

Job Loss Announcements

Retail Operations Leeds & Harrogate Global Transaction Services (Operations) Leeds

Following the announcement by the Group on 2nd September of the loss of a further 3,500 roles within the Business Services Division, today the bank have communicated the specific impact of an overall reduction of 184 permanent UK Retail Operations roles in Leeds and Harrogate and 88 Global Transaction Services Operations (GTS Ops) roles in Leeds which will result in the phased exit and eventual withdrawal of the bank's operations at the Leeds Victoria Place and Harrogate Central House sites.

Background to Announcement & Rationale

Since the start of the bank's ongoing Strategic Review a staggering 21,500 UK jobs losses have been announced across the Group. The next phase of the Strategic Review will see a reduction of 3,500 Business Services roles between now and the end of 2012 and will see the Group withdraw from 12 operational sites across the UK with a further 3 under review.

Whilst the bank asserts that their recovery plan is on track, they have stated that it will take up to 5 years to get back to health and to reach a state of stability. Within Business Services members have already seen a significant impact with the loss of circa 4,500 roles in the first tranche of the Strategic Review. The bank's proposals to cut a further 3,500 Business Services roles centre around their desire to reduce the number of operational sites and in doing so maximise capacity at retained sites where similar work to that currently undertaken in Leeds and Harrogate is carried out. As a result work will migrate to other centres. The bank's use of alternative customer automation channels and the operating efficiencies delivered by the "Lean" programme across the operational sites will result in headcount reductions. The work moves outlined above will take place from early 2011 and end in September 2011.

Impact of Changes

Retail Operations Leeds & Harrogate – Around 267 permanent roles will be impacted with Contact and Processing work relocating and for the most part being absorbed by staff in Bolton, Chatham, Leicester and Manchester.

A total of 73 roles based in Bradford will be available in the first instance to at risk Retail Operations staff in Leeds and Harrogate on a temporary basis, including 29 Private Banking roles and an additional 40 Clerical A front line Telephony roles, which will be realised by the release of 40 Clerical A Agency staff from Bradford. Two Team Manager and 2 Quality Assurance Advisor roles will also relocate to Bradford.

The suitability of these roles both in terms of the new location and the temporary nature of the roles has been the subject of much discussion during consultations. The bank believe that in the majority of cases the roles are suitable alternative roles for staff currently based in Leeds and Harrogate, However notwithstanding the payment of increased travel costs Unite remain sceptical and have concerns in relation to what for many will result in increased travel time to work falling outwith the parameters of the 40 miles/one hour from home criteria for a suitable alternative work location.

Whilst Unite welcome that in many cases the relocation of work will extend the employment of some at risk staff, payment of the £5000 lump sum redundancy mitigation payment for moving to the Bradford site has not been agreed, primarily as the criteria for payment relates to "permanent" alternative roles. Whilst Unite recognises that the roles are not "permanent", the trade union do not support the bank's position and encouraged the bank to consider part payment of the lump sum to make a move to Bradford more attractive. This would also allow the bank to retain existing experienced and knowledgeable staff, however no agreement was reached. Any member who has concerns about a move to Bradford should discuss this during their one to one meetings. Unite would not support a position where individuals who do not wish or are unable to move to Bradford are expected to do so.

GTS (Ops) Leeds – All 82 permanent roles within the Outward Payments Centre (OPC) will be displaced, i.e. they will no longer exist in the new structure, and as a result all impacted staff will be at risk of redundancy. The efficiencies in this team are driven by Automation and Customer Self Service channels. All 36 permanent roles within the Bonds & Guarantees Teams will move on a temporary basis to Headrow Court Leeds which is within reasonable travelling distance from the current work location. In the longer term it is anticipated that these roles will move to Manchester by Q4 2012. A small number of Business Support roles are also at risk, Change Management roles will also relocate to Headrow Court on a temporary basis.

The 73 Retail Operations roles outlined above will also be available to GTS Ops staff in the event that fewer Retail Operations staff wish to take up these roles.

Managing Reductions

All those at risk will have the opportunity to opt for VR/VER or redeployment. In addition to the impact on permanent roles a number of temporary roles are also at risk. The nature of these announcements which will result in the eventual withdrawal from the Leeds and Harrogate sites means that the majority of impacted staff will find themselves displaced outright. If you do not wish to apply for VR/VER, then Unite will support you through the redeployment process. In the event that interest for the residual roles in Bradford is oversubscribed, the bank will undertake pooling selection. Queries and concerns on pooling should be addressed via line management in the first instance. The bank will advise further of the specific impact on your role during one to one meetings.

The VR/VER window for all staff will be open for a period of 2 weeks post employee communications, following which the bank will engage further with Unite on the outcomes, including opportunities for redeployment and any Voluntary Job Matching (VJM) opportunities.

Unite has also agreed a number of additional redundancy mitigation measures to further reduce the potential for CRs, full detail of these measures were provided recently to members in a separate Unite newsletter, can be viewed at www.unitetheunion.org and are also available on the bank's Strategic Review website. These improved measures will also be provided to all at risk employees in their Employee Communication pack and should be discussed in detail with line management in the first instance. For those who do leave the bank's employment, full outplacement support will be provided.

Unite Comment & Next Steps

At the time of the announcement in early September Unite described this as a “horror story” but one that our members and all staff across the Group are sadly all too familiar with. Members and all staff in Business Services continue to endure a significant period of change and uncertainty which will ultimately result in the closure of many of the bank’s operational centres.

Unite has also asked a number of searching questions about the new bank’s operating model and the ability of remaining staff to absorb work from other sites and to meet the challenges of an ever changing and demanding workplace. As mentioned the bank assert that the use of alternative Customer Channels, Automation and the “Lean” programme have realised these efficiencies which will allow the bank to get back to stand alone strength.

Unite have stressed to the bank that we have real concerns for those members who are left behind to drive the bank’s recovery. The trade union also recently met the bank to discuss the “Lean” programme in more detail including the fact that a number of the headcount reductions across Business Services are now being realised directly as a result of “Lean” activity as well as the potential longer term impact on remaining staff. In this regard if members have any feedback either positive or negative about “Lean”, then please either feedback via your local Workplace Representative, our Helpline or email rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org.

Unite has stressed to the bank that they now need to seriously think about their future operating model and how it impacts on all staff when they turn up to work every day. Since the announcement of the 3,500 job losses, Unite have been undertaking an extensive site visit programme across all of the impacted Business Services locations. Many members will hopefully have seen Unite on site in Leeds and Harrogate in recent weeks where we have been meeting many of our members and listening to your concerns. A further visit will be undertaken in Leeds on 18th November to support today’s announcement and a date for a further visit to Harrogate will be confirmed shortly.

The bank has committed to ongoing dialogue with the trade union and have stressed that they are actively engaging with all staff through town halls and other local initiatives. It is therefore vitally important that you make your views known both to the bank and to Unite, your views will help inform next steps and future dialogue with the bank.

If members have any questions or concerns regarding these latest announcements they should be directed in the first instance to your Line Manager; however in the event that this proves unsatisfactory or the query remains unresolved please contact your local Workplace Rep, the Unite RBS Helpline on 0870 241 4425 or email rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org

Unite Representatives

Unite have recently signed a new and improved Unite Representative agreement with the Group and we are always seeking members to take on one of the four Unite Representative roles, i.e. Workplace, Union Learning, Safety and Equality. Any Unite members interested in finding out more about becoming a Unite Representative please contact the Unite RBS Helpline or email rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org

Unite Updates

If you would like to receive regular updates electronically from the union please email from your preferred email address to rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org

Not a Member?

Join Unite’s two million members and have a voice on this and other issues, as well as receiving support, advice and representation for £10.96 a month for full time staff and £4.98 per month for part time staff working less than 20 hours a week. Membership forms can be obtained by phoning 0845 850 4242 or emailing rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org plus you can join on line at www.unitetheunion.org

Alison Maclean & Stuart Davies – Joint Lead Officers
Unite RBS Helpline – 0870 241 4425