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**Royal Mail - Mk 4 Parcel York Container – Next Steps in the Phased Introduction and Roll-out: (Design, Health, Safety, Ergonomic and Training Aspects):**

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

LTB 103/2017 issued on 22 February 2017 provided Branches and Representatives with a detailed report on the history and development of the Mk4 York Container and joint work with earlier Prototypes since 2011, leading up to the Trial of 182 Prototype Units last year in Swindon, Oxford, Reading and HCN, through to the trial's successful conclusions based on positive all round feedback.

The RM Head of Container Equipment, the Royal Mail Lead Ergonomist, the Royal Mail Delivery Design Principle Engineer, Project Lead and Automation Team along with the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department and CWU ASRs in trial offices monitored the trial equipment, attending regular meetings on site and participating in weekly conference calls as well as surveying staff for feedback which was very positive regarding this new concept container during the trial.

LTB 519/17 issued on 26 September 2017 detailed the first phase of the roll-out on a limited and controlled basis. It was discussed and generally agreed beforehand that rather than initiate a national roll-out of large numbers of these new containers at that stage, that as the Mk4 York was a completely new and redesigned unit in comparison to the York containers Mk's 1, 2 and 3 (including the ALP Sleeve), that the initial batch should be smaller in number to enable wider testing within a limited number of sites to further prove the concept and design. This was primarily in order to test the design concept, durability and components of the Mk4 and this phase of the roll-out proved invaluable.

During the trial, a number of relatively minor design, manufacturing and build quality issues were noted on the containers through the trial, and subsequently, the manufacturer has addressed all of these. The key design changes recommended by RM/CWU included a new modified gate locking system with modified tough plastic lock parts on the upper gates and new reinforced gate metal flaps; rivets instead of stitching on panels; improved, reinforced hinges; an additional lifting strap for ease of lifting and locking of the gate into its stowed position; a new gate locking hook on the side; new reshaped gate metal flaps plus tough plastic locking parts and additional cross tubes added on the base frame to reinforce the structure. These modifications have been thoroughly jointly assessed and improved the units which also fully met with all of the safety, ergonomic and operational requirements. The

manufacturer also conducted extensive durability testing, which has yielded wholly positive results.

During the phase 1 roll-out, some further minor improvements in the design, build quality and components were identified and further improvement modifications undertaken in conjunction with the manufacturer.

The background to the Mk4 York is that there had been no fundamental change to the York container design for 20 years, and although the basic design is still sound, robust and very reliable, it was designed originally for mail bags and letter trays, and there are now increasing numbers of small parcels/packets and strapped bundles in the operation along with the introduction of Parcels Automation Machines and York Tippers.

It was identified that existing York sleeves were presenting problems with these new traffic streams, e.g. bundles sliding between the existing York container bars and pushing out or bulging the strapped front of the existing containers, resulting in safety and transportation problems, leading to increasing numbers of complaints from members and CWU Reps.

Additionally, during trials of the first Parcel Automation Machine at Swindon Mail Centre, it quickly became apparent that parcels were becoming stuck in the standard ALP Sleeves, used in Mk 1, 2 and 3 York containers which resulted in inefficient tipping into the machine and high levels of trapped items requiring manual unloading and feeding.

Consequently, the M4 York has been designed specifically for small parcels and strapped bundles. It can be used for letter trays, but existing Yorks remain more suitable for these. As a smooth sided, non-sleeved container, it tips cleanly when used on the Parcel Automation Machines.

The Trial and first phase roll-out have confirmed that this container is fully fit for purpose, and the Mark 4 York will now therefore be adopted as a new standard type York container, to be used in appropriate mail streams alongside existing Yorks, Mk 1, 2 & 3 of which there are circa 550,000 in Royal Mail Service.

Following the trials and testing, 10,000 Mk4 York containers were ordered and purchased from the current York container manufacturer and supplier, Hartwell's, with the majority held in store awaiting phase 2 of the roll-out.

In phase 1 of the roll-out, 2,500 Mk4 York containers were put into service in the following 4 automation sites; Swindon MC, Greenford MC, HCN MC, Chelmsford MC from 16th October last year for full use on Parcel Automation Machines as well as transfers to and from Delivery Offices and Collection Hubs in those Mail Centre catchment areas. In addition, Jubilee MC, Leeds MC, Medway MC and Bristol MC also received Mk4 Yorks from the 4 main phase one MC sites, for use on site and return of automated mail back to the 4 main phase 1 MC Offices. These MC sites did not use the containers for inward transfers to DOs in their areas. Over this period the containers were used in closed loop operations to/from these Mail Centres.

The next stage is to gradually phase in the remaining 7,500 Mk4 York containers, into the Royal Mail operation through automation, manual operation, stowing, transportation, loading, unloading, nesting etc., through a constant use basis.

The Mk4 Yorks have been and will continue to be used on Parcel/Package Automation traffic streams to achieve maximum benefits and in wider use. The purchase of a smaller initial number and utilising them in a small number of offices has allowed Royal Mail to learn more about how these containers perform in greater numbers, in constant use, over a longer period.

The necessary safety documentation was put in place prior to the roll-out of phase 1 and the mandatory requirement remains that all those using the Mk4 York container must be appropriately trained.

The Royal Mail Container Management Team and CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department have been jointly monitoring performance and robustness of the Mk4's in automation and importantly in manual operation, concentrating not only on efficiency but on robustness, safety and ergonomics within all operations and then feeding back to the supplier with any issues.

CWU Area Health and Safety Representatives (ASRs) will continue to be fully involved and will play an important role in the monitoring of the containers during this the next phase 2 roll-out, as they have during the trial and phase 1 roll-out periods and now as the containers are rolled out across more Parcel Automation Offices. ASRs will monitor and review the container's use, checking robustness and safe condition and use, within the automation and manual operations, feeding back into the ongoing national review process. There will be effective meaningful involvement and consultation between local management and CWU Area and Workplace Health & Safety Representatives on the deployment, training, safe use and monitoring of the containers.

Staff, Workplace Coaches and CWU Area and Workplace Health and Safety Reps will be fully trained on the equipment, on its safe operation and standard operating procedures. Health and Safety is of paramount importance to both Royal Mail and the CWU and as such Safe Systems of Work and Standard Operating Procedures will be kept under review throughout deployment by the Royal Mail Assets Containers National Team and the CWU Health Safety & Environment Department.

The agreed next phase is to roll out the remaining 7,500 Mk4 York containers currently in storage. The RM Automation Team are geared up ready to complete the MK4 York training of the workforce in the additional eight Parcel Automation sites ready for Phase 2 deployment, working towards full deployment in 16 Parcel Automation sites which will allow the RM Containers Team to release the remainder of the 10,000 Mk4 York containers into the network system and so enabling the Mk4's to be used in the automation streams which it was primarily designed for and where it gives its best returns, reducing the manual streams overall.

During Phase 2, the current four Parcel Automation Offices - Swindon MC, Greenford MC, Home Counties North MC and Chelmsford MC, and other future automated Mail centres will move to a full Mk4 York use, including to and from collection hubs in those areas. These four MCs will then send Mk4 Yorks to the already circulating four Parcel Automation Plants at Leeds MC, Jubilee MC, Bristol MC and Medway MC. The following additional eight Parcel Automation Offices will now also go live with Mk4 York containers at all sites deploying Parcel sortation machines. These plants will only use and return Mk4 Yorks with automated mail back to the four original current sites rather than fully using them in their areas. This will make best use of the Mk4 Yorks keeping them in relatively closed loops. Mk4 York training and deployment is now scheduled and imminent in the offices listed above.

If any defects or damage is identified and found on the containers, there is a damaged/repair process that has been developed (see attached) which must be followed.

#### **Attachments:**

- Joint Statement on Roll-out & ASR Involvement
- Mk4 York SSoW
- Mk4 York Out of Service Process
- Mk4 York Training Brief
- LTB 103/17

- LTB 519/17

Note: The CWU/HQ Postal Department and PEC agreed the introduction and operational deployment of the Mk4 York with a joint statement in LTB 357/17.

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**