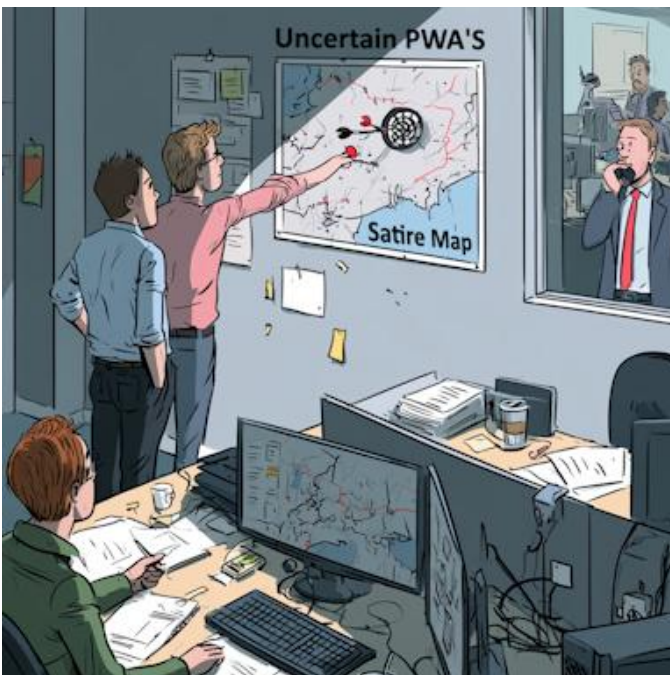


Copper & Fibre Merger – Has It Gone Smoothly?

The long-awaited merger of the Copper and Fibre teams has finally arrived.

For many engineers, the decision to move people into different work areas has been far from smooth. You would think that a major change of this scale would have been planned with great care, with all the relevant information checked and available before changes were made. Sadly, that doesn't appear to have been the case.

We are hearing from affected engineers where a number of issues appear to have been overlooked or simply not checked. These include lower-powered EV vans with limited range, incorrect home addresses recorded on certain systems, and existing Carer's Passports (now My Adjustments) not being taken into account. The result? Unnecessary disruption and frustration, with many engineers reporting significant increases in their travel.



We are hearing plenty about the negatives, but what about the positives? Surely the changes cannot simply mean “give, give, give” from engineers, with increased travelling and longer days becoming the norm. Perhaps there are engineers who have actually seen a benefit from the changes. Has your travel reduced, has your working day improved, or have you ended up better off in some other way?

If so, we want to hear from you, because we need to understand the full picture.

Working Time – Something to Think About

The Working Time Regulations are there as a health and safety protection. Your working day isn't simply the time spent at a customer's premises carrying out the job. The activities required to do your work also count as working time, including van checks, travelling between work locations and completing required end-of-day documentation and administration.

These are all activities carried out as part of your job, and they form part of your working time. They shouldn't routinely be expected to happen outside your scheduled hours or be treated as something you simply have to absorb.

Now consider the impact of increased travel. If you work a 37.5 hour week and are on maximum travel, that could mean an additional 12.5 hours a week, taking your working week to 50 hours.

The WTD limits working time to an average of 48 hours a week over a 17 week reference period, unless you have voluntarily opted out.

And this is where the issue of flex time becomes particularly important. If your regular working day, including travel and other required activities, is already pushing you towards or beyond 48 hours, the question has to be asked: should you really be expected to “flex on” and work even more?

The regulations are there for a reason to help protect workers from excessive working hours and the health and safety risks that can come with them.

Just a thought...



Patch Lead Roles – Changes Ahead

Nationally, the number of Patch Lead roles is being reduced. Within Service Operations, the current 605 roles are being cut to 456, a significant reduction.

The selection process is now nearing completion, with interviews being held between losing and gaining managers. Selection will be based on competencies and behavioural questions covering the last 12 months.

Perhaps that's a tad unfair on those Patch Leads who have spent the last six months back on the tools, while still being expected to answer questions, support colleagues and, metaphorically speaking, using the proverbial broom as they go!

For those who don't secure one of the new Patch Lead positions, the company's current proposal is that they would move back to the Advanced Engineer grade, with pay and pension protection. Is that true? Well... not quite.

This remains under negotiation with colleagues at HQ, as the company still wants to utilise the valuable Patch Lead skills and experience you have built up.

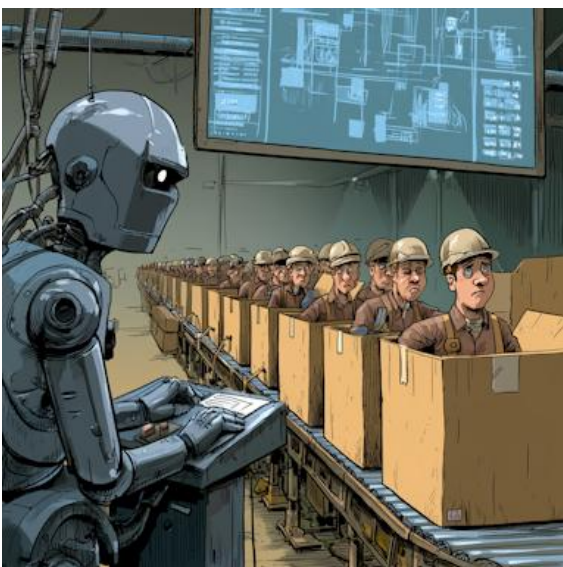
We'll keep you updated as those discussions progress.



BT says AI for All – but is it?

AI is already being used across BT and Openreach to allocate work, measure performance, analyse calls and track activity. Yet the union is not always told when new AI systems are introduced, and BT has refused to share data impact assessments, citing commercial sensitivity. BT CEO Allison Kirkby has said the company aims to eliminate more than 40,000 roles by 2030.

If AI increases productivity, workers should share the benefits through better jobs, improved pay, new skills and ultimately a Shorter Working Week with no loss of pay. Technology should work for people, not simply mean more profits and fewer jobs.



Workers also need a meaningful voice in how AI is introduced and used, with transparency about what systems do, what data they collect and how decisions are made. AI must not be used to create unrealistic targets, excessive surveillance or undermine professional judgement.

Have you seen AI changing your work? Tell us about it. Your experiences will strengthen our campaign

Political Corner

Nigel Farage wanted to show the establishment that he was bigger than them. So, rather unusually, he resigned as the MP for Clacton... only to stand again in the resulting by-election. He described it as "the people versus the establishment".

The establishment, in this case, came in the rather unexpected shape of a new superhero: Count Binface. Nothing quite captures the British sense of humour like cheering on a man dressed as an intergalactic bin, although, if we really wanted to fully embrace the British tradition, perhaps he should have been called Binny McBIn Face.



But, putting the entertainment to one side, what did the whole exercise actually achieve politically? Farage won the seat with 63% of the vote, so he got what he wanted, but the by-election was also boycotted by the major parties and attracted just 44.4% turnout.

What did it cost? Around £250,000 of taxpayers' money. Perhaps that doesn't sound like much when compared with a £5 million crypto donation, but it is still our money spent on an election that arguably didn't need to happen.

And perhaps Count Binface had the answer all along. One of his pledges was: "MPs who resign mid-Parliament should be barred from the resulting by-election." The bin might be dressed as a joke, but on this one, perhaps he has a point.

Email: office@cwuset.uk

Website: www.cwuset.uk