

# Postal workers challenge CWU spin over its restructuring plans with Royal Mail

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The efforts of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) to ram through its national “negotiators’ agreement” with Royal Mail have reached a new low.

Tony Bouch, the CWU’s Outdoor Assistant Secretary, appeared in a four-minute video released May 7, calling for a Yes vote and presenting the company’s Delivery Model 2026 (DM26) as a worker-friendly alternative to the hated Optimised Delivery Model (ODM).

DM26 is ODM under a new name. Its purpose remains the same: slash jobs, intensify workloads, and transform Royal Mail into a parcel courier operation geared to the profit demands of billionaire owner Daniel Kretinsky’s EP Group.

This is the scorched earth plan being put to CWU members in a ballot running from May 11-29.

Bouch’s video was a case study in gaslighting. He acknowledged that Royal Mail’s “original plan” under ODM left delivery staff “working harder than ever,” with fatigue and unmanageable workloads. He insisted that DM26 “breaks this cycle.”

But he proved the exact opposite, explaining that DM26’s “three revised duties” pattern would see three delivery workers expected to absorb the workload previously carried out by four. He promoted the CWU-backed “heavy and light” model as supposedly involving less work than both the ODM and current workloads. According to Bouch, workers would deliver all mail to 50 percent of delivery points on one day, and the next day just parcels and First Class mail at the same call rate.

Postal workers know the reality will be very different. In addition to taking on the work from the collapsed duty, they would be left scrambling to clear growing backlogs of undelivered mail while coping with rising parcel volumes driven by the new model. Bouch’s claims of “less workload on a daily basis” are a fiction.

DM26 is a shell game based on the same “4 into 3” model as the ODM, to slash jobs and intensify workloads,

making £300 million worth of structural cuts to be reaped in profits by EP Group.

The CWU bureaucracy cannot erase the recent history of its own collaboration. It co-authored with Royal Mail the terms of the ODM pilots imposed over the heads of postal workers at 35 delivery offices, with Walsh insisting there was no alternative. When the pilots provoked outrage over intolerable workloads, CWU Deputy General Secretary Martin Walsh went into damage control, claiming ODM would not be rolled out nationally. In February, delivery workers at pilot offices rejected ODM by 96 percent in a ballot. But the CWU claimed, without a shred of legitimacy, that workers’ resounding No vote was an endorsement of the DM26 model!

Postal workers on CWU Facebook responded to Bouch’s video by tearing apart his claims of an “improved model”.

“Sounds to me it’s 4 into 3, on an endless loop of double or triple mail,” wrote one delivery worker.

Another replied: “Yes you can view it 4 into 3, as that is what it is.”

From a pilot office, a delivery worker wrote: “I along with the rest of my office have been doing this delivery method since July 2025. A trial called ODM, it’s exactly the same as the heavy and light models. I REPEAT this is the same as the ODM model and I can tell u that it’s not better and involves more work. The Communication Workers Union it’s A BIG NO.”

Another postie wrote: “We’ve effectively been doing the ‘heavy/light’ model on our two walks for the past couple years since DPR’s (Dedicated Parcel Routes) failed introduction to our office. One walk of mail left everyday, and all tracked items taken out for both. We can barely keep up with it due to the tracked. Today we had around 230 tracked between 2 walks. It’s insane! ... Our whole office leaves mail everyday, these new models feel like they’re just giving a different name to ‘manage your

frame’.”

These comments expose the fiction the CWU is peddling. Workers already know from bitter experience that the “heavy/light” model means endless double and triple mail, undelivered letters piling up in frames, impossible parcel workloads, longer hours, and the destruction of any stable duty structure.

The comments section became an indictment not only of Royal Mail management, but of the CWU leadership itself. Again and again workers returned to the same demand: “One postie, one round.”

What terrifies the CWU bureaucracy is that workers increasingly recognise the union apparatus as an arm of management. “He’s reading off a script,” one worker said of Bouch’s video. Another answered: “from a Royal Mail director.”

CWU General Secretary Dave Ward and Walsh have lied on an industrial scale about a supposed “fresh start” with EP Group. In reality, they are acting as industrial enforcers for the Starmer Labour government, which waved through the £3.6 billion takeover of Royal Mail by EP Group to demonstrate Britain’s pro-business credentials to the financial oligarchy.

The CWU bureaucracy has fully integrated itself into management’s restructuring agenda. Its role is to smother opposition while enforcing the destruction of jobs, conditions and the Universal Service Obligation.

Opposition to DM26 means rejecting the entire nine-page “negotiators’ agreement” aimed at forcing through the destruction of the postal service on behalf of EP Group’s billionaire investors.

The deal would lock in another year of a real terms pay cuts, pegged to the lower CPI rate of inflation at 3 percent for this year—even though CPI rose to 3.3 percent in March. Walsh previously sold the three-year deal as “no strings attached.” Now, any further payment to make up the difference with CPI is tied explicitly to “USO reform”—meaning further job cuts and workload intensification.

The agreement also entrenches the two-tier workforce. New entrants, paid barely above minimum wage, are fobbed off with a so-called “first step” to equalisation worth only a 1.75 percent uplift (in addition to the 3 percent) with a review by January 2027. Fundamental inequalities remain untouched, including unpaid meal breaks and non-payment of the supplement for delivering business flyers.

Meanwhile, the dismantling of the USO continues. Regulator Ofcom’s rubber stamp for alternate weekday

delivery of Second Class letters is designed to gut the mail service and accelerate Royal Mail’s conversion into a parcels operation along the lines of Amazon and Evri.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee has called for an emphatic No vote, but workers’ anger over the agreement must become the launching point for a broader industrial and political fightback.

Postal workers need independent rank-and-file committees in every delivery office and mail centre, democratically controlled by workers themselves, to organise resistance against the biggest restructuring drive since privatisation.

The removal of Ward, Walsh and the unaccountable union bureaucracy is essential if workers are to mount a successful struggle in defence of jobs, conditions and the mail service itself.

What is posed is not simply another dispute over workloads. Royal Mail is being systematically dismantled. A public service built up over centuries is being transformed into a low-cost parcels operation serving EP Group’s investors in the biggest looting operation since privatisation more than a decade ago.

The overwhelming rebuke to Bouch’s video demonstrates that postal workers understand exactly what is taking place. What is now required is the organisation of that opposition into a collective fightback against Royal Mail and the CWU bureaucracy.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee is holding a Zoom meeting on Sunday, May 17, at 7 p.m. to organise the No vote against the CWU-Royal Mail agreement. Postal workers who want to take this fight forward should attend, speak about their experiences, and join the fight to build rank-and-file committees independent of the pro-company union apparatus.



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