

THE VOICE

Autumn 2021



Guest columnist Andy Burnham, Greater Manchester Mayor

P3

Delivery revisions - what's happening on the frontline

P8/9

Future of Work in Openreach - what we need

P10/11

Processing & Distribution - driving change forward

P12/13

GET IN TOUCH...

CWU HQ – all enquiries
150 The Broadway,
Wimbledon, London
SW19 1RX T: 020 8971 7200

In most cases your branch should be your first point of contact. Details are on your membership card.

Harassment Helpline
0800 090 2303

Have you changed your address, workplace or hours?

Please inform CWU about any changes to your membership details. There are three different ways to update your membership details:

Option 1 – Log into the members' only section of the CWU website (www.cwu.org), using the username and password you have previously been sent, and change your own details.

Option 2 – Contact your branch secretary with your new details.

Option 3 – Contact CWU HQ on 020 8971 7447 or email your new details to membership@cwu.org and we will make the necessary changes.

Please help us help you – keep your details up to date.

UNIONLINE

YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM

CWU Legal Services: UNIONLINE
0300 333 0303

UNIONLINE is the CWU's very own law firm offering members and their families a fast route to free, comprehensive legal advice.

To register a claim or for any legal advice call UNIONLINE on 0300 333 0303

More information at www.unionline.co.uk

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CWU DEATH BENEFIT

In accordance with the terms expressed in CWU Rule 4.1.11, branches are advised that from the 1st October 2020 the CWU Death Benefit payment increased to £857.

Any enquiries regarding this letter should be addressed to the senior deputy general secretary's department on telephone number 020 8971 7237 or email sdgs@cwu.org



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The latest from
Dave Ward, your
General Secretary

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, everybody is searching for a new phrase to capture what might come next. But whether it is ‘Levelling Up’ or ‘Build Back Better’, it won’t be the rhetoric that shifts the balance of forces in favour of working-class people across the country.

As the CWU has been saying for some time, it is going to be the hard graft of the trade union movement coming together, and campaigning collectively, that will create a new social settlement in Britain today.

Anybody who has got an eye on what is happening across the movement right now will know that there is a determined emphasis on rebuilding trade union power in a way that we have not seen for some time, and there is a real recognition that if we, as trade unionists, cannot deliver change, then nobody can. As we continue to focus on protecting and enhancing the jobs, terms and conditions of CWU members, over the coming weeks and months we will take out the work we have been developing around the New Deal campaign and explain to our members how support for this will benefit their jobs, families and the whole country.

The New Deal campaign is now gaining traction. The fact that our motion to re-mobilise trade unions behind the campaign passed unanimously at TUC Congress was welcome, but it must now be backed up with action. Just as we are asking other unions to start engaging their branches right now, we will be doing the same, with the clear intention of convincing all members that the trade union movement is coming together to work collectively to campaign around a clear set of shared industrial and political demands.

We want to see this work done in an innovative way, with branches connecting not just with other workplaces, but with community groups and local organisations such as foodbanks and renters' associations, as well as trades councils and those local politicians who are making change happen out in the regions right now. Our plan to connect with people has to extend beyond the usual attendees of the important rallies and demonstrations that we hold – the extent of how unequal our society has become, driven by Boris Johnson's attack on working people, demands that we reach beyond our comfort zone.

This is the same message that we will be taking to the Labour Party conference in Brighton. It is very clear that the current leadership is not cutting through with working people and that many are not interested in the Party, seeing Labour as an

irrelevance at a time when opposition to Johnson's attacks on working people is needed more than ever. But we must be honest about the fact that the difficulties that the Labour Party faces are decades in the making, with successive governments of both Labour and Tory majorities to blame for years of disinvestment in local communities across the country.

As such, we are not interested in waiting for Labour to catch up. It is the job of the trade union movement, and of our union, to advance the arguments in favour of working people right now, and we will not shy away from doing so. However, we are encouraged by the amount of regional and local Labour leaders who are continuing to actively support the industrial and political aims of the CWU, many of them advancing ideas in ways that we have not seen before. The disconnect between the local and the national, both within Labour politics but also politics in general, is an interesting growing issue in the contemporary political debate.

All this work is built on the idea of building collectivism, bringing the trade union movement together to campaign collectively in a way that has only happened once or twice in the history of our movement. This is why as we gear up for our own Special General Conference in November, I will be making the case that there has never been a more important time for trade unions to play a role in every aspect of working people's lives.

Dave Ward.

Dave Ward
GENERAL SECRETARY

BUILDING A BETTER UK STARTS AT LOCAL LEVEL

Voice gives a big CWU welcome to our guest columnist Andy Burnham, Secretary of State for both the Health and Culture portfolios in the last Labour Government and is currently serving his second term as Mayor of Greater Manchester.

It's a pleasure to have been invited to write for *The Voice*, especially given the strong relationship the CWU and I have in Greater Manchester and nationally. I've always felt a strong affinity with the Communications Workers Union as my mum and dad were both members of the forerunner organisations of the union when they worked for the old General Post Office.

I want to give you some examples of how English devolution to the city-regions is working and why the Labour Party and trade unions should get fully behind further devolution.

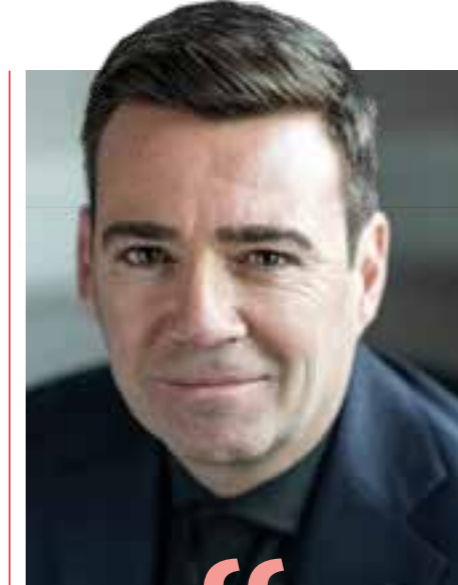
Good Employment

I have worked closely with the CWU on several disputes in the Greater Manchester city-region, most recently around Capita in Bury and I believe the benefits of devolution and elected Mayors can be seen in tackling these issues. I can speak for our place and represent local people affected in a way that doesn't always happen in other parts of the country, but which is more powerful when confronting a company with the real and direct effects of their decisions. It enables me, together with the local council leader, and in the case of Greater Manchester, the 10 leaders, alongside the union to make a powerful counter argument.

But the power of devolution goes beyond individual disputes. Here in Greater Manchester we have developed a Good Employment Charter which is about improving the working terms and conditions for employees across the city-region. It includes getting rid of zero-hours contracts, implementing the real living wage and trade union recognition.

Our aim is to use the Good Employment Charter as part of the social value element in the award of public procurement contracts.

Importantly, through devolution, this policy is not limited to Greater Manchester and colleagues in the Liverpool City Region, West Yorkshire, the West of England and other areas are adopting similar 'Charters'. This is what Labour in power can achieve – real improvements to working terms and conditions for residents across our areas.



“
Our Good Employment Charter in public procurement contracts includes trade union recognition and getting rid of zero-hour contracts. This is what Labour in power can achieve.

It's not just in the field of industrial relations that Labour in power is making a difference. We have begun to roll back the worst of the 1980s – on transport, social housing and support for our communities.

Transport

Since Margaret Thatcher deregulated bus services outside of London back in 1986, we have seen fares rise, routes cut and passenger numbers plummet.

In Greater Manchester around 45 per cent of our residents do not own a car and are therefore reliant on public transport. But, for many, public transport is unreliable and expensive reducing their access to jobs and training and even visits to family. Our privatised bus operators currently compete with our excellent Metrolink (tram) system and we can see buses nose-to-tail on the lucrative routes, whilst parts of our city-region don't even see a bus.

So, I took the decision, using our devolved powers, to bring our buses back under public control.

I want to create an integrated public transport system in Greater Manchester – the Bee Network – linking buses with trams through single, tap-on, tap-off ticketing and London-level fares. Our buses will have a single livery – yellow and black and with the Manchester Bee and looking similar to Metrolink, demonstrating the integrated public transport system that we are building.

At the moment if you get the bus and then the tram you pay twice. I want a single ticket for one journey, including our new bike hire scheme and, by the end of the decade, GM Commuter Rail. Buses will be providing orbital links to all communities and linking them to Metrolink.

I am using the principles that underpin Metrolink – reliable; affordable; sustainable; accessible and accountable – and applying them to our buses.

It won't happen overnight, but here in GM I have made the decision and we are getting on with making the changes.

And, we will use the Good Employment Charter as part of the contract award process, ensuring no degradation in the terms and conditions for bus drivers and other staff.

So these are just two examples of how Labour is working, using the benefits of devolution to make the changes we need for our area.

Labour and our trade union colleagues need to commit to devolution across England, allowing all parts of the country to do what is right for their localities.

Where Labour is in power, we are showing how we can deliver for our residents and much of what we are doing here can be done nationally. All of us want to see better employment, and why shouldn't every part of the country have a transport system that serves the public, and with London-level fares?

Andy Burnham

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester

Winning the peace - improving workplace culture

Following the joint commitments in the national *Pathway to Change* agreement, the union continues to be totally focused on improving the workplace culture and environment. There was never going to be an instant solution, as there are many various different aspects to this work and, in particular, many deep-rooted attitudes have had to be overcome.

But the cultural change has to be delivered and improving relationships and trust in the workplace will be the biggest contributor to our future success and this remains the top priority of the postal department.

Throughout Covid, postal members have continued to retain trust and appreciation on the doorstep and it is essential that this is replicated in our places of work. Our members make a unique contribution to society and should feel proud of what they do and be appreciated by their employer. Creating that culture is now a joint priority commitment and we will not rest until we have achieved that. It has been a long road to get those managing the company to a place where we are now starting to look at joint mutual-interest solutions to deliver progressive change in the workplace, but there are now a number of joint initiatives that are beginning to alter the previous mindsets.

will be circulated to assess if these matters have been resolved and if there has been a material change to culture.

‘Throughout Covid, postal members have continued to retain trust and appreciation on the doorstep and it is essential that this is replicated in our places of work.’

The *Mental Health and Wellbeing* group is also conducting a trial in selected workplaces around an education and training programme to raise awareness. All of the sub-group work will be reported back to the main cultural group and agreements then reached as to how this progresses.

And the final wave of the new uniform issue is due in November.

I am also continuing joint site visits with RMG chief executive officer Simon



If the trial is successful, this will provide a template for us to use going forward.

Finally, there has been an extensive joint training programme on the new dispute resolution process that has been delivered to the vast majority of representatives and managers. This will help to provide the tools for the local parties to reach solutions that are to the benefit of all.

During the adversarial years of our national disputes, we held many branch, divisional, regional and national briefings and the most prominent message from the workplace floor was that we have to change the culture in Royal Mail Group and that's exactly what we are going to do.

It will take time – culture does not change overnight – but we are not going away.

In fact we will constantly increase our activity until we achieve our goal.

Terry Pullinger

**DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY
(POSTAL)**

Thompson and we have not ducked the issue of culture, with priority being given to those high-profile workplaces where there have been ongoing industrial relations problems.

Where mutual-interest solutions have been agreed, these have been recorded and now form the basis for a trial of joint proactive culture intervention work that is due to conclude in October.



The *Culture Main Negotiating Group* continues to meet regularly to discuss how improvements can be made and also to consider the recommendations from a number of sub-groups that continue to drive the various strands of work forward. The *Buildings and Work Environment* sub-group has conducted a trial in six units that provided feedback about improvements to the workplace. A follow up questionnaire

Local culture work – autumn programme

CWU postal executive member Mahmood Ali has been aligned to lead on behalf of the union on the next steps of the detailed culture improvement work planned for this autumn across selected Royal Mail units, working jointly with Jane Long, the company's head of industrial relations delivery.

“There are three units where we're holding launch sessions, which are two delivery offices – Leyburn in Yorkshire and Ware in Hertfordshire – and the Leeds VOC,” Mahmood tells *The Voice*.

He explains that these three sites have been chosen due to the analysis of their Trust Survey results and also because they differ in terms of their demographics. “Leyburn is quite rural, Ware is what you might describe as suburban and Leeds of course is a major city. Added to that, is that it's also important to have different operational functions represented.”

After the launch sessions – which will bring together members of staff as well as local, area and divisional reps and managers

– the plan is to send independent ‘listeners’, or perhaps trained mediators, if necessary, to have one-to-one sessions with individuals to try to understand issues raised.

“We'll jointly compile the concerns and then work together to seek to identify appropriate solutions,” Mahmood continues, emphasising that the focus will be on engaging units and the individuals there to reach local solutions to the underlying problems.

“We're hoping that, before the end of 2021, we'll be able to deliver a full joint report to the *Main Culture Group* and to the postal executive.”

This report briefing, it is hoped, will include action plans for improvement and may also include specific recommendations. If successful, the learnings will form a point of reference for ongoing pro-active culture-based interventions and reviews.

Mahmood emphasises that this programme of work should not be seen as a one-off event, and the joint culture work will not then be considered to be complete.

“We need to establish this as an ongoing process, that will be widening and taking a broader focus going forward,” he explains.

“This work will be moving onto other units and other parts of the company that need assistance and in each instance the focus will be on working with all staff and representatives and managers to achieve local solutions to issues that have arisen.”



Building trust & speaking out

‘Good or bad culture should not just be judged by flashpoints and ballot requests alone. There could be many units that have a terrible culture that goes under the radar,” says our DGSP Terry Pullinger.

“Using the trust surveys as well as information regarding the use of conduct, attendance, grievance and IR issues, we will be able to expose where a positive intervention and support is required.” The most recent trust survey took place across several areas during the latter half of August and the headline results indicated a significant – and encouraging – increase in participation.

The overall return rate for this survey was 66 per cent compared to the previous Big Trust Survey of 48 per cent. And, in terms of the actual trust score, which is based on five particular questions, this was 70 per cent.

“Confidence needs to grow in the trust surveys,” Terry continues, making the point that “the surveys provide a genuine opportunity to raise the profile of a bad culture and, if you are unhappy with the culture and level of trust in your workplace, then use the survey to expose it, because it will be acted upon.”

The union is continuing to jointly evaluate survey results and the other factors that signpost culture-related problems and implementing agreed action plans where required.

“This activity will ensure that we continue to develop local solutions that will have a positive impact on your workplace as well as helping to inform the national picture.”



Framework in place to build full national agreement with BT

The past year has shown that our BT members have real verve to make change happen as they have come together to fight back over unfair changes in the BT workplace during our *Count Me In* campaign.

The participation levels and outstanding support from branches and members from writing to their MPs, signing up to be workplace reps, signing petitions and voting yes for industrial action in our consultative ballot has resulted in more engagement at workplace level than ever before.

That's what a trade union looks like and I hope that this level of passion to fight for what's right remains.

Whilst some may be disappointed that we didn't take industrial action, it's important to remember that the framework agreement reached with BT is a huge turnaround from where we were 18 months ago – the *Count Me In* campaign and the efforts of our branches and members changed that. We are confident that we've achieved an agreement that enables us to provide some key protections for our members going forward.

Whilst it may have gone quiet for a few weeks since our last briefing to you at the beginning of August please be assured that there is work going on behind the scenes to begin to enact the fundamentals of the *Future of Work* framework agreement.

I am confident that we will be able to provide some communications to you within a few weeks which will set out how we will consult with branches and members for the different elements of the agreement.

'This is what a trade union looks like and I hope that this level of passion to fight for what's right remains.'

For now, I think it's important to reiterate some of the key elements of the framework agreement. The agreement without doubt creates a firm foundation of how we will work with BT in the future.

It will result in, increased job security; secure UK-based roles; a fairer grading and pay structure; more opportunities for upskilling and see the union on behalf of its members become a powerful stakeholder rather than an observer to BT's plans.



Set out below are the key workstreams we are currently working through with BT:

- **Better Workplace;** addressing potential problems in advance of making any announcements;
- **Reskilling and Redeployment** - to minimise redundancy;
- **Pay, Terms and Conditions** – we have a commitment to resolve the unagreed pay points, and to embark on discussions to ensure decent pay, terms and conditions for all BT employees. This will include a fair pay, grading and reward structure;
- **Strategic Resourcing** -we will have sight of and the ability to influence BT's future resourcing requirements well in advance. We will aim to ensure our members are equipped with the anticipated skills in advance of these being required, thereby securing your stake in the future of BT.

On top of the above we have put in place a governance team to ensure progression, delivery and implementation of the principles contained in the agreement across all CFUs. And, of course, we will consult with members on key aspects prior to the final agreement.

For now, I urge all members to continue to talk to your fellow colleagues and raise any issues in relation to your workplace through your branch.

Andy Kerr

**DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY
(T&FS)**

Employee choice proves a winner as Santander embraces new working model

A ground-breaking agreement struck between the CWU and Santander to provide an innovative and progressive new framework for the post-Covid world of work has proved its value – with every single staff member being awarded their first-choice preference from a comprehensive menu of options.

Thrashed out against plans for the biggest transformation in the UK bank's history, the CWU-brokered deal had at its heart the intention of preserving jobs and, above everything, avoiding compulsory redundancies that would otherwise have been inevitable as Santander embarks on an unprecedented rationalisation of its property estate.

Following the unveiling of radical plans for a complete rethink of pre-pandemic working arrangements – under which four major head office buildings will close in their entirety by the year's end, with others consolidating to a smaller footprint – the bank launched a jointly agreed company-wide employee preference exercise to establish which work-location options worked best for individuals.

The outcome, announced in July, comprehensively vindicates the hard work put in by union and company negotiators to establish a way forward that ensures a comparatively painless transition from traditional office-based working to a hybrid based predominantly on homeworking.

Just under 1,900 CWU-represented grade employees currently based at the Bootle and Manchester Deansgate sites that are scheduled for closure on December 31 have opted to accept new 'dual location' contracts – under which they will permanently work mainly from home, but with regular attendances at nearby 'collaboration hubs' which are currently in the process of being set up.

Meanwhile, 1,101 colleagues at the former Alliance & Leicester headquarters campus at Carlton Park in Leicester – the second largest site at which the CWU is recognised for collective bargaining purposes – have accepted the same 'dual location' arrangements.

Crucial protections for a post-Covid world of work

Importantly, the preference exercise agreed between the CWU and Santander enshrined protections for those who simply cannot work from home for a variety of reasons – offering a process under which permanent office space would be prioritised for those with exceptional circumstances.

In the event, every single employee who applied for that option has been accommodated. Typically involving those who chose to attend the office rather than work at home during the pandemic, permanent desk space will be provided for 44 colleagues at the new Bootle 'hub', which is currently scheduled to open in January.

At Carlton Park, where consolidation of the campus into just one building is expected to be complete by the year's end, 18 colleagues will be provided with permanent desk space, along with four more at the new 'collaboration hub' in Manchester,

Further demonstrating the value of the multiple options the CWU successfully ensured were offered in the preference exercise, 140 colleagues will undertake an eight-week 'trial' of 'dual location' contracts without losing the opportunity of leaving the business on redundancy terms, should they decide that working from home is not for them.

Longstanding CWU Telecoms & Financial Services (TFS) Executive member for Santander and ALGUS National Branch president, Debbie Cort – who played a key role in negotiations that dominated the six months leading up to her retirement at the start of this month – explains: "From the outset the CWU National Team was resolute that we wanted individual choice to be at the heart of the process. That's precisely what the preference exercise has delivered – in the process enabling the bank to achieve what it wanted in terms of the rationalisation of its estate – and the fact they've been able to do that fairly painlessly is a vindication of allowing people the option to decide what's best for them."

CWU national officer for Santander Sally Bridge agrees, concluding: "Although Santander's initial site rationalisation announcement in March came as a huge shock to many – with particular sadness understandably being felt in Bootle given the major investment that had previously been earmarked for that site – the subsequent agreement we reached has avoided compulsory redundancies and protected those for whom 'dual location' simply wasn't a goer.

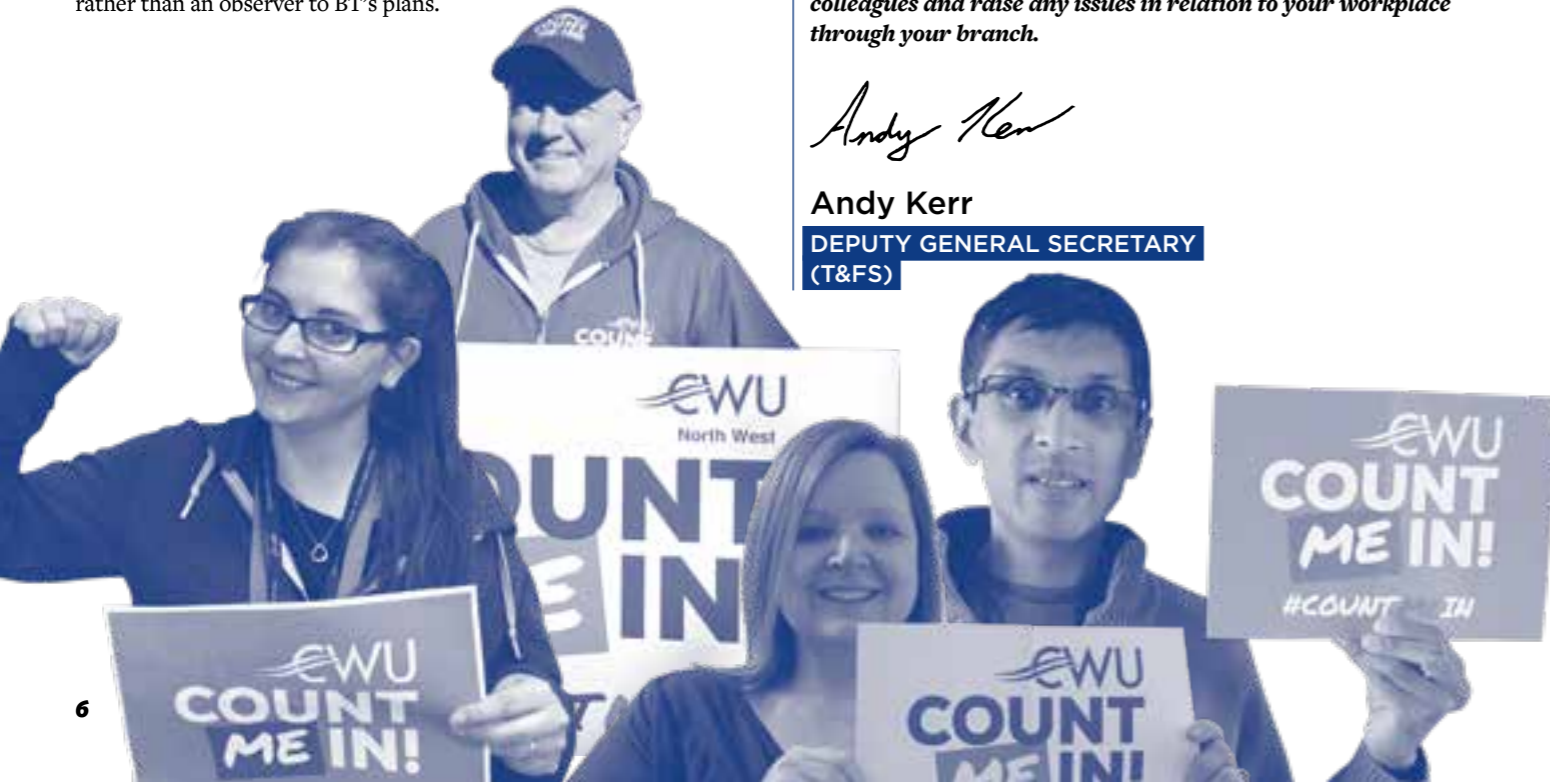


This agreement avoids compulsory redundancies, protects staff and provides for meaningful employee choice. A highly satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

"In providing for meaningful employee choice, in what could otherwise have been an infinitely more painful site rationalisation process, the bank has taken an important moral lead in what is likely to be the first of many corporate readjustments to the post-Covid world of work."

"I'd like to thank Debbie and the rest of the Santander national team for their scrupulous attention to detail throughout intricate negotiations with the company – in the course of which we've ensured a highly satisfactory outcome for all concerned that was categorically not a foregone conclusion at the outset."

Taking over from Debbie as newly elected CWU TFS Executive member for Santander is longstanding Aligus National Branch officer Gordon Johnson, who was also part of the CWU team that delivered the ground-breaking deal.



DELIVERING INNOVATION, CHANGE AND PROGRESS

Over 150 delivery offices have been undertaking full structural duty revisions over the past few months under the terms of the *Pathway to Change* national agreement. Outdoor secretary Mark Baulch asked *The Voice* to join him on visits to two units in different parts of the country to see how these changes are working out...

I'm a YouTuber in my spare time, so it's great to have a four-day week – more time to do my own thing.

Stoke Newington postman Lorenzo Gosling tells *The Voice* when he is asked whether the revision at his unit has been a success.

The structural revision recently completed at this north London office has retained the four-day week option for all full-time staff and spread this choice, as well as a nine-day fortnight, to all 17 part-time postmen and women among the 64 total staff in post.

This is the first job Lorenzo has worked where he has had trade union representation and, he says: "It's 100 per cent better here compared to where I worked before and Matt (Matt Wood, the CWU unit rep here) does a brilliant job looking out for us."

Part-time postwoman Anna Rosiak also welcomes the new shift arrangements, having chosen the nine-day fortnight duty pattern which, she tells us, "works out really well for me and my personal commitments."

In his union role, Matt was centrally involved in working out the details of the revision – assisted by area delivery rep Kevin Carey – and they explain that, as well as protecting the already-existing four-day week options for full-timers and extending it to all staff, the other key CWU aim was to ensure a fairer distribution of the workload among members.

Matt Wood took over the unit rep position at the end of last year following the retirement of his predecessor, for whom Matt had served as deputy.

"In terms of walks, we've gone from 36 plus three firms (firms' being non-residential delivery rounds to business or industrial customers) to 34 plus two firms. And we've also got two indoor duties which have been unchanged," he explains.

"There are 8.45-hour and 9.45-hour shifts and all duty holders get a long weekend every three or four weeks.

"The upheaval of the revision has been a challenge, but I'm really impressed with the way our members have handled it and got on with the job."



As we talk, the office is a hive of early-morning activity as everyone sorts their work, preparing to load up and head out and Matt tells us that average volumes are still up on pre-2020 levels – he gives an approximate current estimate of around 125 per cent and adds that, by the same

criterion, workload was up as high as 150 per cent at the height of last year's lockdown.

ADR Kevin Carey praises Matt for his work on getting this revision completed – which has of course 'triggered' the promised hour off the working week and pro-rata pay rise for part-time members.

"It's been a job well done here – there's a better resource-to-workload balance now and it's great that we've been able to extend the innovative shift patterns to our part-time members as well," says Kevin.

"Despite coming in as quite a new rep, Matt's done an excellent job here."

Across his North/Northwest London Branch area, eight structural revisions have been scheduled and, when we visited Stoke Newington in mid-August, he told us that this was the third to complete and that "the majority will be completed by October."



Up in Morecambe, Lancashire, six of the office's 66 delivery staff are on new dedicated parcel duties following the completion of its revision – a revision which has also increased full-time numbers from 25 up to 41.

CWU unit rep Mitch Mitchell tells *The Voice*: "There are 43 walks here and delivery spans are longer – four hours 45 minutes on average. Our three rurals have longer delivery spans of up to six hours, but the members on these duties are on four-day weeks.

"The rest of our full-timers have one-in-four weekends off," he adds.

Mitch's deputy, Tommy Clough adds that the hour off has been introduced by "realigning the starting times.

"We start earlier on the busier days, Wednesday and Thursday for example, and have the later starts and/or earlier finish on the Tuesdays and Saturdays," Tommy explains.

Dave Atkinson and Andy Monks are both pleased with the outcome of the revision, being among those who have been made up to full-time. Dave says: "I started here in 2017 on 24 hours, went up to 30 hours last December and now I'm up to full-time. I like it, I'm on a local round and it's really good for me," while Andy, who began at Morecambe 10 years ago on 25 hours, then increased to 32, is also now

up to 37 and is now working a van-share duty, tells us: "It's brilliant to have set days and my own duty."

But Hayley Gavins is less impressed by the changes, saying: "It's not great from my view. My walk's been added to and it's more difficult to complete.

"Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love this job and I've been here 30 years – but I do need this resolved."

Mitch says: "We're about to resolve this. We've got extra support – floaters and reserves – who can take away some of the extra delivery workload she's got and our six dedicated parcels delivery members too, so this is how we can resolve this.

Mitch introduces us to Vicky Birchall, busy loading parcels into a York as she preps one of the new dedicated parcels delivery duties, and explains how the six people on this duty organise the deliveries between them, saying: "What Vicky does, for example, is builds her own manifest on her PDA each day."

Speaking to us out on the loading dock about her new duty, Vicky says: "We go all over the delivery area, so it's a larger area to cover. I'm on a 30-hour week, which is up from 24 hours before the revision."

Another change at Morecambe that Mitch points out are the wider sorting frames, which are, he says: "Base plus six – which gives us



more room to manoeuvre – and enabled us to take a whole row out.

"This revision, and the whole *Pathway to Change*, have been a learning curve for us all and problems do arise, like the one highlighted by Hayley, but we have the means to resolve them – and we will," he insists.

CWU substitute area delivery rep Stuart McQueen says that this has been one of seven structural revisions scheduled across his area of responsibility and comments that, "it's great to see Mitch and Tommy using the revision process to identify the need to improve contracts – maximising earning opportunity – and creating more innovative duty patterns to create a better work/life balance for the members.

"With any major change there are always going to be some glitches that need ironing out, and we'll keep working with the management team in Morecambe to see these issues are resolved."



CWU outdoor secretary Mark Baulch tells *The Voice*: "Both visits to Morecambe and Stoke Newington have proven really worthwhile. Listening to the feedback, first-hand, from the members who perform the job day in day out is absolutely invaluable."

"In Morecambe, some real positives have been achieved, with the introduction of improved attendances and also with less-than-full-time staff being made full time or increasing their weekly contractual hours. Mitch and Tommy, and with Stuart's support as well have done a great job and these

are real tangible benefits that the revision and the *Pathway to Change* agreement have achieved for our members.

"And what Matt and Kevin have achieved at Stoke Newington, by fully utilising the national agreement in introducing the revision, is a real positive step for our members – in particular, the menu of duty options for improved attendances.

"This was one of the key aspects which the union fought hard for and secured which is contained within the *Pathway to Change* agreement – so it's fantastic to see the positive outcomes."

Mark also talks about some of the

problems and issues in delivery, saying: "There are workload issues, particularly with some of the HCT routes, and there have also been problems with prep frame layouts and planner support in deployment.

"These are being dealt with locally for solutions to be found, but unfortunately, some of these issues are being replicated in a number of units and we've raised this at national level with Royal Mail's senior delivery management team as it's not good enough.

"Our *Pathway to Change* agreement provides the framework to fully address these issues at all levels."

FUTURE OF WORK IN OPENREACH - WHAT WE NEED

London and the South East are two of the areas most affected by Openreach's restructuring of its desk-based functions and *The Voice* visited the two senior Openreach CWU reps in each region to ask what they want to see in the final *Future of Work* national agreement currently being fleshed out at national level...

When we meet Dave Kaufman at the Withdean Exchange in Brighton, he is out in the yard speaking with some of his field engineers getting ready to start their morning's work. So, he spends some time with them before inviting us inside an almost deserted office.

"The lower floor here is the exchange and the upper floors normally – I mean pre-Covid – would have had around 150 people working here on fibre network delivery (FND)," he tells us as we enter.

A phased return to the office was planned for September and into the autumn, but at the time of our visit – late August – there are only around eight or nine members onsite, with the remainder of the workforce still working from home.

"We've been told this building is closing for this line of work and that this work is being relocated to Bristol, Glasgow and Belfast. But to us this makes no sense," continues Dave, who represents Openreach members across the South East Region.

"The whole building itself cannot close because it's an exchange – and therefore, houses the essential network infrastructure for the area – and as to relocating the desk-based engineering support work, it's been proven over the past 18 months that this work does not necessarily all need to be done in an office in any case.

"Productivity and efficiency of our working-from-home colleagues has been at least as high if not higher than when they were working here. So the whole concept of 'relocating' these desk-based roles is now an obsolete concept."

Dave is the chair of CWU South East Central Branch and is also the union's Openreach regional co-ordinator for the South East. This unit is one of the two largest of its type within his 'patch' – with the other similarly-sized office being at Sevenoaks in Kent.

"Sevenoaks is in line for closure and there are also several other, smaller desk-based units in the South East which are also affected," he continues, pointing out that the current company plans envisage no desk-based units in the South East at all and estimating that around 500 workers will be impacted by this.



Speaking to workers in the Withdean office, it becomes clear that some have already opted for the voluntary redundancy package and are serving their remaining time, while others talk of the various alternative internal positions they have either enquired about or are awaiting confirmation of.

Dave takes time answering members' enquiries and updating them as to the current state of play with the national negotiations, but none of the workers here want to go 'on the record' with us on their views or perspectives.

Dave explains to *The Voice* that this is due to a combination of their own uncertainties and a degree of apprehension on their part as to their futures within the company.

"Basically, a lot of people are very worried and even fearful about what lies in store," he says, adding: "This makes me even more determined that we really do need a strong national agreement.

"At this time, as we know, talks are ongoing at national level between our own leadership and the top people at the company, fleshing out the *Future of Work* framework agreement and, at some point in the coming period, there'll be a full *Future of Work* national agreement.

"The big, big issue is compulsory redundancies and the avoidance of compulsory redundancies needs to be in that full agreement."



London members are equally determined that the company needs to fully address their job security concerns in the full *Future of Work* agreement, according to Bill Dixon, the union's Openreach regional co-ordinator for London, and former secretary of the CWU's South London, Surrey & North Hampshire (SLS&NH) Branch.

Members who have been working from home during the pandemic have started to return to the office and some were back in Colombo House for the first time on the day we met Bill there, with questions for him on the latest state of play regarding their current situation

After briefing the on-site members, he tells us that there are "around 600" desk-based workers attached to Colombo House in Southwark, "150 or so" at Edmonton in north London and "about 70" at the Ilford site to the east of the capital, adding that there are several other, smaller desk-based units in London with workforces of around 20 to 30.

And, although Dartford is geographically in Kent, it falls within the company's London Region and employs "approximately 200" members.

Bill points out that all of these jobs are set to be relocated under the company's stated plan to have no desk-based sites at all in London.

"The full *Future of Work* agreement needs to include a commitment to retain at least one key hub in London – indeed in every region – and the full use of working-from-home options with regard to the company's buildings estate reduction plan, along with a joint commitment to the avoidance of compulsory redundancies," he insists.

It is suspected that, as people would find it very difficult to relocate such long distances, affected members will have no option but to take severance packages – and then be replaced by new recruits in those new locations on lower rates of pay.

While some of these new recruits would be employed in the retained office units in other parts of the UK, the union fears that significant numbers of these potentially vacant roles could be handed, through third-party agents, to workers overseas in countries with far lower wage rates than here, he warns.

Bill estimates that this practice – known as 'offshoring' – has already cost some 4,000 UK jobs across the company.

Commenting on the company's name for its restructuring programme, Bill says: "This is not about a *better workplace* as they claim, it's actually about a cheaper workforce.

"This company is actually receiving public funding for its fibre network programme – but there's no way that the UK public should be forced to fund the offshoring of jobs.

"Offshoring must be halted and those jobs must be brought back to the UK," he insists, adding that this demand, as well as the others he listed earlier must all be in the full *Future of Work* agreement.

'We will continue to challenge the company nationally and this fight will be across every level of our organisation.'



Davie Bowman, the union's national officer for our Openreach members, says: "The impact of the Openreach location strategy will be devastating for thousands of our members, either because their role has been relocated to one of the strategic sites or the travel impact of having to get to their new workplace.

"The strategy flies in the face of what many other blue-chip companies are doing post-pandemic," he continues, "but unfortunately the company's response to the union's calls to reconsider could be described as *'the computer says no!'*

"We will continue to challenge the company nationally and, with the support of reps such as Bill and Dave across the country, this fight will be across every level of our organisation."



DRIVING SUCCESS ON THE PATHWAY TO CHANGE

Following on from the Pathway to Change national agreement, workload alignments and network revisions have been taking place right across Royal Mail's operational pipeline. To find out more, *The Voice* was invited to Preston Mail Centre to speak with reps and members in distribution and processing...

Take your time, be very observant and expect the unexpected," are Dawn Taylor's tips for her colleague Paul Penny as he prepares to begin his Class One HGV training.

"I've been driving Royal Mail Class Ones for nearly 10 years now, so with my experience, I'm willing and able to help newer drivers if they ask me," Dawn explains, and adds, "I think he'll make a really good Class One driver - Paul's great at his job."

Paul is one of several distribution drivers taking the opportunity to upgrade their skills as Preston expands its network operation, with 18 new drivers being taken on here to meet increasing demand.

"I've worked for the business for 17 years, here and previously at Greenford," he tells *The Voice*. "Up to now I've been on the Class Two vehicles, but I start my training on the artics and trailers next week."

CWU distribution unit rep Greg Amissah explains to us that a 'Class Two' licence allows the holder to drive 'rigid-body' vehicles over 7.5 tonnes, while the 'Class One' covers articulated vehicles over that size with detachable trailers.

"We've currently got 52 distribution members here, but that will go up to 70 as we're becoming a VOC (vehicle operating centre). We've started operating units and trailers and we're taking on an extra 18 drivers."

"As a VOC, we'll be working the routes from here up as far as Edinburgh



and down as far as NDC," he continues, adding that the new drivers include new recruits from other parts of the business and former agency workers, which is in addition to people like Paul and others who are upskilling.

Greg explains that the hour off in Distribution is operating on the basis of a 15-minute daily reduction for those on four-day weeks and by 12-and-a-half minutes each day for five-day-a-week workers, while in Network, it has been introduced as an extra hour's pay.

"The alignment and revisions process here has been hard work, and not without teething problems, but the outcome so far seems to be all positive and our area distribution rep Lenny Crook has been really helpful."

Lenny, CWU distribution rep for the whole of the North Lancs & Cumbria Branch area, explains that "because of the massive increase in the LGV (large goods vehicle) workload, we couldn't fit any more vehicles in at Chorley or at the North West RDC, so that's why Preston Mail Centre Distribution is expanding."

"The alignment work here at Preston has been really good. It's taken a long time for us to get to where we are now and all credit to Greg for his efforts," he adds.



Area processing rep Saqib Parvez and sub-APR Gavin Aylott have headed the CWU's contribution to Preston's workload alignment and although Saqib was taking a well-deserved spot of annual leave when *The Voice* visited, we met and spoke with Gavin, who summed up the project as "some gains and some setbacks" for the 400-plus workforce.

"On the positive side, firstly of course, there's the hour off the working week, which the completion of our alignment has triggered," he begins.

"So, for those on lates, start times are now 2.36pm Monday to Friday. On early shift, for people on the five-day week it's one hour off on the Monday and for those on a four-day week, they finish 15 minutes' earlier each day, while the night shift have different starting times."

Gavin tells us that he had hoped that there may have been greater opportunities for additional job numbers, but that a recent drop in processing volumes from the historic highs of last year had reduced this potential.

"However, we are pleased that we've managed to get eight of our part-time members onto full-time night-shift roles - the full to part time ratio here is about 70:30 - and that we've maintained SA (scheduled attendance or overtime) for all our members."

"We operate seven days a week and we're pushing to recruit 20 new staff - to reduce our use of agency resource."

There are some concerns here at how the establishment of the new 'super-hub' some 30



miles away at Warrington will affect workload going forward and Gavin wonders about larger mail items being diverted there from Preston.

"We're all hoping that won't impact negatively on us - but at this stage it's an element of uncertainty," he says.

"But overall, the best thing about *Pathway to Change* is how it's massively improved our operational involvement in all ways. We, as a union, are very much 'in the room', being consulted with, negotiated with and engaged with."

"None of this would've happened here without this union."

Walking around the floor with Gavin as he speaks with members, it's clear there is strong support for the CWU reps' efforts on their behalf, part-timer Ismail Chari telling us how pleased he is to have his hours increased and saying: "Saqib and Gavin do a great job for us" and long-serving full-timer Sharon commenting: "I'm 100 per cent union - and Gavin is a fighter for us."

At the parcel sorting machine, shift rep David Ogden and colleagues are emptying loaded yorks onto the conveyor, while 'upstairs', his wife Bernie and David Rain load smaller packets and Manjula Parekh is set for the letters to start to flow.

This PSM processes some 80,000 items of mail per day, David Ogden tells us, we watch the operation in action, and then see the numerous fully loaded yorks stacked up in the holding area.

If this is Preston when it's experienced a 'recent drop in processing volumes'...

Following the visit, *The Voice* spoke with Davie Robertson, national officer, and he told us: "Firstly, the general atmosphere of camaraderie, solidarity and support for the CWU is testament to the excellent job the North Lancs & Cumbria Branch do on behalf of our members."

"However, the visit and the feedback from our reps and members also highlight the current volatility with regard to traffic due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, although all the indicators remain positive with regard to volume growth."

"The creation of a full VOC at Preston is indicative of this growth, and the training programme to enable our members to

progress their LGV skills is something we want to replicate across the country," Davie continued, adding: "We are in advanced talks with the business on a national driver training campaign to address the widely reported national driver shortage - and I wish Paul and his colleagues every success in their training."

In Processing, Davie recognises the challenges, saying: "Conducting a realignment during a period of volatility is always difficult. However, it's clear that our reps and members have risen to the challenge and delivered an excellent outcome for our members."

He then goes on to address the specific issue of the North West Parcel Hub,

explaining that "I fully understand the uncertainty the new hubs bring for our members and we need to provide clarity as a matter of urgency."

"However, we've been engaged with Royal Mail on the *Pipeline Review* and we expect to be in a position to engage with our representatives very shortly on the next steps as we move towards the hubs going operational."



WORKING TOGETHER IN PARCELFORCE TO WIN BACK TOP SPOT

CWU Parcelforce representatives gathered in Birmingham last month to discuss the pressing technology issues and help shape solutions on productivity and operational improvements...



The briefing was called following a summer of depot visits undertaken by Davie Robertson, assistant secretary, and senior managers from PFW and RMG – including visits by Group CEO Simon Thompson with both Davie and DGSP Terry Pullinger – that provided direct feedback from reps and members on the failings of the systems.

In describing the current situation, Davie told delegates: “There is definitely a window of opportunity and we can make real strides to restore morale and resolve operational issues, but we need to do it together.

“Switching off technology is not the answer but technology must support the operation, not control it and that is where the current issues lie,” he explained.

Davie is hopeful of genuine progress in restoring driver control and overcoming the acute challenges of delivery routing issues across the business to improve one-hour ETA (estimated time of arrival) performance, which is the key differentiator from the Royal Mail service.

At the briefing, both Davie and Terry invited a frank and robust two-way debate, which was conducted in a spirit of determination and unity of purpose. Delegates from every part of the country spoke up about the situation in their own units and regions.

What came across was a real feeling of frustration from reps on behalf of hard-working members who feel thwarted by systems that appear to be operating illogically. Reports of a ‘...but the system says...’ attitude from managers and anecdotes of drivers being sent back and forth to the same streets more than once, mirrored the feedback on the depot tour.

Other issues in respect of PRB (Parcelforce Route Balancing) were also discussed with issues being raised about the programme’s compatibility with REX. “The concept of balancing workload and capping the day is correct but the reality is that the system hasn’t worked as a dynamic tool,” noted Davie

In his reply to the debate, Davie thanked all of the reps for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of members, particularly over this recent extreme period and thanked them for their “honest and heartfelt” contributions.

Davie said: “The message has been clear for some time, we must put the driver back in control of their day and address the daily battle over workload.

We managed to persuade the business to trial some alternative methods to restore driver control in July and August but the results were mixed so we need to go again.

“We’ve asked for your views and you’ve given them. Clearly, we need to get drivers back in control of their route – we need a new and workable version of ‘draw the line’, with the ability to be able to change route if the unexpected happens.”

Davie invited reps to present written submissions after the briefing and, when *The Voice* spoke with him earlier this month, he told us that numerous detailed contributions had been received.

“It’s no surprise that the quality of these reports has been excellent,” Davie noted and added: “We’ve used the contributions from the briefing and the written submissions to present a discussion document/proposal to the business on a new approach.”

Aaron Barnes’s arrival as the new MD of PFW, and changes in the operational management team, in Davie’s opinion, “create an opportunity for fresh thinking to address the issues and early discussions with the new leadership show promise.

“Detailed conversations are taking place this month and there appears to be a consensus around the areas of concern and a strong commitment to work with the CWU to address the situation,” he told us, adding that he hopes to be able to update representatives and members with positive news in the very near future.

“Watch this space!” he concluded.

Parcelforce: some key background info

Under the Pathway to Change agreement, RMG leadership is committed to retaining Parcelforce Worldwide (PFW) – the union has committed to improved operational efficiency to achieve the SWW.

Both parties are committed to PFW being the premium provider at the high-value, high-quality end of the RMG parcels operation. To be a premium provider at

the top of the market, PFW must deliver excellent customer service and beat, or at least match, the service offerings of the competition, the enabler for that level of customer service is vehicle routing technology.

Parcelforce have invested huge sums on the Geoplan, Route Excellence (REX) programme, a system that has been in use

since 2015. Until 2020, REX allowed drivers to set their own route order – or ‘draw the line’ as it’s referred to in the business – but, Covid restrictions moved routing to an automatic setting defined by the technology. According to feedback received, drivers have found automated route solutions produced by REX to be both illogical and restrictive – impacting morale and customer service.

Spirited CWU fight wins limited concessions amidst Bury closure

‘Stressful time for members’, says branch chair, as he thanks the union, the wider community and local and regional politicians for backing their campaign



Despite a spirited CWU campaign to maintain jobs in the area which has scored some limited but important successes, the site in Radcliffe – which has been operated by Capita since Telefonica O2 outsourced its TM call centre operation in 2016 – shut its doors for the last time in September.

Since the closure announcement was dropped on devastated staff in May, the impact of the withdrawal of one of the town’s largest private sector employers has been the subject of intensive political scrutiny, with Bury Town Council and Greater Manchester metro mayor, Andy Burnham, leading demands for a company rethink.

In the event, however, the expiry of the current building’s lease – and Capita’s insistence that relocation within Bury simply wasn’t viable – sealed the fate of the beleaguered workforce.

From that moment on, the CWU has focussed on mitigating the human cost of the site’s closure, starting by challenging Capita’s initial position that its withdrawal from Bury didn’t technically constitute a redundancy situation at all – given that all displaced employees were being given the opportunity to transfer to its Preston Brook site.

With that option impossible for many – on account of a difficult 70-mile round trip from Bury involving congested motorways in peak hours and no clear public transport alternatives – the CWU has secured.

- Concessions from the company that allow for permanent homeworking opportunities on the Tesco Mobile contract for 30 per cent of its Bury workforce.
- Assisted travelling costs (ATCs) for a period of six months for the small number of employees who are prepared to give commuting to Preston Brook a try.
- The introduction of an ‘elective voluntary discretionary redundancy’ (EVDR) programme with a tenure-related bonus that increases statutory redundancy terms by £500 for those with less than three years’ service, £1,000 for those with three to five years in-post and £2,000 for longer-serving staff.
- A commitment from Capita to redeploy those displaced from the Tesco Mobile account who have not opted for EVDR onto other Capita contracts that either allow working from home or are within reasonable commuting distance from Bury.

As *The Voice* went to press, the majority of Capita’s Tesco Mobile contract workers in Bury who have not been offered permanent homeworking contracts had opted for EVDR – with some still working out their notice periods from home.

CWU assistant secretary Tracey Fussey said: “Ultimately it’s hard to take any positives from the sad situation that is drawing to its conclusion in Bury – though it’s certainly the case that the CWU has done everything it possibly could to provide members with genuine options that frankly didn’t exist at the outset.

“Huge credit goes to the CWU’s North West region and the local branch for focussing local political and media attention on the plight of the Bury workforce, because that set the scene for positive national-level talks with Capita in which the company has moved in a number of key areas.”

CWU Prestonbrook & Bury branch chair and national team member, Lawrence McIntosh, concluded: “This has been an extremely stressful and difficult time for our members. We are grateful for the support and backing of the wider community and politicians including Andy Burnham.”

Don’t miss out on ‘Job Swaps’, vulnerable Technology members urged

Members in BT Technology impacted by the business’s current transformation plans or immediate Better Workplace Programme (BWP) agenda are being urged to put themselves forward for ‘Job Swap’ opportunities under a mechanism negotiated by the union in a bid to mitigate against any job losses.

First utilised last autumn, the initial manifestation of the ‘Job Swap’ process allowed individuals who’d been placed at risk of compulsory redundancy under previous phases of Technology’s ‘Project Griffin’ transformation programme to swap places with colleagues who hadn’t been placed in scope for redundancy but who, for whatever reason, were keen to leave the business anyway under voluntary paid leaver terms.

CWU national officer for Technology Sally Bridge explains: “Ultimately this is about maximising the potential for voluntarism to mitigate against any job losses in a challenging change process.

“The ‘Job Swap’ concept can obviously have huge benefits for both parties – providing continuity of employment for those for whom job security is all-important, and the potential of voluntary paid leaver packages for individuals who might positively welcome such an opportunity but who may never otherwise be in scope for one.”

BUILDING OUR COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

It cannot be denied that we live in unprecedented times. The world we live in now could not be more different to that of just a year-and-a-half ago, says our general secretary Dave Ward as he sets out the union's agenda for the period ahead...



Since March 2020, our lives have all been marked by serious uncertainty, as we struggle through the country's greatest crisis since the Second World War.

So much has changed, and there has been so much heartbreak and sacrifice. But this period has also shown who really matters.

It has shown a society where the most valuable are sometimes the worst paid – and that these people step up to keep the country running while the rich and powerful shirk their duties.

This realisation has helped the country imagine new possibilities in terms of the world of work, the health requirements we need, and the broader society we wish to live in.

This is why I am looking forward to our union holding a special general conference between Sunday 7th and Tuesday 9th November.

General conference covers a wide range of issues but not specifically industrial and workplace matters. The industrial conferences will resume in full early next year. That said, I want to assure members that whatever the union does – whether political campaigning, recruitment, issues that impact on wider society or working with other unions – everything we do is about strengthening our union and our ability to represent you in the workplace.

As an online event, the conference will give members the opportunity to discuss our union's policy and activity, including recruitment and organising, our relationship with Labour, where next on our anti-racism strategy, and how we develop the *New Deal for Workers* campaign in this new era.

Since this is the first time we've had a special general conference, many members are asking questions about it, and rightly so. The most common question is: why?

Well, to put it simply, I think it's important that the whole of the CWU needs to come together. The onset of the pandemic has meant that we've not seen each other in far too long.

Of course, this distance was in everyone's best interests, but we have to start bringing people together again.

This is not only important for the morale of our members, who have stood with the union in these difficult circumstances, but also because we need to maintain democracy in the CWU.

To keep on going forward, we need our membership's collective power to come together, discuss things, and make decisions over the future. Members and branches need to hold our elected leadership to account, and we will ensure they have the opportunity and space to do that.

Recruitment and Organising

A major topic we want to discuss is the future of the CWU, as well as the wider trade union movement. We have to be real that despite serious efforts by many dedicated trade unionists, our movement has been slowly shrinking for a long time.

Decades of Thatcherism and draconian anti-union laws from successive Tory and New Labour governments have seen the power of organised workers weaken and if we want to reverse this trend, we need some frank and open discussion.

This isn't to belittle our union – the CWU is a strong organisation with a growing national profile. But we are not immune to the same pressures many other unions face – and have work to do to improve and increase density in our industries.

Looking at other unions, an interesting trend emerges. In the two recent general secretary elections for Unite and the GMB, members in both unions delivered strong mandates for candidates pledging a refocus on the world of work, and re-energised industrial strategies.

I believe that this represents a change of perspective in the wider movement, and represents a unique opportunity to begin pushing a distinct trade union agenda in society.

A Winning Political Strategy

Given the national situation for Labour, it's fair to say that this agenda can't be expected to come through them any time soon.

I believe that Labour has completely lost its way. But this hasn't happened overnight, or under any particular leader.

The truth is that the historic connections between Labour and the working-class communities they once represented has been weakening for decades; there is a complete disconnect between many working people and the party. Our role as a union is to think about that connection, and how best it can be rebuilt.

This is why I want a strategy that recognises this strained relationship between workers and the party that supposedly represents their interests, as well as emphasising that as a workers' movement, we deserve better. Labour must offer more than what Boris Johnson is currently offering.

This can be done if trade unions consciously and collectively decide to reassert themselves in Labour – and that we let Labour know that financially, it won't be getting something for nothing from us.

In Labour, I want us allocating financial support in a more targeted way. We should be suspending donations over the basic affiliation fees to Westminster Labour and refocusing efforts on helping particular Labour politicians.

In places like Salford, Preston, North Ayrshire, Greater Manchester and other 'Red Wall' areas, good Labour politicians aren't frightened about their election chances the way some Labour MPs are – they are getting elected and winning comfortably.

Why? Because they're looking out for people. They're building houses and rebuilding local transport networks. They're moving away from outsourcing and putting proper, union jobs back on the agenda.

That is the sort of politics we support – we want politicians we can trust to help our members and implement policies that can improve their lives. They are who our union should be helping, because that is what workers' political representation should be about.

United Against Racism

In the upsurge of anti-racist politics across the world, we will also be discussing where our anti-racism strategy goes.

In an amazing show of strength, over 12,000 CWU members individually signed up to our statement of anti-racist commitment, while our *CWU Against Racism* shirts were a massive success to members and in wider society.

I believe firmly that unions are the best organisations to bring people together. Our institutions bridge divides in society and allow people to think differently about one another. In organisations like the CWU that provide collective strength and dignity to working people, workers can abandon whatever petty prejudices they may have had – and can realise who the real enemy is.

This is why we want to look at different strategies and perspectives in how to engage people with anti-racist ideas and win people over to perspectives that highlight our collectivism.

A New Deal for Workers After Covid

This brings me to the *New Deal for Workers*. Once, it was only us pushing this sentiment. Now the name has caught on – these days, you can find Boris Johnson, the TUC, Labour and other trade union leaders using the sentiment. But what we now need is meat on the bone. This is why we want to use conference to discuss how we progress the campaign. We want to see it going forward, positively engaging with our members and building links with other unions.

One of the CWU's greatest strengths is in how we mobilise and engage with our people. When we do it right, very few unions in the country can rival us.

This puts us in a unique position to push for change. We need to be getting out there to discuss ending in-work poverty, abolishing insecure employment, and challenging multinational corporations who set the tone of the labour market in a very unfair way. We will be calling for a major campaign in the new year to address questions such as these.

But there is also an internal challenge to the wider labour movement movement too. Our challenge is this: Do you want change now? Can we put egos aside, can we get our leaders in a room? Can we roll our sleeves up and mobilise workers around core demands to bring about a fairer society?

This country is in desperate need of a complete shift in the balance of forces – the pandemic has shown that. But we also can't wait for change from above, because it isn't coming.

We are emerging out of a crisis that fundamentally demonstrated and validated the importance of trade unionism and collective strength.

We can't let that lesson be written out of the history books, and we can't let it be ignored in the political agenda. A great push is needed to put an agenda of justice for workers back into mainstream discussion.

The CWU is up for that fight, but we can't wait for politicians to catch up – it's on us as a united labour movement to fight and do it ourselves.

We have serious challenges facing our movement that we must discuss, but we also have great opportunities. We also have ideas, thoughts, and a committed membership that can help imagine a better future for our movement and for working people, and I sincerely hope this conference will be a great opportunity to demonstrate that with our combined efforts, we can win.

In conclusion, the CWU is a very special union with the best members and officials in the whole movement. I thank you for your support and I look forward to seeing our branches at the conference and I encourage members to join the debate locally.

Solidarity.

Dave Ward.

“One of the CWU's greatest strengths is in how we mobilise and engage with our people. When we do it right, very few unions in the country can rival us.”

RMPFS members set to elect new national and regional reps

Members in Royal Mail's Property & Facilities Services (RMPFS) have been voting this month on a new IR framework which will 'vastly improve their representative structure,' according to assistant secretaries Carl Maden and Mark Baulch.

The agreement covering RMPFS engineers will provide for two full-time national CWU representatives – to be elected for the North and South respectively – and eight lay regional representatives.

"So, subject to members' approval of this new set-up in the ballot, the next step will be elections for each of these positions," Carl explains.

Our RMPFS cleaners, will now have three dedicated full-time regional representatives in addition to the one dedicated full-time national representative.

Mark tells *The Voice* that these reps "will now also receive improved remuneration for these roles, along with the correct support and training in order to ensure that their roles and their status are improved and enhanced and these important positions are fully recognised and valued – as they rightfully should be.

"The new revised framework also encourages and makes clear the remit of the current operational unit and area reps, who

Mark Baulch



Carl Maden

will provide representation on an individual basis within the workplace, which is the focus of the new agreement," he adds.

RMPFS was formerly known as 'ROMECS' and until a few years ago, it was half-owned by a separate, private company. The union fought successfully to bring the whole operation fully back within Royal Mail Group in 2015 and, since then, the union has also been striving to harmonise and improve members' terms and conditions. There are still separate pay negotiations, and this is the next item on the union's RMPFS negotiating agenda.

Carl says: "We're starting these talks soon and something we're going to be pressing in this round as well as pay is for progress on pensions. We want the Royal Mail CDC scheme to become available for our RMPFS members."

And Mark adds: "In addition to the points on pensions, the imperative is to continue on the journey of improving basic pay. We made huge progress for our cleaners with the last three-year pay deal, which committed the company to real levels of living rate pay and we are absolutely not letting up on this.

"Our members have carried out an extremely difficult job during the pandemic and their efforts must be fully recognised by the company with a decent pay deal.

"Both Carl and myself would also like to take the opportunity that this presents to remind our branches and reps to do everything possible to ensure that we are recruiting engineers and cleaners into the union to maintain our strength," Mark concluded.

Capita TVL field members win hour off the working week

Hundreds of visiting officers, detection drivers, sale and enforcement support officers will see their hours reduced from the start of next month in a deal which also includes a consolidated £500 flat rate pay boost...



Andy Furey

Over 300 members benefit from the one-hour reduction – negotiated by the CWU – which has the effect of a 2.7 per cent equivalent increase in the hourly rate.

Those among the Capita TVL field who were previously Post Office employees – i.e. a group of around 30 workers who were in post when Capita TVL was awarded the licensing contract back in 2002 – already work shorter contracted

hours each week so will receive a £600 flat-rate increase.

The flat-rate increases are all backdated to 1st January 2021, while the company's visiting officers who were recruited after the 2020 pay agreement will also receive a 1.85 per cent consolidated pay lift.

"This is good news for our field members," says CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey, "and something of a breakthrough for the CWU in that this is the first working week reduction we've managed to achieve with Capita TVL throughout the whole period we've been dealing with them."

Our non-field members in sites at Bristol and Darwen, Lancashire, many of whom were on the £9.30 Real Living Wage rate, will also receive a 1.85 per cent increase for the period from 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2021 – when the increased RLW of £9.50 kicked in.

And those among the non-field workforce on pay rates already greater than the RLW are set for a £500 per annum pay increase backed to 1st January 2021.

"We're disappointed that we were unable to secure a working week reduction for our non-field members, but we intend to continue to pursue this in future negotiating rounds," pledges Andy, who adds that the next pay review date for all our Capita TVL members will be 1st January 2022.

DECENTRALISATION, COMMUNITY HUBS & REAL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS CAN REBUILD POST OFFICE CROWN NETWORK

After spending the past couple of decades protesting, campaigning and striking against every Crown post office closure, the CWU has decided to seize the initiative with a series of policy proposals aimed at building a new People's Post Office fit for the future.

"Frankly, our members are sick and tired of the managed decline, of the unimaginative and deeply negative policy of closures, franchising, deterioration and decay," explains Andy.

"To use a footballing analogy, we've played defence, but now we're breaking forward into attack. We want a *Crown in Every Town*."

New ideas to transform the Crown network

Andy, in liaison with our general secretary Dave Ward and deputy general secretary postal (DGSP) Terry Pullinger, has put forward a set of new and challenging ideas to the heads of Post Office, to work together to engage with devolved and local authority leaders and businesses – ideas which can transform the network and meet the needs of customers today and tomorrow.

To a government which claims that it wants to revitalise our nation's high streets and 'level up' our society, the CWU argues that a *Crown in Every Town* can lead that revival. It can become the 'shop window' for government services, where public services can be accessed and the 'left behind' can catch up.

For devolved and local authority leaders keen to improve the prosperity of their towns and cities, a *Crown in Every Town* can be that vital community hub, can be a place where council services can be promoted and explained, where local clubs and societies or charities can publicise their work and involve others.

For local businesses, particularly start-ups, a *Crown in Every Town* could provide business facilities and reliable branch banking – especially if the union's Post Office People's Bank proposal can be introduced.

In an encouraging sign, Post Office leadership – led by CEO Nick Read – has taken heed of the union's call for a reset and has agreed to halt its closure and franchising programme to allow for a period of serious discussion.



A detailed policy document has been put together by the union and is aimed at all Post Office stakeholders and potential stakeholders, with further discussions and more high-level talks set to take place through the autumn to the end of 2021.

Andy says: "We have a period of a few months to achieve a consensus as to the way forward – that's how long the Post Office moratorium on closures and franchises has currently been set for."

Our leaders winning political and business support for Crown plan

As general secretary, Dave Ward has joined Andy in meetings with Mr Read and is also leading the push to win political support for the union's plans, having already met with Paul Scully – Minister of State with

'We've been campaigning against what's been happening and asking why – now we're going to develop and build on our vision of how things can be and issue the challenge: Why not?' says CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey, as he explains the thinking behind the union's *Crown in Every Town* aspiration...

responsibility for the Post Office within the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) – and devolved and local authority leaders.

"Over the past months, we've also met with the Welsh First Minister, the Scottish Government and the mayors of London, the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire," says Dave, adding that "whenever we raise the question of supporting Crown offices, politicians are keen to work with us."

Dave notes that the union's affiliation to the Labour Party is helpful in terms of engaging devolved and local authority politicians, but also emphasises that backing for post offices comes from right across the political divide and enjoys cross-party support.

Our DGSP Terry Pullinger highlights how the *Pathway to Change* agreement with Royal Mail includes a commitment to exploring new opportunities for growth and says: "With a new

management team in Royal Mail, there is a now an opportunity to trial and implement new initiatives to help grow its business and one issue we've discussed with Royal Mail is its lack of presence on the high-street and the limited offering for collection from delivery offices, particularly compared to some of its competitors who are expanding in this area.

"As part of this, we've suggested the possibility of it partnering with post offices. Such a partnership could take several forms including shared premises, Royal Mail run-franchises or new collection services in branches."

Andy tells *The Voice*: "This is a great start and it's fantastic to have such strong support and back up from our senior CWU leadership.

"A lot more hard work lies ahead, but there are some genuinely hopeful signs."

Many thanks for electing me as your NEC representative

I joined the national executive council this month as the representative of the union's retired members and I'd like to thank my branch, London Phoenix, for the nomination and those that supported me for the position.

The previous retired members NEC representative was Brian Lee, a great trade unionist and very close friend of mine. Brian's passing was a great loss to the union and he is sadly missed by all those that knew him.

Although I've been a member of the NEC before, I am looking forward to this challenge and hopefully, developing and improving the role that the retired members' section contributes to the union and the wider movement. Many of our retired members have a wealth of trade union experience behind them and have a great deal still to contribute to the movement.

Retired people and the elderly face many challenges, but my philosophy is: We might have retired from work but we haven't retired from life.

However, retired people and the elderly can't do everything by themselves and, in particular, we need the active support of the

trade union movement to defend existing entitlements and improve others. I look forward to working with my fellow NEC members, the national retired members committee and all the other retired members activists in the union.

I can be contacted by email at ncandy@cwu.org

Norman Candy
NEC representative for CWU retired members

“
I'm looking forward to this new challenge.



Pensions triple lock – Will they ditch it?

Next month, Chancellor Rishi Sunak is due to announce his Autumn Spending Review and speculation is mounting that he may take this opportunity to remove this important safeguard that protects the value of state pensions...

If you have been following the mainstream media regarding this issue, you will be aware that hardly a day has passed in the last few months without the future of the 'triple lock' (TL) hitting the headlines. The campaign began over a decade ago, with a number of right-wing think tanks arguing that the protection was unfair to youngsters having to struggle to make ends meet following the introduction of austerity in 2008/09.

The argument then changed slightly when the Covid pandemic and the threat of mass unemployment and another recession was used to justify ditching the mechanism.

More recently, the critics have invented another reason why it is claimed the UK cannot afford to pay retired people a decent state pension. The anti-pensioners lobby is now arguing that, because it is predicted that wages could rise by about 8 per cent this financial year, the triple-lock – which guarantees that the state pension will be increased each year in line with the *Consumer Price Index* (CPI), average



annual wage increases or 2.5 per cent, whichever is highest – is unaffordable and must be either ditched or reduced.

It is important to remember that maintaining the state pensions triple lock was

a manifesto commitment by the Conservative Party going into the 2019 general election – and was a major factor in them winning large support from elderly voters.

However, the triple lock is not the only pensioners' entitlement that is under

threat. The free TV licence for the over 75s has already been reduced to those pensioners receiving Pensions Credit and the period when Freedom Passes are valid has been reduced in many parts of the UK. The promised social care reform has not materialised and many in the anti-pensioners lobby are arguing for even more draconian restrictions on the elderly's entitlements.

But they are not going unchallenged. The WASPI women have shown us all how to organise a campaign to oppose an injustice and the *Silver Foxes* – a less well known pensioners' campaigning organisation – have launched a campaign against the loss of the free TV licences.

The CWU intends to be at the forefront of these campaigns in the coming months.

Our union's *New Deal for Workers* programme includes retired workers and unites all generations in the fight for justice – and the TUC and other unions have pledged support as we build up this struggle. CWU retired members remain an important part of the labour movement and we intend to play our full part in this ongoing campaign.

A 'new normal'? No, it's the same fight against injustice and unfairness

Our senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns cautions against complacent assumptions that positive change will happen automatically post-Covid. He argues that, as we emerge from the pandemic, our movement needs to step up its activity and campaigning...



Over this past period since March of last year, it has regularly been said that a 'new normal' will emerge in the aftermath of the pandemic.

But when *The Voice* puts this to Tony Kearns, he disagrees, saying: "My view is that talk of, or use of, this phrase seems to imply that there has been, or signals that there will be, a fundamental shift in the way society is, or is going to, operate."

"In fact, society, or rather the economy, is operating and will operate in much the same way that it always has – capital seizing every opportunity to exploit labour."

Tony explains that, despite all the hard work and sacrifices made by frontline workers during the pandemic, it would be naive to expect employers to automatically recognise this in any meaningful form – i.e. in terms of better pay, improved conditions or stronger job security.

"This is evidenced by, for example, the use of 'fire-and-rehire' tactics that do nothing other than to drive down pay, make people poorer whilst enriching even more the already wealthy," he points out, adding: "Employers are always looking for new ways to exploit their workforce."

"It will only be through building collectivism around a set of our own demands – such as the *New Deal for Workers* and dealing with the pressing environmental issue – that we are likely to resist employers' attacks and make progress."

Our union's own strong culture of collectivism in both the postal and telecoms industries kicked in when faced with unreasonable or imposed changes. And in each sector, our members have actively campaigned, returned big majorities in national ballots – statutory and consultative – and forced the respective companies into negotiations.

Tony continues: "This doesn't automatically mean employers cave in to our demands. Fighting for the right to be heard is followed by hard negotiation. In Royal Mail, this led to the adoption last year of the current *Pathway to Change* agreement, while our talks with BT and Openreach are still ongoing as I write."

"We are only going to be able to make gains for workers through organisation, strength, unity and a culture of collectivism."

"Every one of our members in each sector responded superbly to the recent Covid19 crisis, going above and beyond the call of duty to continue to serve the public – but," our SGDS explains, "my point is that the crucial factor in defending and advancing workers' interests against hostile employers and a Government ideology driven against our interests, will be collectivism and union organisation."

A minority of our total membership – but still several thousand members – were impacted by the imposition of home working on the nation's desk-based workers and, as we have emerged from the Covid-related restrictions, there has been a gradual return to office working, although many companies are choosing to retain partial home working for desk-based staff.

And another new term has emerged – 'hybrid working'.

"Here again, some employers are trying to use this to attack workers' terms and conditions – with some instances of companies proposing wage reductions for those working from home and others using it to increase surveillance of their staff. And all the while, these businesses are making significant savings in terms of their own overheads and running costs," says Tony.

"A good example of how unions make a difference here is the agreement the CWU struck with Santander, a company which decided to close most of its office buildings and move to a hybrid-working system. The agreement that was made protects staff, while still enabling the business to make considerable savings and continue operating efficiently for its customers."

The CWU is an employer as well as a trade union – and CWU employees mostly worked remotely from March 2020. But, with the union's Wimbledon HQ now reopening, our general secretary Dave Ward, along with Tony and his senior management team, heads of departments and staff trade union representatives are in discussions about how to implement and operate a hybrid working arrangement going forward.

"Our number one priority is and always will be providing CWU members with a first-class service," he says. "And we've all learned a lot over this past 18 months, particularly that there are many things we can actually do better remotely, more efficiently and more economically."

"But there are also many things that can only be done properly, face-to-face and in person."

"And we'll be making sure all our members get the best of both as we focus on building collectivism in the communities we live in to face up to the current and further attacks that, as history tells us, are inevitably coming our way."

“
The strength, unity and determination of the trade union and labour movement is the key factor in winning real, substantial change.

1971 – 2021 Remembering our heroes 50 years on

This year marked 50 years since the 1971 Post Office Strike – when postal workers and telephonists across the UK went on an all-out strike for 44 days in their fight for a fair pay rise.

Back then, the Conservative Edward Heath was our Prime Minister and Harold Wilson led the Labour Party in opposition and our nation was considering the possibility of joining the then EEC – or ‘Common Market’ as it was then widely known

Our money was changing from half-crowns, shillings and old pennies to decimal coinage, the average house price was £5,632 and 1971’s best-selling single was ‘Knock Three Times’ by Tony Orlando and Dawn!

To mark this special anniversary, the CWU comms department and Voice team produced a 16-page small booklet to commemorate the brave struggle of our predecessors and to hear their voices.

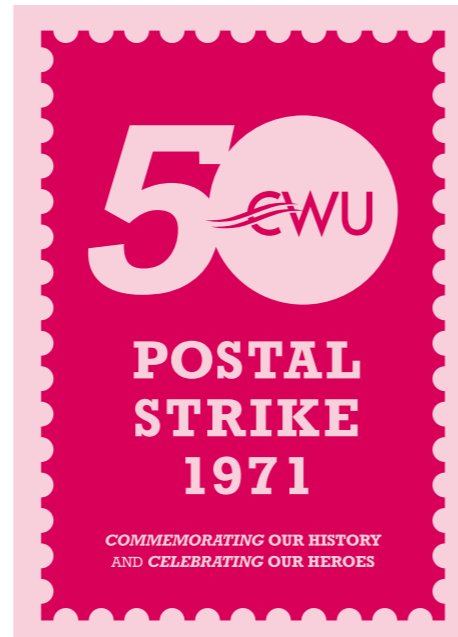
As our general secretary Dave Ward explains in the foreword, “it’s not intended as a comprehensive historical record, but a variety of personal recollections from some of those who were on the frontline of the strike

and building solidarity for our members.”

Through our membership department, we tried to identify every current CWU member who belonged to the union back then and posted them a copy – along with a specially made badge and we also sent a limited number of copies out to branches.

If you would like a copy, please contact your branch in the first instance and ask them to get in touch with the CWU comms department to order some more.

If you’re interested in a more detailed account of the 1971 strike, two CWU veterans, Sean Ryan and Dave Chapple each submitted long-read articles on the subject, which can be viewed on the CWU website at www.cwu.org/1971



A fascinating record of our union and its recent history

The Voice reviews Norman Candy’s new book that takes a deep dive into disputes our union was involved in as the new millennium dawned...

As well as his role as a retired members’ representative on the national executive committee, Norman Candy is also a historian and author, and has just published *London Postal Workers 2000-2003*.

The book, which follows on from Norman’s previous work *London Postal Workers – a trade union history 1839-2000*, is a recounting of a period of considerable upheaval in the postal service, and a time that has yet to be picked up by academic historians.

With magisterial commitment to detail and paying close attention to national union developments, official correspondence and the feelings of the workplace rank-and-file, the book is a moment-by-moment tale of the regularly shifting, often tense relations between the then new Labour government, Royal Mail management and postal workers in the first few years of this century.

The book is unique for intimately describing the scores of postal workers’ disputes, both official and unofficial, that rocked London in the years that many younger members may think of as being

years of industrial peace, as well as national unofficial disputes – such as the unofficial industrial action of thousands of Scottish postal workers against an alleged serial sexually harassing manager in that period – and the struggle that this union waged against the liberalisation of postal services.

In a century when some consider the influence of unions to have been terminally weakened, *London Postal Workers* is important for demonstrating the potential for strong, rooted organisations to take action today by staunchly opposing disputatious, unjust actions such as management bullying and overwork, and maintaining a solid and effective presence in members’ lives.

But it also shows how, despite the generational weakening of the working-class movement by successive decades of Thatcherism, a new generation of new workplace figures came forward to take up vital roles in the CWU and begin to tackle the challenges of the future head-on.

In writing this book, Norman has offered a unique glimpse into our union and the industry so many of us belong to – and he deserves thanks for that.



To get your copy, email ncandy@cwu.org

1st-Class Credit Union: ‘We’re always here for you’

With the widespread vaccination and lockdown restrictions lifting, there is finally a real sense of normality on the horizon and 1st-Class Credit Union tells *The Voice* that, as throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, they remain fully committed to helping members whenever they need assistance...

“Whether it’s access to your savings, applying for a loan or granting a payment holiday, we are here for you,” promises CEO Andy Wright, who adds: “I’d like to thank all of our members for their continued support during the last 18 months.

During the pandemic, the credit union took several steps to improve its support for members, including a revamp of its online service – particularly its mobile app – and last year, 90 per cent of 1st-Class CU members registered and engaged with it online.

“As of July this year, over 92 per cent of members are now using our member area and mobile app regularly, which we’re proud of,” says Andy.

Other recent membership-service improvements have included the creation of a separate account enquiry phoneline, loan repayment holidays and a refinancing option, reduced interest rates and support for households affected by Covid 19.

“As we understand families are still vulnerable to the financial consequences of the pandemic, we will continue to support members as and when they need us. All they need to do is ask,” Andy says.



“And over the coming months, we will be introducing new ways to improve our member experience when engaging with us.”

In common with office workers across the UK, the 1st-Class CU team have been returning to the office during September and their CEO makes a point of praising their “fantastic efforts and hard work” over the recent period.

“They’ve all had to navigate the balance between home and office working while providing each member with a 1st -class service and they’ve all been great,” he tells us, adding: “Here in our Bell Street Glasgow office, we’ve been looking forward to seeing faces of colleagues who we haven’t seen since March 2020.”

Andy concludes: “We’ll all be keeping vigilant, staying safe and protecting workers – and we’ll continue to encourage everyone to do the same.”

Membership of 1st-Class Credit Union is available to all CWU members across all businesses and is also available to their household family members.

Please visit their website www.1stclasscu.co.uk for further details.

All CWU members can now join Penny Post CU

CWU Wolverhampton Branch secretary Dave Jones, who is also president of Penny Post Credit Union, announces that membership has been extended to all our union’s members as PPCU marks its silver anniversary...

“It was back in 1996 that a group of CWU activists and some Royal Mail managers at the old Wolverhampton MLO came up with the brave and radical idea of starting up a credit union,” says Dave, adding that “Graham Jones, who is still serving on the board, and Helen Nuttall, who is now a Penny Post employee, and Vera Kelsey – who was a PPCU employee, but has now retired – were three of the main initiators.

“It’s a UK-wide organisation now and has supported all employees of Royal Mail Group (including Parcelforce Worldwide) and the Post Office for 25 years, as well as any family members living at the same address – and our big news is that, following a members’ vote at our AGM, we are delighted to announce that we now offer membership to all CWU members.”

With 12,000 members, PPCU is a financial co-operative providing secure saving accounts and affordable loans to its members and, since it was established, the credit union has lent over £75 million to members and offers a range of five personal loan products, a special *Christmas Account*, an interest-bearing *Prime Account* and several other options.

“We even have a *Young Savers Account* exclusively for children and grandchildren of PPCU members,” Dave points out.

Members can make regular savings or loan repayments direct from their pay and can make their voices heard at the PPCU AGM by electing the volunteer board of directors.

“We think it’s great that we’ve been going strong for 25 years and that we’ve managed to help so many people over this time. If any *Voice* readers are interested in joining, why not find out more information from our website?”



Please visit www.pennypostcu.com for further details

Longmynd Hike 2021 'the biggest and best ever'

A record turnout and a record amount of money raised were the big stories from this year's 20-mile charity trek across the Shropshire hills, and we only suffered one 'casualty'...



One participant had to pull out halfway round with a bad ankle, so we left him at a farm to wait for the support vehicle," organiser John Turnbull tells *The Voice*, adding mischievously: "I'd have shot him myself, but the others talked me out of it!"

"In all seriousness though, everyone on the day played a blinder and it was fantastic to see so many volunteers this time. There were 36 walkers – which is three times the number we got last year – and so far, over £6,800 has been raised," adds John, of the CWU's Mid-Wales the Marches & North Staffs Branch.

The weather smiled on our intrepid band of marchers for a change as well, with warm weather and even a spot of sunshine as they met up near the town of Church Stretton and made their way around the well-trodden route.

Setting off at 9am and following Town Brook to the top of Long Mynd, the expedition moved on through Pole Cott and Wentnor and



then down Carding Mill Valley back to basecamp, with volunteer support vehicle drivers Dave Tee and Neil Upton waiting at various points along the trail to help if needed.

After a hard day's hike, everybody gathered at The Holt on the edge of the town for food, drinks and a fun quiz – which John tells us included themes as diverse as "Beyonce, Argentina and vulture awareness."

Yes, vulture awareness – because, as we are reminded: "The hike was held on the first Saturday of September, which is of course, Vulture Awareness Day."

Of course!

As well as being the largest gathering in the event's 12-year history, it was also the first opportunity many participants had had to meet up in person for a year and a half – adding to the enjoyment of the day for everyone.

"It really was so nice to catch up with some of the CWU family again. After only seeing them all on zooms for so long, it was brilliant to see real people," said John.

Midland Counties Branch member Julia Upton – a regular Longmynd participant, described the day as "a great team effort" and praised people's "fantastic grit, determination and camaraderie."

"This kind of togetherness is so special and very well done to all who walked, provided support, or donated – I'm so proud of everyone and all in aid of helping the CWUHA deliver smiles," she told *The Voice*.



Lenny Crook, from North Lancs & Cumbria Branch, was on the hike for the first time and said that "the pleasure of the company far outweighed the pain of the hike – and the amount of money raised was the icing on the cake."

"I'm already looking forward to next year," added, Lenny, who was joined on the walk by fellow Longmynd rookie Carl Webb, CWU North West Region secretary.

Speaking to us about how the cash raised will be used, Carl explained how CWUHA, of which he is national chair, will use the cash raised for their homeless project with BCH that helps families and children across the UK who find themselves homeless

"This can provide, for example, emergency packs of toiletries, sanitary and baby products, pyjamas, school clothes and equipment for every child entering emergency housing," he said, adding that, "funds permitting, we may also be able to pay for trips to Chester Zoo, Alton Towers or Gullivers World."

"This is the difference that events like this one – the efforts made by these superb volunteers and the generous donations from so many people – can make in people's lives."

Solidarity and collectivism – supporting NHS charities

Voice spoke recently with Ian Pointer, CWU Nottingham area delivery rep, who is leading the union's efforts to support health service heroes and raise cash for NHS charities...

Readers will recall our magazine last year (*Voice Winter 2020 P28*), which featured Ian's story of his Covid-induced hospitalisation. So serious was his illness that at one stage, doctors advised his partner to 'make plans and prepare for the worst', as he lay in a coma at Nottingham's Queen's Medical Centre.

Thankfully, Ian's condition gradually stabilised, doctors slowly brought him out of his coma, physiotherapists worked with him to get him mobile again and, by the time we spoke with him for that article, he had returned to work on a gradual rehabilitation programme.

But as he told us at the time, he was still not feeling 100 per cent and, as he noted in the article: "I've still got blood pressure and I still have to take tablets. Also, I sometimes struggle with mood swings – which I didn't have before."

Perhaps those were early signs of the condition known as 'long Covid' – something that Ian discovered this year that he is suffering from, along with many thousands, even potentially hundreds of thousands of others across the UK.

He has nothing but praise and respect for the treatment he received and the dedication

of those who cared for him, saying: "What the NHS did for my family and my friends was phenomenal. That's something that's beyond the call of duty. I can never repay them for that debt, it's massive."



These experiences are why Ian has been helping out with a long Covid hospital charity and has led efforts, with colleagues and friends, to raise cash and awareness for NHS causes and research.

"We've done a few things. We've done a fancy-dress day, which got loads of publicity. Some of the Parcelforce guys did a walk and a couple of people jumped out of an aeroplane for the NHS," he says.

There has been £50,000 raised for Nottingham Hospital Charities by many individuals including CWU members and Ian says that "now, the research can start looking into the causes and the effect of long Covid, which could have a knock-on effect in understanding conditions like fibromyalgia."

"But I came to the conclusion that we'd done enough for Nottingham. I thought this should be divisional – we should do all the Midlands, but then why just stop there? It should be about the whole of the country."

That was when Ian wrote to general secretary Dave Ward and DGSP Terry Pullinger, asking them to launch a national campaign.

This campaign will see the CWU raising money for NHS workers, as well as campaigning on the streets to help put pressure on the government to give nurses a better pay rise than is currently being offered.

"You never know how good the NHS is until you use it – just like a union. You never know how much you rely on a union rep until you need one," says Ian.

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Collective campaigning for workers under surveillance

Employee surveillance can be loosely defined as the monitoring of workers by bosses, as well as bosses taking actions that manage and intrude into workers' lives.

This can include managers installing specialist surveillance software to be used against workers', monitoring the attentiveness of workers (including how much they 'click away' from things such as Zoom chats), and the surveillance of workers through webcams.

To some CWU members, this might sound like something out of a George Orwell novel, but it is very real for our members inside tech industries. In an environment where legislation is weak, bosses have plenty of legal power to do things like this – and during the pandemic, when unprecedented numbers of people worked from home, workplace surveillance has been a growing industry.

New programmes have emerged that allow employers to monitor workers' internet activity even more closely. Workers' mobile phone activity has been tracked, including finding out exactly where workers are through plotting their GPS. Companies have been working on assessments to see how long it takes for workers to finish certain tasks, and workers' screens have been recorded and screenshots without their knowledge.

In recent months, the CWU has been fighting on these fronts, making some progress. For example, the recent agreement reached by the union on behalf of our members at Santander, has been labelled 'innovative' for having considered these working-from-home questions.

Alongside securing jobs and avoiding compulsory redundancies, the principles of a charter were agreed on, which would provide clear ethical boundaries and support for employees working at home.

And this is a subject of high importance to the CWU's new Tech Sector National Branch, which has launched a campaign on the issue.

Members of the branch have told *The Voice* that although they have not been harassed or intimidated by their boss, they know there is always the chance they are being watched while working from home.

"I definitely am made to feel far more self-conscious than is healthy with what I'm doing when I'm working from home", says one member, who works at a multinational internet firm and did not wish to be named. "You never know what managers are up to while you're working, if they're looking at what you're up to or not, or what they think is 'acceptable' viewing on company time."

Members believe much greater resistance is needed against employee surveillance in their industry. A recently launched branch website shows workers how to recognise surveillance software on their work computers and encourages them to develop a culture of counter-surveillance.

It also spells out some basic truths to them, like to assume that their e-mails are being monitored, for example, and highlights unexpected types of software – such as, until

recently, Microsoft365, which was collecting productivity data on workers for bosses.

The website also tells workers about their basic rights. But what is important is that they also emphasise the clear need for workers in growing industries like technology to join a trade union, so that they can assert their dignity and comfort in the workplace and have an invaluable army of fellow workers – and legal infrastructure – behind them if they run into workplace trouble.

This belief is something members of the branch, which was launched in September 2020, have been arguing for among tech workers for the past year, while recruiting and campaigning hard among their colleagues.

CWU head of recruitment & organising and national officer for CWU tech sector members Ray Ellis told *The Voice*: "Around one in five companies are already using surveillance technology to monitor everything from their employees working time and speed to their productivity and mood, and this looks set to increase.

"The CWU believes that every worker has the right to go about their day without these intrusions, which can impact negatively on mental health, wellbeing, and morale.

"We also believe that every worker has the right to disconnect at the end of the working day and week – and we will continue to fight alongside our members until all of these rights are enshrined in law."

Pressure leads to victory in Scotland

CWU members have been involved in a successful campaign to persuade an employer to halt plans to effectively install CCTV in workers' homes.

In April, webcams were being sent out to thousands of workers working from home by Teleperformance, the largest call centre company on Earth. This would mean that management figures could access live footage of their workers wherever they work from, be it their bedrooms, living rooms or kitchens.

CWU Scotland secretary Craig Anderson told *The Voice* that an internal memo seen by the *Daily Record* newspaper had reported that camera access was going to be "mandatory" for their employees, despite the company claiming it was an "opt-in" scheme.

"This move was fought by the Call Centre Collective (CCC), an organisation supported by the Scottish TUC, the Better Than Zero group and the Scottish CWU – as well as individual CWU members in Teleperformance.

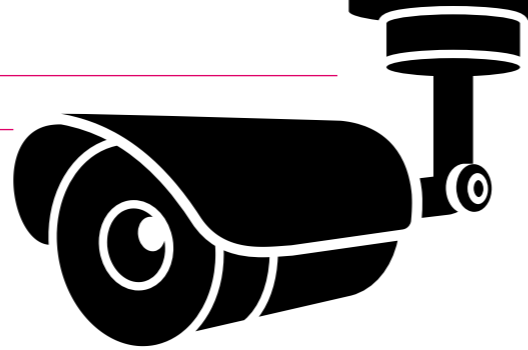
"The CCC works with workers in Scottish call centres where there is no recognised union and encourages them to come forward over any abuses and injustices in their workplace," Craig explained.



As a result of the pressure, Teleperformance promptly backed down, telling workers that the webcams will now be used on a completely voluntary basis.

"This victory is proof that, even in casualised workplaces, unreasonable employers are not unstoppable," said our Scotland secretary.

"The CCC has only existed for around 12 months or so, but has already delivered several significant wins and its clearly shows that direct action to defend vulnerable workers is what the trade union movement must adopt to deliver a new deal for workers."



YOUNG WORKERS: COME ON BOARD & HELP US ROCK THE BOAT

This summer's national executive council elections saw Erin Brett returned for a second term representing CWU members under 30 from the telecoms & financial services constituency, while John Carson was newly elected for the equivalent role by our postal members...



With around 18,000 members under the age of 30, the CWU's overall age demographic is similar to that of the trade union movement as a whole. But as growing numbers of younger employees start to enter the world of work, our two NEC representatives for Young Workers are determined to engage, involve and organise the next generation of CWU activists.

And both of them are putting that aim into practice straight away, with their first big task being involved with the organisation and preparation of this year's *Annual Young Workers' Education Event*, which is scheduled to take place in Newcastle next month.

This gathering, which has become one of the most important of the year for our young members, will be the first in-person national CWU-wide event to be held since the Covid pandemic struck in March of 2020 and both John and Erin were enthusiastically looking forward to it when *The Voice* spoke with them recently.

"The last time we held this particular event was back in October 2019 in Manchester," says Erin, recalling a period which now seems so long ago – back before the last election, when Jeremy Corbyn was leading the Labour Party, the then new Prime Minister Boris Johnson was struggling to get his Brexit deal through Parliament and 'Corona' was still just a beer with a slice of lime.

"It was a great weekend as I remember," she continues. "We discussed lots of lively topics – industrially, politically and environmentally – we had public speaking training, learned a lot about the history of our movement and its achievements, and we went out and about in the city.

"The big challenge is how we activate and involve the mass of the young members of the CWU into the life of this union."

"The full programme for next month in Newcastle is still being worked on, but we can say that it's going to be over the weekend of 22/24 October at the County Hotel and that we'll be keen to include as many topics and activities that we covered last time – if not more.

"So, if you're a CWU member under 30, contact your branch if you want to come – and we look forward to seeing you there," she says.

John is also looking forward to "catching up again with fellow members from all over the UK" and adds: "Like Erin says, we want branches to send as many young members as possible to Newcastle next month."

Describing his election to this post as "a privilege," John explains that he was greatly encouraged by the example of his predecessor Luke Elgar.

"I was really impressed with the work Luke was doing in forging a path for our younger members to get more involved with the work of the union," he says, "so when I heard he'd decided to move on, I thought I'd volunteer for the role and continue the good work being done and help push it into the future."

A member of the union's Glasgow & District Amal Branch and the IR rep for Cambuslang – one of the delivery offices within Glasgow SEDO – since 2018, John feels passionately that more of the union's younger members need to be encouraged to come forward into industrial representative roles.

"I know a lot of our younger members feel a strong sense of wanting to stand up against injustice – I know I always did even back in my schooldays – and this is something we as a union need to harness and bring these members forward," he tells us.

"And for me, that's the big challenge in terms of what I want to try to help to achieve during my time in this role – the challenge of how we activate and involve the mass of the young members of the CWU into the life of this union."

Mersey Branch member Erin is also an IR rep within her workplace, BT Mobile's Warrington site, and believes that this aim of increasing younger members' activity and involvement is best achieved when the union itself is at its most active.

"During the height of our *Count Me In* campaign, for example, younger members were particularly enthused and activated by it," she says, citing feelings of unfair and unequal treatment and that the attacks on grading by company leaders point to a future lack of career opportunities for younger workers.

"I want us, as national representatives of younger members in this union, to succeed in bringing more of them into representative roles themselves – and if we look at the overall demographics of the CWU, it's clear this has got to be done quickly.

"If it's a case of younger members feeling like they're being told not to rock the boat, we say rock the boat."

"I want us, as national representatives of younger members in this union, to bring more of them into representative roles themselves."





EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO...

**Knowledge is Power! – Agitate, Educate, Organise!
– Justice is the goal, Solidarity is the tool, Education is the key!**

Kate Hudson, CWU head of equality, education & development, was pleased to tell *The Voice* that a schedule of courses is being delivered online for our representatives and activists for the last quarter of 2021 and the good news that a blended programme of residential and online courses is currently being put together for 2022.

Speaking to us recently, Kate explained: “Working with our partner further education providers, we are keen to ensure that education is a priority and at the heart of everything that we do, however this has not been without its challenges.”

A variety of courses were moved to various online platforms – such as Zoom – and this meant a steep learning curve for both tutors and students.

And she continued: “Whilst not for everyone, some significant positives must be drawn from this type of delivery.

“Our analysis of the past 18 months of delivering courses online has shown that we have definitely attracted younger reps and reps living or working in more remote areas – as well as more women – into course attendance.

“So, with a cautious eye on the past, and with branches enthusiastic about making sure their reps can get back into the classroom, a blended programme for 2022 will ensure that everybody has an opportunity to learn.”

“Educate, Agitate, Organise!”



Defending union learning

Despite the Government’s decision to cut the Union Learning Fund, the CWU remains committed to lifelong learning and this year’s *National Networking Event* for our CWU union learning reps (ULRs) in November, will focus on expanding our members’ learning opportunities and, providing scope for our members to gain new skills.

Through partnerships with local colleges, our ULRs deliver many of these courses in branch or workplace learning centres. We are also able to offer online and distance learning, which enables all of us to fit learning around our busy lives.

Every branch has a ULR and they are often the first point of contact for members interested in finding learning opportunities in their own areas. They might run a learning centre in the workplace or branch office, or they might direct members to courses with local colleges or community groups,

or recommend online courses that can be accessed anytime anywhere.

We all have our own individual learning journey and ULRs understand what it is like to try to fit learning around our busy lives. They are there to help us to achieve our learning goals.

We are looking forward to welcoming members back into our learning centres – however, we will not abandon what we learnt during lockdown and, going forward, we will continue to offer both face-to-face and distance learning.

So, there is something for everyone. **Why not give it a go?**

Want to find out more?

Check your branch or workplace noticeboard and social platforms for local learning opportunities.

Visit www.cwu.org/leftclick for a wide range of online courses including IT, family history, creative writing, vocational and professional qualifications from our partners at The Skills Network and eCareers and local and online courses from the Workers Educational Association.

If you are a ULR, talk to your branch about attending the national networking event on 16th November in Birmingham.

Are you a poet who didn’t...realise?

The CWU Poetry Club meets on Zoom every Thursday at 5pm. They have produced a collection of poems that can be downloaded for a donation to CWUHA. New members are always welcome. Contact pdovey@cwu.org Or... Scan your phone over this QR code, and it will open up the poetry club pdf.



Stepping up our fight for equality for all

Kate Hudson, head of our equality, education & development department, updates us on the CWU anti-racism agenda, coming out of Covid and much more...

November will see the CWU’s first ever virtual general conference and one of the key themes to be discussed is our union’s anti-racism agenda.

The CWU has a long and proud history in campaigning against all forms of racism and discrimination and the equality, education & development department welcomes the opportunity of general conference to develop and build on the excellent work of the past.

Kate Hudson said: “Race inequality cannot be tackled half-heartedly or by sporadic, one-off, disconnected initiatives; Actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable and taken seriously. Therefore, it’s only right that the challenge of effectively eradicating racism and discrimination from our workplaces and wider society is undertaken by the entire union.”

The proposal for general conference aims to deliver a fresh approach aimed at utilising all of the CWU’s structures. The prop sets out a commitment to develop a well-researched and properly resourced programme of activities. This will include a long term strategy that comprises educational and engagement initiatives, as well as further events and communications – aimed at expanding direct engagement in a way that builds on the values of the union.

CWU Virtual Special General Conference 2021 will take place from – Sunday 7th – Tuesday 9th November 2021.

Confronting racism everywhere

The CWU has been a longstanding advocate of Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) and our connections with the organisation have played an important part in our work to combat racism in the UK.

The CWU is thrilled to promote *Wear Red Day*, which is taking place on Friday 22nd October. The equality, education & development department would like to remind everyone of the support we need from all our members and representatives to make *Wear Red Day* a huge success.

So - On Friday 22nd October we are asking everyone in the CWU to *Wear Red*.

The aim of this action is to take the message of anti-racism directly into our workplaces and into our communities.

Show Racism the Red Card is hoping for mass publicity on the day and the CWU will be helping to create a social media ‘storm’, with people supporting the campaign being invited to share their pictures using the #WRD – and wearing their red tops.

The CWU is committed to continuing our work in challenging racism both in the workplace and in wider society and your support across the country is very much appreciated.

Great to actually see other again

Pre-Covid it would have been strange to imagine a world without face-to-face meetings. Whilst we have become familiar with online meetings and working remotely, the equality, education & development department welcomes the opportunity to meet with our newly elected CWU regional equality leads in the next coming weeks.

Kate Hudson tells *The Voice*: “I am excited that in October, for the first time since our new equality structures were implemented, our equality leads will be coming together over a period of two days, when we will be discussing our priorities and setting out plans for the next two years. We will also be delivering training to support regional equality leads in their roles and offering additional support to those new to the role”

Kate explains that with the recent changes to the NEC, with equality leads increasing from four to eight, the CWU has more talent and resources to move our equality work forward and work more closely with regions and branches.

Celebrating Pride

News of Pride cancellation for the second year running came as a massive blow to many CWU members in some regions of the country.

Pride gives the chance not just to come together, but also to represent and to protest for hard-fought rights.

While some regions had to celebrate pride in other ways the Eastern and Midlands Regions celebrated with ‘Pride’ by organising excellent turnouts in Peterborough, Basildon, Nottingham and Birmingham.

Sarah Pitt, NEC LGBT+ lead from the Postal constituency said: “It was great to march with other CWU activists for the first time since 2019 and it’s monumental that some pride parades were able to take place and celebrate everything that Pride stands for.” Disappointingly the majority of other Prides across the region were either cancelled or cannot go ahead due to Covid.

Jason Reynold, NEC LGBT+ lead from the T&FS constituency said: “Even one or two years of no parade doesn’t mean that there’s no Pride. As a union we continue to fight for LGBT+ recognition and better rights continuously and look forward to 2022 when hopefully will be able to celebrate together across the whole of the UK.”



Your union is serious about keeping you all 'appy... with CWU Affiliate

The CWU is seriously committed to finding new ways of building strength for our members.

This means looking at the best methods of spreading our core messages of collectivism, fairness and unity, and keeping members up to date on everything the union is up to.

This is why we're so pleased to announce that Affiliate, the CWU App, is now available for download.

Affiliate gives members a unique chance to access our online communication tools in one place.

There will be articles, videos, podcasts, event notifications and polls that app users can access to keep up with union affairs.

The app has two feeds. The first is My CWU, which focuses directly on members in the workplace, and members can be able to access the information they want to see based on the constituency and area they work in.

The other feed will be Affiliate, a newsfeed that will host content and discussion from the wider labour movement. Here, we can share news of workers in dispute, follow the wins of other unions, and debate about how to grow our movement.

The launch of Affiliate is a serious development – not only for our union, but for the whole trade union movement.

As such, we are asking every CWU branch and member to involve themselves in the process. We should be encouraging as many members as possible to download Affiliate as soon as they can, and to also contribute, discuss and get involved with it.

It is only by having thousands of our members engaged with the app that we can match and exceed the equivalent forms of communication that employers can pump out – so please get involved!



Affiliate is available for Apple and Android devices, and can be found by searching for 'Affiliate the CWU App'

Your CWU FREE £5,000 Accidental Death Cover

The CWU is committed to protecting and promoting members' interests – so as well as representing their members in the workplace, they've also negotiated some great member benefits. **One such benefit is the Free £5,000 Accidental Death Cover.**

Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69. It lasts for one year, then you can renew it again for free.

Register today at:
WWW.CWUPROTECT.COM/FREEOFFER



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Some super entries to the last Caption Compo, which featured a group of rookie engineers on their first pole climbs at training school. Now we know how scary this can be (well, our editor certainly does, he didn't even get off his ladder when he had a go!) so maximum respect to our engineers who do this every day.

Lots of 'pole dancing' themes in your suggestions, while several of you worked in references to social distancing and plenty of variations of 'I've forgotten my...' or 'I can see...x...'

from here' and for some readers, the photo evoked the iconic Life of Brian 'Always look on the bright side' finale.

Honourable mentions go to Manchester's Annette Coe for her "On top of the world" and David Wincanton from Bath who suggested: "There's a massive spider in my block terminal!"

As always, it was a tough decision for the Voice Competition Panel of Judges, but our winner this time was Dave Southam of Aberdeen for his "Oh I do like to be beside the D-side"

Congratulations Mr Southam, we hope you liked the CWU Goodie Bag! **And to everyone else, thank you for the laughs, the giggles and the smiles.**

Now, take a look below and tell us what you think our CWUHA stalwart and hero hiker Lenny Crook is saying?

Please send your suggested caption to voicecompetition@cwu.org

WARD SEARCH

Congratulations as well, to the Wardsearch 'Goodie Bag' Winners. The first 10 correct solutions – with Dave's bonus word – were received from...

- Andrew Woollard, Norwich
- Karen Bessell, Huddersfield
- Andy Gibb, Glasgow
- Brian Oates, Runcorn
- Sally Peake, Isle of Wight
- Mike Clark, Aberdeen
- Steve Calton, Clwyd
- Peter Firmin, Brent, London
- Carla Bone, Romford
- Anthony Conaghan, Cumbria

...and Dave's bonus word was 'bell'

CAPTION COMPETITION



N	D	F	F	I	P	Q	C	T	Y	L	T	T	L	C	C	S	S	X	D
E	H	V	G	N	P	U	Q	E	W	H	B	G	X	N	E	Z	X	S	S
T	N	H	Y	D	O	O	G	S	O	I	V	R	O	C	V	M	A	X	R
W	F	G	C	A	M	E	L	S	Q	Q	N	C	N	D	X	S	C	E	E
O	G	S	O	X	G	S	E	I	V	U	S	A	H	I	O	N	S	Q	T
R	S	L	R	B	R	R	K	D	Q	F	N	K	I	S	B	R	Y	K	N
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M	O	Q	E	V	J	A	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	I	N	G	T	Y	A
Z	E	I	C	A	B	I	N	E	T	P	C	V	C	O	X	W	C	I	P
M	O	H	B	A	B	Q	S	J	S	W	L	Q	R	N	X	R	O	N	H
W	J	Y	N	C	C	G	V	R	R	H	O	S	C	G	S	F	S	L	L

Could you be a Top-Ten winner this time? Try to find these 12 words in the grid – and Dave's bonus word.

Take a photo of your solution, send to voicecompetition@cwu.org and the first 10 correct solutions, with the correct bonus word, that we receive will win the Goodie Bag! **Best of luck folks!**

- Delivery
- Installation
- Processing
- Repair
- Distribution
- Provision
- Counters
- Maintenance
- Network
- Service
- Cabinet
- Postbox

“ They say this legend once took the FA Cup home and slept with it. This guy was good! ”



DON'T FORGET OUR NHS HEROES

*Thank You
NHS!*

CWU
The communications union



@DaveWardGS



The Communications Union



@CWUNews

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