

# *South East Central*

## **2020 Annual Report**

**£500 Prize Draw**  
**One free entry per approved follower of**

**CWU SEC Noticeboard**  
Private group · 143 members

**Facebook Group**

**CWU COUNT ME IN!**

For full T's & C's see inside cover

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## **You have to be in it to win it! £500 Up For Grabs Facebook Prize Draw, Terms & Conditions.**

- Each SEC Branch member can only submit 1 request to join "CWU SEC Noticeboard" Facebook.
- The draw for our Facebook competition will be held on 17th February at the AGM meeting, via Zoom, between 7-9pm
- All Branch members of our CWU SEC Noticeboard Facebook Group, as at 2pm on February 17th 2020 are eligible (branch officers and committee members are excluded).
- There will be 5 equal prizes of £100 for 5 winners.
- Branch Chairperson will have final say on any issues that arise, or any clarifications needed



*The views expressed in this annual report are personal to the author concerned and may not be the view of the branch. This report is "in confidence" and is meant for CWU South East Central members only.*

# Chairs Report - Dave Kauffman



Hello everyone, I, as the Chairperson of South East Central Branch, would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported and participated with the Branch, during the year of 2020.

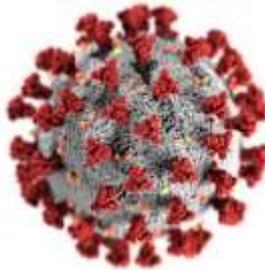
I would like to thank the Branch Secretary for the hard work that he puts in, driving the branch forward. Anyone, who has worked within any organisation, will know these things do not just happen by themselves.

As for my role, within the Branch, I have the lead role on most things Openreach, within the industrial remit of the branch, and have attended many meetings and branch forums on Openreach issues, over the last year.

But I also have the role of representing Members at Grievances or Disciplines

that members may find themselves involved in. I also have attended meetings with members on Attendance/Sick issues as well as Performance related issues.

I'm not sure how we can mention 2020, from a work perspective, without mentioning the Pandemic that we are all living through. I just Hope and pray that you are all well and as safe as we can be. From when it all started back in February 2020, when we were all led to believe that it wasn't going to effect the UK that much. How wrong can the projections have been?



But during this time when we have seen many companies, like those in the travel industry, struggle to exist. BT and Openreach have kept everyone working and in a lot of cases, back in the early days of lockdown, BT and Openreach have tried to allow people to shield them-

selves and friends and family, if medical advice has stated that people need to.

But during all this time, we have seen that BT and Openreach have adopted a stealth like approach to attacking the Union and to attacking working terms and conditions. When I say stealth, like it is not that they are hiding, it is the fact that they are using Covid and the Pandemic to step up the speed of change, that they are pushing through and the fact that in many cases they are just implementing change, rather than working with the CWU for a negotiated change.

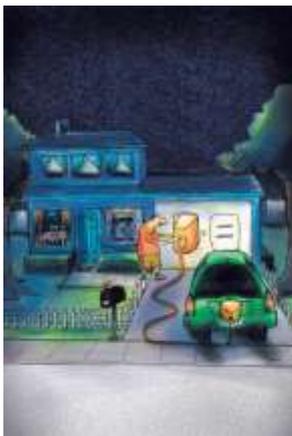
We all know that the people pushing these changes, wont be here in 3 to 5 years time, as they will have jumped ship and left a mess behind them and run off to decimate the next company.

Within Openreach, we have seen grades attacked, we have seen an unagreed incentive scheme that the CWU believe Openreach will use to cut pay in real terms. Openreach have stated that they will be culling jobs of desk based staff in London and the South East and moving

## OBITUARY

function into massive Hubs, at a time when the rest of the world is looking at greener alternatives by keeping people working from Home or at least, near to where they live. When challenged on this, Openreach shout about how lucky you are to have a job and, by the way, our vans are going electric so there's our green credentials. I'm not sure how all the home parkers are going to charge this Openreach electric fleet and who's going to pay for the on street charging points or for the electricity that will be needed?

We are also seeing Openreach bid and get massive amounts of Government money to role out the Fibre Network. Yes, BT and Openreach are also investing there own money in this project, but with a copper switch system that is 20 years out of date and the ambition to go VOIP (Voice Over IP) by 2025.



The end goal will be to sell off big chunks of the BT Buildings/estate. Yet there is no mention of when this happens, where will be the welfare facilities for the engineers in the field? Have you asked your manager? What did they say?

So in response to the many challenges we all have been facing, the CWU launched the "Count Me In" campaign, which returned a massive yes vote in the CWU consultative ballot. I would like to

thank all of you, for your time and support in challenging BT and Openreach managers, during the campaign. But we are not there yet and some parts of Openreach are already moving to an Industrial action Ballot and I urge you all to support your fellow team mates in their endeavour, as it may be all of us voting for Industrial Action if BT and Openreach don't come and sit back round the table in a meaningful way.



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## Obituary

Every year we mark the passing of some members, and this year brought us sad news of the deaths of some popular activists.



Norman Rumley (retired)  
Trevor Redford (retired)  
Ian Neal  
Trevor Read (retired)



Thank you for fighting for our today. Our thoughts are with your families.

# Equality Report - Steve Rhodes



Covid has seen the way we work, engage and communicate change dramatically. Instead of us all getting on the train to attend meetings the video conference has come into its own; with us all arranging our backgrounds to our webcams just enough to keep our privacy in our front rooms, bedrooms and even sheds.

This has meant Equality meetings have been scarce and the merge of departments to what is now the Equality, Education and Development Department has changed the structure of how we do things as a union, but our current situation has brought a lot of Equality issues to the front of our minds.

The pandemic has affected some sections of the membership more than others

and often minority groups are being disproportionately affected. Women, people with disabilities, LGBT+, as well as the BAME community who have been hit hard with the way the virus effects them.

The Black Lives Matter campaign has been in the news and as always the CWU has continued to support other campaigns like Black history month and the Windrush issues and promote its own campaign, "CWU Against Racism". They have engaged with some high profile names along the way to do our best in calling out racism, hate crime and discrimination and help build the type of society we want us all to live in.



Call out racism – contact the branch or ring the Equality, Education & Development department’s bullying and harassment helpline number on 0800 090 2303.

There have been various Disability Awareness events. Some good things that have come out of the pandemic and the heightened use of online technology, are the change that has come from the Communication department after working with the Equality, Education & Development department to bring more ways that members with disabilities can access the CWU information. With dedicated signers now able to be on video calls for our hearing impaired members and they are now looking into new technology, so members with other impairments can be fully involved. There is also now a new Disability Confident Scheme that we hope the company will fully embrace.

The changing situation at work has sometimes meant confusion and this has also added to the mental anguish some of our members have endured. People working, but having ‘extremely vulnerable’ relatives or children at home were unsure, in the beginning, what this would mean to them. But with pressure put on the company, by the CWU, they came to an agreement for these members to be

supported in their situation. burden they are under.

There have been various LGBT+ events including Virtual Pride back in June and a forthcoming LGBT+ history month which runs throughout February. I look forward in learning more about our LGBT+ community and hope to engage with any upcoming training I can.



My continued interest in all aspects of Equality will always keep me wanting to learn more all the time I can.

On top of this, the mental health implications to everyone has been a major talking point and Reps across the country have been taking more calls than ever regarding members' concerns.

This has had an impact on the reps themselves and the CWU launched extra training and a Mental Health helpline for our reps to be able to get some help with the increased

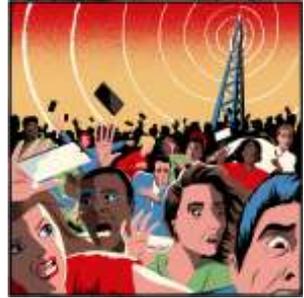
As well as keeping on top of all these aspects of equality, I have a major role in the Health & Safety within our branch.



Over the year I have been out and about completing building inspections and audits, completing accident investigations and cable chamber inspections; all in a Covid secure way. In addition, some of our usual work practices have had to adapt to stay within the guidelines.

There was some heightened cases of harassment and even attacks due to the misinformation around 5G. If you find yourself in a situation like this please report it as this is not something anyone should endure at work.

Covid and the way it has changed the way we work has been firmly in the front of our minds and I think



the future will have us adapting to a different way of being safe at work.

Any near miss or incidents should be reported on the CARM system or ring 0800 671 345

I also help to run the Social media for the branch. It has been interesting in the way we have had to change how we engage our members. We continue to promote the Facebook and Twitter accounts and if you use either and have not yet followed us, please come and find us to stay in touch with the most up to date info on what is going on.



## Assistant Secretary - Pete Francis



This time last year, when I was writing my report, I had just served my first four months on the executive. I highlighted what roles had been given and what I was doing. It started with the first compulsory redundancies announced in BT, how we needed to fight this head on.

Move on a year and we have all been knocked sideways. Covid-19 completely changing our way of life. It has hit many of us hard and my thoughts initially are with all the members, families and friends who have suffered with this awful pandemic. It was only a matter of weeks after the last report that we were stopped from travelling, attending meetings face to face and something we may have heard of, used occasionally, Zoom meetings. This has

now become the new norm and has taken over how we conduct ourselves internally or with the businesses we work with. Love it or hate it, I think it is here to stay.

Over the last year, we have lost many of our members due to the redundancies that the company introduced, in Enterprise, mainly affecting our members in Sevenoaks and has since moved onto Technology, Global, BT Group, and Group Functions. On top of this Openreach have announced their “Better Workplace” programme, which affects our members in Brighton and Sevenoaks. This has led to leaver packages being offered, as there is no long-term future for these sites in the company’s view.

So, even though everyone’s lives have been turned upside down the company have not rested, but rather, increased their desire to change every facet of our working lives. Redundancy is now a norm, grading (or should I say regrading) is common place, trying to scrap and minimise our T&C’s is another. For example, if you are made a priority candidate while in scope now Pay, Pension Protection no longer applies unless the business find you a role. Something we are not seeing generally.

The company are riding rough shod over their own processes now and think that all the T&C’s, we had strived for over the years, as an obstruction to increase their profitability and are looking to change



this with their new found bully boy tactics. This is now the time to fight back, we cannot stand still because if we do, anything you cherish will be gone. I mean it, anyone who is in doubt regarding the company's motive or ambitions is gravely mistaken. This is a race to the bottom and if we do not stand shoulder to shoulder in this fight, a race to the bottom will become a reality?

Openreach field may not yet have seen much evidence yet but the announcement of a trial of FTTP with colleagues employed on far less, with seven day a week, contracts and performance related pay will feel the tide is changing as the company see this as the way forward. BT/Openreach are a very profitable company with ambitions to grow (which we want them to), we realise there must be change, re-training for some roles but we need to be part of it. We need to ensure our membership are taken on this journey if they wish and I believe you should be rewarded for the increase in profitability in the company due to your hard work, dedication as well as loyalty shown especially through this pandemic.

The "Count Me In" cam-



paign, is the most important union led initiative faced by anyone of us in our BT careers. If we do not come out of this positively, we face a bleak future and I dread to think where it would leave us.

We need you to be engaged and be part of it. You are the most important part of the jigsaw, without you there is now campaign, no CWU. Anything you can give, any word you can give a colleague is important. Tell everyone you work with they need to be engaged, need to know that this drive by the business will affect them directly, if not yet very soon and we need to be going into this with our eyes open. We managed the first part in the

consultative ballot and it was a resounding success in letting the company know how their employees feel. It has allowed the CWU to start negotiating again with the company. We still must plan for the next stage an industrial ballot. Our ultimate deterrent that we must be prepared to use and that is why you are all so important, without you there is no CWU.

I am now entering the last six months of my elected term and I thank all of you who voted for me last time. I will be standing again later this year and would really appreciate your vote again, allowing this branch to have representation on the executive. I have in this time spoken and helped many of you and I wish you all good luck, stay safe and well. Let us hope that this pandemic is over and we can return to normal within a matter of months.



"I didn't lose my job. I know exactly where it went. Here's the address in Birmingham!"

# Safety Report - Rick Cobern



I think it's safe to say Covid has changed everything, the way we work the way we spend our leisure time, the way we shop, literally everything.

Our Office based staff have played a major role in ensuring the company keeps going by consenting to work from home where possible. This in itself restricts the spread of the virus, although I must mention that some have suffered anxiety and other mental health issues, which are to be expected, due to the isolated nature of working from home, and the other challenges that presents.

All our engineering, and customer facing staff have stepped up to the challenges of working in an environment with constantly changing processes, which

are designed to keep them and our customers safe, minimising the chances of catching or spreading the Virus. The superb amount of dedication and good will demonstrated by our members, who have continued to enable world class broadband, in such difficult times in a safe manner is admirable, to say the least.

The Virus has highlighted the importance and power of your own personal risk assessments, demonstrating if you don't feel safe doing it, you don't have to do it, and although the provision of PPE was patchy at the start we are now in a position where nobody who needs it should have any difficulty in getting it. If you do have problems, just drop me a line and we will endeavour to get it sorted out.

Our workforce have shown a remarkable resilience and the level of accidents, incidents and near misses in our branch area have not shown any more than the normal expected winter increase.

Our Estates and properties have faced even more maintenance challenges than usual with many CBRE being furloughed

and with the company building reductions looming on the horizon, there is more than the usual resistance to spending money on the fabric of the buildings. Some buildings have deteriorated to such a disgusting state and it is a constant battle to get things done. Thankfully the members are beginning to push back and report the problems, often contacting their managers to express their concerns and highlighting the hazards they are facing. I would also like to say that offices should not be used in any building that has not been declared Covid Secure by the CWU and company management.



In summery the Virus is here to stay for the foreseeable future, so please keep your wits about you. We will get through this together, so keep safe and remember the mantra, "Hands, Face, Space".

# Retired Members - Dave Lomakin



The past year has been overshadowed with the advent of Covid19. The contact with members has become severally reduced. There are various WhatsApp groups going around the region, that helps keep some of the Retired community informally in touch with colleagues.

After February 2020, there was a gradual “close down” for Retired union members activities. CWU HQ in Wimbledon closed, which ceased and restricted the Regional Retired Members Committee.

Communication and meetings were established by using “Zoom” and “Office 365” to view and scrutinise the BT proposals with new pension rights and contributions. BT’s commitment to reducing the

overall pension fund deficit to achieve an acceptable zero balance, by 2025, is looking overly optimistic.

The CWU Retired Members Conference also became a casualty of the Covid19 restrictions and at this time, we’re waiting for future dates to be decided for 2021.

Representing the CWU at the TUC was curtailed when Congress House was closed for committee meetings and informative forums. Although, as before, meetings were produced via “Zoom”, progressing informative views to challenge Industry and Government were severally restricted.

Brexit proposals and the loss of some EU protection for pensions and state allowances could be lost in the files of the leaving agreement without independent scrutiny.



BT PENSION  
SCHEME



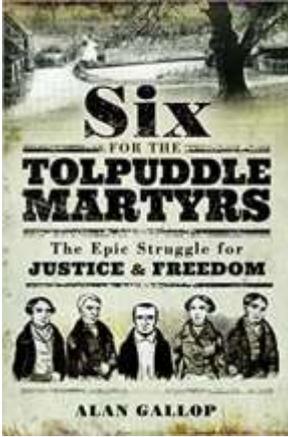
Keeping abreast with branch activities and members has been difficult, with the increasing severity of Covid19 restrictions and self-isolation practices.

One small benefit from the Retired Members Committee recommendation for maintaining retired membership was to resist the annual increase in the Unions subscription rates. This is now applied to all CWU Retired Members subscriptions for this year.

Thinking of retirement or having retirement put upon you?

Refer to the Branch web site or the CWU members web site to continue with retired membership and receive all CWU benefits, legal services and entitlement to receive the Union death benefit, for your nominated next of kin or legal representative.

# Trade Unions and the Labour Link



The link between the Labour Party and almost four million members of affiliated trade unions is one of the British labour movement's greatest strengths and achievements. For over a 100 years there has been a direct line from the workplace to the Party at a local, regional and national level. It is this unique link with the trade unions that ensures that the Labour Party is the only Party that truly stands up for working people and their families.

The Labour Party was formed out of the trade unions over a hundred years ago. From creating the NHS in 1948, legislating for equal pay for women in 1970, the introduction of the minimum wage, 4 weeks paid holiday in 1998, to the Equality Act 2010.



This link between Unions and Labour is now more important and relevant than ever with a Government hostile to trade unions, who are making life very difficult for many working people.

within the union movement for Labour – because we believe that only Labour will govern in the interests of working people.



In our area Peter Kyle MP for Hove (picture above) has spoken up and asked relevant questions regarding our members, standing up for us, that is why it is important we have Labour MP's to help us fight to keep our hard won rights, and to gain more.



We campaign within the Party to make sure that Labour speaks up for working people and their families, and we campaign

**Trade unions:  
the people  
who brought  
you the  
weekend**

# Secretary Report - Chris Power



## Count Me In (Campaign)

Count Me In (CMI) is the campaign that was launched during mid 2020 for all BT and Openreach CWU members, to oppose the changes that the employers were inflicting

upon us. These changes imposed were the use of Compulsory redundancies resulting in the first ever Compulsory redundancies in BT Group companies during 2020, the announcement that the terms of redundancies were to be reduced by up to 50% as at June 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, closure of several hundred BT Buildings across the country, affecting both BT Sevenoaks Workstyle and Brighton Withdean buildings in our Branch, and wholesale changes to grading resulting in loss of pay for many members immediately, and in the coming months and years.

Notwithstanding the Coronavirus pandemic, which I don't wish to dwell on too much in this report, as it has ruined and

taken countless lives in this country and across the world, the Count Me In campaign ruled the working lives of all Branch Union Reps. With the consultative ballot taking place in November and the 97.9% YES national ballot result announced in December, *it was a clear message to the Employer, that as Union members we expect to be treated better.* Whilst the Branch Officers made around 900 phone calls over a 2-month period checking email addresses and mobile numbers so ballot papers could be sent, it had the fantastic result that 77% of members entitled to vote in this Branch, did so, and over 98% voted YES. Fabulous result and I thank you all for voting.

What the employer is imposing is the biggest threat we have faced as a Union of members within BT/Openreach since 1987, the date of the last strike action which lasted more than 3 weeks. That was the start of my time as a Union rep, and it seems we may have to revisit the action taken at that time, to make the Company listen, or mass redundancies in the thousands could occur.

We must all stick together, and unify under the Union





at the moment. Fantastic support.

Being in direct contact with our Branch members over this difficult time is very difficult. It's just not viable to ring over 1000 members every couple months, and that is why we rely, and will do so more in the future, on the Branch Facebook page, (A closed user group for members of the Branch only) Twitter, the Branch Website - which has just been overhauled - together with large use of WhatsApp and including Texting members en masse. We need to keep in contact and advise members of relevant information. Please join these networks.

banner, or existing and most definitely future employees will face drastically reduced pay terms and conditions.

## MEETINGS

During the year we have continued with Branch Committee meeting every 3 months with the much larger use of video conferencing platforms such as GoTo, MSTeams and Zoom. We have also continued with General meetings and have held 4 so far since last February, The Extra-Ordinary General meeting February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 in Sevenoaks, was the last "in person" meeting this Branch has held, called to decide requesting permission for the Branch to ballot for strike action due to around 55 of our Branch members in BT Enterprise division at Sevenoaks being made compulsory redundant. The meeting was very well attended by close on 50 members, and agreed unanimously to request permission to ballot our

Branch members for action, and Head Office was written to. Permission was not authorised at Head office at that time due to the onset of the Pandemic during early March, and other technicalities.

General meetings were held on the ZOOM video conference Branch platform, and meetings will continue in this format for the foreseeable future. In fact, several meetings had to be run within a couple of months, as, as many as 100+ members were attempting to join the meeting, and the capacity of the meetings are limited to 100

## BUMP (BUMPing into members out at the workplace)

Whilst all Officers and activists of the Branch



## SECRETARY

adhered strictly to National and local lockdowns, and worked in accordance within Company safety directives during the latter part of the year, there were still opportunities for some officers to get out and about and visit members early morning all around the branch area, with a view to signing up non-members, and transferring members into our Branch that were relevant to us. Lots members end up working in our area and are part of other Branches, but when issues arise we can't help them unless they are South East Central Branch members.

Personally, when lockdown restrictions were at a minimum during 2020, I visited the outside areas of Brighton Withdean, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Eastbourne, Uckfield, Brighton TEC and various other sites from 7am to speak to members and give out

Union marked freebies. It was really good to meet and chat with members, but BUMP was severely restricted during 2020. Masks and social distancing were adhered to.

### CONCLUSION

Hopefully this has given you a flavour of how things went Branch wise in 2020. We have lost around 150 members during the year due to mainly compulsory and voluntary redundancies, and this has reduced the Branch to around 1050 members. Financially we are at the strongest we have ever been, although this is due to most officers being unable to travel to attend meetings, conferences and forums, and normal Branch expenditure drastically reduced.

I would urge all members, whether they be retired, or working for Virgin Media, PTF, EE, O2, BT, Open-



reach and all other companies we represent, to keep safe, and hope everyone keeps as safe as possible, to see themselves through this pandemic.

Thanks all members, and Officers of the Branch, for their continued support, and hope to see you all at the Annual General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February 7pm.



# It's a Strange world!

Hi everyone. I wanted to take a few minutes just to pose the question to you of WHY, you may think this a strange question but let me explain....

So Why do companies bring in a new CEO? It can be for a number of reasons, but they usually do it when things are not going as the board of directors would have hoped for or because the previous or incumbent CEO has jumped ship.

It can also be that the share price is not where the Board thinks it should be.

So why would a new CEO change things and WHY do it this way or that .....

You see for me the question is why would BT group bring in a CEO who is known for breaking up or selling off bits of companies?

BT group works because it



has a diverse nature and has parts of the business supporting other parts. So why sell off your Fleet arm of the business, when you have one of the biggest fleets of vans in the country? It doesn't make sense, that you can now be held to ransom over who does what work on your fleet.

What will be next and WHY? If you look at BT as a jigsaw, then taking one piece out of the box and throwing it away doesn't mean you can get a jigsaw piece from another box and just make it fit

The same has to be said with all the desk based staff in BT, who are having their piece of the jigsaw thrown out of the box at present. All because, at a national level, it is believed that if you stick enough jigsaw pieces in a big box and shake it up a bit, you will come out, at the end of the process, with a complete jigsaw. I don't believe you can train people in weeks to learn what some people know and have trained for years to be able to deliver.

But, this is about a drive to the bottom for some parts of BT and this again is why I come back to WHY, the question you all need to ask.



## Young Worker Report - Richard Cain



Well, it hasn't been the year any of us expected or hoped it could have been. However, you make get some joy form the fact that my report will be rather short this year as a result.

### Young Worker

In February of 2020, I was elected into the Young Workers officer role for 1 year following the departure of Liam Reed. Unfortunately, just as I was about to get started, we went into a national lockdown which rather limited my opportunities. With the *Count Me In* campaign there hasn't been many independent Young Workers events this year, but I hope you are all following this campaign closely.

As I mentioned at the start, I was elected for 1 year into this role which is now coming to an end. Due to

several factors (including children and my age!) I will not be standing for a new 2-year term. So, I wish the best to whomever my successor, in this role, is. It may even be you, if you are 28 or under!

### Safety

What a year it has been for Safety!

I'm sure you can all guess what has been the hot topic this last year with regards to safety, but I want to tell you about some of the other work I have been involved with. If you have ever read one of my reports in the past you will know I love talking about cable chambers.

transformations. Such as Tunbridge Wells cable chamber, going from one of the messiest chambers in the region to the cleanest, with the help with some of our members in FND. East Grinstead also seems to have its flooding days behind it now. Of course, there are still sites in need of improvement, like the eternally flooded Shoreham.

With more lockdowns we had to pause the inspections for a long time. We are hoping to keep the successes *flooding in* (yes that is a deliberate chamber pun) and have the best region for cable chambers, as we get started again in 2021.



At the start of the year, we were seeing some really good results with the cable chamber project. With our regular visits we were able to keep on top of problems and had some great



# Political Report - Dianne Hill



Another year of chaos and dither. Since our last Annual Report everything has changed Zoom, Skype, Teams have taken over our lives, working from home is the “norm” for many.

At the end of January, I represented the Branch at the CWU nomination for the Labour Leadership, which was in Bristol. It seemed that, in the main, Telecoms went for Starmer and Postal for Long Bailey. I attended the Local Government Conference in Nottingham, where there were lots of discussions around the loss of so many Labour seats in the North.

Wonderful write ups for our Labour women’s International Women’s Day event in Tunbridge Wells forum #EachforEqual was the theme. A day full of activities, panels, stalls, etc. it was the last event

before LOCKDOWN!

The Labour Leadership was announced with Keir Starmer winning the race. I believe he is what Labour needs.

Elections cancelled for the year, events cancelled and life as we know it completely changed. Self-employed were very “hit and miss”, as to whether they got any money or not. Some received Universal Credit, some loans! The issues around PPE for our NHS staff were unbelievable, no way of getting tested, not even doctors and nurses.

**10 years of Tory austerity had left the cupboards bare so we were totally unprepared for this pandemic.**

Johnson is no match for

Keir Starmer, PMQ’s are entertaining, watching Johnson trying to get his brain into gear! Lazy man reads nothing, mumbles his way through, comes out with rubbish that makes no sense like “you can go out, but stay in”, etc.! I’m sure we’ve all heard it. Those 5pm announcements. But if you are Dominic Cummings it’s OK you can do what you want in the middle of lockdown, the man who made the rules broke them. Come on we all drive 50 miles to check our eyesight is Ok.. don’t we? We all do the odd favour for a mate like Robert Jenrick and the planning application don’t we?

There are many unanswered questions around PPE and the disgraceful way our elderly residents in care homes were treat-



‘Come on, Mr Cummings, have another go at reading the bottom line’

ed. MP Peter Kyle (Hove) was the first to raise these issues at the beginning of the pandemic. Also, when he asked Johnson why he was opening up the beaches he was told to “show some guts”. Two days later, half a million hit Bournemouth!

So we were all out clapping for our NHS and key workers, amazing seeing neighbours, being a community. The reduction of traffic, the fresh air and noisy birds! I’m sure we have all been out walking and at times, had red hands from all the washing, but it has to be done.

A little light relief from lockdown with the “Eat out to help out”, in the Summer! I along with many other Labour Group leaders wrote to Robert Jenrick, back in August, to extend the eviction ban. There are 8.5 million households who rent their homes from private, Council or Housing Association landlords with over half a million in arrears.

Good to see Angela Rayner, a working-class woman, who came up through the trade union movement, take on Johnson at PMQ’s. Good to see a footballer Marcus Rashford take on Johnson over the free school meals chaos. The schools’ issue has

been unbelievable, home schooling! Many children with no access to pc’s, good to see the teaching unions being very vocal, standing up for their members.

As a Councillor in Tunbridge Wells, I now sit on many committees regarding our Town and Covid 19, meetings with Officers. Many Council leaders not happy, given 5 minutes notice of lockdowns/ no consultation and every area different! They were told “whatever it takes” but money was very slow to come through and not enough, Councils are struggling. Businesses struggling, Covid grants being distributed but they say they are not touching the sides. We have seen the S.E. go from very low rates of the virus to the highest in the Country. Maybe if Johnson had read the reports from the scientific advisers in July he would have been prepared for a new quicker spreading virus. One of the highest death rates in the World. Thankfully for us the NHS have taken control of rolling out the vaccine.

All Council meetings still on line, homelessness on the rise and many have significant mental health problems. Domestic Violence rising and food bank

referrals going up. This government says the best way out of poverty is work, so why do their own stats say 70% of children growing up in poverty live in working families? I volunteer at the food bank and I have managed with the help of two churches in my ward to set up two Community Larders, obtaining food from Fairshare and local supermarkets.

Well Brexit, we’ve left now and as Rees Mogg says we have happy fish, not sure the fishermen are happy. Worker’s hard-won Rights gradually slipping away. Millions of pounds in the financial review for a Brexit festival, you couldn’t make it up.



Easy to give away money, where’s the plan to pay it back? We will or rather our children and grandchildren will be paying these trillions of pounds back for decades. What’s a trillion pounds look like? I can relate to a million but billions, trillions!

A big thank you to all our engineers out there on the front line.

# Assistant Secretary - Steve Taylor



Two years ago, I wrote in the Annual report, about getting older and the changes I had seen. This year, I can report that, I have started shouting at the telly. Especially when Boris, "I mess my hair up on purpose," Johnson, comes on for a Covid update.

My wife works in Tunbridge Wells hospital, so I can spot a lie when he, or Matt "scape goat" Hancock, wheels out another "terminological inexactitude". The Covid deniers join the queue, to be shouted at. My wife and her NHS colleagues' relentless workload, proves otherwise.

The debacle of people thinking 5G gives you Covid! How on earth to these people get through the day? How can a virus, A living organism, be sent by a frequency wave? Perhaps this is a new form of travel we need to explore? These people have been

verbally abusing engineers in the South East, and elsewhere attacks on the infrastructure. Thought for the day - What deadly disease did 4G pass on? Stupidity?

I have deal with a few attendance hearings for members over the year and one sticks in my mind where an Openreach manager had used, Covid absences to discipline a member - even though they said they wouldn't use the figures. Well at least I didn't shout at his senior manager and we got the decision reversed. So please do not go into any formal meetings, with your manager, unattended. You pay your union dues, so use us - we know stuff!

The "Count Me In" campaign+ has been well received by the membership, and we will need everyone onboard if we are to see this through. In October I wrote to Philip Jansen as part of an Action Day and received a bog-standard response. In November, I wrote again, offering him a



chance to answer the questions I had put to him. A few days later Clive Selley, CEO Openreach, rang to discuss my email. We discussed many things including the closure of Offices in Sevenoaks and Brighton, and the possibility of people smart working from home. His answer was, yes it was available, for perhaps one day a week, but the rest of the time would have to be in the office, in Birmingham! We agreed to disagree on things. But the long and short of it is, don't pin your hopes on smart working!

Philip Jansen also rang, but as I was busy, the call went to my answering service.

We're not just fighting for your today, we are fighting for all our tomorrows!



## Women's Report - Una McMahon



Union revitalisation is dependent on the repositioning of unions, as representative agents for women and minorities.

It is widely recognised that trade union renewal depends on a representative membership, which reflects the changing world of work. Women play a pivotal role in this regard.

Today, women trade union members outnumber men and the average British trade unionist is a young, degree-educated, white, professional woman. Yet trade unions are struggling to shake off their image as the representatives of white, working-class and blue-collar men.

The large proportion of women members are not always reflected in branch officers, workplace repre-

sentatives and national officers.

The WSEC members in our branch, that is every female member, can change this. We need female representation, on our committee, union safety reps and branch officers. If you would like to know more, please contact me or any of our officers.

Another victory as UNISON announce their first ever woman leader, Christina McAnea (below).



International Women's Day. Our branch celebrated this by delivering female hygiene baskets to exchanges across our area in the hope to make our WSEC members lives a little easier and to lead the way encouraging the company to understand the necessity for sanitary products in remote areas.

This was received well, and I personally had a reward and recognition, via the Openreach system, to say thanks from an external working female member. Which made us all in the branch extremely happy.

Events have been difficult, but not impossible to arrange. The support we have had and hope will continue, with the CMI campaign has had a large WSEC involvement. Which proves, in this branch, we DO get involved.

I hope you all had a chance to see the all-female Facebook live pre-ballot event. Called "Counting Women In." I am pleased to report I represented our branch speaking live to 5000 people.

Lastly, I would like to invite you to join the Facebook £500 giveaway, as stated on the front cover. Please invite any members of this branch to join as it will become more important in the future. With the threat of possible industrial action, social media will be the quickest way to disseminate information, even if it is unpalatable to some.

# Incentive scheme, is it really worth it?



I just wanted to take the time to share with you a few thoughts on the Incentive scheme that Openreach are rolling out in parts of the business.

Do you understand how the scheme awards payments? i.e. what do you have to achieve to get money?

Firstly, Openreach benchmark your team against the performance you achieved in that week or month a year ago. So if you were a well disciplined team that returned good results your bench mark will be high. If you were a low performing team, your benchmark will be low.

So a low performing team with, lets say, a score of 50%, will get a bonus payment on every thing that they achieve, that's over

the benchmark of 50%.

If you are a high performing team say with a score of 80% you will only get a bonus payment on anything you achieve over 80%.

There is no real way of calculating just how much you get, as this scheme is based on a floating matrix and the business holds all the aces. Some of you will know, because you have told me, about how FLEX

disappears off your flex record and your manager is at a loss to explain were it has gone. Others will remember, managers going in and amending time-sheets because they did not understand how Personal Travel Time worked. Some engineers have been defrauded of flex and overtime based on a managers ability to understand..... if you trust Openreach systems to get it right each time then please let me know the secret .....

So there we have it. The thin end of a wedge to performance management. If you have anything different, then I would be pleased to know.

Those affected should all get a briefing and I would like to understand what you have been sent, so please let me know at [chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com](mailto:chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com)



## Meeting Dates 2020-21

Members of the South East Central, CWU Branch, are advised that the following meetings are open to all members:

General Meeting	Wednesday 5th May	2021	Venue TBC
General Meeting	Wednesday 4th August	2021	Venue TBC
General Meeting	Wednesday 3rd November	2021	Venue TBC
AGM	Wednesday, 16th Feb	2022	Venue TBC

Meeting venues will be advised closer to the time. Special Meetings may be called to address urgent issues and notified to you via the email address we have for you.

Committee members are advised that the following meetings are open to committee members

Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 6th Apr	2021	Venue TBC
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 6th July	2021	Venue TBC
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 5th Oct	2021	Venue TBC
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 4th Jan	2022	Venue TBC

Dates of all meetings are advertised on the website [www.cwusec.org.uk](http://www.cwusec.org.uk)

Think you could help? Think you could do better? Make yourself known to the branch and join our committee. Ring any of the officers on the contact list for more details.



Keep an eye out for our Branch frost/sun protectors on our "bump" days!

## South East Central CWU

### Current Points of Contact

		<u>Telephone No</u>	<u>Mobile No</u>
Branch Secretary:	Chris Power cwu.sec.br@btinternet.com	<b>01273 565771</b>	<b>07850 840581</b>
Branch Chair:	David Kauffman chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com	<b>01892 522948</b>	<b>07850 815644</b>
Financial Secretary: (& Assist Sec)	Steve Taylor cwu.sec.finsec@btinternet.com	<b>01892 522948</b>	<b>07377 880526</b>
Assistant Secretary	Peter Francis cwu.sec.assistsec@btinternet.com		<b>07740 720573</b>
Assistant Secretary (non BT)	<b>Vacant</b>		
Safety Co-ordinator (& Vice Chair)	Rick Cobern safety@cwusec.org.uk	<b>01732 742222</b>	<b>07498 923159</b>
Political Officer:	Di Hill dianne.hill1@btinternet.com	<b>07747 193133</b>	
Women's Officer:	Una McMahan una.secwomen@cwusec.org.uk	<b>01732 742222</b>	<b>07851 313883</b>
Equality Rep (& Assist Safety)	Steve Rhodes secwuusr@cwusec.org.uk		<b>07764 338836</b>
Retired Members	Dave Lomakin via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com	<b>01892 522948</b>	
Youth Officer	<b>Vacant</b>		
BAME Officer	Ramzi Marouani via cwu.sec.br@btinternet.com		



South East Central Branch  
*Annual General Meeting*

**Via Zoom Video Link**

(Log On details will be sent via email before the event)

on

**Wednesday 17th February**

**7.00pm**

The agenda will include the submission of the Annual report, Branch committee vacant posts and any proposals pertinent to an AGM, i.e. changes to branch bye laws and any proposals for the forthcoming year, including financial proposals, delegation and proposals to the  
CWU

Count Me In Campaign - Strike Preparation - Negotiation Update.

The meeting will conclude with any questions and current issues time permitting.

**YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY**

**PLEASE ATTEND**