

Bank Launches Contact Centre Closure Programme

The Bank has today triggered the start of what we expect to be a programme of Contact Centre closures by announcing its intention to close its LTSB Contact Centre at Sussex House, Brighton on 28th May 2010 with the loss of all 410 Telephony jobs.

Large Scale Compulsory Redundancies

LTU will be doing all we possibly can to ensure that the Bank does everything required to limit the number of compulsory redundancies.

However, with the Bank having already announced many more job reductions in the Brighton & Hove area over recent months, it has accepted that the prospects are bleak for all but perhaps a handful of staff avoiding compulsory redundancy. There are simply too few alternative roles available for staff to transfer into.

Which Centres Will Close Next?

Though the Bank insists that it plans to close no more Contact Centres during 2010, it is inevitable that it will be announcing further closures during next year that will be completed during 2011.

At this stage it is not clear which Contact Centres will be next on the closure list, but it is inevitable that several more Lloyds TSB and HBOS Contact Centres will close over the next two years.

One factor determining which sites will close will undoubtedly be whether the Bank can extricate itself from lease arrangements. In the case of Sussex House Brighton, the Bank has said that by not renewing its lease and leaving the building it will be able to save £6 million in premises costs over three years.

LTSB's Brighton Contact will be the first contact to close, resulting in 410 jobs being made redundant. It is inevitable that during next year the Bank will announce further Contact Centre closures.

Abandoning UK Jobs In Favour Of 'Jobs In India' Policy

It is wholly unacceptable that the Bank should be condemning many hundreds of staff in Brighton - and before long in other Contact Centres - to compulsory redundancy, at the same time as over 5,000 jobs are retained in India. And this merely because the Bank can get away with paying lower salaries to staff in India.

The Bank should accept that it has a responsibility to not only its existing staff but also the UK economy; especially when it has been so dependent upon UK taxpayers' financial support over the past year.

LTU will continue its intensive lobbying of MP's to force the Bank to return jobs from India to the UK. As well as lobbying MP's, Government Ministers and the Treasury, LTU has been seeking customer support outside LTSB and HBOS branches by asking customers to sign our petition demanding that their accounts are administered only in the UK.

This campaign previously succeeded in forcing the Bank to close its Mumbai Call Centre - with the return of 750 jobs to the UK - and we will be looking to replicate this success to protect the jobs of other UK-based Telephony staff.

LTU's Key Priorities

LTU has a reputation for giving members the highest quality professional support available from any UK trade union and this will be no different whenever the Bank announces the closure of a Contact Centre.

Throughout the Bank's Contact Centre closure programme, LTU will have four key priorities:

Minimising Compulsory Redundancies

LTU will be ensuring that the Bank takes all possible steps to minimise the number of staff who will be made compulsorily redundant.

Though it is inevitable that there will be compulsory redundancies at all Contact Centres that the Bank closes, LTU will maximise pressure on the Bank to do all it can to keep these to a minimum.

Measures must include seeking volunteers for redundancy in other areas of the Bank to create vacancies for staff to transfer into; whether this be other LBG operations elsewhere in the local area or even providing full financial support to any staff who might consider relocating to other Contact Centres that have a longer-term future elsewhere in the Bank.

Maximum Support Finding Alternative Work

LTU will be making sure that whenever a Contact Centre is due to close, all staff are provided with the maximum possible support and assistance in finding alternative work either inside the Bank or with alternative employers.

The Union has already made a number of proposals to the Bank in respect of the Sussex House closure, including that it should provide staff with additional skills training to make them more attractive to new employers. Other measures that LTU intends to pursue with the Bank include close liaison with the local authority and other public bodies to identify alternative job opportunities, assistance with childcare for staff who might be unable to continue

on their current work patterns with new employers, etc.

LTU also provides members with a free CV Design & Preparation Service to help them find new jobs both inside and outside of the Bank.

Avoiding 'Forced Redeployment'

Often during Bank reorganisations, an issue for many staff that is almost as emotive as redundancy is the forced redeployment of people into alternative roles that they may not wish to accept (perhaps preferring Voluntary Severance) or consider unsuitable.

In the Sussex House closure this is unlikely to be an issue for most staff, although it could well be with other Contact Centre closures where staff may be in close proximity to other Bank operations that might be able to offer them work.

LTU will also provide all members with our fullest support including, where necessary, representation through the Job Security Appeals Procedure to ensure staff are not forced into accepting unsuitable alternative roles.

Campaigning For Return Of Jobs From India To The UK

LTU will be stepping up our already high-profile campaign to pressurise the Bank into abandoning its 'Jobs To India' policy, forcing the return of work to the UK.

LTU is the only trade union operating within the Lloyds Banking Group that is actively opposing the Bank's Offshoring Policy. In fact, LTU's campaign contributed to the closure of the Bank's Mumbai Call Centre (which was set-up when the Newcastle Contact Centre was closed), with the return of over 750 Telephony jobs to the UK in March 2007.

It is wholly unacceptable that whilst the Bank is making so many jobs redundant in the UK, it continues to maintain over 5,000 jobs in India merely because it can get away with paying lower salaries. This includes a large telephony-

based Collections & Recoveries operation in India, which could easily be returned to the UK and thereby provide employment for many existing Contact Centre staff in the UK who will otherwise face the prospect of being made compulsorily redundant.

LTU has been intensifying its lobbying of MP's over recent months as we seek their support to make the Bank live up to its responsibilities to the UK economy by returning jobs from India to the UK.

Local Political Pressure

In Brighton, this campaigning has succeeded in eliciting the active support of many MP's for LTU's Offshoring Campaign. This includes Cynthia Barlow, MP for Hove, who recently met with a Treasury Minister to discuss these issues.

LTU is planning to work closely with other West Sussex MP's and the local council to intensify this pressure on the Bank to return jobs to the UK.

Job Security Appeals

Sussex House staff who believe they have been treated unfairly - either because the Bank has provided insufficient support to them finding alternative roles or through being pressurised into accepting unsuitable alternative jobs - can pursue Job Security Appeals with full representation from LTU's team of experienced Officials.

This procedure, which has been used successfully by a number of LTU members, means that staff can have their cases presented by professional Union Representatives in front of Panels consisting of an equal number of senior Union and Bank Officials.

It is up to the Job Security Appeals Panel - after hearing submissions from the member of staff's representative and the local management team - to decide whether staff have been treated fairly:

- **Where staff are resisting redundancy, the Panel can decide that the period of job search be extended and/or that other measures be taken to provide 'bumping' opportunities for surplus staff to move into.**
- **Where it believes a role doesn't match up to the definition of 'suitable alternative employment', the Appeals Panel can insist that a member of staff be offered either a different role or given an opportunity to take the Severance Terms instead.**

Members concerned about their own job security should speak to LTU's experienced Official for Brighton & Hove, Stuart Rankin, during one of his regular visits to Sussex House. Alternatively, they can telephone LTU's 24 Hour Advice Line Service on 01234 262868.

Professional Union Support

One thing is absolutely certain - many Telephony Staff are going to need professional union support, advice and representation over the coming two years.

There is a huge gulf between the support provided to staff by the unions operating within the Lloyds Banking Group. For example, talk is cheap and whenever staff are at risk Unite is always quick with its press releases. **But it is LTU - and LTU alone - that is there for Direct Channels staff day in and day out.**

LTU guarantees to provide all our members within Direct Channels with the highest quality union representation available anywhere in the UK.

This includes regular surgeries by experienced Union Officials to all Contact Centres, high quality informative Newsletters, a genuine 24 Hour Advice Line and a guarantee that all our Officials representing staff are fully experienced and totally independent of the Bank.

STEVE TATLOW
Assistant General Secretary

To join call 01234 262868... today!