

## CBI wants assurances on agency workers directive commission

John Cridland, deputy director-general of the London-based [Confederation of British Industry](#) has told ContractorCalculator that the CBI will demand assurances before negotiating with the London-based Trade Union Confederation to create a joint commission on the [Agency Workers Directive](#).

"The CBI is willing to consider the idea of a commission to resolve this issue, but only as long as it is a genuine look at all the facts and not just at the unions' wish list. Agency work plays a vital economic role as part of the UK's envied flexible labour market. People in this industry, working for periods that suit them and often on good pay, should not be painted as vulnerable workers," Cridland said.

### Seeking A Solution

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has been trying to negotiate a solution to this issue which pits contractors against the trade unions. The unions have supported the efforts of the European Commission to pass a Union-wide directive on this issue. The unions are also sponsoring a private members bill in Parliament which will be read on February 23 and which will effectively implement the EC Directive.

### A Commission For What?

The CBI has very effectively opposed this new legislation which would oblige contractors to be given the same rights as employees, and which the CBI estimates will cost 250,000 jobs in the UK. The proposal to create a commission to negotiate the issue could be a positive move for us contractors, but only if the commission is to truly find a solution, not, as Cridland suggests, to implement a trade union agenda. We need to have our industry protected, and it seems that is the CBI's objective as well.

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John Cridland - CBI

### Anyone Feel Vulnerable?

The trade unions are touting this measure as one that protects 'vulnerable' agency workers. There is constant reference to mistreated temps like those involved in the tragedy of Morecambe Bay where 23 cocklepickers lost their lives.

Cridland has lashed out at those making this comparison. "Vast numbers of agency workers are affluent and happy in their work. There is no reason they should be referred to as 'vulnerable'," Cridland points out.

But the unions are also distancing themselves from the proposal. Tom Woodley, joint general secretary of the London-based trade union group Unite, said that a commission "would not be enough."

Woodley said that the proposal for a commission "would not distract from the focus of pressing forward on equal treatment for agency workers."

### Recruiters Cautiously In Favour

But the London-based recruitment watchdog the [Recruitment and Employment Confederation](#) has not ruled out the possibility of the commission having a positive effect.

Tom Hadley, REC director of external relations, said: "The value of establishing some form of Agency Work Commission is open to debate and would depend on how it is set up and what it is looking to achieve.

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Tom Hadley-REC

"One positive aspect is that it could dispel once and for all some of the negative myths surrounding agency work in this country," Hadley said.

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