On 12th May join thousands of CWU members in London marching for a new deal for workers.

Contact your CWU Branch for travel arrangements and more details.

@DaveWardGS The Communications Union @CWUNews #TheCWU
Over the past month, there’s been a growing debate about the relevance of the trade union movement in this country. In this union we know the pressure working people are under. Whether it’s the Four Pillars campaign, the threat to pensions in BT or our fight for agency workers’ rights, no one can say the CWU does not matter today.

Equally, we are under no illusions about the need to face the future and keep building the support we provide to members and reps on the front line, which is the key driver for the union’s Redesign project.

But the questions being asked about trade unions point to the severe problems we all know exist in the world of work. Workers have never been under so much pressure to work harder and faster for less – and it’s our job to do something about this.

So we’ve been pushing really strongly for the trade union movement to come together and develop a proper strategy to tackle the problems in the world of work. As you can read about on pages 14 and 15, the TUC’s national demonstration calling for a new deal for working people on May 12 is one part of this.

We want to see hundreds of thousands of workers on the streets demanding a better deal, whatever industry they’re in.

Therefore, as CWU members, we’ll be marching for a re-nationalised Royal Mail, decent pensions, an end to unfair performance management, an end to Post Office closures, the scrapping of the agency workers’ loophole and much more.

This is a moment to stand alongside others in our movement – nurses, firefighters, teachers and train drivers – themselves fighting for a better deal at work.

But a proper strategy cannot stop there. Together with a high-profile national demonstration, we are calling for unions across the country to work together in three other ways.

Firstly, by publishing a manifesto of fresh demands on the world of work that we want the Government to act on. As a minimum, this must include a real living wage; an end to zero-hour contracts and bogus self-employment; and a strong set of rights for trade unions to stand up for people in the workplace.

Secondly, we want to see all unions pushing a common bargaining agenda with employers to tackle insecurity industrially. If every union agrees a core set of standards and pushes these in co-ordinated negotiations in their own workplaces, this would put significant pressure on employers to end the race to the bottom.

Thirdly, we are clear that unions must be prepared to take action to back up these demands. As we’ve seen most recently in Royal Mail, when a workforce is engaged, united and prepared to take action to back up these demands.

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Thirdly, we are clear that unions must be prepared to take action to back up these demands. As we’ve seen most recently in Royal Mail, when a workforce is engaged, united and prepared to take a stand, this is a powerful force an employer cannot ignore.

We want to see as many members as possible out on May 12, showing that our movement has never been more relevant and that there has never been a better time to deliver a new deal for all workers.
Unionising the young is the challenge of our time

Independent journalist and upcoming political thinker Liam Young argues the mass unionisation of young workers is a vital next step in Corbyn’s revolution.

Youth people play a vital role in the working class struggle. Throughout history the young have played an important role in leading and assisting many great movements. Social change is often brought about by the demands of a new generation that bring a fresh perspective to the status quo.

In the past, politicians have headed into elections with nothing on offer for the young. These politicians calculated that because young people were unlikely to vote en-masse, there was no need to deal with their concerns or demands. The decline in turnout of young voters over the past few decades confirmed this calculation, with politicians doubling down and taking a full-throttle approach to inflicting the pain of austerity on the backs of the young since the 2008 crash.

Cameron and Clegg’s coalition took a particular fancy towards slashing budgets for young people. From the trebling of tuition fees to the continued inequality within the workplace – where an 18-year-old earns nearly a third less than a 25-year-old for the same minimum-wage job – or the mass closure of youth centres to the assault on school budgets; the young have not had it easy.

It is no surprise, given this context, that young people were turned off by the political system and by electoral politics altogether.

I do not buy into the idea that young people were not interested in politics prior to Jeremy Corbyn’s election in 2015. I believe that young people have always been interested in the way that their lives are governed, but that such an interest failed to materialise into engagement with the political system because it seems so rigged against us.

As for many working class people – whether young or old – there’s little incentive to dedicate time to a system that only seems to put us down.

But all of that changed with Jeremy Corbyn’s election as Labour leader. For the first time, a politician engaged with young people on their own terms and asked about the issues they were facing and the causes they were passionate about. In doing so, he became an incredibly accessible figure through which it was possible to vent our understandable anger at the establishment. In formulating policy that addressed our concerns he confirmed that the Labour Party was the home of the young. The support that Labour received in the election is testament to this and so is the continued strength of the support shown by young people.

Something that I would like to focus on over the next few months is recruiting young trade unionists. We need to replicate what has happened with the Labour Party and embrace young people within our trade union movement.

A recent report on trade union membership found that only 2.4 per cent of young people aged between 16-19 and in work were members of a trade union. Not even 12 per cent of young people aged between 20-24 reported that they were members of a trade union. This is surprising given that young people need not wait for a Corbyn government to win pay rises in their workplaces. Some of these victories could be achieved earlier through collective action within a union.

That’s why I see this as the next step of Corbyn’s revolution amongst the young. We should be proud of our trade union movement and its links with the Labour Party and we should be shouting from the rooftops about the achievements of this link. We need to remind young people of the power of our unions and the power that belonging to one brings.

This movement of the young will amount to nothing if we do not embed it within the left of this country.

Unionising the young is part of that great task.

Liam’s new book Rise: How Jeremy Corbyn Inspired the Young to Create a New Socialism is available at all good booksellers.
DGS COLUMN

The first quarter of 2018 has been extremely demanding for the T&FS pensions team, following the closure of BT’s pension consultation on January 17. Since then, we’ve been locked in intense negotiations with BT in an attempt to secure the best possible outcome for all our members.

At the time of going to press a final agreement was still hanging in the balance, with the CWU continuing to exert maximum pressure on BT to achieve the best possible outcome for members of both the BTPS and the BTRSS. We urge all members to engage with the information that will be coming your way, from both the CWU and BT.

Meanwhile, Capita’s recent share price collapse, in the wake of a series of profit warnings, has sparked alarm bells with CWU assistant secretary Sally Bridge. Quite rightly, she has written to the CEO of Telefónica seeking assurances that contingency plans were being set in place to bring nearly 2,000 of its formerly outsourced employees back in-house in the event of Capita’s demise.

The CWU objected to the outsourcing back in 2013 as we believed it wasn’t in the best interests of the customer, the staff or the business. Now we’re concerned that a Carillion-style collapse could seriously affect our members and we’re insisting that they should not be caught in the crossfire and should be safeguarded, by bringing Capita’s contract back in-house.

See the adjacent stories

Andy Kerr

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (T&FS)

Cold comfort for Telefónica contact staff at crisis-hit Capita

Turbulence at Capita – which has spooked the markets and triggered fears that the outsourcing giant could be in danger of becoming the ‘next Carillion’ – has prompted CWU demands for Telefónica to make contingency plans to safeguard nearly 2,000 staff, including many of its ex-employees, who conduct vital customer-facing work for the O2 and Tesco Mobile brands.

To the union’s intense disappointment, however, its request for assurances to calm the nerves of an understandably concerned workforce in the wake of a succession of Capita profit warnings and a halving of the share price in just one day has been comprehensively knocked back by Telefónica UK CEO Mark Evans.

Responding to the CWU’s call for a guarantee that, in the event of Capita going into liquidation, Telefónica would take back in-house previously outsourced employees currently undertaking Telefónica work, Mr Evans insisted that “at this time we have no plans to make any change to our partnership” – adding: “It would not be appropriate for me to comment or speculate on the financial status or future of a Strategic Partner.”

Sally told The Voice: “This is scant reassurance for our members, and frankly the CWU would have expected better.

“Given that the major part of Telefónica’s customer-facing operation – not to mention our members’ livelihoods – would be thrown into immediate chaos if Capita was indeed to go the same way as Carillion, I’d really hope that, behind the scenes, senior Telefónica management are considering what they would do in the event of Capita’s sudden demise rather more intently than this letter implies.”

Pointing out that the current dramas at Capita have vindicated the union’s warnings in 2013 that the then biggest outsourcing of customer-facing staff in UK industrial history carried significant risks of the mobile giant ‘losing control’ of work streams on which its very success depends, Sally concludes:

“If what’s happening now isn’t a wake-up call for senior management in Telefónica I don’t know what is.”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/cold-comfort

BT pensions talks go to the wire

As The Voice went to press the CWU was locked in last-ditch negotiations with BT on future pension provision, with both sides focused on the serious consequences that would follow if an agreed way forward cannot be reached.

Deputy general secretary Andy Kerr explains: “By the time members are reading this magazine we’ll either have secured a draft deal that the Executive feels able to recommend to members of both the BTPS and BTRSS – or we’ll be making preparations for an altogether different kind of ballot.

“Whichever way it goes, members will have received a detailed communication from the CWU at their home addresses – and I’d urge them to consider the contents and the Executive’s recommendation very carefully indeed before casting their vote.”

www.cwu.org
As I write this column, members will be voting on the new Four Pillars and Pay agreement reached with Royal Mail. The CWU's national officers who negotiated the agreement, backed unanimously by the postal executive, recommended the deal without reservation on the basis that we secured each of our key policy demands on pay, pensions, shorter working week, future pipeline and extending our legally binding agreements.

Against that backdrop, we are hoping that the ballot result will deliver a big turnout and demonstrate members’ resounding support for the agreement. From the feedback received during our nationwide unit reps tour – where we listened and spoke to our reps in every division of the UK – there seemed to be enthusiastic and widespread support for the agreement, which I hope translates into a massive ‘Yes’ vote when the result is declared.

While the deal will deliver significant improvements to members’ pay, pensions, hours and conditions at work, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that, once agreed, all the provisions of the agreement – including those around tackling resourcing and improving workplace culture - are fully implemented and adhered to going forward. Equally, the agreement is crucial because it positions the union to ensure that future challenges and change are dealt with on the basis of agreed mutual interest evolution as opposed to dictated revolution.

The agreement was secured through our collective strength, it will protect our current and future members and puts the union in a position to shape a successful future for our members and a great public service.

Terry Pullinger
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (POSTAL)

As The Voice went to press, our Royal Mail members were voting on the Four Pillars national agreement, and our deputy general secretary postal Terry Pullinger and his senior team had just completed their nationwide tour of the UK, briefing local reps in every corner of the nation.

Starting in the Home Counties and London in Week One, Terry and his senior team of officers then met reps from the North East and North West of England, North Wales and Scotland in the second week – and then spent a weekend shivering in snowy Glasgow as the weather cancelled all travel.

The following week’s thaw allowed our CWU leadership to journey back down south of the border again, where they addressed a packed gathering of our Midlands reps in Birmingham – and a separate Parcelforce briefing – before climbing on board a coach to Bristol to meet activists from the South West and South Wales.

County Tyrone was the final venue, our Northern Ireland reps gathering in Cookstown to bring the curtain down on the nationwide tour, which, in total, was attended by nearly 2,000 frontline unit reps all around the UK.

“We’ve seen unit reps from every single division of the UK, plus an extra meeting for our Parcelforce Worldwide Depot and Hubs reps,” Terry told The Voice, “and the response was overwhelmingly a positive one.

“At every briefing there were lots of questions of course, which is exactly what we expected given the significance and complexity of the agreement,” our DGSP explains, “but the feeling we got from every locality was of strong support for the efforts of our senior negotiating team and a determination to move forward positively.

“It’s true that our team worked extremely hard in the talks with the company – but this excellent agreement could not have been achieved had it not been for the fantastic unity and strength shown by our magnificent members all around the nation, led by their reps who are truly the backbone of this great union of ours.

“And at every single briefing, I’ve told our reps that they are a credit to this union and a credit to their class.

“Every meeting ended with a massive roar from the floor of pride and support for the union – and not one single person, out of the estimated nearly 2,000 reps who attended all the briefings, not one of them said they were voting against the deal.

“So, although I’m saying this just as balloting opens and before the result has come in, I’m optimistic for a ‘Yes’ majority.” (See P 6 & 7)
The Four Pillars agreement is endorsed by the members in the ballot, the union’s industrial assistant secretaries Davie Robertson and Mark Baulch are ready to get straight to work on the vitally important Pipeline Pillar of the agreement.

It is critical for the future success of the industry that its operational framework and structure protects the USO and supports and enables growth. The business needs to protect the letter product, while capturing as much as possible of the lucrative and buoyant parcels market in order to sustain existing jobs, be the source of new jobs in the future, and be the logistical heart of Britain’s future economy.

‘HARD-FOUGHT, HARD-WON’

Davie told The Voice that this statement of intent was “hard-fought for and hard-won” during the long period of negotiations with Royal Mail management, “but we now have a CWU agenda, an agenda of change, but change for growth – not for cost-cutting.”

And this is the key fundamental shift, points out Mark, who explains: “Everything, from start and finish times, later acceptance times (LATs), indoor sorting, outdoor delivery – it’s all based on the concept of change for growth.

“We are prepared to consider and agree changes – but every change has to be enacted with the aim and intention of bringing in new products, new services, growing volume and growing revenue in order to protect jobs and enhance our members’ terms and conditions.”

Top of the action timetable are the delivery office trials, which are being started at selected units in the coming weeks.

“Of the trials is around the indoor element of the job and its future design,” Mark tells us, and cites mail prep – specifically sequencing – as a key aspect of this.

“The business have put to us that, if very high levels of letter mail was to arrive at an office already walk sequenced, leaving only a small amount of the letters to be merged into it, then consideration around how the prep frame is used in the future needs to be examined.”

But, he continues, the reality is often that the sequenced mail still needs more sorting before it is ready to be taken out by our delivery members.

“On the front line, there are issues around the presentation of all mails into delivery offices, including walk sequenced mail and these need to be resolved – this then potentially driving a different indoor solution.”

This is an area where Mark and Davie will be working in close liaison, with each part of this potentially impacting on members across each of the various functions.

“If we’re successful in our change for growth objective, then it improves job security for all our members, whether that’s in a mail centre, an RDC, a delivery office, right across the pipeline,” says Davie.

“It’s about putting the CWU back at the centre of the strategy for this industry going forward.”

As well as looking at the future of indoor work within the business, there will also be a big focus on the outdoor operational design in the forthcoming trials, says Mark, explaining that this will include attendance patterns, equipment, and scoping of potential changes to delivery spans – for which the CWU and the company are looking at ergonomic assessments.

“The introduction of the shorter working
week is really important here and we’re going to build this flightpath into the change programme,” he continues, adding that this, combined with the other trialled outdoor methods, will balance the impact of the changes to the indoor operation.

The introduction from October of LAT parcel offerings has also been agreed as part of the agreement, however, the impact right across the pipeline and on all functions has been mitigated with the emphasis on change for growth only.

**STRATEGY FOR CHANGE**

In order for the LAT parcels to connect to core USO deliveries, the change has been kept to a maximum of 30 minutes change to start times in delivery, with the vast majority of units unaffected, with a further opportunity locally to mitigate these impacts further.

Mark points out: “This is about enabling the majority of LAT traffic to connect with the core delivery” and Davie adds that, “co-ordinated, cross-functional engagement, involving processing, distribution and delivery representatives in each mail centre catchment area can ensure that we can maximise connectivity and minimise impact in each function.

“Had we not achieved this agreement, and changed business strategy, then in our opinion, we could have been facing RDC and mail centre and delivery office closures on a large scale and the managed decline of our industry, with huge impacts on infrastructure and jobs,” points out Davie.

“Basically, this is all about change where it supports growth, where it brings new volume into this business, and where it protects the product base we’ve got.

“If a change doesn’t tick those boxes – we won’t support it.”

Both of our industrial assistant secretaries share Terry Pullinger’s positive assessment of the nationwide tour.

“What struck me in particular was the hugely increased confidence of our reps,” commented Mark, “and this more assertive attitude will be extremely helpful to members when it comes to the implementation of the changes ahead.”

And Davie told The Voice that he had been “particularly impressed by the depth of knowledge that was evident in the robust questions that were asked at every briefing.

“They certainly tested and challenged the officers during the briefings and that drive and focus needs to be carried into the workplace – ensuring we’ll be even tougher on managers who may attempt to by-pass any parts of the agreement.”

Our next edition will feature the progress of the workplace trials, but in the meantime, look out for reports from the frontline trials in the weeks ahead on our facebook page and on cwu.org
Openreach ‘Fibre First’ announcement welcomed

NEW JOBS ON THE WAY

The CWU has welcomed Openreach’s announcement today that it is launching an ambitious new ‘Fibre First’ programme in a bid to fast-track progress towards an ‘Ultrafast Britain’.

Openreach is promising to take the lead in the next phase of the national roll-out of high speed broadband by accelerating its Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) programme – with the aim of connecting three million homes and businesses with ultrafast broadband by the end of 2020.

To kick-start this major investment in the UK’s communications infrastructure, Openreach has announced it will be recruiting and training no fewer than 3,000 field engineers during 2018.

Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester will be the first to benefit from the company’s plan to deliver faster speeds with the roll-out of FTTP to 40 UK towns, cities and boroughs starting this year.

Crucially, however, Openreach is determined to demonstrate its ability to deploy affordable FTTP at scale in rural and suburban areas as well as in the biggest towns and cities – and, in so doing, is signalling a different approach to the market-driven emphasis of its competitors, which are focusing largely on the most profitable urban conurbations.

CWU deputy general secretary Andy Kerr told The Voice: “This is something the CWU has always argued is essential to tackle a dangerous digital divide in which rural and poorer urban areas have inevitably been the main sufferers.

“Another big positive, from our perspective, is the recruitment of 3,000 engineers who will receive permanent contracts and full training from Openreach – a far cry from the outsourced and agency resourcing models of a number of other providers which sadly often represents a race to the bottom with regards to terms and conditions.”

Victory on sanitary bins

CWU PRESSURE PREVAILS

CWU representations to BT Property & Facilities Services over the lack of sanitary bins across much of the BT estate have finally secured action – with one bin now due to be provided in each and every building.

Following on from demands that were initially levied by the CWU Women’s Conference in 2014, BTPFS has now agreed to install serviced sanitary provision in 4,825 additional buildings – many of which will be telephone exchanges.

The new bins should have been rolled out to all sites by early April, though the number needing to be manufactured may cause a slight delay.

Assistant secretary Sally Bridge said: “This is a welcome if somewhat overdue development – and one that can be traced directly back to pressure exerted by the CWU.”

BTPFS SECURITY PAY

Concerted pressure from the CWU has resulted in an all new pay structure being agreed for security staff in BT buildings – at a stroke addressing long-standing union concerns about previously largely non-existent pay progression opportunities.

Full story at www.cwu.org/news/fibre-first-applauded

TALE OF TWO TUPES

The CWU has been working hard to allay members’ concerns within the BT Wholesale & Ventures line of business after the loss of two major contracts triggered warnings of potential TUPE situations.

In the event, assurances were sought and ultimately received from BT Fleet Solutions that no CWU-represented grade employees would be impacted by G4S’s decision not to renew a three–year contract with BT Fleet for the maintenance of its Cash in Transit vehicles.

A separate contract loss stemming from KCOM’s decision to in-source previously outsourced work on its Horizon contract is proving more challenging, however. The CWU is presently representing the interests of around 150 BT MSO staff who are in scope for transfer to KCOM on April 1, intent on ensuring that TUPE protections are followed to the letter.

Full story at www.cwu.org/news/bt-fleet-unaffected

Full story at www.cwu.org/news/breakthrough
New Openreach role delivers promotion opportunities for 1,600

SENIOR ENGINEER ROLE LAUNCHED

The all-new approach to ‘Engineering Career Pathways’ agreed between the CWU and Openreach last summer is in the process of delivering its latest prize with regards to tackling limited career development and promotion opportunities within the field environment.

Following the conclusion of a successful pilot in the North East, agreement has now been reached on the creation of a new ‘senior engineer’ role that will offer significant opportunities for pay enhancement and career progression for around 1,600 B2 and TMNE2 engineers this year alone.

In January adverts went out for the new roles across Openreach – the intention being to recruit at least one senior engineer in every engineering team – and two in larger teams – by the end of March.

Successful candidates – who will need to be able to demonstrate their ability to become the ‘go to’ person for other team members requiring assistance and advice on jobs – will receive an overall remuneration package of £33,000 (£30,000 basic plus a 10 per cent bonus) – representing a pay hike of almost £7,000 for those on the minimum of their pay ranges, and just over £3,000 for longer serving B2s at the top of their pay spine.

The new opportunities come on top of those already extended to Workforce 2020 TMNE2 engineers recruited since 2014 to virtually close the pay gap between them and their B2 contract colleagues’ pay levels by undergoing additional training and becoming ‘advanced engineers’.

As well as providing further career enhancement opportunities for both TMNE2 and B2 engineers, the roll-out of the new senior engineer role represents a big step forward in the CWU’s aim of embedding a positive workplace culture of engineers being able to seek advice and help from a trusted colleague without having to flag up gaps in their knowledge or experience to management – something the CWU has long believed has mitigated against the maximisation of skill sets that the company badly needs.

“Infundamental this is about team members who recognise that they have something they need help with being able to turn to a highly experienced fellow team member who is specifically there to provide practical help and advice,” explains CWU assistant secretary Davie Bowman.

“In the new performance environment within Openreach it’s vitally important that our members have the confidence to be able to ask for practical help without fear of their request being taken out of context – and the new senior engineer role will fulfil precisely that need.”

CAREER PROGRESSION PATHS

At the same time the creation of the new role will help address a chronic shortage of career progression for B2 engineers that has become increasingly acute in recent years as a result of technological advance, process changes and the concentration of traditionally higher-paid desk based roles in a much smaller number of sites.

“Apart from providing an important new element of peer support for field engineers across Openreach, the recruitment of 1,600 senior engineers will do much to tackle the promotion ‘wastelands’ that currently exist for B2 field engineers across much of the UK,” stresses Davie.

Davie concludes: “This has been a highly successful exercise from the CWU’s point of view, addressing a long-standing ambition to create meaningful career progression in the field environment – but we’re not finished with Career Pathways yet. ‘The national team intends to build on this significant success and is currently looking at whether scope exists for another new role that would sit between the senior engineer and the operational manager that could result in further opportunities for career advancement – so watch this space!’

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/new-senior-engineer
Santander pay up again

The third and final year of the three-year pay deal struck between the CWU and Santander UK in 2016 will see all CWU-represented grades receive a 2.3 per cent rise on March 1 – apart from those already paid above 106% of the midpoint of their pay band, who will receive 2 per cent.

The fully consolidated rises come on top of substantial CWU-negotiated pay hikes for lower-paid staff in the company’s UK retail contact centres that were instituted in September to combat high attrition rates – and is further augmented by the commencement of new ‘Flexible Benefits Package’ payments, worth £500, for all S1 and S2 grade employees that were also agreed in September.

Assistant secretary John East explains: “A lot of good things were agreed in September, but while some elements of that deal were paid immediately – such as the increases to minimum S1 salary levels and a new £1,000 fully flexible shift premium which has benefited nearly 1,500 in Santander UK’s retail contact centres – the rest are only now coming to fruition.

“The CWU believes that, taken as a whole, this has done much to address deficiencies in some pay rates that were becoming increasingly out of sync with those of comparable jobs elsewhere.”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/santander-tech-pay

DB pensions are defended again in Swiss Post TUPE

Members providing mailroom and document imaging services for Santander have had their terms and conditions – including valuable pension benefits – replicated in full as they transferred to a new employer on Monday this week (March 26).

Nearly a year after Santander first announced it was retendering the contract for mailroom operations that was formerly held by Swiss Post, TUPE negotiations finally got underway late last year when the successful bidder was named as US-owned integrated communications provider RR Donnelley.

From the outset the CWU was adamant that not only should affected employees – who are concentrated in Bootle and Bradford, but include small groups in London, Glasgow and Teesside – have their existing Ts&Cs honoured in full, but that their existing defined benefit pension benefits should also be replicated.

Assistant secretary John East told The Voice: “I’m pleased to say that, for a third time, we’ve been successful on that score – and pension benefits that were transferred over when the members were TUPE’d out of Geoban to Pitney Bowes, and then again in a subsequent TUPE to Swiss Post, have been replicated in the CWU’s new bargaining unit at RR Donnelley.

“Initial discussions with the company – which already recognises Unite and Usdaw at other sites – have been extremely constructive, paving the way for what I hope will be a good working relationship in the future.”

John concludes: “Now that the TUPE transfer is complete, the CWU’s first objective is to conclude pay talks that are already underway.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/news/santander-technology-pay-ballot

Santander Operations pay boost

Members in Santander Operations (formerly Geoban) have had their 2018 pay rise – the third and final instalment of a three-year deal brokered in 2016 – confirmed at 2.3 per cent. G1 and G2 grade employees, however, will also now benefit from a new £500 ‘Flexible Benefits Allowance’ which will be paid in monthly instalments from March 1 following CWU pressure on the division to enhance the 2018 settlement to reflect higher than expected inflation rates. The package, which is flat rate and therefore worth the same cash sum to full-timers and part-timers alike, mirrors an identical payment that was negotiated for lower-paid workers in Santander UK last September. They will also begin receiving the allowance in March pay packets.

Assistant secretary John East said: “From the moment the new allowance was agreed for our lower-paid members in Santander UK the CWU has been arguing that Operations should follow suit – and I’m pleased to say that the subsidiary has now heeded our calls.”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/santander-operations

Santander Technology pay ballot

As The Voice went to press, members in Santander Technology (formerly ISBAN and Prodhuban) had just voted by nearly five to one to accept a CWU-brokered pay deal that has secured across-the-board rises of 2.3 per cent from March 1 for the vast majority of CWU-represented grades.

The settlement also sees the introduction of a new £500 ‘Flexible Benefits Allowance’ for all Consultant 1,2 & 3 grades, Senior Consultants in San Tech (Engineering) and F & G grade staff in San Tech (Platforms) – itself worth 1.5 per cent for those on average salaries.

Full story at www.cwu.org/news/santander-pay-up-again
National Pay Negotiations

As The Voice went to press, a “fair and reasonable” pay claim was being submitted to Post Office senior management for the period from April 2018, reports CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey.

“We’re keen to ensure that national pay negotiations commence promptly and result in our hard-working members being fairly recognised and rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the company,” he explained.

“Over the past recent period, despite the upheavals that have taken place across the Post Office network, our members have continued to provide this vital service to members of the public and to communities all around the UK – playing the key role in achieving some excellent results for Post Office Limited.”

The pay claim calls for an above inflation (RPI) increase in basic pay and allowances across all CWU-represented grades and also for further talks and discussions to resolve outstanding issues around overtime rates and bonus earnings.

“Our Post Office members are also fully aware of the agreement achieved by their Royal Mail colleagues with regard to pensions and we will be seeking separate negotiations with the Post Office on pensions to explore whether we can also reach a similar solution to this vitally important matter.” In previous years, delays by the company have led to industrial action ballots and periods of extended strike action across the network and the union is keen to seek agreement with the business before the situation reaches that point again.

“We’ve submitted a fair claim, and all we ask is that the management approach this year’s negotiations with an open mind and a strong desire to reach agreement,” explained Andy.

Postal Industry News

‘Fair deal’ pay claim for Post Office members

Andy Furey

Industrial Relations

A new grievance procedure, which is expected to speed up the resolution of workplace disputes and improve the working environment, has been introduced across Royal Mail Group. CWU assistant secretary Ray Ellis told The Voice that the agreement is “an important step forward in improving how grievances from members are dealt with and, if applied properly, will end the longstanding backlog of issues waiting to be addressed.”

The union opened negotiations with the business on this issue in accordance with resolutions adopted at National Conference in 2016 and 2017 from Anglia Division and Portsmouth & District Amal Branch respectively, each of which highlighted the “excessive and unclear timescales” in the then existing system and the need for an “overhaul” in this area.

“Members had gradually developed a total lack of faith in the grievance procedure, with some taking up to two or three years to complete,” says Ray “and so the conference motions that gave us our negotiating mandate were both timely and justified.”

The set timescales for each stage are the most significant step forward, as are the various prompts and automatic escalations if the deadlines are missed, he explains.

“As part of this agreement, there is also an agreed joint monitoring process and everything gets recorded on PSP,” continues Ray. “This means that all the relevant data is available when we have our regular review meetings with management.”
Welcome pay boost for post-TUPE Capita O2 joiners

PAY GAP NARROWED

Pay disparities at Capita O2 – which the CWU has long argued have been a major contributor to high staff churn – rates amongst new joiners on Capita contracts, have been narrowed under a new ‘Pay and Reward’ scheme that was announced by the business in January. The CWU has welcomed the development, which resulted in immediate pay increases, coupled with the launch of a new scheme under which all advisors on Capita contracts will be entitled to earn two half-yearly performance rewards, each of up to 5 per cent of their annual base salary.

Those benefiting from the pay uplift are, however, excluded from the wider 2018 pay review, which now only covers those who were TUPE’d over from O2 in 2013. Those pay talks were still ongoing as The Voice went to press.

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/pay-boost-TUPE
Telefónica pay deal accepted

As The Voice went to press, members in Telefónica had just voted four to one in favour of a CWU-negotiated pay settlement which provides for a 2.5 per cent across-the-board rise that flows through to allowances, including pay and pension protection.

The deal also secures pay progression payments for Technical Specialist, Business Support & Technical Engineering grade employees who are not at the top of their pay spine - with the exception of those performance ranked as ‘under performers’. Those pay progressions are worth 1.6 per cent for ‘outstanding performers’, 1.3 per cent for ‘high performers’, 1 per cent for ‘good performers’ and 0.25 per cent for ‘developing performers’.

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/big-yes-telefonica

Holiday pay conundrum resolved at last in Telefónica

Members in Telefónica are finally receiving holiday pay that reflects their actual earnings as a result of the company’s belated response to a three-and-a-half year old European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling.

Ever since that ruling, in May 2014, the CWU has been pressing the company to implement the Court’s decision that holiday pay should include certain payments outside basic pay – including commission and allowances – which reflect an individual’s ‘normal remuneration’ in the three months prior to annual leave being taken.

Intended to ensure that employees are not financially disadvantaged when they take annual leave, most of the companies with which the union has recognition agreements have long since embraced the principle established by the ECJ.

Assistant secretary Sally Bridge told The Voice: “While Telefónica’s belated implementation of these payments is obviously welcome, from the CWU’s perspective it only means that, as of February, our members have been receiving what we believe they should have been receiving for some considerable time. “Unfortunately there’s nothing in law to allow us to seek any retrospective payments – but at least, moving forward, this brings to a conclusion something that has been a thorn in the CWU’s side for a very long time now.”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/holiday-pay-conundrum

Dismay at Telefónica move on sick pay

LOWEST PAID WORST AFFECTED

The CWU has expressed its outright dismay at Telefónica’s decision to impose a vicious attack on sick pay for new starters from March 1 without providing the opportunity for negotiation on proposals the CWU believes are more worthy of a ‘bargain basement’ employer than a leading telecommunications company.

Telefónica dropped the bombshell that it intended to slash its current industry-leading sick pay entitlements to the statutory minimum for new starters almost as an aside in a meeting on December 5 last year – but subsequently agreed to delay its initial proposed implementation date of January 1 pending discussions with the CWU after the union highlighted serious concerns on multiple fronts.

Last month, however, the union was informed, completely out of the blue, that no further discussions would take place and that the Board had already rubber-stamped the switch to statutory sick pay for new starters commencing on March 1.

Longer-serving employees are unaffected, but under the imposed changes, anyone taken on by the company after March 1 will only be entitled to statutory sick pay totalling £89.35 per week if they fall ill in their first six months of employment.

The company insists this will apply to ANY new starters, up to and including Board members and the CEO – though the union has pointed out that there is a vast difference in the working arrangements between CWU members and management grades.

Assistant secretary Sally Bridge explains: “Given high staff churn levels in the O2 stores, this move will disproportionately affect some of Telefónica UK’s lowest paid employees who routinely deal face-to-face with customers. There must be a danger that, faced with a dramatic loss of income at times of illness, these predominantly young employees – who often find it hard to make ends meet as it is – will struggle in to work even when they are seriously unwell, potentially placing customers at risk of infection.

“In the wake of the recent flu epidemic, does Telefónica really believe that an action likely to effectively force unwell employees to continue serving the public will be good for its brand image?”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/dismay-telefonica
Dave Ward is urging all readers of *The Voice* to join the mass TUC mobilisation on May 12 and “march for a New Deal for Workers.”

Our general secretary told *The Voice* that this demonstration “is going to be one of the largest trade union protests for many years – and the CWU must be there in big numbers.”

The demonstration was decided upon at last September’s Congress, as part of a broad-ranging composite resolution about employment standards across the UK which included the CWU’s New Deal four-point plan to tackle job insecurity in today’s world of work.

“This is the agenda that the CWU has been leading on across the trade union movement over the past couple of years,” explains Dave, adding: “We’ve been pushing for a proper strategy to deal with the problems in the world of work and to mobilise the whole of the Labour movement to tackle these challenges.”

**THOUSANDS EXPECTED**

With the support of our fellow battalions in the big general unions of UNISON, GMB and Unite, other industry-specific unions such as the RMT, Usdaw, BFAWU and FBU and the dozens of smaller TUC affiliates all pledged to support the demonstration, predictions are that many thousands of trade unionists will be assembling on the Embankment on May 12.

And Dave Ward is determined that the CWU will, as usual, “punch above our weight” at this event.

“Having pressed and pressed for this demonstration, and submitting motions calling for it at the last three TUCs, it is incumbent on us to turn out in the biggest possible numbers on May 12,” insists our general secretary – and he and our regional secretaries are leading efforts to build the largest possible CWU Block.

“As the Eastern Region secretary of the CWU, I fully support the vision for a New Deal for Workers and the all-unions rally on May 12,” says Paul Moffatt.

“The world of work has changed and, with this, we will need new employment laws to protect workers,” he continues, adding that, while the UK has seen employment growth, a large proportion of that growth is “insecure employment, low-paid work or bogus self-employed work.

“I’m urging all our Eastern Region branches, reps, members and their families to attend and show support, show we care about workers and we’re also trying to encourage non-unionised workers to come along too and inspire them to get unionised.

“Our message is loud and clear – we want a new deal for workers in the UK.”

Regional secretary Kate Hudson promises: “The Midlands Region will be there, on the day, with our families supporting the march.

“A good work life balance is essential, to have a job with regular hours, a decent wage and to be treated fairly in a safe environment should be a right for all workers in this country,” she insists, “but the rise of the zero-hour contract and the gig economy has brought with it insecure work and the demise of workers’ rights.

**MAKING WORK FAIR**

“The march on May 12th in London calls for a ‘New Deal for Workers’ to make work fair and to make it pay so that everybody has a good standard of living and I’m urging as many CWU members as possible from our region to join us.”

“Up here in the North West, we’re fully backing the New Deal for Workers demonstration,” says Carl Webb, secretary of the region.

“While the vast majority of our members have good-quality jobs, with full union recognition and collectively negotiated pay, terms and conditions, we also have membership across a range of other, smaller companies and we’re determined to try to bring every single CWU member up to the employment standards we’ve achieved at our main companies.

“The aims and objectives of the New Deal for Workers march and campaign are absolutely the right agenda for
today’s world of work – and it’s up to all of us across all unions to work together, recruit, organise and fight to win.”

Across the Pennines, Paul Clays is equally determined to bring as many North East members and their families down to the monster mobilisation.

“We’re starting the preparations now to try to ensure there is transport available from all parts of this Region for the big day,” he tells The Voice.

BREXIT PROTECTIONS

“With Brexit coming up, it’s more important now than ever before to make sure we not only protect the rights we have now, but expand those rights further to cover all of these new employment patterns and models right across the economy.

“The North East will be adding our voice to the call for a New Deal for all Workers in every part of the UK.”

From the South East, Paul Carpenter remarks that “people from other parts of the country often talk about the ‘prosperous south-east’ but what those people don’t see are the huge disparities in wealth and the many areas of deprivation, low pay and bleak job prospects – whether that’s along the coast, in our larger towns, or even in some of the rural areas.

“Zero-hour contracts and insecure employment is rife across this region and the message of this demonstration needs to resonate right across this region,” adds the South East Region secretary.

“Our members in Royal Mail and in BT have proved what can be achieved by strong collective organisation – and we need to spread this message across our movement and to workers in other industries and sectors.”

Speaking to us from the South West Region, Kevin Beazer reports that the theme of this march sparked “a lively debate” at his regional TUC executive meeting.

“Insecure employment around the South West is an increasing problem in logistics, as well as in agriculture and food processing industries and also in the hotels and catering sector – particularly outside of the bigger companies,” he says.

“Wages and jobs in the South West have traditionally been poor in comparison to other parts of the nation, and the picture gets worse as you go further west in Devon and into Cornwall, where the jobs market is even more precarious – and we’re doing our very best to take as many marchers as we can from the South West.”

And on the other side of the River Severn, Gary Watkins tells The Voice that “the issues around our New Deal for Workers campaign are massive here, especially with the call-centres that have sprung up along the South Wales corridor.

“The CWU in Wales is targeting EE in particular for recruitment at the moment, but there are several companies in the logistics and home delivery sector which are all paying low pay and have poor conditions and workers in those companies need unionisation as well,” Gary explains.

“We’re working hard with all our branches to raise awareness and support for the May demonstration, make preparations and arrangements and get the message out urging people to come along and show their support and solidarity.”

As host Region, all eyes will be on our London members to turn out in large numbers, and our secretary in the capital, Ian Murphy is already on the case.

“We’re highlighting the importance of the march with our regional women’s and young workers’ committees as well as across our branches and reps,” Ian reports. We’re asking them to share the information with their members and also with family and friends too – we want everyone to come along.

“We want all workers to realise that their jobs are important and to encourage them to join a union if they haven’t already done so.

“This demonstration is an opportunity to show there is a different way and that trade unions are a real voice for workers – and I’m looking forward to welcoming hopefully thousands of CWU activists to London on May 12,” Ian concludes.
Mental wellbeing at work joint initiative

MENTAL HEALTH AMBASSADORS

Royal Mail workers and senior CWU and management representatives gathered at the company’s Mount Pleasant site last month for the launch of a joint mental health at work initiative.

The Mental Health Ambassadors pilot programme involves 80 volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds across the company, and includes frontline workers and unit managers, health and safety reps and first aiders.

As ambassadors and not counsellors, their local-level roles will be to promote guidance and information of the support and assistance that is available to people suffering at the workplace, not to involve themselves with representing individual cases, but to increase awareness and signpost people to the help they can access internally and externally.

Speaking at the pilot launch, CWU national health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce said to the new volunteer ambassadors: “All you people present today have an important role to play and I want to thank each and every one for putting yourself forward for this new role and being here today.”

The company’s head of health Rachel Boon told the audience that Royal Mail’s five-year mental health strategy Because Healthy Minds Matter “continues apace.

“Through awareness-raising and support options, we are working with the CWU and Unite/CMA, towards the further improvement of our mental-health culture and the reduction of sickness absence that results from these debilitating conditions.”

Commenting on the initiative, CWU deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger said that the union was “fully in favour” of this pilot programme, which he described as “the type of more enlightened and pro-active approach that is needed.

“For too long, mental health in the workplace and the wider issue of stress-related industrial illness has been treated in a negative way, or has been either marginalised or kept quiet – and both the union and the company are determined that this must change.

“The joint Mental Health Ambassadors initiative fits into the new workplace culture that will be an important Pillar of the Four Pillars National Agreement,” Terry told The Voice.

We're helping our colleagues in the workplace

LOCAL INITIATIVE

Down in Plymouth, volunteer workers are now helping their colleagues after receiving their mental health first-aid certificates following a two-day workplace training course.

The initiative was initially set in motion by MDEC worker Jo Davies, who set up 24/7 Minds with some fellow workers in order to provide initial support and advice for colleagues experiencing difficult emotional and mental health difficulties.

“I was diagnosed with a bipolar disorder illness six years ago and had to take some time off work,” she says, adding that there was a marked difference between the way others responded to this compared to another occasion when she had been off work due to a physical condition.

“People visited me, sent me ‘get well soon’ messages and generally rallied round when I had the physical injury, but when I was off due to the bipolar diagnosis I felt as if people were keeping away from me.

“It brought home to me the stigma around mental health issues and the way that people don’t seem to know how to respond,” she explains.

At Plymouth MDEC, which is now located within the Plymouth Mail Centre, Jo and her fellow volunteers set up a 24/7 Minds committee. The 11 volunteers who underwent the mental health first-aid training were presented with their certificates by site manager Mark Peard, who Jo says has been “very supportive” of the initiative.

“We’re currently working with Gavin Hardie, our Lead ULR, to run a Mindfulness Course which will be subsidised by 24/7 Minds, continues Jo.

“We’d really like to expand 24/7 Minds to other offices so if anyone needs help to set one up then I am more than happy to be contacted”
Workwear rebrand for Royal Mail PFS

UNIFORM CHANGE UPDATE

New uniform for Royal Mail’s unsung army of facilities engineers and cleaners is due for a national rollout next month, reports CWU executive member Mick Kavanagh.

“This group of members used to be Romec, and as a separate company, they had separate uniform,” he told The Voice. “But now that they’re all fully back in-house, they need properly branded Royal Mail workwear.

“From the feedback we got from members, they wanted to keep the same main colour, but to make sure we replaced the old ‘Romec’ imagery with ‘Royal Mail PFS’.

“But also it was important that we took the opportunity to introduce better quality workwear, particularly paying attention to the different functions within PFS and the differing uniform needs of male and female members,” Mick explained.

Mick has been working with Craig Keating, head of HR at Royal Mail Property and Facilities Services (PFS) and also with the PFS vehicle leasing and uniform national manager Clare Hardman to ensure that the new kit fully meets the needs of the workforce and of the operation.

“We took the new designs out to several workplaces and spoke with engineers and cleaners about the current uniform and what they wanted to change.

“We listened to the responses and a reaction from staff,” explains Clare.

“As well as the rebrand, there is also a new blouse for our cleaning ladies, new work trousers and footwear,” she continued and added that the new clothing was now all agreed and is scheduled to be fully launched across Royal Mail PFS at the end of April.”

‘People thought it was an earthquake’

MAIL CENTRE DAMAGE

Wolverhampton Mail Centre’s loading bay was a casualty of early March’s freak weather, when an estimated six-foot snow drift brought down the huge awning covering the area and smashed several vehicles.

Fortunately, no-one was hurt in the incident, but local branch secretary Dave Jones told The Voice that members of staff inside the building at the time had told him of the frighteningly loud and sudden noise.

“I wasn’t there at the time, but people told me that when they heard the cover come down they initially thought it was the sound of an earthquake,” he told us, adding: “The noise was heard right around the mail centre – the structure that came down is about the length of a football pitch.

“Thank God no-one was working on the dock at the time – the weather had temporarily halted operations and the drivers were in their rest room.”

Reacting to the incident, CWU national health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce called for a “full structural survey and investigation into the construction of this area and the rest of the building to ensure there are no recurrences.”

Dave Joyce also spoke with operational, safety and property directors over the following days to discuss these issues as well as immediate remedial action.

For further details, see LTB146/18
MEMBERSHIP SURGE

Membership growth is continuing to accelerate at EE with the last two rounds of CWU ‘Access Days’ recording further big influxes of new joiners at all the company’s major UK call centre sites.

In January alone, overall union membership density at the BT-owned mobile giant leapt significantly. Not only were well over 100 application forms handed in to CWU recruiters on the Access Days themselves, but a subsequent surge in the number of online applications then followed – with particular membership growth being recorded in some of the sites where local management has historically been most hostile to the union’s presence.

Further evidence of the union’s gaining momentum was provided by the latest round of Access Days in late February and early March – cementing the CWU’s resolve to move towards a formal claim for recognition at EE in the near future.

Encouragingly, previously blatant and commonplace attempts to sabotage the effectiveness of CWU Access Days by anti-union local managers at some sites have become few and far between since Christmas – with the message apparently getting through that such behaviour does not curry favour with EE’s new parent company.

Assistant secretary John East told The Voice: “In stark contrast to the blatant obstruction we experienced in Merthyr and Plymouth at the end of last year – both of which were instantly escalated to BT by the union – the few discordant notes we experienced in the latest Access Days were quickly resolved locally.

“The net result is a growing willingness of CWU members in the company to speak openly about why they believe union recognition would be a major step forward for employees.”

John concludes: “One of the most notable things about the membership surge we are now witnessing is not just a diminishing fear factor amongst employees, but the number of members becoming active in encouraging others to join as word of our campaign for recognition spreads.”

Manpower members working for BT Venture Voice Services have received their second pay rise in less than a year – just as the CWU is ratcheting up pressure on both companies over low agency pay levels.

In a statement issued to advisors responsible for dealing with 999, text relay and 100 calls in January, BT and Manpower revealed they had been jointly reviewing pay rates and that “an increase of 6.25 per cent has been agreed for all PBA (contract) team members, taking the per-hour rate to £8.50” with immediate effect.

As recently as last year the rate was just £7.50 per hour, rising to £8 in the spring.

Responding to the unexpected but long overdue recognition of the value of the work conducted by Voice Services’ agency advisors – some of whom had previously languished for years on £750 per hour – assistant secretary Sally Bridge said: “For a long time we’ve been making regular representations on behalf of our Manpower members working on the 999 service and in operator services, pointing out that they were woefully underpaid. While it’s true they received an increase to £8 per hour just as our Close the Gap campaign was getting underway it’s extremely welcome news that BT and Manpower have moved again and agreed to pay an extra 50p per hour with immediate effect.

“The pressure we’ve been exerting on both companies, now amplified to a wider audience via the Close the Gap campaign, appears to be resonating.

“It still has to be said, however, that, despite their latest pay increase, agency members in Voice Services are still paid considerably less than the minimum of £9.38 per hour paid to directly employed BT staff doing exactly the same work.

“As such, our on-going Close The Gap campaign – which calls for the Real Living Wage (£8.75) to be paid to all agency workers in BT as an absolute minimum, but also for the abolition of discriminatory PBA contracts – is as relevant now as it always has been.”

Full story at: www.cwu.org/news/manpower-pay-up
The CWU has accused the Government of “all too predictable foot-dragging” following the launch of an extensive consultation that seems calculated to delay tangible action to tackle blatant abuses of the so-called ‘flexible labour market’.

Those abuses, now endemic in the modern world of work, have already been lambasted by an independent review commissioned by the Prime Minister herself, as well as by two cross-party Parliamentary select committees.

Yet, rather than acting decisively to outlaw various forms of exploitation identified by the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices – including the widespread use of PBA contracts to cynically exclude agency workers from their legal right to equal pay after 12 weeks in a given job – concerns are mounting that the Government is using a time-honoured delaying tactic of which even the fictional Sir Humphrey of the classic ‘Yes Minister’ political comedy would have been proud.

Lamenting the way the Government appears to be falling over itself to give big business vested interests the chance to attempt to justify the unjustifiable, assistant secretary Sally Bridge insists it is vital nonetheless for the clearest possible evidence of the current injustice to be presented to the latest review to make it as hard as possible for the Government’s “foot-dragging” to prevail.

“It’s deeply disappointing the Government’s long-awaited response to the Taylor Review is another consultation – rather than the concrete action that is so urgently needed,” Sally continues. “It’s still crucially important, however, that we use this opportunity to hammer home the injustice facing nearly 2,000 of our agency members on Manpower contracts working for BT.

“Already the CWU is preparing a detailed submission, as is the TUC, and shortly we will be asking agency members and branches across the country to contribute direct to the consultation, outlining their first-hand experience of exploitation.

“It does defy belief that – even after two Parliamentary select committees have concurred with the Taylor Review’s verdict that the so-called Swedish Derogation, that allows for the inappropriate use of PBA contracts, needs to be scrapped – the Government now appears to be consulting on whether more enforcement of the current rules is needed. No amount of enforcement will make something that is fundamentally wrong right!

“What actually needs to happen is the total repeal of Regulation 10 of the UK Agency Worker Regulations which created the legal loophole that makes PBA contracts so attractive to employers.”

The present consultation will run until May 9, and very shortly agency members will be mailed direct with everything they need to know to make their voices heard loud and clear.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGN HOTS UP

Less than three months after the CWU’s Close the Gap campaign ‘went political’ with a pre-Christmas demonstration in Parliament Square the union has now secured a parliamentary debate on agency exploitation that will take place shortly. Meanwhile, as The Voice went to press, no fewer than 66 MPs had pledged their support to an Early Day Motion tabled by CWU stalwart and Scottish Labour MP High Gaffney demanding the abolition of the Swedish Derogation.

Agency members and CWU branches across the country have been writing to and meeting with MPs urging them to sign the EDM in anticipation of the forthcoming agency debate. (See story at www.cwu.org/news/political-pressure)

Meanwhile, nine young Manpower members have been co-opted onto the national Close the Gap campaign team to ensure that a true picture of the human face of exploitation can be presented to politicians at every available opportunity.

Three of those members – Paul Slodczyk of Lincs & South Yorks branch, Bethany Elstob of Tyne & Wear Clerical and Andrew Davies of Mersey branch – have already delivered powerful testimony direct to MPs of what PBA contracts mean in practice in lobbying sessions that followed the Westminster demo on December 19. (See story at www.cwu.org/news/political-pressure)

Following on from the forthcoming Parliamentary debate, the next big platform for the union’s Close the Gap campaigning will be the major TUC demonstration against insecure and exploitative employment that will take place in central London on May 12. (See centre spread)
POSTAL NEWS

Growing calls for dog licensing

Welsh Assembly Members and Ministers, CWU representatives and parents of injured children gathered in Cardiff’s Pierhead Hall last month to debate the ongoing problem of dog attacks and what can be done by the devolved administration to reduce attacks.

With Royal Mail reporting 843 attacks by dogs on postmen and women over the past five years, and attacks on our BT members too, calls from the CWU for the re-introduction of dog licensing were well-received.

This would, argued our union’s health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce, “help encourage more responsible ownership and also would generate funding for policing and enforcement at a time when central government funding for the police has been cut back.

“There are 22,000 fewer police officers in the UK than there were 10 years ago and the concern is that dog control was slipping down the priority agenda,” he explained.

Welsh Assembly Member Julie Morgan said that postal workers were “most vulnerable” to such attacks.

Postal workers are most vulnerable to such attacks, with children also badly affected

JULIE MORGAN AM

Recent dog attack injuries to our members

Welsh Government Minister Lesley Griffiths said that she had met with the CWU and others on the issue.

A public consultation on these matters is due to report this month and the possibility of establishing an animal offender register and reintroducing dog licensing are both being investigated, she added.

Owner sentenced after dog bites off postwoman’s finger

COURT JUDGEMENT

An irresponsible dog owner was sentenced to 160 hours community service last month, ordered to pay court costs and compensation and contribute towards police kennelling fees.

Stockport postwoman Stacey Brennan suffered a horrendous injury while she was delivering post last July, losing the top of her finger when a dog bit her through the letter box.

The details of the financial penalties ordered by the magistrate’s court last week were a £750 compensation award to Ms Brennan, £85 court costs and a £300 kennelling payment to the police.

Further ancillary orders included a contingent (suspended) destruction order on the animal, a mandatory short leash and muzzle at all times whilst in public, the compulsory fitting of a wire letter-box cage to the front door and a formal notice that any ancillary-order violations will bring the case straight back to court and a destruction order made against the dog.

Commenting on the sentencing, CWU national health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce described it as a “satisfactory and welcome conclusion and full credit goes to Greater Manchester Police for pursuing this case with vigour and determination.

“This case should serve as a warning to those dog owners with a blasé attitude towards these incidents which happen far too often,” he continued, and suggested that dog owners should consider installing wire letter-box cages to their front doors, as a precaution, before a similar horrendous incident happens involving their dog.

Dave also took the opportunity to remind members not to put their fingers through letterboxes “as you don’t know what’s on the other side and dogs won’t always let you know they’re there.”

For further details, see LTB101/18
Delivering England glory?

"It’s a tough tournament, but I do fancy our chances," predicts England Deaf Futsal team captain John Atkinson, as he looks forward to the European Championships in Finland later this year.

When he’s not scoring goals for England – 30 in 25 appearances – John works as a postman at Derby MPU, a position he’s held for the past nine years, since moving to Derby from Doncaster.

Born deaf, 35-year-old John has been playing futsal – indoor five-a-side football – for 15 years, for the deaf futsal team in Doncaster and currently for Derby’s hearing futsal team.

He was first selected for his country in 2006, was awarded the captaincy soon afterwards and in January this year, he led them to top spot in their European Championship qualification group with a goal in their last-match victory against Slovakia, and another following a win over Denmark and a draw with Switzerland.

Looking forward to the tournament itself, John says that he and his England team mates are “all quietly confident and we’re improving all the time,” adding that “we can win it.”

Derby CWU branch secretary Chris Sheldon tells The Voice: “We’re all really proud of John. As well as his futsal exploits, he’s also a great guy to work with.

“We’re hoping England can do the double this year – the World Cup and the Futsal Euros,” he adds.
Over 200 delegates representing 51 branches descended on the Indian YMCA in Fitzroy Square, Central London on January 31 for the CWU’s Retired Members Conference.

There were 9 motions on the agenda covering issues ranging from fuel poverty to the content of the union’s education course ‘Retired Members Weekend’.

Deputy general secretary Tony Kearns moved Motion 1, dealing with the problems faced by the 1.4 million elderly people in the UK living with fuel poverty, on behalf of the Retired Members Advisory Committee (RMAC).

Tony outlined a deepening crisis, with large numbers faced with the choice of ‘eat or heat’ and the incidence of deaths attributable to cold weather increasing by 39.5 per cent compared with previous years. A number of delegates entered the debate, bringing their own personal knowledge of the hardships being faced by pensioners across the country, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Delegates also supported a motion moved by Jake Kharadi, on behalf of the North West Regional Members Committee, calling for the Government to establish a Fuel Poverty Commission to tackle the problem of rising pensioner deaths associated with fuel poverty.

Judy Griffiths of Coventry Branch moved a motion on the issue of NHS privatisation and called on the TUC to organise a demonstration in opposition to its continued damaging impact on health care. She also urged the union to campaign for a future Labour government to end PFI and bring health and social care back into public ownership. The motion was agreed.

The conference then agreed a motion moved by Rod Downing, on behalf of the RMAC, instructing the union to work with other pensioners’ organisations and the TUC to influence the outcome of a government Green Paper dealing with social care and the ageing population.

Motion 5, moved by Mick Jones on behalf of the Midlands Retired Members Committee, and seconded by Phil Duffy, was critical of the delay in dealing with a motion carried at last year’s Annual Conference which dealt with the status of retired members and their ability to stand in certain branch elections.

Tony Kearns replied on behalf of the Committee, explaining that, amongst other things, the delay resulted from the high level of issues CWU HQ has had to deal with in the last year, including the Postal members’ ballot and assisting the Labour Party in the General Election.

Despite this, delegates voted to support the Midlands’ motion.

Another motion moved by Jan Zablocki of Midlands No 1 branch dealt with the same issue – criticising the NEC’s failure to comply with Motion 35 which instructed the Executive to provide details of the reasons why the decision was made to change the branch voting entitlements. This was also carried.

Delegates also committed the RMAC to work with the National Executive to restore web page facilities that had been absent for some time due to technical problems.

The last motion of the day instructed the RMAC to work with the Education Department to review the content of the ‘Retired Members Weekend’ course to include awareness of state pensions entitlements and care and dementia awareness.

During the midday break a ballot was held to decide the two motions that would be submitted to this year’s CWU Annual Conference on behalf of the Retired Members Conference. Under the union’s constitution two motions can be submitted and it was agreed these would be Motions 1 and 5.

Many new delegates attended the Conference and both new and experienced delegates made an important contribution to the democracy of the union.

Debates were lively and passionate with an emphasis on those issues that are of importance to our retired members across the country. Delegates came from all constituencies and those sectors of the union where we have membership and every part of the country was represented.

Did you know that the CWU has a thriving retired members’ section that campaigns on the issues that matter to pensioners?

Barring workplace representation, retired members enjoy all the benefits of ordinary membership including free expert legal advice if required. Subs, which stand at £1.35 per week or £5.84 per month for those contributing to the political fund (£1.15 weekly or £4.97 monthly for those contracted-out), also mean you’ll continue to receive The Voice with its section for retired members – The Link.

For more information please call 0800 731 7434 or email joinunion@cwu.org
Evon Storm Fionn couldn’t stop delegates from descending on a very snowy Glasgow for the 2018 Young Workers Conference. Starting with a pre-conference get-together the night before, the Scottish Regional Young Workers Committee regaled those in attendance with a pub quiz and a raffle, raising £104 towards the CWU Young Workers’ Charity Promise pot.

The morning after, delegates slipped and skated their way through the slush to the offices of the STUC, where CWU general secretary Dave Ward opened conference with a lively session on engagement, the world of work, new politics and new-look trade unionism.

“Open and frank discussions are needed to build a world of work and a model of trade unionism that is fit for the reality of today and for the future, and young workers need to play a crucial role in shaping that,” stressed Dave.

Dave urged delegates to take an active role in securing a large youth contingent turnout at the forthcoming TUC ‘New Deal for Workers’ march that will take place in London on May 12. (See centre spread)

He stressed that would send a clear message that younger people do care, are active and do need positive action to address the scourge of insecure and exploitative employment models that disproportionately affect the young.

Guest speaker Hugh Gaffney MP - himself a seasoned CWU activist - was warmly welcomed by delegates. He spoke about his love of the union and how, without its support, his journey to being elected would not have been easy.

He encouraged everyone to connect with the CWU and to work with it to improve each and everyone’s working life.

Healthy debates ensued on motions that covered issues as diverse as:

- Basic rights within Royal Mail, including the right to equivalent number of Saturdays off as duty-holders
- BT pensions
- Training for branch young workers reps
- The need for gender equality in parental leave
- Supporting agency workers in Manpower and BT with mental health issues.

Dave Moxham, deputy general secretary of the STUC, joined conference to give a presentation on the work of the ‘Better than Zero’ campaign against zero-hour contracts and exploitation in the hospitality industry.

The National Young Workers Committee certainly have lots of work to do over the coming year as a result of the motions carried!

To donate please visit: https://mydonate.bt.com/teams/cwuyoungworkers

Young Workers Conference YOUTH

In response to three motions carried at the Young Workers Conference in 2017, the National Young Workers Committee put together their ‘Charity Promise’. This will culminate in a team embarking on the West Highland Way Walk, with up to 10 young members walking the 96 miles over six days across the Highlands of Scotland.

Team members so far are: Jimi Brown (South Midlands Postal), Elli Long (Greater Mersey & South West Lancs), Fiona Curtis (Northern Ireland Telecoms), Adam Gibbins (Somerset, Devon & Cornwall), Andrew Mercer (Bootle Financial Services) and Jo Thair (head office).

They will be up against the unpredictable Scottish weather and the notorious ‘midges’ - all in the name of charity. Cash raised will go to Papyrus UK, Centrepoint and the Ron Todd Foundation. All three charities do amazing work in supporting young people who are struggling both emotionally and practically in terms of mental health, homelessness or precarious living.

Team member, Elli Long told The Voice: “For a girl who hates camping/insects/cold weather and drives to the corner shop I know this will be a massive challenge for me, but I’m hoping that by the end of it I’ll be like Bear Grylls!”

“The fact I’ll be doing this with a great group of young trade unionists, raising money for three amazing charities, makes me more determined than ever to complete it and hopefully raise lots of money.”

To donate please visit: https://mydonate.bt.com/teams/cwuyoungworkers

HOT TOPICS IN SNOWY GLASGOW

www.cwu.org or follow us on Twitter (@cwuyoungworkers) & Facebook
With horrifying newly published Government estimates suggesting that 1.2 million women and over 700,000 men were victims of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2017, one CWU activist has decided to go public about a painful chapter in her life in the hope that her story gives others the confidence to stand up to their abusers. Simon Alford reports

**KAREN’S STORY**

“I was proud of my first marriage. For 20 years it was brilliant, then the last year was terrible...”

Increasingly it is accepted that around one in six men experience domestic abuse at some stage in their lives – and, as such, Karen is adamant that her own story of surviving domestic violence is just as relevant to victims of any gender.

Karen Kendrick is the first to point out that she’s not what many would consider a likely ‘victim’ (she prefers the term ‘survivor’) of domestic violence.

Not, the CWU North West Region assistant secretary stresses, that she has much time for lazy stereotyping of ‘typical’ domestic violence (DV) recipients. Sweeping assumptions about ‘vulnerable types’, she points out, are not just simplistic but also deeply insulting to those on the receiving end of abuse – almost shifting the blame from perpetrator to victim.

The fact, however, that Karen is as far removed as it is possible to be from the ‘suffering in silence’ type does make a pertinent point. That is, in the lottery of life and personal relationships, anybody can be unlucky enough to find themselves at the receiving end of DV.

That sad truth is borne out in a shocking new Government report that estimates that a staggering 1.9 million people aged 16 to 59 in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2017.

Compiled by the Office of National Statistics using data from the annual Crime Survey, the report broadly corroborates previous estimates that around one in four women experience DV at some stage in their lives.

One big surprise, however, was a significant increase in the number of men admitting they’d been on the receiving end.

No fewer than 700,000 of the 1.9 million individuals the ONS believes were victims of DV in the year ending March 2017 were male – shattering the widespread perception that women are almost always the victims, and men almost always the perpetrators.

Increasingly it is accepted that around one in six men experience domestic abuse at some stage in their lives – and, as such, Karen is adamant that her own story of surviving domestic violence is just as relevant to victims of any gender.

Karen Kendrick recounts a nightmare period of her life reflects the extent to which, in her own words, she’s “moved onwards and upwards” after acting decisively to end the abuse.

“If telling my story can help anyone look in the mirror and think ‘that might be me’ – and for them to accept it, talk about it and seek help – it will have been worth it,” stresses Karen.
Karen’s ex went for some counselling and initially things seemed to be improving. “We still had a laugh, but the relationship was strained,” Karen recalls. “He’d started to drink more, and when he did I felt I was walking on eggshells...”

NO TURNING BACK

“After I was patched up in hospital I thought ‘what now?’ – so I rang my ex’s best friend, who was like a brother to me, and asked if he could pick me up,” Karen continues.

“The nurses had asked me if I wanted them to get the police in, but I said there wasn’t any point – because I was one of the women who’d NEVER go back, and I never did. In fact the only time I ever saw my ex again was when we had to sign the paperwork to do with the house and finances. In retrospect maybe I was being strategic about not going to the police because what I wanted was an easy ‘amicable’ divorce after two years’ separation – though I wouldn’t say that decision would be right in every situation.

“When my ex’s friend arrived to pick me up he was astonished that I was so calm and I explained that was because I knew the marriage was over – this time with no recurrence whatsoever.”

Karen’s ex went for some counselling and initially things seemed to be improving. “We still had a laugh, but the relationship was strained,” Karen recalls. “He’d started to drink more, and when he did I felt I was walking on eggshells. “We were starting to get there, however, and at the time I was getting more and more involved in the union and the Regional Women’s Committee so I had a great support network.”

In February 2007, however, things sharply deteriorated. “He started becoming really argumentative and on one occasion I could see he was about to push me down the stairs. I got out the way and said: ‘I’m moving into the spare room and you need to make a decision now whether you want to stay married, because I’m not carrying on like this’.

“Several weeks later he said he wanted a divorce, and I said ‘fine, if that’s your choice, because I can’t be married to someone who doesn’t want to be married anymore’.”

A week later, however, he changed his mind – and, after considerable reflection, Karen decided to give things one last go.

“Over the next few weeks we went away to places and tried to do all the things we’d always enjoyed the most,” Karen continues – but the respite proved short-lived and the ugly final scene of her first marriage was about to unfold.

“It was early evening on the Saturday of the May bank holiday weekend, and the next day we were meant to be going to stay with some friends in the Midlands,” explains Karen.

“We were watching a film, sharing a bottle of wine. When it finished he went to put some pizzas in the oven and open another bottle, but I’d had enough so was about to go to the garage to get a bottle of water.

“As I went towards the kitchen door he mentioned that he’d put two pizzas on one shelf, and I just commented ‘they’ll stick together if one’s on top of the other’.

“He just blew, called me everything under the sun and I thought ‘here we go again – he’s had too much to drink and isn’t realising where his behaviour is at’.

“I walked over to the garage to get the water and when I came to step back into the kitchen he slammed the door on me and it bounced back on him.

“I just stood there, with him glowing at me. At that point he slammed the door on me again with full force and my arm went straight through the glass.

“I stood there with blood pouring out of the glass. As I walked out the house his final words were ‘I don’t love you anymore’, and I realised that was the crux of it. To my amazement I was totally and utterly calm.”

Karen Kendrick, now, and on her first wedding day, seated.

FROM LEFT] Karen Kendrick, now, and on her first wedding day, seated.
it really was the end.

“I rang the friends we’d been supposed to be going to the next day and asked if I could visit them alone – and then drove down to the Midlands.

“On the way back I dropped off at his parents to explain the situation.

“I then moved in with my parents, and the next Saturday I went down to Bournemouth for my first CWU Annual Conference. In fact I had my stitches out in Bournemouth Hospital.”

LESSONS FOR OTHERS

Karen doesn’t claim to have all the answers for anyone who recognises themselves in her story, but she does have some very simple pointers for anyone suffering domestic violence – whatever their gender.

“Recognise what’s happening for what it is and find somebody you can trust to talk to,” she stresses.

“Don’t bottle it up – speak to someone and seek help – because people can be very isolated in DV situations and that can affect them terribly.”

Karen cites the case of a long-suffering male DV victim who finally approached her as a trusted CWU rep, completely unaware of her own past, when despair at his private life started to affect his work.

“There’s no doubt a lot of men are suffering in silence – partly out of a sense of shame and also the fear that no-one is going to take their situation seriously,” Karen explains.

“One of the cases I’ve dealt with resulted in self-harming, but anyone seeing that guy now wouldn’t have any idea what he went through. “He’s had all the scars covered up with tattoos and now he’s out of that abusive relationship and happily married.

“I looked at him and saw myself – because he tried and tried to save the relationship before saying ‘enough is enough’ and moving on, which was the best thing he could possibly have done.”

And, ultimately that is the enduring message Karen hopes to come from her decision to speak candidly about a horrible chapter in her life.

“You can have a good life after DV, and I think I’ve proved that. I’ve recently got remarried to a lovely guy and I have a brilliant life. I don’t regret my first marriage, because much of it was good, but I didn’t expect it to end the way it did. With DV, however, there comes a time when you just have to move on.”

Affected by the issues raised in this story?
The NHS provides comprehensive guidance for anyone experiencing or suspecting domestic violence at www.nhs.uk/livewell/abuse/pages/domestic-violence-help.aspx

- Women can call 0808 2000 247, the free 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women’s Aid and Refuge
- Men can call the Men’s Advice Line free on 0808 801 0327 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) or ManKind on 01823 334 244. Also see www.mensaid.co.uk/
- Most large employers, including Royal Mail and BT, run Employee Assistance Programmes that provide crucial guidance for staff whose work is being affected by DV at home

(Continued from page 25)
**Friar Tuck turns 70!**
Veteran agency campaigner Roy Reynolds - never one to desist from striking a memorable pose to highlight agency injustice over the years - has received a special vote of thanks from his branch to mark his 70th birthday.

Just last November, the Lincs & South Yorks Manpower rep morphed himself into Friar Tuck at a Robin Hood-themed Close the Gap protest outside BT’s Doncaster Call Centre. However, Roy’s close involvement in the CWU’s agency campaigning goes right back to 2007 when he was one of the union’s first agency members to lay bare the stark reality of unequal pay to MPs at a special Westminster briefing.

Branch secretary Chris Goldson told The Voice: “Like many of our comrades, Roy’s an unsung hero of our union – and we just wanted to place on record our thanks on behalf of the hundreds of agency members he’s helped, mentored and supported over the years. Happy Birthday Roy!”

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**Animal friendly in Hemel and Bootle**

Members at Hemel Hempstead Mail Centre have raised nearly £2,000 for a unique UK-registered animal rescue charity in southern Sri Lanka, thanks to an initiative from CWU member Chouchou Abderrahmane.

After stumbling across the Animal SOS (www.animalsos-sl.com) sanctuary and witnessing first-hand its remarkable work with stray and abandoned dogs and cats, Chouchou was inspired to organise the Hemel Hempstead fundraiser, which included a raffle, global cuisine and the sale of ‘Animal SOS’ t-shirts.

“It made a big impact and people were very generous,” Chouchou told The Voice.

Meanwhile the Bootle Financial Services branch has been busy raising funds for guide dogs for blind and partially sighted people after sponsoring three pups that are just commencing their training.

To kick-start the initiative, two working guide dogs, Nugget and Helena, visited Santander’s massive Merseyside site with their owners just before Christmas – conducting a brisk trade in Xmas cards and soft toy guide dogs to bolster the branch donation. Repeat visits are already scheduled to keep branch members updated about the progress of the sponsored pups.

“Members all agreed it was a great idea to sponsor three guide dogs that will change people’s lives for the better,” said CWU H&S officer Beverley Kenyon.

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536/2017/ADTHEREE/10/17
A winter crisis in which more than one in 10 (11 per cent) of ambulances with patients on board waited more than 30 minutes at hospitals, the highest-ever number of accident and emergency diversions took place, 50,000 elective operations were cancelled and over 95 per cent of hospital beds have been full, protesters assembled determined to send a clear message to the Government.

Our senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns told The Voice that the circumstances that led to the protest were “depressingly similar” to the situation at the same time last year.

“In 2017, we all marched for the NHS against a backdrop of an acute winter pressure period, which even the Red Cross called a ‘humanitarian crisis’. And this year we all marched again – but once again, the Government has not listened and has not responded, preferring instead to ‘point-score’ in the House of Commons,” he continued.

“That tells us all we need to know about this Government and that they could not care less about the health of the people of this country.”

KEEP THE PROTESTS GOING

The HCT movement will continue its work at both local and national level and the CWU, along with other unions – particularly those in the health service – will keep the pressure on for a better deal and will feed these demands into the Labour Party policy development process.

“Our union and our members at all levels will keep up this fight to protect and defend our NHS – our nation’s most precious asset.”

When asked the ‘Devil’s Advocate’ question: “Where is the money coming from?” Tony begins his answer by highlighting an example of how much money has been taken straight out of the public purse and into the hands of large businesses through the cuts in corporation tax since the last Labour government left office.

“Corporation tax has been cut to 19 per cent from 30 per cent since 2010, a cut which, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (May 2016 briefing note) reduced revenues coming into the ‘public purse’ by £16.5 billion per year,” he points out, and explains that Labour’s manifesto commitment to take corporation tax back up to 26 per cent will bring much-needed revenues back into public funds, enabling extra funding for health as well as for other critical public services.

As well as issues of direct funding and finance, a major new area of concern for our beleaguered NHS is the prospect of big American pharmaceutical companies getting a foothold in what they see as a lucrative ‘UK health market’ as part of a potential new trade deal with the USA.

“But it was extremely worrying that Prime Minister Theresa May has so far failed to guarantee that our NHS will be strictly excluded from any such deal.

“We’ve got to keep the pressure on here as well and the message must be loud and clear to President Trump and any private companies in the USA – hands off our NHS or there’s no trade deal.”

CWU activists joined an estimated 60,000 people marching through London last month to press the fight for better funding and support for our National Health Service.