

## Andy Kerr 1956 - 2024



Andy Kerr, former lead negotiator of the of the CWU T&FS sadly passed away on August 27<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Marsden Hospital. Andy stepped down as the lead negotiator at the CWU conference in April with a memorable speech. He told how he had been an organiser from an early age when he organised a school strike in 1973 against the schools masochistic teachers, earning him six of the best and an expulsion from school.

He joined the union when he started work and rose to the position of lead negotiator. I've always been a fighter, he said and reported that he had an illness and was going to fight that too. Unfortunately, he did not win this one. Andy was buried on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

## OPENREACH FOCUS ON POLING



### BRING BACK OUR POLING WORK

*Openreach management's unagreed decision to move poling crews onto other duties and give their work to third-party contractors has caused widespread discontent...*

### Poling.... Who's next?

Openreach's decision to outsource poling operations has sparked strong opposition from workers, with the branch and the CWU firmly opposing the move. We argue that poling is critical to the telecommunications infrastructure and should remain in-house to maintain both safety and quality standards. Concerns have been raised over safety risks if contractors take on this important work, and workers were blindsided by the announcement, which was made during a routine Teams call.

While Openreach claims no jobs will be lost, many workers will be forced to move to civils, where conditions can differ significantly. Some would prefer to take a leaver payment instead, and the branch is actively highlighting these cases. With Civils taking on many displaced employees under pay and pension protection, it creates a two-tier pay structure and potentially fosters animosity among staff. It is imperative to improve wages for civils workers, who are among the lowest paid, and adequately compensate them for their essential contributions to our network. Civils' basic salary is £25,646, plus a 10% bonus, which can be taken away at any time, leaving workers in a precarious situation.

## CDR and performance

If you are feeling bullied by the constant performance contact logs being kept on you, **please do not hesitate to SHOUT OUT**. Ensure you copy the union into any emails you send to management questioning their rationale. Everyone has the right to a healthy work-life balance, as stated in Hearts and Minds. It is crucial to start pushing back against these pressures and assertively communicate that enough is enough. Standing up for your rights benefits you and supports colleagues facing similar challenges. Together, we can foster a more respectful and equitable workplace environment.

## Hard Pinning and Job Allocation

The CWU in the London and South East area has obtained data indicating that managers are assigning an excessive workload to team members. If **you do not wish to take on a tour**, please ensure you have formally communicated this to your manager and copied the CWU in your correspondence.

While we recognise that some team members enjoy tours, it is ultimately your decision whether to accept multiple tasks—this choice is yours and should **not be made by your manager**.

We will review the current data in the coming weeks, and if we observe a persistent trend of hard pinning, we will escalate the issue beyond BVK. It may also be worth considering whether all managers should be downgraded to Control TMNE3 grades and relocated to Birmingham, Glasgow, or wherever control staff are now based, particularly given that there are currently no control jobs available in the South East.



## FTTP Seasonal Working Options

In FTTP, the national team has been involved in discussions on attendance due to a disagreement arising from the preference exercise. Although staff were given the impression that they could choose their preferred option, the reality is that very few people will actually get what they wanted. A manager had suggested that employees would likely receive their preferred choice, but this has proven untrue.



The attendance process, aimed at encouraging more working days with shorter hours to align with winter daylight, has now taken place. However, this branch remains dissatisfied with management's handling of the issue, particularly the lack of transparency and fairness in offering preferences that were not genuinely available.

## Political Corner

### CWU's Stance on Heating Payments for Pensioners

The Communication Workers Union has strongly opposed the Labour Party's proposal to remove heating payments for pensioners in the UK. The union highlighted that this decision would have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable older citizens, many of whom are already facing rising living costs. CWU representatives stressed that maintaining these payments is essential for pensioners to afford basic necessities during the winter months. They have urged Labour to reconsider this approach and reaffirm its commitment to supporting those in need within society.

### CWU's New Deal for Workers

In response to calls for reform, the Labour Party introduced its "New Deal for Workers," which aims to enhance workers' rights and improve conditions across the UK. This initiative focuses on ensuring fair wages, job security, and better workplace protections amid economic uncertainty. Labour's plans include legislating a minimum wage that accurately reflects the cost of living and strengthening collective bargaining rights. However, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of these proposals, emphasizing the importance of robust implementation to protect workers adequately.

The CWU remains committed to advocating for the rights and welfare of both workers and pensioners during these challenging times.

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