

## Pay Negotiation Chatter Needed

It's that time of year when we begin negotiating with BT Group over pay for the coming year. Will they come to us with excuses to avoid offering a decent pay rise? Only time will tell.

Will they blame the government's recent increase in National Insurance contributions, which the previous government reduced just last year (a move that smacks of electioneering)? Or point to the slow uptake and costs of the new fibre network, despite over 50% of engineering work being outsourced?

BT Group reported a net profit of £855 million, assets worth £51 billion, and shares valued at £14 billion. But who truly benefits from this wealth?

With inflation at 2.9%, how much do you think you're worth? Accepting less than this is effectively a pay cut.

Would you accept a shorter working week? More annual leave? A flat-rate pay rise instead of a percentage?

It's gone quiet out there – start asking your manager and discussing it with colleagues.



## Settlement Agreements

There seems to be an increase in car park conversations about "Settlement Agreements," so we thought it prudent to clarify what these agreements are.



Firstly, only you can approach the company to request one; the company cannot offer it unprompted. The company will decide whether to let you go and determine any non-contractual financial payment. By agreeing, you waive all future claims against the company in exchange for that payment. These discussions are confidential, but you can inform your union representative.

Settlement agreements are not the same as voluntary paid leaver payments. These are separate and follow different rules. There is no set minimum or maximum payment, but the amount must be agreed with the company—so no, Joe Bloggs, you won't get a million pounds!

Our concern is that managers are taking people aside and encouraging members to accept these agreements. This isn't limited to one area, so stay vigilant. If approached, seek advice from a branch officer.

## Did someone mention CDR?

CDR and performance has become the management mantra of the last few months. There are no personal targets for you on CDR. Many people have come through to us stating they have been told to get their CDR up, which is a stat/target you are not measured against.

To raise CDR, which is managements aim, relies on many factors and the algorithm behind it. If they want it raised they will have to show you how, ie assisting you to complete a job. The how is important!

## Bites & Abuse

There has been a marked rise in two types of CARM incidents: **abuse towards engineers** and **injuries from pets**.

Save “Ask for Albert” (0800 145 6450) in your phone. Run by Openreach, this service helps engineers leave compromising situations. A simple excuse like, “I need to get something from the van,” can work.

Be mindful when entering homes, as people are protective of their space. Calling ahead can gauge customer sentiment, but incidents also happen on the street. Stay aware, and assess the area before leaving your van. If you sense trouble, leave immediately and call for help.

Use “Ring ahead” to ask customers to secure pets. While most seem friendly, some can be territorial, so always request they are moved. Report incidents to your manager first, then log them on CARM. These are not “near misses.”

Injuries from animals are “**Accident – event causing injury.**” Physical or verbal abuse is “**Violence/Abuse.**” Branch officers are here to support you.

For any safety concerns, send an email to [safety@cwusec.org.uk](mailto:safety@cwusec.org.uk).



## Political Corner

The death of John Prescott has reminded us of what an amazing character he was. A trade unionist through and through and watching the tributes to him we have certainly learned much more about him. His dedication to the Climate change, with Al Gore paying tribute to him. Let's hope Angela Rayner fills his shoes “big as they are” as deputy PM. Certain egg throwers will also remember him as having a great left jab!



Donald Trump in the White House—scary! The people he has appointed would almost be laughable if their policies weren't so dangerous. His leadership raises serious concerns about the future of global stability and democracy.

What Elon Musk is doing, by interfering in British politics, is disgraceful. Just because he has immense wealth, he thinks he can impose his influence wherever he chooses, regardless of the consequences. This behaviour undermines national sovereignty and sets a dangerous precedent for billionaires wielding unchecked power. It's worrying how money and influence are reshaping politics, often disregarding the public's voice.

## AGM and branch merger meetings

We have two meetings coming up within the next month: the AGM and an online Branch Merger meeting.

This year's AGM will be held in the Hastings area on **Wednesday, 19 February 19:30 – 21:30**. Exact details will be shared via email and text reminder. Elections for officers' positions are suspended as we may merge branches within a few months (see below). However, other AGM activities will proceed as normal. Come along and take part in union democracy—food and refreshments will be available.

The other meeting is to discuss the proposed merger of the three South East branches into one larger branch. This merger will strengthen our capacity by uniting more people to assist members while improving organisational efficiency. You can ask questions during this Zoom meeting, held on **Wednesday, 29 January, from 19:00 to 20:00**, before the ballot is sent out. Details will be emailed out to you.



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