

Workers at Cummins turbo components plant in Huddersfield reject insulting pay offer tied to strings

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15 April 2026

Cummins is facing strike action by 450 workers at its turbo components plant in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, after they rejected a pay offer with strings. The result reflects deepening anger over years of falling real wages and worsening exploitation.

The Unite members at the St Andrews Road plant are employed as engineers, technicians, and production line workers, manufacturing turbocharger parts for vehicles made by Volvo, DAF, and Scania.

Cummins' proposed pay offer of 4.5 percent in year one and 4 percent in year two is only marginally above current RPI inflation of 3.8 percent—expected to rise further with the impact of the war on Iran.

In return, the company is seeking an overhaul of established terms and conditions. Unite has referred to “detrimental changes to annual leave flexibility” but has not provided any further information.

The union received a mandate for strike action at the start of April. Contrary to its media briefings that “escalating strike action will be announced in the coming days”, no dates have been confirmed over the past fortnight at time of writing.

Instead, Unite officials have engaged in a media campaign of rhetorical opposition while avoiding any mobilisation of workers. They have made appeals to the company to return to the negotiating table and make what regional officer Dan Stephens described as an “offer members can accept.”

Unite is managing opposition rather than organising it, in a bid to reestablish its partnership with the company. Stephens stated, “These members are skilled workers performing precision engineering. However, their real terms pay has been in decline for years.” He added, “While they generate massive value for the company, a history of below-inflation rises has resulted in a

significant real-terms pay cut.”

The pretence of belated opposition is exposed by the fact that Unite does not spell out what workers have lost or make any concrete pay demand to restore their earnings in real terms. Nor is any red line drawn against the attack on terms and conditions, “hard-won over many years”.

Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham has declared, “Cummins is a hugely profitable company that can more than afford to put forward an acceptable pay offer.” Without binding demands and a concrete plan of action, this is just a media soundbite.

Cummins has been allowed to claim that it is negotiating in “good faith,” working with Unite through “the agreed dispute resolution process”. The company added that it has “contingency plans in place to support continuity of operations,” a signal that strikebreaking preparations are already being developed while Unite delays action.

The next step for Cummins workers

Workers cannot entrust their fight to Unite officials claiming common ground can be found between company diktats and workers' interests. Even in the event of Unite calling industrial action, a strike would be strictly limited to prevent the necessary struggle with the company, while allowing workers to blow off some steam.

A fighting strategy must be drawn up by rank-and-file workers, and direct oversight established over any talks with Cummins. This means preparing a list of demands and work to win support among co-workers in the UK and internationally, including solidarity action against

handling any work transferred by the company.

Cummins, a US-based transnational, has substantial resources. But these depend on the labour of tens of thousands of workers who are the Huddersfield dispute's real allies.

In 2025, the company paid \$1.1 billion (approximately £830 million) in dividend payments for shareholders, increasing its dividend for the 16th consecutive year. These profits were extracted from a global workforce of around 73,000 across 190 countries.

Cummins revenue rests on long-term supply contracts and its position as a key engine and powertrain supplier to major manufacturers including Ford, General Motors, Stellantis, Volvo Group, Daimler Truck, and PACCAR, as well as industrial firms such as Caterpillar and CNH Industrial. This places the company at the centre of global logistics, freight, construction, and energy infrastructure.

The company uses its global network to exert downward pressure on labour costs through segmented bargaining units, site-by-site negotiations, and national frameworks. The Huddersfield dispute is not an isolated pay claim but part of a global strategy of real-wage suppression and intensified production targets.

Unions like Unite aid this process of divide and rule with locally and nationally fragmented bargaining structures. Waging a viable struggle requires breaking out of this framework. Workers need their own international strategy to overcome the divisions and deploy their collective strength.

This applies even within the UK. The Huddersfield plant, producing turbochargers and related engine components used in automotive and heavy-duty applications, is only one part of a tightly integrated UK operation.

In Darlington, Cummins runs a major engine manufacturing and engineering hub, producing engines and after treatment systems, alongside a significant technical centre. The site plays a central role in design, testing, and advanced manufacturing within the company's European operations.

In Daventry, the company operates a high-horsepower engine and generator set facility producing large-scale power systems used in data centres, hospitals, rail networks, marine transport, and energy infrastructure. The same location also houses Cummins' UK Logistics Centre, which coordinates warehousing, distribution, and supply chain management across Britain and Europe.

Alongside these core sites, Cummins maintains a nationwide network of service centres, workshops, and

distribution points supporting aftermarket operations and customer maintenance contracts.

Together, these facilities employ thousands of workers across manufacturing, engineering, logistics, and technical services.

Driving forward a sustained improvement in wages and working conditions poses the challenge of organising a unified struggle across UK sites and establishing links with Cummins workers internationally. Only with a coordinated strategy across the company's transnational production system can workers begin to challenge "labour flexibility", speed ups, pay erosion and job losses.

This requires new political leadership, rank-and-file committees of workers, to challenge the union bureaucracies in every country, which maintain plant and national divisions and work with management to deliver improved competitiveness.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has been developed as the framework for this new leadership, to take the class struggle out of the hands of the union leaderships and place it under workers' democratic control on the shop floor, unified across workplaces, companies and national borders.

Autoworker Will Lehman is championing this campaign in his bid for election as president of the United Auto Workers (UAW). A shopfloor worker at the Mack Trucks (Volvo) plant in Pennsylvania, Lehman insists that the union apparatus cannot be reformed but must be dismantled and replaced with organisations of rank-and-file power.

He calls for a revival of the class struggle, after decades of union-led class collaboration, to recover lost wages, enforce a zero-layoff policy, and fight for demands such as a 30-hour workweek with no loss of pay.

Central to this programme is the rejection of nationalism and the unification of workers internationally against the transnational corporations. We encourage Cummins workers who are seeking a way forward to watch his video, visit the campaign page and contact the *World Socialist Web Site*.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)