

No. 013/25

27th January 2025

**Royal Mail / CWU Joint Communication Covering the Review of the 30-Minutes Flexibility Agreement: Joint Review Output
(Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement - Appendix 1)**

Dear Colleagues,

Branches and Representatives will recall LTB 026/24, issued on 18th January 2024, which outlined the background to the Joint Communication covering the commitments set out in the Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement Appendix 1, Section 2: 30-Minutes Flexibility Agreement.

To recap, the commitments outlined in the BRT&G Agreement are set out below:

In parallel with the seasonal variation approach the Joint Agreement between Royal Mail and the CWU committed to Jointly Review the approach to the use of 30 Minutes Flexibility, previously agreed in the 2007 Pay & Modernisation Agreement and in line with the 2013 Joint Statement covering Fairness, Dignity & Respect in Delivery. This joint review will be to understand how this approach can address workload changes at a route level on a daily basis and develop a revised agreement which will support the efficient delivery of the USO.

The review will gather information relating to how the existing policy is being applied and what arrangements are in place in units, particularly where this approach has been formalised and adopted. The review will also consider and determine how SI/SO data can be used with applying this flexible arrangement.

In line with the Joint Communication, the agreed and limited review process was enacted in January, which was supported by Divisional Reps and Royal Mail RODs. This required local CWU Reps and COMs to complete a short electronic survey across 48 units, 4 per ROD area, which were jointly selected. The list of Delivery units involved per ROD area is set out below in the attached Annex.

Whilst the aim was for all completed electronic surveys to be returned by February and for the review to be concluded by March, this process took far longer than planned due to delays in receipt of the replies. Equally, there were further delays in terms of aligning diaries to jointly review the feedback and then conclude an agreed position, as well as a set of words in terms of the final Joint Review itself.

In terms of the units selected, this was done based on previous responses linked to the Quality of Service & Resourcing Checklist In Line With The RMG/CWU Joint Statement - June 2023: Section 2.5 Improving Quality Of Service & USO Compliance, whereby units confirmed whether they did or did not use the 30-Minutes Flex. It is more than noteworthy to point out that the selected 48 sites were chosen on a 50/50 basis, i.e. 24 sites were selected because in the June 2023 QoS & Resourcing Checklist they said they used the 30-Minutes Flex and 24 said they did not. During the survey process, it was highlighted that only 10 units confirmed that they did use the arrangement, out of the 47 units which did submit feedback.

However, the required Joint Review has now been concluded in terms of the 30-Minutes Flexibility Agreement and in line with the outlined commitments. Set out below are the key outputs of this Review:

Difficulties with the Existing Agreement

From a Royal Mail operational perspective, taking into account the results of the Survey, the agreement is problematic for a number of reasons:

- *The decision to flex up on a 'swings and roundabouts' basis is optional on the staff. Many choose either not to flex up at all or to receive overtime payment instead, if they do. This can lead to cut offs, which undermine USO achievement or require overtime which might otherwise be offset by underworked time elsewhere in the week, thereby impairing productivity;*
- *Because there is no systemised recording of the scheme centrally, there is no visibility centrally of which sites are operating the policy or not;*
- *The approach relies on local record keeping;*
- *The parameters are not clear enough, leading to ambiguity over how to enact it and difficulties ensuring consistent application of the policy. For example, does the requirement to balance time either way over the next 5 working days relate to the next 5 business working days or the next 5 working days of that individual?*

From a CWU perspective, there are additional considerations:

- *The 30-Minutes Flex is designed to support the USO, but its application does not distinguish between USO products and other product services;*
- *Current USO and achievability issues for deliveries mean that choosing when to use 30-Minutes Flex arrangements is difficult and may be used to back fill structural and foreseeable resources shortfalls;*
- *The ability to repay time worked at a preferable / mutually suitable time for the OPG is difficult.*

Proposed Adaptation to the Existing Agreement

Despite the limitations of the existing scheme, it is acknowledged that the current operational setting does not provide the optimum platform from which to adapt the scheme. There are several key initiatives which have recently landed, or are in train, which Royal Mail Operations wish to bed in further before adaptations to the existing 30-Minutes Flex scheme are considered:

- *Seasonal Variation remains in its infancy, nine months after first deploying;*
- *Network Window has just enacted a huge change to delivery start and finish times;*
- *The business is developing capabilities to link SISO OT data to PSP payroll;*
- *Wider USO reform and any future changes to the operational design.*

This Joint Report therefore proposes that the business bed in the above changes before considering potential amendments to the existing agreement. The business and CWU will continue to consider the value of refining the existing scheme.

Propose how SISO data can be used to apply this flexible arrangement

Any considerations in this regard would again need to be considered and take full account of possible future changes to the operational design from any USO reform.

As Branches will note, the Joint Review has concluded that there are wider and ongoing current operational areas and initiatives that need to be addressed in advance of any possible changes to the current 30-Minutes Flex Agreement. Therefore, whilst the terms of the BRT&G Agreement Appendix 1, Section 2 have been met, the Joint Review itself has not brought forward any revised proposed arrangement in this regard for the reasons outlined.

Any enquiries to the content of this LTB should be directed to the Outdoor Department, email address: Pharacz@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Bouch
Assistant Secretary

Annex

<i>ROD Area</i>	<i>Unit Selected</i>	<i>ROD Area</i>	<i>Unit Selected</i>
WALES	Bridgend (CF) Pontypool Haverfordwest Mid Rhondda Ganol	SOUTH CENTRAL	The Queen Elizabeth Reading Slough Sandown
SCOTLAND	Milngavie Johnstone Erskine Lockerbie	NORTH WEST	Kendal Southport Huyton Liverpool North
LONDON	Catford Walton on Thames Upper Edmonton Hanwell	NORTH EAST	Northallerton York Central Wetherby Wombwell
MIDLANDS	Carlton Worcester Evesham Quinton	SOUTH MIDLANDS	Chatteris Brackley Nuneaton Leamington
N. IRELAND	Belfast South Armagh Ballymoney Newtownards	SOUTH EAST	East Grinstead Canterbury St Leonards Heathfield
SOUTH WEST	Exmouth DO Truro DO Warminster DO Westbury DO	ANGLIA	Colchester DO Ipswich DO Benfleet DO Biggleswade DO