

Employment Newsletter

YOUR WEEKLY BULLETIN OF WIT AND WONDER



THE LONG WALK HOME

Should we just abandon the car and go for steps record..?



RACIST AND INADEQUATE

How a firm's failure to act fairly ended in a hefty claim award



FUELLING CONSPIRACIES

It's aliens. They've been SEEN!

TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT

As the fuel crisis rolls on, here at WG Towers we are weighing up alternative methods to get into work. And also wondering, in our regular Conspiracy Theory Support Group, whether it's all been *deliberate*... after all, the electric car brigade are WINNING now!

As I write it's all manageable but by this time next week, will I be zipping in to the office on one of those electric scooters? There are plenty available in most cities now - and the sight of a fully grown adult whizzing past on one is no longer even remarkable.

Of course, I'd have to pack my case notes and other paraphernalia in a rucksack, and I'd have to wear a helmet because I must set a sensible example. And there would be helmet hair on my arrival at College Place. I might also have to put some plastic streamers on each handlebar in a nod to my 1970s childhood.

I'd undoubtedly have to deal with the ire of pedestrians and motorists *and* cyclists, because I will definitely be taking up space on *one* of their lanes - and they don't like it, do they?



I could, of course, go super fit and cycle in, or semi-fit and electric bike in. Or catch an electric bus. Or walk. I could walk it in 1.44 hours according to Google Maps. Which might make for a quicker journey than coming by car and popping in for fuel on the way.

Younger members of the team are weighing up rollerblading and skateboarding. I'm quite on board with this because I like to think we could get some video and run promos on TikTok in which the Wg Employment Team appears funky and cool. I'm trying to persuade Louise and Laura to rollerblade up and down College Place while holding up a tray of cardboard folders with one hand, a bit like that 1980s Martini advert (but wearing more clothes and avoiding the blatantly sexist boardroom scene at the end)*.

But secretly, what I'd really love, if only we had one, is a canal stretching from home to work. Imagine starting your day drifting to the office on a narrowboat. What could be more calming - more mindful and Zen? You'd need a horse to drag it, mind...

You know you want to see that [Martini ad](#)!

What would be your favourite mode of transport to get to work...if you couldn't commute in the normal way? Do let us know on our Facebook page!

WOEFUL WORKPLACE RACISM ON WHATSAPP

And speaking of shameful boardroom scenes brings me to the unlovely case of *Ms Muna Abdi v Deltac International Courier Limited 2020* and a pretty unpleasant racism story.

EVENTS SEASON
2021

Ms Abdi, who is black, of Somali origin and wears a hijab, worked for the company as an Evening Operations Clerk from November 2017 until her resignation in September 2018.

In August 2018, Ms Abdi was in conversation with her co-workers and the topic of white privilege came up. This turned into a heated argument and two co-workers told Ms Abdi "the majority of crimes in England are made by black people". Ms Abdi was very upset by their comment and what she described as a "vile discussion".

In the course of her duties Ms Abdi logged on to a colleague's computer. There, she discovered a WhatsApp group chat which included the colleagues who had made the racial comment about crime and Ms Abdi's line manager, Mr Hocking. In the chat, there were messages that referred to Ms Abdi as a "terrorist" and a "postbox". There were also physical threats made against her, including "I'll rip her head scarf off.". Ms Abdi took a screen shot of the conversation. She complained to Mr Hocking but he did not take the complaints seriously, calling it a "he said, she said" situation.

A couple of days later she logged on to the computer again and saw that the chat had been renamed to 'ALHAMDULLAH' and the group chat icon was a black hijab. There were also more offensive comments. Ms Abdi reported the chat and it was shown to the company CEO, Mr Cunningham. He moved her to a different workplace to minimise her contact with the employees who participated in the chat while he carried out an investigation. Ms Abdi was apparently upset by the move but did not tell Mr Cunningham as she did not want to disagree with the CEO. Mr Cunningham issued Mr Hocking and another employee with a final written warning. Two other employees who were still in their probationary period were dismissed. Mr Cunningham then apologised to Ms Abdi and told her appropriate action had been taken.

Despite Ms Abdi's move, she continued to have negative interactions with Mr Hocking. She resigned in September 2018 and filed a claim for harassment with the Employment Tribunal (ET).

Ms Abdi succeeded in her claim of harassment. The ET found that the comment about black people committing a majority of the crimes in England and the WhatsApp discussion were unwanted conduct which related to the protected characteristic of race and had the purpose and effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and offensive environment.

The ET also commented that it considered the company's handling of the harassment to be "inadequate." The WhatsApp discussion contained serious expressions of hate and threats of physical violence against Ms Abdi. These expressions were condoned by her line manager, who Ms Abdi continued to have negative interaction with. The ET remarked that the company's inadequate handling of the allegations was something it would take into account when deciding on the remedy to be awarded.

Ms Abdi was awarded almost £25,000 pounds, the majority of which was for injury to feelings.

This case shows how important it is for employers to adequately respond to allegations of harassment. Although it may be wise to separate an employee from the alleged harasser while an investigation is undertaken, employers should also give thought to how best to manage the working relationship between the employees once the investigation (and disciplinary process) are completed.

OCT 12
Employment Law
Masterclass –
Settlement Agreements

OCT 20
HR Hangout – Creating a
Diversity and Inclusion
agenda

NOV 9
HR Hangout – How to
include Diversity and
Inclusion – A Practical
Session

NOV 24
Employment Law
Masterclass – Practice
Makes Perfect



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE



So - did you see the so-called 'Atlas V' in the sky on Monday night?

According to the so-called news network - The BBC - this was the craft carrying NASA's Landsat 9 satellite which created a bright cone-shaped light in the sky for around four minutes at 10pm, witnessed by many excited star-gazers around the UK.

Allegedly 'launched' at 8pm, the spacecraft then went into a so-called orbital reversing manoeuvre, creating the strangely shaped phenomenon.

Well, we at the Wg Towers Conspiracy Theory Support Group aren't buying *that!* No. We are certain it was a proper alien UFO - sucking all the fuel out of Europe to power its onward trajectory around the galaxy.

Obviously. Nice try, though, authorities. Most people will buy your cover story!*

* **IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Sitting in a car inhaling petrol vapours from almost empty pumps for an hour on the way in this morning **may** have affected my world view.*

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