

# Oppose Vauxhall Luton plant closure! Defeat Unite's alliance with Stellantis and the Labour government! For a global fightback!

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Stellantis announced Wednesday its planned closure of the Luton Vauxhall plant in England at the cost of 1,100 jobs, transferring production to the company's Ellesmere Port site which is dedicated exclusively to manufacturing electric vehicles.

This brutal restructuring agenda must be met with a combined fight by Vauxhall workers at both plants, and a coordinated strategy to unite with Stellantis workers in Europe and the US against the global jobs massacre being conducted by the company.

The potential exists for a powerful fightback to defend workers' jobs against the profit dictates of billionaire shareholders. Such a fight offers the only viable strategy. Its first step is launching a rank-and-file opposition to the corporatist alliance of Unite, the Labour government and Stellantis and their joint defence of company profits and increased competitiveness.

Workers at the Luton plant were delivered the news of Stellantis' plans to cast them on the scrap heap during on-site meetings conducted by management representatives. Those on morning and afternoon shift were handed letters informing them they could go home to "process" the "surprise" news. A worker who attended one meeting told the *World Socialist Web Site* that no-one from Unite was even present as workers were thrown to the wolves.

This was a calculated move by Unite and company officials to enforce a sense of isolation at Vauxhall's Luton plant and to present the scorched earth policy by Stellantis as a *fait accompli*.

Unite's response to the devastating news of the closure and the loss of more than a thousand jobs was a two-sentence statement by an anonymous "Unite spokesperson"! The statement declared the closure "a slap in the face for our Luton members", claiming: "We stand ready to support our members in doing whatever we can

to ensure that the historical vehicle manufacturing is maintained in Luton and we call on the government to do the same."

But Unite proposed no action to mobilise workers against the company's plans.

The reason for Unite's prostration is clear. Not only do they support the closure plans, which they knew about in advance, but they have already committed to work with Stellantis to restructure the company's operations.

Proof came yesterday in a letter from Stellantis to employees announcing a "Collective Consultation" with its "trade union partners" to "support employees in choosing the right option for them", i.e., imposing the company's demands for transfer, redundancy or "retraining".

A press statement by Stellantis went further still, featuring the following words in bold at the top: "Consultation launched with employees and union partners to complement existing small electric light commercial vehicles (LCV) in Ellesmere Port with battery-electric medium LCVs, **K0\***, transferred from Luton plant."

Unite officials will be working with the company every step of the way. They are fully embedded with Stellantis's plans, working as joint business partners against their own members. This is the real slap in the face for Vauxhall workers.

Unite's claim that the Starmer Labour government can be pressured to save jobs is a fraud. Labour will do no such thing. It is a government dedicated to upholding the interests of the corporations, banks and financial markets.

Labour has in fact welcomed Stellantis's decision to shift investment to Ellesmere Port. Labour MPs have joined with Unite to present the cost-cutting and downsizing operation by Stellantis, achieved through the

closure of Luton, as merely an unfortunate event.

For more than a month after Stellantis chief executive Carlos Tavares announced the closure threat at Vauxhall's two plants, Unite maintained a guilty silence

Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary, issued a belated statement on November 17 described as "a warning shot" to Tavares. Graham had threatened that any closure announcement "will be met with the collective strength of Unite's members who will have my full, unequivocal backing and the whole weight of the union behind them."

Unite's threats have been exposed as worthless. The union's collusion with Stellantis confirms the warning made by WSWS that Graham's statements were aimed solely at pre-empting demands for action by Vauxhall workers.

Graham's promotion of talks between the Labour government and Stellantis over ZEV (zero vehicle mandate) concessions is equally worthless. Speaking in parliament yesterday, Labour's Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said it was a "black day for Luton" but the government had already done "everything we possibly can to prevent this closure from happening".

Stellantis has made clear that even if a deal is finally reached over ZEV concessions, it reserves the right to restructure its operations and eliminate jobs en masse. There are no "shared interests" between workers and the owners of Stellantis, or any other auto company.

Unite's well-paid officials are opposed to any fight which challenges the "right" of the corporations to exploit workers in the interests of capitalist profits. But this is the fight that must be undertaken by the rank-and-file, charting an independent course of struggle against the never-ending race to the bottom.

The brutal restructuring at Vauxhall in Britain is part of a global jobs massacre by Stellantis and other transnational car producers. In the US, Stellantis has carried out more than 4,000 lay-offs since September, and is cutting more than 12,000 jobs in Italy. Earlier this year, it closed its giant engine plant in Bielsko-Biala, Poland after scrapping plans to build a second EV model there.

Last week, Ford announced plans to eliminate 4,000 jobs in Europe, including 800 in Britain and 2,900 in Germany. VW has announced it will close three plants in Germany and cut wages by 20 percent, while Nissan is slashing 9,000 jobs globally and Tesla announced earlier this year it would lay off 10 percent of its global workforce. US and European car producers are competing against China over who will dominate the EV market.

This is part of the turn to protectionist and trade war measures that are leading to world war.

According to Stellantis's timetable, the Luton plant will be scaled down to a single shift from 2025 and cease production from the second quarter with future production based on electric vans concentrated at Ellesmere Port in 2026. The Luton plant which was to switch EV production next year will have the production of its petrol and diesel vans transferred to France.

Workers must take the initiative. A fight against the closure at Vauxhall—uniting car workers at Luton, Ellesmere Port and France—must be waged as a coordinated fightback across national borders. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Rank-and-file committees should be established at Luton and Ellesmere Port to draw up a statement opposing the closure, defending all jobs, and formulating demands to address the ongoing attacks on pay, terms and conditions. The International Workers Alliance for Rank-and-File Committees pledges to support such a fight and urges Vauxhall workers to make contact. We propose the following demands:

- Oppose the closure of Vauxhall Luton! No sacrifice of jobs, pay or conditions to maintain production in the UK. Unite car workers worldwide!
- No two-tier workforce! All temporary workers must be provided a permanent contract on equal pay, terms and conditions.
- EV technology for workers not billionaire shareholders! The reduced labour time expended on EVs must be used to shorten the working day and to increase pay, compensating for decades of declining wages.
- Place Vauxhall-Stellantis under public ownership! The auto companies must be nationalised under workers' democratic control. Profits must be used to provide secure and well-paid employment, research and development.
- Vehicle design and production determined by car workers and scientists not hedge fund managers and bankers. Production for social need not private profit!



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