

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING FOR SAFETY



THE FAILURE OF
MODERNISING
MAINTENANCE
PAGE 4



RFA SEAFARERS BACK
STRIKE ACTION
PAGE 5



FIGHTING ASSAULTS
AGAINST WOMEN
PAGE 18



HOUSING FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE!
PAGE 20



www.rmt.org.uk



RMT CREDIT UNION LTD.

P.O. Box 252, Wisbech, PE14 4FX
c.union@rmtcreditunion.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

RMT CREDIT UNION APPLICATION FORM – please complete your application along with the attached Direct Debit.

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 ☐ RMT Junior Member ☐

6 How much do you wish to save £ ☐ weekly ☐ Monthly on 2nd, 15th or 28th ☐ if 4 weekly add date you get paid

7 Next of Kin

Address

.....

.....

8 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:

Telephone: 0203 535 5820

Authorised and Regulated by FCA & PRA, FRN No.228612 Company Registration No.705C



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the whole form including official use box using a ball point pen and Send to: RMT Credit Union Ltd., P.O. Box 252, Wisbech, PE14 4FX

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

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

Reference Number

FOR RMT CREDIT UNION LTD OFFICIAL USE ONLY
This is not part of 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

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

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date, or frequency of your Direct Debit RMT Credit Union Ltd will notify you seven working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If you request RMT Credit Union Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- 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.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



Contents

Page 4

THE FAILURE OF MODERNISING MAINTENANCE

Page 5

RFA SEAFARERS BACK STRIKE ACTION

Page 6

WINDRUSH STRIKE

Page 7

FOR FAIR PAY AT TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES

Page 8

BRING THEM IN-HOUSE!

Page 10

ACTING AGAINST ASSAULTS IN SCOTLAND

Page 12

DEBATING ASSAULTS

Page 15

BREAKS AND DIGNITY

Page 16

SIGNALLERS DISCUSS PAY, SAFETY AND TRAINING

Page 18

FIGHTING ASSAULTS AGAINST WOMEN

Page 20

HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE!

Page 22

CARGO SHIPS, NO PLACE FOR WOMEN COOKS?

Page 23

MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY WORKING WITH RMT

Page 24

PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Page 26

WINNING AT WORK

Page 27

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Page 28

AWARDS

Page 30

AWARDS/CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



REBUILD BRITAIN

Great British Railways (GBR) has the potential not just to reshape the rail industry but the whole country by driving national productivity and economic renewal.

It is a once in a lifetime opportunity not only to make real structural improvements in the way the railway's run but to prove that the economy does not have to be wired up to serve the financial sector.

Manufacturing makes up less than 10 per cent of our economy, but it's responsible for 30 per cent of exports. In fact, it is the most productive part of our economy, and we cannot exist as a series of banks with a country attached to them.

A privatised railway has only created disinvestment and companies extracting billions out of the industry in dividends for shareholders.

However, the purchasing power of GBR as a single railway entity could be used to re-energise manufacturing in a substantial way by building trains instead of assembling trains manufactured abroad.

There is a chronic skills shortage in the rail and maritime industries with around 50,000 rail workers retiring in the next couple of years alone. But there are new skills required as the nature of work changes and this needs to be addressed by government.

That means creating real, productive jobs not based on outsourcing and deskilling but on long-term investment and planning with proper trade union rights.

Yet we face a real threat to this vision with a Reform Party which is openly against public investment and would attack your right to strike, make it easier to legally fire and rehire and put workers on zero-hours contracts.

RMT president George Welch also lays out in this issue how Reform wants to get rid of the Equality Act and make it legal to discriminate against workers.

Reform are the same old Tories, even bringing in failed Tory ministers, which still want to divide workers and start a race to the bottom for jobs, pay and conditions.

As one Reform leader Richard Tice told the *Daily Express* back in 2022: "The best way to deal with striking transport workers – sack them!", even likening the actions of RMT members defending their jobs as a "cancer".

Finally, as you can see from this issue we are in the middle of our conference season and the message, we are getting loud and clear, is for the need to "fight for safety".

Transport workers of all grades from rail, bus and maritime are facing violence daily. So, this union is committed to raising this issue politically and, if need be, industrially.

RMT is holding a day of action on the union's Action Against Assaults campaign on April 28, Workers Memorial Day, keep an eye out for details.

Eddie Dempsey



THE FAILURE OF MODERNISING MAINTENANCE

Survey finds Network Rail failing to provide basic welfare and health and safety provision

RMT has accused Network Rail of failing to provide adequate toilet and welfare facilities for maintenance workers, warning that the situation may amount to breaches of health and safety law.

A survey of members across multiple regions has exposed widespread and systemic shortcomings in access to toilets, washing facilities, rest areas and hygienic welfare vehicles.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, require employers to provide suitable sanitary and washing facilities that are readily accessible and properly maintained.

The findings reveal that over 70 per cent rarely have access to adequate toilet facilities while on patrol and

are never provided with clean, private washing or changing facilities when taking breaks.

Nearly 70 per cent rate welfare vehicle hygiene as poor or very poor and frequently rely on public facilities such as petrol stations or fast-food outlets.

Only three per cent believe current arrangements meet legal requirements under health and safety and CDM regulations, and more than two-thirds report experiencing health issues linked to inadequate welfare provision.

Nearly 90 per cent back union action to secure immediate improvements, including reinstating local welfare support roles.

The survey highlights the damaging impact of Modernising Maintenance as the restructuring programme has reduced staffing levels and removed local welfare support roles to unacceptable

levels, weakening planning standards and leaving welfare arrangements inconsistently documented in Safe Work Packs.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that rail workers carrying out safety-critical duties should never have to rely on petrol stations or fast-food outlets to access a toilet.

"These findings show that basic welfare facilities are not being provided consistently or adequately. That raises serious questions about compliance with health and safety law which is something we are urgently taking up with the employer.

"Modernising Maintenance has stripped away vital local support and reduced staffing to unacceptable levels. Productivity targets cannot come before workers' health, safety and dignity.

"Network Rail must act

immediately to guarantee proper toilet, washing and rest facilities and ensure full compliance with its legal and frankly moral obligations to their workforce," he said.

RMT is calling for guaranteed access to adequate toilet and washing facilities on all patrols and fault attendance, proper planning, and documentation of proper and suitable welfare arrangements in all Safe System of Work Packs, reinstatement of local welfare support roles, an independent review of compliance with health and safety and CDM welfare requirements, and immediate improvements to vehicle hygiene and food preparation standards.

The union has warned that if urgent steps are not taken, matters will be escalated through industrial, regulatory, and legal channels.





RFA SEAFARERS BACK STRIKE ACTION

Union slams employer for not paying minimum wage on RFA ships

RMT seafarers employed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) have voted overwhelming for strike action after management could not even demonstrate that it was complying with minimum wage legislation.

Members at RFA voted by nine to one against the latest pay offer which clearly fell short of expectations based on years of dedication and service.

Seafarers can routinely work up to 12 hours a day and there remains no clear or transparent formula setting out how pay is calculated

against those hours.

During previous industrial action, some of the lowest-paid RFA workers faced deductions of £87 for a single day, showing how little RFA believed they were being paid.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that it was a scandal that RFA could not even work out its own pay rates.

"Years of real terms falling behind in pay have left RFA seafarers worse off, and management still cannot show if all of our members are even being paid at least the

minimum wage for the hours they are required to work.

"The absence of a transparent system for calculating pay, combined with excessive working hours, has created an unsustainable situation.

"Our members deserve a pay deal that reflects the work they do, deals with the issue around complying with legal minimum standards and addresses the recruitment and retention crisis now facing the service.

"RFA members are proud seafarers and this latest slap in the face will only add to a

deepening crisis, it is time for the RFA and the Ministry of Defence to get around the table with this union," he said.

The union has said that investment in the RFA is the only way to end the recruitment and retention crisis which has dogged the service for over 15 years.

Moreover, improvements in the application of merchant shipping legislation are essential to the future flexibility and effectiveness of the RFA's operational support to the Royal Navy.





WINDRUSH STRIKE

Further action planned against low pay at the company Cleshar

RMT members on the Windrush Line took 24-hour strike action recently after Cleshar CS Ltd failed to table a new pay offer despite protracted talks with the union.

Signalling, telecoms, and track maintenance workers have been offered just a 1.5 per cent pay rise, well below RPI inflation, and the company has refused to offer any improvement.

Cleshar made a profit of nearly £1 million in its most recent financial year.

Keeping basic pay low is incentivising excessive overtime across the workforce leading to increased fatigue, union activists have said.

The employer is recklessly using the tactic of relying heavily on overtime instead of addressing the pay aspirations of members and dealing with understaffing.

These workers carry out safety-critical duties and without their work, the Windrush line cannot operate safely, and fatigue creates unacceptable risks and puts

passenger safety potentially in jeopardy.

Members are also raising serious concerns about underpayment of overtime and annual leave, alongside cuts to sick pay and paternity pay compared to arrangements under the previous contractor.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that Cleshar had failed to table a new offer and has left members with no option but to take strike action.

"Instead of addressing low

basic pay, the company is driving excessive overtime to keep the job covered.

"The employer is displaying a cavalier attitude which is totally unacceptable. We remain ready to reach a negotiated settlement, but that requires Cleshar to come forward with a serious and reasonable offer."

Strike action is also planned to take place on March 26 and April 23, with each stoppage lasting 24 hours.

■

PICCADILLY LINE FLEET STRIKE ACTION

RMT members at Northfield fleet maintenance depot servicing Piccadilly line trains took four days of strike action in late February following a breakdown in industrial relations.

Instead of engaging with staff, management has responded by extending maintenance schedules to

dangerous levels.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that this was putting the public in potential danger by running trains way beyond current maintenance cycles.

"LU management has chosen to spend their time drawing up these

plans to run trains in passenger service with extended safety critical checks and maintenance.

"It is time to stop trying to ride out this dispute and get around the table and take union concerns seriously," he said.

■



FOR FAIR PAY AT TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES

RMT representatives from across the train operating companies meeting in London recently vowed to take industrial action if they were not awarded a no strings attached RPI pay rise in this round of pay negotiations.

Following contributions from general secretary Eddie Dempsey, RMT president George Welch and representatives from all of the 15 train operating companies under the control of the Department for Transport, there was an impromptu show of hands declaring willingness to take industrial action if no acceptable pay offer was forthcoming.

Despite different train operating companies being at varying stages of readiness, there was a general feeling that members would be prepared to back a strike mandate if it was necessary.

Eddie Dempsey opened proceedings laying out all the unions key demands, including:

- An RPI no strings attached deal
- Minimum flat rate increase, to underpin the agreed percentage increase and benefit those on the lowest salaries
- The guarantee of no compulsory redundancies

- Reductions in the working week without loss of pay, improving work life balance
- Annual leave improvements

He pointed out that the deals done on Transport for London and Network Rail had set the blueprint for the government to do the right thing on the train operating companies.

But he acknowledged that the union had to be organised and ready if ministers tried to push through productivity changes as a condition on any pay offer.

Speaking to RMT News

after the successful event, Mr Dempsey said that it was great to see such a strong turnout from our reps who are the backbone of our union.

"It is vital for any successful pay campaign to have our members engaged and directly feeding into the strategy of the union.

"We want a negotiated settlement which reflects the role our members play on the train operating companies and for employers and the government to recognise that we will not accept productivity strings to any pay offer," he said.

TUBE DRIVERS VOTE FOR ACTION

RMT Tube drivers have voted by over 90 per cent in favour of strike action to oppose the introduction of a four-day week.

RMT general secretary

Eddie Dempsey said that it was a fantastic ballot result, and it was now up to TfL to take RMT members seriously.

"Our members will not accept Transport for

London's plan to condense the working week for tube drivers where shift patterns will become unpredictable leading to fatigue and increased safety risks.

"Most tube drivers when

asked have rejected these proposals and our members are prepared to take industrial action if there is no change in course by TfL," he said.

BRING THEM IN-HOUSE!



RMT holds protest to demand end of out-sourcing at TfL

The union laid down a marker to the Mayor of London and Transport for London with a noisy demonstration outside City Hall.

The protest was part of the union's 'End Outsourcing' campaign and to oppose the corporate capture of TfL where the Mayor Sadiq Khan is not fulfilling his democratic mandate to insource cleaners - something he had promised the union he would do.

DLR members, contracted out cleaners were taking strike action during the protest, emphasising not only the need to be insourced but that they want sick pay.

The inhumane behaviour of

their employer Bidvest Noonan has been laid bare after it was revealed that members who despite being hospitalised due to ill health received no sick pay or support from their employer.

One member affected said: "Not having company sick pay has had a profound impact on my mental and physical health.

"Outsourcing is frankly inhumane because the contractor treats you as a disposable piece of junk when you are not working long shifts making them a quick quid," he said.

The union revealed that cleaners have been told sick

pay would only be considered in extremely limited circumstances, such as terminal illness, which RMT has branded an insult to a workforce that kept London moving through the pandemic and beyond.

While this has been taking place, TfL has awarded a new five-year cleaning contract covering more than 2,000 workers to outsourcing giant Mitie, despite previous commitments from the Mayor supporting insourcing.

Speaking at the demonstration outside City Hall, RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey demanded that an enquiry be launched

into procurement practices.

The board met during the protest and the majority of them had no idea half of London's Transport network has been privatised - London Overground, the Elizabeth Line, huge outsourcing contracts for cleaning.

Hundreds of millions of pounds have been signed off and the majority of TfL Board members have no idea this is happening. We believe these practices are deeply corrupt.

"The Mayor has promised me that he would bring our outsourced cleaners back in house. We've been promised the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation. Yet in London



we are seeing the opposite. "Mayor Khan needs to end the corporate capture of TfL by bringing cleaners back in house using break clauses that

exist in these contracts. "This issue will not go away and our campaign both in the capital and nationally will escalate until we can ensure

politicians keep their promises and deliver for the people who elected them," he said.

The union is calling on the Mayor to terminate the Mitie contract, publish an urgent timetable for the early insourcing of all TfL cleaners and for the London Assembly to launch a formal inquiry into corporate influence over TfL's contracting decisions.

The protest was joined by TfL Board member Jim Kelly, who represents the trade unions on the transport authority.

He expressed his solidarity with the workers and publicly raised concerns about how the Board operates.

After addressing the protest, he took the union's case directly to the Mayor and TfL Commissioner Andy Lord, questioning the Commissioner on the Mayor's proposed "comprehensive pilot" of insourcing.

Mr Lord insisted that this would be a real pilot study which would 'go live' in the Summer 2026 and promised to fully engage with RMT and keep the Board updated.

RMT will be watching closely to see if this 'comprehensive pilot' lives up to what was said at the board, but the issues of corporate capture at TfL have not disappeared. ■



Union holds summit to discuss campaign against assaults

RMT regional councils, regional organisers and executive members met in London recently to focus on how to defend members against the growing threat of assaults at work.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that British Transport Police statistics revealed that some rail stations were seeing more than 1,000 criminal offences against staff being committed last year.

Major transport hubs in London saw the greatest number of offences as did big stations outside the capital including Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool.

"These shocking stats underline the need for an increased presence of British Transport Police on our railways.

"Our members are being punched, threatened, spat at and abused simply for turning up to work and keeping the

railway running. That takes a serious physical and psychological toll, and it creates an environment where both staff and passengers feel unsafe.

"We need a properly funded British Transport Police, with a consistent and visible presence on trains and stations throughout the year, not just in response to major incidents. The horrific mass stabbing on a train diverted to Huntingdon station last year

was a stark reminder of the potential dangers faced by rail staff and passengers.

"The government must step in with a long-term funding plan for BTP to restore policing levels across the network, legislate for a standalone offence to deter assaults on public transport workers and end unsafe lone working practices, with a guarantee of minimum safe staffing levels," he said. ■



ACTING AGAINST ASSAULTS IN SCOTLAND

RMT's Action Against Assaults event at the Scottish Parliament demanded safe staffing and an end to lone working on the railways.

The campaign has brought together MSPs, trade unions and campaigners to demand urgent action to tackle rising violence and abuse on public transport of both workers and passengers.

The conference that followed included the Scottish TUC, Transport Focus, Disability Equality Scotland and the British Transport Police (BTP), there were also representatives from the rail and passenger ferry operators.

It highlighted the growing risks faced by front-line transport workers, many of them women, who are subjected to threats, harassment and assault simply for doing their jobs.

In the most recent RMT survey of women public transport workers in Scotland, 70 per cent said that they had experienced workplace violence in the past year, with more than 85 per cent saying it happened more than once.

The most common abuse

reported was verbal assault, followed by threats of physical violence, while over 20 per cent said they had been sexually harassed at work in a 12-month period.

Lone working was identified as a major risk factor, with nearly 60 per cent of those who experienced violence saying they were working alone at the time.

Three-quarters of respondents said that violence at work is getting worse.

A BBC investigation last year also reported a 37 per cent rise in recorded sexual offences on the railway in England, Scotland and Wales since 2015.

Scottish government research published in 2023 also found that women and girls feel significantly safer on public transport when staff are present at stations, in ticket offices and onboard trains, with increased staffing highlighted as a key recommendation.

Despite this, staffing levels are inconsistent across the railway and the BTP has faced a major funding shortfall, leading to station closures and

reduced officer presence, which has had a significant impact in Scotland.

The union is calling on political parties to commit to concrete measures that take workplace violence on public transport seriously.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that assaults on transport workers were rising, violence is becoming normalised and women workers are bearing the brunt of it.

"Our members should not have to face threats, abuse or sexual harassment just to earn a living serving the public.

"This is a workplace safety issue, and it demands urgent political action which we will campaign for tooth and nail until we achieve progress," he said.

RAIL VOICES

A rail worker at the event backed the call for a new law recognising an attack on transport workers as a specific criminal offence.

Guard Mary Jane Herbison detailed the daily trials of RMT members working on trains and the risks associated with

anti-social behaviour.

Speaking at a roundtable of politicians and campaigners chaired by Richard Leonard MSP, Ms Herbison, who has worked on the railway for nearly two decades, said that the railway environment is completely different today compared to when I started.

"There was always abuse and there were always assaults, but in the last...I'd say five, six years, definitely since lockdown, there has been a big change in behaviour," she said.

Recalling the previous night when she was on shift, she had to deal with unruly passengers who were refusing to pay their fares and causing a nuisance for other passengers. She said she had no alternative but to contact BTP and ask for assistance.

"I've got to the limit," she confessed pointing out that the job was "stressful enough" without worrying that she might be assaulted or that there will not be BTP support available when required.

She pointed out that when Scotland hosts major sporting and cultural events, there does

not seem to be any extra deployment of BTP officers on the network.

"My job is not just about tickets; it is about the safety of passengers.

"Thousands of people attending events yet there are no extra BTP officers - that is no good to me," she said.

Ms Herbison said that her colleagues were now not reporting incidents of abuse, harassment or violence because "they don't see the point" often due to a failure to investigate incidents by the BTP or the employer.

But she added that bespoke legislation making it a specific offence to assault a transport worker would be "great" if enforced properly.

Eddie Dempsey agreed that underreporting was an issue as well as a lack of BTP funding.

"Workers are under-reporting incidents of violence and assault because many simply don't see the point. They don't believe any meaningful action will be taken to protect them.

"As a result, some have started to see violence and abuse as just part of the job which is completely unacceptable".

He expressed the union's determination to see legal changes and emphasised the need to end lone working - something which the union believed would help deter attacks on staff.

"It's worth knowing that

we have got support right across the trade unions for this position. We've got support right across industry and from employers themselves.

"We are speaking with one voice. Employees, in rail, in bus, in another modes of operation, agree with us, that this is an urgent measure that needs to be taken, and the same is true, I believe, for the BTP," he said.

He welcomed the news that banning orders and fixed penalties could soon be used to combat anti-social behaviour on Scotrail trains following a report by the Rail Enforcement Powers Working Group making 11 recommendations to strengthen enforcement

powers and improve safety on Scotland's railway.

"We have long campaigned for this change and we urge the Scottish government to bring forward this legislation as soon as possible and for all political parties in Scotland to commit to this protection for all our public transport workers.

"The UK government should also take inspiration from this progress and bring forward its own legislation to protect workers south of the border," he said.

A BTP representative also called for an end to violence, to assaults and the abuse of rail staff and "we take it extremely seriously, it's a core object always to keep that network safe". ■

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BACKS ACTION AGAINST ASSAULTS



The Scottish government's Cabinet Secretary for Transport Fiona Hyslop has announced support for proposals from the rail enforcement powers working group to take action to address violence and abuse against transport workers.

The working group includes trade unions, ScotRail, the British Transport Police and Transport Scotland and has been looking at stronger legal protections, via the creation of a standalone offence. In Scotland, equivalent legislation already exists for emergency service and retail workers.

RMT believes that a standalone offence is necessary for several reasons including that it will make it more likely that cases will be

brought against perpetrators, will act as a deterrent and give public transport workers the confidence that the Scottish Government takes this issue seriously.

Crucially, like retail workers, many public transport workers have an enforcement element of their role, including in relation to fare evasion, railway byelaws and alcohol, and it is well evidenced that such enforcement is a key 'trigger' for violence and abuse.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey welcomed the Cabinet Secretary's acceptance of all the group's recommendations, including exploring new legislation creating a standalone offence of assaulting a rail worker at work.

"RMT has long

campaigning for this change and we urge the Scottish government to bring forward this legislation as soon as possible and for all political parties in Scotland to commit to this protection for all our public transport workers.

"The UK government should also take inspiration from this progress and bring forward its own legislation to protect workers south of the border," he said.

As the Scottish Parliament is going into recess before the May elections, it would be for the next government to bring forward primary legislation.

RMT is seeking manifesto commitments from parties that they will legislate to create a standalone offence of assaulting or abusing a public transport worker at work and

will be calling on the next Scottish government to bring forward this legislation as soon as possible.

The union is asking RMT members in Scotland to use online action with the QR code to write to their MSPs, seeking their support for stronger legal protections for public transport workers. ■

To find out more use the QR code below.





DEBATING ASSAULTS

Packed health and safety conference condemns assaults on transport workers

Over 300 members joined the union's annual health and safety conference meeting in Liverpool to hear local MP Kim Johnson insist that violence should never be part of the job for public transport workers.

She commended conference for the union's ongoing 'Action Against Assaults' campaign.

She said that as transport workers face ever increasing levels of violence and threats, with over 8,000 recorded assaults in the last year, but "too many government officials just shrug their shoulders".

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey spoke about the union's connections to the

city of Liverpool.

"This union was born in Liverpool in 1911 in the great transport workers strike, the first strike of all railway grades, where the famous telegram was sent out by the strike committee, called the Liberty Telegram, calling on all railway workers of all grades and all depots, and in all unions, 'strike for your liberty, loyalty to each will mean victory to all'.

He said that the lesson learnt was that "we are much stronger together, than we are apart" and just two years later, in 1913, the NUR was formed as an all-grades railway workers union.

Eddie updated on an important meeting and rally at

the Scottish Parliament as part of the Action Against Assaults campaign.

The Scottish Parliament accepted 11 recommendations from a trade union working party including to bring about legislation to make it a specific offense to assault a transport worker.

RMT assistant general secretary, John Leach spoke with pride at how good it was to see so many faces at conference.

"What a testimony it is to our great union.

"One of the positive things that came out of our national rail dispute, is that when they came for our jobs, for our pensions and for our

conditions what they got was a whole new generation of trade unionists" he said.

John updated members from all sectors with a common thread that health and safety can never be taken for granted but shortcuts are always in the employer's sights.

"Our Action Against Assaults campaign is lobbying to change the law so that transport workers get the same entitlement that retail workers get," he said.

Opening the debate on motions, Katie Sugg, Dorset Rail called on the union to consult with employers on the introduction of wellness days.

With stress a significant factor for 79 per cent of survey

responders, the introduction of wellness days where a worker could take a day out for themselves and for the benefit of their mental health.

"This would act as an alternative to going sick and will have a beneficial effect not only on staff morale, but also a valuable impact for the companies", she said.

Rick Woolley, Liverpool 5 successfully supported the motion: "I've struggled with stress and I believe that rather than going sick I would benefit from a wellness day - this resolution deserves support", he said.

Matt Hilton, Wigan moved a motion on the impact of nightwork and explained that a policy needed to be developed to ensure that night workers receive more leave and flexible working.

Citing the 2024 RMT document, 'Night work takes its toll', he outlined the serious health risks associated with night work, such as higher rates of heart disease, diabetes and sleep issues that are compounded by chronic fatigue, alongside the impact on families, a lack of management support, poor fatigue management and the pressure to accept overtime.

He said that these were all reasons why the union should adopt a policy aimed at achieving improvements for our members carrying out



regular night work.

The final speaker was Richard Hines, Chief Inspector of the Railway from the ORR, who asked the delegates to ask him anything.

Ken Sharpe, Leeds City asked him about incidents: "I wrote to your staff, and they acknowledged receipt, but I don't have any resolution, and we never see your staff", Ken was promised a formal response.

Leigh Anne Agnew, Glasgow 5 spoke movingly about the incident in 2025 where a train derailed after a landslide; "we should know sensors are going to work", she said.

Richard Hines said that "Network Rail is responsible

for enforcing this.

"They need to know their high-risk assets, and they need to have a greater understanding of why the warning systems didn't work," he said.

Alex Ritchie, Newcastle and Gateshead grilled Mr Hines about why Network Rail's Modernising Maintenance reforms had reduced staff, including those undertaking patrols and how there were no welfare facilities for staff.

The Chief Inspector asked Alex to email him and promised that he'd deal with it.

Martin Sherry, Neasden moved a motion on 'the failure of the ORR', outlining the ORR's lack of power to impose

actions on the train operators as 91 per cent of their finance comes from the TOC's whilst the rest comes from government.

The successful motion called for a summit with the ORR involving the union's Parliamentary group to discuss concerns and to it to account.

It also called for a campaign to have the ORR replaced with a completely independent regulatory body.

Richard Estevao, Piccadilly and District West said that he had called the ORR and they provided no assistance.

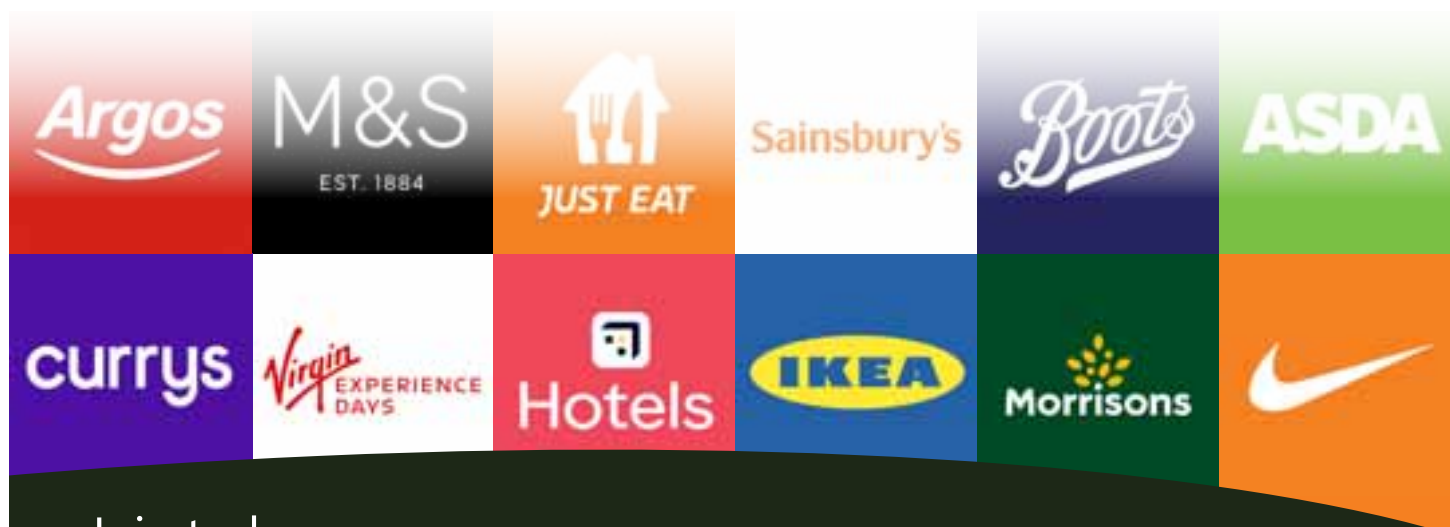
"The ORR is a body that is the last line of defence and if you're not feeling that support then who is the next port of call?" he asked. ■



**Save up to
£600 a year!***

Completely free to join and use, RMT Rewards gives you access to exclusive offers, discounts and regular prize draws.

- ✓ **Save up to 15% on groceries, essentials, travel and days out**
- ✓ **Enjoy 50% off gym memberships**
- ✓ **Up to 40% off cinema deals...**



Join today:

RMTrewards.com/save

*Based on 2024 National Statistics

Range of rates and retailers subject to change. RMT Rewards is a trading name of Union Income Benefit Holdings Ltd (UIB). Union Income Benefit Holdings Limited is registered in England and Wales, register number 307575.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

BREAKS AND DIGNITY

RMT 'clean breaks and dignity in uniform' survey

Over 400 union members responded to RMT's 'clean breaks and dignity in uniform' survey to gather evidence on workplace welfare, breaks, personal protective equipment (PPE), and uniforms.

The overall results highlight significant and recurring problems affecting a substantial proportion of members. The largest number of responses came from Churchill Cleaners, followed by Atalian Servest.

Overall roughly one in three respondents expressed a significant level of dissatisfaction. The written comments provide further insight and show that, in many cases, these issues are serious and ongoing.

Two issues that stood out was that most respondents stated that replacement PPE is not issued promptly when requested and nearly half said that their uniform was not appropriate.

Many members also raised concerns about access to mess rooms and the distance required to reach them during limited break times. In several cases, the time taken to walk to and from the mess room significantly reduced already short unpaid breaks.

Members reported mess rooms being located several platforms away or on different floors, with journeys taking up to 10 minutes each way. Some

workers described having to prioritise operational tasks, such as disposing of rubbish or moving equipment, before even being able to start their break.

More concerning were reports that some cleaners were not allowed to use mess rooms at all. Several members described being asked to leave facilities by other staff or being told they were not entitled to use them.

Others reported having no designated break space and being forced to take breaks on platforms, in public areas, or in vans. One respondent described taking meal breaks in a vehicle containing rubbish bags, including biological waste.

A recurring theme in responses was the inability to take uninterrupted breaks. Members reported being contacted during breaks, asked to respond to spills, or pressured to justify taking time off. In some cases, radios could not be turned off during breaks, making it difficult to rest.

Many members felt that management does not consistently respect their need for breaks and welfare facilities. Responses indicated that breaks are often disrupted during service delays, affected by rota arrangements, or refused altogether. Some members stated that they are

'never' allowed to take a proper break.

Other issues included insufficient break time, heavy workloads, lack of privacy, and cramped or unsuitable break rooms. These conditions leave little opportunity for genuine rest and recovery.

Access to clean drinking water and food-heating facilities was inconsistent. Some members reported having to buy their own drinking water, while others described broken or unhygienic facilities. One comment noted a long-broken vending machine in a mess room that had become a pest issue.

Concerns about PPE were widespread with members reporting delays, unsuitable sizes, with men and women issued the same sizes regardless of fit. Gloves that are too small were reported to split easily, while other items were oversized and impractical.

Several members expressed frustration at repeated promises regarding uniform provision and mess room improvements that had not been delivered. One workplace representative raised serious concerns about delays in issuing uniforms, lack of transparency over deliveries, and the absence of reassurance that correct quantities and sizes had actually arrived.

When asked members highlighted a consistent set of priorities:

- Longer and protected breaks to prevent burnout
- Mess rooms closer to platforms and suitable for all staff
- Clean, warm, and secure welfare facilities
- Reliable access to clean drinking water and food-heating facilities
- Properly fitting PPE and sufficient supplies at the start of shifts
- Waterproof and seasonal uniforms
- Secure storage and larger lockers
- Improved staffing levels, including temporary staff during busy periods
- Better management practices and respect for staff welfare

Some members also raised issues around work-life balance, holiday arrangements, and the physical demands of long shifts without adequate rest.

The comments provided by members point to systemic problems that directly affect health, safety, dignity, and wellbeing at work. Addressing these issues will require meaningful engagement, clear accountability and practical action rather than repeated assurances.■



SIGNALLERS DISCUSS PAY, SAFETY AND TRAINING

Packed signallers grades conference meet in Eastbourne

Delegates at the signalling and operations grades organising conference called for full training for Network Rail managers assigned to chair grievance hearings.

Alessandro Sidoli, Shrewsbury said that lack of training often resulted in unfair outcomes and unnecessary appeals and tribunals.

Lee Williams, Walsall said that some managers often lacked the required knowledge to understand proceedings and what is being presented.

"The manager should be qualified and competent to make decisions of this type," he said.

Delegates rejected a motion calling for the return of the mentoring system to train recruits but supported moves for the union's National Operations Council to enter into the negotiations with Network Rail to improve

training.

Delegates also called on the union to negotiate with Network Rail to support members who are terminally ill or face life-changing injuries.

"We have seen members suffer from many serious conditions yet after six months of sickness the member is reduced to half pay and no pay at all after 12 months.

"The added stress has a significant impact on themselves and their families," said Richard Morley.

Mark Beresford, Bedlington said that Network Rail should be following their own guidelines.

Conference called for nationally agreed terms and conditions relating to the treatment of those affected.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey outlined the need to recruit and organise in the grades represented at

conference.

He said that Great British Railways (GBR) due to be created by next year would create a new unified structure for the railways not seen for

over 30 years.

"We are still trying to find out how this new unified structure will work and even who will be running it.

"However, GBR will need to



Network Rail National Operations Council

The union's incoming National Operations Council (NOC), which negotiates with Network Rail ran an in-depth question and answer session with delegates. The newly elected NOC is made up of Matt Bentley who covers the East Coast, Wessex, Wales, Western and North East. Dave Conroy who covers East Mids, Anglia, Kent Sussex and High Speed. Steve Blinkhorn on West Coast South, Central and North West and Alex Dalgettie who covers Scotland.

There was a full and frank exchange on a wide range of matters including pay, leave entitlement and representation. Picture: Alex Dalgettie, Matt Bentley, Eddie Dempsey, Steve Blinkhorn and Dave Conroy.



UPDATE: RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey gave a full update of the state of the union including dealing with new trade union recognition legislation

recruit rail workers and we will need to organise them because we know from our history that together we are stronger.

"In April new legislation will also mean that it will be easier to win recognition deals," he said.

RMT assistant general secretary Daren Ireland outlined the need to maintain demands for pay deals based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) and not the lower Consumer Price Index (CPI).

"We know that Network Rail would like to use CPI which does not include housing costs.

"We also have the challenge of ministerial micro-management of pay claims and all roads led to the Treasury.

"If the government wants to manage our pay they should

come to the negotiations and face us across the table," he said.

RMT lead health and safety rep Chris Knibbs at Network Rail gave a full report to delegates covering new technology, derailments, protective clothing, line blockages and possessions and investigations and the insourcing of Occupational Health.

NEC member Steve Conway gave a full report including the fact that membership was growing with over 83,000 members.

"A large number of these new members are young people which is very positive and these members need to be encouraged to take up positions in the union," he said.

Conference next year will be held in Hull. ■



SAFETY: RMT lead safety rep Chris Knibbs gives updates to conference



Liverpool hosted the union's largest ever annual women's conference

RMT women meeting in Liverpool called for stronger action to tackle the rise in assaults and abuse faced by female transport workers, warning that football match days are becoming a particular flashpoint on the network.

Moving a motion in support of the union's Action Against Assaults campaign, Jessica Robinson, Darlington No.1 highlighted growing concerns from staff who say large groups of intoxicated supporters are creating unsafe conditions for workers and passengers alike, with women staff often bearing the brunt of intimidation and misogynistic behaviour.

"There needs to be pressure put on employers to

deal with football fans.

"Any member of the train crew will tell you that football days are the days they dread going into work," she said.

Ms Robinson highlighted the difference between her situation as a guard with a cab to go to and caterers and cleaners who remain exposed to potentially violent and abusive passengers.

"Cleaners are getting groped while they are cleaning up sick from everywhere.

"We've got young women working on our café bars who shut their shutters just to try and block out the chanting and shouting but we have situations where football fans threaten our members saying they are going to find them

after their shift," she said.

Speaking of her own experiences as a train manager, she detailed several incidents of abuse, aggression, and assaults she has had to contend with since taking up the post last year.

She also questioned why the British Transport Police had not been instructed to escort a chartered train for hundreds of football fans that turned ugly enroute recently.

"We have the football fixtures in advance so we know when they will travel. Why were there no security or police on that train," she said.

She added that the union needed to press employers on this issue as part of its national Action Against Assaults

campaign.

Annila Saghir, Kings Cross made the point that the motion was not aimed at every football fan but instances of assault and abuse "cannot be ignored".

"Outsourced workers often get the most abuse. As a train manager I can stay in my cab but our cleaners have no such option," she said.

Other delegates went on to share some dreadful experiences they had endured working in transport.

Swansea No.1 delegate and caterer Mandy Evans detailed a disgraceful incident where she was propositioned by a passenger who offered her money while she was at work.

Ebony Kingston-West,

Neasden said that she'd had to deal with drunk passengers on London Underground, both on board the tube and those forcing their way through barriers at the station.

"BTP members have been cut so there is not enough of them or revenue inspectors to stop people forcing through the gates" she said.

Another delegate raised the issue of the LNER mass train stabbing which RMT members were affected by, adding that: "I do not understand why precautions haven't been put in place".

Delegates from the wider transport industry also addressed the issue of mass disorderly passengers and drunken football fans.

Emma Purcell, Liverpool Shipping pointed out that ferry and maritime workers also faced issues with disorderly football fans adding that there was "nowhere to go" when you are stuck on an eight-hour sea crossing from Ireland to Liverpool.

"It is not just the railways; it is ferries too.

"We need protection. We shouldn't need it, but we do," she said.

Caroline Carr, East Midlands Bus alerted conference to the fact bus workers had no security or BTP present and that an emergency buzzer they had was totally inadequate.

WOMEN'S CHARTER RELAUNCHED



WOMEN'S CHARTER: RMT regional organisers Primrose Jeanton and Kathy Mazur (centre) with Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn (left) and Stephanie Edorh-Fidegnon (right). For copies of the charter email: j.webb@rmt.org.uk

Delegates unanimously called on the union to press employers to take firm action, including stronger action and more BTP funding, additional security on football services, the introduction of more "dry trains", and tougher penalties for disorderly behaviour, alongside closer coordination between train operators and football clubs to hold offenders accountable.

Delegates also agreed to include reference to all transport workers and for it to be debated at AGM, alongside another motion calling for action on the spreading of Deep Fake AI which disproportionately

targets women.

Other motions passed included calls for stronger union action on maternal health inequalities affecting Black women, raising concerns that a compressed working week for London Underground train operators would disproportionately impact women and worsen the gender imbalance in operational grades.

There were also demands for workplace agreements to guarantee fair access to annual leave during school holidays for workers with caring responsibilities.

Guest speakers to the conference included local

Labour MP Kim Johnson, NEC member Keir Chewings and RMT assistant general secretary Daren Ireland.

Conference also noted the election of Primrose Jeanton to the post of Relief Regional Organiser, the first black woman to be elected to that position in the union's history.

"It is clear our Action Against Assaults campaign must have the concerns of our women members at the forefront of our activity and employers need to recognise it is not something that we will keep quiet about until we see improvements to safety in all our workplaces," she said.

■





HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE!

RMT young members' conference gathered in Newcastle to discuss priorities

Young members demanded that the union pursue guaranteed affordable housing in all future pay negotiations within London Underground, Network Rail and Great British Rail.

Delegates backed a call for homes owned and rented out by these employers to be offered to their own workers first, with rents capped at no more than 30 per cent of income.

The motion made clear that housing must be treated as a core industrial issue, central to pay, retention and fairness for young transport workers.

Moving the motion, James Braithwaite, LU Fleet said that a survey of members who were apprentices and graduates revealed just how poor they were, particularly in

London, and they were forced to live with their parents.

On average TfL graduates and apprentices spend 45 per cent of their take home on rent and Mr Braithwaite added that he wanted to see rents capped at 30 per cent of income of the lowest paid workers within the respective employer.

Shakeel Choudhury, TfL No.1 backed the motion but had concerns around the idea that affordable housing being tied to your job, would lock workers into employment without the freedom to move around.

James McLelland, Leominster and Herford said that building housing had been done before, such as the building of railwayman's cottages in the 30s and British

Rail staff housing, up until the 60s when affordable homes were built near depots.

"Back then our union got London Transport to build quite a lot of housing, even as far back as the 50s and 60s.

"In this day and age - rent is sky high...people are not going to be able to live and work in central London on the wages they are paid, unless they start paying mad money or instead give you a nice little flat courtesy of TfL," he said.

Chengkai Lian, TfL No.1 added that Transport for London was selling off commercial property instead of using it for the benefit of their own staff when the "housing crisis is already severe" in the capital.

Another key topic included demands for stronger action to

on staffing, safety and workplace protections, warning that young transport workers are increasingly exposed to violence and unsafe working practices.

RMT policy has long opposed lone working, single staffing in safety-critical and customer-facing roles, and the replacement of staff with technological 'mitigations'. Delegates argued that these principles must now be more firmly enforced as working conditions on the railway continue to deteriorate.

Tom Jones, Reading outlined the need to defend and restore a visible, properly resourced British Transport Police presence across the rail network.

"We need to actively engage and organise young

members across the industry; and to apply sustained pressure on employers and government to reverse cuts and protect the safety of rail workers and passengers," he said.

Delegates highlighted growing levels of abuse, threats and assaults across the network, including shocking examples of animals being used as weapons and instances where staff were sacked after dealing with difficult passengers rather than train operators dealing with lone working.

Young members conference chair Sarah Cundy said that she had been a rep for years and had never seen so many instances of assaults and anti-social behaviour directed at railway staff.

"The level of aggression from members of the public is something I genuinely have never known before, and it feels like these sorts of incidents are now becoming far more common across the network.

"Using weapons and physical assault is becoming more commonplace.

"That kind of behaviour is simply unacceptable. It raises serious questions about why



these incidents appear to be increasing and why workers on the frontline are being left to deal with them," she said.

Delegates also called for a bespoke RMT organising course for young members - the design of which would be undertaken in consultation with the Young Members' Advisory Committee.

Several RMT speakers spoke to delegates, including regional organiser Micky Thompson, Ian Lavery MP and general secretary Eddie Dempsey.

In a wide-ranging speech, Mr Dempsey said that the young members section was vibrant and growing stronger year on year.

He praised young members for their contribution during the national rail strike of

2022/23 describing it as "an existential threat to the union".

"The Tory government was out to smash our union.

"They were intent on breaking RMT as an industrial power in Britain precisely because we actually still have industrial strength in the workplace," he said.

"The Tories attempted to ban effective strike action through Minimum Services legislation which meant that you would have been banned from taking meaningful strike action.

"However, they failed and that legislation has been removed by the incoming Labour government," he said.

The union has also made progress in the campaign for public ownership which led

the Labour government to introduce Great British Railways.

"It is important to remember that we only have a voice because we have strong industrial power. It is through the strength of our organisation that anyone takes an interest in what this union has to say about anything.

"And the way we maintain that power is through strong organisation.

"It is one thing to have recognition agreements, and it is one thing to have a presence in workplaces where we are already industrially strong, but none of that means anything unless we continue to organise and maintain that strength among our membership." He said. ■



CARGO SHIPS, NO PLACE FOR WOMEN COOKS?

Jo Stanley's new book deals with forgotten seafaring women

Almost 80 years ago, Kathleen Earnshaw told the *Yorkshire Post* that over a thousand shoreside women were awaiting a decision by the National Union of Seamen, RMT's predecessor. A 'yes' could bring diversity to merchant shipping –although that term wasn't used then.

In summer 1946 a small London company, Buries Markes was controversially trying to do something that became pivotal: let women into a sector (cargo) and to do a job that had been men-only: cooking.

Mrs Earnshaw MBE, an officer in the wartime Women's Royal Naval Service, had encouraged forces' re-settlement officers to spread the word nationally to de-mobbed Wrens: 'A limited number of posts as cooks and stewardesses would soon be available on cargo ships'.

Over 1,400 applied to join all-women catering teams. Together with Margaretta Godefroy, a Wren colleague, Kathleen interviewed 800 aspirants. 'Most of the girls are splendid types and are tremendously keen to adopt the sea as a career,' she declared.



Chief cook Betty Fitch (left) and second cook Freda Price on the Langleeclyde, c 1950. Image courtesy of Maud McKibbin.

Stewardesses had sailed since the 1820s, serving lady passengers. But commanding kitchens on rugged tramp steamers was unthinkable. And because the union ran a closed shop, it could halt this attempted innovation that was said to threaten 20,000 male catering workers.

Round one in the battle was led by the NUS Liverpool District office, in August 1946. Without consultation, Buries Markes had engaged three ex-Wren stewardesses to sail on the elderly 3,000 ton La Pampa to Brazil.

District secretary Charles Booth announced that steps were being taken to prevent this 'infiltration of women'. He said that 'seamen can rest assured that every step will be taken to prevent the idea from spreading'.

The NUS won, temporarily. Three male stewards were sent instead of the 'infiltrators'. Ex-Wrens Florence Mathieson and Freda Clegg were only allowed to sail as 'trainees': supernumeraries. Margaretta, who was to have been chief stewardess, was sent ashore, on the usual grounds: no room for females.

Round two, in early spring 1947, was focused initially on *La Cordillera*. The new 10,000 ton motor ship designed to take 15 women and 40 men.

James Ockleton, NUS North east district secretary, said it 'wouldn't work' but decided the ex-Wrens could sail. 'Only as an experiment, not as a general policy'.

After the arbitrating 'yes', all-women catering teams of 15 ex-Wrens sailed off on several ships, carrying all sort of cargoes including grain, to exotic ports. The women were happy. None were relegated to supernumerary status. Male crew enjoyed the trip, not least because the certified sea cooks produced such delicious scran.

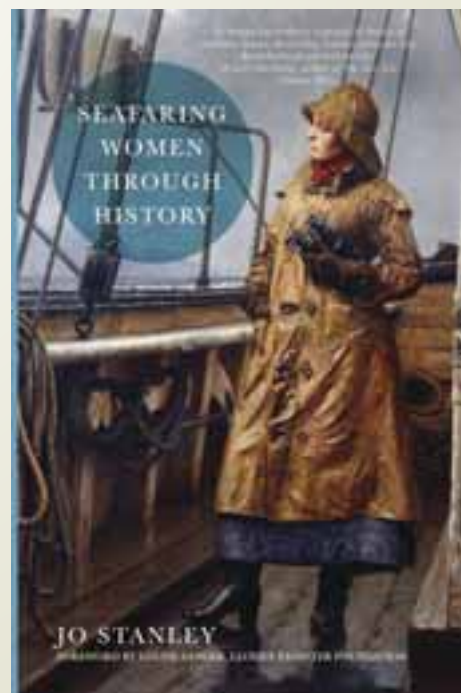
One husband, an ex-AB who helped me research my book, told me about relaxing at sunset on the hatch covers with his future wife Sonia Norris and her plentiful snacks. She approved of Harold because he'd readily eat up any galley blunders.

Until at least 1952 the experiment continued, including on the sister company's Medomsley Steamship Company's Langleeclyde trips to Montreal, Haifa, Haifa, Alexandria, Colombo, Sydney and Cape Town.

Despite misogyny and the no-fraternisation rule some crew married. The carrying of such women-only catering crews is rumoured to have ended because repatriating pregnant women crew proved too costly. Margaretta later became a hotelier in Folkestone. Sonia cooked for Harold till the end of her days, in Ashurst.

However, few, if any, UK-flagged tramps sailed with female cooks. Passenger vessels, especially those with premium bistros, continue to think male chefs add more cachet to cuisine. Even in the last two years shipping companies globally still try sailing 'pink' or part-pink ships. Gender matters but the word 'infiltrators' wouldn't be uttered. ■

Dr Jo Stanley's *Seafaring Women Through History* (History Press, Stroud) is available via the Marine Society's online shop: <https://www.marine-society.org/bookshop>. Price £16.99.



MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY WORKING WITH RMT

RMT member Marc Harris and Simon Renton of the Marx Memorial Library outline their study course

The Marx Memorial Library (MML) has been working with RMT for more than five years to put class politics at the centre of trade union learning.

The annual 'Introduction to Trade Unionism' two-day course for RMT young members is designed and run jointly by RMT young members' committee the MML.

Over the years we have all learned a lot about how best to engage young activists in thinking about class, politics, trade union history and political economy and how these topics are relevant to them as active trade unionists.

By working together with RMT young members' committee Sarah Cundy and other young RMT activists it has evolved further away from traditional teaching models.

Participants do not sit and listen to lectures and presentations from the front but take part in active research, based on looking at pamphlets and documents in the MML archives that record trade union struggles.

This includes issues including nationalisation and privatisation, attacks on working class organisation and living standards as well as workers' fighting back to allow everyone to take part in discussion about what they have discovered, what it means to them and how it might change their trade union activities.

After 45 years of neo-liberal economic policy and ideology, it would be easy to believe that the unchallenged rule of 'the market' and of billionaires

and oligarchs was natural and permanent. Yet the MML archives show that this is not so.

We hold pamphlets, newspapers, leaflets and posters that show that we used to have real trade union power, sectoral collective bargaining, legal sympathy action, massive trade union membership, closed shops and effective picketing.

Giving young trade unionists access to records of trade union history is essential if they are to become activists who can work through their unions to change the world for the better, because only by knowing that things have been different in the past can we imagine that they can be different again in the future.

The group has just finished a four-week pilot run of a new reading group, designed and led by us Marc Harris and Simon Renton. This is even further from a traditional teaching style.

Discussion is based on the reading of material from our archives, much of which has been selected by reading group members. Our pilot was intended for a small, invited group of readers but we intend to welcome a more varied and larger group of readers in the near future, when we have had the chance to think about the pilot run and looked at the feedback from those who took part, we plan to run a series of reading groups.■

For more information email:
info@marx-memorial-library.org.uk
MML website is: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk





SKILLED: RNIB's Erik Matthies says that ticket office staff are skilled in providing multiple kinds of support that people can't get from an app or a machine

PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Half of blind and partially sighted people fear being left stranded at train stations

A new report from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), found that three in four blind and partially sighted people say they can't rely on rail staff for assistance and information, while more than 60 per cent say they are not consistently met by staff at stations when they have

booked passenger assistance.

Crucially the research found that physical safety remains a serious concern. Once they have located their train, four out of five (82 per cent) of blind and partially sighted people say that the gap between trains and the platform causes them difficulty

- incidents can lead to injuries and even deaths.

RNIB's Erik Matthies, who has sight loss, said that far too many people with sight loss were frequently stuck at stations unable to board or change trains and face the stressful experience of having to seek help and locate

platforms and carriages themselves.

"Blind and partially sighted people have to contend with challenging ticket buying methods, inaccessible stations, platforms and on-board facilities like toilets, and inconsistent gaps between the train and platform edges

which contribute to anxious, potentially unsafe journeys.

"With the government's new Railways Bill, working towards the establishment of Great British Railways, now is a perfect opportunity to address these issues.

"RNIB is calling on the UK government and transport

bodies to make sure accessibility is embedded in Great British Railways from the very start of its development," he said.

The research by the leading sight loss organisation - based on a survey of nearly 1,200 blind and partially sighted people across the UK -

identifies that:

Under half - only 44 per cent - are being reliably met by assistance staff at stations and three in four say they can't rely on rail staff.

The research also revealed rail companies were too often failing to provide information for blind and partially sighted passengers in formats they can understand; whether that's on ticket machines, apps or websites, or on signage and guidance for locating and navigating around platforms, carriages and facilities such as buffets and train toilets.

THE REPORT FOUND:

- 42 per cent prefer to buy their train tickets from a person at a ticket office - twice as popular as the next most preferred option - 21 per cent who use a smartphone app.
- 68 per cent say they would benefit from tactile wayfinding, which is a tactile and colour-contrasted path on the

floor that would direct a person to important station facilities: such as platforms, lifts or a point where they could meet staff.

RAIL PASSENGERS WITH SIGHT LOSS ALSO REPORTED DIFFICULTIES IN:

- opening the train doors - 67 per cent
- finding the carriage they want - 77 per cent
- finding an appropriate seat - 79 per cent
- difficulties in using onboard toilets - 57 per cent
- Difficulties in understanding poor quality audio announcements - 55 per cent

The research takes the form of a new report, Platform for Change: making rail journeys more accessible for people with sight loss which can be found online: <https://rnib.in/travel-reports>

QUOTES FROM REPORT ON THE CHALLENGE OF TRAIN TRAVEL

On rail use

"I find the entire process too overwhelming to even dare try and use a train alone."

On the Inconsistency of Assistance and Accessibility

"For me it is the inconsistency of train layout, stations, staff ability that make it all so hard to navigate."

On the Essential Role of Staff

"It is essential that train stations have staff there to purchase tickets from and to receive assistance on boarding the train as it is extremely unsafe for totally blind and partially sighted people to board a train without assistance."

On the Impact of Unstaffed Stations

"Unstaffed stations are a nightmare for the blind."

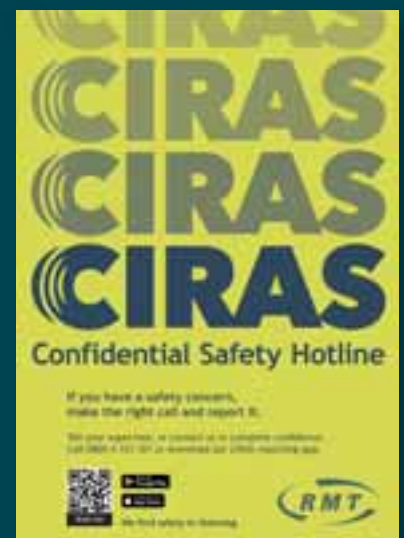
RAISE SAFETY CONCERNS SAFELY

Use the joint RMT and CIRAS posters to share how to raise concerns confidentially

NEW POSTERS

Now available: order printed CIRAS posters and flyers with the RMT logo for free from the CIRAS online shop (above). Search online for CIRAS shop or go to www.willsonshop.com/collections/ciras. You'll find the RMT poster and flyer at the end of the page.

To order click on the RMT item, add it to your basket and select how many to order. In the basket, use the code CIRMT1 in the space for a CIRAS membership number. You'll then go to the checkout. The printed items will be posted to you completely free, no postage needed.



LEGAL

WINNING AT WORK

Member wins over £200,00 in unfair dismissal and disability discrimination case

RMT supported a long-serving member in his successful claims for unfair dismissal and disability discrimination against Transport for London (TfL), securing substantial compensation totalling over £200,000.

The member suffers with Crohn's disease and was assessed by Occupational Health during 2022 as being unfit to carry out his substantive role as a Visitor Centre Customer Service Advisor without adjustments.

Our member offered to return to his role with adjustments. However, he was referred to the redeployment

centre and began a 13-week spell there, but the member was unable to find an alternative role.

At a case conference the member and his RMT representative proposed that he be transferred to work at the Heathrow Visitor Centre as he could manage the journey and would be able to work from Monday to Friday.

After a brief adjournment the member was informed that he was being dismissed with immediate effect with pay in lieu of notice. TfL did not refer the member back to Occupational Health (OH) for advice on this specific role at

Heathrow.

The member appealed against his dismissal, providing medical evidence and again offered to work at Heathrow on a trial basis. The appeal was rejected and the hearing manager said that he could see no point in a further referral.

The RMT legal department supported the claims for unfair dismissal and disability discrimination, arguing that medical evidence was not that he was incapable but could work with reasonable adjustments. The member was not referred to OH, and had not been off sick since

2021.

The Employment Tribunal concluded that these claims were well-founded and TfL had unfairly dismissed the member and subjected him to disability discrimination including a failure to make reasonable adjustments.

The member was supported throughout the litigation process, which took over two years, by the legal department and his union representative who gave compelling evidence in support of the claim.

The Tribunal found that the member was a candid and reliable witness and was

LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS AT EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

If you are experiencing difficulties in the workplace and need advice regarding a potential employment tribunal claim contact the union.

In the first instance, ensure that you contact your local RMT Representatives or Regional Organiser. Then complete an L2 – Request for Legal Assistance (available on-line) and send it to your Regional Office with all supporting documentation.

RMT's legal department deals with virtually all cases from assessment to the case's conclusion at a tribunal for members across England and Wales. The legal department has also submitted claims to Employment Appeal Tribunals.

The in-house legal department is now firmly established and employs four solicitors and 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 In-house legal department continues to strive to deliver a first-class service to all of members. They are committed to provide a strong service to assist the union through the ever-changing legal landscape and their successes have grown yearly.

Your Free legal service covers:

- **Employment Law** – provided by the RMT Legal Department
- **Access to Personal Injury Lawyers** – where 100 per cent of compensation is kept by members.
- **Access to a basic will service.**
- **Access to special terms for conveyancing, probate, powers of attorney.**
- **Access to special terms for family law related matters.**

The contact number for the legal department is 020 7084 7260 or go on-line to rmt.org.uk/about/legal-services/

doing his best in difficult circumstances to find a secure role for himself. It also found that the effect of dismissal on feelings was significant, given the loss of a career and the fact that he was left financially insecure.

As a result, the Tribunal

awarded substantial compensation, and member was now happy and remained employed on the railway.

"I have massive gratitude to the RMT legal team and my barrister.

"There is so much involved in pursuing an Employment

Tribunal claim, even before the hearing, and if I were not an RMT member, I would have had to prepare and present the case myself.

"It is a lot to take on for anyone, and my result might have been different without the help of the RMT.

Being a member of the RMT over the years has helped a lot at work and covered all the legal fees in my case. I am still a member, as I continue to work on the railways in a pleasant, rural location," he said.

■

President's Column

DEFENDING HARD FOUGHT RIGHTS

There has been much talk recently about repealing the Equality Act 2010.

For many working people, that debate can feel abstract or remote, but it should concern us all. The Equality Act is a practical shield that protects millions of us at work, in public life and in our everyday use of services — including transport.

The Act came into being for a simple reason: Britain's anti-discrimination laws were scattered, inconsistent and in places outdated. Over decades, hard-fought campaigns had secured protections through legislation such as the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, among others. Each was a product of struggle by trade unions, campaigners, women's movements, disabled activists and anti-racist organisations.

By 2010, it was clear that bringing these protections together into one coherent framework would strengthen and simplify rights.

The Equality Act consolidated nine major pieces of legislation and over 100 separate instruments into a single, clearer legal structure. It established protected characteristics, clarified duties

on employers and service providers, and introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty — requiring public bodies to consider how their decisions affect people with protected characteristics.

In practical terms, this matters to everyone against discrimination because of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage or civil partnership. That is not a niche list, that is society.

Take maternity rights. Under the Equality Act, pregnancy and maternity are explicitly protected. It is unlawful to dismiss, disadvantage or treat a woman unfavourably because she is pregnant or on maternity leave.

In real terms, that means protection from being sidelined for promotion, from losing shifts, from being forced out of a job simply for having a child. For working families, these protections are not theoretical. They are the difference between security and hardship at a time of enormous change.

And yet we hear increasing rhetoric suggesting that such legislation is somehow excessive. There is a pattern in modern right-wing politics and rarely do we see proposals to extend rights for

working people, safer workplaces or fairer pay.

What we see are attempts to dilute protections — whether through attacks on trade unions, restrictions on protest, or now, suggestions that core equality legislation should be scrapped. This is because inequality serves a purpose for those who benefit from it. The more divided a society is the easier it is to distract, to scapegoat and to control the narrative. When working people are set against one another, attention is diverted from the concentration of wealth and power at the top.

The Equality Act also plays a critical role in access to services — including transport. On public transport networks, it underpins obligations to make services accessible to all.

For disabled customers, it is about whether they can travel to work independently, visit family, attend medical appointments or participate fully in society.

None of this is to claim that the Equality Act is perfect. That is precisely why we should be campaigning for its development — not its repeal. In sectors like transport, where accessibility and inclusion remain ongoing challenges, the framework of the Act is essential to further progress.



So, when politicians argue for abolition, we must ask: what exactly would replace it? Which protections would go? What message would that send to pregnant workers, to disabled passengers, to those facing racial discrimination or harassment at work?

Rights are rarely handed down, they are won — and they can be lost. The Equality Act 2010 represents decades of struggle by working people for fairness and dignity. We should be using it and building upon it — not standing by while it is quietly dismantled.

If those calling for repeal believe they have something better to offer, they should say plainly what that is — and who, precisely, would pay the price in its absence.

George Welch

EDINBURGH RETIREMENT

RMT Scotland gave former RMT regional organiser Mick Hogg a great send-off at his retirement celebration recently.

Mick retired early due to health issues after 16 years as a regional organiser and 34 years in the union.

Despite his health Mick gave an inspirational speech, thanking everyone attending and calling on the need to defend working class interests and the need for solidarity.

He thanked his daughter Nicky who has helped so much recently and other family attendance.

Others in attendance included RMT Scotland Council secretary Jim Grey, president George Welch, NEC members Gary Pollock and David Douglas and regional organisers Ann Joss and Gordon Martin and both assistant general secretaries Daren Ireland and John Leach.

Former Edinburgh and portobello branch secretary Graham Buchanan also gave thanks to Mick's service as well as MSP Richard Leonard who recalled Mick's service to the labour trade union movement in the transport and mining industries.



Mick was also joined by former comrades and friends from the National Union of Mineworkers along with his brother - fellow RMT member

Alex who along with their late father was victimised and sacked in the miners' strike 1984/5.

MEDWAY MEDALS

RMT's Medway and District General Grades branch held its AGM in Rainham with Eddie Dempsey in attendance to present some awards.

He also spoke on a range of topics from the creation of Great British Railways (GBR),

body worn video equipment and union's anti-assault campaign.

It led to a lively and informed debate and questions, as well as humour and solidarity.

Eddie said that 'the lifeblood of our union was

the quality and commitment of reps and activists in the workplace because, without them, "nothing happens and nothing changes".

Eddie presented a 10 membership badges to conductor and health and safety rep Dave Reid (10

years), and 25 year badge to outsourced cleaner and ex-revenue protection officer Ken Woolgar.

Elections were held for health and safety reps and branch committee positions followed by a lush buffet spread. ■



STENA VISIT

RMT Stena convenor Michael Hobson met with members employed at R&F, which is a Stena Line company within Fishguard port which is responsible for the delivery of retail products including duty free to Stena Line passengers transiting through the port to Ireland. ■



PLYMOUTH AWARDS

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach presented five long service awards to members of the Plymouth branch of the union.

Jo l'Anson, Julie Easton and Chris Chiswell received their 10-year badges while Brian Richards and Steve Harvey were presented with their 25-year badges. ■



OFFICIAL RMT BRANDED MERCHANDISE

Show your support for the union. Go to the RMT webshop on the RMT web site for more details. Promote your branch, region and the union - call Pellacraft on 01623 636 602 if you have any queries.



WALSALL AWARD FOR SIMON

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey made a special trip to Walsall branch to make a 40-year presentation to signaller Simon Gudgin who is retiring from work.

Eddie congratulated Simon for his service to the union at several signal boxes since he began work in 1985 at the height of the Miners' strike.

Simon explained that there was no signalling school back then and training was done on the job, passed down from worker to worker.

He went to Bloxwich Box which sat on a freight-only line running Merry-Go-Round coal trains from pit to power station - a symbol of Britain's industrial backbone.

However, because of the strike and the wider assault on the mining industry there were no coal trains running and the

only train he saw was the snow plough!

"My first box was Dudley which closed about 18 months later - another casualty of 'modernisation'.

"I was moved to Round Oak South, which closed around three years later. Then Wednesbury - but that closed in the early 1990s.

"I worked in various boxes across the West Midlands and spent around ten years in Walsall Power Box and, when that closed, I ended up in the West Midlands Signalling Centre.

"The first 30 years were great as it was more than a job, it was a vocation built on pride, solidarity, and public service.

"We kept the railway running for everyone, but the last 10 years were a different

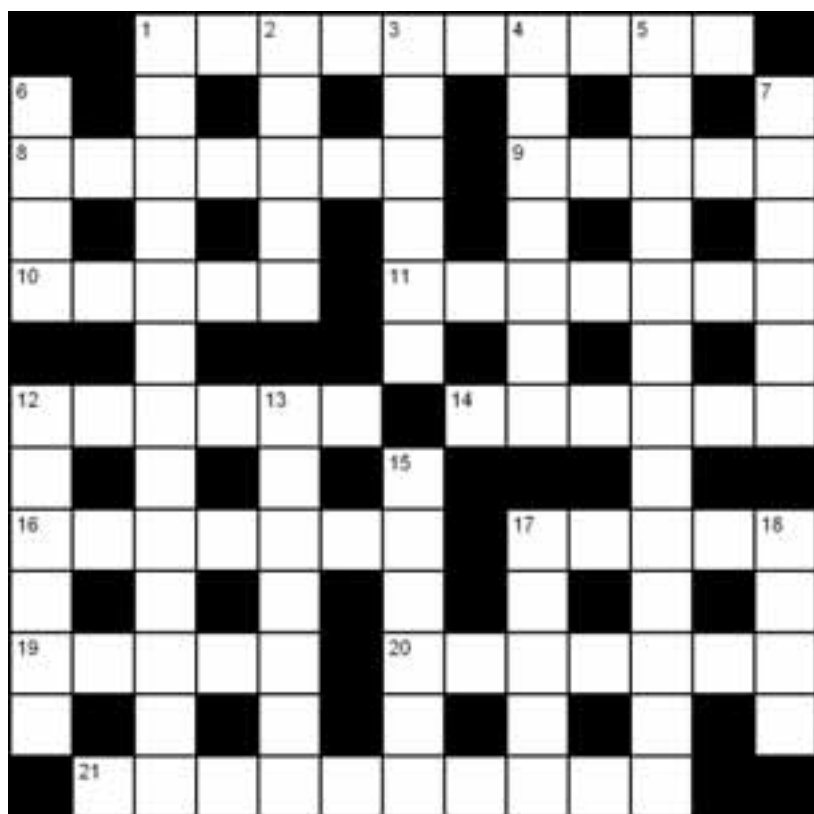
story with the long shadow of privatisation, cost-cutting and managerialism.

"After 41 years of service, I've decided to hang up my lever cloth and retire but I am

proud of the work I did, and of having been part of a publicly owned railway that once put people before profit - something worth fighting for again," he said. ■



£100 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by April 30, 2026 with your name and address.

Last month's winner is A M Gladdin, Burton on Trent.

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

ACROSS

- 1 Subtractable (10)
- 8 Offensive (7)
- 9 Implicit (5)
- 10 Flight of steps (5)
- 11 Serious (7)
- 12 Non-appearance (2-4)
- 14 Raise in relief (6)
- 16 Bishopric (7)
- 17 Tripod (5)
- 19 Headdress (5)
- 20 Oriental (7)
- 21 Sternness (10)

DOWN

- 1 Unemotional (10)
- 2 Gloomy (5)
- 3 Masticator (6)
- 4 Meantime (7)
- 5 Debauchery (13)
- 6 Leader (4)
- 7 Standing (6)
- 12 Nakedness (6)
- 13 Daunt (7)
- 15 Withdraw (6)
- 17 Result (5)
- 18 Optical device (4)

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. This policy is underwritten by Stonebridge International Insurance Ltd. 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

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL

Assistance for members with their potential employment tribunal claim offered through the RMT's In-house Legal Department.

**BETTER JOBS
BETTER SERVICES**



END RAIL OUTSOURCING

It is good news that the government is creating an integrated, publicly owned rail network. But many **essential rail services** - such as cleaning, station staffing, catering, security, rail infrastructure and engineering - **will still be outsourced to private contractors**.

That's bad news for passengers and taxpayers as these companies rake in £400 million annually in profits - the equivalent of a 3.8% fare cut.

Outsourcing is also **bad news for rail workers** as it is an employment model driven by employers engaging workers on precarious contracts and on inferior terms and conditions, such as poorer sick pay and pensions.

Outsourcing is also embedding **systemic racism** on parts of the rail and metro networks as outsourced workers are often disproportionately from a Black and Minority Ethnic background.

But there is a better way. All the evidence shows that insourcing and integrating outsourced rail services with the rest of the railway would provide better jobs, services, safety and value for money. In fact, on many parts of the railway, cleaning, station staffing, catering, infrastructure and engineering services are already provided in-house or there are discussions to do so.

Please scan the QR code to see how you can support the campaign to end rail outsourcing and deliver **better jobs and better services**.



www.rmt.org.uk