



Central Executive Council Special Report

GMB BRANCHES – A FUTURE THAT WORKS

PROGRESS REPORT TO ANNUAL CONGRESS 2015 CITYWEST, DUBLIN

SUNDAY 7 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 4.30 pm

MONDAY 8 JUNE – WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

THURSDAY 11 JUNE

9.30 am – 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - close of business

The membership of the Branch Review Working Party is:

CHAIR	MALCOLM SAGE, VICE-PRESIDENT
BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS	MARGI CLARKE
LONDON	JOE ISAACS
MIDLAND & EAST COAST	VIC BAINES
NORTHERN	JOY THOMPSON
NORTH WEST & IRISH	KEVIN FLANAGAN
GMB SCOTLAND	JOHN MARR
SOUTHERN	ANDY NEWMAN
SOUTHERN	BARBARA PLANT
WALES & SOUTH WEST	ROGER HUNT
YORKSHIRE & NORTH DERBYSHIRE	ERIC BATTY
GENERAL SECRETARY	PAUL KENNY
REGIONAL SECRETARY	PAUL MALONEY, SOUTHERN
REGIONAL OFFICER	HITEN VAIDYA, LONDON
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS	ROSE CONROY
PRESS OFFICER	STEVE PRYLE
MEDIA & CAMPAIGNS CO-ORDINATOR	CHARLOTTE GREGORY
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	STEVE SHORT
EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	PAULA KEANE
NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION UNIT	ALISON TURTLE

Following to the adoption by Congress 2014 of the interim CEC Special Report “GMB BRANCHES – A FUTURE THAT WORKS” the Branch Review Working Party has met a further four times in 2014 and 2015 to discuss and progress action on recommendations in the Congress 2014 Special Report.

The Branch Review Working Party received reports, interviewed and took evidence from the following colleagues on the following subjects:

Martin Smith, National Organising Officer on branch retention and recruitment

Brian Strutton, National Secretary on facility time audits

Brian Shaw, National Equality Forum Chair on branch activity community campaigning

Michael Flunt and Aubrey Thompson, British Gas Stewards on virtual branches

Nick Hughes and Sophie Hayes, GMB Wales & South West Region on the regional membership retention project.

1. Branch Development Plans

Following the Working Party recommendation and rule amendment agreed by Congress 2014, January 2015 saw the first submission of Branch Development

Plans under rule 35.1b. Regional return rates up to 17 March 2015 are shown in Appendix 1 and an updated report will be made to Congress.

The Working Party received a report on non-school local authority recruitment, and activity in local authority branches and making the most of GMB facility time arrangements. Working Party views were sought on a Local Authority Facility Time Audit to be carried out to get a proper understanding of activity and creating role profiles so members with full time release knew what was expected of them. The Working Party agreed an audit would help, but was not a one size fits all solution, and should be analysed alongside branch development plans. Organisers need to complete the audit and be more involved with Local Authority branch activities, Senior Organisers need to ensure the audit is completed, but overall management for the audit lies with the National Secretary as part of an industrial organising strategy, to measure activity, and report to the SMT. At regional level Senior Organisers would report to Regional Committee and Regional Council. The Audit records a starting point to move activity forward. It is hoped that the lowest performing 20-30% of local authority branches raise activity, and raise recruitment levels which could potentially double non-schools recruitment. Regional return rates will be reported to Congress.

2. Branch Websites and Survey

Following the Congress 2014 offer that GMB nationally would fund the first year for branches to set up their own website as set up by Pellacraft, 111 branches took up this offer. A further 16 branches funded the set-up themselves. In December 2014 116 branches who have a Pellacraft branch website were asked to complete an on-line survey to ascertain their experience in setting up the website and the benefits of having a branch website. At the closing date for replies on 16 January 2015, 48 branches had completed the survey.

The survey showed 90% of respondents heard about and signed up for their CEC free issue Pellacraft website at GMB Congress 2014. Almost half, 46.34% opted for PRO (£198) version while 29.27% for STANDARD (£150) version and 24.39% opted for the BASIC (£102) version.

87.6% branches said they will continue with their websites when the first free year is over while 12.4% said they would not continue i.e. pay for it. 80% said they intend to keep the same version while 20% said they would not keep the same version.

It was apparent from the survey that training was required to help branches update and take control of website content, to that end Pellacraft have released a training programme with practical on-line demonstrations on how to load information onto the website. Pellacraft will have a dedicated website helpdesk stand at Congress 2015.

3. Virtual Branches

The Working Party discussed the concept of virtual branch meetings, but felt they may only work for a very limited number of branches. Concerns were raised about whether a virtual meeting complied with the rulebook. Other concerns were about privacy and security and the need for records of meetings to be maintained. The Working Party agreed that virtual meetings of branches could only be held following permission of the Regional Committee with some rules and protocol about what constitutes the need for a virtual meeting.

The Working Party received a demonstration of the British Gas database project to ensure greater accuracy of membership contact details. The membership is spread across the country in 81 branches across all nine Regions and the senior British Gas GMB negotiating team needed a way to contact their 6000 lone working members easily outside British Gas's own networks. The Working Party welcomed this development and the ability for the up to date and verified information to be automatically uploaded to the GMB central database, and **recommended** GMB looks at better integration of databases to gather membership information. This system could also be used to provide members with information eg benefits and services such as Unionline, as well as to receive information.

4. Notification to Branches about apparent leavers

The Working Party were informed that facilities were in place to notify branches of apparent leavers. The Branch Review Working Party **recommends** that Regions regularly report apparent leavers to branches. This can be done on a daily or weekly basis so branches are notified at the earliest opportunity that a member may have left and can investigate accordingly, before the member is automatically lapsed after three months of non-payment.

5. Motion 14, carried by Congress 2014

At the request of the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee Motion 14 carried by Congress 2014 was discussed by the Working Party.

The Working Party were advised that Branch Secretaries will be able to see their branch membership information online, and should be given the ability to amend some basic details such as address, email, telephone number, employer to help keep members' records as up to date as possible.

The Working Party **recommends** this system is put in place, and Branch Secretaries are sent advice by the NAU on accessing this information and amending details.

6. Action on Branches under non lay member control

The Senior Management Team have discussed reducing the number of branches under non lay member control and substantial reductions have taken place some by closing or merging branches, some by electing lay members as Branch Secretaries. In November 2014 the Working Party received a report showing the number of branches with no branch secretary or with an officer or staff member acting as branch secretary. A comparison report was received by the Working Party in March 2015 which showed that the number of branches under non-lay member control had been reduced. The SMT will ensure that this trend continues.

In order to limit the amount of time a branch is temporarily under non-lay member control the Working Party **recommends** a rule amendment is made to rule 35.4

Analysis of Changes between October 2014 and May 2015
(updated information provided by the NAU or Region)

Region	Internal Branches October 2014	Internal Branches May 2015	New Internal Branches Since October 2014	No Change Since October 2014	Still Internal, but Made Changes Since October 2014	Closed Since October 2014	Returned to Lay Member Control Since October 2014
Birmingham	11	10	-	8	2	-	1
London	20	24	6	18	-	1	1
Midlands	7	5	3	2	-	3	2
Northern	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
North West & Irish	88	65	6	45	14	22	7
Scotland	33	32	5	27	-	4	2
Southern	13	8	2	5	-	2	5
Wales & South West	54	6	2	-	-	46	4
Yorkshire	9	7	3	4	-	3	2
	237	157	27	109	16	81	26

7. Branches with no recruitment or involvement in GMB democracy throughout 2014

The Working Party received a report showing 109 branches that had not recruited any members during 2014, of which 65 were under non-lay member control, only 6 of which had sent a delegate to Congress or submitted a motion in the same period, and only 8 of which met regularly. The report gave a definitive view of non-active branches and will be sent to Regions for action and to the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee for information. An updated analysis will be reported to Congress and the Working Party will continue to monitor this.

ANALYSIS OF BRANCHES THAT HAVE NOT RECRUITED IN THE 12 MONTHS MAY 2014 – APRIL 2015
(updated information provided by the NAU)

BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS	11 BRANCHES
LONDON REGION	7 BRANCHES
MIDLAND & EAST COAST REGION	2 BRANCHES
NORTHERN REGION	4 BRANCHES
NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION	13 BRANCHES
GMB SCOTLAND	11 BRANCHES
SOUTHERN REGION	4 BRANCHES
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION	25 BRANCHES
YORKSHIRE & NORTH DERBYSHIRE REGION	1 BRANCH

8. Retention Projects

The Working Party was advised of pilot retention projects in three regions where phone banking, email and SMS messages were being used to contact apparent leavers. The most successful of these pilot projects appeared to be an in-house phone banking system operated by Wales & South West Region.

The Working Party received a presentation on the in-house phone banking retention project in Wales & South West Region which highlighted that local knowledgeable personal contact with apparent leavers led to a high percentage of retentions, the majority of which were retained on Grade 1 or 2 rate. This system also highlighted potential problems which could be identified to an Officer to follow up. The Working Party agreed that this was the most cost effective way of retaining members and **recommends** that an evaluation exercise on the use of existing resources to promote and retain members is carried out .

9. New Joiners

The Working Party was advised of a trial in three Regions on how membership information is recorded for new joiners. The SMT were also investigating a more modern way to process membership forms, such as a digital machine-read system. Investigations have shown that the variation in what information is stored and how much is transferred from membership forms needs to be standardised and more effective use of technology could free up existing resources to deploy on retention work.

10. Increase in Congress related branch activity - Motions and Rule Amendments to Congress 2015

Following submission of motions and rule amendments to Congress 2015 there were 15 more motions than submitted to Congress 2014.

13 Branches submitted motions in 2015 that had not submitted a motion in the previous six years. This is clear evidence that more branches are engaging in the internal GMB democracy and it is hoped that this will continue to increase in future years.

11. Branch Secretary Handbook

The Working Party were advised that work was underway between the NAU and Regional Finance Officers to produce a Branch Secretary Handbook. The March meeting of the Working Party received a draft outline of the areas the handbook would cover, and suggested other issues the Handbook should cover including in respect of GMB@WORK. It was agreed that the publication availability of the Branch Secretary Handbook should be produced in time for Congress.

12. Status of Retired Life Members

In response to clarification of the status of Retired Life Members holding office without paying full contributions it was confirmed that in line with rule 18.7 Retired Life Members could hold office up to branch level whilst maintaining their Retired Life Membership. If a Retired Life Member sought office above branch level, eg Congress delegates, Regional Council member they would have to pay the appropriate rate during their whole term of office in line with rule 18.2

Following their term of office they would revert to Retired Life Member status without having to pay the one off contribution again, unless it had been refunded to them.

13. Branch Financial Report

At the March meeting the Working Party discussed RA17 submitted to Congress. The Working Party agreed that whilst the rule amendment was worthy as it aligned the rulebook to actual NAU procedures it had highlighted an incorrect term in the rulebook – branch balance sheet, which should be referred to as branch financial report. The Working Party therefore **recommends** an alternative rule amendment to rule 37.3 to address both these issues.

14. Rule 26 and Rule 47

During the course of the Working Party discussions clarification was sought on when a member qualifies to pay the unemployed rate and it was clarified that in line with rule 47.3 that the member must be a full financial member and have been a member for 52 weeks. A discussion on the application of and wording of rule 47 in general resulted in the Working Party agreeing suggested rule changes to rules 47 and 26, which tidies up the rulebook, removing references in rule 47 to members cards being marked but maintaining that branches must notify Regions if the member is ill or unemployed for more than 26 weeks so the Regional Committee can consider extending the reduced rate period. The suggested related rule amendment to rule 26 ends the arrangement where a member would pay full contributions if unemployed or sick and was receiving legal assistance.

Congress is asked to pass the following changes to the rulebook.

15. Rule Amendments

Rule 26

Clause 4, Line 5 – Delete “by”

Clause 4, Line 5-8 – Delete “However, if the member changes employment or is unemployed while we provide legal assistance, the regional secretary may decide to limit the period for which the member needs to pay full contributions.”

Clause 4 to read:

4 If we agree to provide legal assistance for any member, the member must keep at all times to any terms and conditions we set, and in particular must do the following.

- Continue to be a member of the union and pay contributions as set out in these rules.
- Accept and follow the advice of the solicitor or representative.
- Co-operate with the solicitor or representative, and in particular:
 - reply to correspondence;

- keep to arranged appointments;
- give them as much relevant information as possible; and
- tell them if they change their address or name.

Rule 35

Clause 4, Line 4

Delete “carry out the branch secretary’s duties”

Insert “for up to six months carry out the branch secretary’s duties, whilst the regional secretary and regional committee formally review the situation and agree the long term solution.”

Clause 4 to read

4 If, in the opinion of the regional committee and regional secretary, and with the agreement of the branch concerned, it is not practical for a member of the branch to act as branch secretary, regions have the power to direct an organiser to temporarily for up to six months carry out the branch secretary’s duties, whilst the regional secretary and regional committee formally review the situation and agree the long term solution. This organiser will take part in the branch committee’s meetings, and will have the right to speak but not to vote.

Rule 37

Clause 3

Delete clause 3,

Insert new clause 3:

“ 3 The branch secretary will send to the National Administration Unit the branch’s financial report, which should be signed by the auditors and the president, within the timetable set by the National Administration Unit.”

Rule 47

Delete Clause 5

Clause 6, Line 1 – Delete “ ’s card”, “be marked to show they are”, “paying”.

Insert “pay”

Clause 6, Line 3 - Delete “send the member’s card to”. Insert “notify”

Clause 6, Line 6-11 – Delete “If the regional committee allows the member to continue paying a reduced rate, the member must continue to keep to the conditions set out in clause 5 of this rule, and, at the end of every 13 weeks, the branch secretary must again send the contribution card to the regional secretary. The regional secretary will mark the card and keep a record of the member’s contributions at the regional office.”

Clause 7, Line 5-6 – Delete “and keep a record at the regional office”

Re-number Clauses 6, 7, 8, 9 as Clauses 5, 6, 7, 8

Rule 47 to read

Rule 47 Paying reduced contributions when unemployed or ill

1 This rule gives members:

- who are temporarily out of work, either through being unemployed or ill (this includes when the employer has a sick-pay scheme in force or when the member is pregnant); and
- whose ordinary wage is significantly reduced or stopped as a result;

the right to pay a reduced contribution to continue to be entitled to those benefits which they would normally be entitled to when paying full contributions, in line with the conditions set out in these rules.

2 If a member is ill but their employer does not have a sick-pay scheme in force, we may credit the member's contributions in full for up to 26 weeks in a row, in line with the conditions set out below.

3 The benefits of this rule will apply only to full financial members who have been a member for 52 weeks.

4 Any member who is out of work or ill and is covered by their employer's sick-pay scheme can apply to the branch secretary to have their contributions reduced to 5p a week. The member must do this no more than six weeks from the date they stopped working. The reduced rate will apply for the time the member is out of work or ill, and will allow them to continue to receive the same benefits as if they were paying full contributions.

5 A member cannot pay a reduced rate for more than 26 weeks in a row. If the member is ill or unemployed for more than 26 weeks, the branch secretary must notify the regional secretary. The regional committee will consider the

member's circumstances and will either give or refuse permission for the member's reduced rate to continue for more than 26 weeks.

6 If a member is unable to work because of an accident for which they are receiving a cash benefit, they must pay full contributions while claiming this benefit. If the member's employer does not have a sick-pay scheme in force, the member will be allowed to pay the reduced rate. In all cases, the branch secretary should report the matter to the regional secretary. The member must continue paying full contributions when they return to work.

7 Members who are unemployed are responsible for applying to their branch to pay the reduced rate. Members who are ill or unable to apply themselves must get someone to apply on their behalf.

8 Without affecting rule 49.3, we will pay a member's contributions for any week they receive benefit under rules 49, 50 or 51.

The Working Party will continue to meet after Congress 2015, and will bring further reports to future Congresses.

Appendix 1

Branch Development Plans return rate as at 15 May 2015.

Birmingham & West Midlands	54 of 83 branches
London	81 of 100 branches
Midland & East Coast	83 of 85 branches
Northern	40 of 79 branches
North West & Irish	125 of 190 branches
Scotland	86 of 112 branches
Southern	63 of 74 branches
Wales & South West	95 of 115 branches
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire	70 of 70 branches