

THE MIDLAND PENSIONER

#COVIDINQUIRYNOW

Winter2022/23



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THIS IS THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



ABOUT US

The West Midlands Pensioners Convention is the Regional Organisation of the National Pensioners Convention.

Our main objective is to promote the welfare and interests of pensioners, both now and in the future; securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement.

We have a number of very active committees, including a Transport Group which holds regular quarterly meetings with Transport for the Midlands (formerly CENTRO).

Regional Secretary:

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Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

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Visit the WMPC website for up to date information on the issues facing pensioners including: the latest "Midland Pensioner" activities and campaigns across our Region.

National Pensioners Convention:

Press Releases/ Bulletins/Newsletters and more

Go to: <https://wmpc.org.uk>

WMPC Facebook Group

OUR ORGANISATION

We have local and Trade Union branches across our Region. Each Branch is entitled to send delegates to the Regional Council, which meets on the second Thursday of each month (except in January and August, when there are no meetings).

Although our Regional Council meetings are delegate based, visitors, friends and guests are very much welcome to attend. We also welcome applications for membership from non-party political organisations of pensioners and retired people from across our Region. Pensioners can also become individual members.

LOCAL BRANCHES OF THE PENSIONERS CONVENTION

Walsall: Jenny Allendale: 07875285259

Halesowen: Tony Whitehouse: 07715314608

North Staffs: Owen Sloss 07582115742
David Hampton 01782 201724

East Birmingham: Stan Simpson: 0121 783 0734

Solihull: Alan Thomas: 0121 705 3342

Sandwell & West Birmingham:

Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

Coventry and Warwickshire BTUAA:

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Individual Members: Brian Allbutt 07342264482
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Support the Nurses



For the first time in its history, the Royal College of Nursing has taken strike action, they were GMB. I visited their picket lines at Good Hope Hospital and Sutton Coldfield and was struck by the level of support from members of the public. However, of more significance to me was their level of passion and commitment, making it clear to the public that the dispute was not only about pay - it was about the defence of the NHS and to ensure patient safety and care.

It has been acknowledged by the government that the number of job vacancies in the NHS is currently estimated at 130,000 and the British Medical Association has stated that the pressure on the NHS is "intolerable and unsustainable" – they estimate that 500 deaths are occurring every week as a result of delays in emergency care. More than a quarter of ambulance patients in England waited more than an hour to be admitted into A&E in the last week of 2022. This affected 18,720 patients. Mathew Taylor, the Chief Executive of the Health Confederation, said that these figures "underline the stark reality of the pressure that NHS leaders, their staff and patients are enduring" which represented he said "crisis conditions with inherent risk to patient safety", and urged the government to compromise.

In terms of the RCN pay claim itself, this reflects in real terms the pay cut they have experienced over the years and is above current inflation levels.

Maureen Wade: Chair Birmingham UNISON Retired Members Section "THE BRUM" Winter 22-23

This is the experience of a nurse on the picket line.

"Just spent 3 hours on the picket line at our hospital!! People were so kind dropping off food and hot drinks for us. I'm absolutely frozen.

Just sad that after 25 years saying I wouldn't strike. I don't see any other option! All the media are saying is 'it's about the pay'. It's not just about that. It's about patient safety, safe staffing levels, it's about the future of our NHS. Nurses are leaving every day; we are already short staffed and cannot provide good patient care. On the wards of our hospital trust for instance, it's one qualified nurse to twelve patients - how is this safe? If one patient becomes really poorly who looks after the other 11? A few weeks ago when I went over to see my patients, the nurses on one of the wards said they were looking after eighteen patients each!

It's not only about retention of staff, it's about recruitment too. People are choosing not to go into £27,000 worth of debt to become nurses when they can do other courses and get better paid jobs afterwards! Therefore, there are a lot less nurses coming through!

We are now recruiting unqualified nurses to do qualified nurses jobs! That's exploitation, but we've got no choice! It just saddens me so much that it's come to this. It should sadden and worry everyone, because one day we will all need the NHS! Will it still be there!



Pensions: *Une retraite morte coute rien!*

While Nadhim Zahawi haggles with the Treasury over his many millions, his old department is proposing to raise the State Retirement Age to 68 by 2035 in the March Statement.

This will affect millions of people born in the 1970s and are aged 54 or under. Just as those of us born in the 1950s and 60s got shafted, now the next generation is getting the ‘work till you drop’ treatment. This is a cynical attempt not to pay out and save money by calculating that many will die before they reach the new State Retirement Age.

The Office of National Statistics (September 2021) has demonstrated that since 2011 there has been a continued trend of annual life expectancy improvements slowing down in comparison with the previous decade.

England, Wales and Scotland are among the lowest annual improvements in life expectancy compared to other similar OECD countries. It will also disproportionately affect the North of England, where life expectancy is lower- so much for ‘levelling up’.

We must take the example of the French people. Where they have risen up against their government’s attempts to raise the State Retirement Age from 62 to 64. In January over 2million took to the streets in protest- taken aback by the size of the mass protests, the French government has already signalled readiness for compromise on the unpopular plan.

We must protest and echo the slogan popular on the French protests:

“ Une retraite morte coute zero euro!”

“A dead retirement costs zero Euros”

Maureen Wade



Halesowen Pensioners Convention

Press Release

The Scandal of Excess Winter Deaths

Members of the local campaigning pensioners group, the Halesowen Pensioners Convention, today (Thursday January 19th) at their monthly branch meeting remembered the 13,400 Excess Winter deaths announced by the Office of National Statistics for the winter of 2021/22. This compares with the 63,000 Excess Winter Deaths in 2020/21.

The Secretary of Halesowen Pensioners Convention, Tony Whitehouse, said of the Excess Winter Deaths “The deaths each year of tens of thousands of mainly older people during the winter months across England and Wales, including many in Halesowen and across the Black Country, is an absolute scandal.”

Ever since the Office of National Statistics began publishing more widely the figures for the number of Excess Winter Deaths, The National Pensioners Convention have used these statistical figures to highlight the extent to which poverty, poor housing and poor health have contributed to tens of thousands of older people losing their lives in circumstances that have been avoidable- thus the use of the rather stark phrase “Excess Winter Deaths”.

The General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, Jan Shortt, speaking at a major demonstration in Westminster on the day the Excess Winter Death figures were released by the Office of National Statistics said “It is shameful that anyone should die from cold related illness in this country. But we fear that the rocketing cost of living, rampant energy prices and the disastrous crisis in health and social care will see tens of thousands more die in this way. It’s time the Government took action to end this horrific annual cull of our oldest and most vulnerable.”

The National Pensioners Convention is calling on the Government to: -

- Introduce a National Programme to improve the heating and insulation standards of existing homes so that they reach the standards of new homes being built today.
- Legislate to oblige all fuel companies to provide an industry wide “social tariff” to low income and fuel poor customers.
- Ensure that energy companies are obliged to offer payment packages to off-line customers that are equal to those available to those on-line.
- Introduce a real price -cap on energy bills.
- End the use of pre-payment metres.
- Provide an annual fuel allowance to all vulnerable older and low-income households, that keeps pace with annual increases in average energy



Fuel charity National Energy Action reveals 45 people die each day from cold homes.

On Thursday January 19th the Office of National Statistics(ONS) released the figures showing there were 13,400 more deaths in England and Wales in the winter period (December 2021 to March 2022) compared with the average of the non-winter months.

Demonstrators outside the gates of 10 Downing Street

Fuel poverty charity National Energy Action has said that up to 4,020 of these deaths were preventable and were caused by the impact of cold homes. That's 45 people dying each day in the winter months last year. However, because of the time lag of the data, the true picture is likely to be much worse.

Last October 4.5 million UK homes were in fuel poverty, according to the charity's figures, now-even with Government support, it's 6.7 million UK households. The average annual bill as almost doubled in a year- from £1,271 to £2,500. The charity warns next year's ONS figures are likely to be much worse.

Adam Scorer, Chief Executive of National Energy Action (NEA) said:

"Every year we see the consequences of failing to keep the most vulnerable people safe and warm during the coldest, winter months. Today's figures show a significant drop in premature winter deaths, partly because of the higher number of deaths outside the winter months, but it's still 45 people each day in the winter months. The truth is we should not accept any death directly because of cold, unsafe home."

"Next year these statistics will expose the full impact of today's energy crisis. The toxic combination of extraordinary heating costs, stagnant and falling incomes, and our notoriously poor, unhealthy housing stock will take a heavier toll with lives blighted by debt, ill health, and worse."

"Milder weather may not save us, or thousands of vulnerable households this winter. We must do-all we can now to prevent a public health emergency and further needless deaths. Fuel poverty needs long term solutions, but this winter we need the UK Government to give more support and stop millions falling through the cracks with the most awful consequences."

Previous research has consistently demonstrated the links between cold homes and health conditions, especially musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, as well as conditions related to mental ill health. The World Health Organisation attributes 30% of all excess winter deaths to cold homes, moreover cold homes contribute directly to excess winter deaths, hospitalisations and wider pressure on health and social care services.

According to the ONS figures for 2021/22 :-

- There were 12,700 Excess Winter deaths in England
- The number excluding Covid was 8,800
- Number attributable to cold homes was 3,810

We Celebrate the Life of Our Dear Friend Andrea Stanton Loved and Missed by So Many of Us



A Slaves Lament

Song of protest



It is the time of the year when Robbie Burns is centre stage. From 'Auld Lang Syne' at New Year to 'The Address to Haggis' at Burns Suppers.

'The Plough Boy Poet' rose from rural poverty to international fame. He is celebrated throughout the world for his poems and songs, written in Scots and is recognised as Scotland's National Poet.

Bob Dylan himself is quoted as choosing a Burns song as the best love song ever written, namely 'My Love is like a Red Red Rose.'

It is indeed a wonderful, romantic piece that is 'the food of love' to quote Shakespeare. However, I offer you a different kind of love song to 'play on'.

In 1792 Burns wrote 'A Slaves Lament', a love song for a slaves lost family, home, land and freedom. Although not so well known, this is probably the earliest transcribed anti-slavery song and as such had a significant part to play on raising awareness of this gross international injustice.

Burns became famous, even in his own lifetime and so the words he wrote were read by many people in Scotland and beyond.

Burns himself was no angel, constantly in conflict with the Kirk, and the families of his many lovers. It was suggested that he fled the country and was offered the job as a book keeper in a West Indies Slave Plantation. He refused and headed off to Edinburgh where he managed to sell the first edition of his work. He was supported by his revolutionary Masonic friends, in the days when the lodge was the only place where men could 'brothers be', regardless of religion or race. Women were not part of the 'club' for a very long time.

Slavery was finally abolished in the UK in 1833, but went on around the world for much longer. Reparation is still an unresolved issue 190 years later.

The song itself is set to a beautiful minor key melody, with a plaintive refrain that was influenced by a traditional ballad.

I believe this song should be known as well as 'Auld Lang Syne' and should be sung just as widely. Here is the first verse...

'It was in sweet Senegal, that my throes did me enthrall.

For the lands of Virginia, -ginia, O: Torn from that lovely shore and must never see it more
O alas I am weary weary O



With Thanks To Donald McCombie



Human Rights Day- December 10th 2023 will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“We declare that human rights are for all of us, all the time: whoever we are and wherever we are from; no matter our class, our opinions, our sexual orientation.”
Former UN Secretary- General Ban Ki-moon.

- Right to Life
- Right not to be tortured or treated in inhuman or degrading ways
- Right to be Free from Slavery
- Right to Liberty and Security
- Right to a Fair Trial
- Right to Nationality and the Freedom to Change it
- Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law
- Right to Respect for Private Life and Family, Home and Community
- Right to Freedom of Thought, Belief and Religion
- Right to Freedom of Expression
- Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association
- Right to Marry and start a Family
- Right not to be Discriminated Against
- Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution
- Right for Desirable Work and to join a Trade Union
- Right to Education
- Right to Own Property
- Right to Participate in Government and Free Elections

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

Nelson Mandela

WHAT'S ON



West Midland Pensioners Convention

Notice to Branches and Affiliates

All nominations for the Officers and Executive Committee of the WMPC along with any motions for consideration of the 2023 Annual General Meeting: should be received by February 28th.

WMPC Regional Council Meeting

Thursday February 9th

Speaker:

Yvonne Washbourne (Wash)

Chair: Midland TUC Pensioners Network

“Better Bus Campaign 2023”

*

Thursday March 9th

Speaker:

Councillor Mariam Khan

Birmingham City Council Cabinet Member
for Health and Social Care

*

Thursday April 13th

Annual General Meeting

All WMPC Regional Council Meetings are held at
the Birmingham UNISON Branch Office:

11.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m.

19th Floor, McClaren Building, Priory Queensway

B4 7LR

Refreshments available

Halesowen Pensioners Convention

The Branch meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month in the Shenston Theatre in Halesowen Library from 10.30 to 12.30.

Future Meetings

Thursday February 16th

Speaker

Sarah Nixon: West Midlands Police

Thursday March 16th

Royal Association for Deaf People

New members are always very welcome

Contact: Tony Whitehouse: 07715314608 or
email whitehousea970@gmail.com

Sandwell and West Birmingham

Pensioners Convention

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at West Bromwich Central Library from 11.00 a.m. till 12.45. New members are always very welcome to join our friendly and diverse group of pensioners. We also hold monthly social events.

Tuesday February 7th

Officers from Sandwell and Walsall Citizens Advice will be coming along to talk about the important work of Citizens Advice at these difficult times.

Tuesday March 7th

Kathryn Meredith: from the Involvement Team of the Black Country Integrated Care Board will be updating the group on the Black Country NHS Forward Plan.

Contact: Brian Allbutt 07342264482 or
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