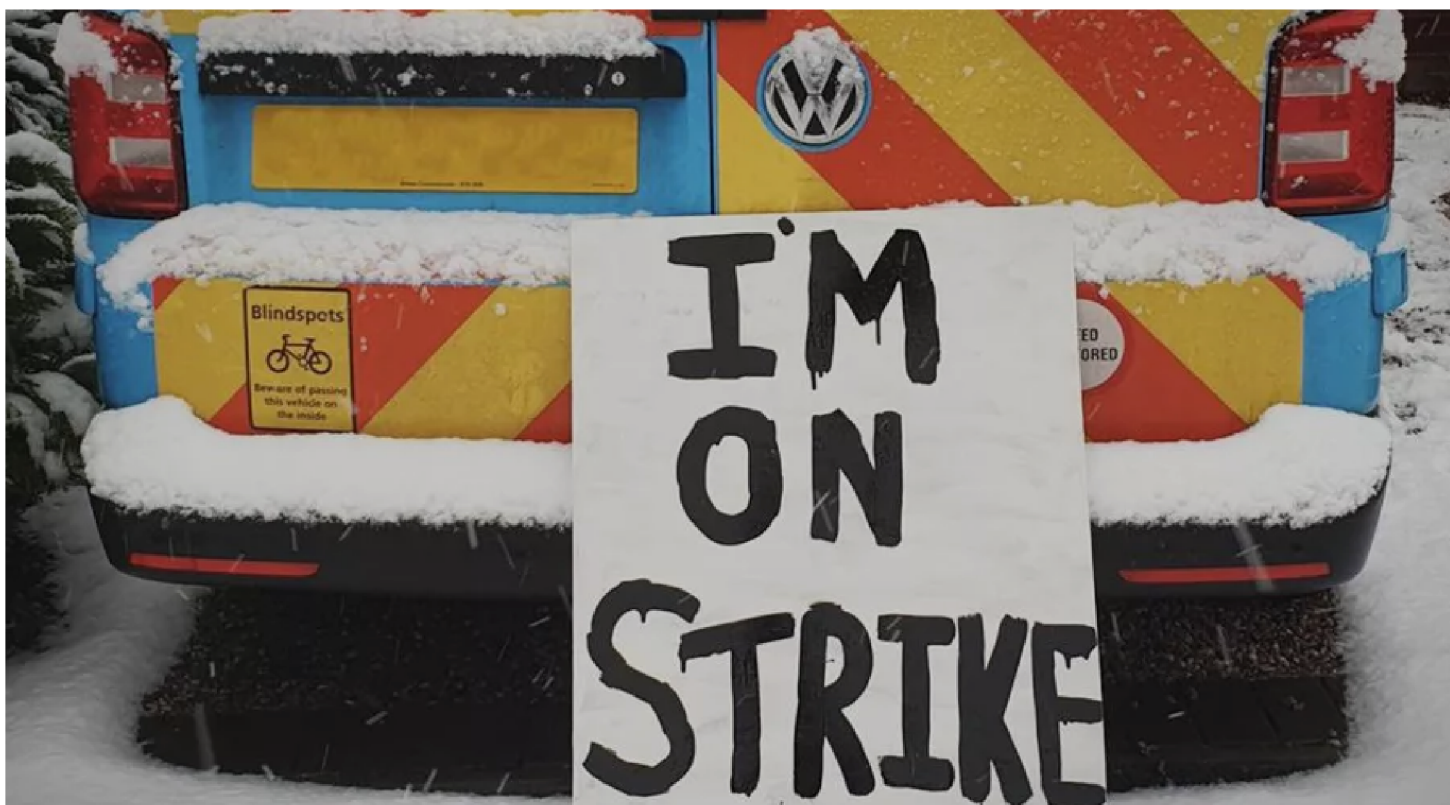


British Gas engineers strike for eighth day as service backlog set to hit 150,000 customers



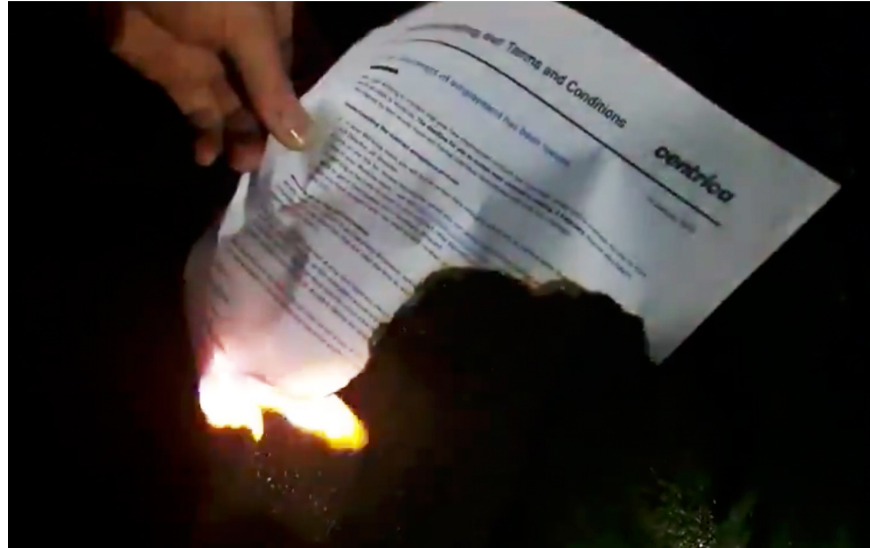
Reckless British Gas provoked the dispute leaving backlog growing at treble the 6,000 a day admitted by the company

GMB British Gas members across the country embark on strike day eight today over the company's fire and rehire threat.



The workers are in dispute over the profitable company's attempt to impose hourly rates 15% below agreed rates and other detrimental changes.

Meanwhile the backlog of customers waiting for service has reached a massive 150,000 as a result of the industrial action British Gas has provoked.



In a show of defiance on strike day seven, gas and electrical engineers across the country staged a ceremonial burning of a contract they have been told to sign or face the sack.

Engineers and other workers have been on strike for five days up to January 11 and for two days last week on January 20 and 22.

There will be further strikes on January 29, 30, 31 and February 1.

British Gas engineers and staff voted overwhelmingly by 89% to strike after boss of parent company Centrica, Chris O'Shea, threatened to fire them all if they didn't "accept" cuts to pay and terms and conditions.

The first five days of strike action caused massive disruption with an estimated 100,000 homes waiting for service across the country on January 12.

British Gas publicly said it was clearing 40% of the 10,000 jobs from households on strike days. This is seriously misleading.

The normal volume of jobs from households varies between 20,000 and 25,000 daily. The ratio is approximately three breakdown jobs to one service job. Plus there is all the normal routine servicing on top of this workload.



On strike days none of the routine service work is done. Only 15% of the breakdowns are dealt with. So the figure for the growth in the backlog is treble the 6,000 claimed by the company.

At the end of strike day eight the numbers of households in the backlog for services will be in excess of 150,000.

British Gas parent company Centrica reported an **operating profit** (before exceptional items and tax) of £901 million in 2019.

The **operating profitability** of its UK home heating business rose by 27 per cent in the first six months of 2020.



Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary, said:

“The backlog of households awaiting services for British Gas is growing at treble the 6,000 per day the company admits. The claim that they are clearing the backlog on non strike days is also not accurate.

“British Gas recklessly provoked this dispute. At the end of strike day eight the backlog will have grown to more than 150,000 household waiting for services. That number will grow due to the next four strike dates.

“The fire and rehire changes being imposed on engineers mean hourly pay rates would be 15% below agreed pay rates along with other worse term and conditions.

“It was wishful thinking in the extreme to think that union members would ever acquiesce with cuts of this magnitude in a profitable company.

“British Gas should accept that taking fire and rehire off the table is the only way to end this dispute.”



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