

## Protecting Call Centre Workers

### TCS Workers Join UNISON

In the last few years ScottishPower has increased the volume of work outsourced to alternative suppliers. In Warrington this has meant the internal Energy Retail workforce shrinking year on year and the workforce of the outsourced supplier TCS increasing significantly. UNISON does not believe any worker should be left unprotected and in the last 12 months dozens of TCS employees have joined UNISON. We have already given advice and support to a number of members facing issues at work and would encourage all TCS employees to join UNISON to ensure they can be advised and supported.

### Trade Union Recognition

Whilst individual UNISON members are entitled to support and representation

at work in the event that they face disciplinary or capability hearings or if they want to register a grievance, at present we do not have recognition for collective bargaining in TCS.

If enough TCS employees join UNISON however then we will be able to approach TCS to seek recognition. This would give us the right to collectively bargain key terms and conditions such as pay, hours and holidays. It would also entitle the trade union to appoint trade union Health and Safety reps who have rights to carry out inspections, investigate accidents and ensure proper attention is paid to safe systems of work.

### Join Now and Become Active

UNISON will continue to arrange recruitment events at Warrington to encourage

employees to join and to offer advice and guidance. We not only encourage you to join UNISON but we are also seeking individuals who are keen to play a more active role and become UNISON stewards.

These stewards will be the first point of contact for UNISON and will be able to represent members in the workplace as well as taking part in future recognition discussions.



## Looking After Your Mental Health

### Mental Health First Aiders

ScottishPower has been encouraging staff to volunteer as Mental Health First Aiders. This is not unique to ScottishPower as there has been a growth in the number of Mental Health issues appearing in workplaces

across the UK and the response by a growing number of companies has been to train staff as volunteer Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) in the workplace.

Whilst we welcome the fact the companies are acknowledging the existence

of Mental Health issues in the workplace we want to ensure that appropriate actions are also taken to address and tackle the underlying issues. We will be engaging with the company to make sure their Mental Health First Aider policy is underpinned by

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*continued...* a clear set of principles and protections for volunteers and those seeking help with Mental Health issues as well as backed up with robust policies to tackle the workplace causes of Mental Health issues. We have developed a detailed policy which we will be discussing with the company but the key points are set out below:

### **Role of Mental Health First Aiders**

1. The role of a MHFA should be entirely voluntary and have protection from liability.
2. There should be proper training and regular refresher training and properly accredited professional support available at all times.
3. Suitable facilities need to be available for confidential meetings and all one to one meetings should be allowed during work time.

### **Tackling the causes of Mental Health at work**

1. All work should be subject to risk assessment to identify any detrimental effect on Mental Health. Any issues which may give rise to Mental Health issues in general or for particular employees should be identified.
2. The company should manage any risk to reduce both the likelihood of its occurrence and its impact should it occur.
3. The employer should engage with the trade unions to jointly discuss Mental Health issues and identify suitable resolutions.

# IT jobs put at risk

ScottishPower has announced a new IT strategy which will transfer **“the majority of our IT support arrangements away from our current UK partner, IBM, to global support partners”**.

They confirmed to UNISON Full time officer Gerry Crawley that they have **“given notice to IBM that their existing 10 year service contract with the Company will end on June 2020”**.

UNISON has nearly 50 members in Chester and Scotland who have given over 1,500 years' service to ScottishPower and have remained loyal despite nearly 20 years of outsourcing.

As we go to press neither IBM nor ScottishPower have provided any explanation of what the impact will be on staff but many fear with jobs slated to move to Spain that there is a high risk of

redundancies.

At the same time we have also learned that ScottishPower are rebuilding their internal IT department, growing the workforce by approximately 60-65 people, coincidentally almost the same as the number of IBM employees who now appear to be at risk of redundancy.

UNISON has made it clear to IBM and ScottishPower that this is a TUPE situation and that consultation should be started with immediate effect. To date however neither ScottishPower nor IBM have given a meaningful response to our request for consultation and instead appear to be engaged in private discussions with each other. UNISON will continue to press for the immediate commencement of consultation and will be taking legal advice in support of members facing an uncertain future.



# Who profits from the Energy Industry?

## Private Industry Public Service

The Privatisation of the Electricity Industry in 1990 represented a massive set-back for workers and customers but a boom-time for shareholders and directors. Salaries and bonuses for those who run the industry shot up more than 20 fold into the millions while thousands of jobs of ordinary workers were shed and work was outsourced and offshored. Meanwhile prices rocketed and the number of tariffs multiplied into the hundreds and thousands as customers were dazzled with an array of complex payment arrangements and charges.

## Public Subsidises Private Profit

Unfortunately the promise of massive private investment failed to materialise as companies hedged their bets and demanded government guarantees before they would invest in renewable technologies. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the development of new nuclear power. The costs and risks are massive

and only with government assurances to guarantee minimum prices have deals been done. So much for the so called free market!

## Green Revolution

The Manweb Branch has consistently challenged the myths of privatisation and called for the return of the Energy industry to public ownership. We were instrumental in moving policy at UNISON's National Conference to win support for this position and are delighted that the Labour Party has now committed to this policy in its 2019 Election manifesto.

The commitment to bring the energy industry back into public ownership and lead a massive drive of investment in new green energy jobs is an incredibly welcome step forward. We look forward to working with a future Labour government to reverse privatisation and create thousands of new green jobs generating energy without pollution and ending the scandal of fuel poverty which has haunted the privatised industry for the last 30 years.

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## New Energy Networks Handbook

Management and Trade Unions have set up a working party to look at creating a Single Handbook for Energy Networks from the existing Engineering, Technical, and Clerical handbooks. The first meetings were held on 23rd and

24th October in the North Lakes Hotel.

The working group will include UNISON stewards from Manweb and Scotland and will be seeking to ensure the interests of all members North and South of the border are to the fore.

The last time the company tried to create a single handbook was in 2013 but no agreement could be made. UNISON will only look to agree a single handbook on the basis that there is no detriment to our members.



# **UNISON Manweb AGM 2020**

**We will be holding lunchtime AGM meetings across the main Manweb Office locations in March 2020. We will be providing refreshments and prize draws at each meeting so please do your best to attend one of the meetings below. Times and rooms will be published locally nearer the dates.**

**Tuesday 3rd March – Warrington**

**Wednesday 4th March – Rhos**

**Thursday 5th March – Liverpool**

**Tuesday 10th March – Prenton**

**Wednesday 11th March – Chester**

## **DEADLINES**

**Branch Officers nominations: Tuesday 14th January 2020**

**Steward nominations: Tuesday 18th February 2020**

**Nomination forms are available from your local steward or**

**UNISON Branch Office 01925 838577**

**David Read 07584 384796**

**Nominations, resolutions, motions and rule changes to be sent to:**

**UNISON Manweb Branch Office,**

**407 Chadwick House Birchwood Park Warrington WA3 6AE**