

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING LOW PAY



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



CLEANERS VOTE
FOR ACTION
PAGE 7



BEN NEVIS
COLLISION
PAGE 11



DEFEND RAIL
CATERING
PAGE 13



PENSION SCAMS
PAGE 16



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

Contents

Page 4

WEST COAST TRAIN CLEANERS STRIKE FOR PAY JUSTICE

Page 6

TUBE FIGHT ON

Page 7

CHURCHILL CLEANERS IN HISTORIC VOTE FOR ACTION

Page 8

SOARING INFLATION HITS LOW PAID WORKERS' WAGES

Page 10

SUBSEA EXPLOSION OFF NORFOLK COAST

Page 11

BEN NEVIS COLLISION REVEALS SAFETY THREAT

Page 12

SCOTTISH COP26 BETRAYAL

Page 13

DEFEND RAIL CATERING

Page 14

ANDY GILCHRIST RETIRES

Page 15

RMT DEMANDS NATIONAL BUS CRISIS SUMMIT

Page 16

PENSION SCAMS

Page 18

MANAGEMENT INCONVENIENCES

Page 20

CARMARTHENSHIRE DERAILMENT AND FIRE

Page 22

OLDEST NUR BANNER UNVEILED

Page 23

CLOSE THE GATES!

Page 24

FRANCO'S WAR ON RAIL WORKERS

Page 25

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Page 26

POPLAR: THE BOROUGH THAT FOUGHT BACK AND WON

Page 28

letters

Page 30

CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



THE FIGHT IS ON

After delivering a massive 94 per cent vote for action the industrial and political campaign to push back the jobs, pensions and conditions attacks on London Underground has stepped up a gear with the union confirming strike dates and making it absolutely clear that we are geared up for a long fight if necessary. We know that the battle on LU is just a taste of what is to come across the industries where RMT organises. Although the cuts are being driven by the government in this instance it is the London Mayor and Transport for London who are caving in and delivering on the ground.

I have made it repeatedly clear to Sadiq Khan that RMT members will not be the meat in the sandwich in a political battle between City Hall and the Department of Transport. Some of the Mayor's comments about our members who are continuing to fight for work/life balance on the Night Tube are shameful for a labour politician. We will not tolerate that kind of posturing when so much is at stake not just for our members but also the travelling public they serve.

As an organisation with an independent political outlook, we are beholden to no one. Our campaign to stop the carve up of ticket offices across Scotland shows that we are prepared and ready to use our muscle and influence to exert the maximum pressure on those calling the shots. It's a model of how we work as a trade union.

I also want to use this column to praise our cleaner members who have delivered a resounding mandate for action against Churchill's in a coordinated campaign on a number of contracts

to end poverty pay for the rail cleaner team. Other cleaner and catering members are also standing up and taking the fight to their bosses. The union stands right beside them. When we say we are an all grades, industrial union we mean it.

With the industrial fights hotting up across rail, buses and maritime I'm sorry to have to report that a small group of people and their outside supporters have chosen this moment to try and cause maximum disruption to our organisation. These actions at Unity House have provoked serious complaints from our staff and their trade unions GMB and NUJ regarding a frankly sickening campaign of abuse, harassment and bullying targeting our loyal and hardworking staff and others using our head office. This has now led to a formal industrial dispute by the GMB and NUJ declared against us based on workplace safety.

I make this clear as your general secretary. You elected me to do a job of work to deliver for you on the workplace issues that impact on you, your colleagues and your families. I intend to do just that no matter what a small group intent on damaging our union throw at me and the organisation. We face a level of cuts and attacks unprecedented in a generation. Anyone who tries to deflect us from the massive task that confronts us to defend jobs, pay and pensions will get short shrift from me.

Michael Lynch

WEST COAST TRAIN CLEANERS STRIKE FOR PAY JUSTICE

RMT research reveals dividend pay out would have given workers a decent pay rise



Avanti West coast Atalian Servest picket line Liverpool Edge Hill Depot

Heroic train cleaners working to keep Avanti West Coast trains clean and safe for passengers launched strike action last month in pursuit of fair pay.

The cleaners, who have worked throughout the

pandemic to keep essential transport services running, are employed by Atalian Servest Limited, a multi-national outsourcing company based in France. Like many outsourced cleaners, they are paid £9.68 per hour, less than the Real

Living Wage and have no company sick pay, meaning that they frequently come into work when sick because they cannot make ends meet.

Atalian Servest has refused to make an offer that would raise pay above the Real

Living Wage rate of £9.90, offering only an extra 2p per hour to cleaners outside London.

According to RMT research, last year Atalian Servest Ltd's holding company paid a dividend to its French parent

		ANNUAL SALARY BILL			
	Approx. Workforce on Avanti West Coast contract	£9.60 per hour	£11 per hour	£12 per hour	£15 per hour
Atalian Servest	c. 330	£5,813,808	£6,606,600	£7,207,200	£9,009,000
Funding required			£840,840	£1,441,440	£3,243,240
Dividend paid by Atalian Servest Holdings Ltd to overseas parent company, 2020					£10,800,000

company of £10.8 million, a sum that would pay for more than 300 cleaners to get a pay rise to £11 an hour 12 times over and £15 an hour three times over.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the people who cleaned our railways are heroes who risk their lives and health every day to keep essential services running but the way Atalian Servest is treating its workers on West Coast trains was an utter disgrace.

"While the dividends keep flowing overseas, cleaners are expected to put up with poverty wages and live in fear of destitution if they get sick. It's shameful that we're driven to strike action to win such basic justice but if that's what it takes, so be it.

"Atalian Servest need to make these heroes a better offer and Avanti need to take responsibility because they are complicit in this gross exploitation," he said.

Atalian Servest employ more than 300 cleaners on Avanti West Coast services. Last year, the company paid a £10.8 million dividend to its French parent company via a subsidiary based in Luxembourg, a low tax regime. The analysis below shows that if Atalian Servest repaid the dividend it sent to its French parent company it would pay for all the cleaners to get a pay rise to £11 per hour 12 times over. The salary bill is calculated on the basis of a 35-hour week and 52-week year. In reality this is likely to overestimate the costs.

As RMT has revealed in a recent report, outsourcing companies get their profits from cutting cleaning costs to the bone, holding down pay and working conditions and cutting staffing numbers, which leads to exploitation of cleaning staff impacts on the quality of the service they can provide. Download RMT's report here: rmt.org.uk/news/cleaning-up-the-railways/ ■



Atalian Servest Picket Line at Manchester Piccadilly



Atalian Servest picket line at Euston



Avanti West coast cleaners atalian Servest picket line Birmingham New Street



Avanti West Coast cleaners - Atalian Servest - Strike picket line - Preston



Atalian Servest picket line at Crewe



Atalian Servest picket line at Wembley



Atalian Servest picket Line Liverpool Manchester Longsight



Atalian Servest Picket Line - Glasgow Central



Atalian Servest strike Picket Line at Wolverhampton Oxley depot

TUBE FIGHT ON

RMT announces strike action as LU refuses to give assurances on jobs, pensions and working conditions



RMT has confirmed that members will be taking strike action next month over London Underground's continuing refusal to give assurances on jobs, pensions and working conditions in the midst of an on-going financial crisis driven by central government.

The announcement was made in the wake of a recent ballot of over ten thousand members across all grades of LU staff with 94 per cent of members voted to strike.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that members would be taking strike action next month because a financial crisis at LUL has been deliberately engineered by the government to drive a cuts' agenda which would savage jobs, services, safety and threaten their working conditions and pensions.

"These are the very same transport staff praised as heroes for carrying London through COVID for nearly two years, often at serious personal risk, who now have

no option but to strike to defend their livelihoods.

"The politicians need to wake up to the fact that transport staff will not pay the price for this cynically engineered crisis. In addition to the strike action RMT is coordinating a campaign of resistance with colleagues from other unions impacted by this threat.

"The union remains available for talks aimed at resolving the dispute," he said.

NIGHT TUBE

RMT is also calling for LU to end their deafening silence over negotiations as latest phase of Night Tube strike action goes ahead.

Mick Lynch called on tube bosses to take up the opportunity of resuming negotiations with the aim of resolving the Night Tube dispute.

"The action continues despite the fact that we believe there are simple and cost free options that would

enable us to consider suspending the action. We cannot make any progress if LU continue to give us the cold shoulder.

"With London heading back towards some normality at last the settlement of this dispute should be a priority for the Mayor and his officials and that means showing a willingness to recommence the talks process.

"The issue at the heart of the dispute, protecting the work/life balance of drivers cannot be swept under the carpet and needs to be addressed rather than dismissed. RMT stands ready to get talks back on," he said.

RMT has also written to London Mayor Sadiq Khan seeking urgent clarification of comments made by Deputy Mayor Seb Dance in which he clearly stated that "It is not the case that drivers will have to work a night shift" and that "where a [Night Tube] driver wants to swap a night shift for a day shift that will be possible".

In his letter the union noted that it appeared to mark a shift from London Underground and TfL's previous statements:

"I would like you to confirm that this is the position and as your Deputy has said "it is not the case that drivers will have to work a night shift.

"Previously, TfL has briefed the press that drivers will be able to swap shifts if possible but have not gone so far as to claim that that drivers will not have to work a night shift.

"Mr Dance's answer clearly states that drivers will not have to work night shifts and therefore it follows that night shifts should not be compulsory and drivers will have the ultimate right not to work them. As you know, this is the core principle underpinning RMT's position.

"If you or London Underground can confirm the above that would be a significant step in the right direction and would I believe serve as the basis for positive discussions," the letter said.



CHURCHILL CLEANERS IN HISTORIC VOTE FOR ACTION

Company pandemic profits would fund 50 per cent pay rise

Hundreds of rail cleaners who have kept trains running throughout the pandemic have voted for industrial action across four separate contracts in the South East in an historic ballot.

The cleaners are employed by private contractor Churchill and work to keep Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern, Southeastern, High Speed 1 and Eurostar trains and stations clean.

They voted in overwhelming numbers for strike action, smashing through the Tory anti-trade union law thresholds on all contracts. In two of the ballots the majorities in favour of action were 100%.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that Churchill and cleaning employers across the industry need to pay close attention to this result.

"Our members have put their lives on the line throughout the Covid pandemic, they've endured low pay and a total lack of respect and they've watched their wages being eaten away by the growing cost of living crisis. Now they've sent a resounding signal that they're not taking it any longer.

"Churchill's cleaning company paid a £12 million dividend last year, while many of our members are on £8.91 or £9.50 an hour. Churchill can more than afford to lift pay and conditions on these contracts and our members have shown fantastic collective resolve in smashing the Tory ballot thresholds so the ball is in Churchill's court," he said. ■



Table 1: Approximate costs of pay rises for Churchill's South Eastern rail cleaners*

	Cleaners	Hourly rate	Salary bill	Salary bill at £11 an hour	Salary bill at £12 an hour	Salary bill at £15 an hour
GTR	500	£8.91	£8,108,100	£10,010,000	£10,920,000	£13,650,000
LSEr	435	£9.90	£7,837,830	£8,708,700	£9,500,400	£11,875,500
HS1	80	£9.90	£1,441,440	£1,601,600	£1,747,200	£2,184,000
Eurostar	150	£9.90	£2,702,700	£3,003,000	£3,276,000	£4,095,000
TOTALs	1165		£20,090,070	£23,323,300	£25,443,600	£31,804,500

*The salary bill is calculated on the basis of a 35-hour week and 52 week year. In reality this is likely to overestimate the costs.

Table 2: Cost of funding pay rises for c. 1,165 cleaners

Hourly rate	Additional salary bill	Funded by
£11 an hour	£3,233,230	Repayment of £3.8 million dividend paid by Group to two Directors
£12 an hour	£5,353,530	Repayment of half the £12 million dividend paid by cleaning subsidiary to Group
£15 an hour	£11,714,430	Repayment of £12 million dividend paid by cleaning subsidiary to Group



SOARING INFLATION HITS LOW PAID WORKERS' WAGES

RMT research reveals that workers on the National Minimum Wage require major uplift to prevent a pay cut

Workers on the National Minimum Wage and the Real Living Wage are more than £1,000 worse off now than 12 months ago as a result of soaring inflation, according to new research published by the RMT.

As RPI inflation reached 7.5 per cent in December 2021 it meant that a worker on the National Minimum Wage would need £1,252 more a year to prevent a real-terms pay cut while a worker on the Real Living Wage would need £1,395 more.

The research is published as rail cleaners on four contracts in the South-East ballot for strike action and train cleaners on the West Coast services take strike action for a pay rise. All the cleaners involved are paid either at the National Minimum Wage rate of £8.91 per hour or the Real Living Wage rate of £9.90 per hour.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that any workers had been hit by a double whammy of pay freezes and soaring inflation and no more so than those who were already on low wages.

"This report shows the devastating effect of inflation on the wage packets of

Figure 1: NMW salaries and salaries uprated for inflation

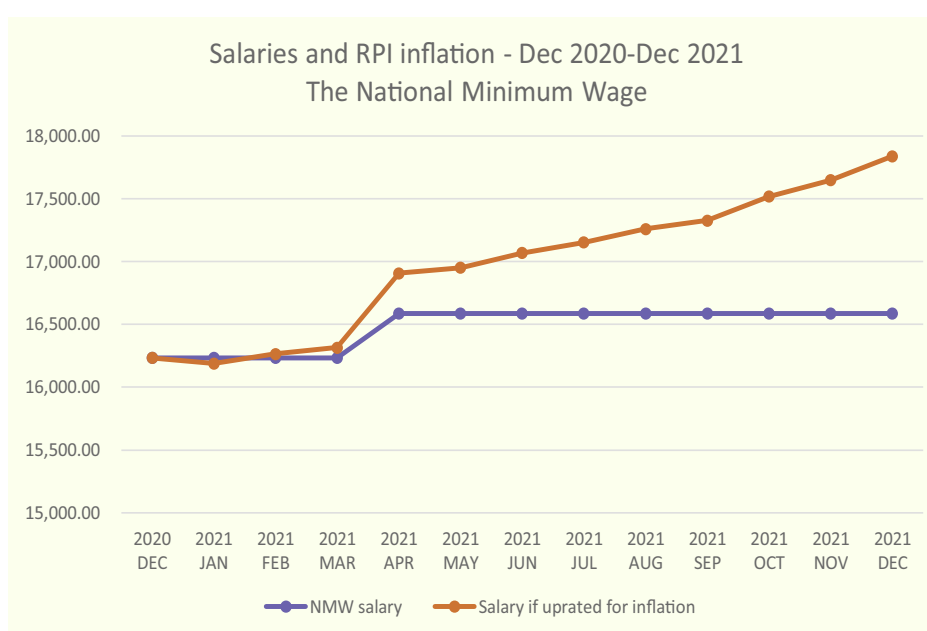
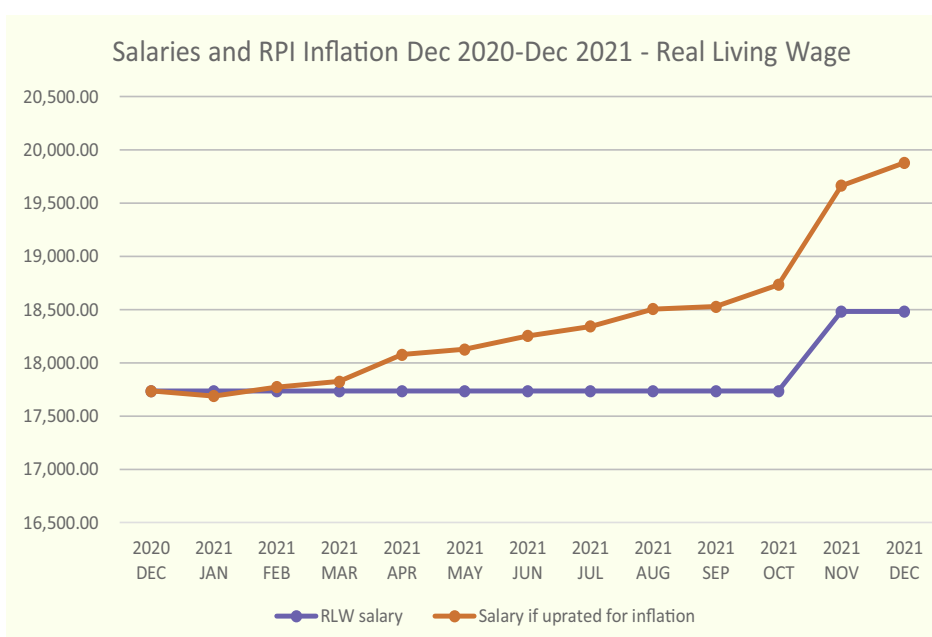


Figure 2: RLW salaries and salaries uprated for inflation - trends over the year



the heroes who have kept our essential services running through the pandemic. It's a national disgrace that so many of these workers, clapped, praised and glad-handed by the great and the good are now expected to put up with pay cuts that leave these already low-paid workers struggling to make ends meet.

"It also shows the value of fighting unions because left to their own devices, there's no doubt the spivs and profiteers who leech off our rail network would be quite happy to carry on in the same old way. Well, RMT is not going to let that happen," he said.

RMT analysed the impact of this soaring inflation on the wages of these workers. The National Minimum Wage (NMW) was set at £8.72 an hour up to the end of March 2021 whereon it was uprated to £8.91 an hour, outside of London.

The Real Living Wage (RLW) is uprated in November each year. Between December 2020 and November 2021, the RLW was set at £9.50 an hour and then uprated to £9.90 per hour.

Assuming that these workers got this uprating at the time, as the graphs and tables below show, workers on the NMW and RLW are cleaners are much worse off now than they were at the beginning of the year. A worker on the National Minimum Wage working the average working week of 35.8 hours over 52 weeks would earn £16,568 a year.

But over the year the earning power of that money has decreased sharply so that they would need to be earning £17,839 a year now to be able to afford the same living standards as a year ago, a difference of £1,252 a year or £104 every month.

Over the course of one year, a worker on the National Minimum Wage lost a cumulative figure of £538 in real terms, with the worst months obviously being toward the end of the year. A worker on the Real Living Wage working the average working week of 35.8 hours over 52 weeks would have earned a salary of £17,734 for most of the year, rising to £18,481 for the last two months of the year. But to keep track of the cost of living and maintain their spending power, they would have to be earning £19,876, a difference of £1,395 or £116 per month. Over the course of one year, a worker on the Real Living Wage lost a cumulative figure of £435 in real terms. Again, the worst months were at the end of the year as inflation spiked. ■

Table 1: Salary levels on the National Minimum Wage

	RPI inflation	RPI Index change	NMW (£)	NMW salary (£)
2020 DEC	295.4	100.0	8.72	16,233.15
2021 JAN	294.6	99.7	8.72	16,233.15
2021 FEB	296.0	100.2	8.72	16,233.15
2021 MAR	296.9	100.5	8.72	16,233.15
2021 APR	301.1	101.9	8.91	16,586.86
2021 MAY	301.9	102.2	8.91	16,586.86
2021 JUN	304.0	102.9	8.91	16,586.86
2021 JUL	305.5	103.4	8.91	16,586.86
2021 AUG	307.4	104.1	8.91	16,586.86
2021 SEP	308.6	104.5	8.91	16,586.86
2021 OCT	312.0	105.6	8.91	16,586.86
2021 NOV	314.3	106.4	8.91	16,586.86
2021 DEC	317.7	107.5	8.91	16,586.86

Table 2: Effect of inflation on NMW salary and monthly earnings

	NMW salary (£)	If uprated for inflation	Loss of value	Monthly earnings	If uprated for inflation	Monthly loss of value
2020 DEC	16,233.15			1,352.76		
2021 JAN	16,233.15	16,189.19	-43.96	1,352.76	1,349.10	-3.66
2021 FEB	16,233.15	16,266.12	32.97	1,352.76	1,355.51	2.75
2021 MAR	16,233.15	16,315.58	82.43	1,352.76	1,359.63	6.87
2021 APR	16,586.86	16,906.91	320.06	1,382.24	1,408.91	26.67
2021 MAY	16,586.86	16,951.83	364.98	1,382.24	1,412.65	30.41
2021 JUN	16,586.86	17,069.75	482.89	1,382.24	1,422.48	40.24
2021 JUL	16,586.86	17,153.98	567.12	1,382.24	1,429.50	47.26
2021 AUG	16,586.86	17,260.66	673.81	1,382.24	1,438.39	56.15
2021 SEP	16,586.86	17,328.04	741.19	1,382.24	1,444.00	61.77
2021 OCT	16,586.86	17,518.95	932.10	1,382.24	1,459.91	77.67
2021 NOV	16,586.86	17,648.10	1,061.24	1,382.24	1,470.68	88.44
2021 DEC	16,586.86	17,839.01	1,252.16	1,382.24	1,486.58	104.35

Table 3: Salaries on the Real Living Wage

	RPI inflation	RPI Index change	RLW	RLW salary (£)
2020 DEC	295.4	100.0	9.50	17,734.60
2021 JAN	294.6	99.7	9.50	17,734.60
2021 FEB	296.0	100.2	9.50	17,734.60
2021 MAR	296.9	100.5	9.50	17,734.60
2021 APR	301.1	101.9	9.50	17,734.60
2021 MAY	301.9	102.2	9.50	17,734.60
2021 JUN	304.0	102.9	9.50	17,734.60
2021 JUL	305.5	103.4	9.50	17,734.60
2021 AUG	307.4	104.1	9.50	17,734.60
2021 SEP	308.6	104.5	9.50	17,734.60
2021 OCT	312.0	105.6	9.50	17,734.60
2021 NOV	314.3	106.4	9.90	18,481.32
2021 DEC	317.7	107.5	9.90	18,481.32

Table 4: Effect of inflation on RLW salaries and monthly earnings

	RLW salary (£)	If uprated for inflation	Loss of value	Monthly earnings	If uprated for inflation	Monthly loss of value
2020 DEC	17,734.60			1,477.88		
2021 JAN	17,734.60	17,686.57	-48.03	1,477.88	1,473.88	-4.00
2021 FEB	17,734.60	17,770.62	36.02	1,477.88	1,480.89	3.00
2021 MAR	17,734.60	17,824.65	90.05	1,477.88	1,485.39	7.50
2021 APR	17,734.60	18,076.80	342.20	1,477.88	1,506.40	28.52
2021 MAY	17,734.60	18,124.83	390.23	1,477.88	1,510.40	32.52
2021 JUN	17,734.60	18,250.91	516.31	1,477.88	1,520.91	43.03
2021 JUL	17,734.60	18,340.96	606.36	1,477.88	1,528.41	50.53
2021 AUG	17,734.60	18,505.15	770.55	1,477.88	1,537.92	60.04
2021 SEP	17,734.60	18,527.07	792.47	1,477.88	1,543.92	66.04
2021 OCT	17,734.60	18,731.20	996.60	1,477.88	1,560.93	83.05
2021 NOV	18,481.32	19,663.77	1,182.45	1,540.11	1,488.78	51.33
2021 DEC	18,481.32	19,876.49	1,395.17	1,540.11	1,656.37	116.26

SUBSEA EXPLOSION OFF NORFOLK COAST

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch, which investigates marine accidents in UK territorial waters, has released its report on a subsea explosion, near Cromer, Norfolk.

On 15 December 2020 the crab potting vessel Galwad-Y-Mor was hauling pots in the North Sea approximately 22 miles north-east of Cromer. The crabbing gear disturbed a 250kg unexploded WWII bomb, which detonated on the seabed below the vessel.

The ensuing explosion caused a shock wave that threw Galwad-Y-Mor about, resulting in significant injuries to five of the seven crew and

major damage to the vessel's hull and machinery.

Despite their injuries, Galwad-Y-Mor's crew were able to send a distress message and board rescue boats that had been dispatched by a nearby offshore support vessel. The injured crew were transferred to hospital by helicopter and RNLI lifeboat. They were treated for head, back and knee injuries. Galwad Y Mor was successfully salvaged and has been rebuilt.

The key safety issues identified were that unexploded ordnance can be highly volatile even after many years of being submersed.



The vessel's crew could not have anticipated the fouling of a bomb in the potting string and the resulting

explosion; their training, experience and emergency preparedness improved their chances of survival.■

OFFSHORE WIND SUPPORT VESSEL GOES HYDROFOIL



The Seacat Sceptre is the latest vessel design for the offshore wind support sector which uses hydrofoils designed and developed in high-end yacht racing.

The vessel, developed by

Chartwell Marine, will now undergo sea trials prior to its handover to offshore energy support vessel (OESV) operator, Seacat Services.

Hydrofoils lift the hull in the water in transit to reduce

frictional resistance, thereby improving energy efficiency and stability. The Foil Optimisation and Stability System (FOSS), developed and patented by BAR Technologies, combines their

America's Cup expertise with Chartwell's high-speed vessel design to resolve the mounting emissions and energy efficiency challenges facing the offshore energy support sector.■

BEN NEVIS COLLISION REVEALS SAFETY THREAT

Union warns that commercial pressures are driving down safety standards in order to win contracts

RMT has warned of commercial pressures undermining safety last month after the Ben Nevis offshore supply vessel collided with a Valaris drilling installation.

The previous owner of the Maltese-flagged Ben Nevis was caught out by maritime regulators in Aberdeen and Rotterdam for failing to pay seafarers wages, and at poverty rates.

Now the new owner has been involved in an incident which reflects a safety culture underpinned by commercial pressures. The Valaris installation was damaged and lives were endangered, as the vessel was knowingly operated

in contravention of procedures and good maritime practice.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that commercial pressure is driving this dangerous behaviour.

"We have repeatedly called on industry and government to address the issues around commercial pressure otherwise operators will continue to drive down standards, especially on health and safety, as well as pay, crewing levels and fatigue across the contractor supply chain.

"Looking at the platform supply vessel network we see consequences such as extended voyages of two months or more onboard,



poverty pay, and in this case non-compliance with basic safety standards in order to win profitable contracts in the North Sea.

"The industry supply chain principles have to be strengthened, or reputable vessel operators employing

domestic crews with proven safety standards and decent pay and conditions will continue to be undermined by this disgraceful race to the bottom.

"With that we will see the potential seriousness of these incidents increase," he said. ■

REVERSE PACIFIC NUCLEAR TRANSPORT FLEET PAY FREEZE

RMT has called on the government to reverse a pay freeze imposed on seafarers working on the Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd (PNTL) fleet.

PNTL seafarers have been hit with the zero per cent public sector pay freeze for 2021-22, despite the importance of their jobs to national security and the environment. Crews are contracted to work up to 18 weeks at sea transporting nuclear waste from Barrow to Australia, via Japan.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that PNTL crew have continued shipping



radioactive waste thousands of miles during the pandemic and are rewarded with a pay freeze by this Government, just as the cost of living crisis and rampant inflation descend on working class households.

"PNTL has paid out £8.6million in dividends in the last two years and pay rise is clearly affordable, the Government must reverse this attack on PNTL seafarers' pay.

"We will not accept public

ownership being used as a smoke screen for blatant cost cutting off the backs of RMT members and we will fight tooth and nail against this egregious attack," he said. ■

SCOTTISH COP26 BETRAYAL

Union warns against ferry privatisation, rail fare rises and service cuts and for secure energy jobs

Marking the three-month anniversary of the beginning of the COP26 Climate Conference transport and energy workers marched to the office of the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to protest at the betrayal by the SNP /Green government of commitments made to move towards a greener Scotland.

The protest by RMT rail, ferry and energy workers was start of a concerted campaign to increase the pressure on politicians as the country approaches the local government elections in May.

The charge sheet against the Scottish government includes:

- Instead of cutting climate change, the SNP/Green Government is cutting rail services including rail ticket offices hours, timetables and infrastructure while the cost of rail travel is increasing at four times the rate of using a car.
- Instead of securing our vital lifeline ferry services in the public sector, ministers appear to be paving the way for privatisation where profits will be put before people and climate.
- Instead of helping guarantee the livelihoods of energy workers, ministers have sold Scotland's renewable energy resources on the cheap to the likes of BP and Shell without securing supply chain jobs.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that COP26 started only three months ago but already the lofty rhetoric about fighting climate change seems a distant memory following a betrayal of ambitions by the SNP/Green government to move towards a greener



Scotland.

"Instead of cutting climate change the government is cutting rail services and ticket offices, threatening the privatisation of our lifeline ferry services and doing far too little to protect the livelihoods of energy workers and the vital service they provide.

"As the country approaches the local government elections in May this protest will be the start of a concerted campaign to persuade politicians to protect these services and jobs which are so vital to our local communities," he said.

Fare rises

Rail passengers in Scotland face a fares hike of 3.8 per cent and RMT analysis has

revealed that since the start of 2012, regulated peak fares in Scotland have increased by a massive 38 per cent, whilst the average cost of petrol has increased by just 8.6 per cent.

In light of this stark disparity between the rising cost of the sustainable rail network compared to fuel, RMT has questioned whether the Scottish government is serious about meeting its climate change targets.

The fare increase comes just days after ScotRail announced proposals to reduce opening hours at 117 of its 143 ticket offices, including the complete closure of three ticket offices. The attack on ticket offices follows

proposals to slash ScotRail services by more than 10 and a cut to the rail infrastructure budget of £74 million (15 per cent).

"Rising fares, fewer services and cuts to ticket offices and safety critical rail infrastructure means ScotRail passengers will be paying more for less.

"Cuts at ticket offices also means passengers will be denied advice on the best value fares and we are urging passengers to oppose the ticket office cuts in the current consultation and to join us in our protest outside the First Minister's official residence on 31 January to demand a better deal for public transport," said Mick Lynch. ■



DEFEND RAIL CATERING

RMT survey reveals that train companies will provide less food and drink on short and long-distance journeys

RMT has launched a new campaign to protect the future of rail catering. RMT is demanding that not only is rail catering protected, but it is expanded, and all provision brought in-house.

The union is arguing that a high-quality catering provision makes rail journeys far more pleasant for passengers and is essential in delivering modal shift to rail.

A survey of over 1,100 rail workers who supply and help sell food and drink on the Britain's railways has revealed that 85 per cent of rail caterers think that the government and train companies will look to cut catering services and jobs in the future. A further 90 per cent think that cuts to rail catering will make it more difficult for passengers to get food and drink during journeys.

90 per cent of rail catering

workers said that they believed the cuts were likely because the train companies were putting profit before passengers, a problem exacerbated by the outsourcing of rail catering services. Over 90 per cent think that all rail catering should be provided in-house rather than outsourced.

As 'Plan B' Covid restrictions are relaxed and more passengers return to the rail network, RMT is warning that the government and train companies' planned attacks on rail catering risk permanently pushing passengers away from the sustainable rail network. Despite the essential role that rail catering plays in enhancing the passenger experience, the Government and rail industry are planning short-sighted and regressive cuts which would see catering jobs lost across the rail network and catering

services further reduced or withdrawn completely.

The low carbon railway has an essential role to play in fighting climate change, yet these cuts would worsen the passenger experience and accelerate the climate crisis by pushing passengers into cars and planes.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that for all the talk from politicians and company bosses of making the post Covid railway more attractive, this survey of staff who actually deliver a key service shows that workers believe damaging cuts are on the way.

"These latest possible cuts mean you will be waiting longer for a cup of tea or sandwich or you might not even get one at all. As importantly, rail caterers are passenger assistance professionals, they provide

advice, enhance the overall passenger experience and provide extra support and safety assurance.

"As our survey shows, rail caterers know that these cuts are about cutting costs, not improving the service for passengers.

"We should be expanding, not cutting, rail catering and bringing all provision in-house. Rail catering should be the norm, not an exception.

"These profit driven cuts will push passengers away from the sustainable railway into cars and planes and exacerbate the climate crisis.

"That's why RMT is campaigning to protect rail catering and is demanding an end to cuts to catering services and jobs," he said.

A rail catering campaign video and a petition are available on the RMT website.



ANDY GILCHRIST RETIRES

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch pays tribute to the union's retiring education officer

Andy Gilchrist, the union's education officer for over 12 years, is retiring from his post after a lifetime commitment to the trade union and labour movement.

Like so many trade unionists of his generation his activism began after attending an anti-fascist concert in Victoria Park in 1978 which included The Clash and many other iconic bands.

He joined the Fire Brigades Union and quickly rose in the ranks to become Luton branch secretary, regional secretary and on to Executive Council Member.

He became national officer by 1996 and was elected general secretary in 2000.

He led a national pay dispute and he was proud to address the US Firefighters conference in Phoenix following the 9/11 atrocity.

Andy's high media profile at the time meant that he was Luton Town's second most famous supporter - after Eric Morecombe!

Andy went on to serve on the TUC general council and carried out international trade union projects for T&GWU Africa, Central America, USA Europe, dealing with £multi-million projects which were delivered to highest professional and audit standards.

RMT was lucky enough to recruit Andy in 2010 as our education officer and he threw himself into transforming the union education services and developing the Bob Crow education centre.

A recent independent 'Impact Study' carried out by Dr Andrew Dean of Exeter University found that the projects Andy delivered under

his stewardship were outstanding and real value for money.

In recent years in addition to his direct education programme role, the union asked him to assume the responsibility of project manager for our Union Learning Fund. He wrote the proposed Round 20 three-year bid at that time, the largest project in the union's 19-year involvement with ULF.

The Round 20 project opened in April 2019 and was clearly challenging as more funding demanded more 'outcomes' required to secure reimbursement on a quarterly basis. In spite of many difficulties this work was successfully carried out. However, in October 2020 the govt announced ULF (England) funding would be ended with effect March 31 2021.

With government funding withdrawn, as the project team were all on fixed term contracts explicitly dependant on government funding, staff were displaced where they could not return to a substantive post in with an employer.

While one individual left, and another found an alternative role, a third could not be accommodated.

It was at this point that a former lead union learning employee made what were proven to be wild and unsubstantiated accusations against Andy.

The NEC instructed that an independent and forensic accountancy report was launched by an external company into the allegations with the full support of our education officer.

This is now the third



authoritative report on this fund having already been reported to the TUC and in the RMT's audited accounts.

The report found no evidence of any misuse of funds, nor fraud, but that an individual former staff member on the project may have made some false claims on expenses. It seems likely that this individual was indeed falsely claiming for meetings and associated expenses that may not have occurred.

I personally have always had full confidence in our education officer's work and commitment to the union and the wider trade union movement.

The RMT NEC has found that all allegations made against Andy were vexatious and not supported in the independent investigation. Our NEC exonerated Andy in their review and their decision on the audit report.

It is unfortunate that during the period leading up to his retirement that Andy has had to deal with these unsubstantiated allegations which he has dealt with professionally and with the highest standard of integrity, which are the hallmarks of his of his character and the values he holds as a dedicated trade unionist.

On behalf of the many friends he has made at this union and across our movement, I would like to pay tribute to Andy Gilchrist and wish him all the best in his retirement.

After a lifetime dedicated to fighting the cause of working people, he leaves with the best wishes of the RMT.

I am sure that he will continue to contribute to the work of the trade union movement as he has his entire working life.

■

RMT DEMANDS NATIONAL BUS CRISIS SUMMIT

Bus operators warn that a third of services in England could be cut in weeks

Following a warning from bus operators that nearly a third of services in England could be cut in weeks if emergency Government funding runs out, RMT has called on the Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps MP to convene an urgent summit comprising employers, unions, local transport authorities and passenger groups to tackle the crisis in the industry.

RMT's demands come as new analysis of Government data by the union reveals the extent of the bus service postcode lottery in England. The union's analysis found that more than six million people in England already do not live within 1km walking distance of a local hourly bus

service. (See Regional Breakdown in notes to editors). Further cuts to bus services risk isolating millions more and exacerbating inequalities.

At the same time as this crisis is unfolding, the Government still has not set out any further details for its review on the ban on municipal bus companies, a commitment it gave in its National Bus Strategy.

The union has written to the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps MP to demand the Government gets serious about protecting England's bus industry and that it calls an urgent Bus Summit to start tackling this crisis.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the government promised a bus revolution with its National Bus Strategy, but despite this rhetoric it is clear the bus industry in England is more in crisis than ever with services facing cuts of almost a third and recruitment and retention problems caused by years of bus operators' refusing to pay decent wages.

"Our research shows that already access to bus services in England is a postcode lottery with more than six million people not being walking distance to an hourly service.

"This crisis cannot be allowed to continue. Local bus services are a lifeline for many.

They provide access to employment, education, healthcare and local communities. Cuts to bus services can cause social isolation and worsen inequalities.

"That's why I have written to the Secretary of State to demand that the government convenes an urgent bus summit of employers, unions, local transport authorities and passenger groups to tackle the funding crisis in the bus industry and to ensure drivers receive a professional wage.

"Ultimately our bus industry would be better serviced by being in public ownership where passenger are put before profit," he said. ■

PROTECT YOUR INCOME

RMT has negotiated with our benefit partner RMTProtect to offer an Income Protection plan, especially designed for union members, that includes cover for time off work due to accidents and illness.



RMT knows how working people can suffer if they suddenly find themselves out of work because of illness.

That is why RMT is here to fight your corner - negotiating the best terms and conditions and job protection. The new plan is designed to get to work when you can't. And you can choose the options which will work best for you.

Choose how much you'd need - up to £1,500 a month or 50 per cent of your monthly income before tax, whichever is lower. Once covered, Income Protection Cover pays out a monthly cash sum for you to spend when and how you like if an accident or sickness keeps you at home.

According to the consumer organisation Which?*

"The one protection policy every working adult should consider is the very one most of us don't have - Income Protection."

38.8 million

working days were lost between 2019-2020 due to work-related illness & workplace injury.†

You can choose when you need the benefits to start, from 30 days to 365 days after you find yourself out of work.

The longer you wait the lower your premium will be. The policy will pay out until you're able to return to work or you reach the end of your 12 month benefit period.

Visit

www.RMTProtect.com/IP or call 0343 178 1233

for a no-obligation quote and, if you like it, simple-to-set-up cover and make protecting your income your priority.

Allen Margrett, a 46 year old Support Worker from Coventry says,

"I took out income protection insurance for the security of knowing ... that there's something there that is going to protect us should the unforeseeable happen. Thankfully I've not had to use it, but to know that it is there is a reassurance."

*www.which.co.uk †Health & Safety Executive: Health & Safety Statistics, 2019/2020 (www.hse.gov.uk/statistics)

Terms and conditions apply. RMT is an Introducer Appointed Representative of RMTProtect which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority to distribute non-investment insurance products, register number 307575. RMT Income Protection Cover is administered by Union Income Benefit Holdings Ltd, and underwritten by Advent Insurance PCC Ltd - UBB Cell.



PENSION SCAMS

Pensions expert Carolyn Stanton explains what they are and how can you protect your pension benefits

Over the last few years, the risk of losing some or all of your pension to scammers has increased.

Official figures on pension fraud show that in the five-year period from January 2015 to December 2019 there were approximately 3,000 crime reports received by Action Fraud.

Sadly, the true scale of pension fraud is likely to be much higher than this, as victims often don't realise they have been scammed until they want to put their pension into payment – sometimes many years later. And some people do not want to acknowledge publicly that they have been a victim of a scam.

The Pensions Regulator (TPR), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the pensions industry as a whole had previously implemented measures and checks to try to prevent scams from happening but from November 2021, these protections have been beefed up.

WHAT IS A SCAM?

Pension scams are serious. Scammers use different ways to persuade people to transfer their pension savings, by promising opportunities that are too good to be true, like investing in overseas property, renewable energy bonds and parking that seem to promise high returns.

Scammers persuade savers to transfer their money into single member occupational schemes, or other occupational pension schemes that seem legitimate. They might promise people early access to their pensions via loans or 'loopholes' as an incentive to transfer. But some or all of the funds are then simply stolen outright.

Frustratingly, many people have ended up losing some or all their pension savings to pension scammers, and then may also end up with a large tax bill because they have accessed their pension prior to the minimum pension age (currently 55).

WHAT ARE THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF PENSION SCAMS?

Typical methods used by pension scammers include:

- Contacting you out of the blue either by phone, text or email (this is known as cold calling)
- An offer of a free pension review
- The promise of help to access your pension savings before age 55 (the current minimum pension age)
- The promise of guaranteed returns on your investment
- Low tax/tax-free withdrawals, including tax-free lump sums
- 'Cash-back' or 'savings advance' from your pension

- Exotic sounding and/or overseas investments
- Pressure to sign up quickly to avoid missing out.

There is a ban on 'cold calling' in relation to pensions. If you receive a call about pensions from someone you haven't asked to call you, and with whom you have no existing relationship, then that caller is acting illegally and you should report it to the Information Commissioner's office on 0303 123 1113.

CAN MORE BE DONE TO PREVENT PENSION SCAMS?

Following a recent consultation by TPR and the DWP, new legislation to combat pension scams was passed and came into effect from 30 November 2021. The regulations give trustees of pension schemes the power to prevent a pension transfer taking place if the conditions proving the legitimacy of the receiving scheme or the member's connection to the employer are not met.

This means that pension scheme trustees and scheme administrators now have an even more important role to play in educating members and protecting them from pension scams. As well as warning members regularly about the dangers of scams and what to look out for, the new legislation requires trustees and

administrators to carry out a number of checks when dealing with a pension transfer request. If the evidence provided for these checks is not satisfactory, or the evidence is simply not provided, the administrator will alert the trustees to it, and the trustees could stop your transfer from taking place.

THINKING OF TRANSFERRING YOUR PENSION?

Many pension schemes, including some sections of The Railways Pension Scheme offer "defined benefit" pensions. These offer pensions payable for life, with additional benefits for qualifying dependents. These benefits are guaranteed as long as the employer backing the scheme is solvent. If you are considering transferring your pension, you should think very carefully about any guaranteed benefits you might be giving up by transferring, and you must seek independent financial advice. You should also make sure you understand the pension arrangement to which the transfer payment is to be made and the benefits you might get from that arrangement.

For transfers to an employer's occupational pension scheme under the new legislation, the requirements have been strengthened to protect members, so you will now need to provide evidence

of employment and membership of your employer's pension scheme (the receiving scheme), including a letter from your employer confirming your employment, and copies of payslips and bank statements. Administrators making these checks are doing so to protect you.

Remember, if you are under 55, it is generally illegal for you to access your pension. The only exceptions are those members retiring due to ill-health and members who are in a scheme they joined before 2010 whose rules gave them a right to retire at 50.

Where can I get help?

If you are considering transferring your pension, talk to an adviser regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). You can find an independent financial adviser through <https://unbiased.co.uk>

You can check that an adviser is regulated by searching on the FCA's Financial Services Register at <https://register.fca.org.uk> You can also check the FCA's list of unauthorised firms and individuals if you are concerned.

To get general help with your pension, you can contact 'Pension Wise,' which is a government service from MoneyHelper. MoneyHelper joins up money and pensions guidance to make it quicker and easier to find the right

help. It brings together the support and services of three government-backed financial guidance providers: the Money Advice Service, the Pensions Advisory Service and Pensions Wise. Visit their website for lots of information and support about your money matters: www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/

Use this link directly – if you search for Pension Wise or Money Helper, you'll be presented with a lot of websites which look like this free Government service but aren't.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I SUSPECT A SCAM?

If you think someone might be trying to scam you, don't be embarrassed to report it to the Information Commissioner on 0303 123 1113; it can happen to anyone. Similarly, if you think you have been a victim of a scam, you can report it to the police, and to Action Fraud either online at [actionfraud/police/uk](http://actionfraud.police.uk) or on 0300 123 2040. The information you give to Action Fraud can help to track down the scammer and protect your family and colleagues. ■

Carolyn Stanton is a pensions professional and has worked in the pensions industry for over 20 years, primarily in the management and administration of defined benefit occupational pension schemes. She works for First Actuarial LLP and is an associate of the Pensions Management Institute.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS CONDUCTORS LAUNCH STRIKE ACTION

Conductors employed by TransPennine Express will be taking the first in a series of weekly strike actions this month over pay discrimination.

Additionally, members will not to work any rostered overtime and withdraw from the electronic scanning of tickets until further notice.

After working right through the Covid pandemic and having a two year pay freeze enforced on them,

TransPennine Express Conductors requested an increase in pay for working on their days off and on Sundays.

The gap between what they get paid for working these days, and what other traincrew get paid for the same days has seen a significant increase with the workers feeling aggrieved at the unfairness.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that TPE conductors who kept the trains running

throughout the pandemic have been left with no choice but to take strike action after being given a flat NO to their reasonable request to close the pay gap between themselves and other TransPennine workers by bosses who have mostly been at home throughout the Covid crisis.

"To add insult to injury Conductors on Northern Trains working alongside TPE Conductors have reached

agreement for a small payment of 2p for a new method of checking tickets.

"Meanwhile, TPE Conductors have modestly asked for and been refused the same small payment for doing these checks.

"Our members refuse to be treated unfairly and will be continuing with industrial action until the pay discrimination is dealt with," he said. ■

DISABLED MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

MANAGEMENT INCONVENIENCES

My name is Craig, and I work as a Conductor on Scotrail. Around 2014, I developed two conditions - primary biliary cirrhosis and ulcerative colitis - which affect my liver and digestive system.

Unfortunately, work has created several problems for me when working on trains. There is often a lack of working toilets, and the company is reluctant to resolve the issue, even when the fault has been reported before the train has departed from the originating station. A 'toilet stop' at the next available main station is not enough, as inflammatory bowel disease can't be controlled by time or dependence on a station actually being open. For example, the facilities at Inverness station may be closed, especially on a Sunday.

I have been open about my conditions and their effects. I've also stated that when it comes to the point where my condition would interfere with my duties, I would declare as

such, but not where I am forced into a situation where basic human needs aren't met.

It feels like management don't have a clue, and don't see the need to attempt to understand an individual issue by researching the symptoms or effects of a condition. Simply reading up on some open-source forums to see how each individual deals with their conditions or how they are feeling would be a massive step forward for that individual, to know that their manager does understand to an extent what they are going through. It's not about asking them to become medical experts.

At the beginning of the pandemic, when shielding started, I had few phone calls from my direct manager. I got a call from HR, who were phoning those on the shielding list, and explained the situation. I was asked about contact from my line manager, and gave an honest answer of the limited contact I had. After this contact with

HR, I received weekly calls for a short time.

I have been an RMT member for fourteen years. My union rep has been supportive and stood by me, always available for advice and to explain my options. They have explained what has been happening when it comes to how management have handled my disability and directed me to qualified professionals who deal with disability discrimination, inequality and effects on mental health due to poor leadership.

The introduction of a diversity and inclusion department and well-being advisor proves that there's an awareness from director level that more support is needed. My job would be much more accessible if all trains were to leave with working toilets (with appreciation that faults can happen en route); if relief staff were available if you can't continue with the service because of your known disability; if there were



accessible toilets at all depots; and if there were options for alternative duties. HR, my manager, my union rep and myself agreed a course of action, but management took two months to implement it, further exacerbated by COP 26, which seemed to put my needs on the back burner and other things took priority.

If you find yourself in a situation like mine, stand up for your rights. Don't ever feel pressurised, don't ever be made to feel like you are an inconvenience. Don't allow yourself to feel abandoned and don't let yourself feel like you have no options. You have more rights than you think. ■



A new pictorial history of the union from 1871 to 2021

Copies of *RMT - 150 Years of Trade Unionism* are available from your branch or the RMT website.

rmt.org.uk/shop/miscellaneous



FREE LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS



For legal advice that helps you read between the lines, contact Thompsons Solicitors

As a member of RMT, you and your family have access to specialist legal advice and representation from the UK's leading law firm for trade union members.

Thompsons Solicitors has been securing life-changing compensation for injured trade union members since 1921. Our trusted lawyers are committed to making sure you have the protection you need if you or a member of your family is injured.

Last year, we secured over £4.5 million in compensation for more than 250 members and their families.

To learn more about how we can help, call **0800 587 7516** or start a claim online at www.thompsonstradeunion.law.

Your free legal service covers:

- Personal injury – at or away from work, on holiday or on the roads
- Serious injury – including brain injuries and spinal cord injuries
- Industrial disease or illness, such as asbestos-related diseases
- Special funding terms for medical negligence claims
- Online basic wills services
- Special terms for conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney
- Employment law (accessed via your RMT representative).

Family members are also covered for:

- Personal injury – away from work, on holiday or on the roads
- Special funding terms for medical negligence claims
- Special terms for wills, conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney.

Keep 100% of your compensation

If you make your legal claim through RMT, you're guaranteed access to experts who, on principle, will only act for those who have been injured, and never for those who cause injury.

You are also guaranteed to keep 100% of your compensation (with special terms available for medical negligence claims) because, unlike with other law firms, you won't pay a penny in legal fees.

0800 587 7516
www.thompsonstradeunion.law

T THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS
STANDING UP FOR YOU

100
YEARS
1921-2021



CARMARTHENSHIRE DERAILMENT AND FIRE

Tanker wagon owners called on to make improvements to maintenance processes

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) released its report into the derailment and fire involving a tanker train at Llangennech, Carmarthenshire with a recommendation to the manufacturer of some of the braking system components to undertake a review of their design.

At about 23:04 hrs on August 26, 2020, a train from Robeston (Milford Haven) to Theale, conveying 25 laden tank wagons, derailed near Llangennech, in Carmarthenshire. The derailment and the consequent damage to the wagons resulted in a significant spillage of fuel and a major fire. The driver, who was unhurt, reported the accident to the signaller. Subsequent examination of the site found that ten wagons had derailed, and that around

446,000 litres of fuel had escaped.

The spilled fuel caused major damage to the environment in an area which is both a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and a special area of conservation (SAC), including cockle beds, natural tidal mud flats and wetlands.

The derailment occurred because one set of wheels on the third wagon in the train stopped rotating during the journey. The wheelset had become locked, probably because of a defect in the braking system on the third wagon, arising from deficiencies in the design and maintenance of components. The sliding of the locked wheel along the railhead caused damage to the profile of the wheel treads. This meant that the wheels were

unable to safely negotiate Morlais Junction, near Llangennech, damaging the pointwork and causing the third wagon to become derailed. The following wagons derailed on the damaged track. Some of the derailed tank wagons were ruptured in the accident, and the spilling fuel ignited.

RAIB made nine recommendations. These cover a review of the actions taken by the owner of the wagons following this and previous accidents, and improvements to the maintenance processes at the locations where the wagons involved in the accident are maintained and overhauled. The probable failure mode of the braking system and the lessons learned from reconstruction tests have led to a recommendation to the

manufacturer of some of the braking system components to undertake a review of their design.

A recommendation has been made to the organisations who carry out surveillance and certification of entities in charge of maintenance of rail freight vehicles to review their processes.

A further two recommendations have been made to improve the management of wagon maintenance on the railways in Britain, and to review the technology and systems used to alert traincrew, signallers and railway control offices to wagon defects that may lead to derailment.

The final recommendation is for a review of the arrangements for regulatory oversight of entities in charge

of maintenance and certification bodies that are not based in the UK.

Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents Simon French said that trains carrying dangerous goods play an important role in the UK economy, but the risks which their operation presents must be adequately controlled.

"The consequences when things go wrong can be disastrous, as we saw at Llangennech in August 2020. Thankfully no one was hurt, but people were evacuated from their homes and the damage, both to the environment and to people's livelihoods, will take years to put right. The accident also closed the railway line for more than six months whilst the railway was being rebuilt and engineers worked to minimise the damage to the local environment.

"The rail industry's approach to the safe maintenance of freight wagons needs to improve. In this investigation we found that there were inadequate maintenance practices, and a failure to appreciate the importance of the correct fastening of the various components of the tanks

wagons' braking system.

"This is not the first time that we have investigated an accident where RAIB has identified serious issues with the maintenance of a freight train. Over the last decade we have identified deficient wagon maintenance as a factor in more than ten investigations, including maladjusted suspension, undetected frame twist and worn bogie pivot liners.

"In our report we have recommended a review of the technology and systems currently being used in the UK and other European countries to identify how improvements can be made to the railway's ability to detect a wagon defect that may lead to a derailment, such as dragging brakes.

"The smarter use of track side technology to warn the railway that a train is endangering its infrastructure is a familiar RAIB theme; some of our previous investigations have urged the greater use of wheel impact load detection data to identify uneven wheel loads. RAIB would like to see more work in this area focused on how track side systems could be used to reliably detect

dragging brakes, but also, how such data can be used in an intelligent way to benefit both real-time operations and fleet maintenance management.

"The majority of our recommendations following our extensive investigation of the derailment at Llangennech relate to improved maintenance processes for freight wagons. The widest ranging of these urges the freight sector, in conjunction with Network Rail, to develop a comprehensive programme of measures designed to promote the improvement of freight wagon maintenance in the UK. This is intended to be a collaborative effort, which is appropriate given the potential benefits of better information sharing across the sector.

"I would like to stress the importance of getting this right. It's time that freight wagon maintenance practices were subject to careful examination and for the industry to think through the way that it can best deliver on its legal and moral obligation to present wagons that are fit to operate through the nation's towns and cities. The

prize for getting this right is improved safety, better reliability and compliance with the freight sector's legal obligations – and all at a reasonable cost.

"Since RAIB has been concerned about the quality of freight wagon maintenance for many years, I welcome the actions that ORR has taken to reinforce its supervision of entities in charge of maintenance. This will provide improved visibility of maintainers' important work and verify the extent to which the important role of ECMs is properly understood and applied across the UK freight sector, and the adequacy of surveillance undertaken by certification bodies.

"I have been struck by the extent to which the safe condition of freight wagons is critically dependent on people being given the tools and training they need to do a difficult job, very often in dark, wet and cold working conditions. So, I urge freight operators and maintainers to think carefully about the people who do the hands-on work, and the things that could be done to develop the capability of the work force," he said. ■



OLDEST NUR BANNER UNVEILED

One of the oldest National Union of Railwaymen banners unveiled at Shildon Railway Institute

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch did the honours unveiling what is believed to be one of the oldest National Union of Railwaymen trade union banners in existence in the country earlier this month.

The Shildon Railway Institute, founded in 1833, in County Durham is believed to be the world's first such institute and is currently operating as a thriving social club and community venue.

The return of the 1919 Shildon Works 2 banner began with a donation from the NUR's successor RMT to help restore it to its former glory.

The National Union of Railwaymen was formed in 1913 from an amalgamation of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the

United Pointsmen and the Signalmen's Society and the General Railway Workers Union.

Mick Lynch said that the union had strong connections with Shildon which had thousands of members when it was a major railway manufacturing town.

"It is important that we keep that heritage alive and

the idea of this country continuing to develop a manufacturing base," he said.

Shildon is also home to *Locomotion* one of the largest railway museums in the country and contains many NUR artifacts. Opened in 2004 it is sited near Timothy Hackworth's Soho Works on the world's first public railway, the Stockton and Darlington

Railway opened on 27 September 27, 1825 with a train hauled by Locomotion No 1 which took two hours to complete the 12-mile journey from Shildon to Darlington. The town was to become a major centre for British railway engineering thanks to the Shildon wagon works, which closed in 1984.



UNVEILED: Shildon Railway Institute secretary Shaun Thompson, Gerald Slack of Auckland Railway Group and Mick Lynch in front of the restored Shildon banner

CLOSE THE GATES!

Trade unionists celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Saltley Gate this month

Fifty years ago, on a day that came to be a key moment in trade union militancy, some 30,000 Birmingham workers downed tools and joined the picket of Saltley Coke Depot in Birmingham in solidarity with miners striking for a decent pay rise at a time of high inflation.

This extraordinary expression of solidarity which took place on February 10, 1972 effectively secured victory for the miners and a 30 per cent pay increase and brought down a Tory government.

As part of the industrial action the National Union of Mineworkers sought to prevent coal from being transported and the largest stockpile in the country was held at Saltley. A small group of miners from nearby Staffordshire set up a picket line at the works at the start of February with little affect.

However, within days, several thousand miners from South Yorkshire and South Wales joined in and requested solidarity from local workers.

Bill Mullins, a newly elected shop steward at the Rover Solihull Plant, remembered a young Arthur Scargill, at the time a Yorkshire NUM official, appearing at a local meeting of the AUEW engineering union.

There he famously said that he didn't want just collections of money for the miners, he wanted Birmingham workers to come down to Saltley gates and stop the lorries leaving with the scab coke.

"From the Monday onwards shop stewards around the Birmingham car and



engineering industry, including myself, went down to Saltley gates and joined the miners' picket lines.

"But when it became clear that we would need far more "bodies" to stop the lorries, we agreed that we would try and get solidarity strikes off the ground.

"I remember on the Thursday morning, February 10, I and a number of other stewards from the plant who had been going down regularly, went to see our convenor.

"We wanted to get him to agree to call a mass meeting of the 8,000 workers in the Solihull factory to ask them to go on strike in support of the miners and for as many as possible to go down to the mass picket.

"As we were speaking to him a knock came on the door. A shop steward came in and told us that that the word had got out and the workers were already walking off the job without being asked," he recalled.

Bolstered by the arrival of tens of thousands of workers

from other Birmingham industries and police ordered the depot to close its gates "in the interests of public safety".

"A huge cheer went up from the mass ranks of picketers with this victory. It was undoubtedly the most significant moment of the strike and a massive victory for workers," remembered Bill.

It was a victory that not only won a fair pay rise but showed the way forward for other groups of workers fighting to defend their living standards.

To mark this important working-class anniversary, Banner Theatre has been commissioned to embark on a multi-media touring show of its

rousing production, *The battle of Saltley Gate* which will also be available on-line.

The production includes a celebrated song about the chant that went up from workers pouring spontaneously out of the factories and workplaces of Birmingham, "*Close the gates, close the gates, close the gates*". This song also appears on a 2014 Topic Records compilation of radical song called *Voice and Vision: Songs of Resistance, Democracy and Peace*. ■

The Battle of Saltley Gate is available for bookings. Contact Dave Rogers on bannerauto2013@gmail.com



Photograph Credits: Tony Coult.

FRANCO'S WAR ON RAIL WORKERS



Chris Roberts speaks at a commemorative ceremony in Cardiff for Welsh International Brigaders who fought and died fighting fascism in Spain

The war against fascism is fundamentally a struggle for the rights of working people. That is why the Welsh International Brigaders overwhelmingly came from the working class.

They were people who, as Hwyl Francis wrote, went to Spain predominantly because of their personal experience of the suppression of organised labour. They knew better than anyone that under fascism it is working people who suffer most. The rights of workers are one of fascism's prime targets, trade unions amongst the first casualties. The dignity of labour disappears.

I want to focus on what happened to one key group of workers in Franco's fascist

Spain, the railway workers. The story of their suffering and humiliation demonstrates how right those brave Welsh volunteers were to take up arms in support of the working people of Spain and their legitimately elected government.

Thanks to the work of CCOO and UGT unions and Spain's socialist government, 82 years after the end of the Civil War and over 40 years since the return of democracy, the Spanish railway company, RENFE, has finally acknowledged how their workers suffered under fascism. They now have a website detailing the horrific treatment meted out to workers whose only crime was

to have been employed in an industry that had strong trade unions and to have stayed loyal and kept the trains running for the Republic.

In Franco's "Purification Courts" (established by each of the railway companies) all railway workers were presumed guilty and had to prove to the fascists that they were not a threat to the regime. Nearly 90,000 railway workers had to present a sworn statement setting out any links they had with the parties that had supported the democratically elected Republic.

Around 83,000 railway workers were purged, 88 per cent of the workforce. At one point they had to pause the

witch hunts because they didn't have enough train drivers to run the railway.

Nearly 7,000 were jailed, for terms varying from months to life imprisonment. One hundred were condemned to death. Nobody knows how many were just taken out and shot, without any charge or trial, but they were many. In 2011 in Burgos an unmarked mass grave was opened to reveal 59 bodies, it is known locally as the tomb of the railwaymen.

Just one story from a railway family:

"It was 1936. The fascists took my father and uncle - José and Rafael Machuca - to a makeshift prison. One night they came into their cell to

take one of them away. Those they took away never came back, so when they came for my uncle Rafael, my father knew he would never see him again, they were going to kill him. My father was lucky they only sent him to prison and barred him from working on the railways ever again. When my grandmother went to the prison to find them, she was told that Rafael wasn't there any more. The poor woman went everywhere she could think of to ask where he might be, she spent her whole life searching for him. He was 26 when he disappeared, even today we don't know where they killed him".

Franco even created a special police unit dedicated to informing on railway workers, to root out any possible opposition. They amassed a total of 120,000 files full of reports detailing railway workers' friendships and everyday movements.

Until 1957, many Spanish railways were being built and maintained by forced labour battalions, often made up of political prisoners. In 1940 there were over 9,000 forced labourers slaving on Franco's railways.

But of course the repression was even worse for the thousands of women who had worked on the railways. Over 4,500 of them were purged for having the wrong political loyalties. The fascists punished women who deviated from the regime's norms more severely than men. They would also be punished if their husbands or sons defied the regime. All women workers were punished just for being women. Franco wanted women to be «esposas y madres», wives and mothers and nothing else.

The daughter of one victim described how her mother, now 93, was sacked from the railway for the crime of getting married. She said: "In those

day's women didn't have a glass ceiling, it was cement, and when they married they were forced to resign. They could only return to work if their husbands died, or deserted the wife without good reason. With the return of democracy in 1978 my mother was finally allowed to return to work in Renfe".

At the recent unveiling of a commemorative statue to the railway victims, the Socialist Transport Minister, José Luis Ábalos, spoke movingly about the importance of remembering the impact fascism had on the everyday lives of working people.

"Remembering hurts, but it heals. What really destroys us as a society is forgetting and silence. (in Spain) We tried to quickly close a painful chapter in our history to embrace democracy. We believed sincerely that reconciliation consisted in not looking back and we were wrong. We were

unjust because we didn't want to see the open wounds. Only by looking the past full in the face will we be able to have the future we deserve. It's time that the victims of Franco stopped paying the bill for our democracy".

Spain is still struggling to come to terms with its history. It's a political struggle almost as polarised as the civil war itself. The new right governing Madrid is intent on retaining street names that celebrate the Division Azul, the troops and volunteers Franco sent to fight alongside the SS on the Eastern front.

That's why it is so important we in Wales take part in commemorations like this one, to keep alive the memory of those brave Welsh comrades who fought so hard in the hope that the working people of Spain may have had different memories and so much better ones.■

RMTPROTECT: ACCIDENT PROTECTION PLAN



Accidents happen, but don't leave the consequences to chance...

£150,000 cover for just under £4 per week!

But it's not just at home - from tripping up on the pavement to being involved in a more serious road traffic incident, there's no knowing when, why or where an accident might happen.

RMTProtect have developed a plan which can help you protect yourself and your loved ones against the financial consequences of accidents.

The Accident Protection Plan provides £150,000 in a cash lump sum to help family members cope if you were to die as a result of an accident.

Of course, that's the bleakest scenario. But hospital stays as the result of accidental injury are also covered by the policy, with payouts of £75 for every 24 hours spent as an inpatient as

the result of an accident* - cash which could help tide you over a difficult time.

With RMTProtect Accident Protection Plan there's guaranteed acceptance for UK residents aged 18-69.

The policy covers you 24 hours a day, anywhere in the world, plus you can insure your partner too and save 10%!

An accident can make us feel completely out of control. RMTProtect's Accident Protection Plan could help you and your loved ones stay on track.

"...it kept my head above water...stopped me from drowning whilst I was in hospital, it made up for it because I was able to borrow the money knowing that I was getting money back."

Samantha, 48, from Moneyside

Illustrative Example:

- ✓ £150,000 accidental death cover
- ✓ Plus £75 daily hospital cash benefit*
- ✓ For just under £4 a week

To find out more and get a quick quote visit:
www.rmtprotect.com/accident

POPLAR: THE BOROUGH THAT FOUGHT BACK AND WON

Janine Booth explains why the Poplar rates revolt a hundred years ago matters today

The two biggest employers in the east London borough of Poplar one hundred years were the railways and the docks. Our forerunner unions had plenty of members there. Their jobs involved long hours and low pay, but they were unionised, so they were fighting for, and winning, improvements.

Like the rest of Poplar's residents, they lived in overcrowded housing, breathed polluted air and died of poverty-related illnesses such as tuberculosis (TB). But they were fighting back in their community too. The unions were heavily involved in the local Labour Party, which in turn supported the unions and their struggles – including the pre-war dock strike and the post-war national railways strike.

In 1919, Labour won a majority on Poplar Borough Council for the first time. Previously, most working-class people – and all women – did not have the right to vote, so a privileged minority had elected Tories, Liberals, employers and clerics to run the borough; they feathered their own nests and allowed the working-class people of Poplar to continue living in destitution.

The newly-elected Labour Council included several transport workers and union



ARREST: Councillor Minnie Lansbury on her way to be taken into custody at Poplar Town Hall

activists, including Albert Baker, Joe Banks, Joseph Hammond and James Jones of the Poplar no.1 branch of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). It included socialist women such as Minnie Lansbury and Julia Scurr.

The Council immediately began improving the lot of the people who had elected it. It built new housing, expanded maternity services, improved libraries and swimming baths, brought the charity-run TB clinic into municipal ownership, increased council

workers' wages, and did much more besides.

But in 1920, economic recession struck. Export trade collapsed, so dockers were thrown out of work, and the knock-on effects saw thousands of other jobs lost too. Local people needed their council services more than ever, but Poplar Council did not have the money to fund them.

Councils had to raise all their money by taxing local residents. There were no significant central government

grants or pooling of costs across London. From the meagre amount that Poplar's working-class residents could afford, its council had to fund all the services they needed, including maintenance for those who were unemployed or impoverished (what we would now call welfare benefits).

Poplar Council faced a choice: abandon the improvements by cutting services or raising rates or defy the law. It chose defiance.

In early 1921, a conference

of Poplar's labour movement thoroughly debated the options available and decided that the council would refuse to collect and hand over that portion of the rates (known as 'precepts') that was owed to cross-London bodies such as the Metropolitan Police and the London County Council.

This was not a clever trick by a small group of leaders; it was the strategy of a large, popular movement that set about building and mobilising its strength. Poplar Labour activists knocked on doors and spoke to workmates. They gave out leaflets which explaining the issue of local government funding and why the council was taking this action. They held outdoor marches and indoor rallies. Socialist newspaper the Daily Herald (edited by Poplar Councillor George Lansbury) reported on Poplar's struggle to its readers across the country.

The London County Council took the issue to court and

convinced the judge to issue a 'mandamus': an instruction to Poplar Council to collect and hand over the precepts. When the councillors refused to do so, the court gave them the month of August to think about it, telling them that if they did not do as they had been told, they would go to prison. The councillors, and the local labour movement, spent the month holding more marches and rallies, giving out more leaflets, and holding a week-long fair to raise money and support!

PRISON AND VICTORY

Over the first five days of September 1921, the sheriff's officers arrested thirty Poplar Labour councillors. They took the twenty-five men to Brixton prison. The five women arranged to be arrested together at Poplar Town Hall, where they gave speeches to a crowd of thousands of supporters who walked alongside the sheriff's car to the edge of the borough, from

where they were driven to Holloway prison.

Now behind bars, they kept up their fight. NUR branches help to organise marches to both prisons to show support for the councillors. Solidarity messages and donations came in from around the country. And finally, two other councils – Poplar's neighbours in Stepney and Bethnal Green – voted to take the same action as Poplar and withhold the precepts.

Under this pressure, the government arranged to release the councillors from prison and rushed a new law through Parliament that made rich boroughs contribute to a fund to help poor boroughs. Poplar and other working-class boroughs would no longer have to cut their services or

raise their rates. They had won!

One hundred years on, the Tory government is again plunging councils into financial dire straits, taking away the central grants that they rely on. Although some Labour councils are doing some good work in a difficult climate, they are generally going along with cuts rather than resisting them. Working-class people suffer as a result: rents go up, special educational needs provision is slashed, libraries close, social care is stretched much too thinly.

RMT's annual General Meeting in October unanimously passed a resolution about the Poplar rebellion, agreeing that we could do with a revival of the Poplar spirit today! ■

Janine has written a book about the Poplar rates rebellion, and a biography of one of the councillors, Minnie Lansbury. You can buy them from www.janinebooth.com/shop

COMPETITIVE INSURANCE YOU CAN TRUST

UJA is proud to have been
providing insurance to RMT
members since 2003.





Please call **0800 030 4606***
and quote News 122

or visit
rmtinsurance.co.uk/news122



Scan
me

* Lines are open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri (subject to change due to Covid-19 restrictions)

UJA Mutual is a trading name of UJA (Insurance) Ltd. UJA Car and Travel Insurance are provided by third parties, see uja.co.uk/terms-conditions for details. RMT is an introducer. Appointed Representative of UJA (Insurance) Ltd and UJA (Insurance Services) Ltd. UJA (Insurance) Ltd is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority (FRI 110653). UJA (Insurance Services) Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRI 307925).

LETTERS

PROTESTS OUTSIDE UNITY HOUSE

Dear editor,

I feel that I should write to convey my dismay at the protests ongoing (at time of writing) outside our union's head office, Unity House.

These protests most certainly do not serve our union in any way that would unite it. They are divisive and, some would say offensive to its members and just as importantly the staff employed by our union, who serve our members with such great skill and care.

As our members across the transport industry face cuts, both in jobs and real term pay this union and its members needs its national officers and staff to be able to go about the business of keeping this union at the top of its game and continuing to be the industrial trade union we should all be proud of.

This whole debacle does nothing within our union, our industries or our class but take away from the wider issues currently afoot. A national rail strike is looming, the night tube and indeed the Caledonian Sleeper actions are still ongoing, we have a de facto furlough lottery and members facing upwards of 30% pay cuts and a furlough lottery in Dover.

Pay freezes have been put in place so that our members, and the working class at large, cover the costs of Tory cronyism that gave out the wheelbarrows of cash to mates during the height of the covid pandemic.

Our members face all of the above, yet these few individuals who are conducting these protests outside Unity House, without due process of trade union machinery, would drag the name of our union, officers and staff to the gutter with name calling, insinuations and personal attacks on social media and other platforms.

Quite recently this great union ran a campaign against bullying and harassment in the workplace, but quite frankly if we cannot protect our staff and members who simply wish to go about the business of serving our union what is the point of such a campaign?

The bosses are watching this issue with glee, rubbing grubby hands in anticipation of the time when they can use it against our members. I for one stand in solidarity with, and urge other members to so, our democratically elected general secretary, assistant general secretary and the Unity House staff who have been subjected to the abhorrent divisive protests that do nothing but go against our motto of "unity is strength".

Yours

Gareth Jameson

AGM REPORT

Dear editor,

Reading the report of October's RMT Annual General Meeting, I had to check that they weren't some pages missing, as so much that happened at the AGM was not included. It is remarkable how much was omitted from a seven-page report, which seemed to give more coverage to speeches from the top table than to decisions made by delegates. The motions from the union's own equalities conference had just a single sentence, which did not give any detail on their content.

So, to assist readers, here are some of the decisions that went unreported but which did happen:

- determination to fight the Tory government's plan for a new anti-union law to compel us to run a service during our own strikes, and to refuse to co-operate with it if it is passed
- a call for employers to deliver accessibility for disabled workers as standard, rather than to offer it 'as required'
- a radical programme for stopping climate change, based on worker-led transition from polluting industries to clean, socially useful production
- opposition to 'gay cure' bigots
- support for developing black leadership
- the creation of a process for RMT's lay tutors to negotiate with the union about their work
- overturning several decisions by the National Executive, including a series of inadequate decisions on disability issues
- solidarity with the Uyghur people against repression by the Chinese state, and rejecting a proposal for union officials to visit China including meeting with state representatives

In future, could RMT News please tell readers of the range of debates and decisions at the union's AGM, rather than cherry-picking its favourites and ignoring the rest?

Thanks

Janine Booth

Finsbury Park branch, AGM delegate

Editor's note: The AGM report which appears in RMT News is not a verbatim record of what is a week-long conference. As the union is facing an onslaught of attacks on jobs, services and conditions for transport workers the focus of the report was the fightback required to resist it. All decisions taken at the AGM are dealt with by the national executive committee.

WELL DONE MIKE!

I am a health and safety rep from Hull Rail branch and I want to make members aware of some fantastic efforts by our branch chair Brother Mike Keal to inspire and empower other safety reps.

On Friday December 17, 2021 Brother Keal, as Health and Safety rep, utilised his powers informing other workers in Network Rail Signal Box Hull Paragon Station to bring the station to a close and suspend service due to a lack of authorised Fire Warden at Hull paragon station which has become a common occurrence.

Brother Keal had put Transpennine management on notice after the mainline Hub terminus was completely unmanned for 12 hours from 18:00 to 06:00 on December 5/6. Brother Keal told management that should the situation arise again he would shut the station down as he was not willing to allow Transpennine Express to toy with the safety of

brothers and sisters from four TOC's, as well as the bus industry, store vendors and members of the general public.

Upon informing the police, Brother Keal organised station security personnel to clear and close the station, notices were placed on the gates to the effect of "station shut due to breach of safety regulations as a result of staff shortages".

I would like to recommend Brother Keal for a commendation from our union that he has served passionately for the last 13 years, for services to our union, it's members and the public. Showing utmost courage upholding union values and protecting members safety.

In solidarity, Jack Gimber

RMT Health and Safety Representative
Hull Paragon Station



President's column

'YOUTH WILL TRANSFORM THE WHOLE WORLD'

This month our RMT Young Members' Conference ventures north to Inverness - capital of the Scottish Highlands. Best wishes to every RMT young delegate for a successful conference and a safe journey home. I also want to thank RMT's wonderful education officer Andy Gilchrist and RMT's Young Members' committee for organising this event.

When I joined the National Union of Railwaymen in 1989 aged 23, both the rail industry and our union, seemed a place for old men. Cuts to the rail network in the 1960s and 1970s had bequeathed a 'stop-start' approach to recruitment. By the 1980s, my generation were guinea pigs for a new railway recruitment drive.

Maggie Thatcher's Tory government, on a mission to smash trade unions and cut workers' wages, pursued policies that created three million unemployed. She saw mass unemployment as a way to supply cheap labour to employers, partly through her 'Youth Training Scheme'.

British Rail played its part in this. By 1988 the Railway Training Scheme paid 'Youth Railway Trainees' as little as £29.50 a week for a variety of menial, but essential tasks, such as cleaning out old storerooms, signal boxes and railway offices.

Many of these RTS Trainees went on to win promotion to full-time railway jobs and enjoyed successful, life-long careers in railway signalling, train operations and engineering. Many of them became RMT activists and continue to be reps, branch and full-time officers in our union today.

What these young workers had on their side was a trade union with strong collective bargaining arrangements for entry grades across the rail industry. The NUR gave exploited young workers in the railways a powerful national voice.

The NUR's 1987 Annual General Meeting backed Blackpool & District branch's call for YTS recruits to be part of collective bargaining negotiations. In 1988, NUR's annual General Meeting carried a resolution from Glasgow No.6 and Brighton branches demanding full employee status for YTS trainees and union pay rates.

Five years later, Thatcher's successor, John Major began privatising Britain's railways. Private rail companies, high on government subsidies and corporate gobbledegook, believed young workers could be brainwashed to accept inferior pay and conditions. How wrong they were.

In 2002 RMT elected 40 year-old Bob Crow, as our youngest ever general secretary which was not only a generational shift but a shift of attitude, strategy and tactics. As private shareholders enriched themselves at public expense, RMT fought back and young workers flocked to our union in their thousands.

Today Boris Johnson's Tories are repackaging rail privatisation for a new era of job, pension and pay cuts, while the prices we pay for food, energy, housing and transport rocket upwards.

The past two years remind us, capitalism is an unequal society, becoming more unequal by the day.



Young workers are being mugged to pay for Tory corruption and capitalist failure. Pay freezes, job and pension cuts fall hardest on young workers who lose most from attacks on future earnings.

Today's railway is a young person's industry from engineering to operations to customer services and a new generation has already stepped forward to lead our fightback.

Young RMT member, Bella Fashola of our RMT Hastings branch, played a leading role winning a 100 per cent 'Yes' vote for strike action this month in RMT's campaign for £15 an hour and contractual sick pay for Cleaners employed by Churchill Services on Southeastern.

Yet today, millions of young workers in Britain are not members of any union. We have to enrol them as RMT activists in this fight of their generation.

Every RMT member can assist a young worker to join RMT, become active in their RMT branch and unionise fellow workers. If they need any encouragement, remind them to book their place for RMT's Young Members' Conference in February 2023 when we will be heading south to Hastings.

A young worker's place is in their union!

Alex Gordon

SAVE THE FISHERS ARMS!

Trade unionists in Northumberland have launched a fundraising drive to save their local pub and turn it into a community benefit society.

The local RMT branch Berwick-upon-Tweed and other trade unions have joined forces with local trade councils and villagers in nearby Horncliffe to help raise the £296,000 needed to buy The Fishers Arms which closed its doors last year.

More than £100,000 had

been raised so far to build a hub for the community.

RMT stalwart Moira Kay said: "The Fishers Arms is much more than a pub; our vision is to create a vital community meeting space, uniting people together in the spirit of co-operation and friendship, alleviating social isolation".

More information about the campaign and details on how to donate is available at: www.fishersarmshorncliffe.org ■



HUB: Locals gather outside the Fishers Arms to launch the campaign to re-open the pub.

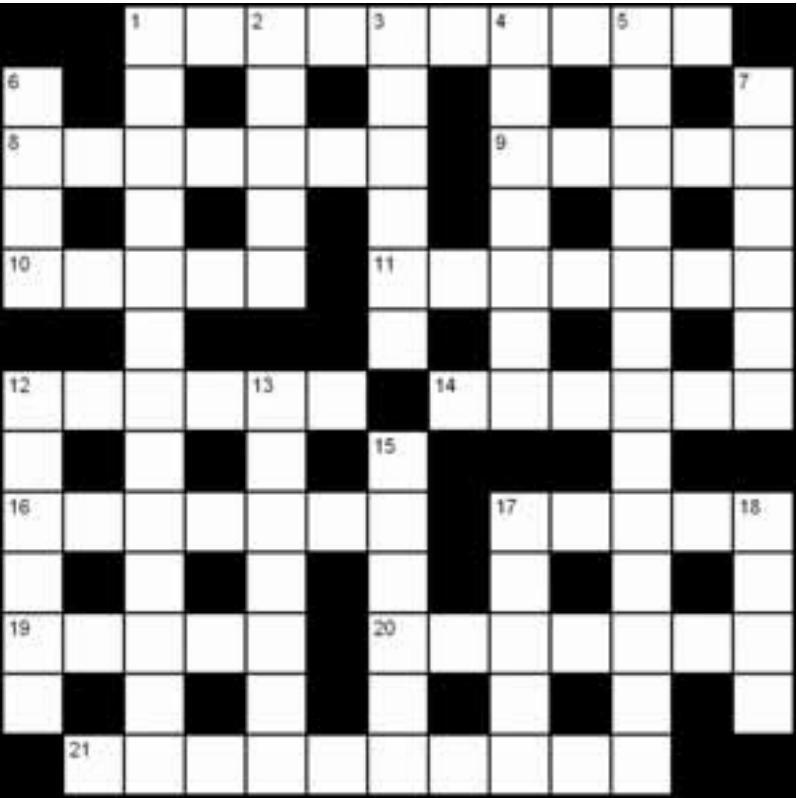
CROYDE BAY CALLING

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

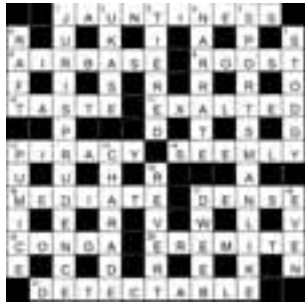
UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Resort and conference centre
01271 890 890 and
www.croydeunison.co.uk
For five per cent discount quote 'RMT' plus your membership number



£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by March 10 with your name and address.

Unfortunately there was no winner last month due to the closure of Unity House on grounds of safety. We apologise for this and hope to restore normal service as soon as possible.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1. Attractiveness (10)
- 8. Alongside (7)
- 9. Exchange (5)
- 10. Apartment (5)
- 11. Serious (7).
- 12. Careless (6)
- 14. Allure (US spelling) (6)
- 16. Cereal (7)
- 17. Scorch (5)
- 19. Banishment (5)
- 20. Avoiding (7)
- 21. Form a union of states (10)

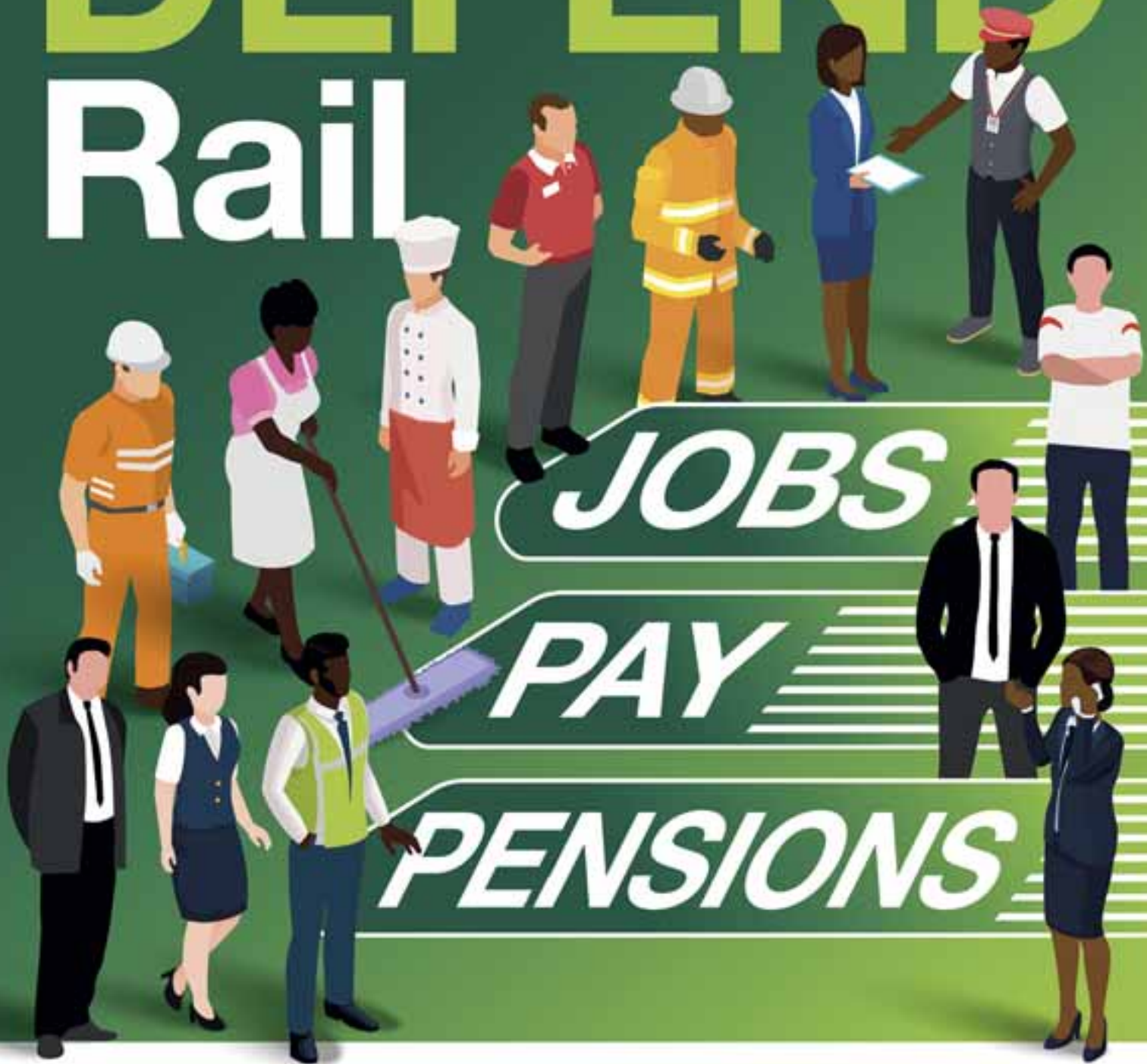
DOWN

- 1. Serving to support (13)
- 2. Wealth (5)
- 3. Froth (6)
- 4. Unprocessed (7)
- 5. Authoritative (12)
- 6. Fur (5)
- 7. Flower extract (6)
- 12. Seal (6)
- 13. linguistic sound (7)
- 15. Optical instrument (6)
- 17. Hindu teacher (5)
- 18. At any time (4)



Britain's Largest Specialist Transport Union

DEFEND Rail



Protecting our members' interests is our priority
Join us today

rmt.org.uk FREEPHONE 0800 376 3706

