

No. 239/25

31st October 2025

USO Pilot Office - Jointly Agreed Peak Guidance

Dear Colleagues,

Further to LTB 216/25 outlining the CWU views regarding the ODM model and the impasse within the National Talks, which had subsequently confirmed that Royal Mail / EP Group have taken a step back and have now fully confirmed there will be no further pilot units or roll out of the USO until the new year and that any deployment will only take place once an overall national agreement has been reached with the CWU.

Within the update given, we also gave a commitment confirming that our immediate focus would be to support all the current pilot units and ensuring that the USO Pilot Offices (35 Units) are fully resourced and achieving all quality-of-service targets via a different operational method.

By way of a recap, the business have previously stated to the CWU, that they would be issuing managerial guidance to the 35 USO Pilot Offices for Peak and making it clear this was a non-negotiable issue for the CWU Nationally and would not involve the CWU Divisional, Area and Local Reps. The CWU made it clear that it was unacceptable, especially given the fact that it has been the CWU that have written to the business on numerous occasions over recent months seeking to resolve issues faced by the pilot offices during the peak period.

Following a week of challenging discussions and an intervention at the highest levels between RM and CWU, we have now agreed a Joint Guidance document, which has since been approved by the Postal Executive. It ensures the CWU is involved across all levels to review the plans within the 35 USO Pilot Offices, therefore, each office will have the ability to agree the following:

- Review and complete the units Manpower Plan;
- Select a revised USO model in line with the options, which includes the CWU Heavy & Light option, with 4 walks / routes being performed by 4 OPGs and ensuring that the 4 into 3 ODM model has the option to add a 4th OPG into the current plan as additional support;
- Ensure the units' resourcing plan has been fully planned and all options considered;
- Put in place a Governance process including Divisional Reps and Area Reps to support reaching an agreed plan and escalation process, if needed.

We want to thank our members in the pilot units for the support and understanding in recent months and for their belief that this revised approach will be welcomed by all CWU Reps and members in the pilot offices and that it will allow them to use that guidance to address the issues being faced within their offices.

Both RM and CWU have today jointly cascaded the agreed peak guidance document to the respective senior operational managers and CWU Divisional Reps. Each office will be tasked with completing their revised operational plan by no later than Friday, 14th November.

Therefore, we hope the fact that we now secured a jointly agreed USO Pilot Office Guidance document will be welcomed in those offices and help the further talks to concentrate on securing the wider agreement on USO and Section 5 subjects, which will receive further updates in due course.

Any enquiries to the content of this LTB should be directed to the relevant department: DGS(P) Department on Hford@cwu.org, Outdoor Department on Pharacz@cwu.org or Indoor Department on Jrodrigues@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Walsh
DGS(P)

Tony Bouch
Assistant Secretary

Davie Robertson
Assistant Secretary



USO Reform Peak Joint Guidance for Pilot Sites

Introduction

Both RM & CWU, through ongoing discussions, recognise the need to ensure pilot offices can operate effectively during the forthcoming weeks and for the duration of Peak/Christmas period. Each office will review their current USO Pilot operation in line with the below Guiding Principles for the duration of Peak.

Guiding Principles

- **Scale Up Resources:** Ensure sufficient staffing to meet increased delivery volumes during the peak period
- **Maintain Efficiency Measures:** Continue using the call rate consolidation, delivery algorithm, and alternating weekday delivery for deferrable items
- **Promote Transparency:** Share unit-level practices and experiences to enable collective learning
- **Track Performance:** Measure outcomes to inform planning for future peak periods.
- **Adapt USO Core/Combined Routes:** Review the current Core/Combined model alongside all options below to accommodate additional workload across all walks/routes.
- **Enable Ad-Hoc Parcel Delivery:** Consider scanning and confirming parcel deliveries via PDA outside of the core route manifest where appropriate

Preparatory Work

Both local parties jointly review the units Manpower Plan / Equipment / and available resource:

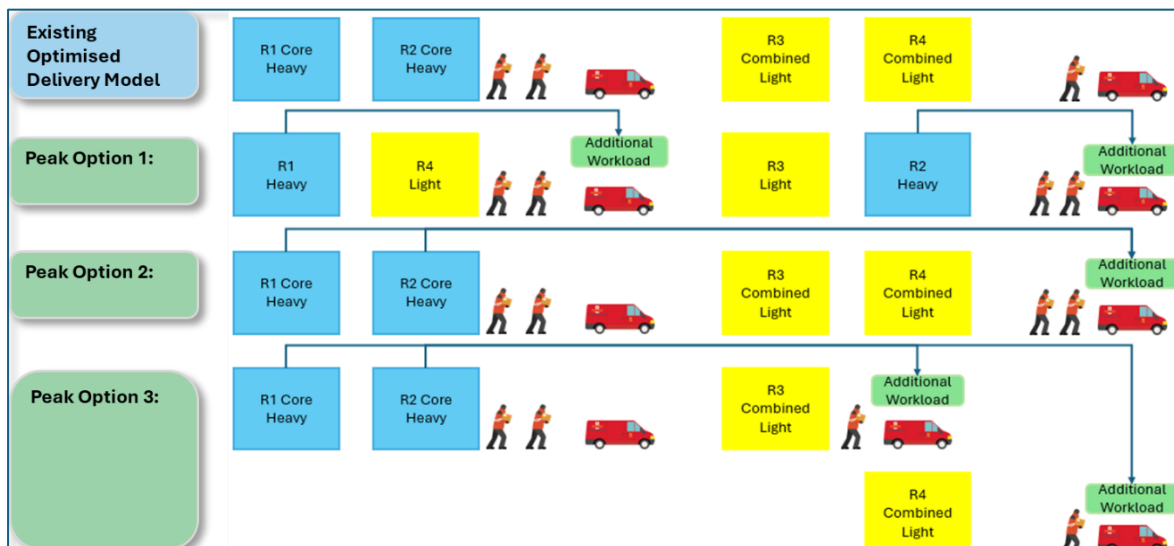
1. **Clarify TM1 / Agreed Number of Deliveries / Duties** (include DPRs/LATs)
2. **Clarify Staff in Post** – PT and FT (scope of PT to increase hours up to FT)
3. **Update Unit skills matrix** (identify gaps and measures to address this, but ensure that support for new starters is not compromised)
4. **Update Saturday firm's retention** to potentially free up additional resource to support the Saturday operation
5. **Clarify A/L plan and Reserves levels** (identify the number of Reserves available in the unit during peak, but account for sick leave)
6. **Clarify forthcoming Attrition** known
7. **Clarify Other Absence**
8. **Confirm Agency /Casuals** arrangements
9. **Ascertain Overtime Volunteers**, and how they could be used (see options table below)
10. **Identify pre-planned overtime arrangements and agreed S/A commitments** to support Day Off cover
11. **Parcel Support Duties** – 7am-10am

12. **Confirm Vehicles/PDAs availability** to cover the AM/PM and Evening (Hire Van needs/arrangements)
13. **Review the above against Traffic Forecast** (account for any current and known inaccuracies and shortfalls of forecasted traffic)

Resourcing Options for Peak

Three high-level resourcing models are available for pilot sites, each based on introducing a temporary fourth duty to cover a fourth route, such as an alternate Core/Heavy and Combined/Light operation (for the purposes of Peak and this document Heavy refers to Core and Light refers to Combined).

These models will only be used to support the Peak Operation up to 3rd January 2026 for the 35 USO Reform Pilot sites, as per the National Peak arrangements. National Talks are ongoing between Royal Mail regarding USO Reform and an overall agreement. These peak solutions will not prejudice those ongoing discussions and are intended as guidance for the pilot sites to operate effectively during the peak period.



Peak Option 1:

- A **4th OPG** is added to the group
- **Shared route pairs** are reconfigured to match a Core/**Heavy route** with a Combined/**Light route**, rather than their usual partners
- **Do not alter the algorithm** to redefine current routes—this would disrupt operations and exceed current capacity
- **Pairing guidance:**
 - In shared van setups, one prepped route is delivered before the second
 - Maintain the original delivery order:

- Match the **first route from the Core/Heavy pair** with the **second route from the Combined/Light pair**
- Match the **first route from the Combined/Light pair** with the **second route from the Core/Heavy pair**
- This preserves **customer delivery expectations**, improving accuracy of **Estimated Delivery Windows**
- Singleton Walks i.e. Firms, Rurals and HCTs could move to 50/50 heavy and light model on their own routes and perform (1st half/2nd half) in alternate day H&L model and then be support duties, taking work from Core and Combined routes
- See **Appendix 1** for visual illustration

Peak Option 2:

- An **additional OPG** is added
- Only **one van** is available for the Combined/Light area, requiring **van sharing**
- **Core/Heavy routes** operate as shared vans, with excess peak workload transferred to Light Drivers as in Option 1
- **Core/Heavy duties** follow the year-round **Park and Loop** model
- **Combined/Light route operations** are constrained by van sharing. Options include:
 - **Park and Loop** for 1c items and parcels
 - **Driver** handles larger parcels (including Format 2), delivers via van, and may perform some foot loops
 - **Walker** handles letters and smaller parcels, performing foot loops only
 - **Foot loops** should be fairly split between Driver and Walker
 - **Best practice is not to operate with both OPGs driving together in the van for the majority of the duty** as this is inefficient

Peak Option 3

- A **4th OPG** is added to the existing group of four
- One of the **Light Drivers** starts later. —This can include utilisation of reserves, overtime and casuals
- The **Second Light route** may be covered via **Overtime (OT)** or **Schedule Attendance (SA)**
- **Core routes** operate as **shared vans**. Any **excess peak workload** beyond what can be completed within duty time, or via extended delivery overtime, is transferred to Light Drivers within their capacity
- **Core duties** follow the traditional **Park and Loop** model, consistent with historic and pilot Core routes

- **Combined routes** operate as they do year-round, with:
 - Lower call rates than Core
 - Primarily driving between stops
 - Occasional **micro foot loops** where parcels or 1c items (and coincident non-priority letters) are clustered

Tailoring the High-Level Resourcing Model to your office

The following considerations are included to enable sites to maximise the chance of success and tailor the high-level model to their office: -

Ref	Area	Consideration
1	Mail Centre	OPL to liaise with Mail Centre to ensure the mail centre is going to provide the SLA profile of work
2	Overall	On the Saturday before Peak starts, ensure there is sufficient staff available to prep D2D and all mail that will not be delivered that day. It is important to get 'a day in front' and this can be a combination of SA/OT/Non-Drivers. (the current Day A / Day B categorisation will not be changed, it is the pairings that will change to avoid any DtS Algorithm changes)
3	Overall	Ascertain which people in the office are willing to complete their walk every day
4	Indoor	Invest in the indoor to get people out to time - it is easier to manage the indoor plan and ensure all deliveries are out before the scheduled departure time, than it is to fail on the outdoor and recover via extended delivery.
5	Vacancies	If units have a resourcing shortfall, identify a corresponding number of rotations that will work their days off, which in turn would free up day off covers to move onto any vacant walks/duties
6	Day Off Covers	Potential S/A or O/T duties for Day Off Cover – 5am/6am start (or earlier) greater Indoor Hours used and smaller i.e. 2hrs Outdoor Delivery Support duties (helps with fatigue and could be nearest walk to the office and no vehicle needed)
7	DPR Support	Consider additional temporary DPR routes in the unit to support Parcel workload across deliveries, utilising Reserves / Agency/Casuals
8	DPR Support	Potential for DPR duties move to a 4-day week, with longer days to help support the core walks, by doing some delivery workload and DPRs (The extra days of coverage supported by Reserves / Agency/Casuals)
9	New starters / Unfamiliar staff	Make use of the DPR route planning RON App in instances where an individual has a very low familiarity for a route
10	Casuals	Align Casuals to best align to the workload
11	New Contract Workers	Align New Contracts to the office duty pattern, where possible
12	Use Delivery Colleagues from other sites	Use of day off overtime from staff from other offices

Ref	Area	Consideration
13	Promote Afternoon / Evening Parcel duties	Incentivise the afternoon / evening delivery of parcels/LAT i.e. 1. Voluntarily move to afternoon / evening routes for peak on Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday attendances up to w/c 22/12/2025 2. With w/c 22/12/2025, Monday to Thursday attendance but with day off in w/c 22/12/2025 being Sat 27th December
14	Saturday Indoor SA	Saturday indoor S/A's only options to ensure all units have D2D prepped and all other indoor operations clear ready to start the following week
15	Managing On the day absence	Where there is 'On the Day Absence', and there is no other contingency, consider the following: 1. Available OPG does Heavy route only. Light is performed by O/T, DPR/LAT, or other means 2. Both walks are reverted to Light and the OPG covers both, with a plan to recover the 'Heavy' on both walks the following day

Prohibited Peak arrangements

The following arrangements **should not** be applied in units: -

Ref	Area	Consideration
1	Switching off DTS	Do not turn off DTS to attempt to equalise call rates, as this will increase calls overall
2	Tail of Mail	When all mails on a Core/Heavy route cannot be cleared due to lack of resource, Heavy (core) routes that are not delivered are alternated to prevent 'tail of mail' failures. See point 15 above for guidance

Governance

- After applying a Peak USO model and factoring in the considerations, the unit will need to create a plan, with input from CWU Area Delivery Rep/OPL as necessary, and display the plan with frontline staff
- Ensure that any consideration around the redeployment of individuals is addressed sensitively and based on voluntary arrangements
- Regions should continue to make use of existing Joint Governance between OPLs and Area Reps & RODs and Divisional Reps to discuss the arrangements and to prepare for peak
- If any unit is unable to reach an agreed plan, then this should be escalated to the National Delivery JWG to support resolution once the Governance process has been exhausted. However, both Royal Mail and CWU Nationally will encourage both parties to resolve any issues themselves before escalation is needed
- To support all the above, there will be a National joint launch call with all the Pilot units before deployment which will be underpinned at Local level with enhanced communications
- The USO Reform project team will set up a review call with the RM Stakeholders to understand the offices' arrangements to support the process

- All 35 Pilot Offices will have agreed Peak plan in line with the above signed off by the RPMs/RODs and Divisional Reps, to be submitted to the National Delivery JWG to understand the offices' arrangements by 14th November

Appendix 1 – illustration of walk pairings for Option 1 across two week cycle

Heavy and Light Model		Indoor Plan	Week 1		Week 2		
Walk 1	OPG 1	Prep 1 & 3	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Pair 1
Walk 3	OPG 2	IPS	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	
Walk 2	OPG 3	Prep 2 & 4	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Pair 2
Walk 4	OPG 4	IPS	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	Mon/Wed/Fri	Tues/Thurs	
Singleton	HCT/Firm/Rural	IPS & Prep	50/50 - H&L/Support		50/50 - H&L/Support		
Heavy = Red							
Light = Green							

The current Day A / Day B categorisation will not be changed, it is the pairings that will change to avoid any DtS Algorithm changes

Indoor Planning in each of the above scenario each OPG pairing can work with 1 x OPG performing Prep and 1 x OPG performing the IPS, with the Singleton duty doing both IPS and Prep.



Tony Bouch
Outdoor Assistant Secretary
CWU



Kate Flintoft
Director of Deployment
Royal Mail