



Powering Together

This joint communication has been endorsed by the four recognised Trade Unions in Northern Powergrid. It highlights the significant concerns we have about the application of Powering Together. Originally called Agile Working the policy was last consulted upon in July 2022. At that time, it suggested some flexibility of location and office attendance of 60%.

Since then and without further consultation the policy has changed name to Powering Together and has become far more prescriptive with office attendance at 80% plus with significant focus on monitoring such attendance. In some cases, particularly in P&A, office attendance is required at five days per week.

Implications for NPg

Your Trade Unions accept that NPg want to encourage collaborative face to face working. We are supportive of that principle. However, it is our shared view that that aim can be achieved through the Agile Working initiative which was consulted upon in 2022.

The current Powering Together policy limits the recruitment pool from which NPg can recruit. It also gives existing staff reason to look elsewhere for employment with greater levels of flexibility than that which NPg offer. This is a particular concern in respect of staff in key areas with high levels of experience. We have seen potential recruits decline interviews due to the lack of flexibility and staff leave for the same reason. NPg accept that this is the case.

ED3

Your Trade Unions have asked for details of how many staff are expected to leave NPg between now and 2028 and between 2028 and 2033 through resignation and retirement and how many staff are required to fill these gaps for ED3 to be a success. Given that the workforce is expected to grow significantly over the next two years in the lead up to ED3 we struggle to see how that can be achieved without a significant change to the Powering Together initiative which we see as a significant barrier to recruitment and retention.

Reasonable Adjustments

The ACAS Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments sets out the clear legal requirement for employers to take such adjustments seriously following Occupational Health referrals. We see little evidence of this happening with the follow-up of a Flexible

Working request being denied as it does not comply with the Powering Together policy. Staff with disabilities or caring responsibilities find it more difficult to comply with the policy than those staff who do not face these challenges.

Office Capacity and Safety

The change in approach by NPg has not considered the fact that the offices have not got bigger causing capacity challenges. We have raised concerns about the lack of appropriate Display Screen Equipment assessments as well as the safety concerns around inadequate parking facilities. Both have fallen on deaf ears.

The Net Zero challenge

While Northern Powergrid is positioning itself as a leader in Net Zero initiatives and demonstrating commitment to sustainability through various projects, there appears to be a contradictory approach in relation to employee working practices. Specifically, the current emphasis on requiring employees to travel into office locations, often unnecessarily, runs counter to the organisation's broader environmental objectives. Encouraging or mandating increased commuting not only contributes to higher carbon emissions but also undermines efforts to promote flexible, modern working arrangements that support both employee wellbeing and the company's Net Zero ambitions.

The Need for Change

We are unclear who was the main force behind Powering Together, but it is having a detrimental and divisive impact on NPg. The UK jobs market has changed in recent years with competition for skills, new players in the sector and employers offering greater flexibility to staff to secure the high-quality staff they need.

What Next?

Your Trade Unions want to work with Northern Powergrid to make the necessary changes to Powering Together and to bring it more in line with the Agile Working policy that was consulted upon in 2022. We make this offer to NPg to work collectively towards an outcome that offers both flexibility and a significant amount of face-to-face interaction in the workplace.

To this end we need to see the establishment of a Joint Trade Union Forum as a matter of urgency. This would be the appropriate place to discuss the many issues that span NPg.

Kind Regards

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