

PRIVATE BANKING & ADVICE

FURTHER PBC CLOSURES 2011-2013

Today (25 November) RBS has announced the closure of 7 Private Banking Direct Centres over the period of 2011 to 2013, which is in addition to the 3 closures of Sheffield, Nottingham and Exeter announced in July of this year. The headline details of the announcement are:

- **The closure of 7 Private Banking Direct Centres (PBDCs), which includes the consolidation of 3 London sites into 1 and the already announced merger of the 2 Bristol sites into 1 within Trinity Quay**
- **The closure programme is headcount neutral, with the overall headcount employed within the remaining PBDCs matching the numbers employed pre-reorganisation**
- **Actual and potential office moves within Birmingham, London and Bradford.**

Private Banking Direct – Strategic Plan

RBS has announced these closures and rationalisation of their PBDC network as the latest plank of the PBD Strategic Plan. The bank has argued that trends show a significant uplift in customers now looking for a more direct and on-line offering, therefore is investing in and improving the technology and infrastructure to support the delivery of this direct banking proposition.

RBS argues that the consolidation of PBD into fewer sites enables the Group to focus and maximise investment in technology, facilities and people, as well as being able to more effectively standardise, redesign and simplify processes for the benefit of staff and customers.

One of the clear drivers behind this re-organisation is reducing the property footprint within PBD and some members, particularly those that are co-located with colleagues recently impacted by announcements within Business Services and Wealth, will greet this announcement with little surprise.

Private Banking Direct Centres

As previously stated 7 PBDCs will close over the course of 2011 to 2013 and included within that number is the closure of Castlegate in Bristol, which has already been announced is merging with the PBDC at Trinity Quay, also in Bristol. The 3 PBDCs in London will be consolidating into 1, with the sites at Threadneedle Street and Drummonds closing, the location of the remaining PBDC in London has yet to be determined, but the remaining location of Premier Place has not been ruled out. The Birmingham PBDC will re-locate from Colmore Row to Brindley Place, as Colmore Row is an in-scope Santander site.

The bank has also announced the closure of Milton Keynes, Wimbledon, Crawley and Bradford. These represent straight closures, with the exception of Bradford and the business are currently exploring the availability of alternative sites either within Bradford, Leeds or the wider South Yorkshire locality. The actual closure of these and the London sites are linked to lease expiries and the proposed schedules of closures is detailed below; however it must be stressed that this represents proposals that could be subject to change.

PRIVATE BANKING CENTRE

Threadneedle Street, London
Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes
Drummonds, London
St George's House, Wimbledon
Turnpike House, Crawley
King Fisher House, Bradford

PROPOSED EXIT DATES

Quarter 1 2012
Quarter 4 2011
Quarter 1 2012
Quarter 4 2012
Quarter 1 2013
Quarter 4 2012

Next Steps

Given the relatively long lead in time around these closures, formal consultation in respect of actual individual site closures will commence with UNITE in most cases in the preceding quarter to closure. The formal consultations upon the actual closures and potential redundancies will not commence until the second part of next year; however UNITE will be engaging in detailed discussions with RBS in the interim period with a view to minimising or avoiding Compulsory Redundancies (C.Rs). The fact that the rationalisation of the PBDCs will not result in net headcount reductions and the relatively long lead in time, provides significant opportunities to redeploy successfully all those impacted that wish to remain with the Group, whether that is within PB&A or another job role within RBS. In relation to the Bristol, Birmingham and London situations, for the vast majority, if not all staff, this will simply result in a change of workplace location.

Given that there will be net headcount increases at the sites remaining open, there will be opportunities for staff to transfer to these sites; however it is recognised that for some members the travel time, distance and expense will render these job opportunities unworkable. Recently within Business Services, following the announcement of a similar, but larger scale property rationalisation programme, UNITE were able to reach agreement with RBS in respect of a number of enhanced Redundancy Mitigation Measures. These included financial assistance and lump sums for transferring to alternative sites or re-locating, dependent upon travel distance and time criteria being met.

These measures are specific to Business Services and the agreement reached with UNITE currently only applies to the job loss and site closure programme within Business Services; however UNITE have already tabled a claim for similar measures to be agreed in respect of the PB&A announcements. The measures represent a win/win situation; RBS retain skills and reduce costs around redundancy payments and most importantly members retain their job roles, with financial recompense. RBS have rightly stated that these measures relate to Business Services; however have committed to reviewing the agreement reached and engaging with UNITE to identify possible measures that could be applied to and be appropriate in the context of the PB&A announcements.

Where members are either unable or unwilling, for understandable reasons, to transfer to a different location, again the long lead in time provides an opportunity for members who wish to remain with the Group to attain a job role locally, elsewhere within the Group. UNITE would not expect members to be blocked in applying for jobs elsewhere within the Group and full support should be provided by RBS to assist this re-deployment process with the objective of avoiding CRs. UNITE maintains a position of complete opposition to CRs and will fully support any members who wish to remain with the Group to ultimately achieve this aim, as well as ensuring that the undertakings and statements made throughout the Group to being committed to avoiding CRs are upheld.

UNITE COMMENT

The bank will argue that the closure of the PBDCs relates directly to a more focussed customer proposition, which enables greater investment in technology, infrastructure and people across fewer sites. It is undeniable however that the restructure is also driven by a desire to have a reduced property footprint within PBD and the drive to reduce these costs across the Group is as a result of the crisis faced by the Group in 2008 and one it continues to grapple with. These announcements will bring to bear considerable anxiety for members as they contemplate their futures and whether these remain with the Group or not.

As previously stated the long lead in time and overall headcount position underpinning these announcements provide a significant opportunity to re-deploy those members that wish to remain with the organisation. UNITE will also seek to facilitate a position, for those members who wish to transfer to one of the PBDCs that are remaining open, of no financial detriment. UNITE believes that with flexibility and creativity there is a very real opportunity to significantly reduce or avoid CRs.

UNITE will visit those PBDC that are closing to support members as the plans for their sites begin to develop; however in the meantime, if members believe that an initial UNITE visit to their site would be beneficial, please contact the UNITE RBS Helpline on 0870 241 4425 or e-mail at rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org. UNITE will continue to communicate with members through newsletters and briefs to Workplace Reps. If members have issues, questions or concerns relating to the announcements, again please contact the helpline, e-mail or contact one of the Private Banking UNITE Workplace Reps.

Not a Member?

Join Unite's one and a half 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 e-mailing rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org, plus you can join on-line at www.unitetheunion.org

UNITE Representatives

UNITE is always seeking members to take on one of the four UNITE Representative Roles ie 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 e-mail rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org

UNITE Updates

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