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RMT news

Essential reading for today's transport worker

AGM 2021

INSIDE...

RMT

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, Motor, 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

For a small monthly premium you can claim cash-back on dental, optical and therapy treatments. Visit www.bhsf.co.uk

Join RMT by visiting www.rmt.org.uk

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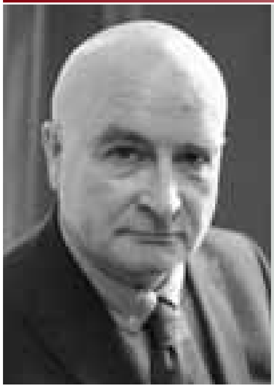
When you have finished with this magazine give it to a workmate who is not in your union.

EDITORIAL



PREPARE TO FIGHT

This month's magazine includes a report back on the union's AGM in Leeds and sets out the industrial, organising and campaigning strategy that we are building in response to the mounting threat to jobs, pay, pensions and conditions being cooked up by employers from across all sectors.

We are under no illusions. We know that the noises coming from both government and the bosses are setting up an assault that could roll the clock back on years of progress and rip up agreements secured through strong trade union organisation in the workplace.

Nothing that we have ever won has been given up by the employers without a fight and it is those core advances they are seeking to claw back using the Covid pandemic as a smokescreen. Bogus figures about projected transport usage are thrown out to justify the cuts agenda when it is clearly far too early to call the future shape of our industries as we slowly emerge from twenty months of crisis management.

As a union we have already shown that where we organise and fight, we can win. In the past month we have secured major victories on both Scotrail and Stagecoach buses which have broken the spell of austerity. We should salute those RMT members who have taken the lead and blazed a trail for the rest of us.

But none of this is going to be easy. We need a mass mobilisation of the rank and file in every workplace and every single member will have a critical role to play.

As this magazine goes to press, I am in the process of preparing a detailed campaign strategy document for the National Executive. We all have to take responsibility and ownership for that campaign if we are going to win through.

Over the coming weeks and months you can expect to receive regular updates and briefings on the campaign and details of the calls that we will be making on you and your colleagues.

In the meantime, I send you Season's Greetings from your union and wish you and your families a happy and peaceful New Year.

RMT general secretary
Michael Lynch

@RMTunion /RMTunion www rmt.org.uk

WINNING AT STAGECOACH

WINNING: RMT regional organiser Barry West with RMT negotiators in Torbay

Union wins improved offers on Stagecoach bus contracts following coordinated campaigning

Following the threat of strike action and actually taking action short of striking at various locations RMT members have won improved offers across Stagecoach bus operations.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that Stagecoach bus workers had shown the way by campaigning on pay and conditions.

"We have forced that company into making significantly improved offers on the back of successful strike ballots and setting dates for action.

"It was very pleasing to note that this success was on the back of co-ordination between Stagecoach companies – not taking them on piecemeal," he said.

Members at Stagecoach East Midlands (Mansfield and Worksop) took action short of a strike in the form of an overtime and rest day working ban. However, the union called off planned full strike action after the company agreed a one-off payment of £400, a pay increase of 1.8 per cent from May 2021 and a further increase of 2.7 per cent from the point of acceptance of the offer. Sickness and holiday pay would also increase in line with the offer and the anniversary for pay talks would be May 2022.

Stagecoach South West (Exeter, Barnstaple and Torbay) also agreed a new package including 2.2 percent pay increase from May followed by a further 2.2 per cent from the week after the deal is accepted. This also included the same rise for cleaners and lower paid staff, a £400 one off payment, a reduction in the working week of two hours introduced by 30 minutes each year with no loss of pay and the retention of all current terms and conditions.

Members at Stagecoach Yorkshire (Chesterfield) were preparing to take strike action when a revised offer included a £400 payment to all full-time employees for 2020, a 1.8 per cent increase across all rates from May 2021 and a further 2.7 per cent increase from date of acceptance and normal pay negotiations will resume in May 2022.

Stagecoach South West (Plymouth, Tavistock and Dartmouth) made an improved offer to the driver basic rate to be uplifted from £10 per hour to £11.80 per hour from October 2021 and a £300 one off payment.

Negotiations are ongoing at Stagecoach operations at Winchester, Andover and Basingstoke for bus workers organised within RMT. ■


WINNING: RMT regional organiser Barry West with RMT negotiators in Exeter

GROWING BUS TRANSPORT JOBS CRISIS

New data reveals 16,000 bus worker jobs lost in the last decade

RMT has revealed that new data published by the Department of Transport confirmed the stark recruitment and retention crisis facing the deregulated and privatised bus industry in England as low pay and poor conditions force a mass exodus of staff who can double their wages in competing sectors.

The data shows that 2,000 bus worker jobs in England outside London have been lost in the last year and that a huge 16,000 jobs have been lost in the last decade. At the same time, bus driver earnings have dropped by a massive 10 per cent in the last year and are now lower than they were a decade ago.

The union said that this continued decline was a direct result of the deregulated bus industry in which commercial operators run bus services for private profit, rather than a fundamental public service that works for passengers and values its workers.

Bus travel is a sustainable, low carbon transport and is central to decarbonising the transport sector. Yet, the government's National Bus Strategy published earlier in the year failed to reverse the ban on municipal bus companies and instead caved to the private operators' opposition to any further regulation that might damage their profits.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that RMT had warned for years that low pay, long hours and poor conditions were storing up a major crisis in the bus industry and with the national skills shortage and better wages on offer elsewhere we are now seeing a mass exodus which will have devastating consequences.

"The sustainable bus network has a central role to play in fighting climate change. Yet at the same time as COP26 takes place, these stark figures reveal the extent of the decline in the privatised and deregulated bus market.

"It is crystal clear that the private bus operators are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic with cuts to bus services, and the low pay and poor conditions are causing a recruitment and retention crisis in the industry. It is disgraceful that despite soaring inflation and the increasing cost of living, pay for these key workers is now lower than it was a decade ago.

"Bus services are a lifeline for many, connecting them to education, employment, healthcare and their local communities and should be considered a fundamental right, rather than a way of lining private shareholders' pockets.

"The government must stop caving to the private profiteers and urgently reverse the nonsensical ban on new municipal bus companies. We need a new deal for public transport which includes paying bus drivers a professional wage, protecting jobs, conditions and services and that invests in and expands the bus network to make services more affordable, available, accessible and attractive to use," he said. ■

RECOGNITION DEAL AT VATTENFALL WINDPOWER

RMT has won a union recognition deal for collective bargaining at Vattenfall Windpower in Barrow-in-Furness after the union gained 100 per cent membership.

The organising drive began after Vattenfall embarked on a harmonisation programme which involved reducing holiday entitlement, incorporating public holidays into the off-shift and therefore unpaid and unpaid breaks which were rejected by the workforce.

RMT regional organiser Daren Ireland said that an improved deal was achieved and working with the union's Liverpool Shipping branch the workers showed tremendous solidarity by sticking together in unity, despite management threatening to fire and re-hire these workers.

Following this victory the union made an application for recognition through the statutory process via the Central Arbitration Committee which was accepted.

"Negotiations commenced and a voluntary recognition agreement has been concluded between RMT and Vattenfall, which gives collective bargaining for pay, hours and holidays and the agreement gives two industrial and and health and safety representative, the nomination process is now underway.

"This now gives service leaders, offshore technicians, warehouse, offshore planning workers union bargaining power at the Ormonde offshore windfarm, to improve pay and conditions as well as health and safety in the offshore sector," he said.

WHERE ARE THE TONNAGE TAX JOBS?

RMT has slammed government proposals for tonnage tax reform announced in the Budget which made no reference at all to jobs or training for UK ratings.

The government will introduce a package of measures to reform the tonnage tax regime from April 2022 to attract ships to register in the UK. These reforms aim to see more shipping companies basing their headquarters in the UK. The extension will also cover cruise companies, ships that lay cables for wind farms and scientific research vessels.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the tonnage tax was already a bad deal for British ratings but the Brexit vote had given the government the chance to amend state aid schemes like Tonnage Tax to directly benefit ratings and maritime communities, reversing the long term decline seen in seafarer jobs.

"Instead, the Chancellor is choosing to compete with flags of convenience like Cyprus, Malta and Singapore which operate tonnage tax schemes that openly drive down seafarer pay and conditions to levels that UK seafarers cannot be expected to compete with.

"Only 75 ratings have been trained on ships that qualify for the UK Tonnage Tax whilst shipowners from around the world have received over £2.165 billion in tax relief since the scheme was introduced. But this is not just about training. Only 13 per cent of ratings working in the UK shipping industry live and spend their money in the UK.

" We can understand why the scheme is to be extended to growth areas in shipping and decarbonisation but without mandatory links to apprenticeship training and permanent employment for British seafarers, the Tonnage Tax scheme will continue to benefit the world's wealthiest shipowners at the expense of seafarers and their families in this country.

"This is economic madness for an island nation emerging from the pandemic and magnifies the worst impacts on seafarers from EU membership.

"We need a system of cabotage laws based on the Jones Act in the USA to put seafarers at the heart of UK shipping, not a complete capitulation to global capitalism," he said.

DEAL ON SCOTRAIL

PEOPLE'S SCOTRAIL: Unions and supporters launch a report calling for a People's Scotrail outside the Scottish parliament and to demand a commitment block proposed cuts to ScotRail services. The Scottish government manages the ScotRail franchise under its ongoing Emergency Measures Agreement and has the power to block the service cuts being proposed.

Union calls on the Scottish government to settle the outstanding dispute on the Caledonian Sleeper

After Scotrail workers voted by a massive 90 per cent in a re-ballot to continue their action for pay justice and equality, the company agreed a deal to end the dispute.

The one year pay deal comprises of a 2.5 per cent pay increase backdated to April and a payment of £300 to all staff ensuring the COP26 climate change conference was not affected by the dispute.

A three-hour book on allowance will also be applied to each rest day worked, applicable for 12 months from the date of this agreement.

The talks also acknowledged the pressures on Scotland's railway and it was agreed that by working together and exploring future productivity initiatives we will be able to build a sustainable future for ScotRail.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch welcomed the agreement between RMT and ScotRail and called on the Scottish government to settle the outstanding dispute on the Caledonian Sleeper.

The union called on Scotland's political leadership to take responsibility and intervene as strike action continues on Caledonian Sleeper in an on-going fight for pay and workplace justice for Scotland's rail workers – staff at the sharp end of providing green transport alternatives.

PICKET: Caledonian Sleeper Glasgow Central picket line

The union has confirmed that the most recent offer of 1.4 per cent from the company, way below both inflation and the deal agreed on Scotrail, had been overwhelmingly rejected by members.

The union said that political pressure was instrumental in securing a settlement to the Scotrail pay dispute and the union was now seeking a similar intervention on the eve of the latest block of sleeper action.

"After a settlement was brokered on Scotrail it is appalling that the similar calls for workplace justice on Scotland's sleeper service are being ignored and the workforce left out in the cold.

"There is still time to come up with a fair pay settlement for this key group of Scotland's rail workers which would be an important statement of support for a group of staff providing green transport alternatives," he said.

VIOLENCE AT WORK

RMT survey reveals a growth in attacks on transport workers since the pandemic

RMT recently surveyed members in all sectors about their experiences of violence at work during the pandemic and over 5,200 members responded by answering multiple choice questions.

Over 50 per cent thought violence at work had got worse during the pandemic and more women than men said that they had noticed this increase.

More than half the respondents reported being threatened with physical violence, while one in 10 had been physically assaulted.

One respondent wrote: "Things have got worse since the pandemic. Staff attribute this to having to implement Covid safety rules, the lack of any action against perpetrators, lack of support, rising aggression levels and mixed messages to the public".

Another wrote: "I've experienced being spat at, called a paedophile, had threats to be stabbed, members of my family would be raped, called all the names under the sun, pushed, shoved, provoked".

Another respondent explained how wider economic issues are feeding into the problem: "I find most of the aggressive passengers are ticketless travellers so due to money worries since Covid more people are travelling without tickets".

A bus member wrote about how employers' failure to resolve violence at work related issues impacts staff stress levels and leads to workers leaving the industry: "It's a daily occurrence getting verbally assaulted at the moment mainly due to current company staffing levels. Drivers are getting abuse left right and centre. Drivers are leaving in droves because management don't care about the amount of stress that we are under".

Half of those who experienced a violent incident reported that they had experienced it more than once since the pandemic started and one in five reported that it had happened more than 10 times since the pandemic began.

88 per cent had been verbally abused, 13 per cent had been racially harassed and six per cent sexually assaulted. When asked why they thought things had got worse during the pandemic, the main reason given was that no action is taken against perpetrators (71 per cent), the reduced presence of BTP (British Transport Police) and police (64 per cent) and the need to remind passengers about Covid-19 safety measures (62 per cent).

16 per cent said they had been spat at or targeted with bodily fluids and comments included: "Threatened to be spat upon by a passenger who claimed to have Covid".

"Sworn at and threatened with bodily harm on daily basis. Spat at twice in last 12 months".

Impact since restrictions have lifted

73 per cent of respondents believed the government's lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and mixed messaging around safety measures had further aggravated the situation.

One respondent explained, "People pushing through the barriers to avoid paying a fare, as gates were previously open during the initial pandemic, rudeness and swearing with increased aggression".

"Far more short-tempered people that fly off the handle for very trivial reasons and far more aggressively. Also there seem to be a lot more intoxicated people too".

"More passengers drinking alcohol since restrictions have lifted. Passengers got used to barriers being open, now they still think it is their right to travel for free and so loads more 'gate line jumpers' with accompanied violence".

"Trains are full again, some full and standing, creating tension with people don't want to sit next to each other and don't wear face covering, when they try to sit in First Class, lots of drunk passengers, especially during weekends and events. Most people in general have no respect for the staff".

LONE WORKING

66 per cent of respondents were working alone when they were subjected to a violent incident and 56 per cent reported that lone working had become more common since the pandemic began.

One respondent commented: "I think more should have been done or offered seeing as I was working alone. Company procedure was basic and I returned to work after my isolation! I had no idea if the time I had off if I would catch Covid as I was spat at in my face and was also threatened to be punched. It seems to me that the staff have put their lives at risk and no management have been visible".

91 per cent reported that they had not taken time off after incidents. Many were worried about taking time off following an incident for fear of triggering MFA (Management for Attendance) and others that they could not afford the financial impact on their income to take off any time. Several explained the consequences of their decision to carrying on working to avoid triggering MFA, with one explaining that they were in constant pain following the attack and another said that they ended up in the situation of having to attend counselling.

REPORTING INCIDENTS

43 per cent hadn't reported the incidents to their managers and when asked why, 59 per cent said that it was seen to be part of the job, "No one wants to spend time on reports. It is seen as part of the job being verbally assaulted. Being sworn at is a weekly thing".

42 per cent said that they believed it wouldn't be taken seriously and almost a quarter said they had previously reported an incident and no action had been taken.

A respondent explained that "incidents were not formally reported as there were too many disgruntled passengers/individuals travelling despite the lockdown rules. It's difficult to stand for the right thing where there is lack of support from the government and police in general".

Of those who did report the incident, 84 per cent said that their employer offered no further support after the incident, such as counselling or adjustments to working patterns.

60 per cent of managers encouraged staff to report incidents, but comments were that it wouldn't be welcome if they reported everything, as they would be looked on as a nuisance if they reported every incident and their management team would not want to get involved. Most members only usually report physical violence.

Only 30 per cent of reported incidents were attended by British Transport Police and most workers (67 per cent) believed that BTP involvement in such incidents has declined over the pandemic. The comments, most were mainly damning of the BTP, many respondents had little faith in them, describing them as "invisible" as "a joke", who are only interested if it is a serious incident and there is a weapon involved.

BODY CAMERAS

15 per cent of respondents currently wear a body camera. There was a mixed response amongst respondents as to whether wanted to wear a

camera, some thinking that video evidence would be used to punish individual staff, and that they shouldn't have to wear a camera – a safe workplace should be provided. But other members welcomed cameras as a useful deterrent.

46 per cent had not had training on dealing with conflict and violence at work – and for many of those who had been trained, it was a long time ago.

VIOLENCE AT WORK RISK ASSESSMENTS

38 per cent of respondents said they had not seen their workplace violence at work risk assessment – and 34 per cent were not sure if they had seen it, a staggering figure given that there is a legal obligation to make staff aware of the contents of these assessments.

Of those that had seen the assessment, some said it was just a tick box exercise and others thought control measure were not satisfactory - such as the advice to walk away from violent incidents, when such action could leave you subject to more violence.

Commenting on the survey results RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the government and the industry were disastrously mishandling the pandemic and putting ordinary working people in more danger through their fixation with cutting public transport jobs and services.

"The union will use the results for Parliamentary work, including to support Olivia Blake MP's Parliamentary 10 Minute Rule motion which called for provision to be made for offences relating to verbal and physical abuse of public-facing workers.

"We also referred to the results when taking part in a recent RSSB webinar on Work related Violence and we will continue to use the survey results to inform other work we are doing to help ensure a safe place of work for our members.

"A fundamental issue highlighted by the survey findings is that of lone working. At a time when employers are looking to make savage job cuts, we must counter the government and industry fixation with cutting public transport jobs, which will only exasperate this problem of lone working.

"Violence at work and abuse is part of the job' and should not be normalised," he said. ■

CUT CARBON EMISSIONS, NOT JOBS PROTEST

RMT demanded that the government cut carbon emissions, not public transport jobs at a demonstration outside the Department of Transport in London in November.

The union also called for an end to cuts agenda as new polling by the Railway Industry Association revealed that confidence in the rail industry had returned to pre-2019 levels.

The London protest coincided with the DfT hosting an ‘engagement day’ for the private sector to try and persuade them to bid for the future Passenger Service Contracts, announced as part of the Williams-Shapps review, and which will replace franchises.

With the eyes of the world on the UN climate summit COP26 taking place in Glasgow the protest put the case that climate change was not just an environmental issue, but also one of social and economic justice.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that public transport had a key role to play in fighting climate change, yet the government and transport operators remain intent on attacking workers’ jobs, pay, conditions and pensions whilst protecting the profit of big business.

“RMT is fighting these damaging cuts as part of its ‘Cut carbon emissions, not public transport jobs’ campaigning.

“Whilst COP26 is taking place in Glasgow, the Department of Transport is hosting an ‘engagement day’ for the private sector to try and persuade them to bid for the future Passenger Service Contracts (PSCs), announced as part of the Williams-Shapps review, which will guarantee profits for the private operators.

“Rather than disgracefully furthering private profiteering at the expense of transport worker jobs, pay and conditions, the government should instead be commencing a new deal for public transport that protects all jobs, pay, conditions and services, and properly funds our rail, bus, metro and shipping networks to power a green transport revolution that makes services more affordable, available, accessible and attractive to use.

"The recent surge in confidence also makes a nonsense of the cuts agenda which is decimating jobs and services across the rail industry.

"Those cuts should be halted or we risk storing up a skills and capacity crisis which will just drive more people away from the railways and onto the roads,” he said. ■

KOREAN ROAD TRANSPORT SOLIDARITY

RMT expressed solidarity with the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers’ Union Cargo Truckers’ Solidarity Division (KPTU-TruckSol), who are taking industrial action to preserve their Safe Rates system.

It was part of the International Transport Workers’ Federation week of action last month with affiliated transport unions across the world to fight for decent work and safety in the Road Transport Industry.

This week of joint action is in follow up to the Safe Rates Summit, during which ITF unions committed to solidarity actions in support of affiliates fighting for Safe Rates and economic employer responsibility, and actions to promote the ILO Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work and Road Safety in the Transport Sector (RT Guidelines).

The RT Guidelines make governments, employers and clients responsible for Safe Rates and other decent work issues directly related to road safety throughout their supply chains. ■

SOUTHEASTERN DEBACLE REVIEW A 'FARCE'

Union calls for Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchises to be taken into public ownership

RMT has slammed the Department for Transport's 'independent' review into financial 'bad faith' on Southeastern railways as a 'fatally compromised farce' in which the public could have no confidence.

The union has called on the Public Accounts Committee to examine the actions of the DfT and reiterated its demand that the government cancel its tendering process for the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise, currently held by the same company that ran Southeastern, and run it in public ownership through the Operator of Last Resort.

The union's call followed a letter from Secretary of State Grant Shapps to correspondence from general secretary Mick Lynch which posed a series of questions about the department's handling of the Southeastern debacle. Mr Shapps's letter confirmed that:

- The supposedly 'independent' review into Southeastern's wrongdoing, including into whether any further money is due to be repaid to the British taxpayer, is being led by the chairs of the companies involved, people who are employees and in the case of Go-Ahead, shareholders of the companies responsible
- That the Department for Transport is not conducting its own review but will only examine evidence given to them by the company's review
- That the results of the review will inform the decision as to whether Govia will be allowed to continue running the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise
- The letter also raises more questions about how much the DfT knew about financial irregularities at the time it awarded Southeastern a government bailout in March 2020. LSER made a £7.9 million profit out of the six-month Emergency Measures Agreement.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the review was a fatally compromised farce.

"The government has accused this company of breaching financial good faith to the tune of at least £25 million, stripped it of its franchise and admitted that there may be more to uncover, so these people have form, yet unbelievably, it's quite content to let them effectively investigate themselves.

"To make matters worse, these groups have a material interest in clearing themselves to make sure they keep their last franchise. This is totally irresponsible and either means the government doesn't want anything else to come out or that they've got no confidence that their officials could uncover the truth even if they tried.

"I'm calling on the Public Accounts Committee to question the government as a matter of urgency and I'm reiterating my demand that the government takes the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise into public ownership now," he said. ■

RMT CONDEMNS BP PROFITEERING WITHOUT INVESTMENT

RMT has called on the government to deliver guarantees for UK workers following BP's announcement of £2.5 billion second quarter profits for 2021 and a dividend scheme that locks in a four per cent increase from oil and gas operations, including in the North Sea to 2025.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that BP and other North Sea operators were wallowing in profit from rising oil and gas prices whilst thousands of skilled installation jobs have been lost since January 2020.

"My members and their colleagues in the fossil fuel sector have skills with a high degree of transferability to renewable energy and carbon capture and storage but they continue to be discarded by the oil majors while their contractors in the supply chain are squeezed into contracts that just break even or make losses.

"Without guarantees over investment in offshore workers jobs and livelihoods, booming profits in oil and gas will mean that governments will miss interim Net Zero targets and drive job losses in oil and gas communities on a par with the Thatcher government's politically motivated destruction of the domestic coal mining industry.

"We sincerely hope that the trade union movement at COP26 use BP's announcement to reinforce demands for a Just Transition for my members and their communities," he said. ■

PROFITEERING ON 'GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS'

The Southeastern franchise joined Scotrail, Wales and Borders, the East Coast Mainline and Northern Rail in public ownership last month due to the continuing failure of the private sector.

Meanwhile rail workers face a pay freeze and job cuts and passengers face above inflation fare rises all to ensure that Britain's railways continue to be a cash cow for privateers.

RMT research has revealed just some of the ways in which the private sector is extracting public money and fare revenue and turning it into private profit and we assess the scale of the looting that is being licenced, past and present.

TABLE 1: THE COST OF DIVIDENDS PAID TO PRIVATE TRAIN AND ROLLING STOCK COMPANIES SINCE PRIVATISATION

	1996-2010*	2010-2020**	Total post-privatisation
TOCs	£1,000,000,000	£2,185,899,000	£3,185,899,000
ROSCOs	£2,520,000,000	£2,998,736,430	£5,518,736,430
Total	**£3,520,000,000**	**£5,184,635,430**	**£8,704,635,430**

*Source: Rebuilding Rail (Transport for Quality of Life, 2012)
**Source: RMT analysis of franchisee company accounts, 2010-2020.

£8.7 BILLION IN DIVIDENDS - 1996-2020

- Private companies operating and leasing trains have made at least £8.7 billion in dividend payments to shareholders since 1996.
- Private train operating companies have extracted an estimated £3.2 billion in dividends from Britain's privatised railways since 1996 (Table 1).
- Rolling Stock Companies (ROSCOs) have extracted an estimated £5.5 billion in dividends from Britain's privatised railways since 1996 (Table 1).

£955 MILLION IN TOC PROFITS - 2020-27

When the government steps in to bail out the private train operators, it puts them on management contracts for six months called Emergency Measures Agreements. The government take on all the revenue risk from plummeting passenger fares and covered all industry costs, while at the same time guaranteeing the TOCs a two per cent profit in the form of a management fees. Department for Transport data show that these managements fees – guaranteed profits – amounted to £98 million between March 2020 and September 2020, around £40 million of which is likely to go overseas (Table 3 - Appendix 1).

TABLE 2: PROFITS FROM GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS 2020-27

Train operation contracts	Profits
EMA profits (1 March 2020-1 September 2020	£98 million
ERMA profits (1 September 2020-1 April 2022)	£231 million
National Contract profits (2022-2027)	£626 million
TOTAL	**£955 million**

TABLE 3 - PROFITS FROM EMAS AND ERMAS

Franchise	EMA Management Fee (1.5%)	Total EMA fees payable (2%)	Projected ERMA fees over 18 months (1.5%)	Projected ERMA fees over 12 months (1.5%)	Owner
Chiltern	£1,414,000	£1,885,000	£4,242,000	£2,828,000	Arriva (Deutsche Bahn)
Cross Country	£4,368,000	£5,386,000	£13,104,000	£8,736,000	Arriva (Deutsche Bahn)
East Midlands	£3,598,000	£4,798,000	£10,794,000	£7,196,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)
East Anglia	£4,627,000	£6,169,000	£13,881,000	£9,254,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)
Essex Thameside	£1,071,000	£1,428,000	£3,213,000	£2,142,000	Trenitalia (Italian state railways)
Great Western	£10,815,000	£13,911,000	£32,445,000	£21,630,000	FirstGroup
South Eastern	£7,973,000	£7,973,000	£23,919,000	£15,946,000	Nationalised as of October 2021
South Western	£7,525,000	£10,033,000	£22,575,000	£15,050,000 state, 30%)	FirstGroup (70%)/MTR (Chinese
Thameslink, Southern and	£14,077,000	£17,831,000	£42,231,000	£28,154,000	Govia (comprising Go-ahead 65% and Keolis 35%) Great Northern
TransPennine Express	£2,156,000	£2,876,000	£6,468,000	£4,312,000	FirstGroup
West Coast Partnership	£8,484,000	£11,313,000	£25,452,000	£16,968,000	FirstGroup(65%) Trenitalia (35%)
West Midlands	£4,095,000	£5,187,000	£12,285,000	£8,190,000	Abellio (Dutch State railways) and two Japanese private firms
Abellio ScotRail	£6,654,823	£8,873,098	£19,964,469	£13,309,646	Nationalised as of March 2022
Caledonian Sleeper	£392,518	£497,189	£1,177,554	£785,036	Serco
TOTAL	**£77,250,341**	**£98,160,287**	**£231,751,023**	**£154,500,682**	

After September 2020, these were succeeded by Emergency Recovery Management Agreements which were to run for 18 months and guarantee profits of 1.5 per cent in the form of a management fee. The EMA fee contained a guaranteed 1.5 per cent and a 0.5 per cent performance element.

In practice almost all the performance element was paid but the DfT data does allow us to see what 1.5 per cent over six months produces and then to calculate what each TOC is likely to earn from a 1.5 per cent management fee over 18 months. The TOCs are likely to make in the region of £231 million over the 18-month duration of the ERMAs (Table 3 – Appendix 1).

After the ERMAs expire in 2021-22, the TOCs are likely to be awarded National Contracts modelled on the ERMAs, containing the same or very similar management fees. The Prior Information Notices for the West Coast, Great Western and Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchises indicate these are envisaged to last five years. Using the figure for 1.5 per cent over six months as the basis of calculations, we can see that by the time the National Contracts expire around 2027, the TOCs are likely to have extracted a further £626 million in profits and dividends (Table 4 Appendix 2).

All this profit is available for distribution as dividends subject to the Secretary of State's agreement, which 'he will not unreasonably withhold'.

If that happens, by 2027 the TOCs would have taken out £955 million in dividends since the pandemic alone (Table 2).

PANDEMIC PROFITEERING

The pandemic year hasn't really seen much let up in the profiteering. As RMT revealed recently, the ROSCOs have continued with their obscene dividend payments. On average, they pay around £260 million a year in dividends. In 2020, they paid out £950 million to their shareholders. With the government covering their lease payments and taking no interest in controlling their dividend payouts, the pandemic has posed, as they put it, 'no material risk'.

The TOCs have also managed to keep the profits rolling. As Table 3 shows, the EMAs gave them £98 million in clear profit for the first 6 months of the pandemic while the ERMAs are likely to result in them getting a further £77 million for the rest of the year, a total of £175 million. All this profit is available for distribution as dividends subject to the Secretary of State's agreement, which 'he will not unreasonably withhold'.

Some TOCs have already paid out dividends during 2020. Southeastern paid out a £30 million dividend, while Merseyrail a concession run by Abellio and Serco, managed to pay out £3 million. In addition, at least one, Abellio's East Midlands Railways, has written to the Secretary of State requesting permission to pay out a dividend. Its operating profits last year were £20 million, so its dividend could well be in the region of that number.

As Table 5 shows, the TOCs and ROSCOs combined could take around £1.125 billion out of the railways in dividends. All in all, it's not bad for a global pandemic which has claimed the lives of 150,000 UK citizens.

TABLE 4 - PROJECTED PROFITS FROM NATIONAL CONTRACTS

Franchise	Projected National Contract profits(2 years)	Projected National Contract profits(5 years)	Owner
Chiltern	£5,656,000	£14,140,000	Arriva (Deutsche Bahn)
Cross Country	£17,472,000	£43,680,000	Arriva (Deutsche Bahn)
East Midlands	£14,392,000	£35,980,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)
East Anglia	£18,508,000	£46,270,000	Abellio (Dutch state railways)
Essex Thameside	£4,284,000	£10,710,000	Trenitalia (Italian state railways)
Great Western	£43,260,000	£108,150,000	FirstGroup
South Eastern	£0	£0	Nationalised as of October 2021
South Western	£30,100,000	£75,250,000	FirstGroup (70%)/MTR (Chinese state, 30%)
Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern	£56,308,000	£140,770,000	Govia (comprising Go-ahead 65% and Keolis 35%)
TransPennine Express	£8,624,000	£21,560,000	FirstGroup
West Coast Partnership	£33,936,000	£84,840,000	FirstGroup(65%) Trenitalia (35%
West Midlands	£16,380,000	£40,950,000	Abellio (Dutch State railways) and two Japanese private firms
Abellio ScotRail	£0	£0	Nationalised as of March 2022
Caledonian Sleeper	£1,570,072	£3,925,180	Serco
TOTAL	**£250,490,072**	**£626,225,180**	

NETWORK RAIL SUB-CONTRACTING

In 2004, in the wake of the disastrous crashes that accompanied privatisation of infrastructure, Network Rail brought its maintenance in-house. This generated savings of between £100 and £264 million every year from the reduced overheads from commercial profit margins, removal of duplication of systems to manage staff and programmes and economies of scale.

However, renewals and enhancement work continued to be outsourced. This decision was criticised in 2004 by the Transport Select Committee which said that "taking more work "in-house" would also be an opportunity to reduce the number of company "interfaces" and contracts which currently burden the industry. In the longer term, Network Rail should reconsider its decision to retain private sector contracts for track renewals. It should also review now what other services it currently purchases and which might be more economically provided under direct management control.

In spite of these recommendations, Network Rail has continued to outsource this work.

As Table 4 shows:

- Last year, Network Rail spent £4.7 billion on this outsourced work: £2.9 billion on renewals and £1.8 billion on enhancement. Commercial profit margins in renewals are reported to be around six per cent.
- That means that around £284 million of Network Rail's funding leaked out of the industry into commercial profits.
- Of that £284 million, £174 million is going in profits from the Network Rail's contracts in renewals.

If Network Rail was to end the outdated practice of outsourcing renewals and bring this work in-house, as was recommended by the Transport Select Committee, it could save around £174 million each year.

Continued overleaf...

NATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS, CUT FARES AND RAISE WAGES

The government is propping up a failing private sector, helping them to extract profits from our railways at public expense, even as stark reality forces them to nationalise ever more of the network.

The price of this dogma is that in the pandemic year, around £1.3 billion will leave the industry in profits to the private sector that will not be reinvested in the railway.

Instead of being siphoned off overseas by foreign investors or shuffled off into tax havens, this money should be spent on the railways.

Staff costs in 2019-20 were £3.1 billion. If the government were to take the TOCs back into public ownership as their ERMAs expire, the TOCs' profits from this year would be more than enough to pay for an inflation-matching pay rise for all staff (£149 million).

RMT has called for the ROSCOs to be nationalised and for the government to directly procure and own trains. However, the government could introduce a Windfall Tax on their pandemic dividends. The ROSCOs pay on average, £260 million a year in dividends, an obscene amount in itself.

A Windfall Tax of 50 per cent on all their dividends above this figure would raise around £345 million, enough to fund a cut of 3.6 per cent in rail fares (measured against fare income in 2019/20 which was £9.5 billion). A 100 per cent Windfall Tax would raise £690 million, enough to fund a 7.2 per cent cut in rail fares. ■

TABLE 5: PANDEMIC PROFITS BY TOCS AND ROSCOS

ROSCO dividends	£950 million
TOC profits	£175 million
Total	**£1,125 million**

TABLE 6: NETWORK RAIL OUTSOURCING PROFIT LEAKAGE

Network Rail spending, Financial Year 2019-20	(£m)	Profit leakage (£m)
Operations and support	2117	0
Maintenance	1737	0
Renewals (outsourced)	2908	174
Enhancements (outsourced)	1824	109
Finance costs	2105	
Other	360	
TOTAL	**11051**	**284**

TABLE 7: PANDEMIC YEAR PROFITS - WHOLE SYSTEM

ROSCO dividends	£950 million
TOC profits	£175 million
Network Rail sub-contracting profits	£174 million
Total	**£1,229 million**

CARE FOR SEAFARERS

Culture of care is key to seafarer health and welfare

The Seafarers Hospital Society (SHS), Yale University and Lloyd's Register Foundation has told shipping companies that they will need to create a culture of care if they are to adequately address the health and welfare needs of seafarers.

Reporting on the early findings of their study of maritime worker health initiatives, Dr Martin Slade, Director of Yale University Maritime Research said: "Seafarers need to feel safe and be able to express themselves without fear of reprisal. They need to be looked at as people not just a source of profit.

"When they finish their tour they are at their highest risk of suicide, not just while they're on board, but just after they leave the ship too.

"So the culture of care needs to be holistic - on board and on shore, involving not only the crew but their families as well," he said.

Dr Olivia Swift of Lloyd's Register Foundation highlighted a further five key messages for shipping companies emerging from the research so far.

They are: get the basics right for food, water, accommodation and recreation; minimise bureaucratic workload and undue pressure by automating or moving some aspects ashore, look at what can be done to address fatiguing and intensive port calls; consider the potential to reduce contract length and address the impact of no change crew clauses on seafarer health and welfare.

"No crew change clauses have been an issue over the last year during COVID and many of the companies participating in our research felt they should be refused when signing agreements with charterers. While acknowledging the difficulty in potential implementation and the financial risks taken by charterers, many of the study's respondents felt that responsible companies should turn down business with a charterer if the terms were not conducive to good psychological wellbeing for seafarers," said Dr Swift.

These and other emerging issues are part of a larger ongoing study looking at the effectiveness of the various maritime worker health initiatives taken by shipping companies, charities and the wider maritime sector to keep seafarers healthy and safe.

Ismael Cobos Delgado of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) said: "It has been, and continues to be, a very challenging time for the whole maritime community. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to place immense physical and mental pressures on the world's two million seafarers. Hundreds of thousands still face extended times at sea, with tours of duty stretching many months beyond their contracts. Unable to go to shore, repatriate and join ships, and without access to medical care, seafarers face a humanitarian crisis that puts at risk the safety and the future of shipping".

To watch a video on the subject go to: www.seahospital.org.uk

A FIGHTING UNION

Annual General Meeting calls for unity in the face of attacks on jobs and pay

A rallying call to prepare for action was issued at RMT's 2021 annual meeting in Leeds as "storm clouds" gather and threatening the jobs and pay of hundreds of thousands of workers.

With employers determined to attack workers in pursuit of ever more profits and a government intent on making working people foot the multi-billion-pound bill for the coronavirus pandemic, the message to RMT members was to mobilise for resistance.

The union returned to its roots for its 150th annual meeting to Leeds, where what was then the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) was formed at a meeting in the city in 1871.

The Victorian building where the meeting took place is long gone. But it was clear at this year's AGM that the struggles facing the ASRS then were little different from those facing the union today.

In 1871 the founders faced profit-driven private operators, anti-union employers, needless deaths and serious injuries involving rail workers, poor wages and working conditions, the need for financial security in old age and the challenge of recruiting thousands of non-union workers, the Leeds AGM was told.

What has changed? Many advances had been made by workers in the 150 years which have passed since then, but the same challenges remain.

Just as those early trade unionists prepared for battle, delegates at this year's AGM did the same with decisions to fight, if necessary, with industrial action not only to defend what has since been achieved, but also to make new gains.

In a passionate speech RMT general secretary Mick Lynch praised the resilience of the union's activists over the last two years in the face not only of attacks from profit-driven private operators backed to the hilt by the Tory government, but also the tragedy of the Covid pandemic, which claimed more than 30 bus drivers' lives in London alone.

Despite the difficulties RMT membership has grown from 81,000 to 83,000 since January 2020, he reported.

"We have been able to sustain and build our membership levels in the most difficult of conditions.

"That is a great achievement. And that reflects the work of our rank-and-file activists in the workplace who are the real, everyday face, voice and profile of this union," he said.

Nor had the pandemic prevented RMT members from taking the fight to the employers through industrial action on the issues of real importance in the workplace – jobs, pay, conditions, pensions and safety – and more are to come.

"The vast majority of our members have been subject to a pay freeze for the last two years.

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"But I am glad to report that in recent weeks our Stagecoach bus workers have shown the way by campaigning on pay and conditions and we have forced that company into making significantly improved offers on the back of successful strike ballots and setting dates for action.

"It was very pleasing to note that this success was on the back of co-ordination between Stagecoach companies – not taking them on piecemeal," he said.

He indicated that the way ahead for RMT members employed by small companies which operate as part of one central, controlling corporation was to join forces and fight as one united body of workers, as had happened at Stagecoach.

"Together we are stronger.

The union's seafarers, despite decreasing numbers in the offshore sector, had enjoyed successes, again despite the pandemic and lockdowns, he said.

"In October 2020, we achieved after years of campaigning and lobbying, the breakthrough that the National Minimum Wage for seafarers came in to force in UK Waters and UK Continental Shelf.

"This is not perfect but it does allow the shifting upwards of the minimum wage levels and enables enforcement.

"We also won new recognition agreements in 2020 including CAF Rail and Bombardier in Fleet Engineering, in cleaning contracts and in some Offshore companies," he said.

As conference began, workers at Scotrail were preparing to strike in a struggle engineered by the Scottish government.

Privateer operator Abellio, which is to lose its franchise in March, was merely the "messenger" of the Scottish government in the long-running dispute.

And before the end of the conference concessions had been won which led to the cancellation of strike action which would have disrupted the much-trumpeted COP26 climate change conference of nations in Glasgow.

FIGHTING FOR BUS WORKERS

The annual meeting is the forum in which delegates from the front-line of the workforce debate and decide policies and action for the union in the coming year.

The determination of the union to fight, through industrial action if necessary, was voiced from bus and rail sectors.

A national campaign for bus drivers to be paid a minimum wage of £15 an hour, called for in a motion from the National Bus Workers Industrial Organising Conference, won solid support.

Delegate Mark Thomas from Stagecoach South West said: "The wage for bus drivers is still below a professional wage.

"We are reminded constantly that we are professionals and that we should maintain professional standards. But we are not paid a professional wage.

"Many depots around the country have taken industrial action to get the message across.

He said that "the only concern companies have is their shareholders but £15 an hour is what we seek".

The motion described how bus workers are so much more than drivers behind the wheel, but skilled workers with responsibility for hundreds of lives.

"They are police officers, social workers, medics, but most importantly they are professional drivers," it said. "It is high time they received a professional wage."

Backing the call on behalf of the union's national leadership, the general secretary said that after Tory privatisation of public transport, profiteering operators had used the break-up of operations "to drive down wages, with members paid under £11 an hour."

He criticised the employers' "exploitation of workers doing a highly stressful job." And he re-iterated the need for bus workers to unite across the sector, rather than tackling one small company at a time.

The motion won unanimous backing.

Within days of the conference the union revealed that new data published by the Department for Transport confirmed an exodus of workers from the bus industry in England, with staff forced out as low pay and poor working conditions meant they could double their wages in other industrial sectors.

Outside London 2,000 bus worker jobs were lost in England in the last year – among 16,000 lost in the last decade.

At the same time wages fell by 10 per cent.

The revelation provided yet more evidence of the need for a professional wage for bus drivers.

The contribution that bus transport could make to national and international efforts to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change was emphasised at the meeting.

But despite all the evidence the government's National Bus Strategy published earlier in the year failed to reverse the ban on municipal bus companies and instead caved in to the private operators' opposition to any further regulation that might damage their profits.

A motion at the meeting called for changes to legislation governing the recording and publication of statistics relating to people killed or injured in accidents involving buses.

Research has revealed that local councils who have responsibilities as highways authorities have no statutory duty to record such accidents.

The motion called on the union's national leadership "to support and vigorously campaign for" an amendment to the Bus Services Act which would force local authorities to gather, record and publish data – and for bus operating companies to supply it – so that necessary action can be taken to improve safety and reduce the number of accidents.

Again the union's national leadership fully supported the call.

"The problem with the bus companies is that there is no central body telling us what is going on," said Mick Lynch.

"On the railways there is a

Delegate Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn

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central body reporting incidents.

"We do not have that in the bus industry because there is not the requirement to do it.

"The Bus Service Act should be amended so that we have this data".

Blaming bus operating companies for the lack of availability of information he said: "Their interest is only profit".

And attacking the government for refusing to introduce the necessary legislation, he said: "They do not want their friends in the private sector to have that requirement to produce their safety records in a public way".

The AGM unanimously backed the call for the necessary changes in the Bus Service Act.

The meeting heard a shocking report about how one penny-pinching private operator had tried to cut the costs of installing protective screens for bus drivers – not just from coronavirus infections, but also from attacks by passengers – by installing cheap shower curtains in cabs.

The money-saving move was just one example of privatised bus companies putting profits before the health and safety of its workers and passengers, the meeting was told.

The delegates also debated a call from Mark Thomas to "encourage" privateer companies to install safe, effective cab screens to protect drivers.

"Not only is the screen for protection from contamination, but from ever-increasing violence against drivers," he said. "Passengers can throw punches at you, and liquids."

He said drivers were also constantly breathing in the air circulating throughout their vehicles,

"We are constantly having the air into the bus dragged into our cabs.

"But operators are only interested in money. We need to address this and get bus drivers safe in their workplace," he said.

Mick Lynch said that companies had resisted installation of protective screens even during the Covid-19 crisis.

"It must be because they cost money.

"We wrote to bus companies asking for adequate screens. South West were fitting curtain shower screens around the drivers. That was their response to the Covid-19 crisis – putting up cheap shower screens from Wilkos. That is what was happening," he said.

He criticised Sadiq Khan, London Mayor, over the "terrible toll" the coronavirus pandemic had taken among bus drivers.

"More than 30 bus drivers died in London.

"Just one died in Nottingham. If you are losing people in an industry the way we were last year you would think they would wake up and do what they could for these workers. But they did not," he said.

The motion backed a call to the union's national executive committee to approach bus companies "to strongly encourage companies to install a safe, effective cab screen on passenger vehicles to protect employees from contact and contamination from viruses".

RAIL FIGHT

Action was demanded in the rail sector after the conference was told by Liverpool delegate Billy Kimm that workers suffering the debilitating effects of "long covid" were being subjected by Train Operating Companies to a management procedure whose final resort was the sack.

The procedure is the "Managing for Attendance" process under which employees with recurring sickness absences are put through a series of meetings with management.

He warned: "We are not out of this pandemic. We are in it and we are going to be in it for a long time.

"Even the doctors do not know what the long-term effect of covid is.

"But most companies say covid now comes under Managing for Attendance.

"We have two members at Liverpool Lime Street with long covid.

"One is in his 30s and cannot walk up a set of stairs. – imagine, someone in his 30s who cannot walk up a set of stairs.

"What has the company done to help and support him? – put him in stage one of the Managing for Attendance process, saying 'we are looking after you.' Stage four is 'you are out of the door.'

"We need to fight this because this is here for a long, long time," he said.

Delegate Daniel Randall, a customer services assistant on London Underground, said: "These policies are designed to discipline people for being ill, to sack them for being ill".

He said that the "punitive" attendance policies also discriminated against disabled people, and that the effect of the management's policies on workers whose jobs have been "outsourced" – such as cleaners – was even worse.

Senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley told the annual meeting: "The same people who were clapped and told they were key workers are the very people who suffered most when these policies were introduced.

"At Arriva in London sub-contractors had people sacked for not coming to work with covid. These are people who cannot feed their kids," he said.

Conference delegates unanimously backed the motion committing the union to "fight these developments with all means at our disposal including our various disputes machineries up to and including industrial action."

The union's *Staff Our*

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Stations campaign (SOS) is to be stepped up following a call at the annual general meeting.

Beverley Thomas, a ticket office worker for Arriva Rail London, proposed a motion calling for the election of an SOS officer to co-ordinate the campaign, the holding of public meetings in every region, and formation of a national SOS committee to meet four times a year.

She spoke of incidences where one person would work alone in a station at night.

"One person in a station is not a staffed station.

"We definitely need this campaign and we must keep this going with it," she said.

Delegate Denis Connor who works for Abellio Scotrail said that employers had been attempting to cut staffing at stations repeatedly since 1999.

He said that this year the Glasgow Evening Times had run a campaign in support of the proper staffing of stations.

The issue chimed with the views not only of station staff but also of passengers and the wider public.


Richard Burgon Labour MP for Leeds East

He told of a member of station staff who had prevented a passenger suicide.

"We had a customer who tried to commit suicide.

"Our member stopped him and pinned him to the ground before paramedics then helped him.

"What would have happened if the station staff member had not been there? The reality is that violence against lone station staff was also increasing and workers have suffered attack after attack after attack.

"We must stand together to fight the cuts that are coming," he said.

Mick Lynch said that members had been hailed as heroes by the government but government policy was to target station staff.

"Only 11 per cent of stations are now fully staffed and forty-five per cent are totally unstaffed.

"What the government is trying to do is to de-humanise the railway.

"The public wants a railway that is friendly, with people you can deal with who are human beings. The public is on our side with this and our members want to keep this campaign going.

"Assistance is a vital element of reviving our railway system.

"If we have a railway system that has got the human touch we are not going to get people out of their cars and onto the trains.

"If you have a system that is friendly and welcoming you are more likely to get people back onto the railways," he said.

The call to step up the *Staff Our Stations* campaign won unanimous backing from the meeting.

The threat posed to jobs by the introduction of new technology and automation, particularly for ticket office workers, was another key issue dealt with by the annual meeting.

In addition to introducing increasing numbers of ticket vending machines, online ticket sales are also growing in number – while ticketing equipment used in ticket offices has not been improved in 20 years or more, according to a motion from the national conference for supervisory, clerical and other salaried grades.

Denis Connor said that technology can work for staff but it can also work against us.

Delegate Mark Carter, a guard with South Western Railway, spoke of the importance of ticketing offices in rural communities.

"I have worked in ticketing offices in rural places and they are part of the community, particularly for older people.

"The ticketing offices in these rural places also keep an eye on everything else.

"We have lost so much service to people in this country due to the obsession with profit. We are losing the hubs of our communities," he said.

The meeting unanimously supported a call to the union to establish a new working party to plan "a campaign to fight automation where it seeks to do away with jobs," negotiate with Train Operating Companies and demand that outdated machinery in ticketing offices be replaced, and "to fight any attempts to reduce opening hours or to close down manned ticket offices across the country".

DEFENDING CLEANERS

The plight of cleaners whose jobs have been outsourced by operating companies was debated – including the union's *Cleaning up the Railways* report which had been put before the conference.

The report provided a damning indictment of the outsourcing of jobs to profit-hungry contractors.

Despite words of praise from the government for the cleaners and their vital role during the pandemic, the report concluded that the government had "effectively washed its hands of responsibility" for the way cleaners were being treated.

The meeting urged the union's leadership to use the report as a basis "for campaigning politically and industrially for the aim of in-sourcing all cleaning work and for our basic demands of justice for cleaners, improved safety, pay, conditions and pensions along with dignity and respect for cleaners in transport".

Mick Lynch emphasised the continuing struggles by organised cleaners – such as in Merseyside – and said that cleaners should not be seen by members as "separate" from the rest of the workforce.

He said that he knew of engineers who would not let cleaners into their rest facilities.

"Before privatisation

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cleaners were all directly employed. They could build a career in the railways. They could go on to become train crew, engineering.

"One of the effects of outsourcing is to cut that off," he said.

He asked why the cleaners – many of whom are from diverse ethnic backgrounds - had no delegates representing them at the annual meeting.

And he warned that the employers' outsourcing tactic would not stop at the cleaners.

"Don't think that they're not coming for you.

"This model is coming your way if we do not resist it and we have to reverse the crime of outsourcing.

"We have got to stick it to Network Rail and Transport for London. What are you going to do about these people who are being exploited?

"We are determined, and I am determined as general secretary, to put cleaners at the centre of what we do," he said.

FIGHTING FOR SEAFARERS

The union's maritime workers won support for a call for a UK equivalent to a law in the United States governing maritime commerce.

The motion from the union's maritime industrial organising conference said that "successive governments starting with Thatcher's Tories have repeatedly and callously undermined UK seafarers to the point that we're an endangered species".

The motion said that in the US the Jones Act was a law which required "goods shipped between US ports to be transported on ships that are built, owned and operated by US citizens or permanent residents".

The motion stated: "That this seafarer's protection exists in the home of unfettered capitalism surely means that a UK equivalent should not be out of the question".

In the UK such a law would particularly affect vessels supplying offshore oil and gas rigs.

The union's Offshore Energy branch won support to lobby for the right of offshore workers to elect health and safety representatives across the sector – including for divers.

As always, RMT members' commitment to social responsibility and to those in need of help in the community – often including members or retired members of the union - was seen clearly at the annual meeting.

A call from Cambrian branch to support an organisation which took action – including direct action – to defend housing tenants from unscrupulous, greedy and exploitative landlords was supported.

ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

As a result, RMT will affiliate to ACORN – the Association of Community Organising and Reform. RMT branches will be informed of ACORN's vital work and will be encouraged to affiliate locally.

The wide age range of RMT activists was represented at the annual general meeting.

Tony Donaghey of RMT's retired members section won unanimous backing for a call for a Health Care Act to bring social care and the NHS together.

His call followed outrage at government incompetence which contributed to the wave of Covid-19 deaths which swept through care homes at the height of the pandemic last year.

He attended the conference with a delegation from London region of the National Pensioners' Convention and said that vulnerable elderly people were discharged from hospital direct into care homes without having being tested for the virus.

The government, at the same time, was boasting about care homes being "ringed with protection" against the virus.

Forty per cent of the first wave of Covid-19 deaths last year involved care home residents.

"And today care homes are at a state of near collapse," he told the annual meeting.

A new Health Care Act would integrate all health care in the UK – including the National Health Service and social care outside hospital.

The motion said: "We demand an urgent Health Care Act which is an integral part of our NHS free at the point of need." His call won unanimous support.

YOUNG MEMBERS

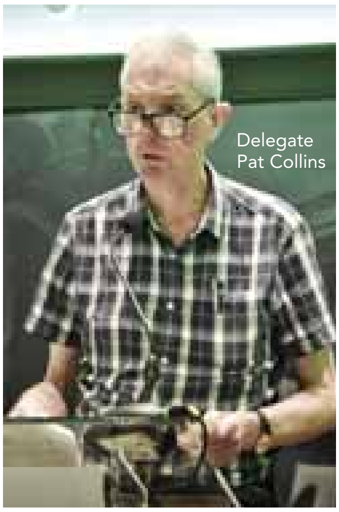
Young members also played an active part in the meeting and one young delegate won applause when he said that more needed to be done to encourage young members to become active.

He won unanimous support for a motion calling for more information to be given to young members about involvement in union activity.

The meeting also backed a call for a training day for young members to be established at the Durham Miners' Gala – the UK's biggest annual celebration of trades unionism – which returns in 2022 after being cancelled during the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown.

Recognising the union's proud history, there was unanimous support for RMT involvement in the annual celebrations which mark the 1911 Llanelli Railway Strike in Wales. It will now rank alongside the Durham Miners' Gala and the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival on the union's calendar.

The union's commitment to fighting racism, to equality, to trade union education, defence of LGBT+ people,



Delegate Pat Collins

was clear in the delegates' support for motions on all these issues.

During the annual meeting it was announced that Eddie Dempsey has been elected assistant general secretary.

Aged 39 and from south east London, he joined the railways at the age of 27 as platform staff, later becoming as train driver for Thames Valley.

On joining the industry, he immediately became an active union member and served as secretary of Paddington No1 branch.

He said that in his new post: "I have an ambitious project – to return our trade union to its industrial unionism roots.

"That means we want to role the union out of our head office into the depots and workplaces where we organise. We want to make sure that every depot in this country is run by the RMT; that this is the foundation of everything we do," he said.

MPS ADDRESS CONFERENCE

Labour MP for Leeds East Richard Burgon is well-acquainted with trade union struggles, including defending victimised shop-floor activists – among whom are RMT members.

Before becoming an MP has was a solicitor working in Leeds for trade union law firm Thompsons.

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Delegate Janine Booth

He welcomed delegates to his home city, and in a well-received address attacked the Tories and their financiers.

But he began with a quote he had heard as a boy from Billy Bremner, who had been captain of Leeds United football team -"side before self every time".

And he went on: "When I think of RMT, that is what I think. Side before self. Collectivism. Class before individual interest".

He said that he was proud to be at RMT's annual general meeting and proud to have represented RMT members in Leeds as a solicitor.

He spoke about changes since the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had been founded in his city 150 years ago.

"Since 1871 many things have changed," he said. "Some for the better, some recently have changed for the worse.

"But some remain the same – the conflict of interest between bosses and workers, between profits and people, and now planet," he added, referring to climate change and the destruction wrought by the insanity of pursuit of profit over all else.

He said that throughout all the struggles by working people for decent wages and working conditions RMT had been there.

"RMT has a well-deserved reputation as a fighting union. A fighting, activist socialist trade union.

"It is a union not afraid to take on the bosses, a union that all the right people like, a union that all the right people dislike.

"Right-wing press correspondents cannot stand the action you take. It is why so many bosses, so many right-wing politicians do not like you. And that is to your credit," he said.

Moving on to the Covid-19 pandemic he said: "It was low-paid workers who were most likely to lose their lives during the Covid crisis. Bosses made huge sums during the pandemic. But key workers got us through. We cannot do without them.

"But we can do without the privateers and profiteers who are sucking money out of our public services," he said.

He spoke of campaigns he had worked on in Parliament with the union including working with fellow Labour MP Ian Mearns pressing for legislation to achieve the minimum wage for seafarers.

He mentioned the continuing campaign against the disgraceful fire and re-hire practice of employers – sacking workers and offering them their jobs back on lower wages and worse conditions, the campaign to protect public transport and the planet.

"It is time to tackle transport emissions.

"RMT has made it clear that we need a new deal for publicly-owned, green public transport.

"It is an opportunity for workers. Pursuit of profit cannot hold us back.

"The RMT has always taken on the biggest issues – public ownership, internationalism, anti-racism, for people not for profit".

He ended with the famous quote from the late RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

"If you fight you will not always win. If you don't fight you will always lose".

The second MP to address the annual general meeting was Ian Mearns, Labour MP for Gateshead in the North East, and, in Parliament, a friend to the union and its members.

He said that the work necessary to make society function has to be carried out by ordinary, decent working people.

He spoke of the fights carried out in Parliament by MPs working with trade unions – a combination of industrial and political activity – including those against driver-only operation on trains, campaigning "to ensure that your members do not pay the price of the crisis," the repeal of anti-union laws, and for the public ownership of public transport – a cause supported by a majority of members of the public.

"For the moment at least, that is still Labour Party policy," he said.

He said that public transport had a huge role to play in reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

"Train travel, public transport is much greener than other means of transport," he said – but public transport had to be made affordable and available.

He accused privateers of "squeezing every last ounce of profits" out of public transport before handing operations back to the public to pick up the bill and repair the damage – as happened repeatedly with East Coast Main Line and now with London and South Eastern Railways.

And on the coronavirus pandemic he said: "The mixed messages from the government are a public health disaster.

"The government has handed billions to their mates," he said, and said that the "independent" media in the UK "does not hold the Government to account".

He said that the government's failures included "fuel shortages, food shortages, an energy crisis because they have got rid of our excess capacity."

Mr Mearns said that he was proud to represent RMT in Parliament.

PREPARE FOR ACTION

The most resounding calls at the annual meeting were those to prepare for action in

Retired members Ron Douglas and Tony Donaghy

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RMT general secretary Mick Lynch addresses conference

defence of jobs, pay and conditions as the threat of attacks gather from what is probably the most vicious, anti-union Tory governments to be in power since the union's foundations were laid in Leeds 150 years ago.

Outgoing RMT president Michelle Rodgers urged members to "stand proud" in battles in which they would have to "fight and strike for every job.

"We are going to face an onslaught of job cuts.

"We have a big fight on our hands. To all our members now facing the threat of massive job losses on our railways, we must stand proud and return to the militancy this union has always believed in and fight and strike for every job," she said.

Mick Lynch said that the government would seek to recoup the billions spent paying for the Covid-19 pandemic by attacking the very people who had helped the country get through it – including transport workers.

He urged workplaces to be prepared for the attacks, which he said would be coupled with the determination of rail and bus privateers to maintain their profits as taxpayer subsidies are withdrawn.

"All the employers and all of the politicians want to use the Covid health crisis as a means to make permanent detrimental attacks on our members and our union," he said.

He said thar many of the billions spent fighting the virus were "wasted and people lost their lives through the stupidity, ineptitude and incompetence of this government."

"But working people should not be passive and settle the bill for Johnson and his friends. We must be ready to fight off any attacks".

Mr Lynch said that projected cuts planned by the government were "frightening."

"I believe a storm is coming and we have to prepare for it," he said.

"RMT has to be able and ready to take up the many challenges, able to fend off the attack, to defend our members, their livelihoods, their pay, conditions and pensions.

"But also, to be able to go on the front foot – to take our campaigns to the bosses, to the authorities, the governments and the politicians and to the workplace," he said.

■

AGM AGREES PAY RECALIBRATION

The RMT annual general meeting agreed a recalibration of the wage structure for the union's general and assistant general secretaries.

RMT general secretary Michael Lynch suggested the changes following his election earlier this year and the union's national executive committee commissioned a review of the remuneration for national officials which was ratified by AGM delegates.

RMT OFFICERS SALARIES (2020 RATES)

Grade	Basic salary	Re-calibration	New salary
Regional Organiser	£57,294	None	£57,294
National Secretary	£63,549	None	£63,549
Assistant Gen Sec	£80,666	-10%	£72,599
General Secretary	£105,218	-20%	£84,174

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE POLITICAL FUND

In accordance with section 84A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 we are obliged to inform, on an annual basis, any member who joined the Union on or after 1 March 2018 that they are entitled to choose to withdraw their contributions to the Union's Political Fund if they submit a withdrawal notice. For the avoidance of doubt, the Union does not recommend that you do this as the money it receives from the Political Fund is vital to much of the campaigning work it undertakes.

However, notwithstanding the Union's position, if you wish to withdraw your contribution to the Political Fund you need to submit a withdrawal notice making clear you no longer wish to contribute to the Union's Political Fund. In this notice you should set out who you are, what your address is and what branch you are in. You can submit the withdrawal notice either by delivering it by hand to the Union's head office or your branch office or by emailing info@rmt.org.uk . The Union will then action your request. You can also ask us to provide you with an electronic version of a withdrawal notice for you to complete to facilitate your withdrawal and we will do this immediately if you email info@rmt.org.uk.

NEW ROUTE: Bedlington bridge

NORTHUMBERLAND JOB WORKSHOPS

Local communities in the north east encouraged to take up employment on new railway route

Northern has launched a second series of workshops seeking to give local communities in the north east a competitive advantage in the job market ahead of the opening of the Northumberland Line which will bring rail services and jobs to the region.

Work on the line is expected to begin next year and Network Rail is now working on plans to upgrade the track and infrastructure. The re-opening of the Northumberland Line, which brings with it six new or refurbished stations at Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth Bebside, Newsham, Seaton Delaval and Northumberland Park, will be a huge boost for the area and the courses are designed to give local people the best possible chance to be part of the workforce.

Special rail services have already taken place between Newcastle and Morpeth as plans to reintroduce passenger trains on the Northumberland Line gather pace.

Northumberland County Council and Northern hosted the events which saw trains travel on part of the Northumberland Line – taking in the route that will see five of the six proposed new stations built by 2024.

As well as the new stations the Northumberland Line will also result in an upgrade of 18 miles of track to provide local communities with enhanced connectivity.

The scheme, proposed by Northumberland County Council, has been made possible by the government's Restoring Your Railway Fund, which offered development funding to explore options to restore lost rail services connections to communities.

Northern regional director Kerry Peters said that the first series of workshops had been very popular.

"We are determined to make a positive impact for the north and one of the ways we can do that, and build stronger links with the communities we serve, is to help those communities develop skills that give them an edge when looking for and applying for jobs," she said.

Northern's online workshops are open to all focus on CV writing and interview coaching, building self-esteem, understanding great customer service and an introduction to Northern.

"We're the second largest employee in the north east and we're growing all the time. As we grow, we want to drive forward success within the region and provide employment opportunities – as well as travel – to the communities we serve," she said.

Northern has joined forces with local authorities in the region to make the workshops available to those who may not be able to access the required technology at home. Contact details for the local authorities are:

Newcastle City Council - 0191 580 6601 - skillshub@newcastle.co.uk
Northumberland County Council - employmentandtraining@northumberland.gov.uk
North Tyneside Council - 0191 643 2111 - employability.skills@northtyneside.gov.uk

DARTMOOR LINE SERVICES RESUME AFTER 50 YEARS

Line between Okehampton and Exeter reopens for year-round services this month

For the first time in nearly 50 years, regular passenger services will run on the Dartmoor Line, connecting Okehampton to Exeter. It marks the first reopening under the government's *Restoring Your Railway* programme which is exploring ways to return old lines and stations to service across the country.

The route will connect Exeter St Davids, Crediton and Okehampton providing a launchpad for visitors to explore Dartmoor and regional links for local commuters. Around half of services, including at peak times, will also carry on to Exeter Central. The reopening of the route is expected to boost local businesses, the tourism sector, and provide greater access to education and work for thousands of people who live locally.

Exeter Labour council leader and former RMT regional organiser Phil Bialyk said that it was exactly the sort of investment required.

"Cities like Exeter need first class transport links if we are to tackle climate change.

"It will bring forward better green infrastructure to a great part of the world and improve prospects by bringing in more railway jobs," he said.

GWR managing director Mark Hopwood said: "Working with our partners at Network Rail and in the community we have long campaigned for the re-opening of this important local line, and we are really looking forward to being able to start running passenger trains again.

"This is great news for communities surrounding Okehampton who will once again be connected to the national network.

"The project to re-open the line is already helping to bring social and economic benefits to the local area reinforces the positive impact the railway can have on the communities we serve," he said.

Network Rail's Western route and strategic operations director, Mike Gallop said:

"We're delighted that we've reopened this much needed railway line for passenger services in just nine months and ahead of schedule.

"Our team has worked incredibly hard alongside our project partners GWR, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the local community to ensure this railway is ready to open," he said.

Regular passenger services will run on the route for the first time since 1972 following years of campaigning by local supporters. Since 1997, the line has only been open during the summer.

To make this possible, Network Rail's team of engineers worked tirelessly to deliver a huge programme of work to physically reopen the line in just nine months, including laying 11 miles of new track and installing 24,000 concrete sleepers and 29,000 tonnes of ballast in record time. Repairs have also been made to 21 structures along the route including four bridges and a range of works including vegetation clearance, earth and drainage works and fencing are ongoing in preparation for the return of regular services.

More work will be carried out over the winter including further work on the station buildings to enable the restoration of the café and other facilities. ■

REOPENED: Okehampton railway station with passengers at buffet tables on the platform

DERAILMENT LESSONS AT SHEFFIELD

Network Rail handed recommendations regarding high derailment risk locations

A report into a freight train derailment at Sheffield station, 11 November 2020 by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) has alerted track maintenance staff for the need for effective management of track gauge in tightly curved track.

Last year 16 wagons of a freight train that was conveying cement powder from Hope, Derbyshire, to Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, derailed at the north end of Sheffield station. A number of wagons were damaged and there was significant damage to the track, resulting in a partial closure of the station. No one was injured.

The train was coasting through the station at a constant speed of around 12 mph when the leading right-hand wheel of the twelfth wagon dropped into the space between the two running rails, because the rails were too far apart: a problem known as gauge widening. The train stopped when the signaller observed a number of signalling equipment failures indicated on a display screen and alerted the driver to a problem.

The track gauge had widened because a number of track screws, that secured the rails and baseplates to the wooden bearers, had broken, allowing the rails to spread apart under the loads from passing trains.

Although this was a location with a potentially high risk of derailment, it had not been recognised as such because Network Rail's guidance for identifying such risk had not been applied.

Recommendations

RAIB made four recommendations to Network Rail concerning the implementation of processes for identifying high derailment risk locations, the implementation of safety-critical changes to its processes, standards governing fitment of check rails, and track geometry data formats.

RAIB has also identified three learning points for track maintenance staff alerting them to the need for effective management of track gauge in tightly curved track, the limitations of geometry alerts provided by static measuring equipment, and the importance of monitoring track geometry trends for the identification of track deterioration.■

NORTHERN ENGINEER CELEBRATES HALF A CENTURY

Craig Neild joined British Rail as an apprentice in 1971, working at Longsight Electric depot as he was living in Wythenshawe at the time. He then transferred to the deport at Newton Heath, where he worked for 25 years, moving to live in New Moston.

In his current role as an outstation fitter based at Manchester Picadilly, Craig is called out to fix anything from engines to gearboxes, doors, and customer information screens on Northern's fleet of trains running through the station.

He says having such a diverse job has kept life interesting – and is the reason he has stuck around on the railway for so long.

"It's so hands on, that it keeps me active. Every day is different and there's always a new problem to solve," he said.

And his colleagues are also one of the reasons he has continued to work for Northern.

"I have a good working relationship with everyone – drivers, guards, platform staff and maintenance control, as well as the rest of the outstation team.

"I've never wanted to go into management as I like to be hands on, but I think this is why I was encouraged to be a council union representative as well as a safety representative," he says.

Craig said that his job is a lot more technical these days thanks to Northern's modern new fleet.

Brand-new trains – electric Class 331s and diesel Class 195s – were first introduced for Northern customers in July 2019 and there are now 101 serving the network.

The CAF-built trains feature free Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, at-seat power and customer information/media screens with real-time information. They are also more spacious and fully accessible, with spaces for wheelchairs and bikes.

"Technology on the railway is moving very fast and it's a challenge to keep up, especially as Northern has more classes of units than any other train operator," he said.■

PACER TRAIN FOR YORKSHIRE HOSPITAL

Pacer train becomes family support centre for Airedale Hospital

Airedale General Hospital has received a retired pacer train to expand hospital services.

NHS Trust won a Department for Transport competition to 'Transform a Pacer' and will use it as a site to offer support and respite to families visiting the hospital. The competition marked the end of the line for the unpopular Pacer trains on the Northern network.

The retired Pacer carriage was lowered into the grounds of Airedale General Hospital, ready to start a new life serving the community after completing millions of miles on the railways.

The local NHS Foundation Trust submitted a winning bid to save the vehicles from the scrapheap and use them to create a positive environment that could benefit the local community. The hospital will transform their carriage into a mixed-use, non-clinical space to improve the experience of patients using Airedale General Hospital.

This will have a particular focus on helping children and families, as well as those suffering with dementia, providing a unique communal environment to support patients during their stay.

The 19-tonne carriage was lifted into position by a crane and onto a specially constructed site, ready for restoration.

The vehicle is the third and final of the retired trains to be delivered to community projects as part of the DfT's 'Transform a Pacer' competition in the North of England. Previously, a vehicle was delivered to a primary school in Bradford to create a new science laboratory, and a second was delivered to a mental health charity based in Huddersfield station.

The competition means that after three decades of service to northern communities retired Pacer trains will now serve them in new ways focused on bringing the community together.

Children's ward matron Kirsty Randall said that they were really excited to have the Pacer train carriage on site and can't wait to start using it with patients and their families.

"We're planning on using the space for children and young people who need to be in hospital but not necessarily on the ward at all times.

"The space will give these children and young people a space which feels less medical which will really help our younger patients to have a more positive hospital experience," she said.

The train was installed with the help of Network Rail teams who managed the logistics of putting it into place. ■

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

Set out below is the report of the independent auditors to the members as contained in the accounts of the Union for the year ended 31 December 2020:

OPINION

We have audited the financial statements of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers ["The Union"] for the year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the Income and Expenditure account, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Changes in Equity, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of the significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:
- Give a true and fair view of the state of the Union's affairs as at 31 December 2020 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

BASIS FOR OPINION

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Union in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to the audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO GOING CONCERN

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Executive Committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Union's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the National Executive Committee with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

OTHER INFORMATION

The National Executive Committee is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Report of the General Secretary and schedules attached to the financial statements other than the financial statements and our auditors report thereon. Our opinion of the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.
Matters on which we are required to report by exception
The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (Amended) requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:
- A satisfactory system of control over transactions has not been maintained; or
- The Union has not kept proper accounting records; or
- The financial statements are not in agreement with the books of account; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we need for our audit.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities of the National Executive Committee, the National Executive Committee is responsible for the preparation of financial statements and being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the National Executive Committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the National Executive Committee is responsible for assessing the Union's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the National Executive Committee either intends to liquidate the Union or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in according with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

As part of our planning process:
- We enquired of management the systems and controls the union has in place, the areas of the financial statements that are most susceptible to the risk of irregularities and fraud, and whether there was any known, suspected or alleged fraud. The union did not inform us of any known, suspected or alleged fraud.
- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable to the union. We determined that the following were most relevant: FRS 102 and

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION EXTRACTED FROM THE FULL ACCOUNTS

Summary income and expenditure accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020:

General Fund and Orphan Fund

	2020	2019
	£'000	£'000
Subscription income	18,101	17,344
Operating expenditure	(17,480)	(19,321)
Operating result	621	(1,977)
Other income/(expenditure)	(1,454)	3,840
Result for the year	(833)	1,863
Other comprehensive income	(3,026)	5,732
Comprehensive result for the year	(3,859)	7,595

Political Fund

	2020	2019
	£'000	£'000
Subscription income	239	233
Operating expenditure	(135)	(115)
Operating result	104	118
Other income	9	26
Result and comprehensive result for the year	113	144

SUMMARY OF SALARIES AND BENEFITS PROVIDED

Name	Position	Details	Amount
M Cash	General Secretary	Salary	£109,542
		Pension contributions	£38,370
		Other benefits	£1,432
S Hedley	Assistant General Secretary	Salary	£61,720
		Pension contributions	£21,610
		Other benefits	£2,945
M Lynch	Assistant General Secretary	Salary	£85,282
		Pension contributions	£22,175
M Rogers	President	Attendance, lodging allowance and reimbursed expenses	£57,082

The members of the National Executive Committee do not receive any benefits but do receive attendance and lodging allowances, which are set out below. The General Secretary, the Assistant General Secretaries,
the President and the members of the National Executive Committee are reimbursed for any expenditure incurred by them in the performance of their duties on behalf of the Union.

Summary of attendance and lodging allowances and reimbursed expenses paid to the National Executive Committee

Name	Amount	Name	Amount
I Allen	£56,381	D Marr	£53,528
J Armstrong	£56,426	P McDonnell	£57,279
P Burton	£54,094	W Moore	£1,256
M Craig*	£174	K L Morrison	£1,256
L Gaynor*	£1,738	M Nothard*	£55,870
A Gordon	£58,934	S Nott*	£55,081
MJ Herbison	£1,286	B Rawcliffe*	£55,353
P Howes*	£54,623	M Rodgers*	£57,082
G Jackson*	£56,341	L Rundle*	£54,337
K Jewell*	£56,011	S Shaw	£1,256
J Kirby	£57,468	J Wood	£56,443

**In addition, the Union provides accommodation while on Union business* the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (Amended).

- We considered the incentives and opportunities that exist in the union, including the extent of management bias, which present a potential for irregularities and fraud to be perpetuated, and tailored our risk assessment accordingly.
- Using our knowledge of the union, together with the discussions held with the union at the planning stage, we formed a conclusion on the risk of misstatement due to irregularities including fraud and tailored our procedures according to this risk assessment.

The key procedures we undertook to detect irregularities including fraud during the course of the audit included:

- Identifying and testing journal entries and the overall accounting records, in particular those that were significant and unusual.
- Reviewing the financial statement disclosures and determining whether accounting policies have been appropriately applied.
- Reviewing and challenging the assumptions and judgements used by management in their significant accounting estimates, in particular in relation to property valuations, valuation of unlisted shares, legal fees provision and the employee pension benefits liability.
- Testing key revenue lines, in particular cut-off, for evidence of management bias.
- Obtaining third-party confirmation of material bank and loan balances and investment balances.
- Documenting and verifying all significant related party balances and transactions.
- Reviewing documentation such as the national executive committee's board minutes, for discussions of irregularities including fraud.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. The primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud rests with those charged with governance of the Union.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report to the members of The Union
This report is made solely to the Union's members, as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Union's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Union and the Union's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

HW FISHER LLP
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Acre House
11 - 15 William Road
London NW1 3ER
United Kingdom

Date: 20 September 2021

We are required by the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (amended) to include the following declaration in this statement to all members. The wording is as prescribed by the Act.
"A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring, or have occurred, in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct.
The member may raise any such concerns with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.
Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice."

ART AT HARROGATE STATION

Northern conductor Paul Mirfin's colourful railway paintings go on display

Northern conductor Paul Mirfin who first picked up a paintbrush during the COVID-19 pandemic had his debut exhibition at his home station in Harrogate last month.

Paul, from Knaresborough, has worked for the rail operator for 19 years and decided he needed a new therapeutic hobby just a few months ago.

"Painting is really new for me. I had never painted in my life but earlier this year I picked up a brush, bought a load of oils and just started painting.

"I was diagnosed with anxiety a little while ago. My mum had passed away, I moved house, got married and had a lot going on. Painting just focussed me in a way nothing else did and really helped," he said.

His colourful artworks, which are often inspired by scenes he sees every day on the railway, have been a big hit with colleagues with some even asking for commissions.

"Obviously, being a railway man, that's what most of my paintings are of so far. One will be put into the staff room at Leeds, which I'm very proud of. And I've started to do some on request for colleagues too.

"I'd recommend giving painting a go to anyone. It's so relaxing and absorbing – it helps you take time off in your mind of other things that are going on, or it does for me at least," he said. ■

WARRINGTON AWARDS

RMT Warrington and District branch members Roy Lambert, Ian McNamara and Roger Bailey (Pictured right to left) all received their 40-year service awards from the branch chair Dave Wakenshaw. On behalf of the union branch secretary Chris Knibb thank them all for their loyal membership of the union.■

BLACKPOOL AWARD

Presentation of the 40-year membership badge to Northern Conductor Steve Tench at the RMT Blackpool and Fylde Coast branch by relief regional organiser north Craig Johnston. ■

NOTIFICATION OF RMT CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 2022

Like most things, the cost of providing you with the benefits of RMT membership increases every year and contribution rates increase to help us maintain and improve those benefits and our services to members.

Noting the high rate of RPI inflation, general increases in the cost of living and the fact that many of our members have been subject to employer and government imposed pay freezes, a proposed alteration to Rule 2, Clause 10 was placed before the 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Following its acceptance, the new Clause 10 now permits the General Secretary to request the National Executive Committee (NEC) to review and determine the application of the resultant potential increase in the Full Rate contribution.

At a meeting on 4th November 2021, the NEC determined that the full contribution rate for 2022 would not be incremented by the September RPI figure of 4.9%, but by a figure of 1.9%. Therefore, from 1st January 2022, new members whose basic salary or equivalent earnings are above £23,600 per annum will pay £5.40 per week. New members whose basic salary or equivalent earnings are below £23,600 per annum will be £2.32 per week.

Direct debits will be amended accordingly as well as contributions collected by employers under paybill deduction arrangements. Members who pay contributions to cash collectors may obtain up to date information by contacting the Membership Department at this Office or by emailing membership@rmt.org.uk

Members who pay their contributions by cheque or postal order directly will need to adjust the amounts they send accordingly:

Period	Full Rate	Low Rate
Weekly	£ 5.40	£ 2.32
4 Weekly	£ 21.60	£ 9.28
Monthly	£ 23.40	£ 10.06

We maintain a tight control of our costs and continually re-examine them to ensure that we make best use of our resources to deliver improved services to you. I am sure you will agree that RMT membership continues to provide excellent value for money. ■

DISABLED MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

WORK CAN BE A PAIN

I'm Alison Hazlehurst, and I am a customer complaints manager for Northern Rail. Before this, I was a conductor, also for Northern.

When I was still a conductor, I developed severe pain and tiredness. After around ten years of visits back and forth to the doctor, I was eventually diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis (a long-term condition in which the spine and other areas of the body become inflamed) and fibromyalgia (another long-term condition that causes pain all over the body).

Shiftwork presented a massive barrier to me. I was unable to work early turns, and I ended up being permanently medically redeployed into the job I do now.

The workplace presented barriers in my new role as well. I needed a suitable office chair, desk and working environment, and later shifts. After union intervention, I got all these.

The union has been there for me from start to finish, which ensured that management realised I was not making it up!

I have become Equality Officer for my RMT branch, and represent my region on the union's Disabled Members' Advisory Committee.

Shiftwork and inadequate office facilities present problems to disabled workers across our industries. A truly accessible workplace would address these issues rather than wait for individuals to demand changes.

My advice to other union members facing a similar situation is: Seek advice, don't ever give up, keep fighting.

President's column

THANK YOU

Well, my final column! I thanked all those that helped in my campaign last month but missed the biggest THANK YOU which is to you the members as without your support and kind words of encouragement I'm not sure the three years would have not been bearable.

We have had quite a rollercoaster, with general secretary elections, long serving officers retiring all having given their best to the trade union movement and I'm sure many will be around with words of wisdom and encouragement.

As you read this, the regular yearly national executive committee elections will have concluded and those regions will have your voice in the boardroom. So, I wish Bros King and Goard and those successful in the respective elections all the best and remember you're there to make the decisions despite what some may say or do.

Democracy and the rule book remain the most important thing in our union. This is why my final AGM had lots of decision overturned by our supreme body a democratic process where 60 plus delegates make what should be an independent decision based on the debates presented. It's gone on for 150 years and hopefully will continue for 150 plus years.

As national president I'm often reminded by others what their interpretation of the role is and have battled to maintain the essence of what our AGM decided. "To ensure the AGM is never overturned by the NEC and to be a safe valve for our democracy".

I would like to think that despite what some have said about my tenure I've maintained that and that any president that comes in the future (hopefully another women soon) continues the essence of the role.

I hope now with Mick Lynch's election we can move forward and the unity statement eventually becomes a reality because having witnessed the 2020 AGM and 2021 and the misinformation being peddled by a so called newspaper masquerading as a socialist paper decides to retract some of its published material about this union because it only continues to add to the strife. This organisation doesn't need that as we face a difficult 2022 for our membership. It's time we removed our inability to embrace others ideas and realised it's the membership that matters not personalities and ego's.

Lastly a big thanks to each and every employee of this union from the various departments at Unity House and beyond. You contribute to what makes our union so fantastic on a day to day basis and don't ever think we forget that.

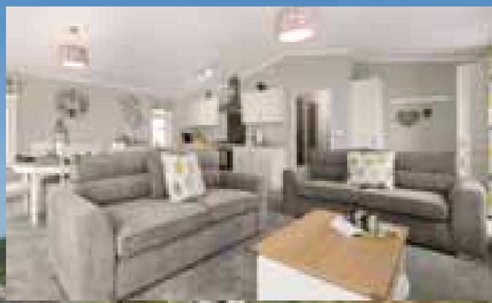
I wish Mick, Steve, Eddie, Darren, the new president and the rest of the NEC (the officers are the NEC too even though they don't get a vote their influence forms part of the decision making) all the best for 2022 and I'm sure you'll continue to make those decisions and Mick and officers will continue to carry out your wishes. I'm not saying goodbye just see you soon and sisters don't let me be the last!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Solidarity, Michelle Rodgers

CROYDE BAY CALLING

RMT members get five per cent off for holidays at this trade union-owned holiday resort in beautiful North Devon

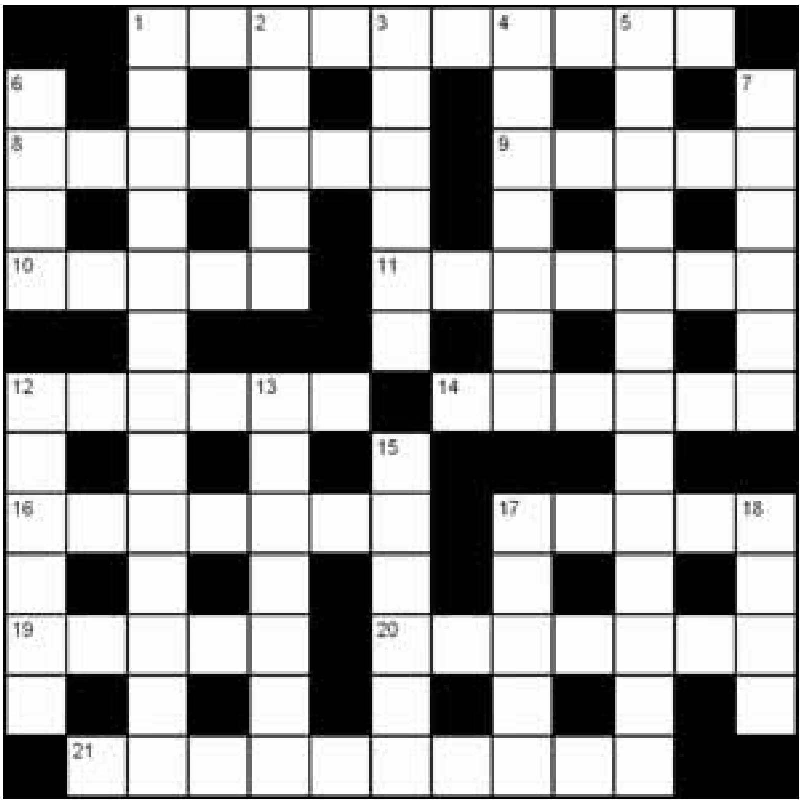


UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Resort and conference centre

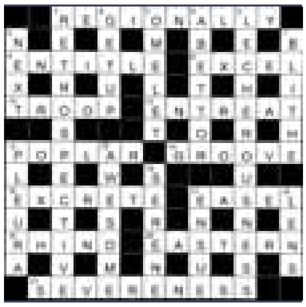
01271 890 890 and www.croydeunison.co.uk

For five per cent discount quote 'RMT' plus your membership number

£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NWI IJD by January 2 with your name and address.

Winner of last month's crossword was C Hicks, Kent

uia mutual & RMT insurance for trade union members

Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

1 Cheeriness (10)
8 Aerodrome (3,4)
9 Shelter (5)
10 Penchant (5)
11 Glorified (7)
12 Hijacking (6)
14 Decent (6)
16 Arbitrate (7)
17 Thick (5)
19 Dance (5)
20 Recluse (7)
21 Easily seen (10)

DOWN

1 Legal system (13)
2 Edict (5)
3 In levels (6)
4 Recount (7)
5 Fair play (12)
6 Flat float (4)
7 Indigestible (6)
12 Solidified lava (6)
13 Pretence (6)
15 Return to normal (6)
17 Studious person (5)
18 Level (4)

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Finance Department, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD

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Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and **black ink**.

1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

Surname

Forename(s)

Home phone

Mobile phone

Email address

Date of Birth / /

Address

Postcode

National Insurance Number

2 Marital Status married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐

Drivers Licence No.

3 Your Employment.

Employer

Job Description

RMT Branch

4 **Mr** ☐ **Mrs** ☐ **Ms** ☐ **Miss** ☐

5 Membership Status

RMT TU Member ☐ Retired RMT TU Member ☐ RMT Family Member ☐

6 How much do you wish to save £

This is the amount you wish to save by Direct Debit monthly on the 28th ☐ or date you next get paid weekly ☐ if 4 weekly (Fri) ☐ date here......................

7 Normally your payments are made once a month (28th) to RMT Credit Union Ltd.

8 Next of Kin ....

Address ....

....

....

9 I undertake to abide by the rules now in force or those that are adopted.

Your signature

We are checking new member identification electronically. To do this, we now carry out searches with credit reference agencies who supply us with relevant detail including information from the Electoral Register. The searches will not be used by other lenders to assess your ability to obtain credit.

I agree to my identity being checked electronically ☐

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Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

9	7	4	2	8	1

Reference Number

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Please pay RMT Credit Union Ltd Direct Debits for the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with RMT Credit Union Ltd, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions from some types of account

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

DIRECT Debit

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- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by RMT Credit Union Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society. – If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when RMT Credit Union Ltd asks you to.
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