



Melanie Smith  
Chief Executive  
Ocado

Melanie.smith@ocado.com

Cabinet Office  
Perceval House  
14/16 Uxbridge Road  
London W5 2HL

 : @\_petermason  
Tel: 0208 825 6833

**Email** : masonpe@ealing.gov.uk

14 September 2021

Dear Melanie,

We met earlier this week with a number of Ocado Zoom delivery drivers based at your depot in Stirling Road, Acton, which falls within the borough of Ealing. We came away from that meeting deeply concerned with what we had been told in regards to the threats to the employment of many of these workers; the way in which their earnings have been substantially reduced in recent months; and the manner in which existing drivers are being undercut by the use of a new agency which pays still lower wages.

Despite the vital role that these drivers have played during the pandemic, continuing to deliver essential food and other items through the toughest lockdowns, their treatment since has been unacceptable.

We want Ealing to be a great place to work, where good jobs come with decent pay and guaranteed employment rights, including union recognition. What we appear to be seeing at Stirling Road is the opposite of that – the worst excesses of a gig economy where classifying workers as independent contractors is used as a means to circumvent providing those rights. We believe that these drivers have a strong claim to be limb (b) workers with a right to the pay and protection that comes with this status.

These delivery drivers have played an essential part in the success that your company has experienced during the pandemic. They deserve to be treated far better than this. We are very concerned to learn that agency workers are being brought in on substantially lower pay and worse conditions than existing drivers, which is both a poor deal for the new workers and undermines your dedicated workforce who the business' success was built upon. Your drivers have built their lives around the expectation of a certain level of pay and cannot afford to agree to



new contracts via an agency that would leave them with thousands of pounds less each year.

In relation to your green credentials, it was also made clear that these staff had, at their own expense, invested in electric vehicles on the basis that they would receive appropriate recompense so that they could afford the higher up-front investment in such vehicles. Your proposals, as they currently stand as we understand it, do not address the investment they have made. Furthermore, it was clear on-site that company vehicles were all run on fossil fuels. All of the electric charging points installed as a condition of planning approval were blocked with fossil fuel vehicles so could not even be utilised by drivers who would wish to recharge their electric vehicles on site. This was very concerning.

To help resolve these issues and to ensure that these key workers are treated properly, we are asking that you intervene in the situation at Stirling Road. Most urgently, this should include recognition of the IWGB union, who represent many of the delivery drivers at this depot, and committing to sitting down with the drivers and their union representatives in order to understand and address their concerns. It seems that direct dialogue with the workforce has been very limited or non-existent, and this clearly needs to change urgently.

We very much hope that you will take urgent steps to ensure that these workers, who have given loyal and essential service to your business during very challenging times, are treated fairly and have their rights and earnings secured. We understand that you have set a deadline of 4 October for all drivers to have moved over to the new agency under the disputed new contracts. We would ask that Ocado meet with the IWGB and feed back to us on the outcome of those negotiations well ahead of this date.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Mason".

Cllr Peter Mason  
Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Mahfouz".

Cllr Bassam Mahfouz  
Cabinet Member for  
Decent Living Incomes