# MPs scrutinise major shake-up to UK postal service delivery days



Proposed changes to the UK's Universal Postal Service (UPS) are under scrutiny this week as Members of Parliament gather in Westminster to evaluate the implications for both urban and rural communities. The UPS guarantees a uniform postal service across the UK, yet the latest proposals could redefine it significantly. One major point of discussion is the suggestion that while First Class mail will continue to be delivered six days a week, Second Class letters may only be delivered on alternate weekdays, excluding Saturdays altogether.

Royal Mail has called for the postal regulator Ofcom to re-evaluate existing regulations that prevent it from offering parcel tracking for Universal Service customers, describing the absence of tracking as a "hygiene factor" in an increasingly competitive parcel market. According to the company, the current restrictions no longer align with customer expectations, placing the Universal Service at risk of becoming obsolete in the digital age.

The Scottish Affairs Committee, which is overseeing the discussions, aims to assess how these changes might adversely impact remote and rural communities, which already face considerable postal delays. On 11 June, MPs will gather to examine testimonies from various stakeholders, including consumer advocacy groups and representatives from Ofcom and Royal Mail. Grace Remmington, Head of Postal Advocacy at Consumer Scotland, and Stacey Dingwall, from the Federation of Small Businesses, will provide insight into how the proposed changes could exacerbate existing postal issues faced by those in less accessible areas.

Ofcom has expressed that the proposed adjustments, aimed at alleviating some of the financial burdens on Royal Mail, are essential for long-term sustainability. The regulator suggests that the current delivery network is proving financially unviable due to a marked decline in mail volumes. It estimates that the proposed changes could help Royal Mail save between £250 million and £425 million annually. While Royal Mail would still be mandated to maintain First Class deliveries, the easing of Second Class delivery obligations signals a significant shift.

The context for these discussions is further complicated by Royal Mail's recent ownership change. Daniel Křetínský's acquisition through a £5.3 billion deal marks a historic shift, as it is the first time in 500 years that Royal Mail is not British-owned. Křetínský's strategy includes commitments to uphold the Universal Service Obligation while modernising the operation to compete more effectively in the parcel sector. However, concerns linger about the potential erosion of service provisions, particularly in rural areas where businesses and residents are already vulnerable due to logistical challenges.

Legislative hearings will also explore how the proposed changes to postal delivery might not only influence financial performance but also affect service quality. MPs aim to scrutinise Royal Mail's operational differences between urban and rural delivery approaches and how these reforms could potentially lead to increased costs for consumers. The awareness that rural communities might be disproportionately affected by these changes has prompted advocacy groups to call for measures that would safeguard their access to reliable postal services.

As discussions continue, observers will be watching to see if the proposed changes will ultimately streamline operations without compromising the Universal Service's foundational goals—providing affordable, equitable postal service across the UK. As the landscape of postal services evolves under financial pressures and ownership shifts, maintaining this balance will be paramount.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles/38827-mps-set-to-check-out-changes-to-mail-rules), [[4]](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/consultation-review-of-the-universal-postal-service-and-other-postal-regulation/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles/38827-mps-set-to-check-out-changes-to-mail-rules), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/bac10c52-16b6-4542-82f9-f5371915a1ed), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/765f3fa9-1bbe-4985-b536-9a5ac613d6e4)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-ofcom-proposes-changes-royal-mails-obligations-2025-01-30/), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-second-class-mail-deliveries-could-be-scrapped-saturdays-2024-09-05/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles/38827-mps-set-to-check-out-changes-to-mail-rules), [[7]](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/nalc-calls-on-ofcom-to-safeguard-rural-postal-services.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles/38827-mps-set-to-check-out-changes-to-mail-rules), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/bac10c52-16b6-4542-82f9-f5371915a1ed)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles/38827-mps-set-to-check-out-changes-to-mail-rules> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/bac10c52-16b6-4542-82f9-f5371915a1ed> - Daniel Křetínský has acquired Royal Mail through a £5.3bn deal, marking the first time in 500 years that the service is out of British ownership. To secure the deal, Křetínský's EP Group made commitments to the UK government, including a 'golden share' giving ministers veto power over changes in tax status and headquarters. Concessions were also made to unions, including a 10% dividend share and promises to align employment terms for recent recruits with more experienced staff. Royal Mail has faced significant challenges, including strikes and a declining market share. Křetínský aims to invest in the parcel market while adhering to the Universal Service Obligation. However, concerns remain over the potential erosion of this obligation, especially in rural areas. The golden share will ensure the UK's control over Royal Mail's headquarters and tax status, albeit with some exceptions. Křetínský’s plan includes maintaining the principle of universal service while focusing on making Royal Mail more competitive, though his promise to hold GLS for only three years raises the possibility of substantial future changes.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-ofcom-proposes-changes-royal-mails-obligations-2025-01-30/> - Ofcom, the UK's regulatory authority for broadcasting, telecommunications, and postal services, has proposed altering Royal Mail's delivery obligations. Key changes include switching second-class letter deliveries to alternate weekdays instead of Saturdays. Currently, Royal Mail is bound by law to deliver letters from Monday to Saturday and parcels from Monday to Friday, with two delivery speeds: first-class for next day and second-class for within three days. These proposed revisions aim to help Royal Mail reduce costs by £250 million to £425 million annually. This comes as Royal Mail continues its efforts to modernise and focus more on parcels. Despite these changes, first-class letter deliveries will still occur six days a week, and the price cap on second-class stamps will be maintained. Ofcom indicates that maintaining the existing network is financially unsustainable due to significantly reduced mail volumes.
4. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/consultation-review-of-the-universal-postal-service-and-other-postal-regulation/> - Following extensive engagement with stakeholders and consumer research, Ofcom is proposing a package of reforms to the Universal Service Obligation (USO) on Royal Mail and corresponding changes to Royal Mail’s obligation to provide access to its letter network. The consultation includes proposals to remove the requirement on Royal Mail to deliver Second Class letters six days per week and allow it to deliver such letters on alternate weekdays (Monday to Friday). This change reflects the fact that postal users no longer need two six-day-per-week services to meet their needs and is intended to support the financial sustainability of the service. The consultation also maintains the requirements for delivery of First Class letters, which will continue to be delivered next day, six days per week, and maintains the current parcels USO specification.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/765f3fa9-1bbe-4985-b536-9a5ac613d6e4> - The UK's communications regulator, Ofcom, has fined Royal Mail £10.5 million for failing to meet its delivery targets during the last fiscal year, nearly doubling the £5.6 million fine from the previous year. Royal Mail only delivered 74.7% of first-class mail on time and 92.7% of second-class mail within three days, significantly below the targets of 93% and 98.5%, respectively. This fine comes at a critical time for Royal Mail, which is being acquired by Czech billionaire Daniel Křetínský for £5.3 billion. Křetínský faces the challenge of modernising a company that has struggled with worker disputes and adapting to the rise of online shopping. Royal Mail is implementing changes to improve service, including a proposal to reduce second-class deliveries to just three days a week due to declining demand, aiming to save costs and improve efficiency.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-second-class-mail-deliveries-could-be-scrapped-saturdays-2024-09-05/> - Royal Mail might discontinue second-class letter deliveries on Saturdays as part of proposed reforms by UK postal regulator Ofcom. The aim is to secure the future of the universal postal service amidst declining letter volumes. Royal Mail, owned by International Distribution Services (IDS), which recently saw a takeover bid from Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky, has long sought changes to its service obligations. Ofcom noted a significant decline in letter-sending and substantial financial losses for Royal Mail. Research indicated public demand for a next-day first-class service six days a week, while most letters are not urgent. Ofcom suggested that ceasing Saturday second-class deliveries would enhance efficiency and allow resource reallocation to parcel services. IDS CEO Martin Seidenberg emphasized the urgency of reforms due to the drop in letter volumes. Ofcom plans to consult on detailed proposals next year, aiming for a decision by summer. IDS shares rose 1% following the announcement.
7. <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/nalc-calls-on-ofcom-to-safeguard-rural-postal-services.html> - This week, we urged the Office of Communications (OFCOM) to prioritise the protection of rural postal services in response to its review of the universal service obligation. In response to the consultation, we clarified that rural communities must not be sidelined in the proposed reforms. Thousands of parish and town councils are located in non-urban areas, and a reliable, accessible postal service is essential for residents, businesses, and local democracy. We emphasised that Royal Mail must remain accountable and that competition from private mail providers should be maintained to drive service quality. OFCOM must acknowledge the risks to rural users in its proposals, actively protect these communities, and uphold minimum delivery standards. In addition, we are calling on the government to back its commitment to the Sub Post Office Network, including Post Office Local and Outreach branches, by delivering realistic and sustained financial support. Finally, we reiterated our firm belief in maintaining the universality principle that a letter of a certain size can be sent to any UK address for a single, fixed price, regardless of distance.