



CONNECT



CHRISTMAS 2024 VOL: 27 NO.2



It's time for legislation to ensure everyone has the right to stand up for better at work



**See inside –
Telephonists' Struggle for
Equal Pay in the 1970s**





CONNECT

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Editorial



Christmas & New Year Message from the General Secretary

Colleagues,

The threat of the far right, worryingly gaining some traction in Ireland, the re-election of Donald Trump as President of the USA, Russia's war in Ukraine and the expanding and worsening conflict in the Middle East pose a real threat to world peace, democracy and society generally. A ray of hope exists following the commencement of the 60-day ceasefire.

However, the most serious challenge is the impact of global warming which is self-evident as serious weather events increasingly challenge the way we live and grow the food we eat across the world.

At the time of writing, the outcome of the general election was awaited to see what the makeup of Government will be for the next five years. Whichever grouping takes the reigns there are major challenges and it must be said, choices to make if we are to address the high cost of living and begin to end the crises in housing and health.

It is most alarming and entirely unacceptable that far too many in this country live in fear or poverty, with no hope, and wrongly led to believe the challenges are insurmountable. It is sheer madness continuing to do the same thing and expect a different outcome. Policy direction changes are urgently required, together with honest, strong leadership so that we can begin to address the problems we face. Only this approach will gain support which will assist in providing hope and direction that solutions exist and can be achieved. As a country, we demonstrated our ability to do this during COVID and at a time when economically our finances were never better, there is no acceptable excuse for failing to do so now.

The trade union movement is founded on a simple principle of unity is strength and now more than ever we must hold and act to this principle. As a first step we must stand in solidarity against extremists, exploitation and misinformation, designed to create division by sowing hatred in our communities and workplaces.



For this very reason I attended the Rally for Unity & Hope organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on the anniversary of the Dublin riots, to reject the wholly unacceptable behaviour and mistreatment of front-line workers in the emergency services and workers in retail, which includes our members in eir and An Post.

The problems we face arise from political choices made

by successive governments and therefore should not be attributed to migrant workers. In the health services for example, a huge contribution is made by migrant health workers, who will not treat you any differently when you require health care because you are Irish. In fact, at a time of poor health they act professionally in offering support and care to all patients. The same can be said for transport and all other workers that provide services in the communities, so we should acknowledge this and not tolerate abuse.

Reflecting on the work of the CWU organisation in the past year we set our agenda and the demands for workers in eir, An Post and the private sector seeking to improve their pay, conditions of employment and retirement benefits. We secured good agreements and real improvements for members that were endorsed in ballots. We held a tremendously successful Biennial Conference in Galway which endorsed these.

We have been busy and progressive too in equality and diversity, striving for more inclusiveness and where discrimination at work occurs, we can address it proactively. In promoting a more diverse and equal union we have as an organisation taken steps to ensure more opportunities for women in leadership. We have agreed a rule change governing the election of the National Executive Council for balanced gender representation, following up with a first to have three women appointed to fill the five worker director seats at the Board of An Post. I wish the newly appointed directors every success and I have every confidence that Deirdre Medlar, Ellen Moore Teresa Kavanagh, Keith Butler and Paul Kennedy will effectively discharge their responsibilities when they commence their work on the 12th December.

Lest we forget, this year marks fifty years since the enactment of the first piece of equality legislation in Ireland, with the Anti-Discrimination Act 1974. The POWU (now CWU), led by Terry Quinlan, General Secretary, successfully campaigned for equal pay for women. However, it was the determination of women, with the support of male colleagues that brought about an Equality Officers decision in 1979, that the women were entitled to equal pay. I wish to acknowledge the great work of Margaret De Courcy who has researched this and written a book and kindly an article in this Connect.

Succession planning, training and development are key components to ensure we are equipped with the necessary resources and skills to continue the good work. This year we have conducted more education and training courses at all levels than ever before. Following a very competitive process a seamless transition to replace CWU Regional Officers Jarlath and Bill following their well-deserved retirement, with Paul Kennedy and Adrian Scanlon the successful applicants.

We have also invested in our future by the additional recruitment of Siobhain Kenny Digital Organiser together with new Organisers Shane Murphy and John Bohan. The team at head office were saddened at the retirement of Lorraine on health grounds and Sandra who moves to her next chapter in life. Together with our newest recruit Nicole I wish all every success and look forward to working with them as together we build on our successes.



*Seán McDonagh
General Secretary, CWU*

Progressing change and advancement of workers' rights is difficult at the best of times, even when management acts in good faith at the negotiating

table. While we have made substantial progress it is most concerning that every worker does not have the right to join and be represented by a trade union.

The Respect at Work Campaign seeks to change this injustice, and CWU is working together with our colleagues in FSU, MANDATE and SIPTU, calling for legislation to ensure the right of workers to organise and be represented by a trade union of their choice. Moreover, that victimisation of workers representatives and union busting tactics are outlawed. Along with these unions the CWU has led a national general election campaign to build support among candidates around the Respect at Work pledge which calls for collective bargaining legislation. The pledge has drawn support from across the political spectrum including outgoing Fianna Fail and Green Party ministers as well as the leaders of Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Social Democrats and People Before Profit, among others. This support is essential to making sure that workers' rights feature in the next programme for government.

I am a firm believer in patience and perseverance and accept that we may not be able to change the direction of the wind, but we can certainly adjust our sails in order to reach our destination. Ultimately the key to success is not in having perfect conditions or a foolproof plan, but in being able to adapt and adjust as needed. By doing so we can stay focussed on our goals and find the way to reach them, even where the journey is difficult. We should take solace and encouragement by those who have gone before us as evidenced above by the determination of women in their fight for equal pay.

I look forward to the year ahead with the comfort of your support and a strong organisation. I wish to convey my appreciation and thanks for all of our representatives and your team at Head Office.

Wishing you a safe and joyous Christmas break and a happy and healthy new year.

www.respectatwork.ie



*Imad Temeiza, International Relations Officer
Palestinian Postal Services Workers Union
pictured with Seán.*

A Message from PPSWU to the CWU

Dear Seán,

It was a great pleasure meeting with you again. We are deeply honoured and proud of the historical relationship between our union and the Communications Workers' Union of Ireland. It is a privilege and we appreciate to have this message published in your **Connect** magazine, and we believe it will greatly support Palestine and shed light on the injustices our people face.

Postal workers in Palestine are experiencing and operating in the most difficult circumstance. In the West Bank, postal workers face immense challenges due to the Israeli military blockade, which has severely restricted movement. Meanwhile, in Gaza, many postal offices have been destroyed, cutting off communication with our colleagues, some of whom have been displaced with their families, and others have tragically lost their lives. We have been unable to provide any assistance due to the restrictions and the ongoing military aggression by the Israeli occupation.

Additionally, public sector postal workers have been suffering for over three years, receiving

CWU donates €10,000 to Palestinian Postal Workers

"This is wonderful news that speaks to the greatness of the Irish people and the strength of Irish workers' solidarity with Palestine. We are deeply grateful for this generous support, especially during these challenging times when we truly need the solidarity of our brothers and sisters."

IMAD

only partial salaries due to the financial blockade on the Palestinian Authority and the collective punishment imposed by Israel. The situation has become unbearable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ireland for standing on the side of peace and justice and for recognizing Palestine as a state, despite the injustices in the world. In the context of trade union activism, the Palestinian Postal Services Workers' Union (PPSWU) will continue to fight for the rights of the Palestinian people. As a prominent member of the National Committee of the BDS Movement, we are committed to internal struggles for justice and better conditions for postal workers in both the private and public sectors. We have also established new partnerships with global and local unions to strengthen international campaigns in support of Palestine.

Regarding financial situation, we are in dire need of support and I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to your union for the very generous financial assistance. We currently have several internal relief campaigns aimed at supporting the resilience of workers' families in besieged areas, and I can assure you the contribution will alleviate some of the hardship.

Thank you so much for your thoughtful message, and I hope we can meet again soon.

In solidarity,

Imad

UNI World Executive Board: Israel should stop blocking communication services in Palestine



“As CWU General Secretary and member of UNI World Executive, I wholeheartedly support the call for restoration of postal and telecommunication services, together with the urgent need for humanitarian aid.”

In November in Nyon, UNI’s World Executive Board endorsed the call from UNI affiliates Palestinian Postal Service Workers Union (PPSWU) and the Jawwal Employee Association for an upgraded communications infrastructure in Palestine.

Israel currently bans access to 4G and 5G frequencies, making modern internet service impossible and establishing unfair competition advantages with nearby Israeli networks. The ban also puts Palestinian employment at risk.

Similarly, Israel controls the Palestinian access to postal services from around the world, services which has been dramatically cut back since the Gaza war. This is a further attack on the rights of Palestinians to communications services.

In a mission to the West Bank last May, the minister responsible for these services explained to UNI General Secretary Christy Hoffman and others that he was helpless

to modernize Palestine and move towards statehood when these basic services were blocked under the Israeli occupation.

UNI’s Hoffman said: *“Our World Executive Board was clear that Israel should end the ban of 4G and 5G in Palestine and restore a functioning postal service. These are basic services which should not be denied under any circumstance. We stand in solidarity with our union affiliates on this point – a small but necessary step in their fight for dignity.*

“We further expressed our outrage and horror at the ongoing denial of humanitarian aid – especially to North Gazans. We cannot remain silent in the face of this horrible suffering, with hundreds of thousands facing starvation. Senior UN officials now say that aid is at its lowest point of the war. This is not acceptable. All governments should insist that aid be increased.”

Appointments & Contracts

Appointments

The Union regularly receives enquiries in relation to contracts and appointments and how they are and should be administered within An Post.

First and foremost, issues in relation to the implementation of agreements within An Post are overseen by the Monitoring Group. The Monitoring Group was appointed by the Labour Court and as such have authority of the Labour Court in governing the various change agreements. Their determinations are binding on both the Union and the Company.

They have issued a number of Determinations in relation to how the appointment of permanent staff should be managed by An Post. The latest Determination issued in 2019 provided for the following:

- Temporary staff with over two years continuous unbroken employment with the Company should be appointed subject to the condition that they are required for ongoing work requirements.
- Where temporary staff have intermittent broken employment during the two-year period which generally does not exceed four weeks in any year, they may be considered for appointment where the other conditions are met.
- Where an employee is recruited against a permanent vacancy, they should be given a permanent appointment following successful completion of the six-month probationary period.

Contracts



Notwithstanding the above, members employed on fixed term or specific purpose contracts also have protections under employment legislation. The manner in which the Company issue contracts to staff remains a cause of concern. The Union is aware of many instances whereby members on such contracts or members on long term casual contracts are not provided with their correct contracts as provided for in the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term) Work Act 2003.

While the Company accepts that they have an issue with the issuing of contracts they have done nothing concrete to address the concerns of the Union. The Union believes that the Company needs to change its

policy in relation to staff recruitment and the continued use of such contracts is no longer tenable. We contend that such contracts should only be issued for genuine short-term vacancies such as maternity leave.

We have set out below some answers to the questions we receive on a regular basis in relation to contracts:

Within two months of commencing employment employee must be given a written statement setting out the terms and conditions that should apply to them.

Information to be provided

Under the Employment (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2018 an employer must notify any new employee in writing, within five days of commencement of employment of five core terms of employment as follows:

1. The full name of the employer and the employee
2. The address of the employer
3. The expected duration of the contract if it is temporary or the end date of it is a fixed – term contract.
4. The rate or method of calculation of the employee's pay
5. The number of hours the employer reasonably expects the employee to work per normal day and per normal working week.

In addition, the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001 provide that an employer is obliged to provide an employee with a written statement of terms of employment within the first two months of the commencement of employment. The statement of terms must include the following information:

- The full name of employer and employee
- The address of the employer
- The place of work
- The title of job or nature of work
- The date the employment started
- If the contract is temporary, the expected duration of the contract
- If the contract of employment is for a fixed term, the details of that term
- Details of rest periods and breaks as required by law
- *The rate of pay or method of calculation of pay
- The pay reference period for the purposes of the National Minimum Wage Act, 2000
- *Pay intervals
- *Hours of work
- *That the employee has the right to ask the employer for a written statement of his/her average hourly rate of pay as provided for in the National Minimum Wage, Act 2000



- *Details of paid leave
- *Sick pay and pension (if any)
- *Period of notice to be given by employer or employee
- *Details of any collective agreements that may affect the employee's terms of employment

*In the case of these items instead of giving each employee the details in writing, the employer may refer an employee to other documents, for example, a pension scheme booklet or a collective agreement, provided that the employee has easy access to such documents.

Fixed Term Employee



This refers to a person who has entered into a contract of employment where the end of a contract is determined by an objective condition such as arriving at a specific date, completing a specific task or the occurrence of a specific event.

A fixed term employee cannot be treated less favourably than a comparable permanent employee unless it can be objectively justified. A ground would be considered as an objective ground if it is based on considerations other than the status of an employee as a fixed-term employee and the less favourable treatment is for the purpose of achieving a legitimate aim.

What happens if I don't receive a statement setting out my terms and conditions of employment?



Where the company fails to provide this then the employee is covered by Section 8 (1) of the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term) Work Act 2003. The Labour Court has previously considered such cases, and they have determined that this information must be provided in writing and that this is a mandatory provision of the Act. In effect this means that whereby the Company fail

to provide this statement that the employee concerned is entitled to a contract of indefinite duration.

Renewal of Fixed Term Contracts



If the Company intends to renew a fixed-term contract, they must set out in writing no later than the date of renewal the objective grounds justifying the renewal and the failure to offer a contract of indefinite duration. This is covered by Section 8(2) of the same Act. The Labour Court has again determined on this and found that this provision is mandatory with no exceptions. This means that where an employee is on a fixed term contract which finishes on a certain date, they must be advised at the latest by that date why they are not receiving a permanent contract. If the company fails to do this then they are entitled to a permanent contract.

How long can I be employed on a fixed term contract?

You cannot be employed on such contracts indefinitely. If you are employed on two or more continuous fixed term contracts, then the aggregate duration of these contracts cannot exceed 4 years. If the contract continues beyond this time, then you are entitled to a contract of indefinite duration.

What is a 'Casual Worker'??



There is no definition of 'casual employees' in employment law in Ireland. A casual worker is a part-time worker who works on a casual basis. In reality, casual workers are on standby to do work as required without fixed hours or attendance arrangements. However, these workers are employees for employment rights purposes. In An Post we have agreed that casual workers will have less than 13 weeks service. We do not accept that the Company can continually switch employees from fixed term or specific purpose contracts to casual contracts.



We believe that the cases brought to our attention highlights a lack of awareness among Managers of not only the collective agreements but also the legislation in place to protect employees. We do not believe that the introduction of the new HR system alone will address these concerns. As stated, we believe that the Company should change its strategy and revert to permanent contracts with employees subject to probation and that fixed term or specific purpose contracts should only be issued for genuine temporary reasons. We will keep members informed of developments.

DocuSign

In order to improve the issuing of contracts we have agreed to the automation of the signing of contracts. This should improve the timely issuing of contracts, and we have agreed to review its operation on an ongoing basis.



Staff being issued with a contract through DocuSign will also receive a cover note which will set out the following:

- An Post is supportive of its Trade Unions role in representing their members and the DocuSign process was agreed with them
- This is seen as a positive step to ensure that employees receive the correct contract in a timely and efficient manner
- Any queries in relation to the issuing of contracts should be raised with the appropriate person and you should seek union advice if you have any doubts in relation to the terms and conditions contained within it as soon as possible.
- Your local Union Representative can raise concerns on your behalf with management.

Process

Below is a step-by-step guide on how you sign a document that has been sent to you via DocuSign.

1. Receiving and reviewing the contract

- You will receive the contract via email from dse@eumail.docusign.net
- If you have an An Post email address the email will go to that address.
- If you do not have an An Post email address the email will be sent to the email address provided by you with your application.
- In the body of the email, you will see a message from the HR team member that has sent you the contract.
- Below the message you will see a link to **Review Document**

- Click on this link to open DocuSign.
- You will see the following prompt ***“I agree to use electronic records and signature”***. You should tick the box to agree.
- You should then proceed to review the contract.

2. Signing the contract

- If you are happy with the contract and wish to sign it, you can do so by clicking on ***“sign”*** which is highlighted at the end of the contract.
- If you have any concerns, you should raise them as detailed below under “Section 3 – Queries on the contract”
- If you have not used DocuSign before you will be provided with a sample signature, you can then select ***“adopt and sign”***.
- You will then be directed back into the main document again and once you click ***“sign”*** the document will be signed electronically on your behalf.
- You should then click ***“finish”***, and the contract will be forwarded to the HR team member to sign on behalf of the Company.
- **Note:** by signing the contract electronically you are confirming that you are happy to accept the terms and conditions of the contract. All An Post contracts are issued in line with the relevant employment legislation. If you have any concerns about the contract issued, then these concerns can be addressed as detailed below under “Section 3 – Queries on the contract.”
- When the contract is signed by both parties a PDF signed version will be automatically sent to you from the system for your records.
- A copy of the signed contract will also be sent to the HR team.

3. Signing the contract

- If you have queries on the contract that you wish to raise you can reply to the original email (from dse@eumail.docusign.net).
- Issues can also be raised by your Local Union Representative with Regional HR.
- Your query will then be sent directly to the member of the HR team that sent you the contract via DocuSign.
- Once your query is resolved you can follow the steps outlined in section 2 to sign the contract.

If you do not feel your issue has been resolved satisfactorily it can be escalated through the Grievance Procedures and you may seek representation from your trade union.



Central Address Database-Review

The CWU/An Post Transformation Agreement provided for a review of the Central Address Database (CAD), which was recently completed. The CWU National Executive Council agreed in principle to proceed as outlined below with a commitment from the company to provide roles to all 28 staff in CAD. The roles will include.

- 14 new Data Systems Officer position at CS2 level for validators.
- 6 Field Planner positions at CS1 level.
- 2 Strategic Planner positions at CM2 level.
- 1 Data Systems Officer Lead position at CM1 level.
- 1 Field Lead Planner position at CM1 level.
- 1 Project Manager position.
- Voluntary Severance Scheme.

(Note; if there are no staff interested in VS there will be roles for all 28 staff)

Pay to the new positions will be performance based as now applies to the vast majority of managers

represented by the CWU. Salary will commence at 80% of the median or 5%, whichever is the greater. Our information is that most staff are at the max of the POC grade therefore we have agreed that the change allowance will be consolidated in wages first then the 5% applied. Management grades also attract PMD payments of up to 10% for CS grades and up to 15% for CM grades. There is also the potential to reach 120% of the median of the grade. (Median of CS2 Grade is €48,860 at present).

In line with the Indoor Admin Operative (IAO) role profile, the IAO will be the point of contact for “CAD” data collection and collation.

Further discussions are in place to agree an implementation date, next steps and commencement date for pay purposes.

This agreement includes the modernisation of the area to align with the company’s digitisation strategy. It also recognises the work and commitment of our members over the years and provides security to the roles now and into the future.

CWU REGIONAL STRUCTURE – An Post

Following the appointment of Paul Kennedy and Adrian Scanlon to the position of CWU Regional Officers, a revised regional structure area of responsibility for the CWU Regional Officers is outlined below:

Paul Kennedy West Region	Adrian Scanlon East Region	John Tansey Northwest Region
Athlone, Ballina, Ballinasloe, Castlebar, Claremorris, Cork Postal, Ennis, Galway, Kilmallock, Limerick, Mallow, North Kerry, South Kerry, Tuam, West Cork and Westport.	Birr/Roscrea, Bray, Carlow, Cavan, Clonmel, Drogheda, Dundalk, Enniscorthy, Kells, Kilkenny, Longford, Monaghan, Mullingar, Naas, Navan, Nenagh, Nth Wexford/Sth Wicklow, Portlaoise, Thurles, Tipperary Tullamore, Waterford and Wexford.	Carrick-on-Shannon, Castlerea, Cork Clerks, Donegal, Letterkenny, Lifford, Roscommon, Sligo, Southern Managers Branch and Western Managers Branch.

As a follow up, the General Secretary recently held catchment meetings with Branch Secretaries to discuss the main issues of concern for Postal Branch Representatives.



Review of An Post Retirement Policy

The Union and the Company recently completed a review of the Retirement Policy which was initially introduced on a trial basis in 2021. The purpose of the review was to address concerns that arose during the initial trial period with a view to addressing them to ensure that the policy was fit for purpose. The Retirement Policy follows best practice on the management of retirements in organisations and incorporates the recommendations contained within the Code of Practice on Longer Working issued by the Workplace Relations Commission.



A priority for the Union was to ensure that the Company apply a consistent approach to retirement and address requests for extended employment beyond the maximum retirement age in a timely manner. Summarised below are some of the key points from the policy:

Normal Retirement Age

Within An Post there are a number of ways of calculating normal retirement age. It is dependent on the following:

- employed pre-Vesting Day i.e. prior to 1st January 1984
- paying Class D PRSI
- paying Class A PRSI
- Employed pre-Vesting Day i.e. prior to 1st January 1984

For those employed pre vesting day, Normal Retirement Age is the date on which they reach the age of sixty years.

Paying Class D PRSI

For those paying Class D rate of PRSI and who joined post Vesting Day, provided that at such time their age is

not less than 60 years, it will be either, when they have completed 40 years' pensionable employment or, the date on which they attain the age at which the State Pension (Contributory) is payable.

Paying Class A PRSI

For those paying the Class A rate of PRSI the Normal Retirement Age is the date on which they become eligible for the State Contributory Pension, currently age 66.

In all cases the Maximum Retirement Age is the date on which an employee might become eligible for the State Contributory Pension i.e. 66.

Lead up to retirement

The decision to retire is an important step for any employee. It is important in that regard that employees receive support to remove uncertainty and ensure it is dealt with in a sympathetic and understanding manner with employee concerns addressed. To ensure this happens the following will apply:

- A member of HR will make contact with any employee 12 months before their NRA and 12 months ahead of any minimum age / service at which they can retire to ascertain their intentions and hear any concerns or issues and respond to them promptly in writing.
- They will provide access to a pre-retirement course without loss of pay

The policy recognises that some employees may change their mind about retiring early or wish to extend their retirement date and the policy provides for this eventuality.

Extension of Working beyond Maximum Retirement Age (MRA)

Some employees on reaching their MRA may wish to extend their working life within the Company and the policy provides for this opportunity. Any extensions may be for up to 12 months at a time in the following circumstances:

1. To ensure specialised roles and specialised knowledge are retained within the Company where this is needed.
2. To ensure that the role/job continues to be performed during any handover/recruitment phase and to ensure no interruptions/gaps in the role/job.
3. To ensure continuity of service, knowledge and



- standards in particular projects undertaken by the Company.
4. To meet employee requirements to prepare better for retirement or to improve pension provision.

Applications from employees for extensions should be sent to the Company at least 6 months before the MRA, and if further extensions are sought at least three months before the expiry of an extension setting out the reasons they are seeking an extension, the duration and whether it is sought on a full time or part time basis. In general, the first extension will be for a minimum of six months.

The Company will consider the request, arrange to meet with the employee concerned and provide the employee with a written response within three months of the application. Each case will be considered on its merit and the Company will take the following into account when deciding on an application to extend the members working life:

- a. Each Individual's circumstances and their ability to give regular and reliable service
- b. The need for intergenerational fairness i.e. allowing younger workers to progress
- c. Creation of a balanced age structure within the Company
- d. Succession Planning
- e. Motivation and dynamism through the increased prospect of promotion

- f. The continuing need for their role
- g. Consideration of any risks from a health and safety perspective to the employee or others.

Other Points

- If an application for extended working is not approved then an appeal may be made to the appropriate HR Director.
- The same terms and conditions of employment will apply for the duration of the extension
- The extension is granted on the basis the employee being able to provide regular and reliable service.
- Employees working beyond their MRA will receive their pension lump sum once they reach their MRA but they cannot receive their An Post pension until they actually retire
- Under the rules of the An Post Superannuation Scheme no contributions are made to the scheme after the MRA and no additional Service is accrued. An employee may however contribute to a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA).
- The Company will complete a risk assessment and may seek medical evidence having regard to the nature of the work and any individual considerations which may impact on the person continuing to carry out their role safely. This will be particularly important for roles such as those involving HGV driving.

HGV Apprenticeship Programme An Post

The grade of HGV driver new grades was introduced following agreement between the CWU and An Post, with the assistance of the Monitoring Group in March 2020. An important aspect of this agreement was to agree an apprenticeship scheme for the future training of HGV drivers. The purpose of this scheme is to provide opportunities for staff members to upskill and at the same time provide the Company with a resource to cover future vacancies and cater for increased capacity during Peak.

While finalisation of the arrangements has taken longer than envisaged, we are pleased a pilot programme commenced in October, with 5 Postal Operatives commencing their training.

The programme has been developed by Rita

Gaffney of An Post, and she has put a lot of time and effort into this which is appreciated by the Union.

The first five apprentices, whom we wish well, are:

Mark Cuddihy Portlaoise Postal Branch

Oisín Ferry Portlaoise Postal Branch

Tim Murphy DPAB

Mark Norton DPDB

Stephanie Reynolds Athlone Postal Branch

There will be a further programme next year and members will have an opportunity to apply for it

Jack Chambers Out to Lunch

Staff at state-owned postal provider are looking for an increase to a decades-old eating allowance set by the government – but issue wasn't mentioned in budget.

by Donal MacNamee, October 2024
Sunday Business Post



An Post: Delivery drivers are entitled to eating-on-site allowance under agreement with the Company.

An Post delivery workers have criticised Jack Chambers, the finance minister, after he declined to introduce increases to a decades-old food allowances regime in Budget 2025.

Staff at the state-owned postal service had called on Chambers to increase the threshold for the payments – known as “eating on site allowances” – in the budget, amid persistent inflation over recent years.

Under rules set by the Revenue Commissioners, employers in some sectors are allowed to pay tax-free eating on site allowances worth a maximum of €5 a day.

Eligible employers can pay the allowance only if they don't provide facilities for making tea, coffee or other refreshments. Delivery drivers, who spend long hours on the road, are therefore eligible.

The payments have existed at An Post, which is currently led by David McRedmond, since 1993.

In August, the Communications Workers Union (CWU), which represents staff at the organisation, told Chambers the payments have not increased for 18 years and should be increased to €7 a day.

“The high rates of price inflation over the past few years has meant that the value of this allowance has decreased significantly,” the CWU wrote in a letter to Jack Chambers, the finance minister, last week.

“Against the backdrop of very significant consumer price index increases, together with the allowance now having an increase for 18 years, the union sought an increase from An Post,” it added.

Chambers, however, did not announce any changes to the allowances in the budget – prompting the CWU to write to him again to express its unhappiness.

“I must admit I was disappointed that no provision

was made in Budget 2025 to increase the threshold of the eating on site allowance to €7,” Seán McDonagh, general secretary of the CWU, wrote.

He called on Chambers to clarify if he has “an intention to make amendments to the Finance Bill, for provision of this”, and requested a meeting to discuss the issue.

In reply, the Department of Finance told McDonagh that his request for a meeting would be considered.

In 2006, following an agreement at the Workplace Relations Commission, An Post and the CWU agreed that the food allowance rate would be increased every two years based on the consumer price index for food and non-alcoholic beverages over the intervening two-year period.

The annual rate of inflation in Ireland at the time the deal was struck was 4 per cent. It fell to a trough of -0.3 per cent in 2015, before peaking at 7.8 per cent in 2022, as the global economy felt the full weight of the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

In its earlier letter to Chambers, the CWU said that if An Post increased the eating on site allowance above the €5 threshold, the full amount would be liable for tax.

“From late October, An Post delivery staff will be obliged to work longer hours because of the increased mail volumes right up to Christmas with the speculated added possibility of a general election, but most certainly will take place by March 2025,” it said.

“You will appreciate it is not tenable for the union to accept a freeze on the payment value of the allowance for postal workers indefinitely, particularly whereby several justifiable increases have been approved in other allowances such as travel, subsistence and hauliers rates.”

CASH IN: Major boost for thousands of retired workers amid new approval for pension increases at two Irish companies



by Jodie McCormack
Correspondent
Irish Sun online

THOUSANDS of Irish pensioners are in for a boost after pension increases were confirmed for two retired workers of two major companies.

Retired workers at both eir and An Post will receive the increase as part of separate pay deals agreed with the Communications Workers' Union in April.

Retired workers at An Post will now see an increase in pensionable pay of 2 per cent from January 1, 2024. And retired workers at eir will see an increase of 2.5 percent effective from July 1, 2024.

An Post has confirmed arrangements to increase pensions and pay arrears from November 22, 2024 and eir has agreed to increase arrangements from January 2025.

Increases were secured following the agreement negotiations on pay and pensionable pay by the CWU with both An Post and eir, that concluded in April of this year.

The pension increase at both An Post and eir required the approval of the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Welcoming this approval CWU General Secretary, Sean McDonagh said: *"The approval by Ministers of pension increases has been a source of delay and significant frustration for the Union, and hardship for our retired members.*

"However, there should be no delays in paying agreed pension increases. Following representations made by the CWU to Ministers, approval of pensions increases under the current agreements has been expedited.

"We are pressing both companies and our Trustees to ensure all increases and arrears are now paid to pensioners without delay.

"In our negotiations with An Post and eir, we have sought to narrow the gap between the levels of

increases in pay and pensionable pay for current and retired workers.

"Both pension schemes are properly funded and have been showing strong performance. An actuarial review of the pension scheme at An Post will take place during 2025."

And the General Secretary revealed further plans for next year. He detailed: *"We will be seeking to secure additional increases to pensionable pay for workers and to have these applied to pensioners at both An Post and eir in 2025."*

The increases to pensions will impact thousands of workers across both companies. Approximately 11,000 retired eir staff and 7,000 from An Post will benefit.

Major Social Welfare Payouts

Separately thousands will benefit from a four major social welfare payments due to be paid out this week.

The first double Child Benefit payment of €280, as announced in Budget 2025, will hit parents' pockets tomorrow Tuesday, November 5, 2024. The second €280 sum will be paid out in early December.

And in order to help those struggling to heat their homes in the winter months, a €300 lump sum on top of the ordinary Fuel Allowance payment rates will be issued this week.

The €400 Disability Support Grant lump sum will also hit pockets across the country this week from November 6 to November 8.

This is a once-off payment that will be issued to those who receive the Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance and the Blind Pension.

Lastly, a whopping €400 will be paid out to 46,000 people receipt of the Working Family Payment on Thursday.



An Post Pension – The facts

to achieve pensionable increases pay increases must be negotiated and agreed first.

We recently received correspondence from a Group purporting to be representing An Post Pensioners. This correspondence was unsigned and didn't contain a return address.

However, the authors raised some questions, made inaccurate statements including that the CWU has not represented the interests of Pensioners. While there is no obligation on the Union to respond we thought it important to set out the factual position in this Connect Magazine so members and retired members could understand matters and not be misled.

Pension Accord

Following the financial crash in 2008 many defined benefits pension schemes suffered from severe deficits in their funding positions. The An Post Superannuation Schemes were impacted by the downturn in equity markets.

The crash resulted in the value of the An Post Schemes falling by 31% by the end of 2008. A drop of €651m. The Pension Authority, that regulates occupational pension schemes, gave pension funds a period of time in which to address their deficits. The Pension Authority placed a requirement on schemes to submit funding proposals. An Post Schemes had until the 30th June 2013 to submit their proposals.

The Group of Union's entered discussions with the Company in 2010 in an attempt to negotiate a package that would be acceptable to the members of the four Union's in An Post. However, discussions proved to be difficult primarily because of delays in introducing changes to the Pensions Act. In addition, in 2011 the Government introduced a Pension levy of 0.6% for a four-year period from 2011 to 2014 which took much needed funds out of an already stretched fund.

There was a clear understanding within the Group of Unions that unless the deficit was addressed the pension fund would eventually run out of money. We needed to act to ensure that pension benefits

earned by members were safeguarded and that the Scheme remained financially viable and secure into the future.

Pension law dictated that should An Post and the Pension Fund Trustees fail to present an agreed plan to the Pensions Board for approval, the Pensions Board had the power to impose a solution on the Pension fund. A decision in which the Scheme's members, the Company, the Group of Unions, or the Trustees would have no say whatsoever. Any such decision by the Pension Authority would have either reduced the past service benefits for active and deferred members or else ordered that the Pension Schemes be wound up.

If the schemes were wound up, then the assets of the scheme would be used to secure pension in payments to the **existing pensioners** at the time by the buying of annuities. Pension increases would not be provided for. The remaining assets of the scheme would then be used to pay pension benefits to active and deferred members. This would have meant that only 68% of member benefits would be secured.

On that basis and following detailed consultation with members the accord was accepted by the members of the Unions in a ballot with 90% voting in favour.

The Pension accord was to remain in place for ten years with some changes being permanent including the cap on pensions. This was designed to protect the scheme in the future to ensure that it never went into deficit again and the details are set out below.

Company Contribution Rate

Every three years, the scheme's actuary values the liabilities of the scheme, compares this to the value of the scheme's assets and calculates the amount of money that must be contributed into the scheme in future years to meet the benefits that are payable. Calculations are based on a number of assumptions. While the contribution rate is set, the Company

removal of the Pension Cap would cost €779m.

The changes being made are envisaged as a permanent change – i.e. they will continue beyond 2023.



can terminate its liability to contribute without any notice.

All Schemes must prepare an actuarial funding certificate and submit this to the Pension Authority. Following the last actuarial review which was presented to the Trustees in September 2022 the actuary suggested a contribution rate of 3.7%. The Union was not prepared to accept this as it was significantly below the rate at the time which was 14.4%. Following discussions at the WRC and Labour Court the company rate was set at 8% for the duration of the review period i.e., up to 31st December 2024.

It is important to remember when discussing the above that **to achieve pensionable increases pay increases must be negotiated and agreed first**. Accepting a reduced contribution rate allowed the Union to achieve a significant increase for staff and pensioners. If the Company was compelled to remain contributing 14.4% it is unlikely we would have achieved the same level of pay increase.

Cap on Pension Increases

As part of the review the Union sought advice from the Byrne Actuaries who advised on the various options available and the impact these options would have on the pension fund. All options were costed by Mercers and verified by Byrne Actuaries. The Union sought the maximum return for staff and pensioners from these reviews. Our primary aim is to reduce the pensionable gap while ensuring that the fund remains on a sound financial footing.

The **removal of the Pension Cap would cost €779m**. This meant that if we sought this and it was agreed it would have pushed the fund into a further deficit resulting in no pensionable increases for employees, deferred pensioners and pensioners. This would also have meant that the Fund would once again go into a deficit which would have led to the requirement for a further funding proposal to be issued to the Pension Authority. It is unlikely that they would accept a similar proposal, and it was more likely that they would reduce benefits which would have led to increased hardship for all. Given the cost

of this option it was ruled out in favour of seeking a 6% increase in pensionable pay which was costed at €276m.

Pensionable Increase

The unsigned correspondence we received accused the Union of not supporting pensioners by agreeing to the above. This is not correct. The General Secretary Seán McDonagh has led the campaign setting a key objective of addressing the pensionable pay gap. Considerable progress resulting in over **12.5% increase in pensionable pay in the period 1st January 2022 to the 1st January 2024**.

These increases have been secured by the CWU for pensioners, but only after examination and approval by Government and NEW Era

Union Strategy- Unanimously endorsed at Conference

Our priority in relation to pensions remains as discussed at our recent Conference

- Ensure the pension remains fit for purpose;
- Ensure the pension scheme is protected so that members and pensioners can expect increased benefits;
- Continue strategy of reducing the difference between pensionable and non-pensionable pay.

In the last pay agreement, we secured a 2% pensionable pay increase from the 1st January 2024 for all existing members, deferred pensioners and pensioners. This was paid at the end of November. A further pensionable increase is due from 1st January 2025.

At the end of this year the actuary will start to prepare the actuary valuation for the three-year period 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2024. We expect that this will show a continuing surplus in the scheme which will allow the Union to secure further increases in pensionable pay.

The Union will continue to campaign for pensioner increases to be paid in a timely manner.

12.5% increase in pensionable pay in the period 1st January 2022 to the 1st January 2024

Continue with strategy of reducing difference between pensionable and non-pensionable pay

CWU General Secretary has led the campaign, achieving significant progress.

An Post TUG AVC Scheme

Administered by

Halligan
INSURANCES



Now
is the
time!

Let's talk AVC's

What is an AVC Scheme?

An AVC Scheme provides you with a tax-efficient way to build up a sum of money that can be used by you in retirement.

The following are broad examples of scope for a Main Scheme member to take out an AVC:

- **Missing years**

If you do not expect to have full service, you could use AVCs to make up part or all of the **shortfall**.

- **Non-pensionable earnings**

If you have non-pensionable earnings (such as overtime or allowances), you can use AVCs to fund the gap.

Why are AVCs important?

AVCs help protect your financial future after you retire. There are a number of benefit options, depending on individual circumstances:

- a Immediate tax free cash lump sum.
- b Purchase an annuity, to provide an additional pension on top of your An Post pension.
- c Transfer balance of fund to an Approved Retirement Fund (ARF) for an additional taxable income.
- d Provide or increase dependant's pension.

How do you join the Plan?

Joining is easy. Simply contact the AVC Scheme administrators, Halligan Insurances: **01 87 97 100** for advice and to request an application form link or a new member email pack to be emailed to you.

New An Post AVC Lump Sum Calculator and new Video Examples now available on www.halligan.ie

EU lawmakers agree with union demands on scrutiny of working conditions at Amazon warehouses

*by Daniel Kopp. UNI Global Union
November 2024*



On 10 October, Amazon sent a letter to EMPL coordinator Li Andersson to re-open dialogue after Members of European Parliament banned Amazon lobbyists from the Parliament in February.

BRUSSELS, 21 November – European Union lawmakers have reached an agreement on scrutiny of working conditions at Amazon warehouses in line with demands by European trade unions earlier this week. Under the agreement, Amazon must attend a hearing in the Parliament’s Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) before Members of European Parliament go on a fact-finding mission meeting Amazon officials and workers’ representatives at its warehouses. Subsequently, the Committee would decide, without any automatic guarantee, on the readmission of Amazon lobbyists to the European Parliament. The decision comes after European trade unions, including UNI Europa and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), sent a letter to lawmakers on Monday outlining these conditions. The letter also urged them to consider Amazon’s history of alleged union-busting and refusal to engage in collective bargaining as part of their deliberations.

On today’s decision, Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary of UNI Europa, said:

“Earlier this year, Amazon’s lobbyists were banned from the European Parliament for refusing to face democratic scrutiny. Now, as the company asks for a

dialogue again, we commend EU lawmakers setting clear and strict conditions for a parliamentary fact-finding mission and a hearing. Crucially, this includes listening to workers’ representatives and trade unions to paint a full picture of what is going on in Amazon’s warehouses.”

On 10 October, Amazon sent a letter to EMPL coordinator Li Andersson to re-open dialogue after Members of European Parliament banned Amazon lobbyists from the Parliament in February. The company had refused multiple times to participate in a parliamentary hearing and cancelled parliamentarians’ official visit to observe working conditions in its warehouses. Over 30 trade unions and civil society organisations, including UNI Europa, Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl and SOMO had sent a joint letter to European Parliament President Roberta Metsola demanding a ban of Amazon lobbyists. Two months later, UNI Europa coordinated a visit of S&D MEPs with Amazon workers and trade union representatives in Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands to hear first-hand stories of workers.

Last month, an investigation by the EU Transparency Register revealed that Amazon Europe updated its lobbying spending figures to over €5 million back in August. The new figures were published after a civil society complaint exposed two think tanks and two lobbies on the US multinational’s payroll that were not properly registered.

Island gets broadband via water pipes in UK first

©BBC.com



The fibre cable is delivered through a second pipe housed within the drinking water network

Homes and businesses in the Orkney island of Papa Westray are now receiving their internet through the water network, in what is believed to be a UK first.

Cables have been laid within existing water pipes, using the island's community-owned water system, enabling full fibre broadband to almost all properties.

The innovation allows locals to do things they couldn't previously, like attending medical appointments remotely and gaming.

It's now hoped it will attract people to live and work in the island and that water networks could be used to deliver broadband in other hard-to-reach areas.



In total, it took around eight months to install the network

In the past, Papa Westray has suffered from poor connectivity, with internet speeds either slow or non-existent. This has limited what the 90 or so residents there can do. In total, it took around eight months to install the network, which was carried out by local contractors CloudNet.

The internet connection initially reaches Papa Westray via a radio link from neighbouring isle of Westray, before being distributed across the island

using the water pipes.

The fibre cable is delivered through a second pipe housed within the drinking water network.

The island became the first to use this approach successfully because the water system is owned by the community, making the work a more efficient and less disruptive alternative to conventional cable laying methods.



Mr Cursiter helped to install the broadband on the island

Ian Cursiter, a Water Board supply engineer and farmer in Papa Westray, has lived on the island his whole life.

For the first time, the broadband allows him to access the same facilities as those elsewhere.

He is now able to watch calves being born from the comfort of his bedroom, allowing him to catch up on sleep.

"If you're disturbing them when they're calving sometimes they just stop and they look at you like they want to get on with it, so that's one of the good things.

"We had an analogue system for one or two years but

the cameras didn't seem to last very well. The digital side of things is so much better, I find that anyway."

The camera can move 360 degrees, meaning Mr Crusiter can see what's going on from all angles.

He was one of the workers who helped to install the broadband and said it's "amazing and different".

The system also means the chance of a calf dying is less likely, as Mr Cursiter is able to monitor the situation closely. He says the costs to put the cameras in is "worth it" if it means saving a calf's life.



Mr Cursiter is able to watch his cattle calving

Remote sensors placed in the water pipe also provide a hi-tech way to monitor the island's water quality.

CloudNet received funding to carry out the work through the Reaching 100% (R100) programme from the Scottish government.

Managing director of CloudNet, Greg Whitton, said the company was "proud" to have delivered the first successful commercial project of its kind in the UK, to the most remote island in Orkney.

"The benefits to fibre in the water is you don't need to excavate and you can run over a kilometre without having to do any land. You're just utilising the water network to provide fibre to properties at home," he said.

Mr Whitton said the island was left behind in terms of internet speed, so he is happy there is now a solution for it. He said there were challenges making sure the system could be designed and installed in a way that worked for the island.

"I think with the help of the islanders it's been a big challenge because we've learnt a lot through the programme. But I think the uplift and success of it has been really good."

eCOMMS UPDATE



FMI Contracted Staff in FOTS Area



In the response to the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff in the FOTS area, eir have contracted Field Management Ireland (FMI) to hire additional Sales Representatives to meet the demands of the expanding customer base. Within the next two years, 1.5 million homes are projected to become eligible for fibre broadband. This significant growth presents a substantial opportunity for eir to attract new customers.

FMI teams will be allocated on a 'needs basis', in areas where there are not currently enough eir FOTS staff. FMI staff will have the same base pay

and commission as eir FOTS staff and they will be trained by their own management.

The Company have committed to the CWU that there will be no headcount reduction or adverse impact on existing or future FOTS staff. eir will continue to hire direct staff in the FOTS area and hope to meet their headcount target next year.

The Union will continue to monitor these developments closely, ensuring there is no negative impact for our members. In line with the subcontractor's agreement, the CWU are engaging with eir for union access to the workers in FMI.



eir Pension

Pension Increase 2024

Under the Trust Deed and Rules, pension increases for pensioner and deferred members are granted by eir, subject to approval by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, and Transport with the concurrence of the Minister for Finance. Accrued benefits for active members are increased in line with pensionable salary increases.

Following the CWU pay deal 2024, eir sought approval from the Ministers for a 2.5% pension increase, based on the Pension Accord, payable from 1 July 2024. The CWU wrote to both Ministers to ensure speedy sign off to the increase and to avoid any delays. We were notified in November that Ministerial sign off is in place and that the expected increase will be included in the January 2025 pension payroll payment. Payments will include backdating to July 2024.

Letter sent to Paschal Donohoe TD, from Seán McDonagh

Our Ref: 0213

3rd October 2024

Mr Paschal Donohoe TD
Minister for Public Expenditure NOP
Delivery and Reform Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street Dublin 2

Re: eir and An Post Pension Increases

Dear Minister,

I refer to previous correspondence in connection with the following pension increases due to retired staff of eir and An Post.

- eir 2.5% from the 1st July 2024
- An Post a 2% increase from the 1st January 2024

While I am aware the process of approval nears finalisation, I should impress upon you the need to have this completed within the next week or so, to allow the commencement of efforts to have the payment made before Christmas.

In Budget 2025, government rightly recognised the

need of pensioners in receipt of the state pension approving a €12 increase. Therefore, it cannot be understood or accepted by the 11,000 retired staff of eir and over 6,000 in An Post, that government could not understand the same need. This is particularly the case where both superannuation schemes are in a position to pay the increases and furthermore, there is no cost to the Exchequer.

Your early attention to this matter is appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sean McDonagh
General Secretary

c.c. Mr Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport,
Mr Ossian Smyth TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Communications and Circular Economy
Mr Jack Chambers TD, Minister for Finance
eir/An Post Branch Secretaries

Scheme Membership as of 31st March 2023

MEMBERSHIP	01-Apr-23	31-Mar-24
Active - members who are currently in service with eir	1,036	828
Deferred members - members who are former employees	1,587	1,334
Pensioners - those in receipt of benefits from the scheme	12,414	12,613
Total	15,037	14,775

Financials

The assets decreased over the year to 31st March 2024 from €3.9bn to €3.81bn after taking account of the net benefits of €165m paid from the fund. The fund continues to satisfy the Minimum Funding Standard (M.F.S.) and Funding Standard Reserve.

Opening Fund value as at 31st March 2023	€3,900,104
Net Withdrawals from Dealing with Members	-€165,193
Investment Return	€77,727
Closing Fund value 31st March 2024	€3,812,638



Viatel Technology Group is one of the companies interested in BT Group's Irish unit. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Bloomberg

Macquarie-backed Viatel runs rule over BT Ireland

UK telecoms giant's Irish unit recently put on market for second time in five years

*by Joe Brennan
Irish Times Online*

Viatel Technology Group, a Dublin-based digital technology company, is among parties running the rule over UK telecoms giant BT Group's Irish unit, which was recently put on the market for a second time in five years, according to sources.

BT Ireland is also said to have received interest from other players. However, it was not possible to confirm the identity of those parties.

BT chief executive Allison Kirkby signalled in May that the group was "exploring options to optimise [its] global business" as it refocuses on its home market amid a multibillion-pound cost-cutting programme.

The UK group had previously entered exclusive talks in 2019 to sell BT Ireland to UK investment firm Mayfair Equity Partners. However, the talks broke down early the following year, with the decision reportedly down to a change of heart on the part of BT at the time.

A spokesman for Viatel declined to comment, while a spokeswoman for BT Ireland was not in a position to comment when contacted by The Irish Times.

A unit of Australian financial services giant Macquarie bought a significant minority stake in Viatel – whose business spans cybersecurity, networking, cloud computing and communications services – last December for an undisclosed sum, giving the company more firepower as it continues to pursue deals.

Other shareholders include entrepreneur Colm Piercy's Chirisa Investments, tech investor Quay Ventures and Viatel's management.

Viatel, which is led by former Microsoft Ireland chief executive Paul Rellis, has carried out nine acquisitions since 2020. Last month it completed the purchase of the technology division of print services and security systems group MJ Flood.

The deal, reported earlier this year to be worth about €30 million, expands its position in cybersecurity, cloud computing and communications.

Other purchases in recent years include Limerick-based ActionPoint, a digital transformation specialist,

telecoms companies Ripplecom, Nova and Rocket Broadband. It employs about 350 people.

BT Ireland, which is led by managing director Shay Walsh and has about 650 employees, is the second-largest fixed-line wholesaler in the Republic with wholesale customers including Vodafone, Sky and Three and corporate customers including Bank of Ireland.

It has also operated the Republic's 999 and 112 emergency call-answering service (Ecas) for the past 15 years.

The Company recently pulled out of the running in a Department of Communications tendering process relating to the next Ecas contract. BT Ireland's agreement runs until November 2025, though there is a clause in the documents that allows the Government to extend the term for a further two years.

Industry sources previously said the decision to back out of the procurement process for the next emergency calls service contract, a low-profit line of business, may boost the appeal of BT Ireland to potential buyers. It is not clear whether any of the parties circling BT Ireland are interested in managing the remainder of the Ecas contract.

BT made an initial foray into the Republic in 1998 when it set up Ocean, a fixed-wire joint venture with ESB. The London-based group acquired Denis O'Brien-founded Esat Telecom two years later.

It subsequently bought ESB out of Ocean to settle a dispute with the State-owned electricity group over the Esat deal.

BT rolled Esat's mobile business, Esat Digifone, into its wireless division, which would be spun out in 2011 as a separate company initially called mmO2, but later rebranded O2. Spain's Telefonica bought O2 in 2005, before selling the Irish mobile business to Three Ireland in 2014.

Sources had previously indicated that UBS was advising BT on the sale of the Irish unit. However, the process is actually being managed by investment bankers in Citigroup.

The French billionaire who will hold on to eir 'until the day I die' Worth an estimated €10bn, Niel is one of your 'always on' kind of entrepreneurs

by Joe Brennan, Irish Times, October 2024



French billionaire Xavier Niel, the majority owner of eir, at his Paris office. Photograph: Emmanuel Fradin

The past five weeks have seen the 57-year-old, among other things: buy a mobile company in war-torn Ukraine; release a book, titled *Une Sacrée Envie de Foutre le Bordel* (A Real Desire to Cause Trouble), that traces his journey from humble beginnings to building a telecoms empire with more than 110 million subscribers across 23 countries in Europe and central and South America; and join the board of social media app TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance.

Worth £10.2 billion, according to Bloomberg data, Niel is one of your "always-on" kind of entrepreneurs. "What my team don't like is when I'm out of Paris on vacation," he says. "Because then I don't have meetings – so, I can send them message all day long."

eir, the former State monopoly which has been through seven changes in control in the past 25 years, has distributed more than £2 billion in dividends to its owners since Niel led the takeover in April 2018. It equates to twice the £1 billion equity value of that deal.

eir has had a sad history of being something of an ATM for a series of owners.

Niel says his team was first attracted to eir because of its sorry state after years of being "not well managed". Under the Frenchman, eir has transformed IT systems that hadn't been updated since the 1990s, moved the company's previously notorious outsourced customer service function – and other work – back in-house, while cutting running costs at the same time. (While call service indicators have improved under the current owners, eir still topped the list of customer queries and complaints to the competition watchdog helpline last year.)

When asked if he, too, will ultimately join the long cast of one-time eir owners, Niel insists: "It will never be for sale, until the day I die."

"We lost a lot of money [on Vodafone]," says Niel.

The stake is reported to have cost him about £750 million (£891 million). It is currently worth £480 million.



New Openeir Structure

The Company recently informed the CWU that they were changing the reporting lines in openeir Networks at the senior management level. The changes affect where some teams will sit in the organisation chart as the reporting lines will be different.

Most of the current Fixed Access Build (FAB) teams will now be placed into the openeir field structure.

Current work activities and management teams are not changed just who they report into at the highest level.

A new Quality Design and Contract Management structure will encompass current Access Design, PQO, Major Projects and Contractor Management areas. Again, no change to current work activities or management teams, just a new structure and reporting line.

Vodafone Retail TUPE

Back in September Vodafone made the decision to TUPE 2 of their retail stores, Omni Shopping Centre and Navan, to a franchise partner, King Communication. This decision left the staff in these stores feeling nervous about their future and I was contacted by a long-standing member who was fearful of the impact that this change would have. Unfortunately, the Company communication did nothing to ease these fears.

I visited both stores in the days after the announcement and spoke to staff in each. After the visits, both stores had full membership and meetings were scheduled to discuss the TUPE process. The members set out their fears in these meetings and I explained the consultation process to them. A Representative from each store was chosen to represent members in the consultation process as well as myself as Branch Secretary.

It was clear from further meetings with the Representatives that the main concern was the impact

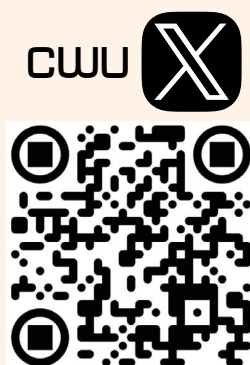
the change would have on their potential commission earnings.

The Branch had already dealt with a TUPE with another retail store to King Communications so I consulted with members who confirmed that potential earnings under the King Communications commission structure are significantly lower than those in Vodafone Retail.

Through further meetings with the employee Representatives, I prepared them for the consultation process with their new employer. After much negotiation during the consultations, they successfully argued that employees would be economically worse off under the new structure and this was not allowed under TUPE legislation. A good result was achieved by a group of members who stuck by each other through a very difficult process and stood firm to ensure that they got the best result for themselves from a difficult situation.

Use QR Codes to Connect

Members can scan the QR codes below to connect to our social media and we encourage our members to engage with our social media as much as possible.





NJJ Contact Centre in Portugal

In August, eir announced a decision by its owners NJJ to outsource some elements of customer support to their NJJ sites in Portugal. The announcement came as a major shock and disappointment for staff who have worked hard every day to serve eir customers in a fast, efficient and friendly way.

The rationale for this decision is difficult to comprehend given the positive financial report released by the company the day before, delivered in no small part by the dedication and hard work of members in the Contact Centres and companywide. Moreover, the expansion of the customer base, together with an average call wait time of under two minutes indicates there is no justification or requirement for the decision.

The business decision is not supported by the CWU and

represents a strategic volte-face by the company from stated objectives and the company's "deliberate move to onshore" - establishing and committing to the highest customer quality of service provided by directly employed staff.

We believe the decision is only driven by a demand for increased profits. It runs the risk of undermining the excellent customer services put in place to rescue the company's image and standing from the wrath of unhappy customers, Comreg and the Oireachtas.

On foot of the announcement, a meeting was secured with eir senior management, involving representatives from the four customer operations Branches, to ascertain the rationale and implications of this decision by NJJ for directly impacted members.

Meeting with CEO Ollie Loomes

The Union has engaged in a positive manner with senior management on issues of immediate concern for staff directly impacted. There is also a requirement for the Union and company to engage as a matter of urgency on the more strategic elements of this decision and possible implications for the business, customers and staff in all other areas of eir.

Following discussion at the National Executive, it was agreed to seek a meeting with the CEO.

The immediate focus for the Union is for members directly affected by this and our demands centre around the retention of the four sites in Ireland with no changes to terms and conditions; no compulsory redundancies and no

diminution of services to customers – we want to ensure that the high standard of customer service our members deliver day-in and day-out is not negatively impacted by this action.

Although customer service is key, members throughout the Company who contribute to the full package that delivers the high return on investment are also concerned as to whether the Company has plans for any further outsourcing. Set out below is the letter sent by the General Secretary.

The response we receive will determine our next steps and we will keep you informed of the outcome of these discussions.



3rd October 2024

Mr Ollie Loomes
Chief Executive Officer eir

Re: Meeting Request

Dear Ollie,

I am writing to you in connection with the surprising business decision by the company to off-shore some elements of customer support to Portugal.

You will appreciate this announcement comes as a major shock and disappointment for staff who have worked hard every day to serve eir customers in a fast, efficient and friendly way.

It is difficult to comprehend the business rationale for this change given the positive financial report released by the company the day before. Moreover, the expansion of the customer base, together with an average call wait time of under two minutes indicates there is no justification or requirement for the decision.

It represents a strategic volte-face by the company, from the stated objectives outlined by you in the mission statement and the company's "deliberate move to onshore", establishing and committing to the highest customer quality of service provided by directly employed staff.

Not long after your appointment you confirmed your primary focus was to rebuild the brand by investing in the customer support functions across the country. I would be the first to acknowledge the excellent results you and your team and the staff in the centres have achieved in that regard, which makes this announcement all the more concerning.

The Union has engaged in a positive manner with senior management on issues of immediate concern for staff directly impacted. There is also a requirement for the Union and company to engage as a matter of urgency on the more strategic elements of this decision and going forward possible implications for the business, customers and staff in all other areas of eir.

It would therefore be appreciated that we could convene a meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Seán McDonagh
General Secretary

Union Recognition Campaign In BT Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS)

Following extensive media coverage stemming from the CWU Conference, CWU Officials met with the Minister of State with responsibility for Public Procurement, eGovernment and Circular Economy, Ossian Smyth on the 15th May 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to bring the Minister up to date on the plight of ECAS operators and their campaign to have their voice heard through their union.

Specifically, the Minister was given an overview of the ECAS campaign, including a timeline of events and was informed of BT's repeated refusal to engage with the CWU to address the concerns of staff. And, that this ultimately led to members deciding to conduct a ballot for industrial action which was very well supported.

The Minister was informed that CWU members were eager to avoid taking any such action, and in an act of responsibility, referred the matter to the conciliation services of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in a final attempt to avoid any disruption to the service.

Regrettably, BT in an act of irresponsibility, refused to attend the WRC. It was pointed out to the Minister that BT's stance towards trade unions was putting a vital public contract at risk because it forces ECAS operators to fight to have their voice heard, through union recognition, by either threatening or undertaking industrial action.

Furthermore, given that the ECAS contract is part of the public procurement process for which the Minister is responsible, it is unacceptable that BT Ireland would refuse to engage with the industrial relations machinery of the state while at the same time receiving state funding.

It was also impressed upon the Minister that matters are compounded by the fact that ECAS operators are the gateway to the emergency services and are the only workers within that eco system that are denied the

right to trade union recognition.

Unfortunately, the ECAS dispute is the poster child for the ills of the voluntarist industrial relations model that is adopted in Ireland and has featured prominently in the Respect at Work campaign. CWU member and former ECAS operator Sharon Gill has continued the fight for ECAS workers and has spoken publicly at several Respect at Work events about some of the treatment she endured when working for BT.

A discussion was had with the Minister on the vital importance of that campaign, and that the strongest possible transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wage Directive is essential in providing workers with the opportunity to have their voice heard through their union without having to strike for it.

The Minister was receptive and supportive of the campaign but did outline the limitations to which he could intervene. As a follow up, a meeting was convened with The Minister for Communications Eamon Ryan which was regrettably postponed and was due to be rescheduled.

Given that we are in the middle of a general election campaign at the time of writing, the reality is that the union will have to wait for the formation of a new government to pursue a meeting with the incoming Minister for Communications.

In conclusion, It is simply unacceptable in a modern society that a vital public service, which is receiving state funding, should be able to simply deny its workers the right to trade union recognition and then refuse to engage with the state's industrial relations machinery. The CWU is committed to pursuing this matter so that BT workers in ECAS are treated in the same manner as every other vital worker in the emergency services.

Members will be kept up to date with any further developments.

National Safety Representatives Conference



Stephen Elliott, Pascal Connolly, Pat Kenny, Mikey Wall and Martin Duffy.

Representative Conference in Dublin Castle. This event hosted by the Health and Safety Authority was attended by over 250 delegates. This Conference highlighted the great work undertaken by Safety Reps and heard that worker participation is the key to safe and healthy workplaces and those organisations with active safety representatives tend to be safer and healthier for everyone.



Michael Gillen, IBEC, Pat Kenny, CWU, and Dave Hughes, INMO.

At the Conference Dr Joan Cahill from the Health and Safety Authority published the results of its recent survey on the role and perception of Safety Representatives. The purpose of the survey was to understand safety consultation and safety representation from the point of view of different actors/roles across a variety of

sectors, company sizes and perspectives. The results of the survey will provide the Authority with an evidence base which can be used to develop and strengthen the role. It demonstrates that the Authority is listening to the concerns raised by Trade Unions and others involved in the promotion of Safety Representatives and shows a strong commitment and motivation to promote and strengthen the role of the Safety Representatives.

The Authority received nearly 900 responses to its survey. The survey confirmed the benefits of Safety Representatives particularly in relation to consultation, compliance and prevention. It also highlighted areas where there was room for improvement such as management valuing the role, access to inspection reports, training, time to perform the role and awareness.

The Conference also heard from keynote speakers from the Trade Union movement and employer bodies and included panel discussion and round table discussions. A number of Safety Representatives spoke about their experience. Tony Finn (CWU member and Health and Safety Coordinator in An Post) presented on the outcome of a recent audit and highlighted how the Company in conjunction with the Union intends to promote the role next year.

Pat Kenny (ICTU Health and Safety Chairperson) along with David Hughes (former Deputy General Secretary of the INMO) gave the Conference the Trade Union perspective highlighting that the requirement to consult and provide for Safety Representatives are legal rights and not privileges. Pat Kenny stated that Employee



elected Safety Representatives act as a bridge between the workforce and management on safety-related concerns ensuring that safety concerns are escalated, and safety matters are effectively communicated and implemented. Health and Safety Authority Inspectors, he said, play a key role here by raising awareness of this important role and encouraging its take up. It is important in that regard that Inspectors when carrying out inspections seek out the Safety Representative and where they are not in place question why they are not and advise the employer of the requirement to have them and provide for their election.

Anyone interested in taking up the role should contact their Branch Representative.



Pat addresses the Conference.

The result of the survey can be accessed on the link below:

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/enterprise_and_employee_supports/safety_representatives/consultation_and_safety_representatives_survey_2024/

CWU PEOPLE

Dublin Postal Clerks Branch Retirements



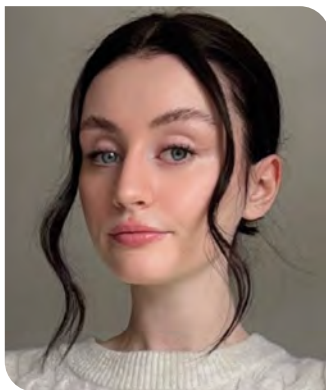
Brian Kane retires after 44 years service as a member of the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch pictured receiving his Union Scroll from Joe Daly Assistant Branch Secretary and Danny Hoare Dublin Postal Clerks Branch Committee.



Three New Recruits for Organising

The CWU’s Organising Strategy, as set out at the Biennial Conference earlier this year, committed to recruit new Organisers into head office to help drive our organising strategy forward. With a long and proud history in organising, the NEC saw that we needed to fill these important posts to continue with our renewal and growth strategy. Following a comprehensive selection and interview process, three successful candidates were chosen to join the team. With thanks to the hardworking interview panel we would like to welcome Siobhán, Shane and John to the CWU and wish them every success in their careers.

Siobhán Kenny has joined the Organising team as our Digital Organiser which is a new role within the CWU and reflects the growing importance of being able to engage and organise current and potential members in new ways in the digital space.



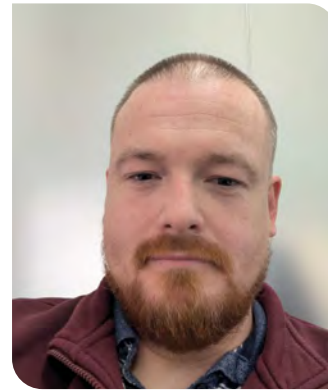
Siobhán Kenny

Siobhán is a recent graduate, having previously worked in the Department of Foreign Affairs. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Advertising and Marketing Communications (First Class Honours) and a Level 5 QQI in Journalism and Digital Media. Siobhán will play a key role in developing our online presence, reviewing and enhancing our social media presence and developing new communication systems to ensure that we remain connected to membership both now and in the future.

Shane Murphy has joined the CWU from Vodafone where he worked for nine years in both retail and consumer operations. Shane joined the CWU while working in retail and quickly got involved with the Vodafone Branch as a Committee member before becoming Branch Secretary in 2020. The Vodafone Branch Secretary role gave him valuable experience in organising and industrial relations.

During this time, he was elected to the National Executive Council (NEC) for two consecutive terms. Over the course of these four years, he was involved

in a number of the NEC sub-committees and had a particular interest in the Organising sub-committee. As a result he championed the organising agenda at every opportunity.



Shane Murphy

Shane is a proud Wexford man, married to Jenny and has three children Seán, Charlie and Layla. He will continue to work closely with the Vodafone Branch as well playing a key role in the CWU organising strategy into the future.

John Bohan has joined the CWU from the Financial Services Union (FSU) where he was an Organiser for two years. During his time there John was heavily involved in the development and execution of the FSU organising strategy and he dealt with tech workers as well as the those working in the banking sector. He was involved in advising members on their workplace rights, assessing whether workplace issues could be collectivised and used as an organising opportunity, and he supported workers in non-union workplaces who were going through redundancy processes.



John Bohan

In the free time John is also a proud member of Community Action Tenants Union (CATU), a voluntary organisation fighting for collective gains in the homes, communities and lives of all of its members.

Shopify Workers Unionise

Shopify, the Canadian e-commerce company, employs over 500 workers in Ireland. In 2022, the company announced a global layoff of 20% of its workforce. To sidestep Irish collective redundancy laws, management opted to make 29 employees redundant each month. This underhanded approach not only avoided any possibility of public scrutiny but prevented workers from electing their own representatives to engage in a 30-day consultation process. This meant that only those directly affected, and their immediate supervisors were informed of the layoffs.

Affected workers were offered 16 weeks of pay, but only if they signed a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) that prohibited any legal action against the company. Faced with the fear of job loss, many felt compelled to accept these terms. For those who remained, each month brought anxiety as they awaited dreaded meeting invites that could signal their own job cuts. Colleagues seemed to vanish overnight, leaving a palpable sense of unease. Once regarded as a great employer, Shopify had transformed into a toxic workplace where employees felt scrutinised at every turn.

In response to this mistreatment, a small group of workers reached out to the Communications Workers Union (CWU) and initiated a campaign to unionise Shopify in Ireland. They held secret online meetings and participated in organizing training, rallying around the message: “Shopify Workers in Ireland demand that the company engage with their workers on the future plans for the Irish operation.” Despite working remotely and never having met in person, their efforts led to a growing union membership, all without management’s knowledge.

In November of this year, Shopify callously altered its layoff tactics, demonstrating a blatant disregard for workers’ rights. Two CWU members were invited to a “catch-up” meeting, only to be blindsided by HR with the shocking news that they were being terminated for alleged underperformance—accusations they had never faced before. This surreptitious approach not only stoked fear among employees but also exemplified a toxic culture of intimidation.

Immediately after their termination, these workers were locked out of company systems, stripped of their access without warning. A termination letter was sent to their personal emails, accompanied by a coercive NDA that offered a meagre payment in exchange for their silence. If they did not sign within seven days, they were threatened with receiving only their notice pay and any outstanding annual leave. This tactic is a clear attempt to deny workers their rights and stifle any dissent, further entrenching a culture of fear and uncertainty among the workforce. Such actions are unacceptable and the CWU

condemns Shopify for their appalling treatment of their workers.

Shopify reported a gross profit of approximately \$3.52 billion in 2023, a 27.6% increase from the previous year. It beggars’ belief that a successful and profitable company would go to such lengths to avoid their responsibility to their staff and deny them any genuine support.

Unfortunately, many of these profitable tech companies adopt practices that circumvent Irish employment legislation, using NDAs to intimidate workers into relinquishing their rights.

Union membership at Shopify continues to grow, and the CWU is committed to representing members who have faced illegal practices. The experiences of Shopify workers are not isolated; many tech employees in Ireland endure similar mistreatment.

As workers across the tech sector begin to unionise, the CWU is actively campaigning to advocate for stronger protections for workers organising a union in their workplace. We are making Respect at Work a general election issue by asking politicians and parties to pledge to support legislation which promotes collective bargaining, protects workplace representatives and ensures the right to access a trade union at work. You can read more about the campaign elsewhere in this issue.

HomeSecure

The CWU would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members in HomeSecure.

HomeSecure was sold to Norwegian group Sector Alarms, which already owns PhoneWatch. The CWU is the recognised union for workers in PhoneWatch. The union successfully secured an agreement with HomeSecure management to meet with their workers.

Over the last number of months, CWU Industrial Organisers arranged meetings with office staff and field engineers to explain the benefits of union membership. We are delighted report many of these workers have made the decision to become CWU members

The CWU Organising Department are continuing to meet HomeSecure staff, and we look forward to welcoming even more new members to our union. An inaugural AGM for the new HomeSecure Branch will be held in the new year and the union will engage with the company on a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the CWU.

VOTE WORKERS' RIGHTS



1 in 5 workers are low paid,
over 400,000 people.
Many more can't afford
to cover their bills.

Working hours are getting longer,
contracts are getting less secure
and people are struggling.

But when workers stand up for
themselves, too many are punished
- or even sacked.

It's time for that to change.

**It's time for legislation
to ensure everyone
has the right to stand
up for better at work**

**See which General
Election candidates
support legislation
to strengthen
workers' rights:**

Respectatwork.ie/ge24/

Ireland has some of the weakest workers' rights in Western Europe. That means far too many people are afraid to stand up for better at work.

SHARON'S STORY



Sharon was a 999 call centre worker. She tried to organise to improve conditions for her and her colleagues.

"As a 999 call centre worker, I tried to organise for the terms and conditions my colleagues deserved. It's a disgrace that we had to speak in hushed tones in dark corridors about unions, but that's the reality in Ireland today.

"We were told that unionising was an act of self-harm, that monkeys could take the calls. I was left with crippling anxiety and low self-esteem.

"Every worker should have a meaningful right to organise for decent pay and liveable conditions at work. And that right needs to be protected in law."

THE FACTS

Research shows that 44% of workers in non-union workplaces would vote to join a union.

But Ireland makes unionising those workplaces extremely difficult – and that needs to change.

Union busting denies workers a voice, and pushes pay and conditions down!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1** Contact General Election candidates to show your support for workers' rights. Go to respectatwork.ie/ge24 to send an email – it takes one minute!
- 2** Ask your General Election candidates to pledge to support new legislation to promote collective bargaining and protect workers' rights.
- 3** Join the campaign and help us to fight for workers' rights. Sign up at respectatwork.ie to find out how you can get involved.



@respectatworkie
respectatwork.ie

Press Launch of ground-breaking Union Busting report



CWU Delegation at Leinster House

In October, the Respect at Work campaign launched a groundbreaking research paper into union-busting in Ireland with a press event in Buswell's hotel. The launch was well-attended by the media and by politicians from the main opposition parties.

The report – **Union Busting: An Inconvenient Truth** – confirmed issues that the CWU has been aware of while organising in companies throughout Ireland.

As shown in the report, union busting in Ireland is real, widespread and must end. Employers are actively blocking workers from joining unions and fighting for fair conditions. This isn't just an inconvenience—it's a violation of workers' rights.

With the announcement of a general election, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to change things. We want election candidates to support the Respect at Work pledge for workers' rights which can be found at the website - [Respectatwork.ie/ge24/](https://respectatwork.ie/ge24/)

To get workers' rights onto the agenda for a future government, thousands of leaflets have been sent out to members to give to candidates on the doorsteps. **We have all heard what government is doing for business. Now it's time to hear what they are willing to do for workers.** When candidates call to your door, make sure they know that your vote depends on their support for workers' rights.

You can visit RespectatWork.ie for more information and to lend your voice to the campaign by signing up to get the updates.



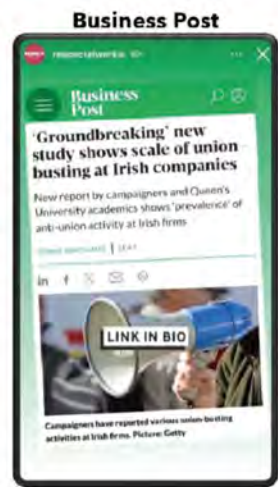
It's time for action on workers' rights

Show your support, visit: respectatwork.ie/pledge



The highlight of the event was the testimony of two workers – one from Mandate and our own Sharon Gill from ECAS 999 (pictured on the right) who, as always, spoke powerfully of her own personal experience of union busting while organising her workplace.

General Election Campaign



This household is voting for workers' rights

Injustice is rampant in Irish workplaces. But when workers try to unionise, many are victimised – or even sacked.

Respect at Work is calling for legislation to ensure that everyone has the right to stand up for better working conditions.

Hundreds of thousands of thousands of union members will vote in this election.

Will you pledge to support a new law protecting workers' rights?



Unions call on next government to respect workers' rights

by Brian O'Donovan
Work & Technology Correspondent, RTÉ Online

RTÉ



RESPECT.
at work

The pledge calls for legislation to promote collective bargaining, protect workplace representatives and ensure the right to access a trade union

A group of trade unions will today launch its General Election pledge calling on the next government to respect workers' rights.

The **'Respect at Work'** campaign is backed by SIPTU, the Financial Services Union (FSU), the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) and Mandate.

The campaign said it is approaching parties and candidates from across the political spectrum to ask them to pledge their support for legislative change to boost workers' rights.

The pledge commits politicians to support legislation that promotes collective bargaining, protects workplace representatives and ensures the right to access a trade union at work.

"We have half the European average of workers covered by collective agreements and the flimsiest protections for workplace representatives on the continent," said campaign spokesperson Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin.

"With over 400,000 workers now low paid across our economy, politicians must commit to legislative change," Ms Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin said.

Last week, the Government said it expected to meet a deadline to transpose an EU directive on workers' rights.

Unions however accused the State of not fully implementing the rules by failing to pass new legislation.

The EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages seeks to reduce working poverty and inequality by improving statutory minimum wages, as well as the promotion of collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is the process of negotiation between employers and employee representatives such as trade unions.

Under the directive, member states with less than 80% collective bargaining coverage, which includes Ireland, must establish an action plan to promote collective bargaining.

The Department of Enterprise said it has received legal advice that Ireland's current minimum wage setting framework, namely the Low Pay Commission, is largely already in compliance with the provisions of the directive, although there will be some amendments to the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 to bring the framework completely into line with the directive.

"No new legislation is required on the collective bargaining side. It is expected that the transposition deadline will be met," a Department spokesperson said.

Bid to make worker rights a doorstep issue launched by union group

'I don't think I've ever heard government say now is a great time to look after workers,' says campaigner.

by Emmet Malone, **THE IRISH TIMES**
Work Correspondent, Irish Times Online



Union members Pretty Ndawo, Shane Murphy, Lynda Scully and Andy Kehan at Liberty Hall in Dublin at the launch of the Respect at Work campaign.

Photograph: Leah Farrell/Photocall Ireland

"Ireland is the wild west when it comes to workers' rights," said Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin on Monday as the trade union Respect at Work launched a campaign to make employment issues such as collective bargaining and recognition doorstep issues in the general election.

The campaign is asking candidates to commit to backing workers' rights legislation after the election. It wants union members to press candidates about the issue over the remaining 10 days of the campaign.

The push to prioritise the issue comes after the Government opted not to legislate for the transposition of the European Union Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, with its provisions on the promotion of collective bargaining. A deadline last week was missed after the Attorney General said no new laws were required.

Employers are free to decide whether they recognise or deal with unions representing their staff. Unions say this has led to a steady decline in their private-sector membership.

They say change is needed more than ever now to stem the rise of the far right by addressing its claims that the concerns of large sections of the population are being ignored by the political mainstream.

"What we're looking for is new legislation to protect workplace representatives, protect the right to organise in the workplace and provide for genuine collective bargaining in Ireland," said Ms Ní Bhrógáin.

"The outgoing Government supported this directive in Europe and that directive requires the Government not just to support collective bargaining but to promote it. We currently have half the rate of coverage of our EU peers."

Lynda Scully, a supervisor at the Dublin 12 Jobs Initiative and a Siptu activist, said it had taken workers in her sector 15 years to achieve recognition but that the benefits since they succeeded had been clear.

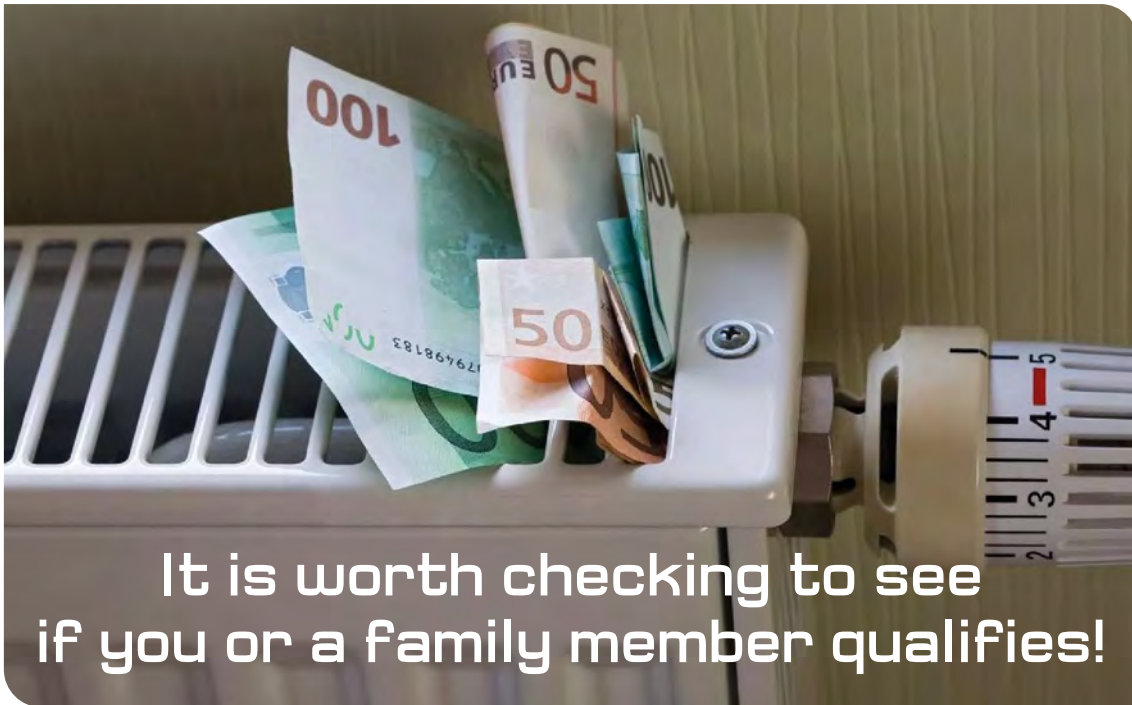
"It was difficult because we are so dispersed, across the whole country, and so it was difficult to organise people but since it was agreed we have received our first pay rise in 15 years, we now have a mechanism for sitting down and speaking with our employer when we are due another one. What we want is other workers to have that."

Asked if she felt the Government's reluctance to legislate might be rooted to any concern about the election of Donald Trump in the United States and fears of adding to the uncertainty around future foreign direct investment, she was sceptical.

"I don't think I've ever heard any government say now is a great time to look after workers. They'll always come up with an excuse, whether it's a recession, whether it's Trump, whether it's Covid. That can't be the argument.

"Nobody's looking to be a millionaire here but we have to make sure that we have fairness in the workplace."

Fuel Allowance for over-66s



Fuel Allowance is a payment to help with the cost of heating your home during the winter months. Worth €924 a year which you can get in two payments of €462 or €33 a week for 28 weeks between September and April.

There have been big changes to the qualifying rules for over-66s. As a result, 85,000 more older people are now eligible for Fuel Allowance.

NEW Qualifying Conditions (from 1 January 2025)

People aged 66 and over no longer need to be getting a weekly social welfare payment to be eligible for Fuel Allowance, **such as Class D PRSI**.

New Maximum Weekly Income Limits

Single people over 66 will be able to have an income of up to €524 a week to qualify. Couples with one person over the age of 66 will be able to have a combined income up to €1,048 a week. This includes the person's State pension.

This is an increase from €373 for a single person and €600 for a couple from January 2023.

New Savings Limits

The amount of savings and investments that are disregarded in the means test for the Fuel Allowance for people aged over 66s have more than doubled.

The first €50,000 is now be completed disregarded. If you have savings above this amount you may be entitled to a reduced weekly Fuel Allowance payment.

Other Qualifying Conditions (no change)

To get Fuel Allowance you must be living alone or only living with

- A spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and/ or dependent children.
- A person getting Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit and is caring for you or your spouse or partner on a full-time basis.
- A person getting Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Other people who would also be eligible for a Fuel Allowance.

Lower Energy Bills

People who receive Fuel Allowance are eligible for free energy efficiency improvements up to €30,000 on your family home if it was built before 2006.

This government-funded scheme from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) will get you a warmer home and lower energy bills.

An SEAI surveyor will visit your home and recommend the upgrades needed based on its age, size and your heating system. The SEAI will hire a contractor to carry out the work.

Older people in receipt of Fuel Allowance are the main beneficiaries of this scheme.

Further information

You can find out more information about the Fuel Allowance payment here and about the fully-funded SEAI energy upgrades to homeowners here.

All I Want For Christmas...

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS UNION

RESPECT.
at work

I PLEDGE

to support legislation which promotes
collective bargaining,
protects workplace representatives
and ensures the right
to access a trade union at work.

Signed: _____

respectnetwork.ie

RESPECT.
at work

Telephonists' Struggle for Equal Pay in the 1970s

This year marks 50 years since the enactment of the first piece of equality legislation in Ireland, the Anti-Discrimination Pay Act (1974) which became law on Ireland's accession to the European Union, or the European Economic Community [EEC] as it was then called. As we head into the last quarter of 2024, neither our government or the trade union movement have acknowledged one of the most significant pieces of labour law ever enacted in this country and one that predominantly benefited working women.

Background

Up until the 1970s, workplace discrimination against women was widespread, and related not only to pay, but also to far inferior working conditions compared to their male colleagues. The harsh treatment of working women was simply the tip of the iceberg for women generally, as their everyday life was very much inferior to that of men. Some examples of societal discriminations experienced at the time were, that a woman could not sit on a jury; or open a bank account, get a loan or a mortgage in her own name. Contraceptives were not available to her, nor could she get a barring order against a violent partner.

The 1937 Irish Constitution laid down largely a subservient role for women in terms of child bearer and family carer. The Catholic church used their dominance in Irish life at the time, and supplied the government with theories of Catholic principles on the family, marriage, and private property, and helped draft articles along these lines to be included in the constitution. So early marriage, rearing children and focus on the family became the accepted role for women in Irish society for the next three decades.

By the mid 1960s, the growth and activities of feminist groups in many countries, particularly in the United States, was beginning to take hold, which resulted in positive changes for women. These images and messages were now being beamed into Irish households through the new media of television and became influential. The emergence of similar groups in Ireland, such as the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, and Irish Women United, challenged Irish women to wake up and demand changes in their society. One of the most controversial actions by the IWLM was the "contraceptive train," when on the 22nd May 1971, a group of women travelled to Belfast, bought contraceptives, and imported them back into Dublin. On their arrival at Connolly Railway Station, they taunted customs control officials to arrest them, showing off their illegal purchases. The event was a major triumph for the group, and they received widespread publicity. However, not all women agreed with such tactics, or the demands being made for change

on issues like birth control, abortion and divorce. But by the early 1970s it was clear an ever-growing number of Irish women were now demanding major change on issues that constrained their lives, whether political, legal, religious, or socio-economic.

Working Women & Pay Inequality

Paid work for women in Ireland throughout the decades up to the early 1970s was seen as a gap-filler between school and marriage, with the exception of those who remained single or became widowed.

The marriage bar was introduced into the public sector in the 1920s and required women to leave their jobs when they got married and disqualified married women from applying for permanent posts in the Service. The same practise was applied informally in many private sector employments. Gender discrimination was further reinforced through the centralised pay bargaining process between trade unions, employers, and the government throughout the 1960s, whereby women received lower wage increases to men, the assumption being that a man was supporting a family whereas a woman was living in the family home with little expense. By 1971, women were only earning 59% of male rates. The male dominance of the trade union movement allowed most unions to ignore their much smaller women membership and the issues that affected them.

Ireland made application to join the European Economic Community [now the EU] in the late 1960s but it was significantly out of step with all EEC membership countries regarding workers' rights and protections. It was the principle of equal pay for work of equal value where Ireland was most seriously out of line. While the 1974 National Wage Agreement made provision for employers to reduce workplace pay inequality between men and women, this clause was largely ignored, as women were a cheaper form of labour in many employments. When the Anti-Discrimination [Pay] Act 1974, became law on the 1st January 1975, it would be a game changer for women and unions to pursue claims for equal pay against a male counterpart under any of three grounds, which were,

1. where both performed similar work, under similar conditions and were interchangeable.
2. where some minor differences occurred but were only of small importance in relation to the work as a whole performed, and
3. where work of both the man and the woman were equal in value, in demands such as skill, physical or mental effort, responsibility and working conditions are equal.

POWU campaign for Equal Pay for Women Telephonists



MISS M. J. McPARTLIN

The commitment to equality by the Post Office Workers' Union [POWU] now CWU, long predates the equality legislation. From the early 1940s it consistently debated equal pay motions at Union Conferences, much due to the work of Maureen McPartlin, a telephonist in the Central Telephone Exchange in Dublin, and the Union General Secretary, William Norton TD. McPartlin went on to

become the first woman Chair of the Union in 1946.

The Union served a formal claim for equal pay on behalf of its women members in all grades in the post office, as part of the general civil service claim in 1969. The employer (the government) roundly rejected the claims, and no progress could be made. In 1972 POWU

General Secretary, Terry Quinlan, served an equal pay claim for women day telephonists against their male night counterparts. When the claim was rejected by the post office, it was submitted to the Equal Pay Commissioner (set up under the national wage agreement) for adjudication. After almost a year of deliberating, his decision was, that while the actual work of the two grades was the same, he rejected the claim saying, *"the male night telephonists*

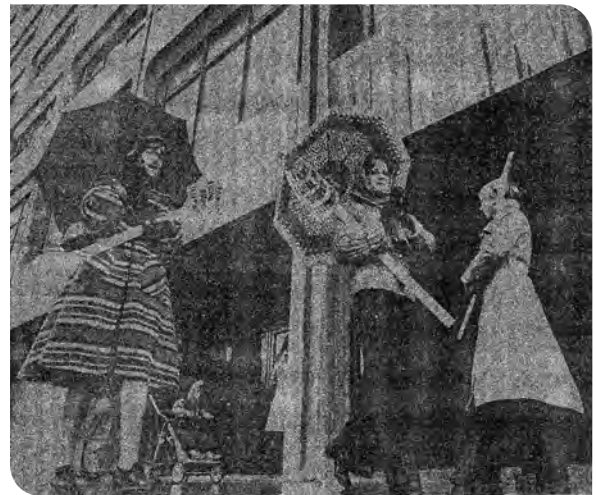
are not fully compensated by the night duty allowance, or otherwise than in basic pay." Both the Union and the women were incensed by the outcome, and while Quinlan systematically tore the decision to shreds for its inconsistencies and failures, it was the women themselves that decided to let their feeling be seen by taking industrial action. The first ever work stoppage and walk-out by 1200 women day telephonists took place from 3pm to 4pm on 12 August 1975. The women's industrial action was fully supported by their POWU male night colleagues.

The Union appealed the decision to the Labour Court, who took six months to reject the Union's case on all grounds. The Court's decision resulted in a co-ordinated walkout by the women telephonists



Terry Quinlan, General Secretary, POWU

throughout the country, thereby throwing the telephone service nationally into chaos. It should be remembered this was the time when the phone system in Ireland was almost totally manual and phone calls were connected by telephone operators. Newspapers reported the unprecedented disruption with headlines like *"Telephone service breakdown 'probable'"* [Evening Herald 12 August 1976] and *"Chaos in telephone service from today,"* [Irish Press 13 August 1976]. The following week the Department of Post & Telegraphs had to admit that a work-to-rule was in operation by women telephonists throughout the length and breadth of the country, which was causing considerable disruption in the telephone service.



Telephonists who are on strike over equal pay claim picketing the exchange at Marlborough Street, Dublin yesterday. – (Photograph: Tom Lawlor) - 1978

As a result of the successful action, the Department offered to re-enter fresh talks on the issue with their Union if the industrial action ceased. Albeit reluctant to do so, and after much debate, the women agreed to stand down their action in favour of immediate fresh talks to negotiate a solution to their claim. When proposals emerged that fell short of full equal pay, they were rejected by the women. As the talks dragged towards year-end, and with no resolution in sight, Dublin women telephonists met and decided it was time for more radical action to resolve their equal pay claim. In late January 1977, a General Meeting of all women telephonists in Dublin mandated their union officers to seek official strike sanction from their union in support of their equal pay claim.

On the 2nd February 1977, I led a small delegation to address the Union's National Executive Committee seeking official union sanction for an equal pay strike. The odds were vastly against us getting such sanction, as official strikes in equal pay disputes were prohibited under clause 14 of the National Wage Agreement. Having laid out our case, we argued our reasoning calmly and systematically. The Executive acceded to our request by granting two days of strike action starting

on the 7 March in all Dublin telephone exchanges. We decided to reconfigure the two days strike into four days action. This was done by splitting up the days and taking out different exchanges on alternative days, this allowed us to run the strike over almost an entire week

Money at the root of telephonists' unrest



*Telephonists at a protest march in Dublin last week.
(March in Dublin, December 1978)*

The strike days were an overwhelming success with the entire telephone system in Dublin grinding almost to a halt over that entire week. The general public and businesses were so confused by the alternating of strike areas that they largely thought all services were on strike for the entire week. We knew one week's action would not be enough, we immediately requested additional strike sanction. Again, the same delegation met the Union's National Executive Committee and put our proposal for further strike action. Four more days strike action was agreed, and they took place on the 15 and 16 March followed by the 23 and 24 March 1977.

The combined action was very successful, but consequences lay ahead for the Union's support for industrial action, and Terry Quinlan realised he had to manoeuvre cautiously so as not to be found in breach of the National Wage Agreement. But as ever the expert contortionist, he argued that by granting the limited strike action, he avoided an all-out strike by women telephonist nationally on the issue. He ably deflected criticism of his union into discussions as to how the current impasse



*Lilly Toner outside CTW
Exchequer Street Equal Pay
Strike.*

could be overcome and the women's claim address. After intensive negotiations, a formula emerged that offered an immediate resumption of direct talks between the parties, and if these talks failed, then both sides would submit the claim under the Anti-discrimination [Pay] Act 1974, for a decision to the new office of the Equality Officers. Quinlan brought the proposals to a General Meeting of the Dublin women telephonists seeking their agreement. He knew he had no easy audience, but while the women were reluctant to re-engage again in a talks process with the post office, they trusted Quinlan's judgement and overwhelmingly accepted the proposals.



*Telephonists delegates at the POWU Conference 1977.
L to r: Lilly Toner, Ita Tangney, Margaret de Courcey (Dublin
Telephones), Rose O'Callaghan (Cork Telephones),
and Margaret McGinley (Buncrana Telephones)*

Over the following months of talks, new proposals emerged but again all fell short of equal pay and were rejected by the women. When these direct talks broke down, the mechanism agreed for reference to the Equality Officer was triggered. Quinlan and the women's local Union Representatives put considerable work into drafting the Union's case. Senator Mary Robinson was brought on board by the Union to assist and advise on the claim. She was the leading expert in equality and European legislation in Ireland at the time, and her knowledge was invaluable. The Union's extensive submissions were completed and registered with the equality officer in December 1977.

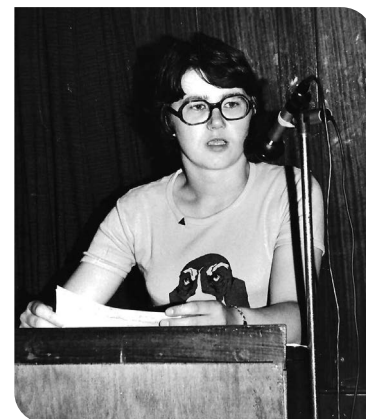
Over the years the employer side, the Department of Post & Telegraphs, were always slow in responding to this claim, but it was the Office of the Equality Officer that proved to be the stumbling block in getting our claim actively addressed at this point. Almost the whole year of 1978 evaporated as we waited patiently for our case to be investigated, and an outcome. The Union kept up the pressure by calling on the Government to intervene in the process, but all to no avail, so again the women telephonists took to the streets and brought the claim front and centre again into the public domain. A major walkout of all Dublin telephone exchanges took place on the 7 December 1978. Women telephonists

marched through Dublin city centre demanding an answer to their claim. We handed in a letter of protest to the POWU Union Headquarters in Parnell Square, looking for immediate action to bring this unacceptable delay to an end. Next the women marched to the Department of Labour on Mespil Road, where a letter of protest was also handed in. Coverage of the protest was extensive that evening on RTE news programs both radio and television.

(<https://www.rte.ie/archives/2023/1121/1417716-telephonists-call-for-equal-pay/>)

Equal Pay Decision

The long-awaited Equality Officer's decision in the claim was issued on 2 February 1979. Her recommendation ran to forty-seven pages, but she concluded that the women were entitled to equal pay. The decision was met with euphoria throughout the Union as a whole, but it was the women telephonists nationally that celebrated the victory. No appeal of the decision was made by the employer side. We felt at the time that their acceptance of the decision was a calculated attempt by the post office management to try and cajole the women back to work, thereby breaking the national postal strike that had started in February 1979. As always, the post office totally underestimated the women who would steadfastly participate fully in the national strike with all the other grades until the strike was resolved in June 1979.



*Margaret de Courcey,
Branch Secretary,
Dublin Telephones
1978 POWU
Conference*

Conclusion

This is a very brief version of a book I have just written on this most important struggle for equal pay. The CWU (formally POWU) stands alone as the only Union in fifty years of equality legislation who were prepared to sanction a strike for the right of their women members to be paid the same rate for the job as their male counterpart. Finally, this success story would not have happened without the work and role played by Terry Quinlan, General Secretary, and the National Executive Committee of the Union, who fearlessly stood up to the sexism of the day. But it was the telephonists' women themselves that I acknowledge as the heroines of this story, who not only believed in equality but would accept nothing less than making equality for them a reality.

FINDING

PATSY

I have received a phone call from a gentleman called Gerry Long, who lives on Lennox Street, off South Circular Road. He is seeking our help to find his long-lost neighbour, Patsy O'Neill, who is a retired postman who used to live on Lennox Place off South Circular Road, but now lives near Harolds Cross, or so Gerry believes. Any help would be much appreciated. Gerry knows his GDPR very well: if we help to locate Patsy, and after obtaining Patsy's permission, we can then contact Gerry to let him know. Anyone with any information please contact: Imelda@cwu.ie or call (01) 8663000



BREAST CANCER IRELAND

researching a cure

CWU Continues To Work With Breast Cancer Ireland



The CWU was delighted to once again work with Breast Cancer Ireland over the last year to roll out lunch and learn sessions. The purpose of the sessions is to raise awareness of breast health and to emphasise the importance of early detection.



Breast Cancer Awareness Session in the EXO

Our work with Breast Cancer Ireland is a continuation of our commitment to the health and wellbeing of members. We worked with An Post, and eir to host a series of Breast Cancer Awareness talks across numerous locations.

Alarmingly, every 29 seconds someone in the world is diagnosed with breast cancer which is why we partnered with Breast Cancer Ireland to deliver these sessions.

Breast Cancer Ireland gives valuable information on the signs and symptoms of breast cancer in these sessions which includes when and how to seek professional medical advice and provides resources and support for anyone affected by breast health issues. In addition, they have a demonstration on a mannequin on how to conduct a self-breast check.

We have worked closely with eir and An Post which was very successful and our thanks to both employers for hosting. In eir we covered all the call centres and the HSQ and in An Post we covered the EXO, Dublin; Limerick DSU, Dublin Mails Centre, Portlaoise Mails Centre, Cork Distribution Centre, Athlone Mails Centre and Castlebar DSU.

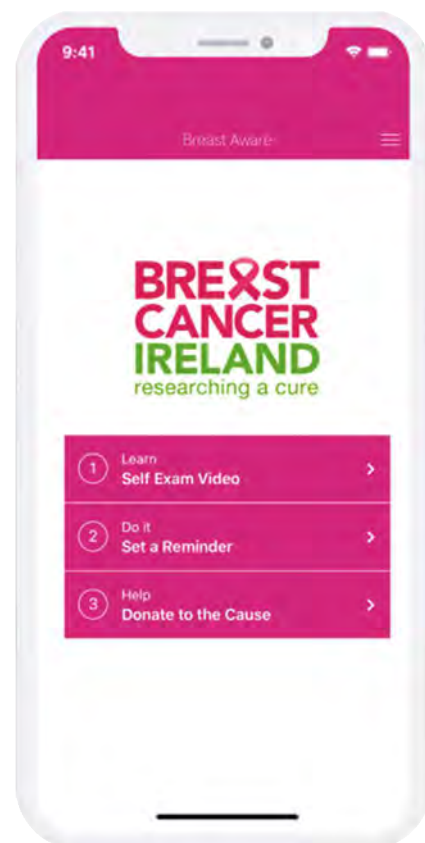
We hope once again to roll the sessions out in other areas.

What to expect:

- Expert-led talk on breast health, including how to perform self-examinations.
- Information on the signs and symptoms of breast cancer.
- Guidance on when and how to seek professional medical advice.
- Resources and support for anyone affected by breast health issues.

Talks are open to all employees working in and around the locations listed and we strongly encourage our members to attend when it is on offer.

For those who can't make a session, online information will be available at Breast Cancer Ireland. We also encourage members to download the Breast Aware app





CWU Develops further Collaboration with AsIAm



CWU Representatives at the AsIAm Seminar.

The Union continues to work with AsIAm, Ireland’s autism awareness charity. Several senior union officials attended a half day training programme to develop our work as we see that there is a real need for awareness and supports in the workplace. According to AsIAm one in 25 people are autistic and while in recent years autism has become a more recognisable issue with greater understanding, there is still a lot to be done particularly in the workplace.

Several topics were covered in the training from the language of inclusion to dispelling the myths around autism. We also discussed the various types of reasonable accommodation and supports that can be implemented at work. The supports listed included sensory PPE, adequate lighting, neutral office colours, appropriate seating, mentoring as well as sensory breaks and sensory workplace maps. This is not exhaustive as accommodations need to be tailored to suit the individual.

Overall, there are very simple supports that can be provided in consultation with the individual employee so that they can participate at work to the maximum of their abilities. The union will be

working with AsIAm into 2025 as we aim to ensure a more inclusive union and workplaces for our members.

AsIAm provides supports to autistic adults, employers, as well as parents and family members. For further information please see www.asiam.ie

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WWW.CWU.IE



EU Commissioners need to make collective bargaining compulsory in procurement revision

The CWU has, for a long time, been an advocate for better public procurement rules that demand that public contracts must respect workers' rights and collective bargaining. Our Union has seen what first hand happens when state contracts are given to companies that do not respect basic workers' rights. The CWU fully supports the UNI Europa 'No Public Contract Without Collective Agreement' campaign to change the rules of public procurement.

clearly the goal, offering best support and resources for workers."

UNI Europa urges collective bargaining to be the guiding principle in the Commission's overhaul of procurement rules. The millions of working people whose pay and working conditions are being worsened by the EU's broken public procurement rules must not have their voices drowned out by an army of corporate lobbyists. The imbalance of the public money driving



This campaign has made good progress of late. During hearings in the European Parliament, EU Commissioners-designate committed to overcoming lowest-price competition and promoting social criteria in public procurement. UNI Europa urges them to make collective bargaining the guiding principle in the Commission's overhaul of procurement rules.

Commissioners-designate Roxana Mînzatu and Stéphane Séjourné committed to overcoming lowest-price competition and promoting social criteria in public procurement, as Members of European Parliament questioned them on their legislative projects today. But millions of workers across the EU are looking for more: an unequivocal commitment to compulsory social criteria, in particular respect for collective bargaining, in public tenders to strengthen workers' rights, pay and working conditions.

A little over a month before the hearings, over 1,000 essential workers from nine countries mobilised in Brussels for public procurement reform that improves pay and conditions for millions of workers across the EU.

During the hearings, Commissioner-designate Séjourné clearly stated that "we shouldn't just go for the lowest bid", specifying the need to "look at working conditions and salaries" in order to "factor that into our assessment of bids". Commissioner-designate Mînzatu intends to work with Séjourné to promote social criteria in public procurement, saying "collective bargaining is

down workers' pay and conditions must be urgently fixed.

Background

UNI Europa research shows that half of all public tenders across the EU are awarded solely based on the lowest price, often due to procurement rules. These rules overlook the social costs to communities and undermine Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's promise of quality jobs, quality services and increasing collective bargaining coverage to "support fair wages, good working conditions, training and fair job transitions for workers".

In an open letter, over 100 leading world-leading economists, including Thomas Piketty and Isabella Weber, diagnosed that "current procurement practices – with their dominant focus on the lowest price in tenders – create market conditions that allow bidders to disregard social criteria" and expressed their support for workers' demands for "a reform of the EU public procurement rules that strengthens collective bargaining and improves working conditions in labour-intensive sectors".

During the European Parliament's first plenary session in October, a majority of parliamentarians supported "a revision of the directives on public procurement to ensure they promote collective bargaining."



UNI Report on Organising and Collective Bargaining for Remote Work

Over 50 trade union leaders, experts, and representatives from nearly 20 countries convened in Antwerp, Belgium, on 14 November, 2024 to address the challenges of organising and bargaining collectively in an era increasingly dominated by remote work. The conference, organised by UNI Europa, marked the conclusion of the EU-funded project “*Addressing Remote Work through Collective Bargaining and Organising*” (ARCO).

Participants from the finance and ICTS sectors highlighted the need for robust trade union strategies to protect workers in sectors transformed by remote work. While remote work has created benefits for workers – such as improved work-life balance and greater workforce inclusion – it has also led to challenges such as isolation, increased workloads, and inequities in who can benefit from flexible arrangements.

Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary of UNI Europa, opened the conference by underscoring the importance of equitable remote work policies. “*Workers deserve a real say and more pay — and shouldn’t pay extra for working from home,*” he said, pointing to the risks of overwork. Data shows that remote workers are six times more likely to work outside regular hours, a trend that UNI Europa and its affiliated trade unions argue must be addressed to protect workers’ rights.

Our own Carol Scheffer, UNI World Women’s President and one of the leaders on the project commented, “*this has been a very important project, and it has highlighted real challenges, as well meaningful benefits, arising from remote work. But crucially the report provides concrete recommendations to empower trade unions to negotiate strong collective bargaining agreements on remote work.*”

Legislative and cultural change

Esther Lynch, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), emphasised the need for EU-wide legislation to address emerging challenges. Central to her address was the call for a “right to disconnect,” a policy designed to shield workers from the encroachment of work on personal time.

Heejung Chung, Professor of Work and Employment at King’s College London, reflected on “the flexibility paradox” when considering why flexible working leads to more (self-)exploitation. While acknowledging the

need for new leadership models, she insisted that individual policies are counterproductive. Instead, this paradox needs to be addressed through collective action and bargaining.

Kalina Arabadjieva, a Senior Researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), spoke to the cultural shifts required for fair remote work practices. “A telework culture should be normalised to ensure fairness for everyone – for those who embrace remote work and those who do not,” she said, reflecting a broader consensus among the attendees.

UNI Europa has long been at the forefront of advocating for workers’ rights in remote work. In 2021, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we published the “*UNI Key Trade Union Principles for Ensuring Workers’ Rights When Working Remotely.*” The guide offers a blueprint for collective bargaining agreements that safeguard workers’ rights and conditions amid the rapid shift to remote work.

A new report on remote work

The ARCO project built on this legacy with two workshops held earlier this year. The first, in Paris, focused on organising remote workers and negotiating strong agreements, while the second, in Dublin, explored the impact of remote work on gender, diversity and inclusion.

The outcomes of these workshops were discussed during the conference, with UNI Europa Organising Director Ben Egan, Adrian Soare (FSAB, Romania) and Hanneli Lindholm (Swedish Engineers) reflecting on organising remote workers, while UNI Europa Equal Opportunities Director Amel Djemail, Frédéric de Fondaumière (FBA-CFDT, France) and Riccarda Darmanin (GWU, Malta) showcased trade union actions to stop remote work from having a negative impact on women and minorities in the workplace.

During the Conference, the external project researcher Dr Nicole Helmerich presented the outcome of these workshops and the concluding project report “*Trade Unions in the New World of Remote Work: The Challenges and Opportunities of Bargaining Collectively in Finance and ICTS*”. The report will be available to download from cwu.ie and it includes practical tools such as a checklist for negotiating collective bargaining agreements on remote work.

Collective Bargaining Workshop



In October, the CWU hosted an international UNI Europa workshop on the strengthening of collective bargaining through National Action Plans linked to the Minimum Wage Directive in countries with medium collective bargaining coverage.

The discussion focussed on countries with company-level bargaining, but no or limited multi-employer

(sectoral) bargaining and explored opportunities to strengthen both.

Using highly interactive sessions including power mapping to assess how to secure to policy change, Organisers from Ireland, Czechia, Cyprus, Malta and Croatia examined issues such as the protection of employee representatives, the access of workers to unions and public procurement.

CWU PEOPLE

Dublin Postal Clerks Branch Retirements



Willie Mooney presents the Union Scroll to Mary Gaynor, who has 25 year's service.



Willie Mooney presents the Union Scroll to Aiden Grattan, who has 42 years' service.

DPD Pays €70m Dividend from Bumper Profits

Independent Online - Gordon Deegan



Photo caption: DPD's Athlone facility can handle up to 21,000 parcels an hour. Photo: Getty

The country's largest dedicated parcel delivery firm, DPD Ireland, has this year paid out a €70m dividend from the bumper profits recorded in recent years.

The post balance sheet dividend payout is disclosed in new accounts for Interlink Ireland Ltd, trading as DPD Ireland, which show that pre-tax profits last year increased by 15.6pc to €25.5m.

The €25.5m pre-tax profits for last year follow pre-tax profits of €22.06m in 2022.

The profits followed revenues rising by 3pc from €182.5m to €188.6m and the increase last year followed a 17pc drop in revenues in 2022. The principal activity of the firm is to provide an overnight service for the collection and delivery of parcels, through a network of franchises and network members in Ireland.

The directors state that "turnover has remained relatively stable" from 2022 after the drop-off from Covid volumes that year.

"The expectation of management is that turnover will remain consistent if not slightly increase in the following years," they say.

The business's operating profits last year increased by 6pc to €23.3m and interest payments received of €2.19m resulted in the pre-tax profits of €25.5m.

In 2000, the business became part of Geopost, the parcels and express arm of La Poste, the French Post

Office, and the Irish business renamed itself DPD in 2008.

The Company's Athlone facility can handle up to 21,000 parcels an hour. Numbers employed last year totalled 481 as staff costs rose from €19.49m to €22.06m. The profit for last year takes account of non-cash depreciation costs of €3.77m.

A breakdown of revenues shows that €162.45m of revenues were generated in Ireland with €26.15m in the UK.

Pay to directors decreased from €1.2m to €1.05m, made up of emoluments of €900,000 and pension contributions of €152,000.

The Company last year recorded a post-tax profit of €22.52m after incurring a corporation tax charge of €2.98m.

The Company's balance sheet strengthened throughout the pandemic and since.

Ahead of the €70m dividend payout this year, shareholder funds on December 31 last totalled €128.53m. This compared with pre-pandemic shareholder funds of €52.96m at the end of 2019. The company had accumulated profits of €127.4m on December 31.

The firm's cash funds last year reduced from €6.7m to €5.14m.



CWU Training – UPS Cork & Shannon

The new collective Agreement that was signed between CWU and UPS last year includes an agreed method of weekly engagement between Local CWU Representatives and local management. The purpose of this engagement is to resolve issues at the local level in the first instance and to facilitate a clear and structured way of addressing concerns that arise for members.

Any issues that are not resolved at this level will then be referred to Union Head Office and UPS senior management for resolution. Additionally, it has also been agreed that a CWU Representative will attend the CHSP meetings to raise and address concerns that emerge in relation to Health & Safety.

The Union reached agreement with the Company on the release of the Representatives from Cork and Shannon to attend Union training so that local CWU Representatives were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to utilize the engagement structures effectively.

In September, CWU Representatives, Lawrence Mullen from UPS Shannon and Donal Feehan from UPS Cork, attended CWU Head Office for two separate training days. The first day of training covered all the

key components that are required to run an effective Branch Committee. This included how to conduct effective meetings with Company management. The roles and responsibilities of Representatives and what their function is in ensuring that the local Branch conducts its business in an effective way for Members was also covered.

From a Representative perspective, attendees were brought through how to conduct representations in grievance and disciplinary procedures. The second day covered the key components of Organising within the Branch with a particular focus on member participation and involvement as a prerequisite to power and democracy within the workplace. To this end, both sites will hold their Annual General Meetings early in the New Year and details of nomination procedures, dates and venues will issue in due course.

The training was delivered within the context of the agreed engagement structures mentioned above. The training and the engagement structure means that the UPS Branches are now empowered to address Members' issues locally on a day-to-day basis.

DPD Athlone – Training Day

CWU activists in DPD Athlone attended a training day centred on organising and building the participation of members within the Branch in the Athlone Hub. The training day comes on the back of several issues that were identified by Supervisors/Team Leaders and the Shunter/Traffic groups that they wish to address and has seen a steady increase in union membership.

The participation of activists on the day was energised and focused on a new pay agreement for 2025. Activists discussed the company's performance which has attracted much media coverage over recent months (See article below) with bumper profits being announced and bumper dividends being paid out to shareholders. There is no doubt that the company has been managed extremely well through the two major crises that workers have faced in recent history, namely the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The consensus among the group was that CWU members have played a significant role in that success, and given the rude financial health that the company finds itself in and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the expectation is that they will be recognised as such in the upcoming pay negotiations in March 2025.

There was also broad agreement among participants that the full implementation of the new Global agreement mentioned above is essential.

As part of the preparations for the pay agreement, activists agreed that the first step should be to conduct a survey of all staff on the impact of the cost of living. The survey has been issued, is open to all staff in DPD Athlone, and should be shared with as many of your colleagues as possible.

You can scan the QR Code here to take the survey or share it on to your colleagues.



DPD – UNI Sign New Agreement with Geopost



UNI Global Union (UNI) has signed a new groundbreaking agreement with DPD's parent company Geopost. The new agreement is an addendum to the 2017 global agreement and expands the scope of coverage and strengthens the rights of DPD workers to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Importantly, the new agreement also covers subcontract workers.

As an affiliate of UNI, CWU officials were part of the UNI negotiating team that brought about the new agreement and were successful in achieving stronger language on collective bargaining to reflect the weak legislation in Ireland. CWU will play a central role in ensuring the agreement is deployed both in Ireland and globally.

What does this mean for DPD workers in Ireland?

Traditionally, the CWU has had representation rights for the night staff only in the Athlone Hub. However, in line with this new agreement, negotiations are underway to extend our representation rights in the Athlone Hub. This means that all DPD workers in Athlone will have the right to be represented by the CWU as part of the new agreement. As part of these discussions, both CWU and DPD Ireland management have committed to finalise the new collective agreement for Athlone by February 2025.

Once agreed, arrangements will be finalised for CWU to begin engaging with workers on the day shift in Athlone so that those workers can have their issues addressed through their union. Once those discussions have concluded the focus will then shift to the DPD Depots and how the new addendum will be applied within the network here in Ireland.

Please see the full press release below for further details.

Uni Global Union and Geopost Strengthen and Extend Global Agreement.

UNI Global Union and Geopost have signed a groundbreaking addendum to their 2017 global agreement, expanding Geopost's human rights responsibilities to more workers within its operations, including subcontractors. Notably, the new addendum includes a commitment to limit subcontracting to a single tier, setting a new benchmark for responsible outsourcing in the sector.

Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union, commented: *"Geopost has expanded in recent years to become a truly global company, and UNI welcomes*

the extension of our 2017 agreement to meet some of the challenges which accompany this growth. With this addendum, we make clear that the commitments of our global agreement also apply to its many workers who are supplied through subcontractors. Our negotiations with Geopost have furthered our shared goal of advancing human rights throughout the company's operations, with a firm focus on the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining for all workers."

Yves Delmas, CEO of Geopost, said: *"With the signature of this agreement, we are reaffirming our strategic ambition to become the international reference of sustainable delivery through our Employer of Choice and Partner of Choice programmes. We are committed to continuous social progress, which lays at the heart of our positioning and strategic differentiation, as we believe our employees and partners are our greatest assets and best ambassadors. This first addendum promotes our desire for continuous improvement and drives sustainable action for our employees, our partners and our customers."*

Building on a pioneering 2017 agreement between UNI Global Union and Geopost

Geopost and UNI Global Union have signed an addendum to their 2017 global agreement which clearly establishes the obligations of subcontractors to respect the human rights of their workers.

The 2017 agreement, which covers Geopost workers in 50 countries, sets global standards for workers' rights, including the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as dignified working conditions, transparency and sustainability.

In a groundbreaking addition, the addendum marks the first in the postal and logistics sector to commit to limit subcontracting, ideally to a single tier. This is especially important in an industry that relies heavily on subcontractors (also known as partners) for delivery. It also sets a precedent by ensuring the strong involvement of trade unions in Geopost's compliance with due diligence obligations – going beyond the requirements of French law.

The signing ceremony took place on 22 July 2024 in Paris with Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union and Yves Delmas, CEO of Geopost. Also present, and signing the agreement, were the French affiliates of UNI Post & Logistics (CGT-FAPT, CFDT-F3C, FO-COM) and their respective trade union leaders.

The new agreement marks an important stage in Geopost's social commitment to its employees, trade unions and partners. It was made possible by constructive



**From left to right on the picture: Jérôme MORIN, General Secretary of CFDT- F3C ; Christine SIMON, Responsible for Postal Sector of FO- COM ; Yves Delmas, CEO of Geopost ; Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI; Romain Boillon, Member of Federal Secretary of CGT-FAPT*

dialogue and close collaboration between Geopost’s management and UNI Global Union and its affiliates, and defines clear objectives and concrete actions to ensure that Geopost’s duty of care commitment lives up to the expectations of its stakeholders.

The addendum aims to establish a basis for improved labour relations among Geopost and its partners, unions and workers, with the specific intention of contributing to Geopost’s sustainable development and performance.

Implementation

As part of the implementation of this commitment, UNI Global Union will set up pilot schemes to train trade unions and local managers at Geopost’s partners on how to apply the agreement at the company level.

In addition, all Geopost workers, including those who are self-employed or working at subcontractors, will have access to a new, independent grievance mechanism, which will be drawn up in consultation with trade unions.

Under the new agreement, Geopost commits to integrate principles of vigilance into its corporate culture, and to work actively with UNI Global Union and its trade unions to prevent, identify and remedy any negative impacts of Geopost activities. In this regard, Geopost will continue to put in place tools and resources to train and raise awareness among employees and partners about duty of vigilance.

At the same time, Geopost, with support from UNI Global Union, will establish rigorous monitoring mechanisms to evaluate performance and make continuous improvements.

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LIMERICK

Delta Retail Park, Ballysimon Road
V94 H329

TRALEE

Mile Height Retail Park
V92 PD63



The training calendar for 2024 has proven to have been exceptionally busy. We were very pleased to be able to welcome a significantly higher number of training attendees for our variety of courses which commenced in January and ended in November.

Women in Leadership

We started off our calendar year of training early with our women in leadership program.

This training program is attended by experienced female trade union activists to help them to develop their role. The course is facilitated by external trainer Isabelle Butler, and we hope to be repeating the course early next year so that further experienced representatives can attend.



Treasurers' Course

We held our Treasurer Training Course on June 19th which was attended by newly elected Treasurers. They received training on how to carry out the duties of Treasurer as well as other union representative issues.

Branch Officers' Course



Our Branch Officer Training Course was held on June 5th & 6th and is open to Assistant Secretaries and Vice Chairpersons. We had a large group with active participation. The Branch Officer plays a supporting role to the Bench Secretary and Chairperson.



Chairpersons' Course

We had a high volume of representatives seeking to attend our Chairperson training course which required us to run two separate courses. We ran one course in May and another one in June to meet the demands of our new Chairperson representatives. We have

developed our training materials around the area of chairing skills so that they can be as effective as possible for all who attend. These skills are required for those chairing committee meetings, annual general meetings and other meetings as they arise



Attendees from the May Chairperson Training Course



Attendees from the June Chairperson Training Course



Branch Secretary Stage 1 Course

As with the Chairperson training course, due to high numbers, we held two Branch Secretary Stage 1 courses which ran at the end of May and early June. Our Branch Secretaries completed intensive training on Union Representation, negotiation skills and many other modules.



Branch Secretary Stage 2 Course



This course was held in September and was attended by Branch Secretaries who have completed Stage 1 and are in their second or consecutive term as Branch Secretary. The primary focus of the training is to build on the experiences of the Branch Secretary to increase their capacity as effective Representatives.



Equality Representatives Training Course



As always, the Equality Representative Training Course has proven to be popular with our Representatives. The course was held over two days in October and covered the basics of employment equality legislation.

We also covered other topics such as leave arrangements, work life balance, bullying, disability in the workplace etc. Equality Representatives will make reports to their Committee as required and with relevant updates.

Advanced Branch Officer Training Course



This course is open to Branch Secretaries who have completed the stage 2 Course prior to 2024 and have been re-elected to their role. It is also open to Branch Chairpersons who completed the Chairperson Training Course prior to 2024 and have been re-elected. The first day covered topics such as employment law, grievance and disciplinary matters, equality etc. The second day was based on negotiation skills training delivered by Dr Gerard McMahon.



Committee Courses

This year a number of Committee Training courses were held both in Union Head Office and on a regional basis, depending on adequate numbers from the branches requiring the training. The training is designed to meet the specific needs of the Branch Committee and is a great way to integrate established and new members to ensure the Committee works effectively. We also held courses in Union Head Office for a variety of other Branches across the telecoms and tech sectors.

We delivered training to the following Committees

- Ennis Postal
- Galway Postal
- Dundalk Postal
- Portlaoise Postal
- Dublin Postal Amalgamated Branch
- Dublin Postal Clerks
- Call Centre Branches



Ennis Postal Branch Committee



Galway Postal Branch Committee

Finally this year, we also arranged for advanced courses to be delivered to Union Officers and the National Executive which included Employment Law, Sexual Harassment and Negotiation Skills. These were delivered by Dr Gerard McMahan and were well received by

attendees.

Overall, the Union delivered training to over 300 Representatives proving that it has been one of our busiest years so far. Our thanks to the CWU Education Committee for their hard work.





*Joy to the
World*

Wishing CWU members a
Merry Christmas &
Happy 2025

FROM ALL IN

FM Downes
LTD

INSURANCE & MORTGAGE BROKERS

Kandoy House, 2 Fairview Strand, Dublin 3

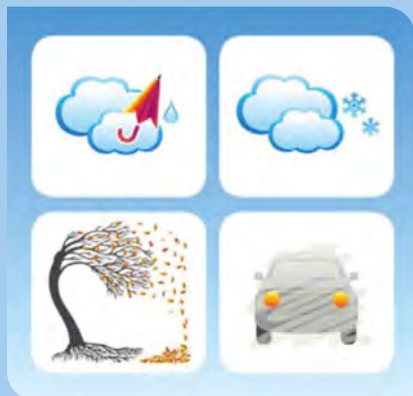
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Be Winter-Ready SAFE DRIVING



Practical Advice for Severe Weather

DRIVING IN WINTER

- Don't get caught out if severe weather strikes.
- A few simple precautions can ensure the safety of you and your family on the roads this winter.
- Bad weather such as torrential rain, severe winds, fog, freezing fog, ice and snow can strike suddenly catching road users off guard.
- In extreme weather conditions you should ask yourself if making a journey by road is absolutely necessary. If it's not, consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve.
- This is especially important if you are a vulnerable road user such as a pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist.
- If using the roads in such conditions is unavoidable—be prepared. Inform family/friends of your planned route, estimated time of arrival and carry a mobile phone. The golden rule is to drive, cycle or walk with care and caution and expect the unexpected.
- However you should take heed of any warnings from the Emergency Services not to go out.

Is your Vehicle ready for Winter?

You should:

- service your vehicle so that it is safe for winter driving
- top up with anti-freeze and screen wash
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades and replace



them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows

- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least 3 millimetres of tread depth
- make sure all vehicle lights are working and clean

In prolonged Severe Weather conditions (such as heavy snowfall) it is advisable to carry the following in the boot of the car:

- High Visibility Vest (1 per seat is best)
- Wellington boots
- 2 hazard warning triangles (one for either side of a bend where necessary)
- De-icing equipment
- First aid kit
- A working torch
- A blanket
- Winter jacket and warm clothes
- A bottle of drinking water

BE PREPARED

Before setting off on a journey check if there are any problems on your route:

- For updates on conditions on Motorways and National roads visit the **Transport Infrastructure Ireland website** and view their Traffic and Weather Information section
- For updates on the latest traffic news visit the **AA's website** or download their App
- Check for live weather, Local Authority and Garda updates as you travel – but remember not to use your phone while driving
- You can check your Local Authority website for updates on road closures and to view the 'Gritting' plan that is in your county when roads freeze
- It is vital that you heed any road safety warnings, or detours that have been put in place by the authorities

General Tips for Drivers

- It is dangerous to assume that your car can handle all road conditions. Even the most kitted out four-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads e.g. fording rivers and driving through flood waters
- Use your dipped headlights at all times so that others will see you
- In severe weather brake early and gently. It takes longer to stop a vehicle on wet, icy or snow covered roads so slow down and leave extra distance between you and the vehicle in front
- When temperatures drop watch out for “black ice.” If the road looks polished or glossy it could be, “black ice” one of winter’s worst hazards. Watch out for black ice, especially in sheltered / shaded areas on roads and under trees. It can take up to 10 times longer to stop on ice
- Check your owner’s manual and find out if your vehicle has any safety assist technology like Electronic Stability Control (ESC) or Anti Lock Braking System (ABS). Know how they help your driving in severe weather conditions. But don’t let these lull you into overestimating your vehicles ability to handle severe weather driving
- If another vehicle coming towards you seems to be out of control on snow or ice take care not to react suddenly, gentle braking is even more important in such conditions. Do not brake and steer at the same time



General Tips for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Motorcyclists

- Each winter slips and falls on ice or snow cause serious injuries. Be extremely careful
- Take extra care when walking near traffic or crossing the road in extreme weather conditions
- Visibility is reduced in severe weather conditions so wear high visibility clothing and carry a torch
- Wear clothing that does not restrict your hearing or vision



You can get more information from:

- www.rsa.ie
- www.emergencyplanning.ie
- www.winterready.ie
- www.met.ie
- www.tii.ie
- www.theaa.ie

Willie Mooney Retires

During the course of a thoroughly enjoyable evening in which Willie Mooney celebrated his Retirement, supported by his CWU friends and colleagues, Dave Sheehy, Dublin Postal Clerks Secretary, made the following toast:

“Colleagues

It is great to see so many faces here tonight to honour and celebrate the retirement of our brother Willie Mooney. Tonight is a bittersweet occasion for myself as, whilst I am delighted to see my partner in crime Willie set sail on his well earned retirement, I am also, selfishly, twinged with sorrow that I will no longer working alongside my friend on a daily basis.

Will began his career in An Post over 40 years ago and has held numerous positions in An Post and the CWU over this period. Please bear with me and honour me with your patience as I go through these. Willie worked as a Junior Postman, Postal Sorter and a Clerk(a very bad one!) and has been involved with the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch for over 20 years. In this time he has carried out many roles including Worker Director, Chairman of An Post and, most proudly for the Branch, President of the CWU. This term came about during one of the most difficult global periods in modern times as we faces the COVID-19 Pandemic. It’s testament to Willie that he navigated this period with flying colours and even more so given the Union itself was undergoing major changes at the time.

Willie took me under his wing nearly 15 years ago as his Assistant Branch Secretary and straight away what struck me was the fact everywhere Willie went everyone knew him and would stop to talk or say hello. It didn’t matter if you were a JP, Postman, Clerk or a Senior Executive Manager and this was all down to the fact that whatever Willie did he always showed the upmost of respect to anyone he dealt with. In fact, the only people who ever failed to recognise Willie were Mick Fennell, John Barry, Alice Boyle, Noel Connaughton, Mick McGuckian and Kieran Lavin. These were Willie’s co-workers in Mails Revenue. I would now like to offer these people a final chance to be introduced to Willie before he leaves!

Within our Branch Willie has always been a mentor and guide to us all and none more so than

to myself. There was never an occasion where Will wouldn’t be in a position to assist and alongside this he also ensured we honoured the traditions and work ethic of one of the oldest Branches in the Union. Everything Willie did was steeped in his dedication and commitment to the Trade Union movement.

I’m sure Willie has already begun making plans to continue watching his beloved Bohs(!) and to commence travelling around the globe in the coming months and this will no doubt involve the 3 women in Willie’s life who he cherishes so much. His daughters Niamh and Ciara who are brought up in conversation sometimes more than Union issues and his loving wife Angela who will also be retiring in the coming weeks. I’d like to thank Angela for all her help over the years and for putting up with my late hours phone calls to Willie to discuss whatever the issue of the day happened to be. Can you please raise your glasses to Ciara, Niamh and Angela and pray for these women that Willie doesn’t attempt to take up any DIY in his newly spare time as he is absolutely useless at it!

Before I sign off here I would like to take the opportunity to describe Willie in as few words as possible. Dedicated, genuine and one of the most decent people you are ever likely to meet. We live in strange times and it can be disheartening to see certain factions, mind-sets and ideologies seeping into our culture. However, if we keep producing people like Willie Mooney I think our movement and our overall society is going to be OK.

Lastly, if anyone is seeking a conversation starter with Willie tonight please feel free to ask him about his newly formed post retirement business venture plans. These came during a lightbulb moment on a recent trip to Killarney and involve the supply of fresh venison to pet owners.

Please join me in a toast to our colleague, friend, brother and a true legend of the CWU, Mr. Willie Mooney.”

CWU PEOPLE



Old friends enjoying the Celebrations.



Willie and Seán.



Angie and Seán.



Fan signs Willie up to Retirement Section!



Dublin Postal Clerks Boyband join in the singing with musician Seán Frayne.



Carol Bolger, former Chair in An Post, Willie and Martina.

Bill Colfer Adieu! CWU Stalwart Retires



*The Original Boy Band re-Union The Coordinators.
Famous for their Hit single: "Enough about me, what about you?"*

After 43 years' service, Bill Colfer, CWU Regional Officer, retired, with the final curtain call taking place at Briody's. A packed attendance gathered to pay tribute to bill for his long and dedicated service to the CWU and as an employee of An Post. Nicknamed Bilco, or sergeant Bilco, he opened proceedings with a quip of – All I ever wanted was a fair week's pay for a fair day's work.

Briody's so often a venue for CWU gatherings, was a fitting venue where many a strategy was hatched by Dublin Clerks with whom Bill had a valued life-long loyalty and friendship. He also gained great respect nationwide where Branch representatives were well at ease from their experiences of dedication to the cause and resolution of individual cases. Many owe a debt of gratitude for solutions he worked out on their behalf with management during his tenure as Partnership Coordinator.

There are so many achievements to acknowledge as a trade union activist, no doubt strongly influenced by his father, John who was himself a major figure, being President during the 1979 strike and supporter of the ratification of David Begg as General Secretary.

Although a Post office Clerk, Bill successfully performed the full range of duties commencing with a short stint as a telegram boy. He was elected as Branch Secretary of the newly constituted amalgamated Waterford Postal Branch in 1992. Elected to the National Executive Council in 1996, he provided great insight of the back office Clerical work and together with his colleagues on the working group, was central to the outcome of the Transformation through Partnership Agreement.

The next pivotal moment was in 2002, when he was party to and instrumental in a successful outcome in the union securing a 12.5% Change Allowance for the then Post Offices Division. The change programme linked to this was the conversion of Retail Branch offices and he managed this as Partnership Coordinator. This set the benchmark for Clerks in SDS and Letterpost and subsequently achieved for all Collection & Delivery staff in January 2006.

In his final chapters in CWU, Bill elevated to Acting National Officer role, for the purpose of progressing implementation of the DSU redesign programme. In paying tribute to Bills work and talents, General

CWU PEOPLE

Secretary Seán McDonagh praised his attention to detail, comprehensive and accurate documentation of issues which he said were meticulous and could always be relied upon. This ensured focus on the issues in dispute resulting in management being held to account. The GS also drew an analogy of history being repeated as the union again secured a change allowance for the DSU Postal Operative Grade, with the first tranche of

3% paid in November. Bills work again central to the union achieving payment.

We wish Bill and Margie, son Sean, daughter Amy and husband Darren and grandchildren great joy in retirement and long health in the future.

So Bill, feet up for a well-earned retirement:

GOODBYE TENSION HELLO PENSION!



President Frank presents Union Scroll to Bill.



Peter Branch Secretary Waterford Postal makes a presentation to Bill.



Bill with great friend and colleague Elaine Bermingham .

Elaine 'Bermo' Bermingham Retires also

Elaine Bermingham HR Director An Post Commerce paid tribute, expressing appreciation to Bill for his long and fruitful service with An Post. Recently, Elaine (Bermo to her friends) also retired from An Post, following forty years service with the Company. Her affection for An Post commenced with her Dad Tom being a Postal Sorter retiring from the TPO (Train Post Office). Elaine began her career as a Post Office Clerk and very quickly became an active member of the Dublin Clerks Branch as Chairperson and subsequently elected to the National Executive Council. Her strong leadership talents and knowledge of the business were recognised by the Company, where she elevated to the senior management position as HR Director in the mails business. The professional, pragmatic and respectful approach to the most complex and sometime fraught issues, resulted in agreed solutions during some very difficult and at times tense moments. The CWU wishes Elaine, Ger and family every good wish in her retirement.

Dublin Postal District Branch Retirements



Noel Doyle, Ravensdale Road (right) with Local Representative, Billy Corcoran.



Brian Reilly (left), Tallaght DSU, with Branch Representative, Tommy McEvoy



Daragh O'Neill, Dunshaughlin, with Frank, Gerry and colleague Thomas Keogh.



Tony Flynn (L), Edmondstown with Branch Representative, Ciaran Doyle.

CWU PEOPLE



Tommy Rowe (left), Swords DSU with Branch Representative, Seán Boylan.



Kieran Mynes (left), DSU 2, with Local Representative, Billy Corcoran



Patricia Dawson, Harmonstown DSU.



Willie Hyland (C), Ravensdale Road with Local Representatives, Karl Donohoe & Gary McGuirk.



Paul Hegarty (C), Ravensdale Road with Local Representatives, Karl Donohoe & Gary McGuirk.



Peter Buckley (C), Fortfield DSU with Branch Rep, Daniel Lennox & Vice-Chairperson Andy Keehan.

CWU PEOPLE



*Vincent Frawley,
Blackrock DSU.*



*Brendan Farrelly,
Ravensdale DS.U*



*Eamon Hanlon (C) Whitehall DSU, with Frank and
Local Representative, Kevin Chapman.*



Happy Birthday, Adrienne!!

*Congratulations to Adrienne
who celebrated a big birthday
this month. DGS Ian presented
her with a bouquet and helped
her blow out the candles.*

CWU Dublin No.2 Branch Retirements

Pat McCabe, John Fitzpatrick, Peter Whelan, Tom McAdam and Tony Farrelly receiving their Scrolls and Badges from the No.2 Branch Officers and Committee members.



Tony Farrelly



Tom McAdam



Pat McCabe



John Fitzpatrick



Peter Whelan

Dan O'Kane Retires



Dan O'Kane (pictured on right) receiving his Retirement Union Scroll from Paul Gallagher, Treasurer, Lifford/Inishowen Branch after 42 years' service with An Post. Dan delivered the post in the Raphoe area of Donegal for all of his 42 years with An Post. The Lifford/Inishowen Branch would like to extend best wishes to him on his retirement and wish him all the best for the future

Jim Gaynor Retires



General Secretary Seán presents the Union Scroll to Chairman Jim Gaynor, Dublin Postal Managers Branch, at a retirement function in the Grand Central recently. We wish Jim all the best in his retirement.

David Purcell Retires



On the left is David Purcell, who retired as Manager of the REMs Centre in Portlaoise on 27th September. He was presented with his Union Scroll by Michael Cahill.

David commenced work in An Post on the 4th May 1987 as an indoor postman. He was the 1st Auxiliary postman on a bike in the Athy area. He then moved to the counters in Portlaoise in 1991 after working in Athy for 3 months. In 1999 David ultimately moved into the REMs section and in 2016 he became Manager. He has enjoyed his 37 years working in An Post and is now looking forward to retirement. David would like to thank all his colleagues for all their help down the years and wishes everyone well for the future.

Gerry Perry Retires



Gerry Perry, eir National Managers Branch Secretary and NEC member, receiving a farewell gift and Union Scroll on his last day at work from National Officer John Clarke. We wish Gerry a long and happy retirement.

Galway Postal Branch Retirements



Paul Kennedy receives a presentation from Tom Geraghty and Paul Pender on behalf of the Galway Postal Branch, to celebrate his role as CWU Regional Coordinator.



Tom Browne, PO Galway DSU, at his retirement party marking 42 years' service. He was presented with his Union Scroll by Paul Pender, Galway Postal Branch.



Julie Murray, PO Galway DSU, was presented with her Union Scroll by Paul Pender, Galway Postal Branch, to mark her 40 years' service.



Jarlath Heneghan was presented with his Union Scroll, to mark his retirement, by Paul Kennedy and Barry Haddock of the Galway Postal Branch.

Portlaoise Postal Branch raise €850 for Cara Rescue Dogs!



Pictured are Karen Connolly, Dina Considine and Ellen Moore the organisers from Portlaoise Postal branch who held their annual branch charity summer draw which raised €850 for Cara Rescue Dogs. Great work and thanks to all who supported it

Portlaoise Postal Branch raise €1,480 for Kolbe Special School



Portlaoise Postal also hold a Christmas draw for Kolbe Special School every year and raised €1480 last year. Members of the branch embraced the occasion on the day in the Mail Centre. Well done to all.

Early Retirements & New Service Operative!

The Sad News:

It has been a strange few months here in Headquarters as two of our Team Awesome employees decided to leave us. Both Lorraine and Sandra decided to take early retirement and depart for a more

restful quality of life. It's been a difficult and hard decision for them and even harder for us to accept. We will miss them dearly and wish them both a long and happy retirement for the future.

The Good News:

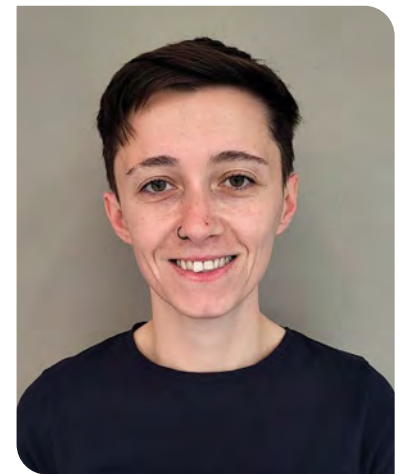
Nicole Buckley joined us here in November as our new Service Operative. Nicole is a local from Ballybough and we all welcome her to the team and wish her the very best in her new job.



Lorraine



Sandra



Nicole



Up-Up-and-Away! CWU Finance Officer Gerry Martin Abseils for Cancer Fundraiser

CWU Finance Officer, Gerry Martin, abseils off the roof of Croke Park Stadium to raise funds for Oesophageal cancer.

John Meehan Retires



John Meehan retired from An Post Donegal SW on October 25th. He is pictured here in Donegal Town DSU being presented with the Union Scroll by Branch Secretary, Daniel Rose, to mark his retirement. We wish John a healthy and happy retirement

Johnny Saunders Retires



Johnny Saunders, who retired on the 20th September 2024 after 32 years with the Thurles Postal Branch. Johnny is pictured accepting Union Scroll from Branch Secretary, Fergal Horgan. We wish Johnny a happy and healthy retirement.

Ollie Power Retires



Ollie Power from Kilkenny DSU retires after 39 years of service. He is pictured here receiving his Union Scroll from John MacClean, Kilkenny Postal Branch Secretary. The Branch would like to wish Ollie the very best in his retirement. He will be missed by all his colleagues in Kilkenny.

Patricia McGettigan Retires



Patricia McGettigan retired from An Post Donegal SW on May 31st, after serving for 16 years, having been made permanent back in 2008. Branch Secretary, Daniel Rose, presented Patricia with the Union Scroll in Dungloe Sub Office, to mark her retirement. The Branch wish Patricia a long and happy retirement

Pat McGrath Retires



Pat McGrath retired recently from Thurles Postal Branch after 46 years' service. He is pictured here with Branch Secretary, Fergal Horgan, having been presented with his Union Scroll. The Thurles Postal Branch wish Pat all the best for his retirement

Stephen King Retires



Stephen King (left) receiving his Union Scroll after 18 years' service with An Post. He is pictured here with his colleague, John Henderson. Stephen delivered the mail in the Buncrana area of Inishowen and retired on 14th June. We at the Lifford/Inishowen Branch would like to wish Stephen all the best on his retirement

Pauline McNeill Retires



Pauline pictured with Branch Secretary, John Sharkey, and Branch Chairman, John Bligh, who presented her with the Union Scroll and Pendant on behalf of the CWU.

Pictured below: Pauline McNeill An Post DSU Castlerea on the day of her retirement after 24 years' service on 7th August surrounded by colleagues and family. Castlerea & District Branch wish Pauline a long and happy retirement



Carrick-on-Shannon Postal CWU Branch Retirements



(Seated l-r): TJ Cullen, Joe McKiernan, Donal Warnock, Sean Murtagh (Outgoing Branch Secretary), Michael Duignan, Tony Tiernan and Padraig Butler.

(Standing l-r): Deirdre Harte Branch & Social Club Committee, Gerry Goldrick (Incoming Branch Secretary), Alan O'Brien Chairperson Social Club, Niall Foley Branch Vice-Chairperson & Secretary Social Club, John Tansey CWU Regional Officer and Brian Crowe Branch Committee & Social Club Assistant Treasurer.
Photo Credit Gerry Faughnan.

Carrick-on-Shannon DSU saw an exodus of Staff leave in 2024. In total, seven Postal Operatives departed the scene. Led by Branch Secretary, Seán Murtagh, determined and driven by the principle of strength in numbers, he was joined in the “walk out” by lifetime work colleagues Donal Warnock and Padraig Butler, together with TJ Cullen (ex-Dowra DSO), Tony Tiernan (ex-Drumshanbo DSO), Michael Duignan (ex-Ballinamore DSO) and Joe McKiernan (ex-Ballinamore DSO).

While almost all worked exclusively in the Carrick-on-Shannon Postal District, some with up to 46 years' service, Padraig Butler began his career in Dublin having worked for six years in Sherriff Street before being “deported” to Geevagh in Co Sligo, where he spent a further six happy years, eventually boarding the mothership in Carrick-on-Shannon in 1990.

“The Magnificent Seven” and their families were hosted at a Retirement Party organised by the local Social Club which saw a packed house in Cryan’s Hotel Carrick-on-Shannon on Saturday 12th October.

A special word of thanks to Seán Murtagh for his service both to the CWU and to the Members of the Carrick-on-Shannon Branch over the years. Seán served as Branch Secretary for ten years during which time he successfully negotiated a number of agreements on office revisions and DSO consolidations. His proven poker playing skills always came to good use in the cut and thrust of industrial relations while in pursuit of his Members’ interests.

On behalf of the CWU, we thank them all for their loyalty and support to the Union over the years and extend our good wishes for a healthy and happy future as they embark on another chapter in their lives.



Work colleagues from Carrick on Shannon DSU gather together to bid farewell to "The Magnificent Seven".
Photo Credit Gerry Faughnan.



Uilleann piper Eamonn Walsh (retired postal sorter DMC) played as the remains of Ms. Kathleen Watkins were taken into the Church.
Ms Watkins was married to the late broadcaster Gay Byrne.



CWU BAND

Annual Concert

on

Saturday, 14th December 2024 at 8pm
Unitarian Church, St. Stephen's Green

Musical Director: Kevin Corcoran
Programme featuring seasonal numbers and more.

PROCEEDS TO CHURCH

Phone me! - Tent caught on the hoof



PHOTOS: PETER TREAGUS

HOLY trunkcall! A tent with legs!! Irish Telecom operators Fintan McCarthy and Dermot Tracey had been flown in to help repair Crawley's telephone cables – and they were doing it in their own inimitable style. Fintan said: "A school bus passed us just now and the kids were all laughing. Walking like this is perfectly sensible – this way we don't have to dismantle everything when we move from hole to hole."

Fintan from Drogheda, Co. Loch, was tickled pink when he knew he would be in the Observer. "If I'd known I would've shaved and taken me woolly hat off. There'll be thousands of Observers sold in Ireland next week," he said.

• Above: Move along there... Right: Fintan and Dermot revealed

Memories of our time on the UK contract in England in 1988. We were based in a place called 'Hersham' and used a British Telecom headquarters in a portacabin.

I organised a get-together in the headquarters in Kells, Co. Meath, with old workmates from Newry-Navan Monaghan, Castlebar. After 36 years, it took a while for recognition to cut in, but after the hand-shaking came the: "I remember you now!" moment. We talked about families, and "how are you keeping?"

After reminiscing about the old times and exchanging photos, we had a meal and had a group photo taken by one of our members, Eamon Kennedy, and agreed to have a reunion next year.

The article (top right) and the black and white photos appeared in the OBSERVER newspaper on Wednesday, 15 March, 1989, kindly supplied by Vicky Evans, Searchroom Archivist, West Sussex Record Office, from the British Newspaper Archive (BNA).



Fintan McCarthy and Dermot Tracey in the famous Walking Tent.



Good old Days in Horsham 1988 working in British Telecom headquarters. Tom Conaty, Fintan Mc Carthy, Michael Kierans, Noel Duffy, John McAuley and John Dillon

Remembering our Colleagues

Gone but not forgotten



CWU President, Frank Donohue.

On Wednesday 6th November the Company organised the Annual Commemoration of our friends and colleagues whom we unfortunately lost in the

past year. During the memorial ceremony 18 candles were lit to remember the 18 members of staff who passed away.

Our President, Frank Donohue, represented the Union at the event where he thanked the Company for staging the event. He stated, "I think it is proper and correct and important that we take this time to reflect and acknowledge the loss of our colleagues during the past year.

The General Secretary speaking prior to the event stated, "Taking the time to reflect and acknowledge the loss of colleagues is important. We remember too their families, friends and co-workers at An Post. We feel their loss, not just as colleagues but in many cases as friends too.

WE REMEMBER THEM ALL

Dean Cowzer Blackrock DSU	James Finlay Ancillary Services GPO Dublin
Thomas Ryle Fonthill DSU	Michael Kennelly Galway DSU
Ciarán Sheridan Cavan DSU	Fergus McSweeney Ancillary Services GPO Dublin
Thomas Barry Kilrush DSOs	Donal Mulligan Swords / Malahide DSU
Patrick Butler Kilkenny DSU	Neil Davoren Fonthill
Thomas Reilly Finglas DSU	Thomas Moore Cavan DSU
Robert Rogers Baldoyle DSU	Kenneth Freeman DMC
John Rapple Foxrock DSU	Brian Roche Mallow DSU
Michael Meenan Blackrock DSU	Glenn King DMC



Jim O'Neill RIP

On Wednesday 9th of October, the Bray/Greystones CWU Branch learned of the untimely passing of our former Secretary, Chairman, and friend, Jim O'Neill.

From the outset, Jim was heavily influential in the growth of this branch. With his wealth of experience from his time in Fords of Cork and Massey Ferguson, Jim quickly established himself as a key figure in the development and growth of the Bray/Greystones Branch. Whilst he was fundamental in the resolution of issues in the workplace, it was his calm and approachable manner that offered the younger and less-experienced Union members a framework on how to conduct union matters professionally.




With his calm demeanour, Jim was a man of few words but had words of value and wisdom for every Branch member. When Jim spoke, the room listened. In 2006, when the Branch faced adversity with redesigns being introduced across the offices, Jim was at the forefront in solving these concerns. As always, he showed his experience and leadership as he navigated through this period, ensuring that the Branch voice would be heard.



Eloquently known as 'Big Jim' in the Bray office, he will be sadly missed as a Union Secretary, a colleague and most importantly, a friend. We wish to extend our deepest condolences to Geraldine and family in these sad times. May he rest in peace.

John Wilkes RIP

John was a member of the Dublin postal delivery branch. He commenced employment as a telegram boy in the Department of Post and Telegraphs and he later worked in the old Pearse Street sorting office before moving to Ballyfermot district office where he spent the remainder of his working life. John lived in Ballyfermot where he was regarded as a legend due to his success with the local soccer club Cherry Orchard Football Club starting with the schoolboy teams and later with the senior team. It is a measure of the high regard that John was held when the different Football Associations put together a tribute to him on his passing. John was known in football circles as Gentleman John which is some achievement given the sometimes competitive nature of football. John's funeral was attended by former Irish International players and managers, another indication of the esteem this local Ballyfermot postman was held.

DEATH OF JOHN WILKES

The death has taken place of legendary Cherry Orchard manager John Wilkes. Along with assistant Joe Healy the duo formed a brilliant double act as manager and coach and Wilkes famously led the Ballyfermot club to an unprecedented hat-trick of FAI Junior Cup wins in 1985, 86 and 87 as the Cherries reigned supreme writing themselves into the history books of the fabled competition. Wilkes was also honoured when appointed FAI Junior international manager - a role he took immense pride in. Wilkes was a titan of the amateur game and was hugely successful as the club consistently claimed trophy after trophy in what was a Golden Era for the club. John was a great supporter of the senior international team and a regular traveler to away matches for a number of years.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilis.



Book Review by Adrienne Power



SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE

by: Claire Keegan

Bill Furlong, a family man, is the local coal merchant, whose sole purpose in life is to provide a good Christian home for this wife and five daughters. Until one Sunday, near Christmas, when the ice is on the ground and he must deliver a load of coal to

the local convent, his eyes are opened to something very disturbing in a place he never expected. It brings him back to his own past and how lucky he was to be the man he is today after growing up in a small rural town with a single mother and no father.

Reading this book you become transported to 1985 Rural Ireland in the midst of winter: You can feel the cold in your bones; Hear the cawk of the crows; Feel the sting of the bitterness in the air and the unnatural vibes from places that are meant to be sanctuaries for those in their hour of need. Places with crucifixes prominent in every room but most of those who look up at them have become blind in spirit. As they often say, 'one person can make the difference' and that's what this

story is all about.

The depiction of the crows throughout the book adds a wonderful ominous presence. For example; *"It was a December of crows. People had never seen the likes of them, gathering in batches on the outskirts of town, then coming in, walking the streets, cocking their heads and perching, impudently, on whatever lookout post took their fancy, scavenging for what was dead, or diving in mischief for anything that looked edible along the roads before roosting at night in the huge old trees around the convent."*

I found at the end of the book it took time to close it. I had been holding my breath as I read the final scene. This is a book which will haunt me forever!

Usually my blood is boiling with the constant delays on the DART and the extra time needed now to get to work in the mornings, but while reading this I noticed a wonderful stillness that expanded from reading it. Sitting on a packed train with all the noise of people on their phones, they became distant sounds.

As in all her works, Claire Keegan blends words to make a masterful story soufflé.

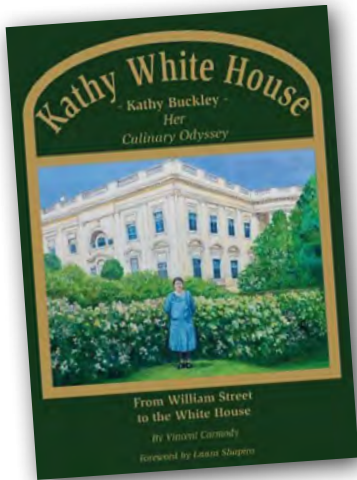
This is a book that **has** to be read! It is a small book you can read in one sitting. I hear the film is definitely worth watching too, with Cillian Murphy in the lead role.

This is a book that HAS to be read!





Book Review by Adrienne Power



KATHY WHITE HOUSE **Kathy Buckley - Her Culinary Odyssey** **From William Street to the White House** **by: Vincent Carmody** **Foreword by Laura Shapiro**

Historian, Vincent Carmody, has produced a beautiful coffee table size book about the extraordinary life of Kathy Buckley.

It is wonderful to shine a light on the life of this amazing woman who came from Kerry and ended up working as a cook in the White House in 1924 for nine years.

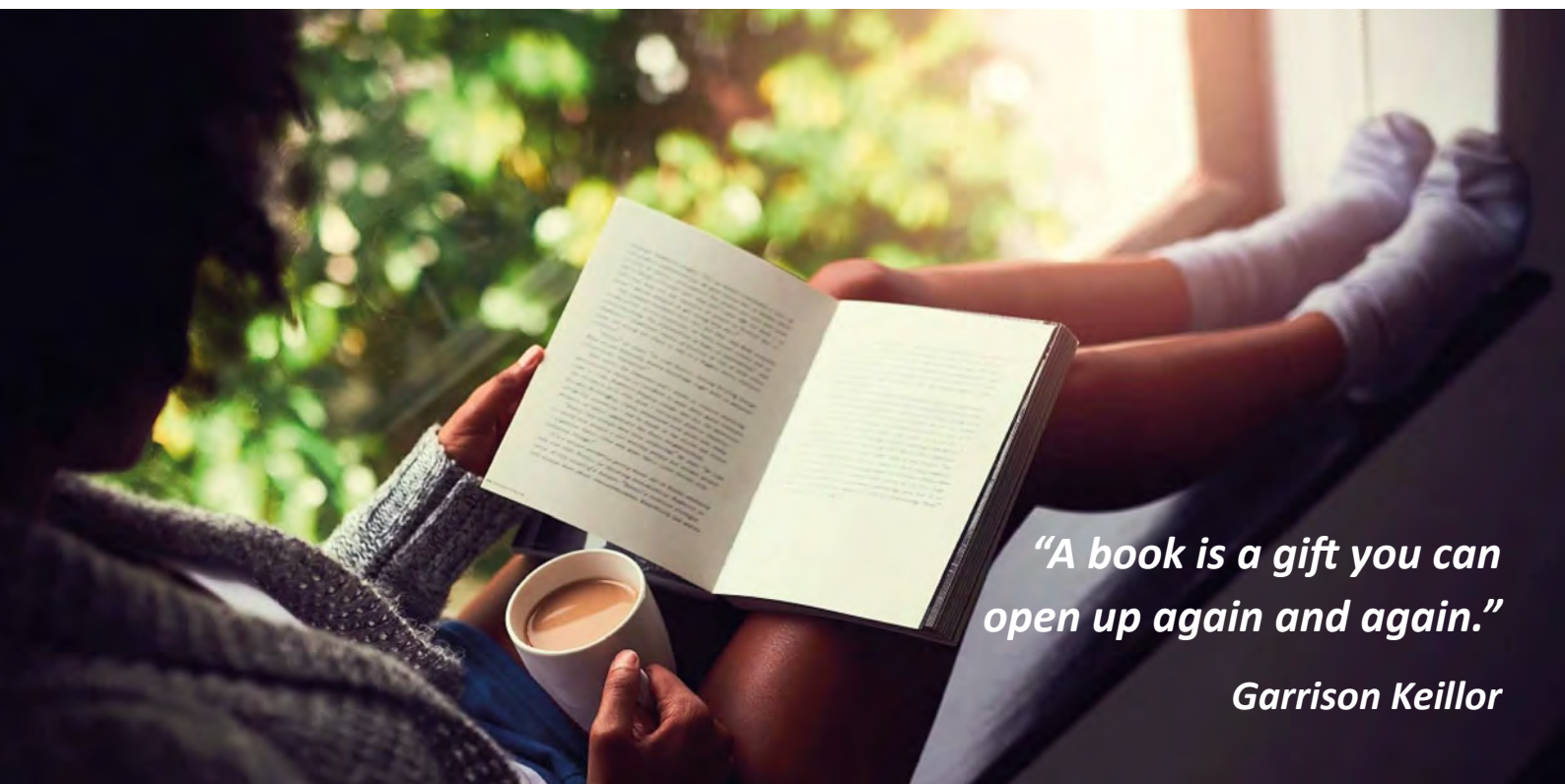
Vincent's marvelous book starts at Kathy's humble beginnings in Listowel as a young woman meeting the famous entrepreneur and banker JP Morgan and moving to America to work for his family. She worked for the Morgan family for seven years in New York. Then she was employed in Boston, then Worcester before her job as Head Cook in the White House.

The book is sumptuously presented with a whole array of photos and historical documents. Some of her mouthwatering recipes like Chocolate Vienna Cake, Brioches, Cheesecake, Dublin Cookies, Philadelphia Relish, the extraordinary Lace Wafers (to name but a

small few), so sumptuous they make your mouth water reading about them. You would never see the like of such amazing cooking today with all the time and effort that goes into producing it from such fresh rich ingredients. It makes us think of the art involved in cooking. Forever tweaking recipes adding, changing consistencies, and working long hours in kitchens creating banquets for large groups of people. How she took it all on. Having to cater for tastes of people from different lands. It must have been such an exciting and challenging time. One of her famous dishes was "White House Supreme" described as a "golden brown concoction decked out with mushroom sauce and chopped parsley and flanked on a Snowdrift of rice which melted in the mouth." Such a legacy to leave behind.

In the book there is the fantastic documentation about musical spectacles which would have guests like Mark Twain, the King of Siam and even the Aviator Charles Lindbergh, who offered to fly Kathy over Washington, but she declined. She wanted to keep her feet firmly on the ground.

This is a fascinating culinary historical delight



"A book is a gift you can open up again and again."

Garrison Keillor