

Poll: British Gas customers oppose fire and rehire plan and support strike



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Almost three quarters of British Gas customers support the strike against fire and rehire of all engineers, new polling shows.

Customers were also asked where the priority should be if savings had to be made – 76% said that the first port of call should be reducing senior managers' salaries or shareholder dividends ahead of changing employees terms and conditions.



A backlog of more than 100,000 customers awaiting service will grow after the latest round of strike days in the dispute provoked by CEO Chris O'Shea.

British Gas is refusing to remove the threat of firing and rehiring their workforce if they don't sign up to a punitive new contract that would see five-and-a-half to eight hours of unpaid work and travel added to their work weeks.

The fire and rehire policy – in the middle of an unprecedented global pandemic – has been condemned by politicians of all parties, including the Prime Minister and the Labour Leader Keir Starmer.

Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary said:

“Like most of the wider public and politicians, British Gas customers are opposed to this hated fire and rehire policy.

“This dispute was avoidable as is the growing backlog of customers waiting for service, which was already more than 100,000 before the latest strike days.

“The company has a consistent record of very healthy operating profits and until the price cap, operating profit margins were well above those of Sainsbury's and Tesco.



“It is fact that CEO Chris O'Shea's plan would cut the effective hourly rate for engineers to 15% lower than the current agreed hourly rate. This is a very long way from the “streamlining” he says is the aim of the latest cuts exercise.

“Before he embarked on this course, the British Gas board should have asked Mr O'Shea how his plans would impact on British Gas customers when the workforce inevitably rejected his imposed changes. It was wishful thinking in the extreme to think union members would ever acquiesce with cuts of this magnitude in a profitable company.

“Engineers have at every turn overwhelmingly rejected the cuts and followed this up by seven days of solid strike action.



“A company with £27 billion turnover and **£901m operating profits**, after exceptional deductions, should be using incentives and persuasion to get changes, not force.”

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