

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

CLEANERS FIGHT

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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU

RMT membership helps you at work and saves you money

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

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

CAMPAIGNING

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

PERSONAL INJURIES

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

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

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

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

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

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

ACCIDENT BENEFIT

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

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

RETIREMENT BENEFIT

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

TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

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

DEMOTION COMPENSATION

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

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

ORPHAN FUND

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

Benefit is paid while a child is

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

RMT CREDIT UNION

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

ONLINE SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

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

FINES POOL

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

BEREAVEMENT BENEFIT

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

CASHBACK PREPAID CARD

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

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

FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

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

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

INSURANCE

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

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

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

HEALTH CASH PLAN

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

Join RMT by visiting
www.rmt.org.uk

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EDITORIAL



NOW IS THE TIME

RMT Churchill cleaner members are leading the way by taking strike action for improved pay and conditions. The union has now embarked on a ballot for strike action for members working for Network Rail and 16 train operating companies which represents the majority of our membership.

This decision has not been taken lightly. Network Rail intends to cut at least 2,500 safety critical maintenance jobs as part of a £2 billion reduction in spending on the network. Staff on the TOCs have been subject to pay freezes, threats to jobs and attacks on their terms and conditions.

Members are facing a two-year pay freeze while inflation is rampant, massive cuts to jobs across all companies, working practices, terms and conditions and collective agreements are to be torn up.

In addition, the future of the Railways Pension Scheme is under attack with the potential of massive increases in contributions and restricted benefits.

The bosses are throwing down the gauntlet and attempting to slash jobs and conditions at the behest of this Tory government.

Your union is calling for an end to the industry-wide pay freeze and a substantial real-term pay increase, a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies and an assurance of no detrimental changes to working practices and terms and conditions.

Therefore, we need a maximum voter turn-out this month to reach

the voting thresholds imposed by the latest anti-trade union laws which are designed to stop you taking action in defence of your livelihoods.

The employers and the government insist that there is no money in the rail industry but the salaries of railway executives alone are eye watering. This edition of RMT News also exposes the scandal of the rolling stock companies which leach millions in pure profit out of the industry every year.

The co-ordinated action taken last year by bus workers at Stagecoach has shown that a national strategy for strike action can bring results.

As part of that fight for justice for our P&O members and all seafarers the union has launched a political and industrial Fair Ferries campaign which re-establishes collectively bargained terms and conditions agreed with the union as the minimum employment standard for Ratings on international ferry routes from UK ports.

Permanent employment, pensions, safe roster patterns and Ratings apprenticeships will also be campaign demands with the aim of eradicating the low-cost crewing model from the ferry industry.

Now is the time to unite and fight for our agenda and defend transport and energy workers whatever their grade.

Mick Lynch

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



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CHURCHILL CLEANERS TAKE STRIKE ACTION

Hundreds of Churchill cleaners take to picket lines in fight for decent pay, proper sick pay and help with travel to work

Churchill cleaners launched strike action in their fight for a £15 per hour pay rate and marched at this year's Mayday rally in London to get the message out.

Staff in cleaning roles on GTR, Southeastern trains, and HS1 can earn as little £8.91 an hour. The union is demanding Churchill pay company sick pay and free travel for cleaning staff across the

network, just like every other railway worker is entitled to.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis with prices rising at their fastest rate in 30 years and inflation running at over seven per cent, these workers need a pay rise now.

Churchill made £39 million profit in 2020 but is flatly refusing to raise cleaners' wages to a reasonable standard.



SOLIDARITY: RMT president Alex Gordon calls for support at Tyne and Wear May Day rally for striking Churchill cleaners

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the strike was an escalation by members in their fight for pay justice.

"Churchill needs to recognise the damage to its public reputation and the fact customers will have to board filthy trains during their commutes and leisure travel because of their refusal to pay cleaners a decent wage.

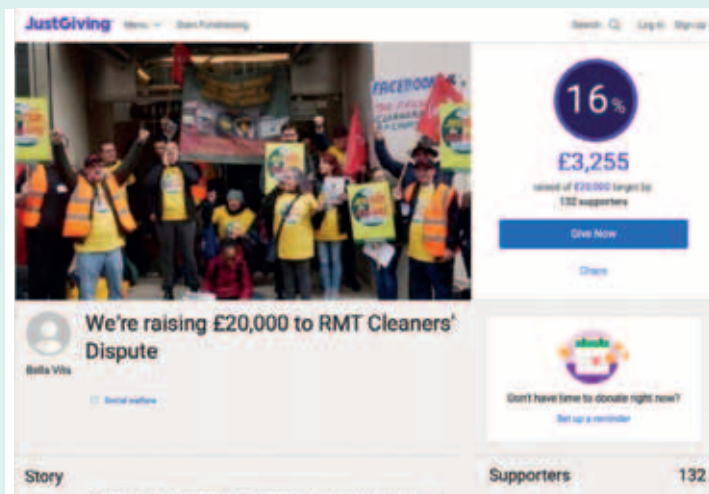
"Cleaners were rightly hailed as heroes during the pandemic only to be treated appallingly by Churchill.

"We will continue to ramp up this campaign and ensure that these greedy multimillion pound contractors are stripped of their ability to exploit workers on our railways," he said.

The message from the union is that RMT members working for Churchill are essential workers – they've done their duty throughout the Covid crisis by keeping train clean for the travelling public. Now they deserve justice.

- Support their fight to win justice in the workplace
- Fight for £15 an hour because they deserve it
- Fight for proper sick pay and help with travel to work

Go to www.rmt.org.uk for more information and videos explaining the fight for decent wages and conditions and an Early Day Motion you can ask MPs to sign in support of Churchill cleaners.■



An on-line Twitter event raised over £3,000 for the £20,000 cleaners strike fund. If you want to donate go to justgiving.com/crowdfunding/RMTUnionCleanersSupportFund



PACKED: A meeting addressed by RMT senior assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey and NEC member Ian Allen in Birmingham hosted by Birmingham Rail branch & Midlands Regional Council.

JOIN THE FIGHT BACK

Rail workers across the country attend mass meetings for strike action against attacks on wages, jobs and conditions

RMT officials and national executive committee members have been addressing mass meetings of RMT members who work for Network Rail and the 16 train operating companies being balloted for industrial action.

Speakers re-iterated the fact that the cost-of-living crisis had worsened with record inflation, energy prices and a looming National Insurance

hike which had increased demands for the union to take action on pay. The rail industry is also under pressure to make savings of hundreds of millions in staff costs.

At a packed meeting in Birmingham RMT assistant general secretary Dempsey and Ian Allen of the NEC reported that the union was now in dispute with Network Rail and 16 other TOCs.

Eddie Dempsey made it clear that rail workers were facing the fight of their lives to retain the jobs, the terms and conditions and the pensions that they had so strongly fought for over the years.

He pointed out that the Conservative government had no wish to be involved in pay talks with Network Rail or any of the TOCs stating clearly the reason why Network Rail was

looking to slash thousands of jobs, in order to save millions of pounds.

"This is down to successive government's poor handling of the transition from Railtrack to Network Rail which had left the company with crippling debt.

"That debt is now due to be repaid and the way this Conservative government is looking to pay it is by slashing jobs in order to find money to pay back bankers' loans.

"With the government also advertising last year for a new Director of Rail Pensions and Workforce Reform, it should be clear to all members working in the rail industry that this government is also putting our pensions firmly in their sights.

"We need to stand strong and take this fight to the government in order for us to have a decent wage, good terms and conditions and a decent pension that will see us through to the end of our days, which I don't think the average working man or woman in this country would see as too much to ask," he said. ■



FIGHTBACK: RMT north east regional council sends out the message

Rail Workers



6 reasons YOU should VOTE YES to defend jobs, pay and conditions with your employer...



- 1 Your cost of living is soaring**
– inflation, national insurance and bills have all increased
- 2 Your pay has been frozen**
– while much of the rail industry is making big profits
- 3 Your employer **won't guarantee your job security****
- 4 Your employer wants to attack your hard-won conditions of employment**
- 5 You have been a key worker during the pandemic – **you deserve better****
- 6 Your Union is fighting for a better deal – a **big YES** vote will help your Union win for you...**

Vote YES for Strike Action and Industrial Action Short of Strike Action

Ballot papers will be sent soon to RMT members employed in the following companies who the union is in dispute with: Network Rail • Chiltern Railways • Cross Country Trains • Greater Anglia • Island Line • Gatwick Express • London North-Eastern Railway • East Midlands Railway • c2c • Great Western Railway • Northern Railway • South Eastern Railway • South Western Railway • Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern Railways • TransPennine Express • Avanti West Coast • West Midlands Railway.

Help us to stay in touch. If you have recently changed your place of work, job title, home address and contact details please update your details here.



More info:

info@rmt.org.uk www.rmt.org.uk [RMTunion](#) Freephone 0800 376 3706

TRANSPENNINE STRIKE ACTION

Transpennine Express conductors
picket in Glasgow



Union escalates strike action over pay and Sunday working after company refuses to negotiate

TransPeninne Express (TPE) conductors on major railway lines took 48 hours of strike action last month in dispute over pay and Sunday working.

The company has refused point blank TPE conductors' request to increase pay for staff coming in on their days off and Sundays.

TPE has claimed that there was no money in the budget to resolve the dispute but were then forced to admit they

are paying out three times what conductors are asking for on daily basis - to managers to work on trains during strike days.

RMT has repeatedly pointed out that there are vastly different pay levels for conductors and other train crews for doing the same thing.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the escalation of rock-solid strike action

would bring TPE trains to a grinding halt and the bosses only had themselves to blame.

"What our members are demanding would cost TPE less money than the loss of revenue resulting from strike action.

"The public will be severely inconvenienced by this strike, and they should direct their wrath at TPE for not settling the dispute.

"RMT remains open to talks

about properly rewarding our conductors for the crucial role they play in keeping the trains moving," he said.

The union is demanding enhanced flat payments of £250 for Rest Day Working (RDW) and £275 for working Sunday which were being paid to conductors are fully restored. This would cost the company a lot less than losses sustained due to industrial action. ■



Transpennine Express conductors picket in Newcastle



Transpennine Express conductors picket line outside York Station



Transpennine Express conductors picket line outside Glasgow Central Station



SOLIDARITY: Yorkshire and Humber TUC delegates join the RMT Transpennine Strike Picket Line at Hull



Transpennine Express conductors picket line outside York Station



Transpennine Express conductors picket line outside Liverpool Lime Street Station



Transpennine Express conductors picket line outside Manchester Piccadilly Station



STATION GRADES MEET

The annual stations and associated grades organising conference discuss the fight for jobs, wages and conditions

"We have got a fight coming and it's going to be against us specifically I'm afraid," RMT conference president Keith Miller said as he opened the two-day gathering in Blackpool.

The conference was held amid preparations for strike ballots at all TOCs controlled by the Department for Transport - as well as Network Rail - over cuts to jobs, pay and conditions. RMT general secretary Mick Lynch warned that the DfT and operators "wish to shut every ticket office in Britain" and called for a massive mobilisation of members ahead of the ballot.

"Our people had to go out, put themselves in a place of danger, keep the system going, and they were at risk.

"And your reward for that is that your job is at risk. So that's number one, we must secure our jobs, no compulsory redundancies.

"If you're lucky enough to survive the job cuts they've got in mind with us, and I think it's 15,000 jobs, they're not targeting drivers, they're

targeting all the other grades. If you survive the cull, all of your working practices will be up in the air. All of your terms and conditions will be ripped up," he said.

Mr Lynch also warned: "All the stuff that we've agreed, they're saying that they're out of fashion, they're old, we've got to modernise. They want to get rid of everything you work to.

"One of the most shocking things they've got in their document is the very notion of pay bargaining. If you don't have pay bargaining you have pay begging," he said.

Delegates voted to re-affirm their support for RMT's Staff Our Stations campaign. Stephen Findlay, Leeds City said: "There are lots of stations in my area which are no-go zones after darkness falls".

Mandie Walton, North Clyde reported on the early successes of RMT's campaign against booking office closures in Scotland - where planned cuts have been scaled back, but the union is still fighting

for every station under threat. Calling for maximum engagement with passengers, she said: "We did have quite a lot of success with the local people".

The conference also passed

a resolution warning that "the Covid pandemic has been used as a reason not to fill vacancies" across TOCs, calling for a return to pre-Covid staffing levels. Chris Cuomo, Orpington said: "Very

Mick Lynch addresses conference



few seem to be getting filled and this is an ongoing thing across all the TOCs.

"To me this is very important that we get back to some kind of normality especially now the pandemic is supposedly ending and the passenger numbers are increasing. We need qualified staff to maintain those positions in the railway," he said.

An emergency motion raised the alarm over TOCs' use of agency labour to dispatch trains - including Carlisle Support Services. The resolution said that it was "outrageous that these safety-critical workers are paid under £10 [an hour] with only statutory sick pay".

Mercedes Caccia Mesorio, Manchester South said: "They get treated absolutely disgustingly. They have to work 4 days on, 4 days off, 12 hours each time. They're having to dispatch quite big units.

"The level of training is terrible, shocking - they reduced it from four weeks to a week and a half. They don't get any other benefits that any of the other members of the company do. We've been trying for years now to bring them in house, so they get the benefits that we do, and a level of respect. They do a great job, but management treat them like the dirt on the floor."

Bob Lawrence, Bristol said: "GWR has lots of unfilled vacancies and what we're doing is we're mapping where these vacancies are.

"They're deliberately not filling these vacancies because they know there's going to be another round of redundancies. In essence what they're doing is leaving these vacancies unfilled so they can re-deploy staff and save redundancy money."

The conference also heard a motion warning that station staff were dealing with passengers fleeing from domestic violence "with little

or no training" for doing so. Delegates voted to welcome the free travel facility for abuse victims but called on the union to "demand designated places of safety in every manned station" and call for training and support for staff.

Conference also noted that staff assaults on stations were "through the roof". Delegates called on the union to campaign for transport workers to be covered by legislation which already offers emergency service workers enhanced protection under the law - and make assaulting transport staff an aggravated offence.

Daniel Tiftik, Central Line West said: "I've been assaulted more as a London Underground worker than I was as a police officer. Right now it's a free for all, it's like the Wild West".

Nick Emsley, Portsmouth added: "We've had groups of youths jumping over the fence, jumping over the barriers, running amok all over the station. The BTP turned around and said 'we can't do anything because there's not enough data'".

Stephen Finn, Leeds City called for workers to be more vigilant in reporting every offence even if the perpetrators have fled, saying of the BTP: "If it's not reported, it hasn't happened in their eyes".

Derek Dochery, King's Cross responded: "We need to go a bit further and we need to put pressure on BTP, because even when we do report it, they're not following it through".

Ross Marshall, Central Line West noted: "We put it on record last year, that we believe the BTP should be disbanded - we believe the Metropolitan Police should take over. It's not so much the officers, the rank and file when they turn up, they're alright. It's the management".

Another motion warned that when station workers do report incidents to the police, they often face having their



Beverleigh Thomas

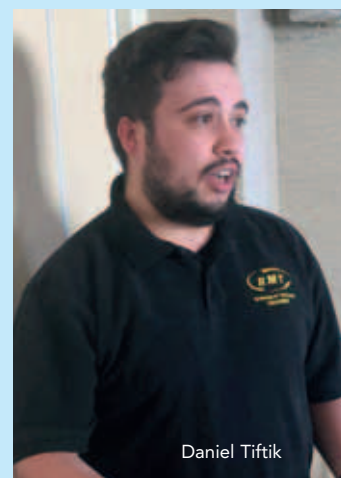
name and address read out in court. Other railway grades, however, are only required to give their payroll or badge number and their location.

Ronnie Hardman said: "The last few times they've actually catch these lads, in court your name and your address is getting read out by the solicitors who are dealing with it, and these yobs are saying 'we know where you live'. If you're a guard just your number is read out, and that's what we want".

Mandie Walton, North Clyde added: It's the same with ScotRail and BTP up there, and it's not good. Most of them know you and when you come to work anyway.

Delegates also raised the alarm over the lack of first aid training for station staff, calling for a "company by company audit" of the practice. Daniel Tiftik said: "We have no first aiders any more. The amount of people who get stabbed and then come to my station, they think they can get help there". Tom Gray, Surrey and Hants asked: "What's the point in having a de-fib if no-one can use it?"

A further motion, which will be put before the AGM, called on the union's annual general meeting to "state their agreement that the benefits our conference brings to our union is core to our ability to organise and defend the station and associated grades we represent".



Daniel Tiftik



Willie Strang

Delegates also issued a rallying call for station staff to be treated on an equal footing to other railway grades. Josie Partington said: "When it comes to station and retail staff managers will do anything to disregard our terms and conditions - which they wouldn't do to other operational grades. Show us the respect we deserve, as individuals as well as union members". ■

SAFETY BEFORE PROFITS!



Dover banner

Union protest ports after P&O vessel that failed an inspection in March loses power in the Irish Sea

RMT has vowed to keep the pressure on P&O ferries after the embattled company was forced into an embarrassing U-turn after trying to reduce agency workers rates of pay even further.

The union had received reports of agency workers being forced to sign new contracts that further reduced pay to drastically low levels.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that due to the pressure from RMT seafarers, P&O had been prevented from further cutting the pay of vulnerable agency crew.

"There are no depths to

which P&O and their Dubai owners at DP world will sink to extract the maximum profit from ferry crews operating our vital maritime supply chains.

"This is underlined by the fact that despite this U-turn, P&O is still only paying barely half of the UK minimum wage of £9.50 per hour.

"Ultimately, staffing ships with super-exploited agency staff is not just morally wrong, it undercuts those remaining ferry operators who do abide by union rates of pay and conditions and undermines passenger safety.

"The only way out of this

latest crisis at the ferry operator is for the government to take over the running of P&O vessels and reinstate directly employed staff on union rates of pay," he said.

The pressure on P&O Ferries increased last month after one of its vessels *The European Causeway* sailing from Scotland to Northern Ireland lost power off the County Antrim coast and has been ordered to remain at Larne Port until it passes an inspection.

The Maritime And Coastguard Agency (MCA), which detained the vessel in

March after it failed safety checks, said that the ferry will have to stay docked until it is reviewed.

P&O also tried to claim that it did not ask agency workers to accept lower rates of pay by claiming that there was an "administrative misunderstanding".

"The fact is P&O were caught trying to pay people from South America inferior wages to their counterparts in Europe and the MCA made change those contracts.

"We have seen contracts of agency workers where they are being paid the equivalent of

£4.35 an hour for 17 weeks work. This is less than half the current UK national minimum wage," Mick Lynch said.

FAIR FERRIES

Following the illegal sacking of 800 P&O workers the union has launched a campaign for fairness on ferries. Ever since this destructive action was taken by P&O, the government has claimed to be taking legal action against the company.

Ministers have also supported the unions' call on P&O to reinstate the dismissed seafarers on their original terms and conditions. As part of that fight for justice the union has launched a political and industrial Fair Ferries campaign which re-establishes collectively bargained terms and conditions agreed with the union as the minimum employment standard for Ratings on international ferry routes from UK ports.

Permanent employment, pensions, safe roster patterns and Ratings apprenticeships will also be campaign demands with the aim of eradicating the low-cost

crewing model from the ferry industry. This includes all ro-ro, ro-pax and lo-lo vessels and covers thousands of Ratings jobs on international routes from UK ports. The union has been in detailed discussions with government and ferry employers over a framework agreement in the ferries sector that supports collectively bargained rates of pay, high safety standards, safe roster patterns, Ratings training and full pension rights.

International Transport Federation (ITF) inspectors who were scheduled to investigate welfare issues at the Port of Dover following reports of bad practices on P&O vessels were denied access by the Port Police despite giving advanced warning of their visit.

The inspectors said that it was an unprecedented situation and the first time they'd been blocked from investigating welfare issues in 17 years.

Mick Lynch said that P&O were running a pirate outfit staffed by undertrained, ill prepared agency workers making their ferries unsafe for



the travelling public to use.

"The contempt that the company have for both staff and passengers alike is underlined by the Easter travel chaos at UK ports that their illegal actions have unleashed.

"We are gathering support from all political parties, passengers, commercial

hauliers the wider trade union movement, and businesses across the supply chain in this continuing battle for justice.

"The union's Fair Ferries campaign is fighting to ensure that the ruthless behaviour of P&O cannot happen again in the maritime industry or anywhere else," he said.

CHAOS: P&O passenger ferry European Causeway on the Larne Cairnryan route lost power off the County Antrim coast and was ordered to remain at Larne Port until it passed an inspection.



LARGEST EVER ON-LINE STRIKE RALLY



Mick Lynch addresses the rally

Thousands join on-line rally to get the vote out for strike action against the pay freeze and massive job cuts

Thousands logged on to the union's website or on Facebook to join RMT's first ever mass rally as ballot papers were delivered to members' doors for industrial action.

Over 300 members also volunteered during the rally to take part in peer-to-peer texting sessions to get the message out on the need to vote.

Over 40,000 railway workers

on Network Rail and 16 train operating companies (TOCs) are being balloted for strike action in what is potentially the biggest rail strike in modern history.

Network Rail intends to cut at least 2,500 safety critical maintenance jobs as part of a £2 billion reduction in spending on the network. Staff on the TOCs have been subject to pay freezes, threats to jobs and attacks on their

terms and conditions. The ballot opened April 26 and closes May 24.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch explained in detail about the background to the dispute, what the companies are planning in terms of attacks on your jobs, pay and conditions and what the union is doing to deliver the mandate to allow members to take action to fight off these attacks.

RMT senior assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey covered the union's strategy for getting the vote out and specifically what you can all do to deliver the strong mandate that RMT needs.

There was also time for questions from members, reps and activists. A comprehensive ballot frequently asked questions document has also been produced and is available on the RMT

campaign page on the website.

Eddie Dempsey explained that the anti-trade union laws dictate that in order to take industrial action certain voter thresholds must be met in terms of both members voting and those voting yes.

As a result, even if everybody voted yes, the threshold would not be met, and the workforce would not be able to take industrial action to defend their pay, jobs and conditions.

"As a result, they are trying to get members not to vote. For instance, Network Rail wrote to all staff and said: 'You are not obliged to vote and there is certainly no rush to make your decision'.

"We know that we will get a yes vote in every company but because of the anti-trade union laws we must also maximise turnout to ensure that we get over the thresholds.

"That is why the companies aren't just trying to persuade you to vote no, they don't want you to use your vote at all! They are trying to steal your voice," he said.

The union has been getting the message out to members in various ways:

- Regular campaign messages including texts, emails and video messages sent to every member involved
- Campaign materials including *RMT News* and a postcard about the ballot has been sent to every member setting out the six reasons why they should vote yes
- Campaign materials have been sent to all regional offices and you can email voteyes@rmt.org.uk to ask for some to be sent to you at home

Mick Lynch went into great detail about the true scale and depth of the attacks being faced by rail workers as the country emerges from the Covid pandemic and enters further into the cost-of-living



Eddie Dempsey addresses the rally

crisis.

"Members are facing a two-year pay freeze, so far, while inflation is rampant, massive cuts to jobs across all companies, working practices, terms and conditions and collective agreements to be torn up.

"In addition, and in a separate process and probable dispute, the future of the Railways Pension Scheme is under attack with the potential of massive increases in contributions and restricted benefits.

"The bosses are throwing down the gauntlet saying: 'you will accept the pay we dictate; you will accept job cuts and you will do what you're told, when and how we tell you to do it, and to top that off when you retire, you won't get what we promised you for your retirement'.

"Your union has called for an end to the industry-wide pay freeze and a substantial real-term pay increase, a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies and an assurance of no detrimental changes being made to my members' working practices and terms and conditions.

"No company has met these demands but merely repeated a mantra that in order to save costs – to 'modernize' and 'reform' – the workforce has to accept mass job cuts, detrimental and profound changes to agreements and working practices and suffer a pay freeze while inflation and the

cost-of-living rockets.

"We cannot accept that, so we are now in dispute with all of these companies. RMT will not remain passive and now is the time for us to campaign in defence of our members," he said.

You can watch the entire rally on the RMT website.

FIVE KEY ACTIONS

- Register for peer-to-peer texting sessions
- Email voteyes@rmt.org.uk if you want campaign materials
- Email defendjobschanges@rmt.org.uk if you need to amend your address, job or workplace records.
- Big turnout for the TUC rally on June 18 in London
- Most importantly get your ballot papers back in as soon as possible and ask colleagues to do the same



GETTING THE VOTE OUT

Train crew and shunters organising conference calls for maximum turn out in national strike ballot

The national industrial organising conference of train crew and shunting grades met in Bournemouth recently with the main focus on one key task, to organise the grades to get the vote out in the rail ballot over jobs, pay and conditions.

Conference president Billy Kimm opened the conference and welcomed delegates to the first in person gathering of the grades since 2019. He explained how crucial the event was as an opportunity for activists to exchange experiences from their branches and regions.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch told delegates that the union had no choice but to ballot for industrial action in the face of rail industry plans to slash thousands of jobs and permanently change the way the rail network functions.

"They want to enforce a pay freeze, which we've got to bust, they want your jobs to be insecure. My estimation is somewhere between 10 and

15 thousand people will be stripped out the rail system. And even those that keep their jobs will be affected. Because even if you keep the job, your terms and conditions, your working practises, even down to your roster diagrams will be permanently changed.

"Even the idea of collective bargaining, collective negotiations, will go out in the window. That is what this agenda is about," he said.

After giving an outline of how grades across the wider industry will be affected, including the abolition of the entire operative grade on Network Rail, the closing of ticket offices and the decimation of on-train catering, Mick hammered home what the plans for the grades represented at the conference will be.

"They have said to us expressly in writing that the role of the train crew will be reoriented to customer service and away from operational duties.

"For the guards, conductors, they propose a train manager grade that will not have a safety critical role; that's in the documentation we've got. Now that's not their number one priority, that's the second priority after they've dealt with stations," he said.

Explaining how far reaching the proposed changes are Mick told conference that the industry has no intention of going back to the timetable that existed pre-Covid. The days of the never-ending upward trend in season ticket sales, 'the goose that laid the golden egg' was over," he said.

"Now there are fewer journeys, there's more people travelling on a Saturday and Sunday than there are on a Monday, which is a complete reversal of the last 30 or 40 years of commuting. So, they're saying to our Network Rail people, you must commit to working more weekends and unlimited amounts of weekends and nights.

"You must, and this is written down in the documents, include Sunday, in the working week without any compensation, whether it's monetary or time.

"They have made it very clear that fundamental change is what they want, without negotiation. But we disabused them of that when they got the formal notification of the ballot," Mick said.

RMT president Alex Gordon congratulated Billy Kimm, conference secretary Neil Sharples, and the liaison committee for keeping the grades' meetings and conference going over the last two years and Dorset Rail branch for hosting this year's event.

Talking about the immediate tasks that the grades faced he said: "We will never be able to recreate this moment. This organising conference is a moment you should remember because it's when we had a possibility to really make some changes for



the future, some changes in our lives and changes for our children in the future.

"We've got an opportunity here that we've got to grasp but in order to win the industrial action ballot – the ballot for strike action – we have to make some very big changes of consciousness and organisation," he said.

Alex explained that rather than tell workers to vote 'no' the companies' tactics are to create apathy so that members don't vote at all so that the thresholds for the ballot under the Tory anti-union laws are not met.

"You have to understand that what's being done to you and your members is very similar to what has been done to many other people in other societies. They're trying to take you out of an active role in politics. They're trying to take you out of a possibility of changing your lives for the better," Alex said.

RMT assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey told delegates in practical terms what they needed to do to get the vote out in the ballot based on recent experience and outlined the importance of the union's telephone call bank operation.

"I originally was tasked with delivering a ballot result on Network Rail, 20,000 members and putting 11,000 ballots back in the postbox. I put a strategy together. We've got call bank operations in Scotland, in Liverpool, in the south in London, in

Birmingham and in Doncaster. And now we're going to move forward from that into a second phase. I'm now responsible for taking the strategy and transferring it across to delivering a 'get the vote out' campaign for all the train operating companies.

"Every member involved in this ballot must be contacted to confirm that they have voted. This conference needs to urgently assist and get the vote out. It's your responsibility to work a shift on the telephones to deliver this ballot result," he said.

Delegates passed a resolution condemning plans for the further extension of remote train despatch by Network Rail.

Moving the resolution Ivor

Riddell, Medway and District said: "We have grave concerns that yet again the employers are tinkering with what is the most safety critical points of travel on the railway. The 'platform, train interface'.

"Despite the assurances from the RRSB it is not about staff cuts, we do not accept these assurances which have in the past have proved to be false and misleading.

"Technology can only do so much and used in the right way can help to enhance working practices and safety for staff and passengers. But this is not the case with remote despatching as there would inevitably be the temptation to cut corners and staff numbers," he said.

A resolution passed in

defence of the role of the grades' conference itself caused much discussion with delegates affirming its importance. Moving the motion, Richard Eastley, Portsmouth said: "We have a unique and intimate knowledge of the role train crew carry out and are committed to continue defending it and our employment.

"Delegates are uniquely empowered by their attendance and contribution at this conference, to continue planning and organising the fightback and defence of our members on behalf of those in the workplace," he said. Next year's conference will be held in Newcastle.



Mick Lynch

WIGHT SKY CATASTROPHIC ENGINE FAILURE

Wightlink instructed to ensure competent technical oversight of maintenance of its vessels

A Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) report on two catastrophic engine failures, one resulting in a fire, on board Wightlink vessel Wight Sky in 2018 has identified a number of key safety issues.

Wightlink has been identified insufficient technical oversight of the engines' operating parameters, standards of maintenance management and quality control, engine component and auxiliary system design problems and a lack of clear ownership for engine maintenance and engine condition monitoring.

On August 26, 2018, Wight Sky suffered a catastrophic main engine failure as it prepared to enter the Lymington River on its regular crossing from Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. This was the ferry's second catastrophic main engine failure in less than a year, the failed engine being the replacement for the previous failure that had resulted in a fire and serious injuries to an engineer officer. On December 14, 2018, Wight Sky then suffered a third catastrophic engine failure. On this occasion, the failed engine was a new build and had been in operation for just 389 hours.

Wight Sky was one of three Wight Class sister ferries and following the third engine failure Wightlink withdrew its Wight Class ferries from service. Following discussions between the ferry owner, the



Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Lloyd's Register, and the engine manufacturer Volvo Penta, a mitigation plan was put in place to enable the ferries to return to service.

This investigation found a history of engine failures across the Wight Class fleet dating back to 2010 and consequently, the scope of the investigation expanded to include all known failures. This led to a long and detailed technical investigation that comprised forensic examination and testing of five of the failed engines and their components, a full review of the vessels' system design and operation, and the safety management, planned maintenance and condition monitoring procedures, together with manning and technical oversight.

Other safety recommendations called on manufacturer Volvo Penta AB to identify all affected D16 MH customers to inform and resolve the identified oil filter

bypass anomaly.

MAIB called on Lloyds Register to assess the need to introduce within its rules and regulations the time taken to declutch a main propulsion engine from the drive shaft in the event of an emergency shutdown, to prevent the engine from being driven and increasing the risk of serious injury and damage.

RK Marine Ltd was also requested to provide its customers with all manufacturers' safety bulletins applicable to the engines in use.

Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents Andrew Moll said that it had been a long and complex investigation initially focussing on two catastrophic engine failures, the investigation found a history of engine failures across Wightlink's fleet of Wight Class ferries dating back to 2010.

"Consequently, the scope of the investigation was broadened to include the forensic examination and

testing of five failed engines and their components, a full review of the vessels' propulsion system design and operation. We also examined the ferry operator's safety management, planned maintenance and condition monitoring procedures, together with the technical oversight provided by the engine manufacturer and its approved service provider.

"MAIB has worked closely with Wightlink, Volvo Penta AB, Lloyds Register and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency over the past three years to help ensure that most of the technical issues identified in the investigation report were addressed as soon as practicable.

"The report contains recommendations aimed at improving the reliability of the propulsion machinery on board the Wight Class ferries and reduce the likelihood of future catastrophic engine failures," he said.



The Maritime Charities Group (MCG) Redundancy and Retraining Bursary Fund will remain open following discussions by funders, the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB), Trinity House and the Nautilus Slater Fund.

The fund, which provides up to £500 for training and refresher courses to UK-based seafarers who have lost work due to Covid-19, was due to close last month but funders have agreed to extend the deadline to meet growing demand.

MCG chairman Commander Graham Hockley said: "We have decided to keep the fund open to support those who have recently lost their jobs and want to stay in the industry but need further training or requalification to do so. The closing date for applications is currently open-ended but will be determined by demand and available funding".

The fund, which is administered by the Marine Society on behalf of MCG, is aimed at merchant seafarers who have lost their job due to the pandemic and want to stay

in the industry. Applicants can claim up to £500 towards training or qualifications of their choice.

Since it opened in November 2020 the fund has helped over 80 UK-based seafarers by providing over £36,000 in funding for training to help them stay in maritime. So far over 30 per cent of beneficiaries have already got back into employment.

Mr Hockley added that the fund had been a real success story for MCG at a time when Covid hit many of our seafarers very hard.

"By working together to fund training for those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, our members have made a real difference to their chances of getting another job in maritime," he said.

Case study

John Jess did his SCTW refresher courses so he could stay in the industry

I've been a marine engineer since I left school, working mainly in the deep sea merchant fleet and more recently in oil and gas, specifically offshore drilling. With the onset of Covid-19 the

company I worked for made everyone on my rig redundant by October 2020.

Having been at sea for over 20 years I thought about getting a job ashore but decided I should renew my STCW courses and continue working at sea in some capacity, either in oil and gas or back within shipping.

I saw the adverts for the bursary fund in the Nautilus Telegraph and, as my certificates were due for renewal in March, thought I would apply. I was unemployed at the time and had an offer to start work again soon but needed to get my STCW courses refreshed urgently.

So I paid for the courses myself and applied for the grant at the same time. The process was quick and easy and very flexible. I received £500 towards my STCW refresher courses - 4 of them in total - and this paid the majority of the fees. Once I'd passed the courses I was able to accept a contract.

I'd say to anyone in a similar position, take this opportunity and apply for a grant either for a refresher course or towards training for something new in the sector. It's a really good way to enhance your skills and improve your job prospects in these hard times.



HOW TO APPLY

Applications to the MCG Redundancy and Retraining Bursary Fund are managed by the Marine Society on behalf of MCG. To find out more about the scheme and how to apply go to www.marine-society.org/redundancy-fund

Newly-elected assistant secretary Gwen McNeil

DISABLED MEMBERS MEET

Gwen McNeil and Janine Booth report on RMT's annual disabled members' advisory conference

Delegates from up and down the country met at the mechanics institute in Manchester last month for the 2022 national disabled members' conference.

Chaired by Scotland's finest, Davie O'Donnell, we were all made to feel very welcome and put at ease, whether this was our first conference or we had been involved in the disabled movement within the union since its inception.

We were fortunate to have RMT general secretary Mick Lynch to address conference and heard a very honest and open account of what the

future could look like, particularly within the rail industry.

Words like 'streamlining' and 'modernisation' are often double-edged swords and it sounds like this will very much be the case moving forward. Of course, the truly awful treatment of P&O workers was discussed, as well as the blatant law-breaking arrogantly admitted by CEO Peter Hebblethwaite, when quizzed by MPs recently.

Delegate also heard Dennis Queen from Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, who is a well-known face

locally and has been a fantastic ally to transport workers when faced with disputes in that part of the country. It's refreshing to hear the support this coalition offers people of all ages and with any impairment: they help with benefit entitlement and employment opportunities, and advise local authorities on matters from accessibility to inclusivity and everything in between!

After closing day one's session, we made our way to Tony Wilson Way for a social event complete with some local neurodivergent poets

performing some of their work. It was a fantastic end to a full-on but really enjoyable and productive day.

Next day delegates joined the striking cleaners' picket line at Piccadilly station. We helped give out leaflet and gave vocal support to the cleaners' fight for decent pay.

Day two of the conference involved delegates debating issues and making important decisions. Conference heard reports from the Disabled Members' Advisory Committee and the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee.

We agreed a plan of

activities for the year ahead, including quarterly online forums, distributing 'know your rights' information, and publishing a pamphlet of our Disabled Members Speak Out articles. Disabled members will continue to support RMT campaigns and strikes on staffing and accessible transport and to highlight the impact of anti-union laws on the fight for disabled rights. We will be publishing a Neurodiversity handbook, and offering speakers to branches about mental health.

The plan also includes advising RMT branches on making their activities more accessible, and pressing the union nationally to improve its accessibility. We will promote (free) RMT membership to people on unpaid employability schemes.

We will also be launching our Disabled Workers' Charter, and working with reps, activists and branches across the country to campaign for its

demands.

We passed five resolutions that had been submitted by branches:

- calling out the government's Disability Confident scheme and the employers who use it as 'virtue signalling' while mistreating disabled workers
- calling for campaigns to go beyond 'awareness' and demand changes to remove disabling barriers
- asking the union to resume its practice of counting all members towards the minimum needed to register for courses
- highlighting GWR's mistreatment of autistic and other neurodivergent workers and asking the union to place a series of demands on the company
- asking the union to run a Stage 2 Neurodiversity course, so that members who have attended the



David King

Stage 1 course can develop their understanding.

We elected officers for the year ahead and decided to hold next year's conference in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and elected a three-person liaison

committee to help organise it.

All in all, it was a very productive conference and has set the scene for a year ahead of active and effective campaigning for a better deal for disabled workers. ■

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THE ROLLING STOCK RACKET



An RMT report exposes the scandal of a rolling stock company that own around 80 per cent of UK trains

The rolling stock racket is a long-established scandal on the railways. There are three main rolling stock companies (ROSCOs) Angel Trains, Eversholt and Porterbrook which owns and maintains railway engines and carriages which are leased to train operating companies who operate the trains.

Created during rail privatisation in 1995, the ROSCOs have faced criticism from many quarters – including even passenger train operating companies – because they act as a monopoly to keep lease prices high.

In the last 10 years, the ROSCOs have paid out £2.7 billion in dividends to their owners which typically represent around 100 per cent of their pre-tax profits. The average dividend payment is around £260 million each year. As RMT has previously shown, the cost of leasing rolling stock is growing faster than any other cost and now consumes 23 per cent of TOC spending.

Yet even as it attacks staff pay and jobs, the government maintains a deafening silence about the ROSCOs and their grotesque profiteering.

RMT has repeatedly argued that this broken model of train procurement needs to be finally swept away. The public should buy and own our trains directly, rather than paying extortionate rents to these three main companies.

As an immediate step the pandemic profiteering must be curbed. The government could announce a windfall tax on profits of the Rolling Stock companies and use the proceeds to help fund a fair pay deal for staff.

EVERSHOLT

Recently the union produced a report called 'A great sucking sound': Eversholt as a case study in the rolling stock parasites. In the last five years, Eversholt, one of the three rolling stock companies that own around 80 per cent of UK trains, has:

- Paid £208 million in

dividends to its Luxembourg parent, with an average annual dividend payment of £41.5 million. These dividends represent, on average, between 90 and 100% of the profits being made by the group of companies.

- Paid £239 million in interest payments on a Eurobond of £340 million. Over the term of the loan it will pay £48 million each year until 2055 amounting to £1.8 billion in interest payments in addition to the loan principal. This is simply a way of extracting dividends by another name.
- Avoided paying £9.5 million every year to the Exchequer and £363 million over the term of the loan. Eversholt's decision to use this Eurobond means that it will avoid paying £363 million in tax to the UK Treasury that would otherwise be due in Withholding Tax on these interest payments to its

overseas Luxembourg parent company.

- Invested consistently less in new rolling stock than it makes every year in revenue on operating leases. In the last two years, it spent only around £100 million on new rolling stock. In the same period, it took out around £180 million in dividends and interest payments on its Eurobond.

Far from being innovative investors in new rolling stock, Eversholt, like the other ROSCOs, is a parasitic interest in the railways, enriching itself at public expense while the government shields it from public attention and directs austerity at the staff who work on the railways.

In October 2012, Andrew Haldane, then an Executive Director at the Bank of England, described the way that the banking sector drew people into its activities and extracted wealth from the nation as 'a great sucking

sound'. This striking metaphor could be used to describe perfectly the relationship between the companies that lease trains and the railway industry. While passengers face reduced services and staff endure pay cuts and attacks on their jobs, one thing has remained absolutely unchanged during the pandemic: the ongoing looting of the railways by the ROSCOs.

The three Roscos are complex networks of companies whose parent companies are based overseas in low tax regimes like Luxembourg and Jersey (Table 4).

These companies are geared toward the production and extraction of dividends and they have been very successful at doing this up to, and during the pandemic.

Eversholt's latest published accounts show that the top UK-based company, Eversholt UK Rails Limited, which acts as the investment and holding company for the group in the UK, paid a dividend of £41.8 million to its Luxembourg-based parent company UK Rails S.a.r.l in June 2021.

Over the last five years it has paid £208 million in dividends to its Luxembourg parent, with an average annual dividend payment of £41.5 million.

These dividends represent, on average, between 90 and 100 per cent of the profits being made by the group of companies. These are recorded in the consolidated accounts of the group's accounting company Eversholt UK Rails (Holdings) Ltd.

TAX AVOIDANCE

One major advantage of the form of loan that UK Rails S.a.r.l has issued is that it avoids normal taxation on international interest payments.

Ordinarily, interest

TABLE 1: EVERSOLT PROFITS AND DIVIDENDS

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	AVERAGE	TOTAL
Profits made by Eversholt							
UK Rails (Holding) Ltd (£m)	£43.041m	£40.048m	£41.550m	£41.5m	£41.8m	£41.588m	£207.939m
Dividends paid by Eversholt							
UK Rails Ltd (£m)	£43.514m	£40.012m	£44.015m	£9.601m	£54.557m	£38.340m	£191.699m
Dividend as a % of Eversholt							
UK Rails (Holding)							
Limited profit	101%	100%	106%	23%	131%	92%	

TABLE 2: UK RAILS S.A.R.L'S EUROBOND AND INTEREST PAYMENTS MADE BY EVERSOLT UK RAILS LTD

Eurobond principal	Annual coupon (14.06%)	Interest payments over 38 years	Interest payments since 2017
£340,625,386	£47,891,929	£1,819,893,312	£239,459,646

TABLE 3: EVERSOLT'S ROLLING STOCK ASSETS, PURCHASING AND FUNDING

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Rolling stock assets (£000)	£2,867,406	£3,124,112	£3,476,930	£3,520,420	£3,272,457
New rolling stock	£248,555	£261,644	£404,145	£80,941	£21,539
Revenue	£378,399	£374,927	£442,564	£438,688	£426,148
Long-term debt	£2,677,651	£2,645,856	£2,391,827	£2,695,226	£2,637,044

TABLE 4: THE ROSCOS' OVERSEAS PARENT COMPANIES

Rosco	Major shareholder	Registered	Ultimate Parent
Porterbrook	Allianz Infrastructure Luxembourg I	Luxembourg	Allianz Capital Partners, the investment of arm of Allianz Group, the German multinational insurance and financial services giant.
Porterbrook	PIP4 Thomas LP on behalf of AIMCo	Canada	AIMCo is the Alberta Investment Management Corporation which is an investment vehicle for Alberta pension funds and endowments.
Porterbrook	Utilities Trust of Australia International Pty Ltd	Australia	Utilities Trust of Australia (UTA) was set up as an infrastructure investment fund by Hastings Funds Management, now Vantage Infrastructure. In 2018, UTA appointed New Zealand based infrastructure investment fund Morrison and Co to manage their investments, including Porterbrook.
Angel Trains (Willow Topco Ltd – registered in Jersey)	AMP Capital Investors (Angel Trains Topco) S.a.r.l	Luxembourg	AMP Capital Investors owns 65% of Angel Trains. AMP Capital Investors is part of AMP Capital, an investment arm of the Australian financial services firm AMP Group Ltd. AMP Capital also has a minority holding from the banking arm of Mitsubishi.
Eversholt Investment Ltd Security Group	UK Rails S.a.r.l.	Luxembourg	UK Rails S.a.r.l. was, until this year jointly owned by CK Infrastructure Holdings Limited and CK Hutchison Holdings Limited, which is registered in the Cayman Islands. UK Rails S.a.r.l. is now the controlling party.

payments from a UK company to its overseas parent would be subject to a 20 per cent withholding tax. Eurobonds, however, are exempt from this withholding tax provided they are listed on an international stock exchange. Eversholt's Eurobond is listed on the International Stock Exchange and this allows it to avoid

paying withholding tax on interest payments.

This withholding tax would be worth £9.5 million every year to the Exchequer and £363 million over the term of the loan. Eversholt's decision to use this Eurobond means that it will avoid paying £363 million in tax to the UK Treasury.

The government is intensely relaxed about the Roscos enriching themselves. As RMT has shown before, the government has stepped in and guaranteed that the ROSCOS' lease payments will continue to be paid in full and has made no attempt to control either lease charges or dividend payments. ■



A VOICE FOR RETIRED MEMBERS

Retired RMT members call for a campaign for decent pensions in the current standard of living crisis

RMT's first in-person retired members' advisory conference took place against the backdrop of the Manchester Mechanics' Institute's magnificent stained-glass windows - which among other unions illustrate the work of the union's predecessors the National Union of Railwaymen and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

"Since last year pensioners in our country have been affected regretfully more or less the way we thought we were going to be treated," newly elected conference president Tony Donaghy said in his opening address. "It's even worse I think".

He called for retired members to "express our solidarity with all the workers in the transport industry who are in struggle at the moment" - pointing to the all-grades ballots at Network Rail and 15 Train Operating Companies as well as sackings at P&O Ferries. "We're all members of

an excellent union and that union fights for its members. We're a part of RMT and we have to look upon ourselves to campaign."

NEC member Joe Kirby told delegates: "What P&O did at the behest of DP World was chop the hands off our members."

"The way things are going, that campaign has evolved somewhat, and we're looking at a Fair Ferries campaign."

Top of the agenda was the Tory government's attack on the state pension "triple lock" - which is designed to increase pension payments by the highest of the increase in average earnings, the increase in living costs or inflation. But in response to soaring inflation and in a breach of their own election promise, the Tories have ditched the triple lock this year and instead imposed a 3.1 per cent increase.

Tony Donaghy said: "Of course as you're all aware the triple lock is no longer a triple

lock - it's a double lock.

"We're faced now with a new situation of heating. The saying used to be that pensioners and people in poverty have to choose whether they heat or eat, and the situation we're in exacerbates that," he said.

Delegates unanimously endorsed a motion calling for the reinstatement of the triple lock and pushing for RMT to step up its campaigning on these issues.

Oliver New, London Transport retired members, described the current state pension age as "woefully low, disgustingly low".

"It's become even more relevant because of the huge cost of living crisis. We all need to be fighting on several different fronts, and for us part of that is going to be demanding justice on pensions," he said.

Frank Murray, London Transport retired members, said: "If we were to get the 10

per cent [in accordance to high inflation], that is what we should be getting, but instead it's been suspended and we're getting 3.1 per cent."

Noel McDonnell, Manchester and North West retired members, said: "This 3.1 per cent is not even honest. With the freezing of the tax allowance a lot of people are paying extra tax this year".

Delegates called on the union to consider supporting the renationalisation of energy companies.

A further resolution called for the NEC to raise the alarm over energy companies pressuring customers to "go digital even though millions of pensioners do not have access to the internet".

Kate Byrne, London Transport retired members said: "We're not going to get satisfaction with the energy prices unless we start nationalising the energy companies again".

Andy Warnock-Smith, North West and North Wales retired members, said: "We have one of the lowest state pensions of any country in the developed world, and that's a disgrace."

Addressing the issue of digital exclusion, Tony Donaghy said: "We talk about the Equality Act. The question is: where is the Equality Act in terms of utilities?"

Lesley Finlayson, London Transport retired members, noted: "Instead of increasing the pensions, they've brought in these gimmicks in the heating allowance and everything else. Then they take away things like the over-75s TV licenses, they're going to start changing for prescriptions. If they just put it in the pensions and let pensioners take decisions about their own lives. Younger people don't understand the importance of pensions, they just live for today."

Tony Perks, Wessex retired members added: "I'm finding that my council tax and electricity bill is actually more than my mortgage was."

Delegates also called for a "top up heating allowance" for pensioners on limited incomes.

Noel McDonnell said: "People have been told by their energy suppliers to increase what they pay into their account. And they are saying they just cannot do it."

A motion that delegates voted to send to RMT's AGM in July called for the union to campaign for the UK government to establish an independent pensioners' commissioner, akin to those already in place in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ron Douglas, London and Anglia retired members spoke of the pensioners' movement's ongoing frustration over its engagement with politicians. "They say yes, but do nothing," he blasted.

"We can get the RMT parliamentary group to get moving on this motion. The National Pensioners

Convention has tried to get it going as its own entity, but we can't get anyone in Parliament to put it forward as an early day motion."

Further motions passed by delegates called for the union to raise the prospect of a "living pension" with ministers, set at 70 per cent of the living wage and rising in accordance with triple lock metrics.

Retired members also voiced discontent over the axing of free TV licenses for over-75s. Ron Douglas said: "We had a meeting with the BBC, expressed our concern particularly the disabled and elderly people who can't get out, it's the only form of contact they have with the world."

A second motion to be sent to the AGM focuses on the role of RMT's retired members' section and calls for recognition of this category of membership in the rulebook. It called for this to be included in the organisational review recently instigated by RMT general secretary Mick Lynch.

Ron Ward said: "We're not seeking to be EC members, we're not seeking to be branch secretaries, all we want is to be recognised in the rulebook of our union".

Lesley Morrison noted: "When people retire they're not just going to do a bit of gardening, not people like us. You don't just curl up and die you get out there and do something. We should still be part of the union".

Conference delegates additionally heard a report from the TUC Pensions Committee, a presentation on the RMT credit union and a speech from Caroline Degale of Keep Our NHS Public - who called on union activists to step up campaigning efforts against the Health and Care Bill currently going through Parliament. "It's really about embedding the private sector into the NHS, it's a way of trying to break up the NHS as we know it," she said.



Ron Douglas



Lesley Morrison



Stained-glass window

LEGAL

SETTLEMENT FOR INJURY

Member wins compensation for injuries without court proceedings

An RMT worker whose occupation is a Signal and Telecommunications team Leader was injured in an accident at work in October 2017. He was struck by the door of a van after the hinge at the top of the door snapped. As a result, he suffered pain and stiffness to the neck, right shoulder and lower back as well as pain to the right hip and right arm.

He was subsequently

examined by two different medico-legal experts. He was originally examined by an Accident and Emergency consultant who in his medical opinion believed that he should have made a full recovery 3-6 months from the commencement of physiotherapy.

Unfortunately, the member continued to experience pain following the treatment and was examined by an

Orthopaedic Consultant for a further opinion. Upon being examined, it was requested that he undergo MRI Scans of the cervical spine and lumbar spine as well as nerve conduction studies of the right arm.

Following these further investigations, the member was re-assessed for a final opinion. It became apparent that the accident had served to accelerate the worsening symptoms by a number of years.

As a result of the accident, he was unable to work for approximately three months and required extensive treatment in the form of physiotherapy, osteopath and sports massages to alleviate his pain.

Once the medical evidence was finalised to identify the exact nature of his injuries, negotiations started with the defendants representatives. Following correspondence and detailed negotiations with the other side's representatives, it was possible to negotiate a satisfactory settlement without the need for court proceedings.

The member was compensated both for his injuries and financial losses. The fact that Thompsons Solicitors was able to recover compensation may assist the health and safety representatives at the workplace and prevent similar accidents in the future. Cases such as this show the value of the union's legal service. ■

MERTHYR RISING 2022



June 10 - 12 2022 at Cyfarthfa Castle, Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

A music, arts and ideas festival celebrating working class culture and resistance at the birthplace of the red flag.

You can buy tickets and find out more information here - www.merthyrising.uk

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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.

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ASBESTOS MEMORIAL OPENS IN EAST LONDON

A new permanent memorial commemorating the lives of all the people who died as a result of exposure to asbestos was unveiled at a special remembrance ceremony last month on International Workers Memorial Day.

The new stone carries two inscriptions, the first reads, "In memory of those who have lost their lives because of exposure to asbestos. In gratitude to those who fight to improve safety conditions for those workers and their families. Remember the dead and fight for the living" and on the other side it states, "Together showing our commitment to safer

workplaces and communities".

Barking and Dagenham have seen an exceptionally high asbestos mortality rate, a marker of how hard the area has been hit by the legacy of the Cape Asbestos Factory, which operated in Barking from 1913 to 1968.

Health and Safety Executive figures show that Barking and Dagenham is the worst borough in the country for the number of women dying from mesothelioma. So common was the harsh cough, that sounds somewhat like a dog barking, that the phrase "Barking cough" was widely used to describe the symptom of asbestosis among the

population of and around the former Cape Asbestos Company factory on Harts Lane. Residents recall that dust from the factory often fell like snow, and former pupils from the nearby Northbury School tell of having 'snowball' fights with the dust.

We owe it to future generations to ensure workplaces are safe and we stand with our Trade Union colleagues.

The unveiling ceremony coincided with International Workers Memorial Day, which takes place annually around the world on 28 April to remember all those killed, disabled, injured or made

unwell by their work.

Henry Gregg, Director of Strategy and Culture, said: "It was very important to us as a council, to support this special memorial for those who died due to exposure of asbestos. We know many people have suffered in the borough, due to use of asbestos, which is still causing pain and suffering for many people and their families.

"We owe it to future generations to ensure workplaces are safe and we stand with our trade union colleagues," he said.

Although laws were originally introduced to ban asbestos in 1985, it wasn't

President's column

A LONG, HOT SUMMER

This month RMT launched the biggest vote for strike action by rail workers in this country for 30 years.

It was the summer of 1989 when RMT's predecessor union, the National Union of Railwaymen challenged the Tory government's policy of cutting public spending and wages.

Back in 1989, Britain's inflation rate was 8.3 per cent, the highest for seven years, rising to 9.5% in 1990. Railworkers took 6 days of strike action as part of a national rail strike in June and July 1989 demanding a real pay rise, while London Underground staff began coordinated wildcat strikes in April 1989.

The rail workers' strikes of 1989 restored confidence to a trade union movement that had been driven back by Margaret Thatcher's anti-union laws and the brutal use of paramilitary police tactics to suppress the 1984-85 miners' strike, the lockout of the printers' unions at Wapping in 1986 and sequestration and seizure of the National Union of Seamen's assets during the 1987 P&O dispute.

The parallels between then and now are uncanny. Not only do we see rampant inflation today of nine per cent, appalling attacks on seafarers in Dover, Hull, Cairnryan and Larne by P&O Ferries - the same company that attacked seafarers pay and conditions in 1987 - but a greedy and hubristic Tory government now as then, is punishing working people with extra taxes.

In 1989 Margaret Thatcher's Tory government introduced a 'Poll Tax' in Scotland, which she extended in 1990 to

England. Immediately, thousands of Anti-Poll Tax Unions sprang up in working class communities across Britain to encourage workers not to pay the unjust Poll Tax.

We burnt our Poll Tax Bills in local parks. We clogged up Magistrates' Courts to protest against fines for non-payment. We brought down a Tory Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher who was forced to resign in 1990 after a revolt by Tory MPs who saw the strength of working-class opposition and feared for their own jobs.

Today, Boris Johnson's Tories tax workers by increasing National Insurance Contributions and tax consumers by allowing private monopoly energy companies to double our domestic energy bills.

BP's profits for the first three months of 2022 also doubled to £4.9 billion, compared to £2.08 billion for the same period in 2021. BP's record annual profits in 2021 of £10.26 billion prompted their chief executive, Bernard Looney to describe the energy market as "a cash machine".

When RMT members open up their domestic energy bills this month, at least they will know that the boss of Britain's biggest private energy company sees them as his company's personal cash dispenser.

If he thinks RMT members are going to accept this daylight robbery, Mr Looney must think ATM stands for 'All Time Mugs'.

We must now call not only a tax on energy companies to pay for insulating homes and workplaces, but a cap on energy bills and nationalisation of energy companies.



Attempts by bailiffs to evict, or cut off energy supplies to those unable to pay must be met with resistance, a coordinated non-payment campaign and a demand for cancellation of domestic consumer energy debts incurred due to energy companies' price hikes.

The votes that RMT members employed by rail companies return this month for coordinated strike action to bust the Tory pay freeze, to demand no compulsory redundancies, no job losses and no imposition of worse working conditions is the fight of our generation.

It is also a vote to reject a future of pay poverty, energy poverty and corporate profiteering at our expense.

Your vote is your voice. It will be heard from our union's boardroom in Unity House to the corporate boardrooms of the City of London groaning with money they admit they don't even know how to spend.

Let us vote in May and march together on Saturday June 18 at the TUC National Demonstration in London to demand the real pay rise that workers need.

Alex Gordon

until 1999 when a complete ban came into effect in the UK although it remains in use around the world and the World Health Organization estimates 125 million people are exposed to the deadly fibre each year.

The memorial was organised by Barking, Dagenham and Havering Trades Union Council, with the support of Barking and Dagenham Council, and has been funded by donations from local trade unionists, individuals and supporters.

Susan Aitouaziz, Secretary Barking Dagenham and Havering Trades Union Council said: "We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of trade unionists,

their unions, and members of our community, which has enabled us to place a beautiful piece of blue pearl granite, engraved with a message of remembrance.

"To complement the memorial, we have also installed an interpretation board to shine a light on the harm done by asbestos, a scourge that continues to threaten us today in our workplaces, schools, public buildings and homes.

"A Book of Remembrance will be opened and maintained to receive inscriptions throughout the coming years, so we will be able forever to remember the names of those who have died," she said. ■

REMEMBRANCE



RMT Aberdeen no1 branch chair Ann Joss and secretary Mike Rollo laying wreath at Workers Memorial in Aberdeen on Workers' Memorial Day April 28.

Getting ready for Summer but still counting your pennies? That's where we can help!

The Union Rewards app has thousands of special offers, discounts and deals from big-name retailers you know and love to help you save money this winter. Plus, you get a FREE £10 bonus* just for joining! Here are just two of our exclusive in-app offers for RMT members this month:

HUSSE

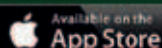
As they put it themselves: Hussle is the UK's most flexible way to get fit. They offer access to premium gyms, whether near work, home or even whilst travelling. There are no contracts or sign-up fees, just unlimited access to 1000's of venues including gyms, swimming pools and spas. With 14% off for Union Rewards members, your wallet will thank you!

Next, what better way to beat those January blues than to start planning a holiday? Bag a bargain with fantastic offers on travel, hotels and tours PLUS an additional 7% off from Inspire!

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From groceries at Morrisons to the latest Adidas trainers, or even just topping up on your regular toiletries at Boots - you get even more for your money with Union Rewards! Download the app before 31st August 2022 to be automatically entered into our prize draw to win a £100 Love2Shop gift card.*

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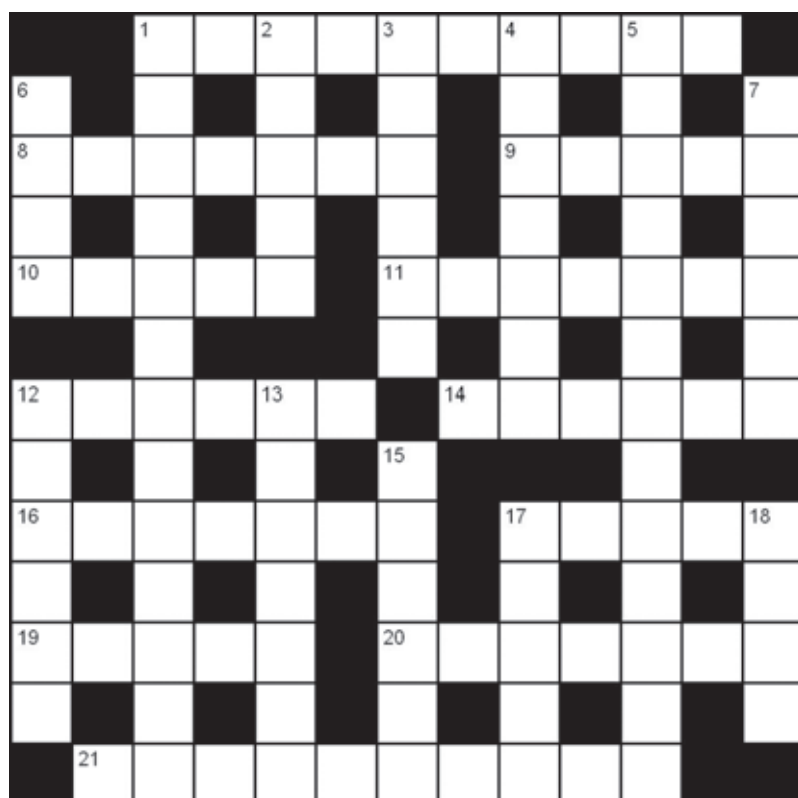
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£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by June 5 with your name and address.

Last month's winner is J Yates.



Crossword
sponsored
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ACROSS

- 1 Ugly (3-7)
- 8 Utter (7)
- 9 Postpone (5)
- 10 Native tent (5)
- 11 Dissatisfy (3,4)
- 12 Belief in Gods (6)
- 14 Change to ice (6)
- 16 Small bagpipe (7)
- 17 Cravat (5)
- 19 Leg bone (5)
- 20 Understanding (7)
- 21 Container (10)

DOWN

- 1 Indescribable (13)
- 2 Machine tool (5)
- 3 Ancient (3,3)
- 4 Elderly person (7)
- 5 Powdery deposit (13)
- 6 Assist (4)
- 7 Alloy (6)
- 12 Vegetable (6)
- 13 Fill (7)
- 15 Sorrowful (6)
- 17 Ludicrous act (5)
- 18 Journey (4)



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Forename(s)			
Home phone			
Mobile phone		Postcode	
Email address			
Date of Birth		National Insurance Number	

2 **Marital Status** married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐ **Drivers Licence No.**

3 Your Employment.

Employer		RMT Branch	
Job Description			

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

5 Membership Status

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

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

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Address

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Your signature

Date

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

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If we cannot verify your identity and address by this method, we will ask you to provide paper documentation instead. Full details of these can be supplied to you by calling 020 7529 8835.



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To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
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Bank/Building Society account number

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Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

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Signature(s)

Date

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

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

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BRITAIN NEEDS A PAY RISE!

TUC National Demonstration Saturday 18 June 2022

Families across the country are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living storm. Every worker – public and private sector – needs a real pay rise now.

Sat, 18 June 2022, 12:00 to 15:00
Parliament Square, London, SW1P 3BD
Join the RMT contingent – bring your banners

