

No. 128/20

17th March 2020

Dear Colleague,

COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) – CANCELLATION AND POSTPONEMENT OF CWU EVENTS

LTB 121/20 sent out on Friday 13th March 2020 informed Branches of a number of actions we were in the process of drawing up in order that the CWU can continue to operate as a result of the above pandemic.

Over the weekend a number of developments have occurred both publically and industrially and on the afternoon of Monday 16th March the NEC Emergency Committee (EC) met to discuss the CWU approach. Before detailing the decision of the EC it is worth repeating one of the key messages of that LTB. That is, Branches will be aware that the Health and Safety department have issued a number of LTBs that are directed at the industrial health and safety aspects of this matter as it impacts upon our members working conditions. In relation to those issues branches and representatives should continue to deal with those matters through the relevant industrial departments in conjunction with the H&S Department at CWU HQs.

As we are aware this is a contagious disease and varying degrees of “self-isolation” and/or “social distancing” initiatives are rapidly coming into force. Indeed following the meeting of the EC the Government have made further announcements on this issue. These new Government announcements follow decisions taken over the weekend such as the Scottish Government has placing a de-facto ban on all events of more than 500 people. Large scale sporting events (Premier League, EFL, Rugby Six nations) have been cancelled. This is because it is accepted that such large gatherings assist in spreading this virus.

There is no escaping the fact that we face a serious situation, people have and will continue to die as a result of this pandemic. The CWU has a real responsibility to put in place what actions we believe necessary to protect our members, activists and staff and alongside them their friends, families and communities.

As a result of the current environment and the ever changing position i.e. the likelihood that the situation we face will worsen dramatically the EC believes it would be irresponsible if, at a time when people are being advised to put distance between themselves and others to minimise the risk of spreading the infection, we continue to operate as if nothing is happening.

Amongst the issues the EC had to consider for example, was if we went ahead with General Conference we are looking at approximately 1,000 people coming together to work in close proximity to each other. Precisely the type of environment we are told heightens the risk of spreading the virus.

Accordingly the EC has agreed with immediate effect to postpone and/or cancel the following specific and general events within the CWU.

- CWU Annual (General and Industrial) conference 2020.
- NEC and Industrial Executive meetings and associated subcommittee and industrial business meetings.
- All CWU schools/training and CWU organised events.
- Branch Annual General meetings/Membership meetings.
- All Regional meetings.
- Implement an avoidance of all non-essential travel policy within the CWU.

As highlighted in LTB 121/20 we are continuing to work thorough the steps we will need to ensure that the CWU continues to operate during this difficult time. This means scoping alternative arrangements to ensure that key meetings can take place in some format.

We know Branches will understand when we say the above decisions, whilst not taken lightly, are the right approach. Our aim here has been to ensure that we act responsibly when it comes to the wellbeing of members, reps and staff at what is a deeply concerning period of time for all.

As part of our planning around next steps we will also aim to scope what opportunities there are to run any of the above conference/events, etc. later in the year.

We will continue to keep Branches updated on our response to this issue as and when we implement alternative arrangements aimed at ensuring the CWU continues to operate and support our reps and members as the situation we face develops further.

Unless or until otherwise advised branches should continue to raise any issues with any CWU HQ Department as they normally would. Any changes to this approach as a result of the implementation of alternative working arrangements at HQ level will be notified to Branches immediately.

Any comments or questions on the above should be addressed to Tony Kearns at sdgs@cwu.org. However we are sure you will all understand that we are now committed to putting in place operational changes to ensure continuity of our day to day operation and it will be those matters than now take priority.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Ward
General Secretary



Tony Kearns
Senior Deputy General Secretary