



TO: ALL CWU MEMBERS IN THE ROYAL MAIL GROUP

Dear Member

UPDATE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND OUR DISPUTE WITH THE ROYAL MAIL

We are writing to all CWU members to update you on the Coronavirus crisis and meetings that have taken place with the Chief Executive, Rico Back, and his senior management team, since we announced our ballot result last week.

The Coronavirus Crisis

CWU members across the country are in contact with the union at all levels expressing their major concerns and anxiety about whether or not it is safe to continue working during the Coronavirus crisis.

We want you to know that we could not have taken a stronger position with Royal Mail over social distancing at work and the lack of personal protective equipment for frontline workers.

The Chief Executive and Royal Mail's senior management team agreed with the union last week, that Royal Mail must enforce Government and UK Public Health advice to the letter. However, we recognise that what is being said at national level by the company is not the reality in far too many offices on the ground. We also acknowledge that Government advice and the advice of the UK Public Health Authorities, has not been clear enough and is creating confusion for workers across the country, most notably for key workers, including those who work in the NHS. In the absence of any conclusive Government or medical advice, the CWU issued at the start of this week, the strongest advice we can to protect our members. For the purpose of complete clarity this advice is set out again below:-

“If any CWU member does not feel safe at work through lack of social distancing or personal protective equipment, they should not work. We will support any individual member or office that takes this position. This is not a call for workers to take unofficial industrial action, but it is a clear statement on the grounds of health and safety that we will support our members.”

The truth is, the situation is different across the country and we are not in a position to give a blanket instruction. This would be wrong and not in the interests of our members and the sustainability of your jobs and the business.

Furthermore, the country's medical professionals are not giving conclusive medical advice on how the virus spreads and whether or not it's safe to work. Therefore, the position the union has taken is the right one at this juncture. We are also asking our representatives at all levels to issue the above mentioned advice.

We can also advise that we are pressing the company to prioritise services as sick absence and self-isolation increases. We have told Royal Mail that it is wrong for them to be delivering door to door items and continuing with absorption during the crisis. We expect the company to move to our position on these points in the next day or so.

Update on our dispute

Since we announced our ballot result last Tuesday, we have had three meetings with the Chief Executive and the senior management team. These meetings have prioritised the Coronavirus crisis, but we have also had discussions on resolving our dispute and our offer for Royal Mail to act as an additional Emergency Service.

The position we have reached to date on the dispute, is as follows:-

- The company has confirmed that they will cease all executive action that had been announced but not yet deployed.
- The company has confirmed that their 2024 Strategy Plan for the future is on hold and that they are now prioritising how we deal with the Coronavirus crisis.
- The company has confirmed their plan to TUPE Parcelforce members into a separate company has now been put on hold.
- The company has confirmed that they are willing to agree a process for talks to resolve all issues in dispute.

The above mentioned should be seen as good progress, although the union want the company to go further on reviewing executive action that has already taken place and we will hold them to the positions above and also press for an extension to our ballot. However, we do recognise that at the moment contingency planning for the Coronavirus crisis will take precedence in our day to day operations.

We want to make it clear that we remain in dispute with the company but we recognise that dealing with the Coronavirus crisis, protecting our members' health and safety and addressing the sustainability of jobs and the business, must be the priority. We have set up regular meetings at national and divisional level to deal with all these issues and we are posting regular updates on Facebook and we will be utilising other communications channels to keep our members informed.

CWU offer to utilise Royal Mail as an additional Emergency Service

We are firmly of the view that subject to prioritising the health and safety of our members at work and the advice we have issued in this letter, it continues to be right for the union to pursue our offer of utilising our members and Royal Mail as an additional Emergency Service.

We continue to press the company to make a public statement on this and we are due to meet a Government Minister on Monday to discuss all the issues contained in this letter. As well as wanting to help the country, our offer is part of a strategy to sustain our members' jobs and the business in the future. We have long believed that Royal Mail should be freeing up our members and empowering them to be part of developing the future with local to local services, in addition to providing daily deliveries through the Universal Service Obligation. In many ways this goes to the heart of our current dispute with the employer.

Without wishing to score political points during these unprecedented times, we should all be concerned that the Government and Royal Mail's failure to seriously pick up our offer thus far, whilst at the same time allowing competitors like Amazon and Uber to take precedence, does not bode well for the future.

It is absolutely right that postal workers across the UK were given key worker status. We now need to build on this and we are asking our representatives and members to work with their local managers and communities to push and enact our offer wherever possible. In the meantime, we will continue to discuss this with the company and the Government and we anticipate that there may be some Government contracts being offered to Royal Mail, specifically relating to urgent work needed to deal with the current crisis.

We will keep you informed of developments on all these issues and we thank you for your continued support.

Stay safe and strong, these are extraordinary times and the union will continue to do what's right for our members and your families.

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
General Secretary



Terry Pullinger
Deputy General Secretary (P)