



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Department for Business, Energy &
Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

Dave Ward
General Secretary
Communication Workers Union
150 The Broadway
Wimbledon
SW19 1RX

29 April 2020

Dear Dave,

Thank you for your letter yesterday and for making the time to talk through your concerns about Royal Mail's announcement to temporarily reduce its letter delivery service.

As I said on our call, this is a temporary change in service standards. The Government has not cleared the change; it is not our role to do so. Ministers do not have a role in the operational business of Royal Mail other than to set the overall service obligations in its role as the Universal Service Provider in the Postal Services Act 2011.

The regulatory conditions that require Royal Mail to deliver letters 6 days a week as part of the universal postal service also provide that Royal Mail is not required to sustain these services without interruption, suspension or restriction in the event of an emergency.

Ofcom has acknowledged in this context that the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency situation. Accordingly, the regulatory framework allows Royal Mail to modify its operations, including reducing the frequency of the delivery of letters, without formal authorisation, if they consider it necessary to respond to the challenges they face in sustaining the universal postal service in light of the crisis.

On the question of any longer term changes to service standards, there is a clear and transparent process for how this would be considered. Section 34 of the Postal Services Act gives Ofcom the power to review whether the minimum requirements of the universal postal service continue to reflect the reasonable needs of users of postal services in the United Kingdom. If such a review were to be submitted, the BEIS Secretary of State would have to decide whether to propose changes to the minimum requirements, which would need to be made through secondary legislation and agreed by Parliament.

I hope that my comments will reassure you, your Union colleagues and the postal workers that you represent.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Scully', positioned above the printed name.

PAUL SCULLY MP

Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Labour Markets

Minister for London