

No. 269/26

8th October 2026

Dear Colleagues,

IMPORTANT UPDATE ON DM26

The purpose of this LTB is to update Branches on DM26 and explain the position the CWU has now taken on several crucial issues relating to both its ongoing deployment and the future direction of the company. These are set out below:

1. The Current State of Play of DM26

An overview of where DM26 is working relatively well, alongside those areas where significant problems remain.

2. Royal Mail's Failure to Fix Problem Offices

We explain why the CWU cannot support further deployment until agreed action is taken to resolve the problems currently affecting a significant number of units.

3. Why the CWU believes a new operating model will be required

While we continue to support the full deployment of DM26 as a necessary change, once we fix the units not working, we also set out the reality that DM26 alone will not solve the underlying challenges facing the company, its customers, or our members.

4. Why we need to see DM26 as a bridge to a very different future

It is now essential that we begin planning for a different future, linked to the CWU motion passed at this year's Labour Party Conference.

The Current State of Play

Despite the challenges, there have been a number of successes under DM26:

- 237 delivery units are achieving 100% delivery point coverage.
- A further 225 delivery units are achieving 99% delivery point coverage.
- 408 delivery units are either completely clear of workload or holding fewer than 1,000 items.
- 352 delivery units will receive an incentive bonus payment.

These achievements demonstrate that where DM26 has been deployed correctly, supported by adequate resources and proper planning, it can deliver positive outcomes.

However, there is an equally important reality. A significant number of units have not deployed successfully, are failing to operate as intended and, crucially, are not being fixed quickly enough in line with the agreement.

Royal Mail's Failure to Fix Problem Offices

The CWU is frustrated by the slow pace of Royal Mail's response to those delivery units that are not working effectively under DM26.

To date, fewer than 158 delivery units have completed their formal review process, and only 13 reviews have been fully signed off, with those units formally returned to business-as-usual operations.

This falls far short of what was agreed and is not consistent with the commitments contained within the DM26 agreement.

Instead, Royal Mail appears focused on deploying the remaining units despite growing concerns that many still do not have robust and sustainable resourcing plans in place. Put simply, if a boat is already taking on water, adding more passengers is unlikely to solve the problem. Yet that appears to be the approach currently being adopted.

CWU Position

The CWU has now formally written to Royal Mail making it clear that we will not support any further DM26 deployments until there is a credible and agreed plan to address the issues affecting units that are currently failing.

Data available to the union suggests that approximately 170 delivery units are continuing to deteriorate and are failing against both workload performance and delivery point coverage measures.

There are also a considerable number of additional units failing against one of those key measures and requiring support.

As a result, we intend to hold a national briefing with representatives to explain our position in detail and gather feedback on the practical measures needed to restore struggling units to stability.

What are we asking our Reps to do?

We are asking all Divisional Representatives and Branches not to agree to any further deployment of DM26 until Royal Mail has agreed and prioritised a process to fix those units that are not working.

We want every office that is failing workload measures or not achieving quality of service standards to register a formal unilateral disagreement, clearly setting out:

- The problems being experienced.
- The impact on performance and quality.
- Potential solutions to address the issues.

These should be copied to the Divisional Representative. We ask all reps to make this an immediate priority.

It is also essential that we stop the micromanagement of the delivery operation by the centralised Assurance Board. The agreement recognised that Customer Operations Managers (COMs), local representatives and employees are best placed to understand what will work within their units and how local problems can be resolved.

Now is the time to empower those who work in these units every day to implement practical solutions, rather than seeing those solutions routinely vetoed by the Assurance Board.

Royal Mail will never restore quality of service by standardising attendances and practices across 1,280 vastly different delivery operations.

Why the CWU believes a new operating model will be required

There is growing evidence that DM26 is having a negative impact on employee retention and wellbeing.

Before DM26, delivery operations were losing around 330 employees per week from a workforce of approximately 83,000 employees. Since deployment began, that figure has increased to around 400 employees per week.

Most of these departures continue to be new entrants working part-time hours. However, there has also been a noticeable increase in employees leaving from legacy contracts.

At the same time, sickness absence levels have increased, placing further pressure on the operation.

The reality of the delivery job

The delivery role has become significantly harder and less attractive than it once was.

Several factors are contributing to this reality, including:

- Pay levels relative to the wider labour market.
- Two-tier terms and conditions.
- Increasingly demanding spans and workloads.

These issues must be addressed through future discussions and negotiations.

Ironically, many of the challenges currently affecting units are not driven by the letter volumes covered by the USO. Instead, they are being driven by the continued growth of:

- Parcel traffic.
- Tracked products.
- Attendance services.
- Transaction calls and doorstep activity.

These activities place substantial additional demands on delivery employees and are not adequately reflected within the current USO framework.

Many members tell us they feel physically exhausted and are walking significantly greater distances under the new arrangements. Whilst most appreciate receiving additional time off work including fewer Saturdays at work, the reality is that many delivery employees on their days at work are now regularly walking between 25,000 and 30,000 steps per day - the equivalent of approximately 12 to 15 miles daily.

This level of physical demand is simply not sustainable in the long term.

Why we need to see DM26 as a bridge to a very different future

Royal Mail faces significant financial pressures and an existential challenge to its future. The CWU remains committed to working constructively with the company to address these issues and has called upon the Government to support meaningful discussions about the future of the business.

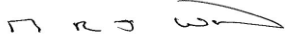
These discussions must build on the motion passed at the Labour Party Conference and address the following priorities:

- Fixing those units that are not working under DM26.
- Reform of Ofcom.
- Ending the bogus self-employment model that is undercutting Royal Mail in the parcels market and threatening secure employment.
- Restoring quality of service in every postcode, including Royal Mail and EP fully honouring their commitments under the national agreement.
- Equalising pay, terms and conditions for new entrants.
- Build on the Government's golden share by developing a new ownership and governance model for Royal Mail, with democratic public control and oversight and worker and customer representation, supporting investment, diversification, growth and public value.
- Bring Royal Mail and the Post Office back together, creating a stronger national network delivering postal, banking, government and community services.
- Improving basic pensionable pay.
- Agreeing a growth strategy that provides the company with a long-term sustainable future.
- Developing a new delivery operating model built around achievable and manageable workloads.

The union will be launching a major campaign on all of the above priorities in the coming weeks. The General Secretary – Dave Ward, and myself will share more information on the above objectives in the coming days.

Any enquiries relating to the content of this LTB should be referred to the DGSP department hford@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Walsh
Deputy General Secretary (Postal)