

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN PACKAGES & EXPRESS AND THE CWU
COVERING CONSULTATION & NEGOTIATION ARRANGEMENTS
FOR DEPOT RATIONALISATION.**

1. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1 This Agreement has been negotiated to ensure that clearly understood and agreed mechanisms are in place, to ensure appropriate and adequate discussion, consultation and negotiation takes place at an appropriate level to meet the requirements of the depot rationalisation programme.
- 1.2 This Agreement builds upon the foundation of a joint commitment to build positive and constructive working relationships between P & E and the CWU, which promotes strategic involvement at all levels. This foundation allows for genuine CWU input into the formulation of Packages & Express policy prior to decisions being finalised, in order to take account of both business and employee needs.
- 1.3 It is accepted that the process of information share and involvement is not a replacement for the procedural agreement or formal negotiations and should not be used as a way to prejudice either party, individuals or the negotiation process.
- 1.4 Both P&E and the CWU agree there are benefits for both the business and employees that can be realised through good industrial relations. P&E recognise the CWU as a partner in the creation of a positive working environment and the body through which collective agreements are negotiated for all employees in the CWU represented grades. The process defined in this agreement is seen as an enhancement of the role of the CWU and provides additional opportunities for input, the development of greater understanding and an improvement in working relationships.
- 1.5 Both parties recognise that the success of this approach is dependent upon:
- the timely exchange of quality information at the planning stage before decisions are finalised
 - the development of confidence that the CWU's ability to contribute and influence at the planning stage is meaningful and worthwhile
 - the development of a common understanding of the changes required
 - the encouragement of dialogue at all levels
 - an open and honest exchange of views.
 - a mutual desire to reach agreement on the changes required so that the change can be implemented quickly, efficiently and effectively.

2. AGREEMENT.

- 2.1 It is agreed that the existing procedural agreement and all other national agreements will be the means and guiding principles by which all consultation and negotiation will take place.
- 2.2 Whenever there is a depot amalgamation programme to consolidate 2 or more depots into a single unit, P&E will appoint a lead negotiator, normally the relevant ACSM. The CWU lead will be the appropriate Regional Organiser but exceptionally may be another elected lead representative, appointed in accordance with the P&E / CWU Procedural Agreement.

- 2.3 The two lead negotiators will establish respective negotiating teams responsible for all consultation and negotiation relating to the changes required and agree the membership numbers for each negotiating team. This should reflect the number of people and units involved and be sufficient to ensure a good exchange of views and understanding is achieved. The CWU team will comprise of adequate CWU representation from each of the units affected by the change required. All CWU representatives will be P&E employees. Other managerial or CWU expertise may supplement the agreed forum as and when agreed necessary.
- 2.4 The role of the respective negotiating teams is to fully and frankly exchange information and discuss all relevant issues with a view to reaching agreement so that the changes required can be implemented, efficiently and effectively within the timescales required.

3. THE PROCESS.

- 3.1 Management representatives will share information on how and why specific proposals have been made and will inform the negotiating teams of all intentions, analysis, information gathering and involvement activity appertaining to the project before detailed information is passed to employees. The CWU negotiating team should be provided with all relevant information available. This will allow for a better understanding of the direction of the project, which in turn will allow for more informed exchange of views, consultation and, at the appropriate time, negotiation. The full value of CWU operational experience should be taken into account and the management team will allow the CWU every opportunity to input into and express views on all proposals regarding the project prior to finalising any decisions and the commencement of negotiations. In line with the directive on the European Works Council confidential information given to CWU representatives will not be shared with employees or third parties.
- 3.2 The negotiating teams should agree a clear, unambiguous framework programme for each project. Such a framework should clearly define milestones of successful progress and ensure a balance between the protection of existing service, maintenance of quality of service and the resolution of all people issues.
- 3.3 Past experience has proven that the resolution of people issues in change programmes is crucial to the achievement of project timescales. Both parties recognise that quality communication, information, sensitivity, advice, planning and consultation are major priorities. For those who are required to transfer to another site or where there is a surplus of staff created, this will be progressed inline with the Standard Terms Agreement and the spirit and intent of the Gemini annex (Code of Practice / Alternate Job Offers)., Experience has shown that these agreements are workable if applied sensibly.
- 3.4 Where preference exercises are required they will be carried out inline with annex A of this agreement.
- 3.5 It is agreed that such initiatives require a high degree of commitment and participation, if the change is to be delivered smoothly on time and morale is to be maintained. Therefore regular communication, both joint and separate, to employees and CWU members is considered another crucial factor in such an initiative. Joint communications should be agreed and carried out jointly where appropriate and will include team briefings, one to one discussion, newsletters and information bulletins as necessary. In respect of separate communication, it is accepted that for the CWU to operate effectively and democratically it needs the active participation of its members. Reasonable time during working hours will be provided for CWU members to be

adequately updated, discuss progress and ratify proposals. Such meetings should only be held with the express agreement from management and in considering the appropriate time for such meetings, both parties should ensure the safeguard of customer service and a mutually convenient time should be agreed which minimises any effect on the operation.

3.6 The role of the CWU Representatives in this agreement and its associated processes is fully recognised, as is the requirement for appropriate release in order for them to meaningfully prepare, participate and obtain the views of their members. To this end it is agreed that local managers will be informed that release for this purpose must be facilitated and that requests for release should not be unreasonably withheld.

3.7 It is recognised by both parties that failure to conduct themselves within the spirit and intent of this agreement could result in serious difficulties borne out of ignorance and offence. If the terms of this agreement are respected it will serve to avoid embarrassment to either party upon the revelation that proposals are found to be well advanced in the absence of involvement or consultation with the other party.

3.8 At all times both parties will be driven by the objective of reaching agreement. However, when it is evident that agreement cannot be reached on any particular issue relating to amalgamations and office closures, and where the above structure has been utilised, both parties will formally record their heads of disagreement, with the statement being signed by the lead negotiators. Resolution of any such disagreement will be by a senior manager appointed by P&E SHQ and CWU HQ in line with the Procedural Agreement.

3.9 The structures detailed in this agreement are specific for the purposes described and cover the transitional representational arrangements for dealing with depot amalgamation. When such projects are completed all representational procedures will reflect normal arrangements and national agreements.

4 REVIEW

4.1. Both parties accept that this agreement represents a new and innovative approach to CWU involvement in respect of depot rationalisation. The terms of this agreement will be reviewed by P&E and CWU HQ's after it has been in operation for at least one year or after it has been used on a minimum of two major projects, whichever is the sooner.

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ANNEX A.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE UTILISATION OF PREFERENCE EXERCISES.

1. Both Packages & Express and the CWU regard the use of preference exercises as an important opportunity for individuals involved in depot amalgamations and other change programmes to express a personal choice on the options available to them and ensures more informed manpower planning.
2. It is agreed that preference exercises will be undertaken where appropriate in the preparation of arrangements relating to each project where the re-deployment of staff is necessary as individual preferences will be used to help identify where employees will work after the consolidation has taken place. Preference Exercises should not be used in isolation, but as a support to other techniques in determining manpower needs and employee expectations.
3. Preference Exercises are not binding on the individual or the business. Where it is agreed that preference exercises should be undertaken, the completion of a preference form is necessary to ensure the views of all employees can be taken into account in the manpower planning process. Should circumstances change such that individuals need to change their preference they should advise management and complete a new preference form.. In the event that information available or circumstances change or timescales become extended, it may be necessary to conduct a second or subsequent preference exercise. P&E undertakes to try and meet as many preferences expressed as possible. Full consultation will take place over the allocation of staff in order to achieve the best possible match to the available duties and individual preference.
4. Information from all preference exercises will be treated with full confidentiality.
5. The design of preference forms is crucial. They should be clear, short, easy to read, and well laid out, with details of the options available. Any questions should be unambiguous and relevant. To this end, both P&E and the CWU, will jointly ensure that the subject matter and questions posed within preference exercises will be carefully scrutinised prior to issue.