

Paper & Packaging Industry

Last update: 4 Apr 2025

2025 Bulletins

DS SMITH 2025 PAY BALLOT RESULTS – NATIONAL BARGAINING

Posted on: 4 April 2025

Dear GMB Union member,

We would like to thank all members who had your say on your pay and voted in big numbers in the recent ballot. We achieved a bumper turnout this year of 91.44%.

All the votes are in and have been counted and verified. There were no spoilt or invalid ballots.

Members have voted as follows:

To Accept: 74.58%

To Reject: 25.42%

Thank you to all your reps for their hard work in organising the ballot.

In solidarity,

Matthew Roberts

National Officer



DS Smith UK Packaging – National Pay Negotiations 2025



Posted on: 21 March 2025

Dear GMB member,

Following extensive and constructive negotiations between the parties, we are pleased to confirm we have **secured a best and final position** to take to a workplace ballot.

Your GMB and Sister Union negotiating team recommend acceptance of the proposal.

It is clear to the parties there are currently real challenges within the business including difficult market conditions, continued cost pressure, a 1.6% increase in labour costs separate to this pay offer due to government National Insurance changes, and the need to focus on controlling costs, both now and in the future.

The proposal is for a **3.3% increase** to all aspects of pay in line with previous practice with effect from **1st May 2025** for those employees in the bargaining unit.

Should you have any questions please speak with your trade union representatives. Please ensure you vote in the ballot.

In solidarity

Matt Roberts

National Officer

2023 Bulletins

DS Smith 2023 Pay Update



Posted on: 11 September 2023



11th September 2023

DS SMITH 2023 PAY UPDATE

Dear GMB Union member,

We would like to thank members for participating in the democracy of the negotiations process by voting in the recent pay ballot at your sites. All results are now in.

We would like to inform members of the confirmed aggregated national results across all sites and trade unions, that have been notified to the employer today:

- 93.37% voted to Accept the offer;
- 6.63% voted to Reject.

Thank you to your representatives and the negotiating team for delivering this deal that members have supported. We will now explore negotiations on the future replacement to the Confederation of Paper Industries pay bargaining which has now been terminated by the employers' side.

In solidarity,

Matthew Roberts

National Officer for the Paper & Packaging Industry

GMB Union

Smurfit Kappa 2023 Pay Update



Posted on: 11 September 2023

11th September 2023

SMURFIT KAPPA 2023 PAY UPDATE

Dear GMB Union members,



We would like to thank all members who voted in the recent Smurfit Kappa national pay ballot for participating in the democracy of the negotiations process.

We also thank your reps and negotiating team, in particular Peter Humphrey at West Auckland, for their hard work on this.

The trade union national officers have met today to confirm and verify the final aggregated results across all Smurfit Kappa sites and recognised trade unions.

The turnout in the ballot was 78% nationally.

80.2% voted to Accept the offer from the employer as stated at the time of the ballot.

19.8% voted to Reject.

The national officers will now write to the employer to confirm this outcome and to confirm that the deal will be implemented as agreed.

If you have any queries on the national ballot or site specific queries, please speak with your local GMB rep or organiser in the first instance.

In solidarity,

Matthew Roberts

National Officer for the Paper & Packaging Sector

GMB Union

DS SMITH 2023 PAY BALLOT BULLETIN



Posted on: 21 August 2023

Dear GMB Union Member,

Following the recent demise of the CPI, the separate pay negotiations with your employer DS Smith are now concluded for members working in the corrugated sites. We would like to thank your reps who participated in your negotiating team. The employer has tabled their best and final offer as follows:



The employer offer this year represents a 20 month deal of approximately 11.07%, paid in two instalments of 6.8% and 4.0% (with what is an effective 2.33% lump sum due to the fact that the pay date has been move back from the 1st September to 1st May).

If you choose to reject the employer's full and final offer then GMB will seek your support to carry out a ballot for industrial action in pursuit of an enhanced offer.

Please talk to your workplace rep and regional officer if you want to get more information on the offer, and make sure that any colleagues not already in GMB join www.gmb.org.uk/join in order to have a vote on the offer. Only GMB Union members have a say on pay.

Matt Roberts GMB Reps

GMB National Officer National Negotiating Team

DS Smith Joint Union Statement



Posted on: 16 August 2023

Dear Member,

Please see below the joint union statement agreed today at the annual DS Smith pay talks.

These were due to be CPI talks but these were pulled when the other signatory to the agreement (Smurfit Kapa) withdrew at the eleventh hour.

The offer represents a 20 month deal of approximately 11.07%, paid in two instalments of 6.8% and 4.0% (with what is an effective 2.33% lump sum due to the fact that the pay date has been moved back from 1st September to 1st May).

The reps in the meeting from both unions were happy to recommend this for acceptance with a ballot result to be delivered by 8th September.

Full details of the ballot will be circulated over the next two days.

In solidarity,

Andy Prendergast



GMB Union @ DS Smith



Posted on: 7 March 2023

Dear GMB Union Members,

Following the conclusion of the recent CPI pay bargaining, I have now taken over responsibility for DS Smith from my colleague Eamon. Your reps were recently called to a meeting at DS Smith Smethwick. The meeting was well attended. I would like to thank you reps for their participation in the meeting.

During your reps' meeting we held a post-mortem on the recent pay talks with all cards on the table. Following our interim notice to potentially leave the CPI on 29th November 2022 we then held a lengthy consideration of all the options for us as a union moving forwards. It was unanimously decided that we should seek reforms to the organisation and process of the CPI so it works better for GMB Union members, and to require that DS Smith Featherstone is allowed to join the CPI to give us more strength in numbers (Featherstone have wanted to join for some time).

With Featherstone on board with us nationally, and changes made to the process, your reps believe the CPI could work better for us. If these changes are not agreed or if they do not work out, your reps feel we will need to leave the CPI. We will also be working with our sister union Unite the Union on these points.

Prior to your reps meeting the company, we want to have feedback from you on what we should focus on changing or improving. Please can members either speak to your reps in person or complete this online form to provide your comments: <https://forms.office.com/e/6k2EhYV9N3> or scan the QR code below:





Please speak with your reps if you have any questions or concerns. We will be working to get the above points implemented as soon as possible, otherwise we will need to re-look at leaving the CPI.

In solidarity,

Matthew Roberts
National Officer
GMB Union

2022 Bulletins

CPI 2022 PAY BALLOT – GMB RECOMMENDS REJECTION



Posted on: 3 December 2022



Dear members,

Pay negotiations with the CPI have now resulted in the best and final offer as follows:

- 8% consolidated wage increase;

Whilst the employers have increased their final offer it falls well short of the claim submitted by members and the current cost of living pressures they are experiencing. GMB members returned a strong mandate for strike action with a 93% yes vote to taking strike action, and 87% in favour of overtime bans, in pursuit of:

“A WAGE INCREASE LINKED TO RPI INFLATION”

The recent inflation figures show RPI at 14.2% so the offer above falls well below that and even the lowest measure of UK inflation both now, and at your anniversary date in September, and as result we are recommending members reject the offer.

We have not taken this decision lightly and a joint Trade Union meeting today expressed strong feelings about the offer, and ultimately it will be a decision for each member to take. Our view is clear, this year we are only asking to stand still, not get ahead, and it is crucial that members and their families don't lose ground in the current climate.

The ballot will not stop sites implementing the overtime ban that has been notified to employers and is due to close at midday on Friday 25th November and **will close before the first strike action commences.**

GMB will be providing support to members in the event of strike action but we are still hopeful that another strong rejection will reinforce to the employers that this year we need an exceptional offer to match the exceptional circumstances members find themselves in.

Please make sure that any colleagues not already in GMB join www.gmb.org.uk/join in order to have a vote on the offer.

Eamon O'Hearn GMB Reps
GMB National Officer National Negotiating Team

Trade Union And Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 Section 231A

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Posted on: 3 November 2022



Result of Ballot – DS Smith

Further to my letter of 5th October 2022 the results of this industrial action ballot were:

Question: Are you prepared to take part in strike action?

Number of individuals who were entitled to vote in the ballot – **592**

Number of votes cast in the ballot – **423**

Votes cast in the ballot as a % of individuals who were entitled to vote – **71.45%**

Number of 'Yes' Votes – **393 (92.91%)**

Number of 'No' Votes – **30 (7.09%)**

Number of spoilt or otherwise invalid voting papers returned – **0**

Question: Are you prepared to take part in industrial action short of a strike?

Number of individuals who were entitled to vote in the ballot – **592**

Number of votes cast in the ballot – **423**

Votes cast in the ballot as a % of individuals who were entitled to vote – **71.45%**

Number of 'Yes' Votes – **368 (87.00%)**

Number of 'No' Votes – **55 (13.00%)**

Number of spoilt or otherwise invalid voting papers returned – **0**

Yours in Solidarity,

Eamon O'Hearn
GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 01-09-2022



Posted on: 1 September 2022



Dear Member,

Thank you to all of you who voted in the recent consultation ballot on the CPI offer:

- 3% consolidated wage increase and;
- +£760 consolidated increase for DS Smith or;
- +£810 consolidated increase for Smurfit Kappa.

The results from all GMB sites in both DS Smith (including Featherstone) and Smurfit were as follows:

- Between 97% – 100% rejection of the offer as outlined above.
- Between 94% – 100% support for action up to and including strike action.

This is the first time that many can recall that all GMB sites have been aligned on pay and action, and it is a credit to the work of Reps, members and Officers that we have achieved these results.

The CPI and our Joint Union have been updated to the outcome and we await further talks with the CPI.

Your Reps reserve the right to initiate a formal, legal ballot in order to secure our bargaining strength, and we will consider our options shortly at a Reps and Officers meeting, and we will keep members updated on progress of talks and any improved offers we receive.

Yours in solidarity

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 07-09-2022



Posted on: 7 September 2022

Dear Member,



Pay negotiations with the CPI are now concluded for members working in the corrugated sites at DS Smith and Smurfit Kappa, where the industry have tabled their best and final offer as follows:

- 3% consolidated wage increase and;
- +£760 consolidated increase for DS Smith or;
- +£810 consolidated increase for Smurfit Kappa.

The employers offer this year has two parts which has some benefit for our lower paid members, though the offer is different to all members so each company will provide you with a personal illustration at site.

This two-part offer though only has an overall value of 5.5%.

It was very clear from our recent survey to members in both GMB and our Joint Trade union that a pay pot of 5.5% was far short of member's expectations **and for that reason it is not being recommended to you by the National Negotiating Team.**

If you chose to reject the industries full and final offer then GMB will seek your support to carry out a ballot for industrial action in pursuit of an enhanced offer.

Please talk to your workplace rep and regional officer if you want to get more information on the offer, and make sure that any colleagues not already in GMB join www.gmb.org.uk/join in order to have a vote on the offer.

Yours in solidarity

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 01-08-2022



Posted on: 1 August 2022

Dear Member,



Your joint Union negotiating team met the CPI on the 23rd/24th August, where we tabled our claim for at least 10-15%, and provided feedback from our cost of living surveys that showed significant numbers of members relying on food banks and pay day loans.

We want to thank members for their replies, especially those who shared very sensitive information about how they are being impacted by the cost of living pressures, that feedback has been invaluable in helping to set the tone of the talks.

The feedback was a sobering reminder to the industry that our members are experiencing a huge pressure on their household finances and that why their aspirations for a pay award were crucial.

The CPI recognised immediately that the mandate they had, 5.5%, was not nearly enough, and that based on our initial feedback, particularly on the food banks etc they needed to go back to their respective companies to reassess their mandates.

What they did ask was whether we would consider a proposal for a pay award that would benefit the lower grades in the industry.

Their proposal would mean everyone getting a consolidated percentage award (as per normal offers) and a consolidated amount of cash that was equal in value for everyone, which means that it would be worth more money to members in lower grades ie it's a bigger proportion of their salary.

At today's meeting of the joint Reps combine, there was support for this type of proposal, though it depends entirely on the overall pot of money that is offered, and what this means for members across all grades.

The 5.5% CPI mandate is clearly below members' aspirations and another meeting is scheduled for Friday 2nd September, where we are hoping for a revised offer that meets members aspirations.

CPI PROPOSAL

The CPI have provided an example of how their proposal to benefit lower grades could look like, so we would encourage members to study it and ask questions.

It is also important to understand that the cash part of their offer, would not be paid as a lump sum like cash awards/bonuses that are not consolidated, but would be added to the base salary along with the percentage, therefore raising the base salary which would benefit members in the first month of pay after any implementation.

We also know there is a lot of detail that has not yet been provided, including how many members are paid at all the different grades/hourly rates, and this is being requested to assist us in making a decision about this type of proposal.



It will generate lots of questions, which are very important, but what is important to emphasise is that it is not our proposal, but we are willing to explore the implications of it for members.

However, as we are now aware of the extent of members relying on food banks/pay day loans, it is crucial that we carefully consider any other that could assist the lower grades this year.

NEXT STEPS

A further meeting is scheduled for Friday the 2nd and we expect it will result in a formal offer that we will take to ballot.

As per usual a decision to recommendation accept or reject will be made depending on the amount offered.

It is important that members clearly relay back to Reps their views, both on the proposal of an offer that benefits the lowest paid in the industry, but also on your aspirations for pay, and whether they are the same, or have changed.

Reps will be canvassing members and also asking member to ensure that your address and contact details are correct so please ensure that you alert them to any changes.

Once again thank you to all members who participated in the surveys and please ensure you pass on your feedback to Reps regarding the proposed structure of an offer that would benefit the lower paid members.

Yours in solidarity

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

DS Smith – Result of Ballot

CPI 2022 PAY OFFER REJECTED – STRIKES SUSPENDED NOT CANCELLED



Posted on: 28 November 2022



Dear members,

Thank you to everyone who voted on the CPI offer of 8%.

70% of GMB members have rejected the CPI pay offer.

The result of both GMB and Unite votes was an overall rejection of 50.33%.

However because Unite members voted in both DS Smith and Smurfit Kappa to accept, Unite have advised the CPI that they will accept the industry offer.

This is disappointing as we had hoped for a strong rejection of the offer across all sites and Unions and coordinated industrial action to commence this week.

On Friday we took the collective decision to suspend our action this week, not cancel all of it, and we are intent on quickly and urgently consulting members this week on continuing to fight for a better offer, now that we know that Unite are not joining us.

We still have strike action planned for the week commencing the 5th December and initial member feedback is that they want to continue the fight for a better offer via pursue industrial action.

We also took the decision to give interim notice of our intention to leave the CPI, subject to a membership vote in Jan/Feb next year, as the framework for pay talks is not fit for purpose.

Finally we have written to DS Smith to advise them on all of the above and that we are looking to hold direct discussions this week.

Please make sure that any colleagues not already in GMB join **JOIN** in order to have a vote on the offer.

Eamon O'Hearn GMB Reps

GMB National Officer National Negotiating Team

2020 Bulletins

RENEWED RISK ASSESSMENTS



Posted on: 22 December 2020



“Existing measures (e.g. social distancing, ventilation, hand hygiene and mask usage) remain important, but given the increase in risk associated with the new variant, strengthening the measures taken may be needed”

This means that:

- Risk assessments need to be reviewed and revised – the risk has increased (as virus is more infectious), so the full set of measures now need to be implemented to the fullest.
- The risk assessment will look similar – risk ratings should be higher numbers; colours switch from yellow/orange to red; list of measures should be longer and more detailed.

Many essential workplaces will have these in place but to remind everyone, in particular those measures in bold which are likely to be more relevant to factories.

Measures 1

- Every worker who can work from home must do so
- All Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (Shielding) workers must remain at home
- Standards of ventilation should be the highest achievable as per HSE/CIBSE/REHVA requirements
- Social distancing must be rigorously adhered to in all areas including communal areas, common parts and canteens.

Measures 2

- Welfare facilities must be provided to ensure that hand washing can be maintained.
- Hygiene standards must be the highest achievable in terms of cleanliness and frequency of cleaning
- Teams should be organised into the smallest units possible to minimise cross-exposure. Workers should remain in these teams with no intermingling as far as possible.
- Working patterns should be organised to minimise numbers in the workplace to fewest needed at any given time.



Measure 3

- All requirements for PPE and face coverings must be met in full, with access to supplies as needed.
- Every worker who is in a group identified at being at higher risk from Covid-19 (older workers; pregnant workers; BAME workers; disabled workers; workers with underlying health conditions) should be individually assessed and suitable additional measures implemented.
- All workers who are required to self-isolate must be able to do so without fear of any detriment – loss of pay; loss of holiday; disciplinary action.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

- Workplace Inspections, floor walks etc., daily if possible
- Daily H&S Meetings on performance and local infection rates
- Full Consultation on all Covid matters
- Facility Time/Time Off with Pay for these activities.
- Effective communication will be key to managing this period of high risk, and consultation structures will help to aid this.

Yours in solidarity

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 06-10-2020



Posted on: 6 October 2020

Dear GMB Member,



We hope that you, friends and family are all keeping safe and well. Thank you for continuing to work through the pandemic and lockdown, your commitment as essential workers has been remarkable and we believe this deserves recognition.

2020 PAY TALKS – CPI FULL AND FINAL OFFER

This year's pay talks have been a car crash, with the employers originally unable to agree a common position following the original 1% offer which was resoundingly rejected by Joint Union members.

However since then the CPI (DS Smith and Saica) have made a full and final offer, of **1.5%, though this is subject to a recommendation from both Unions**, representing the best offer that can be achieved through 'negotiation'.

GMB REPS

Your GMB Reps know that members were not happy with the original offer of 1%, and many consider 1.5% to be a very low pay offer, particularly when feedback is that almost every site is performing well, with high production levels and in some cases record output, which is a testament to the work of members.

In the normal course of pay talks we would have some indication of industry performance but this year we have to take the employers word that they can't afford anything greater than 1.5%, and your Reps believe members deserve greater recognition.

However Reps are also aware that many members will have family and friends affected by the wider economic fluctuations, possibly having been furloughed or lost their jobs. There are many companies struggling in the community and some may not recover, and there are others like Amazon, Morrisons and Hermes hiring thousands of new staff and making record profits.

The 1.5% is the best that can be achieved by negotiation but your Reps believe that members need to be asked whether they want to pursue a better outcome via potential industrial action.

GMB Reps understand this may be a difficult choice for some members, but we are committed to fully supporting members whatever the result. We believe that in the current circumstances members need to be able to consider all their options.

Before your Reps can consider proceeding down this path, **GMB members will need to deliver a Yes vote at all GMB sites** covered by the CPI National Agreement.

To be absolutely clear at least 70% of GMB members at all GMB sites need to vote Yes by over 70% – this is crucial because GMB members need to be united on this potential course of action.

Yours in solidarity



Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

