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## Up to 70 jobs to go at West Midlands dailies

Posted by johnfranklyn - 2009/01/15 02:49

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Up to 70 jobs to go at West Midlands dailies

by Paul Linford

Around 70 newspaper staff in the West Midlands are facing the prospect of compulsory redundancy after a proposal for voluntary job losses failed to get enough takers.

Last October, the Midlands News Association announced plans to shed 135 jobs in a major restructuring operation.

But the company, publishers of the Express and Star and Shropshire Star, failed to achieve its target of voluntary redundancies, with less than 50 staff opting to leave.

Now, in what would be by far the biggest single batch of compulsory job losses at any one company since the start of the current downturn, it is looking to axe up to 70 posts across all departments.

The new plans were revealed by managing director Alan Harris at a meeting of the company's staff council earlier this week.

It is not clear at this stage how many journalists' jobs will be affected.

The company has confirmed the proposal, but says it is not making any further statement beyond the one issued in October, which made clear that compulsory redundancies were an option.

It said: "It is hoped staff savings can be achieved through voluntary redundancies across the group but some compulsory redundancies may be necessary to achieve an overall cost reduction of £3m a year."

National Union of Journalists' father of chapel John Corser, the editorial staff council representative, informed colleagues of the announcement in an email.

He said: "The managing director announced that there will have to be compulsory redundancies. The process of finding voluntary redundancies came up short.

"Only 16 were found at Wolverhampton and 24 in Shropshire. The company is now looking to find 60 to 70 more across the group."

The process of selecting people for compulsory redundancies has already begun, with each head of department carrying out a review over the next two weeks.

It is expected to be completed by 23 February, the next time the staff council is due to meet.

Said one reporter: "This is very sad news but it is not unexpected.

"The E&S is still a big concern in the newspaper industry but if our editors don't start thinking about what our readers actually want then there will be more jobs going in the future.

"We have brilliant staff and hard working reporters but they are not free to do the job they love.

"With the resources we have it is a real missed opportunity that the E&S isn't leading the industry through these tough times instead of following the pack."

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## Re:Up to 70 jobs to go at West Midlands dailies

Posted by HOOP - 2009/01/15 05:09

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That explains the news we had yesterday - they are closing the "Express Distribution" operation at Ketley.

Until now the leaflets, newsletters etc. that you find stuffed inside your Telford Journal on a Thursday had to be delivered to Ketley. Customers are now being told that in future they will have to take their stuff to West Bromwich, with an obvious increase in costs.

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Surely they could have retained a drop-off facility at Ketley?

As usual with these things, the only commonsense seems to be coming from the workforce - who as ever are the last ones to be listened to but the first to suffer.

So fewer people will pay to have stuff distributed with the Journal, which in turn will have a knock-on effect on the paper.....which is printed on the same presses as the Star.....

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## Re:Up to 70 jobs to go at West Midlands dailies

Posted by Matt - 2009/01/15 17:41

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The reason is that one of the options under consideration is to close the Ketley building and sell the land for development.

All printing would be done at the West Midlands printworks.

Apparently a 'live' option under serious consideration would be to cease publication of the Shropshire Star all together.

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## Re:Up to 70 jobs to go at West Midlands dailies

Posted by HOOP - 2009/01/15 17:51

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Yuppp - sounds stupid enough to be true.....