

Royal Mail workers must take charge: scrap DM26, end the two-tier workforce!

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee UK
16 October 2026

Dear Brother and Sisters,

The crisis at Royal Mail has reached a tipping point. We must take charge of defending the mail service, jobs and the fight to reverse crippling workloads and the two-tier workforce. We are a 130,000-strong workforce, without which nothing functions. Generations built this service for the public; now it has been pushed to the cliff edge.

Our voice has been stifled by those who insist Royal Mail's "sustainability" must be determined by profitability: the Labour government, and Communication Workers Union (CWU) leaders Dave Ward and Martin Walsh—working in alliance with billionaire owner Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group.

In opposition, we must turn to our genuine allies: local government workers, National Health Service workers, teachers, and workers at BT Group and in the car industry, all of whom face the same job destruction and excessive workloads designed to funnel wealth to the super-rich.

Taking ownership of our struggle, transferring decision-making to the shop floor and acting collectively are the foundations for advancing our fight and reaching our allies.

These include the public defrauded by Royal Mail which has breached its statutory delivery targets for the past three years while they are gauged for a service not provided. The price of a first-class stamp rose this year to £1.80, an almost three-fold increase over 10 years ago.

Royal Mail chief executive Alistair Cochrane's recent announcement of 2,500 job cuts at head office and in support roles is part of a wider restructuring. It is in line with the downgrading of the Universal Service Obligation (USO)—approved by Ofcom in July last year—which reduced the requirement for standard mail deliveries from six days a week to alternate weekdays.

This means gutting the mail service, slashing thousands more jobs and enforcing Amazon-style working practices to create a courier parcel network.

The question is no longer whether the CWU leadership can be trusted to oppose this, but how to replace an unaccountable union bureaucracy that enforces management's demands and prioritises company profitability over our interests.

Walsh has consistently maintained the USO "is no longer financially viable" and has signed off on the £250 million cuts

through the introduction of DM2 to be pocketed by EP Group.

CWU rebrands a corporate wrecking operation

Walsh, Ward and the Postal Executive bare direct responsibility for the disaster that is DM26. We were told they knew better on a new delivery model; untested and mis-sold as a more worker friendly version of the failed Optimised Delivery Model (ODM).

This rebranding exercise maintained the core of the slash and burn agenda to reduce four duties in three, leaving delivery staff to absorb the additional workload. The "safeguards" in the agreement over resourcing and against fatigue were worthless.

Walsh was inundated by reports from members around the country since the roll out of DM26 in May. They had the same message: mounting backlogs of mail, increased parcel volumes and extended delivery spans of well over five hours and pounding the streets for up to 15 miles a day.

Walsh responded by mounting a PR operation with Royal Mail, citing its data of an increase in delivery point coverage to 98.2 percent in units where DM26 had been deployed: massaging the figures to conceal the extent of undelivered mail.

This was in early September when the rollout had reached around 738 of 1,280 units nationally. In the space of a month, with the roll out reaching 800, Walsh was referring on October 7 to "the reality of a collapsing Royal Mail", calling on the government to intervene and for a pause on the roll out of DM26.

None of this is about changing course. Walsh refuses to take responsibility and is claiming the problem is with units where DM26 was not operating "as intended". He even claims it was not the CWU's "preferred option."

What a fraud! Members were told to vote for DM26 by Walsh in the May ballot, with a promotional four-minute video produced by Outdoor Assistant Secretary Tony Bouch to extol its virtues as part of the Yes campaign by CWU headquarters.

The Yes result was on a record low 32 percent turnout, with only one in five members voting to accept. We were only

offered a choice of poisons—ODM or DM26.

A union leadership which treats this as a mandate is not in the business of engaging members but manufacturing consent for their collaboration with management. Walsh let slip how the deal was got over the line, stating there was “no organised opposition, only social media.”

Walsh cannot be allowed to act with impunity any longer!

As a first step the demand must be taken up for a vote of no confidence in Walsh, Ward and the postal executive responsible for this wrecking operation. This is necessary to begin the process of taking power back into the hands of the rank-and-file to wage a fight under democratic control.

Unite senior and new posties

The two-tier workforce must be abolished! Its introduction was a red line crossed in the pro-company agreement in July 2023 betraying our year-long national dispute.

Walsh’s claims of an “equalisation pathway” under Kretinsky promised a first step for last September and a full plan by December 2025. The first step only came in May this year. This nailed new entrants’ national hourly rate to just £13.06, barely above the £12.71 minimum wage and left them unpaid for meal breaks and the delivery supplement (commercial flyers), with further negotiations now kicked down the road until January 2027.

The employment model presided over by the CWU is the gig economy: driving senior postal workers to quit or take ill health retirement through injury or exhaustion and then replaced by new entrants on inferior pay and terms.

The workforce is in a state of collapse. Senior and new posties leaving among the 80,000 plus delivery staff has increased from 330 to 400 a week since deployment of DM26.

The fight for immediate equalisation is our answer to chronic understaffing—based on our terms not what the billionaire equity owners claim is affordable as they dismantle the mail service.

Reject appeals to Burnham—for an independent path of struggle

Ward’s call for a “summit” between CWU officials, the company and the Burnham government is a damage-limitation exercise on behalf of the guilty parties. This is shown by his lie that the “recruitment and retention crisis” has been “self-inflicted” by Royal Mail, when it is the result of the pro-company agreements he co-authored with management for a

two-tier workforce and DM26.

The CWU bureaucracy and Labour government handed Royal Mail to Kretinsky’s private-equity firm in December 2024. The government’s “Deed of Undertaking” and the CWU’s “Framework Agreement with EP Group” provided the blueprint for restructuring and carving up the company.

The Burnham government has already shown its contempt for a petition signed by more than 100,000 people calling for a return to public ownership, replying that “privatisation was necessary” and Royal Mail remains within the private sector to “transform the business.”

We must wage our struggle independently of the political establishment and the union apparatus that defends private owners. We must unite with other sections of the working class confronting the same deterioration in conditions, fight the subordination of essential services to corporate interests and austerity, and oppose the diversion of public funds to military spending.

Rank-and-file committees are needed in every delivery office, mail centre and Parcelforce depot. These committees must unite workers, share information, expose management practices, formulate demands and coordinate resistance independently, so we are not isolated by the CWU apparatus.

- Scrap DM26 and end all cooperation with job cuts and workload intensification!

- End the two-tier workforce and equalise conditions for new entrants!

- Defend the universal mail service as a social right!

This is part of an international fight. Postal workers in the United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere face privatisation, restructuring and union bureaucracies collaborating with management. Workers must establish direct links, exchange experiences and coordinate their struggles through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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