

RMT *news*

RAIL CUTS COST LIVES

LONDON RALLY FEBRUARY 28



**RAIL CUTS COST
LIVES CAMPAIGN**

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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU



Use the QR code to join to get help at work and save 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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EDITORIAL



RAIL CUTS COST LIVES

We all need to act against job losses and spending cuts on our rail network being demanded by this Tory government. You can use the QR code in this magazine to contact your Westminster MP or Scottish MSP to add your voice in opposition to these cuts.

An RMT survey has revealed that over 90 per cent of Network Rail RMT members think that a major railway incident is likely to happen in the next two years due to cutbacks.

Rail workers are already reporting an increasing number of broken rails and high-profile faults exposing the state of ageing infrastructure, yet Network Rail spending plans mean cuts.

The union has already warned that the litany of major rail crashes including the deadly derailment at Carmont last year were caused by poor infrastructure maintenance.

These extremely damaging cuts must be reversed, and we need to move towards a public ownership model which sees increased investment year on year and safety as the number one priority.

That is also why we are campaigning against the introduction of driver-only operation at Scotrail. RMT members are also taking industrial action alongside ASLEF on Avanti West Coast, Chiltern, Cross Country, Great Western and TPE. Due to the anti-trade union laws, we are only able to take action on these five companies.

Going to press it seems that rail employers are reluctant to use work notices against train drivers under the government's draconian minimum service regulations which will only worsen industrial relations and threaten safety. It is to his credit that London mayor Sadiq

Khan has also refrained from threatening to use these anti-union laws in the capital.

Talking of which RMT has suspended planned tube strike action after Transport for London agreed to more funding for a settlement. Negotiations on a pay deal for London Underground members can now continue with significant further funding.

On shipping I am pleased to report that RMT has won pay deal worth nearly 40 per cent at Stena Line. It is refreshing to see the company respond to our arguments that the recruitment and retention of workers was being impacted due to starter rates being significantly inferior to other onboard rates of pay.

It is also encouraging that your union and Stena Line have reached a Memorandum of Understanding to the benefit of employees subject to policies designed to improve the environmental and social sustainability of the shipping and ports industry.

This approach is in distinct contrast to the disgraced operator P&O Ferries who have been rewarded for sacking hundreds of seafarers with a new freight route between the Thames Freeport and Rotterdam. This is yet another slap in the face for UK seafarers by this government.

As we enter the new year the grades conference season will soon be upon us and on behalf of myself and other union officers, we are looking forward to share ideas about how to build this great union. We hope to see as many of you as possible for some healthy debate.

h.g.e.

AVANTI CELEBRATES 'FREE MONEY'!

Avanti West Coast caught out referring to performance payments as 'too good to be true'



Avanti West Coast has been left with egg on its face after a leaked internal presentation described government subsidies as 'free money'.

On one of the slides released by Novara Media, an image appeared saying: 'Roll-up, roll-up get your free money here!'

Another slide explained how train operators are paid bonuses by the government even if services are not run completely to schedule, under the service quality regime (SQR).

This included the statement: "Sound too good to be true? Well on this occasion – it isn't – it's the absolute truth!"

The leaked presentation follows calls in December for an urgent review of the company's operations after the rail firm announced that it was slashing West Coast Mainline services throughout December.

Avanti West Coast is owned 70 per cent by FirstGroup and 30 per cent by Italian state railways Trenitalia which operate the West Coast Partnership.

During the pandemic, train operating companies went onto emergency contracts where the government paid a fixed amount for them to deliver services with the taxpayer bearing the financial risk, a system that is still in place.

Train operators can get paid more if they meet certain targets, "just like other government suppliers", according to the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which speaks on behalf of the rail industry.

"That means it is taxpayers who bear the burden of a railway that is unsustainable," the RDG said in December.

Transport for the North said that passengers were enduring a "deteriorating service" with 31.8 per cent of all services

cancelled or delayed over a period of eight days.

Yet back in September last year, Avanti West Coast's operating contract was renewed by the Department for Transport for up to nine years, with Transport Secretary Mark Harper claiming that it was 'back on track' following major disruption.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that Avanti was one of the worst rail companies in terms of performance and how it treated its rail staff.

"For senior management to produce a PowerPoint slide bragging about the government paying them public money is a disgrace.

"The government has the mandate over Avanti and should never have given them a long-term nine-year contract award.

"The fact that the company feels emboldened to boast that they get 'free money' is down to the ridiculous system

of rail ownership in this country.

"Ultimately profit driven companies who receive huge public subsidies have failed to deliver for railway workers and passengers alike. And that's why we need public ownership of the entire network," he said.

An Avanti West Coast spokesperson said: "These slides were an attempt to explain how the SQR works to some of our colleagues, but the language used in this presentation was regrettable and we apologise for this".

Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden told MPs that he was not aware of the matter but pledged to look into it.

First Group's latest yearly profits to March 2023 show that Avanti had made profit before tax of £12.8 million and paid dividends of £11 million to shareholders.

ACT NOW ON RAIL SAFETY

RMT rally outside Parliament on February 28 against rail cuts, bring your banners



RMT has launched a campaign against dangerous government-driven cuts of over a billion pounds to Network Rail funding for the next Railway Control Period 7 (CP7) from 2024 to 2029 for vital safety-critical railway infrastructure work. These cuts include:

- Funding cuts to renewals expenditure for CP7 of £1.2 billion in England and Wales and £315 million in Scotland for the next five years.
- Abolition of the Track Renewal Service (TRS) organisation within Network Rail supply chain cutting 500 highly skilled jobs and outsourcing



- operations to private infrastructure companies
- Cuts to maintenance on track, signalling and other assets at a time of increased degradation of railway infrastructure at a time of extreme weather events such as the one which caused the Carmont 2020 rail disaster
- A reduction in railway renewals and an increased reliance on railway maintenance which will

lead to an increase in safety risks and a reduction in performance.

In a recent survey of Network Rail maintenance RMT members, a vast majority believed that there was an increased risk of a major rail safety incident occurring on the railway within the next two years due to broken rails and ageing infrastructure (see page 16-17).

You can help by using the QR code for updates and to

contact your MP or MSP to add your voice in opposition to these cuts.



BATTLE CONTINUES AT CARLISLE SUPPORT SERVICES



RMT members who work for Carlisle Support Services on Northern Trains Revenue and Gateline contract are being balloted for strike action and action short of strike action.

The union is supporting multiple members with individual and collective

grievances in relation to the application of the 'time gate' and the holiday accrual calculation.

Many members have been losing large amounts of their annual leave with some losing as many as 15 days; despite being able to demonstrate they have managed their

holiday entitlement evenly over the 12-month period.

- A significant pay increase reflecting the cost-of-living crisis
- Reform of the 'Timegate' system to end members losing annual leave
- All employment contracts

to reflect normal rostered hours

- CSS staff to receive equal leisure travel facilities
- CSS staff to receive full sick pay
- CSS to increase employer pension fund contributions

RMT MAKES PROGRESS ON TUBE PAY DEAL

RMT suspended planned tube strike action for January following talks with Transport for London which agreed to more funding for a settlement to be made.

Planned action from

January 8 to 11 was suspended after RMT made progress in discussions.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the negotiations on a pay deal for London Underground

members could now continue with significant further funding for a settlement being made available.

"This significantly improved funding position means the scheduled strike

action was suspended and we look forward to getting into urgent negotiations with TfL in order to develop a suitable agreement and resolution to the dispute," he said. ■

TRANSPENNINE STRIKE SUSPENDED

Planned strike action by low paid RMT train cleaners employed by contractor Bidvest Noonan to clean TransPennine Express (TPE) trains has been suspended following an improved offer.

A referendum has been organised on the offer backdated to last April which includes reaching the living wage this year, duty and leisure passes after a 12-week probationary period as

opposed to a year and access to rover family tickets which equate to 50 tickets per year which could present savings of up to £1,000 against full fare travel.

The company has also committed to meaningful talks with a view to developing a roadmap to £15 per hour.

Contracted out caterers working on TPE services are also being balloted for strike action after a leading Rail

Gourmet rep Jamie Reid was sacked following a successful pay dispute that won a pay increase of 20 per cent has also been sacked on trumped up charges.

As a result the union is conducting a ballot so if you are a TPE Rail Gourmet member ensure that your job title, address or workplace has recently changed, please contact the RMT Helpline by Email at info@rmt.org.uk;



alternatively, you can call the RMT Freephone Helpline number on 0800 376 3706, the RMT switchboard on 0207 387 4771 and ask to speak to the Industrial Relations Department. ■

RMT DEMANDS PROTECTION FOR TXM WORKERS

RMT is pushing for a protective award for RMT members made redundant at the TXM after the company went into liquidation.

The union has been in contact with TXM Plant's administrators to understand what steps are being taken to find a new buyer, or funding for the company.

However, as the workforce were not consulted properly and only given statutory redundancy payments, RMT is

now seeking a protective award for all its members.

If successful, it means workers could get eight weeks extra wages on top of the statutory minimum they will be paid.

The Wigan-based supplier of road-rail vehicles was part-owned by private equity investor LDC and until recently had been making profits of £4 million on turnover of £38.9 million.

RMT argues that the

proposed government cuts to funding for maintenance renewals has a direct impact on the Network Rail supply chain which TXM was part of.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the way these workers were being treated was a total disgrace.

"The company hid the fact they were in financial difficulty and failed to consult our members despite the fact they were obligated to consult the recognised trade

unions on prospect of redundancies.

"With private investors grabbing what they can and running out the door and government cuts to funding, what we need is a national strategy for proper rail funding and public ownership.

"We will pursue this matter legally in order reach a just settlement for our members who have been left without a job through no fault of their own," he said. ■

STRIKE AT HITACHI RAIL

RMT members at maintenance depots run by Hitachi rail will strike over five days in row over pay.

Strike action will take place at Craighentenny, Bounds Green and Doncaster maintenance depots with members at Outstations and

Maintenance Control also taking action.

Bosses at Hitachi Rail have only offered six per cent despite the fact that the company made over £100 million in profit last year.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that workers at

Hitachi Rail did a range of highly skilled work ensuring that trains and infrastructure are all working properly.

"However, bosses at the multi-million-pound company are undervaluing their own staff by being greedy and not offering a decent pay rise.

"This sustained action by Hitachi Rail workers will send a clear message to the company that we will not rest until we get a negotiated settlement on pay, that rewards our members sufficiently," he said. ■



MOST BUS DRIVERS SUFFER MSK PROBLEMS

Union survey finds that bus driver cabin design could be improved

RMT has carried out a survey of bus members on musculoskeletal (MSK) complaints such as back, neck and shoulder pain.

400 bus workers were surveyed with 78 per cent saying that their occupation caused MSK problems. 94 per cent said that their working conditions could be improved by the introduction of

adjustable seating, steering columns and driver dashboards.

95 per cent also said that the bus driver's cabin could be designed in a more ergonomic way with 94 per cent did not feeling they were given equal treatment to office workers who ask for workplace adjustments.

As a result, nearly one

quarter of respondents said that they had taken time off in the previous year due to back pain, neck pain or shoulder pain.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the results were deeply concerning and underline the need for strong trade unions in the workplace, pushing employers to make the changes workers need.

"It is unacceptable that bus workers are having to take time off for injuries sustained at work when there is technology available that can easily assist them ergonomically.

"Bus companies are solely concerned with private profit and we need to see all services taken into public ownership for the benefit of passengers and bus workers," he said. ■

BLUESTAR BUS PAY DEAL



RMT bus members working for Bluestar have overwhelmingly backed a pay deal worth 7.14 per cent uplift.

Bluestar operates bus services in Southampton and surrounding areas of Hampshire. It is a subsidiary of the Go South Coast sector of the Go-Ahead Group.

ACCEPTED OFFER IS AS FOLLOWS:

- A 7.14 per cent increase

across all grades, effective January 1, 2024 increasing the Drivers rate by £1 per hour from £14 to £15.

- An additional concessionary pass for one eligible child for staff who have completed 24 months continuous service.
- Current trainees will receive a £1 per hour increase and new trainees will be paid the current £13.00 rate. ■

WHAT IS THE STRIKES (MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS) ACT?

Trade unions vow to back any union or worker sacked for exercising the right to strike

The government's draconian Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act has been forced through parliament by the government.

This means that when workers lawfully vote to strike in health, education, fire, transport, border security and nuclear decommissioning, they could be forced to attend work – and sacked if they don't comply.

It has now become clear that in some sectors affected by MSLs, the vast majority of workers would be prohibited from ever taking strike action. This undemocratic new law is set to curtail the right to strike for one in five workers.

This malicious legislation imposes unworkable bureaucracy on unions and their members, and also puts them at risk of huge and unacceptable penalties if they fall foul of the rules.

The government is riding roughshod over workers' rights to take strike action to defend their pay and conditions. The UK already has some of the most restrictive trade union laws in the world. But instead of a proper plan to boost jobs and raise living standards, the Conservative government is trying to make it even harder to win fair pay and conditions.

But RMT and other unions will not stand by and let workers get sacked for defending their pay and conditions. And it won't rest until this malicious, unnecessary and unworkable law has been repealed.

The TUC has also agreed that the entire trade union movement will rally behind any union attacked under these MSL laws or any worker sacked for exercising their fundamental right to strike.

PROTECT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

The government believed that this law would be easy to push through. But the trade union movement won allies across society, across the political spectrum and around the world. The condemnation of these anti-democratic plans made headlines at home and abroad and they were defeated three times in the House of Lords. It has delayed the implementation of this latest Tory anti-trade union law, embarrassed the Conservatives and made them pay a political price. The Trade Union Congress has also secured a vital commitment from the Labour Party that it would repeal this pernicious law in their first 100 days of office.

But until then RMT will join with other unions to take all opportunities to challenge, frustrate and resist this

legislation and its implementation.

The TUC has secured commitments from the Welsh and Scottish governments as well as city mayors and council leaders that they will not implement minimum service levels. Trade unions will also continue to push employers not to impose work notices. In every workplace where employers attempt to impose these draconian rules, they can expect the trade union movement to respond with a show of force and solidarity for any workers affected.

The government has adopted a reckless approach with its minimum service levels legislation and the trade union movement has vowed to explore all options to fight this legislation including legal routes. The right to strike is a fundamental liberty and must be defended at all costs. ■



STENA LINE PAY WIN

RMT wins pay deal worth up to nearly 40 per cent for incoming crew at the shipping company

RMT has negotiated a significant pay uplift for seafarers and dockers working for Stena Line operating in Harwich, Belfast, Cairnryan, Holyhead, Birkenhead and Fishguard and onboard Stena Britannica.

The union has argued that that recruitment and retention of workers was being impacted due to starter rates of pay being significantly inferior to the other onboard rates of pay.

As a result, it was unfair for colleagues carrying out the same duties were paid varying rates of pay. So, to address this problem, the union's negotiating team suggested a new incremental scheme that would allow new starters to achieve parity within their grade over shorter a period of time.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that the union had told the company that it needed to review and improve its crewing model in order to retain skilled seafarers in the industry.



DEAL: Superfast VIII ferry at Belfast Docks

"It is in everyone's interest to recognise that the industry needs to retain highly trained personnel by making it an appealing career choice," he said.

As a result, the highest uplift of 35.65 per cent was awarded to newly qualified Able Seamen (AB) and grade two Stewards were awarded between 18.38 per cent and 25.82 per cent.

All those ratings on the historic rate of pay will receive a 5.5 per cent increase from January 2024. In addition to the base uplift, specific grades on current Stena rate will see a further increase from January

of up to nine per cent.

- Able Seamen holding a II/5 ticket will receive a pay award of nine per cent as an Able Seafarer Deck
- Current Motormen holding a III/5 ticket will receive a pay award of nine per cent as an Able Seafarer Engine.
- Current Motorman holding a III/4 ticket will receive a pay award of 5.5 per cent as an Engineering Watch Rating.
- Able Seamen holding a II/4 ticket salary will be aligned with the Engineering Watch Rating position.
- Hotel Repairman, Assistant

Bosun and Bosun ranks will receive a pay award of 7.5 per cent

- Able Seamen holding a II/4 EDH ticket will be aligned with the salary of the Engineering Watch Rating position.

In addition, it has been agreed to move towards gender neutral rank terminology. As such a new rank term for 'Hotel Repairman' is expected to be discussed and agreed between the company and the union.

Stena has also agreed to increase the voluntary recall rate permanently to 1.25x the base rate of pay. The training rate of recall will remain at 1.15x and detention onboard will be 1.5x rates of recall as per the current CBA.

It has also been recognised that Stena Britannica has a structure and management outside of the alignment of the Irish Sea vessels. Following positive meeting between the company and RMT regional organiser Kathy Mazur an agreement has been reached to upgrade one G1 post per crew in the Galley to a G1 co-ordinator (Sous Chef) in line with the structure on the Irish Sea Vessels.



DEAL: RMT national secretary Darren Procter with Stena reps in Belfast

JUST TRANSITION AT STENA

RMT and Stena Line have reached a Memorandum of Understanding to the benefit of employees subject to policies designed to improve the environmental and social sustainability of the shipping and ports industry.

Both parties agreed that dialogue through the collective bargaining process must be respected as a core element of the Just Transition process.

The agreement applies to the social, economic and environmental changes demanded by climate change which could have an impact on the livelihood, pay, employment conditions or fundamental rights of employees in the business covered by agreements with the union.

Both parties endorse the UN International Maritime

Organisation's recognition of UN Sustainable Development Goal 13 - to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts – in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which cause global warming.

They also agree to work for a just transition to meet the IMO targets for CO2 emission reductions per journey of 40 per cent by 2030 and the ambition to reduce annual GHG emissions from shipping by 30 per cent by 2030; 80 per cent by 2040 and to achieve net-zero by 2050.

The agreement recognises the following areas which to passenger and freight vessels and ports covered by collective bargaining agreements between the RMT and UK subsidiaries of the Stena Group:

- Low and zero emission forms of fuel
- Bunkering, storage, safety and shoreside supply of low and zero GHG-emission fuels
- Training, re-training and upskilling of seafarer Ratings and port operative and clerical grades
- Digitalisation on board passenger and freight vessels and in port storage, warehouse, operational and clerical premises
- The application of Artificial Intelligence in Stena Group's shipping and ports businesses
- Workplace policies designed to reduce GHG emissions

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that workers affected by Just Transition changes must be entitled to

free re-training and contiguous employment at no loss of pay or detriment to contractual terms and conditions of employment, including pension rights.

Where technological or other changes are proposed in the workplace or to the job in response to the climate emergency would result in the replacement of a worker, the worker will be offered re-training and work elsewhere in the business, at no loss of pay or detriment to contractual conditions of employment or to their fundamental employment or human rights.

"There is also a welcome commitment to develop workplace education programmes for trade union representatives and the wider workforce on just transition policies at Stena," he said.



'DISGRACED' P&O HANDED NEW FREIGHT ROUTE



Tilbury Port

RMT has said that handing disgraced P&O Ferries a new freight route from March between the Thames Freeport and Europoort in Rotterdam was a slap in the face for UK seafarers.

The Dutch-flagged *Norbay* vessel will be used on the new route, having been transferred from the Liverpool-Dublin route that P&O Ferries scrapped last December.

RMT general secretary Mick

Lynch said that the government's weak response to P&O Ferries slashing 786 seafarer jobs in March 2022 meant that the Dutch flagged ferry on this new route would not recover jobs for RMT members or tackle local economic deprivation.

"P&O continues to deny their pension liabilities to UK seafarers and have even attacked dockers' jobs in Rotterdam, where we expect

this proposal to be equally controversial.

"Clearly, the government's Seafarers Wages Act and its voluntary Seafarers Charter have had no effect on P&O's policy of exploiting workers for private profit in Dubai and the fact that this route is in the Thames Freeport in which DP World has a significant stake, tells us that the government prioritises big business over the needs of

working people.

"The government must demand a review of the employment conditions on this new route but to break the business model of rogue operators like P&O, we need a New Deal for workers that extends mandatory rights to fair pay agreements, safe working patterns and secure pension rights on short sea shipping routes," he said.



END SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORK

Union survey finds women workers across rail, bus, metro and passenger ferry sectors face sexual harassment

RMT research has found 40 percent of women public transport workers have been sexually harassed at work.

The union surveyed 1,400 women workers across rail, bus, metro and passenger ferry and found the following:

- Four in 10 women public transport worker said that they had been sexually harassed at work in the last year. Yet nearly 70 per cent of those affected did not report the incidents.
- When asked why they did not report incidents, the most common response was that they did not think their complaint would be taken seriously.
- More than 80 per cent of women said that sexual harassment on public transport was becoming more of a problem.

RMT women members also shared several distressing statements including:

"I have had numerous men stroke my bum as they pass by and that's in the day. Of a night when they are drunk it's worse, I've had a group of men grab me and say come on love sit on my knee".

"Cat-calling, touching,

staring, unwanted uncomfortable conversation, unwanted 'complements' and people taking pictures of me without my permission".

"Sexually aggressive and explicit language as a form of intimidation is a frequent thing".

"I have had many comments made to me, one of the comments that was made to me which stuck with me was 'you look amazing in that uniform, but I think you would out of it'.

"There are fewer staff and perpetrators become emboldened by this".

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the survey, carried out for the International day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, revealed that employers had much more to do in the public transport industry and the authorities in wider society, in tackling misogyny and harassment against women.

"It is clear that more staffing and reducing lone working will help make our members feel safer.

"I am grateful to all our women members who took part and shared their

experiences some of which make for uncomfortable reading.

"RMT will always support our women members at work in combatting sexual harassment and hold employers to account for any shortcomings," he said.

TACKLING HARASSMENT AT WORK

Workplace violence encompasses a wide range of behaviour including verbal abuse, racial abuse, physical assaults, threats, being spat at. RMT's survey found that 70 per cent of women public transport workers had experienced workplace violence in the last year and two-thirds of those were lone working at the time.

98 per cent said that more action was needed to be taken against perpetrators of violence and abuse towards public transport workers. While just 40 per cent of members said that they feel safe at work.

The union has re-iterated the need properly staffed public transport networks. The ongoing de-staffing of trains, stations and other forms of transport must be

halted and reversed. The union's survey also highlights that lone working was becoming more common and put staff more at risk of abusive and violent behaviour. Increasing the presence of staff deters perpetrators, improves the safety of both passengers and staff and means that there are more people able to respond if incidents do occur.

It is also clear that the lack of action taken against perpetrators is exacerbating the problem and leading to underreporting. RMT believes that transport employers must have a robust, zero-tolerance approach to perpetrators of violence, sexual harassment and abuse of transport workers. This involves properly supporting victims, having accessible reporting procedures in place, and policies on tackling sexual harassment and violence.

RMT is also campaigning for the creation of a specific offence of abuse or assault of public transport workers, mirroring legislation which already exists for some other public facing sectors, to afford additional protections to workers. ■

WOMEN'S SAFETY ON SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY

Union survey of women members working at ScotRail reveals sexual harassment getting worse

According to new RMT research one in three women ScotRail workers have been sexually harassed at work in the last year and more than 80 per cent did not report the incidents for fear that the report would not be taken seriously.

More than half also said that they had witnessed sexual harassment being perpetrated against female passengers in the last year and three-quarters thought it was becoming more of a problem.

Sexual harassment, abusive and violent behaviour towards women and girls is prevalent and is perpetrated in various settings, including on public transport and can affect both passengers and staff and less than a quarter of women ScotRail members said that they feel safe at work.

Nearly all ScotRail female members surveyed also said that a further extension of Driver Only Operation (DOO)

would worsen the safety of women and girls on the railway and similar amount said that cuts to ScotRail ticket office hours would worsen women and girls' safety.

95 per cent said that increasing staffing on trains and at stations would improve the safety of women and girls on public transport.

RMT's survey results have clearly exposed the scale of the problem and the need for more action to be taken by employers and the Scottish government.

The survey reinforces the union's view that properly staffed transport networks are vital for supporting passenger, and staff safety. As the Scottish government's own research has found, women and girls feel safer travelling when there are staff at stations, in ticket offices and on trains. Its own report, published in March 2023, also recommended the Scottish

government look at increasing staffing at stations and on trains.

It is therefore concerning that the Scottish government's progress towards acting on the recommendations from March last year appears to be slow. At the same time, and in clear contradiction to its own findings, it still has not ruled out cuts to ScotRail ticket office hours and ScotRail has recently proposed rolling out DOO on more of the network.

RMT welcomes the recommendation in Scottish Labour's recent report into ending violence against women and girls that it will continue to call on the Scottish government to "prevent any reduction in ticket office opening hours, commit to no cuts to staffing on trains".

It is clear from the RMT survey that women feel that issues around sexual harassment and workplace violence are often not taken

seriously and that there is a lack of action against perpetrators which exacerbates the issue.

The union believes that transport employers must have a robust, zero-tolerance approach to perpetrators of violence, sexual harassment and abuse of transport workers. This involves properly supporting staff who are victims, having accessible reporting procedures in place, and policies on tackling sexual harassment and violence.

RMT also has wider concerns about the prevalence of anti-social and abusive behaviour on Scotland's railway. The union has been campaigning for the Scottish government to introduce legislation which creates a specific offence for abusing or assaulting transport workers, mirroring legislation which already exists for the blue light and retail sectors.



ORGANISING ON THE RIVER



RMT carries on a long tradition of organising river workers with a colourful past and a bright future

Among the colourful characters of the River Thames from a bygone age were the well organised and sometimes boisterous lightermen - who transported goods - and watermen - who carried people - along the river.

Although this most famous river is often viewed as a highway of the rich, the writer Peter Ackroyd suggests in his book *Thames: Sacred River* that Handel's Water Music was first performed in 1717 on royal vessels carrying King George I to drown out the 'vulgar abuse of the Thames watermen and their egalitarian sentiments hallowed by tradition on the river'.

The advent of an increasing number bridges across the Thames in the intervening centuries rather undermined their monopoly in trade. However, their successors are still with us today, operating on the capital's river which is a good deal quieter than 400 years ago.

Today RMT members work on regulated ferry passenger services which started in the 1880s and are now provided by City Cruises. The company operates seventeen vessels of various sizes on the Thames,

with combined capacity to carry over 3,000 passengers. Over four million passenger journeys were taken on City Cruises vessels on the Thames in 2022 alone.

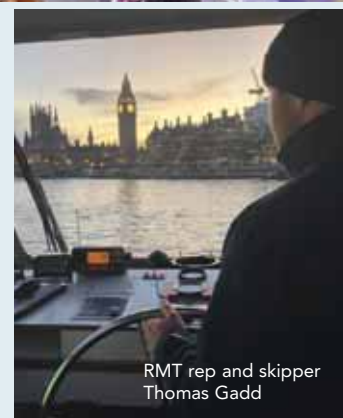
The company was founded in 1996 but had been operated in various guises since the 1970s. City Cruises was bought by the US company Hornblower Group in 2019. The company was kept afloat with £2.35 million of taxpayer support during the pandemic and having survived that, the future looks brighter for RMT members on the Thames and across City Cruises.

This is despite the fact that competitor Thames Clippers has a contract with Uber to use their 20-vessel fleet to provide river bus services. While City Cruises and other operators pay pier fees on the Thames, Thames Clippers are exempt from that charge, a cost that members should never have to bear.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter said that there was a thriving trade union tradition on City Cruises services with reps in place and a healthy collective bargaining process to discuss vital issues



RMT member
Martin Welsh



RMT rep and skipper
Thomas Gadd

including conditions and pay.

RMT rep Thomas Gadd is a skipper on a City Cruises vessel and explains the lure of the river he has worked on all his life.

"I started as an apprentice and I'm still here but there is always something new to learn working on the river," he said.

York City Cruises also operates on the River Ouse, with five vessels with combined capacity to carry over 400 passengers and

hundreds of thousands of passengers use them every year.

City Cruises also operate a service in Poole, Dorset, where the five sea going vessels have a combined capacity to carry 650 passengers.

RMT organises apprentices, cabin staff, customer services, deck crew, mates, skippers and stock controllers and is currently negotiating recognition for all other pier-side roles. ■

NO TO DRIVER ONLY OPERATION ON SCOTRAIL

Details of campaign meetings and action available on the RMT website

RMT has launched a campaign to defend the role of the guard at ScotRail after the company tabled short-sighted proposals to extend Driver Only Operation (DOO) on a number of lines including Barrhead, East Kilbride and Kilmarnock.

Under ScotRail proposals there would be no role for conductors in despatch and no guarantee of a second member of staff on board.

RMT is completely opposed to any further extension of DOO, which risks passenger safety, security and accessibility and members' jobs and conditions.

The union has launched a number of mass meetings for the affected members including conductors in Dumfries, Glasgow and Ayr as

well as a high-profile public and political campaign alongside an industrial campaign.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch warned that if ScotRail is able to roll out DOO on these lines the company would not stop there as this was not the first time DOO had been threatened by ScotRail.

"In 2016 RMT conductor members took a number of days industrial action in a successful fight to oppose DOO and protect the role of the guard.

"That is why all RMT conductor members at ScotRail need to support the campaign to fight off the threat of DOO.

"It is important to note that ScotRail is now owned and managed in public ownership



by the Scottish government, and it can intervene at any time.

"That's why in addition to our industrial campaign, RMT will be campaigning politically for the Scottish government to scrap these harmful proposals permanently," he said.

When the company first announced its intentions, the union wrote to the Transport Minister Fiona Hyslop MSP to register the union's complete opposition to an extension of DOO. Supportive MSPs have also tabled parliamentary questions and a motion in the Scottish Parliament and events with MSPs will be taking place as part of the campaign.

RMT will also be campaigning publicly to ensure that passengers are aware of what is being proposed and to build support for the campaign. As part of this, public meetings and demos will be taking place and all details will be circulated to members and on social media.

Here is what RMT members can do to support the campaign:

- Get the message to your colleagues about what the company is planning and be ready to fight these plans
- Lobby your MSP – ask them to oppose any extension of DOO and raise concerns with the Scottish government which owns ScotRail
- Make sure your membership details are up-to-date. Email info@rmt.org.uk with any updates
- Follow the website and social media for campaign updates @RMT_Scotland & @RMTUnion
- Attend and publicise public actions as part of the campaign ■

Regular updates will be sent to members and shared on social media. Campaign resources will be available online at www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/



IS IT SAFE?

Union raises safety concerns over broken rails, job losses and spending cuts

Over 90 per cent of Network Rail RMT members think that a major railway incident is likely to happen in the next two years because of spending cuts, an RMT survey has revealed.

Network Rail plans to cut £1.2 billion of its budget between 2024 and 2029, raising fears of accidents and serious safety-related incidents on the railway.

These cuts include abandoning track renewals for at least the next five years and the permanent loss of highly specialised, skilled jobs and equipment while reports of broken rails on aging infrastructure increases.

In a damning indictment of these changes, 96 per cent of Network Rail workers say that the cuts in the next five years will worsen railway safety, with 77 per cent of members saying it will 'substantially worsen rail safety'.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the shocking survey results revealed the real fears of members on the front line, as the reality of rail funding cuts becomes clear.

"These cuts mean Network Rail will not renew a single mile of track for the next 5-8 years and the permanent loss of specialist workforce and equipment currently delivering 70 per cent of Britain's Track Renewals.

"Instead, passengers will experience a planned and deliberate reduction of railway service as reliance on speed restrictions becomes the norm to mitigate the increased

safety risk posed by decrepit rail tracks. We are witnessing the managed decline of a national asset.

"They must reverse these extremely damaging cuts and move to a genuine public ownership model which sees increased investment year on year and safety as the number one priority," he said.

RMT has written to Network Rail, Westminster and Scottish governments as well as the Department of Transport over these deep concerns.

Rail workers are already reporting an increasing number of broken rails, de-wirements and recent high-profile faults which affected The Elizabeth Line and Eurostar services have highlighted the state of ageing infrastructure, yet Network Rail's latest spending plan means deep spending cuts.

The union has already warned that the litany of major rail crashes including the deadly derailment at Carmont last year caused by poor infrastructure maintenance were testament to what can happen through lack of investment and continual cost-cutting.

CUTS

The Office of Rail and Road's Final Determination shows that Network Rail's Control Period 7 (CP7) expenditure will be approximately £43.065 billion in the five-year control period starting from April 1, 2024 and ending on March 31, 2029 (CP7). This is a one per cent cut on total CP6 funding of



£43.470 billion.

This also equates to a £1.7 billion cut in the original £44.8 Billion Statement of Funds Available (SOFA) included in ORR's Draft Determination which ORR explain is "primarily because of higher than anticipated inflation".

Total renewals expenditure for CP7 is £17.5 billion which is £1.2 billion or six per cent lower than in CP6 of £18.7 billion. As a result, Core Renewals expenditure, covering track, off-track, signalling, level crossings, earthworks, drainage, buildings, electrification and fixed plant, and telecommunications, is being significantly cut. In CP7 it is projected to be £15 billion which is 10 per cent less than in CP6.

The proposed cuts to renewals mean that there will be a greater reliability in maintenance but the fact that Network Rail, under huge financial pressure from the government, is now imposing its Modernising Maintenance

Programme which will slash Maintenance Scheduled Tasks (MSTs) by 50 per cent with the sole intention of reducing headcount and overhead costs. The reductions in MSTs is completely incompatible with the cuts to renewals budgets.

Network Rail is also winding up their Track Renewals Services completely with the threat of up to 500 redundancies which the union has said would be an 'act of industrial vandalism'. Not undertaking track renewals over the next five years would leave rail infrastructure dilapidated and permanently remove the capacity to undertake renewals in-house.

The combined crises of record high inflation, ageing infrastructure and climate change will have a devastating impact on the railway network but the strategic business plan for CP7 simply seem to wilfully ignore these crises and instead kick the can down the road.

The union believes that proposals to reduce renewal

work and instead put a sticking plaster of increased maintenance and using operational controls such as speed restrictions is a dangerous and reckless way to run a railway for the next five-year period.

This will ultimately pile more pressure on the network and increase the risks to both passengers and railway workers. Reducing renewals over the next five-year period will not only threaten services and safety but also thousands of skilled railway jobs.

SURVEY

RMT regularly receives information from members concerning the impact that funding cuts to infrastructure are already having on the rail network

Following the confirmation of the cuts to the renewals budget the union surveyed members working in Network Rail maintenance in all regions and the results were startling and shocking. Here are the questions asked and the answers received:

- **“Do you think the railway is safer or less safe than it was 2 years ago?”** In total 44 per cent said that the railway was substantially less safe and 33 per cent said it was moderately less safe, so 77 per cent of Network Rail maintenance members believe the railway is less safe than it was two years ago.
- **“To what extent do you think the proposed £1.2bn cut in renewals in the next five-year control period (CP7) will impact rail safety?”** In total 77 per cent of members said that it would substantially impact rail safety and 19 per cent of members said that it would moderately impact safety so 96 per cent of members believe these cuts to renewals budgets will impact on rail safety.
- **“Based upon your experience do you think**

there is an increased risk of a major rail safety incident occurring on the railway within the next two years?” In total 58 per cent of members said that a rail safety incident was very likely and 34 per cent said that it was likely so 92 per cent of our members believe a rail safety incident in the next two years is likely.

- **“To what extent do you think the proposed £1.2bn cut in renewals in the next five-year control period (CP7) will impact rail performance and reliability?”** In total 68 per cent believe the £1.2bn cut to renewals budgets will substantially impact performance and reliability whilst 26 per cent said it would moderately impact performance and reliability so, 94 per cent of respondents believe cuts to renewals budgets will

impact performance and reliability in the next five-year control period.

Recently, The Office of Road and Rail (ORR) also wrote a scathing letter to Network Rail about the failure to comply with structure examinations meaning a backlog of thousands of structures on the railway being left with little or no examinations over many years. The letter states how this poses a clear safety risk.

The cut in renewals means that there will be a greater reliance on maintenance but Network Rail, under huge financial pressure from the government, is now imposing its Modernising Maintenance Programme which will slash Maintenance Scheduled Tasks (MSTs) by 50 per cent with the sole intention of reducing headcount and overhead costs. Such reductions are completely incompatible with renewals budget cuts.



DISASTER: The Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into the disaster at Stonehaven, Carmont, where three people lost their lives, found that the failure to ensure inspections were carried out on a drainage system directly contributed to railway engineers not identifying a construction fault which ultimately led to the derailment.



MONEY-GO-ROUND PROFITEERING

Rail companies sitting on millions of unclaimed delay re-pay pay outs

RMT research has found that less than half of eligible rail passengers who are entitled to compensation under the delay repay scheme are putting in a claim.

Only 47 per cent are putting in delay repay claims with rail companies when their train is delayed by a certain amount of time, meaning train operators are sitting on potentially tens of millions of pounds.

According to Department for Transport figures passengers received £101 million in compensation in the year 2022-23 for delayed services, 13 per cent more than before the pandemic, even though overall passenger numbers remain slightly down on 2019.

This means that it is highly likely that around £100 million has not been claimed, allowing private rail operators to artificially boost profits and revenues.

New data published by the Office of Rail and Road also revealed that train operators compensate themselves at public expense for their own failure using the complex 'Schedule 8' procedure to claim more than £132 million last year for 'lost revenue' from the taxpayer via Network Rail as a result of unplanned disruption.

Schedule 8 payments are made between different parts of the industry, Network Rail and the various train operating

companies, to ensure that companies don't lose out on revenues because of each other's failings.

They are paid on the basis of formulas attributing responsibility and calculating lost revenue to ensure that operators have 'financial comfort' that they will not suffer for events beyond their control including late services by another operator, for example. Revenue loss because of planned disruption is covered by a separate compensation regime, 'Schedule 4'.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that it was scandalous that private rail companies were effectively

profiting from running a poor service a situation that could be ended with a single integrated ticket system alongside a nationalised rail operator.

"It would mean the overwhelming majority of delay repay claims could be done automatically and passengers who had to make a claim, could do so in confidence that rail companies were not profiting from their failures.

"The fleecing of taxpayers and passengers by profit hungry rail companies must come to an end and a fully publicly owned and controlled railway is the best way to achieve that," he said. ■

SUPPORT FREIGHT ON RAIL? END RAIL CUTS

RMT argues that the government's ambitious rail freight growth targets cannot be met

The Department for Transport's long-awaited rail freight growth target pledging to increase rail freight by "at least 75 per cent by 2050" is profoundly at odds with its rail cuts agenda, RMT has said.

In his introduction in support of these pledges, Transport Secretary Mark Harper MP points out that a growth in rail freight would improve the environment as a tonne of freight moved by rail produces around a quarter of the carbon emissions that it

would if it were moved by road. One train could replace up to 129 heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), easing congestion on our roads.

Yet his same government has told Network Rail to cut £1.2 billion from its funding for railway renewals for the next five-year funding control period 7 (CP7) from 2024 to 2029.

As highlighted elsewhere in this magazine these cuts include abandoning track renewals for at least the next five years and the permanent

loss of highly specialised, skilled jobs and equipment while reports of broken rails on aging infrastructure rockets (see page 16, 17).

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the 2050 target for rail freight growth target meant nothing if at the same time the government was cutting vital rail infrastructure projects such as the Northern leg of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse rail which would provide the desperately needed extra capacity.

"We have a government that simply does not understand the importance of investing in our railways, in rail freight and creating the mode-shift we need.

"This government seems hell bent on overseeing the managed decline of our railway by flogging the dead horse of a fragmented privatised railway, whilst making massive cuts to infrastructure funding that is jeopardising safety and performance," he said.



RMT 2024 CONFERENCE DATES SCHEDULE

Conference	Date	Venue
February		
National Health & Safety Conference	February, 21	York
Young Members' Conference	February 23 – 24	Wigan
Signalling & Operations Grades	February 24 – 25	Torquay
March		
National Women's conference	March 1 – 2	Poole
Black & Ethnic Minority conference	March 4 – 5	Birmingham
National Union Education Conference	March 13	Bristol
Freight & Logistics Conference	March 23	Birmingham
Catering Grades conference	March 23	Blackpool
Supervisory & Associated Grades	March 23 – 24	Manchester
April		
RMT Station & Associated Grades	April 5 – 6	Portsmouth
RMT Disabled Workers Conference	April 10 – 11	Liverpool
Bus Workers Conference	April 12 – 13	Grimsby
Engineering Grades	April 20 – 21	Liverpool
Train Crew & Shunting Grades	April 25 – 26	Penzance
RMT Retired Conference	April 30	Manchester
May		
Cleaning Workers	May 10 – 11	York
LGBT+ Members' Conference	May 17 – 18	Manchester
June		
RMT Annual General Meeting	June 23 – 28	Hull

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Promote your branch, region and the union - call Pellacraft on 01623 636 602 if you have any queries.

END DIGITAL POVERTY

RMT retired members call for action to tackle older people left behind by digital technology



Retired RMT members meeting last year in Manchester discussed a motion submitted by the London and Anglia retired members branch called on action to end digital poverty amongst older people by joining forces with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC).

In an age of high-speed internet and ongoing technology when you can't even find out what money you have in your bank account without logging onto a website, RMT representatives met with the NPC to understand what digital poverty was and how to campaign to end this unfairness.

NPC's digital working party chair Jenny Sims explained that around three million people, 30 per cent of adults over 65, do not use the internet.

"As society becomes increasingly digital, they are being left behind. This group of people are finding it increasingly difficult to access

information and services, often leaving them poorer and socially isolated.

"The NPC's campaign, Connections for All, was launched more than two years ago with two goals: to help more older people get online, and to ensure that those not online, for whatever reason - including choice, are not disadvantaged, or discriminated against, and are always offered alternatives to digital services.

To achieve these aims, the NPC works in partnership with other organisations including the Digital Poverty Alliance (DPA), which has launched a campaign to end digital poverty by 2030, and affiliate members such as RMT," she said.

What is digital poverty?

The DPA's definition is: "The inability to interact with the online world fully, when where and how an individual needs to".

Its website says: "We believe that digital poverty and its definition needs to feature in the current agendas

including social mobility and levelling up in the UK".

And it warns: "This is an urgent issue. The pandemic made us all more aware of the digital divide. Some initial progress was made in response, but we must go much further to address the determinants of digital poverty. Providing access to a device alone cannot end digital exclusion."

In collaboration with stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors, the DPA has published a National Delivery Plan, 2023 "to end digital poverty together".

One of its key messages is that digital access is a basic human right.

One of the barriers to going online is the cost of broadband. Although most internet providers offer a social tariff, research shows that too few people are aware of them and the uptake is low. But many of those who do have broadband are still struggling.

This was verified by a Citizens Advice survey which found that one million people

cancelled their broadband subscriptions earlier this year.

After producing two interim reports on their findings and conducting a survey of NPC members at the NPC's Annual Convention in Blackpool in June, the Digital Working Party recommended the NPC campaign for "a basic internet access package available free for those over State Pension Age".

The Digital Working Party's remit included helping to raise awareness of such reports and to signpost members to the UK-wide range of opportunities to access free digital training, devices, help, advice, and support e.g. through the social change charity, the Good Things Foundation.

"The NPC welcomes the news that RMT has agreed to support the NPC's Connection for All campaign," said Jenny.

For more information on the *Connections for All* campaign and how to become a RMT Retired Activist, please contact the RMT Pensions Officer, Paul Norris, at p.norris@rmt.org.uk or on 020 7529 8806. ■

200 YEARS OF THE RNLI



The RNLI has been saving lives at sea since 1824

With the support of the public the Royal National Lifeboats Institution (RNLI) has saved the lives of over 144,000 men and women off the coasts of the UK, Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands as well as many inland waterways.

Following a number of high-profile shipwrecks, the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck was founded on March 4, 1824 at the London Tavern pub in Bishopsgate.

By 1854 the name was changed to the RNLI and has 238 lifeboat stations and operates 444 lifeboats. RNLI lifeguards also operate on more than 200 beaches: paid by local authorities, but the RNLI provides equipment and training. The institution also operates flood rescue teams nationally and internationally,

the latter prepared to travel to emergencies overseas at short notice.

What the RNLI has achieved in the last 200 years has only been possible thanks to ordinary people doing extraordinary things including forming crews, funding kit and lifeboats to save lives at sea.

Once, the RNLI launched wooden lifeboats with oars and sails and now they are saving lives on motor-powered all-weather lifeboats with state-of-the-art technology and communications.

WARTIME

During the First World War, lifeboat crews launched 1,808 times, rescuing 5,332 people. With many younger men on active service, the average age of a lifeboatman was over 50. Many launches were to ships

that had been torpedoed or struck mines, including naval or merchant vessels on war duty; a notable example was the hospital ship SS Rohilla

which foundered in 1914 and was attended by six lifeboats, saving 144 lives over a 50-hour rescue mission.

The Second World War



placed considerable extra demands on the RNLI, particularly in south and east England where the threat of invasion and enemy activity was ever-present, rescuing downed aircrew a frequent occurrence, and the constant danger of mines. During the war, 6,376 lives were saved.

Nineteen RNLI lifeboats also sailed to Dunkirk in 1940 to assist with the evacuation. Lifeboats from Ramsgate and Margate went directly to France, Ramsgate's crew collecting 2,800 troops. Both coxswains, Edward Parker from Margate and Howard Primrose Knight from Ramsgate, were

awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for their 'gallantry and determination'.

WOMEN

As part of the anniversary the role of women in the RNLI is being celebrated including an exhibition of photographs at the National Maritime Museum, London opening on March 2, 2024.

It will celebrate the vital role that women have played in saving lives at sea, highlighting the work and success of women in a variety of roles throughout the RNLI's 200-year history.

Alongside the portraits, the

exhibition will include recorded oral histories from some who share their experiences of life with the RNLI. Six histories have been collected during the creation of the exhibition which will also be available via the Royal Museums Greenwich website.

The exhibition explores how women have played a crucial role in ensuring the RNLI remains functional through fundraising efforts. The section includes the thoughts of Janet Kelly MBE who recounts the challenges of establishing a new lifeboat station on the Thames in Central London. Tower RNLI

station was opened in 2002 in response to the 1989 Marchioness riverboat disaster. Janet was key to promoting the RNLI's presence on the Thames and even helped negotiate the purchase of the station's pier location for just £1.

Women have always been at the heart of the RNLI, although women weren't part of the crew until the 1960s, they played a vital role in a myriad of ways such as fundraising and launching lifeboats during emergency callouts. To find out how you can help the work of the RNLI go to <https://rnli.org> ■

President's Column

SHAKE YOUR CHAINS TO EARTH

We start 2024 as we mean to go on.

In January, RMT Train Drivers employed by Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Trains, Cross Country, Great Western Trains and TransPennine Express voted for action in pursuit of our demand for a 'no-strings' pay offer in our unresolved national rail dispute that began in 2022. RMT Drivers will strike and undertake an overtime ban alongside drivers in ASLEF.

Train bosses did a screeching U-turn after initially threatening to use the new anti-union laws against ASLEF members striking at East Coast operator LNER.

We must conclude that either Tory anti-strike laws are impractical, and unworkable, or the penny has begun to drop – the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act is a blatant political wedge tactic for a Tory general election campaign.

While trade unionists welcomed the news that LNER, run by the Department for Transport's 'Operator of Last Resort', backed off from its threat to use new Tory anti-worker Minimum Service Levels legislation against a trade union, this will not be the last we hear of this anti-democratic law.

While serving Work Notices is not mandatory on employers, there is no doubt government ministers apply heavy pressure on rail employers to 'throw the book' at strikers.

Robert Buckland MP, Tory chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee greeted January's general strike by teachers, civil servants, bus, and train drivers in Belfast, by calling for minimum service level strike bans to extend to Northern Ireland. How did it go the last time a British government removed civil rights from people in Northern Ireland?

British Tories, a bit like a former French royal family, learn nothing and forget nothing.

Their latest anti-union law gives employers the power to issue 'Work Notices' to trade unions and individual members of staff, advising workers to work normally during lawful strike action they have democratically voted for, or be at risk of disciplinary sanction without the right to claim unfair dismissal at an Employment Tribunal.

Any state that imposes such a legal prohibition on workers taking strike action is an authoritarian state. The right to withdraw your labour is a fundamental human right.

This conscription law strips fundamental rights from workers and trade unionists in Britain. Not for the first time in our history we must organise to defeat anti-union, anti-worker laws.

Members of RMT's forerunner union, the National Union of Seamen (NUS) were routinely sacked and imprisoned under the draconian 1894 Merchant Shipping Act for "desertion" or "disobeying a lawful command" for striking on board merchant vessels.

In 1960, when seafarers on the passenger liner Corinthia walked out in Liverpool to protest the dismissal of a ship's steward, strikers were arrested and imprisoned. Their comrades picketed Walton prison and organised an internal union pressure group, the National Seaman's Reform Movement to fight for their trade union rights.

This month RMT members in Royal Fleet Auxiliary began a strike ballot over their paltry 4.5 percent pay offer. RFA crews rotate around a fleet that increasingly covers the shortfall in Royal Navy vessels and personnel.

As former General Secretary, Bob Crow used to say, "RMT members have the same



reasons as everyone else to support peace and oppose war. But additionally, our members are deployed as civilian workers into theatres of war." We owe it to them to end British government support for war.

A ceasefire in Gaza is the only way secure merchant shipping in the Red Sea. If Sunak's reactionary, authoritarian government cared about lives of civilian seafarers, Palestinians, or Israelis it would stop supplying arms to Israel and support a ceasefire in Gaza immediately.

Alex Gordon

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.

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DEMAND STATE PENSION FAIRNESS

Retired activists branches back campaign against unfair government pension changes

On April 6, 2016 the government introduced a new Basic State Pension (BSP) for those reaching their State Pension Age after this date. The new state pension was a combination of the old BSP and the amount of State Second Pension, formally SERPS, individuals had built up during their working life's. This new pension would be known as the "Single Tier State Pension".

However, while the intention of the government was to make this new state pension fairer and to take future pensioners out of potential poverty it left pre-April 6, 2016 pensioners on a lower BSP.

In line with the Triple Lock Guarantee, which increases the BSP annually by either CPI, Average National Earnings or 2.5 per cent, the BSP will increase by 8.5 per cent from April 8, 2024. This will result in the pre-2016 BSP increasing £13.30 a week to £169.50 pw and the new BSP increasing by £17.35 a week to £221.20pw. It is clear that based on the higher new BSP the gap between the two state pensions will get wider and potentially leave pre-2016 pensioners poorer.

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) recently wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, pointing out that the UK BSP is one of the least adequate in the industrial world and that there was an anomaly of the

inequality between the basic state pension and the new state pension which is of concern to ordinary pensioners. The NPC asked the government how it intended to rectify this unfairness between pensioner groups based on age.

RMT retired activists branches fully support the NPC campaign for state pension fairness and Wessex retired regional council activist Tony Perks has articulated the views of many retired members. Tony writes:

"In 2016 the government created a new group of pensioners on a higher state pension than existing pensioners. After speaking to

retired groups regarding the unfair, some would say unjust treatment of those that retired before the new higher rate BSP was introduced in April 2016 many retired people feel understandably short-changed and left behind in the chaotic economic world.

"Every time there is a pension increase, the new state pension goes up more than the old pre-2016 pension and is starting to create an underclass of pensioners which is discriminating against older pensioners.

RMT branches should join an alliance to campaign against this unfairness with not just the NPC but other retired member section in other

unions as well as Age UK to bring this injustice to forefront," he said.

RMT's retired branches are supportive of the NPC state pension campaign as well as other NPC campaigns which promote the welfare and interests of all pensioners, as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement, now and for those who retire in the future.

If you would like to know how you can get involved with your local RMT retired activist branch to campaign against injustices like the one above, please contact the RMT Pensions Officer, Paul Norris, at p.norris@rmt.org.uk or on 020 7529 8806. ■



PROTEST: RMT retired activists Ron Douglas and Tony Donaghey with National Pensioners Convention banner

LEGAL

UNFAIR DISMISSAL NETWORK RAIL WIN

Union secures substantial settlement for unfair dismissal and disability discrimination



An RMT member was dismissed from his employment by Network Rail following advice from Occupational Health that he was no longer fit to carry out his substantive role due to arthritis in his knee. However, Occupational Health advised that the member was fit to carry out other duties.

In circumstances where an employee is permanently unfit to carry out their substantive role, but they are fit for other duties, the Stood Off Arrangements apply. The Stood Off Arrangements arise from the Red, Blue and Green

Conditions of Service books. They remain contractual Conditions of Service for our member covered by the Red, Blue and Green Books in Network Rail today.

The Stood Off Arrangements require Network Rail to accommodate employees with permanent medical restrictions in their role with reasonable adjustments where feasible. However, those who cannot be accommodated should have their restrictions detailed by Occupational Health and a welfare meeting should take place to identify suitable

alternative roles.

Where a suitable alternative role is identified that is vacant, the employee is to be placed into the role. Where a suitable alternative role is identified but is not vacant, the employee is to be Stood Off for up to 2 years. The employee will receive basic pay and any London & South East allowances where applicable if they have at least 10 years' service.

In the member's case, the union's legal department had argued that Network Rail had not applied the Stood Off Arrangements correctly. When

considering suitable alternative roles, Network Rail only considered vacancies and not all templated roles. They also required the member to apply for roles whereas the Stood Off Arrangements state that employees should be placed into a suitable alternative role if it is vacant.

This case highlights the importance of the Stood Off Arrangements to members who are unfortunately unable to carry out their substantive roles due to medical restrictions. ■

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL LEGAL SUPPORT

If you need advice regarding a potential employment tribunal claim contact the union

If you are experiencing difficulties in the workplace and need advice regarding a potential employment tribunal claim in the first instance, ensure that you contact your local RMT representatives or regional organiser. Then complete an L2 – Request for Legal Assistance (available online) and send it to your regional office with all supporting documentation.

RMT's legal department, which is now firmly established

and employs four solicitors, deal with virtually all cases from assessment to the case's conclusion at a tribunal for our members across England and Wales. The legal department has also submitted claims to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

The in-house legal department continues to advise and support members in their work-related criminal cases in the Magistrates Court. This often involves defending

members against false allegations made by the public of assault, false allegations of theft and alleged driving offences. Furthermore, it continues to offer tailored advice and support for bus and taxi drivers, in respect of their licensing issues, licensing appeals before the Magistrates Court, driving offences, and in respect of appearances before Traffic Commissioners.

The legal department will continue to strive to deliver a

first class service to all members. It is committed to provide a strong service to assist the union through the ever-changing legal landscape. Its successes have grown yearly.

Additionally, RMT members benefit from access to personal injury lawyers where 100 per cent of compensation is kept by members, access to a basic will service and special terms for conveyancing, probate, powers of attorney and family law related matters. ■

FREE LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS



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

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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.

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Your free legal service covers:

- Personal injury – at or away from work, on holiday or on the roads
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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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SOUTHWEST MIDLANDS AWARDS



Southwest Midlands branch held its long service evening when numerous awards given out for 10, 25, 40, 50 years loyalty and a special award for community spirited leaders who campaigned for against ticket office closures at Stourbridge.

The branch gave a special thankyou to all that helped with the ticket office campaign. Ian Tomlinson received his 50-year badge and Graham Ridley received his 40-year badge. Both members work at Stourbridge station and were delighted to receive awards from the RMT general secretary Mick Lynch. ■



ORPINGTON

RMT Orpington branch held its members long service awards evening at the branch AGM on Wednesday 20 December 2023.

Sharon Gooden (Platform Grade 2 at Beckenham Junction) and Robin Crosby (Platform Grade 2 at Grove Park) stations each received their 10-year membership badges from RMT

president Alex Gordon.

RMT Orpington Branch secretary Daniel Kennedy reported on new members who have recently joined the union across stations and cleaning grades. The branch agreed to reaffiliate to Bromley Trades Union Council and to send delegates to several RMT Conferences in 2024. ■

EAST SUSSEX COASTWAY AWARD

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch attended a ceremony to present an award to outgoing branch secretary Keith Mitchell who held the position for 10 years. Mick gave a lovely speech and then presented Keith and his wife Kacey with flowers and a gift from the branch members. Bella Fashola has taken up the role of branch secretary. ■





AWARD FOR KEITH

Longstanding bus member Keith Murphy received his 40-year award at the Newport Isle of Wight No2 branch AGM recently.

Keith has been active in the branch and union all this time and he was branch secretary for 25 years before stepping aside to assistant secretary Ed Sturgess last year.

He is a tutor at Doncaster and has held many roles within the union over the last 40 years. ■

PRESENTATION: Newport Isle of Wight No2 branch secretary Ed Sturgess with Keith and branch chair Tony Sharpe.

AYR - 50 YEARS ON

Retired Ayr branch member Richard Hodge sent in some pictures one for the history records. The annual NUR Conference was held in Ayr Town Hall in 1974 when Sir Sidney Greene was the general secretary. Richard was asked to take some pictures and one shows the top table and some delegates photo two is the AGM organising committee, they are from left Ted Hemsley, Robert Green, Mrs & Mr Sir Sidney Greene, Alex Smith, John Higgins, John Walker, Robert Smillie and Ronnie Kidd. ■



CHANGING OF THE NEWPORT GUARD

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch and RMT president Alex Gordon took time out at the South Wales and West of England Regional Council to present outgoing Newport branch chair Dale Vodden with his 40-year membership award and outgoing branch secretary Steve Richards with his 50-year membership award. Incoming branch chair Aaron Maloney and new branch secretary David Hobbs were also in attendance.

In the photo back row left to right RMT regional council president Mark Armstrong, regional council Secretary Paul Thomas. Front left to right Bro Lynch, Aaron Maloney, David Hobbs, Dale Vodde, Alex Gordon and Seve Richards. ■



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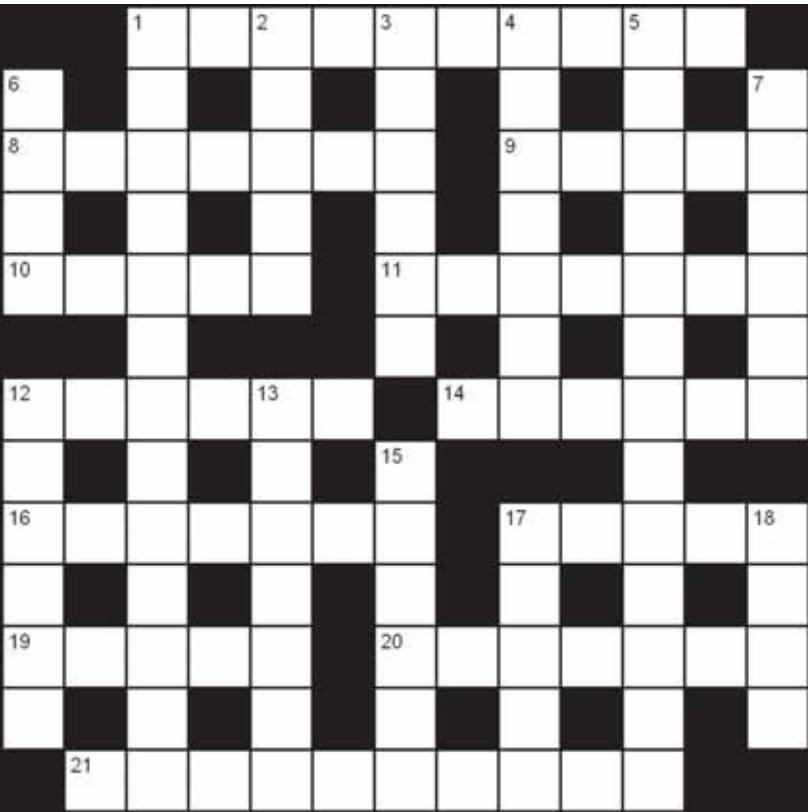
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Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by February 29, 2024 with your name and address.

Last month's winner is Andrew Jefferies, Yate.

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

ACROSS

- 1 Negotiator (10)
- 8 Festoon (7)
- 9 Firearm (5)
- 10 Representative (5)
- 11 Dissatisfy (3,4)
- 12 Nakedness (6)
- 14 Anesthetise (6)
- 16 Ornamental plant (7)
- 17 Position (5)
- 19 Dance (5)
- 20 Lease (7)
- 21 Infer broad principles (10)

DOWN

- 1 Predominance (13)
- 2 Competently (5)
- 3 Levelly (6)
- 4 Apparatus for exposure to air (7)
- 5 Powdery deposit (12)
- 6 Exchange (4)
- 7 Woollen hat (6)
- 12 Learner (6)
- 13 Adolescent (7)
- 15 Repeated phrase (6)
- 17 Veranda (5)
- 18 Eye infection (4)



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

1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

Surname		Address	
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 ☐

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

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

8 **Next of Kin**

Address

.....
.....

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

Your signature

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.

I agree to my identity being checked electronically ☐

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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Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
	Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

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Branch Sort Code

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Originator's Identification Number

9	7	4	2	8	1
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Reference Number

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This is not part of the the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.

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

Signature(s)

Date

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

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

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

