

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

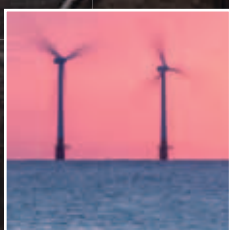
SCOTRAIL TO BE NATIONALISED



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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU

RMT membership helps you at work and saves you money

RMT has developed a number of benefits to save members money. This includes negotiating access to savings and special offers from our approved partners.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The union has a dedicated team of elected officers and local reps to serve your interests negotiating with employers on issues from pay, hours of work, pensions and working conditions. They are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated terms for you.

CAMPAIGNING

The union has a political fund to run campaigns and provide a political voice to benefit members' interests in the workplace. RMT has a very active parliamentary group which raises issues of concern for members at Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

PERSONAL INJURIES

Personal injury claims cover if you suffer an accident in work or outside work. RMT underwrites settlements that would not be provided by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495.

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

Members who have suffered an industrial disease will receive free legal support to make a claim. Such claims are underwritten by the union and members will not have any deduction from their settlement unlike claims run by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Should a member find themselves unfairly dismissed, discriminated against or have any claim which has reasonable prospects of success at an Employment Tribunal, RMT will provide

legal representation and pay the fee. Even if the union is advised that the claim is unlikely to succeed, members who make a claim are eligible to receive free legal advice.

ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Accident benefit is only payable if you have been off for three days or more.

Accident must be reported to branch secretary within 26 weeks in order to qualify for accident benefit.

RETIREMENT BENEFIT

Payable to any member who retires over the age of 60 or aged 55 if retired through redundancy or resettlement. Ill health retirement is also payable; proof of this must be sent with application for retirement benefit.

TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

The union can provide a personal taxation service and will preparation service.

DEMOTION COMPENSATION

Payable to any member who is experiencing loss of wages through being permanently demoted or downgraded as a result of illness or injury.

Payment of £300 provided that member reports this to branch secretary within 12 weeks.

ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a member or spouse if the member dies in service or if a members' spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children.

Benefit is paid while a child is

in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is £12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

RMT CREDIT UNION

Accessible savings and affordable loans from RMT's Credit union.
www.rmt.org.uk/about/credit-union

ONLINE SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

Shop online with RMTrewards.com and earn cashback savings from hundreds of retailers, like B&Q, Argos and Tesco. It's free to join, plus you'll get a FREE £10 Welcome Bonus in your online account! (Terms and conditions apply)
www.rmtrewards.com

FINES POOL

if you drive a company vehicle as part of your job you can join the RMT fines pool for £7 per year. The Fines Pool will reimburse members for any speeding fines, related court costs and lost time to attend a court hearing.
www.rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/fines-pool

BEREAVEMENT BENEFIT

A Death Grant of £600 is payable to the nearest relative or legal representative if a member dies through any cause prior to retirement.

CASHBACK PREPAID CARD

Fancy cashback on your everyday shopping? Use your RMT Prepaid Plus Cashback card at over 50 partner retailers, including Sainsbury's, ASDA and Boots, and earn unlimited cashback! It's

different to a credit or debit card - you can only spend what you load so there's less chance of getting carried away.
www.rmtprepaid.com

FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

As a benefit of your RMT membership you can register for £5,000 Free Accidental Death Cover. Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69.

12 months free cover. Annually renewable and always FREE. The Cover is underwritten by Advent Insurance PCC Ltd - UIB Cell.
www.rmtprotect.com

INSURANCE

UIA Mutual offers great value, low cost Home, Travel and Pet Insurance to RMT members and their families.

- Interest free direct debits (spread over 10 months)
- No fees to amend your policy
- Accidental damage to TVs, laptops and game consoles covered
- Cover for damage caused by subsidence
- Alternative accommodation for family and pets if needed

Call on 0800 030 4606 to talk to UK-based call centre agents from 8.30am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

HEALTH CASH PLAN

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Join RMT by visiting
www.rmt.org.uk

EDITORIAL



THANK YOU

This will be my final editorial column in *RMT News* as your general secretary but as you will see from this jam-packed issue the personnel may change but the battles for jobs, pay, conditions and safety the length and breadth of our industries continue apace.

As a union we have been well aware that as the emergency measures during more than a year of the pandemic begin to unwind we can expect the attack on workers to intensify as the employers seize the opportunity to go on the offensive. That is exactly what is happening right now.

On Network Rail we have launched a new No Cuts campaign as we fight back against an assault on jobs, maintenance works and the safety culture on our rail infrastructure.

We can expect the moves on Network Rail to be mirrored on the train operating companies in the months ahead and we need to be ready for that.

The tube will face similar threats. We are already seeing attacks by local management on our activists and on

working conditions.

Our shipping, offshore, bus and road membership are also right in the front line now. Ferry companies are eyeing up jobs, pay and pensions as they look to exploit the crisis with some seeking to break union organisation once and for all.

But as I sign off this column for the last time, we should remind ourselves of just what we have achieved together in hostile conditions.

Our members and their jobs have been defended workplace by workplace. That hard graft day in and day out by our well-trained local reps is the lifeblood of this trade union.

We have faced the full might of rail bosses and the Tory government in their joint attempt to impose Driver Only Operation. They wanted to smash our union and the guard's grade once and for all. It has been one of the longest disputes in our history, and the fight carries on of course, but what a credit it is to our members who have held that line on rail safety that we have beaten back the attack on the guard grade.

We have successfully challenged the philosophy that the railway should have less staff. Today there is widespread support for RMT's position that cutting rail staff damages safety, service and accessibility whatever the grade.

We have fought to ensure that most of our members wages have risen in line with or above the inflation.

We won the argument that the railway is essential to our economy and climate. It could not be clearer that privatisation has failed, Network Rail has been nationalised and two nations,

Wales and now Scotland, are taking rail back into public ownership. Moreover, our campaigning for public control of buses is starting to bear fruit.

On maritime we defeated plans to privatise Calmac Ferry services in Scotland, won the long-standing campaign to extend the minimum wage to seafarers, secured a collective recognition agreement in the Offshore sector and are well placed to move more widely into the rapidly expanding renewable sector.

We are the union with one of the highest, if not the highest, public profiles in the country, punching way above its weight industrially and politically. So much so that the Tory government introduced the Trade Union Act in 2016 to stop us from defending our members, they failed.

Whilst most other unions have struggled with falling membership, in the last six years our net membership increased by 6,000 to levels not seen in this union since the 1990's. Our membership is changing with over 50 per cent having joined the union since 2014. We have a union which is at its most diverse in our long history with 17 per cent of our members women and 17 per cent from BAME groups. Yet there is more to do.

We have been both able to expand our services to members. RMT is one of the few unions to have its own legal department and we have also massively expanded our education capacity, significantly increasing the number of reps we train each year to an average of 1000 a year.

We have kept the union in a strong financial position at

the same time as providing affordable subs for our lower paid members.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment loyalty and skill of our members, representatives, activists who defend and strengthen the union by their individual and collective acts every single day and also the hard work, dedication and professionalism of our officers and staff. My personal thanks to each and every one of you.

I step aside as we come out of this global pandemic whose impact has and will have far reaching consequences for us all. Our union is 150 years old this year and we have a history of navigating our way through difficult times.

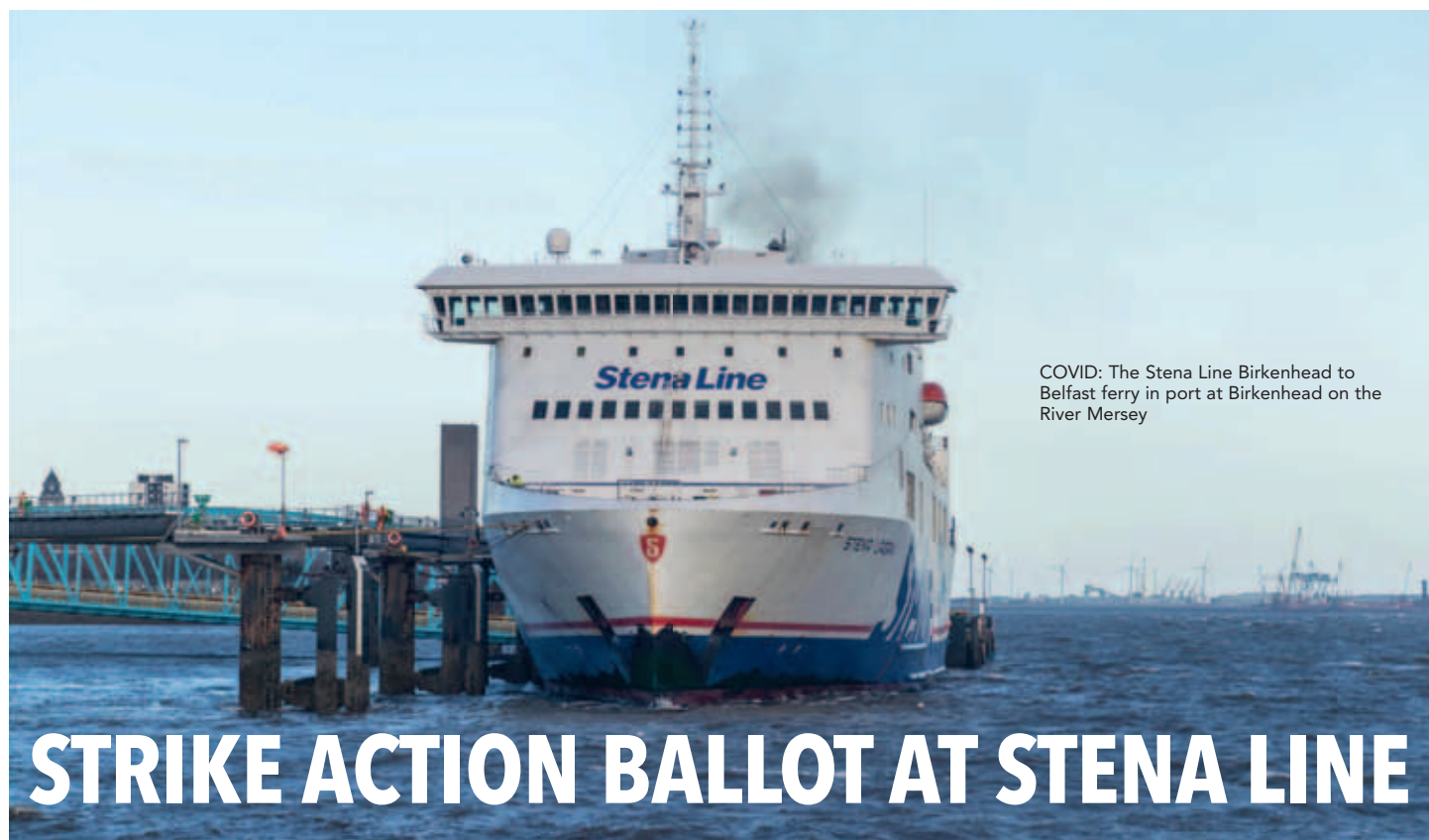
Our history tells us that we will continue to thrive but only if we choose unity instead of internal rows and factional fights. By keeping relevant to our members and ensuring that we reflect the union we are today not yesterday.

We are at our best when we work together, stand together and fight together. Through difficult times I have sought to strengthen the union's foundations and to keep it focussed on what matters, our members and their workplaces.

After joining our union 42 years ago as an 18-year-old track worker, who had left school with very little qualifications but grew as person thanks to my union, all I can do now is wish you all well for the future under a new general secretary.

Final words for my wife and family without whom I couldn't have achieved so much.

Thank You.



COVID: The Stena Line Birkenhead to Belfast ferry in port at Birkenhead on the River Mersey

STRIKE ACTION BALLOT AT STENA LINE

RMT is preparing to ballot its seafarer and port members over the company's proposals on sick pay.

A company sick pay scheme, agreed with the recognised trade unions, has been in place for seafarers and port workers in Stena Line until the start of the pandemic when the employer unilaterally scrapped it, forcing staff infected with or displaying symptoms of Coronavirus to rely on Statutory Sick Pay.

RMT general secretary, Mick Cash said that Stena Line had taken outrageous health risks

at the start of this pandemic by scrapping the union-agreed sick pay scheme.

"Care is one of the core principles of the Stena Line brand but this was completely contradicted when our members needed support the most, forcing key workers to decide between illness or poverty.

The union has argued that the company's actions had played a part in the two outbreaks of Covid-19 on Stena Line ships during the pandemic. There was a Coronavirus outbreak amongst

crew on the Italian-registered *Stena Horizon* working between Holyhead and Dublin in November last year which required the whole crew to self-isolate on the vessel and a second outbreak occurred amongst crew on the *Stena Edda* in December on the Belfast-Birkenhead route, leaving over 300 passengers stranded.

It was only after those two outbreaks that the company got back around the table to discuss a new sick pay scheme and now the company was refusing to budge on

proposals that are inferior to the scheme they scrapped.

"We are now asking our members whether they are prepared to take industrial action on Stena Line ships and in Stena Line ports in order to restore a decent, union agreed sick pay scheme.

"Our members have been patient and battled through the pandemic at great personal cost to keep the company afloat and Stena Line need to recognise that ahead of an expected recovery in passenger numbers," Mick Cash said. ■

NO TO SOCIAL DUMPING AT DOVER

RMT has raised serious concerns over the announcement that Irish Ferries will commence a service on the Dover – Calais route despite having a proven reputation for social dumping, replacing local workers with cheap foreign labour.

The union has written to Irish Ferries seeking a

meeting to outline the union's concerns surrounding employment practices and the threat that this development poses to employment of RMT members at both P&O Ferries and DFDS Ferries.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was imperative that local labour and safe roster patterns

were used when this new service commences.

"That means that the salaries of ratings onboard the ships are in line with those at companies where RMT has collective bargaining agreements.

"RMT previously raised concerns when P&O withdrew two vessels from the route of the possibility of

another operator coming into the port of Dover.

"The union will not sit by and allow seafarers to be exploited or unsafe working conditions to be introduced from the port of Dover and we will be seeking public and political support for our demands," he said. ■

RFA NEEDS UK SEAFARERS

Following the government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy RMT reiterated the importance of UK seafarers.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that with all the sabre rattling, the government had overlooked the importance of civilian seafarers to the country's long term strategic and security needs.

"Seafarer numbers slumped again last year but there is no detail in here for our members working to support the Royal Navy and the military with essential maritime capacity.

"The Royal Fleet Auxiliary remains committed to apprenticeships but it is simply not sustainable to continue replacing RFA seafarers through natural wastage every



JOB: RFA support ship *Mounts Bay* (left) outward bound to sea from the sound passing RFA *Wave Ruler* (right)

year.

"Also there is no mention of how the government intends to meet the military's future strategic sealift demands when the Ministry of

Defence's PFI contract with Foreland Shipping ends in 2024.

"Instead of striking soft power poses, we need practical measures to

strengthen our seafarer skills base which would provide true strategic resilience, not to mention jobs for the years ahead," he said. ■

FOR SHIPPING JOBS

Board of Trade report ignores UK shipping jobs

The UK Board of Trade report, 'Global Britain, Local Jobs', which makes a series of recommendations on Britain's trading future, contains no reference at all to creating

local jobs in the key transport link in international trade – shipping.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the report's attempt to link post-

Brexit trade policy to local jobs was both unconvincing and unambitious.

"The government's own statistics show that UK seafarers only held 19 per

cent of jobs in the shipping industry, and this doesn't include the cull of seafarer jobs in Dover and Hull initiated by P&O's owners in Dubai.

"Liz Truss must stop airbrushing local seafarers out of employment and recognize that investment in local Ratings and Officers is a core component of any sustainable trading policy," he said. ■

END PAY BETRAYAL FOR CALMAC KEY WORKERS

The union has written to Scotland's Minister for Islands, Energy and Connectivity, Paul Wheelhouse MSP demanding that he meet the union to correct a pay injustice for key workers at public sector ferry company CalMac.

RMT believes that the scandalous below inflation 0.5 per cent pay offer for 2020-21 for CalMac workers' dedication and commitment over the pandemic has again been highlighted by the Scottish

government's two per cent settlement for other public sector workers in Scotland.

The letter points out that inflation had already eaten away at the value of Calmac members' pay and the average RPI in the months since August was 1.18 per cent. However Calmac has stuck rigidly to the August RPI figure.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said from the outset, CalMac had been intent on forcing a derisory pay offer on

RMT members and even rejected the offer of conciliation through ACAS.

"CalMac's dedicated and hard-working staff are public sector key workers who have put their health at risk operating lifeline services during the pandemic but are now being treated unfairly when compared to other public sector workers, that is nothing short of a betrayal.

"The sacrifices that other public sector workers and their families have made in the face

of this cruel disease have been rightly recognised by the Scottish government and as we approach parliamentary elections we are giving notice that we will be launching a fairness for ferry workers campaign to achieve pay justice.

"We're calling on the Minister, Paul Wheelhouse to meet RMT to work with us to sort out this problem at CalMac," he said. ■

RMT BALLOT OVER BUS WORKER SACKING

Member sacked for reporting concerns to Network Rail around a bridge being struck by vehicles

The union is balloting bus driver members for industrial action over the victimisation of Southampton bus branch secretary Declan Clune who has been dismissed for reporting concerns around a bridge being struck by vehicles to Network Rail.

The union has launched a high-profile publicity campaign in public and media forums including demonstrations in support of Declan's reinstatement by the company Bluestar.

At Declan's recent appeal hearing the company upheld their earlier decision of dismissal for bringing the company into disrepute.

No evidence has been forthcoming to explain what the loud banging noise has been when buses have passed

under the bridge in question.

Bluestar has denied that it had failed to adhere to its own procedure and decided that Declan, in reporting the issue to Network Rail, could have influenced their opportunities for further business. The union rejects this as total nonsense.

RMT's National Executive Committee has reaffirmed the union's commitment to supporting and campaigning for our Declan Clune's reinstatement by Bluestar. The union has made clear that it considers this matter to be an attack on representatives who come forward to ensure members receive the best possible advice, support and help at work.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the victimisation and sacking of

Declan Clune was a disgrace and Bluestar should reverse its decision.

"Workplace representatives selflessly come to the aid of members without a second thought it is every member's responsibility to come to theirs when attacked. That is why we have declared a dispute with Bluestar and are preparing a ballot for action.

"A Director's Review of the matter of the dismissal has now been granted and our officials will be putting a strong case for reinstatement and to right this wrong.

"The company should seize this opportunity to reinstate Declan rather than provoking an industrial dispute.

"Our concerns over the reporting of safety issues will be raised with Network Rail,



the Office of Rail and Road, Traffic Commissioner, HSE and relevant local authorities," he said.



SCOTRAIL CONDUCTORS FIGHT FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Industrial action by ScotRail conductors has been taking place each Sunday in a fight for equality and justice over enhanced payments for rest day working.

More than 75 per cent of members voted to strike which is taking place throughout this month. All Abellio ScotRail Conductor members are not working Rest Days or undertaking any higher grade

duties until further notice.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that ScotRail members were standing shoulder to shoulder during the days of industrial action.

"ScotRail ticket examiners have also voted for action in growing fight for workplace justice in a dispute around equality and justice over enhanced payments for rest day working.

"Our ticket examiners have now joined our conductor members in this fight for equality with other ScotRail grades over enhanced payments and it's now time for Abellio to get out of their bunker and do the right thing by their staff.

"The political leadership in Scotland can no longer sit on the fence and ignore these disputes in their back yard. It's

time for serious talks, a serious approach to workplace fairness and justice and a serious solution to be reached.

"We have made it clear that we will not allow ScotRail to divide the workforce and are demanding that ScotRail do what is fair and honour an enhanced rate for rest day working for all grades," he said. ■

SCOTRAIL TO BE NATIONALISED

RMT calls for a speedier transition for Scotrail being returned to the public sector



The Scottish government has announced that Scotland's railways will be nationalised next year after transport secretary Michael Matheson said that "the current franchising system is no longer fit for purpose".

The government was also drawing up further emergency agreements with both ScotRail and the troubled Caledonian Sleeper franchise from April to September amid the fallout of the Covid pandemic, with support estimated to cost £173.1 million.

The ScotRail franchise run by Abellio will be taken over by the state's operator of last resort when its contract expires in March 2022. The move comes after the Welsh government took its railway network into public hands by ending the Keolis-Amey franchise in February.

Two major franchises in England, LNER and Northern, are already run by the government through its operator of last resort, and the Office for National Statistics said in 2020 that rail services had been in effect nationalised due to the level of Treasury support.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the fact that ScotRail services would be run in the public sector within a year.

"We have long campaigned for the Scottish government to utilise its existing powers and take Scotland's rail passenger services into public ownership and this announcement represents a

clear victory for this campaign.

"The Scottish government is looking to extend the Abellio ScotRail Emergency Measures Agreement until September 2021 but, rather than propping up Abellio for any longer, RMT is calling on the Scottish government to have the Operator of Last Resort in place from September this year.

"Public ownership of ScotRail will deliver significant benefits for Scotland's rail workers, passengers and taxpayers and help enable the creation of an affordable, accessible and sustainable rail network that contributes to Scotland's decarbonisation targets.

"In light of the announcement, RMT will be seeking urgent discussions with the Scottish government to ensure that all ScotRail workers' jobs, pay and conditions are protected throughout this process and once they transfer to the new operator," he said.

The Scottish government had already announced in 2019 that it would enforce an early break clause in Abellio's original 10-year franchise after years of poor performance and industrial disputes.

A yet-to-be-published review of Britain's rail system by Keith Williams has already indicated the end of the traditional franchising system but passenger train services are still being contracted out under emergency recovery measures agreements.

JUST TRANSITION COMMISSION'S FINAL REPORT FOR SCOTLAND



GROWTH: Offshore wind turbines and support vessel near Caister.

RMT has warned the Scottish government that it was ill prepared to reach its net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and a fundamental transformation of the economy following the publication of *Just Transition Commission's final report*.

RMT general secretary Mick

Cash said that the *Just Transition Commission's report* was a step in the right direction but the pace had to be speeded up.

"Just transition plans for local jobs in offshore wind and decarbonising public transport and skills guarantees, including for the self-

employed, are welcome but the industry is currently ill-prepared to deliver.

"Trade unions must be at the heart of work that must start immediately to take advantage of the Just Transition Commission's valuable work.

"The application of IR-35 in

the North Sea and the protracted squabble between training standards bodies are just two areas that will have an increasingly detrimental effect on offshore oil and gas workers, after a year in which over 12,000 jobs have been lost," he said.

GO-AHEAD PROFITEERING

RMT calls on government to act against pandemic profiteering

The union has written to the government to demand that it uses its powers to prevent pandemic profiteering after rail giant Go-Ahead announced its intention to pay a dividend,

In a statement the company said: "The Board continues to work towards paying a dividend at an appropriate level in the 2021 calendar year".

In a parliamentary question the rail minister has said, for the duration of the rail Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs): "that payment of dividends may not be made without the Secretary of State's consent".

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was utterly unacceptable for Go-Ahead to

be planning a dividend on the backs of emergency tax payer funding and also rail workers who have been told they have to accept a two year pay freeze.

"We have written to the government to say they should use their powers to block this dividend and indeed the overall profits other rail companies stand to make, and instead give our rail staff the pay rise they deserve as essential workers.

"The announcement by Go-Ahead is pandemic profiteering ultimately cooked up and sanctioned by the Treasury and we will also demanding a meeting with Rishi Sunak the architect of the pay freeze.

"It's time to freeze their profits, not our rail workers

pay," he said.

The GTR rail company is operated by Govia, of which Go-Ahead is a 65 per cent majority owner and GTR has an Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA) until September.

Govia also owns South Eastern which is operating under an Emergency Measures Agreement until October 2020. This does not currently allow the payment of dividends, but the operator is a paid a management fee which can be used to accrue profits and therefore could be used to pay a dividend in the future.

Following a Parliamentary Question Grahame Morris MP asking the Secretary of State for Transport about what

restrictions he plans to place on the payment of dividends as a condition of the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements, he said that that payment of dividends may not be made without the Secretary of State's consent.

"Consent to the payment of a Permitted Dividend will not be unreasonably withheld or delayed, subject to franchisees fulfilling their financial obligations under the ERMAs to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State and complying with their Companies Act obligations. For any franchisee year the Permitted Dividend will be limited to the value of the fees paid to the franchisee net of Corporation Tax," he said.

STRIKE ACTION AT UNIPART

RMT members working at Unipart Rail Doncaster took industrial action earlier this month following a ballot against a derisory pay offer from the company.

Unipart Rail's Doncaster warehouse supplies parts to

the rail industry and staff are not carrying out non-contractual overtime or working rest days.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that members at Unipart Rail Doncaster had been forced to take industrial

action following a paltry pay offer for their hard work over the last year.

"All workers in the transport industry should be adequately rewarded for the work that they do. Our members deserve a decent pay rise,

especially for the work they have done keeping the company running during the current pandemic.

"RMT remains available for talks and is ready to enter into negotiations in order to resolve the current dispute," he said. ■

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Keep your RMT membership details up-to-date

In the light of draconian anti-trade union laws that have been used against the union, members should keep their personal data up to date. It is also important to note that in order to keep members informed your union requires your mobile telephone number and email address.

Members can do this via the RMT website, telephone the RMT helpline above, or writing to the membership department at RMT head office, Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD.



JAILED: Ricky Tomlinson and Des Warren following their release from Leicester jail in 1975 having been jailed for conspiracy.
(c) Mike Tomlinson/Report IFL Archive/reportdigital.co.uk

COURT OVERTURNS SHREWSBURY 24 CONVICTIONS

Union congratulates campaigners nearly 50 years after trade unionists were wrongfully convicted on trumped up charges

RMT has welcomed a decision last month to overturn convictions against the Shrewsbury 24 as a victory for working people of Britain which had only been achieved by the sheer resilience and determination of the pickets who refused to stop fighting for justice.

The Court of Appeal overturned the convictions of

14 men during the national builders' strike in 1972 sentenced for offences including unlawful assembly and conspiracy to intimidate.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the union had been proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Shrewsbury pickets throughout the long, hard fight for justice.

"Never again should trade

unionists be criminalised by the state for fighting for workplace justice. This victory will be a shot in the arm for every single union member standing up today for jobs, pay and decent working conditions," he said.

Lawyers for the 14 had argued the destruction of witness statements made their convictions unsafe and Lord

Justice Fulford said: "what occurred was unfair".

Socialist campaigner Ricky Tomlinson was among those convicted and he was jailed for two years and speaking after the verdict said: "It is only right that these convictions are overturned."

Six of the 14 who brought the action have since died, including Dennis Warren, who

was jailed for three years.

"My thoughts today are with my friend and comrade Des Warren. I'm just sorry he is not here today so we can celebrate, but I'm sure he's with us in spirit," he said.

Des Warren received a three-year sentence and he was regularly made to drink a cocktail of tranquillisers while in prison which led to Parkinson's disease and his death in 2004.

Many of those convicted also found that upon their release they had been blacklisted and were unable to work. For nearly half a century, the families of the convicted men, backed by the trade union movement, have campaigned for their convictions to be quashed.

Speaking at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, Lord Justice Fulford said: "These 14 appeals against conviction are allowed across the three trials and on every extant count which the 14 appellants faced. It would not be in the public interest to order a retrial".

In its written ruling, the Court of Appeal allowed the 14 appellants' appeals on the grounds that original witness statements had been destroyed.

In June 1972, trade unionists called the first-ever national builders' strike in protest against pay, unjust employment practices and dangerous conditions on sites and strikers demonstrated in Shrewsbury and Telford.

None of the demonstrators were arrested that day but five months later the picketers were charged and subsequently convicted on trumped up charges.

Lord Justice Fulford wrote: "If the destruction of the handwritten statements had been revealed to the appellants at the time of the trial, this issue could have been comprehensively investigated with the witnesses when they gave evidence, and the judge would have been able to give appropriate directions.

"We have no doubt that if that had happened, the trial

process would have ensured fairness to the accused. Self-evidently, that is not what occurred.

"By the standards of today, what occurred was unfair to the extent that the verdicts cannot be upheld," he said.

Lawyers had also argued the broadcast of a highly emotive anti-communist documentary during the trials was "deeply prejudicial", but the Court of Appeal dismissed the claim that the Red under the Bed documentary might have made the verdicts unsafe.

Arthur Murray, who was convicted of affray and unlawful assembly and sentenced to six months, said: "We were innocent all along, yet it has taken us nearly 50 years to clear our names.

"Sadly, my mother and four of my siblings have passed away without knowing that we were innocent.

"Serious questions need to be asked about the role of the building industry bosses in our convictions and the highest offices of government who all had a hand in our trial and

conviction.

"Make no mistake, our convictions were a political witch-hunt," he said.

Mr Tomlinson said: "We were brought to trial at the apparent behest of the building industry bosses, the Conservative government and ably supported by the secret state.

"This was a political trial not just of me, and the Shrewsbury pickets - but was a trial of the trade union movement," he said.

Terry Renshaw who was convicted of unlawful assembly paid tribute to the campaign's researcher, Eileen Turnbull, who worked "tirelessly" to obtain "crucial evidence".

She uncovered a document in the National Archives which was part of the prosecution papers and revealed for the first time that police had destroyed some of the original witness statements.

"It's been 47 years I'm just so emotional. I didn't think it would hit me like this. I am no longer a criminal," he said.



JUSTICE AT LAST: (Left to right) Mark Turnbull, Terry Renshaw, Harry Chadwick, Eileen Turnbull, John McKinsie Jones with wife Rita McKinsie Jones and lawyer Jamie Potter, outside The Royal Courts Of Justice, London, in February before the hearing in the Court of Appeal for the Shrewsbury 24 which has now overturned the convictions.

CAMPAIGNING FOR CLEANERS

Union carries out risk assessments for train cleaners in Kent and demand safe working conditions

A delegation including relief regional organiser Eddie Dempsey, Conductor Company Council Paul Dennis and Cleaners Company Council John Johnstone carried out a risk assessment on the Sittingbourne to Sheerness Line where Servest cleaners are employed to clean and sanitise the trains during the journey.

There are specific difficulties with the work as a large proportion of the passengers do not wear face masks. The Conductor is permitted to not patrol the train during the Covid pandemic but contract cleaning service staff are still required to carry out their usual duties.

If there are any problems with overcrowding, they are told to get off the train and wait for the next service. This both risky and unreasonable but Servest insist this a practical solution.

When asked for the risk assessment they could not produce it and so John Johnston escalated the issue to the regional organiser.

After further protracted attempts to engage on the issue, John and Eddie informed the company that they would be carrying out their own assessment at Sittingbourne and to Sheerness. Medway & District branch health and safety

officer Paul Dennis, was also invited for his local knowledge of the route and issues on the line.

Servest sent a junior manager and a supervisor to represent the company, they could not at first even find the generic risk assessment for on board cleaners.

Despite it being an unusually quiet day there was still plenty of evidence that the work was a risky procedure and there was clearly a much safer and more practical solution.

The stock has a turnaround time of 20 minutes at Sittingbourne for most journeys. The obvious answer is that the cleaner remains at Sittingbourne when the train terminates. The passengers are not allowed to board until the cleaner has gone through the empty coaches, cleaning and sanitising in a much safer environment then releases the train for service.

This has been proposed many times by John Johnstone, but the company is adamant that the procedures are safe and the union will continue for a change in policy.

South East Regional Council has also launched a three-month organising campaign around cleaners and contracted staff.



Eddie Dempsey



John Johnstone

BUS BACK BETTER

The government is to a review of the ban on local authorities setting up new municipal bus companies according to a new Department of Transport report 'Bus Back Better – National Bus Strategy for England'.

The report promises that the fragmented, fully commercialised market, which has operated outside London since 1986, will end.

"We want to see operators and local councils enter into statutory 'enhanced partnerships' or franchising agreements to receive the new funding and deliver the improvements.

"It is expected that many councils will choose enhanced partnerships, where local authorities work closely with bus companies, drawing on their operating knowledge and marketing skills.

"Because of the decline in

use caused by the pandemic, bus operators have already received significant emergency support from the government. From this summer, only services under these arrangements will be eligible for continued support or any new sources of funding from the £3 billion transformational investment," the report said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the commitment to a review of the ban on local authorities in England setting up new municipal, publicly owned, bus companies but questioned why this was not referenced in the government's initial announcement.

"RMT has long campaigned for the illogical ban on local authorities setting up publicly owned municipal bus companies to be overturned.

"It is a victory for this campaigning that the government has finally

acknowledged that this ban is 'ripe for review'. The Bus Strategy acknowledges that 'bus services have been in decline for a long time' and RMT believes this is a direct result of the deregulation and privatisation of the sector in the 1980s, which also prohibited the establishment of new municipal bus companies.

"However, we need more than just a review, we need radical, meaningful action from government to ensure that local authorities are able to provide affordable and reliable bus services to their community via a publicly owned municipal bus company.

"It has been estimated that municipal bus operation in Britain, outside London, could save over £500 million a year and this money would be far better spent on improving and expanding services than lining

the private operators' shareholders pockets. The government cannot delay action on this any longer," he said.

Transport for Quality of Life has estimated that 'The total gain from municipal operation would be of the order of £506 million per year in Britain excluding London' - Building a world-class bus system for Britain.

Other changes include:

- simpler bus fares with daily price caps, so people can use the bus as many times a day as they need without facing mounting costs
- more services in the evenings and at the weekends
- integrated services and ticketing across all transport modes, so people can easily move from bus to train
- all buses to accept contactless payments ■





PROFITEERING: FirstGroup Trenitalia Avanti West Coast rail franchise West Coast Main line Alstom Class 390 Pendolino train from London To Manchester at Manchester Piccadilly

END WEST COAST PROFITEERING

RMT condemns plans to hand the West Coast Main Line to First Trenitalia after a decade of profiteering

RMT has slammed plans by the Department of Transport to award a decade long contract to First Trenitalia to run the West Coast Main Line and called for an end to the government's obsession with privatisation.

The West Coast partnership franchise is currently operated by First Trenitalia as Avanti West Coast.

The financial details have not been not revealed, but the government has said previously that it wants to end the old franchising system, in which operators took a large slice of commercial risk. This implies that the new award could be a form of management contract or concession.

A Prior Information Notice

issued last month stated the government's intention to directly award a contract for the franchise, which is operated by First Group and the Italian state railways, for up to ten years, four more years than it had initially planned, when the operator's Covid Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA) expires in March 2022.

RMT estimates that First Trenitalia could stand to make over £30 million in management fees under its ERMA and initial Emergency Measures Agreement by March 2022, with this profiteering set to be cemented with a further decade long contract.

In contrast, the East Coast Main Line, LNER, has been

successfully operating in public ownership for a number of years, with all surplus revenue reinvested in the rail network, rather than seeping out in profits to big business.

RMT is demanding that the DfT withdraw its ludicrous plans to hand the West Coast Main Line over to First Trenitalia for a decade of profiteering, and instead bring it back into public ownership as a matter of urgency.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was nonsensical that the government was considering giving First Trenitalia the green light to operate and most likely profit from the West Coast Main Line for a whole decade, when the alternative, public ownership, has already

proven to be effective and will provide far better value for money for passengers and taxpayers.

"Both the Welsh and Scottish have opted to bring rail passenger services into public ownership, yet the Westminster Government continues with its obsession with privatisation, serving only the interest of its big business cronies.

"If the government is serious about meeting our climate change targets and building back better then it must put an end to this crony capitalism, and bring the West Coast Main Line, and the rest of the railway, into public ownership," he said.■



CLERICAL GRADES MEET BY ZOOM

The national organising conference of supervisory, clerical and other salaried grades conference president Willie Strang opened the meeting by commenting on how reps and activists had adapted to the Coronavirus which had changed working lives so much.

He also commented on the new technology which had been brought to the fore which was being used for the conference and its uses in the workplace.

A Dover District General Grades branch motion pointed out that pandemic was still with us and the fights to come would be some of the greatest ever seen.

Conference secretary Ross Marshall, spoke of the various reports of attacks on railway staffing and that station grades would be in the front line of that attack.

A way to combat these attacks was for some joined up thinking from both

conferences and he outlined what was happening with monthly meetings of delegates and he invited everyone to join them in these meetings going forward.

National President Michelle Rodgers said that the bosses were using the cloak of the pandemic to find new and innovative ways to attack staff but we must stand up collectively and be ready to fight. RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley continued that it was important to be organised in preparation for the attacks and that, as key workers who had kept the country going, deserved better than losing our jobs or no pay rise.

Organising unit manager Alan Pottage led a session on effective organising to raise the density of membership and protect jobs that will face attacks. During the Q&A which followed the issue of GDPR was discussed and how these could perhaps cause

hinderance to organising.

National Executive Committee member Ian Allen clarified the issue by saying that before we use third party organisations we must ensure that safeguards are in place for compliance with GDPR and advice should be sought from Unity House if there is any doubt.

A further two resolutions associated with concerns around Job protection were discussed and Wishaw & Motherwell delegate Davie Hailey said that automation was giving management a golden opportunity to replace staff.

Andy Budds, Leeds City said that you may well be able to replace staff but you cannot replace passengers who will still be travelling and when things go wrong with automated things staff are required to fix them and these staff must be able to offer identical products to what is available on-line and through

apps.

A motion from Edinburgh No 1 called for the union to work collaboratively with the Rail Industry Recovery Group to ensure that staff numbers are maintained and any efficiencies come from the profits.

Mike Sargent, Dover District reminded conference that it was government money being used to hold up franchises and that this should be used towards the earnings of staff and not go into the pockets of shareholders.

Del Docherty, Kings Cross warned of the disregard for timescales being demonstrated by management and said that when he had been approached regarding making changes to some company policies, he had stated that he would only discuss them when management adhered to timescales within current policies.



NO CUTS AT NETWORK RAIL CUT THEIR GREED, NOT YOUR JOB

Despite Network Rail staff being hailed as heroes during Covid-19 by the company and government, it is now cynically exploiting the crisis and intends to introduce the biggest attack on jobs, conditions, safety and pay in generations. Reforms which will affect all grades.

Just some of the company's proposals are listed below. More details on the company's proposals are contained within an RMT Network Rail special members' bulletin which has been sent to all RMT Network Rail members.

- An open-ended pay freeze for all Network Rail staff with massive effects on earning power and standard of living. The company intends to make the whole workforce poorer.
- Managed stations staff moving to a 'One Team' concept, with unknown effects on station staff numbers, duties, terms & conditions in both Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies.
- Less staff carrying out far more work, with less control over work-life balance.
- Diluting safety standards and importing more risk.

Network Rail intends to take more chances with railway safety in order to save cash through cutting maintenance cycles and jobs.

- Various reforms affecting maintenance, including an extension of risk-based maintenance, a 50% reduction in Maintenance Scheduled Tasks and joint working across maintenance disciplines, ending the current departmental distinctions such as S&T, OLE, P-WAY, P&D etc.
- Pooling of all Operative grades.
- More unsocial hours, more night and weekend working.
- All of this would be undertaken without the commitment of No Compulsory Redundancies across all of Network Rail

NETWORK RAIL'S NASTY NUMBERS

Despite launching this huge attack on all Network Rail members' pay, conditions and safety, it is business as usual for Network Rail and the massive private sector profiteering that the company and the government fund.

For instance, in the year to July 2020, the company made an operating profit of £2.3bn, up 62% on the previous year. Before the pandemic, profits were growing, and they can be expected to grow back as the

rail industry recovers. In fact, in March 2021 the company said there would be a 'quick bounce back' from Covid-19.

RMT estimates that the private Rolling Stock Companies and Train

RMT NETWORK RAIL
SPECIAL MEMBERS BULLETIN
APRIL 2021

CUT THEIR GREED, NOT YOUR JOB!

NO CUTS at NETWORK RAIL

RMT

RMT's response to Network Rail's plans to cut jobs, pay, conditions and safety

Operating Companies stand to make around £480m in annual private profit – ending this private profiteering could free up funds to instead be invested in Network Rail.

WHAT A PAY FREEZE WILL MEAN FOR NETWORK RAIL'S WORKERS

Despite the continued corporate greed at Network Rail and across the rail industry, an open-ended pay freeze has been imposed on all workers.

RPI inflation is predicted to run at an average of 2.7% over the next three years, the table below shows how various grades at Network Rail could be worse off after a three-year pay freeze, both in terms of total loss of earnings and the impact on salary.

And of course, less pay also means less pension.

RMT's alternative

It is clear that Network Rail's real agenda is 'unfinished business' with its workforce and RMT. It is shamefully using the Covid crisis to rush through ill thought-out changes and is preparing for a conflict with its own workforce.

RMT has no alternative except to go on a national dispute footing to defend members' interest. RMT is also presenting an alternative to the company and government, built around the following principles:

- Safety First

- Oppose attacks on RMT members
- Protect jobs, not bonuses
- Increase rail resilience, not rail risk
- Cut greed, not jobs and safety
- End outsourcing and casualisation
- Recognise that Network Rail staff are already very productive
- Freeze their profits, not workers' pay
- Restructure how Network Rail is funded

Further information on RMT's alternative is in the special Network Rail members' bulletin.

What happens next?

RMT is completely opposed to this cuts agenda and will continue to campaign to protect the interests of all members at Network Rail. But we are on a dispute footing and are actively preparing to ballot members for industrial action if it proves necessary.

RMT is undertaking a widespread publicity and social media campaign which highlights the essential role that Network Rail staff undertake and the need to protect jobs, conditions, safety and pay. RMT is also conducting a widespread political lobbying campaign with the support of our parliamentary groups in England, Scotland and Wales.

COVID-19 - WHAT THEY SAID LAST YEAR

"One thing which really has come through is the phenomenal levels of commitment from everyone in the railways. It is a reminder of the innate loyalty to the railways and the skills being used by colleagues to help save lives."

Andrew Haines, CEO Network Rail, April 2020

"Your members have been True Heroes."

Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport, letter to Mick Cash, May 2020

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING TODAY

"Outdated practices, and the impact of Covid on passenger numbers, show that the railway is not serving passengers, taxpayers or staff as well as it should."

Andrew Haines, CEO Network Rail, March 2021



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Spread the word that RMT Network Rail members have to be ready to take whatever steps are necessary to defend their futures.

Make sure colleagues are members of the RMT, make sure we have your up-to-date details, keep updated by

looking out for RMT texts and emails and following RMT on social media.

All RMT Network Rail members should have received a copy of the special bulletin in the post, if you have not received a copy, please contact your regional office.



Sample of Network Rail roles and grades	Current salary - 2021	2022 salary (increased by projected RPI)	2023 salary (increased by projected RPI)	2024 salary (increased by projected RPI)	Impact on salary of a 3-year pay freeze (compared to annual pay rises in line with RPI projections)	Total loss of earnings across 3 years (compared to annual pay rises in line with RPI projections)
S&T 2	£25,855	£26,553	£27,270	£28,006	£-2,151	£-4,264
S&T 6	£46,694	£47,955	£49,250	£50,579	£-3,885	£-7,702
Leading Trackman	£24,669	£25,335	£26,019	£26,722	£-2,053	£-4,069
Team Leader level 1	£33,807	£34,720	£35,657	£36,620	£-2,813	£-5,576
Team Leader level 4	£40,672	£41,770	£42,898	£44,056	£-3,384	£-6,708
Signaller 1	£26,486	£27,201	£27,936	£28,690	£-2,204	£-4,369
Signaller 5	£38,355	£39,391	£40,454	£41,546	£-3,191	£-6,326
Signaller 10	£50,224	£51,580	£52,973	£54,403	£-4,179	£-8,284



RMT's disabled members' Advisory committee member James Denny joined colleagues from Network Rail, Great Western Railway and Splash Projects recently to help out the NHS in Exeter fighting Covid 19.

Following on assisting the Nightingale Hospital and Exeter Vaccine Centre, a team of industry colleagues were asked to provide a garden

area for them. The building is a former DIY store with no windows, and the hospital needed somewhere for people to get fresh air and exercise to help their recovery.

Taking a corner that was partly a large, muddy, sinkhole and mostly unloved, the team constructed and painted a raised decking area with sail canopy, planters and seating. Fencing was used to make the

area feel like a garden and screen the heavy air conditioning units. The corner was finished off with a brand-new railway wheelchair ramp provided by GWR.

The has government announced that the Nightingale hospitals were now being wound up but the Exeter one might have a future, as it has equipment including a CT scanner that

can be used to help other areas of the NHS in the area.

This project was undertaken by railway volunteers, with the help of local businesses who provided many of the materials. It was a really positive example of collaboration, taught many of the team new skills, and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who took part.



ATTACKS INCREASE ON DISABLED

Shocking rise in hate crimes on the rail network shows we need for more staff

The shocking rising level of hate crime toward disabled people travelling on Britain's railways is a wake-up call to the industry to stop the cost-cutting that has emptied staff from trains and stations the union has said.

New figures published by the Department for Transport have shown that hate crimes toward disabled people traveling on the rail network have risen by 24 per

cent in the last three years.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the figures revealed a growing problem with hate crimes toward disabled people on the railways.

"It is frankly disgraceful that disabled people, who already take far fewer trips by rail, are being increasingly subjected to hate crimes when they do travel. The Department's own research tells us that the answer to

this is more staff.

"If we're going to build back better after the pandemic so that disabled passengers feel safe to travel and the rail network is truly accessible, we need to stop the profit-driven cost-cutting and put more trained and skilled human beings back on our trains and at stations," he said.

Surveys of disabled passengers also reveal that action to reduce staffing

levels makes them less likely to travel by train, while research commissioned by the Department itself has revealed that disabled passengers 'report feeling vulnerable without on-board assistance being available' and believe that more staff on trains and at stations are the most important measures that could be taken to make them feel safer.



WORCESTER WOMEN



Women in the Workplace

Worcester branch women celebrated International Woman's Day last month

"Women and unions, a chance to change our world"

Kerry, Senior Conductor, West Midlands Trains.

"A woman should be two things, who and what she wants"

Lisa, Customer Service Assistant, West Midlands Trains.

"The railway is always perceived as a male dominated industry, I'm so glad that times have changed and more and more women are joining the railway and we are treated as equals amongst the men, the union has always supported us

regardless of gender and I'm so glad to be a part of it."

Amy, Senior Conductor, West Midlands Trains.

"It's lovely to see women being recognised in the workplace and having a day of celebration along with the support of our union we finally have equality"

Helen, Train Manager, Great Western Railway.

"Being in part of a union to me means safety..someone is looking out for me and my job"

Tracey, Train Manager, Great

Western Railway.

"The union have fought for equality in the workplace and to have their support and recognition is amazing"

Laura, Customer Service, Great Western Railway.

"Being in the union as a woman gives me the confidence to speak out on any issues "

EM, Senior Conductor, West Midlands Trains.

"Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another we're Strongest when we cheer each other on "

Karen, Carriage Cleaner, West Midlands Trains.

"As woman in the union I feel empowered and supported"

Steph, Senior Conductor, West Midlands Trains.

"Being a woman in RMT provides me with the knowledge that I will have the support and backing of a union who are committed to continually strive for equality for all regardless of sex, race or gender"

Lisa, Senior Conductor, West Midlands Trains.■

WHEN YOU'RE AT WORK ALL DAY, YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR HOME'S SAFE

RMT members, every year thousands of homes are damaged by storms and flooding, fire and smoke damage and from harm caused by vandalism and theft. No one ever thinks it will happen to their home.

The following small security and maintenance measures can go a long way to keeping your home safe.

PROTECT YOUR HOME WITH ADDITIONAL SECURITY

The contents of your home are particularly at risk which is why your home insurance needs to include enough cover to repair and replace your items. It takes time to calculate how much the entire contents of your home are worth, that's why UIA includes cover up to £75,000 as a standard part its contents insurance policy.

UIA recommends a number of ways to

reduce the risk of burglary and theft; one of the simplest is to use smart bulbs and plugs to create the appearance of someone always being at home.

PROTECT PROPERTY WITH REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Fire damage is considered to be one of the most serious and dangerous threats covered by a home insurance policy which is why UIA strongly recommend you install a fire/smoke alarm. In 2018/19 more than 28,000 homes in the UK suffered a fire (Gov.uk, National Statistics).

Maintaining your property regularly and checking wiring and guttering will also reduce the risk of damage; as will being part of a neighbourhood watch scheme.

To discover the extensive cover that UIA offer to RMT members, check out rmtinsurance.co.uk.



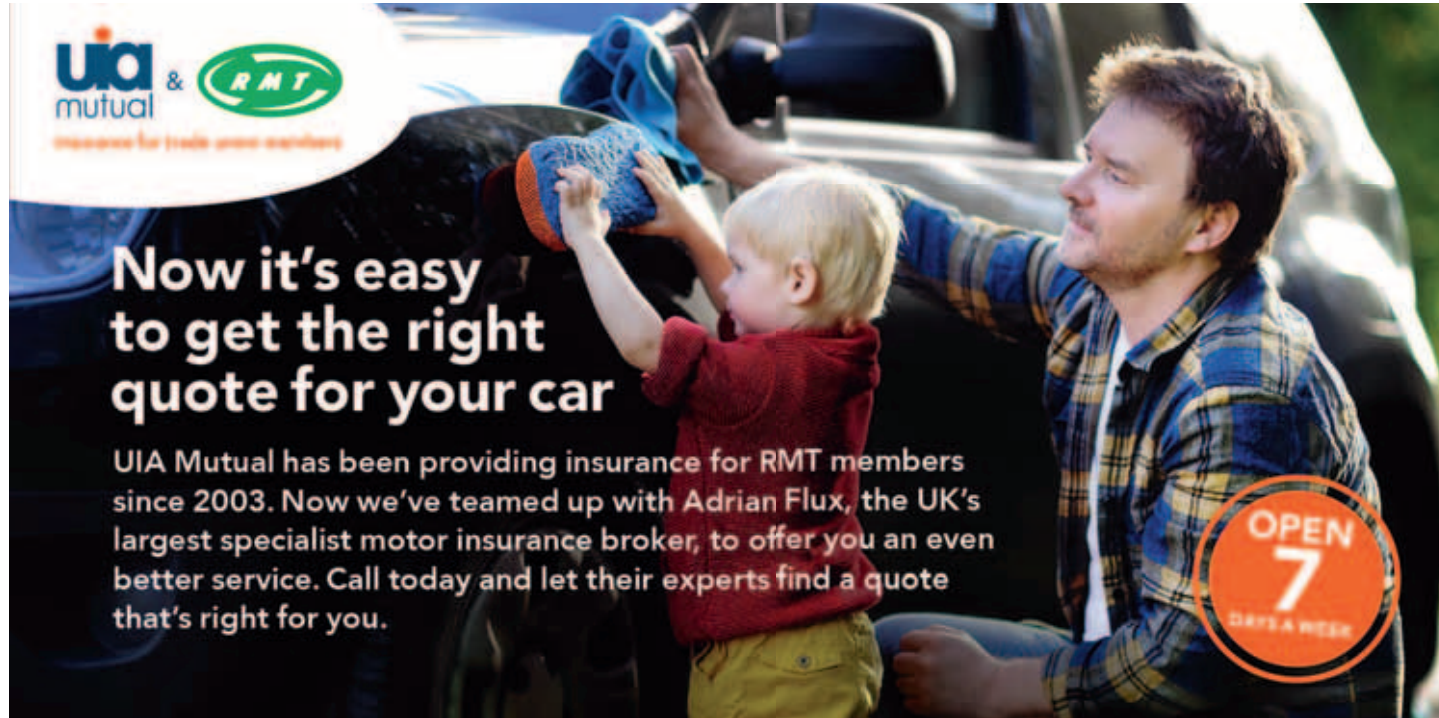
WINNER! : RMT member Melecia Mullings has won the iPad offered in a competition from RMT's home insurance provider UIA.



insurance for trade union members

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President's column



MEMBERS FIRST

This month I've been privileged to attend our equality conferences for RMT women and Black and Ethnic Minority members a big thanks to Glen and Marie for the welcome and good luck to Mandy and AJ for the year ahead I'm sure you'll carry on the work done by your predecessors.

I feel that we could all do so much more to make sure our equality advisory groups get true representation and more autonomy so that is the challenge I set the next general secretary.

It's certainly the area I've learnt the most from whilst on the NEC and as president. I have made friendships that will last a lifetime and for that I am extremely grateful. I'm prepared to listen and we shouldn't ignore or think that we know best but try harder as small steps lead to great victories.

That means that all of us must listen and change how we act to be inclusive. We cannot change what we are not aware of and once we are made aware we cannot help but change.

I also want to say we have made a difference since these conferences were introduced but we are still a long way from having achieved the aspirations of our members and I want to put it on the next GS and president to tackle that head on!

I have also chaired our biggest Network Rail meeting online where we hit capacity it was a pleasant focused and robust meeting with everyone is now aware of the forthcoming attacks across the whole network. I feel confident that the determination shown by all our representatives to defend our hard fought for terms and conditions our members will be ready to fight and will not allow the cloak of the pandemic to tear down what they have worked hard to gain.

I also met representatives from Stena in our maritime industry who have been given broken promises and had conditions removed by stealth under the pressures of the covid pandemic. The straw that broke the camel's back was the withdrawal of the sickness policy. I heard one member saying that he had to go off for a week and received only £22 to keep his family. This is absolutely shocking when you were being hailed hero's for bring essential supplies to the country no wonder the work force feel Stena doesn't look after their welfare and wellbeing whilst keeping services going throughout the pandemic.

Whilst making money for shareholders and owners they are taking taxpayer money to keep staff on furlough and reflag vessels to avoid paying their dues to the government. It's important that the union gets behind our members.

I also pay tribute to RMT members for standing up and telling Scotrail that they want equality and to stop playing us off against other unions for the same rights. We will not be held responsible for your lack of management! It appears a smear campaign has backfired with mass of support and empathy from the travelling public.

The SWR DOO referendum should have concluded by the time you read this and whilst some will make a load of noise round what's gone on I won't get hung up on the finer details. We can leave that to the AGM, but I will say that every deal done has been claimed to do the guard in and we have proved that wrong time and time again.

Our members are the ones who decide when to fight and that has always been the success of our trade union and we have to listen when they tell us they have

no fight left. However what I will say is it was inspiring to see our general secretary Mick Cash speak (even though he doesn't get to vote) so passionate and so in favour of the deal highlighting similar incidents during his tenure and I've no doubt that his performance actually probably swung the opinion of some NEC members and the way they voted which for me was good to see because despite this myth that exists out there the NEC don't support the general secretary this evidently goes to show they do. It was good to see his leadership hold the boat steady during what has been a difficult time with the attacks on our guard members. However, I'm deeply disappointed with murmurs that our maritime and offshore grades apparently shouldn't involve themselves in Industrial railway issues so ask yourself this if not them then what about our Network Rail or bus members also? The last time I checked we are an all grades union and that sort of grade snobbery should be a thing of the past.

I am also aware when you get this edition the new general secretary will be in place and I hope that the whole union unite behind him and these counterproductive factions wither away or change their approach. The members come first in this union not egos and personalities and we must prepare for what will be the worst attacks out there on our members and I will 100 per cent work with whoever is triumphant to make this happen because when we pull in the same direction we win!

Solidarity

Michelle Rodgers

REOPENING RAIL IN THE SOUTH WEST



REOPENED: Dartmoor Line rail services will be restored for first time in half a century: Okehampton station pre-closure

Dartmoor Line rail services between Okehampton and Exeter to be restored for first time in half a century

Regular passenger services are set to be restored on a popular railway line in the South West of England for the first time in almost 50 years.

As part of the 'Restoring Your Railway' scheme rail passengers to benefit from the return of daily services between Okehampton and Exeter later this year.

The scheme will reconnect communities across Devon, reinvigorating local economies, boosting tourism to Dartmoor National Park and improving access to jobs and education.

The Department for Transport, Network Rail, and Great Western Railway (GWR) are working together to reopen the line between Exeter and Okehampton to passengers all year round. Since 1977 the line has only been open during the summer after a regular service was withdrawn in 1972.

A service will initially run every two hours later this year, with the expectation that it will increase to an hourly service towards the end of 2022. This

will benefit students heading to colleges in Exeter as well as tourists travelling in the other direction towards Okehampton for Dartmoor, easing congestion on local roads.

This is the first project to see services restored under the government's Restoring Your Railway fund, launched in January 2020 to reinstate axed local services and restore closed stations. The fund is focused on delivering schemes which can level up the country, reinvigorating high streets, reconnecting cut-off communities and boosting opportunity across the country.

The government has also announced £37.4 million of funding for the critical third phase of works to improve resilience on the coastal railway between Holcombe and Dawlish. This is in addition to a £341 million package of rail enhancements already committed across the South West.

Network Rail is set to begin work later this summer on a rockfall shelter and netting to address instability

on an area of steep, high cliffs to the north of Parson's Tunnel between Holcombe and Dawlish.

This is the part of the South West Rail Resilience Programme to create a more resilient railway after storms caused significant damage to the line in 2014, closing the railway for eight weeks and severing the South-West Peninsula from the rest of the network.

Phase 1 of the programme, to build a new £80 million seawall on the seafront west of Dawlish station to protect 360 metres of railway and homes behind it, was completed in July 2020.

Work on the second phase of the new seawall, to extend it a further 415 metres eastwards from Colonnades to Coastguards, began in November 2020 with support from an innovative eight-legged, jack-up barge, known as a 'Wavewalker'. Work is ongoing and is expected to be completed by 2023.

Exeter College Principal John Laramy said that the

return of the Okehampton to Exeter rail line full-time was great news for the region and building connectivity across the South West.

"As we all know, enhanced connectivity is a key driver for productivity and this development will open up new opportunities to support the growth of our economy within this area.

"We have students study with us from across the South West region and another rail route into the heart of Exeter can only be a good thing, not only for learners themselves, but also for the city of Exeter," he said.

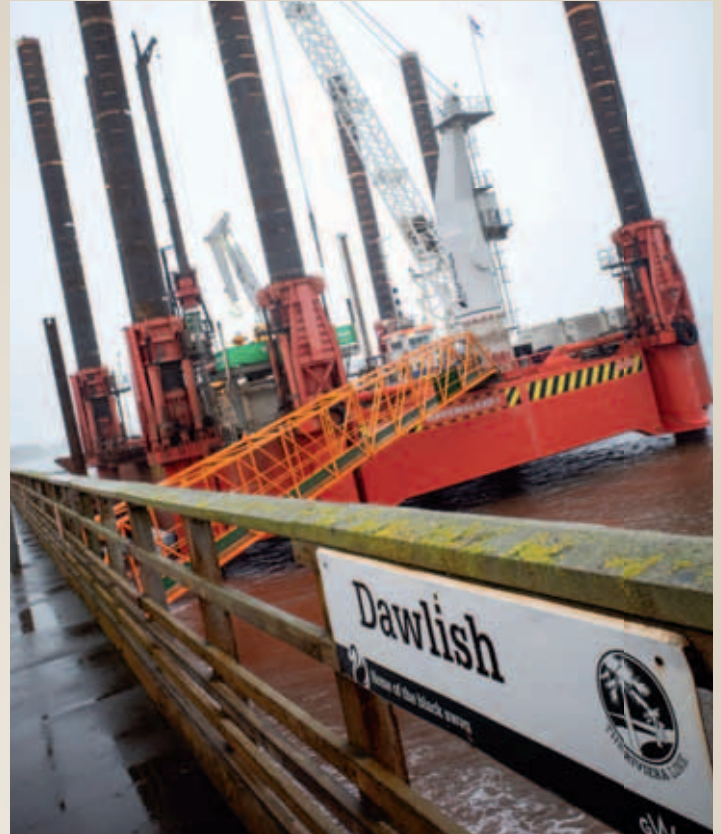
Dartmoor National Park Authority chair Pamela Woods said that opening up the line to Dartmoor with a regular train service would provide a sustainable route to access Dartmoor via regular rail links, reduce congestion and provide a more accessible way for all to enjoy the National Park.

"We are looking forward to working with GWR to provide visitor information at

Okehampton Station, to make the most of the opportunities this presents to support our tourism businesses and the local economy," she said.

The news comes on top of £341 million of rail enhancements already announced in the South West including:

- The development of a new £53 million depot in Exeter providing enhanced servicing facilities for trains and improving the availability of trains in the region, including for the Dartmoor Line.
- Ongoing capacity upgrades at Bristol East Junction, worth £132m, and £60m station improvements at Bristol Temple Meads as part of the Bristol Rail Regeneration programme.
- Contribution of £7.8 million for Edginswell station in Torbay from the third round of the New Stations Fund and it is planned to be opened in 2024.
- Investment of more than £8.48 million for improvements at a number of stations across the region including:
- £1.7 million for delivery of accessibility and car parking improvements at Castle Cary station, with construction to start in Spring 2021.
- £6.6 million for station improvements and new car parking at Taunton station, with construction to finish in Spring 2021.
- £183,000 to upgrade the previously derelict station building at Saltash station
- Contractual support through the Great Western franchise agreement for the Plymouth station scheme with construction ongoing until 2029. ■



CONSTRUCTION: Wave Walker jack-up barge helping construction of a new bigger sea wall at Dawlish protecting the railway, Devon, England.

UNION
Rewards



GET PAID CASHBACK FOR YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING!

Your RMT membership entitles you to free access to RMTRewards.com - the rewards website for cashback, discounts and deals at hundreds of retailers. There's even a free £10 welcome bonus for members to enjoy when they set up their account.

This exclusive free service is designed for RMT members and their families to help them save on their online shopping.

Sign up is free and quick, and it's a great way to get even more from your online shopping. So if you're buying clothes, grocery shopping or looking for a bargain, make sure you login to shop!

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LETTERS / OBITS / AWARDS

NO TO PAY FREEZES

Dear editor,

The train operating companies have been instructed by the Department of Transport to impose two-year pay freezes because of the Covid pandemic which is not our fault.

Our bills, rents and groceries are really costing more every year and its causing hardship on many, but the long-term damage will be to our pensions which is very serious. In a few years time, when members look at their pension estimates, they may well be very disappointed with reduced lump sums and the devaluation imposed on it by the pay freezes.

I have never known this union to accept pay freezes without a fight. The union has a responsibility to protect our pay and conditions, where are we going with this as a union? After two years our pay will be worth in real terms a lot less but I can't see any fight back.

Many thanks

Mark Still

FACTIONALISM AND NEUTRALITY

Dear editor,

In the last edition of *RMT News* I note our president's sadness and frustration at the factionalism within the union. Is it just the Broad Left faction that makes her sad and frustrated or is it all factions? Does it for example include the CFDU faction, whose meeting she attended at the Waldorf Hotel, Manchester during the 2019 AGM, with no mention of sadness and frustration on that occasion?

She further complains about derogatory references to democratically elected members of the National Executive – could this be the same president who was more than happy to appear in an election video promoting a supporter of another faction who was challenging a democratically elected regional organiser? That RO might well have found himself out of a job because of her endorsement and by introducing herself as the national president she

then proceeded to disparage the incumbent because of his age in contravention of the discrimination laws of the land.

Since I joined this union back in 1973, I have always been aware of different factions within our organisation. For better or for worse, factions exist within every political or campaigning organisation that I am aware of. Therefore, any call for unity by a neutral figure such as the president must necessarily condemn all factions. To condemn only one faction is to show approval for all others which in this case and the president's favoured option would appear to be the CFDU, judging on her past record.

Her display of sadness and frustration rings hollow to me and in favouring one faction while condemning another is an abuse of her position and utterly unworthy of an RMT president.

Ray Knight

Enfield, London

OBITUARY : STEFAN MELNYK

Stefan Melnyk was a dedicated trade unionist and a socialist and, a bus driver, he was an activist in RMT's Central Line West branch for over 15 years. He actively represented workers across the industry and received an award for his work for members presented by former general secretary Bob Crow.

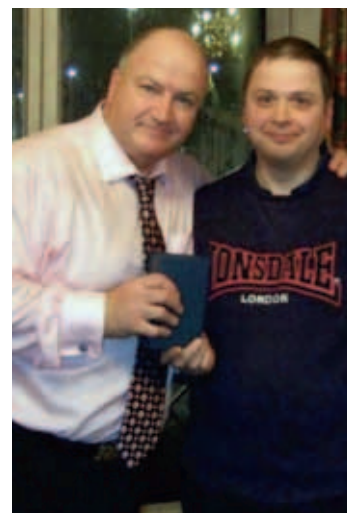
Stefan was a loved and respected colleague by many

bus drivers at Stamford Brook bus garage and further afield. He represented many drivers and route controllers during disciplinary hearings not only at his workplace but at many other companies. He accompanied many bus drivers to employment tribunals in his own time. He was a selfless and caring individual. Having spent over 20 years as a bus driver and Stefan's knowledge

and experience was vital to new drivers who relied on him for advice on writing accident reports, grievance statements and many other work related problems.

Originally from Ukraine, he was a strong supporter of the Ukrainian Solidarity Campaign and built links with Ukrainian transport unions.

Oz Dube and Ross Marshall
Central Line West branch ■



WIRRAL HONOUR

Wirral branch secretary Stuart Harris presented Keith Spencer with his forty year service award last month at Sandhills IECC. Keith started his career on September 9 1974 in Liverpool UG and has worked as a

Grade 7 Signaller at Net Rail Sandhills MEC since September 1994.

Stuart said that he was a congenial man with a passion for his job, the railway and his trade union. ■

CHOLSEY TO WALLINGFORD

RMT Reading branch secretary Chris Reilly became a volunteer on the Cholsey to Wallingford heritage railway after the branch held a social event there.

"The enthusiasm of all of the volunteers struck a chord with me and I thought I'd help out in whatever way I could," he said.

Cholsey Wallingford Rail Preservation Society chairman Anthony Stead explained that due to the fact that the main line did not connect to the market town of Wallingford it was decided to build a branch line from Moulsoford to Wallingford built in 1866.

Due to its unprofitability, it was taken over by GWR in 1872. When the main line was converted from Broad to Standard Gauge two additional lines were built and the branch line from Moulsoford to Cholsey became part of today's relief line.

A new station was built at Cholsey and the branch line from Wallingford was realigned to terminated in a

bay platform at Cholsey.

As demand declined in the line was treated as a 2.5 mile long siding until 1981 and the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway Preservation Society (CWRPS) was formed to preserve the line. Thus 2021 will be the 40th anniversary of closure.

The CWRPS first operated passenger trains in 1985 using a 08, TSO coach and a Guards van. That 08 is believed to be the oldest operational one in the country. Steam power is usually provided with hired in locos although currently the Sentinel loco Isworth is resident on the line.

CWRPS is entirely volunteer-run which makes it possible for volunteers to become involved in all aspects of the operation and new members are always welcome. Volunteers have re-laid the track into Cholsey thus giving passengers the opportunity to travel by GWR to Cholsey and transfer to a preserved line for a trip to Wallingford.

This year the Victorian canopy from Maidenhead

Station has been erected at Wallingford and it is hoped that the signal box from Stoke Canon will arrive at Wallingford and, together with the Oxford signal gantry, this will further improve the railway ambience of Wallingford."

Chris Reilly said that due to

the Covid 19 pandemic it has not been able to run services or have private hire events which means there is a lack of funding and urged members to assist in any way they could.

Visit www.cholsey-wallingford-railway.com for more information. ■





ARTWORK: left to right sculptor Vincenzo Muratore and artist Christopher Mick collaborated to create a memorial painting



THE WRECK OF THE PRINCESS ALICE

Artists invoke the memory of a disaster on the Thames nearly 150 years ago which claimed at least 640 lives

On the evening of September 3 1878 the overloaded pleasure steamer the *Princess Alice* was on the return journey from Sheerness to London. The weather had been fine and her passengers had enjoyed a day's pleasure trip to the Kent coast, a popular pastime at this period. Some children were asleep and the band was playing on the main deck.

As the vessel entered Galleons Reach near today's Docklands at around 19.30

hours she crossed a larger vessel, the *Bywell Castle*. On board the *Bywell Castle*, Christopher Dix, her pilot, shouted: 'My God, that man is starboarding his helm. Stop her. Hard a-port. Reverse the engines full speed' but it was too late and she hit and sunk the *Princess Alice*.

As steam billowed from the gash in the vessel's side, she broke in two and an estimated 700 men, women and children went into the filthy, polluted water which had just received

75 million gallons of raw sewage from nearby Barking Reach.

The exact number of passengers on board during that fatal voyage is unknown as there was no passenger log but it is thought that around 640 people drowned, making this Britain's worst inland waterway disaster.

Despite being a largely forgotten tragedy at the time it had a profound effect on the policing of the river and pollution control as well as

largely ending the golden age of the pleasure steamer as railways and buses became seen as safer alternatives.

Both an inquest and a Board of Trade inquiry were held. A majority verdict by the inquest jury apportioned blame to both vessels. The *Bywell Castle*, it said, had contributed to the collision by not acting quickly enough to ease, stop and reverse her engines, and 'the *Princess Alice* contributed to the collision by not stopping and

going astern'.

They also said that there should be 'proper and stringent rules and regulations laid down for all stream navigation on the River Thames'. The Board of Trade inquiry blamed the *Princess Alice*, finding that she had breached the Board of Trade Regulations and the Regulations of the Thames Conservancy Board, 1872. These required a vessel to port her helm if she came end on to another vessel travelling in the opposite direction.

By a further twist of fate, five years after the disaster, in 1883, the *Bywell Castle* herself disappeared, sometime after being sighted off the Portuguese coast.

One of the most popular tracks on the GFTU CD *Working River: songs and music of the River Thames* is *The Wreck of Princess Alice*, a 19th century poem put to music commemorating the

sinking. This ethereal and mesmerising contribution by *Crafting for Foes* captures the depth of the tragedy and the sudden sense of loss.

Now artist Christopher Mick has collaborated with sculptor Vincenzo Muratore to produce a suitable piece of art to commemorate the lives lost. Chris felt that it was time to remember a disaster that he himself had known nothing about until recently and to remember how many safety rules only come about due to tragedies like this one.

"Whilst walking on the Thames path between Woolwich and Erith I saw a small sign denoting the location of the disaster. Despite living and working in London for most of my adult life, I had never previously heard about this tragic event.

"The sheer scale of the disaster, and the miserable circumstances surrounding it, demand that people should

know what happened.

"Accidents will always happen, it's a brutal fact of life. But if the rules of inland waterway navigation that we use today had been in existence back then it is almost certain that this accident would never have occurred.

"The loss of such a large number of civilians in a single event is something we should respectfully commemorate," he said.

Adam Rees of *Crafting for Foes* feels the same way and thinks that the many hidden histories of the Thames should be remembered.

"What I found moving about the original poem about the *Princess Alice* is the fragility of life, one minute these people were enjoying a day out the next they were fighting for their lives.

"I also think that it is largely a forgotten disaster maybe because the vast majority of

those that perished that day were workers and their families.

"I think the stories of ordinary people are often lost with each turn of the tide.

"Yet for me the lives of workers and those who built and toiled in London are far more interesting than that of kings and queens and the rich and that is what the *Working River* CD is all about really," he said.

Chris says that while they do not yet have a permanent home for the piece popular opinion suggests that it should be on permanent public display somewhere in London.

"We would be happy to support this idea. In the short term, we will be showing the work at an exhibition at the Art in the Docks gallery in Royal Albert Wharf starting in June to coincide with the lifting of lockdown restrictions," he said. ■

WORKING RIVER

Songs and music of the Thames

GFTU and Folktree Recordings have come together to produce a CD of the untold story of working people of the Thames through music and song. Lightermen, bargemen, the match girls and dockers strikes, fishermen, smugglers, mudlarks and mutineers... It's all here in a wonderful 21 track musical journey. Also included is an illustrated 16 page booklet charting the history behind the music, all for just £12.99 (including p&p).



Available at folktreerecordings.bandcamp.com and gftu.org.uk

PICCADILLY AND DISTRICT WEST BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	MANCHESTER SOUTH BRANCH SUPPORTING GORDON MARTIN FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	NORTH THAMES BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	NEASDEN BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
BAKERLOO BRANCH NOMINATES JOHN LEACH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	JUBILEE SOUTH BRANCH NOMINATES JOHN LEACH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	SOUTH DEVON BUS BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	BIRMINGHAM ENGINEERING BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
NEWCASTLE RAIL & CATERING BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	IPSWICH BRANCH NOMINATES MICHAEL LYNCH FOR RMT GENERAL SECRETARY	SWANSEA NO 1 BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	CENTRAL & NORTH MERSEY BRANCH NOMINATES STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	NORWICH BRANCH NOMINATES MICHAEL LYNCH FOR RMT GENERAL SECRETARY	STOCKPORT & DISTRICT BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	EAST LONDON RAIL BRANCH NOMINATES STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
NUNEATON BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	GLASGOW NO5 BRANCH NOMINATES STEVE HEDLEY FOR RMT GENERAL SECRETARY	SOUTHALL, EALING & SLOUGH BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	DOVER DISTRICT GENERAL GRADES BRANCH NOMINATES STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
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CAMDEN 3 BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	SOLIHULL TAXI BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	FELTHAM BRANCH NOMINAT MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	HULL RAIL BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
COVENTRY NO.1 BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	MORDEN & OVAL BRANCH SUPPORTS JOHN LEACH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	TFL NO.1 & LU MATS BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	CARLISLE CITY BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
SOUTHAMPTON SHIPPING BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARY	BLACKPOOL AND FYLDE COAST BRANCH SUPPORTS JOHN LEACH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	WIMBLEDON BRANCH NOMINATE STEVE HEDLEY FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	BURTON-ON-TRENT NO.1 BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
BLETCHLEY AND NORTHAMPTON BRANCH SUPPORTING MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	WARRINGTON & DISTRICT BRANCH NOMINATES MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	OFFSHORE ENERGY BRANCH NOMINATE GORDON MARTIN FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	DERBY RAIL & ENGINEERING BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

POOLE & DISTRICT BUS BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	BIRMINGHAM RAIL BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	WATFORD BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	STOCKPORT BRANCH SUPPORTS MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
NORTH STAFFS BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	ORPINGTON BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	GREAT NORTHERN RAIL BRANCH NOMINATE MICK LYNCH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY	BASINGSTOKE NO1 BRANCH NOMINATES JOHN LEACH FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
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BRANCH
NOMINATES
JOHN LEACH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

SOUTH EAST ESSEX BRANCH
NOMINATES
JOHN LEACH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

PRESTON NO1 BRANCH
NOMINATES
JOHN LEACH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

BLACKPOOL AND FYLDE COAST
BRANCH
SUPPORTS
JOHN LEACH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

EDINBURGH NO1 AND
PORTOBELLO DISTRICT BRANCH
NOMINATES
GORDON MARTIN
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

ASHFORD NO1 BRANCH
NOMINATES
MICK LYNCH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

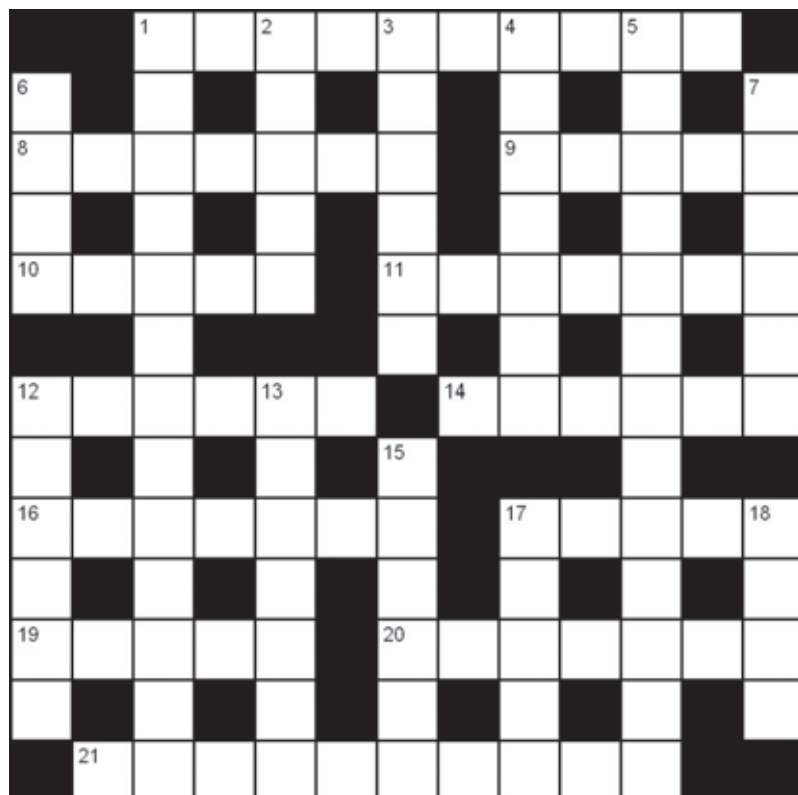
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NOMINATES
STEVE HEDLEY
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WIRRAL BRANCH
NOMINATES
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All winners will be announced at a later date as the Unity House offices are currently closed due to the pandemic.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1 Scoundrel (10)
- 8 Conscript (7)
- 9 Banishment (5)
- 10 Duck (5)
- 11 Pain in the ear (7)
- 12 Detector (6)
- 14 Payment (6)
- 16 Sportsman (7)
- 17 In the area (5)
- 19 Breathing gear (5)
- 20 Remove (7)
- 21 Container (10)

DOWN

- 1 Private accommodation (8,5)
- 2 Later than (5)
- 3 Custodian (6)
- 4 Bring to light (7)
- 5 Include again (13)
- 6 Laze (4)
- 7 Harsh (6)
- 12 Scattered (6)
- 13 Too old (6)
- 15 Warm again (6)
- 17 Jape (5)
- 18 Bookmaker (4)



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