

No. 213/24

18th June 2024

TO: All T&FS Branches

Dear Colleagues

Your Voice in the Workplace – June 2024

Please find attached the June Workplace Bulletin.

We will be sending you out a limited print run (approx. 10 per cent of branch membership) of this Edition, which should reach you by the end of this week for distribution to your reps to take into workplaces.

You also have the link to print immediate copies and/or to print off more copies.

It is crucial that branches are distributing the monthly bulletin in every workplace. The purpose is to ensure members are receiving written content from the union directly into their workplaces, so your role in that process is integral.

Thank you for your support and please contact us with your feedback on the Bulletin.

<https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/08121-your-voice-BTG-06-v5-AR-2up-1-1.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Karen Rose
Deputy General Secretary (T&FS)

Chris Webb
Head of Communications

NEW CWU REPRESENTATIVES ELECTED AT GXO

They will represent GXO drivers and warehouse workers serving BT's supply chain.

Andy Murray and Hayley Robbins are, respectively, the Northern and Southern Transport Hubs CWU representatives, while Tom Weighell will represent processing/loading members at the company's Northallerton, North Yorkshire, site..

Hayley, who works out of the company's Bracknell depot, told Your Voice: "Thanks very much to members and I'm looking forward to the role and to helping colleagues."

Tom Weighell will represent processing/loading members at the company's Northallerton, North Yorkshire, site.

"It's good that they've now got direct input from drivers who know firsthand what we do and what we're up against."

And her Northern Hubs counterpart Andy Murray told us that he is also very pleased to have been elected, saying: "Thanks to the members and I'll certainly do my best to support them in this role."

Andy, who has worked for the company since 1989, came over to what was BT Supply Chain four years ago and is a Class 1 driver.

As well as covering the units in northern England, he will also be responsible for representing members working out of the Northern Ireland and Scotland depots at Mallusk (Antrim) and Newhouse (West Lothian) respectively.

"I'm keen to get started and work with the



Hayley Robbins



Andy Murray

other reps and the CWU leadership on behalf of the workers," he says.

CWU national officer Tracey Fussey said: "It's great to get our new reps elected and the first thing we've got planned is to meet up and set out our programme of work over the coming period. We've already started discussing arrangements with the company and I think it's true to say we are all eager to get started."

"With pay having recently been settled, with an 84 per cent Yes vote for the deal which sees increases between 4 per cent and 4.5 per cent, we now have an ideal opportunity to work constructively with the business on a range of other issues, where there are improvements that,

we feel, can be achieved.

"Of these, one of the biggest issues for drivers is route planning and daily workloads, while we also want to ensure we're delivering the best possible service to BT Group. As regards our warehouse members, there are areas we need to discuss including shift patterns and overtime."

"Now that we've got Hayley, Andy and Tom, I'm sure they'll form a strong CWU team and that we can take these issues forward in the best interests of our members, as well as our customer and the company. We have rep vacancies at Magna Park and we are hopeful we will have them filled shortly so they can join the team and represent their members."

GRADE UPLIFT OR EQUIVALENT ALLOWANCE FOR HV POWER ENGINEERS

High-voltage power engineers will benefit from a new agreement achieved by the union, in accordance with Conference policy from 2019, reports acting CWU national officer Ken Wooley.

Ken explains: "The business initially proposed to offer a contractual change to lift this group of engineers up from their existing grade to a new advanced TMNE4 grade," he says, adding that, after consultations with members and reps, and following further talks with the company, an alternative option was offered.

"And we're pleased that our power engineers will now be able to opt for either the pay grade uplift – to TMNE4 – or an allowance equivalent to the rate uplift, which will be an annual allowance paid monthly."

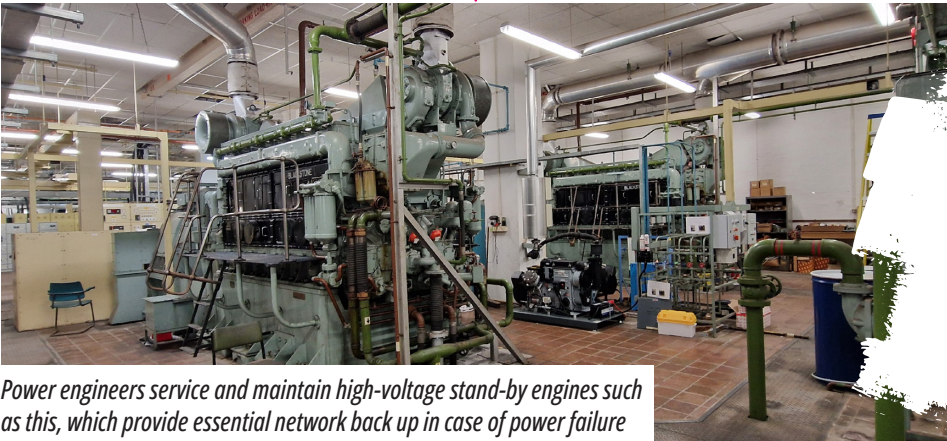
"The uplift and the allowance are worth approximately £400 extra,"

Ken tells Your Voice that our power engineers – around 160 of them in total – provide an "absolutely essential service to the network right across the UK."

"In the event of a power failure, the network relies on the high-voltage stand-by engines to provide back-up and without our power engineers

to maintain and service this crucial kit, potentially nothing works, can you imagine no Broadband or telephony?"

"So, it's good to see that this deal has been done and that they'll be getting more money in their pockets in recognition of their skills and commitment to the company."



Power engineers service and maintain high-voltage stand-by engines such as this, which provide essential network back up in case of power failure

Winners of May YV Book Competition: Osaigbovo Imina, Newark; Dave Hogg, Wokingham; Liam Trainor, Belfast; Ruth Rees, Cardiff.



FOR CWU MEMBERS WORKING IN BT GROUP AND THE WIDER TT&FS SECTOR...

ISSUE SIX, JUNE 2024



GETTING AI-READY & PROTECTING JOBS

Your DGS T&FS Karen Rose on technology impacts & improving fairness at work...

INSIDE: CHANGE NEEDED TO OPENREACH CDR SYSTEM

BACK COVER: NEW DEAL ACHIEVED FOR POWER ENGINEERS

Artificial intelligence (AI) and the ever-growing use of technology in the workplace will be an increasingly important issue for the CWU to deal with, says deputy general secretary (DGS) Karen Rose.

"The rapid advance of AI has gathered pace within the companies our members work in," Karen tells Your Voice. "And the simple fact is that we can't afford to just assume that those companies will automatically do the right thing on this."

"If there are going to be advantages of AI, we want to seize those advantages and if there are risks and dangers, we need to defend against them," she continues, explaining that what the CWU – as well as other unions – needs to do is look seriously at how we can establish appropriate governance for AI and make sure workers have got a voice."

Our DGS explains that, following a presentation and discussion on the subject during Annual Conference in April, the union's executive decided to launch a nationwide consultation with all members focussed on this subject.

"We want our members to feel involved in this technical exchange, in this conversation," says Karen, adding: "We need members' feedback and we need to know more about what systems are out there in their workplaces and across their companies now."

"Working with members, we want to expand our own knowledge and expertise, as a union, so that we can represent our members as well as possible. And we also want to help our members, and our reps in particular, develop the skills to have these discussions within their companies."

"We'll be sending a detailed comms to members on this to all T&FS members and we're hoping as many members as possible will engage in this national conversation."

"We're getting AI-ready."



Changes needed to CDR - see inside

ORGANISING & CAMPAIGNING

As well as discussing AI at Conference, delegates also adopted a resolution instructing the union's national leadership to negotiate changes to the Openreach customer delivery rate (CDR) system and this Edition features some feedback and views from frontline members and reps on the subject.

On the same issue of work-measurement systems, also within Openreach, a campaign has been launched by the union, in response to the unagreed rollout of another work-measurement system in another part of the company. Please look out for further information on this and please back the CWU campaign.

There's some welcome positive news on this Edition's back page. It's good to hear that, despite having been outsourced to GXO, our members have now elected new CWU reps and are continuing the vital work of representing their fellow workers in dealing with their new employer. And similarly, another step forward for our power engineers, who are to receive a well-deserved pay boost, thanks to successful negotiations by the CWU.

AND DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

General Election Day 4th July is fast approaching and Karen makes the point that the decisions made by the new Government that will be elected on 4th July will be absolutely critical to job security for workers as well as the increased use of tech at work.

"As a Labour Party-affiliated trade union, we're strongly recommending a Labour vote to all our members in all Constituencies," she says. "After 14 years of a governing party that just does not seem to care about workers, a change of government is what we all need."

Karen says that it is extremely important, particularly in regard to the subject of workplace legislation and the need for better governance and regulation, that CWU members make their voices heard during this period.

"My message to members on this is watch out for election communications from the CWU, make the politicians listen and don't forget to vote."

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OPENREACH FRONTLINE FEEDBACK



CDR SHOULD BE TEAM-BASED

Local reps and members back union in push for change...

An annual Conference in April debated a branch motion instructing the union's leadership to negotiate with BT Group, specifically Openreach, with the aim of changing the company's Service Delivery Customer Delivery Rate (CDR) work-measurement system from an individual to a team-based metric.

The proposition, which was approved by Conference, stated that its use on an individual basis had led to instances of CDR being 'used as a measure by which engineers find themselves targeted with bullying and harassment' and that this had 'led to the creation of a hostile and paranoid work environment' in some areas.

Your Voice visited two regions and spoke with reps and engineers out in the field to get a frontline perspective of the issue and how it is impacting on workers.

In Gateshead, we meet North East Branch rep Jack Davies at the TEC. Jack tells us that he's been with the business for 10 years and a branch rep for four years.

"In our branch, we've got around 1,300 engineering members and North East Branch covers a large area from Hull up to the Scottish border. We've got eight branch reps and as I live in Newcastle, I mostly look after the members in the Tyne/Wear/Tees area.

"I enjoy being a rep, but the CDR system causes a lot of concerns among Service Delivery (SD) members – particularly those working on copper. Personally, I've had issues with it as well. For me, it doesn't take account enough of the wider variability of different jobs. Some jobs can be resolved very quickly, while others can be more complex. It's not as straightforward as the number of jobs cleared per day."



Jack Davies

Jordan Worrall speaks to us in the Gateshead yard just before the start of his shift, saying: "Being on lodge loan can affect our stats – can bring us down. There's a lot of pressure on people. If issues are outside of our control, there shouldn't be a negative impact on us." Jordan then heads off to his first job of the day in Newcastle.

Out and about around the patch, we meet Suzie Todd and as she sets up at a residential roadside, she tells us that she previously worked in the care sector before coming into this role: "I enjoy the work. I like the physical aspect of it. We do our best for the customers. The union does a good job for us engineers and they're right to be looking at making the system fair for all within the company."

Phil Hudson has just finished at a CSP inside a customer's front garden and tells us that he has been with the business for seven years, having started on copper and switched over to FTTP last autumn. "I enjoy the job," he says, "but if I could change one thing for the better, I'd say the quick returns issue needs to be improved on."

Another engineer who has recently transferred from copper to FTTP is Dan Cheeseman, who is working up a pole when we arrive at his job

and speaks briefly with us after he comes safely back down again. "I was on copper SD for six years and on fibre SD for the last six months. There were some issues when I worked on copper, but on fibre it's much better."

When asked what he would change about the current system, Dan says: "CDR should take account of factors beyond our control."

Several engineers currently working on copper speak with us – and make a variety of points about the system – but ask if their names can be withheld and no photo taken. Jack explains: "A lot of them do bring their concerns to me, but are worried about repercussions if they speak out openly."

Jack continues: "There are some serious problems here – complaints that managers are using the system unfairly in order to pick on individuals are quite common. I'm on copper myself and I think there's a lot wrong with the system. It's good that the union is seeking to move away from an individual-based system to one that's team based, but it also needs to take account of the various factors that engineers have mentioned."



Dan Cheeseman



Anthony Edwards, Paul Rath, Michael Kopp

Coming down south, *Your Voice* met Capital Branch union safety rep (USR) Paul Rath and new Young Workers rep Anthony Edwards and visited engineers out and about in the Hertfordshire and North West London area.

The first member we meet is Paul Mulally, working on a customer provision at Bushey. Paul tells us he has been with the company 17 years and works on copper Service Delivery (SD). When we ask his views on the CDR system, he says that he feels the system can be applied unfairly.

"If you're multi-skilled, for example, you get given more complex jobs and they take longer," he says, adding: "It starts to put unfair pressures on people."

"Doing CDR on a team basis would be fairer than individually. Although in my opinion, I think they should just go back to how they did it before CDR came in."

Majid Nazir, repairing a customer fault at a premises in a busy central Watford street, tells us that he has been with the business for six years. "I was on copper and now I'm on fibre SD. I find there's less pressure on fibre than there was on copper."

Faults are trickier on copper – there are far more possibilities as to what the cause could be – whereas on fibre, the faults are often disconnections, like this one."

On CDR, he says: "More complex tasks seem to get relatively fewer points. Team-based has more advantages."

We then head to the Watford engineering yard, where the branch has access to limited office facilities and while Paul catches up with some branch business, he tells us that he started working for the company back in 1985, in what was then BT's Motor Transport/Fleet operation and has also worked as an Openreach engineer on Network Build.

While we talk, a call comes in from a member with a work-related complaint and Paul spends some time patiently hearing the member's complaints and advising the engineer what to do and how best to respond to the manager.

The general gist of the advice the rep gives is that the member needs to make sure to work 'by

the book' and to carry out all of the approved and mandatory operational procedures – not to cut corners for speed, which could compromise safety.

"You should keep your own notes of all the jobs you do and then if the union needs to become involved formally, there's evidence that can be used to help your case," Paul tells the member.

Speaking to us after the call, he says that the member had seemed quite distressed at first and explained: "We get quite a few calls from members sometimes feeling at the end of their tether with issues around being 'loaned out' and various pressures from their manager over their stats and we always do the best we can to help."

"There definitely does need to be change and it's good that the union at national level is focussing on this in talks with the business."

Michael Kopp comes into the yard and gives his own critique of the CDR system, saying: "I don't know how they calculate the points between different types of jobs." Michael, who has worked both copper and fibre and has been with the business since 1987, agrees with the union's position and says: "A team-based system would be better."

Out again and off to Harrow, where Michael Donaghey (above) is on a new fibre provide at



Michael Donaghey

a customer premises. Michael says that in his opinion, "the CDR system makes people not want to help each other – because it makes them all stress about their individual stats."

An engineer for three years, he says that the previous system worked better – both operationally and in terms of fairness to individuals. "I'd say let's go back to how we had it before," he says.



Majid Nazir



Responding to the feedback, acting CWU national officer Fiona Curtis told *Your Voice*: "It's good to hear a crosssection of opinions from our frontline engineers in completely different parts of the country. And what comes across loud and clear is that the current way CDR is being applied is, frankly, not working fairly."

"This clearly illustrates the problem that our Mersey Branch highlighted with their motion to Annual Conference in April and my CWU Openreach National Team (ORNT) is on the case with this, pushing the company for change and aiming to move away from individual scoring towards a team-based metric."

"Openreach Fibre Network Delivery (FND) have decided to press ahead with the rollout of an unagreed mutation of 'My Potential'. A campaign has been launched by the union and branches have been notified. It is crucial that we oppose metrics that could lead to a regressive style of management. Our campaign can only be won by all of us working together, so please watch out for further information and support your branch in this campaign."

"Just one more brief point I'd like to highlight is the progress of my ORNT and your local CWU branches on a new agreement reducing the number of Saturdays engineers have to work within Service Delivery UK Operations. This will start to kick in from the end of July."

"We've also been working hard with Service Delivery FTTP, looking at seasonal working and roster patterns, and to see if it will be possible to reduce Saturdays here too."