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MAIL CENTRE REVIEW UPDATE

CWU NORTH WEST/NORTH WALES DIVISION

Dear Colleague

Review of North West operational network

Last week Royal Mail announced what they label as their preferred option for the future of the North West Mail Centre network. In doing so Royal Mail outline some of the changes they say are necessary because of the unprecedented level of change within the industry. They also give as a reason for change their belief that many of our existing buildings are not able to accommodate new machinery.

It is true to say that downstream access has had an impact on revenue and that we are in a declining market. The CWU are fully aware that if current trends continue then some changes will have to be made. But it is our belief that those changes need to happen at an acceptable pace and our members need to be convinced of the need and brought along with this change.

It is only when our people are fully on board will change bring about the designed benefits.

We don't believe we are at that stage and are very disappointed that Royal Mail chose to ignore the CWU and went ahead and prematurely announced their preferred option. They state the reason for this was 'our people wanted to know'. Well actually, we believe you would much prefer to hear a solution that has been jointly agreed with the trade union.

Instead we have Royal Mails preferred option, which in essence does not differ from the position we know they privately adopted on day one of the consultation process.

Labelling it as a £50 million investment in the North West is an insult as it ignores the savings management expect to make as a result of the closures.

Furthermore, the CWU sees changes to the Mail Centre Network as something that has implications nationally and cannot be dealt with piecemeal, region by region. There are implications for the delivery function regarding the ability to fulfil the current USO. This will require a resolution at national level.

The fact is that Royal Mails preferred option in the North West represents the worst deal for our members and is built on strictly financial foundations and all the talk of declining markets and new technology are a mere smoke screen. Furthermore we believe the “biggest is best” and “all your eggs in one basket” pose significant risks to delivered quality of service and will require a whole new Delivery structure. Delivery staff will recall the last change in the Network led to Mail arriving later in the Delivery office and their start times were inevitably changed. In essence delivery staff had no control over the changes to the job they do. This will be the case again under Royal Mails preferred option.

The rationale behind Royal Mail claim of a 30% reduction in traffic over the next few years has never been satisfactorily explained to the CWU. Over the last 3 years Mail has decreased by a total of 7%, just over 2% year on year.

Royal Mail originally told the union that packet traffic would decline by 30% but eventually, in the face of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary conceded that it is expected to rise by 20%.

There is only one site that new technology may not fit into and that's Liverpool because of its multi storey status, and the union are currently working on a cost effective solution to keep a Mail Centre Liverpool. This must form the basis of the CWU s preferred option.

The suggestion that Bolton cannot accommodate new technology is simply not true, particularly as they propose to remove Farnworth Deliveries from the building. Bolton is a relatively modern site, only one year older than Manchester Mail Centre and the CWU believes has an important role to play, strategically placed in-between the two main centres Preston and Manchester. We believe Royal Mails preferred option to close Bolton is driven simply by the value of the building as a disposable asset.

The CWU has a solution that we believe takes us some way towards Royal Mails preferred option. One that acknowledges changes to the market but changes that we have built in safeguards for our people.

For instance our members from Crewe are being asked to travel up to 70 miles a day to Warrington, a site not accessible by public transport. We know you will agree that this is unacceptable. In fact the prospect of such a move will force some members to leave the job completely. A position this trade union has successfully fought against over the years and is a principle we will not relinquish under these proposals. Acceptable solutions for the members in Crewe must be found.

It is accepted that both the Stockport site at Green Lane and the Oldham Mail Centre site in Hamilton Street will remain open. Green Lane will house the Stockport CDO currently in Exchange Street and the delivery function in Oldham will remain on the current Mail Centre site.

Removing the processing function will leave the Oldham & Stockport buildings significantly underutilised. The CWU proposal seeks to maximise the use of this space and keep as many jobs in the locations as possible whilst minimising the risk to delivered quality of service.

The CWU position is one that accepts change is coming, but that change needs to be done carrying our members with us. We believe this can only be done at an agreed pace whilst delivering real benefits to our members.

The Union nationally are in the process of trying to secure an agreement which will deliver the best possible solution for everybody. In the meantime we urge you not to be pressurised into taking part in any preference exercise until there is an agreement to move forward.

We trust you support the CWU in this endeavour. We will be keeping you informed of our progress. One thing is for sure, we cannot allow Royal Mail to merely dictate change we believe will be detrimental to our short and long term futures.