

Bosch Rexroth workers in Scotland to strike for a week against pay cuts

Steve James

7 December 2025

Over 280 workers at Bosch Rexroth's manufacturing plant in Glenrothes, Scotland, are set to strike for a week from December 8-15 against a cut in pay and working hours by up to 22 percent. A 95 percent majority, based on a high turnout, voted for strike action, rejecting the company's latest proposal. The strike follows "a collective conciliation meeting", hosted by arbitration service ACAS.

The wage cuts are in the form of a short-time flexible working system, which, over nine months, could allow the company to recoup wages for unworked hours. Previous proposals meant that workers could lose up to nearly £1,000 a month. Essentially the company are trying to introduce "gig economy" conditions at the plant.

The Glenrothes site, highly integrated into Bosch Rexroth's global operations, is the company's worldwide design and production centre of its MCR series hydraulic motors used in construction, forestry, material handling and other heavy industries. 95 percent of the output from its skilled workforce is exported worldwide. The Bosch group employs some 6,300 people in the UK, including at manufacturing the R&D sites, which is also the company's fourth largest market worldwide and the second largest in Europe after Germany.

The capitalist logic driving attacks on workers globally

The assault on conditions in Glenrothes is part of a desperate global attempt by Bosch Rexroth parent company, Robert Bosch GmbH, to increase its profits at the expense of its workforce.

Worldwide, the Baden-Württemberg headquartered company employs around 418,000 people in around 60

countries. More than half of these, 230,000, are in the Bosch automotive parts supply wings, whose primary customer is the European car industry, which is in deep crisis. This September, Bosch announced 22,000 were to be eliminated in Germany alone—the largest in the company's history.

According to the *Financial Times*, 30,000 jobs were lost in the parts industry alone across Europe in 2024, part of 58,000 lost since 2020. The European Association of Automotive Suppliers (CLEPA) reports suppliers employ as many as 1.7 million workers across the continent. But the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation following the Ukraine war and ever more efficient competition from China have driven corporate managements into new attacks on workers to sustain and increase profit margins.

Over the last year—besides Bosch—Volkswagen, Mercedes, ZF, Porsche, Ford, Audi, Stellantis/Opel and many smaller outfits have idled production lines, shut down plants, gone bankrupt, and made tens of thousands of workers redundant. Last year, VW announced 35,000 job losses by 2030, pay cuts and flexible working while threatening plant closures. Audi is cutting 7,500 jobs in Germany alone.

Stellantis is threatening to close plants across Europe, while forcing thousands of its workers to take compulsory days off. The historic Rüsselsheim Opel plant, which once employed 40,000 workers, now hosts about 1,500 production workers, half under gig economy conditions. In the UK in April this year the company closed its van production site in Luton, England—formerly Vauxhall, GM—ending 120 years of vehicle manufacturing in the town axing over 1,000 jobs directly and 5,000 in the supply chain. This is to transfer production to its remaining electric vehicle-only site in Ellesmere Port, Merseyside from 2026.

Unite opposed any joint action by members instead

pledging to impose further productivity increases to keep the Luton site open combined with nationalistic appeals to the Starmer government.

Just last week, French owned parts manufacturer Valeo warned of a “Darwinian transformation” in the industry, Valeo CEO, Christophe Périllat told the *Financial Times* that Valeo’s ongoing restructuring had closed 38 sites across Europe, between 2022 and 2025, while only four had opened. CLEPA has warned that as many as 350,000 jobs could be lost by 2030. CLEPA and the European industry are calling for protectionist measures to defend their market share from Chinese competition, while seeking to expand their own sales in China, and taking advantage of “opportunities” caused by the collapse of First Brands and Marelli, which have both entered bankruptcy in the US.

Not a word explaining this crisis has come from the Unite trade union, of which the striking Glenrothes workers are members. In the union’s last press release, General Secretary Sharon Graham reiterated the blustering and vacuous line. “Unite will not allow our members’ jobs, pay and conditions to be slashed by an extremely profitable company. We will back our members all the way in their fight as they begin strike action.”

A Unite industrial officer, George Ramsey said, “Hundreds of workers are being forced to take strike action by Bosch Rexroth when there are absolutely no financial reasons for them to impose these changes.”

Given these statements, workers could conclude that they were dealing with a greedy local management, inexplicably failing to pay decent wages. All was well with capitalism in Britain and Europe and the Bosch Rexroth board will see sense in due course.

In fact, Bosch remains far more profitable than Unite let on. The Bosch group’s after-tax profit worldwide last year was €1.4 billion on sales of just over €90 billion, down from €2.6 billion profit on €92 billion sales the previous year. Despite this, the company’s balance sheet improved as did the dividend paid to shareholders. But the company employed 11,500 less workers.

Bosch, which is 94 percent owned by a charitable foundation run by ex-corporate officers, industry figures and members of the Bosch family, aims to remain profitable directly at the expense of the jobs and living standards of its workforce.

corporations

Bosch workers can only defend themselves by mobilising their independent strength. The fight cannot be left in the hands of the union apparatus who refuse to unify workers against any aspect of the capitalist onslaught.

Both Unite in the UK and the IG Metall union in Germany, exert their bureaucratic influence to blind workers as to the origins of the attacks on them and delay, suppress, confuse and divide workers’ efforts to oppose these attacks. Where struggles break out, the unions work to ensure they remain isolated and ineffective.

Bosch Rexroth workers are on strike only a few miles from the threatened Mossmorran ExxonMobil Fife Ethylene Plant beside the former mining town of Cowdenbeath, where 400 workers are faced with unemployment due to the proposed closure of the facility early next year.

The Mossmorran closure, announced only weeks ago, is entirely due to anarchic and crisis ridden capitalism where a sudden market shift or geopolitical crisis can render entire industries “uneconomic” overnight. As with Bosch, no confidence should be placed in talk from Unite or the GMB unions of “worker led transition plans” or attempts to shame the UK or Scottish governments, or ExxonMobil itself, by pointing to its huge profits. ExxonMobil intends to expand its \$25 billion annual profits by closing down an insufficiently profitable venture.

Workers are tasked with building new organisations of struggle to defend themselves from the capitalist assault and advance their own interests. The WSWs encourages the formation of rank-and-file committees of action in every factory, office, workplace and institution of education and care. Such committees are posed with unifying workers within corporations and across industries, sectors, regions and national borders. Contact the *World Socialist Web Site* today to discuss further.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

For workers unity globally not divide and rule by the