



Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

NPC Annual Convention Blackpool 2023 — SPECIAL ISSUE

Back Stronger Than Ever!



NPC

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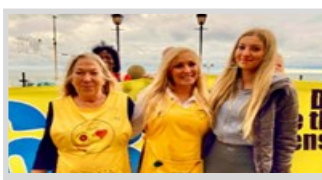
WANT TO JOIN THE NPC?

Do you care about issues affecting older people? Want to do something about them? Then join us as an individual, or as an affiliate group. We are the biggest UK campaign group run for and by older people. Contact us to find out how to get involved. Details above.

NPC members have returned from the 2023 Annual Convention in Blackpool with a renewed determination to campaign for the rights of today's and tomorrow's older people.

More than 300 delegates gathered at The Imperial Hotel, Blackpool for our first Convention since before the pandemic. Over two days (28th & 29th June) they heard 23 guest experts address eight panel sessions on key issues. But the final session confirmed that uniting the generations to fight for a better retirement is most im-

portant - a view echoed by three generations of Nana's Against Fracking campaigner Tina Rothery, who brought her daughter Stephanie, and 18-year-old granddaughter Amelia to the Convention (see page 2). NPC General Secretary, Jan Shortt said, "This was a very important Annual Convention given the many serious problems facing older people. But it was heartening to see so many people - young and old alike - asking questions and encouraged to fight for real change and reform across all our broken systems."



Tina, Stephanie & Amelia Rothery.

More pictures & reports: P. 2/3



Closures consultation deadline delayed — but we fight on!

NPC welcomes news that the deadline for a consultation on plans to close 970 railway ticket offices has been extended until 1st September. But, we will continue to press for the proposals to be thrown out, and are urging members and affiliates to make their views known - as NPC has already done - to the consultation leads at Transport Focus and London Travelwatch.



NPC's Jan Shortt said: "We have won a battle, but we need to keep campaigning until the plans are completely scrapped. If the closures go ahead, they will have huge consequences for older and disabled people, many of whom can't go online to buy tickets. It discriminates against people's right to travel, and to obtain discounted tickets online."

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THE OPENING RALLY



NPC President Rosie MacGregor, with Blackpool Deputy Mayoress Sharon Hoyle & Deputy Mayor Adrian Hoyle who opened the event. Our speakers (ltr): Keynote, Robert Palmer, Tax Justice UK; Jack Jones, TUC; Simon Francis, End Fuel Poverty & Joel Kosminsky.



Solving Issues Facing Older People

President Rosie MacGregor introduced Deputy Mayor Adrian Hoyle who welcomed the NPC to Blackpool. He outlined the multi-million pound levelling-up investment set to transform the resort, which will also benefit its sizeable retired population. Keynote Robert Palmer of Tax Justice said the UK needs urgent tax system reform. He suggested imposing six new wealth tax measures could

raise £50bn a year to upgrade our struggling public services.

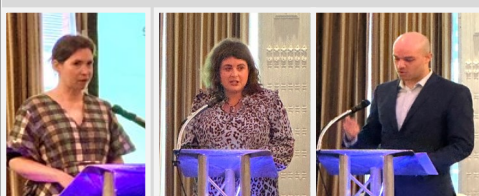
Simon Francis, End Fuel Poverty Coalition (NPC is a member) said fuel poverty is a 'political choice' and that UK living conditions are now as bad for many people as those back in 1940, minus the outside toilets. Jack Jones said the TUC is committed to campaigning for a better pension system: "Healthy retirement is a right not a luxury." Joel Kosminsky previewed the NPC Transport Working Party Conference, which will discuss how accessibility and inclusion is essential.



Why The Older Generation Needs Champions

NPC has joined forces with the three other main older people's organisations in the UK to campaign for Commissioners for Older People in England and Scotland, as they have in Wales and Northern Ireland. Chair and NPC Vice President Norman Jemison (right, second left) introduced speakers (right, ltr): Jan Shortt, General Secretary, NPC; Morgan Vine, Head of Policy & Influencing, Independent Age (IA); Chloe Wright, Head of External Affairs, Age UK; and Christos Tuton, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Officer, Ageing

COMMISSIONERS FOR ENGLAND & SCOTLAND



Better (AB). While each organisation has a slightly different focus, we discussed our consensus calling for Commissioners to champion older people's issues. These include campaigning to tackle poverty (IA); to giving older people a stronger voice in Parliament on issues like exclusion (AgeUK); and the need for a strong UK strategy on ageing (AB). Jan repeated the NPC demand for Commissioners to be independent.

HEALTH AND CARE



The Social Care Crisis: Time For A Health Check or Intervention?

No other issue sparks debate as much as the NHS and social care which provide increasingly vital services as we age. NPC's Jan Shortt chaired a panel with (left to right): Gavin Edwards, Senior National Officer, Social Care, UNISON; John Lister, Director, HealthEmergency.org & Keep Our NHS Public; Jan; Judy Downey, Care Leader; and Dr Jean Hardiman-Smith, Chair, NPC Health & Social Care Working Party. Gavin Edwards said UNISON, like NPC is campaigning for a National Care Service, and added that care, with 165,000 sector vacancies, is deliberately underfunded. John Lister detailed the devastating impact of privatisation on healthcare services. Retired care leader Judy Downey said there were solutions to the care crisis but they needed radical change, likes giving the Care Quality Commission (CQC) investigative powers. Jean Hardiman-Smith, spoke about her personal experience of the health system and said we need a National Care Service to put 'humanity, not profit, at its heart.'



Delegates were welcomed to a lunchtime fringe meeting of the Women's WP co-chaired by Shelagh Hubbard. Attendees, who included men as well as women, heard a report on the WP's many activities over the past year. In a Q&A, concerns were raised about the implications for women who are continuing to work from home post-Covid. The fear is that work-from-home women would be under pressure to take full responsibility for the family housework while juggling paid employment.

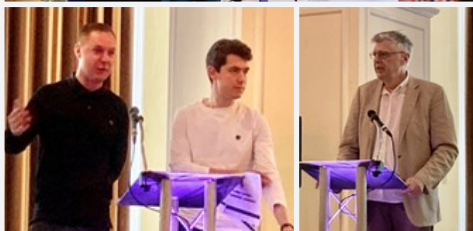
WOMEN'S WORKING PARTY

Lunchtime Session



PENSIONS & RETIREMENT

The Unite, NPC & SPF Campaign



Will Our Children Ever Retire: Can They Afford To?

Pensions & Incomes Working Party Chair Brian Sturtevant introduced this packed and informative session on the future of retirement and the state pension. He outlined the NPC's policy for a decent state pension for all, set at 70% of the living wage (outside London rate) and above the official poverty level. Bryn Davies, Lord Davies of Brixton (below, right) outlined the origins of the state pension from 1948, and how far it has fallen in real terms, leaving millions struggling in later life. He said NPC's campaigns for a better pension for the older people of today and the future is key to overcoming misconceptions about pensions among young workers. Lord Davies believes we need a 'formal guarantee' on pensions. Unite the Union, NPC and the Scottish Pensioners' Forum have joined forces on 'The 68 is Too Late' campaign (above left) to stop the retirement age being raised earlier than expected. Unite organisers Joe Rollin and Josh Berlyne (bottom, left) led a lively session on the union's commitment to fight for decent pensions and better retirement quality for all.



The Future is Digital: Making It Work for Us All

A packed Louis Room heard an excellent session on the digital issues that are increasingly key to all our lives. Tom Lowe, Head of Policy & Communications at Digital Poverty Alliance, (below left—NPC is a DPA member), outlined their National Delivery Plan to substantially reduce the numbers without essential computer and smartphone skills, and ensure the sustainability of training in response to changing technologies and needs. Sarah Parkes of Age UK Digital Champions (pictured left, on the right) discussed the charity's bold initiative for one-to-one teaching of digital skills to navigate the internet and access services like hospital lists and GP appointments. Jenny Sims (above, far right) discussed the NPC's vigorous Connections4All campaign to end digital exclusion of older people. NPC Vice President Sandra Durkin chaired.



DIGITAL INCLUSION & EXCLUSION



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Our Aims on Campaigning, Recruitment & Diversity

Ellen Lebethe, Chair of the NPC Ethnic Minority Working Party (pictured right) told this inspiring session: "The NPC's aim is to promote the welfare and interests of *all* pensioners as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement." But she added that the NPC was 'not truly diverse and inclusive' and that we must work to ensure the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion permeate and govern our views, policies, practices and strategies in recruiting members to "develop and strengthen our movement." The panel, chaired by NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt, included George Stanbury (left), of Independent Age, who spoke about their 'How to Campaign' Toolkit; Tina Rothery, of Nanas Against Fracking, who talked about her success as an environmental campaigner. Jan thanked all the speakers and said: "The NPC needs to recruit for the future, and every single one of us is responsible for bringing new activists into the organisation."



HOUSING WORKING PARTY

Chair Tony O'Brien, far right with Roy Rix, told a busy session that soaring costs demand the urgent implementation of a price cap for both private and social housing renters. He said the Housing WP also want the Government to end all no fault evictions, along with the scandalous use of freeholds. Tony added that most importantly: "We need a multi-billion pound investment in social housing, designed to meet older people's needs."



Lunchtime Session

NPC WOULD LIKE TO THANK..



NPC
Thank you to our stewards & volunteers, like Tom & Sue, above.

NPC wishes to thank our Speakers, Chairs, Stewards, Delegates, Volunteers, Imperial Hotel, Age UK, Independent Age, Ageing Better & Blackpool Council for their help



VISIT BLACKPOOL



Office closures consultation 'rushed'

The decision to delay the the consultation process consultation over plans was being 'rushed.' A legal action has been launched against the plans by Mayors Andy Burnham of Manchester, Tracey Brabin of West Yorkshire, Oliver Coppard of South Yorkshire, Steve Rotherham of Liverpool City Region and Dr Nik Johnson of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, along with UK disability groups. NPC's Jan Shortt said: "This is a rights issue and we are also writing to the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) and the Equalities & Human Rights Commission (EHRC)."



NPC Newcastle demonstra-

NPC Transport Conference

This Autumn's eagerly anticipated NPC Transport Conference will discuss the wide range of critical concerns impacting the UK's transport system. Organised by the NPC Transport Working Party, the event will hear from experts on issues ranging from the mass closure of railway ticket offices, and our declining bus and train services, to the dangers posed by electric scooters. Full details are to be confirmed, but the conference is currently pencilled in for 18th October at St Aloysius Church Hall in Euston, London. Final details will be announced in August, including timings, the programme and how to obtain tickets. *Yorks & Humber Pensioners Convention held an informative and well-supported 'Campaigning for Outstanding Bus Services' conference in York in June.



Call on No 10 to end BBC cuts

The NPC and National Federation of the Blind UK (NFBUK) made a last ditch bid to stop cuts to BBC local radio this summer. We took a petition to Downing Street opposing the proposed cuts to BBC local radio services. The NPC is very worried about the loss of BBC local radio stations in England, which will result in the loss of crucial afternoon and weekend shows, which are a vital lifeline for many older people. The BBC plan is to absorb the programmes into bigger regional shows to effect savings. NPC's Jan Shortt said: "Local stations are extremely important in keeping older and disabled listeners in particular connected. This damaging decision must be reversed."



Campaign for Scots champion

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt (middle row, third left) attended the Scottish Parliament for the launch of a Private Members' Bill to establish a Commissioner for Older People in Scotland. The NPC is a key signatory of a consensus statement calling on the Scottish Government to create an independent Commissioner. We are also seeking to establish a Commissioner in England as they already have in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Members' Bill was brought forward by Colin Smyth MSP and the consultation runs from 13 June to 12 September 2023. NPC would encourage you to show your support at: www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/proposals-for-bills/proposed-commissioner-for-older-people-scotland-bill



Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) shows that looking after a loved one can cost carers tens of thousands of pounds in lost earnings. Forced to work shorter hours or quit work altogether, JRF say unpaid carers are being pushed into poverty. The longer they provide invaluable unpaid care the greater the impact on their finances. It's estimated the average pay penalty amounts to nearly

Unpaid carers forced into poverty over lost earnings

£6,000 per year, rising to nearly £9,000 per year after six years. JRF is now calling for unpaid carers to receive Government-funded Statutory Carer Pay, providing 39 weeks of flexible paid leave for one year. Abby Jitendra, at JRF, says it is "not right that unpaid carers on low incomes" are losing out and being pushed into poverty. She added that The Carer's Leave Act (2023) will not prevent the financial hit—we must value unpaid carers.