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TO: All T&FS Branches

Dear Colleagues

Your Voice in the Workplace – October 2024

Please find attached the October 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/2024/10/08194-your-voice-BTG-issue-9-Oct-2up.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Karen Rose
Deputy General Secretary (T&FS)

Chris Webb
Head of Communications

BREAKTHROUGH AT VMO2 PETERBOROUGH

Recognition for the site's Business Technical & Business Enhanced Customer Support workers means collective bargaining rights on pay, terms, and conditions...

Your Voice joined CWU assistant secretary Tracey Fussey and field organiser Mark Norris on a visit to the Peterborough site recently, where they met with members and briefed them on the new arrangements and answered questions.

"This is great news for VMO2 workers in this part of the company," Tracey told us, "it brings the CWU formally back into this part of the company for the first time in over a decade – although there have always been individual CWU members within these and other grades. I also hope it brings hope for our other members in the former VM part of VMO2. We have a high level of membership in Peterborough and it made sense to seek recognition there."

"It was great to spend some time speaking with our Business Technical & Enhanced customer support members and I was struck by the enthusiasm they have for the CWU and the many ideas expressed as to where we need to go, collectively, from this point forward. The first step, organisationally from a Peterborough perspective, will be to formally elect a CWU representative and I'm delighted to say that Matthew Callaghan has volunteered for election to the role.

"Matthew is a long-serving member of staff here and has been a CWU member for some 25 years. We are looking forward to getting on with the job representing these hard-working people.

"We are hitting the ground running as we will be commencing pay negotiations in the next few months. We will be setting out our aims and consulting with members throughout. So a lot to do and it's inspiring to see our members here



"I WANT US TO BE NEGOTIATING ON PAY, ON SHIFTS AND HAVING A SAY IN THE WORKPLACE."

Matthew Callaghan

keen and ready to get going. I also want to say how pleased we are that this recognition agreement was achieved voluntarily with the company and the CWU is looking forward to establishing a positive and productive relationship with this part of the company."

"We want to extend CWU recognition to other areas within VMO2, and we'll be actively pursuing this aim in the period ahead. We know our members elsewhere in the unrecognised area of VMO2 are also eager for the CWU to have recognition and collective bargaining and our focus remains on this."

Speaking with Matthew, he explains the work that he and his colleagues do is for business customers "and we always do our best to give the customer a quality service. It's a 24/7 operation here and there are various rotating shifts and patterns."

When we ask about his own background, Matthew tells us: "I started work for BT in 1995 and I worked for them in Leicester and Peterborough. I did 151 and 150 residential and customer services faults and ECS and I thought it was a brilliant company to work for. But then, like thousands of others, my job went to India in 2004 and I got redundancy.

"I'd kept my CWU membership after leaving BT and I applied for a job here – and as it was very similar work, it suited me. So, I've now been here 20 years and I've stayed a CWU member throughout. That's why I've volunteered to put my name down for election as a CWU rep here.

"I want us to be negotiating on pay, on shifts and having a say in the workplace," Matthew continues "and I hope we'll be able to extend recognition to other parts of the business. There are several others who are also CWU members or who are ex-BT and of a similar view. For me, union membership is all about the basics and not hard to explain to new people. Everyone understands money and shifts and having a say and having someone to back you up if you're in trouble."

• *Matthew ended by telling us that he wanted to thank several people for their help and support in getting to this stage, citing Tracey and Mark, as well as Liam Alderson, Leigh Daniels and Jez Mitchell from Midland Counties Branch, and also John Turnbull.*

SIGNIFICANT STEP FOR UTAW BRANCH

A landmark agreement with Saab UK represents a significant win for the CWU's UTAW Branch and solidifies our position as the union for tech workers.

Speaking to *Your Voice* about the achievement, which follows a formal recognition ballot among the workers affected, Eran Cohen, UTAW Branch organiser, told *Your Voice*:



Eran Cohen

"The recognition will apply to workers in the company's Public Safety & Security Division, who create and maintain communications solutions for emergency services. They're the people who make sure the caller, 999 phone operator and the ambulance crew can communicate.

"It's been a hard slog to achieve recognition in Saab's PSS Division and I'm very proud of our members' patience and tenacity," Eran continued, adding: "I'm sure these will serve them well in their future negotiations."

CWU DEATH BENEFIT

In accordance with the terms expressed in CWU Rule 4.1.11 Branches are advised that from the 1st October 2024 the CWU Death Benefit payment will be increased to £1,084.

Any enquiries regarding this Letter to Branches should be addressed to the Senior Deputy General Secretary's Department on telephone number 020 8971 7237, or email address sdgs@cwu.org

SCAN ME! JOIN THE UNION



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

ISSUE NINE, OCTOBER 2024



WINNING RECOGNITION & WELCOMING NEW ACTIVISTS

Your deputy general secretary Karen Rose on recognition successes, the new generation of activists and political progress...

I'm pleased to share some fantastic updates this month. CWU members have secured a voluntary recognition agreement at VMO2 Peterborough for the Business Technical and Business Enhanced Customer Support teams. This gives them collective bargaining rights on pay, terms and conditions.

Additionally, it means having a recognised CWU representative in the workplace, ensuring a strong collective voice. We're also planning to extend recognition to other areas within VMO2, so I would encourage anyone in VMO2 to come forward and get involved in our future campaigns.

In other good news, we're about to sign a recognition agreement with Saab UK, a leading provider of defence and security technologies. This landmark agreement is a significant win for our United Tech & Allied Workers (UTAW) Branch, solidifying our position as the union for tech workers. We'll continue to represent and grow our membership in the tech sector – so watch this space. You can read further about these two developments on our back page.

Inspired by our Young Workers

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the CWU Young Workers Education Event. It was inspiring to meet new young workers, hear about the challenges they face, and encourage them to share their concerns. As technology and globalisation reshape the job market, our sectors like engineering, where fibre roll-out will impact jobs, mean that young workers must have an eye on protecting their future.

By working together, we can push for innovative ways to ensure they stay in the sector through reskilling and retraining agreements, so that they have opportunities in other areas. In the finance sector and contact centres generally, technological advancements and the movement of work to cheaper economies will impact the job market and particularly young workers, making it essential for new activists to get involved and stand up together to protect their futures.

There was a full report of this event on the CWU website, so if you haven't read it yet, please take a look.

CWU in politics & the New Deal

I also highlighted the importance of linking our industrial and political strategies. With a Labour Government now in place, we've been campaigning and lobbying for a New Deal For Workers. This month, they introduced the Employment Rights Bill, which includes a myriad of new measures to protect workers, such as new individual employment rights from Day One, sick pay, unfair dismissal protection, parental leave, and some repeal of the restrictive Tory anti-trade union laws.

Unions are not just about preserving the past; they're about building the future. For young workers, being in a union offers a chance to get involved and ensure fair employment. So, I encourage everyone to take the step, get involved, and be part of the movement shaping the future of work. And, as always, if you meet a colleague who's not yet joined the CWU, please ask them to use the 'Scan Me & Join' QR code on this page to become a member.



**INSIDE: ENGINEERS BACK CWU STANCE
INSIDE & BACK: REBUILDING THE UNION IN VMO2**



SCAN ME & JOIN THE UNION



OPENREACH ENGINEERS



FIELD ENGINEERS: 'WE'RE ONE TEAM AND WE WORK AS A TEAM'

CWU Openreach FTTP members speak out in support of the union policy on work measurement...

In our June Edition, we spoke with Openreach Service Delivery (SD) engineers about the CDR work measurement system, particularly in the context of the CWU position that these systems should operate on a collective, or team basis rather than individually. Those whom we met and spoke with were of the opinion that a team-based metric was preferable, both in terms of fairness for the workforce and also in getting the job done in the best interests of customers.

Recently, *Your Voice* visited FND engineers (now Complex Engineers) in the South West Region to ask their views on whether the company's *My Potential* method should be done on a team-based or individual-based metric. Many of the points engineers made were similar to the opinions that had been voiced by our SD members.

We meet CWU Great Western Branch rep Josh Barclay early in the morning at the Swindon yard, as engineers are preparing for the start of their shift. "Engineers from here service a large patch covering the surrounding area as well as the town itself. And around here, there's plenty of new builds and estates springing up, so it's quite busy in terms of new provisions – residential and business," he explains.

Josh tells us that he has been with the business for eight years and served as a branch rep for two, adding: "I first got involved through the Young Workers and that's how I got interested in the union and what it does, and in becoming a rep. On the subject of work measurement, it's good the CWU's pushing for a collective approach to this for engineers. We haven't really had many problems in this area in regard to stats and relationships with the management on the whole are good."

Charlie Barrett is getting ready for her first job when we speak by her van. She has worked

this job for five years and says: "I really enjoy it, especially the wide variety of jobs we get each day. I'm working on a new business site this morning with a colleague and there's a lot of that at the moment."

When we ask how she feels about work-measurement systems, she says: "A team-based method's better. It's better for morale and for getting the work done."

Also getting set to head out is Paul Denner, who says the focus should be on "team-based completions. Some jobs take a couple of hours and other jobs can take days. So, something based on individual completions doesn't necessarily give a true reflection in my opinion."

We have a longer conversation with Jack Crane, who speaks with us during his break while out on an ethernet provision at a care home. Josh explains to us that Jack, who has worked for the company 11 years, is one of the more senior engineers on the team and tells us that "it's hard

to measure this individually because there are so many variables. All our jobs are appointed and there's a difference between how long it takes to do plots and how long it takes for a job like this one.

"Personally, I strongly support the union's position on this. The union does a really good job for us and they're right on this 100 per cent. We're one team and we work as a team, helping out each other and getting the job done."

CWU assistant secretary Fiona Curtis told *Your Voice*: "It's good to hear that members on the frontline are supporting the CWU's position that we need to do this on a team-based basis. And it does seem, so far, that the business may be realising that this is the best way to measure and operate in this field of work.

"We also want to make sure we get the same principle applied for our SD GB Ops members too. We want the team-based principle to apply across our field engineers."



Charlie Barrett speaking with Josh Barclay in the Swindon yard



Jack Crane

Updating on seasonal working in SD FTTP and the attendance patterns issue, Fiona continued: "Currently the majority of jobs carried out by FTTP include an element of climbing poles or climbing ladders at the customer end to erect fibre dropwires, etc. Due to the high volume of this type of work, the current spread of attendance patterns means an increased level of furthered and incomplete work at the end of day particularly in the winter months, during periods of reduced daylight.

"We've aimed to find a solution that meets minimum service levels and customer demand, but continues to offer flexibility for our members and follows our Service Delivery Transformation Agreement.

"On these attendance patterns going forward, Openreach strongly recommends that engineers choose a seasonal pattern and your CWU Openreach National Team would ask engineers to also give this serious consideration.



"IT'S GOOD TO HEAR MEMBERS ON THE FRONTLINE SUPPORTING THE CWU'S POSITION. WE WANT THE TEAM-BASED PRINCIPLE TO APPLY ACROSS OUR FIELD ENGINEERS."

FIONA CURTIS, CWU ASSISTANT SECRETARY

"However," Fiona added: "We don't want individuals to be pressured by management. If you feel you're being put under pressure to select a seasonal pattern, contact your rep.

"And we're close to a new agreement on Specialist Technical Engineers. The job descriptions have been agreed and announced. We're still working through the grading process. Once we've reached agreement, this will directly impact several hundred of our engineering members."

REBUILDING UNION ORGANISATION AFTER SITE MOVE

Relocation after a reorganisation left Capita's VMO2-contract workers with a choice of redundancy or moving 20 miles...

'We've moved from Preston Brook in Cheshire to Wythenshawe on the outskirts of Manchester," Hannah Sadler tells *Your Voice* "and all the other reps except me took the VR package."

But finding herself the only CWU rep left among this group of relocated workers has certainly not disheartened Hannah: "I'm not afraid of the challenge. We've rebuilt before and we can do it again," she insists.

"I'll miss many of my former Preston Brook colleagues who opted for the redundancy package – some of them had worked at the site for decades and were and still are good friends. But here at Wythenshawe there are several hundred already working here in other parts of the VMO2 business and the opportunity is there for us to recruit new members and, hopefully soon, there'll be new volunteers to take on CWU rep roles alongside me.

"In practical terms, the relocation has meant a longer commute for me – and next year, there's another move planned to a new building in central Manchester. All of us here will be relocating there and we're all hoping things will settle down again.

"Right now, we are supporting members and one of our key messages is that the stronger the union, the better our chances of success. We're urging all non-members in VMO2 to join."

CWU assistant secretary Tracey Fussey, who has national responsibility for VMO2 workers, said: "Hannah's a fantastic example of a really determined and hard-working CWU rep and her branch and the union generally are giving our full support to her. The decision by the business to relocate its VMO2-contract workers out of Preston Brook was quite a blow when it was first announced and it was sad to see long-standing reps and members depart.

"But going forward, we've got positive prospects for rebuilding a strong CWU organisation – at Wythenshawe for the time being and then onto the new site in the city from 2025 – and, we hope, bringing union representation into new parts of the company.

"The new building 'Island' in Manchester has just been confirmed. We will be working to ensure the move is as smooth as possible for our members and will be doing all we can to ensure just that during consultation next year."

• See next page for news of a recognition breakthrough with VMO2 at another UK site.



Hannah Sadler