



From the office of **Sally Bridge** | National Officer

18 August 2020

OPEN LETTER TO HOWARD WATSON, CTIO BT TECHNOLOGY

Dear Mr Watson,

When we briefly met in May earlier this year, you talked to the CWU about the priorities in Technology and the need for an ambitious transformation programme to modernise BT. You also shared some detail on the achievements in Technology, particularly keeping the network running and our nation online 24/7 during the pandemic. You will note the CWU support on this matter.

The CWU understands the need for such a transformation agenda. We know Technology is an exciting and innovative part of BT; we want it to be successful and a vibrant place to work. However, any transformation programme should also have at its heart the wellbeing of the workforce - after all they are the very people who have been instrumental in delivering the successes of which we are all proud.

The recent announcement in Technology of a number of proposed redundancies within a phased implementation programme is troubling, not because of why you are trying to transform, but the way in which you are trying to achieve it. This has caused widespread concern and anger amongst the loyal and productive members we represent.

These proposals constitute a significant shift in approach by Technology, as they will without doubt lead to compulsory redundancies.

The CWU has from the outset raised concerns and objections at the way the business is proposing to deal with the job losses, and has made a number of alternative suggestions and counter proposals primarily around voluntarism, as this is the very crux of how we believe compulsory redundancies can be avoided. Our clear intention in making these representations has been to reach an agreed way forward.

Our main counter proposals are as follows:

- Extend the areas in scope and pools for a voluntary redundancy exercise
- Allow an individual preference exercise prior to any selection arrangements to ascertain those that want to leave under voluntary redundancy and those that wish to remain.

It is a legal requirement for Technology to demonstrate that, through consultation, the business has avoided, reduced or mitigated against the consequences of the proposed dismissals. The current proposals as they stand will lead to the absurd position of many people who want to remain employed being forced out and, on the other hand, many who want to leave the company amicably, being denied that opportunity.

There is a better way of dealing with this. There is a better way of managing CWU members' expectations and wishes. Our members in Technology are fearful for the future and whether they will have a role

going forward, especially in the light of the Better Workplace Programme.

Nowhere in your company briefings have you explained how BT Technology workers and CWU members have moved from the status of 'Key Workers' during Covid-19 to that of expendable, unwanted and redundant employees. We are willing and open to hear your thoughts on this reasoning.

The CWU believes this matter can be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties; we have a good track record of working together and making agreements that benefit our members and the business, we would therefore like the opportunity of meeting with you to find a way forward.

Yours sincerely

Sally Bridge
National Officer