

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

HOW NOT TO RUN A BUS SERVICE



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www.rmt.org.uk

WORKING FOR YOU

RMT membership helps you at work and saves you money

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

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

CAMPAIGNING

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

PERSONAL INJURIES

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

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

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

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Should a member find themselves unfairly

dismissed, discriminated against or have any claim which has reasonable prospects of success at an Employment Tribunal, RMT will provide legal representation and pay the fee. Even if the union is advised that the claim is unlikely to succeed, members who make a claim are eligible to receive free legal advice.

ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Accident benefit is only payable if you have been off for three days or more. Accident must be reported to branch secretary within 26 weeks in order to qualify for accident benefit.

RETIREMENT BENEFIT

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

TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

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

DEMOTION COMPENSATION

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

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

ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a member or spouse if the member dies in service or if a members' spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children. Benefit is paid while a child is in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is £12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

RMT CREDIT UNION

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

ONLINE SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

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

FINES POOL

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

BEREAVEMENT BENEFIT

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

CASHBACK PREPAID CARD

Fancy cashback on your everyday shopping? Use your RMT Prepaid Plus Cashback card at over 50 partner retailers, including Sainsbury's, ASDA and Boots, and earn unlimited cashback! It's different to a credit or debit card - you can only spend what you load so there's less chance of getting carried away. www.rmtprepaid.com

FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

As a benefit of your RMT membership you can register for £5,000 Free Accidental Death Cover. Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69. 12 months free cover. Annually renewable and always FREE. The Cover is underwritten by Advent Insurance PCC Ltd - UIB Cell. www.rmtprotect.com

HEALTH CASH PLAN

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

Join RMT by visiting www.rmt.org.uk

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KEEP UP THE PRESSURE

It is crucial that members working for train operating companies of all grades return a resounding YES vote for further industrial action to keep up the pressure on the employers.

This country's anti-trade union laws require that your union ballots members once again to continue the mandate to take industrial action in defence of jobs, pay and conditions.

Your resounding solidarity and determination has already brought the TOCs to the negotiating table and now it is crucial to send a message that we remain unified and determined.

Following the suspension of strike action last month, the Rail Delivery Group has proposed a new two-stage proposal which provides for a first stage pay increase for 2022/23 in return for RMT participating in a Dispute Resolution Process.

If adopted, there would then be a second stage of negotiations and consultations within TOC Company Councils on their agenda for Workforce Change, on which a modest Year 2 pay agreement and certain guarantees would be dependent.

The national executive committee has decided to distribute that document to the membership and a presentation on its contents has been broadcast and is still available to watch on the union's YouTube channel.

Ultimately this union will not be hurried into such a process without members having proper consideration of the detail and a good understanding of the implications of entering in to the proposed two-stage process.

This issue of *RMT News* also reports on demands by The House of Commons transport select committee for the government to do more to improve bus services across the country.

This underlines the fact that this government has failed the bus industry and that there needs to be a drastic overhaul in how bus services are run in our towns, villages and cities.

It is clear that 40 years of bus privatisation has failed spectacularly just as it has failed the rail and maritime industries. Even this Tory government has admitted so much by laying out the problems in the industry caused by Thatcher's madcap free for all for bus privateers launched in 1984.

This reckless ideological approach can be seen at P&O Ferries. A year after sacking nearly 800 maritime workers in the drive for profit, evidence is piling up that corner cutting on maritime safety has become the norm as the company exploits low wage agency workers endangering passengers and crew.

This kind of government-sponsored profiteering can be also seen as the rolling stock scandal rolls on. The ex-rail franchisees that now run rail contracts for the government are literally shovelling billions of public subsidies into the ROSCOs operating through offshore accounts which are then transformed into dividends for investors.

It is clear that while this government blatantly tolerates such corporate skulduggery, it is imposing relentless austerity and cuts on everyone else and working people are increasingly sick and tired of it. That is why this May Day trade unionists around the world will be putting forward a different agenda which gives working people hope.

We stand for a world of investment in people, peace and solidarity against the agenda of endless profiteering and economic decline.

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

GOVERNMENT TOLD TO IMPROVE BUS SERVICES

The House of Commons transport select committee has told the government that it needs to do more to improve bus services across the country.

Its report found that £1 billion made available to local authorities for their Bus Service Improvement Plans 'is simply not enough money to produce real improvements in bus services across the whole country' and that 'allowing roughly half the country to miss out risks entrenching, and in some cases creating, a two-tier system in which bus services improve in one area while, across an invisible county border, they worsen or even disappear'.

It highlights that the government hasn't reviewed the ban on municipal bus companies, or issued new guidance on socially and economically necessary services and says 'we urge the government to put its



promises into action'.

The report concludes: "post-pandemic, many people's lives have changed, and this has altered, perhaps permanently, when and where they wish to travel.

"So far, the government has responded to this challenge with limited, albeit welcome, schemes such as the £2 fare cap. But it needs to do more. It would be absurd for the government to spend billions of pounds to support the ailing bus sector through the pandemic and then allow it to wither away".

RMT general secretary Mick

Lynch said that the report underlined the reality that the government had failed to fund bus services properly.

"RMT believes there needs to be drastic overhaul in how we run our bus services in our towns, villages and cities.

"Local bus services are a lifeline for many, providing access to employment, education and healthcare, but the decline experienced since the industry was deregulated means that few people have access to a reliable bus service.

"Two years after its National Bus Strategy was published,

the government has still not acted on its commitment to review the ban on municipal bus companies.

"It is clear ministers are more interested in protecting bumper profits made by bus companies, than protecting and providing a vital service to passengers.

"Local authorities need sufficient ring-fenced national funding to run their bus services in public ownership as part of an integrated and publicly owned public transport network," he said (see pages 16 17). ■

SEAFARERS LOSE OUT ON NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

RMT has lambasted the government ahead of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) increase, pointing out that thousands of seafarers will not be eligible for the rise.

From this month, the national minimum wage will rise by 9.7 per cent from £9.50 to £10.42 for all over 23-year olds.

However, despite the Seafarers Wages Act being passed, it will not come into full force until next year, meaning P&O Ferries and other operators will be under no legal obligation pay the new NMW rate.

Due to legal loopholes, some agency crews being employed by P&O, Irish Ferries Seatruck, Condor Ferries, Cobelfret and others are being paid as little as £4 an hour in British waters on routes which call at UK ports up to five times a day.

Other seafarers who will miss out include some of those working in offshore wind and the green energy supply chain.

The Seafarers Wages Act and the National Minimum Wage (Offshore Employment) Order 2020 do not apply to seafarers working on vessels servicing offshore

wind/renewable installations out to the 200-mile limit of the UK Exclusive Economic Zone.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the modest rise in the National Minimum wage was below the rate of inflation and does not even apply to thousands of low paid seafarers working regularly from UK ports for anti-trade union operators.

"The government makes a lot of noise about improving the lot of seafarers in response to the P&O Ferries scandal but the reality for seafarers is a race to the bottom through super exploitation of their

terms and conditions where RMT does not have recognition with the employer.

"Ministers are refusing to tighten legal loopholes which permit this rampant exploitation and this refusal to protect decent jobs and skills is accelerating a decline in pay and working conditions for seafarer Ratings.

"RMT will continue to campaign for decent treatment of seafarers through mandatory fair pay agreements with the maritime unions, which is the only way to rein in the P&Os of the maritime world," he said. ■



Union calls on members and the public to write to minister to demand end to poverty wages

Contracted out cleaners working on trains across the country took 48-hour strike action earlier this month.

RMT members working as cleaners for the likes of Atalian Servest, Churchill and Bidvest Noonan are demanding £15 an hour, company sick pay, decent holidays and good pensions from contractors who are raking in profits worth millions of pounds.

The train companies that will be affected are Avanti West Coast, GWR, Northern, GTR and South East Trains. Cleaners working on the Network Rail High Speed contract will also be taking part in the stoppage.

The latest round of strikes are part of the union's campaign to see justice done for contracted out cleaners, who are some of the most

exploited railway workers in the country.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that cleaners do a vital job making sure the health, safety and welfare of passengers is taken care of on a daily basis.

"It is almost criminal that many of them struggle to make ends meet and have dreadful conditions of work while the contractors they are employed by collect millions in profit every year.

"RMT is campaigning vigorously to end this super exploitation and injustice.

"Our members will continue their industrial campaign, until they have achieved fair pay and good conditions of work.

"Train companies should also hang their heads in shame for allowing contractors

to exploit workers who keep their trains clean.

"Ultimately all cleaning contracts currently with private companies on the railway must be bought back in house as a matter of urgency," he said.

CLEANERS DEMANDS ARE:

- A minimum wage of £15 per hour
- A Company sick pay scheme of at least six weeks' full pay and six weeks' half pay
- Staff travel facilities
- An increase to pension contributions

ACTION INCLUDES ALL CLEANER MEMBERS AT THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES:

- Atalian Servest (Alstom/Avanti West Coast)
- Atalian Servest (Great

Western Railway)

- Bidvest Noonan (Northern Trains Contract)
- Churchill (Network Rail High Speed Contract)
- Churchill (GTR Contract)
- Churchill (South East Trains Contract)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Write to Secretary of State Mark Harper asking him to intervene and make sure rail cleaners get a fair pay offer. Use the QR code below. ■



LIFEBOAT FALLS OFF LOW WAGE P&O FERRY

Corner cutting on P&O Ferries now typical as it exploits low wage agency workers



RMT has written to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) after a lifeboat fell off the new P&O vessel *P&O Pioneer* last month whilst using low paid agency crew.

Accidents involving lifeboats are a key concern and, following P&O's illegal sacking of 800 seafarers last year, maritime inspectors listed an unprecedented 31 separate failings on P&O Ferries vessels, ranging from problems with fire safety to lifeboat drills.

According to the Royal Institute of Naval Architects (RINA), lifeboat drills are becoming increasingly dangerous. The worst cases occur when crew members are loaded aboard lifeboats and have to rehearse the entire abandon-ship

procedure. Many accidents are caused by mechanical or design flaws in the lifeboat or other equipment. Insufficient training, sloppy procedures or human error also contribute to lifeboat drill accidents.

Seafarers working on P&O Ferries are low paid agency crew, predominantly recruited overseas by Maltese crewing agent IFM. IFM was set up to supply agency labour to P&O Ferries before the unlawful dismissal of nearly 800 directly employed UK ratings and officers last March. In the aftermath of these dismissals, the MCA detained P&O Ferries' ships a number of times for safety failings, including crew lifeboat drills.

Despite government's protestations, an Indian AB on the *Pride of Canterbury* is contracted by IFM to work 17



weeks straight, 12 hours a day, seven days a week, for a basic hourly rate of £3.94.

The Chinese-built vessel is due for delivery on the Dover-Calais route to replace the *Pride of Canterbury* and this crewing model will be used on P&O Ferries' *Pioneer*.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that this sort of corner cutting on basic maritime safety was typical of P&O Ferries.

"Nothing could demonstrate P&O Ferries' contempt for maritime safety standards more spectacularly, especially when you take into account the knackered 17-

week contracts low paid agency crew are working on P&O's fleet, including those registered under the Cypriot flag of convenience.

"The irony is that this government signed an agreement with the Cypriot register in February, with the specific aim of enhancing maritime safety.

"We are in contact with the MCA and our comrades in the French trade unions to ensure that P&O Ferries cannot sail their new ship without a functional set of life saving appliances on board," he said.

■

KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE!

It is absolutely crucial that you all return a resounding YES vote for further industrial action

This country's anti-trade union laws requires that your union ballots members in train operating companies to continue the mandate to take industrial action in defence of jobs, pay and conditions.

Members working in all grades for the train operating companies will have received a ballot paper earlier this month so if you haven't voted yet filled it in it is imperative that you return it before May 4.

To re-cap the offer from the Rail Delivery Group on behalf of the TOCs which led to the strikes being suspended last month offered a pay increase for 2022 that is dependent on the Dispute Resolution Process document being adopted by your union. The national executive committee decided to distribute that document to the membership and a presentation on its contents has been broadcast and is still available to watch on the union's YouTube channel. The video deals with the main questions raised by members and has received many thousands of views already.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that a conversation needed to take place within the union around the two-stage offer.

"It has been frustrating to be in negotiations when the

major player in this dispute - the Tory government - was absent, while the employer's side sought its authorisation on every offer it presented.

"But your negotiators and your NEC are not going to rush into a decision on these proposals or on the course of the negotiations.

"We are heading toward the 12-month mark in this dispute and, while we wish to see a satisfactory an outcome as soon as possible, we will not be hurried into a dispute resolution process without members having proper consideration of the detail and a good understanding of implications of entering into the proposed two-stage process.

"For these reasons, the re-ballot of all members at the train companies represented in this national dispute is going ahead and voting papers have been dispatched.

"In the meantime, it is important to remember that at the beginning of the dispute nothing was on offer and nothing was on the table for members working for TOCs.

"It has been through your actions and determination which has brought the employers round the table and that pressure must be kept up," he said. ■



KEEP SCOTRAIL PUBLIC

RMT has urged incoming Scotland first minister Humza Yousaf to keep his promise of continued public ownership of ScotRail.

The union also called on Mr Yousaf to reverse the decline in Scotrail by increasing services to pre-pandemic levels, investing in rail infrastructure and ruling out cuts to ScotRail ticket offices and jobs.

A recent Transport Scotland report recommended that

increasing staff levels on public transport should be explored in order to make women and girls feel safer.

According to the report, increasing onboard staff on trains and other modes of public transport would "add significantly to women's sense of safety and may lead to an uptake in public transport at night".

During his successful election campaign Mr Yousaf

said: "Bringing Scotrail and Sleeper Services into public hands was as much about energy as it is about building a safe, reliable, and accessible public transport system then.

"It is the belief of the SNP that a successful just transition relies, in part, on the public ownership of our rail. For that reason alone, I will commit categorically to keep Scotrail and Sleeper Services in public ownership," he said.

Scotrail was taken into public ownership by the Scottish government just over a year ago.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the certainty provided by the new First

Minister that ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper would remain in public ownership was very welcome and meant all revenue can be reinvested in improving Scotland's railway.

"The First Minister must also improve rail access and connectivity by increasing funding for infrastructure by reversing cuts to Scotrail services.

"We are also keen that he will act swiftly on Transport Scotland's report on improving safety of women and girls on public transport by ensuring adequate staffing levels and no closure of ticket offices on Scotland's railway stations," he said. ■

ANTI-UNION FIRM HANDED SCOTTISH FERRY SERVICES

RMT has accused the Scottish government of conducting a P&O by the back door by chartering a catamaran from anti-trade union employer Pentland Ferries on the embattled Clyde and Hebrides network.

Transport Scotland is spending £1 million per month to charter the MV Alfred for nine months. The vessel will be crewed and operated by Pentland Ferries staff who are not covered by a trade union agreement and whose terms and conditions of employment are below their colleagues at CalMac, effectively undermining the collective bargaining arrangements on the network.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that to announce a new vessel without any prior consultation with the recognised CalMac trade unions was an insult and demonstrated a contempt for the conditions of hard working CalMac staff.

"Spending £9 million of public money on a catamaran owned and crewed by an anti-trade union employer with a poor safety record is a P&O style race to the bottom in Scotland's ferries sector.

"We need public ownership of all vessels on publicly contracted ferry routes in Scotland and we need to know under whose ministerial authority this decision was

taken," he said.

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

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

Vessels 801 and 802 remain undelivered nearly eight years after the contract was awarded and are now expected to cost over three times more than originally budgeted.

The report by the Audit Committee found that both vessels are now millions of

pounds over budget and years behind schedule. There has also been a significant lack of transparency and accountability throughout the project.

The union said that the report highlighted how the SNP government was letting down ferry workers and taxpayers by masking industrial scale incompetence and complicity in a bad deal for two vessels which remain undelivered.

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

RMT DEMANDS STRONGER WORKERS' RIGHTS ON WIND FARMS

RMT has demanded trade union rights and fair pay in the Offshore Wind industry following an independent report by the UK government's Offshore Wind Champion Tim Pick.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that it was disappointing that trade unions were not consulted as part of the report, especially as it acknowledged the importance of a just transition

to the 50,000 jobs which are expected to be lost from the oil and gas industry by 2030.

"RMT is calling for mandatory collective bargaining in the offshore wind supply chain for fixed and floating projects, including in low tax low regulation Freeports where the government intend much of this accelerated offshore wind activity to take place.

"We welcome the

recognition of the delay in skills passporting for our offshore members, the move away from voluntary local content targets and the linking of seabed leasing rights to supply chain development, which could be funded out of Crown Estates' profits.

"The recognition of the advantage gained in the US and EU by massive subsidy commitment to green energy is also significant but we need

some reality to prevail over the damaging effects of government policy to date on increasing jobs, safety and skills across the offshore wind supply chain.

"For example, crew in the offshore wind supply chain can be paid below the national minimum wage to work at sea for months on end and that needs to change fast," he said. ■

ROSCO RACKET ROLLS ON

Rail rolling stock companies turns taxpayers' money into dividends



RMT has revealed that rolling stock company (ROSCO) Angel Trains paid out £75 million of taxpayers' money in dividends in three months, mostly to a Canadian investment fund.

Nearly 90 per cent of the rolling stock on Britain's railways is owned by three companies, known as the ROSCOs. When British Rail was privatised in 1993, these three companies were handed BR's stock of rolling stock of engines and carriages, assets which had been provided by public investment.

The ROSCOs then leased the vehicles to the train operating companies (TOCs) who controlled the rail franchises. The flawed theory was that they would generate competition and mobilise the private sector and capital to drive innovation. In fact, the opposite has happened and it has created a lucrative private monopoly that adds no value to the railways.

For example, between 2012 and 2018, the ROSCOs passed on a total of £1.2 billion to their parent companies or owners in the form of dividend payments.

To put that in context, three

companies paid out the same amount as all the train operating companies managed across 20 franchises over a five-year period between 2012 and 2017.

The ROSCOs are now owned by a group of investment vehicles associated with financial services companies or profiting from the global market in privatised infrastructure assets.

Angel Trains, one of the three ROSCOs, has a parent company registered in the tax haven Jersey, named Willow Topco but, as a result, it is difficult to see its accounts.

However, on September 16, 2021 44 per cent of Willow Topco was acquired by a new company called Amalfi Co 8 Ltd, a dedicated investment vehicle set up by PSP Investments Holding Europe Ltd, the European outlet of a Canadian Pension Fund's investment arm (Public Sector Pension Investment Board). PSP indirectly holds 74 per cent of Angel through various vehicles which cost PSP £654 million.

The annual accounts of this company reveal that Willow Topco paid out £75 million in just three months in the first

quarter of 2022. On January 13, 2022, Willow Topco declared an interim dividend of £25 million, £11 million of which came to Amalfi Co 8 Ltd. On March 22, 2022, Willow Topco declared another interim dividend of £50 million, £22 million of which came to Amalfi Co 8 Ltd.

In three months, Willow Topco has paid out £75 million in dividends, £33 million of which went to this one company and £55.5 million of which will have gone to PSP.

It is not yet known how much Willow Topco paid out over the course of the rest of 2022. Angel Trains Ltd paid out a £30 million dividend in 2021 to Willow Topco. The year before that the Angel Group restructured, dissolved one of its companies and paid out a dividend worth £822 million to Willow Topco.

END OF FRANCHISING

With the abolition of rail franchising and the phasing in of new contracts, the government and the taxpayer now pay the ROSCOs directly for the rising cost of leasing trains. In the last five years, the ROSCOs have jacked up the

cost of their leases by around 66 per cent so that it now represents around a quarter of TOC spending.

In 2020-21, the ex-franchisees paid £3.1 billion to lease trains from rolling-stock companies - 55 per cent more than in 2016-17.

RMT general secretary said that while passengers had faced cancellations and cuts on the rail network, the company had extracted £75 million from the railways all at taxpayers' expense.

"Our railways are every day the subject of a shadowy heist pulled by the well-heeled parasites who lease out our trains.

"The rolling stock companies continue their shabby dealings untouched by government, shuffling taxpayers' money out of the railways, through Jersey and in the case of Angel, into the hands of a Canadian pension fund. This is a scandal that gets far too little attention and it's got to stop," he said.

- The RMT report *The ROSCO racket: Why it's time to take control of UK rolling stock* is available on the RMT website. ■

MANAGED DECLINE OF THE RAILWAYS

On the anniversaries of Beeching and Potters Bar a new era of cost cutting will prove just as costly

On the 60th anniversary of the Beeching report and 21 years after the Potters Bar rail crash it is clear that the government is implementing a new programme of managed decline.

The Beeching report *'The Reshaping of British Railways'* published in 1963 led to the decimation of the railway network with hundreds of stations and railway lines closed. On May 10, 2002 a train derailed at high speed outside Potters Bar station, killing seven and injuring 76, adding to a list of disasters since rail privatisation including at Hatfield two years earlier.

The Potters Bar tragedy directly led to Network Rail taking all track maintenance in-house, ending the use of private contractors except for large-scale renewal projects.

RMT points out that railway service levels continue to be significantly below pre-Covid levels despite the Rail Industry Association recently highlighting that national rail passenger numbers have reached over 100 per cent of pre-Covid levels for the first time since March 2020.

Cancellations have also reached almost 1,000 trains per day in the worst rail performance since rail regulator the Office of Rail and Road began recording performance figures.

Significant rail infrastructure projects continue to be downgraded including HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Integrated Rail Plan.

Train Operators including South Eastern Railway, South Western Railway, Avanti West Coast, Trans Pennine Express all continue to run reduced timetables and services.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that Network Rail was also clearly being starved of funds for the upcoming spending round as part of a deliberate process of managed decline.

"This government seems hellbent on actively pursuing the managed decline of our railways, cutting investment, slashing services and staff numbers, scrapping vital infrastructure projects and rewarding failed private train operators like Avanti with lucrative contract extensions.

"The upcoming anniversary of the Potter's Bar rail disaster is a vivid reminder is where endless costing and sub-contracting ends up.

"It is quite clear that the rail regulator needs to step in as the current perception is that they are asleep at the wheel.

"Ultimately with climate change accelerating it is incumbent on the government to recognise the critical importance of rail to reducing carbon emissions and commit to invest to expand rail services and rail staffing rather than cutting them to the bone," he said.

EXPANSION NOT DECLINE

As the Campaign for Better Transport has pointed out in its report *The Case for Expanding the Rail Network*, the disastrous legacy of the



CUTS: Rail workers in England in the 1960's protesting about Beeching's plans for large scale rail cuts.

Beeching report means that there is no shortage of disused and abandoned stations and of ideas for re-openings.

However, despite the soaring ridership over the last 30 years, few new stations and lines have been added to the network.

Yet reopening railways has the potential to transform communities. For both passengers and freight, rail is a high-quality national transport network that can give people access to a wealth of social and economic opportunities. It can support local economies; expanding labour markets and encouraging

new investment and development. It can help tackle regional inequalities, making economically disadvantaged parts of the country more attractive for investment. It can help create better places to live, relieving

road congestion and pollution, and reducing carbon emissions. Ultimately, the railways can support the national economy and directly create and maintain high skill employment.

Given these benefits, it is unsurprising that the clamour for new and reopened rail lines has been widespread and consistent for many years. Local campaigns have been spurred on by high profile successes such as the Borders Railway.

The political focus has been on mega projects such as High Speed 2 (HS2) and Crossrail 2, and identifying schemes attractive to private sector investors. While important, this needs to be balanced with enhancements and other projects that maintain the skills base and supply chain in the intervening years. In reality, too little support is currently in

place to bring reopening schemes to fruition.

The assessment of potential expansion schemes is often narrowly drawn and overly risk averse. Public investment in rail remains focused on maintaining and updating the existing network rather than seeking out the best opportunities to expand.

This requires the political will to invest and build new infrastructure and Britain's rail

network is an essential part of the country's infrastructure. The railways have shown strong growth over the last 20 years and demand to expand and improve access to the network is high.

Investing in rail to meet this demand will increase the network's value and its usefulness economically, socially and environmentally. ■



DISASTER: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) report into the Potters Bar crash released a year later found that the points were poorly maintained and that this was the cause of the accident. Rail contractor Jarvis had claimed that the points' poor condition was due to sabotage but the HSE report found that other sets of points in the Potters Bar area showed similar maintenance deficiencies and the poor state of maintenance "probably arose from a failure to understand fully the design and safety requirements".

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL?

The rail regulator has come in for criticism for failing to act during strike action

In allowing employers to use insufficiently trained 'contingency labour' to break the strikes the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the supposed 'independent safety regulator' has played a key role in supporting employers to undermine RMT industrial action over the last year.

RMT raised concerns with the ORR in June last year when the union demanded that it took action to stop strike breaking measures that might lead to dangerous incidents - but these requests were ignored

This is hardly surprising as the ORR reflects government policy of its safety regulators having a 'light touch' so that business can run without the burden of state intervention. The ORR approach is conflicted as it is responsible for both safety regulation and enforcement as well the economic regulator for the railways. So, it is a key driver in delivering budget cuts demanded by the government.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch also explained to the union's health and safety conference recently that the ORR used to be part of HM Inspectorate of Railways, a subsection of government. During industrial action RMT branches and safety reps reported safety incidents caused by using contingency staff and passed

them to the ORR. Amongst the many examples provided included:

THREE BRIDGES RAIL OPERATING CENTRE

NWR logs showed that during strike action there were multiple wrong routing incidents across several signalling panels coming from the same signal box, suggesting problems regards competency of contingent signallers.

The ORR investigation initiated the following response to RMT in September of last year:

"We acknowledge RMT's identification of numerous problems at Three Bridges ROC. We have undertaken a further inspection at this location. Local management accepted that there had been room for improvement".

CREWE ELECTRICAL CONTROL ROOM

RMT reported concerns regarding contingency staff responses to a collapsed overhead electric line which created a serious risk of electrocution. This happened because contingent staff in the electric control room had not followed the correct procedure and had re-energised the OHLE (Overhead Line Equipment) - without asking the signaller if there were any

electric trains were in the Overhead Line Equipment Area that had tripped.

However, the ORR assessed the risk of potential for injury from this incident as low and informed RMT that NWR had "identified learning for handling these incidents".

SPAD

A Signal Passed at Danger on the Trent Valley Line occurred due to a serious operating irregularity and miscommunication by Network Rail managers. Operating rules were broken as an exit signal at an easily identifiable location was not used, neither were relevant operating forms. This resulted in a serious miscommunication between driver and signaller and a signal being passed at danger by over 2,000 metres.

In response ORR said this was a low-risk incident. But this is nonsense as if a train had been still in the signal section beyond the emergency special working section it could have run straight into the rear of that train.

TRAIN DESPATCH

There were three train despatch incidents on the C2C line at Fenchurch Street. The ORR told the company to review significant changes made to train despatch arrangements in relation to

industrial action. But the ORR document, Principles for Contingency staff, shared with their Inspectors in early June 2022, states that one of the legal requirements is that a "suitable and sufficient" risk assessment should be in place.

These incidents have left RMT safety reps frustrated that incidents that would have seen their members facing disciplinary action and being drug and alcohol tested, did not result in the same action for contingency staff.

This approach does not bode well for rail safety workers must have confidence that safety will be taken seriously at all levels of the organisation and in all instances, not turning a blind eye to those incidents that take place during industrial action.

Unfortunately, the same non-intervention approach from ORR is being applied in relation to the Network Rail Modernising Maintenance consultation. RMT has raised concerns with the ORR as regards failure to consult as per the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations 1977, particularly in relation to consultation and sharing of documentation with RMT representatives and a failure to provide information to reps so that they can play an informed role in promoting health and safety at work. ■



LIVING WITH LONG COVID

TUC calls for urgent action to prevent long-lasting inequalities

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact heavily on all our lives and one of the long-lasting impacts is the emergence of Long Covid, an umbrella term that refers to multiple different symptoms people may experience.

Whilst many people infected by Covid-19 may fully recover, significant numbers will experience ongoing and debilitating symptoms that last weeks, months or years following the initial infection. This prolonged condition has been given the umbrella term Long Covid. Recognition of Long Covid was accelerated by people-led advocacy groups such as Long Covid Support and their Employment

Group advocates for better support to stay in, return to or leave work well.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) reported that, as of August 2021, 970,000 people in the UK were experiencing self-reported Long Covid. The most recent data from January 2023, shows that this has increased to two million people. Early research into reinfections shows that the risk of Long Covid is still present in subsequent infections, even if not experienced the first time.

This report summarises the findings of a survey of over 3,000 people with Long Covid on their experiences of work and research found shockingly

high levels of poor treatment by employers. One in seven respondents had lost their job because of reasons connected to Long Covid. Given the high numbers of people experiencing Long Covid, this finding is extremely concerning and many people losing their jobs could be in key sector roles.

Two thirds of respondents (66 per cent) said that they had experienced one or more types of unfair treatment at work. This includes one in six (16 per cent) who had been subject to bullying and/or harassment at work, one in 13 (8 per cent) told us they had been threatened with disciplinary action and almost

a quarter of respondents (23 per cent) said their employer has questioned whether they have Long Covid and/or the impact of their symptoms.

Half of respondents (49 per cent) said that they had reason to believe they had contracted Covid-19 at work highlighting that many people are being continually failed by their employer, from a lack of health and safety measures, including ventilation, to poor treatment in response to Long Covid.

Symptoms

Most common symptoms were fatigue (96 per cent), cognitive dysfunction (84 per cent) and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (73 per cent) amongst a list of many.



SYMPTOMS: Long Covid symptoms can include fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, depression and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

The range of symptoms experienced by people with Long Covid highlights the need for employers to listen and believe individuals as people's experiences and the barriers they face in the workplace will be different.

Over nine in 10 (93 per cent) respondents stated that their symptoms fluctuated and over eight in 10 respondents (86 per cent) experienced post exertional malaise. This is the worsening of symptoms following physical or mental activity, which can mean that people have to limit their activities and need additional rest periods. Previous research on energy limiting impairments demonstrates that there is much scepticism about the existence and extent of fatigue and a view that it is not a "real disability" creating additional barriers for people who need support from their employers.

Overall, 60 per cent of respondents said that they had been experiencing symptoms for over a year. Six in 10 respondents (63 per cent) told us that their ability to carry out normal day to day activities had been limited substantially and a further third (33 per cent) reported that their ability to carry out day to day activities had been limited to some extent.

The report demonstrated feelings of fear or disillusionment when it comes to speaking to employers about experiences of Long Covid, which is not surprising given the poor treatment revealed. More than one in ten (12 per cent) respondents did not inform their employer of their Long Covid symptoms at all. Of these, a third (36 per cent) said it was because they didn't think their employer would do anything or they were worried that their symptoms would be viewed negatively by their employer (31 per cent).

The report also reveals the difficulties people are facing accessing the changes and support they need at work and the reluctance of employers to remove barriers to inclusion. Almost half (48 per cent) of respondents reported they were not given all or any of the changes they needed to return to work, and half (50 per cent) were not given all or any of the changes needed to manage their job.

The findings reveal that employers are seeing phased returns to work as the solution, which, whilst important, fails to recognise the fluctuating nature of the condition. Respondents also reported that flexibility was essential but

that this was often the hardest adjustment to get from their employer.

In June 2021, the TUC and LCSEG conducted a similar survey and produced one of the first reports to demonstrate the impact Long Covid was having on people's experiences of work. The comparisons between the two surveys reveals how starkly the situation has deteriorated.

Half (52 per cent) of the people who responded in 2021 had experienced some form of discrimination or disadvantage, rising to 66 per cent in this survey and 5 per cent had been forced out of their jobs rising to 14 per cent in this survey. The percentage of people not given any or all of the changes they need at work is a notable increase from our 2021 survey (48 per cent of respondents in this survey said they were not given any or all of the changes requested for returning to work and 39 per cent in 2021). These percentage rises are striking and even more concerning as the affected population, as measured by the ONS has also more than doubled.

There is also some confusion on what legal protections people with Long Covid are entitled to and what

employer's duties are towards them, including whether people with Long Covid are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

People are deemed disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Whether someone meets the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability would be based on the experiences of that individual. However, employers should support people in the workplace as it's the right thing to do.

Both reports demonstrate clearly that too many people are being failed by their employers in increasing numbers. Many are key workers who kept the country running and yet have been faced with disbelief, negative treatment and a lack of support from employers and government. This report is vital to draw attention to people who have fallen out of work, are underemployed, struggling to remain in or return to work because of the virus.

For more information go to: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/workers-experience-long-covid>.





CATERING GRADES MEET

Delegates call for national campaign to defend on train catering services

The annual hotel, catering and ancillary grades met at the Plymouth Argyle football ground this year in an impressive new facility overlooking the pitch which was built and is owned by fans of the club.

Mandy Evans, Swansea said that the conference and the grade itself had been hit badly of the Covid pandemic and the union needed to look at how to organise the sector.

"We have to rebuild this conference and win workers back to attend including catering workers from the maritime and offshore sectors not just railway workers," she said.

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach agreed and said that the grade was an essential part of the union and the conference was an integral part of the union.

"We are an all-grades union and conferences like this are crucial to allow your grade to talk about your issues and feed them back into the union so they are discussed by the national executive and the annual general meeting.

"As Mandy said this conference also needs to be

an arena for organising catering workers," he said.

He paid tribute to transport workers who worked through the pandemic at great risk to themselves and they were described as heroes by the government.

"Yet throughout that time rail workers did not get a pay rise and, even worse, P&O sacked seafarers in their hundreds by email.

"The government has been attempting to implement plans to further attack workers by driving down pay and cutting jobs.

"RMT responded by taking strike action which inspired other workers to fight back and demand something better.

"They demanded wholesale job cuts and attacked conditions including shutting all ticket offices and introducing driver only operations in return for a small pay rise and we refused.

"We refused to trade off cuts for pay and as a result we won guarantees on jobs and travel facilities for staff on top of improved pay.

"We will fight cuts in services, and we remain ready to fight in the future.

"This union lit a fuse and inspired solidarity among workers not seen for many years and we have come out of that fight stronger and more united than before.

"A sign of that is the fact that Network Rail head Andrew Haines, to his eternal shame, compared the long-running dispute to the Iraq war.

"But he knows we never invaded a country, we simply stood our ground in defence of workers and their families," he said.

Delegates backed a motion calling on the union to raise

awareness of the threat to catering grades.

Mandy Evans warned that the employers were coming for catering jobs.

She said that on-board catering staff were front line workers working in a volatile environment and often deal with vulnerable people.

"We are often the only staff around to dissolve difficult situations and assist passengers as well as providing a service.

"Yet the train operating companies and the government seem determined to cut services and bring in



John Leach addresses conference

driver-only operation," she said.

Steve Harvey, Plymouth No1 warned that catering workers were often perceived as 'poor relations' among train grades by train operating companies.

"Any agreements with train operating companies needs to include the defence of catering grades and their jobs," he said.

Conference also called on the union to campaign against lone working in the workplace which has become normal practice.

Delegates also said that there were numerous risks to lone working including threats to personal safety, extra pressure on performance targets and job losses.

Russell Davies, Penzance said that there were a lot of female and young members in his area and lone working increased the threat of attacks.

Roland Harmsworth, Reading said that violence on

the railways was on the increase and lone working made things worse.

Nick Parr of the British Transport Police also addressed conference about the problems for on board rail workers.

He outlined the problems of the BTP which operates with relatively low numbers of officers who are stretched over large geographic areas.

He encouraged rail workers to log assaults wherever possible to help protect staff and passengers.

"It is important to report incidents at work and let people know about suspicious activities, violence and unruly passengers.

"That is the only way in which we can deal with these issues and respond to physical threats and anti-social behaviour," he said.

Delegates voted for next year's conference to take place in Blackpool.



AWARD: Mandy Evans presented the annual Chris Kefford award to long-standing conference delegate Derek England. Derek joined the union 43 years ago and served three terms on the executive and presided over many grades conferences. "I am extremely proud of this union, one that has inspired the entire trade union movement and fights to defend members and I'm sure that will continue," he said. Graham Roberts of Plymouth branch was also presented with the award for his contribution to the conference.

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HOW NOT TO RUN A BUS SERVICE

The Tory government continues to champion bus privatisation despite a mountain of evidence that it doesn't work

Nearly 40 years ago the Department of Transport (DfT) under a Tory government produced a White Paper to sell the privatisation of the bus industry to the public but a recent (DfT) report into the industry only underlined what a disaster it has been.

The 1984 Buses White Paper claimed, with little evidence, that "competition provides the opportunity for lower fares, new services, more passengers".

It also claimed that "a free market encourages a quicker response to what the customers want than a regulated system ever could".

It made the bold assertion that new and better services would be provided "without

the dead hand of restrictive regulation".

Yet the Department for Transport produced another document called *Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England* in March 2021 which completely refuted all these claims and revealed the disaster that privatisation had wrought on the bus industry.

It found that under competition "services became unstable and confusing; the quality of vehicles fell and fares in many places rose sharply".

On claims that multiple operators would provide more services it found: "Many communities have lost their daily bus services altogether. Others have services for only a

few hours a day".

On claims that privatisation would keep down costs it found that "average bus fares have risen by 403 per cent since 1987".

On claims that the free market would respond to what customers wanted it found that "services can be confusing, split between different companies who do not accept each other's tickets or, in some cases, acknowledge each other's existence".

On deregulation: "The legacy of the 1980s 'bus wars' is overprovision, with dozens of buses per hour, including with duplicate competing services which do not accept each other's tickets. This is

wasteful, polluting and can paradoxically make services slower and less attractive".

On removing subsidies: "Few services could now survive without emergency state support. If we are not to abandon entire communities, services cannot be planned purely on a commercial basis".

Bus privatisation has also created what are effectively bus monopolies rather than increase competition. When deregulation started there were lots of new entrants to the local bus market. However, throughout the 1990s acquisitions created a few big operators and by 2010, the big five operators, Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express, and Stagecoach, controlled 70

BUS WARS: The Darlington Bus War refers to a series of events between 1986 and 1995 in Darlington, culminating in the wholesale entry of Stagecoach Group onto the Darlington bus scene, and the collapse of Darlington Corporation Transport.



per cent of the market. With the sale of Arriva to Deutsche Bahn and Abellio, ComfortDelGro, Transdev and Veolia Transport also owning operations, a quarter of operators were in foreign ownership by 2010. This has increased with RATP Group and Transit Systems having since entered the market.

When Prime Minister Boris Johnson launched *Bus Back Better* two years ago, he said: "As we build back from the pandemic, better buses will be one of our major acts of levelling-up".

But the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) has revealed that nearly a quarter of bus services in England, amounting to 2,800 services, have in fact been cut since the launch in March 2021.

Philip Alston, a law professor and former UN special rapporteur for poverty, also said in a report that since Margaret Thatcher's sell off, the country had been left with an "unreliable, fragmented, and dysfunctional" bus network.

"Over the past 35 years, deregulation has provided a master class in how not to run an essential public service, leaving residents at the mercy of private actors who have total discretion over how to run a bus route, or whether to

run one at all," said Philip Alston, who authored the report with Bassam Khawaja and Rebecca Riddell, Co-directors of the Human Rights and Privatisation Project at the Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice.

"In case after case, service that was once dependable, convenient, and widely-used has been scaled back dramatically or made unaffordable," he said.

He added that "bus operators have prioritised profits and dividends—extracting money from the system—and cut essential routes".

The researchers spoke to passengers in England, Scotland, and Wales who described a broken system of fragmented services, disappearing routes, reduced frequency, poor reliability, falling ridership, limited coverage, inefficient competition, and poor information.

"Private companies understandably prioritise profits rather than the public good, extracting money from the system while cutting unprofitable but necessary routes," said Ms Khawaja. "The public has effectively become an insurer of operator profits, propping up private services with considerable

subsidies".

The 38-page report finds that many people have lost jobs and benefits, faced barriers to healthcare, been forced to give up on education, sacrificed food and utilities, and been cut off from friends and family because of a costly, fragmented, and inadequate privatised bus service that has failed them.

Despite privatisation, the government provides billions of pounds in funding for bus services annually, accounting for more than 40 per cent of funding for bus services in England, and has allocated hundreds of millions more to support private operators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unlike in London, where bus travel lies under the aegis of Transport for London (TfL), across most of England bus services are run solely by private sector players.

"Deregulation has left England, Scotland, and Wales with a vital public service run almost entirely by the private sector, with no minimum service frequency standards, and no authority responsible for ensuring local buses meet residents' needs", the report said.

"Numerous reports from civil society and official institutions document a

system that is broken and at odds with the UK's own social and transportation objectives and climate change goals".

It added that for those dependent on bus services, deregulation had resulted in serious consequences such as shutting people out of work, education and healthcare.

In the future, bus transport should be put in the hands of public authorities, the paper concluded.

RMT union general secretary Mick Lynch said that the report was completely right in its assessment that privatisation and deregulation had created a bus network which was 'expensive, unreliable and dysfunctional' and does not work for passengers.

"For many, bus services provide a vital link to their communities, and as the report highlights, poor bus services restrict access to work, education, healthcare and food and certain parts of society, including people living in poverty, older people, women and disabled people are particularly affected.

"It is clear that bus privatisation and deregulation has completely failed, and this report should have been a wake-up call for the government," he said.

■

NATIONAL BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY MEMBERS' CONFERENCE



This year's RMT national black and ethnic minority members' conference took place in Bristol recently with delegates passing resolutions addressing racial injustice.

Committee chair Glenroy Watson opened the gathering by telling delegates that he would be stepping down from his position this year and that it was up to attendees to keep campaigning to defend the gains that had been made with regard to representation and to carry the work forward.

Delegates were welcomed to the city by Bristol branch chair Amanda Testa, a city that appropriately has a rich and radical history of campaigning against racism and colonialism.

RMT regional organiser Brendan Kelly recounted how black and Irish immigrants in the 1950s faced discrimination in housing with landlords notoriously placing signs in windows proclaiming: "No blacks, No Irish, No dogs".

He reminded delegates of the Bristol bus boycott of 1963 which received national attention and was carried out in response to the Bristol Omnibus Company's refusal to employ black or Asian bus

crews. After four months of campaigning the company backed down and the colour bar was overturned.

Guest speaker Rhian Graham – one of the Colston Four – gave a personal account of a much more recent campaign, of how the statue of slaver Edward Colston was pulled down in Bristol during a Black Lives Matter protest in 2020, and how she and her co-defendants ended up on trial in Crown Court in a much-publicised case and were

acquitted.

Mel Mullings, Bakerloo called on the union to step up its activities in support of migrant workers.

"Electronic checks on status, workplace raids, pricing out migrant workers for primary care, etc, are not only racist but also excessive and wrong by disproportionality discriminating against black workers.

"The union must organise to empower our migrant worker members and treat issues of exploitation and

discrimination based on immigration status as class issues for our workplace organising," she said.

Conference unanimously agreed that the union should take the following steps in the campaign:

- Establish a dedicated training course for reps on supporting members with issues around immigration status, to be run regionally and nationally.
- The NEC to support Regional Councils in establishing databases of



TOPPLED: Protesters throw statue of Edward Colston into Bristol harbour on June 7 2020. Four people who helped topple the statue were found not guilty of criminal damage by a jury in January 2022.

local contacts for organisations that can help migrants.

- Carry out a consultation towards establishing a migrant worker members' committee.

Andrew Child, Camden No 3 called on RMT to carry out a survey of all its black and ethnic minority members regarding their experiences of the internal structures of the organisation.

"This is aimed at understanding and producing an increased level of participation in our internal structures and to ensure we are fully inclusive and diverse," he said.

RMT assistant general secretary John Leach told delegates that fighting racism and discrimination is crucial to the union's work and the fight for workers' rights. He explained that he had been tasked with ensuring that the work of the conference was carried forward within the



union.

National executive committee member Jas Breyal reported on progress that had been made from work carried out on the previous year's resolutions. She also led a special session arising from the previous year's resolution 'use of black face'.

Anti-racism campaigner Nabeela Akhtar also addressed conference.

RMT relief regional organiser Glen Hart received a

warm welcome from delegates as he declared that he is the first black activist to hold a senior position in the union. He outlined the difficulties faced by someone from a black or ethnic minority background rising through the union's ranks and encouraged delegates to fully engage with the organisation's structures.

Advisory committee vice chair Ola Apantaku and secretary Mel Mullings gave a joint account of the

committee's work over the last year. The wide-ranging report demonstrated a busy year's activities from organising the RMT presence on the Notting Hill Carnival to the work that had gone into organising the conference itself.

Conference elected Ola Apantaku as chair, Nathan Wallace as vice chair and Mel Mullings as secretary. Next year's conference will take place in Birmingham.



RMT 50+ Personal Accident Plan

Winter brings unpredictable weather and with that comes an increased risk of slips and falls. If we could predict accidents, we could stop them happening. They are, by their nature unexpected and unplanned events and more likely to happen the older we get.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ANXIETY

RMT is taking part in Mental Health Awareness Week next month and the theme is anxiety

The union is supporting Mental Health Awareness Week between May 15 to 21 next month organised by the Mental Health Foundation on the theme of 'anxiety'.

Anxiety is a normal emotion in us all, but sometimes it can get out of control and become a mental health problem.

Lots of things can lead to feelings of anxiety, including exam pressures, relationships, starting a new job (or losing one) or other big life events. We can also get anxious when it comes to things to do with money and not being able to meet our basic needs, like

heating our home or buying food.

THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON YOUR BODY CAN INCLUDE:

- a churning feeling in your stomach
- feeling light-headed or dizzy
- pins and needles
- feeling restless or unable to sit still
- headaches, backache or other aches and pains
- faster breathing
- a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat
- sweating or hot flushes

- sleep problems
- grinding your teeth, especially at night
- nausea (feeling sick)
- needing the toilet more or less often
- changes in your sex drive
- having panic attacks.

THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON YOUR MIND INCLUDING:

- feeling tense, nervous or unable to relax
- having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst
- feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing

down

- feeling like other people can see you're anxious and are looking at you
- feeling like you can't stop worrying, or that bad things will happen if you stop worrying
- worrying about anxiety itself, for example worrying about when panic attacks might happen
- wanting lots of reassurance from other people or worrying that people are angry or upset with you
- worrying that you're losing touch with reality

- low mood and depression
- rumination – thinking a lot about bad experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again
- de-personalisation – a type of dissociation where you feel disconnected from your mind or body, or like you are a character that you are watching in a film
- de-realisation – another type of dissociation where you feel disconnected from the world around you, or like the world isn't real
- worrying a lot about things that might happen in the future.

A survey of 3,000 adults aged 18 and over, conducted by Opinium in November 2022, found that 29 per cent of adults experienced stress, 34 per cent experienced anxiety and 10 per cent said that they felt hopeless because of financial worries during the

previous month.

Earlier this year, the Mental Health Foundation published research with the London School of Economics and Political Science, which put the cost of mental health problems to the UK economy at £117 billion annually.

The Foundation has stated that the UK government should consider the mental health impact of all decisions that affect the cost-of-living crisis. Other measures it is asking for include maintaining and extending free or subsidised public transport to allow people to connect with friends and family and increasing the provision of debt advice and other vital community services.

RMT has previously produced a document, "Campaigning for Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work".

This short pamphlet is intended to improve

conditions for mental wellbeing in the workplace and can be found on the website.

Employment security, redundancy and pressure and stress at the workplace can all result in poor mental health, affecting RMT members both at home and at work.

The core of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approach for dealing with work-related stress is set out in its Management Standards. This involves systematically addressing the six major work stressors: demand, control, support, relationship, role, and change. The HSE claims that if these six work areas are properly managed, work-related stress can be reduced.

The Management Standards approach requires employers to follow the five steps to risk assessment:

- Identify hazards
- Decide who might be harmed

- Evaluate the risk and take action
- Record your findings
- Monitor and review.

The TUC has issued a guide on Tackling Workplace Stress using the HSE Stress Management Standards to assist union health and safety reps in encouraging their employers to implement the management standards which can be found on the TUC website.

Mental health is a key issue for RMT and the entire trade union movement and by fighting for better workplaces, we are fighting for better mental health.

Keep up with the latest on this year's Mental Health Awareness Week. Follow on social media:

Twitter: @mentalhealth
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RAILWAY WORK LIFE AND DEATH PROJECT

Union launches new historic health and safety database

RMT has launched a joint historical health and safety data initiative with the University of Portsmouth, the National Railway Museum (NRM) and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (MRC).

The data from the Railway Work Life and Death (RWL&D) project provides a fascinating insight into the past health and safety experiences of RMT members, including risk posed by their jobs and any accidents

they were involved in.

Around 25,000 records from between the 1880's and the 1920's from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) and National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) – the predecessor unions of the RMT - will be released.

Speaking at the launch at Unity House in London, RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the project was an important opportunity for RMT members and the wider public

to learn about their rail history.

"RMT industrial disputes this year have been about maintaining rail safety practices and we will not allow standards to slip.

"Recent train crashes in the US and Greece show the impact on health and safety of cutting jobs and maintenance.

"We are committed as a union to keeping our members and passengers safe on our railways," he said.

The RWL&D project aims to

make it easier to find out about historical railway worker accidents in Britain and Ireland by providing data about who was involved, what they were doing on the railways, what happened to them and why.

The project has been led by Dr Mike Esbester of the University of Portsmouth who has worked with volunteers to transcribe the data they have discovered via a number of routes: compensation for deaths and injuries,



disablement support, death claims, representation at inquests, and payments made to support dependent children via the orphan fund.

The data provides a fascinating inside into the past health and safety experiences of RMT members. As well as the risks of their jobs, you can get a better impression of the individuals involved from the data. And there are all sorts of interesting details - a quick search shows that the records include, for example, the third person to be allocated a membership number, driver R Morris of the Taff Vale Railway, having joined the union in July 1872.

Mike Esbester said that it shouldn't surprise anyone to find out that supporting members has been at the heart of the union's work since its predecessor, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), was set up in 1871.

"The records come from six ways the union helped members, from the late 1880s through to 1920. Much of that was financial - support was needed after an accident, or following ill-health or old age. So, we have records of support provided by the Death Fund, paid to any member's dependents after they died, to cover immediate costs.

"There was also the Disablement Fund, which provided a payment - usually

between £20-30, if a member was incapacitated. This was the case for signalman F Stevenson of the Great Northern Railway of Ireland, a member of the Belfast branch who received a £20 payment on grounds of age in 1901 - he was 85!

"One of the key areas the Union assisted in was securing some form of compensation, where possible. When the employers did pay out, the records show the amount varied considerably - from just £4.7.6 in the case of Great Central Railway wireman G Deacon of the Neepsend branch in 1915, to £353 in the case of Cardiff Railway goods guard W Cooper of the Cardiff No. 4 branch in 1917.

"For an additional payment from their wages, members could choose to join the Orphan Fund. Those who paid in would know that if they died at work, their children would receive some financial support from the union until they reached age 14. This was the case for Great Central Railway head shunter JW Head, killed in 1917, who had nine children supported by the fund.

"The union also provided representation for its members or dependents at coroner's inquests. This might be to safeguard union members who might have been seen as bearing some responsibility for the death of another, or to provide a voice for a member

who had been killed in an accident at work.

"All of the work transcribing the records from the originals has been done by our brilliant volunteer teams at Warwick, which looks after the RMT's archive, and by the team at the NRM. Without them, none of this could be done, so a huge vote of thanks to them all," he said.

The project invites you to explore the RWLD project and the database, and let them know who and what you find - we're always keen to hear. That's especially the case if you come from a long railway family and you find an ancestor mentioned in the records.

Watch this space, too, as the RWLD project and RMT are working out how to support each other and involve members more. We're always happy to hear from you with your ideas, too. ■

Web: www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/
Twitter: twitter.com/RWLDproject
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DELEGATION: TUC women's delegation left to right Charlotte Foster-Lewis, Dyanira Christiaan, Suzanne Quainton, Aisha Ansell, Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn, Mandy Evans, Linda Moseley, Maria Taylor, Ebony Kingston, Ann Joss, Lorna Smyth and Sophie Flood.

TUC WOMEN MEET

Full RMT women delegation takes part in WTUC conference

Last year the TUC women's conference was an on-line event, so it was great to be back in London for this conference which took place over three days, starting on International Women's Day, March 8.

RMT had submitted two motions for the conference. First to be considered was the motion 'women in railways' moved by Ann Joss. This motion raised concerns about the government backed companies closing ticket offices and extending Driver Only Operation (DOO) across the rail network. Adding concerns that de-staffing our stations and trains would make public transport less safe, secure and accessible for women and girls. Ann reminded the conference the cuts were about protecting profits at the expense of workers and passengers.

Ann stressed that the attacks on public transport

jobs and services were happening amidst a cost-of-living crisis and noted that research had shown women are disproportionately affected by this crisis. The motion called on the trade union movement to continue coordinated campaigning and activity to defend jobs, pay and conditions.

RMT's motion was seconded by ASLEF who added that they wanted properly staffed trains as in an emergency the driver will in most cases need support from the on-train crew. ASLEF fully supported the motion and stated that the railways can be lonely places for vulnerable passengers and staff needed to be visible to stop anti-social behaviour and to protect women and girls.

RMT's second motion was on 'male Bias in the maritime industry', moved by Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn. This motion raised the issue of the



Jennifer Aggrey-Fynn

prevalence of male orientated language in maritime legislation. As international conventions and domestic legislation still refer to 'Seaman', your official

document is a 'Seaman's book', with job titles such as 'Motorman' maintaining a division of gendered roles, no wonder women were fundamentally discouraged



Ann Joss

from seafarer jobs.

Highlighting the fact that only 1.3 per cent of the world's 1.89 million seafarers are women and that the number of women in receipt of taxpayer funded seafarer training in the UK fell by 14 per cent between 2021/22, the motion concluded by calling on the TUC to support a campaign for gender neutral

language in maritime relations, conventions and practices which could be introduced with sectoral collective bargaining in the shipping industry. Nautilus seconded the motion.

Having submitted an accepted amendment to a motion on the menopause, delegates Alisha Ansell and Ebony Kingston gave moving

contributions to the debate.

Both motions were passed overwhelmingly and Sophie Flood, Derby Rail and Engineering Branch was the RMT nominee to the TUC Women's Committee 2023/2024 and she was successfully elected. It was an excellent and invigorating conference.



LEGAL

LEGAL VICTORIES



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

An RMT member was involved in an accident in the course of his employment with Network Rail on 20 January 2020. He was instructed to knock out pandrols with a hammer. Pandrols are a metal component at each side of the sleeper on a railway which hold down the track. He was relatively inexperienced and had not been properly trained to undertake the task.

The use of the hammer was contrary to the defender's safe system of work. Their risk assessment identified that a pan puller ought to be used and thereafter identified other mechanical means that ought to have been used in the event the pandrol was stuck. Notwithstanding that he was instructed to use a hammer by his supervisor. As he swung the hammer and missed, his foot was stuck in the fresh ballast. This prevented his feet from twisting whilst his body above the knee did so, causing him an injury to his left knee.

Thompsons intimated a claim against Network Rail who denied liability. They denied that the member was not properly trained and denied the use of the hammer was unsafe.

The member suffered a significant injury to his knee and required surgery. The impact of the physical injury

caused him to suffer a deterioration of his mental health. Thompsons undertook significant medical investigations including the instruction of an orthopaedic surgeon, psychiatrist, and pain consultant. They also investigated all losses our member sustained including assessing the impact on our members future employability and his pension loss. NR made its own medical investigations.

The claim was raised in court and the member was represented by Thompsons Solicitors who also arranged access to advice from Junior Counsel and a King's Counsel.

After extensive negotiations at the end of a lengthy court process our member received £70,000. This will allow him to ensure he receives the treatment he requires as well as pay off the debts he has incurred as a result of this incident and secure his financial future. We hope it will also prevent any more of our members being injured by similar unsafe working practices."

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

RMT recently represented a member who worked on the railway throughout a long career in his claim for unfair dismissal. He had been summarily dismissed following

allegations of bullying and discrimination against him, which he vehemently denied. The union instructed its in-house legal team to represent the member. RMT's legal team set out in detail the specific reasons it considered that the Respondent's findings and conclusions were unfair and unreasonable and prepared the member and his witnesses for the Tribunal hearing. The union also instructed an experienced barrister to represent our member at his hearing. The Respondent settled the claim for a substantial sum during the first day of the hearing.

HOLIDAY PAY

RMT's legal team also represented a member in her claim for unpaid holiday pay against her previous employer. The Respondent initially denied that any payment was due. However, they later accepted during ACAS Early Conciliation that they had made a mistake and paid the amount due in full. Our member received payment and was pleased with the swift resolution.

BUS WIN

An RMT member was employed as a Bus Driver by Bluestar. Unfortunately, he developed a knee injury which

was later diagnosed as arthritis. He was unable to drive a bus because of the condition.

The member underwent physiotherapy and other treatment but sadly it did not improve and it was eventually confirmed that he would need surgery and a long recovery period. Bluestar decided to terminate the member's employment on grounds of ill health.

In those circumstances, members should be paid for their notice period. The Employment Rights Act 1996 states that employees are entitled to one week's notice for each year of service, up to a maximum of twelve weeks. Some employment contracts give a more generous notice period.

The member had been employed by Bluestar for fifteen years. He was therefore legally entitled to twelve weeks' notice. However, for unknown reasons, Bluestar paid him for two weeks' notice only, in breach of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The RMT Legal Department was instructed to represent the member in a claim to the Employment Tribunal. Shortly afterwards, Bluestar agreed to pay for the remaining ten weeks' notice period that he was legally entitled to. ■

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A VISIT TO THE KILLINGWORTH BILLY

The Stephenson Steam Railway is home to one of the oldest surviving steam locomotives in the world

Signalling members took time out from their grades conference in Newcastle recently to travel back in time to when coal was king at the Stephenson Steam Railway.

The visit was organised by North Tyneside Steam Railway Association (NTSRA) member and signalling conference regular Mark Beresford who also works hard to keep the North Tyneside steam railway alive as a volunteer.

Delegates took a trip on the two-mile industrial railway managed by Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums on behalf of North Tyneside Council. They rode in style in 1950s British Railways carriages to the sound of one of the diesel locomotives work hard climbing the steep gradients away from the Tyne towards the old coal fields of Northumberland.

In the station yard at Middle Engine Lane, you can see a large variety of wagons and rail vehicles that were once a common sight on the railways of Tyneside. Inside the museum, delegates explored the range of steam, diesel and electric locomotives that each have a fascinating story to tell.



Volunteers also took them around the busy workshops that keep the trains going as well as working on 20 year projects such as rebuilding entire steam engines.

The state-of-the art museum teaches visitors about George and Robert Stephenson and their influence on the development of the steam locomotive through animations and artefacts from the time. There are steam, diesel and electric locomotives from collieries, steelworks and power stations in Tyneside and beyond from as early as the 1880s.

This includes a Tyneside Electric Parcel Van - built in 1904 and beautifully restored at the museum, the only surviving vehicle from the Tyneside Suburban Electric Railway. There is also an electric locomotive built by Siemens in 1909 for an extensive colliery railway system in South Shields.

The star of the show is the early locomotive 'Billy' - built in Newcastle around 1816 under the supervision of George Stephenson. The engine was used to haul waggons carrying coal from Killingworth Colliery to the River Tyne.

The Association is based at Stephenson Steam Railway and provides a volunteer workforce to assist with the maintenance and conservation of locomotives and rolling stock. Association members operate the locomotives and railway, with roles as diverse as driver, firemen, guard, shunter, operations controller and engineer. Volunteers also provide support with administration and customer service. All training is provided so if you're interested in gaining work experience in a friendly environment, learning new skills and gaining confidence, get in touch - email members.ntsra@gmail.com

President's column

MAY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

As you flick through *RMT News*, you join thousands of RMT members taking inspiration from trade unionists standing up for each other and for workers' rights.

This month, RMT joins millions of workers worldwide, celebrating International Workers' Day on Monday, 1 May.

On Saturday 29 April, I am honoured to be invited to address trade unionists and their families at Glasgow's May Day Rally. The Glasgow Trades Council assembles at George Square at 11.00 and marches to Queens Park for a festival of children's entertainment, speeches, and songs from The Tenements, a band bringing Glasgow's radical history to life. Join us if you can.

On Sunday 30 April, Mick Lynch addresses Belfast Trades Council's May Day rally in the city where James Larkin first organised dock workers in 1907. Belfast Trades Council gave RMT Belfast Shipping Branch members much needed solidarity at Larne harbour last year, when Irish trade unionists protested against P&O Ferries' mass sackings.

I will be joining RMT members in Ipswich for their Trades Union Council May Day rally the same day.

On May Day – Monday, 1 May - marches and rallies take place worldwide. London's May Day Rally assembles from 11.00 outside the Marx Memorial Library on Clerkenwell Green and marches to Trafalgar Square

where Mick Lynch will address us. Bring your banners.

May Day belongs to us all, celebrated on every continent on earth, with the possible exception of Antarctica. May Day's ancient origins lie in pre-industrial societies of the northern hemisphere, a celebration of spring, signalling a return of longer, warmer days, of life and rebirth.

In modern industrial societies, May Day was adopted by workers' movements demanding an eight-hour limit to the working day and workers' rights.

In nineteenth-century Britain, the 'Master and Servant Act' meant workers were frequently prosecuted as criminals for 'breach of contract'. In 1865 alone, 12,345 workers were prosecuted for disputing their conditions of employment and 7,557 were convicted, of whom 1,658 were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

In 1863 a delegate to London Trades Council reported how a worker who left work without notice in Wolverhampton on receiving news his child was dying, returned to Liverpool to find his child already dead and his wife dying. The next day, his employer arrived with police to arrest him. He was gaoled and Wolverhampton magistrates fined him £4 for 'breach of contract'.

This was the context when Glasgow Trades Council launched a call for a national conference to scrap brutal, anti-worker laws. The first national conference open to all trade unions met in London on



5 May 1864. It took ten years however, to repeal the iniquitous 'Master and Servant Act'.

On 28 September 1864, London Trades Council welcomed a delegation of French workers at a public meeting in St. Martin's Hall, Covent Garden where they founded the first International Workingmen's Association with representatives from Britain, Germany, France, Poland, and Italy. Karl Marx became the German workers' representative on The International's general committee.

The First International connected workers across borders with a simple common demand:

"We require 8 hours for work. 8 hours for our own instruction and 8 hours for repose."

In the 1860s, this radical slogan was engraved on the face of so-called '8-hour watches' to commemorate the founding of The International. Only 11 were made. One is in the People's History Museum in Manchester. Another is at the Marx Memorial Library in London.

On the reverse of the watch is the guiding principle of the international workers' movement:

"Workers of every country, unite together to defend your rights."

Happy May Day!

Alex Gordon

LETTERS

DEALING WITH SEXISM

Dear editor,

The recent Kennedy report revealed the appalling extent of sexism, harassment and bullying that has taken place in the TSSA.

The appropriate response from RMT would be to express solidarity with those on the receiving end of this behaviour, and also to consider whether we as a union have a problem with this and what we could do about it. Instead, our National President used his column to assure us that RMT is in "contrast" to TSSA, his evidence being that we have large and lively equalities conferences.

But the existence of such conferences does not mean that there is no sexism in RMT. At these conferences, at other meetings, on courses, and in conversations among ourselves, RMT women repeatedly report instances where they have been treated in a way that is unacceptable in a union that aspires to equality.

Sometimes, an incident may be serious enough for the woman involved to make a formal complaint, but many who do are then disappointed by the union's response.

So, let's respond to the Kennedy report with some long-overdue self-examination and solidarity with women members, rather than saying: move along, nothing to see here.

Janine Booth

MERSEY LEGEND PASSES

Merseyrail members are in shock at the recent passing of stalwart stations rep Dave Sumner. Dave was a highly popular Station Retailer at the busy Orrell Park station in North Liverpool. He was an RMT health and safety rep, and had recently along with his fellow RMT reps on the Emergency Covid Committee, been awarded "Team of the year" by the company, in recognition of their work in keeping members safe and the railway running during the pandemic.

Dave was an active member of Central & North Mersey branch for decades. His dad, Don, was a signaller at Warrington Power Box and also a strong union man. Dave served for many

years on the Stations Company Council and was in the thick of things in all of our industrial struggles. He was well known and highly popular with the regular passengers at the station as well as colleagues, as could be seen by the many warm tributes paid to him on

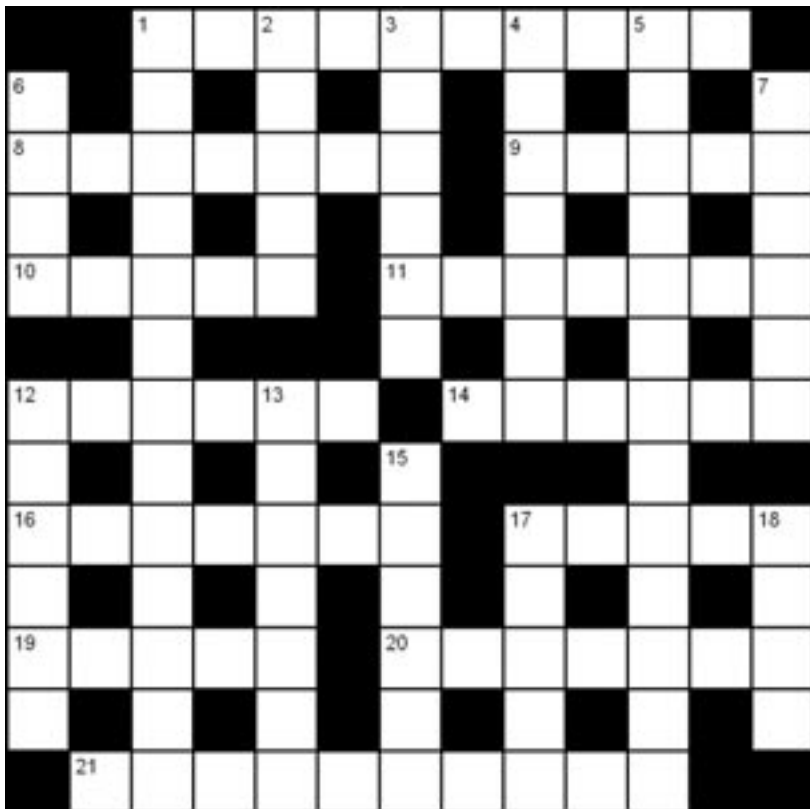
social media.

Dave was always there for his stations members when they needed help and advice, he was respected and well-liked by all. His infectious laugh and warm character will be sorely missed by all his comrades at Merseyrail.

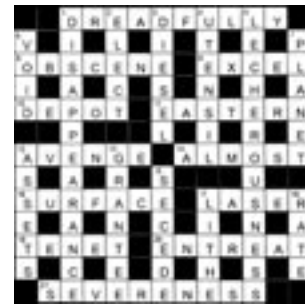


Dave pictured Centre on the march with the RMT in London with recently retired Branch Chair Peter Creaby on the left and John Tilley

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Last month's winner is Chris Krudy.

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ACROSS

- 1 Nonconformity (10)
- 8 Go back over again (7)
- 9 Give birth (5)
- 10 Avoid (5)
- 11 Nonsense (7)
- 12 Leave voluntarily (6)
- 14 Health union (6)
- 16 Cleanliness (7)
- 17 Trio (5)
- 19 Laxative (5)
- 20 Jewelry (7)
- 21 Extremely pleasing (10)

DOWN

- 1 Inflexibility (13)
- 2 Egg-shaped (5)
- 3 Egg dish (6)
- 4 Stand (7)
- 5 Confident (4,9)
- 6 Desire (4)
- 7 Female pheasant (6)
- 12 Reuse (6)
- 13 Small bomb (7)
- 15 Return to normal (6)
- 17 Pulsate (5)
- 18 Boundary (4)

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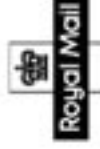
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