

Kevin Gilliland:

Has Kevin Gilliland been sacked?

Absolutely not! After 38 years with the business and nearing retirement, Kevin has decided that he would like to spend a few years doing something else – probably in music. He leaves behind a remarkable legacy, having played a vital role in building the Post Office into a thriving, profitable and sustainable business. A fantastic achievement, which was recognised last year when Kevin was awarded the OBE for his services to the Post Office and local communities.

Why did two versions of the announcement about Kevin's leaving go out?

Mark D to answer: Quite simply we made a mistake and sent out an earlier draft – we're sorry for any confusion this caused.

IR:

Changing the way we work with the CWU:

Why do we need to make changes to the way we work with the CWU?

We are concerned that the existing National Collective Engagement and Industrial Relations Framework (CEIRF) agreed in 2015, isn't working as we intended so we have reviewed and updated our approach to funding and working with CWU. The CEIRF is designed to provide an agreed mechanism to discuss business proposals which affect our employees, and resolve any disputes that could arise from them and we do not feel that this is being achieved or at least is not as effective as it could be.

What does new the CEF change?

We are introducing a new National Collective Engagement Framework (CEF) agreement, intended to engender and support the resolution of workplace problems at a local level.

This would give union members easier and quicker access to an accredited CWU representative located within their own workplace. In line with the CWU Rule Book and Acas guidelines, anyone in the workplace would be able stand for election to become a part-time union representative and, if successful, they would carry out their union duties alongside their normal day job.

Will we still have full-time CWU National Representatives?

Yes, but we are seeking to reduce this to 3, reflecting the changes to our business over the last two years, the future increase in part-time representatives, and aligning to the approach we have with our other union, Unite. Full time representatives would continue to be invited to meetings of the National Joint Negotiation Committee (NJNC) and Business Consultation Forum (BCF). This also brings us in line with other similar companies.

How will a new national agreement improve industrial relations at Post Office?

We believe that our proposal to introduce a new national agreement will enable a more inclusive approach to collective engagement. Instead of taking a traditional top down approach, the creation of more local level work place representatives will provide colleagues across the business with greater access and opportunities to influence and have more of a say over any proposals that affect them.

Is it true that these changes unfairly impact on female CWU representatives – isn't this sexual discrimination?

CWU recruit and elect candidates for the roles of full time representatives, Post Office funds the roles but will not be involved in the selection process which would follow any reduction. It is not the case that the changes therefore impact on a particular group of representatives as any such recruitment would need to be open and fair. Additionally, as the employer we will make sure that any current full time representatives are treated fairly and we will speak to them all to establish their preferences around future employment – including support and development required to integrate them back into the workforce.

Isn't this about trying to derecognise the union?

Not at all, we remain absolutely committed to working with our unions. We're just bringing our arrangements for funding full time release in line with other organisations.

Isn't it ridiculous to expect an employee to take a role as union rep when they would be dealing with their own line manager?

Our managers fully accept and understand the role of union representatives in the workplace; indeed many of them are themselves union members and they are collectively represented by a union. In addition to this there are clear protections in law that mean no one could be adversely impacted as a result of carrying out duties as a union representatives.

Consultative ballot on pay:

Why have we imposed a pay agreement on staff without agreement of union – isn't this all about undermining and de recognising the union

No, we've always been very clear with CWU that we think it's important to reward our staff for their hard work and we didn't want to delay paying the increase and back pay. The 2 % increase is in line with average pay increases and is more generous than general public sector pay which is still capped at a 1% increase.

Royal Mail Strike:

How will the Royal Mail Strike impact the Post Office?

- The CWU have set a date for industrial action at Royal Mail on 19 October for 48 hours
- Our priority is to keep Post Offices open for our customers and we've been working with Royal Mail to develop contingency plans
- We will update you when we have more information

JFSA Court Case

When will the JFSA Court Case take place?

The case management hearing on Oct 19 is part of the legal process to effectively manage the Court's time – it is not a hearing about the merits of the claim.

Is there a problem with Horizon?

No. We have confidence in the Horizon system, which is robust, reliable and used across 11,600 branches by postmasters, agents and their many thousands of staff, to process six million transactions successfully every day, including on behalf of the UK's high street banks.

Weekly to monthly pay – legal challenge

Date – 4 October 2017

Key Points:

- In February around 840 Post Office employees transferred from weekly to monthly payroll. This followed a 90 day consultation with all those affected.
- The majority of people accepted the changes, which were made to ensure all employees are served by a robust and efficient payroll system which was also able to meet the requirements of the Pension Automatic Enrolment obligations introduced in May 2017.
- We are making changes across our business to make it simpler to run and ensure it thrives for the future. We need to ensure that a robust and efficient payroll system is in place for all our people.
- Our communications to all those affected made it clear that the changes were required to improve our payroll systems, and meet the needs of the Pensions Automatic Enrolment obligations.
- Post Office ensured that employees were not adversely affected by this change, including assistance in financial planning and offering all those affected interest free salary advances if required. With a range of payment options from 12 to 36 monthly repayments or a one off repayment when the employee left the business.
- We offered a range of support including face to face briefings to listen to concerns. We listened to feedback to ensure the right support was in place when introducing the changes.
- The CWU were included in our consultation process and were aware of the need to upgrade to update our systems to ensure that a robust system remained in place for our employees, and to meet Pension Automatic Enrolment obligations.

How many employees are affected?

Around 840 people transferred from weekly to monthly payroll. The majority of our around 6000 people are paid monthly.

The CWU are suggesting you mislead/bully employees?

Absolutely not. We kept our people fully updated. We undertook a 90 day consultation with all those affected. We explained that our weekly payroll system was outdated and needed to be replaced by a more robust system, as part of the changes taking place across the business to make it simpler to run. The changes our payroll systems also meant we were able to meet the Pensions Automatic Enrolment obligations.

Aren't you obliged to get the Union's agreement?

We did endeavour throughout to consult with the CWU and made them fully aware of our proposals. Despite numerous requests they failed to submit formal comments or challenges. However, following a 90 day consultation with those affected the majority of our people accepted the changes being made.

The CWU say this shows how little you care about your people's opinions?

We undertook a 90 day consultation with our people and made sure that there was no adverse financial impact on our employees. As part of the consultation we listened to the feedback of our people to put in place the right support, such as face to face briefings, financial planning tools and interest free loans. The majority of people accepted the changes.

You lost the case and the CWU says this could cost you millions?

We undertook a 90 day consultation with our people and made sure that there was no adverse financial impact on our employees. The majority of people accepted the changes.

We will of course be considering the findings and seeking advice as to our next steps.