

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE



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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

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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CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE

Congratulations to all those members taking strike action in the national dispute with the train operating companies as well as our offshore energy members and others fighting for justice at work.

We are in a battle for our lives to ensure decent pay and conditions at work for all our members at the height of this cost-of-living crisis.

This union is determined to win a better deal at work and the recent massive votes to reaffirm our strike mandate on the 14 TOCs until November show that members are with us in that struggle.

On London Underground we are determined to defend jobs and pensions in whatever way we can. The endless job and funding cuts on the tube demanded by this Tory government will inevitably lead to declining services. Therefore, I have written to the London mayor to demand that he turns words into action and joins the fight against these cuts.

The unity of purpose within the union is clear from the input of our grades conferences which are often seeing attendances returning to pre-Covid levels. These conferences reflect the views of our members in all grades and make a vital input into our industrial and equality agendas going forward.

The shocking results from a recent survey of bus members reveal that assaults on bus workers are soaring. Lots of abuse and violence originates from the frustrations of passengers who are either running late, herded onto crowded, low-frequency services on clapped-out buses and charge too much money in fares.

Any abuse towards staff should not be tolerated and all instances of abuse should be followed up appropriately. Ultimately all transport workers should feel supported instead of being fearful that they will be blamed for the incident.

Finally, I recently addressed the House of Commons Transport Select Committee about more anti-trade union legislation calling for minimum service levels and unions and employers were united in telling politicians that it will only provoke further conflict.

The general view is that these plans to conscript workers against their will to work will only serve to sour industrial relations even further and create the conditions for more strife. These plans are clearly a profound attack on the basic human rights of workers and have no place in civilised societies.

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

MINIMUM SERVICE LEGISLATION 'COULD PROVOKE FURTHER CONFLICT'

Unions slam anti-union legislation as a 'pig's ear' and employers warn of more industrial strife not less

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee questioned rail industry and union leaders about more anti-trade union legislation currently going through Parliament.

Plans to legislate for minimum levels of service during rail strikes could have "unintended consequences" of provoking further conflict, MPs have been told.

Jamie Burles, managing director of Abellio Greater Anglia, said that the "overriding" objective of the industry was to avoid strikes and have good industrial relations.

He stressed the importance of having "absolute clarity" in the planned law about the requirements on employers and workers.

"If we do not have that, one of the unintended consequences would be further conflict or stress between the relationship," he said.

Cross Country Trains managing director Tom Joyner told MPs that he had not been lobbying the Government legislation on minimum levels of service.

The Strikes (Minimum

Service Levels) Bill has been debated in the House of Lords and is due to return to the House of Commons.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said that it was time for the government to ditch the Bill for good and protect the right to strike.

"No-one should be sacked for trying to win a better deal at work.

"This draconian legislation would mean that when workers democratically vote to strike, they could be forced to work and sacked if they don't comply," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch told the committee that the law would be a "disaster".

Critical workers such as signallers and train drivers would be "conscripted" to work even if they voted legally to strike, he said.

"It will be a complete pig's ear. It is unsafe, it will not work or serve passengers."

Mr Lynch said the law would spark "novel" forms of industrial action as well as wildcat walkouts.

He said that the government often points to legislation in other EU countries, but highlighted recent strikes in France, Italy



and Sweden.

He said that the government did not understand how the railways operate and was "making it up" in terms of the legislation.

He warned that industrial relations would be "poisoned" by the new law, with the prospect of large numbers of workers being sacked, leading to huge consequences for the rail industry.

Train drivers' union ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan agreed and warned that the law would spark more strikes and other forms of industrial action.

He told MPs that unions had not been involved in

discussions around the planned legislation.

"In all my 38 years in this industry I cannot see how this can be done safely. There will be more action, and it will worsen industrial relations," he said.

Both general secretaries said that laying down a minimum level of service would raise expectations among passengers about how many trains would run during a strike.

Mick Lynch said that it would lead to anger when the "inevitable chaos" which meant there would not be a minimum level of service.



NO TO ILLEGAL MIGRATION BILL

Transport Workers could be prosecuted for not detaining and restraining asylum seekers

RMT is opposed to the Illegal Migration Bill which seeks to exploit boat crossings in the Channel and to stoke enmity

against refugees and migrants seeking asylum in this country. The Bill does not protect people from organised crime

or modern slavery and Amnesty has described the legislation as "cruel". Even the government has admitted the legislation could contravene the European Convention on Human Rights.

Along with twenty-six other trade unions RMT is supporting the Safe Passage for Refugees policy which

would create a visa for safe travel for refugees who have viable asylum claims.

This would stop people from getting into small boats and risking their lives, eliminate people smugglers' profits, and keep the UK compliant with its international obligations. Details can be found at care4calais.org

RMT is also opposed to the legislation because part of the Bill puts transport workers in situations of conflict. Specifically, the Bill gives immigration officers power to instruct a transport worker, a train guard or a seafarer, for example, to detain and restrain asylum seekers on their train or ship.

People going to work to operate transport services, including RMT members, could be made liable for detaining and removing people who have been denied due legal process under these

draconian provisions.

In briefings issued to MPs and Peers the union is calling on the government to be challenged on a number of points including:

- Will transport workers be arrested and or prosecuted if they do not detain asylum seekers in line with this appalling legislation?
- Transport workers are often advised not to put themselves in situation of conflict when performing their contractual duties. Why is this situation any different?

- What consultation has the government conducted with employers in the transport industry regarding these powers, which amount to state appropriation of public and private employees?
- What is the status of government legislation which is not compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and is subject to international legal challenge after becoming law in the UK?

This is not the first time that this government has sought to drag transport workers into its agenda. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 originally threatened seafarers with life imprisonment for unknowingly facilitating asylum claims in the UK. Following pressure from RMT and others the government removed from the Bill the threat to seafarers.

RMT will continue to challenge the illegal migration Bill in parliament and also lobby to protect transport workers.

SOLID STRIKE ACTION AT TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES

Re-ballot passes threshold imposed by anti-trade union laws with massive votes for action

RMT members across 14 train operating companies took strike action earlier this month to demand a fair deal for rail workers.

This strike took place following a recent re-ballot of members working for all 14 companies which massively re-affirmed a mandate for further strike action. All the ballots passed the 50 per cent participation threshold imposed by the government's anti-trade union laws and included massive votes for further strike action.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that while the rail companies were threatening passengers and rail workers

with cuts, the companies made a fortune during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Throughout this dispute – which has gone on for over a year – the government has tied the hands of the railway companies and prevented them offering a fair deal.

"We are striking so that the employers and government can see the huge anger amongst rail workers is very real and they need to recognise that fact, face reality and make improved proposals.

"We are calling for the rail companies to get around the table with RMT and negotiate in good faith for a better deal for rail workers," he said.

The Saturday May 13 date was chosen to take action as it was the last date allowed under this country's stringent

anti-trade union laws. A new mandate has now been secured for six months that will run to November 3. ■





RMT SLAMS GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR LONGER LORRIES

Plans for new mega vehicles ignore the rail sector and present a danger on UK roads

RMT slammed the government over plans to permit longer lorries to travel on UK roads despite the climate emergency and the managed decline of rail. There have also been widespread warnings that the move will increase the number of fatal road accidents.

Under government plans the lorries will be a maximum of 2.05 metres longer than the current standard sized trailer meaning lorries can be over 18.5 metres in length.

The longer lorries have been trialled since 2011 and there are about 3,000 already on the roads, but from May 31 any business in England, Scotland or Wales will be able to use them.

RMT general secretary Mick

Lynch said that it was completely baffling that the government had made the announcement on longer lorries despite the fact that the climate emergency was accelerating and the increasingly obvious managed decline of the rail including the freight sector.

"Rail freight is the most sustainable and environmentally friendly way to move freight but instead over recent years what we are seeing on our railways is cutting investment, slashing services and staff numbers, scrapping and downgrading vital infrastructure projects and rewarding failed private train operators with lucrative contract extensions.

"If this government was serious about tackling the climate emergency, they would recognise the critical importance of rail freight to reducing carbon emissions and commit to a historic mass investment in this sector to ensure the UK meets its legally binding climate targets," he said.

The government argues that the move will reduce emissions and improve productivity.

But these vehicles, known as longer semi-trailers or LSTs, measure just over two metres longer than a standard semi-trailer have a larger tail swing extending blind spots, raising fears for the safety of other vehicles, pedestrians and

cyclists.

Road safety groups have long warned of the dangers posed to pedestrians and cyclists, adding that the vehicles' swing and blind spots could result in damage to roadside infrastructure.

When the trial was launched, campaigners argued that the new lorries would have a greater length than the bendy buses previously used in London, which were phased out partly because of reports that they were the cause of twice as many injuries as other buses.

The Campaign for Better Transport criticised the change as a disappointing retrograde step.





RMT urges London Mayor to end threat of job cuts and pension attacks

Spending cuts, job losses and growing attacks on pensions must end, RMT has told the London Mayor.

The union wrote to Sadiq Khan emphasising the importance of station staff to the safe running of London Underground and the need for the mayor to resist Tory budget cuts.

In the letter, RMT general secretary Mick Lynch wrote: "Stations were closed on 2,115 occasions last year, compared with a pre-pandemic high of 649. Of course, this is only a figure for closures. More often, stations will have been left open with no staff.

"We both know that the cause of this rise in station closures is a package of cost savings that includes holding vacancies and cutting 600 station jobs, demanded by the Tory government.

"The rank hypocrisy of Tories attacking you for the consequences of delivering

their cuts is deplorable but predictable. Yet, I'm sure that you share my concern about the strain that is being placed on London Underground by these cuts.

"This situation cannot go on. I urge you to refuse to make further spending cuts on London Underground. The roll out of 600 job cuts on tube stations must stop. Pension attacks must be ruled out. Current plans for reductions in jobs and changes to working conditions, across train crew and engineering functions must stop.

"My members are delivering on productivity daily. TfL has forecast a £75m surplus on budget this year. Passenger numbers are rising faster than forecast. It is time to say enough is enough. I call on you to reject government demands for cuts and to campaign alongside your staff and RMT for a fair funding arrangement for London's

public transport system and to defend the jobs, pensions and agreements of London Underground workers," he said.

DEFEND YOUR PENSION

TfL and the government have signed an agreement to seek pension cuts by transferring your pension into the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

As a result, RMT members could lose up to 32 per cent of your pension if you retire at 60. Pension contributions could also increase from five per cent to up to 12.5 per cent. Risk is also transferred to you so that a fall in financial markets could leave you with a further reduction in benefits or increased contributions.

There is no guarantee that accrued benefits would be fully protected. TfL estimates it would save £60 million by transferring the TfL pension into the LGPS. This is because

you would pay more and get less. TfL's savings would be at your expense if we do not fight back.

The current TfL pension scheme is in good financial health and TfL is making a surplus again on operations and the pension trustees have not called for any changes to the TfL scheme. There is no justification for attacking the TfL pension.

The union fully agrees with the London mayor's comments, reported in the *Evening Standard*, that tube staff, who worked throughout the pandemic to maintain a reliable service, do not deserve the "sword of Damocles" hanging over them in the form of attacks on their pensions. RMT members face changes to their pensions that could double their contributions and cut their pensions by a third which is unacceptable to RMT.



ANTI-UNION: Pentland Ferry MV Alfred arriving at St Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay, Orkney Isles, Scotland

END SCOTLAND'S FERRIES CRISIS NOW!

Scottish government charters non-unionised and accident-prone vessels to undercut CalMac

RMT has written to the new Transport Minister in the Scottish government Kevin Stewart MSP to demand action over the increasingly fragile resilience of ferry services following the latest safety incident involving anti-union company Pentland Ferries.

The government has chartered vessels from the anti-union outfit Pentland Ferries' including the MV Alfred for £9 million to provide relief on specific Clyde and Hebrides routes.

Another non-union vessel MV Pentalina grounded off the Orkney Islands last month and experienced an engine room fire. All 60 passengers and some crew members were safely transferred to RNLI vessels.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the Pentalina

had a recent history of safety issues and the Alfred was subject to an ongoing Maritime Accident Investigation Branch investigation after it grounded off Swona in July last year, injuring six passengers.

"I pay tribute to the bravery and professionalism of the crew who successfully extinguished the engine room fire and returned the beleaguered vessel to port at St. Margaret's Hope.

"The root causes of these incidents remain the Ferguson Marine fiasco and the complete lack of a coherent ferries plan.

"We are now at a stage where the Northern Isles as well as the island communities and local economies in the west of Scotland are forced to live with the restricted capacity

on their ferry services just as the summer timetables hit full swing.

"RMT is committed to working to resolve these issues, which are affecting over 1,200 members at Pentland Ferries, CalMac Ferries and NorthLink to an intolerable extent," he said.

The union has slammed the Scottish government for failures in delivering two new CalMac vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides contract.

According to the Public Audit Committee report, there has been a profound failure in procuring two new ferries to replace ageing ships on CalMac's lifeline Clyde and Hebrides services.

Vessels 801 and 802 remain undelivered nearly eight years after the contract was awarded and are now expected to cost

over three times more than originally budgeted.

The report by the Audit Committee found that both vessels are now millions of pounds over budget and years behind schedule. There has been also been a significant lack of transparency and accountability throughout the project.

The union said that the report highlighted how the SNP government was turning on ferry workers and taxpayers to mask incompetence and complicity in a bad deal for two vessels which remain undelivered.

RMT called once again on the incoming First Minister to commit to a publicly owned and operated public ferry services as a priority, in line with existing legal advice on state aid rules. ■

OFFSHORE STORK WORKERS TAKE ACTION



Offshore workers employed by Stork Technical Services Ltd on a number of oil platforms across the North Sea took 48-hour strike action earlier this month after overwhelmingly backing the action.

RMT members joined a number of other unions in the action in a dispute over pay, terms and conditions of employment.

Around 150 RMT members took action on a number of platforms including Anasuria FPSO, Armada, Beryl Alpha, Beryl Bravo, Bleo Holm, Blue Catcher, Brent Charlie, Bruce, Buzzard, Claymore, Clyde, Cygnus Alpha, Elgin, Forties Alpha, Forties Bravo, Forties Charlie, Forties Delta, Gannet, Golden Eagle, Heather, Lomond, Magnus, Mariner, Montrose, Nelson, North Everest, Rough, Scott, Shearwater, Tartan Alpha, Triton FPSO, Western Isles and Norfolk House, Pitmedden Road, Dyce and Aberdeen.

The action also included an overtime ban.

New incoming RMT regional organiser Ann Joss said that the downturn with the price of oil collapsing back in 2014 saw many workers suffering cuts to pay and

conditions with an average 20 per cent pay cut and to the widely hated three day and three work pattern.

"Following that downturn our members were then hit by the pandemic with just over third of the offshore workforce

being made redundant.

"Fast forward to the war in Ukraine and oil prices have shot up which has meant massive profits for the companies but nothing for the workers – they are demanding a pay rise!," she said. ■



STRIKE: A fishing vessel operating close to the Beryl Alpha production platform 160 miles Northeast of Aberdeen in the North Sea.



ORGANISING BUS WORKERS

Bus workers conference delegates discuss safety, training and organising

The 80th national industrial organising conference of bus workers meeting in Torquay was opened by former RMT regional organiser Phil Bialyk and now Labour leader of Exeter council.

"I am proud to say that I remain an RMT member as leader of the council just like previous council leader Peter Edwards who was also bus worker," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the union was committed to the bus sector and organising bus workers.

"This union is seeking to raise the profile of people working in the industry and highlight the damage that bus privatisation has done which is failing to provide a reliable and universal services.

"The private companies you work for such as Stagecoach, First and Go-Ahead are familiar across the transport

industry.

"Therefore, the problems of privatisation and the drive to drive down wages in the pursuit of profit are the same.

"As a result, we are creating alliances with user groups and politicians where possible to actively campaign to win a better deal at work as well as increasing membership density.

"We are campaigning for justice at work and for a fairer society in general and this union is at the forefront of that fight," he said.

RMT senior assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that under the union's rulebook Rule 12, Clause 4 the role of the organising conference was to build membership in the sector, educating and training reps and developing organising strategies.

He made a detailed

presentation on union membership density by region and by company and the number of activists and representatives.

"We need to understand where we are in the industry and how to improve RMT's profile and organisation.

"We need to build our power in the workplace to provide a better deal for bus workers," he said.

Conference unanimously called for the creation of an organising committee for bus worker recruitment.

Ed Sturgess, Newport Isle of Wight No2 said that the union was required a committee with a member within the bus industry from every region to oversee the recruitment and retention of members across the entire country.

"It can ensure that conference has a regular role

in carrying out organising responsibilities as set out in the rulebook.

"We need to plan, map and sustain regular activity around issues that bus workers feel strongly about," he said.

Jason Gosling, Poole and District said that it was a 'no-brainer' to set up such a committee in order to co-ordinate recruitment and retention efforts.

Lee Rundle, South Devon said that such as national committee needed to include all bus workers including engineers and cleaners as well as drivers.

Alan Pottage of the organising unit said that mapping was important to identify who were members who was not in order to build the strength of the branches across the country.

Lee Rundle said that the union needed to recruit

members across the industry and to particularly target green field sites which had no union presence at all.

Steve Jackson, Transport for Cornwall called for a

programme of training which would enable a safe method of evacuating passengers facing an emergency.

"We are seeing an increase in bus fires and training like this should be provided or included in induction training," he said.

Jules Tobin, South Devon said that bus passengers across the country should be safe and training should be provided to ensure that it is the case.

"This union should be demanding minimum standards of safety across the industry," she said.

Delegates also backed calls for basic public first aid training for young bus workers and apprentices.

Dave Goard of the national executive committee reported to delegates on the union's new survey of bus members regarding assaults (see page 20-21).

"The results of this survey are shocking, and the union will be using it to highlight the unacceptable levels of violence and abuse aimed at bus workers," he said.

Donna Jones, Poole and District said that during Covid there were screens for safety.

"If we can have them during the pandemic why can't

we have assault screens now?" she asked.

Conference supported a call to campaign for a maximum bus cab working temperature.

Lee Odams, Notts & Derby said that the climate crisis and faulty bus cab air conditioning systems during the summer months meant bus drivers are compelled to drive buses where the in-cab temperature exceeds 40c.

"According to the Mayor of London these inhumane conditions were permitted because 'there is no specified upper workplace temperature in UK regulations'.

"Meanwhile the government has longstanding guidance for the safe transport of livestock that expressly states: 'that you should not transport animals in temperatures over 30c'.

"If animals can't be transported under these temperatures why should we?" he asked.

Steve Lethbridge, North Devon backed the call for the union to work with the Health & Safety Executive to issue clear guidance to bus operators where bus drivers would not be required to drive.

Donna Jones said that bus workers were classed as outdoor workers so had to work in very hot as well as very cold temperatures.

"Currently we have to sweat in summer and freeze in winter



when we are simply going to work," she said.

Delegates backed a call for a campaign for toilet dignity for all bus drivers.

Simon Pick, Notts & Derby said that no bus operator should be permitted to run a bus service where a working bus driver's access to a suitable toilet was not guaranteed.

"There are a number of laws and regulations which oblige employers to provide hygienic and accessible toilet facilities to workers in the working environment," he said.

Lynn Asher, Southampton said that it was even more important issue for women for a variety of reasons including those going through the menopause and require to drink more water.

Conference called for a national toilet dignity database that named the bus routes that failed to provide toilet dignity



Keith Murphy retires as conference secretary

and clearly define the maximum time a bus driver can be denied guaranteed access to a toilet while working.

Delegates also backed an emergency motion against the introduction of driverless buses (see page 14). ■





GREEN AGENDA FOR TRAIN CREW

Packed grades conference focusses on national dispute and the promotion of a green agenda

The national industrial organising conference of train crew and shunting grades met in Newcastle-upon-Tyne recently with the largest turnout for the event in recent memory.

Conference president Billy Kimm opened the meeting at this important time for the grade, which was held in the midst of re-balloting members for industrial action.

Mayor of North of Tyne Jamie Driscoll welcomed delegates to Newcastle, explaining that the rail industry was proudly born there with the early acclaimed steam train Stephenson's Rocket being built in the city. He outlined plans to change the way that public transport was organised in the city, pledging to integrate the Metro, rail and buses locally.

RMT assistant general

secretary John Leach thanked the activists for the work that they had put in with the strike action over the last year.

"This is the biggest dispute not only in living memory but in the union's entire history," he said.

John explained that it was unprecedented to bring out over 50 per cent of the membership together through successful ballots.

"What we did became contagious, and others followed us and went into disputes themselves," he added.

Giving a frank report of how general secretary Mick Lynch and himself had been involved in negotiating with the Rail Delivery Group, he outlined how the union refused to accept compulsory redundancies, changes of conditions and fought for a

proper pay rise.

He explained how the RDG wanted an upfront commitment for the union to agree that the role of the guard would end, 940 ticket

offices would close and other long-standing terms and conditions would be up for discussion too. These were things that the union could not sanction and this was made



RMT president Alex Gordon and Gordon Jones



clear at the meetings.

"But the people we were negotiating with were puppets. It was the government that needed to be at the table," John said.

Bringing delegates up to speed on how an offer was finally put to the union in January this year, and rejected, John explained the difference in what was currently being proposed.

He ended with a rallying call for a successful re-ballot regardless of people's views on the current offer so that the union would have a strong hand in the continuing negotiations.

"My message is that we have led the way for the labour movement, but our main focus now is the importance of the re-ballot. We are in it to win it," he said.

Promoting a green agenda was a conference theme and Nathan Wallace, Central Line East called for employers to equip depots with charging ports for electric vehicles.

"At the very minimum staff should have access to a drying room, showers and changing facilities in order to enable them to commute to and from work by bicycle," he said.

Guest speaker Mathew Topham from the *We Own It* campaign group explained how the organisation was working in collaboration with trade unions to fight for a green public transport system that was fully staffed.

Jeff Slee, Deptford, outlined the problems that drivers were faced with where new seats made it impossible for them to stand up in the cab. He told delegates that the driving cabs of new trains are normally designed so that it is not possible to tip back the driver's seat.

As a result, drivers must drive the train seated. Whereas older trains gave the driver the option of tipping back the driver's seat and driving the train standing up.

He outlined the results of studies that show that when office workers can stand at their desks this led to an improvement in their health, well-being, and mood. He argued the same must be true for train drivers.

"Where RMT reps have any say in the design of driving cabs of new trains, they should

insist that these cabs have seats that can tip up, so that drivers have the option of driving whilst standing up," he said.

Steve O'Connor, Bletchley and Northampton, called for the union to mount a campaign to establish a safe distance between the train and passengers on the platform before a conductor or guard dispatches it.

"Every campaign that highlights the safety critical role carried out every day by our grade is of benefit. This campaign will also highlight the jeopardy the driver grade is taking on with any extension of driver-only operation (DOO)," he said.

Nigel Flanagan, trade union activist and author of the book *Our Trade Unions* gave a sombre account of the decline of trade unionism over recent

decades. Ending on a positive note Nigel gave examples from his experiences of union organising abroad of mass recruitment successes where experiences can be drawn upon.

RMT president Alex Gordon said that it was the best attended conference in decades. He presented veteran attendee and union activist Gordon Jones with an award for his 65-year membership of RMT and its forerunner NUR.

Jessica Robinson, North East Regional Council Secretary, told delegates: "you are important in our current national dispute and the struggles that we are going to face in the near future. In this room is the backbone of the railway". Next year's conference will be held in Penzance. ■



Billy Kimm chairs

NO TO DRIVERLESS BUSES

RMT's bus conference discussed the threat of automated buses to jobs in the industry

Full-size, self-driving bus services will come into service in Scotland this month in what is believed to be a world first. Stagecoach said that the route over the Forth Road Bridge will run between Ferrytoll park and ride in Fife and Edinburgh Park train and tram interchange. Five single-decker autonomous buses will have the capacity for about 10,000 passenger journeys per week.

A safety driver will sit in the driver's seat to monitor the technology, and a so-called bus captain will help passengers with boarding, buying tickets and queries.

Sam Greer for Stagecoach in Scotland who oversees the project said that these services will see two members of staff onboard each autonomous bus and will continue to do so for safety until customer acceptance or confidence is developed.

This suggests that at some point there will be no need for the skill set of licenced drivers onboard these vehicles.

Eventually bus captains will be available for the customer for any needed personal interaction and may eventually pave the way for job tittle changes, job losses and an attack on certain contractual rights.

Sources say that this project is needed as one in 10 PSV positions are currently vacant in England and figures show a decline from 2012 to 2022



from 135,000 to 110,000 and companies claim that this shows the need for innovation was important, as large numbers of PSV drivers did not return to the industry after the furlough restrictions ended.

These figures are disturbing but not surprising because bus companies are not addressing low pay, very long hours, poor family time and probably the worst rosters available.

Such conditions are not enticing new workers so one bus company in particular has pioneered the for fully autonomous buses which can only be seen as a hostile approach to these problems.

Instead of offering better the pay and conditions to workers, which would no doubt go some way to filling

the vacant positions, but this company looks to innovation instead of addressing their poor record of recruitment and retention.

Stagecoach will soon begin recruiting 20 'autonomous bus professionals' to monitor the autonomous bus systems. At the same time, a 'captain' will interact with passengers, answer questions, and preview a potential self-driving future. The buses will operate at SAE Level 4, which means that the system does not expect the driver to take over, though the vehicle might come equipped with vehicle controls.

Government officials from both England and Scotland which include transport ministers and local MPs have been engaged throughout the development. Government

funding fully supports this new innovation within the industry and other industries which include the Royal Navy, who currently have autonomous 10-tonne unmanned surface minesweepers

Jamie Nickle, Exeter No2 addressed conference about this incoming autonomous hardware and called for a campaign to keep jobs in the bus industry.

"This technology is not something that is going to happen in the future it is here now and the union needs a considered response to it that protect the jobs of bus workers.

"Bus drivers jobs matter and we need to campaign today to save them," he said.





RMT DISABLED WORKERS' CHARTER

Introduction

This charter has been compiled by RMT's disabled members as an agenda for change in the workplace. We recognise that the world we live in today has a long way to go before it will be able to fully comply with the social model of disability. This charter shows what the RMT is striving to achieve now and in the future for our disabled members.

This is a charter of demands to benefit all disabled transport workers, full-time or part-time, directly-employed or outsourced, whatever their impairment or conditions, whatever mode of transport they work on.

Social model of disability

Society disables people with impairments and differences by placing barriers in the way of our equal participation in work and in wider society. The social model identifies those barriers and removes or reduces them.

Making the transport industry more accessible for transport workers will also make it more accessible for passengers.

We want all employers to formally adopt the social model of disability, but more importantly, to put it into practice.

Disabled workers need rights not pity or charity.

Physically accessible workplaces

- step-free
- enough space to move around
- comfortable and suitable workstations, including seated roles
- accessible transport to, from and around work
- universal design
- equipment to do the job
- benign sensory environment inc. full-spectrum lighting

Accessible workplace communications

- dyslexia-friendly print layout
- clear information
- communications in various formats, including large print, audio, etc.
- assistive technology and software

Mentally healthy workplaces

- shorter working hours
- no bullying or harassment
- a quiet room in every workplace
- manageable workload
- support after traumatic incidents
- secure employment
- mental health support and first aid

Control over how we work

- individually controllable workstations
- choice over working hours where possible
- workers' control over method and pace of work
- new technology to be used to assist not replace staff

Fair and accessible recruitment, promotion and training processes

- no psychometric testing
- practical work trials as an alternative to exams and interviews
- no requirements for jobs that are not actually required for the role, including irrelevant personal characteristics
- training in accessible formats that suit all learning styles
- apprenticeships and similar schemes to be accessible to disabled people, with decent pay and conditions

Adjustments when we need them

- changes to hours, location of work etc

- the opportunity to work from home where practical
- the equipment we need in order to do the job
- suitable redeployment where appropriate, without loss of pay
- a 'reasonable adjustments passport' so our adjustments stay with us when our jobs change

No detriment or disciplinary action for disability-related absence

- paid time off work to attend medical appointments, therapies, etc
- sickness absence related to disability to be paid
- absence related to disability not to count towards disciplinary action, but to be recorded as 'disability leave'
- good terms for medical retirement if and when it suits the worker concerned

Nothing about us without us

- working conditions negotiated with us via our trade union
- the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative throughout any process regarding our employment
- paid release from work to take part in trade union disabled members' structures
- the right to organise and raise issues in the workplace
- employers to recognise equality reps
- paid release for all representatives to attend union-run training on disability, including updating their knowledge

Support and rights for carers

Workers with caring responsibility for a disabled dependant to have rights including:

- changes to hours and/or work location to fit in with caring responsibilities
- paid leave to deal with emergencies
- freedom from harassment, bullying or undue pressure

Using this Charter to campaign for workplace change

This Charter is not just a wish-list. The union wants

its regional councils, branches, representatives and members to campaign for the demands that it contains.

Identifying your demand

Start by identifying a demand to put to your employer. It is important to take this decision collectively, so discuss it with your fellow RMT members, then make your decision at a branch or other appropriate meeting. The key thing is that your demand is one that your disabled members support and think is important. So – ask them!

Read through the Charter together and highlight which demands are most relevant where you work. Perhaps you will choose to demand a quiet room in your workplace, or assistive technology for dyslexic workers.

You might realise that an individual case has wider implications and make an appropriate demand arising from that. For example, if an individual disabled worker has had their adjustments removed by a new manager, you could demand that the company introduce 'reasonable adjustment passports' so that this does not happen again.

Make sure that your demand is concrete and specific. We need real change rather than more 'awareness' events!

Submitting your demand

The next step is to table the demand to the employer. Talk with RMT reps and officers about this, so that the union tables it through the appropriate processes and so that it is in line with what the union is doing in your area.

Your demand will then progress through the 'machinery of negotiation', the arrangements for discussions between the union(s) and the employer. If management do not agree to your demand straightaway, then the union can 'escalate' it to the next level, up to and including an industrial dispute.

Campaigning

While your demand goes through the process of negotiation, you can increase pressure on the employer to accept it by running a campaign. Talk with your workmates.

Contact RMT's Disabled Members' Advisory Committee at DMAC@rmt.org.uk for help and support. Speak with your region's representatives on the Committee and get them involved.

You could produce some leaflets and/or posters to distribute at work. You could run a petition in support of your demand. You could contact local campaigning groups and ask for their support.

Save money with your RMT membership!



"Any income RMT receives from these products goes into our dispute fund."

With household finances under mounting pressure from the current cost of living crisis, we wanted to remind you that your RMT membership is there for you both in and out of work.

Over 68,000 RMT members have benefited from membership services which offer a variety of savings, as well as legal and financial support from our trusted partners.

Members are benefiting from cashback on their everyday shopping, exclusive car and home insurance rates, as well as protection policies designed with union members and their families in mind. **Your family can benefit too!†**



EARN CASHBACK ON YOUR INTERNET SHOPPING

Union Rewards provides cashback and discounts from hundreds of online retailers. Access to Union Rewards is free to RMT members and includes a £10 Welcome Bonus for you.

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FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

Don't miss out on your RMT membership entitlement. Register for your FREE £5,000 Accidental Death Cover today:

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CAR INSURANCE COMPARISON

Compare quotes online to see how much you could save on your car insurance. PLUS don't miss out on their Price Match Guarantee - if you find a cheaper car insurance quote online, just call **0330 022 6657** and RMTCar guarantee to beat it!

RMTCar.co.uk



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SAVE WITH THE NEW HOME INSURANCE COMPARISON SERVICE

With an expert panel of insurers, the home insurance comparison offers a discount for RMT members and searches for the best deals to suit your needs.

PLUS - get a quote before 30th November to be entered into our £2,000 prize draw!

RMTProtect.com/Home



INCOME PROTECTION

Pays you a monthly tax-free income which can be used to pay your bills, your mortgage or your rent in the event you are unable to work due to an accident or sickness.

RMTProtect.com/Income



GUARANTEED ACCEPTANCE LIFE INSURANCE

Life Insurance provides a cash lump sum payout when you die, money to help support your loved ones at a very difficult time. Key features of RMT life cover include:

- ✓ Guaranteed acceptance
- ✓ No medical questions
- ✓ Fixed premiums - will not rise

RMTProtect.com/Life

To find out more visit: RMTProtect.com

†See terms and conditions for full details *For prize draw rules visit RMTProtect.com/win2000 Terms and conditions apply to all products. RMTProtect is a trading name of Union Income Benefit Holdings Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority to distribute non-investment insurance products, register number 307575. This can be checked on the FCA website: www.fca.org.uk. Free Accidental Death Cover and Income Protection underwritten by Stonebridge International Insurance Ltd. Life insurance underwritten by Scottish Friendly Assurance Society Ltd. RMTCar.co.uk is administered by Vast Visibility Limited. Home insurance operated by Ceta Insurance Limited, registered in England & Wales company number 2827690. RMT Rewards and RMT Prepaid Plus are trading names of Union Income Ltd who arrange RMT Rewards and the RMT Prepaid Plus Cashback card.



ENGINEERING A WAY FORWARD

The engineering grades conference discussed the national dispute and dealing with a hostile media

RMT Norwich branch chair Ray Williams welcomed delegates to Great Yarmouth for the 2023 annual engineering grades organising conference.

RMT senior assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that RMT had gone through trying times, but the union had emerged from those crises more united and determined.

He said that one of the ways to build that unity was to increase communications between the union and the membership.

"We have strived to improve those communications in a number of ways using new technology available to us including social media and video," he said.

He said that the union had to continue to progress with these innovations in order to get the message out against a hostile media environment.

"During strike action in the national dispute the media simply repeated messaging from an aggressive Tory

government.

"This government is seeking to criminalise workers whose only crime is to fight against poverty for their families.

"Not only are they indemnifying employers and using agency workers during strike action, they are bringing in more anti-trade union laws including minimum service levels.

"Therefore, the union faces a number of challenges for external communications to break through in the media as well as internal communications with members," he said.

Doug Hammersley, Transport for London congratulated the union for its media performances in the national dispute and reminded delegates that the union also had a big fight on London Underground regarding jobs, agreements and pensions.

"The threat to the pension fund is very real and this will affect everyone including

managers," he said.

Jack Rawcliffe, York and District said that Network Rail's Modernising Maintenance agenda was still in place, and that this was making the workplace less safe.

"We have to ask ourselves, going forward, what are we going to be fighting next?" he said.

Charles Fisher, Deptford called for unity among RMT members and said it was the only way to make employers listen across the country.

"We have to realise that there are big differences across the country, between north and south in particular,

and we need to make honest assessments about what we can achieve together.

"That means being realistic as well as being united because unless we do so we all lose," he said.

There were wide discussions regarding CCTV monitoring and other uses of technology designed to increase surveillance measures on workers.

Conference delegates also expressed solidarity to suspended health and safety rep Dan Leong, Paddington No1 and reaffirmed that the union would defend reps with every resource available. ■



Eddie Dempsey

BUS ASSAULTS SOAR!

An RMT survey of bus workers exposes widespread violence against bus workers

According to a new union survey of bus worker members rough half have experienced incidents of workplace abuse in the last two years.

The most common form of abuse suffered was verbal (90 per cent), over a fifth were spat and over 10 per cent experienced physical assault.

Racial harassment was experienced by over 10 per cent of staff and over 60 per cent of respondents have had to deal with threats of violence at work.

Shockingly, 97 per cent said that they did not get any support such as counselling or

working arrangements from their employers following an incident.

The deregulated nature of the industry is illustrated by the fact that 94 per cent of respondents said that they were not paid company sick pay following their attack at work and 84 per cent said that they did not get any additional support, such as Occupational Health Assessments or phased returns to work.

Nearly half of respondents (42 per cent) said that they did not report incidents of abuse at work as they did not think the employer would take them

seriously.

One RMT member said: "The mentality from management is that it's just part of the job unless it's a really serious assault and will affect passenger's opinion of company reputation."

This survey came about as a result of a resolution from 2022 national bus workers organising conference about the lack of support and backing whenever a member is physically or verbally assaulted.

When the national executive committee met to consider the resolution they

instructed the union to launch a public campaign on awareness, particularly highlighting problems experienced by women members and this survey forms part of that work.

Respondents described humiliating and threatening experiences:

RESPONDENTS DESCRIBE INCIDENTS AS FOLLOWS:

"Full bottles of coke thrown into cab door at myself into cab area, exploding covering myself and steering wheel etc with coke".

"Projectiles thrown at cab

screen”.

“I was called a paedophile”

“Had a passenger who thought he was allowed to grope my genitalia”.

Another response shows the impact on women bus workers *“Creepy male passengers, same passenger 2/3 times”.*

One respondent explained that they were losing count of incidents and explained that these incidents had a racial element *“Threat of violence and verbal too many times to count. Spat at 3 times. Racial several times”.*

“Items thrown at the bus. Brick thrown at cab door when stopped to pick up a passenger the youth threw one directly at me then another up the bus aimed at passengers before running away”.

There were lots of examples of objects being thrown at screens and of passengers punching the safety screens, particularly on late night buses.

Given responses latter on in the survey, to questions such as *“did you report the incident”*, RMT suspect that many of the 90 per cent of respondents who say they have experienced verbal abuse do not report it (nearly half said they didn’t report) instead accepting it as *“part of the job”*. Becoming a *“verbal punch bag”* has a cumulative impact on mental health and can lead to physical or mental breakdowns.

Respondents explained that it is *“not worth reporting as they just laugh”*, *“it’s pointless reporting”*, *“nothing seems to happen if I report an incident”*, others only report *“when serious enough to do so”* other respondents spoke to colleagues about the incident rather than reporting to the employer as they wanted to make sure as many co-workers as possible were aware of the problem.

The majority of

respondents explained that they did not hear anything more after reporting the incident. If there was police intervention, it was not due to the employers actions. Others got the blame themselves, one was sacked, another wrote that he got treated like he was the problem, and another got a warning for taking too much time off work following an incident.

SLOW POLICE REACTION:

One member wrote, *“Although contacted the police unfortunately they did not attend. They rang me 2 days later to get a statement. Nothing heard ever since”.* Another wrote that it took one hour forty minutes before the Police turned up, another wrote, *“They don’t turn up. Police are not concerned anymore”.*

In terms of what can be done to resolve the situation comments included:

“More proactive approaches required - more publicity on buses about employers pursuing action if we are subjected to abuse/assault. Better monitoring of problem areas/routes where ie abuse is a regular occurrence”.

“Run a better service basically - invest the profits into more reliable buses which don’t keep breaking down, time the routes properly to take account of congested, narrow and inappropriate routes for the buses which are assigned to them, provide improved frequency services. Lots of abuse/violence originates from the frustrations of passengers who are either running late, herded onto crowded, low-frequency services on knackered buses and/or charged too much money in fares for the privilege of all of that. Make it clear that abuse towards staff will not be tolerated and all instances of abuse will be followed up appropriately. Make the staff feel supported

instead of fearful that they will be blamed for the incident”.

“Take some Interest in the situation”/“more support, information, or training how to deal with violence”/Listen to drivers and not fob them off and take customers side always.

“A lot of drivers want assault screens installed. The drivers that don’t want them are saying they would be happy to have one’s that can be put up if they want it in place or have them down. The company seems to dismiss these concerns prioritising customer satisfaction with the service over driver protection and aren’t looking to negotiate whatsoever. I think the suggestions should be considered at least or I think some drivers may leave as they feel unsafe at work”.

“Communicate regularly any changes after incidents and getting us all following the same plan”.

“Back us up. Give us body cameras as proof of incident. They say that there are cameras in the buses, but if we need footage or the police asks for it they don’t cooperate, according to the police”

“Have a way of recording and informing fellow workers of individuals who threaten violence and refuse to take these individuals as passengers”.

“Have an easy-to-use panic button that immediately alerts controllers to an issue. Also make sure protective screens are operational. Having all changeovers in the bus station would be beneficial”

“Provide clear notices on buses that violence will not be tolerated, whether verbal or physical. Provide drivers with clear instructions on how to report incidents and make it clear reports will be acted upon by investigating and providing drivers with evidence of investigations and outcomes”.

“Stop creating situations

where conflict can arise ie. faulty ticket machines, incorrect fare stages, poor timetable advice, app not working, avl not working, dirty buses, over-tight timetables, faulty buses”

“Making sure the phone is in the control room is in working order and someone is at the end of to answer at all times. This goes for the radio in the buses. They need to be in full working order. Its our first port of call we need the support”

“Run a better service basically - invest the profits into more reliable buses which don’t keep breaking down, time the routes properly to take account of congested, narrow and inappropriate routes for the buses which are assigned to them, provide improved frequency services. Lots of abuse/violence originates from the frustrations of passengers who are either running late, herded onto crowded, low-frequency services on knackered buses and/or charged too much money in fares for the privilege of all of that. Make it clear that abuse towards staff will not be tolerated and all instances of abuse will be followed up appropriately. Make the staff feel supported instead of fearful that they will be blamed for the incident”.

The issues of provision of violence at work training and taking drivers seriously came up repeatedly. There seemed to be very little knowledge of the bus companies reporting procedures (two thirds of respondents had not seen this) and 40 per cent said that they had not seen their violence at work risk assessment.

The survey results show that the government failure to fund bus services properly impacts on members being able to work safely and that shareholders are only interested in taking profits out of the industry. The full survey is available on the RMT website. ■

REWARD: Govia Thameslink Railways paid out a dividend of £16.9 million last year 'following permission given by the Department for Transport'.



REWARDING FAILURE IN RAIL CONTINUES

RMT slams Department of Transport for signing off £82 million dividend payments to privateers

RMT has revealed that Transport Secretary Mark Harper has allowed two private rail companies to be paid £82 million in dividends in 2022.

This is despite the fact both companies are part of a major industrial dispute where hundreds of millions of pounds has been used to indemnify them against lost revenue from

strike action.

FirstRail Holdings Ltd, the holding company for five FirstGroup franchises, and Govia Thameslink Railways, which runs the biggest franchise in Britain, have recently reported dividend payments of £65 million and £16.9 million respectively in their annual accounts for 2022.

Two of FirstRail Holdings

Ltd's franchises, Avanti West Coast and Transpennine Express, have been the subject of public and political controversy after cancelling hundreds of services. In spite of this, the government has renewed or extended contracts for Avanti West Coast but it has kicked First off TPE this month.

Govia won a contract to

carry on running the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise from the government in October 2022 despite its sister company LSER being stripped of the Southeastern franchise for concealing public money.

The DfT allowed Go-Ahead Group to conduct its own internal inquiry into the failings at LSER and renewed Govia's

FIRSTGROUP FRANCHISE DIVIDEND PAYMENTS

	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
First Greater Western	£40,000,000	£19,000,000	£33,000,000	£92,000,000
First Hull Trains Ltd	£0	£0	£0	£0
First South Western Railways	£0	£0	£12,900,000	£12,900,000
First Transpennine Express	£0	£0	£0	£0
First Trenitalia Avanti West Coast	£0	£11,500,000	£13,500,000	£25,000,000
TOTAL	£40,000,000	£30,500,000	£59,400,000	£129,900,000

Source: Annual reports in Companies House, 2020-22

contract for the Thameslink franchise in spite of the fact that the two companies shared many of the same management personnel.

All these franchises have benefited from indemnification worth hundreds of millions of pounds in taxpayers' money by the DfT to cover the costs of lost passenger revenue during the ongoing dispute.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the DfT was now geared largely to turning tax revenue into shareholder dividends.

"If you're a private train operator, it doesn't matter whether your problem is unpredictable passenger revenue, costly train leases or industrial action, the Secretary of State is there to help, opening the public purse and emptying it into shareholder's pockets.

"This system is not operating in the interests of passengers, railway workers or the taxpayer.

"It is clear that only full public ownership of train operation in this country can save our railways from being

looted by this gang of unaccountable spivs," he said.

FIRST RAIL HOLDINGS LTD

Accounts filed for FirstGroup's companies for the last three years show dividend payments of £129 million over the last three years, with 2022 being the highest yet at £59 million. £51.4 million of this was attributable to FirstRail Holdings (Table 1).

In October 2022, Secretary of State Mark Harper gave Avanti West Coast a contract extension in spite of its disastrous service failures. In March 2023, he again extended Avanti's contract in spite of the fact that it was still cancelling 17 per cent of trains under its new timetable.

GOVIA THAMESLINK RAILWAYS LTD

Govia Thameslink Railways paid out a dividend of £16.9 million in October 2022, 'following permission given by the Department for Transport'.

Govia were given a National Rail Contract by then Secretary of State Grant Shapps in spite of the fact that

the same owning group had recently been fined £50 million and LSER stripped of the Southeastern franchise for concealing multiple millions in public money over years to ramp up their dividend payments.

Incredibly, Mr Shapps and the DfT allowed Go-Ahead to conduct their own internal inquiry into LSER's 'breaches of good faith' in financial matters, in the full knowledge that the results of the investigation would be used to determine whether Govia would be allowed to keep the Thameslink franchise. Go-Ahead had every incentive to find their wider group innocent, which they duly did, in spite of the fact that LSER and Govia shared many senior directors.

The £16.9 million payout was authorised by the DfT was made during an industrial dispute in which the companies have had all their costs covered by the same Department for Transport. As Govia's annual report states 'Under the management contract... the direct cost and

revenue risk of industrial action remains with the DfT'.

In October the same year, just as the dividend payment was being made, Go Ahead was acquired by a company set up by Australian bus operator Kinetic and Spanish transport investment fund Globalvia.

THE ROLE OF THE DFT

The Department of Transport has refused to disclose details of applications and approvals for dividend payments. On December 20 last year, rail minister Huw Merriman said: "The Department does not publish a list of approved dividend payments or applications under consideration as it considers that publication of this information would prejudice commercial interests".

The DfT claims that payments are authorised following 'independent evaluation' but revealed under questioning that this involved yet more contracts to private companies, including consultancy firms Arup and Atkins. ■

CONTRIBUTION RATES FROZEN FOR 2023

Having considered the economic situation and the continued pay freeze that many of our members have been subjected to, at a meeting of the RMT National Executive Committee in October 2022, a decision was taken to freeze contributions rates for a period of six months from 1st January 2023 and to review this decision until the middle of this year.

Given the current industrial environment and the cost of living for our members, at a meeting on 2nd May 2023, the National Executive Committee determined that our contribution rates will continue to be frozen at 2022 levels until the end of the year.

To confirm, the contribution rates for this year are as follows:

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

Members whose basic salary or equivalent earnings are above £23,600 per annum are required to pay £5.40 per week, while those below this threshold will pay £2.32 per week.



ORGANISING LOGISTICS WORKERS

Freight and logistics members focus on recruitment and retention

RMT's national freight and logistics industrial organising conference meeting in Peterborough took place as the union is developing a national rail freight campaign.

The campaign aims to influence government policy to radically increase investment in rail freight and rail infrastructure to decarbonise transport by creating a shift from road to rail.

Conference secretary Andrew Hill opened the event with a call for delegates to concentrate on recruitment and retention. He called on attendees to get their branches to record the companies and locations the conference covers.

Derek Goodliffe, Leicester

and Rutland outlined the recruitment and retention work being carried out at DB Cargo which was beginning to see results.

There was also discussion about the ongoing attempts and difficulties faced by Southampton and Eastleigh Workshops branch in its recruitment work at Pentalver Transport at Southampton Terminal where it is building for union recognition at the site. The work has been hampered by repeated refusals by the company to allow union access to the site.

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach told delegates that the union was fully committed to stepping up its work in the sector.

He praised the work of

regional organiser Daren Ireland, referring to the comprehensive report that he had submitted to the conference which outlined pay deals and recruitment and recognition work at key companies in the sector.

"This is a very vibrant industry and there is a determination within RMT to push things forward.

"The sector is in front of the rest of the union when it comes to pay deals," John added.

Andrew Hill explained why he believed that relatively strong non strings pay deals of over seven per cent were bucking the trend in the rest of the transport industry.

"The better pay deals are partly driven by driver

shortage and the fact that the companies want to retain drivers," he said.

National executive committee member Jas Breyal reported on work carried out on the previous year's resolutions. She told delegates that there was a need for a national organising committee to cover the sector and that this was being looked at by the union.

Delegates discussed how to build the conference in the future and make it a more effective tool for the sector. It was agreed that next year there would be a push to get reps to the event so that the emphasis could be on organising.

■

FIRSTGROUP KICKED OFF TPE CONTRACT

Union calls for Avanti West Coast to be taken in-house for the same reasons

After a catastrophic decline in services and widespread cancellations to government decided to strip the Transpennine Express franchise from rail privateer First Group earlier this month.

TransPennine Express is the latest part of the rail network to be run by state-owned operator of last resort when its FirstGroup contract expires at the end of this month joining Northern, LNER and Southeastern in public hands.

Despite the TPE operator launching a recovery plan in February, the Department for Transport said that to achieve the "performance levels passengers deserve, and that the northern economy needs, both the contract and the underlying relationships must be reset".

However, the transport secretary Mark Harper immediately committed the government to returning TPE

to the failing private sector as soon as possible.

FirstGroup is a British company which owns four major train operating companies including Avanti West Coast and Great Western Railway and is considered by the Tory government to be a vital part of the privatised railway system.

Trade unions, passengers and politicians across the north have been calling for the change due to the negative impact the failure of train services on the local economy.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that it was absolutely right not to renew or extend the TPE contract which was something the union had also long campaigned for.

"First should now also lose its failed Avanti West Coast contract as part a return of all our railways to public ownership.



"With other parts of our railway already nationalised this decision should now mark the beginning of end for rail privatisation which has brought nothing but chaos for passengers.

"However, it is

disappointing to hear Transport Secretary Mark Harper saying that he intends to return TPE to the private sector despite the shambles the service has become," he said.



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LEGAL

LEGAL VICTORIES



As an RMT member you have access to legal advice and representation from leading trade union lawyers



An RMT tube driver secured compensation after being knocked off his bicycle in a road traffic collision.

The member was hit when a car driver turned into this path when carrying out a U-turn. The member was left with lacerations leaving residual scarring, multiple soft tissue issue and a labral tear in his right shoulder, which left him requiring shoulder surgery.

Due to his injuries the member was off work for almost six months.

The member instructed specialist Thompsons Solicitors, through the RMT legal assistance scheme and after investigation the driver's insurers admitted liability for the accident.

Thompsons instructed a consultant orthopaedic and trauma surgeon to prepare a medical report detailing the nature and extent of the injuries suffered by the member and drafted a schedule of his losses following the accident. Detailed negotiations followed and an out of court settlement of £23,000 was agreed.

FALL AT WORK

An RMT member has secured compensation after being injured in a fall at work.

The member, who is an ultrasonic inspector, was carrying out his usual inspections, walking along the

ballast, when he tripped over scrap rail left on the railway. He fell forward onto the rail and managed to break his fall with outstretched arms. His left arm took the impact and he fell to his left knee directly onto the piece of scrap rail.

The member attended A&E where he was treated with several stitches to the left knee and underwent x-rays, which showed no bony injury. He also sustained bruising and trauma to the left forearm and left thumb, which took almost two months to heal.

He was unable to work or carry out strenuous activity, such as go to the gym, for a number of months. He also has visible scarring.

Thompsons was instructed to obtain compensation for the member's injuries and associated losses. Our member's employer's admitted negligence in respect of the accident and Thompsons therefore proceeded to obtain expert medical evidence in respect of our member's injuries and losses.

Once the evidence was complete, Thompsons negotiated a full and final settlement of our member's claim in the sum of £4,600. This was to compensate the member for his pain, suffering and loss of amenity, together with his loss of earnings as a result of his absence from work following the accident. ■

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
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- 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.

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JOINT CLERICAL AND STATIONS GRADE CONFERENCES

United grades discuss assaults, monitoring technology and the national dispute

RMT members working across stations and associated grades strongly condemned the use of CCTV technology by employers to discipline transport workers.

Taking place at Hertford Castle last month, RMT members from the organising conferences for station and associated grades and supervisory, clerical, and other salaried grades held their respective conferences together to discuss the key issues of the day.

Chief among them was the use of CCTV footage and body camera technology in disciplinary hearings.

Both conferences called for the union to update its policies on CCTV and video technology and supply members with sufficient guidance.

Moving the resolution for the Supervisory, clerical, and salaried grades conference, Edinburgh No1 & Portobello District delegate Willie Strang said that he was "aghast" to find reps who had unwittingly allowed management to use CCTV footage for "fishing trips" in meetings to try and discipline members.

"The union's policy for CCTV is dated 2001 and is over 20 years old. All this resolution is doing is for the policy to be rewritten, updated, and sent out to activists and reps," he added.

The successful resolution also stated: "The steady growth of the use of video surveillance systems across public and private sectors, has led to both fixed and mobile cameras becoming more accepted in society.

"Building public trust and confidence is essential to ensuring that the benefits of any new technology can be realised. Or membership must



have confidence that the use of surveillance systems is lawful, fair, transparent and meets the other standards set in data protection law".

Scott Harvey, Portsmouth pointed out that his workplace had agreed a policy with management that body camera technology could not be used in disciplinary hearings.

At the Supervisory and Associated Grades conference, Daniel Tiftik, Central Line West said that "station staff had been furnished with equipment such as body worn cameras and some stations use enhanced CCTV and data collection".

Conference secretary Ross Marshall added: "Over the last five years, we've had body cameras given to us which has its pros and cons.

"Within body worn cameras and CCTV, there is data collection in the cloud so you're monitored at work.

"With that we need to know what we can do and what the company is allowed to do.

"It is illegal for the company to monitor you on a minute-by-minute basis unless you are at risk of committing terrorism offences and that monitoring has to be approved by the managing director.

"Now a lot of people do not know that. We've had

managers standing round the corner looking at people, turning up posing as customers trying to trap staff and we have even had managers use their own video recorders to video people.

"This is going to get a lot worse. Most people now carry around through their smart phone a video recorder and editor.

"We are asking for the union to produce a comprehensive guide on CCTV, data collection and electronic monitoring, explaining what our rights are and what the company can and cannot do."

Other motions at the conference included an in-depth discussion on staff assaults and attendance warnings and duty of care.

Moving the successful motion, Central Line West branch chair Kieron Ali said that station staff were at the forefront of the mass rise in staff assaults.

"Some companies duty of care post assault is shocking, this including attempts to discipline staff for taking time off.

"We need to ensure that every company has a genuine and followed duty of care policy post assaults and any assault, no matter if verbal or

physical is not counted in any attendance warning system," he said.

Seconding the motion, Joe Simpson from Finsbury Park said that he had been forced to stop fights on the gate line due to a lack of police presence, arguing that if he had not there would be "anarchy" on the stations.

Walé Agunbiadé, East London Rail Branch Secretary and Arriva Rail London company council rep gave a moving account of some of the horrors he witnessed on stations, the lack of British Transport Police officers on stations and the varying affects violent incidents have on members.

"The BTP is pretty much non-existent and just last week we had a member of staff threatened with a machete.

"Two weeks before that we had a guy get a black eye from trying to stop some going on the tracks.

"There is a very inconsistent approach by different companies and the union needs to get behind this, ensuring that companies do have a consistent approach," he said.

Mr Agunbiade added that there had been a shooting in a Hackney station and that during Covid levels of

aggression had risen on the rail network.

Beverley Thomas, Arriva Rail London said that the union must look out for agency colleagues on the network too as they were often forgotten entirely by rail companies.

"I've seen situations where they themselves have been assaulted and have been forced to stay on the stations afterwards and not allowed to go home.

"To see guns and machetes it is traumatising, and I don't believe agency colleagues are getting the support they need," she said.

Other motions passed at the conferences included opposition to plans to re-purpose ticket offices and increased support for reps dealing with difficult cases.

Officials and staff from across the union also addressed delegates from both conferences, including RMT general secretary Mick Lynch, assistant general secretary John Leach, president Alex Gordon and Alan Pottage of the organising unit.

Mr Lynch focused on the national dispute with the 14 train operating companies pointing out that it was not over until the union got a negotiated settlement.

He took issue with suggestions in the media that the union was opposed to technological change and innovation.

"All of you have experienced change. But what we are experiencing now is attacks. It is ok saying technology is there, we understand that.

"We're not riding around on Stevenson's rocket. We've had the age of steam, we've had in every grade...every single one of our members during their life on the railway, has been affected by change.

"We cannot stop technical innovation, but it has to be in our interests, the interests of working people and it cannot be at the cost of attacks on jobs, wages and hard fought for terms and conditions.

"This is not a battle against change - it is a battle against job cuts and imposition," he added ■

President's column

WE NEED WORKERS' RIGHTS, NOT CONSCRIPTION



On Monday 22 May 2023, MPs voted to remove the right to strike from 1 in 5 workers in Britain.

Northern Ireland is not subject to the Tory Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. But 5.5 million workers across England, Scotland, and Wales in health, education, fire and rescue, transport, border security and nuclear industries now face the threat that if they take lawful strike action that they voted for, they can be instructed to cross a picket line to work – and be sacked when they refuse.

This Tory 'Conscription of Workers Act' as the legislation should be known, is the latest sign that a government that can't rule by consent, has turned instead to management by dictat.

Unemployment rose from 3.8 to 3.9 per cent in the first three months of 2023 while average take-home pay fell by almost £1,000 a year. The evidence of an economy rigged against the working class is all around us.

Retail Price Index inflation – the rate that prices including housing costs rise over twelve months - has been in double digits now for over a year. In April 2022, RPI inflation hit 11.1%. Last month, the Office of National Statistics released figures showing RPI inflation in the twelve months to March 2023 was 13.5%. Break that down. It means that the cost of just surviving for workers in Britain has been rising by over 10% every month for the last year. This is a war on workers.

While average wages rose by 6.7 per cent, high inflation means take-home pay fell by 3.1 per cent - the longest wage squeeze since the Napoleonic wars, which in case you wondered ended in 1815.

Real wages today are below wage levels before the 2008 global financial crash. And the current 15-year pay squeeze is set to last until 2026.

As RMT members know better than most, these are the reasons workers across the

NHS, schools, the civil service, train operating companies, and other sectors continue to vote for strike action.

A Tory government trying to stop a strike wave during a cost-of-living crisis by banning the right to strike is like Cnut, King of England, Denmark, and Norway from 1016 to 1035 who ordered his chair to be placed on the seashore and told the rising tide, "You are subject to me, as the land on which I am sitting is mine. I command you not to rise on to my land, nor to wet the clothing of your master."

But the sea came up as usual, and disrespectfully drenched the king's feet and shins anyway.

Workers will continue to struggle against attacks on our class, by whatever means are necessary, including by non-compliance with authoritarian, anti-working class, Tory laws.

More importantly, RMT members need to understand that the movement for jobs, wages, and decent terms and conditions that we unleashed in 2022 with coordinated strikes by workers across the national rail network and London Underground, is part of a labour movement that stretches across every economic sector in Britain.

The response of our movement to the Tory government's latest attack on the right to strike, must not be simply to put on a black armband and mourn the loss of another right for working people.

Our trade unions and our class have been under sustained political attack from successive British governments to restrict our collective rights since 1980. That is a lifetime.

We need workers' rights to organise, to bargain collectively and to withdraw our labour through strike action. A united, determined working class movement can win this. Join the union.

Alex Gordon

KEEP IT SIMPLE

The key to the RMT Credit Union is 'keeping it simple'



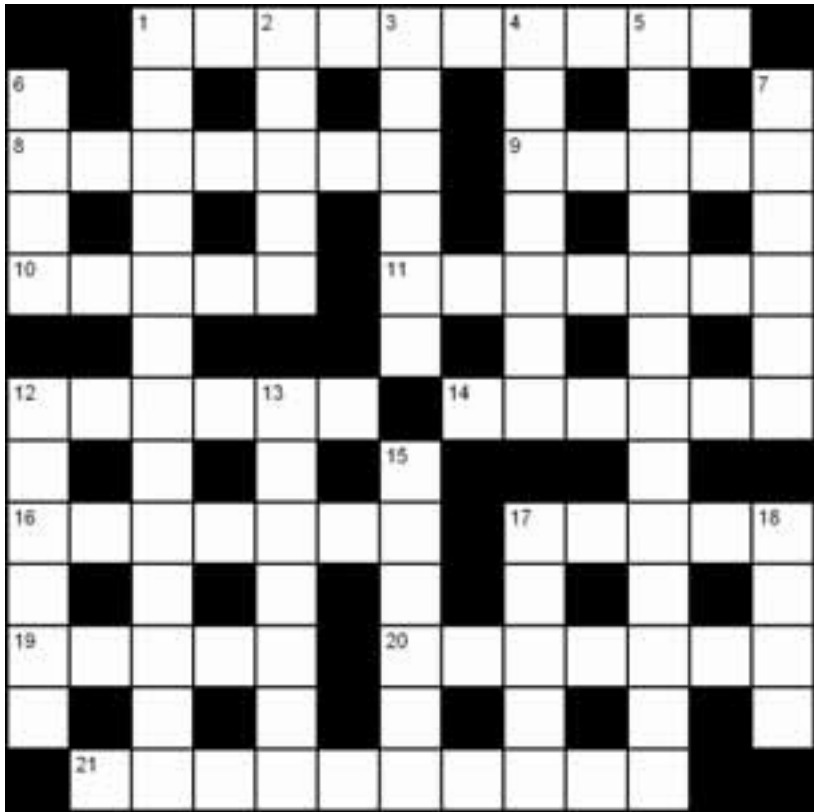
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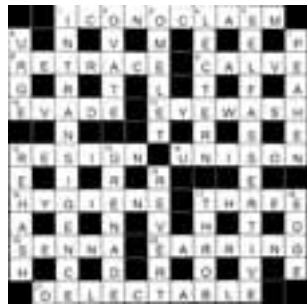
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Last month's winner is Charlie Hicks, Edenbridge.

Please supply bank account details and sort code to receive your prize quickly.

ACROSS

- 1 Theatre illumination (10)
- 8 Military take off site (7)
- 9 Exhilarate (5)
- 10 Joint (5)
- 11 Performer (7)
- 12 Quantum of radiation (6)
- 14 Slight wind (6)
- 16 Flammable liquid (7)
- 17 Closed litter (5)
- 19 Many-headed monster (5)
- 20 Increase (7)
- 21 Replicable (10)

DOWN

- 1 Awareness beforehand (13)
- 2 Talk (5)
- 3 Sideways drift (6)
- 4 Welcomer (7)
- 5 Supremacy (13)
- 6 Lady ... (2,2)
- 7 Remove (6)
- 12 Irregular (6)
- 13 Too old (7)
- 15 Warm again (6)
- 17 Colonial Indian term (5)
- 18 Not ever (4)



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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

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

8 **Next of Kin**

Address

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

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To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
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Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

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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

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- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
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