

BT, Royal Mail and Openreach workers begin countrywide strike

One of the biggest strikes of the year began on Thursday morning with [Royal Mail](#), BT and [Openreach](#) workers walking out over pay and conditions.

Members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) are embroiled in long-running rows with the companies and have already taken strike action in recent weeks.

A picket line is in action at the Royal Mail delivery office in [Brighton](#), Sussex, with other members protesting outside the TUC [Congress](#).

Union leaders at the Congress are set to stage a protest in support of the CWU strikes.

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One protester in Brighton is Tom Coles-Rogers, who has worked at Royal Mail for five years.

He said: "It's not just about pay but the terms and conditions – these changes they want to bring in are trying to make Royal Mail unrecognisable and make as much profit as possible.

"This job is a public service and I'm happy to do that and don't mind going out in the rain. When I first started people told me 'work hard and you'll have a job here for life' but not any more."

The CWU accused Royal Mail chief executive Simon Thompson of side-stepping talks aimed at avoiding strike action.

The union said that in recent weeks, relations between worker and employer have deteriorated, with Royal Mail serving legal notice that it was withdrawing from existing agreements with the CWU, as well as threatening to cut 10,000 jobs following strike action last week.

CWU general secretary [Dave Ward](#) said: "Instead of sitting down and sorting out his problems like an adult, Simon Thompson chose to be a vanishing act instead.

"When someone like him earns £62,750 a month and can give himself six-figure bonuses, it is a disgrace that he sees it fit to disrespect our members in such a way.

"Simon can't dodge the reality that a mood of rebellion is sweeping postal workers who won't accept Thompson's hostile and bizarre behaviour.

"Postal workers go above and beyond every day and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We won't be backing down until we get just that."

A Royal Mail spokesperson said: "On Friday, 14 October, we announced losses of £219 million in the first half of the year.

"This once again demonstrates the urgent need for Royal Mail

to change.

“Further strike action would materially increase our losses for the full year and may necessitate further operational restructuring and job losses.

“Four weeks have passed since we invited the CWU to enter talks with Acas to resolve the change and pay dispute.

“We once again urge the CWU to join us in Acas talks.

“This is the only way to reach a resolution and secure Royal Mail’s future and jobs for our people.

“We apologise to our customers for the inconvenience the CWU’s continued strike action will cause. We are doing all we can to minimise delays and keep people, businesses and the country connected.”

Royal Mail said the CWU’s statement on Simon Thompson’s salary was incorrect, pointing out the correct figure was £525,000.