7th November 2024

TO: ALL POSTAL BRANCHES

Dear Colleagues

Your Voice in the Workplace –November 2024

Please find attached the November 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/2024/11/08215-your-voice-RMG-issue-9-Nov-2up.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

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 NINE, NOVEMBER 2024



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS – YOU STRENGTHEN THE UNION

*Your DGSP Martin Walsh on recruitment,
national talks and Divisional visits...*

If you are one of the increasing number of new Royal Mail starters who has joined the union recently, I want to give you a warm CWU welcome and repeat to you the promise we've made that improving your pay, terms and conditions is a huge priority at the top of our agenda.

The reason your situation is worse than most of your colleagues is because of an unfair decision taken by Royal Mail Group management two years ago. This union opposed the company on that at the time and we continue to oppose that policy now. It's our policy that all new starters should be able to achieve full parity with their 2022-contract colleagues and we continue to use all means necessary to make this change.

So, thank you for joining. This union now has your back and you are now part of the collective fight for fairness, a fight we're determined to win.

CWU IS FOR EVERY ROYAL MAIL WORKER

If you haven't yet joined, you can use the QR code on this page to become a member and be part of the fight for fairness. And, if you are on a post-2022 contract, you'll pay a reduced contributions rate until a fair deal has been reached.

Some people say: "Young people nowadays don't even understand what a union is or what it's for" but we in the CWU disagree.

Everyone, whatever their age, understands money and wants decent pay for the work they do. Everyone wants basic fairness and everyone appreciates someone having their back if they need help.

That's what a union is for, and in Royal Mail, that's what the CWU is for – it's not complicated.

NATIONAL SITUATION

General secretary Dave Ward and myself have been in further meetings with the potential new owners of Royal Mail Group and we've set out clearly what the union's agenda will be going forward.

Our key points, among others, are: Job security, keeping RMG together, a fair deal for new entrants, and an agreed pay rise.

There is also a review into the Universal Service Obligation (USO) carried out by the Regulator Ofcom. This could well see some changes to how we operate and on this, the union is currently in talks with the business to try to reach an agreed position. In these talks, those same key points will be upmost.

VISITING THE DIVISIONS

My thanks to CWU reps in Anglia and Northern Ireland who we met last month (and which you can read about on the inside pages.) This brings the number of Divisions we've visited since beginning the nationwide programme to five. This month, we'll be meeting with Midlands reps and South East reps. Then we'll pause for the Peak-Pressure Period and the remaining three Divisions – North East, South Central and South Wales/South West – will hold their events early in the New Year.

AND FINALLY...

In the last Edition, there was a fond farewell to our long-serving assistant secretary outdoor Mark Baulch. This month, I'm pleased to welcome his elected successor Tony Bouch and wish him the very best in the role.



**INSIDE: ANGLIA & NORTHERN IRELAND
BACK: EDINBURGH MAIL CENTRE**



SCAN ME & JOIN THE CWU



RECONNECT NATIONAL TOUR



Martin Walsh at Comber DO

FOCUS ON ANGLIA & NORTHERN IRELAND

Last month saw the fourth and fifth legs of DGSP Martin Walsh's Reconnect UK tour, as he and the union's national officers met frontline workplace reps from two more Divisions...

While the Anglia reps' briefing had the same format as previously – a general opening by Martin, followed by presentations from each of the respective national officers interspersed with questions and comment from the floor – the Northern Ireland event, held in Belfast, was in two parts.

Here, Royal Mail regional operations director Michael Clark, who has overall operational responsibility in Northern Ireland, gave a presentation which began on the subject of workplace safety – with a particular emphasis on vehicles – before moving on to other issues including quality of service and afternoon delivery.

These subjects sparked several questions from the floor, with some reps pointing out that their own unit's safety committee was not meeting as regularly as they are supposed to, while others gave examples of feeling under pressure to take out vehicles thought to have defects.

Other contributions to this discussion included the need for work time learning and also for the pressures of unachievable workloads to be taken account of in terms of the stresses on staff. In response to these points, Michael advised that serious workplace safety concerns, if not resolved at unit level, should be escalated to him and to the CWU divisional rep for Northern Ireland Fra Martin. And on the issues raised around workloads, his response was that it was necessary to strike the right balance between this and operational efficiency.



Martin at Newtonards DO

After Michael had finished, Martin opened the CWU-specific part of the event. And from this point on, the agendas of the Northern Ireland and Anglia gatherings were essentially the same.

Our DGSP began with a look back at the 2022/23 dispute and its outcome, talked of the crucial importance of recruiting new starters into the union and stepping up the push to improve their contracts and updated the audience on the potential Royal Mail Group takeover, the forthcoming Ofcom Review and the likelihood of subsequent USO reform, and the CWU's agenda – or 'shopping list' – for what the union wants for members.

Other key themes, once again, were Network change and the forthcoming programme of IR training for reps.

Questions and comments from the floor at both meetings ranged over a variety of issues, many reps talking of the difficulties posed by the 'two-tier workforce' situation created by the company and the recruitment challenge, while others brought up duty patterns, workloads and the pressing need for training – especially given the growing numbers of new reps coming forward as older reps retire from the business.

The potential for further operational change was another subject on the minds of many, with the Delivery 2.0 trials mentioned, as well as feedback from Martin's briefing on the Ofcom Review and proposals for USO reform.

Our new assistant secretary outdoor Tony Bouch spoke in detail on specific Delivery matters, while assistant secretary Davie Robertson outlined where we are in Processing, Distribution and other relevant functions and acting assistant secretary Bobby Weatherall spoke about attendance and sick pay issues among other group-wide matters.

REPS' FEEDBACK & UNIT VISITS

Your Voice spoke with some of the reps afterwards, asking them for their feedback on the events and their thoughts on the information received and we also visited Cambridge MPU in Anglia Division. Over in Northern Ireland, before the briefing began, Martin Walsh made the trip out of the city to the Newtonards and Comber offices and we were invited to join Tony Bouch on his visit to East Belfast DO.

George Heron has been the Newtonards CWU rep for the past three years and he explained to us that his role also covers the Comber office – which used to be on the same premises – and Donaghadee SPDO, which is still in the Newtonards building.



George Heron



"THE INFO ON THE BUYOUT AND THE USO WAS GOOD TO HEAR ABOUT. THE CUT IN NEW ENTRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS WAS A GOOD STEP – IT'S A TOUGH JOB RECRUITING THEM. AT MY PLACE, THEY'RE PUTTING THEM ON AFTERNOON DPRS."

Andy Black, Stevenage

"It was great to have Martin come and visit us," he told YV, adding: "Our members haven't seen one of our leaders before, so it was a great opportunity for them to meet him, hear at first-hand exactly what's going on and to ask him their questions.

"These briefings all around the different Divisions are a really good idea," the rep continued. "It's something that should happen more often – and it shows to us, as reps, that what we do is appreciated."

George told YV that there are 89 staff in post at the two units and that they serve the BT 21, 22 and 23 post code areas. "I'd call it rural overall. We've only got two HCTs and the rest are all vans," he says, which takes him onto the subject of vehicle repair, which he describes as "a losing battle – at the moment we've got about 30 hire vans. More white vans than reds, which is not good."

On the subject of new starters and recruiting them into the union, George says: "It's good that this was a big topic at the briefing. It's getting towards 50/50 now and I don't want a kind of 'them and us' attitude to come about, so we've got to get them a better deal and what we need is more literature about the CWU and what we've done for workers over the years. Got to get that message across in my opinion.

"Also training for reps is very important, especially for the new guys stepping up. I know when I had my training I felt much more confident afterwards."

One of the new reps hoping to get onto a training course as soon as possible is Felixstowe's Lauren Potter. She stepped up to volunteer for the role when the previous rep left "about three months ago."

Speaking with Lauren after the Anglia briefing, she told us: "Nobody else wanted to do it, so I put my name forward and the members backed me for the role. I am enjoying it, but it can be difficult.



Lauren Potter

"Luckily my area rep Steve Belham is massively helpful whenever I need advice and we also have a Chat Group of the other unit reps in the area – so there's plenty of support and back up. I'm happy to go into the manager and defend any of our members – but it'll be good when I've got some proper training so I know more of the details, the rights, agreements etc when I'm in there," she continues.

"One of the things we've got going on is a temporary agreement on start times while there's been some roadworks around here. The manager now wants to make this change permanent, but we only agreed to it temporarily so we're saying no to that."

On the subject of new starters, Lauren says: "I always speak to them as soon as I can and out of the three most recent ones I've got two of them recruited and still trying with the other guy. I'm persistent, but I try to do it cheerfully if that makes sense. We've got another new one coming next week, so I'll speak to him then.

"I thought the briefing with all the other reps gave out a lot of information – it was a lot to take in to be fair – but yes it's good to have these get-togethers and good to hear what's going on elsewhere."



Gary Liston speaking with Louis Hobbs

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge MPU is one of the largest units in Anglia Division, with 370 Delivery staff in post, 230 Delivery walks and serving CB1-5, CB9 and CB23-25. And the first point unit rep Gary Liston makes when we meet up with him is that "my biggest issue here is the new entrants' unfair contracts."

ADR Paul Sparks agrees, saying that he is glad that the union at all levels has got this issue at the top of its negotiating agenda and that the discussion of this at the Anglia reps' briefing had been important. "It was a good briefing and Martin's 100 per cent right to visit all around the UK, because that's the way to keep closely in touch with what's going on everywhere."

Walking around the floor, we speak with several new-contract members as well as some longer-serving colleagues and Ami Beschizza (pictured on the front page) gives us her views as she sorts her parcels. "I've been here since August and I like the job, but we need to have the chance to catch up with the others. My wages are not much above Living Wage right now and people doing the same job as me are on better pay."

Alex Wilson came to Royal Mail from the insurance sector "because I thought it would be less stressful" and enjoys this job "apart from when it's raining." He agrees with Ami that "we should have a way towards getting equal with the older contracts." And Blessing Maponga, who has worked here for six months, says that he used to be a HGV driver before he came to live in the UK. "I like working here, but I'd like it to be earlier if possible," he says.

David Allen has been with the company since 2005 and transferred to Cambridge from Ilford, Essex, a couple of years ago. "The managers are nicer here. I work a rural about three or four miles outside the city," he says. With 40 years' service, Paul Corbett is the longest-serving member we meet and he talks of how the job has changed over this time.

"Some things have got better. There are more women in this job now and it's more friendly," he recalls. "But the walks used to be doable, we used to have more time to learn the job properly. They need to treat postmen and postwomen like adults. And believe us when we say walks are unachievable."

BELFAST EAST

Arriving at the Belfast East Delivery Office with outdoor secretary Tony Bouch and area delivery rep Gabe McCurry a little after 7am, there is a large lorry in the yard and a conversation starts with the office manager about last arrivals and starting times here.

When told that delivery workers all start at 7.30, Tony asks if staggered starts have been considered and the manager explains that his strategy is to have everything in the office before work begins, which has subsequently been picked up by Tony to review with the business nationally. A large volume of parcels is evident here as well and the subject of dedicated parcel routes (DPRs) is also discussed, as is the Delivery 2.0 system – this being the D2.0 trial unit selected from this Division.

YV featured the D2.0 trial in our June Edition – although not at this unit, where there is a local variation. Each of the four post code areas operate separately, something described by the office manager as "four circles."

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"THE BRIEFING WAS REALLY GOOD FOR ALL OUR UNIT REPS. I THINK WE'RE MOVING FORWARD NOW WITH OUR NEW LEADERSHIP. MARTIN AND TONY, STRONG ON DETAIL AND THEY TELL IT LIKE IT IS - EVEN IF IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS."

Mark Davis, Southend

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Unit rep Jonny Morphew tells us: "We started this back in the early Spring and it's created more space in the office – although there are still space constraints."

We're told that the office has 95 staff in post and serves BT4, BT5, BT6 and BT16. Jonny says that he has been the unit rep here for four years and also serves as a workplace coach, along with Rodney Boyd and Colin Campbell, who tells us: "I get two weeks with the new starters."

Discussing the retention of new starters, Jonny makes the point that "what they think this job's going to be and what it really is are very different. They think they'll just come in, pick up a bag of mail ready to go and then head out on delivery. People don't realise about the indoor side of it before they start here. And often they find that complicated."

Busy sorting, Jordan Bell tells us that she has been here just over a year and agrees that "it takes some time to pick it up" but adds that, under the new system "it's more well organised in here." Kyle Ginn, here for eight months, comments that he much prefers the outdoor part of the job, saying: "I like being out and about the best, speaking with the customers etc," while Mark Gillespie, with 10 years' service, says that workloads are getting larger and that "we need more staff."



Tony Bouch, Rodney Boyd, Jonny Morphew

Speaking afterwards, Jonny Morphew said: "We had over 600 hours removed during the dispute and have only had 150 hours reinvested back in. The unit desperately requires additional investment to provide members with achievable workloads."

And Tony said: "It was really good to visit this office, walk the office floor and speak with members on the wide variety of day-to-day issues. I'll be working with Jonny and the Division to deal with some of these specific issues."

EDINBURGH MAIL CENTRE – NETWORK CHANGE IMPACTS

Processing reps and members affected by shift and workload changes...

Network changes, resulting from the ending of mail flights within mainland UK, have impacted on start and finish times for members to a varying extent all over the country, but most of all in Scotland.

As reported in Your Voice back in July, when we visited the Glasgow area and again in last month's Edition, when DGSP Martin Walsh and other officers met all Scottish unit reps in Perth, the CWU leadership has worked hard to try to mitigate these impacts, particularly in Scotland, as well as on a national basis.

CWU assistant secretary Davie Robertson invited YV to join him on a recent visit to Edinburgh Mail Centre, where we met with area processing rep Andy Stewart and night shift rep Brian Kempton. Arriving just after 5am, with the night shift team soon to be relieved by their early-morning colleagues, we start in the CWU office with both Andy and Brian updating Davie on the current situation.

Since the ending of the flights, there has been a surge in arrivals in this latter, post-5am part of the night shift – from around 150 yorks up to as many as 500. – with the workload increasing even more in the last hour. Andy says: "We're supposed to get 100 yorks in the last hour of the night shift, but we've been getting double that and more than 300 on some occasions."

As well as making the shifts more stressful for members here, this clearly has a knock-on effect on Delivery as well. And the union reps here have been in talks with the management to try to increase resourcing where it is most needed, while also aiming to even out this workload.

"They're saying they've got 25 seasonals due to start next week and we're still talking with management about the 32 full-time duties that are currently vacant," he says, adding that there are 145 currently on nights, with an additional 20 casuals, 120 on lates and 65 working the early duty.

Night shift start and finish times have altered, the APR continues, saying that they now work on until either 7.15am or 8am, having previously completed their duty at 6.30am before the flights were stopped.



Davie Robertson and Andy Stewart speaking with members

Davie and Andy walk the busy floor, answering members' questions and also speaking with duty managers about the operational situation, while out on the loading dock, Processing staff – some of them day shift workers in early on overtime – load and unload vehicles.

Davie says: "Our reps are working as hard as they can to deal with this significant change and to try to smooth out the difficulties it's caused throughout the network. And our members are working flat out to keep the mail moving through.

"It's important that we regularly visit critically important hubs like these, especially when we see exactly what our members on the frontline are up against on a daily or nightly basis. The post-implementation review (PIR) – the enhanced PIR that's been agreed for Scotland – is of crucial importance in working through these challenges.

"Discussions at national and divisional level continue with Royal Mail to address current network issues and maximise opportunities to advance traffic into Scotland and these remain a priority. The CWU does not accept that the network is currently meeting the needs of the service and RM should work with us to improve the situation."

SCAN ME! JOIN THE UNION

