

National lockout looms unless British Gas pulls back from mass sacking of striking workers



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A mass sacking of British Gas engineers will happen on April 1 unless they accept a 15% cut in pay rates and changes to terms and conditions they have already overwhelmingly and repeatedly rejected.



A GMB Central Executive Council (CEC) meeting tomorrow [Tuesday March 23] will consider declaring an official national lockout dispute with British Gas unless the company pulls back from the brink. It will also consider fixing further strike dates.

Lockouts – where bosses shut workers out of the workplace and won't let them work – have historically been used by bosses to bully workers into accepting cuts to their pay, terms and conditions and are very rare in the modern world.

The April 1 deadline for the mass sackings is one of three rapidly approaching deadlines unilaterally fixed by British Gas in this long-running deadlocked dispute.

- Today, Monday March 22, thousands of GMB British Gas members are on strike – their 38th strike day.
- Thursday, March 25 is the deadline for staff to sign acceptance of the imposed cuts. Those failing to sign will not be paid lump sum payments of up to £4,500 and other so-called 'protected terms' offered by British Gas.
- Friday, March 26 to Monday, March 29 thousands of GMB British Gas members take part in strike days 39 to 42.
- Monday, March 29 British Gas will give up to 12 weeks' formal notice of termination for staff who have not accepted the imposed changes.
- Thursday, April 1 British Gas will sack staff who don't accept the imposed cuts and other changes, with pay in lieu of the up to 12 weeks' notice they are required to give.

Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary, said:

“Mr O’Shea – CEO of British Gas – has unilaterally created an April 1 cliff edge and is driving the company at high speed towards it.

“For the CEO to gamble the future of a profitable business on a strategic decision of mass sackings is illogical. It will leave everyone bewildered.

“It is all the more illogical in that from the recent talks at ACAS, Mr O’Shea apologised for undermining trust by accepting dodgy legal advice to go ahead with fire and rehire and promised never ever to go down this road again.

“There is still time to pull back. Mr O’Shea should do what’s right for the business, customers and the workers and take April 1 off the table.”





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