

No. 094/25

13th May 2025

TO ALL BRANCHES

Dear Colleague,

SPECIAL RESTRUCTURING CONFERENCE – 28TH/29TH JUNE 2025

Further to yesterday's LTB 093/25, we are now publishing to branches four separate policy papers that are being placed before our special conference in June.

Please find attached a copy of the overall documentation which includes the four policy papers. We can also advise branches that ten printed copies will be sent to branches as soon as possible. In the meantime, please ensure your representatives have a copy of the documentation.

We look forward to positioning these papers with branches and answering any initial questions, at Thursday's online 11am national branch briefing. This briefing is a priority commitment for all branches and for ease of reference the link to join the meeting is set out again below:

<https://cwu-org.zoom.us/j/88481883939?pwd=CdWEIh78RPqULaAPlavgc9eK83eHUb.1>

Meeting ID: 884 8188 3939

Passcode: 484793

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact dlynch@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
General Secretary



Tony Kearns
Senior Deputy General Secretary



The communications union



SPECIAL RESTRUCTURING CONFERENCE 2025



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INTRODUCTION

Since last year, we have been working towards the Special Restructuring Conference in June and this has included various national briefings (including online) and providing branches with important documentation, setting out the financial challenges facing the union and the overall plan for restructuring.

We have now reached a point where the NEC has agreed four policy papers to be placed before the Special Conference. A copy of these papers are attached and are titled as follows:

- National and Branch Structures
- National Officers
- Regions
- Conferences and Delegations

We believe that the CWU is aligned around the key objective of remaining as a standalone union and to achieve this, we must substantially reduce our annual expenditure by making clear choices about what the union must prioritise going forward.

The proposals cumulatively, alongside the restructuring in our Recruitment and Organising Department, will result in an annual saving of approximately £2m per year. This is an essential step in securing our immediate future and will create the opportunity and the right environment for the debates and decisions that need to be taken to secure the long-term future of the CWU. These proposals are also designed to assess how the union can be more effective in representing our members and how we can modernise our ways of working.

This is a moment where we must not allow vested interests to frustrate the need for major change- everyone has to play a role in securing the long-term future of the CWU. That is why this is the most important conference since merger and we urge branches to support the recommendations made by the NEC and make decisions in the interest of the future of the union.

RESTRUCTURING - THE OVERALL PLAN

As previously stated, it is essential that branches recognise there are three separate elements to the restructuring plan, all of which must make a contribution to a more affordable and effective union. For ease of reference, these three elements are set out again below:

- a) Assets** – The need to utilise our assets in the most effective way possible, including the various different cash deposits we currently have at our disposal.

Regarding the union's assets, we have accepted an offer for the sale of CWU HQ and we will provide a significant update on this at the briefing on Thursday 15th of May and at the Special Conference. In addition, we are working to finalise the completion of the sale of the Elstead Hotel in Bournemouth and we will also update branches on this at the briefing. We are also extending the review of our assets, including assessing our branch assets and the best way of utilising them, for the benefit of the whole union.

b) CWU HQ – The ongoing reorganisation of CWU Headquarters to streamline our costs and work in a more effective way in the following areas:

- Reducing overall staffing
- Modernising our policies and procedures
- Organising Department restructure
- Unionline/Legal Services Department restructure
- A more effective departmental structure that removes duplication of work and introduces a more efficient and coordinated digital infrastructure.

We have already taken several steps towards CWU HQ restructuring and significantly reducing our overall costs related to staffing. Since 2015, we have reduced our overall headcount by 64 FTE roles. If we had not implemented these changes, **the union would be at least £5m worse off in salary and pension costs.**

In addition, branches will be aware that the union has also been reviewing our Recruitment and Organising strategy. The NEC has agreed a new plan that delivers a saving of approximately **£600k per year**, subject to ongoing discussions with staff and the staff-side union.

We are also continuing to review every department in CWU HQ as part of the implementation of the 'one union' approach to governing the union. Branches will be aware that this has been done with our approach to Health and Safety and we are now in the process of reviewing how our Legal and Medical Department/Unionline operates and we will be finalising these plans in the near future.

We are committed to continuing to make further reductions in our staffing levels, while ensuring that we can maintain or improve services and representation to our members.

We are also planning for more regular subscription increases (including this year) and rationalising the variances in our subscription rates.

c) Modernising our structures – the need to modernise our structures at national, regional and branch level.

Regarding our structures, we have considered a number of factors, including the response from branches to the recent national consultation. We note that many branches provided constructive feedback and fresh ideas about how to take the union forward against the many challenges we face but it was clear that the overall results of the consultation reflect a cautiousness regarding any changes to our existing structures. However, we all know that not making changes is untenable.

This means that there are difficult decisions to be made, as the CWU clearly cannot maintain our structures as they are, otherwise the union will be forced to merge in the near future.

Therefore, in considering both the views of our branches and the external challenges facing us, we have designed these proposals to create immediate savings and designed a further review of both our national and branch structures, alongside further restructuring at HQ. This review of our national structures will be set against the five principles agreed by the NEC and previously circulated to branches. This will help form a more detailed plan for how we can reimagine the union and modernise our way of working, while preserving our unique workplace culture and strength.

NEXT STEPS

We will be engaging with our branches regarding these proposals and our further restructuring plans in a number of briefings before the Special Conference in June. Firstly, there will be a series of online briefings in the next few weeks, starting with the national briefing to be held on **Thursday the 15th of May at 11am**, to go over the policy papers in more detail. There will also be a presentation on the results of the branch consultation in the next few weeks.

In addition, there will be a financial report presented to the Special Conference, which will breakdown the union's finances in more detail. Branches will note that some of the figures are amended from the last paper that was circulated alongside the restructuring consultation and we are confident these figures reflect the savings achievable from the proposals (all figures will be confirmed in the financial report presented to Conference).

Finally, we urge branches to support these proposals from the NEC. They are essential in providing an immediate saving for the union, as well as laying the foundation to modernise our structures and ensure that we can sustain ourselves in the long-term.

Dave Ward.

DAVE WARD
GENERAL SECRETARY

Tony Kearns

TONY KEARNS
SENIOR DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY



CONFERENCES AND DELEGATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The topic of CWU Conferences including their frequency, size, duration, composition of delegations, location and cost, has been under consideration by the NEC for a considerable amount of time. The matter has also been debated on numerous occasions at various conferences over the past five years.

The fact remains that, apart from the Industrial Conferences becoming motion-based in 2003, the format of our Conferences has remained practically the same for the last thirty years since the formation of the CWU in 1995. In the decades since, the pace of change in the workplace and increased pressure on trade unions means that our current approach to decision-making and Conferences is no longer suitable for a modern trade union. In addition, it is time to acknowledge that our Annual Conference has become a significant cost-burden on the union and its branches during a time of financial pressures and changes are necessary, in order to ensure that the CWU can remain a standalone union.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The NEC believes that it is the right time to modernise our approach to conferences. At the same time, we must ensure that we do not compromise the ability of the union to make decisions, as well as maintaining accountability for delivering these policies.

In addition to the clear savings and efficiency improvements that can be made, it has become evident that having to spend six or seven days away from home can be challenging for many of our representatives. This is especially true for those with family commitments or caring responsibilities. At a time when we look to reconnect in the workplace and reinvigorate recruitment activity, this is a potential barrier to fully engaging with the union.

The NEC has also been considering how our conferences can best facilitate debate and engagement with the union's policies. At present, when policies are debated and agreed at a conference every year, there is an ever-decreasing time to negotiate and enact these. At the same time, holding a conference on an annual basis means we are limited in the time for debate, due to the significant cost of putting the conference on. In addition, the pace of change in our industries, the complexity of the challenges facing our industries and the subsequent frequency of policy debate has meant that the union's approach to policy has been oriented to the short or medium-term, rather than the long-term. At times, this has led to fragmented policies being adopted and issues with policies being implemented on an annual basis or in a short period of time.

Members will be aware that various events and challenges have disrupted our Annual Conferences over the last several years, demonstrating that an annual timetable is far less feasible for a modern trade union.

The CWU cannot continue to be reactive in our policy-making and we must find a way to ensure that policy is properly debated, agreed and implemented, while ensuring that we can work flexibly and move at pace- all while delivering a saving for the union.

MOVING TO BIENNIAL CONFERENCES

Therefore, it is the view of the NEC that it is now essential to move away from holding General and Industrial Conferences every year. Our Conference must provide the vehicle to develop and implement a comprehensive union strategy that addresses the challenges facing our members in the workplace, as well as those in wider society. It must also not present an unmanageable cost-burden for both HQ and branches. Moving from annual General and Industrial Conferences to biennial (every other year) will allow the union to achieve these goals. However, the NEC have agreed that the existing arrangements for an annual Retired Members and Young Workers Conference should remain in place.

Alongside moving to biennial conferences, we must ensure there is the ability to arrange Policy Forums to deal with urgent contemporary matters and those requiring substantive strategy and direction between Conferences. This will allow the union to engage with members and branches in a dynamic and cost-effective way and increase participation in the union's structures. The CWU demonstrated during the national disputes in Royal Mail Group and BT in 2022/23 that we can deal with major industrial issues very quickly and be flexible enough to conclude agreements without an Annual Conference.

The NEC has also considered the possibility of holding an Annual Conference online every other year. However, we do not believe this is a practical solution. It would still require significant preparation and staff time and would still constitute an additional burden to the union when we are trying to deal with a significantly more complex set of issues in the workplace. Further, having a period of two years between Conferences will allow time for policy decisions to embed in the union, for the long-term.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE COST BREAKDOWN

Annual Conference represents a significant cost burden to both branches and HQ. The approximate cost to HQ of the Annual Conference in 2018 was £340,000. This rose to £442,020 in 2022, as costs have increased sharply following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, the cost to CWU HQ rose to £487,367.

The cost to branches¹ in 2022 was approximately £1,022,911. This represents an average spend of approximately £8,750 per branch. For context, the total funds in branch accounts currently is approximately £4,693,797. Therefore, if branches were to undertake the same level of expenditure at another annual conference in 2026 (with a 5% increase to account for rising costs and inflation- £1,074,056) branches would spend an average of 22% of the total cash in accounts overall, in one single event. This is clearly an unsustainable level of cost for the union and must be reduced if we are to become financially sustainable.

CONFERENCE DELEGATIONS

The CWU's rules for General², Telecoms and Financial Services³ and Postal⁴ cover the current delegation sizes for those respective Conferences. The current arrangements for delegation sizes have remained the same for a long period of time and have not been adjusted since membership has fallen significantly.

The sizes of our delegations are therefore clearly not sustainable. We also note that this view is shared by some branches as, in the CWU restructuring consultation, branches actually suggested that the CWU should reduce delegation numbers to both Conferences and briefings.

¹ The combined total that all branches spent facilitating delegations to Conference (accommodation, travel etc).

² Rule 10.3 in the CWU Rule Book

³ Rule 10.9.3 in the CWU Rule Book

⁴ Rule 10.15.2 in the CWU Rule Book

CURRENT DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

Members will be aware that there are currently three separate delegation arrangements outlined in the CWU Rulebook⁵. These are outlined below:

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Membership	Delegates	Membership	Delegates
1-500	2	3001-4000	7
501-1000	3	4001-5000	8
1001-1500	4	5001-6000	9
1501-2000	5	6001 and above	10
2001-3000	6		

TELECOMS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES CONFERENCE DELEGATION

Membership	Delegates	Membership	Delegates
1-500	2	3001-4000	7
501-1000	3	4001-5000	8
1001-1500	4	5001-6000	9
1501-2000	5	6001 and above	10
2001-3000	6		

POSTAL CONFERENCE DELEGATION

Membership	Delegates	Membership	Delegates
1 to 250	1	1501 to 2001	6
251 to 500	2	2001 to 3000	8
501 to 750	3	3001 to 4000	10
751 to 1000	4	4001 to 6000	12
1001 to 1500	5	6001 and over	14

Branches may be aware that the 2024 Postal Conference delegation was larger than the main Conference delegation. This is due to the above current arrangements in the CWU rulebook which allocates three separate delegations (General, Postal and T&FS). Though the General delegations are the same allocation for all branches, Postal branches are allotted more delegates proportionally than Telecoms and Financial Services to their Industrial Conferences. In addition, Postal branch secretaries have also been allowed to attend additionally, in a non-voting capacity, without affecting delegation numbers. Given the disparity between the two constituencies and the cost implications, the NEC is proposing to ensure both constituencies have equal allowances for delegations relevant to their membership and that we take a 'one delegation' approach to Conferences, so both General and Industrial Conferences entitlements are the same- though branches may still switch out delegates between General and Industrial Conferences.

⁵ Rule 10.3 in the CWU Rule Book

PROPOSED NEW DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

The NEC is proposing the following:

- New delegation arrangements for branches according to membership, as laid out below
- Proportionally equalising delegation arrangements between the Postal and Telecoms constituencies
- Moving to a ‘one delegation’ system, where branches have the same delegation allowance for both General and Industrial Conferences (though delegates may change between Conferences)

NEW DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL CONFERENCES

Membership	Delegates	Membership	Delegates
1-750	2	3751-4500	7
751-1500	3	4501-5250	8
1501-2250	4	5251 and above	9
2251-3000	5	6001 and above	
3001-3750	6		

If the Branch Secretary is attending, they should be included as part of the delegation- not in addition. Each branch should continue to strive to bring a diverse delegation to Conference, as is the case currently, in reference to Rule 10.3 in the CWU rulebook.

The reduction in delegation numbers will still allow branches to be well-represented at Conference, while providing a significant saving for both HQ and branch accounts. It will also allow the union to find smaller, more affordable venues for our Conferences and allow branches to reduce Conference expenditure. This is essential as the average spend for branches for Annual Conference is approximately £8,750 and, for many branches, this represents a significant portion of their annual expenditure.

NON-DELEGATE VISITORS TO CONFERENCES

Branches can still bring non-delegate visitors to Conference and we will consult further on how to manage the number of visitors so that we can still utilise smaller venues.

EQUALITY

It is very important that we retain a space for debate and policy specifically related to equality matters, while making adjustments regarding the biennial timetable. Therefore, the NEC is proposing that the rulebook be amended to allow for a dedicated session of half a day related to equality policy at each General Conference. In addition, the Equality, Education and Development Department will be holding at least a one-day Equality event every year, outside of General Conference.

RULES AND REVISIONS

The NEC is proposing that the rulebook be amended to allow for a dedicated session of up to half a day related to Rules and Revisions at each General Conference, to facilitate any rule changes.

MODERNISING CONFERENCE AND MAINTAINING OUR DEMOCRACY

In order to ensure that the CWU is able to respond to urgent and important issues outside of the biennial Conference, the NEC will ensure that the CWU can utilise different decision-making processes. This will include using decision-making policy forums, which can be called by the NEC, branches and Industrial Executives, subject to the rules of the union. These should only be utilised if an urgent issue arises, a major issue of an unforeseen nature, or one requiring strategic direction between Conferences. This approach will ensure that when policy is agreed it will be at the right time and with the full involvement of those impacted.

Guidelines for calling policy forums will be produced by the NEC or the Industrial Executives, where appropriate, including the delegation sizes and the bylaws to govern these forums. This would have to include the necessity for policy forums to be convened at short notice and ensuring there are procedures and processes in place that will not prevent this from occurring.

Where appropriate, holding policy forums online can also provide further flexibility. The success of these during the pandemic can be used as the basis to make further improvements to supplement both future Conferences and Policy Forums. The Industrial Executives or the NEC, where appropriate, will adjudicate whether Policy Forums are held online or in-person. For any events held online, we will ensure we have the appropriate accessibility adjustments in place.

The measures above will not only contribute to the financial reductions to put the CWU in the best position to remain as a standalone union but will help to support a more contemporary policy-making process going forward.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

We will continue to ensure that our Standing Orders Committee (SOC) is able to scrutinise our Conference processes, timetable and ensure rules and standards are adhered to. However, the NEC and the SOC will review the current way of working, including better utilisation of virtual working and creating savings, to ensure that it can work in the most efficient way possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the CWU moves to holding biennial Conferences, along the policy lines stated in this document and that the first General and Industrial Conferences under this new process will be held in 2026.
2. That the delegations to these Conferences are reduced, along the policy lines stated in this document.
3. That the delegations for the Postal and Telecoms Industrial Conferences are proportionally equalised, along the policy lines stated in this document.
4. That the CWU moves to a 'one delegation' system, along the policy lines stated in this document, where branches have the same delegation allowance for both General and Industrial Conferences (though delegates may change between Conferences).

REGIONS

INTRODUCTION

Our regional structures have been a point of discussion in restructuring efforts for some time now. However, thus far, regions are the only part of the CWU that continues unchanged. We believe everybody recognises that to remain a standalone union our existing structures are no longer affordable or sustainable and that the Special Conference must now deliver major change and major reductions in our annual expenditure.

In addition, it is clear that, although our current regional structures have served us well, we can always do better in creating the best possible union structure to deliver for our members, both at present and in anticipation of the challenges ahead. In this regard, effectiveness and focusing more on our ability to support the growth of the union, are the other core principles that must be at the heart of our restructuring process, as well as creating savings.

Therefore, we must make clear choices over what our future priorities should be and these must reflect the priorities of our members at large. This means industrial representation must and always will be the priority and key function of the union now and going forward. In turn, this requires us to make fundamental changes to reduce the cost of our regions and the scale of how they operate.

THE EXISTING REGIONAL STRUCTURES

The objectives of the regional structure, as outlined in the CWU rulebook, are as follows:

- *To work under the direction of the NEC and oversee all non-industrial work within the Region.*
- *To support the development of the union's work within the wider trade union movement, including building stronger links to TUC Regional Structures.*
- *To support the development of the union's political work, including building stronger links with the relevant Labour Party structures.*
- *To support the development and delivery of the union's Organising and Recruitment Strategy.*
- *To support the development and delivery of the union's Education, Learning and Training Strategy.*
- *To support and oversee the work of our branches and implement strategies such as the CWU measures of success.*
- *To develop Regional priorities and campaigns that support the general strategies of the union.*
- *To support the development of the union's Communications and Engagement Strategy.*

These objectives are clearly too broad for an industrial union of our size to achieve, especially given the challenges we face in our industries. It is also unreasonable to expect a single position to facilitate such wide-ranging objectives, which should instead be achieved by empowered branch structures that receive support from CWU HQ. Having such broad objectives also creates duplication of work, inconsistency in approach and the potential for siloes between the field and HQ. This is not about blaming any individuals in regions or headquarters, rather it is about acknowledging that the system is not designed to work well for a union of our size and scope.

Furthermore, a closer examination of the work these objectives require illustrates that many strands of our current regional work would be better served through a direct link between the national union and the branches. This is particularly true regarding equality work, recruitment and organising, general union campaigns and communication and engagement. Similarly, when it comes to improving the consistency of how branches operate and represent members, in line with the measures of success, we believe this will best be achieved by a more direct link between branches and the national union.

Additionally, it is important to note that in the branch consultation, recruitment and organising, as well as education and training, were identified as clear priorities for branches, whereas political work and regional TUC participation were ranked as lower priorities for branches. Given this disparity, we believe it is time to enable branches to connect more directly with the national union on areas they feel are important to prioritise, while ensuring that there is still support for our work in the wider political and trade union movement.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The whole union must now acknowledge that, in this time of unprecedented financial and organisational challenges that threaten the future of the CWU, supporting our industrial work and doing everything possible to recruit new members must be the absolute priority of the union. Our political work and wider trade union movement, as evidenced by our success with the New Deal for Workers, is very important but again could be better served by engaging our branches more directly and reducing the separation between industrial and political structures, rather than operating through a separate regional structure.

For all the reasons stated above, the need for fundamental change to our regional structures is unavoidable. Put simply, the continuing cost of seconding and/or contracting ten regional secretaries - which mirrors the structures of much larger general unions such as GMB - is no longer affordable or sustainable for the CWU.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE COST BREAKDOWN

The cost of seconding and/or contracting regional secretaries across all ten regions is currently **£610k**. This includes travel and subsistence but does not include the 2% of branch rebate that is currently transferred into a regional fund and the costs of running elections for these positions. This is a very significant cost to the union and will rise year-on-year.

The savings that would be made by reducing the number of regional secretaries by 50% would be approximately **£305k** per annum.

A NEW REGIONAL STRUCTURE

In proposing major change to our regions, particularly the existing number and role of regional secretaries, we have given careful consideration to the following:

- The feedback from the branch restructuring consultation.
- The need to prioritise industrial representation and work.
- The reality that the current costs of seconding/contracting regional secretaries is not affordable going forward.
- The reality that the current rulebook objectives for regions are simply too broad for an industrial union of our size.

As a result, the NEC is proposing major changes to the role and number of regional secretaries and introducing a very different way of operating our non-industrial work. This will create substantial savings for the union, while introducing new national networks with a direct link to regional subcommittees, enabling non-industrial work to be carried out in what will be a more consistent and effective way. This new approach and way of working means that there is no requirement to move to merged regions. The new approach will be reviewed in 12 months.

The key principles and details of this new approach are set out below:

1. THE INTRODUCTION OF FIVE REGIONAL OFFICIALS WITH A REDEFINED ROLE

- a. The NEC is proposing that CWU elects five interim **regional officials to replace the current regional secretary roles**. These new roles will be tasked with helping to develop and implement new national networks and support the national non-industrial strategies of the union. This is particularly important and timely, given we want to implement a strategy that further grows the union's influence across the wider trade union movement. This includes advocating for reform of the TUC and greater cooperation between trade unions through the introduction of sectoral collective bargaining.
- b. These five regional officials will work across two regions each, though the regional boundaries will remain the same for the regional subcommittees.
- c. The five officials will work much more closely under the direction of the GS Department and the NEC to help develop and implement a wider political strategy that works beyond the Labour Party and aims to influence politics as a whole, uniting working-class people across gender and ethnicity and challenging the rise of the far-right politics.
- d. Through a clearer political direction and streamlined remit, the regional officials will also help solidify our links to external regional political networks, including the regional Labour Party and regional TUC, while also empowering those on the Regional Political Committee to be involved at every level. However, we are adopting the principle that devolved nations¹ will be able to represent themselves at their respective committees in those nations and within their extended political and wider trade union movement structures. We will develop guidelines for each respective nation to ensure this principle is adopted in practice.
- e. The five officials will also support the initial implementation of the new national networks and the connection with the regional subcommittees **(as set out below)**.
- f. Any administration work currently being carried out by the Regional Executive Committee will be absorbed by the regional official or by HQ, where this is more practical.
- g. There is also a need to clarify the rules covering the eligibility as to who can stand for the new five regional official roles. The NEC are clear that these new positions should only be open to members who are employed in our recognised businesses, solely on a secondment basis for the period the individual is elected. This means only members who work in CWU-recognised companies would be eligible to stand and members elected as a regional official, who subsequently choose to take voluntary redundancy from their substantive business role, would need to immediately relinquish the role. This clarification and change to our existing rules is now essential because it can lead to an added and unaffordable financial burden of the union having to directly contract or employ more staff. We believe branches will understand that this was never the intention for our existing regional secretary roles and the current loophole must now be closed.

In addition to the above, the GS Department will work with the interim regional officials to ensure that there is provision for how each region will interact with the wider movement, particularly TUC regional committees.

This new approach also ceases the need for the Assistant Regional Secretaries and the Regional Executive Committee. The new roles will be elected in September 2025, by branch ballot, for a period of 18 months. After 12 months, we will undertake a review of the effectiveness of this redefined role in supporting the objectives of our non-industrial work and their financial sustainability.

The regions will be paired, for these new roles, as follows:

- Midlands and Eastern
- London and South East
- Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Wales and the South West
- North West and North East

¹Please note, the Northern Ireland Region does not have a political fund nor does it undertake any political activity outside of making representations for our members where appropriate.

Once again, the regions will not be merged together- instead, the elected interim regional official will support branches and subcommittees in two separate regions.

As part of this review, we will also examine our regional fund and whether the 2% contribution from branches could be utilised to better support the priorities of branches, particularly recruitment and organising. In the meantime, the regional fund will remain as is and continue supporting the regional committees. Any decision on the continuation of these roles will be decided by a Special Conference or Policy Forum.

2. INTRODUCING NATIONAL NETWORKS

The NEC is also proposing that alongside the five regional official roles, we introduce new national networks for specific areas of non-industrial/wider movement work that will provide a direct link between CWU HQ and existing regional subcommittees. These national networks will enable greater consistency across the regions and strengthen our non-industrial work.

They will operate as set out below:

a. National Equality Network

- The Regional Equality Committee (REC) will continue to meet. It will elect a Lead who will oversee the committee and liaise with the Equality, Education and Development Department (EED) as needed. The Equality, Education and Development Department will support each committee with resources, education and training needs and liaise with them over potential issues and/or projects in their local area.
- Branches should note that the Employment Rights Bill introduced by the Labour Government will bring in statutory rights for Equality trade union representatives, meaning we will be able to access better facilities and more time for reps to carry out their work. The RECs and our EED team will work together to best utilise these new provisions when they come in.
- The Leads of each REC will meet twice a year with the Head of EED and the NEC Equality Leads.
- Areas of work will include national-led equality roadshows that deliver workshops, networking opportunities and promote equality campaign initiatives in branch localities to inform members about their rights at work, encourage membership involvement and target the recruitment of members into vacant union positions.
- We will also continue the national networking events, which have been successful in providing safe spaces for equality strand groups to reconnect and network.

b. National Education Network

- The Regional Education, Learning and Training Committee (RELTC) will continue to meet. It will elect a Lead who will oversee the committee and liaise with the Equality, Education and Development Department as needed. The EED Department will support each committee in their training and learning needs and liaise with them over regional training, ULR and lifelong learning initiatives.
- The Leads of each RELTC will meet twice a year with the Head of EED and the Learning & Education Coordinator to discuss relevant matters.
- Both the EED Department and the regional official will provide support to the RELTC. The committee will also liaise with the relevant branch officials to ensure that the union can address training and education needs across the union.
- We will also continue an annual ULR National Networking Event, which has been successful in developing new learning strategies to support members in a constantly changing learning and skills environment, enabling ULRs to share new opportunities and best practice, and develop their skills and confidence.

c. National Political Network

- The Regional Political Committee (RPC) will continue to meet, with the regional official in attendance, to discuss local issues and actions. It will elect a Lead, who will work closely with the regional official and will liaise with the GS Department for any support needed.
- Both the RPC and the regional officials will work together with HQ to campaign locally and regionally, in and outside of the Labour Party and to develop local initiatives that aim to unite workers, across gender and ethnicity, against the far-right.
- The Leads of each RPC will meet twice a year with the General Secretary to discuss any relevant matters and the union's overall political strategy.
- There will be a Political Officers Network briefing at least once a year and a dedicated Young Workers Political Forum will be held at least once a year, as well as additional guidance and support from HQ.
- Political Forums can also be called to deal with urgent matters outside of Conference, according to CWU rules and guidelines.
- The political fund will be used to provide extra support where needed.

d. Health and Safety Network

- The Regional Health and Safety Committee (RHSC) will continue to meet. It will elect a Lead who will oversee the committee and liaise with the dedicated Health and Safety Policy Officer, who will give feedback to both Postal and Telecoms on workplace health and safety issues.
- This will be aided by the newly introduced health and safety structure, which takes a 'one union' approach to health and safety matters.
- Both the Health and Safety Policy Officer and the relevant officials in the Industrial Departments will provide support to the RHSC, especially regarding health and safety campaigns. The committee will also liaise with the relevant branch officials to ensure that the union can address health and safety matters across the union.

e. Regional Young Workers Network

- The Regional Young Workers Committee (RYWC) will continue to meet, with the two Young Workers leads from each region included in the committee. The Leads will liaise with the dedicated Young Workers Coordinator, the Young Workers NEC representative and the GS Department to provide support for each committee.
- This includes direct communication with our Communications and Membership Department to ensure the union can retain young members, get them involved in the union's structures and get members involved in campaigns with special relevance to young workers.
- This will also create a more direct link to young members to discuss policy and prepare for the annual Young Members Conference.

f. Regional Retired Members Network

- The Regional Retired Members Committee (RRMC) will continue to meet. It will elect a Lead who will oversee the committee and liaise with the Retired Members Representative on the NEC, as is often the case in practice now.
- The Retired Members Representative, alongside the GS Department, will provide additional support for the RRMCs and will liaise with both the Communications and Membership departments on how to ensure the union is able to retain members as they retire and ensure there are targeted comms for retired members, as well as full involvement in our campaigns that have special relevance to our retired members.
- This will also create a more direct link to retired members to discuss policy and prepare for the annual Retired Members Conference.

REVIEW OF NEW STRUCTURES/INTERIM ROLES

As stated above, this new structure and the five interim regional official roles will be reviewed and it should be recognised that we may need to adjust and fine-tune the proposal as we move forward from implementation. The formal review will take place 12 months after implementation of the new structures.

As part of this review, we will engage with branches and representatives to understand the effectiveness and financial sustainability of the new structure/new regional official roles and we will assess the savings made, against the financial backdrop of the union at that time. Ultimately, any recommendations stemming from the review will be presented to a Policy Forum/Special Conference for agreement.

SUMMARY AND FINANCIAL SAVINGS

The above changes will bring our regional structures much more in line with our needs and objectives, as a medium-size industrial union. Crucially, they will also provide very significant financial savings to assist in securing the future of CWU as a stand-alone union. As laid out above, the savings made by replacing the ten current regional secretary roles with five interim regional officials would be approximately **£305k** per annum. In addition, a further significant saving for the general fund can be delivered by part-funding the new redefined roles from the political fund, subject to the rules that govern this fund. In closing, the NEC believes the proposals set out in this paper are fundamental to the objectives of CWU restructuring and will not only significantly strengthen our financial position, but will also improve the consistency and effectiveness of our non-industrial work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That we replace the ten current regional secretary roles with the redefined role of five elected interim regional officials, reducing our annual regional expenditure by 50%, along the policy lines stated in this document.
2. That the new national networks are introduced, along the policy lines stated in this document.
3. That the interim regional official role and the new national networks are subject to formal review 12 months after implementation, along the policy lines stated in this document.

NATIONAL OFFICER ROLES

INTRODUCTION

The NEC has agreed to cease four National Officer roles as a key part of our plans to restructure the CWU.

The roles we are seeking Conference endorsement to cease, and the associated reduction in expenditure, are set out in the table below:

Officers Roles To Cease	Reduction in Annual Expenditure (approximate)
The Role of the Senior Deputy General Secretary	£125k (including pay, national insurance and pension costs)
One Postal National Assistant Secretary Role	£100k (including pay, national insurance and pension costs)
One Telecoms & Financial Services National Assistant Secretary Role	£100k (including pay, national insurance and pension costs)
SAVING	£325,000 per annum

In addition, the NEC has agreed to cease an appointed National Officer role, as we transition to a new Central Services structure within CWU HQ. We are confident that this role is not required elsewhere in the organisation nor will it prevent us from delivering services to members. The total saving from ceasing this role, in addition to the three elected National Officer roles, will therefore be approximately **£425,000** per annum.

The rest of this paper sets out the rationale for ceasing each of the above roles and the approach to redistribution of workload to ensure the services and support provided to members and branches is maintained or improved.

THE RATIONALE FOR CEASING FOUR NATIONAL OFFICER ROLES

RATIONALE FOR CEASING THE SENIOR DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (SDGS) ROLE

- It is no longer financially sustainable for CWU to have three Deputy General Secretaries, a senior leadership structure which was, in reality, a by-product of the 1995 merger.
- The current SDGS has advised the NEC he will not be standing for this role and will be leaving the CWU, at a date to be confirmed. This presents the opportunity to put in place a new approach to the way the CWU manages its finances.
- If we were starting a union from today, with the heightened financial scrutiny and the increased reporting requirements on trade unions, we would not choose to elect this position. Instead, we would appoint a professionally qualified financial expert and support this with a refresh of all our financial policies and processes.
- There are other duties contained in the current role that are no longer suited to an elected position in a modern trade union, including record management and overseeing our data compliance and cyber security, as well as managing the union's staff and HR processes.
- In ceasing this role, we will ensure that there is democratic accountability for the financial management of the union. This can be fulfilled by putting in place new robust processes and financial structures, facilitated by an enhanced governance body comprised of senior elected representatives, the independent Trustee Board having a greater role in financial oversight, the NEC receiving more detailed financial reports and ultimately, additional reporting to Branches and our conference.

- The areas of responsibility covered by the SDGS role (outside of financial management) can be redesigned by building upon the new Central Services approach and reorganised Central Services departments.
- It is important to recognise that the day-to-day work is already covered by existing staff, leaving line management duties to the SDGS. In the future, these management responsibilities will be absorbed through the GS Department and senior leadership team.
- The financial savings from ceasing the SDGS role, including pension and National Insurance costs, is approximately **£125,000** per year. In replacing the SDGS role with a financially qualified individual, we will not only support a more effective way of managing our finances, we can restructure the Finance Department to ensure the above savings can be delivered. This will be done by ceasing the SDGS role and replacing the current Finance Operations Manager (who is leaving the CWU) with an enhanced, higher-graded Financial Director role, who will be a qualified accountant.

RATIONALE FOR CEASING A POSTAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROLE

- Established trends of membership decline and the future challenges in Royal Mail and the Post Office, mean that maintaining the current number of Postal Assistant Secretaries is not financially sustainable.
- While recognising that membership decline has taken place across all areas in the Postal Department, the Assistant Secretary role that covers POL now represents a level of membership which does not justify a separate National Officer.
- The NEC will be aware that the Government has recently announced plans to franchise all remaining Crown Post Offices. The union has not agreed this but there is a reality that further change, which is likely to have an impact on membership numbers, will take place.
- There is a clear opportunity to rationalise the existing roles and merge the Officer roles currently covering POL and conduct and attendance procedures.
- The existing workload will be reduced, given the reduction in membership in POL and the roles merging can also facilitate work being more effectively absorbed within the department- incorporating support from the Postal Executive.
- The approximate savings from ceasing one Postal Assistant Secretary role, including pension and National Insurance costs, is **£100,000** per year.
- The current arrangements for Postal Assistant Secretary Roles in the Postal Department will continue as they are now, until such time as Conference has endorsed the proposed changes and restructuring is finalised.

RATIONALE FOR CEASING THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY T&FS

- Established trends of membership decline and the further challenges across the Telecoms and Financial sectors mean that maintaining the current number of T&FS Officers is not financially sustainable.
- The NEC is also aware that further membership decline is likely to take place- although not agreed- through the introduction of artificial intelligence technologies, offshoring and rationalisation plans across the employers in the T&FS constituency.
- There is a clear opportunity to cease one T&FS Assistant Secretary role and implement a more effective way of working to redistribute workload across the T&FS department.
- The existing workload will be reduced, given the reduction in membership across the constituency. We will also look at a more effective way of working to ensure that Executive members can support the Officers as appropriate, including how we service smaller companies within the T&FS constituency.
- The approximate savings from ceasing one T&FS Assistant Secretary role, including pension and National Insurance costs, is **£100,000** per year.
- The current arrangements for National Officer roles in the T&FS Department will continue as they are now, until such time as Conference has endorsed the proposed changes and restructuring is finalised.

REDISTRIBUTION OF WORKLOAD

The reduction of National Officer roles is a crucial step in securing the union's financial stability and we are confident that the existing workload can be absorbed and/or redistributed by utilising, in a more effective way, executive members and the numerous representatives in both constituency and business-based field structures.

Alongside this, the CWU will review the working practices to ensure we eliminate any duplication of work. CWU HQ will also be providing more support in how to organise workloads and manage time, as well as exploring ways to reduce the need for travel through better utilisation of virtual meetings.

TIMELINE

Branches should note that, due to the complexities of realigning roles and workload, these changes will not be implemented immediately, following the Special Conference. Instead, the GS Department will work closely with our Industrial Departments and the relevant HR staff on a date for implementation that takes account of the need to redistribute workload. Similarly, the timing of the cessation of the appointed role will be subject to a discussion with our HR team and the relevant member of staff.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the overall number of National Officers is reduced by four, along the policy lines stated in this document, therefore reducing expenditure by approximately £425,000 per annum.

NATIONAL AND BRANCH STRUCTURES REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to address the unsustainable costs of our national structures and to carry out a union wide review of the effectiveness of our national, constituency and branch structures for the first time since merger in 1995.

SECTION ONE: REDUCING EXPENDITURE IN OUR NATIONAL STRUCTURES

The current costs of our national structures are set out below. Please note, these do not include any costs for National Officers or staffing in the GS, SDGS, Postal and T&FS Departments.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE COSTS

- Approximate annual costs, including travel and subsistence, for the National Executive Committee are **£69k**

POSTAL EXECUTIVE COST

The approximate annual costs of the Postal Executive are as follows:

- The cost of secondment and pay: **£855k**
- Travel and subsistence: **£213k**
- Total annual cost: **£1.068m**

TELECOMS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES EXECUTIVE COST

The approximate annual costs of the Telecoms and Financial Services Executive are as follows:

- Travel and subsistence: **£65k**
- Total annual cost: **£65k**

It is important for branches to note that there are two main reasons why the Postal Executive's costs are significantly higher than the Telecoms and Financial Services Executive's costs. Firstly, Postal Executive members, for the period they are elected, are covered by a secondment agreement from their employer, the cost of which is entirely funded by the CWU. This means that the employer does not contribute towards paid release or travel and subsistence in relation to any industrial relations work carried out by our Postal Executive. Secondly, as the impact of membership decline has grown over the years, the cost of Postal Executive pay has significantly increased as a proportion of our overall income. When this was originally introduced, it was based on achieving pay parity with CWU Divisional Representatives, a senior field-based Industrial Relations grade paid for by Royal Mail. At the time of introduction, the cost of Postal Executive pay was absorbed by Royal Mail agreeing to remove the 2.5% (of our total income) administration fee charged for check-off.

It should also be noted that the number of positions on the Postal Executive was reduced in 2024, from 17 to 14, as part of restructuring efforts. This resulted in an approximate saving of **£194k** per annum.

With regard to the T&FS Executive, the costs are substantially lower for two reasons. Firstly, the employer pays for the release of executive members. Secondly, they do not receive additional remuneration for being an executive member and their pay reflects the individual's role/grade in their respective company. Branches should also note that UTAW members on the T&FS without release or recognition currently volunteer their time and we will examine solutions to this as part of the proposed review.

Regarding our NEC, these costs are substantially lower than the Industrial Executives because NEC members who are not part of the executives are only afforded release for attending NEC meetings and specified events/responsibilities attached to their role, which only add minimal cost to the union. Furthermore, the lower cost of the NEC also reflects the fact that executive members from both Postal and T&FS who are part of the NEC do not add any additional costs to the NEC.

Considering all the above, we know that to remain a standalone union we cannot continue with the existing costs of our national structures. The NEC has agreed that the fairest way to significantly reduce our expenditure, at national level, is to further address the cost of the Postal Executive. Therefore, the NEC has agreed the need to reduce the current secondment costs of the Postal Executive by at least 50%. This would equate to an annual saving of at least **£427k**.

The NEC is also determined to ensure that we reduce travel and subsistence costs, where possible, by utilising more virtual meetings and introducing new travel and subsistence policies, across both constituencies.

However, the NEC has also agreed that, while the principle of the proposed cost reduction is for the Special Conference to endorse, the method by which this is implemented is a matter for the Postal constituency to determine. We are confident that there are clear options for the union to achieve this saving without further reducing the overall number of Postal Executive members¹. In this regard, the Postal Executive will be pursuing an option that realigns our industrial structures/interfaces with Royal Mail's industrial structures/interfaces. It is anticipated that the discussions on the realignment option will be finalised by the end of Summer 2025.

SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF OUR NATIONAL STRUCTURES

We have made clear to branches that in addition to reducing our expenditure, a key objective of CWU restructuring is to improve the overall effectiveness of the union in representing our members. Although our structures have served us well to this point, they are nevertheless a product of merger and have remained mostly unchanged since 1995. During this time, the world of work has changed beyond recognition and all workers and unions face very different challenges today to those of the past. The pace of this change itself is perhaps the clearest example of this, alongside the impact of new technologies in the workplace and how workers are monitored. Vastly different methods of communication have become the norm and the demand for quicker information to frontline representatives and members to counter those of the employers has also added to a much more pressurised environment under which unions now operate.

It is time for all of us to recognise that the CWU is now a different union in size and faces a very different set of circumstances in our industries, as well as new opportunities to grow, in the technology sector in particular. When thinking ahead about how best to ensure the CWU's survival as a standalone union, we must imagine how we would structure our union if we were building it from today. This includes developing what our national structures would look like, how they would interact with the rest of the union and how we could best represent our members. This must form the basis of our approach, rather than simply using savings made elsewhere to subsidise the existing structure.

Therefore, the NEC is proposing a root and branch review of our national structures including the NEC, our Industrial Executives and constituencies. This is an opportunity to reimagine what type of union we need to be to address challenges of the future and to introduce a more effective way of working in all our national structures.

¹ Branches should note that the number of Postal Executive members was reduced in the 2024 phase of restructuring from 17 to 14.

As part of this review of our national structures, we will also examine the interaction and work carried out between our Industrial Executives and the appropriate field/team structures that support the respective industrial constituencies. Furthermore, we will examine how we allocate work.

This review also presents opportunities to improve communication and engagement between all representative structures and significantly strengthen a 'one union' recruitment and organising culture.

Any recommendations from this review will be assessed against the five principles of restructuring agreed by the NEC. These are set out below:

1. *Do restructuring proposals deliver a financially sustainable and standalone CWU?*

Finance cannot be the sole driver of this project but put simply, unless we can implement very significant cost savings across the union then any attempts to protect the CWU as a standalone union are doomed to fail.

2. *Do restructuring proposals help to recruit and retain more CWU members?*

With our two main employers in structural decline we must adapt. We must recruit every potential member in Royal Mail and BT Group and we have to get smarter at our membership retention work. We must also build on the success of UAW and invest seriously in recruitment outside of our recognised employers. Any restructuring, new processes and technology must support these objectives.

3. *Do restructuring proposals help to build representation and strength at local workplace level?*

In recent times, we have seen a drop off in representatives in some workplaces. Through training, communications, support and engagement we must turn this tide. Restructuring must put resources and focus on local reps at the heart of our plans.

4. *Do restructuring proposals at all other levels of the union support improved representation of our members and workplaces?*

The culture of the CWU is unique and one we are rightly proud of. It is also one that is under threat with continued attacks from employers. One of the major selling points of our union is strength in the workplace. This project must protect and enhance that. We also have to be alive to the fact many of our members have no workplace and either operate remotely or from home. We need to leverage the technology at our disposal to recreate our traditional strengths in new areas.

5. *Do restructuring proposals help bring through a new generation of representatives, which also reflect the CWU and the wider movement's diversity?*

Some excellent work has been undertaken in a bid to increase the diversity of the CWU's representative structures but now is the time to do more. The CWU, like many other trade unions, also faces an ageing population in both its membership and in our representative structures. We must take this opportunity to recruit a new generation of members, with a particular focus on young members and increase representation of minority groups within the union's structures at every level.

We note that, in the restructuring consultation, many branches referenced a loss of connection between the national structures of the union and the frontline workers and representatives- across both the industrial and national executives. It is essential for the survival of the CWU as a strong, standalone industrial union that we ensure that our structures truly reflect the interests of the members on the ground and the review will be conducted with this as an essential objective. It is also clear that our structures need to set a precedent of creating a union that allows the next generation of representatives to not just join the CWU but actually get involved in our structures, as succession planning in the union has not always been successful. Our leadership must also reflect the diversity of our union and our wider society and understand the challenges faced in the modern workplace by all.

The aim of this review is to make our national structures more effective and fit for the modern workplace, provide a further cost-saving and to empower our representatives. As such, we will ensure that branches and members are involved in the review and that the views of our representatives and branches shape the review's outcome. To facilitate this, we will set up two working groups, one for Postal and one for T&FS to take the review forward initially in their own constituencies. These working groups will report to a joint national review group to ensure that any proposals meet the terms of the five principles and enable a consistent approach to improve the effectiveness of our representation.

The working groups will be supported by a mechanism that provides meaningful input and engagement with our branches throughout the process. Both constituency-based working groups will also be consulted regarding the review of the National Executive and the NEC Equality Leads will be given an opportunity to input into these reviews. Given that the costs of the NEC are clearly manageable, any recommendations will focus on how the NEC can improve its effectiveness and connection with branches and the executives, which was referenced as an issue in the branch restructure consultation. The national review group will lead this part of the review.

The recommendations from the review of our national structures (NEC, Constituencies, Industrial Executives), will subsequently be presented to a Policy Forum/Special Conference in 2026 for agreement.

BRANCH REVIEW

In tandem with a review of our national structures, it is only right that we concurrently examine our branch structures. Through the restructuring consultation, we have been able to learn more about the branch structures themselves, what branches value in their structures and the potential for improving these structures. However, it is clear we need more information and time to establish what measures can best support recruitment and building power in the workplace for our branches. The NEC is therefore proposing that a full branch structure review is undertaken and completed by 2026. The review will cover the following:

- **Standardising branch rules and implementation of consistent standards:** the review will produce a recommendation for standardised branch rules, as well as implementing consistent standards so that members have consistent representation and structures available to them, regardless of their branch.
- **Mergers:** the review will identify opportunities where branches may be strengthened through a merger, including cross-constituency mergers. It will also identify how the union can give advice and guidance to branches regarding mergers, especially cross-constituency mergers, so our members and branches can be fully supported in any process and be able to maintain their ability to address workplace issues. This is particularly important given the need to protect the facilities arrangements/ agreements with respective employers.
- **Joint-working:** the review will identify opportunities for more joint-working between branches, as many branches expressed that there should be more opportunities for this in the consultation.
- **Improving purchasing power:** there is a clear need to pursue arrangements that may bring costs down, through properly utilising the union's purchasing power. This includes exploring centrally-procured contracts and/or deals that will reduce accommodation or equipment costs. This is not about moving every part of branch purchasing to HQ but identifying the most significant areas of overspend and ensuring that branches have access to arrangements on consistent areas of expenditure, which can save them money.
- **Professionalising administration:** the review will explore how branches can be more well-supported when it comes to record management, financial management, ensuring GDPR compliance and good cyber security practices.
- **The next generation:** the review will also explore how branches can ensure both good succession planning and improving younger workers' participation in branch structures and how they can be supported in taking on branch roles.

This review will use the five principles of our restructuring project to assess the viability of our branch structures in the future. The CWU has a long history of branch strength and autonomy and we do not want to change this. Instead, we need to ensure the branch structure can facilitate the growth of the union, be financially sustainable in the long-term and bring through the next generation of CWU representatives. The review will make recommendations for how the ideas from branches given in the consultation (that have not already been implemented) can be implemented.

However, the NEC is also aware that there are some situations where intervention with branches may be needed before the conclusion of the review. The NEC reserves the right to take action, including mergers, where absolutely necessary, including where branches have high levels of non-membership or where the branch has become dysfunctional. The Industrial Officers will support the NEC in these matters.

We are conscious that branches have had a reduced rebate in recent years and are facing serious changes in our industries. In addition, we know that there are differing views from branches on how the union should work going forward, including on working across constituencies and how we approach mergers. That is why we have taken the decision to properly review every aspect of the structure before recommending any reforms, to ensure that branches are able to thrive in the long-term and that the best possible solution can be implemented.

The NEC will have ownership of this branch review and a small working group with representatives from both Postal and T&FS branches will be able to contribute to any recommendations for a new branch structure and plans for future joint working. The recommendations from this review will also be presented, alongside the recommendations from the review of the national structures, at either a Policy Forum or Special Conference in 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Postal Executives' current secondment costs are reduced by at least 50%, to be achieved along the policy lines stated in this document.
2. That our national structures, including the NEC, constituencies and the Industrial Executives, are reviewed, along the policy lines stated in this document.
3. That our branch structures are reviewed, along the policy lines stated in this document.



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