

NPC

Campaign!

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WANT TO JOIN NPC?

Do you care about issues affecting older people? 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 and get involved. Details above.

Fighting for the rights of older people

NPC backs a UN Convention for Older Persons Rights worldwide

NPC's Ellen Lebethe joined an Age International delegation to call on Foreign Secretary David Lammy to publicly champion a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. We were delighted that Ellen (front, right) was invited to represent the NPC in delivering a letter signed by 30,000 people and 35 leading civil organisations to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The letter makes the case for an international legal framework to protect older people's rights worldwide.



NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "Now more than ever, it is crucial to strengthen the rights of older people in the UK and worldwide. We are committed to a future where older people's rights are fully recognised and protected."

Proof older people are freezing after Winter fuel payment cuts — just as bills set to rise 5%!

The National Pensioners Convention wants urgent government action after a survey showed 3 out of 4 older people were too cold in their own homes this January.

As we brace for yet another rise in the Ofgem price cap on energy prices next week, research by Age UK estimates about 9.1 million aged over 66 endured cold homes 'some, most of or all of the time.' NPC believes it is time the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reverted back to the old system of calculating excess winter deaths due to cold homes, to give the clearest measure of the impact of the WFP cuts.

Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary commented: "We are pursuing clarification of the ONS figures for excess deaths this winter. Since they changed their method of calculation during the pandemic it is not clear how many people died as a result of cold conditions in their homes this winter. This is vital information to inform government policy on

helping older and vulnerable people survive the cold." Age UK published their survey findings as they delivered a petition signed by 649,827 people - including huge numbers of NPC members - into 10 Downing Street (18th February). The 'Save the Winter

Fuel Payment for struggling pensioners' petition highlights the pressures felt by older people since the government cut the allowance to help with heating bills last year. It calls for a range of government measures to ease the situation.

Jan added: "Age UK's research shows just how deeply the Winter fuel payment cuts are being felt by millions. We hope the government finally heeds the call of NPC, Age UK and other campaigners to take action. This is particularly urgent as analysts Cornwall Insights predict Ofgem will announce that the energy price-cap will rise by 5% in April, adding £85 onto the average household bill." *Age UK report: www.npcuk.org*

Inflation rose again in January according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) - much to the surprise of commentators.

NPC Finance Working Party analyst Philip Burgess gives his view of the latest figures... and the impact on our personal finances. *Philip writes:*



January inflation data*
 RPI = 3.6% (Up from 3.5%)
 CPI = 3.0% (Up from 2.5%)
 CPIH = 3.9% (Up from 3.5%)
 OOH = 8.0% (No change)

“The Office” of Budget Responsibility (OBR) predicted inflation for the first quarter of 2025 would average at 2.41%. We are already running ahead of that although, the figures could fall next month. But The Bank of England’s latest forecast predicts that CPI (Consumer Price Index) inflation will increase to 3.7% in the Summer. According to the ONS, the largest upward contribution to the monthly change in both CPIH and CPI annual

rates came from transport, food and non-alcoholic beverages. The largest downward contribution to both came from housing and household services. The OOH (the cost of housing services associated with owning, maintaining and living in one's own home) remains at an astonishing 8% which explains why CPIH remains so much higher than CPI. Remarkably, this has placed CPIH even higher than RPI. I do not recall ever seeing this before. Overall, the costs for pensioners continue to outstrip the 4.1% Triple Lock rise - another reason we must persuade the Government that the real issue is the inadequate levels of State Pensions.” **(RPI—Retail Price Index. CPI—Consumer Price Index. CPIH -costs of owning, maintaining, and living in a home. OOH—as above).*

Women’s Equality Committee report highlights need for Older People’s Commissioner in England

The government's cross party Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) warns in a new report that ‘widespread’ and ‘culturally embedded’ ageism requires a new strategy and stronger legal protections against discrimination.

Crucially the WEC report recommends the Government assess the experience of Wales, which has a well-established Commissioner for Older People and a network of local authority Older People’s Champions to deliver a national strategy, with a view to replicating a similar framework in England.

Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary said "The WEC report clearly reinforces what the NPC and many other organisations have long-recognised - the urgent need for a Commissioner for Older People in England.

“The role is essential to ensure a joined-up and holistic approach to the policies that affect older people and giving them a genuine voice. With an ageing population it is crucial to seriously plan for the demographic shifts underway. Older people are not one homogenous group—we deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, which sadly is often lacking today." The report found existing age discrimination law is ‘failing older people’ as their protections are inadequate and rarely enforced, WEC’s report on the rights of older people found, as it called on the

Government to commission and fund a wholesale review by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

MPs found clear evidence that ageist stereotyping, including portrayals of older people as frail, helpless or incompetent – or conversely as wealth-hoarding "boomers" - is prevalent across the UK media and is a significant contributory factor to normalising of ageist attitudes.



The WEC report flagged the success of the OP Commissioner in Wales – who is currently Rhian Bowen-Davies.

The report concluded that ageism also led to stereo-typing, and the generations being pitted against each other. Despite our ageing population - with 11 million in England and Wales aged over 65 and half a million aged over 90 – the UK’s equalities framework omits a focus on demographic change and ageing. It calls for a data base to analyse challenges, and for the EHRC to review the effectiveness of protections against discrimination.

On digital exclusion from essential services, it warned some older people are at high risk, including in aspects of healthcare, local authority services, benefits and banking. It added that it is a ‘considerable failure of government’ and the WEC urged the Government to prioritise the development of a new digital inclusion strategy that includes a detailed focus on older people’s needs. There were also calls for media standard reviews.

NEWS FROM THE NATIONS & REGIONS

CONTACT DETAILS
For The REGIONS:
www.npcuk.org/regions

The Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention organised a successful rally in Leeds to protest at the withdrawal of the universal Winter Fuel Payment. The event in November was agreed at our quarterly meeting where the speaker was a regional officer from Unite. Over 50 people joined the rally includ-



Yorkshire & Humber

ing union members from Unite, Unison, Leeds Trades Council, WASPI women and the Older People's Champion on Leeds Council. **Secretary Fran Postlethwaite said:** "Passers-by stopped to listen to speakers and took our leaflets with enthusiasm – the campaign was widely supported by young and old. Several people also joined the YHPC. The BBC came along and we had a few minutes on the national news bulletin that evening.

"We are working to continue the campaign to restore the Winter Fuel Payment for all pensioners. Rachel Reeves is a Leeds MP and her constituency office will be the focus for future protests. **"We are also planning an 'alternative Spring statement' event on March 26th where we will call for taxes on the rich and an end to fuel poverty and attacks on the poorest in our communities."**

More than 100 NPC-Wales members have taken part in a mass demonstration against the Winter fuel payment cuts outside the Senedd in Cardiff.

NPC Wales

The event at the Welsh Parliament was organised by Unite the Union and supported by members of PCS and CWU among others. NPC Chair Dereck Roberts led our delegation including Christine Newman, Jeff Richards, Jeff Burn and Gareth Parsons. Back to the Norwegian Church the demonstrators heard speeches on the impact of the loss of the winter fuel payment to older people in Wales. In his speech, **Vice Chair Gareth Parsons said:** "Pensioners in Wales are suffering as a result of these cuts, and there are currently no proposals for additional support from Welsh Government in its spending plans for the coming year. The loss of the winter fuel payment is more than just the cost of energy and help towards bills. Without it, older people



have to find the money to pay the increasing cost of energy bills out of their fixed income. That means other things need to be cut. We are aware of older people turning off their heating, skipping meals, reducing their care packages or cutting them altogether. Cold homes kill and if they don't kill you then you have an increased chance of heart disease, suffering a stroke and the respiratory problems—all of which increases pressure on the NHS." NPC Wales are also continuing to support Unite's judicial review bid of the WFP cuts.

Northern Region made the biggest comprehensive submission to the major public transport consultation being chaired by our NE Mayor Kim McGuinness (pictured centre).



Northern delegates with NE Mayor Kim McGuinness.

Northern

Secretary Alec McFadden said: "We have established a good working partnership with Mayor McGuinness and NPC President Norman Jemison (left) and I will lead a delegation to meet the Mayor on Monday 24th February. Our AGM established the role of Women's Regional Officer

and Pauline Weighell was unanimously elected to position. Our next step is to establish a women's committee. We have now built a Northern Regional e-site thanks to trade union donations and the work of Chris Lawlor our volunteer senior research consultant. We are continuing to build partnerships and campaign allies. **The twin aims of justice for WASPI woman and getting the Government to reverse the Winter Fuel Payments cuts remain our key priorities."**

NEWS FROM THE NATIONS & REGIONS

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Campaigners held a demonstration calling for **East Midlands**

East Midlands Mayor Claire Ward to help them bring buses into public ownership. Chesterfield NPC were among those who supported the Better Buses East Midlands coalition outside the Mayor's Chesterfield office. The group, part of a wider East Midlands Combined Authority (EMCA) coalition, previously presented the Mayor with evidence that bus services across the region are in crisis. They have launched an online petition calling for the Mayor to act and believe that since buses were deregulated in 1986, there have been a severe decline in vital services. **Lisa Hop-**



kinson from Better Buses East Mids said: "The government has committed to making deregulation of buses easier and Mayors of Combined Authorities can now take our buses back into public control."

Members held their London Regional Council meeting at the **London**

end of January. Instead of inviting 'outside' speakers, they decided to concentrate on just one subject: The NPC'S 'Need for Change' to a Company Limited by Guarantee. Secretary Barry Todman, said: "We were extremely fortunate to have as speakers, Mike Sparham, the secretary of the Fi-

nance Working Party, followed by Steve Whitehead the NPC Treasurer. As you would expect there were a number of questions, which were adequately dealt with, as well as various comments on the change. At the conclusion a vote was taken and it was overwhelmingly agreed in favour of proceeding along the lines as agreed at the NPC NEC."

Oxfordshire NPC organised a meet- **Thames Valley**

ing for adult social care users in January to share their feedback on care service issues. The meeting garnered many useful comments and views from participants. Many care service users

and carers were unable to get the time away to attend. So the group invited them to give their views through an online survey. The comments will be added to those already submitted by TV to the Louise Casey Commission on social care. The region will provide the substantive report to NPC National, so that it may be used alongside other NPC submissions. Thames Valley AGM will be held in April—details will be circulated nearer the time. Current officials, John Paine and Steve Snook have done a sterling job for the region. They hope to invite new members to come and support the work of the NPC.

Cold hard facts

Independent Age unveiled an ice sculpture outside London's Tate Modern of an older person sitting in a cold house to represent all those who can't afford to heat their homes. The later life financial hard-



ship charity wants to tackle the stereotype that all older people are enjoying a comfortable retirement, and are campaigning for more support for those on a low income. The charity's research showed 23% of older people in England who are losing their Winter Fuel Payment will not turn on their heating this winter. The charity saw a 302% rise in calls to its helpline after the WFP cuts.

Alan Edgar



Thames Valley NPC members were sad to learn of the passing of Committee Chair Alan Edgar. Alan, who lived in Camberley, was a stalwart of the NPC, and a valued member of the Digital Working Party among others. A Cardiff University graduate, he was a bacteriologist in his working life. He was a long serving member of Prospect Retired Members Group Thames Valley, and latterly CSPA.

NPC 250 Club

Sign up today and support our work

Join the NPC 250 Club and you could win cash and help the NPC. For just £2 a month or £24 per annum, you will be entered into the NPC 250 Club prize draw. Half of the income goes into the monthly prize draw, and the remaining 50% will go to the NPC to support our work for older people. You can sign up at: www.npcuk.org/post/npc-250-club *OR: Write to the NPC office address on Page 1.