

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Amicus Section

11 December 2008

EWS RAILWAY UNITE MEMBERS

Dear Colleagues

The Engineering Company Council (ECC) met with EWS management yesterday to further discuss the proposed 93 jobs at risk within the scope of the Engineering agreement.

At the staff side pre-meeting the ECC reps reported back on the views of the membership in their regions, though it is understood that not all members had been consulted, due to the time constraints, it was clear that there was a divide in opinion, the larger depots and those where there are no jobs at risk at this time were generally opposed to any movement from current practices and roster hours, whilst the depots with members who were at risk had indicated they were prepared to consider added flexibilities, though EWS would have to clarify their position on this matter. It was agreed by all reps that at this time a reduction or ban of overtime working was not an option that would be supported by the membership.

The EWS managers in attendance were, Roy Taylor, John Devin (HR) and Keith West, the ECC expressed anger that depot managers had already approached Unite reps to discuss changes in roster to reflect the reductions in engineers announced last week, EWS were told in no uncertain terms that this action totally undermined the formal consultation process and these actions would be subject to a legal challenge, EWS agreed to investigate and respond.

EWS were informed that it was the view of the ECC that they were exploiting the general down turn in the economy due to the credit crunch, to achieve changes that had previously been discussed. Roy Taylor denied this was the case and gave an update on the business activity of the business units, which the company claim justified their position.

The ECC stated that the most important function of the consultation process was to mitigate job losses.

It was the ECC's view that the current business model had clearly not worked and EWS should not only review its current model but also the way that its business is managed.

EWS produced figures on overtime both rostered and otherwise and a listing of agency and contractors that they are currently employing, these details were subject to much debate on the opportunities for permanent staff to displace agency labour. EWS pointed out that there had already been a significant reduction in the use of agency & contract labour.

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Each depot where jobs are at risk was discussed and ways of mitigating job losses at each was explored, it emerged that at some depots EWS believed there were opportunities to significantly reduce the number of redundancies, if the workforce accepted added flexibilities.

There were however depots that EWS saw no opportunities for mitigation due to loss of work load, when challenged by the ECC to produce evidence of the losses in work load, EWS were unable to do so. At this point a heated debate took place, the ECC questioned the work load reduction at Margam as the Blast Furnace at Port Talbot was to come back into operation much sooner than the EWS proposals indicated, on this point EWS agreed to investigate and respond at the next consultation meeting.

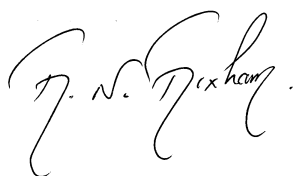
A request was made to move the discussions to local level at a number of depots however the ECC took the view that all the business units consultations should remain at ECC level until EWS quantify the extent of mitigation that flexibility would produce and until the loss of work load at each depot was identified. In addition in the event that compulsory redundancies can not be avoided the method of selection should be agreed through the ECC.

It is the view of the ECC that where there are opportunities to reduce the level of jobs at risk, every effort should be made to do so.

It was agreed that a further consultation meeting would be held at Bristol, Barton Hill depot Wednesday 17th Dec.

A further update will be issued following this meeting,

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Rixham'.

Bob Rixham
National Officer
Railways, Buses & Ferries