LETTER TO BRANCHES

The communications union

The Communications Union @CWUNews #TheCWU CWU.ORG

No. 298/26

2nd November 2026

For the Immediate Attention of All:

Postal Branches
Divisional Representatives
Area Delivery Representatives
Area Processing Representatives
Area Distribution Representatives

Dear Colleagues,

Royal Mail – Peak / Christmas Arrangements 2026

Branches are advised that discussions have been ongoing with Royal Mail for some time with regards to a Peak/Christmas Arrangements document for 2026. As you will be aware this year Boxing Day falls on the Saturday and in line with the precedent set in 2004, the 26th December is declared an additional non USO day across the whole of the UK. The arrangements for this day mirror those agreed for similar instances since 2009.

In Scotland as part of the standard Bank Holiday allocation there is a second New Year Bank holiday, normally the 2nd January, which moves to Monday 4th January. In 2009 Postcom, declined to authorise an additional non service day in Scotland for the 2nd January though did give Royal Mail the option to move the non-service day associated to the Bank Holiday from the Monday to the Saturday, which following consultation with the Scottish Branches did happen in January 2010, 2016 & 2021. This means that Royal Mail do not operate USO collections or deliveries on the 2nd January, which is a normal working day in the rest of the UK, but are required to operate a full USO service on Monday 4th January which remains the designated Bank Holiday.

Royal Mail intend to do so again this year, however an issue has arisen over the attendance and remuneration arrangements for the 2nd and 4th January and following consultation with the Scottish Branches this issue will be the subject of separate national discussions, to allow the wider arrangements to be released which we believe is in the best interests of our Representatives and members including those in Scotland. Para 3.10 of the agreed arrangements covers this point and arrangements are being made to meet on this point as a matter of urgency.

Attached for the information of Branches and Representatives are the agreed Peak/ Christmas arrangements for 2026. The document follows the tried and tested format of previous years with only minor updates, which do not change the substance of the content.

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Regarding the Attendance and Resourcing arrangements, section 3 covers the arrangements for the Bank Holidays and non-service days and retains all of the established principles and protections.

The document confirms the Christmas Supplement and the additional £100 ex Colleague Share payment will be made as usual and are unaffected by the Peak Incentive Scheme. The traditional paragraphs on Scheduled Attendance, SA Holiday Pay and Temporary Variation to Contract have been retained unaltered in the final draft.

Branches should note the clear guidance on the timing of Supplementary Tracked Parcel Deliveries may be planned and takes place between 07:00 and 10:00 in order to maximise the opportunities to deliver as many items as possible and likewise for the PM operation parcel deliveries should be planned to be delivered by 19:00, with a variation to 21:00 during weeks 35 -39, only where the relevant risk assessments have taken place. Equally Mail Centres should ensure that measures are in place to ensure that traffic is available to meet these constraints.

As in previous years cross functional Local Joint Working Groups (LJWG) will oversee this aspect.

We believe that the publication of the attached arrangements much earlier than in previous years will be welcomed and will provide guidance to Reps and Branches. Agreed measures to amend DM26 during peak have also been agreed and will be circulated separately.

Any enquiries in relation to this LTB should be addressed to:

Processing/Distribution: Davie Robertson, Assistant Secretary, email: jrodrigues@cwu.org; quoting reference LTB 298/26.

Deliveries/Collections: Tony Bouch, Assistant Secretary, email: pharacz@cwu.org; quoting reference LTB 298/26.

Yours sincerely,

Davie Robertson
Assistant Secretary

Tony Bouch
Assistant Secretary

Peak Arrangements 2026

1. Introduction

This document summarises the operational arrangements for Peak 2026. Robust staffing arrangements will be required throughout this period to ensure customer/operational needs and USO obligations are met in line with workload forecast whilst considering the aspirations of employees. These arrangements cover OPGs, OSGs, MGV drivers, Mail Screeners, MDECs, Processing Engineers scheduled to shift working, LAs whose conditioned hours attract assigned allowances, and Network professional drivers as detailed below.

The 2004 Christmas agreement abolished claw back of hours arising from public, bank holidays and non USO days and these arrangements remain in place for Peak 26.

For Network Professional Drivers, Bank Holiday attendance arrangements will be made in line with the terms in the National Agreement on "The Introduction of the Professional Driver". Details for arrangements this year will be covered in the Joint Statement between Royal Mail Linehaul and the CWU on Peak Bank Holiday Resourcing for Network Professional Drivers, Peak 26.

Local discussions should ensure operational arrangements are concluded in line with the terms below and relevant National Agreements to secure excellent customer service through reliable staffing, ensuring everyone has a fair and manageable workload. Options may include:

- Pre-scheduling hours against forecast workload
- Scheduled Attendance or pressure overtime in line with Section 5 below
- The opportunity for part timers/less than full time staff to increase their contracted hours where workload supports this
- Use of temporary/agency staff as supplementary resource in line with the principles reaffirmed in the national Recruitment, Resourcing and Retention Joint Statement issued on 1st October 2021

2. Enhanced Operational Arrangements

The following enhancements will operate within the period of times specified. These are intended to address customer concerns, provide improved service, and improve efficiency.

Key Principle – National Peak Workplan

- To ensure we deliver the best possible service to our customers, Mail Centres and Parcel Hubs should plan to advance T48/2c workplan with the object of improving/smoothing flow and enhancing the arrival profile at Inward Mail Centres.
- To enable Peak 26, with the forecast expectation in parcels, any Mail Centres may need to divert a number of 2c/T48 parcels to Christmas Parcel Sort Centres to ensure they have adequate inward sorting capacity to clear inward parcels to workplan. This assumes that all internal resource at the Mail Centre have been fully utilised including current supernumerary employees. This encompasses weeks 32-42 during which period the full range of Peak Resourcing arrangements should be in place to maximise available internal resource including the terms outlined at sections 5 & 7 of these arrangements.
- Mail Centres will also be required to maximise connecting volume on Linehaul Services while ensuring that all services despatch to schedule.
- In addition, where it is established that fully utilised Mail Centres have insufficient capacity, a number of larger Delivery Offices and MPUs will be identified as additional sorting centres, and these will be utilised in line with the key principles.

- Any temporary changes to local workplan for each Mail Centre, Parcel Hub and Delivery Offices will be discussed as part of the peak planning process and resourcing arrangements agreed. All changes must fully comply with the national workplan standards.
- Any agreed changes to workplan to advance T48/2c traffic will be considered temporary measures for peak.
- In addition, Mail Centres should ensure all services to Delivery Offices despatch all available mails.
- All medium / large Delivery Offices (more than 40 walks) should consider opening during the night shift and may introduce some earlier starts to ensure that Mail Centres and Distribution services can advance workload to assist with the flow of mails and to improve the return supply of equipment particularly Yorks and trays.
- Ensure that the additional support and equipment is in place in units including increasing the overall numbers of vehicles on site where this is necessary in order to ensure all products can be delivered to their specification including USO deliveries.
- As part of our equipment repatriation plan, we will be targeting c150 critical Delivery Offices where we will be moving empty Yorks collected direct to Parcel Hubs, bypassing the local mail centre.

Cyber Weekend

Normal resourcing procedures will apply. There should be discussions locally at operational sites (Parcel Hubs, Mail Centres and Delivery Offices), on how to best resource what is anticipated to be a high-volume weekend.

In Parcel Hubs and Mail Centres a significant operation will be in place through the weekend to advance Parcels. Enhanced collection arrangements will need to be in place over this weekend to support the operation.

Customer Service Point (CSP) Opening Times

CSPs will operate in line with normal BAU year-round operations. However, there may be a requirement locally to adjust attendance times and this will be subject to local discussions. Where local discussions fail to resolve the matter, it will be referred to the appropriate OPL manager and Area Representative or ROD/Divisional Rep for speedy resolution.

Tracked Direct Dispatch

To alleviate capacity issues at some inward Mail Centres for the processing of tracked items a number of MPUs will perform the inward sortation for their respective postcodes during the Christmas pressure period. Resourcing options will be agreed locally.

Supplementary Tracked Parcel Delivery Services (LAT/Parcel Hubs)

A number of Delivery Offices will introduce Supplementary Parcel Deliveries as part of the support operation to the dedicated parcel hub operation. This will maximize connectivity of premium products, arriving in Delivery Offices too late to connect with core delivery. From week 35 until week 39 the number of participating Delivery Offices will increase to c950 based on local arrangements, when it is anticipated that volumes will increase, and consideration needs to be given to Mail Centre sortation plans as a result of the increase in units as part of the LJWG below.

It is imperative that the upstream pipeline/network is in place to connect and distribute this traffic. To ensure that these arrangements are agreed in a timely manner, each Mail Centre which receives non-core LAT traffic will also create Local Joint Working Groups (LJWG) to ensure that the cross functional working is adopted, and all functions are aware of the roles

and responsibilities. The LJWG will be overseen by the relevant Manager and nominated CWU Divisional Representative with the core attendees being:

CWU	**Royal Mail**
Divisional Representative	ROD/GM
Area Delivery Representative	Operations Performance Leader
Area Processing Representative	Plant Manager
Area Distribution Representative	Area Distribution Manager

Each unit will need to plan and align resource dependent upon the traffic forecasts, to ensure Premium Products are delivered on the same day as received at the Delivery Offices. This can include utilisation of reserves, overtime and casuals. Units may also enact the new terms and conditions of employees that entered on or after 1 December 2022 to ensure the workload is covered daily. The delivery of these items should normally be completed by 19:00 hours, however taking into account that this is our peak delivery period, delivery can be extended up to 21:00 hours in weeks 35-39, but must be subject to the appropriate safety and security risk assessments.

These Supplementary Parcel Delivery duties will form part of the normal local discussions covering operational arrangements and will take full account of local circumstances in ensuring sufficient resource and vehicle provision is available to cover the workload, and in line with Section 15.3 of the Guiding Principles agreement.

Both parties would encourage local discussions to ensure the Supplementary Standard Parcel Delivery may be planned and takes place between 07:00 and 10:00 in order to maximise the opportunities to deliver as many items as possible, particularly for units which have opened during the night to improve flow of mails. However, these will not replace the points above for the resource to deliver the parcel products that arrive on the day and do not connect with core deliveries. Both parties commit to minimising repeat coverage to the same address daily.

In all circumstances, employee safety and the security of mail must be assured. Areas/Addresses identified as high risk: for example, where deliveries are suspended due to attacks, robberies, or problem dogs etc., will be excluded from receiving this additional service**.**

Sunday Delivery

Sunday delivery will operate in line with normal BAU year-round operations.

However, this aspect will be subject to continued and ongoing review and if any office finds it necessary due to a high number of undelivered items, or based on local knowledge and/or current challenges in regards to maintaining the USO, tracked and service performance then arrangements will be made via local discussions in advance to ensure the necessary resource is put in place. Where local discussions fail to resolve the matter, it will be referred to the appropriate OPL manager and Area Representative or ROD/Divisional Rep for speedy resolution.

Sunday Collections

Sunday collections will be in place within all mail centre catchment areas to provide mail for the Sunday outward processing operation that will be in place this year. It is expected the requirement as in previous years will be to collect from heavy boxes, open POL outlets, Parcel Lockers, Collect+ sites and local firms. Local knowledge of heavy boxes or the local Mail Centre capacity plan will be the driving factor, and the required staffing arrangements will be on a voluntary basis and agreed locally – this may include weekend duty patterns to ensure the work requirement is covered.

Sunday Processing

There is a requirement this Peak for an outward processing operation at Mail Centres on Sunday afternoons during the peak period. This is to support the Monday operation at mail centres where we see a surge in traffic. Staffing will be on a voluntary basis and the arrangements agreed locally. Parcel Hubs will also work Sunday (as per year round) and the normal staffing arrangements will apply.

Collection on Delivery

Local discussion should ensure adequate arrangements are in place to deal with Collections on Delivery, where there may be larger than normal postings, to ensure that all mails (Collection and Delivery) meet their due service standards this will include collections from parcel lockers.

3. Attendance and Resourcing Arrangements

3.1 Thursday 24th December is not a Bank Holiday and normal resourcing arrangements should apply. However, night shifts will not be required to attend on this night. In exceptional circumstances where any attendance on Night Shift is required this will be on a voluntary basis.

3.2 Friday 25th December is a Bank Holiday. There will be no USO collections or deliveries on this day.

3.3 Saturday 26th December is not a Bank Holiday it is a Non Service Day. We have agreed with OFCOM that there will be no USO collections or deliveries on this day

3.4 Sunday 27th December is a normal working Sunday.

3.5 Monday 28th December is a Bank Holiday. There will be no USO collections or deliveries on this day.

3.6 Tuesday 29th December is a normal working day.

3.7 Wednesday 30th December is a normal working day

3.8 Thursday 31st December is not a Bank Holiday and normal resourcing arrangements should apply. However, night shifts will not be required to attend on this night. In exceptional circumstances where any attendance on Night Shift is required this will be on a voluntary basis.

3.9 Friday 1st January is a Bank holiday. There will be no USO collections or deliveries on this day.

3.10 Saturday 2nd January is not a Bank Holiday in Scotland in 2027, however it is a designated non service day and there will be no USO collections or deliveries in Scotland on this day. It is a normal working day in the rest of the UK. Monday January 4th 2027, is a designated bank holiday in Scotland. *Operational attendance and remuneration arrangements for 2nd and 4th January 2027 is subject to further national discussion between Royal Mail and CWU.*

3.11 Sunday 3rd January is a normal working Sunday across the UK.

3.12 In line with normal Christmas bank holiday and non USO service day arrangements, people who would normally be scheduled to work on the day of the bank holiday or non USO service day for the provision of USO collection and delivery services and non USO parcel operations will not be required to attend and not be required to make up the hours.

3.13 Rest days will apply in line with normal year-round arrangements. Attendances may be varied by local agreement to take account of workload forecasts and service requirements. Where workload requires, (and subject to currently agreed working time limits) people can volunteer in advance to work their normal rest day in return for a day in lieu or the resourcing/remuneration options contained in Section 1. Where a rest day falls on a Bank Holiday (i.e. on 25, 28 December, 1 January) and it is not operationally sensible to transfer the rest day to another day in the same week, people will receive an additional day holiday (including those working 'a week off in six' or other variations on this theme) in the form of a day in lieu or alternatively the excess hours can be taken as normal overtime. Normal adherence to the Working Time Directive still applies. These rest day arrangements do not include Saturday 26th December which is a non service day across the UK.

3.14 To comply with the USO, Inland night shift operations should resume as required on Monday 28th December and Friday 1st January (Saturday 2nd January in Scotland) to meet service obligations. Staff required to attend within conditioned hours on Monday 28th December or on Friday 1st January will receive the Bank Holiday premium for each hour worked on the Bank Holidays. Where agreed night shift resourcing arrangements result in attendance beyond conditioned hours, staff will receive normal Bank Holiday rates (option A or B as appropriate) for the additional hours worked on the Bank Holiday (before Midnight) and normal overtime rates for hours worked out-with the Bank Holiday (after midnight).

3.15 People who volunteer and attend for overtime on bank holidays will receive normal bank holiday rates (Option A or B as appropriate) for the hours worked on the bank holiday.

3.16 Local Christmas arrangements should ensure staffing is in place to meet service obligations in full on Bank Holidays while maximising opportunities to meet employee aspirations for time off. To support this, discussions will utilise the full range of resourcing options, including the realignment of conditioned hours across these weeks.

3.17 Weekend duty holders (notional full timers and people who make three or less attendances each week) will have separate scheduling arrangements, in line with the relevant national agreements, to be agreed/discussed locally.

3.18 Providing resourcing is secure at their parent offices, people can volunteer for duty or additional earnings opportunities at neighbouring Parcel Sort Centres, and at specific MPU sites that will be processing inward tracked arrivals. (Mail Centre workload). Normal processing arrangements for inward tracked arrivals will resume after the Christmas period.

3.19 Local flexibility agreements and the National Pay and Modernisation agreement Phase 3 Annexes A and B will apply and be utilised during the Christmas period. Both parties will explore opportunities to give people time off where possible consistent with customer and operational requirements.

4. Christmas Pay Supplement

The Christmas pay supplement of £100 for full time OPG and OSGs, pro-rated for part timers and 35-hour full timers (subject to the arrangements in Section 7) will be paid on Friday 18th December. The eligibility criteria for the Christmas supplement payment will be the same as last year, based on the four December weeks (commencing Monday, 23th November). In the event of any Industrial Action the abatement criteria will be drawn from the PBS agreement.

The separate payment of £100 (pro rata for PT and 35hr full time employees) agreed in the National Joint Statement - New Incentive Arrangements June 2012 will also be paid on Friday 18th December. As in previous years, any necessary top up payments for Part Time employees will be made in January 2027 in accordance with the actual hours worked at standard rate, beyond contractual during 2026.

For the purpose of clarity, individuals employed on post December 2022 monthly paid OPG terms and conditions, will also qualify for both Christmas payments for Peak 2026 in line with the scheme arrangements.

5. Scheduled Attendances

Scheduled Attendance rates can be paid for pre-scheduled overtime worked during the Christmas pressure period. These do not attract Paid Meal Relief unless worked on a Sunday.

Additional 'on the day' pressure or absence overtime will be paid at ordinary standard overtime pay rates.
All year-round SAs will remain in place during the Christmas period unless agreed locally. Where agreement is reached on revised SA arrangements, 4 weeks' notice must be given before any agreed change is deployed. Normal SA arrangements will resume following the Christmas period.

6. Scheduled Attendance Holiday Pay

Christmas SA may increase the number of SA hours worked above normal weekly averages. To ensure the additional contribution is not lost SA holiday pay for the Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day (plus 2nd January in Scotland) Bank Holidays will be calculated by taking the average daily amount of SA worked by each individual in the 4 weeks prior to the Bank Holiday.

7. Temporary Variation to Contractual Status

To ensure parity of treatment, where workload supports the increase, part time staff may extend their contractual hours to 37 hours for the Christmas period through a temporary variation of contract in line with the current process. Individuals employed on post-December 2022 monthly paid OPG terms and conditions may extend their contractual hours up to 37 hours per week.

8. Pay Arrangements

Pay dates during Peak 26

Pay dates and payroll processes remain the same for weekly paid employees, with current week basic pay, assigned allowances and previous week's additional hours and ad hoc adjustments paid each Friday.

Due to the impact of bank / public holidays on payroll operations, the following arrangements apply:

Weekly-Paid Contracted Employees

w/c 16th November (pay date Friday 20th November)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed w/c 9th November

w/c 23rd November (pay date Friday 27th November)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed w/c 16th November

w/c 30th November (pay date Friday 4th December)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed w/c 23rd November

w/c 7th December (pay date Friday 11th December)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed w/c 30th November

Note: In addition to BAU process PSP will be closed for all changes from 02.00 to 07.30 on Friday 11th December and Monday 14th December. Payroll will then be locked from 14.00 to approx. 18.00 on Monday 14th December to enable processing of the payroll for the week commencing 14th December.

w/c 14th December (pay date Friday 18th December)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed and keyed w/c 7th December up to 13.00 on Monday 14th December.
- Christmas Supplement & Underpin

Note: PSP will be closed for all changes from 02.00 to 07.30 on Thursday 17th December and Friday 18th December. Payroll will then be locked from 14.00 on Friday 18th December to enable processing of the payroll for the week commencing 21st December. Processing is expected to be completed by around 1800.

w/c 21st December (pay date Thursday 24th December)
- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime/SA/Ad hoc allowances performed and keyed from 14th December up to 13.00 on Friday 18th December and for w/c 7th December where data was keyed after 13.00 on 14th December

Note: In addition PSP will be closed for all changes from 02.00 to 07.30 on Wednesday 23rd December and Thursday 24th December. Payroll will then be locked from 10.00 on

Thursday 24th December to enable processing of the payroll for the week commencing 28th December. Processing is expected to be completed by around 15.00.

w/c 28th December (pay date Thursday 31st December)

- Regular Pay (Basic & assigned allowances)
- Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances performed w/c 21st December up to 09.00 Thursday 24th December, and any overtime keyed after 13.00 on Friday 18th December.

Back to BAU - PSP will be closed for all changes from 02:00 to 07:30 on Monday 4th January and Tuesday 5th January. Payroll will then be locked from 14:00 on Tuesday 5th January to process the payroll for any Overtime / SA / Ad hoc allowances keyed after 09:00 on Thursday 24th December. Processing is expected to be completed by around 18:00.

Monthly-Paid Contracted Employees

The monthly payroll cut-off date is Sunday 20th December
Final payroll will run on Tuesday 22nd December
Pay date will be Thursday 31st December

Royal Mail CWU

Date: