



## Business and Trade Committee

Monday, 16 February 2026

**Alistair Cochrane**  
**Interim CEO**  
**Royal Mail Group**  
**[By email]**

**Cc: Blair McDougall MP**  
**Minister for Small Business and Economic Transformation**  
**Department for Business and Trade**

**Cc: Melanie Dawes**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Ofcom**

**Subject: Royal Mail deliveries**

Dear Alistair,

I write to raise significant concerns about the quality of postal service being provided by Royal Mail.

You will be well aware of the recent failures in service that have been reported to the press and to Members of Parliament. In recent days, the Royal Mail website has listed well over 100 postcodes across the UK at risk of service disruption due to “local issues such as high levels of sick absence, resourcing, or other local factors”.<sup>1</sup> This chaos has continued into mid-February, well beyond the predictable pressures of the Christmas period.

Alongside this, concerns have been repeatedly raised that Royal Mail appears to be prioritising parcels over letters. This Committee’s predecessor concluded as much in a report published in March 2023.<sup>2</sup> I am aware of a statement issued by Royal Mail which claims that, beyond “recognised contingency plans” to prevent unsafe buildups of parcels in delivery offices, Ofcom has investigated and found no evidence to support these allegations. I would like to seek your categorical assurance on this point.

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Mail, [Service updates](#) [accessed 12 February 2026]

<sup>2</sup> Business and Trade Committee, [Royal Mail](#), HC 1045, 17 March 2023



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There have also been suggestions that in some cases Royal Mail deliberately chooses not to deliver letters until a “batch” of mail is ready to be delivered to that address. This alleged practice of “batching” letters, if true, clearly risks customers missing important time-sensitive information such as medical appointments, as well as impacting upon Royal Mail’s delivery performance.

In October 2025, Ofcom announced a fine of £21 million on Royal Mail for failing to meet its First and Second Class delivery targets in the 2024/25 financial year. Royal Mail only delivered 77% of First Class mail and 92.5% of Second Class mail on time, well short of the 93% and 98.5% targets respectively that applied to such deliveries. This was the third time Ofcom had found the company in breach of its regulatory obligations in as many years.<sup>3</sup>

The Postal Services Minister, to whom this letter is copied, told the House on 4 February that he had made clear to Royal Mail “the way they are operating is not good enough and that they are on notice”. He also stated that he had received on 3 February “an absolute commitment that it will work to deliver the best possible service to customers”.<sup>4</sup> Ofcom has said Royal Mail must “urgently” publish and implement a credible plan that delivers significant and continuous improvement, and that in the absence of this, further fines are likely.<sup>5</sup> As part of its interventions to improve Royal Mail’s service, in July 2025 Ofcom also set Royal Mail new enforceable “backstop targets” so that 99% of mail has to be delivered no more than two days late.<sup>6</sup>

To provide the Committee with confidence, I would be grateful for answers to the following questions:

1. In the year 2025/26 to date, what is Royal Mail’s performance against Ofcom’s new backstop target of 99% of mail being delivered no more than two days late?
2. Can you categorically assure the Committee that Royal Mail does not operate a general policy of prioritising parcel deliveries over letters?
3. In relation to the contingency policy of prioritising parcels to prevent congestion in delivery offices:

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<sup>3</sup> Ofcom, [Ofcom fines Royal Mail £21m for missing its 2024/25 delivery targets](#), 15 October 2025

<sup>4</sup> HC Deb 4 Feb 2026, [c194WH](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ofcom, [Ofcom fines Royal Mail £21m for missing its 2024/25 delivery targets](#), 15 October 2025

<sup>6</sup> Ofcom, [Reforming the postal service so it delivers what people need](#), 10 July 2025



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- a. What percentage of letters delivered so far in 2025/26 have been deprioritised as a result of this policy?
  - b. How does this compare to the percentages of letters deprioritised in 2023/24 and 2024/25?
  - c. How does Royal Mail track the impact of this policy on the achievement of its First and Second Class delivery targets?
  - d. Does Royal Mail have plans to invest in delivery office infrastructure so that this policy will over time become unnecessary?
4. Are there any circumstances in which Royal Mail deliberately delays delivery of mail items in order to reduce the number of separate deliveries?
  5. When does Royal Mail intend to publish the improvement plan Ofcom described as "urgent" in October 2025?
  6. What specific, measurable commitments on service improvement did Royal Mail provide in the meeting on 3 February referred to by Minister McDougall?
  7. What financial provision has Royal Mail made for future penalties imposed by Ofcom for missed delivery targets, and what is the anticipated impact of this outlay on investment and service levels?

I would be grateful for a response by Monday 2 March.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP**  
**Chair of the Business and Trade Committee**