Energy

# British gas must take ‘fire and rehire’ threat off the table

## British Gas owner Centrica in retreat over much-criticised plan to dismiss entire workforce is postponed until January 2021 after pressure

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British Gas should take its threat to fire and rehire its entire workforce off the table for good after the company confirmed its plan would be pushed back, energy workers’ union GMB said today.

In the face of sustained pressure, the company has retreated on its original plan which could have seen thousands being told before Christmas they would lose their jobs after it served advance notices of

redundancy on its entire workforce in July, before negotiations with Unions had even started.

The company confirmed today that it would delay the plan to instigate mass redundancies - but only until January 2021.

GMB warned Centrica bosses “continued to hold a box of matches, threatening to set fire to the terms and conditions of this loyal workforce once the Christmas decorations have come down”.

Centrica, the owner of British Gas and PH Jones, had previously revealed their intention in August to fire and rehire the entire 20,000 workforce, if they didn’t ‘agree’ to detrimental changes to terms and conditions, with a British Airways style threat.

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Select Committee Chairman Darren Jones MP yesterday wrote to the company with concerns about the “extreme measure”.

Outlining a series of questions, his letter requires answers from Centrica CEO Chris O’Shea by Wednesday 14 October. Jones raised the prospect of further committee investigation into the much-criticised tactics of Centrica management, with the possibility of executives being called to answer questions by MP’s.

Shadow Business Secretary Ed Miliband, Shadow Employment Rights Secretary Andy McDonald and Shadow Energy Minister Alan Whitehead piled the pressure on the beleaguered company, branding the proposals ‘immoral, unethical and counter-productive' in a letter to Centrica boss Chris O’Shea.

It is expected that the House of Commons will next week debate calls to legislate against ‘fire and rehire’ tactics being used by companies against their own workers.

**Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary, said:**

“It is welcome that Centrica management have woken up, smelled the gas and put a pause on their despicable plan.

“Working with, not against, the workforce and focusing now on serious negotiations that talk about growth not just cuts, is how to address the crisis created by past Centrica leaderships.

“This temporary retreat comes after sustained pressure, condemnation and public and political outcry over the proposal to sack the entire British Gas workforce.

“Make no mistake however, Centrica bosses are continuing to hold a box of matches and threatening to set fire to the terms and conditions of this loyal workforce once the Christmas decorations have come down.

GMB UNION

“Centrica should now do the decent thing and take this fire and rehire threat off the table for good.

“Centrica’s problems were not caused by the loyal engineers, call centre workers and back office staff who have done everything asked of them over years of boardroom mismanagement but have found their jobs in the firing line.”

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## Press office

07958 156846

press.office@gmb.org.uk


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info@gmb.org.uk