



# POA Annual Conference 2022

## Annual Conference Verbatim Report

Building **Safe** Workplaces



# POA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022

Monday 16th – Friday 20th May 2022

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**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. I'll bring you to order. A welcome to you all. I've been informed that the mayor, who's going to open Conference, is here, so I'm going to invite councillor Pat Rodohan to approach the stage. I'll introduce him and then he's very welcome to open Conference.

So this is Pat Rodohan. He had an idyllic childhood in lovely Latrude in northwest of Southern Ireland. His father was the local headmaster who also had a local farm with a fishing river flowing alongside it. Educated at Residential Colleges in Ireland, Pat came to London in 1961, where he met Barbara, who comes from Southwark. They married in 1964. He worked in marketing and advertising, and later as an executive officer for the Australian Government in London. Pat, Barbara and their two sons came to Eastbourne in 1972 and Pat commuted to London for two years while they developed their hotel business. Pat has always been a community leader and organiser. Whilst in London, he was the founder secretary of the London Youth Gallic Football Board. He initiated annual games between Dublin and London youth teams, which were played each year as part of the Gallic Games Festival in Wembley Stadium and in the National Stadium, Croke Park, in Dublin. On the 50th anniversary, the Irish ambassador presented an award to Pat for his service to Gallic football.

Pat was an executive member of Eastbourne Hotels Association, Area Chair of FSB and organised a successful march in Eastbourne opposing the unsustainable increases in business rates. From '84 to '88 he was Eastbourne Borough Councillor, Deputy Chair of Tourism, '87-'88 Deputy Mayor, '92-'96 Wealden District Councillor, 2009 to date he is East Sussex County Councillor for Upperton Ward. He was opposition spokesperson as well for the Environment and Highways. 2011 to date, Eastbourne Borough Councillor, Chair of the Conservation Area Advisory Group and Licensing Committee. Pat is looking forward to serving his adopted town as Mayor. He loves nature and knows that environmental improvements under discussion will make Eastbourne an even better place to live, work or visit. Pat's hobbies include walking, swimming, yoga, meditation and reading. He's looking forward to supporting his chosen charities, who support children with learning difficulties, Community Wise and Holding Space, who help families with mental health issues. Pat, you are very welcome to open Conference. Conference, please welcome Pat to the rostrum.

<Applause>

**PAT RODOHAN, MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE:** Thank you for the grand introduction! Welcome – welcome to Eastbourne, the “sun trap of the South”. We had a little rain over the weekend just to help our gardeners. The Downs gives us a unique microclimate which means we have sunshine all the year round, and that's one of the reasons why we are the second-fastest growing seaside town and the fourth happiest town in the UK. But we are a tourist town and 28% of all jobs come from tourism. The borough has invested heavily in the town pre-Covid and that has drawn in much private finance. For example, we spent £48 million on the Devonshire Complex here, which includes the Winter Garden that we're in – inside, not outside may I say – the new Welcome Building, the Devonshire Park and the Congress Spaces and the Devonshire Park Law Tennis behind us, which holds the largest tennis tournament in the UK outside Wimbledon. And this drew in, for example, £84 million private money to extend and develop the town centre more. And recently we received or won £19.8 million of Government levelling-up fund to further enhance the town and the gateway to the South Downs National Park, which is very close to us. Awards have been flowing in, but the important thing is that, last year, 5.35 million people came to Eastbourne and injected £530 million into the local economy.

I hope that you have a very successful conference. Our amenities here are now state of the art and meant for modern times. That should help and support you. You're a very important organisation. But I do hope that you find some time to look around Eastbourne – whether it's on the seafront, the town centre. But if you're short of time just walk to the rear of the Welcome Building that you came through to get into this building, have a sit down in the veranda. You overlook the Lawn Tennis Clubs, you look on to the National Downs, and if you're feeling a little bit harassed, it'll bring a lot of quietude and you'll be able to come back again and actually enjoy the conference.

So, welcome! Do come back again, whether as individuals or as a conference, and just enjoy yourself while you're here. And again have a great time, have a great conference. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, thank you Pat – and before you leave the stage, we do have a small token of our appreciation for opening conference.

**PAT RODOHAN, MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE:** Thank you. Thank you ever so much.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, Pat Rodohan.

<Applause>

Conference, I'm now going to hand over to the Chair of Standing Orders for his Report Back – David Todd of the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Good morning delegates, honorary life members, invited guests and observers. Welcome to Eastbourne, the

POA's 81st Annual Conference. As Chair of Standing Orders it's my intention to set out the order of the business. I'd like to thank the Standing Orders Committee for conducting the business of the union. I'd like to thank Nicola Hubert, who's worked tirelessly with the Committee.

You will note in your delegate programme we've several fringe meetings scheduled during Conference, and I urge delegates to support these events wherever possible. Food and refreshments will be offered at each event. Space is limited so get there early to avoid disappointment.

You should have all registered and been furnished with the appropriate documentation for this year's 81st Annual Conference. For the avoidance of doubt, each delegate should have an Annual Conference Agenda booklet, a report back booklet, Conference Policy document, Conference Papers 1 to 5, four Appeals to Conference. We've furnished you with a fourth appeal as a hard copy. All documentation was contained in your delegates' pack, which you picked up this morning. If you need any assistance during this week, do not hesitate to contact the Conference staff in the Conference Office or the NEC.

Delegates wishing to address Conference should make their way to the front of the hall and take a seat. All delegates must take up seats on the floor of Conference. I'm assured that there is enough seating for all delegates scheduled to attend, and looking around there is plenty of space available.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We've got a point of order. Please approach.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, just what Dave said there, all delegates should take their part down here. We have a retired members branch. Why are they not sitting on the floor with everybody else?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We have a Retired Members Committee. They don't have the same authority as a branch – they're not officially a branch. They're recognised as a Retired Members Committee and they are welcome to observe at the back.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Mr Chairman, apparently we've accepted the Cuffe Report in its entirety, and it says on there that they're a branch and they have a right to Conference motions, reference retired members and vote only on retired members' issues.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That's correct, but we need rule changes to implement that and, as I reported back in November, anybody who wishes to bring anything in relation to the Cuffe Report can do so during Conference. We haven't had any motions during Conference for the Cuffe Report. We're getting a report back on the Cuffe Report from the General Rules, and Pat Cuffe will be invited to speak on the Cuffe Report. Only delegates can raise points of order so I'll – I'm dealing with a delegate thank you. Craig, you do not have a point of order, so please take your seat.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Can I just say something about that Mr Chairman, to that point of order then. Retired members can speak. It's been allowed before. Colin Moses spoke when he brought up the issue about Tom Robson being an Honorary Life Member.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Retired members can speak if they're invited to speak. Pete, you're not allowed to raise a point of order.

**PETE HANCOX:** A point of order has been raised by a delegate. He's saying that not much has been ... members committee on four separate occasions. In light of the Cuffe Report, we ask the NEC and this Conference to accept us a branch. You denied it.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Is it not right that we should have a vote on this now?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No. We will get a report back on the Cuffe Report from the General Rules, and Pat Cuffe will address Conference.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Permission to remove the Chair.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do we have the support of ten branches to remove the Chair. Please show – show of hands. That falls. Please continue Dave, thank you.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Thank you Chair. Delegates, observers, providers, invited guests and honorary life members must wear your identification badge throughout Conference to assist the security team. Whilst we have no specific intelligence on security threats, will everyone be vigilant and report any concerns to a member of the security team? Conference, only delegates are allowed on the Conference floor and all observers and other invited guests must take up their seats in the appropriate designated area. In moving the Standing Orders Committee Report to this 81st Annual Conference, the Standing Orders Committee seeks the approval of Conference for the following delegates to be appointed as scrutineers and tellers: Stewart McLaughlin, Wandsworth; Wendy Price, Drake Hall; Phil Tuck, Cardiff; Niall McIntosh, Whitemoor. Can I call on the Chair to ask Conference to approve the scrutineers and tellers?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, I need a show of hands please. Can you show your approval for the scrutineers and tellers? Thank you Conference, that's carried.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Standing orders procedure in regards to the order of business for Conference is set out on the inside of the Conference Agenda. Please take a moment to remind yourself of the rules throughout the Conference. Delegates are reminded that the rules governing Conference and procedures are set out in Conference Paper 3 of 2015. If you're unsure on any issues, please feel free to speak to the

Standing Orders Committee. We are here to help.

For the 81st Annual Conference we received 85 Annual Conference motions within the prescribed time and one was received out of time. Standing Orders Committee contacted the branches and 18 motions were reworded in line with Conference policy and approved by the branch, and one motion was separated into two motions. Five motions were withdrawn before publication of the agenda, five were returned as not meeting the criteria and, of these five, one was overturned by the NEC and four are subject to appeal to Conference following the NEC's determination on all appeals, giving us an agenda for this Conference of 78 motions in the Conference Agenda booklet. The Standing Orders Committee received four emergency motions. All four emergency motions were rejected by Standing Orders Committee and the appeal to the NEC. Conference are reminded that the section containing proposed rule changes will require a two-thirds majority and the rest of the Conference Agenda will require a simple majority. Therefore, Conference, we now have an agenda of 78 motions as contained in your Conference booklet, five Conference papers, and two emergency motions from the NEC are already placed in the Conference Agenda at 47 and 64. Conference, we also have a section for the 10-year anniversary motions. Out of courtesy, the Standing Orders have placed these on the order paper and invited the original movers of the motion to second. This was a very time-consuming piece of work and I therefore ask branches from now on to look at the policy document in their preparations for future conferences and determine if they would like to bring back any of the 10-year anniversary motions to put before Conference.

Conference, in order to expedite business throughout the week, your attention is drawn to the inside of the Annual Conference Agenda, which outlines the reports, standing orders and the procedures. Delegates are reminded that all mobile phones must be switched off or set to silent throughout the duration of Conference. This also includes NEC and FTOs, invited guests, observers and honorary life members. Any branch who wishes to second a specific motion should ensure that they inform myself or Mick Pimblett as soon as possible so that we can inform the Chair of Conference before we seek to second that with a motion from the floor.

Delegates should be aware, if you second a motion you must speak at that time as you will not be allowed to speak once the debate has started. Again, delegates, if you intend to speak on behalf of your branch on any motion, will you please come forward to the front of Conference and occupy one of the seats during the moving of the motion? Chair will call you to the rostrum to address Conference. Any delegates wishing to address Conference must give their full name and branch so that the recording facilities in use for the verbatim report can identify the moving branches.

Will all delegates, observers and providers return to their seats quickly following any breaks in conference so that the Chair can move business? Throughout Conference, delegates may be required to attend the office on official business. All delegates must ensure that at least one delegate remains on the Conference floor whilst Conference is in session. In line with the custom and practice of Conference, the Chair of Conference may call motions when guest speakers are attending and addressing Conference, with the approval of Conference.

The Welfare Committee AGM will take place at the direction of the Chair of Conference. The NCSH AGM will take place at some point on Wednesday morning. Chair, can I now ask you to hear the appeals? Just a reminder to the Durham Branch, you're not to go into the body of the motion during the appeal.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Can I now call Durham to address your Appeal 1 to Conference?

#### Appeal 1

That the NEC negotiate/or submit a reduction of PP to £1 per hour.

#### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, just for clarity, do I get up to speak after the NEC speaker?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No, it's an appeal to Conference.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, you might think this motion's very strange. It's actually not if you look at it. I wanted to have a debate but if I had a debate not many of you would have got up to speak, so this was the opportunity to come and speak, say what I had to say and for people to get up and say their part. I put the two motions in specifically. The next motion's there for no reason at all, it's just to show what I'm doing. So what I wanted to say is that the NEC negotiate –

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Craig, it's probably better if you just explain to Conference – it'll help you – why the decision not to allow this on the paper is wrong.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** It's wrong because it should have a debate. That's what we're here for, it's as simple as that. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Craig. Over to Dave Todd to reply.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, if this motion was allowed onto the order paper it would not be in the best interests of your branch members. The motion, as you see it was returned, would adversely affect the interests of the membership, hold the Union to ridicule and seriously damage and discredit the Union. Conference, we also face legal action from the employer. We all know how restrictive the permanent injunction is on the Union. Conference, this is your decision. Make it. The decision, however, must be made within the spirit of the rules and constitution. Conference,

over to you for direction in this appeal.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, we need a show of hands. All those in favour of this appeal, if you want this appeal to appear on a Standing Orders Paper, please show your support for the appeal now. All those against? That appeal is lost.

Durham, would you like to address Appeal 2 please?

### Appeal 2

**That the NEC negotiate/or submit a reduction of PP to £20 per hour.**

### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference, that the NEC negotiate or submit a reduction of PP to £20 per hour. I hear what Dave said so I'll get my opportunity now to speak about it. The NEC has just done exactly what you have voted against about the pound. The NEC's put a submission in to the Pay Review Body that pensions should be 30 quid. You were getting 40-odd quid last year. Think about it man. This is your opportunity to speak. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Craig. Dave Todd to reply.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, all the same reasons as the previous appeal: ridicule, legal issues, potential impact on the Union. Thank you. Over to you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. All those who accept this appeal please show now. All those against? That appeal is lost. Durham, appeal number three please, thank you.

### Appeal 3

**That the NEC do not alter or change Conference Policy when Conference is not sitting if it is stipulated in the motion.**

### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference, that the NEC do not alter or change Conference policy when Conference is not sitting if it is stipulated in the motion. We are the ruling body when we're sitting. When we're not, these people behind us are the ruling body. I just want something in place which certain aspects – I'm not asking for everything – but certain areas I think it would endorse the problems that we have with the Pay Review Body. We put it in our rules and constitution. Simple as that. It's a new rule.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Craig. Over to Dave Todd.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, the Standing Orders Committee returned the motion to the branch stating this required a rule change. It's not for the Standing Orders Committee to write the motion out. We can merely advise the branch, which was done in this case. If the branch wants to change rules, that's their absolute right – however, they must identify the rule they wish to change along with the new suggested wording. Conference, I ask you to seek rejection.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Over to you, Conference. All those who wish to accept this appeal, please show now. And all those against? That appeal is lost. Craig, fourth and final appeal please.

### Appeal 4

**The NEC seek clarification and assurances that HMPPS will endeavour to secure legislation that will allow staff to carry their full PPE on escorts, which they have been trained in (namely Pava).**

### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Not having much luck here, am I? The NEC seek clarification and assurance that HMPPS will endeavour to secure legislation that will allow staff to carry their full PPE on escorts which they have been trained in, namely PAVA. It's been rejected I believe because it wasn't put in in time. It couldn't be put in in time because the incident only happened two weeks ago. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Craig. Dave Todd.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Standing Orders Committee returned this motion. The content is nothing new since the closing date

of Conference motions. I've got sympathy for Durham. I absolutely accept that you're saying that the incident happened post closure. If in fact you look at the agenda, you'll see a similar motion from the Frankland branch, which is on the agenda. Therefore, Conference, we ask that you reject this appeal.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Over to Conference. All those who accept this appeal, please show now. All those against? That appeal is carried. We will let you know what number it appears on the paper when Standing Orders have decided.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, we will place that successful appeal on the agenda. We'll have a quick Standing Orders meeting and place it where most appropriate. I now ask the Chair of Conference to seek Conference approval for the adoption of the Standing Orders Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** All those who approve the Standing Orders Report, please show now. Any against? Thank you Dave, that's been approved.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Thank you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, before we move on I'm just going to ask our tech guys to come and give you a quick tutorial on the new toys we've given you with regards to electric voting. We'll have a quick dry run so we all know what we're doing and what buttons we're pressing, and hopefully it will all work out.

**TECHNICIAN:** Voting delegates should have received a voting handset and a voting smartcard. These two things are paired together to enable you to vote with the day's motions. Please ensure that the smartcard is in the handset when it's time to vote. When it's time to vote, all you need to do is press 1 or 2 on the device to submit your responses. If you wish to abstain, simply do not use the device. When the poll's closed, you'll see it return to this POA logo screen. So that's all there is to it. Hopefully it should be straightforward. If you have any difficulties using the handset, our control desk is at the back of the room. Please make yourself known if you need any help with handsets. I'm going to pass back to the Chairman, who will now run a couple of test votes and you all try using the devices. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. So just a dry run, nothing changes. I'll ask you if you support the motion or not, all those for, then you press the button. All those against, then you press the button, and then you should get a printout on the screen on how it's gone. So we'll try that now. So all those for, please vote now. You should have a button on your handset, for. And any against – and then we can display that result on the screen. So in relation to that, we have 92% in favour, 8% against.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** <Inaudible>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** <Laughs> We'll come to that on the third dry run. I'll explain that.

OK, if we go to test motion 2 – all those for, please vote now. And any against? And there's the result there, as you can see. For: 30%, against: 71%, so that motion would have been lost. And then test motion 3, this is a replica of a card vote, so the scrutineers and tellers, your duties during a card vote will be simply to sit at the back and watch the votes come in, to make sure you're happy with the way things are going. So, on a card vote, it will go to the number of members in your branch and give us a grand total at the end of it. So, all those for, please vote now. And any against? And there we have the result. So, 16,000 for, 4,000 against, so that would have been carried on a card vote. So, hopefully we can continue in that vein.

Conference, I'm now going to ask you to join me standing in a minute's silence, which is even more poignant this year after the pandemic. If we pay our respects to our colleagues and friends who we miss but are certainly not forgotten, and we will start that minute's silence now.

<Minute's silence>

Thank you Conference. Please take your seats.

Conference, National Executive, delegates, observers, honorary life members, invited guests, friends – welcome to the POA Annual Conference. This should actually be our 83rd Annual Conference but, due to the pandemic, it's actually the 81st. Good to be back, it's good to see everyone face to face, and it's good to see everyone looking so fit and healthy after what we can only describe as a really concerning two years. I'd like to thank my amazing NEC for all their hard work over the last couple of years. Sixteen hours a day in front of a computer screen is not healthy for anyone but that's what it was like when we first went into lockdown – ADM, SOPS, emergency policies getting thrown at us. They worked tirelessly on your behalf. I'd like to thank my fantastic Vice Chair, Dave Todd, for all his support and hard work, continually challenging the employer and fighting for you – along with my General Secretary Steve Gillan, Deputy General Secretary Joe Simpson and all the FTOs who do tireless work on your behalf to try and improve your working life. Not forgetting of course all the support staff, the admin staff – this Conference doesn't get organised overnight! They've put a lot of hard work into making life a bit easier for us all. I'd like to thank the retired members, the former Retired Members Committee, for all their hard work and I'd like to welcome the new Retired Members Committee to the forefront of this Union. I'm sure you will drive forward benefits for all retired members, who remain an integral and welcome part of this Union.

You should all be so proud of yourselves, each and every one of you. The people I want to thank the most are you – the delegates, the branch officials. I know how difficult it's really been for you. When we first went into lockdown, nobody had any of the answers. You were getting pressurised, you were getting asked questions you didn't know the answer to, we had a shortage of PPE, there was no blueprint for the pandemic, and I know how difficult life has been for you. And that's why I have never been so proud to lead this Union, wherever you work – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland,

the Isle of Mann, escort services, public or private sector, secure psychiatric hospitals. Wherever you are, you have done an absolutely commendable job and I thank you for it.

During the course of the week we've got some guest speakers including Frances O'Grady, the TUC General Secretary. This afternoon we've got Victoria Atkins, the Prisons Minister, and we've also got a short video address by Dominic Raab, the Secretary of State for Justice. We've got Earl Attlee addressing us. He tried to introduce a Noxious Substances Bill, which would have protected us when we were subject to potting incidents. Phil Cople, the Director General, is addressing us. Patrick Roach, General Secretary of NASUWT, teachers' union. Ian Byrne, Labour MP for West Derby, who's campaigning for the right to food. He also won MP of the Year. Grahame Morris, a great supporter of the POA, Labour MP for Easington, he's trying to progress the Safe Inside Bill. Mick Lynch, the General Secretary of the RMT – and we've got a late addition which is not in your programme, which is Barry Gardiner, Labour MP for Brent North, he's trying to outlaw fire and rehire.

We also have awards including the Cronin Clasps, Health and Safety Award, Branch Rep of the Year, the Mabel Hempton Award for Bravery, and we have fringe meetings as the Vice Chair has just announced. Thompsons Solicitors, quite an interesting one, reluctance of police and Crown Prosecution Service to pursue assaults on prison staff. They're going to tell you how to address that if it happens to you and how to get your rights heard and what appeals to put in. We also have Justice for Colombia, the National Committee of Private Sector Services, Show Racism the Red Card, and we've got the stalls that you can walk around. And I'd like to welcome the HMPPS Equalities Team, who will be taking you through the Race Action Plan, which we're only too keen to engage with. And on that subject, I'd like to thank you for all your hard work in your establishments. Things are improving. There's no room for racism in society or our workplace, or misogyny, discrimination or bigotry of any form, and I know that you've done a great job in improving things for everyone in your workplace, so thank you for that. I'd also like to thank Eastbourne for hosting this. I know we're very demanding but I think you'll agree they've done a great job.

Our chosen charities this year are Macmillan Cancer Support and LIVERNORTH – they support families and patients who have liver problems. And a big thanks to HMPPS for giving us all facility time for the entire week to attend Conference. It's most welcome.

So here we are. Our last Conference was 2019, and then the pandemic hit us and there's no blueprint for a global pandemic. There's no contingencies. We didn't know what to expect – it took us all by surprise. At first, HMPPS wanted to carry on as long as they could, as normal as they could. That just wasn't an option in our eyes and I made it clear to Phil Cople that, if he didn't shut down our prisons, lock down our jails, then the POA would. And credit to Phil, he got back to us 24 hours later and he said, 'OK, we do need to lockdown our jails. None of us know how bad it's going to get and we need to work in partnership, we need to get through this.' And it was the right decision that we threw all our differences aside and we just wanted to work through this pandemic and make you as safe in your workplace as you can be. And we just needed to get through it, just work our way through it, because none of us knew what was coming next.

Now I know you've been criticised by the reform groups and the pressure groups, criticised because you were forced to place prisoners in their cells for prolonged periods of time, forced to enact restrictions, but let me tell you, that was the right thing to do and I will not have any of you criticised by anyone. The modelling suggested that there would be at least 2,700 prisoner deaths due to Covid. They didn't have a figure for staff. As I stand here now we have had, unfortunately, 194 deaths of prisoners and 37 of our colleagues have perished. 194 compared to 2,700 is down to you. It's down to you, putting your own health and safety and that of your families on the line to protect the public and to care for those in our custody. You should all be very proud of what you've achieved and I know the worry you've been through. Is there Covid in my jail? What am I taking home to my family? I've got no PPE. You had no PPE at the very beginning, despite us insisting that you needed it, because all the experts were saying the mitigations you've got in place are more than sufficient, and it wasn't until the October of that first lockdown that they finally agreed with the POA, and as the NHS were running out our supplies were getting flown into the country.

I suspect we didn't get it when it first broke because the NHS needed it more, but those were the excuses we were getting. Just imagine if you hadn't have locked down the jails, imagine what the critics would be saying now, if there was over 3,000 prisoner deaths. They would say those prison officers don't care, look what they did – they allowed people to mix, they unlocked large groups of prisoners, they carried on as normal and they created the deaths we see in our prisons. You did the right thing. Don't ever forget that. And what are the thanks we get, colleagues, what are the thanks? Well, it's yet to be seen what thanks we get from the Government on the recommendations of any Pay Review Body, but I know one thing – warm words in the House of Commons and handclaps on doorsteps ain't gonna pay your bills. We are now in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis and it's real. Energy prices up, fuel prices up, National Insurance contributions up, food costs up, interest rates up, inflation up, council tax up, excessive hours working up, your retirement age up, your take-home pay down, your standard of living down, your mental health down. If this isn't addressed we will face a cost-of-leaving crisis, because as you well know in your prisons, attrition rates are at an all-time high. We are seeing mass resignations across the country. We are wasting £30 million each and every year by training new recruits, only for them to leave within 24 months. £30 million that could be put towards a pay rise for us all. And what's the employer's answer? Pilot schemes, toolkits, volunteers.

Let me just highlight a few of these pilot schemes that have been created by our employer. We now have in place a buddy scheme – you're all gonna be buddies now, named after an elf. And that's where two colleagues apparently informally support each other in your own time. Well the document actually says a mutually convenient time to meet. Let's just think about that. A mutually convenient time to meet. So, first thing in the morning is not mutually convenient because I'm unlocking. Then I've got to take applications, then I've got to supervise movement of prisoners to activities, then I'm gonna be feeding prisoners, so what's a mutually convenient time? In your dinner hour, when you should be relaxing, going for a walk, using the gym, eating your food – is that a mutually convenient time, is that what they mean? I don't know anyone who's got a mutually convenient time.

And then we have the new colleague mentoring scheme, apparently so new joiners 'have a smooth and supportive onboarding experience'. Who writes this stuff? Onboarding experience! You work on the trains now. Is this just another name for POELT mentor? Remember them? When they were introduced, they were quite successful you know, it worked, but then the funding was withdrawn and where are they now? Are they in the ether somewhere? They were certainly a success. We now have apprenticeship coaches – they support learners. Is it going to be full time? Is it profiled? I don't know. Nobody's told us. They – along with their manager, apparently – will conduct 12 reviews. They're not managers, they are training

providers. Are they going to be prison officers? So, they're going to sit down with the apprentices every 12 weeks. Well, according to the performance management tool, CMs are going to sit down with their 24 staff that they look after every eight weeks. I don't know where they're going to get the time to do that. This is the best – 'structured supervision'. This is for the Band 4s. So the Band 4 staff will support colleagues' capability and confidence, one-to-one, on a monthly basis. One-to-one on a monthly basis? Is that not a management task? So, they're going to give you additional skills but they're going to give you no additional salary.

You know what? This employer, they've got more tools than a mechanics, more pilots than British Airways and more volunteers than the Red Cross. Just imagine, just picture the scene, that someone with a lot of life experience joins the Prison Service from another industry where every additional skill they got is paid for. So they're in the tearoom after a couple of months on the landings, they're settling into the job, and into the tearoom comes the governor, head of the wing, who introduces himself. 'How are you doing?' 'Yeah, I'm doing alright.' 'We're short of first aiders in this jail.' 'Oh right?' 'You don't fancy doing a First Aid at Work course and becoming a first aider do you?' 'Well, what does that involve?' 'Well, you go away for three days, you get a First Aid at Work qualification, and then when you come back you can administer first aid to staff and prisoners in an emergency situation.' 'Well that sounds interesting. Really responsible role, that.' 'Yeah, it is.' 'How much a year extra are you gonna give me for doing that?' 'Oh nothing. We want you to volunteer for it.' 'Nah, I think I'll give that a miss. Have you got anything else?' 'Well yeah, we've got Tornado if you fancy that.' 'Well, what's that? Are you gonna teach me how to fly a fighter jet?' 'No, no, that means that you respond to incidents, riots and concerted indiscipline.' 'Well, what's that involve?' 'Well, we send you away from home for five days and we get loads of people to chuck bricks and scaffold polls at you, and then you learn how to deal with a riot and you could get called out at a moment's notice.' 'Well, that sounds good, but isn't that dangerous? What happens if I get injured and I have to go sick?' 'Oh, don't worry about that. We give you the PPE.' 'Yeah, but if I get injured seriously on a shout, or a training, what happens?' 'Well, you're in your first year of the job so you'll get four weeks full sick.' 'And then what?' 'And then we'll put you on half pay.' 'Well, what happens if I have to stay off for a couple of months because I'm really seriously injured?' 'Well, because we give you all the PPE and it's partly your fault, we'll probably sack you on a capability.' 'Right OK – and how much a year extra does that pay me in the salary?' 'Oh nothing – we want you to volunteer.' 'I'll give that a miss. Have you got anything else?' 'Well, we've got an ACT assessor.' 'Oh, what's that? That sounds interesting.' 'Well you decide as an assessor when someone comes off an ACT document.' 'Alright – that's really responsible isn't it?' 'Yeah it is.' 'And what happens if I make the wrong decision?' 'You probably end up in coroners' court.' 'Yeah, but you'll back me, won't you, because Government Legal Department will back ...' 'Oh, if there's a conflict of interest we probably won't.' 'Wow, that's a really responsible job.' 'It is, yeah. You fancy it?' 'How much a year extra is that?' 'Oh nothing, we want you to volunteer for it.'

I mean, you couldn't make it up, could you? Imagine getting a plumber into your home and, say, they're fixing a kitchen tap and they're coming towards the end of the job and you say to them, 'Well, while you're here I've got all these radiators that need replacing in my house. Can you just do that while you're here?' And he says, 'Yeah, of course I can. I'll just give you a quick price for it. It won't take me long.' 'Oh no, I don't want to pay you extra. While you're here, do it out of good will.' He'd laugh in your face – but you know what, colleagues? We're doing that! Our members are doing that, they're volunteering for tasks for which they get no pay. Some of these tasks you're expected to do in your own time, and all I'm saying is it makes life very difficult for the Executive to persuade the employer to pay you for additional tasks that meet the business needs and help the business, because why should they? 'Why should we? We've got loads of volunteers, all the tasks are covered and it's not costing us a penny.' It's difficult to us to persuade decision-makers and influence pay review bodies when there's so many people volunteering for these tasks. We would like a situation where you're recognised for the skills, you're recognised for the training you've had to do, and you're paid the proper rate for the additional skills you gain. And it's good to see things on the order paper that we're going to debate and decide once and for all, and I notice a lot of contentious issues when it comes to pay and what we've done engaging with the Pay Review Body – but let me assure you, Conference, every decision this Executive makes, every decision is in your best interests, and I'd much rather be in the room trying to influence decision-makers than sat outside hoping that I get some crumbs.

I've noticed lately, colleagues, that as restrictions start to ease and we start to open up more, the violence has started to creep up again. This is your chance, as committees, to make your prisons as safe as they possibly can be. You will never get another chance like it. And I know you've got concerns. I know those concerns are, 'But my governor wants to go back to pre-Covid regimes. They want full-wing unlocks, they want to put on association.' You know what's best for your jail, so do what's best for your jail. And if that means you have to dispute your governor, or challenge your governor, then do so. What they've realised, a lot of governors, is that the Covid regimes were a lot safer. If we don't unlock a full wing, only unlock half a wing or a couple of landings, we've got better staff-to-prisoner ratios, we've got more staff around to deal with what's thrown at us.

When we're looking at purposeful activity, we need to move away, if we possibly can, from pointless association periods where we were giving prisoners pool equipment or letting them play table tennis. Give them something more purposeful and constructive to do and don't be fooled by governors who say, 'Well, we can get the pool balls out now because a member of staff is going to supervise a pool league, or a pool competition, and that's a structured on-wing activity.' I've never known any prisoner who's been released and the first thing they've done is joined a local table tennis club or looked for the local pool league. And I've been reading the daily reports – there've been some horrific assaults on staff where pool cues have been used. You know what's best for your jail, so do your best for your members and make it as safe as it possibly can be. And we're here to support you. You'll get all the advice and help that you need from the Executive.

But look at it like this – is it not safer, for example, to supervise 60 prisoners with six staff than 120 prisoners with six staff? Is that not safer? We think it is. And I know there are people in the high security estate who are concerned that, well, if we don't unlock a full wing then we're going to lose staff to Detached Duty or we're going to get our staffing levels cut. If you read the Sir Jon Hall report into terrorism in our prisons, it's an eye-opener. It's quite revealing, it's quite damning in parts, and even Sir Jon Hall recognises in that report that, in the high security estate, you do not have adequate staffing levels. And I know your staffing levels are good, but even an independent person has come in with fresh eyes and recognised that the type of prisoner you now deal with, and the threat you now face, you do not have adequate staffing levels. Read that report if you can, Conference. It's an eye-opener. And I know Government have accepted 12.5 of the 14 recommendations. The other 1.5 recommendations are to do with legislation changes, and our colleagues in the high security estate, Conference, are going to need our support over the next 12 months because, believe you me, things are going to get difficult in that estate. Because, when you read that report – the recommendations that have been accepted – there'll be no more appeasement. Staff will get the backing to do their job. When they challenge inappropriate behaviour, inappropriate comments, when they refer people to separation centres, they will get the backing from their managers. And if they don't, their managers will get replaced. It comes from

the very top. The directors are keen to implement everything in that report and to make our high security estate fit for purpose, and the only reason it failed is because staff on the front line are not getting that support from senior leaders. They want to challenge people, they want to get things right. You've got to have the backing and support to do that. I can assure you, Conference, that support is coming.

When I look at health and safety, we've just come across some information which is yet to be confirmed, so I'll put it out there now and maybe you can help us. So, apparently HMPPS are telling us that there are 22 prisons which have had extra fire safety surveys done due to the concerns about fire safety in those prisons. One prison, apparently, it was stated that it was so unsafe that they should decant that prison immediately, carry out remedial work and then get the prisoners back in. That means that you are working in an unsafe environment, and prisoners are housed in an unsafe environment. And we're all at risk. We were made aware of a whistle-blowing in one prison that apparently whistle-blew because there was a problem with the gas supply which could have caused an explosion. And he only whistle-blew because, for six months, they were ignored. So we've got staff going into a prison that could have been killed because of a faulty gas supply. Yet to be confirmed, but if you know about it, please tell us. And there was a cell fire in one prison where the fire detection in that cell wasn't up to standard. It failed, and that's why you'll notice the latest circular that Joe Simpson sent out, encouraging you to get your workplaces inspected. It is so important. When you get back after Conference, please conduct a health and safety assessment of your workplace and try and find out if the fire safety is up to scratch, if everything's in good order, because we need to know about it.

And then we turn to pensions. Colleagues, we are one of only two public-sector unions who have gained a successful remedy and settlement over our pensions challenge. We've already got the seven years back in our legacy pensions – if you wish. That's your choice. And we're now waiting for sign-off for injury to feelings claims. So for those members who've put a claim in, you will be getting compensated for injury to feelings because of the changes to your pension. And as soon as the Treasury sign that off – it's all been approved, it just needs a signature – we will update you accordingly.

But look at our retirement age. You know, colleagues, some campaigns are long and hard-fought, and this is one of them. Our retirement age – state pension age, 68 – it's just too late. It's unachievable. We cannot work in our late sixties in what I consider to be the most hostile and violent workplace – certainly in Western Europe, if not the world. It needs to be fixed. It is mentally and physically impossible for us to continue to work in that environment late into our sixties. It's abhorrent, unnecessary, impractical and unworkable. And I know many of you have written to the Prisons Minister, Victoria Atkins, about this issue. Well let me just quote some of the responses contained in that letter, because if you write to your local MP you'll get the same reply – it's just a copy and paste job – but some of the comments are quite interesting, and I quote from Victoria Atkins's reply to some of you: 'HMPPS has been recruiting prison officers at age 60 who have successfully completed the training and are undertaking their roles effectively.' How sad is that? We're that desperate for staff we're now recruiting people aged 60 and above. It doesn't say how many people we've recruited at that age. That might be worth a little Freedom of Information request I think, but I can't see many people in their sixties undertaking their roles effectively.

Next quote: 'Cabinet Office did give consideration to the fact that the prison officer role was a physically demanding one. The work concluded that, as there were a number of other civil servants whose jobs were similarly demanding, for example seamen on Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships and on Fishery Protection Vessels, that a lower pension age could not be justified compared to other scheme members.' Now I don't know about you, but I don't know of many merchant seafarers who go onto the deck of their vessel and have someone come along and throw a bucket of urine and faeces all over them. I don't know many of them who get approached by someone holding a sharp-edged weapon or a knife trying to slash their throat. And I certainly don't know many merchant seafarers who go back to their cabin they're sharing with their shipmate, only to find that it's getting smashed to smithereens and he's barricading himself in. So, I don't know where that one's coming from but we'll certainly tackle it this afternoon.

Next one: 'Due to the higher physical demands in the firefighter role and the higher potential for serious injury and fatality in both police officer and firefighter roles, Government felt that the role of a prison officer was not directly comparable with those within the emergency services.' We were part of the Assault on Emergency Services Bill, so we're classed as an emergency service, we're a frontline uniformed service, and to say that we're not at as serious risk of fatality as those two other roles – it might have been accurate ten years ago, it's certainly not accurate now. Look at some of the incidents we've had over the last 12 months to two years. You've had the terrorist attack at Whitemoor, where one of our colleagues was going to get held hostage and beheaded. We've had a member of staff at Swansea slashed across the throat. The surgeon said that you're lucky to be alive, it was that close to your jugular vein. Only recently, we've had a member of staff at Cookham Wood airlifted to hospital and placed in an induced coma, such was the ferocity of the attack. We've had a member of staff at Bedford stamped on, placed in intensive care. And they're just a few examples. So that's clearly not accurate in the modern Prison Service.

'It's also worth noting,' she goes on to say, 'that those in the police and firefighter schemes pay more into their pension to allow them to take formal retirement at age 60. Under the civil service scheme, the prison employee contribution rate is set at 5.45%, whereas under the police officer and firefighter schemes, the rate is between 12% and 14% of the individual's pensionable pay.' Yeah, and we'd be happy to pay the same if you matched those wages. If you want me to pay between 12% and 14%, then increase my salary so I'm not at a detriment. Because after seven years on the beat as a copper, you're earning at least £38,000 per year without any promotion. That's the top line for a custodial manager. Is it any wonder people are leaving to join the police? So, if we matched them we could pay that.

'The Government is alive to the views of staff and trade unions on retirement age and efforts have been made twice, once in 2013 and again in 2017. The 2013 package offered prison officers the ability to purchase a lower pension age. A similar offer was made to prison officers in 2017 but there was no cost to the individual member of staff to purchase a lower pension age of 65. Both offers were rejected by the POA membership.' I remember them well. I remember the quote from myself in 2013. So for me to be able to retire aged 60, despite the fact when I signed on the dotted line I could, with a full pension and gratuity, and a non-contributory pension scheme by the way, it would have cost me an extra £350 per month. I couldn't afford it then, I can't afford it now and I don't know many prison officers who could, so it's no wonder that that was rejected. And the 2017 offer was not a standalone offer. It was tied in with other elements of workforce reform, and it was State Pension Age minus three, and that was the sticking point. Yeah, I agree, we've got to break the link between State Pension Age and our retirement age, but State Pension Age minus three could have, in the future, put us back to where we are now, because if the pension age is increased to 70, and we'd accepted that, we'd be back to a retirement age of 67 with no argument. So I think we made the right decisions.

What the Government have got to do is they've got to stop comparing us to merchant seafarers. We are frontline essential uniformed service, so treat us like one. The risks are there for all to see. What is it going to take? Is it going to take a murder of a prison officer on duty to make people realise how dangerous our occupation is? We need a standalone deal. We will continue to press this issue, Conference. This is a fight we can win.

And when we're talking about safety, it's our stance that we want PAVA rolled out in every prison in every estate, no matter where you work. But I have to say that recently there have been some horrendous incidents in the youth custody estate, dealing with those prisoners who are under the age of 18. If they are going to be classed as children, they need to start acting like children, because at the moment they are nothing more than violent young criminals. We've had minibuses taking dozens of staff to hospital to get treated. We've had staff airlifted to hospital and placed in induced comas. We've had education blocks smashed, teachers attacked, violent young criminals attacking each other as soon as they're unlocked. What is it going to take for directors to admit that we need that protection in the juvenile estate? We came close to a murder at Cookham Wood, and I'm so pleased that the member of staff, the POA member who was airlifted to hospital and placed in a coma, is here with us this week working on security. Wayne, it's absolutely fantastic to see you and I hope this week aids your recovery.

<Applause>

That alone should convince people. To the directors in the YCS estate, who refused to back our call for PAVA, shame on you! We don't want you to have an open mind, we want you to support us. We want you to agree that the rollout of PAVA in the juvenile estate is the right thing to do. It protects staff and it protects prisoners as well. I can assure you, Conference, we will not stop campaigning, pressurising, insisting, demanding the rollout of PAVA for our members who work in the youth justice sector. PAVA now in the YCS estate – no excuses!

Colleagues, this is a very proud union and I'm so grateful that we are internationalists. We shouldn't be insular. We should support other causes and unions around the world. Look at other industries, look at what's happened during the pandemic, and sometimes you've got to look at other industries and think, you know what? We're not doing too bad. None of us were furloughed. We all enjoyed full pay. Yes, we were working on the front line, but lots of people who were furloughed then got made redundant when the money from the Government ran out.

Then we've got the abhorrent process of fire and rehire. We've seen it with British Gas engineers and we've seen it more recently with P&O Ferries. Sacked by Zoom, your livelihood gone overnight, replaced with cheap labour on less than the minimum wage. And all the Government have to do is withdraw the licence to P&O and insist they reinstate the staff. So why don't they?

That's why this union will always have solidarity with causes that need our help. Solidarity with Cuba trying to life the blockade so they can get vital medical supplies into that country. And did you know that, during the pandemic, Cuban doctors left their home country and flew all over the world to assist with the fight against Covid? That's why we will stand in solidarity with Justice for Colombia. People like you – activists, social leaders, trade unionists, community leaders – being assassinated for daring to speak up. We will stand in solidarity with all unions fighting fire and rehire. We will stand in solidarity with the Windrush Generation, who still wait for justice – as do the victims of Grenfell. And we stand in solidarity with the now 97 victims of Hillsborough, and that's why we're debating this week the Hillsborough Law. We won the Shrewsbury 24 campaign and we now fight for a public enquiry into the Battle of Orgreave. And of course we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and pray for peace. We will stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters universally because that's the right thing for any trade union to do.

Colleagues, as I mentioned before, we have been given five days' facility time from the employer and that's because we've got really positive relationships with the employer, and long may that continue. It doesn't mean we don't have our fallouts, it doesn't mean we don't disagree. We've still got pending court cases over issues that they refuse to back down on – that will always be the case – but there is a way forward, and as one director once said to me, 'It's OK to disagree.' And it is. Happy disagreement. It's the way you disagree, the professional manner in which you disagree. And I know how difficult it is for some of you when your governors just won't back down. They're obstinate, they won't listen, they don't value the union or your input. That's what we're here for. You're allowed to dispute, you're allowed to gain advice and support from the Executive. We'll give you that advice and support. But what I would encourage you to do is to sit down and try and resolve your issues.

In any conflict situation, whether it be the workplace or society, there has to come a point where both sides sit around a table, thrash out their differences and find a resolution, which may involve compromise on both sides. If we can do it, you can. But this is the way I want to do business with this employer – constructively, in partnership, because I believe you get more benefit from that way of doing business than constantly being in conflict. But remember this – I haven't changed. We haven't changed. By God, we will continue to fight for you as long and as hard as we can to improve your working life in every aspect possible. We will continue to fight colleagues, fight to win our retirement age of 60, fight to make our workplaces safe, fight to gain decent pay rises, fight to get our right to strike back, fight to scrap the fitness test, fight and win and never ever give up. And when the critics say to you, 'It's pointless fighting, we achieve nothing,' look at what we have achieved together since I have been the National Chair.

Successful pensions challenge. Stopping Band 2s staffing segregation units on nights. Early day motions in Parliament about violence in our prisons. Westminster Hall debates about our unrealistic retirement age. The rollout of PAVA, SPEAR and rigid bar cuffs. The rollout of body-worn video cameras. Nobody forced on national Detached Duty. Protection for Band 4s during the OMiC implementation. The professionalisation of the YCS estate and favourable transfer terms for those who do not want to work in that estate anymore. The stopping of immediate changes to compensation payments for inefficiency. Completely tobacco-free and smoke-free prisons. Birmingham returned to the public sector. Holiday pay for additional hours worked. Legal representation of PPO interviews. A legally binding health and safety protocol. Crime in Prisons Referral Agreement. Reinstatement of ACHP for those that had it removed. Full pay for staff shielding. No detriment for staff who had to isolate due to Covid. Assault on Emergency Workers Bill. Bonus schemes during Covid. Bonus payments during Covid. Record compensation pay-outs for members. POA podcasts, POA videos and the POA Memorial.

So, when members come to you asking what the POA do for them, you go ahead and tell them. And when they say it's the most expensive diary in the world, you look them in the eye and you say, 'Hell yes, but it's worth every single penny!' Conference, there is absolutely nothing we cannot achieve

together in unity. I salute you in solidarity to you all. Unity is strength! Thank you.

<Applause>

Thank you Conference. I call on Steve Gillan to deliver the Finance Officer's Report.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chairman. Conference, delegates, it's my duty under the rules and constitution to move the finance report on behalf of the National Executive Committee. Colleagues, I can advise that in line with rule 12.17 of this trade union's rules and constitution, I have received no questions in relation to the audited accounts that have been published in the April Gatelodge and as agreed by our Executive and signed off.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Point of order, Conference. Please approach.

**MICK LONGSTAFF – BRANCH CHAIR, LOW NEWTON:** I don't know about any other branches, but we haven't got our Gatelodge magazines, so we can't bring questions to Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, with respect, before Conference everybody is notified that if there are any questions they must submit them to the Finance Officer.

**MICK LONGSTAFF – BRANCH SECRETARY, LOW NEWTON:** But if we don't see the accounts, how can we put questions?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** The accounts are available to any POA member, anyone at all who's a member, to view at any point when they wish.

**MICK LONGSTAFF – BRANCH SECRETARY, LOW NEWTON:** What I'm trying to say is we haven't had our Gatelodge magazines and I know other branches who haven't had theirs.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIRMAN:** Well, Gatelodge magazines were sent out at the same time. I've no idea why you haven't had yours but the point is, Conference, that any POA member at any time can request to see the accounts, so I'm going to have to rule your point of order as out of order. Thank you Mick.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, perhaps I can clarify that as well, to your ruling. In relation to the Gatelodge magazine, it's not only just sent out to every single branch, it's also on your website, your POA website as well, as an electronic copy. So it's gone out in April, in compliance with the rules and constitution. It is out there so every delegate can have access to it on the website, so you can even check that in your lunch hour today, but the reality is they were all sent out, as they are each year. Sometimes they get held up in gatelodges, we accept that. We try our best to get them out but not one branch has reported, actually, that they've not received their April copy of Gatelodge until this morning. And prior to the Conference starting I was approached by a branch delegate as well, but I gave them my copy of Gatelodge. But the reality is it's definitely on the website, it's definitely been sent out to every branch, and I'm sure some branches have indeed received them as well.

So firstly I would like to thank the Finance Committee and the NEC, along with Paula Larwill in our Finance Department and our accountants, for their hard work – not just this year but every year. Their work is much appreciated and should not be underestimated. As in previous years, although not required to do so under the rules and constitution, NEC and full-time officers' monthly claim forms will be available during this week. If any branch delegate wishes to scrutinise those forms, they will be made available on a laptop with Paula and myself in attendance throughout the week, along with our accountant tomorrow. Our accountants are also present and can be asked any questions in relation to the audited accounts of this trade union.

Colleagues, commencing with the income of the Union for the year ending 31st December 2021, there was a small decrease in membership, predominantly caused by the recruitment and retention issues in the England and Wales service. Most other parts of our membership in Scotland were maintained, and indeed the same applied in Northern Ireland, special hospitals and private sector. As a result of the slight decrease, income decreased by £22,000. The closure of Union Learning and Learn Direct resulted in a surplus of £230,000 and, with the Covid Welfare Grant of £47,000, accounted for an overall increase in income of the union for the year of £162,000. With this increase in income, and only a small increase in costs, we generated a surplus for the year of £594,796. But I don't want anyone to be fooled by that headline of an increase in surplus. There was a surplus at the end of 2020 of £445,194, and of course the surplus last year of £594,796, but that was predominantly down to not having a Conference or full travel, branch official training etc. So don't be fooled by that headline figure.

Turning now to the balance sheet, our net current assets increased by £722,000, principally due to the amounts held in the bank in the Trades Dispute Fund and the accumulated fund. The overall net assets of the Union increased by £693 and now stand at £5,032,000. Colleagues, I must also report on the amount paid by the union in death benefits, which was sadly £199,300, with round about 41 deaths in 2021, which again Mark alluded to in his opening address, and that is extremely sad for those individuals and their families.

I now want to turn to two other areas that were agreed on throughout the reported year of 2021, and I will firstly deal, colleagues, with the POA cars, because if you recall, at the information meeting in November I did allude to the fact that the costs were expensive because of issues pertaining to HMRC and Government and I said that I believed there was a potential saving of £80,000 by the full-time officers, Deputy General Secretary, myself, the Area Secretary in Northern Ireland and the Chair in Scotland moving to a situation of an allowance currently given to the Executive, and claiming mileage. However, I've been proved wrong on that particular issue because there's more of a saving actually to be had by keeping the electric cars,

and I'm pleased to announce that there will be over £100,000 saving, not the £80,000 I envisaged, by us remaining on electric cars, and I'll explain why.

During the current lease contract, the Government have significantly punished company car providers financially, simply for driving diesel and petrol vehicles based on CO2 output. At the same time, taxation incentives have evolved to make road users reduce their carbon output by adopting pure electric vehicles. I was looking for savings of over £80,000 as previously explained, compared to the NEC allowance and mileage rate. The work presented and verified by our accountants presents a saving well above my initial target. We believe savings of over £100,000 against the NEC allowance and mileage will be achieved, with further savings likely through a reduction in Class 1 National Insurance paid by the employer.

The high punitive taxation means we can no longer provide a combustion engine vehicle to employees. Savings would be achieved on both benefit-in-kind taxation, fuel-benefit taxation and Road Fund Licence, plus running costs. Therefore pure electric vehicles do present the significant cost reductions we needed to achieve. The lower benefits-in-kind rate applied to pure electric vehicles would reduce the POA liability by 90%. Several electric vehicles were shortlisted and assessed against a real-world range, efficiency and charging speed. Due to access to its fast and reliable charging network, and vehicle efficiency, a Tesla vehicle was selected. In the field, vehicles would be charged on the Tesla supercharger network and the POA would pay the costs. Other charger networks are available if needed. However, the preferred charging network would be the Tesla network.

In relation to home charging, it is proposed that the vehicle users would record and claim the cost per kilowatt as the vehicles are charged should they wish to have a charger at home, but that's down to the individual. Currently, HMRC allow any charging performed on workplace premises to be exempt from any benefit-in-kind liability. In relation to Road Fund Licence, the Government have increased Road Fund Licence year-on-year in relation to combustion engine vehicles. The Tesla vehicles shortlisted are currently exempt from Road Fund Licence tax. As the cost of both petrol and diesel and electricity continues to rise, the electric vehicles would still provide significant cost savings to this trade union, as I've already identified. These savings have been analysed by our accountants and they agree that it would produce significant savings for the Union. It has been noted by the POA accountants that, although costs associated with carbon fuels and electricity both tend to be rising, the differential that would deliver an ongoing saving between the two remains constant.

There is considerable variation on the cost of charging electric vehicles. The cost per mile associated with the shortlisted electric vehicles ranges from 6.25p per mile domestic rate through to 13p per mile on Tesla superchargers and 9.5p per mile at the public charging stations, up to 7p per mile non-Tesla motorway charger. The cost per mile for a pure electric vehicle in April 2022 averages 12p a mile. Set this against the current 31p a mile paid to the NEC – a significant saving. This represents, on average, a 62p a mile saving. The deal secured as a replacement for the fleet includes the complementary installation of home chargers per vehicle if individuals so wish that to happen. Our accountants have confirmed charging at the workplace also is not a taxable benefit even if some of the mileage is private rather than business. Charging at home, as I've stated, is not, but you can get Government provision, actually grants, for providing them at home as well. The package currently being offered also includes one year's free insurance that represents a further saving. The proposal will not only significantly reduce costs for this Union when the current vehicle leases expire in October, but will reduce the POA's contribution to global warming by reducing carbon output by 59.474 kilograms of carbon a year. Conference, the Executive have endorsed that provision of remaining because of the savings on electric cars to be replaced in October.

There is also another issue about Calder Road in Scotland. For those of you who don't know where Calder Road was, that was part of a subcommittee group that looked at the issues in Scotland. However, things do change within the Cuffe Report, and obviously I'll explain why the change during that Cuffe Report. The Scottish National Committee, through Phil Fairlie, produced a report to the Executive about the state of Calder Road and that there should be a maintenance package put in place year-on-year to maintain Calder Road. Conference, when we looked at it, even the Scottish National Committee along with Phil and the branches determined that that wasn't a viable proposition, so we decided as an Executive to scrutinise the report from Scotland and, listening to the Scottish membership, that we would actually sell Calder Road and rent accommodation in the central belt, which is near <inaudible> and is only approximately, apart from obviously Inverness and Grampian, it's within 30-45 minutes travelling distance for the majority of the Scottish prisons. So it makes economic sense. The sale finalises on the 27th of this month, where we sell Calder Road at a significant cost but we got £600,000 for that premises. It would have cost us several hundred thousand to put into refurbishment and then have a maintenance package. That money will be ring-fenced for Scottish accommodation and we believe that the lease on the rent will be paid for when Kilmarnock comes back in as well to the public sector next year, because that's the pledge from the Scottish Government, that Kilmarnock will be returned to the public sector. So there'll be an increase in membership in Scotland and we believe that that money ring-fenced for Scotland will last for a generation of up to 25 years, just on that lease itself.

Conference, that concludes my Finance Report and I commend it to you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, we now need to adopt the Finance Report. All those in favour of adopting this report please show your hands now. Thank you Conference. That's unanimous. Thank you Steve.

I think we'll call it tea break. I can look in people's eyes and can see they're gasping for refreshments. Back at half-eleven please Conference. Thank you.

<MORNING TEA BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, we will progress business. We've got the AGM of the Welfare Fund Charity and then the adoption of annual reports. Over to Steve Gillan, General Secretary.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Conference, Chairman, delegates, it gives me great pleasure in moving the POA Welfare Fund accounts for year end 2021. Before I move the accounts I'd just like to say something about this Welfare Fund going back to 2003, some nearly 20 years ago. It's

one of the best things that this union has ever set up and we've, of course, added to that the Fire Fighters Charity stuff where we send our members for rehabilitation. Your fund, paid by you, for our members and, I've got to say, it generates a lot of income that we do spend on our members. Sadly, during the pandemic, we couldn't send them to the Fire Fighters Rehabilitation Centre, but in many respects that is pretty much going to be back on track now with the hybrid system of online and indeed face-to-face consultations again. So, you should be very proud of this Welfare Fund and indeed every POA member who pays into it should be exceptionally proud – past and present members – because I can't think of a better Welfare Fund in any of the trade unions in the whole of the UK, quite frankly. We should be exceptionally proud of this, and believe me, for someone who sat on the Welfare Fund for a long period of time in different capacities, by God, there are some shocking cases out there. They're private and confidential to the Welfare Fund, but there are heart-breaking cases out there that I don't know how some families, some members actually survive. And it's credit to you as branch officials, and indeed, our whole membership for looking after them, so thank you so much that we've got a vibrant fund that assists our members, and retired members, in their time of need. Without further ado I will move the accounts. Thank you, Chair.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Conference, are we happy to adopt those accounts? Please show in favour.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** I haven't actually moved them yet, Chair.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Oh, thanks for that. That's an indication.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Colleagues, it is now my duty to present the Welfare Fund's Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2021. The members' contributions were almost unchanged, with a slight decrease in the number of contributing members reduced subscriptions received by £6,000 to £318,136. The Gift Aid due on these contributions for the year amounted to £74,000. All of this amount has now been received from HMRC. The Welfare Fund also gratefully received a £10,000 grant in the year from the CSIS Charity Fund, which the Welfare Fund donated to the Prison Service Trust in Northern Ireland to assist our members there. All of the above have resulted in a reduction in income of £23,000 from last year to a total of £403,000. 69% of membership contributions were given out as grants during the year, and of the total grants of £270,000, £18,000 was provided for the residential rehabilitation courses for the Fire Fighters Charity. The other costs, including travel and subsistence and stress and bereavement counselling helpline, increased from £1,000 to £19,000 on behalf of our members <inaudible>.

Conference, as you know, the Welfare Fund has got charity status and we're bound by the rules of the Charity Commission. There's certain things that we've got to do within those initial rules that were passed by this Conference in 2003. There's certain rules that we can actually amend, and we've had to amend during the year, because we asked Wendy Price from Drake Hall to come on as a member because Mick Ricketts is sadly not very well, and we asked Stewart McLaughlin from Wandsworth to be seconded on as well. So, Conference, they have done tremendous work since they have come on as well. They are two very astute branch officials who know the Welfare Fund backwards because they've been at Conference a long, long time and are very experienced branch officials, and I commend them for the work that they do. I also commend David Evans and Jazz Windsor and our accountants who assist us in going forward. We're actually looking at the moment at investing some of this money to get a better return, but we'll keep you updated with respect to any decisions that we make, whether that's by circular or whether I report back at next year's Conference.

As I've said, during the pre-moving of this, it's a fund that you should be absolutely delighted with. So, turning now to the balance sheet of that fund. At the year end, the charity held just over £1,220,000 in the bank. The other debt is of £68,000, mainly from the Gift Aid due to HMRC. Overall, the surplus in the year of £113,000 helped increase the overall reserves of the charity to a total of £1,288,000 at year end, 31st December 2021. Looking forward I can advise Conference that once again this year in 2022 the CSIS Charity Fund had made previous donations but this year I've said, because of the amount of money within the fund, that we won't be making an application to them and they're extremely grateful for that because the pandemic hit their charity massively and I couldn't justify making a further application because of the amount of money in there. I commend the report to you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Good to go, Steve?

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Good to go.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You know the dance, Conference. All those who wish to adopt this report, please show. Thank you very much. That's adopted.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman. Chairman, in moving the Annual Report for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, I am aware that the Annual Report was emailed to every branch in the country. Please use this as a real reference point for the work that your Executive and full-time officers and our parliamentary work is doing on your behalf. You will see reports in there from our Whitley Council members, you will see the stuff that we've done in the comprehensive parliamentary Report Backs in this document, you will see the work of Scotland, Northern Ireland and, very sadly at the back, you will see the names of our deceased members going back to 2019. Sadly in 2019 we lost 29 members, in 2020 we also saw 50 of our members dying and, in 2021, 41. Conference, we try to look after those families, we try to look after, as you do at a local level, those individuals. You will see in a Conference paper that's going to be moved during the week, we want to up the death benefit. But I'm well aware, and I take on board what Low Newton said about the April Gate Lodge, and I have double-checked, it did go on the website in April but what I've asked for them to do upstairs is get a copy of those accounts so that every delegate has got one for when we debate and discuss the actual Conference Paper. This is an excellent document, colleagues, and I commend it to you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. We now need to adopt these Annual Reports from 2019. All those in favour of adopting those reports, please show now. Thank you, Conference, they've been adopted, Steve.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you very much, Chair. Chair, I think it might be worth squeezing in here the Pat Cuffe Report

from my Report Back on behalf of the Executive and that Conference, given time, you allow Pat Cuffe to respond because clearly there's nothing controversial within the Pat Cuffe Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Happy for that to happen, Steve. Carry on please.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** And I clearly say that tongue-in-cheek but this is the reality of the Pat Cuffe Report. Bear with me, Conference. The Cuffe Strategic Review of the POA began in June 2018 after motion 63 was agreed at the Annual Conference and the recommendations within the report were accepted by Annual Conference in 2019. Obviously since then the only opportunity to feed back to delegates was at the Information Meeting in November 2021, due to the global pandemic. The Executive acknowledge that the Information Meeting was not a decision-making meeting, but an opportunity to inform delegates of progress and an opportunity for branches who did not agree with the Report Back that was given at the Information Meeting in relation to the Cuffe Report to bring motions on areas where your branch wish to deliver changes within the Cuffe recommendations. Looking at the agenda there are no motions based on the recommendation of the report of 2019 from any branch throughout the United Kingdom. The NEC fully accept that this reference document can be used for the future, and branches may wish to bring motions in future years for debate at Conference on any future changes based on these recommendations. The NEC have not sat on their hands and a lot of work has been done, and I'll explain in detail which will supplement the information given at the Information Meeting last year. Before I do, I wish to thank the branch officials and POA members who engaged in the process and also the retired members and honorary life members who made up some of those sub-committees after the 2019 recommendations were accepted.

I also want to thank Pat Cuffe, who, at times, must've wondered what he'd got himself involved with when the Terms of Reference were agreed. I think it is appropriate to say that not everything ran smoothly and there was conflict between us on the NEC, and indeed, Pat Cuffe, which spilled over occasionally. But with constant dialogue I think both parties concluded that Mr Cuffe was defending passionately what branch officials and members told him and the NEC were also defending passionately what we as a collective believed. The one thing I would say is that Mr Cuffe always said this was a membership report based on what he was told in the focus groups that he held around the UK from within the POA membership where we operate. I think there is now respect from the NEC to Pat Cuffe, and indeed, from Pat Cuffe to the NEC. Mr Cuffe always stated that, where the NEC believed it was not possible to implement any recommendations within the report, the NEC needed to put up a business case and, where that business case was valid with clear evidence, then he would support it – and indeed he has.

When, on behalf of the Executive, I put a very simple case to him why national elections had to continue until branches brought changes to the Rules and Constitution, because in his recommendations it was about regional elections. But of course Pat Cuffe will be responding to any statement that I make on behalf of the NEC in respect of this Report Back as to whether he agrees or not with anything in this Report Back. Without opening a whole debate about the Cuffe recommendations, they are clearly that – recommendations – and as identified at the Information Meeting a lot of work has been done. But I also have to say, for two years there has been intense discussions with various employers during the pandemic that took up an enormous amount of time, not only from the National Executive Committee but yourselves as local branch delegates. That is not an excuse for certain things falling behind schedule, it is an absolute fact of what was occurring in the world around us, and I'm afraid that took priority in the preservation of life for our members, and indeed prisoners that we care for.

Turning now to the recommendations. Cuffe Report Recommendations 1, action point: Complete the constitution and rules review and report. The Executive believe this has been achieved, and indeed have brought forward rule changes for this Conference, which are in your Conference pack. It is fair to say we haven't complied with all rule changes, only rule changes that the NEC were in favour of, as we could not legitimately bring rule changes that we disagreed with as NEC members cannot speak negatively, nor indeed any branch, on any motions they produce. That in fact was for each branch to do and for the NEC to determine whether we were in support or not. All motions, including rule changes, have been before Thompsons as occurs before all conferences. This has not stopped branches in the future putting motions on the agenda which can be progressed in future years.

Action 2: Complete the membership fees review and report Annex B. The NEC believe if this was implemented then it would be riddled with problems and we would see complications by having a tiered system based on POA members' salary. We understand the sentiment, but unless the POA move to a check-off system, which involves employers giving us information and effectively controlling our membership database, we wouldn't know who moves between different grades. For example, if an OSG became an officer, would the POA straightaway know when the new subscription payment is due? Similar, in the private sector and special hospitals the grading system is different, as is the salary ranges for Northern Ireland and Scotland. We won't rule it out – as IT progresses it may well be worthy of future consideration. If branches feel that strongly about it, then that can be pursued in the future, but clearly if we do go down this route we need to be clear about how is it achieved and be able to guarantee a certain amount of annual income coming into the POA.

Action 3: Cuffe Report Recommendation: Complete the POA premises: Castell House, Cronin House and Linden House. This action has been completed and a relevant committee made up of retired member and honorary life members have concluded their reports and recommendations made. You also heard me talk about Calder Road this morning, which you moved and accepted in the finance report.

Action 4: Cuffe Report Recommendation: Complete the Scottish issues review and report Annex D. This report was concluded, again, by honorary life members and retired members and concluded that there were no significant areas of concern in their report. Since the Cuffe Report, the NEC were approached about the long-term future of Calder Road, which I've previously explained.

Action 5: Cuffe Report Recommendation: Implement new recruitment practices, job analysis, job and person specification, open recruitment, shortlisting, competency/skill-based interview, independent board members. Whilst, as general secretary, I agree with the thrust of this recommendation, I cannot agree to the changes that it will be independent board members that sit on the panel when clearly the system in place is adequate and agreed with the recognised trade union, which is the GMB. When I talk about that element I'm talking about the support staff, not about full-time officers. Our post for support staff needs to be balanced on the needs of the work. I was satisfied, after discussion with the recognised trade union and Senior Office Administrator, that we could comply with this recommendation for a further part-time member of staff, and that individual has now been employed. But

I still wish to make clear the POA cannot have outside influence on determining when and who we recruit and how many support staff we have. This is solely for negotiation with the recognised trade union, and I'm very proud to stand, as your General Secretary, and say I promised the staff that I would avoid redundancy, compulsory redundancies, at all costs. And believe me I have. It's been difficult because we only get a certain amount of money coming in and the reality is our staff wage bill is no higher than it was in 2010. Fact. That is the sole negotiation with recognised trade union, discussion with the Senior Administrator and, ultimately, me so that our wage bill does not run out of control. I'm pleased to say, as identified within this Finance Report, that our staff bill – in fact I say that looking at staff bills from 2010 back to 2005, managing the process in a fair way – hasn't increased.

Action 6: Cuffe Report Recommendation: Implement new recruitment practice in the private sector and special hospitals with the recruitment of two organisers. Well, as General Secretary, I liaise with the DGS, and indeed, full-time officers on workload and responsibilities, because they're all paid a good salary. If I believed there was a need for the recruitment of two organisers then I would produce a business case to take to the NEC and subsequently Annual Conference for you to decide. This has a cost implication, not just on salaries and travel but also on costs such as National Insurance and pension, which in turn would put pressure on the finances of this trade union. Since this report, I'm aware that we had the ridiculous situation of a national official acting outside the collective viewpoint of this Executive. Frustratingly, the Conduct Committee believe this individual didn't have a case to answer and I fully respect, as do the Executive, the decision that they made because you put the Conduct Committee in place and we listen to what the Conduct Committee say, even if we disagree. I respect that decision, but equally I'm not going to waste POA money on recruiting people that I do not need, or indeed, can justify.

Conference, if you believe that that's the best way forward then bring motions to do that. For that reason I've not complied with the recommendation, but I've put systems in place that are reaping rewards of hard work and using the resources that I have in a different way for organising and recruiting new members. The private-sector membership has increased, with new voluntary agreements being agreed at Oak Hill and Five Wells. And I've paid tribute to the team of private-sector local committees and full-time officers, along with Steve Lewis, who's taken on the role of organiser and recruitment within the POA. The business model that we have for the private sector, and indeed the special hospitals, is working. If, in the future, I believe the model needs to change as identified in the recommendations, then a business case will be brought before the NEC and Conference, but presently we are being successful within existing resources. And I actually believe the private-sector committees actually agree with that. If they didn't agree with that or special hospitals didn't agree with that, then they would have brought motions to this Annual Conference. They may reflect on it in the future, but at this moment in time we have given adequate resources, and by God it's worked because we have seen some good results in the private sector, not just on disciplinaries or grievances – and in special hospitals as well – but on pay, terms and conditions and so forth, and credit to those local delegates for the way that they've conducted business in a professional manner. I say, thank you.

Action 7: Complete a pay analysis study forthwith post-Conference upon acceptance of the Cuffe Report. To be fair, a paper exercise was carried out looking at comparable trade unions to the POA in relation to General Secretary, DGS, admin staff and full-time officers. It is a very difficult analysis to do on all terms and conditions. Some unions provide cars, some don't. Some have a defined benefit pension scheme, others have a defined contribution, as do the POA. Some have collective bargaining on pay, some, like the POA, have an agreed pay formula which has been intact since the 1990s. Some unions do have a differential in pay but the duties vary, so it is very difficult to do a full comparison. The point in this is all the employees of the POA are paid a decent wage overall and the employees are content with the systems of the pay model that is currently in place with the formula, and staff are content with the overall package including, for admin staff, a 35-hour week. If they are required to work overtime from time to time, then overtime is paid at multiple rates. The GS, DGS and FTOs do not get overtime and are not on a 35-hour week. Pensions for staff are a defined contribution and have been for a significant period of time, i.e. a staff scheme which goes back to the 1980s.

Action 8: POA branding addition. Not progressed and the NEC will leave this recommendation directly up to Conference. If branches feel strongly about it I am sure they will bring motions to Conference in the future. That is about 'unity is strength'. Some members believe that should be changed to something else. I'm not sure what but we await branches to bring that in future recommendations.

Action 9: Media training for national officials. We fully take on board this recommendation and recognise the world is changing and new techniques in the media world may be required. During the pandemic there was no opportunity to source this, but we will look after this Conference to prioritise this training for national officials.

Action 10: Make relevant administration changes as needed to National Chairman and Vice Chairman. We note that no branch has brought a motion to change the names and, when it has been brought in the past, the motions have been defeated. But the NEC recognise the recommendation, and rather than just reject it, we have on the Order Paper in our Rules and Constitution to reach a halfway house which may satisfy everyone. And being gender neutral we are seeking to change the name from Chairman to Chair, as we recognise our female Chairs will not want to be referred to as Chairman. Conference has every right to bring this back in future years if they feel that strongly about it.

Action 11: Retired members and honorary life members. The POA are proud of the way that we deal with our retired members and we do have a section of retired members contained within our Rules and Constitution. It laid dormant for a considerable amount of time, from about 2002 until I, as General Secretary, persuaded the Executive that we needed to reinvigorate that and we brought a motion to Conference which did reinvigorate it. They do not have Executive powers, and to make them a branch as suggested would be costly to the union because it would make them the biggest branch in the country, with over 3,000 members. We treat our honorary life members in a very good way, and rightly so, and try and involve both retired members and honorary life members in everything that we do as a trade union. If you actually look at what Pat Cuffe set up to do certain reviews, it was made up of experienced retired members and honorary life members. Our Conduct Committee operate with honorary life members and Cronin Clasp holders. They do a difficult job and at times the criticism they receive is unnecessary. We have looked after our retired members in legal cases on pensions and other areas and continue to look after them in welfare and other matters. We have a new committee for the retired members section and I'm sure they will look at areas of improvement and make recommendations to the NEC in due course. We look forward to progressing matters with them that are affordable to the union and do not present issues of vicarious liability. If Conference wish to give them more powers and visibility at Conference by being delegates, then they need to bring motions to Conference to further those aims, and presently no motions have been forthcoming for scrutiny by Conference by any branch.

Action 12: Review and exploration of POA website. The NEC took this recommendation on board and, after having a critical analysis, our members were correct to be angry and upset at the quality of the website. This didn't happen overnight but occurred over decades of neglect for fear of spending too much money. I am pleased to say we haven't only just improved the quality of the website, we have introduced webinars, <inaudible>, short promotions and the feedback we have had has been very good. But all this has cost money and it is this NEC that has introduced these significant changes.

Action 13: Explore information technology. Again, this was another exemplary recommendation that we had to deal with, mainly because of the pandemic, and find different ways of working. There is no doubt that, if we use the technology at national level, there will be savings for the POA that we can then put into other areas of campaigns for the benefit of the POA membership. I'd just like to make the point that there needs to be a balance between face-to-face meetings and IT. A hybrid approach is something we need to find that balance on, and that will be done in conjunction with you, as branch officials, and indeed respective employers about the facility time that they will give for that hybrid approach. I think that's a common-sense way of dealing with things.

Action 14: Thompson's App. This is achieved and Thompsons are rolling out the app and progress was only stalled because of the pandemic.

Action 15: With regards to Gatelodge is now achieved. The number is reduced and the magazine modernised and placed on your website.

Action 16: National Conference recommendations. We addressed this at the Information Meeting and branches were invited to bring motions about how they wish to see their Annual Conference. That is the NEC position. We can always strive to be better and there will always be an element of showboating at Conference as indicated within the report. Nobody wants lots of delegates who are in favour of motions just getting up and repeating what has already been said. But at the same time this Executive do not want to stifle legitimate debate. So, if there is a desire to alter the manner in the way we do things at Conference, then we look forward to future motions based on this recommendation. We're also introducing electronic voting, which you've had a demonstration on, to modernise Conference, and indeed, to demonstrate transparency about how each branch votes on motions so that the membership are clear on how business is being progressed, which also means branch officials from each branch will be held accountable for how they vote on important business.

Action 17: Mandatory training for branch officials. I'm afraid the National Executive Committee have rejected this recommendations, Conference, on your behalf as it just isn't viable. If someone is legitimately elected at local level, who are we to dictate that they must complete modular training through the POA? We don't believe it is legal, nor advisable, as no training for a trade union at local level should be mandatory. But we will keep an open mind and watch in the future for motions supporting this recommendation from you as delegates.

Action 18: Finance Officer role to be replaced. This has been achieved and this is the first opportunity for the NEC to bring rule changes to both the Rules and Constitution and the Finance Manual. I also want to advise this has seen a saving for the union as well.

Action 19: Modular training for private sector and special hospitals. This recommendation has been partly achieved without the modular training and we will continue to work with our branch officials in those sectors on a model of training that they want to see – not that the NEC want to see, what they want to see.

Action 20: All new positions for recruitment to be filled as per the model in the report. The recommendation has been achieved and two full-time officers have been recruited under the new model of the independent panel, and I'm pleased to say that was Phil Fairlie, in Scotland, and Angela Montgomery, who has been a major success and brings her experience from the field of working for different trade unions into the POA.

Action 21: Regional reps. Whilst the NEC are acutely aware of this recommendation and that the report indicated branches wanted regional reps who live in the region and work in the region, we are surprised that this hasn't been costed to ascertain whether it is cheaper or indeed more expensive, and whether moving to such a model would restrict talent from obtaining a seat on the NEC. At present, four out of the six reps do live and work in areas that they represent. If branches want this model then they need to bring a motion to Conference as it would need a rule change to be implemented, and until that time comes we will continue with the national model as the NEC do not believe it should be changed and therefore we could not bring a negative motion to Conference.

Action 22: DGS to be appointed rather than elected. Again, the NEC do not support this recommendation. We accept, under trade union law, the DGS does not have to be elected but the GS does, and if the GS is off then the DGS then becomes the acting General Secretary. Without having executive authority and the right to vote, he or she would not be able to exercise their vote or do the role of General Secretary. This has been before Conference on at least three occasions and each time rejected in favour of keeping an elected DGS. If branches really want to implement this recommendation, then they'd need to bring motions in the future to deal with it and make those changes. For clarity, at present the rules require the DGS to be elected. As the election commences this year, then an election will take place as per the current rules. That's for clarity.

There were other topics covered in the Cuffe Report, such as young members must be brought more into the POA movement, and we agree and encouraged towards greater involvement. The NEC agree with this initiative and, prior to the Cuffe Report, we've attempted to set up a young members sub-committee without success – there was no expressions of interest. The TUC classify young members as being under 27 years of age. We, as an NEC, will continue to push this as well as the trade union movement, as it isn't just a problem for the POA but indeed for the whole trade union movement.

A standardised and national recruitment programme must be set up as a priority. We agree. And I've got to say, Conference, as well, we know how difficult it is out there with recruitment and retention at this moment in time. You know better than us how difficult it is to retain members, but it's only you at a local level that can bring into the membership those recruited at local level and keep on top of it. You actually get facility time to do that. There

is a national agreement on facility time to address POELTs coming in, so I would ask you to do so.

EPSU membership. The POA are no longer affiliated to EPSU. This has nothing to do with Brexit but we didn't feel there was value for money. But we will continue, as the National Chairman identified, to have strategies internationally to liaise with other unions worldwide so that they can learn from us and we can learn from them.

In conclusion, the Cuffe Report gave a comprehensive review of the POA. We needed an external review because we have done review after review in the past and never really moved forward. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas. Now, we have a reference document that branches can review and refer to in the future. But it must be recognised the world, the trade union movement and POA will have to do things differently post-pandemic. We have learned how to do business in a different way and that will be nurtured in the future. The NEC, branch officials and members, along with Pat Cuffe, have wanted the very best for the POA as a trade union – and, out of the 22 action points, 12 have been fully implemented or achieved, four have not been progressed, two have been partly achieved and four are ongoing. There was the invitation for branches at the Information Meeting to propose any aspects of the report via Annual Conference and that remains the position for the future.

Once again, thank you to Pat Cuffe for his report based on what branches and members told him. It couldn't have been easy and I know sometimes there's a reluctance for change in any organisation. The POA have demonstrated that we are not afraid of change as long as it is justified, fair and affordable to the paying member. I know, Conference, that is a long Report Back but it was completely necessary so that it was explained to you, the delegates, who set Conference policy. We don't set the policy at the top table. You are our parliament, you set the policies.

So, Conference, thank you very much. That is Report Back from the Pat Cuffe Report and I'm sure Pat Cuffe will probably take his time in responding to what I say. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. I'd like to invite Pat Cuffe to respond. Conference, please welcome Pat Cuffe.

<Applause>

Pat, in all sincerity it's really good to see you looking so fit and well. You're very welcome.

**PAT CUFFE:** It was probably due to less stress because of the pandemic. Chair, General Secretary, members of the NEC, FTOs, invited members, honorary life members and you, the important ones, the delegates – it's good to be here. It is good to be here.

I was very interested to know what way the Report Back would be from the NEC on the report that I was commissioned back in 2019. I was interested when I heard the Chair this morning, using the words that, when there is need for debate, when there's conflict, when there's disagreement, that the key to resolving it is discussion. The key to resolving it is respect and compromise. And I believe that to be the case also with the Cuffe Report.

Everybody who's in the room here, and a lot who aren't, will recall that there was a lot of conflict when that report was put forward. A lot of conflict. And that conflict was between three parties – one was the NEC, I was party number two and the branches were party number three. The report, thanks for democracy, was overwhelmingly endorsed by Conference in 2019, and it was endorsed in its entirety. Let's just explain what that means. The report and everything that was in it was passed and accepted in its entirety, and the reason for that was that I didn't want cherry-picking. I didn't want people saying, 'Well, I like this, I don't like that.' Nothing would've been done. So, the report passed. Now, let's look at what the report is. It is literally that, it is a discussionary document. It's not a table of law, it's not etched in stone. Nothing in life can be etched in stone – unless, and I please want you all to listen to this, the General Secretary referred to it on numerous occasions in his speech – nothing can be etched in stone unless you etch it in stone. I'm going to say that again, in particular for the POA, nothing can be etched in stone unless you etch it in stone.

People are entitled to have their worries, their concerns. They're entitled to disagree. I mean on the Report Back in November the National Chair mentioned the 21 or 22 different recommendations and, at some, his comment was, 'We don't like that.' People contacted me, people from branches contacted me and they were a bit disappointed to hear that tone and that comment. My point was, what's the problem? It's a democracy. The National Chair, everybody on the NEC, are entitled to disagree with things. That's the way it is. That's democracy. But they can't unilaterally throw it out. They're entitled to disagree. Now, I'm not going to go through the 20-odd recommendations there were. I think the General Secretary has done a particularly good job by going through each one of them. But the one overriding factor that came out of the General Secretary's Report Back, and I absolutely agree with him, I'm disappointed that the branches didn't put through.

I'm disappointed that the branches didn't put through motions for this Conference. Nothing can happen unless you, the branches, put it through. As the General Secretary said, they can't put through negative motions – you guys can't put through negative motions. I thought that what the General Secretary has done here today was particularly brilliant, but I think it would have been more valid next Conference, where you looked at each of the individual reports and recommendations, and discussed them and done the old hands up or the electronic voting system and put it through. At the moment you have a reference document, the Cuffe Report – that's all it is. But that's your word. This is what you people told me. So, if you want that to work you have to make it work, and that means you have to put in even more work. That work means putting Conference motions into next year's Conference and to have it openly and totally debated and to have members of the NEC coming up and saying, 'Well, we reject that particular motion because ...' But that word because, again what the General Secretary said, and also the Chair said as well, that you have to put a business case for why we're rejecting something. You can't just say, 'We own the ball, we're not playing anymore, I'm going home to have my tea.' There has to be a business case put forward why something is rejected.

The General Secretary said today there was a couple of areas that the reason the NEC are going against it is because there could be constitutional issues or whatever. That's fine. But once that's explained it's up to you then to say, 'Well, there's a way around that, we change the constitution.' You are the people with control. As the General Secretary said, they are the MPs doing the work that you, their constituents, tell them to do. But they can't do anything unless you (a) put it forward and endorse it, or (b) you don't do anything. But if you do nothing, nothing is going to happen. Doing nothing is not an option.

You contributed towards that report in your hundreds. It was a pleasure to deal with all of you. Don't let it go to waste. Don't let it go to waste. Now, I don't know why branches haven't put through motions to this particular Conference regarding the recommendations. Maybe they thought that the report was it. That it was the Ten Commandments and it had to be done. But I'm here to tell you it's not, but it can be this time next year. And I ask you, don't be afraid to talk to each other, different branches – 'Look, come here, you know this thing, how do you feel about that?' 'Well, yeah, we kind of think that's a good idea.' If it's 10 branches putting forward a motion next year, fantastic! I don't care. The NEC don't care. All anybody is interested in is dialogue and compromise, as your Chair said this morning. Let's get rid of the conflict. Let's move forward for the better of the POA.

And I'm going to finish by saying this to you. I have had a lot of experience over the years dealing with different trade unions and different organisations, and I've seen loyalty, I've seen disloyalty, I've seen conflict and I've seen accord. I was so proud of you guys, not for what you were told earlier on about the <inaudible>. I'm so proud of you as a trade union. The efforts that you put in in engaging with me and my colleague, Mark Freeman, when we went around all the branches, it was phenomenal. A number of branches said, 'Look, why should we engage with this Cuffe Report thing? The NEC are going to bat it out of the pitch!' And, as I said, 'Well, if it was an NEC-led report they'd have every right to do it.' But it wasn't. It's a Conference report that was set up by the NEC. They have to get credit as well. Without them the Cuffe Report wouldn't have happened. Now, they might disagree with a lot of it – that's fine. I'm asking you to go back to your branches, talk to your branches and come up with motions on the 20-odd things that we put forward from you, to have then enacted, to have the members of the NEC coming up here and explaining why they disagree with it instead of just saying, 'No, we don't think that's a good idea.' Have your say. This time next year, hopefully I'm here and hopefully you lot will be here as well. And I thank you very, very much and I thank the NEC for inviting me to Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Very welcome, Pat, thank you.

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference, we're going to draw this morning's session to a close and ask you to reconvene at a quarter-to-two, when we can get on with our first guest speaker, Frances O'Grady. Just one announcement, for your information: the emergency motion from Durham, emergency motion for that will be cited at 19a. If you want to record that in your booklets, 19a emergency motion from Durham, and I'll see you all at quarter-to-two. Thank you.

<LUNCH BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. If I can bring you to order. Thank you Conference, it's my pleasure and honour to introduce our first guest speaker, who's worked tirelessly on behalf of working-class people throughout her trade union career, the General Secretary of the TUC, Frances O'Grady. Frances, I'm going to read out your bio here. I have not written this so I am blameless!

Frances became General Secretary of the TUC in January 2013, the first woman ever to hold this post. She joined the TUC as Campaigns Officer in 1994 and launched the Organising Academy in 1997. Frances headed up the TUC's organisation department in 1999, reorganising local skills projects into Union Learn, which now helps a quarter of a million workers into learning every year – or did until the Government reduced the funding, and now it doesn't exist anymore. As Deputy General Secretary from 2003, Frances led on the environment, industrial policy, the NHS and winning an agreement covering the 2012 Olympics. She has served as a member of the Low Pay Commission, the High Pay Centre, the Resolution Foundation's Commission on Living Standards, the Commission on Economic Justice and the Government's National Retraining Partnership.

You haven't really done that much, Frances, have you?

In 2019 Frances became a non-executive director of Bank of England Court of Directors and in 2020 she became a non-executive director for Unity Trust Bank. Conference, please welcome to the stand Frances O'Grady.

<Applause>

**FRANCES O'GRADY – GENERAL SECRETARY, TUC:** Thanks very much Chair. Thanks for your fantastic leadership and your work for the Union and the wider movement. And delegates, just in case someone from Downing Street is watching this, can I just say this is what a work-related event looks like!

<Applause>

No suitcases of booze, no karaoke, no cheese on sticks and no Prime Ministerial porky-pies. Conference, I want to begin by thanking Steve, your General Secretary, for his leadership, his friendship and his wisdom. I've known him for longer than I care to remember and, take it from me, I wish you could see him in fact in the General Council because you could not find a better champion of this union and the people that you represent. And never underestimate the huge sacrifices that Steve makes for his members. The long hours, the endless travel and, not forgetting the grimmest part of the job, those meetings with Dominic Raab. He is the man of course, Dominic Raab, who once co-wrote a pamphlet claiming that British workers are the worst idlers in the world, and I'm pretty sure that Steve will have put him straight on that one when it comes to prison officers. But whether it's

fighting the far right or supporting our trades councils, Steve's commitment to working people is second to none.

And I want to pay tribute to Steve and I've been asked to do this specifically on behalf of the TUC President for putting equalities at the heart of the POA's work. He's a highly respected member of the President's Group on Tackling Sexual Harassment and we're all really proud of him. And if I can just say this, and I say this not just as a General Secretary but as a woman active trade unionist and rep in my working life, that one of the problems with sexual harassment is it just feels humiliating. You feel, when you're trying to do a good job on behalf of the Union, you feel like you're taken down and made smaller and in the end all it does is weaken our unions, because we need men and women fighting fit for the cause that we all represent.

So, I also want to thank you, Delegates, for everything that you do in your branches, your workplaces and your communities too. Your international solidarity, fighting for justice in Colombia and elsewhere, building rock-solid organisation at every level of the Union, so that if you are a prison officer or if you work in a secure psychiatric facility, it's odds on that you will be a POA member and fighting for the fundamental human right to work free of fear and violence.

Now, over the last 30 years, as you know all too well, the prison population has almost doubled, and it's no coincidence that there are now more than eight assaults on prison staff every day. So we're all right behind Labour MP Grahame Morris's Prison Violence Bill, because trade unions are clear, it's time to protect the people who protect us, and safety at work has never mattered more than it matters now. When Covid swept through our prisons with such devastating effect, you put your own safety on the line in the service of others. You did everything you could to make our prisons as Covid-secure as possible and you made big sacrifices. I spoke to a prison officer who'd moved out of his family home because he was terrified that he would spread the virus to his loved ones. Many suffered stress, others became seriously ill and some died. And that's why your work with Thompson's to secure justice for members who contracted the virus in the line of duty is so, so important.

Delegates, it's all a sober reminder that the work that you do is difficult, demanding, dangerous. Violence, suicides, riots, dirty protests, fights – day in, day out you have to deal with it all. The best of human instincts sometimes dealing with the worst. And POA members are among our country's most important key workers, on the frontline of the criminal justice system, keeping our society safe, and your professionalism shines through.

But Delegates, where is the recognition? Tory cuts have seen uniformed grades slashed from 25,000 to 18,000 – no surprise then that assaults are more than double. And the false economy of rehabilitation in ruins. Reoffending rates up by 40%. Conference, let's be clear: you cannot run prisons on the cheap and you should not run prisons for profit. The POA is absolutely right to say that the incarceration of citizens must be the responsibility of the state, not an opportunity for private greed.

<Applause>

Let what happened at HMP Birmingham be a warning lesson. Handed to the private sector amidst great fanfare and at huge expense, and then we have the devastating riot there in 2016 before it comes back into public hands. Instead of selling off the family silver to line the pockets of shareholders, let's invest in publicly run, publicly accountable prisons, and let's invest in the skills and the pay packets and the pensions of dedicated men and women at the sharp end of our criminal justice system. And that's why your '68 is too late' campaign is so crucial. The work that you do, it shouldn't have to be said but the work that you do is physically demanding. It would be draining for young people, let alone anybody approaching their eighth decade. Many of your members would have to put in 48 or maybe 49 years of hard graft, so let's send a message to Ministers. We demand decent pensions, a fair retirement age and dignity in retirement for prison officers who've given a lifetime of public service.

Delegates, these are tough times for POA members, just as they are for all working people, and we face the worst cost-of-living crisis in generations. As the TUC has exposed, energy bills are already rising at 14 times faster than average pay. Inflation surging towards 10% – families are struggling. Just a week ago we learned that two million people in this country can't afford to eat every day and many of them are children. Tory MPs say we don't need food banks, just better cooking skills. According to the Tories, to eat healthily people only have to spend 30 pence per meal. Well, I'm pretty sure that some of those MPs spend a little bit more than that. Poor families are on the sharp end, but the cost-of-living crisis has spread far beyond. Everyone can see it in their weekly shop, household bills and on their bank statements. Perhaps if the Chancellor spent a little less time on Instagram he would see it too. Yet what's his answer for struggling working families? Well, we saw it in the Spring Statement – it was tax hikes and benefit cuts. Instead, the TUC has called for the Government to go back and do it again. We need an emergency budget to deliver real change. We need a proper living wage and fair pay agreements, decent sick pay and a boost to Universal Credit, a windfall tax on greedy energy giants and the equalisation of capital gains tax with income tax – because, yes, all of us want to see more money for the NHS and for social care, but Conference, it's time to raise tax on wealth, not workers.

<Applause>

And today I call on the Government to stop interfering in the Pay Review Body. Instead, get a grip on the recruitment and retention crisis in our prisons, give prison officers the decent pay rise they've well and truly earned – and, if the Pay Review Body cannot prove that it's genuinely independent, then it's high time to bring back free collective bargaining. We've had too many broken promises from this Government. Delegates, remember when Boris Johnson promised that Britain would be the best place in the world to work? Well, try telling that to the crews on P&O Ferries. 800 workers shamefully, unlawfully sacked over Zoom, replaced with exploited agency labour – and they're working 12-hour shifts, 7 days a week, paid less than half the UK statutory minimum wage. Delegates, that is gangster capitalism at its worst. We've said that P&O must be a turning point on workers' rights, because if P&O can get away with it, then no worker is safe. We've seen fire and rehire, zero-hours contracts, millions of workers on low pay and no security, but yet again Ministers have delayed the Employment Rights Bill that the Prime Minister promised not once, not twice but on 20 separate occasions. That was a kick in the teeth for workers and a god-send for rogue employers who treat their staff like dirt. This Government says that it hasn't been able to find the parliamentary time to introduce stronger rights for workers. Funny that, because they found time to implement the so-called 'unfinished business' of the 2016 anti-trade-union Act, and you know better than any union that every Tory Government ever since the 1980s has brought in anti-trade-union laws. Each one, each one designed to worsen working conditions, weaken workers' bargaining power and fix the odds in favour of

bad bosses.

Now, thanks to years of POA campaigning, the Scottish Government has at long last restored trade union rights – so, if Scotland can do it, then why can't the rest of the UK do it too? And let's be clear, the decision to hold the POA in contempt of court for doing what any free and independent trade union exists to do – which is to stand up for its members – it is a scandal in any democracy.

We've got a lot of lessons to learn but we need to learn the lessons of the pandemic about whose work really matters, the true value of labour. I often say, when people were out on their doorsteps they weren't clapping private equity partners or hedge fund managers, they were clapping key workers. Ordinary people get the value of the work that is done. We campaigned for an independent public enquiry and we've now won that. Now, together with the Covid-bereaved families' groups, we are going to be demanding answers. Why it was that key workers like you were left so badly exposed, particularly at the start – very often not enough tests, poor PPE and poor ventilation, with union reps on the ground giving people the only hope of protection. Why it was that so many vital contracts ended up in the pockets of Ministers' VIP mates, and why it was – from unemployment to death rates – black and ethnic minority people too often bore the brunt. Now, the TUC's anti-racism task force, headed up by Patrick Roach, is making anti-racist action a priority for the whole movement because, delegates, whatever our race, whatever our religion, whatever our background, everyone, everyone should be treated with dignity at work. And we want to make sure that our own movement leads by example, so we become a stronger fighting force for all working people everywhere. I know that, when we work together, when we combine our power, we are unstoppable.

Who was it who won the furlough schemes that averted that threat – remember, at the start of that crash when companies were on the brink – averted that threat of mass unemployment? And it protected, at its height, the livelihoods of 12 million workers. We did that. I can guarantee you that would not have happened without the trade union movement. We did it. Who has shown, from our public services to the likes of Deliveroo, that there are no no-go areas for trade unionism? We have. And who has recorded net membership growth for the whole movement for the last four years in a row? Together, we've done that.

On the 18th June the TUC General Council has called a national demonstration in London demanding action on the cost of living, a decent pay rise for all and a new deal, stronger rights for all working people. So let's spread the word in our workplaces and communities, make this our biggest, boldest, best demonstration in years. Men and women, black and white, whatever our background or profession, a real show of strength and friendship between all working people and then together I believe we stick together, we stand together, we will win.

Solidarity, delegates. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well Frances, it's always a pleasure to listen to you speak. You speak passionately about working-class people and the fight continues. I know you're due to retire at the end of this year and I'm going to hand over to Steve Gillan, who's got a few words that he'd like to pass on to you. I know you've worked closely with Steve and he's also got a gift which apparently is left over from one of Boris's work gatherings! Over to you, Steve.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much, Chair. Conference, I'm delighted to say that I've known Frances for many years and what a remarkable woman she is. I know that she's very proud of the fact that she's the first female General Secretary of the TUC and I remember, back in 2012, that the POA National Executive Committee, we nominated Frances for that position – not because she was a woman but she was the best person for the job. An absolutely committed trade unionist and one of the best General Secretaries, in my opinion, that the TUC have had. And I just want to relay this short story to you about a time that we dealt with Frances in the POA, and it was back in the day when Colin Moses was National Chair, Brian Caton was General Secretary and I was the then Finance Officer. And would you believe, the employer had run us in on a contempt of court issue in 2007. We turned up at court, we'd briefed the then General Secretary, Brendan Barber, and indeed Frances, on the issues that we were facing.

When we got to the court, we were due to go in for the hearing and Gerry Sutcliffe, who was the Prisons Minister at the time, ordered the Prison Service to call it off and to come to his office in the Home Office – which we duly did, with an element of surprise actually that the contempt of court had been called off when we were just about due into court. And the employers in HMPPS then were ordered to attend the Home Office as well. Frances absolutely destroyed them in an argument about what was right and what was wrong with the Prison Service – and we'd only briefed Frances a week before this court case was coming. And to see some of the employers sit in that office, being ripped to shreds by the TUC Deputy General Secretary, will live with me for a long time actually. And since she became General Secretary I've watched, worked with her and I've got to say she's been an absolute pleasure to work with because, any time the POA have needed assistance, Frances hasn't just been there. She's been actively involved and she produced a witness statement for us to take to court saying why we should have our trade union rights restored and what a travesty of justice it is.

So the reality is she didn't just look after big trade unions. She looked after all. And I think she's not just an inspiration to young women coming forward in the trade union movement – and I hope to see that in the POA actually – she's an inspiration to all trade unionists. And Frances retires at the end of this year, in December, and she will be a real tough act to follow. But life goes on and I'm sure the next person that becomes the General Secretary of the TUC will also have their work cut out and I look forward to working with them as well on behalf of the POA.

Frances, thank you so much, and we'd just like to give you a small presentation of our appreciation, not just for what you've done for the POA but what you've done for the trade union movement. Many thanks Frances.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. The next guest speaker is due at 2:30pm, which is Victoria Atkins, the Prisons Minister. We've also got a short video from Dominic Raab to present to you. Just one thing before we make a start on the motions. There are observers from the Gibraltar Prison Service here – very welcome. Thank you for your kind gift – and just for your notation I haven't visited Gibraltar! So let's get a start on these motions and let's see how this electronic voting goes.

Motion 1 is Hollesley Bay. Do we have a seconder for this motion? Warren Hill, thank you.

#### **Motion 1:**

**Changes are made to the wording of Rule 11.2 to reflect the difficulty faced by smaller Branches in convening meeting which qualifies under Rule 13.**

**Rule 11.2 to read:**

**Branch Committee members should:**

**(a) Hold a branch meeting to discuss the election. OR CIRCULATE REQUESTS FOR NOMINATIONS TO MEMBERS VIA EMAIL. No branch meetings, for nomination purposes, should be convened, OR REQUESTS CIRCULATED, until close of nominations, as stated in the officially published timetable.**

**(b) Read out OR CIRCULATE BY EMAIL all requests for nominations and nominate a candidate for the vacant position or inform the General Secretary that the branch failed to nominate any candidate.**

#### **HOLLESLEY BAY**

**MARK SMY – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLLESLEY BAY:** Chair, Conference, NEC, basically it's just a change in rule 11.2. I mean we're an open prison, 75 members and they're all spread out all over the place. To actually have a branch meeting is near impossible. We ask for it, the governor grants it, we end up – we've got an MSL normally running of 12 or 13, seven are on res units and we've just not even got enough for a quorum. So what we're asking, if there's the possibility of changing or having an amendment that we can, for nominations to the NEC, we can circulate the requests via email to every member, and then get their feedback. We've got our own POA mailbox up and running now, which is working very efficiently. And we'll read out or circulate by email all requests for nominations, and then we can put the nomination form back to the General Secretary accordingly, whether or not we nominated candidates or not. But as I say, when you can't get enough for a quorum, it's a bit disheartening. We want to be an active branch, but we need an amendment or a modernisation to the ruling, so please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Hollesley Bay. Do Warren Hill wish to speak on this motion as seconder? Just a reminder to Conference. If you second the motion you must speak after the proposer. Any more speakers? Thank you.

**RAY SOMERS – BRANCH SECRETARY, ICE IMMIGRATION:** I understand the sentiment on this and we would like to support it. I can't hold a branch meeting. I can't get my members from Coquelles down in France and over in Northern Ireland and Scotland in one room together. It's impossible. So we have to do things by post, we have to do things by electronic, emails, the rest of it. It's the only way we survive. So, wholeheartedly support this vote. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Ray. Any more speakers?

Over to Dave Todd, speaking on behalf of the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding on behalf of the NEC. The National Executive have sympathy for this motion and the reasons Hollesley Bay have brought this motion to Conference. However, the Executive seek rejection of this motion. Conference, it's all our responsibility to encourage better attendance at meetings. Now we do get what Hollesley Bay are saying and again I have sympathy, but the union's got to try and look to promote ourselves better and get buy-in from the membership, otherwise we're not a union. These are really, really important decisions that you're going to discuss and debate in this meeting. How can you have a debate over email? You can't. There are things like Teams we can use now, I know it might be a pain first getting there and getting ourselves up and running doing stuff, but Conference we can't stifle healthy debate. That's why we have Conference as well. Do you want the whole Conference virtually in the future? I don't think you will. We need people to debate the issues, debate what the branch want, make a decision at that meeting and then send it on. Again colleagues, sympathy for Hollesley Bay but it's our responsibility to drive up attendance. Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Would Hollesley Bay like the right to reply?

**MARK SMY – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLLESLEY BAY:** Colleagues, until we have a change in the ruling it's just an uphill struggle at our branch and you're just going to expect more nil returns, that's all.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, thank you. Time to test our new toys out. We'll go to the vote. All those in favour please show now. All those against? Conference are indicating now that you are in favour of that motion, so that motion is carried.

<Applause>

On to motion 2, Hollesley Bay. Do we have a seconder please?

**Motion 2:**

**2 Changes are made to the wording of Rule 12.5 to reflect the difficulty faced by smaller Branches in convening meeting which qualifies under Rule 13.**

**Rule 12.5 to read:**

**Rule 12.5 the motions to be discussed at Conference are those proposed by a Branch:**

**(a) After having been passed at a duly convened meeting of the Branch; (IF A BRANCH MEETING IS NOT HELD; PROPOSED MOTIONS ARE CIRCULATED TO THE BRANCH MEMBERS VIA EMAIL) and**

**(b) Submitted to the General Secretary at least 3 month before the Conference is due to commence unless the National Executive Committee agrees a shorter period; and**

**(c) In writing, signed and certified on the approved Annual (and Special) Conference Motion Standard form by the Branch Chairman or Secretary, that it has been passed at a duly convened meeting of the Branch. (OR CIRCULATED TO THE MEMBERSHIP VIA EMAIL)**

**HOLLESLEY BAY**

**MARK SMY – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLLESLEY BAY:** Conference, Chair, NEC, again to 12.5, this is for motions for Conference. We have one or two branch members who do put forward some good ideas but once again it's the same situation, trying to get everyone to a branch meeting, so if we could do again with the circulation by email to the membership – we're not saying we won't hold a branch meeting, but if we can't we need that option there. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Would the seconder like to speak? Over to Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, David Todd responding on behalf of the Executive. Again much the same as the last speech. I've a problem with the words that will be removed from the rule. So when we talk about branch meetings, it stipulates that only motion that you can discuss at the branch meeting is the one that's in front of you. If you take that away then you can put any motion you want in. You're not going to have a vote electronically so how do you adopt that motion from your branch? It needs to be a branch meeting. Please reject.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Right to reply, Hollesley?

**MARK SMY – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLLESLEY BAY:** Just as before, we're up against it logistically, so please support the motion. We can't fit everyone in the grit bin in the winter, there's rock-salt in it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Hollesley Bay. As with motion one, we need a two-thirds majority because it's a rule change. We had a two-thirds on motion one, no problem. So we'll take it to the vote again. To your handsets. All those for, please indicate. And all those against.

So we're looking for 66.6% to carry this motion. That vote's now in and obviously we haven't got enough for that. We've only got 64% so that motion is lost.

On to motion 3, Durham. Do we have a seconder please? No seconder, so that motion falls.

**Motion 3:**

**That Rule 12.21a is removed.**

**DURHAM**

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Reference the first vote, was it not 64%?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** 66%.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Oh, 66%?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yeah, it just about got it, Craig. The second one was 64, slightly below. Yeah. 66. On to motion 4, Preston. Do we have a seconder for this please? Thank you Kirkham.

**Motion 4:**

**Amend Annex H – Para 2 – Delete the words “and defend”.**

**PRESTON**

**PAUL MALLIBAND, BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** NEC, Conference, let's get rid of the butterflies! Annex H. I'm not an anorak, OK? Annex H is the Corporate Responsibility in the POA for anybody who's on the National Committee, the NEC etc. Personally I call it the gagging order. You usually have to go to court for one of them but we've got it in our rule book, but it's buried right at the back so it's not one of those little rule changes that we do.

I've no idea who wrote it and I certainly don't blame the current NEC in any way whatsoever, right? I'm not here to bash the NEC. It's not what I do. What I do is I look at something that when I speak to my NEC rep, which I've got massive respect for, and he knows that I told him that I would say that so he can go red now, he can't talk to me about all sorts of things that go on at the NEC until the minutes are published of a meeting if I've asked him to raise a matter. I've got four motions. I had discussions with Dave Todd beforehand because he wanted me to perhaps put them all together and I wouldn't do that because I'm not an all or nothing person. I like you to cherry-pick!

OK. So paragraph 2 talks about members of a Committee shall uphold and defend the collective decision made and shall not express dissent from or campaign against such decisions made by a Committee. This first motion calls on the word defend to be removed from that paragraph, because why should you defend it if you spoke against it in the Committee? Because it quite clearly goes on to say that you won't go against the line, so I accept that there has to be a line that's taken once a decision's made, but should you have to actually defend it? It's one thing to be an NEC member who comes out of an NEC meeting, perhaps, who's argued against a point and lost it, and toe the line and make sure that you don't breach the rules. Because this document has been used in the past to expel people from this Union and the NEC – well, certainly the NEC, I don't know about the actual Union itself. So why would you have to defend it, especially if it was a matter of conscience? It's one thing to say that was the decision of the Committee, but why should I actually have to defend that decision if I had a specific reason not to? So that's that first bit. I'm not going to go into motion 5 or whatever, but get the general feeling of, why are we doing it? Because my members back at Preston, 99 times out of 100, and I'm sure you'll all understand this statement, don't give a toss what we're doing until it affects them. They want us to be able to direct policy etc. and make sure things on pensions and whatnot are there, but 99 times out of 100, which is why we supported the first motion a minute ago for smaller branches. You can't even get them to a meeting, no matter how hard you try.

And therefore, until it actually affects them directly, and half the time they don't even see that, they expect us lot to do it on their behalf – which we do, eloquently all the time, then how do I make these people relevant to my members? I'll parade him round like a celebrity when he comes to Preston, which he is of course, and all your reps in your different areas are, but I have to make them relevant and I can't do that if I have to wait six months for a set of minutes to be produced from an NEC meeting that I asked him to raise something at. So he shouldn't have to defend the role. He has to toe the line, I acknowledge that, but he shouldn't have to defend the decision that was made, so that's motion 4.

I'll sit over here because I'm going to be up and down like a yo-yo.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Paul. Kirkham, would you like to speak on this?

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Having a good read of Annex H, it does refer to Committees, and I've been on the Wandsworth branch committee for a number of years as Branch Secretary. The Committee needs to protect itself from unscrupulous managers or governors who would seek to divide us. The collective responsibility and the collective decision is something that trade unions have done historically for decades, because once they find there's a dissenting voice on a Committee, they'll be the ones they'll target to divide us. This does refer to Committees. Would you feel comfortable with every Committee decision because someone in a Committee of seven didn't like the decision and then started telling all the other branch members why they didn't like it, undermining the Committee decision? You've been democratically elected by the branch members – it's basic trade unionism. I'm a delegate to the local trades council. We hold meetings, we come to an agreement, and that's the trades council committee decision. There could be dissenting voices, but that's not for the people outside of our movement or indeed outside of our committees to know who was speaking against. It's historic because employers will pick off the dissenting voices and they'll use it to divide us, so I can only say you've got to reject this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Stewart. Any more speakers? Steve Gillan responding for the NEC.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much Chairman. Conference, delegates, retired members, honorary life members and observers, I've got to say Paul spoke eloquently there and I'll go on to justify, on behalf of the Executive, why we're opposed to this, and Stewart has covered some of it. It's fundamentally not a gagging order, as Paul says. It's about discipline within your Committees. You wouldn't, at local level, well I certainly didn't at local level, have a Committee meeting, when you make a decision and then someone that disagrees with the collective view goes then out and campaigns against it. Just like we can't have that on the Executive. It's about corporate responsibility, it's about discipline, it's about basic trade unionism. There have been lots of times where I and different members of the Executive have disagreed with each other, but once the decision has been made in Committee session, we're as one and we defend that collective responsibility. A famous person in our union, in my time, Ronnie Adams – a dear friend of mine, no longer with us – for those of you that knew him, he once said, 'The NEC leaks like a sieve', so if someone couldn't get their own way at an Executive meeting, they're going to leak it to a branch to try and get that branch to bring it to Conference or what have you. That's not the way to operate in any Committee. So we ask you to reject this.

The other thing that Paul eloquently raised was about it takes six months to get any minutes out. It used to. That doesn't happen anymore, Paul, because they're sent out at the end of every month, once we reconvene and the draft minutes are amended by Executive members, which can happen on many occasions. So there's only a month between meetings and they're sent out at the end of each month. We have two Executive meetings a month. The reality is it's about corporate responsibility. It was needed within the POA. It's not a gagging order, it's collective decision-making, and that happens in politics as well. And the reality is, if you can't agree and defend the corporate and collective view, you have got a decision to make – you can resign. If it's a matter of conscience and you can't live with the decision that the Executive have made, resign your position and fight it from the floor. That's the reality and that's the way it's been for many years and we don't want to change that. It's about discipline and a collective responsibility going forward. Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Right to reply, Preston?

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** I'm glad that the two speakers against me actually talked against that, because if you actually read the paragraph, what it actually says very clearly is that members of the Committee shall uphold and defend the collective decisions made and shall not express dissent from or campaign against such decisions made by the Committee. I'm not advocating that. I'm advocating that you don't need to actually defend it if it's a matter of conscience. Of course you can't express dissent. I've not asked for that to be deleted. I've asked for the word defend to be deleted so the corporate position continues to be the case, but who decides how you've defended something? You could go out of a meeting and say, 'Well I didn't support that decision, but that's the position that we're at' – and you could get reported for not defending it by coming out with a statement like that. I don't accept what they're saying because it's still clearly stating that you shall not express dissent or campaign against the decision. What I'm saying is, if it's a matter of conscience you shouldn't have to defend it, and this doesn't allow for that, so support the motion please.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Paul. Take it to the vote. All those in favour, please vote now. Any against? We're looking for 66.6% because it's a rule change. And for that is only 31% so that motion is lost.

Conference, I'm just going to sort an issue out on my screen. As you can see it's a bit obscured, and we will check out that motion 1, because I might be seeing things that are different to what you're displaying. We'll get our tech guys to sort this out. We'll only be a few moments. I will check motion 1. Thank you for that, Craig.

<SHORT BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We've sorted a new screen out and motion 1, votes for was 63.64% and votes against was 36.36%. So, apparently I have to say the poll is now closed because you're allowed to alter your vote, if I don't say that, that's why I saw on my screen that it had got carried. It's actually lost. What I am prepared to do Hollesley Bay, I'm prepared to have a re-vote if you wish.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Can we just cut to the quick and just have a card vote on both of them?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do we have the support of 10 branches?

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** <Inaudible>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Card vote for motion 1. OK, we have support for a card vote. We'll take that to a card vote, I'm happy with that. Thank you, Craig. It's only fair. Our tech guys, we've got a card vote on motion 1. You see this is modern technology now, we've gone all posh. The way this works, as we practised this morning, it goes on the amount of members in your branch. All those in favour of motion 1 on a card vote please indicate now. And any against. That poll is now closed. And as you can hopefully see on your screens, that motion has been carried by over a two-thirds majority.

<Applause>

Craig, I was right. We're up to motion 5, Preston. Do we have a seconder for Preston please? Kirkham, thank you.

**Motion 5:**

**Amend Annex H – Para 3 – Delete the words “and sanctioned”.**

**PRESTON**

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, Conference, NEC, I'm back on Annex H again. As you can see, it's been a bee in my bonnet since 2019. It probably came about because of the Cuff Report actually. Because what I actually wanted was the transparency and accountability of branches upward and the NEC back down. What we do every five years or so at a great expense is we elect some of these people behind us and then five years later we do it again and nothing in between. I want to enhance that. There are things in the Cuff Report that I could have gone on with for hours. I didn't bring motions to Conference this year because I wanted to deal with this first. I may come back next year, I don't know, we'll see. Maybe not. It depends how slaughtered I get in the next few minutes.

So, paragraph 3, which is motion 5 which is asking for the words 'and sanctioned' to be moved. Might sound petty, but is it really? Minutes of the Committees and such reports are produced to be treated as private and confidential to the Committees, of course. These minutes and reports will

remain private and confidential until approved as correct and sanctioned for publication by the Committees. Now, I don't know what 'and sanctioned' means, because when I hold a Committee meeting we'll have the minutes of the previous meeting and I'll go, 'Are they a true record?' 'Yes.' 'Are they agreed?' 'Yeah.' If any member then wants them they can ask me for them. I don't have to sanction the release of them because I've already agreed them with the Committee that they're correct. What I want to know is who's responsible for sanctioning any of the minutes of any of the Committees above branch level, because I think this is what this actually refers to predominantly, and why do they need sanctioning? Once they're agreed then they are available and should be available for publication. This merely asks to remove the word, 'and sanctioned' because I don't understand who sanctions them. And if they're agree, they're agreed. Therefore they should be released to the membership for them to have a look at. Because you could get a situation somewhere where you agree the minutes but because whoever this invisible person is who sanctions the minutes doesn't sanction them so you never see them ever. There you go.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Kirkham, would you like to speak? Any more speakers? Over to Steve Gillan for the NEC.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Thanks very much, Chair. Conference, delegates. Paul's got a very nice way of putting things but the reality of it is a very simple explanation the word sanctioned. Again, we ask you to reject this change in paragraph 3. It's very, very simple. Those people that you can't see or the individual that you can't see who sanctions them is this Executive. This Executive, because there may have come times when we discuss these issues of national importance and to release those minutes into the general public could be used against us by Government or the employer. It has been in the past where we've put things, warts and all, into NEC minutes and they're referred to in court. What we tend to do is we will say whether something should be issued or not in the way of minutes – quite logical really – and we sanction them. And if you actually look there's still some minutes that haven't been sanctioned for released because of the sensitivity contained within them. Very simple, Conference. Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Right to reply, Preston. OK, straight to the vote then. All those for please display now. Any against? The poll is now closed and as you can see for yourself that motion is lost.

Preston, you have motion 6 next. Do we have a seconder please? Last chance. Wymott, thank you.

#### **Motion 6:**

**Amend Annex H – Para 3 – to include; “any matter requiring a vote at any committee, will be a recorded vote”.**

#### **PRESTON**

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Third time lucky. Chair, NEC, Conference. Thanks for the, You'll Never Walk Alone, Robbie.

<Laughter>

Motion 3 asks for a recorded vote at every Committee. Many times I've seen NEC minutes, sometimes contentious issues or whatever. We never have a clue how anybody voted anywhere and I'll go on again about the Cuff Report and accountability of the NEC and how we, as branch officials, hold our NEC members to account etc. because the reality is we can't and you can't. There is this massive void between branches and the NEC, whether we like it or not. It's usually caused by most of us sat here where we want something and there's no requirement in rule for any area meetings to take place. They can just be called as and when your NEC rep sees fit. I come from a previous trade union where it was regional structures and full-time officials etc. accounted to regional areas. I know that was part of the Cuff Report that's not really been addressed, and at some time in the future I think you need to look at it in terms of democracy within the organisation itself, but there's no accountability. If I, for example, and the rest of the Northwest Region had a meeting with Terry, which we do do regularly it has to be said, and we decided that next year's diary is going to be green and we require him to go to the NEC and vote for it to be green and he goes and votes for it to be black, I want to know! And our NEC minutes and various other Committees don't allow for us to actually have that level of accountability of the people who represent us at the national level. So, let's have a recorded vote in the NEC minutes, shall we?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Paul. Wymott, do you wish to speak? Any more speakers? Steve Gillan in reply.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Conference. Delegates, the NEC asks you to reject this motion and vote against it. It's not important about which individuals vote in which way. It's actually about the outcome of that particular collective decision. Now, I remember – I've got a long memory you see – I remember not so long ago where three individuals on the NEC were outed, grossly unfairly, about allegedly voting in a certain way over a particular issue. As a result there was a code of conduct investigation that we mounted, that cost the Union a lot of money, in order to have it investigated. And we couldn't identify who leaked the information about certain individuals voting in a particular way. Again, this is about the collective responsibility. We've had this debate numerous times at Conference, about recording verbatim NEC decisions, identifying individuals, and it's always been rejected, and rejected for good reason. Could you imagine, we're going to hear from a Cabinet Minister in a minute, could you imagine if any Government in power had individuals named at a Cabinet meeting? It just wouldn't happen. Don't even see minutes, you get leaks to newspapers about, 'a source says', but the reality is it's for discipline and we see no need for this to be changed, because if we start recording individuals and the way they vote you might get a suppressed NEC actually because they won't be able to say what they want to say. And believe me, there's robust discussions around the National Executive Committee that, once a decision's made, it doesn't matter whether three voted against it or four voted in favour, that's the end of it and you go out and defend that collective decision. Just what I would expect you to do at local level as well and not hang people out to dry. Because you wouldn't go to your governor and say, 'Oh, by the way, two people on the Committee disagreed with this particular decision, these are their names.' You wouldn't do that at local level so why do you expect us to do that at national level? Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Right to reply, Preston? OK, to the vote then. Please cast your votes now for. And against? OK, that poll is now closed and as you can see that motion is lost because it's a rule change. See, we're cooking on gas now, you're getting used to the electronic voting, I'm getting used to it, no more hiccups. We have got a hiccup with the TV screen up here but apart from that we're doing OK. We are due a break now and the Prisons Minister still hasn't arrived – no sign of her yet so we might as well have a break and hopefully by the time we come back – oh, she's here. She's ready to rock and roll. Brilliant, even better.

So, without further ado, let me introduce to you the Prisons Minister, Victoria Atkins. And if our tech guys are ready we have a brief video address by the Secretary of State for Justice, the Right Honourable Dominic Raab MP.

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE – RT HON. DOMINIC RAAB MP:** I'm really sorry I can't be with you all today but I wanted to record this message for your first in-person Conference since the start of the pandemic. And in particular I really wanted to take the opportunity to thank all of you, every single one of you, for your incredible hard work, your outstanding dedication during such a tough set of times. Prison officers I know may not always be in the public eye in the same way that police officers, doctors and nurses are but I've got no doubt, and I've seen first-hand that you're at the frontline of our defences when it comes to protecting the public, and you do an outstanding and amazing job. I'd like to see all of you at the frontline get more recognition for that incredible work you've done, both during the pandemic and more generally.

Throughout Covid-19 you've done more than ever to demonstrate why, in my view at least, you are the unsung heroes across our justice system. I've been hugely impressed by what I've seen in the nine prisons I've visited so far since I become Justice Secretary. At Category A prisons like HMP Frankland and Woodhill, I saw the extraordinary security challenges that the governors, Darren Finley and Nicola Marfleet, face in dealing with some of the most serious offenders, including radicalised terrorists and dangerous gangsters. You guys, your teams, work incredibly hard in what is a very precarious environment to see the early signs of terrorist risk, to nip them in the bud, to stop the spread of poisonous ideologies and ultimately to help us protect the public.

Of course, in many of those other prisons, where the focus is more on rehabilitation, I've seen the vital role that governors and staff play in getting prisoners off drugs, getting them skilled up, getting them into work. From the marketing call centre that I saw at HMP High Down, to HMP Ford, where prisoners get the chance to work as HGV drivers when they're on ROTL. And from HMP Hatfield's farm shop and the recycling centre, to the working farm and timber processing at HMP Prescott, from the barbers and bike repair shop at HMP Five Wells, to the mechanics and the cleaning workshop at Wandsworth. I've seen the great potential that we've got and that you're grasping in prison to use inmates' time in a more constructive way to get them the skills to get them back into work, which is ultimately the way we'll get them back on to the straight and narrow and reduce reoffending and protect communities around the country.

I'm really struck by the conversations that I've had with offenders that I've met who were able and willing to take that opportunity to start to turn their lives around. I know it's a long haul and there'll be ups and downs for many offenders, but getting prisoners off drugs for good, through sustainable recovery, getting them the skills, the training, the work experience they need to go straight – those are two of my very top priorities. And of course they're critical elements in helping those offenders to turn their lives around and that keeps our streets safer with fewer victims. So the public really do owe you all a debt of gratitude and I want to say thank you for all that amazing work that you do. Of course, when I look forward at the agenda that we've got ahead of us over the next year, that's why we're going to be assessing offenders for any addiction they've got from the moment they arrive, so that the treatment plans we put in place – including expanded use of drug recovery wings and a greater focus on abstinence – all of those things can be put in place straightaway and strengthen the rehabilitation work that you're doing.

Of course, we're going to have a zero-tolerance approach to drugs in prisons, clamping down on the illicit items being smuggled in. We're enhancing our prison security with a lot of the technology that's being funded by a hundred million pounds of new investment, including the state-of-the-art X-ray scanners across the whole closed male adult state. I've seen them work first-hand and I'm convinced that they will help reduce the violence and help keep prison officers, as well as offenders, safer. And of course we'll continue to build on our partnerships with you at a national level and between prison governors and local branches of the POA to create prisons that are better, safer and which, as I said, through all the work we're doing will help drive down reoffending relentlessly.

I now want to pass over to our brilliant Prisons Minister, Victoria Atkins, to take you through some of the detail of our strategy. Again, from the bottom of my heart, through Covid and all the other work that we're doing, thank you so much for the outstanding job you're doing and I look forward to seeing many more of you in the weeks and months ahead.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** There you go, Conference. Credit where it's due. He couldn't be here but he still addressed you. That's very welcome. It's my great pleasure – and it's always a pleasure to see you, Victoria – to introduce to Conference Victoria Atkins, MP, our Prisons Minister. In September 2021 Victoria Atkins was appointed Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice and Minister for Afghan resettlement. Victoria leads the Ministry of Justice's work on prison operations and policy, youth justice, tackling violence against women and girls and rape and serious sexual offences. From 2017 to 2021 Victoria Atkins was the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability at the Home Office. This role included work on domestic abuse, honour-based violence, sexual exploitation and FGM. Victoria Atkins was elected as the Member of Parliament for Louth and Horncastle in May 2015. Prior to her election Victoria Atkins was a criminal barrister specialising in prosecuting serious organised crime. And I do know that you resided in Blackpool because you went to school there, so we can adopt you as a Lancashire lass as well. Conference, please show your appreciation for Victoria Atkins, Prisons Minister.

<Applause>

**VICTORIA ATKINS MP – PRISONS MINISTER:** Thank you so much for that wonderful, warm welcome, and can I say what a genuine pleasure it is to join you today in the sunshine here in Eastbourne, and also to congratulate you on the first Conference in two years? And the reason I've come here is because I wanted to say, in person, an enormous thank you to all of you and your friends and your colleagues who work with you in service, a

huge, huge thank you for everything that you have done over the last two years and of course continue to do. Because in March of 2020 Public Health England predicted that, without drastic action, up to 2,700 prisoners would die from Covid, and it is thanks to your professional commitment in your roles that this did not happen. It is thanks to your resilience and those of your loved ones that this did not happen, and it is thanks to your determination that vital rehabilitation work continued, albeit in very different ways, but it continued through this last two years. So for everything that you did to get us where we are today, I genuinely thank you and your colleagues for your hard work.

And we really do want to get the message to you that we value your hard work, and that is why we've been having many discussions with the POA about the issues that really matter to you. And I'm extremely grateful to your leadership for the constructive engagement that you have, certainly since I've been in role and I know before then. We know that issues such as safety, staffing levels and of course pay matter to you, and if they matter to you then believe you me, they matter to me as Prisons Minister, to Dominic Raab as Deputy Prime Minister and to the Ministry of Justice as well. We are in the middle of the pay discussions with the Prison Service Pay Review Body, and they are considering our proposals for prison pay, and of course they will report back in due course, but I want to assure you that we will take their recommendations very seriously and work through them with great, great care because we want to retain frontline officers in prisons. That's why we're providing significant investment to keep you safe, supported and with opportunities to progress your careers.

But I also want to ensure that we are valuing you and supporting you in other ways, which is why we are working on measures to complement the pay package to ensure that you are safe in your place of work and can see a career path for you and your colleagues in the service. Without the dedication of our brilliant prison staff, our reform ambitions would be impossible to meet. While the plans that we've set out in our Prison Strategy White Paper in December are ambitious, I am confident that they are attainable, and I'd like to use my time now if I may to run through with you some of the measures and the long-term reform plans that we envisage will ensure that prisons are secure, safe and help to cut crime.

Now, as someone, apart from anything else, who used to prosecute for the Health and Safety Executive, I absolutely believe passionately that you should be safe in your workplace, and we will never tolerate violence against our hard-working staff and we will always push for the strongest possible punishment when this happens. As you know, all too well, the smuggling of contraband into prisons can make them dangerous places in which to live and work. The impact of things as tiny as a sim card in prisoners' hands can be enormous. Vulnerable offenders can be indebted to dangerous criminals – they can be exploited, they can be used to run errands and indeed forced to settle scores. This ultimately puts our staff at risk and makes their already tough job even harder to do, and that is why we are taking a zero-tolerance approach to the smuggling of illicit items which fuel violence.

Our £100 million security investment is making our prisons safer. It's what's enabled us to implement enhanced gate security, advanced phone blocking and detection technology, and introduce the cutting-edge body scanners so many of you operate across the entire closed male adult estate. As of January, the 75 scanners installed collectively had already made over 10,000 positive indications, and when we consider this in conjunction with the finds made by our highly trained sniffer dogs and their handlers, we are more able to find drugs, weapons and mobile phones than ever before. But that doesn't mitigate the support that offenders need to face up to and beat their substance misuse issues. Our plans are about making sure that new prisoners can be assessed thoroughly on arrival so that alcohol and drug addictions are spotted, so that you can identify individuals at risk and put in place the tailored support they need.

And because old habits die hard, we want to increase the support we offer to get offenders clean. That means having a full range of high-quality treatment options, including abstinence-based rehab and incentivised substance-free living areas. Now, I know how difficult it is to help offenders engage at all with their rehabilitation if they're battling addiction and I understand how frustrating that can be, because you are not in your jobs by chance. I know how passionate and determined you are to help offenders positively change their lives. It's something we genuinely share. But it is officers who deal with offenders when they are at their best and at their worst, at their strongest and at their weakest, and we understand that in order to do this as effectively as possible, you need as much support as possible. The same can be said for governors. We have some truly exceptional trail-blazing leaders in the prison system, so we want to entrust them with more autonomy to run their prisons. After all, they know their prisons best, as you do, and have the necessary knowledge and experience to help us meet the strategic vision set out in our strategy. When governors have the space to innovate and determine what is best for their prisons and the prisoners and staff within them, great things can happen. We know that, with their insight, regimes could be further personalised to meet the needs of each prisoner and prison, regimes which work for everyone. And since the devil makes work for idle hands we want to focus on making sure prisoners' time behind bars is well spent so they can contribute positively to society on release.

Now, prisons play a huge role in making our streets safer. I know that from my previous career in the criminal courts – putting people away once I've done my job prosecuting them, hopefully persuading a jury of their guilt, then it's over to the Prison Service to ensure that those people are kept from harming the public and we hope rehabilitated. They don't just serve to punish, albeit that is an essential part of a sentence of imprisonment, but they can also transform lives for the better. An individual that arrives at a gate as a criminal can truly, with the right level of support, leave with their life of crime behind them for good. So it follows that, since this Government prioritises public protection, building more prisons that are geared towards reforming offenders is the next logical step. We aim to create up to 20,000 additional prison places by the mid-2020s and we will achieve this by investing £3.8 billion over the next three years, carrying out the biggest prison-building programme this country has seen in more than 100 years.

Our newest prison, HMP Five Wells, opened officially in March and will hold around 1,700 offenders when at full capacity in December. There are 24 workshops available, more than any other prison in the country, where prisoners will learn skills and get qualifications that they'll use to eventually find a job. Prisons should rightly be places where securing employment is both encouraged and expected, and offenders are offered a second chance to lead a more positive life. And some people ask, why does this matter? It matters because employment is one of the best ways to tackle the cycle of reoffending. When an individual turns over a new leaf, fewer victims are created. In fact, research shows that offenders who get jobs on release are up to nine percentage points less likely to reoffend than those who don't. All over the country I've met prisoners who told me about how much it means to them to get the opportunity to work, and many of you will be able to attest to this.

Some of you may have already seen employment advisory boards set up in your prisons, which links prisons with industry and offenders with job opportunities on the outside. We plan to roll these out to all resettlement prisons within the next year. Some of you may also have a new dedicated

prison employment lead to provide case-level employment support and develop an establishment-level employment strategy. These will be rolled out across all resettlement prisons within the next year. And employment hubs in every resettlement prison will bring together all staff involved in employment outcomes into one place, helping prisoners access job opportunities and support with applications. And even more prisoners will be job-ready soon. In February we announced our intention to change the law so that prison apprenticeships can be made available for the first time, which will open up a whole new avenue of training, development and work experience for ex-offenders, helping make sure that their time behind bars is well spent.

But if prisoners are going to secure employment, we need to make sure that they have basic numeracy and literacy skills first. We want to take advantage of technology to help us with this, such as secure devices so that offenders can not only access courses but practise skills such as booking a health appointment or contact with a family member. We also want to boost vocational training as it can play a key part in transforming prisoners for the better as well. For instance at HMP Lincoln, my local nick, offenders can complete the training necessary to get the constructions card that enables them to work on building sites on release, and we want to replicate this in as many ways as possible across our resettlement estate.

Nonetheless, if an offender wins in the battle against their addiction, closes the gaps in their education, learns skills needed in local economies, but leaves prison without basic essentials such as ID, a bank account or a CV, the likelihood of them continuing on the road to redemption is slim, and that's what makes our new resettlement passports so important. These personalised documents will cover mental health, drugs, education, skills, work, accommodation and family ties, bringing together the information and services that prison leavers and those working with them need to access. Having good health and somewhere to call home is of course also key, so we're committed to ensuring timely access to mental health and drug treatment upon release as well. And our new temporary accommodation service, which initially launched last year in five probation regions and will be expanded nationally by the end of the year, provides up to 12 weeks of housing and basic support for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. So please, you can rest assured knowing that we are working hard to ensure offenders leave prison with a firm foundation to build new lives away from crime, which ultimately keeps the public safer.

So I'm going to end, if I may Mr Chairman, in the same way that I began, which is by thanking each and every one of you, your colleagues, your friends and members of the service. I want you please to leave this Conference knowing that we appreciate the critical role that the POA plays, with other unions I must say, in improving the Prison Service, and we welcome the constructive and imaginative ideas that you bring to the table. And to the loyal officers here, I want please for you to understand that you may work away from the public eye, but you are foremost in our minds in the Ministry of Justice. Never in our history have we had the level of training, tools and tactics currently available to us to transform the Prison Service and prisons, so we are at a critical, and I think very exciting, juncture where improvements are genuinely possible, and if we continue to work together we will achieve a Prison Service for the 21st Century of which we can all be immensely proud. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Prisons Minister, for that and it will amuse you to know that, credit where it's due, you've accepted the invite to Conference and you've addressed Conference whereas the Shadow Cabinet, the opposition, didn't accept our invitation, so credit to you for that. And, you know, Conference, we've met several times with Victoria and I can deal with people who are straight-talking and that's exactly what you get with Victoria. But I'll tell you one thing, she gets it. She gets what we need. She gets our cause and our arguments, but she's not in a position to influence a lot of things. Now, I think it'd be useful, Minister, if after the announcement of 91,000 Civil Service redundancies, does that affect prison officers and related grades? Is it going to be back office staff, the admin grades in our jails? Does it affect us in any way? Do you know that?

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** I absolutely understand why you're asking this question. I hope colleagues will understand that I am not involved in those Cabinet Office discussions at the moment, but as a matter of common sense we are absolutely committed to opening more prisons, to providing up to 20,000 prison places. What is more, I have been very loud and clear in the message that we need to have sustainable levels of staffing in our existing prison infrastructure, and so I'm very helpful indeed that not only will that message be heard and understood, because we have to be able to people our prisons safely and effectively in order to meet our strategies. I said when we opened up HMP Five Wells – it's a very beautiful building, but actually it doesn't work unless we have prison staff, prison officers in there making it work. So, bear with me, Conference, and we'll see what comes of these latest discussions and conversations.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. You mentioned there investment in prisons, which are very welcome. We've had enhanced gate security, we've got the key worker which gave us additional staff. But of course there's a lot of prisons around the country where key work gets dropped, where we can't staff the gate security because we haven't got the staffing levels to do it because we can't recruit and retain. You've mentioned there about new prison builds and additional spaces in the public sector. If you can't recruit and retain staff you won't be able to open new prisons or create additional spaces, and that's all down to pay. We need a significant above-inflation pay rise. And I know we're waiting for the recommendations.

<Applause>

We're waiting for the recommendations from the Pay Review Body which will hopefully recommend that significant pay rise. You knocked us back on a £3,000 pay rise a couple of years ago, but what we want to know is, will the Government now commit, after that massive own goal of knocking back that pay rise which saw people leave in droves and continue to resign in mass, will the Government now commit to accepting the Pay Review Body recommendations in their entirety, without reservation?

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** Well, thank you for that. And look, I hope first of all, and I know you have had the chance, but I hope everyone in the hall has had the chance to look at our pay proposals that we put forward. And I hope you appreciated that we very much listened to the point about both recruitment but importantly also retention because I very much understand the need to retain our experienced officers on the wing.

They can provide not only a great deal of support – and they're so vital to the workings of a wing on an average day – but of course the support they give to our newer recruits as well. I hope you've seen our proposals that we very much targeted what we can at both new recruits but also importantly at retention of our operational grades. And we are awaiting, as I say, the pay review recommendations.

I've also listened loud and clear to the very reasonable points that you made about the timeliness of the pay review programme. We have done everything we can at our end to speed up that because I want to try to get money into people's pockets and pay packets as quickly as we can. I am at the mercy of other arms of Government, including the Pay Review Body, but we're hoping that we're going to be able to make some progress on the way that we did last year. In terms of the recommendation, I'm very, very aware of my duties but also very, very, very understanding of the points that you and the POA have raised on the need to keep our pay in line with and indeed reflecting the enormous social responsibilities that individual officers are responsible for, every single day of their working lives.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. I just want to mention PAVA, the rollout of PAVA. I know, and we're very grateful, that you have personally written to Wayne from Cookham Wood after his horrific assault in the youth custody estate dealing with under-18s. He's written back to you and he's saying exactly the same thing as me – we need PAVA in the youth custody estate for staff dealing with the juvenile offenders. We need it now, immediately, not only to protect ourselves but to protect them from attacks on each other. Will you now commit to agreeing with the POA and supporting our campaign to give staff on the frontline in the youth custody estate the protections they need? At the moment they've got absolutely nothing. They've got a polo shirt and a pair of cargo trousers and a pair of boots. That's it. They don't carry batons. I wouldn't personally like to see batons dealing with the juveniles. But PAVA is an irritant. It makes people's eyes water and sting for about 20 minutes. No long-lasting effects, no health issues, it's not a threat to life. My members working on the frontline in the most violent estate of any, the youth custody estate, need your help and need PAVA. Will you now commit to agreeing that we need to rollout PAVA in the youth custody estate when we're dealing with under-18 prisoners?

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** Well, thank you, and I didn't want to presume to mention the case at Cookham Wood, but I'm extremely grateful to Wayne and to the other officers onsite. That was a horrendous, horrendous incident. I don't know if it gives you any comfort as to how seriously we take this, but as soon as there is an incident of that nature I am notified, regardless of what commands have been put up, silver or gold command. I'm notified because we take this so very seriously and I just wanted to reach out to Wayne and his family because I know how committed they, as a family, are to the Prison Service, and wanted to thank him and his family very much for the suffering that they had gone through. In terms of PAVA spray I very much hear the recommendations and the experiences that colleagues that work in the youth estate are raising. Would you forgive me, I'm going to have to do that thing that people – whenever I do media and I come up with this response, I know it can be met with, 'Oh, crikey, just answer the question.' Genuinely on something like this I've got to take it a step at a time. We're trying to roll it out across the adult estate and we have got to look into the potential repercussions of using it in the youth estate. I take your point, Chair, as to the resources that officers on the ground have. But please just bear with me whilst we conduct this review because I do get the point, particularly the volatile nature of some of these young men in the YOIs. It can be a very, very volatile situation, I do get that, but just, again, bear with me.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. And finally, Victoria, retirement age – state pension 67/68. It's cruel. It's unworkable. It's impractical. You can't expect us to work in what I call the most hostile environment workplace of anywhere in the world. There's no one worse than us when we go to work. We need to sort it out once and for all and we need to put this issue to bed. I know that, when you respond to constituents who write to you about this issue, you keep quoting the same things, which was before your time as Prisons Minister, that we knocked back a deal in 2013 which would've increased our contributions. That was unaffordable to most of my members. We knocked back an offer in 2017, which wasn't a standalone deal, and it was only state pension age minus three, which if you increase the State Pension Age to 70 puts us back in the same position we find ourselves in now. And please stop comparing us to merchant seafarers from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary or fishing industry.

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** I don't think I, in fairness –

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You did in your letter. I quoted you this morning.

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** OK. That one's passed me by. OK, sorry about that.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You need to have a word with one of your Spads about that.

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** Alright, yeah.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** And you can't even say that we're not at risk or don't experience the same risks as firefighters, as police constables, because we've had some horrific assaults where it's been very close to being a murder on duty of a prison officer, not least of which the terrorist attack at Whitemoor. My offer to you is – me, you go into a meeting with the Treasury, because I know they're the decision-makers, I'll set out my arguments for my members, you back me up and we'll see what we can broker.

<Laughter and applause>

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** That is an invitation that I'm tempted to say I find irresistible. Let me go and speak to Treasury. As you know – in fairness, I mean in all seriousness – this is something I've been looking at very carefully with you, and indeed I think it was the topic of our first meeting soon after I'd been appointed. I do take it seriously. I do get the point about, as one gets older, particularly with some parts of the estate as you've already referred to, some of the incidents that have happened recently, I do take that point. I think, as you know, there is a long history to this that predates either you or me but I am always, always very much in listening mode. So whilst I can't bind a Treasury Minister's diary let's see what we can do to have that discussion and to show people some of the enormous responsibilities, but also some of the costs that officers have to

put up with on a day-to-day basis.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Nothing would improve morale more than giving us our retirement age of 60 back. And think about it, a new recruit age 18 joining the service now has to work for 50 years on the landings before they're considered for retirement. That's just something to reflect on. So, before you go I've got a gift, a token of our appreciation, which would look good actually in one of your work meetings. I know old Boris likes his cheese and biscuits.

<Laughter and applause>

Conference, Victoria Atkins.

<Applause>

**VICTORIA ATKINS, PRISONS MINISTER:** Thank you so much.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks so much, Victoria. Safe journey home.

Well, thank you, Conference. I think it's time for a well-earned cup of tea. If you can reconvene at quarter-to-four that'd be fantastic, thank you.

<Applause>

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. We will bring you to order. We're just going to get through a few more motions. I can't envisage us staying till 5pm. I know you've had a long day and a lot of admin to go through. Some of you still need to check in. Motion 7 – Preston have indicated that they wish to withdraw this motion but they need your permission to do so. If you're happy for them to withdraw can you display a show of hands now in favour of them withdrawing that? Paul, you've been spared, that's been withdrawn. On to motion 8 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder for this motion please? Styal, thank you.

#### Motion 8:

#### Conference Paper 1 Rules & Constitution.

#### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN, GENERAL SECRETARY:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, although it's one Conference Paper, I'll address the rules element and Mick will address the conduct element. The rules element, Conference, this was a result of the Pat Cuffe Report. There was appointed honorary life members and myself, as Chair of the Rules & Constitution Report, it was clear that we needed to go through the Rules & Constitution to tidy them up. Some of the examples in there – you've all had electronically – some of the examples in there are when we had two Vice Chairs, so that needed taking out. We needed to bring it more up to date around online applications etc. We've taken out Finance Officer and replaced it with General Secretary or DGS or Finance Department, depending on what element of work the rules is referring to. There's a separate motion to do what Pat was talking about this morning but that's on the order paper around titles.

As I say, all of these are to tidy up the Rules & Constitution. I'm not saying it's done by any means – there's probably more work to do. We always need to improve and get things better, but this part of the Conference Paper, as I said, is the work that the Rules & Constitution Committee did in conjunction with the Cuffe Report. I'll hand over now to Mick to talk about conduct.

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Conference, as you're aware, conduct and discipline within the POA is governed by Rules 26, 27, 28 and 29. These have previously been agreed by the POA at Annual Conference, and as per the Rules & Constitution would need a two-thirds majority in order to amend them. Recently with Conduct Committee it's become clear that there are difficulties in arranging Conduct Committee members to deal with conduct and discipline matters within the POA. This could be for a range of reasons, including geographical locations, access to transport, availability and sickness. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 there have also been additional difficulties of travel restrictions and access to and training in the use of remote technology, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This has often led to delays and cases being put back, and this is unacceptable for the Union and individual members. This review of conduct and discipline of the POA, if accepted, will result in the Rules & Constitution governing this important work to be amended. In summary, the NEC recommend that two additions to Rule 26.1 are made to reflect the diversity of the POA membership and related legislation. The NEC recommend that Rule 26.2 is changed to allow for investigations to be undertaken by assistant general secretaries. Currently, the Deputy General Secretary, who administers conduct and discipline, has not managerial oversight of investigations. This rule change will provide this and also give the ability to challenge performance. There will also be advantages to the Union financially in that assistant general secretaries will undertake this work as part of their everyday duties.

The NEC also recommend that the requirement to inform the members branch, Rule 28.23, is removed due to GDPR issues, and the NEC recommend that the investigating officer no longer takes part in a disciplinary hearing unless called as a witness by the disciplinary panel or the person subject to proceedings. In conclusion, I believe that these rule changes, and the way that conduct and discipline is undertaken in the POA, will improve the whole process. It's vital that this part of the Rules & Constitution is correct and administered in a way that does not leave the union open to criticism.

Conference, support Conference Paper 1.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Mick. Styal, do you wish to speak on this? OK. Any speakers? Thank you, Craig.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair. Are we voting for the total package or can we nit-pick this?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** It's for the entire paper.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** I'm asking to reject it then. The NEC's got a downer, a massive downer on the retired members. I see here, 'retired members section', not branch. '8.6 retired members section', again. You have never mentioned about the retired members before – you mentioned a lot of things but not about the retired members. There seems to be a fear of what the retired members are going to do. Let's get the facts right. We just had the Minister here. We've had the National Chair ask about retirement age of 60. You're going to have a lot of people in this hall who are going to leave very shortly or in the not too distant future, looking round. I'm going in two years' time. That's at the minute, I might go even earlier. I can go any time. But you've got a lot of experience up there and all they're going to ask for is because, if it's a branch then, as I said this morning, they can sit down here but they can only deal with stuff that affects retired members.

There's a lot of things happened. I've been put on a pension scheme now and I've been back and forward with the NEC. I haven't got a problem with the NEC. I've been back and forward with their pensions people. It's like putting us on a contract and I haven't signed this contract because there's no rules to this contract. I have asked, 'How does this contract affect me?' And the answer is, 'October '23.' That's the only thing I get out of them, 'October '23.' So I'm going onto this new pension scheme and nobody can tell me what them rules are. If people have already been through that in other things they may have been advised. They might've been advised things about actually when they're claiming the old age pension, what you can claim and what you can't claim, because you know what, we're not experts in everything. The NEC are not experts in everything. I'm not, neither is anybody here, but if somebody's done it before it's valid and I think we should treat these people with the respect they should have. They've all been in positions up here. You've got a man up there, Pete Hancock, who tried to speak this morning. He saved this union. If it wasn't for him we would've been bankrupt. What a right mess! So, please, reject it because of them. If you take them two things out I haven't got a problem, but Mark says it's got to be in its entirety. The other point is, if you did go that way and you followed the Cuffe Report, in the Cuffe Report, action number 11, they would be able to vote. Well, with the new electronic voting system it's dead easy. You could stop them, you can see if they're voting and they shouldn't be voting, so please, reject it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Craig. Any more speakers? Replying for the NEC, Dave Todd.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, NEC, invited guests. Nobody's having a go at the retired members. Nobody. I respect the retired members immensely. I think they've got a lot to offer the Union. Don't chuck this Conference Paper out on the strength of that. Nobody's trying to put down retired members. Nobody, Craig, certainly not me. I work with the retired members to complete this Conference Paper, with the help of Pat Cuffe. Please support, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, thank you. Conference, we'll now take it to the vote, and remember, it's a rule change so it's 66.6% we need. Please cast your votes now for. All against? That poll is now closed. You should be able to see the result there and that motion is carried.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Card vote!

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I think on that, Craig, you're pushing your luck a bit there. Look at the disparity. Do we have 10 branches in support of a card vote? Yeah, we do. OK, we'll take it to a card vote. We'll just wait for our tech gurus to get sorted. OK, we're ready for the card vote. Cast your votes now for or against. OK, that poll is now closed. You can see for yourself the results, that is still carried. Thank you, Conference.

On to motion 9, the NEC. Do we have a seconder for this motion? Wymott, thank you.

#### **Motion 9:**

**The Rules & Constitution are amended to 'chair' rather than 'chairman' throughout.**

#### **NEC**

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. As I mentioned previously when I was up at the rostrum, we've put a rule change in say, 'The Rules & Constitution are amended to Chair rather than Chairman throughout'. Thank you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do you wish to speak, Wymott? Any other speakers? OK, looking for a two-thirds majority. Please cast your votes now, for or against. That poll is now closed and that is carried.

Motion 10, Styal. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you, Preston.

#### **Motion 10:**

**The NEC in regards to the female estate negotiate the introduction of 'body scanners' into every female establishment. This to coincide with the introduction of the new 'body scanners' within the rest of the prison estate.**

## STYAL

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH SECRETARY STYAL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads, 'The NEC, in regards to the female estate, negotiate introduction of body scanners into every female establishment. This to coincide with the introduction of new body scanners within the rest of the prison estate.' Conference, this issue relating to the non-introduction of body scanners into the female estate leaves Styal exasperated that yet another function being denied in the female estate. On top of the reluctance to implement the use of the various security tools, include PAVA, rigid-bar handcuffs, amongst other aids. The female estate has now been denied the use of newly introduced body scanners. The sole reason the body scanners have been disregarded in the female estate from the employer is the risk to potential pregnant prisoners arriving in reception areas. That is the sole reason, Conference. At a risk of something like 0.001% there is little evidence to support this. Female prisoners are routinely tested for pregnancy in any case now on entering as a new reception. As we all know, airports up and down the country and around the world have body scanners, and we are reliably informed with the same radiation levels as the newly introduced body scanners with thousands of females per day passing through these body scanners in all airports.

Two years ago Styal was cited as being one of the top ten prisons in the country with the highest level of illicit drugs being brought into the prison through the reception process. The knock-on effect and risk to our members dealing with this drug problem is not acceptable. Body scanners should be introduced into every female establishment in our view, but yet again the female estate is disregarded when it comes to security and safety for our members. We've just seen a demonstration with Dominic Raab there saying the introduction of X-ray systems are very welcome in the closed male estate. But what's the difference between the female estate, the juveniles and the open estate? Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Andy, well said. Preston, do you wish to speak? Any more speakers? Responding for the NEC, Sarah Rigby.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC in support of the motion. In 2019 we were informed that HMPPS would be investing a significant amount of money into the enhanced gate security as part of the Security Investment Programme. The justification for the investment was around the use of drugs in prison being one of the greatest challenges facing our criminal justice system, particularly in relation to psychoactive substances. The investment was also to try and tackle the upward trend in the number of illicit mobile phones in prisons in the five years prior to the investment. HMPPS stated the growing illicit economy was incredibly harmful and fuelled by debt and bullying that impacted the safety of both staff and prisoners. They went on to highlight that internal concealment is the most challenging method in smuggling contraband and by utilising the appropriate security measures, such as the X-ray body scanner, prisons can effectively tackle smuggling contraband via internal concealment.

It was confirmed this year that 75 X-ray body scanners have now been rolled out across all closed adult male prisons and that these scanners have provided over 14,000 positive indications since July 2020. All sounds good, which raises the question around why it has not already been expanded to include the female estate. The current guidance is explicit and states that prisoners with female reproductive organs must not be X-ray body-scanned. We can understand and appreciate the risks around this but females are body-scanned when they pass through an airport, so there must be safe alternatives to the equipment currently being used in the male estate. We will explore this with HMPPS and ask that the Security Investment Programme is expanded to include female establishments within their remit. If the current X-ray body scanners are considered unsuitable we will ask that an alternative is sourced. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Styal, wish to reply? We're on to just a simple majority on the voting now, Conference, so we'll take it to the vote. Please cast your vote now, for or against. Thank you, Conference, that poll has now closed and as you can see, that motion is carried.

Motion 11, Lancaster Farms. Do we have a seconder for Lancaster Farms?

### Motion 11:

**Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to change the HDC eligibility, so that prisoners who are sentenced for attacks/assaults on HMPPS staff are ineligible for HDC consideration, thus strengthening the HMPPS stance on their zero tolerance towards violence policy.**

## LANCASTER FARMS

**JOHN THRELFALL – BRANCH CHAIR, LANCASTER FARMS:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads that, 'Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to change the HDC eligibility so that prisoners who are sentenced for attacks or assaults on HMPPS staff are ineligible for HDC consideration, thus strengthening the HMPPS stance on zero tolerance towards violence.' We believe that should this motion be achieved it would add a further layer of protection for prison staff, especially frontline operational staff. As in many other establishments, Lancaster Farms is no different in the fact that regimes are opening up and we are starting to see an increase in violence, which unfortunately includes assaults on staff. And whilst we must not return to the previous unsafe, unlock-at-all-costs regimes at the expense of staff safety, it does seem inevitable that, as more prisoners are unlocked, violence will inevitably increase. However, we believe that we can better protect staff against the threat of assault by achieving this motion, whilst as already stated, providing an additional layer of safety for frontline prison staff. Conference, support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, John. Does a seconder wish to speak? Any more speakers? On behalf of the NEC, Andy Baxter.

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The NEC thank Lancaster Farms for this motion. HMPPS want to incentivise prisoners to change their offending behaviour. They also have a duty of care to ensure our workplaces are as safe as they possibly can. Prisoners who turn to violence against staff must realise they can't carry out acts of violence against our hard-working members within impunity. Negative actions by prisoners must have consequences. HDC is something for prisoners to work towards – it's a target that the majority of prisoners have in their sights. If someone acts violently while serving their sentence, do we really believe that makes them a fit and suitable candidate for release on home detention curfew? The NEC agree with Lancaster Farms – good behaviour should be rewarded, negative behaviour should not. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Andy. Lancaster Farms, wish to reply? Straight to the vote then. Please cast your votes now for or against this motion. Thank you, Conference, that poll is now closed and that motion has been carried.

On to the awards section. Motion 12 has been seconded by Carstairs and speaking on behalf of the NEC is Phil Fairlie.

#### **Motion 12:**

**That Conference award Andy Hogg Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this Trade Union.**

#### **NEC**

**PHIL FAIRLIE – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks, Chair. Conference, it's an honour and quite fitting actually that my first address to Conference in my role as AGS is that I get to pay tribute and propose the motion from a good friend and predecessor in this role with his Honorary Life Membership. Andy Hogg has been a member of the SPOA and then the POA since 25th May 1987, which was his first day in service. His first involvement in elected office came in '95 when he was elected to the post of branch chair at the now closed HMP <inaudible>, I should probably stress that those two facts are not in any way linked, of course.

Andy and I were both first elected to the NEC in Scotland in '98 following a pretty tumultuous time, when we had suspended and then expelled several of the NEC at that time in Scotland. It was a situation that had been brewing for some time and culminated in the National Chair, and others, being locked out of the offices in Edinburgh and the police having to be called to resolve the situation. It was a fairly quiet uneventful introduction to the Offices of National Officials for us back then. We only served together in the NEC for just over a year at that time because Andy went on to be appointed for the post of the TUS Secretary, which is an elected role from all of the trade unions in Scotland in the Scottish Prison Service. That also came at a time with dreadful industrial relations in the service, where we couldn't sit in the same room as senior managers. There was no relationship, no trust and no respect between the trade unions and the senior figures in the service. That came to a head when the SPOA took strike action one morning and we took out every branch in the country over the continued and repeated imposition approach that was in play at that time by SPS management. It was a key moment in defining the future of industrial relations in the service in Scotland, and Andy was to go on to be a key figure in shaping up what those relationships would turn out to be in the future.

The reason for that is that Andy is a people person, and anyone who knows him will really identify with that description of him and will have witnessed him demonstrate it on a daily basis in an almost unconscious way because he is just good with people. That period of unrest led to the development of a partnership agreement that, as a working document, is held as a gold standard partnership agreement, and it's been sought out many times from colleagues across the STUC. It's been referenced in European journals several times as an exemplar of good industrial relations. In the recent Scottish Government Fair Work Agreement, it also references the SPS Partnership as the benchmark for all trade unions and employers should aspire to. None of that would have happened without the enormous contribution of Andy Hogg at that time – and not just for the contribution he made to the text on the pages of the agreement, which was an anonymous contribution. Andy's biggest contribution was his patience, his bridge-building and his wisdom in getting people who, quite bluntly, couldn't stand each other, who didn't trust or respect each other, to come together into rooms over and over again and start to build working relationships that before would have seemed impossible. His ability to calm a room and to have people feel heard – to bring them together in a way that brought their words on the page to life and to actually mean something – was one of his great skills that the POA, and all the trade unions in the Prison Service benefitted from many times over his years in that post.

In 2010 Andy applied for and was successful in getting the AGS post in Scotland and I was incredibly lucky to have him by my side for the almost 10 years that I had as the Scottish Chair of the SNC. We had a great working relationship with each other anyway, but we formed a very good understanding of each other's way of working and I think we complemented each other's style. I always knew and valued what Andy brought to the role throughout the whole of that time. Like any term of national office, it has highs and lows, periods of success and periods of frustration. In that time together we were able to get the Scottish Government to publicly back support for the 60 pension age. We got the right to strike back in Scotland and we got a written commitment to no further private prisons and the return of HMP Kilmarnock from the private sector. We also secured the biggest three-year pay deal anywhere in the UK in 2019, which was Andy's last notable achievement going into his retirement. And while I don't credit Andy with all of the responsibility for all of those things, his contribution and counsel through all of them was invaluable and timely in contributing to their coming to fruition. As Chair I was best placed to watch from close quarters his best attribute at work daily, which brings me back to his people skills. Andy, in his time in office, proved himself time and again to be a natural at relationship-building and I watched him do that with management every day. But he did it wherever he went. He built positive relationships with the STUC in a way that went way beyond where we'd been before. He did the same with colleagues in the private-sector committee and with our colleagues in special hospitals, and in particular as Carstairs, where he's enhanced the standing and reputation of the POA for many years. Politicians and journalists alike consistently spoke of their respect for him.

It helps that Andy is also quite simply one of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. He's an absolute gentleman and faultlessly polite, but that's not the reason I'm proposing him for his Honorary Life Membership day. He is, in all my 25 years as a national official, without doubt, one of the most honest hardworking, genuine trade unionists I've ever known. His contribution to the POA and the wider trade union movement of Scotland is something that he has every right to be incredibly proud of. As a trade union we have every right to be proud too that he is one of ours. And it is for that reason it gives me enormous pleasure in moving this motion today, to award Andy Hogg his well-earned Honorary Life Membership of the POA.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Phil.

<Applause>

Carstairs, like to speak? Thank you.

**ALAN BLACKWOOD – BRANCH CHAIR, CARSTAIRS:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. It's a great honour to be seconding this motion on behalf of Carstairs Committee and members. Andy Hogg has worked closely with the branch for over 10 years, and in particular with Bob Hunter and Alan Connor, who some of you will know. Both are very disappointed not to be here today to witness this nomination. We'd like to honour Andy for his support and his guidance and commitment to the branch and membership at local level as a former full-time official. Andy is a revered figure at Carstairs, universally respected by the members, as well as the management, respectful of his professionalism, his diligence and commitment to partnership working. Past and present branch officials describe him as a man of knowledge and integrity, with a great respect for his dedication to the branch and wider trade union movement. Andy has always made himself available, night or day, to provide counsel and guidance for our Committee. He brought a calm assurance to local negotiations, both challenging management locally around members' issues with a stoic determination – saving a few members' careers along the way I have to say – holding management to account and improving working conditions for our members.

I have to say, too, he's always impeccably turned out and typically the smartest dressed man in the room – except, I have to say, when we were on a picket line in 2011, when we took industrial action over pensions, where Andy wore at least six jackets and two hats in the perishing conditions in the west of Scotland, announcing that hell had finally frozen over at Carstairs. He also managed to march with the branch in Edinburgh in 2017, where they agreed that the conditions were far more agreeable. So, colleagues, on behalf of the special hospitals and Carstairs branch, we'd like to recognise Andy Hogg's outstanding contribution to our trade union and thank him formally, wishing Andy and his wife, Angela, all the very best for the future. On a side note, if there is a karaoke bar in Eastbourne we'd like to hear 'Ol' Blue Eyes, My Way' one more time. Colleagues, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Carstairs. No more speakers so we'll go to the vote. Please cast your vote now, for or against. That poll is now closed and we have that motion carried. Well done, Andy Hogg, Honorary Life Member.

Motion 13 has been seconded by Glenochil and speaking on behalf of the NEC is Steve Gillan.

### **Motion 13:**

**That Conference award Mick Gratton Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this Trade Union.**

### **NEC**

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Conference. Before I start on the Mick Gratton motion for honorary life membership I would just like to add to an endorsement Phil said, and it's a brilliant decision by Conference to award Andy Hogg, former assistant secretary, honorary life membership. I was on the panel that interviewed Andy Hogg and – no disrespect to any other candidate – Andy was outstanding on that interview. The man is incredible and I commend that that you have given him the brilliant award, the highest award that the POA can give, so well done Conference on that.

Motion 13 reads, 'That Conference award Mick Gratton Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this Trade Union.' Conference, it also gives me great pleasure to move this motion on behalf of the NEC to award Mick Gratton Honorary Life Membership. This motion would've been placed before Conference earlier, just like the Andy Hogg one, but unfortunately Covid put to that and it is an honour to speak to this motion.

Mick joined the Scottish Prison Service on 8th October 1984 at HMP Glenochil, where he worked until he was transferred to HMP Edinburgh in 1988 and was seconded to the NHS to train as a nursing officer. Whilst as a nurse in Edinburgh he was elected on to the local committee until he was transferred back to Glenochil as a nurse officer. Soon, Mick was on the local committee at Glenochil. Mick ended up on the galleries as a prison officer – because that's what they call it in Scotland, the galleries – at Glenochil after a nursing review. He remained on the Committee at Glenochil, where he was highly respected for his knowledge and representative skills. In 2001 he stood for the SNC and was successful. He served the membership skilfully on disciplinaries, grievances, capabilities and ill-health retirements, as well as negotiating with the Scottish Government, and indeed, the Scottish employer. Mick was later elected as the Vice Chairman, where he served the membership until his retirement on 22nd May 2020. Please award Mick Gratton the highest honour for his service to the POA with his outstanding contribution to the POA.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Glenochil, do you wish to say anything? Good man. Keep it clean.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER – GLENOCHIL:** Colleagues, I found myself wanting to say this after a phone call because I didn't actually realise I was going to have to get up and speak today, but I'd like to point out that, in my years of working at the branch, Mick Gratton has been there at the end of a phone. He has been there to come in at the last minute to help us out with any issues we had at the local branch, and if everybody knew Mick Gratton, as soon as the subject got on to pensions he was your man. We second this motion and we hope that it's passed at Conference. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, well done. OK, let's go straight to the vote then. Cast your votes now for all against. That poll is now closed and as you can see that motion is carried. Well done to Mick Gratton, Honorary Life Member.

Motion 14 has been seconded by Wandsworth. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Steve Gillan.

#### **Motion 14:**

**That Conference award Mark Healy Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this Trade Union.**

#### **NEC**

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Conference, delegates. In moving this motion that Conference award Mark Healy Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this Trade Union – unfortunately sometimes we forget about the contribution that people have made over the years and over the distance of time and Mark Healy is certainly one of them that should have been awarded this much earlier than today, quite frankly. Conference, it does give me great pleasure in moving this motion to award Mark Healy Honorary Life Membership.

Mark joined the Prison Service in 1982 and became a member of the Wandsworth Committee in 1986. He was on a Committee that led to an 11-day strike walkout in 1989, with many of the issues over the implementation of Fresh Start and imposed shift systems. In 1993 Mark was elected to the National Executive Committee representing London and the Southeast. During this time there was the introduction of the 1994 Criminal Justice Public Order Act and all the chaos that brought in relation to trade union rights under Section 127. In 1997 he was elected National Chair, dealing with the full range of issues as Chairman, and led the way in relation to recruitment of members in the private sector – which wasn't, at that time, universally welcomed in the POA. But he stuck to his beliefs that a trade union was for everyone and not just a club for some. Also, working closely with David Evans, they negotiated a deal which led to Scotland coming back in to the POA. Mark also recognised back then that the POA still had a problem with racism within the ranks of our members and agreed, with the then Director General, Martin Neary, how they would deal with those that were found guilty of racist activity.

Mark was a shrewd operator and an excellent National Chair and he deserves the very best accolade that this union can give, and that is to be awarded Honorary Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to this union over that period of time. Thank you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Wandsworth?

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Obviously delighted to second this. I've got fairly good memories of Mark Healy. I do remember one story that went around for quite some time, of somebody trying to sell insurance deals to POA members based at Wandsworth. Whoever it was, was going round knocking on the quarters doors saying, 'I'm here from insurance company, personally endorsed by POA and Mark Healy.' He knocked one morning on the door of one of the quarters, gave them this talk that he was 'personally endorsed by Mark Healy', whereupon Mark Healy said, 'I'm Mark Healy, I've never heard of you or your company. I suggest you go away and stop pestering my members.' The man was never seen again, so Mark had made his point. Also, in branch I remember a programme, I was there at the time, called Turning the Screws. I think you might be able to still watch it. Mark essentially didn't get enough support for action that he wanted to take and he gave a thank you speech to the members but it wasn't a big enough margin for the Committee to take action going further forward. But he didn't give up.

I also remember much later at a special delegates Conference where a vote clearly went against the NEC and he didn't give up. I think that was something about him – he didn't just give up if he didn't get his own way. He was quite prepared to stay the course, remain in the arena and continue fighting – a valuable lesson that I learned from him before becoming a branch official myself. Please support.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Stewart. Any more speakers? Straight to the vote then. Please cast your votes now for or against this motion. OK, that poll is now closed and as you can see that motion is carried. Congratulations to Mark Healy, Honorary Life Member.

Just a few announcements. Just to remind you that on the way out, hand in your handsets to re-register tomorrow morning. Don't be taking them down Weatherspoon's and pretending you're a yuppie. Mick Lynch cannot make Conference on Friday, he's busy dealing with fire and rehire and court cases and all kinds, so unfortunately he can't deliver his speech on Friday, just for your notation. And finally, we're gonna start at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. We've got a speech from Earl Attlee at 10:30pm so we'll get through a few motions before he addresses Conference. Thank you for today. Enjoy your night and see you tomorrow morning at 10am.

Monday 16th to Friday 20th May 2022

Tuesday 17th May

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Just a few announcements before we progress business. When you visit the stalls could you do me a favour and go and say hello to HMPPS on the Race Action Plan stall. They're feeling very lonely! Just a reminder that we have a survey on our POA website that you can access via the members area. You need your POA membership number to access it, and it's to do with social media. The more people that fill it in, the better for us. And Joe Simpson's asked me to remind you to put the date in your diary, Saturday 18th June, for the TUC Rally in London. Let's have a good turnout for that as well.

Before we get going, I've been assured by our tech team that yesterday there were a few concerns that there wasn't 100% of people voting. That's because people don't have to vote or they may have left the room, but I can assure you that it's all above board and working well. What we're going to do is we're going to have two test votes and I want, on the first one, for everybody to vote 'for' and then, on the second one, everyone to vote 'against' so the tech guys can make sure that everything is working properly, that the cards that you've got in the handsets are all logged in, and we're all happy. So, everyone vote 'for' now please.

So we've got one person who's voted against.

<Laughter>

You can change your vote though! Change it to 'for', whoever's voted against, change it to 'for'. I knew this would work well! OK, close the poll now. So, as you can see, one against. I can only try, Conference!

Right, test motion two please, tech guys. Everybody vote 'against' – which probably means one will vote 'for'.

That's looking good. OK, we can close that poll now. Yeah, everything's working well. So, if there are some people who aren't voting, they're either not voting on the floor, they've gone to the toilet or they've had to deal with branch business, but it is working well.

OK, what I'm going to do first thing is I'm going to introduce our guest speaker, Lord Attlee. He has indicated he's happy to take questions from the floor so after his speech, if you want to clarify anything or ask questions. Come up and ask away – and he will be around all day if you want to converse with him. He's been a big supporter of the POA, particularly in trying to get through Parliament and the House of Lords the noxious substances bill, which unfortunately wasn't successful, but he's going to keep chipping away on our behalf.

Lord Attlee was educated at Stowe School, trained with Smiths Industries and worked mainly in materials management. Following his father's death, he entered the House of Lords in 1992, initially as a cross-bencher. He undertook a tour with the non-governmental organisation British Direct Aid in Bosnia during the winter of 1993 to '94, then ran British Direct Aid's operation in Rwanda for most of 1995. In the Territorial Army he served for 18 years in the ranks and was then commissioned in 1991. After a further 25 years he retired at the rank of Major and has served on operations in Bosnia during '97 to '98, and in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Shortly before the general election of 1997 he joined the Conservative Party. He is one of 92 elected hereditary peers that remain in the House of Lords after the passing of the House of Lords Act in 1999. In 2008 he attended the Royal College of Defence Studies as part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme. He has served in a number of frontbench roles since 1997, both in opposition and in Government. He stepped down from the Government in April 2014 and, as I said, he does us a lot of favours in the House of Lords. Lord Attlee, you are very welcome to address Conference.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Chairman, thank you for that kind invitation. I'm grateful for the opportunity to address the POA Conference. Due to Covid I've had to wait two years, since 2020, to do so. I'd like to thank Steve Gillan, the General Secretary, and Charley Allan, who is the POA's parliamentary liaison officer, for enabling me to speak today.

You may be wondering why on earth your leadership has allowed this out-and-out Tory hereditary peer to address Conference today. And the reason is to enable me to share my thoughts on prison reform with you, in respect of prolific minor offenders. Back in September 2017 we had a debate in the Lords on prison overcrowding, and as a result I decided to reinvent myself and take a very close look at our penal system. During my researches I found many issues, but I'm not going to recite them all to you because they're largely negative. The Chief Inspector's reports regularly comment on them and you understand them and invariably they have been done to you, and the prison system, and they are certainly not this association's fault. In fact, the closer I have looked at our prison system, the greater my admiration for you and the governors who have to operate the system, which looks after the most objectionable members of society and keeps us all safe. Thank you.

In a moment I intend to outline my proposals for drastic reform of the prison system in respect of prolific minor offenders, but a quick word about myself. I struggled at school with dyslexia and I was a very late developer, and without the privilege of private education and loving parents, I could easily have got in trouble, as many less fortunate do. All you have to do is fall in with the wrong crowd. After school, as we've talked about, my background was centred on 40 years of service in the reserves, time in industry, practical automotive engineering and overseas aid operations. In the Lords, I'm not known to be a fluffy bunny. Now, before getting to talking about prolific minor offenders, I would like to touch on two issues – which

are potting and pensions.

I became aware of the problem of potting through my researches. This type of assault is not tolerable – nor is the apparent lack of disciplinary action from the criminal justice system. I had a great opportunity with the passage of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act going through the Lords, and Steve Gillan put me in touch with Charley Allan, and Charley drafted me an excellent amendment to put to the Bill, to run with the Bill. The amendment created a new and specific offence of potting, which would be easier to prove in court. Although the amendment had cross-party support I did not push it to a vote because of assurances that I received at a Ministerial meeting. Now, the next step in this mini-campaign is for me to take up with Ministers any new and egregious case where no action has been taken against the perpetrator, so I need you to report up through the General Secretary's office any suitable cases where no action has been taken when action should have been taken, so that I can take it up at Ministerial level. I believe that there should be zero tolerance for these offences and I will do everything that I reasonably can to make that happen.

<Applause>

I'm now 65 years old. I have done a few bits and pieces in my time, but now when I get up in the morning my joints ache, my back is stiff and if I drop my toothpaste on the floor it's a logistical disaster. And sometimes I ask myself, do I really want to get on the train and go to the House of Lords? I therefore cannot understand how anyone thinks it is reasonable to have a retirement age of 68 for a prison officer.

<Applause>

Charley Allan has drafted a simple oral question for me that I have tabled in the House of Lords, and it reads, 'To ask Her Majesty's Government until what age must a newly recruited prison officer stay in post before they are able to claim their full occupational pension?' I think the answer to that question and the subsequent debate will be very interesting. I just don't know when the oral question will come up.

Turning to prison reform. After looking at the issues in our penal system I saw several areas where we could do things differently or better, but as a good politician I looked for the low-hanging fruit where we could have the maximum possible benefit. And looking at prolific minor offenders we know we've got about 12,000 between the ages of 18 to 24 and a reconviction rate of about 65% within 12 months. However, most stop reoffending by between 26 and 30 years of age, so there must be hope that we can do something with them. As we know, young PMOs often have a terrible start in life. None of their siblings will have the same father, no positive male role model, illiterate and innumerate, and generally unemployable for these reasons and lack of skills. And of course young PMOs can go on to commit very serious offences.

There is considerable debate in Westminster as to whether short sentences do more harm than good. But short sentences are unlikely to improve matters if, in reality, very little is done to address offenders' weaknesses. And this is why I think drastic reform is required. My political colleagues do talk about rehabilitation but only in the context of the current system using the secure estate. And what I say to my colleagues in Westminster, who obviously know about my background, I say, 'If you gave me 100 prolific minor offenders straight off the criminal justice system, would you expect me to stick them in one building and do almost nothing with them, and certainly with no question about them being tired or fulfilled at the end of the day?' But that is what we do. And why is anyone surprised that the prisoners resort to drugs and then why do we expect them to miraculously stop reoffending when we haven't in fact done anything to address their weaknesses?

I asked Frances Crook, the now-retired Chief Executive of the Howard League for Prison Reform, I asked her, 'So how often do these kids that are YOI get taken out on camp?' And she said, 'John, you should really ask how often do they get taken out of their cells?' And of course the Chief Inspector's reports regularly back that up. Now, please note, this is not a reflection on POA members or governors, it is a function of available resources given to you and what we in Westminster ask or tell you to do. It's not your fault. So I propose a new sentence, and that is to be detained for training at Her Majesty's pleasure, or DFT for short. Release will be dependent on reaching the required improvements in performance levels in respect of education, training and conduct, rather than having served a certain length of time as under a determinant sentence. The court would determine the level of achievable improvement required before release. And also time on remand wouldn't help advance the release date. The required performance improvement would be achievable within three to eight months, thus the additional costs of DFT – it would cost more – would be outweighed by the faster throughput of the proposed system compared to the status quo.

The initial phase, basic compliance training, would concentrate on hope, pride and discipline in order that more interesting training can be safely undertaken later. The training would be based on respect and compliance. Training would include, inter alia, long walks and map reading – in other words getting lost – in order to be tired at the end of the day, basic first aid, anger-management and conflict-avoidance training in practical exercises. Now, I am aware that we do anger-management training within the prison system, but we cannot train and test in field conditions for obvious reasons. A high standard of dress and bearing will be required and this is important to improve employability later on. Compliance will be primarily achieved through a rewards culture as punishments are of very limited effectiveness for this sector of society. Peer pressure from other team members is expected to encourage good performance. Few members would want to let their own team down. Most importantly, most training will be undertaken as part of a team in order to counter the gang culture and be more effective. Teams will be composed with trainees from all parts of the country and they will be competing against each other. The key components of the training would take place in remote rural locations in order to isolate from criminal influences, and mobile phones and most importantly drugs. The remoteness would provide the security rather than the prison walls. We're not talking about using the secure estate.

Now I can see how this might cause some anxieties, which I will seek to address in a moment. Don't panic! Accommodation for trainings would be austere but numerous, and regular improvements would be available to reward good performance. Training after basic compliance training would be demanding and, given the amount of time available, high standards would be required. Training would cover such things as literacy and numeracy and getting to the required improvement standard, first aid at work certificate if there weren't any contraindications, basic construction skills certificate so they can legally go onto a building site, even if they have no particular skills. Things like training and certification to erect a prefabricated aluminium access tower. There is a ticket for that and it's a useful ticket to have. Possibly a forklift truck driving licence. It only takes a competent person a week

to be qualified to drive a forklift. Safe use of power tools, basic – and I mean basic – risk assessments, and importantly plenty of outward-bound training. Training exercises would be frequently used, initially simple ones but later on they would be complex, with missions to be achieved using the skills already taught. So, on a simple exercise it just might be a map-reading exercise but they might find themselves dealing with a first-aid scenario and they have to take the correct actions as they've been trained, or an anger-management scenario where they come across Farmer Giles who's in a strop and they need to exercise the training they've already been given to de-escalate the situation.

And finally, release from DFT would be gradual and safe, without the current cliff edge. Now, my proposed paper gives much greater detail but it is not set in stone. I can email the paper to anyone who asks me for it and it's important to know that, even if adopted as policy, the outcome would be different from my original proposals. Just to drill down in a few areas, on the HR issues I mentioned training in remote rural locations. Fear not, you are not going to have to go on camp in remote parts of Northumberland or mid-Wales if you do not wish to. There are 12,000 18-24-year-old prisoners and a proportion will be serving very long sentences for serious offences. DFT should not be required as just a new type of punishment, and offenders would not be sentenced to DFT unless they are very likely to benefit from it and are able to meet the required standards of improvement set by the court and there is a properly funded and resourced place available. Therefore only a small proportion of the prison population will be on DFT, and it will not have much effect on the majority of inmates or prison officers. If you read my proposal, you will see that I am proposing absolutely drastic reform in respect of prolific minor offenders. However, I am equally clear that the people who would look after these DFT trainees are called prison officers and generally speaking they will be members of this association.

Incidentally, I'm not convinced about the current model of a private prison because, so far as I can see, it is only a means of screwing down the prison officers' remuneration. Now, these are early days for a proposal for drastic reform. The staff who would operate it are probably not even in the Prison Service today. I don't want to get drawn into HR detail but I do envisage qualified outward-bound instructors and others being recruited into the Prison Service to run this scheme. I accept that there will have to be a discussion about pay for additional qualifications and everybody loves dealing with Her Majesty's Treasury. Thank you for your attention. I'm happy to take questions. I will be around all day today and possibly tomorrow, so do feel free to buttonhole me at any time today or possibly tomorrow. Thank you for your attention.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Lord Attlee. I'm now going to invite questions from the floor. If you wish to ask his Lordship a question please approach.

**MIKE KIMPTON – WHATTON BRANCH CHAIR:** It's my first time. Sir, this is more of a request than it is a question. I would like you to take to your Peers that the retirement age for prison officers is obviously 68 where our fellow police officers and the fire service it's currently 60. If I look around this room now with everybody here, I think you'll find very few staff here that haven't dealt with a cell fire. We've all been in situations where we've had to deal with fires and, when it comes to police officers, I actually had a conversation with a police officer about it this when we had one interviewing one of our members. I said to him, 'Jeez, this is more difficult than it looks guys, I swear!' I said to him, when we were discussing this, it was, 'You work a 12-hour shift and you deal with a difficult, violent perpetrator for maybe two hours of that shift and then you go and you hand them over to a custody officer. We have to deal with that same person for 12 hours of our 12-hour shift, and then once we've locked them up at the end of the day we come in tomorrow, the following day, and deal with that same person for 12 hours. We do not have anywhere to take these prisoners to get them out of our way when they're being violent, when they're being refractory.' And yet they can retire at 60. We who fight fires, who police our landings and control dangerous prisoners by keeping them out of the public, still retire at 68. So I kindly ask you to remind your Peers that, yes, we are prison officers, but we do everything that the emergency services do outside, but in a confined area out of view. So please take that forward to your Peers.

<Applause>

And finally, this is a very short one, I assure you. You talk about rehabilitation and being a prison officer. Believe it or not, I do actually believe in rehabilitation. We should give everybody the opportunity to turn their lives around from a life of crime, but I must state that rehabilitation starts with everybody in this room, it starts with prison officers and, if you've got happy prison officers, give rehabilitation that chance to actually be successful with prison officers. Start with them, sir. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Thank you for all of that. Your last comments, start with them. When I started looking closely at prison reform, one of the first people I invited to tea at the House of Lords was Steve Gillan. And we think, we were discussing it just earlier, we think it was in September 2017, about, the first man I asked to brief me on the prison system was Steve Gillan.

Talking about the retirement age, 68. I'm 65, I do not want to go to the House of Lords every day – I've cut down. I used to go four days a week, five days a week sometimes. Now I'm saying, 'Actually, do you know, I think I only want to do three days a week,' and we're expecting prison officers to work until they're 68. In the army, you can't be an old junior NCO. They have something called a manning control point and, when you get too old to be a full corporal, you have to leave. You can't do 22 years and get no further than a corporal. I mean it will be interesting to see how their lordships react to the oral question, because we've carefully drafted my oral question so that the only correct answer is 68. I suspect the Minister will tart it up with a load of justifications, but there can be no justification for asking a prison officer to retire at 68, so I will keep it high on my agenda to get a reasonable retirement age.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Do we have any more questions from the floor? Well done Whatton. Can't stop you now.

You've popped your cherry, get back up! Well done, well said.

**TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Do you support this Union's call for PAVA in the juvenile estate?

**LORD ATTLEE:** The use of PAVA? I'm not fully briefed on it I'm afraid so I couldn't comment on that.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We're happy to give you a briefing on PAVA.

**LORD ATTLEE:** I'd be delighted to take briefing from people. You might be disappointed that I say I can't comment because I'm not briefed on it. That is why I'm here. That's why I'm going to be here all day today and maybe tomorrow, so if you want to talk to me about PAVA, I'm very, very willing to listen carefully.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Tyler, this is your opportunity, during today, to buttonhole a Lord. Make the most of it!

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Sir, I respect your opinion. I think it's very noble and what you're trying to do. The one question I've really got to ask you is finance. Where's it going to come from, because if we have got this bottomless pit, that we can afford to do this rehabilitation, me and my colleagues would like to see it going into our wages as a start.

<Applause>

The wage at the moment – I've been in the job 20 years, the new top rate for prison officers is exactly what it was 20 years ago. I don't think that's at all acceptable. So please sir, will you just, if there's some money available, let's stick it into our back pockets, because we've been through the pandemic and we've worked hard and I'd really appreciate your support. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** I absolutely take on the point about pay. You cannot expect to get good results if you're not prepared to pay for them. I imagine part of the problem is dealing with the Treasury, who always think that success is having the minimum pay you can possibly get away with. On the economics of what I'm proposing, there's an interesting comparison. An army recruits course costs about in the region of £38,000 per trainee, and that is using very good-quality instructors and actually much better paid than prison officers. And that is, you're talking about 16 weeks of training, intensive training, whereas we're looking at about £40-44,000 per year per prisoner using our conventional system. So broadly speaking it's affordable to have a shorter, more intense course, but as I alluded to at the end of my speech, there will be increased costs because you're going to have to have junior prison officers who have got specialist qualifications and they need to be rewarded.

**RICKI MCNEIL – BRANCH CHAIR, HMP BERWYN:** I'm going to go on a different thread – the reason you're standing there today in regards to rehabilitation. I spent 10 years in the British Army and I've done 30 years in this job. Myself and Mark joined the job at the same time, and we joined the job for the same reason as you've just explained, rehabilitation. I come from a very bad – I was put in an orphanage as a child, I grew up in a bad council estate, like most of the people here, and we made that choice to better ourselves and move on, whether it be Prison Service or whether it be army. That was our way out, so a lot of us here have come from the areas that the kids nowadays are in jail for, and what you've said is commendable. I'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to HMP Berwyn because at the moment we've got a young lad who's just passed selection for SAS Reserves and he is determined to help rehabilitate these lads in the same way that you've actually looked to introduce through your work, your reform. So, if you could meet after this I'd like to take the opportunity to invite you HMP Berwyn and look at what we propose. I've already been speaking to the Justice Minister and also the Minister for Prisons in regards to getting something up and running at HMP Berwyn, so I'd really appreciate your input. Thank you.

**LORD ATTLEE:** Thank you. I'd be delighted to visit, subject to Ministerial approval because I won't do something against the wishes of the Minister, but it's extremely unlikely that he'd say no, or she'd say no.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can assure you she won't. We get on great!

<Laughter>

**CRAIG SMITH – BRANCH CHAIR, LEEDS:** Chair, Conference, NEC, first time at Conference, you can hear it in my voice. I just want to pick up on the DFT training. Obviously that's going to happen years to come. Like you said, most people in this room will be probably finishing. The point I want to make is you've just said that there's 12,000 YOIs in the estate. That puts fear into my heart because they're going to be in our estate soon and the workforce is getting older and older, and they're getting younger and younger – and that's the point about 68 or 67. So I'd just like you to take that back as well. The 12,000 YOIs, a big proportion of them are going to be rolling around on the floor with us very soon. That is going to get bigger and bigger, and I'd like you to take that back as well. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** I'll be honest, what I do not understand about the YOI population, that 18-24 age group, is what proportion are suitable for DFT – in other words, you can do something with them – and what proportion either you can't, they're hopeless, or they're in for very serious offences or in for

offences which just mean it's not suitable. So I don't know what proportion are suitable, but of course it's going to be a significant number, and there's a high churn because they're relatively short sentences.

On the age of the prison officers, I would envisage having to recruit quite young prison officers again, as I said, with a specialist qualification. Actually when you look at the salary available for an outward-bound instructor who's done a degree in outward bound, the salaries aren't very high, so actually the Prison Service ought to be able to make a good offer, but so far as I'm concerned we've got to pay the prison officers enough to get the right quality of prison officers with the right qualifications and at the right age.

**KEVIN JESPO – BRANCH SECRETARY, FORD:** I'll just ask the one question. Can we have the equipment to deal with these people in every single category from As to Ds. Give us the PAVA, give us the extending batons, give us everything we need. A white shirt is not good enough. Can we please have extendable batons, PAVA to be used – I've used PAVA in Cat D, and I'll be speaking a motion later – can you take it back to Ministers and give us the equipment to deal with these people? Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Well, as I've already indicated, I'm here to listen. If you can convince me then I'll take that to Ministers. On the potting I had some pretty heavy-duty discussions with the Minister about the penalty regime – frankly the lack of penalties for potting, and the cameras. One of the issues that came up with the Minister is he was unhappy that you didn't want the cameras to be rolling all the time. But I can absolutely understand why you wouldn't want to have the camera rolling all the time, because it's simply not fair for you to have a camera rolling all day long when you're having your free and frank discussions with your colleagues. Also I can see the advantage of, if something's getting a bit heated, just going and pressing your camera button to go on record. But please, Conference, grab hold of me, grab me by my lapels and tell me what you think. I'm here to listen.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more delegates wish to speak? Pete, I'm afraid it's delegates only, not observers or guests or honorary life members. Sorry. If you want to pass your question to a delegate –

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** I would like Conference to give me permission –

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, we're going to adjourn for 10 minutes while we sort this issue out. Thank you. Thank you Lord Attlee. Come back in 10 minutes and we'll reconvene. Thank you. Ten minutes Conference.

<Applause>

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. If we start drifting back to our seats and we can reconvene. Thank you. Thank you Conference, we'll reconvene. Apologies for the interruption and a slight delay – Pete Hancox is passionate about our cause, a bit overenthusiastic, and he'd like to just apologise to you all. Thank you Pete.

<Applause>

**PETER HANCOX – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER:** Chairman, NEC and fellow delegates of the past, yes, what the Chairman has just said is I am passionate, always have been. I have represented our members for some 46 years. What I said to the National Chairman, and obviously that would include the National Executive Committee and yourselves, I fully apologise for the way I said what I said. Please, members, forgive me.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said, Pete, and you're very welcome. Thank you very much for that. The point Pete was trying to make to his Lordship was that it's been over 30 years since the riot at Manchester and pay hasn't increased significantly for prison officers during that entire time, and we seem to be back now to a long-hours culture and surviving on overtime – that was the point Pete wanted to make. So, Lord Attlee, if you'd like to retake the rostrum. I don't think there are any more questions, just a few points I'd like to make and show our appreciation to you. Are there any more questions, colleagues? Yes.

**IAN KNIGHT – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLLESLEY BAY:** I'm back.

<Applause>

One nervous boy here. Chair, Sir, NEC. One thing you haven't picked up on, if you're talking about supporting prisoners through their journey, one thing really dear to my heart here – prison officers' mental health. You're not doing anything with it. We're not getting any bloody support, we're not getting any supervision. Prison officers are hanging themselves. Why are you not helping us with mental health throughout the system?

<Applause>

Please. You talked about getting out of bed at 65 and how you ache. Well, I went at 55, I'm now part-time, I went to Bedford because the clientele

that we're employing, there was eight at our gate – volunteers required to go to Bedford, Bedford's gone up. Three of us over 50, 'Yeah, we'll go.' Five youngsters put their heads down. So we go, three days, really an awful lot of bloody violence – vile stuff that you try and deal with in your head. No-one wants to know afterwards. I ached for a week. How are you expecting our bloody prison officers here to work until 68 when at 55 I was nearly done? We need to really look at that because look at the age group here now. How many of us are going to be here in five years' time? And them kids are not capable of doing what they're doing all the way up to 68. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Well, I've already made it quite clear that I fully support the case for retirement much earlier than 68. On the mental health, we're beginning to be much more aware of mental health needs right across the board and you see talking much more about the effect of mental health in the armed forces, but I can absolutely understand how you can get a mental health problem with the Prison Service with what you have to do. No doubt about it at all. I wouldn't want to be a prison officer and have to deal with your clientele because, as I said in my speech, they are the most obnoxious people in society and we ask you people to deal with them. So we're very grateful for that. Again, I can only say that I will take whatever briefing you give me and take it away.

<Applause>

**ANDY COLLINS – BRANCH COMMITTEE, GRENDON & SPRINGHILL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. Sir, what you are proposing is essentially a boot camp – however, as we all know, the service has gone beyond discipline and is now a soft touch. How would you protect our members from the human rights lawyers who would essentially be a barrier to enforcing any discipline to make your proposal a success?

**LORD ATTLEE:** The first point, I made it to one of your colleagues, is we need to avoid the term 'boot camp' because it smacks of bullying. My proposals have a whole chapter on anti-bullying controls, including the appointment of a mentor from the point of conviction to right the way through the DFT process until the offender trainee is in employment. I've run my proposal through the House of Lords as an amendment to the Policing Bill very recently and I'm pleased to say that actually it fared fairly well and I didn't get the difficulties that I'd expected. There will be resistance to the principle of saying that you don't get released until you meet the required standards of improvement in respect of education, performance and conduct rather than the court saying, 'You've got to go to prison for three years.' But, to me, it's madness saying to a young offender, 'You've got to go to prison for 18 months, three years, or whatever it is,' but you're not the slightest bit interested in whether they've addressed their weaknesses or not. And yet the weaknesses can be objectively measured – does the offender, does the trainee, does he lose his rag or not? Can he be provoked into losing his rag or not? That is the most difficult part of the policy, to get people to accept that you're releasing on performance, not after an elapsed time.

I expect that I will – if I can be the *bête noir* of the Daily Mail and the Guardian at the same time I'll be doing really well. *Bête noir* of the Daily Mail because I'll introduce an element of fun into the training and you motivate people by fun – you say, 'This exercise you're going to be doing is going to be fun and if you can beat the other team you'll get the barbecue with beer and the other team will get the barbecue without beer. The team that's lost will get the pizza that's been through the blender.' And for the Guardian, they won't like it either because I want to be strict. When I talk about basic compliance training, it will be a very strict regimen in order to secure compliance in order that they can do more exciting training later on.

So I would love to have that argument about human rights and I think it's a human right to be sent to prison if you're sentenced to prison but actually the state does something useful with you while you're incarcerated rather than, at the moment, we just incarcerate and pay lip service to rehabilitation. So I look forward to engaging with people and I will not shy away from arguing on the human rights issue.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Noble Lord. I'd just like to ask you, somebody brought about the mental health of staff. I'd like to bring up about the mental health of prisoners. A lot of prisoners, the vast majority of prisoners, have got mental health issues but nowhere to send them so they get dumped in the Prison Service. We don't have any training to deal with them. I work on actually a wing that deals with mentally ill prisoners and the amount of time it takes to try them and get them into a special hospital is unbelievable. So we are the dumping ground because they forgot to deal with the mental health hospitals. As I say, it does no favours. You said before that some people wouldn't be suitable for this. The reason why they're not suitable is because they've probably got mental health problems and that needs to be dealt with. As I say, we get no training whatsoever so maybe something should be looked at there. You need to go further into the health estate and do something about that.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** It's interesting for me to find out that there's a problem that I didn't know about, which is precisely why I'm here. Please do raise these mental health issues with me offline because I am interested in them. One issue I do have on the – one of the drivers for my proposals on the DFT, if you've got a young offender, and they're bound to be mentally fragile at the very least, that actually sticking them in a prison, a conventional prison, isn't the best environment for them. Therefore taking them out into the countryside is going to be much more therapeutic.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Anyone else?

**SIMON HENLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, CHANNINGS WOOD:** Chair, NEC, delegates. One thing that I keep hearing is about how much the Government wants to do these, as Mark addresses too, pilot schemes to future things – and yourself like this brand new DFT thing. But if you haven't got the staff on the ground and you haven't – we haven't currently got staff enough to unlock a landing, I don't know how you're going to get them to be romping round in the countryside, sir, with all due respect. So until this Government addresses the retention rates and pay and decency, so people actually want to stay in this job for more than two years. Because how does anyone have the experience to do that when I can count on one hand, I would say, in my jail the people that would have that built-up jail knowledge how to do that job. I don't know how they're going to do it. So I would ask you to go back and speak to your Peers and ask them to really address pay and retention in this service because, until you do that, you won't have the skill

set to do what you want to do. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Well, that's a really well-made point. The first thing I would say is, if I was trying to implement this I'd ring-fence the funding for DFT so you wouldn't be vulnerable to not being able to get the staff you need to run the DFT scheme. But actually on the wider issue of retention, to me, when you look at an organisation the first thing you look at is the retention rate of the staff, the staff turnover. And you're looking at, say, a TA unit, if you're visiting a TA reserve unit the first thing you'd want to see is what is their turnover. If you were looking at a commercial organisation you would want to see what is their turnover of staff and how does it compare with competitors because, if you've got a high turnover, it means something is wrong – either the management are pigs or alternatively you're not paying the staff enough. I sincerely hope that in the case of the Prison Service it's simply that we're not paying people enough.

But it is obvious that, if you've got a high turnover, and we have – I'm acutely aware of the lack of experience in the Prison Service of a far higher proportion than used to be of prison officers with very limited experience and the turnover rate is simply not acceptable. It's not even economic. It can't be economic because you've got to keep retraining people and when they're inexperienced they make mistakes, which is costly. It's much, much better to keep people as prison officers for a full career but you'll only do that if you've got a reasonable retirement age. I can see someone joining the Prison Service at, say, 30 – a good age to join I would have thought – but if they're looking at, they're 30 and think, 'I've got to keep working until I'm 68 here,' at some point they're going to leave because they realise actually this isn't a good game. So the retirement age, in my opinion, reasonable retirement age, is absolutely critical in retention. But also you've got to be reasonably paid, there's no question about it. In my opinion it's not economic to underpay people.

<Applause>

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Chair, NEC, delegates, distinguished guests. First time up on the rostrum if you haven't figured that one out already. Lord, I've got a number of questions, the first one being I've not helped – obviously I've listened to you talking about the DFT and stating that they would be incarcerated until they are suitable for release. So my first concern is, or my first question to you would be, is this just not a rehash or a potential rehash of the IPP because if they're not –

**LORD ATTLEE:** Could you say that again?

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** I just would like to know if it's a rehash of the IPP that was abolished because obviously if we're going to keep them incarcerated until they're suitable for release, my concern is if they refuse to engage are they potentially going to be stuck forever and a day?

The second point I would like to question is, during your speech, you referred to the members of staff as young prison officers that would be taking care of them so I would like to ask is that just young in service or are you looking at prisoner officers that are newly in service and are relatively lacking in the experience and confidence of a prison officer's requirements?

**LORD ATTLEE:** I'm not quite sure about your last point on prison officers?

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** You referred to them as young prison officers, I just wanted to clarify whether that was young in service or also young in age?

**LORD ATTLEE:** Young?

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Young in age.

**LORD ATTLEE:** Right.

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Taking the point about young in age, to run the DFT scheme you will need prison officers who are, I'd say, put it this way, even better at leadership. You can actually objectively measure leadership, that is the ability to get people to do things that they would rather not do and army officers are very carefully selected for the ability to get people to do things that they'd rather not do. Actually, prison officers are constantly doing that – you are getting people to do things they'd rather not do because they'd rather not comply, they'd rather be a bloody nuisance. But, actually, you've got the skills to keep them under control. So the people running the DFT scheme, they will have to have the capability of doing it, especially maybe only two prison officers looking after eight prisoners, eight trainees, on their own or with limited support. So it will be quite testing.

On your point about IPPs, I can understand what you're talking about but it's not really relevant because you will only be suitable – I can see some laughter there. You'll only be put on DFT if you're suitable and are likely to benefit from it. The people that are being put on IPP are serious criminals, almost unredeemable but – or irredeemable, sorry, that's the correct word. But we all know that the IPP is a disaster, and we've been talking about that in the Lords, but for the people on DFT, if they don't want to comply, they don't try and pass out on the basic compliance training, just want to sit

on their posterior, the worse that will happen is that if they would have attracted a three-year sentence for whatever they'd done wrong, then they'll have to spend the whole three years in prison, in the secure estate. That will be the incentive – there won't be any remission because they haven't taken the opportunity to address their weaknesses and therefore they are bound to reoffend. There's a 65% reoffending rate in any case and that figure is flattened by those who, for one reason or another, aren't going to reoffend anyway. So, I'm losing my track here, but the two issues are the IPP disaster is a separate one. They're not going to have, on my DFT, very serious offenders.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Any more?

**JOHN DIXON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** NEC, Conference. Sir, ten and a half years in the army, I'll give you some lingo that you'll probably get used to. We don't advance to contact with only half a battle group and what you've got there now is half a battle group. You've got prison officers well below capacity, you've got long-term absences. Shotts have 98 people off sick. PTSD – seen deaths, hangings, blood induced, cutting arteries, and we have had to deal with this all the way through a pandemic. And the thing that has been missed through this whole entire process is it's not been recognised that we are an emergency service and we are the frontline. We are their fathers, we're their brothers, we're their sisters, we're their mothers, we're their first line of contact that they come into and we want to do everything that you want us to do and you want us to progress with – but we haven't got the staff. As everybody is saying, we've not got retention. We have got a dilemma that's coming up at Scotland right now, where the majority of people are in their fifties, their late fifties, who are now leaving the job because it's becoming far, far too dangerous. So what you're proposing, and what you want to do in the grand scheme of things, is laudable – very, very. A great idea but the problem we're going to get is it's going to cost and nobody wants to pay for the service that we are actually, the hidden service, and everything that we do does not get recognised. This has been done by government after government after government, and they have made us knuckle-dragging neanderthals who do not deserve the respect that we're supposed to have. So you need to take that back, sir, and you need to tell them this is what we are, this is what we do and this is what we need. Give us the pay, give us our pension rights and make sure that we are looked after, sir. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Well, I agree with every word you've said. And it's a vicious circle – if you are understaffed then the job becomes far less attractive because it becomes too difficult. Once you're fully staffed, fully recruited, reasonably paid, the difficulties of the job will seriously reduce. If we do what we're doing at the moment, which is underpaying, under-recruit, too high a turnover, insufficient experience, it just gets worse and worse and worse. So I will absolutely take away the argument that you've just made.

<Applause>

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** Why don't governments understand that we're not a business? We're a tax-paying funded public service. That's my question.

<Laughter>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Does the Government understand?

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** Why don't they understand that we are not a business? Why is it top-heavy, scrutiny, assurance? We're not a business, we don't make money, we're a tax-payer funded public service. Why don't they understand that?

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** That's the most wicked question I've been asked.

<Laughter>

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** I wasn't trying to trip you up.

**LORD ATTLEE:** Because you've asked me a wicked question which I can't really answer. And that's what my job is, is to ask Ministers wicked questions to which they should answer.

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** So that's what I would like you to take back to them.

**LORD ATTLEE:** What I would comment on, actually, given the opportunity, is the turnover of Ministers in the Ministry of Justice. When I wrote my paper, which I finished my proposal in February 2020, the tenure of both the Prisons Minister and the Justice Secretary were about 18 months at best. Therefore, if you're in that position and you know you've got this job for 18 months, your objective is to try and make an improvement that will take effect within 12 months. And someone mentioned Strangeways – just keep your fingers crossed that you don't have a Strangeways on your watch. But it's a huge problem that the turnover of Ministers and therefore if you know you're only going to be there 18 months do you want to have a bloody battle with the Treasury or do you just want to put up with them screwing down the cost of running the service?

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** So the attrition rate of the Prison Minister is just as bad as the prison officer. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Anybody else? I hope the debates go like this, Conference. Very good.

**STEVE MCKENNA – BRANCH SECRETARY, NORTHUMBERLAND:** Chair, Conference, NEC. It's not my first time but I'm a little bit nervous. I'm here to actually wish you luck because it's a great thing what you're trying to do. The other point I think you've missed is if you look around the room, investing in the next generation of prison officers because this job is now an unattractive job and through everything that's happened to our pension, pay, terms and conditions, the whole lot, I think you need to look at investing in the next generation of prison officers that you're going to get to do this that come through. This job is no longer attractive to people. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LORD ATTLEE:** Of course, you're quite correct. What we've got at the moment is a few very experienced long-serving prison officers and then the junior ones on a high turnover when actually we want very low turnover. We want people to decide to be a prison officer and stay as a prison officer until they retire at a reasonable age. To my way of thinking, that is a more efficient way of running the system rather than have a high churn of prison officers. So I absolutely agree with you.

<Applause>

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** Chair, Conference and invited guests. Basically, one of the things that I've actually noticed is we get headlines saying, 'Lock up is for 22½ hours or 23 hours' – but when we're running red regimes, amber regimes, which means that we haven't got even sufficient staff to unlock so therefore how are we going to rehabilitate them? If we have the sufficient staff then it's more likely we'll be able to do the job. We might not even need to get to the stage where you are, saying DFT etc, whereas we can actually do the job and actually do it completely from start to finish. So for that reason, can you take that back with regards to having the sufficient staff first and foremost? And also being able to train and retain. Again it comes down to wages as well and the pension.

**LORD ATTLEE:** Yeah, I think what I will take – so far, anyway – I think what I'm going to take away from Conference is that you're not fundamentally opposed to what I'm proposing, you're not fundamentally opposed to it, but actually what you're feeding back to me is huge HR problems with the pension, the pay and the turnover of staff.

I think one difficulty, I suspect, is that very few people actually read the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons. Because what you're telling me about lack of staff to unlock and everything, when you read the Chief Inspector's report it's as plain as daylight. He says that you're not able to let the prisoners out for exercise, for all the things they're supposed to do, simply for lack of staff. It doesn't say that, in the report it doesn't say that the prison officers are horrible people, it just says that there aren't the resources to do what you know you should be doing. So it goes back to the pension age and the pay and that problem leads to the high turnover. So I think what I need to do is not only pursue my proposals for the reform inspectors, the prolific minor offenders, which is only a small proportion of your cohort. Actually you've got a huge cohort that you're still going to have to look after, they're not going to disappear. All the other very serious offenders, the sex offenders, the geriatrics – all that problem is not going to disappear. So I'm absolutely with you.

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** One other thing was rather than saying 22½ hours lockup they should be saying lack of staff. Like we haven't got the staff there because that's one of the things our media keeps on portraying is a bang up 24 <inaudible> media.

**LORD ATTLEE:** And I take it by when you say you haven't got the staff, that's less than this – there must be an establishment for the prison calculated from the number of prisoners and everything you need?

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** The ratio.

**LORD ATTLEE:** And there must be an establishment figure because that means I could start asking snotty questions in the Lords about how does the staffing of particular prisons compare with the establishment? Because that would be quite embarrassing.

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you.

<Applause>

Thank you Lord Attlee. It won't be the only thing you take away from Conference – we've got a nice gift for you here. Just to finish off, then, you mentioned about Outward Bound for young offenders. We used to do that in the '90s and it was really successful. Our PE staff used to take them mountaineering, hill walking, orienteering, canoeing – we used to do all kinds with them and that was really successful. But what you've got to understand is, in the '90s, we were dealing with a completely different cohort to what we're experiencing now. So you need to be aware of that and the risks involved. And also, as one of my colleagues mentioned to you, in the early 2000s we opened up a boot camp at Thorn Cross. Again, that was very successful but you're trying to influence this on the same principles we installed at that boot camp and those two dirty words that the Guardian-reading, tofu-eating, woolly hatted reform groups hate – make conditions austere to build character and install discipline. So my question is what

support have you had amongst your Peers and in the House of Commons, and have you had any kickback from your proposals?

**LORD ATTLEE:** In the Commons, obviously I can't argue the case in the Commons although I am on the 1922 Backbench Justice Committee, who have a small role in determining what the Conservative Party Manifesto will be. But other than that, I'm not able to influence the thinking that much of the House of Commons. In the House of Lords, as I said, I have run an amendment in the Lords which was basically my proposals. It was quite a long amendment because it had to say everything that I wanted to do rather than what powers you'd need to do.

The kickback that I've received in the Lords is particularly on the legislative change which would be to release dependent upon performance and conduct rather than just a determinant sentence. But I think I can argue that case in the Lords. Actually, I really wanted to make it so you just stay in prison until you comply but I found out I'd never get that through so the best I could do would be to say that if you don't want to comply and your offence justifies a three-year sentence then you'll spend the whole of the three years in prison in the secure estate if that's what you want to do. But I think that anyone who is suitable for DFT, in other words they've got two brain cells to rub together, they would actually think, 'I think I'll do the DFT rather than spend three years in prison.' It's a no-brainer really. And you wouldn't put someone on DFT unless they were going to benefit from it. So if they're hopeless they're not going to go on DFT, you'd continue to use the current system.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, thank you Lord Attlee for your address, it's been very interesting. Thank you Conference for engaging, it's been very worthwhile. I'd like to thank you for your continued support and ask you to stay there while I present you with a nice gift that you can take to one of Boris's work meetings.

<Applause>

Thank you Conference, we'll now have a delayed tea break. If you can reconvene for a quarter to twelve we'll get through a few motions before lunch. Thank you.

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. We'll reconvene when you take your seats. We'll get some motions done before lunch. We are on to Motion 15 from Hull, I believe Hull want to address Conference about this motion.

**KEVIN BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. Chair, I'd like to withdraw this motion on legal advice please.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, we might as well use our handsets, Conference, so if you want to give Hull permission to withdraw this motion please vote 'for'. Cast your vote now. Okay, that poll is now closed. They've given you permission to withdraw. Thank you Hull.

**KEVIN BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Next we have Motion 16, Frankland. Do we have a seconder please?

**Motion 16:**

**The NEC asks the Employer to return to the annual allocation and issue of uniform.**

**FRANKLAND**

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Quite a simple motion – the NEC asks the employer to return to the annual allocation and issue of uniform. The way the uniform is getting done at the minute is, obviously, you can order as much as you want, when you want, what you're entitled to. We've got over 700 uniformed members of staff and we've got uniform coming in virtually on a daily basis putting additional sort of on resources of our OSG group who work the <inaudible>, and a lot of the staff just basically wanted back to what it was – a one-off order coming once a year. Please support the motion, thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Does the seconder wish to speak on this motion? No? I see another speaker approaching.

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Conference, I'm here to ask you to reject the motion. The system that we have in place now is far better, more flexible and more practical than any previous uniform allocation systems that have been in place. Rather than once a year having to go and collect a big box of uniform, which will only end up in your attic, this system is more practical – you order what you want, when you want. It's better for our members and it's certainly better for your roof space. If you prefer to order all your uniform in one go, annually, you can still do that with this system that we've got. But to force all members to have to go back to that system just seems backwards. Conference, please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Jade. Any more speakers please? Responding on behalf of the NEC, Jackie Marshall.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, I'm speaking against the motion on behalf of the NEC. I wasn't really sure which uniform issue the

motion wanted to go back to as there have been so many. Those of you who were around in the early '90s will remember that you were given uniform whether you wanted it or not, and most of us ended up with piles of shirts, shoes, trousers or skirts, as it was in them days, in the loft. I'm not sure which system came next, if it was the points system. Again, we ended up with piles of uniform in the loft because we're prison officers and we had to use those points because the department weren't going to take them off us. I remember all my mates and female relatives had a scarf, leather gloves and leather handbag for Christmas because in those days we could order them. But enough about the past, the system currently in place is by far the best I've known throughout my service. The Amazon-style ordering system has had some hiccups at the start, as have all the other ways we've had uniform issued, but it's getting better. Order what you want, when you want, and it's delivered in a couple of days – what more could we want? Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Jackie for letting us know about your leather collection. Frankland, would you like to reply, Frankland?

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** No thanks.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, straight to the vote then. All those for or against, cast your votes now. Okay, we can close the poll and, as you can see for yourself, that motion is lost. Frankland, I'm going to skip your motion and do it this afternoon because the speaker from the NEC is actually on a meeting with the Cabinet Office to discuss important issues. Thank you, Frankland. So we'll skip to Motion 18 from Moorland. Do we have a seconder for Moorland's motion? Durham. Thank you Durham.

#### Motion 18:

**For Conference to condemn the employers for their mental health awareness and express discontent for the support services in place.**

#### MOORLAND

**STUART SUSEK – BRANCH COMMITTEE, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. This is my first time at the conference and it's my first time speaking.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Come on, be like the TUC.

<Applause>

**STUART SUSEK – BRANCH COMMITTEE, MOORLAND:** The motion we put was to condemn our employers for the mental health awareness and discontent for the service that is in place. Conference, our employer pays lip service to the mental health support – we feel it's a tick-box exercise and it needs to change. You only have to go on to the HMPPS internet page and see the surface-level support our employer gives. This includes awareness weeks, mental health champions and fancy soundbites. But I ask you, what is the worth of these offerings? I'm sure, like me, many of you have seen our colleagues suffering at home and at work and what is the response we get? They're removed from prisoner-facing duties, away from their colleagues that give them a support network and often put into an admin role which is seen to solve the problem. They're given a referral to PAM Assist, they get six sessions on this and, once our colleagues in crisis get to the crux of their issues and start to open up, the service is pulled from under them. They're expected in that time to go to the GP and get a referral and, as you know, trying to get a GP appointment is quite hard these days. We then have to wait to get this referral for the service to start and often our colleagues are back to square one.

The nature of work that we do means our employer should provide a robust, meaningful mental health service which is fit for the purpose and provides adequate support. As I said before, we all know cases in our own jails where staff are seriously struggling and some have often taken their lives.

I call on this Conference to condemn our employer for the mental health support services in place, and demand improvement going forward. We need a meaningful, well-targeted and robust service that does truly support our membership and ensure that, doing the job we do, we can live a happy and healthy life. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, I'll be the second of this motion. I dealt with a colleague – and I'd like to thank the top table because they assisted as well – who wasn't very well. He went to throw himself off a car park, six storeys. He decided not to because he didn't want somebody like me to find him. He wanted to do it late at night so a drunk would find him. He then walked into the river, he went and drowned himself. He went out one night to walk in front of cars – his family got a hold of him. He sectioned himself – mental health. We had his form when he had – he wanted to have the form. I had the form, I had to go and pick him up from the special hospital because he could discharge himself and I took him back again. He had PAM Assist and when it went through we found out they'd treated him the wrong way. He was a right mess. He went for medical retirement and they rejected it because they said he didn't have PTSD. So we went to appeal, sent the appeal in and the appeal was the consultant psychiatrist who says he has, he's just discharged him. They wouldn't accept it so we challenged the doctor who made the decision because he's not qualified to do that. A few months later he gets a letter saying <inaudible> your appeal, she says, 'You're correct.' He won his appeal.

But I'll go a little bit further. There's a reason why this is happening as well. I work in a local remand prison. We've got disputes about the courts. You might think it's got nothing to do with it but it has. The courts come in now and knock off at half-past seven. Because they don't pick bodies up and drop

them off we will get three or four busloads come in at half-past seven. Our mental health nurse goes off at eight o'clock. I was on late shift the other day and we were getting them from reception at half-past eight and putting them in cells to be dealt with by night shift. We don't know who we're dealing with and, as I said before, we don't have the training and that affects the mental health of staff. We need something done. The department needs to look at it, they need to sort a lot of things out. I've asked that we have a mental health nurse on nights – still waiting. I've had absolute nightmares in the segregation on nights. We had three prisoners going absolutely barking. I've had no training, I told the Governor I had no training – 35 years in the job, I've had no training to deal with this. A prisoner kept telling me the devil was coming to see me at three o'clock. The bells were constant. At four o'clock I went to see him, I put a towel over my head, I said, 'The devil is here now.' He went to bed. I told the Governor, I said, 'You can look it up with the cameras.' I've had no training and that's what I had to do. It's shocking, really. We need to look after ourselves and unfortunately the employers aren't looking after us. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**JOHN MUMFORD – BRANCH CHAIR, DARTMOOR:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking in support of this motion. I think the current provisions that are offered by HMPPS are an absolute disgrace – they don't really care about our mental health at all. I had an experience in about 2020, pre-pandemic, where I had to give CPR to a prisoner. Served in Iraq, like a lot of delegates have served in the forces and a lot of our members. That triggered something in me but it wasn't until the next day when I was sitting in my car waiting to go into the gymnasium and I started having proper flashbacks. So I rang PAM Assist when it had alleviated and the lady on said, 'I'm not qualified to deal with you. Go to a police station or go to the hospital.' So it's not acceptable. We need better and we deserve better. Support this motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks John.

<Applause>

**JOHN DIXON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** NEC, Conference, full of support for this motion. In Scotland we have got something called the Employee Assist Programme and it seems to me it's their get-out-of-jail-free card that, if a member of staff goes off, they go off, there's a wee leaflet, go and phone them and that's it – they've done their bit and they seem to think they can get away with that. What we've just recently found out is my HR Department have decided to secretly – I don't know if you've got capability in England but we've got the capability process in Scotland. What they've decided to do is – HR, without being open and honest, have now decided to put in secret – 'I'm here to support you, I hope you're well, we'll look after you,' but in the background what they're saying is, 'John Dixon's an idiot, don't agree with anything he said and I'm putting that submission in.' We have only found out that that's happening so I don't know if it's happening in England. There'll be something that you should have to have a look at to see if they're actually putting in secret what place letters and the capability process is, because it's happening Scotland right now and it's something that I'll be taking to Scottish Conference.

On the back of that, we had a member of staff who previously suffered from mental health issues but, on the day in question, a prisoner decided to open an artery in his leg, wanted to kill himself during, obviously, the Covid lockdown etc. When we responded, the cell was soaked from the floor, up the walls and up the ceiling. This member of staff waded through congealed jelly-like blood to actually go and try and save this man's life – putting a tourniquet on and trying to resus him etc. in all this blood, and covered in it. Now what they did out of that was – this is one of the people we found out that HR did not support because he had previous mental health issues. What we are finding, what's coming back from Optima and Capita, they're actually going, 'Well, it's not wholly or solely attributable to your work.' But this man, when he walks through the front door of the establishment is reporting fully fit and the organisation is accepting that he's fully fit. Why are they writing and going back on this and saying, 'Well, actually, you know what? He actually suffered from previous mental health,' and he's not getting support. So please fully support this motion, colleagues. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Over the last two years a bit of me dies every time I lose a member of staff. In the last twelve months at Preston alone we've had 12 staff leave on medical inefficiency, two on ill-health retirement, eight regraded to an equivalent admin role – and 95% of those cases are to do with mental health. One department alone in the jail, the PEI department, and we know they're a special breed, okay? Try to put that bit of humour in but eight PEIs to deliver a service, and we all take the mick out of them and everything but, by God, do they keep our jails functioning for us when we're allowed to. One of the first activities shut down in Covid were the gyms. So what do we do with PEIs? We put them on exercise duty or we stick them on a wing that they're not really trained to run because they're specialist Band 4s and they're F&S. I lost five of them in six months. Five of them went off, five or six months off. Each and every single one of them left on medical inefficiency grounds. I was getting phone calls at 12 o'clock at night etc. because they were climbing the walls at home. Their families couldn't cope with them etc, etc.

The services offered by the Prison Service are criminal, there's no other way of putting it. What we need is not some idiot at the end of a phone on PAM Assist who can't assist you and tells you to ring the police or section yourself or whatever. What we need in the service is what the NHS have. Thatcher and her cronies shut down establishments in our communities – they called it 'care in the community'. Some of us may remember it, some of us are old enough, some of us are not. Okay? And they filled our prisons with, now, what we are told is about 85% of our population have got mental health issues when they come into prison. And what about the staff who are dealing with them? There's nothing there to support them. What we need is qualified professionals like healthcare workers do, where you get a supervision interview every six months, where you sit down and you're assessed as to whether the unit you're working on etc. is still suitable for you. Like the police do after traumatic incidents etc. And there's none of it. There's none of it whatsoever. The Prison Service's answer to mental health is, 'Go off sick and we'll sack you in four months.' That's the reality of what you're looking at because they don't want you then, once you've been off with it. They don't actually believe that it's curable, which is nonsense in itself. Mental health can be a temporary episode.

The Prison Service in the northwest, 10 years ago, took me and three other individuals from Preston to do some training with an organisation called

KUF on personality disorders and it was so that we could go back into our establishments and out in the areas to go out and assist staff in identifying prisoners with personality disorders and then dealing with them differently. Ten years later, I'm still waiting to do any training and the other two people who did the course with me have left. The only way we're going to address this issue is if we tell them what to do with their performance management policies, the new ones that they've introduced. They look fluffy, don't they? They're not going to help you, they're just going to get you out of the job. We need the supervision. People need to actually understand that the job we do every day and the trauma that we actually deal with needs unravelling on a one-to-one basis as part of your performance review during the course of a year. Now, we've not got a Conference policy on it, I don't think, but the service offered through the Union is better than what's offered from the employer. It's not good enough.

I can't say I've not suffered by seeing all my members disappear. It's hard to deal with on a daily basis when 35-year-old people are leaving the job in their droves and they're not being replaced. And the people that they are being replaced by get involved in one incident and then they leave because it's a better job at McDonalds because they're not going to get assaulted there. We're quite right to condemn what the service offer because they don't actually offer anything other than dismissal. Alright, support the motion.

<Applause>

**JORDAN COMBBS – BRANCH REP, HULL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, it's my first time at Conference and first time speaking so apologies if I stutter my words a bit.

<Applause>

I wanted to come up first of all to pay respects to one of our colleagues who unfortunately last month took his own life. Not our jail but a jail very close to ours. It's not the first member of staff I know that's taken their own life and it's becoming more prevalent. We often get the statistics on self-inflicted deaths in custody – it's been coming down in Covid, great news. I've yet to see any statistics on self-inflicted deaths of staff. I think it would be shocking if it came out. HMP Hull, we fully support this motion and we're in a very fortunate place in Hull where, as part of our care team provision, we have an on-site counsellor now who is available to book in for appointments, face-to-face appointments now we can get with her, and that has saved lives in our jail. That should be available to every single member of staff here – it's shocking that it's not. I've rang PAM Assist myself before – it's diabolical. We fully support the motion and I hope that it's carried. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? Yes.

**SION SCOURFIELD – BRANCH CHAIR, LINCOLN:** Chair, NEC, Conference, guests. Mental health comes in many forms. What other service you know who issue sick warnings to employees who have suffered from stroke or Parkinson's disease? Only ours. This is what the service has done to two of my colleagues at Lincoln. The sick policy is not fit for purpose, there is no support for our members and this has a detrimental effect on retention. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Anybody else, Conference? Thank you to all the speakers there, well done. Replying on behalf of the NEC is Dave Cook.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the National Executive. Firstly I'd like to thank Moorland Branch for bringing this motion, which highlights a very important issue for our members. It raised a very emotive subject and for that we thank them. The NEC are happy and proud to support this motion on your behalf. But it has to be recognised as well that, whilst it is poor, the service that we get is poor, but we've got to recognise as well it is slowly improving. But it's like trying to push a lorry through a lake of molasses, it is slow. It is far too slow for our members, for the people that we've lost before now and those that we may lose in the future.

Quite frankly, can the employer do better? Absolutely true, they can. We raise this issue every time we meet with the Health and Safety Whitley. The National Executive bring this up and we're saying to them, time after time after time, 'The service you provide our members, your staff, is not good enough. You have to improve this. You have to start investing in the mental wellness of your staff.' Long hours, poor working conditions and, more importantly, the lack of support that our staff have on the landings is one of the biggest contributors to stress, anxiety and mental health issues through the work that they're having to do. We have absolutely no problem feeding back to our employer your condemnation of their awareness of mental health issues and the very poor services that they are providing. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Does Moorland wish to reply? Happy? Okay, straight to the vote then please. If you want to vote for or against this motion please cast your vote now. And that poll is now closed and that has been carried. Well done Conference.

Conference, just to remind you that we have a fringe meeting at 12:30pm in the Mallory Hall, that's level zero, and it's with Thompsons Solicitors. Quite a useful fringe meeting, I would encourage you to attend. It's the reluctance of police and Crown Prosecution Service on prison assaults, so if we've got members who the CPS refuse to prosecute you'll get help and assistance from that fringe meeting, where Thompsons will explain what your rights are and how to appeal and how to go about it. So I encourage you to attend that.

I'm going to draw this morning's proceedings to a close there and when we reconvene I'll go back to your Motion 17, Frankland. We should be in a position then to deal with that motion. We'll progress motions and hopefully we'll be in a position to show you this film launch. So if we can reconvene at a quarter to two that will give us enough time to go to the fringe, get a bit of dinner and just chill out a bit. Okay, see you at quarter to two, thank you.

<LUNCH BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference, we'll bring you to order. Just to confirm this afternoon we're going to crack on with some more motions. We've got a fraternal address from an honorary life member, John Hancox, and then we should be in a position to show you the POA film that we plan to launch today. After which I've had a request from a delegate who wants to go sunbathing, can we have an early <inaudible> – of course we can because apparently it's going to rain tomorrow. Just one announcement: we have a first-time delegate, first time at conference, a happy birthday to Glyn Thomas from HMP Haverigg.

<Applause>

I was forced to do that, Glyn, I can assure you. Right, we'll go back to Frankland's motion, if we may, Motion 17. Frankland. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you Ford.

#### **Motion 17:**

**The NEC request that HMPPS restore the boot and shoe allowance option to enable members with foot issues to purchase suitable footwear for their particular condition.**

#### **FRANKLAND**

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion 17 reads, 'The NEC request that HMPPS restore the boot and shoe allowance option to enable members with foot issues to purchase suitable foot gear for their particular condition.' The boots have changed again, I know that, and I know we asked to trial them or whatever. However, all that's done is put everybody who initially had been through the podiatrists, been to the doctor's, been issued specialist shoes – they were all asked to try them, and I think this is about the second or third time, to try them. So every time they keep saying to us they now have to go back to your doctor, your podiatrist and start the system again. All our members want is the boot and shoe back to give them the opportunity to go and purchase suitable footwear that will tick all the boxes of health and safety, just obviously for their medical conditions. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you.

**KEITH STUTLEY, BRANCH CHAIR, FORD:** Chair, bear with me, it's the first time I've done this.

<Applause>

God, this is really daunting. You're standing up here and all you see is faces and bottles. I'd like to support this motion. Basically, at the moment if you do have a medical condition like myself, I'm a diabetic, the current boots are not fit for purpose and you have to jump through hoops to get the requirement of the footwear that you need. It needs to be made easier for us to do it and this is a way of doing it, so please support this motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done, we'll see you back again sometime soon.

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Chair, NEC, delegates, distinguished guests. I'm getting a taste for this now.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Told you.

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Second time up already. I'm calling for support of this motion please. I've had myself, I've experienced plantar fasciitis and sciatica through the crap footwear that we were provided previously and we've currently got a member going through OH procedures and whatnot, again through the poor footwear. So I urge for support of this motion, thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Well done.

<Applause>

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE HULL:** Chair, Conference, guests. We fully support this motion. The shoes are terrible, the lowest provider. I think they cost less than 10 quid. Personally, I'd rather wear the box they come in. We spend twelve hours a day in these shoes. It breaks my heart but I buy my own because they are absolutely terrible. The employers try saying that they're part of our PPE, they're not. You go on a building site, PPE – everyone wears it from the cleaner to the CEO. It's just an excuse again just to rip us off so Hull fully supports this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? Joe Simpson for the NEC.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, first time speaker.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** He needs clapping. In irons. Crack on.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, I listened to the debate and I thank the branches for coming up and saying that the boots are crap, that I'd rather wear the box. Let me give you a little bit of history as to why they came here. Back in 2001, I believe it was, the Health and Safety Executive did an investigation into the Prison Service because of the high number of slips, trips and falls. Off the back of that there were seven recommendations that came from that report and it was changing floors, doing other things. And the last recommendation was to change the footwear. They changed the footwear and if you think the boots and shoes that we've got now are bad, you should have seen the first lot, they were terrible. It's took us all of this time to get to the PPE that we've got. It is PPE. It means if it goes wrong you can go and change it at any time, at any time, that's the legislation.

As for our colleagues who are suffering with their feet because of the boots and shoes, the employer must give an alternative and it shouldn't take weeks and months in order to get that. It should be done immediately and then you can go to Occupational Health to see what happens.

If you'd had a previous alternative boot and shoe which fitted you, you were happy with, then that's what you should have remained with. They shouldn't be taking any boots and shoes off anybody and if they are please email me. The Prison Service, your employer, wants the PPE tag taken away from the boots and shoes. What they want to do is they want to make it a uniform issue. The problem you get when it becomes a uniform issue is they will dumb down and we will get boots and shoes that cost a pound. Slips, trips and falls will go up. This motion will allow them to do that because they will not give you your shoe allowance back – they will not give your boot and shoe allowance back because they are providing it.

Conference, I understand what our members are going through. If there are problems like this we need to know so the NEC can deal with it straight away. We've got that in there. Conference, please reject.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Joe. Frankland, would you like to reply?

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Yeah, just one thing on that. I don't believe this motion will give them the opportunity to give us substandard at a cheaper price. All this motion asks for is that we ask HMPPS to restore that. If they don't restore it, all we're asking is that we ask that question and we push that through. Conference, please support.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Straight to the vote then. Please cast your votes now for or against. Okay, we'll bring that poll to a close and as you can see that motion has been carried.

Moving on to Motion 19, Frankland. Do we have a seconder please? Wormwood Scrubs, thank you.

#### **Motion 19:**

**The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to allow prison staff to use BWVC, PAVA and rigid cuffs on escorts, bedwatches and other external duties.**

#### **FRANKLAND**

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion reads, 'The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to allow prison staff to use body-worn cameras, PAVA and rigid cuffs on escorts, bed watches and other external duties.' This motion is a simple request that POA members are able to use PPE and equipment that we have issued within our jails whilst on duty outside our jails – on escort, bed watches and other external duties. It is our belief that POA members are potentially at their most vulnerable while outside the establishments. Body-worn video cameras are a great piece of kit which help de-escalate situations and can crucially capture footage of assaults, attempted assaults, escapes and other incidents that can occur outside our walls.

If a barman in Weatherspoon's can be issued a body-worn video camera I think it's only reasonable that POA members are afforded the same piece of kit. The same can be said of PAVA and rigid bar cuffs. There are many scenarios that these bits of kit could help – our own personal safety and to prevent escape and protect the public. We already have this equipment so let's get our employer to agree for us to use it. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Dave.

<Applause>

Scrubs, do you want to speak first as the seconder? Thank you.

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRIBS:** Chair, Conference and invited guests, I want to second this motion. I've actually practical experience of it myself. Out on an escort I had actually taken the body-worn camera myself on a regular basis, even though it's against the policy of the Governor. Took it out with a YA and basically, because I had the camera, his friends actually turned up and they have been previous inmates of the establishment as well. So the minute they realised that we had the body-worn cameras they basically left the hospital. And if we didn't have that then basically it could have escalated into something else.

So our Governor, and I have actually spoken to my Governors as well, and we have on an individual basis – if an officer wants to take the body-worn camera with them, they are being permitted to do that now because of the situation that I actually explained to them. And hopefully you will actually – I not only second this, I want everyone to be able to take the rigid cuffs, and also it's part and parcel of our PPE. If we are allowed to have it in the establishment we should be allowed to have it outside as well because it is part of our uniform, part of the thing that we need to actually have on us. So I would ask the Conference to have this carried. Thank you.

<Applause>

**KEVIN JEPHSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, FORD:** Chair, NEC, delegates, all the invited guests. I've had personal experience of PAVA. For those that don't know Ford, it's an open jail. It's the first one to ever have a riot – 2011. Had an incident on nights and we should be given it 24/7. Our night crew is an SO at the time, SO, two officers, three OSGs, one's in the gate. We had an incident where a prisoner turned up at two o'clock in the morning shaking for his life, probably like we all do standing here. When they asked, 'Why are you here?' he said, 'I've been threatened with a nine-inch carving knife.' And I went, 'Okay,' spoke to the SO and we went and spoke to him out of sight of everyone else. He said, 'My roommate is pissed and he's got a friend with him with this knife and he's threatening us.' He's already stabbed one and if you go into one of the huts there was a pool of blood. So we phoned up the duty governor and she said, 'Oh, it's only hearsay. It's only hearsay, how do you know it's true?' So I looked at the SO who is now on Band 3 and I said, 'I don't care what she wants.' So we walked to the gate and I put a stab-proof vest on for Cat D. I put a stab-proof vest on to protect my life.

So we were then told to go and do the roll check. So we went to do the roll check, we've got a problem on A-wing, walked towards B-wing and there's this idiot running down with this knife. The SO goes one side of the hut, I went the other. He threatened me with a knife, I've got a stab-proof vest on. And he said to me – I said, 'You've got one chance. You either have a go at me or you throw it,' and he lobbed it at me. I chased him round the hut, he went straight into the SO who put him against the wall, cuffed him, put him in the block. When we got him in the block he decided to play up. It was whatever substance he'd taken. He was up and down like a yo-yo. When they tried to get out the cell he grabbed hold of the SO's watch, grabbed him, threw the cameras on the floor. We ended up fighting him and trying to stop him to get out the cell. We then managed to get him. He got halfway through the door, I was the biggest lump at the end, so we pushed him back in, got him on the bed.

Having spun the bolt to search him to start with, I then had to get the key out and turn the lock so we could slam it shut. As we attempted to get out he was a bit quicker than the SO standing on the bed. So he got up and he had his hands between the door and his feet and he was with so much strength that the officer that was with us, who was the only one that was qualified, sprayed him with PAVA in a Cat D on nights. He sprayed him with PAVA and all we got criticised for was we hadn't turned the lights on in the cells so the camera was poor quality and we told him to spray him.

We need to have this stuff 24/7. We need to have batons, we need to have PAVA 24/7, whether it's outside of the jail or inside. So that's the open estate, the female estate and the juvenile estate. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MICK HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, Conference, invited guests, we support this motion. PAVA is brilliant, it's a massive game-changer for everybody that's got it. Why can't we take it on escorts? We're out there, there's no response coming, there's just two of you, or three, that's it. We support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JOSEPH CONBOY – BRANCH CHAIR, NOTTINGHAM:** Good afternoon. We've been mandated by our branch to support this. You've got to remember that, when people are out going to hospitals, they're dealing directly with members of the public. Nobody has been searched going in to a hospital and crazy things happen. I was there when somebody set fire to their own mattress. I was <inaudible>, I wasn't actually cuffed to the prisoner. I think in a situation like that it would be justifiable to use PAVA. We've got somebody who works at our jail who used to be an officer of Alberta Prisons in Canada and they would not go out without a pistol, a sidearm. We're not asking for that, we're asking for PAVA, cuffs and a body-worn video camera. I don't think it's unreasonable and I think that's what we should be campaigning for.

<Applause>

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** I support this motion but I've got one little issue with it. I don't see the point of sending a prison officer out with a camera hanging off the lapel on his jacket. I think we need the proper body armour like police to put it on – your PAVA, your camera. So I don't know how to do this but I think this motion needs amending to include that bit of kit that you can hang it off. I don't know.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yes, just to clarify, you can't amend it but I can assure you we consistently ask for the utility vests.

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** And again I'd ask for them to be worn in prisons as well as standard issue kit. I think we need them.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** So do we, but unfortunately the employer at this moment in time is stalling.

**VITO BELLO – BRANCH CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We'll keep pressing, I can assure you. Any more speakers? Can't stop him now, look. Good lad, good lad.

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON:** Well I did pop my cherry, so I'm game now. Conference, the only thing that I really want to add to this, it's a very small one, is that as officers on duty we have the power of a constable. So if the police can carry this stuff and all the protection that they have on out in the public, why on earth can't we? It's personal protection. We're not going to go around spraying people for – ooh, nearly swore – we're not going to spray people for giggles, it is for our protection and the integrity of our escort. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers? First time NEC speaker, first time NEC, Conference.

<Applause>

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Be gentle with him, Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. I'd like to thank Frankland for bringing this motion to the rostrum on the grounds of health and safety and protection for all our members. The executive understands that PPE items are carried up and down the country by our police forces and, as a prison officer, we have the powers of a constable under the 1952 Prison Act. Every prison officer whilst acting as such shall have the powers, authority, protection and privileges of a constable. There have been several incidents around the estates that warrants the PP items and especially concerns in the high security estate to such a degree that, when the police officer supporting in a Cat A bed watch had body-worn cameras, PAVA, rigid cuffs and firearms, the prison officers were denied carrying of their own PPE. Conference, support this motion and give our members the protection they deserve. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply? I think I know which way this is going. Okay, start to cast your votes now please, for or against. Okay, we can close that poll now. Thank you Conference, that's been carried.

On to 19A, Durham. A seconder for Durham please? Thank you.

### **Motion 19A**

**The NEC seek clarification and assurances that HMPPS will endeavour to secure legislation that will allow staff to carry their full PPE on escorts, which they have been trained in (namely Pava).**

### **DURHAM**

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair. Very similar to the last motion but a little bit different. I don't know whether I was going to carry on afterwards, actually, but I will. The NEC seek clarification and assurances that HMPPS will endeavour to secure legislation that will allow staff to carry their full PPE on escort which they have been trained in, namely PAVA. When we go on escort we take our batons but they're not our batons that we carry all the time, they're actually stuck in a bag from security so we take it with us. The legislation I'm looking to is, if you carry your PAVA would you have to take your PAVA out of jail and take it home with you? Because if you're on escort and it ends up as a bed watch and you go out there, what happens then? So that's the legislation I'm looking at. Do we seek legislation so we can do that, that we can take it out of jail like that and take it home, or do we have it in the bags already for? That's not our own personal use PAVA, it's the jail's PAVA. That's the only thing I'm looking at and that's why I asked for the clarification and legislation that we seek to do it.

I fully agree that we should have PAVA, we should have everything that you've asked for, it's just that I don't know what the department will say and whether they'll come back – well, this is the fall back on it – and say, but we're seeking for legislation and clarification and this is the way you would do it, it would go in your bag. Please support.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Craig. Whatton, do you wish to speak? No? Any more speakers? Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. We would like to thank Durham for this emergency motion to Conference. Just to clarify, standing orders rejected this originally on the timing, not on the body of the motion. We will have to go back and check the legislation as, during the pandemic, four branches carried this crucial PPE. Conference, support this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Straight to the vote then. Cast your votes now for or against. Okay, we can close that poll now and that

has been carried. Thank you.

Motion 20 is a debate, so no need for a seconder, and I invite Durham to start the debate. Please use the chairs at the front to join in this debate, thank you.

## Motion 20

**That Conference debates the positive impact policy compliant RMPs can have on the running of prisons.**

## DURHAM

**JON NEWTON – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM:** Chair, NEC, colleagues. RMP, not to talk, but there appears to be little appetite from management, despite Mr Copple's insistence that every establishment have one. The RMP is one of the most important policies we've signed up for for many years. It's a far-reaching document which agrees a safe system of work for all parts of the regime and gives branch officials a say in what regime is running and how staff are utilised. It clarifies what the MSL is and can reduce the requirement of staff being brought in. The planning meeting which comes with the RMP can, properly conducted, impact on staff and prisoner safety, give consistency to prison regimes. It also acts to make managers accountable. Conference must remember that the RMP was agreed as a cornerstone of the NEC's attempt to reduce the pre-pandemic levels of violence. Without an agreed PSI-compliant RMP, governors will simply revert to the pre-pandemic mess that we've all seen. Every jail must have a policy-compliant RMP and the NEC must ensure branch officials are supported to achieve this.

In 2021 HMPPS admitted that up to 90% of prisons didn't have a compliant RMP – shocking statistics given it was agreed in 2017, that's five years ago. If we are to provide a safe workplace for our members, with some consistency for those we lock up, we need to have that – we need to have what has been agreed. If you don't have an agreed RMP, come up here, I invite you, and tell us, tell Conference, so that it can be recorded as such. I'm sure Durham aren't the only establishment that's been reported to local area office that we have one when we don't. Governors tell lies. Please join the debate.

**JOHN MUMFORD – BRANCH CHAIR, DARTMOOR:** Chair, NEC, Conference. I don't want to take the focus away from this really important debate but I need to say a few words to our National Chair regarding his opening address to Conference. He missed out one thing. When he listed his list of achievements, he missed out one achievement, which was assisting myself and the POA and all the members at Dartmoor in securing our future. We were due to close next year – this was going to be my last time at Conference representing my members. Our branch was going to dissolve next year, I think, so we wouldn't have come to represent our members. Our members at the time, in 2013, when the famous Chris Grayling, he made a statement in the Houses of Parliament that they were enacting the 10-year lease period and they were shutting Dartmoor Prison in 2023. All the way through, I bumped into a big, tall, bald guy with a funny accent at Conference about five years ago, and Mark put the weight of himself and the POA behind myself and my members – and Sarah Rigby, as well, was there for the last five years supporting myself. We were going up to Parliament and it was POA funds that enabled us to go up there and meet with MPs. So I just want to express my appreciation for what Mark and Sarah and the POA as a family did for Dartmoor and I would ask you all to join me in showing my appreciation, please Conference.

<Applause>

I'd like to thank our colleague from Durham for bringing this motion. I think it's a really important debate and I know the majority of new delegates have got up and spoken and popped their cherries but this is a really good motion to come up and join in the debate. In 2017, and I know Mark was the driving force and our members of the NEC, they negotiated the implementation of the RMP. As many of you are aware, the main purpose of the RMP is to specify how many staff is required to safely run a prison regime. At Dartmoor, the POA led on creating the RMP and, during the pandemic, the ERMP and the RRMP. It's important that the local Committee and the local management team consult each other and sign off on it together. This stops these rogue governors doing what they want on a day when staffing levels are tight, like in most of our jails at the minute. It is a health and safety document and, in my opinion, one of the best tools we have as the reps to keep our prisons safe.

I find it appalling that HMPPS have not ensured every prison has an RMP in place. If you don't have an agreed RMP and follow the disputes process and log those disputes so it goes up to the top table – we're not doing, we're not following what we should be following.

Just a couple of weeks ago, myself and Terry McCarthy, we were part of a workshop. Michael Harrison who went around in 2017 with Ian Carson and Jackie Marshall delivering the workshops, they started again with Melish as well, who is present at Conference. The only people that engaged in that workshop – there was a director, there were multiple governors – the only people that engaged were POA colleagues, myself being one of them. Afterward I went back, we had a visit from our PGD and area team and one of the area, one of the governors from our area, said to me, 'What did you make of the workshop?' To which I said, 'I enjoyed it.' I said, 'There was a lack of debate from your side, it was mostly POA colleagues talking about this,' and he said, 'Yeah, I had pretty bad feedback that some of the governors present, and I quote, they said it was crap.' So that's some of the employer's top managers, that's their view on the RMP in my opinion. So please come up, join the debate. I'm just a little bit gutted that I didn't bring a motion myself condemning HMPPS for their failure to make it mandatory that our prisons have got an RMP. So please, colleagues, join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you John, thank you for those kind words but it was a team effort. Well done.

**JOHN MUMFORD – BRANCH CHAIR, DARTMOOR:** Back again.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Good lad.

**JOHN MUMFORD – BRANCH CHAIR, DARTMOOR:** Reference the RMP, my prison has an RMP that was written with help from myself and one of our governors. I do fully support the RMP we've got in place. But as recently as last Friday, when I was off on a course at Newbold Revel, I came in to find that just about every wing was locked down because of staffing levels. When I raised this with the governor, because we had prisoners who still went to work, she said, 'Well, what does the RMP say?' 'Well, I've got the RMP here, Governor, and it says with the amount of staff we had it should only be wings that open.' But they shut the wings and then they opened all the workshops and we still had, top of my head, about 250 prisoners attending work. And how many staff did we have to respond to that? Two, just two. So clearly we can have an RMP in place, clearly the POA can agree to that, but clearly managers do what they want to do. So what I would like to see is the managers are actually accountable via they have to report when they have an RMP, which is great, but when they don't follow it and a proper process for them to follow for that. Thank you.

<Applause>

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, it doesn't get easier even if you've been up here 10 times, let me tell you. RMPs – at Styal it's not been going on long, about six months. So far, definitely positive because everybody is playing by the rules. It's there in black and white – green, amber, red. How many staff have you got in a jail? Tick-off lists. And it's not open to interpretation like the MSLs were with previous SMTs we've had in place. Everyone knows the rules. We still have managers try and chop and change it – like, we don't need MDT today, we'll have fluffy workshops going on. That's the latest, well, that's the only problem we've had so far is with getting rid of MDT and having a little fluffy workshop open.

On the whole, though, it's our members who understand it. So, if there's no reps available we've made it plain and put them all over the place, the RMP, what you can and can't do with the amount of staff we've got. So far at Styal a positive impact. Thank you Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Andy.

**CRAIG SMITH – BRANCH CHAIR, LEEDS:** Popping my cherry for the second time today. NEC, Conference. We're currently going through our RMP at Leeds. We were told by the duty governor only last week that we have returned to Stage 1 but it's not – we don't need a RMP for Stage 1 because it's now called New Ways of Working. We have had RMPs in the past that have been basically written on the back of a cigarette packet. We've actually got a failure to agree, which we've given the Governor until the 27th to agree that. If it's not done then we will be putting a failure to agree in. We've had a lot of support from Ian Carson and we ask that that continues. But, going back to what Styal has just said, what I believe is the best way forward for this is the education of all uniform staff, including Band 3s up to Band 5s, as regards the RMP. So I'd ask you to support this and support everything around the RMP because it is the most important thing that we've got to fight back against the SMTs of our establishments. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL FOSTER – BRANCH CHAIR, NORTHUMBERLAND:** Good afternoon. Chair, Conference, guests. As a privately run prison we are not under any obligation to have an RMP, despite seeing the benefits through the pandemic. With business as usual now starting to look a lot like exactly what we were doing pre-pandemic, we need the clarity of an RMP. Despite the latest National Framework document saying that RMP underpins safe, decent, secure, resilient and sustainable regimes, we're not getting one in the private sector. We just have a separate arrangement for POA members. As business as usual moves forward, our safety, health and safety especially, is being compromised and it's not fair. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JOHN MCGINTY – BRANCH CHAIR, LINDHOLME:** Conference, Chairman, NEC. The NEC will be well aware of Lindholme's history with the RMP and rogue governors who don't feel like they have to follow it. But if you can get one in place and – well, they could do with some more teeth, to say the least – but if you can get one in place and you can get it working, it does make a difference. Lindholme is a testament to that and I would just like to thank Mr Carson for all his help getting ours in place. Thank you.

<Applause>

**LEON HUBBARD – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM:** Chair, NEC, first time up.

<Applause>

At Feltham we've struggled quite hard and fought for an RMP and I would suggest every branch does the same thing. We've fought pre-pandemic for an RMP and we were ignored for quite a while. Eventually we got one and I'm determined to keep it at Feltham. During the pandemic I was pretty much left on my own as the only member. Our committee dissolved, we had a few committee go off shielding, and I had to deal with it on my own. Luckily we've managed to keep the RMPs that we've got. The only problem it's had is, like the previous member mentioned, that the management tend to do their own thing when we're not there.

Also, with the RMP on our juvenile side, they are the worst offenders for putting in the RMP. They're always trying to change it and making excuses, putting in non-profile tasks for various areas. We also get pressure from the YCS, which I'm sure is going to come up a lot later, to have 30 hours of

education per week. And they don't supply enough staff or they won't put enough staff in to do it. I would say fully support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JON NEWTON – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM:** Just to thank you, Conference, for the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Joining the debate for the NEC is Andy Baxter. Oh, hang on, we've got a late arrival. Was you on-boarding?

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Thank you, Chair, NEC and Conference. I've just been taking part in a workshop for RMP done by the Prison Service and Mr Harrison, Michael Harrison, he stated that only one establishment in the country is running a non-effective at 20% and the average is 30%. In my establishment it's about 42%. Most of the Band 3s that they've employed at my establishment are at college and I asked him to explain what kind of introduction all our POELTs get to find out about the RMP. And he stated, and it was recorded, that it wasn't really important – that's not their main focus at the moment. So I urge you all to go back to your establishments and make sure that your POELTs understand what RMP is and safe systems of work, and I fully support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Over to Andy.

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, Conference, NEC, I'd like to thank Durham for raising this motion and hopefully, even in these challenging times of rampant staff shortages, I hope we can have a positive debate about the positive impact policy-compliant RMPs can have on the running of prison. A lot of branch officials in this hall will believe or will have originally believed that the RMP policy was written in relation to HMP Utopia – some prison in a distant land where the skies are always blue, the sun always shines, a place that has staff coming out of its ears, low levels of attrition and low levels of staff sickness. RMPs are probably most valuable in the prisons that have really challenging staffing levels.

Regime Management Plans are, in essence, an agreement between you, the POA officials within your establishment, and your Governor in relation to the Governor deciding which pieces of work are his priorities and how he will deliver those priorities within the staffing resources available. It sounds simple – however, we must overcome scepticism because, as I said, RMPs are even more valuable in prisons that are the polar opposite to HMP Utopia. This Union and this National Executive are acutely aware of the issues all around the country with HMPPS's inability to recruit and retain staff. What has that got to do with RMPs, I hear you thinking. Simple – the overriding principle that runs through the ethos of RMP policy and, more importantly, the safe delivery and planning aspects within a prison, is that you cannot deliver 100% of the work in a prison where you only have 70% of the agreed staff.

I'm going to read that again and I want you to take that back to your Governors. It's a very simple message that came out in 2017 and there were a lot of anxious-looking Governors in workshops that we did round the country. They were anxious because they weren't used to being in the same room as the POA NEC – to us it looked like they weren't even comfortable in the presence of their own Committees. So, go back to your Governors and tell them you can't deliver 100% of the work in a prison when you only have 70% of the staff. It sounds simple, it sounds logical. That's because it is.

When we went round delivering the workshops in 2017 with the employer, I used to watch Governors' faces when they heard that statement. Some struggled to come to terms with the fact that the POA and the employer seemed to agree on such a previously contentious issue. Some Governors saw the RMP as a challenge to them and their authority to run their prison. Some of the more enlightened Governors saw the RMP as a chance to build local relationships, identify their priority work – an assurance that could protect them if they were challenged about delivery of some tasks.

The RMPs presented a platform for POA officials to be involved in the planning and review of delivery. The 10-day planning meetings should be providing two weeks of anticipated resources. We appreciate in some of the staffing-critical establishments this is not possible. However, there should be an endeavour to forward plan. Lack of planning and review in a prison soon manifests itself in the form of unpredictable regimes and instability. Those planning meetings are vital, so make sure you have a seat at the table. A policy-compliant RMP should include a full review of risk assessments and the opportunity at any time to revisit those risk assessments if you have concerns. This aspect of the RMP should allow all branch committees to challenge Governors around all aspects of health and safety, including staffing levels, check-in guaranteed, alarm bell response, unsafe fire risks, issues around failing planned and preventative maintenance, indeed, anything that puts your members or prisoners in our care in danger.

We believe our prisons could be ticking time-bombs following significant failures around key safety equipment and maintenance. A policy-compliant RMP being delivered in line with policy empowers you at grassroots levels to drill into key health and safety issues and raise them as part of agreeing or, indeed, reviewing a compliant RMP.

As part of agreeing that compliant RMP you're doing so much more than simply agreeing a knock-off list. The RMP policy gives you the facility and the authority to have an input on issues that, if ignored or managed poorly, undermine the stability of our prisons. Done properly and delivered properly, a policy-compliant RMP is a key tool to provide predictable regimes that maintain the stability and go a significant way to improve the health and safety of both our members and the prisoners in the care.

Colleagues, get that seat at the table with your Governor in relation to your RMP. The facility time is there. If you have any issues, let your area NEC rep know. Private prisons, raise your issues with your FTOs. Let's challenge the private prisons and see what we can do in relation to the RMPs.

Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Andy. And thank you Conference for that debate. Moving on to Motion 21 from Garth which has been seconded by Wymott.

### Motion 21

**That the NEC again challenge HMPPS in regard to the operational band 2-5 profiling non effective percentage that is currently set at 20%. The national average of actual non effectives is over 30% and by not being profiled realistically it is having a detrimental effect in regard to regime delivery and staff and prisoner safety.**

**This motion mandates the NEC to negotiate an increase to the profiled non effective percentage with AIM of achieving 30% or greater to reflect the current national average.**

### GARTH

**NEIL ROSS – BRANCH CHAIR, GARTH:** Chairman, NEC, Conference, following on from the previous debate we'll probably never achieve a workable RMP without this motion. Motion 21 reads, 'That the NEC again challenge HMPPS in regard to the operational Band 2-5 profiling non-effective percentage that is currently set at 20%. The national average of actual non-effectives is over 30% and by not being profiled realistically it's having a detrimental effect in regard to regime delivery and staff and prisoner safety.' The motion mandates the NEC to negotiate an increase to the profile of non-effective percentage with the aim of achieving 30% or greater to reflect the current national average.

I bring this motion today not just for Garth but for every prison branch. Terry McCarthy sent me a spreadsheet containing the actual working non-effective percentages for all branches and most of them were running well over 30%. Garth had been running over 30% non-effective for over two years and it has led to wing lockdowns on a daily basis, lack of regime and increased unrest amongst the prisoners, creating dangerous and volatile working environments for POA members.

Similar motions have been brought to Conference in the past and, as far as I'm still aware, the NEC still challenge HMPPS regarding increasing the profiled non-effective percentages. However, I wanted to bring this to Conference again this year as we will all be involved in local negotiations about re-profile as we come out of Covid regimes. The rhetoric throughout the pandemic is building back better and creating purposeful regimes for prisoners. How on earth are we supposed to create decent and safe regimes when we have to start on the back foot? If every prison is running at least 10% over their profiled non-effective levels, we simply cannot run regimes. We cannot meet key-work targets. We cannot complete mandatory training and we certainly can't get adequate leave and TOIL, which leads to a decrease in staff morale and staff retention.

Profiles cannot continue to be built based on 20% non-effectives. They do not work on the current running non-effectives that every prison is currently experiencing on a daily basis. We all know that if the non-effective level is increased to over 30% it will mean every prison's TSF being increased by tens of officers and I'm guessing that's why the real reason the employer continues to put their head in the sand.

If any Prison Service senior managers are in today I have to ask – when are you going to wake up and smell the coffee and give us adequate staff to be able to achieve the regimes that you promote and that we, as uniformed grades on the shop floor, deserve? Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

**IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Happy to support this motion. Fit purpose non-effectives affect us all. They underpin everything we do in the prison setting. Just like Garth, daily non-effectives have consistently been above 30%. In fact, during Covid they reached 40%. So what does this mean in real terms? A non-effective means an absent person, a job not being done, prisons run on fine margins. Get the balance wrong and we see assaults, protests, incidents at height or worse. Routinely searching and other key tasks are cancelled – in Wymott that's drugs, weapons, phones not found, criminality not challenged.

The much-trumpeted key-worker model has seen weekly completion rates fall to 11%. They should be 74%. We get an additional 50 officers on the back of this project. It's only a matter of time before questions are asked – what's happened to that ring-fenced money? On a daily basis our whole regime is propped up with Payment Plus. At present we are currently on our third bout of ORSP stability money. This compounds the problem – once the overtime rate drops, so does the uptake. The Regime Management Plan conveniently masks the problem. In other industries, the job doesn't get done if you don't have the staff. In our setting, it only ever comes to light when there's an incident and frustration boils over.

Annual leave is also part of the 20% non-effective. You may think, what's that got to do with safety? During the summer months, a granted day's add-up leave is as rare as an above-inflation pay rise in the public sector. When staff join the job, the advert, which is usually on the back of the local bus, says 'x number of days leave'. What it doesn't say is you can't actually get that leave when you need it. Downtime is essential. Much has been said over the course of Conference regarding the appalling retention rates. That's millions of pounds of money wasted, causing untold damage to the reputation of the service, putting our safety at risk. Key work was brought in to repair the damage of the disastrous New Ways of Working policy, the idea being to break down barriers between staff and prisoners.

Conference, yesterday we heard the Prisons Minister's impassioned speech over rehabilitation. Quite simply, none of that takes place unless you have staff – the right staff in the right place at the right time. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Ian.

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. On the more general matter of the so-called 20% non-effective, you've got to remember over the last few years the increase in what's classed as mandatory training. That also falls into the non-effective. And, of course, non-effective is sick, annual leave and training, not TOIL – and don't believe any Governor who tells you it is, it's not true. Then you come down to the annual leave based on 37, 39, 41 hours a week, part-time pro-rata. No, the non-effective figure needs complete revision. But obviously to establish how much non-effective there really is out there, we'll probably need information back from branches to back it up.

But I would like to place on record the situation at Wandsworth as it is today. Wandsworth has a payroll, and I'll just use the Band 3s – 315 prison officers at Band 3, 70 OSGs and then you have your Band 4s, SOs and CMs on top of that. A couple of weeks ago, 68 officers were available for their full duties. We're told by our <inaudible>, an SMT, there are on average between 120-130 Band 3s not available for their duties – the cause of this mostly attendance and restricted duties. We consider it a good day if we have over 100 officers in but then, that asks the question, where's the other 215? So we're running at, what, 60% non-effective? And if it's down – and it is largely down – to attendance management, is anyone being poor performed over not looking after our staff on attendance management? Absolutely not. They temporarily promote people into managerial positions who haven't got a clue about attendance management – no training given. It also seems to be a lack of self-motivation to even get up to speed with it. Who is responsible for this? Yes, our managers and our Governors. Definitely need an improvement on the 20% non-effective and I'm glad the actual motion says 30% or above because locally at Wandsworth we need to, and we're going through a re-profile, we need 60% non-effective to deliver a failing regime, which no-one is ever going to lose their job over apart from us if we do something wrong. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Stewart, any more speakers? Over to Jackie Marshall replying on behalf of the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking in support of the motion on behalf of the NEC. Everything that the speakers have said is true and I'll thank Garth for bringing this motion. We know that most prisons are running at 28-29% and that's only with training, leave and sick. Look at everything else, there are no non-effectives for the extra five days' leave allowance – the non-effectives never went up. Maternity and paternity leave, suspensions, disability leave, carers leave, POELT training and that's just a few. Engagement has already started. Please support the motion and let us do what we can to get non-effectives to an appropriate level. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, we'll take it to the vote. Cast your votes now for or against. And that poll is now closed, that motion is carried.

<Applause>

Conference, before the break I'm now going to invite a good friend of us to the stage, honorary life member John Hancox, to deliver a fraternal address to conference. John, very good to see you. You're very welcome. Just put your shades on, he is rather tanned. A lot of dog walking during his retirement apparently. Or was it dogging? One of the two, John, wasn't it? You're very welcome John. John Hancox.

<Applause>

**JOHN HANCOX – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER:** Thank you Chair. Chair, NEC, Conference, it gives me great pleasure to bring fraternal greetings from the honorary life members. This is your first conference in three years due to Covid. You have all worked tirelessly for your members and for the inmates in your charge during this time and we congratulate you all. Although we've only heard a few of the motions so far, I must thank Moorland for Motion 18. This is a very important issue to all of our members and to you all. Other agenda items such as PAVA we've just heard and of the use of PAVA in the YOI, in the female estates and, of course, the repeal of Section 127 of the Criminal Justice Act – these issues are raised time and time again. But never give up. Never be disheartened. Your NEC will never give up but they need your support. They need your full support and your mandates to highlight these issues with the employers. They need you and the grassroots members that you all represent.

Finally, don't rush into retirement. I've been retired now seven years and it's not good. I don't get ad hoc or annual leave. You can't throw a sickie. And never ever decide you're going to go on strike because your grandchildren won't let you. Conference, you've got a lot of business to discuss so I'll take up no more of your time. The honorary life members wish you a very happy and a fruitful conference. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** John, don't you want this? It's a new dog lead. Come and get it, come on.

<Applause>

The Health and Safety reps didn't see that. John, it's a pleasure. Enjoy.

**JOHN HANCOX – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER:** Cheers. Thank you very much.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Smile for the camera. All done mate.

**JOHN HANCOX – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER:** Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, we're going to break for a break now. We need to go and see if this film is ready, our own Steven Spielberg's having problems so we're going to have to hit him over the head with a blunt object. So if we get back for about quarter past three, that would be great, thanks.

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. We'll bring you to order. The film is still getting edited apparently so we'll look at that tomorrow sometime. We'll crack on with a few motions and get you away early so you can enjoy the sun.

We'll continue with motion 22, Lancaster Farms. Do we have a seconder please? Liverpool, thank you.

## Motion 22

**Conference instruct the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to ascertain a defined upper limit percentage of unsociable hours worked due to the detrimental effects and concerns over members health and safety.**

## LANCASTER FARMS

**JOHN THRELFALL – BRANCH CHAIR, LANCASTER FARMS:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads, 'Conference instruct the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to ascertain a defined upper limit percentage of unsociable hours worked due to the detrimental effects and concerns over members health and safety.' At Lancaster Farms we believe that due to the wording in NOMS pay manual, certain staffing groups across HMPPS are being unfairly exploited in relation to the number of unsociable hours that they are forced to work. It's worth pointing out that there is significant evidence on the impact of staff's health due to shift work. Some of the more common issues associated with shift work are sleep and food disorders, high blood pressure and increased risk of heart attack due to the disruption caused to the body's internal clock. So, the Pay Manual currently reads, 'The proportion of unsociable hours worked will vary at individual establishments depending on the role and local arrangements within the working group. As a guideline those in qualifying roles' – and this is the important bit – 'will work around 20-30% of their hours as unsociable. This percentage is provided as a guideline only and will vary.' We believe that by achieving this motion we will reduce the impact on staff's health due to working high levels of unsociable hours and we request that the NEC seek a defined upper limit percentage for unsociable hours. We ask that you support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, John. Liverpool.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER – LIVERPOOL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. In support of the motion. As our colleague said, it's there, it's in the Pay Manual, 20-30% as a guide – but it does vary. It varies at Liverpool. They asked us on our last re-profile to look across the board and one of the ones that really caught our eye was our Band 2 colleagues. They told us we have a permanent night setup at Liverpool across the OSGs, from a Band 5 down. The Governor said they invited the Prison Resource Group in to assist us and told us that, from the centre, nights were no longer to happen, no longer having night groups, we were all doing it from days. That left our Band 2's, who are nights every six weeks. Oh, it varied alright. It varied to 70% red hours. And I would ask you all to go back and look at your branches, all your grades, and see what red hours and how they vary at your establishment.

We were amazed at where that left us. But, we went to our Governor, we told him quite firmly we would not be taking part in any re-profiling exercise that laid such red hours on anyone's doorstep. I say it again, colleagues, 70% red hours. Their own explanation is between 20 and 30. As the colleague said, what's that doing to our members? What's that doing to their families, their loved ones? The pay we're on, that goes back to retention and everything else. We can't let this go on and I urge you all, as was said before, we will all face re-profiling soon coming out of Covid. Please look at the red hours they're asking your members. We'd overlooked it as a branch until this re-profile and we sat down and done the figures. Painful and shameful from the employer. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Any more speakers? Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, for the Executive, speaking in favour of this motion. HMPPS guidance on this is just that. It's guidance and it's been blatantly ignored. Last year, on the back of the Liverpool dispute, I did a little research in the northwest area. Fifteen branches, I asked them all, 'What red hours are your Band 2s working?' Nobody came in at under 30%. In fact, several branches were working over 50% of the red hours. For

far too long now HMPPS have got away with blatantly ignoring their own policy. The impact of working excessive unsocial hours is obvious. It must have an effect on your mental health and your health and safety. So let's take this to HMPPS, let's get an upper limit defined, let's get it set in stone. They won't like it because of the pay implication, but that's not our concern. Our concern is the health and safety of our members. Conference, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, cast your votes now please, Conference, for or against. That poll is now closed. That motion has been carried. Motion 23, Styal. Secunder for Styal please. Nottingham, thank you.

### Motion 23

**Conference instruct the NEC to challenge the Employer in regards to PSI 6/2010 Conduct and Discipline. Specifically in relation to contracted workers on conduct matters where 'the service retains the right to refuse contracted members of staff access to the Prison Estate' despite those workers having their conduct investigated by their own employers resulting in no further action.**

### STYAL

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads, 'Conference instruct the NEC to challenge the Employer in regards to PSI 6/2010 Conduct and Discipline. Specifically in relation to contracted workers on conduct matters where the service retains "the right to refuse contracted members of staff access to the Prison Estate" despite those workers having their conduct investigated by their own employers resulting in no further action.' Specifically, in the PSI 6/2010, specialist and contracted staff it says, 'In cases involving doctors, nurses, chaplains and other specialist staff the relevant manager should first check whether the member of staff is employed by NOMS or whether they're employed by another service provider, e.g. the local Primary Care Trust.' It carries on, 'The service retains the right to refuse contracted members of staff access to the prison estate, even for those staff who are not subject to our Code of Discipline.'

Styal, like most other prisons, has a large number of nurses who are members of our POA and to retain these nurses in the membership it is necessary for us to protect their employment rights fully. They have specialist grades who have been POA members for years. Despite numerous providers of specialist service and encumbrance of TUPE regulations, these members have loyalty to prisons around the country and have shown true faith and loyalty to those establishments and to the POA. Occasionally, like disciplined staff, nurses and other specialist grades employed by contractors become involved in disciplinary investigations. We, as a branch, have represented a large number of nurses throughout the years with various employers, these usually being contracted to the local Primary Care Trusts. Despite these employers' dread when one of their members arrive accompanied by a POA rep, and a large part are reluctant to engage with us as their union official, we have successfully represented these nurses and other specialists. This is to the benefit of our members.

However, all this work can be undone by this certain paragraph in the PSI, where a Governor or Director of a prison who refuse contracted members access to the prisons they have worked in for a number of years. They can do this at will, with no investigation nor hearing. A point-blank refusal to allow these members back into establishments, some of whom have worked for years in those jails, simply because a Governor or a Director doesn't like that POA member or that nurse, because they've no right to just carte blanche say, 'I don't want them in the prison', in our view. These are members who have been fully investigated by the NEC with no case to answer, and yet a Governor who might not even know that person will say, 'I'm not allowing them back through the gates of our prison.' This needs to stop. Please, support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Andy. Nottingham, do you wish to speak? No, happy. Any more speakers? Responding for the NEC is Geoff Willetts.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to reject this motion. Conference, PSI 6/2010 isn't the policy the Governors use to refuse contracted members of staff, or any other staff, access to the estate. The policy that does is PSI 42/2014, which is the vetting function. These procedures cover staff and non-directly employed workers who are to be excluded or dismissed on grounds of their behaviour or actions which were deemed to pose a risk to the safety and security of the HMPPS estate, staff, prisoners and supervised individuals. They are excluded and are deemed, on the balance of probabilities, to pose a continued risk to HMPPS estate on the grounds of safety, security and a duty to care, prisoners, <inaudible> and individuals. External employers may not know the full facts of the incident or certain behaviour, which can be a serious risk for the security of the establishment. Conference, reject this motion and let the Governors protect everyone's health and safety. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Right to reply, Styal.

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Conference, I don't agree with that statement there. We've had nurses in our prison, been there for 10, 15 years, and the whole crux of the argument is they've done nothing wrong. Been found to have done nothing wrong. To reject it outright is against what we think. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Andy. OK, Conference, to the vote. Please cast your votes now for or against this motion. That poll is now closed and that motion is lost. Next we have motion 24 from Frankland. Secorder for this motion please.

#### Motion 24

**The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to amend PSI 06/2010 that in cases of gross misconduct the hearing authority consists of an independent panel rather than one person.**

#### FRANKLAND

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion 24 reads, 'The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to amend PSI 6/2010 that in cases of gross misconduct the hearing authority consists of an independent panel rather than one person.' We've done several disciplines over the last few years and have seen a different change from some of our, what we would call, rogue managers. The commissioning authorities are friends of the hearing authority. Decisions are being made on personalities – decisions are being made on various other things. We've heard from one of our colleagues there, Preston, this morning, who basically said a little bit of him dies every time we lose a colleague to various things like forms and obviously discipline procedures. Now, when you're sitting and you've got the whole case in front of you, you're reading a case, you believe you've put something forward, you believe you've got it banged to rights, you've got everything sitting there, to simply have the Governor of the prison dismiss it and dismiss that member of staff.

Our Governor, we had a young girl who was facing gross misconduct and, for want of a better word, the case was a really good case. We sat with the case, we were confident going in and the Governor used nothing other than what I would describe as top trumps. We had six witnesses, five Band 2s and a Band 3, that added up to 13. The witnesses against were two Band 5s and a Band 7 – that added up to 17 – and his rationale was the managers basically top trump lower grades. She was dismissed. We've had other cases where Governors have come in and they've not called witnesses, they've just looked and said, 'I don't need to call that witness.' My daughter was involved in a case where she was assaulted, allegedly. That person, the Governor, held the discipline on the person who allegedly assaulted my daughter, another Band 3 officer, and didn't call my daughter as a witness to her own assault. Didn't call the three witnesses that would've backed it up and found the other person not guilty, purely because she had a tribunal, in my belief, she had a tribunal in and GLD were trying to make sure that it was minimal cost when they paid out.

We've had members of staff where we thought potentially, you know, we can speak to the Governor, see where we're going. We had another discipline where we'd spoke to the number one Governor, both myself at the time as branch secretary and branch chair, and were sort of assured that that member of staff was probably going to retain his job, he was going to retain – he was a dog handler and he was going to retain that. At the very worst, if things didn't go great he may be regraded under old terms, but no financial detriment. For whatever reason that discipline turned out – the Governor changed tack on the day and he dismissed them. Now, like I say, that is absolutely shocking. My now branch secretary was assist on that and the branch chair at the time and it hurts. It hurts you. With an independent – we believe we've got a half a chance with independents who don't bring in personalities, they don't bring in whether they don't particularly like the rep who's representing. So, I would ask you, please support this motion.

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** While I've just accepted a lot of what my colleague has just said, I would urge that we reject this motion. One of our biggest tools is knowing our Governors, finding out what the Governor's actually going through when you go and have a meeting prior to some of these hearings you can get a lot of work and a lot of deals done. Just on that basis alone, please don't throw that chance out of the window by getting an independent that we do not know anything about. Please reject the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference. I'm going to ask you to accept the motion. I brought a motion to Conference several years ago about the Governor who brought the mobile phone into prison and gave it to three prisoners. He was investigated but was never called. He was disciplined and was never called. I'll give you an update now because I went through the Freedom of Information and I'd like to thank Mark, that site – They Work For You, great site. Ask anything, really upsets people that try and get away with things. So I asked the Freedom of Information, 'Could I see the transcripts for the investigation and the hearing?' They said no. I says, 'Why?' 'It's because you weren't party to it.' I says, 'Who made the allegation?' 'Was never called.' I don't know how it happened. I'll give you the full verdict now because the Governor who dealt with it was an ex-governor of Frankland and the ex-governor from Low Newton was the investigating. They both got OBEs after it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Craig. Any more speakers on this motion?

**ALI PHILO – ACTING CHAIR, WOODHILL:** Yeah.

<Applause>

Thank you, yeah. Conference, Chair, invited guests. We support Frankland in their motion. Woodhill have had numerous investigations where the investigating Governors appear to have been given a predetermined outcome to allow our Governor to dismiss members of the POA. Several of these have successfully challenged their awards, and I thank both Geoff and Jackie at this point for their enormous amount of help to get these appeals

overturned. An independent panel would protect our members from these predetermined outcomes. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Over to Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking against the motion on behalf of the NEC. And I understand the sentiments of the motion, but colleagues, the people with the best relationships with your Governors are you, the local branch officials. How many of you know what the award's going to be before the hearing's even started? How many of you do deals to keep people in jobs? How can any of that be done if you don't know who you're dealing with? When we're doing the appeal, we're challenging the decision of one person. Challenging the decision of a panel would be far more difficult. PSI 6/2010 Conducting Discipline isn't a bad document. Where it falls down it's the application of it by Governors, like not calling witnesses, as Phil and Craig have said. And I have to say, the Woodhill Governor is one on her own. That's the problem, Governors doing what they want and that's what we continually challenge. Colleagues, it's better the devil you know. Please reject the motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Jackie. Frankland would you like to reply?

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Yeah, I hear what the NEC say in asking you to reject the motion. At Frankland I would class that we've got an excellent relationship with our management and our SMT. However, ours has just been over the last bits about the processes. We're not getting these deals anymore. We're not. They're turning up, they're listening to us, they're not giving us the indications and they're dismissing at will. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Phil. OK, Conference, let's go to the vote. Please cast your votes now for or against this motion. OK, the poll is now closed. Results are there – that motion is lost. Moving onto motion 25, Preston. Do we have a seconder please? Alright, hang on a minute.

#### Motion 25

**Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate changes to the Conduct and Disciplinary PSI 2010-06, specifically the following; Para 8.8 – Effective date of Penalty to be changed to; All disciplinary penalties for Oral Warnings/Written Warnings/Final Written Warnings And Removal from the field of promotion or the opportunity to move to higher pay band will be effective from the date the Terms of Reference were issued. All other penalties are from the date they are given by the person conducting the Disciplinary hearing.**

#### PRESTON

**PAUL MALLIBAND – CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I've been made aware with various discussions that have taken place with members of the NEC that we're currently in advanced negotiations at reviewing this particular policy. There is some concern about an aspect of this that wasn't included and therefore Preston's requesting that Conference withdraw the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Paul. Just cast your vote now for us please. If you give permission to withdraw press 'for', if you don't press 'against'. Thank you, that poll is closed and you have permission to withdraw, Paul. Thank you, Conference.

Motion number 26, Moorland. Lancaster Farms, if this is carried your motion will fall so you might want to second this motion and speak on it if you wish. Don't forget, if you second it you can't speak against it but you could be very sarcastic in your speech.

<Laughter>

Leeds, thank you for bailing Farms out.

<Applause>

#### Motion 26

**Conference to hold a vote of confidence in SSCL.**

#### MOORLAND

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Let me just start by stating a simple fact. The service that we have provided by SSCL to our members, it's absolutely fantastic! I'm sure every single one of you sat here right now has a list of examples that could literally scale the height of Mount Everest highlighting how good and how efficient SSCL really are. How all of our members at HMP Moorland have never had to wait over a year for ill-health retirement, we've never had members not being paid incorrectly, we've never got members into financial hardship and we certainly never have had members struggling with mental health due to the issues and the problems that may have been imposed on them. And certainly SSCL have never ever, ever, ever breached data protection and shared any of our members' personal details. SSCL are

extremely proactive, very knowledgeable – they acknowledge the issues and fully engage with members to rectify mistakes and usually do this in a very, very quick and speedy and efficient manner. The complaint system, it's first class – it's literally first class and on a whole they are just superb. We, Conference, need to send a clear message indicating that we have full confidence in their ability to effectively manage the service. On this basis we are calling a vote of confidence in SSCL and instruct the NEC to tell them what we really think of them. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Absolutely brilliant! Colleagues. I'd like to thank Jade from Moorlands for bringing this motion and an excellent speech. Sarcasm at its best. I'm so glad that we had the one person in HMPPS who can say a good word about SSCL, but that's about my limit of sarcasm. We all have stories of disgraceful content in the way SSCL have treated our members, all at various stages of their career, from starters to those at the end. So, colleagues, I ask you to reject this motion basically on the fact favour motion 27 which I believe is probably a little bit more accurate. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Paul.

<Applause>

Any more speakers? OK, over to Angela Montgomery, responding for the NEC.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, delegates and speakers of the motion. The NEC rejects what has been said in the motion. Our view is they do none of the things that the motion states. In fact, they do the opposite and we would like you to send a resounding message to SSCL by all of you rejecting this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, just for those who aren't clear. If you vote in favour of this motion it means you have full confidence in Shared Services. If you vote against it it means you have no confidence at all in them. Let's take it to the vote, over to you, for or against. That poll is now closed, that motion is lost which means you don't have any confidence in them. Well done, Jade. Motion 27, Lancaster Farms. Do we have a seconder? Don't all rush at once.

#### **Motion 27**

**A vote of no confidence in SSCL due to the poor service being provided to the membership.**

#### **LANCASTER FARMS**

**JOHN THRELFALL – BRANCH CHAIR, LANCASTER FARMS:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads, 'A vote of no confidence in SSCL due to the poor service being provided to the membership.' I think Moorland did such a good job coming up then that there's really nothing I can add on it. I think hearing what the NEC have had to say and your own horror stories, I really don't think I can add much to this. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? I think we know which way this is going. Sarah Rigby responding for the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Yeah, what John said.

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done, OK. Straight to the vote. This is different now. If you vote in favour of it you have no confidence in Shared Services. Off you go. Thank you, Conference, that poll is now closed and that is carried. We will happily relay the feelings of everybody in this hall to our Employer about Shared Services. Motion 28, Lancaster Farms. Secunder please. Thank you.

#### **Motion 28**

**Conference instruct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in discussion to review the current contract with Shared Services Connected LTD (SSCL).**

#### **LANCASTER FARMS**

**JOHN THRELFALL – BRANCH CHAIR, LANCASTER FARMS:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads, 'Conference instruct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in discussion to review the current contracts with Shared Services Connect.' We obviously have a different contract than Moorland on this. We believe that SSCL are failing in their contracted obligations and offering a poor level of service and support to our members. I'm sure that every person in this room has their own horror stories, so rather than explain individual cases, here are some of the more common issues faced by

our members. And this list is in no way exhaustive. We've seen underpayments to staff, overpayments, non-payments, issues with pay for staff on TP, issues with staff going part time, a complete lack of knowledge from operators and difficulty just getting through to the correct department. We also had two members waiting nearly six months for their pension payments, which is absolutely unacceptable – this is their money. We believe the way that SSCL are treating our members is nothing short of a disgrace and the most common words I hear from members after dealing with SSCL is disorganised and shambolic. We believe that this contract needs revisiting by our NEC and SSCL need bringing to account for their failure to deliver even a minimal level of service for our members. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, John. Any more speakers? Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, speaking in favour of the motion. Cast your minds back to the distant past when every jail had someone called an EO in charge of all matters regarding personnel. They were a font of all knowledge and you could do these really strange things, you could sit down in front of them, explain your problem, they'd listen to you, they'd take ownership of it and get it sorted and it worked reasonably well. Somewhere along the line a deal was done on a golf course somewhere then we were presented with Shared Services and the rest is history. Everybody in this room has got a horror story about Shared Services. Our members deserve a better service, particularly when they're going through a particularly stressful time – ill health, retirement, payment queries. Conference, let's get this contract reviewed, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Farms, would you like to reply? OK, straight to the vote. All those for or against, please cast your votes now. That poll is now closed and that motion is carried.

Motion 29, Risley. Frankland, if this is carried your motion will fall so I would encourage you to second this motion and speak on it. Thank you. Risley, invite you to the rostrum.

#### Motion 29

**The NEC engage with the employer for a review of the T&S Policy taking into account increased costs.**

#### RISLEY

**PAUL HORNBY – CHAIR, RISLEY:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. Motion number 29 reads as follows, 'That the NEC engage with the employer for a review of the T&S policy taking into account increased costs.' The reason I support this motion is due to the current and ongoing costs of living that keeps increasing, the impact this has on fuel costs and maintenance of vehicles. We believe that it should be interest linked – sorry, I'm first-hand, I'm nervous.

<Applause>

Linked to the rate of inflation or should be reviewed on a more regular basis and amended as accordingly. Will you please support this motion?

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done, Risley, well done.

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Happy to second this motion. Obviously since this motion was proposed there's been a bit of movement on the mileage allowance but prices are still going up, wages are still static at best so please support the motion. It is what it is. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? Sarah Rigby responding on behalf of the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC supporting the motion. We've actually already achieved this but there's a delay in the full policy implementation. In 2019 there was a restructure of the HMPPS HR department and a number of areas were transferred to the MOJ. This set in motion a number of policy reviews in an attempt to align HR policies to enable a consistent approach across MOJ. The travel and subsistence policy was one of the first to be reviewed. We've been consulted on it over the last couple of years, with the consultation process being completed in November 2021.

The original plan was for HMPPS to launch the new policy in line with an update to the expenses IT system to enable the changes to be enforced. The update to the IT system has been delayed – no surprises – which in turn has delayed the new policy from being fully rolled out. After pressure from the POA NEC, the changes to the travel expenses were implemented from May 1st this year. This means the single business mileage rate is now in use rather than the previous standard and public mileage rate. It was possible to roll out this element, as the single mileage claim rate of 45

pence a mile is already built into SOPs. The new IT system, we're informed, should be ready to roll out, in full, alongside the rest of the policy later on this year. The reason the rate of 45 pence has not increased is due to the limit set by HMRC to enable the claim to be made without incurring tax and National Insurance.

There are other changes to the policy that include amendments to subsistence – there are increases to the over-five hours and over-10 hours. The over-12 hours has been removed and replaced with an over-15 hours and the overnight rate is re-badged as over-15 hours and ongoing past 8pm. The flat rate for that will be £25. The changes are in line with the rates set by HMRC and, again, ensure tax and National Insurance contributions do not apply. Did we want more? Yeah, of course we did. We recognise there are some positive changes but there will also be situations where people feel they are receiving less with the removal of the over-12s option. Overall, the changes are for the better, and particularly the increase to the mileage rate should help to offset the significant rising costs of fuel. The updated policy will hopefully stop the many varied interpretations of the policy and it should help to ensure a more consistent approach across the board.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. No reply from Risley, so straight to the vote. All those in favour please vote now. If you want to vote against press the other button. Thank you, Conference, that poll is now closed. That has been carried. That means that 31, Hewell, I believe you want to withdraw, is that correct? No. This is a debate, Conference, so there's no need for a seconder, so I would invite you all to highlight the problems you face in your jails during this debate and let's see what's going on around the estate.

### Motion 31

**For a debate to take place on workplace bullying, harassment, victimization and discrimination by workplace managers.**

### HEWELL

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. We were going to ask for this debate to be withdrawn because Hewell now has these issues in hand and things have been dealt with. We were then asked by another branch here that they wish to speak on this subject. Conference, the podium is yours.

**JOHN DICKSON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** NEC, delegates. In Scotland we have recently been in the news and we've been at Scottish Parliament for the amount of stuff that's been happening at Shotts at this moment in time. Things like trying to get the jail locked down so we can search the prisoners, and it took nearly 2-3 months to get this done. And when we did, we found over 800 prohibited articles and we actually put the lid back on the establishment. However, throughout the processes of doing these things, management had a dictatorship in how they were going to actually proceed with things and how we have got a partnership agreement in Scotland where we're meant to work jointly together and to come to conclusions etc. but it was lost in translation for a number of reasons.

The one point I want to get on to was I believe Winchester had been forced to carry out exercise and they didn't have the correct staffing levels. Well, something similar had happened at HMP Shotts, where we were contacted – both myself as chair and Alan as secretary – at home to say for the first time ever at HMP Shotts the staff were instructed to carry out exercise at night, pitch dark, in the pouring rain with no nurse cover, minimum staffing levels weren't even agreed, were well below it, and they were basically informed that if they didn't do this they would be disciplined. From the back of this we actually then took charge of it and said to the staff, 'Listen, before we do any of this and before you go for it we have to have a look at the risk assessments, the safe systems of work and an impact assessment to see whether this is safe or not.' The staff did not refuse to do the exercise. They took advice from the branch chair and the branch secretary. The advice from us was very clear, 'Until that's in place we, as the Committee, are saying we're not doing this.'

We came in the next morning thinking that the Governor, number one, would pull us up the stairs, sit us down and say, 'Whoa, let's have a wee chat about this so nothing like this happens again.' But no. Alan went up to the morning meeting – we have a meeting morning meeting where we sit down with the senior management team and we discuss events and we have this every second day. We expected that to happen and what actually happened was the manager who gave the instruction and who also threatened disciplines was totally miffed about our staff members. He decided at that meeting that he gave, what he classed, as a reasonable instruction. Now, Alan turned round and says, 'Well, it's not reasonable because we have said that there's no risk assessment carried out to carry that out in the dark, at night, below the safe staffing levels and no nurse cover.' We tried to put that across but it wasn't listened to. So, what we had in place was we had a manager who is probably, as a unit manager, has done maybe 30 years to 32 years' service, so he's got a lot of service, he came up through the ranks so he knows the score. But what we had in place was 13 members of staff with roughly 200 years' service for the first time ever turning and saying to the management team, 'No. This isn't safe.' And that's the advice that we have got from the Union. That's what came out of that – and what happened at the back of it? They decided to go straight for disciplinary. Thirteen members of staff with 200 years' service getting bullied, harassed and victimised because they stood up for their rights.

Now, for the first time ever I've actually looked and went really in depth into this, and I looked at the Employment Rights Act 1996 and within there it quite clearly states, 'The right to refuse dangerous work', and you are actually protected from reprisal from doing so. So, we have got a PFTA system. I'm assuming you have got something similar. We went straight to PFTA on this and they were adamant, adamant that it was a reasonable instruction and these staff were guilty. I think the newspaper article that came out saying, 'Disobedient Shott staff.' They weren't disobedient. They were standing up for their rights. They were standing up for the staff's rights, the prisoners as well. Now, for an understanding on this we've had sit-down protests, we've had staff assaults, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, we've got – I don't know if you've got it in England, <inaudible>, we've had prisoners who look like zombies walking about the jail killing themselves, overdosing, cutting veins, cutting arteries, we've had people climbing fences. All this was all happening in the run up and I believe Winchester might've been sort of similar down that road as well, where they actually had people saying that it's unsafe.

So, we had an unsafe jail that the Governor refused to lockdown, unsafe practices, below safe staffing and minimum levels and no nurse cover – and he wanted this to happen and he actually thought it was OK to bully and harass and say to these staff, ‘If you refuse to carry out this order, we, we will discipline you.’ These are the things that’s happening in Scotland, and this is in a partnership. A partnership that we are actually supposed to sit down and work together. And I would like to thank the SNC because they fully supported us and we were willing to go all the way to an Employment Appeals Tribunal on this. But this is the sort of things that’s happening right now and I’m assuming it’s going to be happening with every other establishment because that’s the way they operate and it has to stop. They have to listen and we have to have the strength – and I honestly tell every single one of you look at the Employment Rights Act 1996. It is a bible for us. Thank you, colleagues.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. Where do we start? So, personal experiences – I challenged a CM for doing unsafe practices. I got put on restricted duties for 10 weeks for that. Appalling! Really crazy. Governor made that decision on her own back, moved me into the gate, 10 weeks restricted duties for keeping the prison safe when the CM wasn’t. Absolutely disgraceful and I’m sure a lot of you have got a lot of different stories, so get up and join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

**CHRIS MOSTYN – CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** NEC, Conference. I’m sure you’ve all got your own stories about bullying and victimisation, and unfortunately it goes back as long as I’ve been in service and that’s 20 years. We had 14 members of staff suspended over 20 years ago for inappropriate relations. They were investigated for over a year, no support from management, no police investigation or back to work. Two years ago we had eight members of staff suspended for allegedly assaulting two prisoners in two separate incidents. Governor decided that he wouldn’t continue with the investigation because the police were going to take precedence. That’s OK. There was an appetite to proceed from the police and there was evidence that supported the allegations. No case to answer. 20-minute interview from a manager from outside the prison – no case to answer. They asked the police whether or not there was any investigation for these members. No, nothing at all. But the Governor decided he would continue with the investigation. No support, no nothing. Unfortunately, bullying and victimisation is thread throughout the Prison Service, no matter which Governor grade we happen to have in charge. The Prison Service is a great one for saying we’re their best resource and they love us, we’re the best thing it can do. They show us no support, they bully and they victimise us and they hope we’ll go away because we’re weak. But we’re not weak, we all stick together and we show solidarity. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JAMES SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. I don’t know where to start really with Wandsworth. Not as bad as what I heard from some of the delegates – Shotts, absolutely appalling. It seems to me that there’s a complete shift in attitude. We had quite a good working relationship. We’d fall out but then we’d kiss and make up when we’ve got it all fixed. This new breed that we’ve got seem to rule by diktat. Somebody complained that they didn’t feel safe and my colleague, Stewart, the branch chair, pointed out about how we’re running at 60% ineffective. So you can imagine we’re not running much of a regime at Wandsworth and we’re not on our own. Some staff were told to unlock for some education classes. There was only, like, three of them and they went, ‘Well, no’, and they didn’t do it. But it was led by one individual who was identified, he was concerned about his health and safety. He said, ‘Show me the safe systems of work, risk assessment.’ No one bothered doing that. But what they did was, again, they put him on restricted duties. He was a C&R instructor and he liked doing that and they took him off that, they took him off everything that he liked doing. Didn’t discipline him, they just instead of showing him the risk assessments, showing him the safe systems of work. They reason they didn’t do that is because they didn’t have them. What they did was they identified him and the Governor actually published, in the weekly newsletter, and described anybody who was concerned about their health and safety as a mood-hoover. That’s just one issue. There’s plenty more. I’m not going to go on. Support the debate please.

<Applause>

**WILLIAM YOUNG – BRANCH CHAIR, GLENOCHIL:** NEC, Conference. You’s have all got this booklet in your pack and actually on page 10 is one of our cases. We had a branch member come to us who was due to go into a hall where he didn’t want to go. He was suffering mental health issues and all the rest of it. We went and spoke to the Governor and we tried to say, ‘Please listen to this member of staff.’ The Governor didn’t listen. The Governor sat in meetings with myself, my branch secretary and went, ‘I’m the Governor. I decide what happens in my jail. I’m not putting that. I’m not listening to him.’ In Scotland you go through Optima. He got an Optima Report that said, ‘Back to member.’ We went back, Governor again, ‘No. I’m in charge. I’m the boss.’ So we said, ‘This is the wrong way to go with this, sir.’ He didn’t listen. It’s in that book. We took it to Thompsons, Thompsons done their due diligence through the <inaudible>. That member of staff ended up going through capability but he took his case and he won it. If he’d had the mental capacity to take it further he would’ve got more, but he was happy with the settlement he got and then obviously back on that you’ve got the Optima pay-out as well. This just shows you what Governors will do if they feel that they’ve got the right to decide how their employees at their jail should be treated, and us as branch officials have to stand up to them sometimes and say, ‘You’re going down the wrong road. You need to listen to us.’ We are there to represent your members and these individuals sometimes need to be taken to task. And if that means going to Thompsons with it, we need to go to Thompsons with it. Thanks very much, continue the debate.

<Applause>

**SION SCOURFIELD – CHAIR, LINCOLN:** NEC, Chair, delegates. I’m going through a case at the moment where a member of staff’s been assaulted at work and the Governors have blamed him. It was his fault. Leading up to this this member of staff had a phone call from his wife. He was sat in the car park in his car, wife rang him and says, ‘Why aren’t you home from work yet?’ He said, ‘I’m sat in the car debating whether to (1) drive the car into a wall and kill himself, or (2) drive the car into the Governor and kill her.’ Now, this is serious now, this is the effect some of these Governors and managers are having on our members and I think it needs to stop. Thank you, support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you to the speakers for contributing to that debate. On behalf of the NEC, Angela Montgomery.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, delegates and guests. On behalf of the NEC I am outlining the position that we have in respect to workplace bullying, victimisation, harassment and discrimination. The POA are clear that we, as a Union, will not tolerate our members and you as reps being subject to bullying by your employer. In supporting our members who suffer from bullying, victimisation and harassment, the response by the employer may well be to victimise you and your member. We will not tolerate it. We will support all of you to ensure that the workplace is safe. Everybody here has a right to go to work and not be fearful from bullies in the workplace. In HMPPS evidence shows that these are largely managerial bullies. Not always but largely. The reluctance of senior managers and your Governors and Directors to stamp out workplace bullying is shocking, to which you've all testified. There is a reluctance to investigate managers who are bullies. It's an opinion supported by the fact – it's not that I believe it, the returns would support that. This Union are not going to stand by and allow this to happen to you. Thompsons will support you, should there be that need.

To give some credit to the employer, they have attempted to resolve workplace bullying by the creation of TUBU. Some of you may know what The Unacceptable Behaviour Unit is but others of you won't. It is a unit that deals with unacceptable behaviour in the workplace, to which everybody can directly access. They are there to ensure that this does not happen. My understanding is their difficulty is, since they were set up, they have been inundated with calls and there are a number of serious ongoing investigations. But that should not stop us highlighting those. So those of you who do come across those in your workplace, ring TUBU, and if you don't get a response tell the NEC because they will then support you in the workplace and at senior level to get your members' issues resolved.

Members need to be better served than they are and the POA recognises that bullying doesn't just happen in your workplace, it actually happens across a range of workplaces, and we support a private members bill being put in by Rachael Maskell, who happens to be my MP, which is putting forward new legislation to protect employees at work from bullying and harassment. You should not underestimate the impact that bullying and harassment has, and I'm sure you don't. It causes significant physical and mental distress, not only to our members but to their families and to the wider community. It also causes that to those who witness it and I'm sure everybody here will have witnessed bullying if they have not been subjected to it. Our responsibility is not to let the bullies win and to support our colleagues who are subject to that.

The NEC thank Hewell for bringing this debate to the fore and we would like to support all of you and commend all of you to continue the invaluable work you do by fighting bullying in the workplace. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, for that debate.

Motion 32, Pentonville. Secunder for Pentonville please. Thank you, Preston.

### **Motion 32**

**That Conference recognises that members and staff have little trust and faith the current staff Grievance policy PSO 8550, and that it is not fit for purpose! Further that Conference mandate the NEC to re-negotiate a better more fairer Grievance policy with HMPPS.**

### **PENTONVILLE**

**CHRIS MOSTYN – CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** NEC, Conference. The motion is in front of us all so I won't read it out if we've got it, so we all know <inaudible>. We have been suffering from workplace bullying at Pentonville for the last two years and this motion feeds into it. I think it speaks for itself in its simplicity and common sense. However, I'd just like to place some structure and background as to why our branch feels so strongly about it. Some of you may know, about two years ago eight staff at Pentonville were suspended for allegedly assaulting two prisoners after two separate serious allegations and incidents. The investigation was handled in what can only be, in my opinion, described as vindictive, amateurish and uncaring. The incident was referred to the police, as the Governors are entitled to. They reported back to the Governor with no case to answer. At the time he wasn't happy with that decision and he referred it back to the police – not once, but twice more. As more facts emerged over the two-and-a-half years later, it turns out many suspended staff were never even under police investigation. Some of them were in IPP requests to see what the police had been doing. The police had never even heard of them. No case against any of them, no names progressed to the police. Now, staff suffered seriously from the time they were suspended. Some are on medication for life, marriages, relationships became strained and at least one has considered taking his own life. Spoke about people suffering from mental health illness and considering taking their own lives and other people's lives because they're so stressed out. Others sought solace in the bottom of a bottle, and we all know that prison officers like a drink and some of them like a drink too much and they get to the bottom of that bottle. For some there's no way out.

So, thankfully all returned to work after the investigation, after there was no case to answer. Bearing in mind they was suspended for 18 months – their interviews lasted 20 minutes, start to finish. These serious allegations that had allegedly been referred to the police, a Governor grade asked questions for 20 minutes. Make your own mind up about that, can't you? Staff understandably wanted answers as to why they'd been treated so badly by an employer that likes to champion himself, and it does on a regular basis, that it's fair. It's fair to us, it's fair to prisoners. I don't see any fairness in this particular situation and, to tell you the truth, I don't see any fairness with anything the Governor grades do for any of our members. So, as any of us would they submitted grievances against the Governor, only to be initially told the Governor, who had conveniently left the establishment by now,

was too ill to take part. OK, he's ill. He's gone. They then receive an email from the said Governor saying that he would take part and he was looking at the grievances and he wanted more time to get facts together. OK. The Prison Service initially think it was wholly appropriate for him to deal with the grievances after all the damage that he had caused – was hoping no doubt that the grievances were going to be dealt with very, very quickly, the staff would go away and be thankful they still had their jobs. The staff didn't go away and neither did this Committee they've put there that helped us out.

The decision to allow this Governor to be the appropriate manager as per the PSO to deal with this was clearly wrong to anyone with an ounce of common sense and any notion of fair play. Thankfully that decision was reconsidered and overturned. The grievance was given to another senior Governor, who sought help from the Complex Case Review Team to get to the bottom of the treatment of staff. And as to date, it's still unresolved. That's two years. All these staff have been sat at home and told that they're going to be interviewed by the police. They've not been interviewed by the management – left at home sweating, basically. Now, this example may be at the extreme end of the spectrum but I'm sure you've all got similar examples – whether it's one member of staff, two, three or four. And as I mentioned earlier on, it's not the first time this has happened at Pentonville – we had 14 staff suspended in one day and now eight. The 14 were suspended over 20 years ago and nothing's changed. Nothing has changed.

It cannot be allowed to continue that the Governor's allowed to be judge and jury over complaints made against them. Who in their right mind would criticise their own behaviour and decisions, and then uphold a grievance against themselves? Nobody. And as the secretary of Pentonville, Ronan McCarthy, says, 'It's tantamount to marking your own homework, we're all going to give ourselves an A+, aren't we, because we're all good at our jobs.' So, in conclusion, I hope you support this motion to give staff confidence that Governors will be held to account in the same way that members of this Union are. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, well done. Preston, you seconded the motion, you can speak next please. Thank you.

**PAUL MALLIBAND – CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Happy to support this motion. Grievance policy – is that really what we actually call it? It's quite correct but what kind of organisation, when a complaint is made against a line manager etc., then gives the complaint to the person you're complaining about and allows them to sit there and decide whether you've got a valid complaint or not? What utter nonsense! Where is there ever going to be any kind of natural justice in that type of process? It is absolutely not fit for purpose. Trust in the system? Well, I don't think so. The reason why we don't raise many grievances in prisons is because nobody trusts the document, and there's the fact. How many of you have actually assisted members with grievances? They don't fill them in. Why would they? Because you might as well put a big target on your back for everybody to shoot bullets at you because you've stuck your head above the parapet, so it doesn't happen. And if that's the approach to how you deal with issues for individuals then it's clearly not working – and if it's not working then we need to do something about it. We've got grievances rank-on-rank. There's been a live one recently where apparently I'm a bully, but this is because at a branch meeting I was given the authority to go to the Governor to tell him that we didn't have confidence in a particular individual to carry out orderly officer duties because of the catalogue of complaints that we had. We were told, 'Well, put a grievance in.' Well, what good would that do? Because that same person would then just carry on doing exactly what they were doing before, because when you fill the form in you've got to look for the outcome, and if you suggest that the outcome is that that individual apologises for their behaviour the Governor can't make them do that and they'll certainly not investigate them for it after, will they? Especially if it's them that are actually doing the hearing of the grievance. The policy is not fit for purpose. It needs ripping up and it needs re-writing. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – CHAIR, WHATTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. I'm going to ask the members to please reject this motion. Now, before you take me outside and burn me at the stake for being a heretic, there is some logic to my madness. There is currently an outstanding mandate to the NEC from the 2019 Conference – motion 86, and I quote, 'That Conference instructs the NEC to seek and change the current grievance process to ensure that each stage of the grievance is heard independently.' And my colleague from Pentonville is very right – and I did think he put his argument forward very well – but if we go with this mandate, this motion has been put forward, then all it states is for a fairer grievance process. There is no fairer grievance process in getting it done independently, so what I don't want the motion from the 2019 Conference to then be superseded by this one. The current mandate from the NEC – which I would like to remind them we still haven't had an update on yet – I would like to see that this one still gets carried forward and we reject Pentonville's motion today. So please, please, please reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The Wandsworth experience of grievances. Probably for about two years plus Governors have been mish-mashing the grievances being put through by my members. Starting to hear complaints about themselves and then being judges in their own cause. We are probably about ready to go into dispute over the breach of 8550 at Wandsworth and we've given notice to the management and the reasons why. The one thing that the management at Wandsworth, and I think managers just about everywhere don't bother reading, is actually page 1 of 8550 – desired outcomes, outcomes sought. The policy is followed in line with statute and Acas principles. Acas principles are very clear – you submit a grievance to a manager who is not subject of that grievance, that's what an employment tribunal will look at when it comes to taking grievances further down the line. Unfortunately grievances within work, if they've been badly managed or there's a clear breach of the Acas code, it's almost impossible to take to a tribunal. It's deemed as a breach of your terms and conditions, so legally you'll almost certainly be advised to go for constructive dismissal. You're never going to advise a member to resign then take your chances on that one.

However, if you have any members taking grievances through with protective characteristic issues, whether that is a form of race discrimination, or bullying with regard to race or female members of staff not being given their maternity rights, you're at an open door there because the first thing you'll win will be the breach of the Acas code on grievances. Whenever I point out page 1 of the PSO, like I say, they never read it – how can you hear your own grievance if you're being told to follow the Acas principle? At the start of any grievance which is being heard by the person who's subject to it, there's got to be, 'Are you in agreement that you're breaching the Acas code?' Managers will then refer to the two woolly paragraphs, 3 and 4 in 8550

that says, 'Well, we can hear our own grievance.' Only if you're breaching page 1 of 8550 and the Acas code. Do we need a new grievance policy? Yes. But if they were to throw the one out and now have anything, at least we'd have the Acas code, which is clear you can't hear your own grievance. I would actually say support this motion to continue the work of tearing up the poor grievance policy we've got. But if you've got members taking grievances through, if you've got a protected characteristic, consider taking that further forward for legal advice. It'll be worth doing it.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Stewart. Do we have any more speakers? Responding for the NEC, Sarah Rigby.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC in favour of this motion. As I've previously explained, a lot of the HR policies are currently being reviewed to try and align all policies across the MOJ to make it easier for the HR department to manage and to use one policy across all departments instead of having to use several. This is not necessarily a positive for us, as applying policy in an office environment can be very different to applying it in an operational environment. A grievance policy has been included under this remit and in 2021 we were issued with an Annex A and we responded to it. As with all consultation there were things we liked, things we didn't like. One of the main things we objected to very early on in the process was the proposal to rename it The Dispute Resolution Policy. An attempt to put a positive spin on really what's a negative process. We were informed by HMPPS that, following a large amount of feedback from all of the unions affected, they were reconsidering elements of it and we were expecting another version to be sent to us this month for us to consider further. The first version was over-complicated and parts of it were quite difficult to understand. There was also an intention to remove the appeal panel in its current format. Often for us the appeal panel is the only glimmer of hope that someone independent will oversee at least part of the process.

I think we can all agree that the current policy is not perfect. However, the main issues lie behind the application of the policy and the way the process is managed. All too often a grievance is received and put in a drawer somewhere and ignored. Timescales are not adhered to or a member finds themselves sat in front of the very person who they have alleged is bullying them, trying to explain why that same person should uphold a grievance against themselves. I have seen some fair and good outcomes under the current process but unfortunately they are few and far between. Members do not have faith in the process. There is no trust or confidence that concerns are taken seriously and that steps will be taken to right a wrong. This puts people off submitting a grievance in the first place, which in turn means nothing changes because nobody is held to account. This has to change. We will continue the consultation when we are sent the revised document and will try to ensure that the final version is fit for purpose, gets better results for our members and holds management to account.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply from Pentonville? Happy.

**CHRIS MOSTYN – CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** Just in reply to Mike from Whatton. I understand that you've got a previous motion placing. Ours may well undermine yours, but that was in 2019 so there's obviously been some inactivity. I won't accept Covid as an excuse because that's an excuse for everything. So, we either put a fire under one that's sitting around doing nothing and we use this as a lever to push that one forward and push both of them forward, either separately or together. I think we should put this motion and support it. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, Conference, motion 32, cast your vote now please, for or against. That poll is now closed and that motion is carried. Thank you for that.

Conference, we're gonna bring the day to a close there because a good friend wants to go and see the sunshine before it rains tomorrow apparently. The weather man there with his tan. Just a reminder that the National Committee for Secure Healthcare Services, you have a meeting on the 5th floor in the Johnson Room and don't forget to hand your handsets back in. We start bright and early tomorrow at 9:30 because we've got a busy day. See you tomorrow, have a good evening.

Monday 16th to Friday 20th May 2022

Wednesday 18th May

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. I'll bring you to order. So just a few things. It was announced this morning that inflation is now 9%, so trade unions asking for a 10% pay rise isn't that unrealistic after all! According to Fred the weatherman over there, it's going to rain today. He blagged me to get you an early finish yesterday to enjoy the sun, but it's going to rain today. That's right, is it? Yeah? And yesterday evening I saw some hippies on the beach, on the pebble beach having a good time, a picnic and a few beers, and then I realised they were delegates. They shall remain anonymous!

<Laughter>

Conference, we're going to open today's proceedings with an address from our Director General, Phil Copple. Just to introduce him, Phil has worked in offender management for over 30 years. He joined the Prison Service in 1990 as a prison officer before undertaking a range of managerial posts at different prisons as well as headquarters. He took up his first Governor post at Deerbolt Establishment for Young Adult Men in 2000. He was Governor of Frankland, a high security prison, from 2002 to 2006, after which he became area manager for prisons in northeast England and then the Northeast Director of Offender Management within the National Offender Management Service, with responsibility for both prisons and probation in the region. Phil became a member of the NOMS board in 2011 and served as Director of National Operational Services, Director of High Security, Director of Public Sector Prisons and Chief Operating Officer. He had a short spell seconded to the Ministry of Justice's strategy unit working on prison strategy in 2015. Upon creation of HMPPS in April 2017, Phil took up a post as Executive Director of Prisons with responsibility for all prisons in England as the agency's head of profession for prisons. Under the revised structure, Phil became Director General of Prisons from November 2019.

Now he can't take all the questions because he's got to get back to London for Ministerial meetings, but what I've said, if anybody wants to email their area rep with a question they want directly answered from Phil, I can guarantee we will get an answer to your question and he has agreed to respond to any questions via email. So you have it in black and white, so feel free to do that. And one little-known fact about Phil, before he joined the Prison Service, apparently he was a lifeguard. He couldn't swim but he had the ability to walk out for three miles because he's that tall!

<Laughter>

So please welcome Phil Copple to address Conference.

<Applause>

**PHIL COPPLE – DIRECTOR GENERAL, HMPPS:** Morning everyone. Can you hear me there, is that alright? Can you see me at the back?

<Laughter>

I can do the jokes as well. So thank you very much to the NEC for inviting me to speak to you this morning. It's great to have the opportunity to do that, and of course it's just really great to be able to come out of the pandemic and start to gather and do more normal business, including having Conferences like this. I know it's a long time for all of us since we were able to do more normalised things like that, and three years for you. And we had a Governors' Forum recently – it was three years since the last one almost.

And the timing I think is useful, because we're just coming out of the National Framework for Covid management and seeking to recover there, and of course the Prison Service Pay Review Body report is due quite soon, and I want to say a bit about both of those things a bit later on.

I do want to try and look forward for the most part, in terms of what I cover, think about where we are now and look at what's going to be ahead of us, but I do want to take a few moments first to look back and some reflections on the last couple of Covid years that we've had.

I want to start by just paying tribute to the colleagues that we've lost to the Covid virus over this period. Thirty-two prison staff of all grades lost their lives to the virus. We obviously did all we could to reduce risks and to save lives, and I do want to come back to that, but I don't want to in any way deny the price that a lot of people in our care have paid and a lot of our colleagues have paid in this situation.

I think for me, and I think probably for all us, the last couple of years – and knowing what was coming as best we could during that initial first wave, and beyond as it endured as a pandemic – has probably been the greatest challenge of all our careers, and it put huge demands on all of us. It's been a very heavy weight of responsibility and I recognise that that also applies to Union officials as well, because of the role you play in the system normally and had to play in these extraordinary times, but I think we all rose to those responsibilities. It tested the resilience of the system and its people in a way that we'd never been tested before, but our collective response was, in my opinion, magnificent. We couldn't avoid all tragedies or damage to people's wellbeing or <inaudible> work, but we will always be the Prison Service generation that withstood the pandemic, that showed great courage and saved many lives, and that kept the prison system operating, that maintained order and looked after people with great skill. In all those years of service that Mark referred to, most of them in leadership roles, I've never been more proud of us. What you did as prison staff was superb, just as your colleagues up and down the country did, and I want to say a sincere thank you to you for that.

And also to say thank you for what you did as POA officials to respond so constructively and responsibly to this unprecedented situation. And I think, as I think has been touched on already at Conference, there are positives for our employee relations to take from it and to build on. As that first wave hit us, at a moment of national crisis, the way that we worked together set the tone and literally set the framework for how we would deal with a prolonged, severe crisis. Within that, I do want to pay tribute to the NEC as well. The work that we did together was never easy or cosy, nor should it be. But I think that the work we did and the way the NEC approached us was impressive and responsible leadership. There were always lots of details and issues to work through, but the big judgement call that the NEC made, which was to reflect our shared values and our common interests and our collective responsibility, it was reflected in our joint statement, and that judgement call was undoubtedly the right one for the POA to take as a Union.

I do want to acknowledge outstanding work for a lot of my colleagues on the management side as well. Richard Vincent, the ER team who were here this morning, and the Covid Goal team to work through all those details and issues with great patience and commitment. I also want to pay a particular tribute to those NEC colleagues that I dealt with the most during this period – Mark, Steve, Dave Todd and Joe Simpson. I have great admiration for the work that they've done and the way that they engaged with us in what were very difficult circumstances, and I hope that receiving praise from me doesn't in any way blight their future union careers.

Because it would be wrong to give the impression, as I say, that all this was very easy and cosy – that's never the case and I don't think it should ever be the case. There are proper tensions that have to be managed between a trade union and management. I believe in the legitimacy of that and the appropriateness of that. I think your national leadership was always forthright and honest in working through those issues, but it was conducted in the right manner – always professional, always in good faith – and there was great flexibility and a lot of hard work shown. The time pressures meant that we couldn't do things in the usual way or to the usual timescale. There had to be rapid and intense consultation over lots of issues, and we tried hard to make sure there were frequent communications, to make sure that we were walking this together, because we did have to walk alongside each other on a very uncertain journey.

I'm hopeful that that experience has nurtured that most precious of commodities, trust. That's so important to enabling us to manage successfully over the last couple of years. I think we respected each other's positions but we also trusted each other's motives. And the good local employee relations that we have in so many prison establishments are so often based on that kind of trust as well, where people know each other, work with each other, trust each other to act honourably and reasonably and in good faith, with confidence in each other's motives, but always enabling room for reasonable people to reasonably disagree. So if there's something to take from that experience for future employee relations, it would be that for me. And there are always difficult things to work through. It can't always be sweetness and light, and there can be local difficulties in relationships too and I know that you would often challenge management, national or local level, for having not done enough in various areas. There are plenty of issues where the question of what the right thing to do is is contested between us, and I think that's fair enough and that's natural. It would be very strange and unnatural if we thought that there could be a future where there was never anything in contention. But I do hope we can move beyond what sometimes I regard as an unhealthy culture, particular points in time or particular locations, where that may persist. I think sometimes it can be quite a corrosive culture of confrontation and mistrust, of assuming the worst of people, almost casually attributing bad faith or lack of integrity or malevolent intent. That can work both ways. I certainly acknowledge that from the management side, locally. If there is a lack of care and support and unreasonable behaviours, if there is high-handedness or bullying, none of those things are acceptable to me. The standards of behaviour by which we conduct employee relations are very important and we are doing work to develop a formal protocol with all unions to try and jointly agree the kind of standards that we want to have in the way that employee relations are conducted – and I think to build on some of the good practice the last couple of years, give ourselves a solid foundation for moving forward.

Looking ahead more widely, just three things that I want to touch on initially – and a lot of these are very big macro trends, sometimes as a service we have no control over, sometimes we have limited or even no influence over them, but they have a big, big impact on us. The first of those is around population and capacity expansions that we expect to be managing, and that we've started managing already. Secondly, around staffing challenges across the service. And thirdly, just to say something about recovery and living with Covid.

In terms of population and capacity, clearly the Government has made a number of policy choices and a number of funding and investment choices that will have a big impact on our system, particularly in relation to sentencing and further changes there. What that will mean over the longer term – but very much now and over the rest of this decade – an increase in the number of police officers by over 20,000 will have impacts downstream in the criminal justice system, the courts, for probation and for prisons. Exactly how far and precisely how fast that growth in the prison population takes place remains to be seen. We have projections but the projections are not at all straightforward at the moment because the system is in a situation that it's never been in before, trying to recover from all the dislocation of the pandemic. And there can be a risk that it can dominate the agenda for us as a service. And I do think that some of what we need to do is to try and avoid that kind of domination and element of distraction from it, the fact that it could be at risk of crowding out proper considerations of all the other challenges and issues that we need to deal with. But we are seeing the capacity of the system expand across both public and private sectors. We will have one of the new generation of prisons being built run by the public sector. We have a lot of expansion in a lot of public-sector prisons of various scales. The programme is aiming to deliver 20,000 more prison places by 2027, at significant cost to the taxpayer, and we've already increased the capacity across the system by about 3,000 so far.

One of the important implications of that, as I move on to talk about staffing, is what was reflected in the White Paper – and it's an expectation of the system needing about 5,000 more prison officers between public and private sectors over the next few years, with maybe two-fifths of that, around 2,000 of them, in the public sector. Our staffing position is a great concern to all of us because of just how fundamental it is to have the right staffing availability, the right number of people in post on a day-to-day basis in order to run our prisons the way we aspire to run them. It's absolutely foundational.

I was in a meeting recently with the Chief Inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector, and one of the things that was of interest was the Deputy Chief Inspector, himself a former prison governor, talking about how in a number of recent inspections it's quite clear how the staffing position in those prisons is a significant roadblock to progress. And that's just confirming something that we all are aware of. We're also all aware of the fact that we have significant recruitment and retention challenges at this time, just like a lot of other employers and a lot of other sectors across the economy. We are seeing really significant shifts in economic forces globally as well as for the UK. Mark, I heard, touched on the latest inflation projections a moment

ago, and the globally economy is also dealing with some things that weren't necessarily anticipated in terms of all the aftershocks from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The labour market has been getting tighter for quite some time, and it's now joined by what, for this generation, are quite exceptional inflationary pressures as well. We had a worsening staffing position during 2020 because, in that first wave of the pandemic, we didn't have a Covid-safe way of still recruiting and training people. So our staff-in-post numbers dipped, and when we started to be able to safely resume more training, when we had more of those Covid-secure ways of working and we had more of the equipment to enable us to do it, it couldn't take place at the same volumes as would normally happen. We had to have socially distanced classrooms and so on. Nevertheless we were able to pick up the recruitment as time went on and we had a period, of course, during the pandemic, when we were doing relatively well because of the change in labour market disruption, and retention improved and we had large numbers of new recruits coming through.

During 2021 we made a fair bit of progress in getting our staff in post closer to our target staffing figure across the system, but we had an increasing retention problem as the calendar year went on. The last few months of the year, we were having to recruit about four new prison officers to get a net gain in post of one because for every four that we were recruiting, we lost about three people leaving. So there was an enormous recruitment effort taking place that was only just allowing us to nudge up our staff in post figures. We also were aware that the recruitment pipeline was starting to slow down considerably. We knew towards the end of 2021 that the number of people on new officer training courses from March onwards was going to dip because we had people who had applied, been selected earlier in the year still booked on courses during January and February, but there were fewer people coming through the second half of 2021 and the numbers going on training courses for March onwards were going to fall. The number of applications that we were getting in the second half of 2021 was less than half the number of applications we were getting at the beginning of 2021, which all reflects these very significant economic factors impacting on us. And for the service, that creates a bit of a double whammy of more people leaving and fewer people coming through as new recruits as well. And we all know what that means for the running of our prisons.

I wanted to acknowledge all of that I guess for a couple of reasons. One is that I think that it's right to be candid and honest as a general rule, but secondly I wouldn't for one moment want anybody in this room to think that somehow I and the senior leadership of HMPPS aren't even aware of that and don't think it's a problem. We're very exercised about it.

The number of vacancies we had by the turn of the calendar year amongst officer grades rose to around 1,000 and it's going up. It's going up by about 100 a month at the current time, because of more people leaving and fewer new people coming in. But we start, because of that progress earlier in 2021, we start from a position of having around 96% staff in post against our target staffing figure for officers. So the starting position is not a catastrophic one but the pressures are going to increase until such time as we're able to do better and change those trends for recruitment and retention. And of course the vacancies that we have in the system are not evenly spread across all the prisons. We have a number of prisons that are already some months into facing acute challenges. We have six establishments where the staff in post is below 90% of the target staffing figure for officers. We have our first prison that's gone below 80% of the target staffing figure with one or two scheduled to join it in the near future. So this is a huge challenge. It's also absolutely fundamental to us trying to run a system that's safe and decent and secure and one that can start to make progress.

There's a number of reasons why I'm not pessimistic about that, but I also recognise that there's an awful lot at stake and also that the coming weeks and months are going to be very important in shaping how well we do in addressing those challenges. There's a range of things we're doing on the non-pay side to try and improve retention. Initiatives to try and help with mentoring of new staff, buddying of new staff, generally improving our game and learning from good practice in a lot of prisons about how to look after and support people in practical ways, but I also want to acknowledge that I believe that pay is going to be a fundamental part of turning this around. The evidence that we submitted on behalf of the Government to the Pay Review Body this year did involve an increase in the spend on our pay budget of nearly £100 million a year, which is way above any authorised proposals that we've put forward to the Pay Review Body in the past.

We did put together a number of proposals to try and target that investment in more pay at lower pay grades and at operational grades. We're targeting operational grades by trying to increase the unsocial hours allowance to 20%. Also trying to give the most significant rise to Band 2 OSGs, with an increase in the Band 2 rate of £1,500 a year, so that OSGs would have an overall pay rise of around 11%. We also have proposals for officers that would increase starting pay by around 10% as well, enabling people to get to the pay band maximum more quickly as well. But that's just the evidence we've submitted, the proposals that we've submitted on behalf of the Government, and with approval of Ministers of the Department and Treasury. The Prison Service Pay Review Body of course will form its own views.

I did want to just reflect on that for a moment with you, because I think that what happens with their recommendations this year, and the Government's response to them, is going to be very important – more important than in any other year I can remember. I think the views of the Pay Review Body and its preferred strategies for what should happen with Prison Service pay are in my view pretty clear. Last year's Pay Review Body report and the one before are obviously published and I think they very clearly set out the Pay Review Body's assessments. They think that prison officers are notably underpaid and they want to address that. They have in mind I think a particular strategy for trying to address it as well and I think that's quite evident from what they've said in their last two reports. They obviously made the recommendation in 2020, Recommendation 3, for a further mid-year increase in the pay rates for F&S Band 3 officers of £3,000 in total, for a combination of an increase in the basic pay-points by around £2,600, taking it up to £3,000 when the unsocial hours allowance is on top of that increase. Of course that recommendation was rejected by the Government but what it reflects, I think, is the Pay Review Body's thinking. And I think in last year's report, when they had a restricted remit, they set out that they'd taken legal advice about whether they could depart from that remit, and that they assessed that that wasn't possible for them to do. But they also set out in last year's report that, had that not been the case, they would have broadly made the same recommendation again. That's part of the backdrop for the recommendations they're going to make this year when they haven't got a restricted remit.

The strategy they've got in mind as well is that they want to find a way of speeding up and closing the pay gap between closed grade officers and Band 3 F&S officers. They also don't like market supplements and they would like to find a way of phasing them out and phasing them out in a reasonable

timeframe. And the Recommendation 3 they made two years ago also points to the way in principle that they'd like to do that, because when they recommended a £3,000 pay rise for Band 3 F&S officers, they also said that that would allow amber market supplements of £3,000 to be removed and to be consolidated, absorbed into basic pay. And for £3,000 of the £5,000 red-site supplements to similarly be removed, absorbed into basic pay right across the system.

The closed grade officers at the current time have salaries of around £32,000 – everybody who's at the top of the pay band of course. The Pay Review Body also intend to have pay awards for closed grade officers. We've proposed a pay award for closed grade officers in our proposals. So my assessment of the way that the Pay Review Body is thinking is broadly this: that over the next two, three, maybe four years –

<Interruption – phone going off>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Does Dominic Raab know you're here?

**PHIL COPPLE – DIRECTOR GENERAL, HMPPS:** That was the Treasury trying to tell me to shut up I think!

So I think the closed grade officer salaries will go above £32,000 over the next two to three years. Not sure by how much but I think the Pay Review Body will recommend increases. So maybe that gets to £33,000, maybe it gets to a bit more than £33,000. And I think, over the same sort of timeframe, the Pay Review Body want to get F&S officer salaries to the same level, so I think that's going to mean not just one year but two, three, maybe four years of quite significant pay awards for F&S officers being recommended by the Pay Review Body in line with our strategy, so that F&S band officers are also earning about £33-34,000 at the top of the pay band within a reasonable timeframe, and over the course of that period market supplements are pretty much phased out by being consolidated into the basic pay.

That's got significant implications obviously for all of us, for the organisation. It's got significant implications for our cost base, which we'll need to work through and so on. But we're also in a financial context, I think, following the spending review settlement, that there is a significant amount of additional investment going into the Ministry of Justice, including HMPPS, for a number of initiatives, some of which I'll touch on later. So unlike in 2020, there is not the same straightforward argument that the recommendations to the Pay Review Body are unaffordable. So we expect the Pay Review Body's report to be submitted to Government in the near future. I sincerely hope then the Government makes decisions relatively speedily and that, at the latest by mid-July before Parliament goes into summer recess, there is an announcement of the decisions whether or not to accept the Pay Review Body's recommendations, and I can be about as certain as I can be the Pay Review Body are going to recommend this year very significant pay awards for prison staff. Whether to accept those recommendations or not is a decision that will be made by Government, by Ministers. What I do want to acknowledge is that myself and other senior officials will, for a number of the key conversations, be in the room with those Ministers, and I did want you to be aware of the fact that, in those discussions, all weight will be given to the fact that the Government's policy position is that it will accept Pay Review Body recommendations other than in exceptional circumstances, and that there would need to be a very careful consideration of what might constitute exceptional circumstances. But there also has to be proper weight given to the staffing challenges facing the Prison Service and about the steps that are necessary to address it, and address it quickly, so that we improve our staffing position, particularly in those places that have got these more severe challenges. My personal view is that, as a matter of principle, regardless of what the Pay Review Body recommends, that their recommendations should, each year, be accepted.

The Pay Review Body's particular status is unlike any other public-sector pay review body's status. That's why the position is that the recommendations will be accepted ordinarily other than in exceptional circumstances. It seems to me that, by definition, it follows that Government has to accept that sometimes it will agree recommendations that it may not agree with. It has to accept them and it has to implement them, but from an operational point of view, as the Director General of Prisons, when the recommendations that I am confident will be made for a very significant pay award come through, my advice will be that a very significant pay award is needed in order to address the scale of staffing challenges that we have.

I'll just move on to recovery from Covid and learning to live with Covid. As I said earlier, we're obviously now exiting the national framework, we're moving out of command mode as a service. All the way through the pandemic, we've tried to strike a balance, one that we regard as proportionate, between the risks of serious illness and death from the virus on the one hand but then some of the risks and some of the harms that come from the things that we meet to try and address the Covid risks, some of the risks and harms from having highly restricted regimes for protracted periods of time. We've now thankfully got to a position with very clear evidence from the fourth wave over the winter, and then the more recent spike driven by the Omicron variant and then the Omicron subvariant, that in the current circumstances with a highly vaccinated population, that the risk to life is much, much lower thankfully, and it follows therefore that you should strike a balance in a different place. And that's what we're seeking to do.

I acknowledge that there must continue to be uncertainties about the future course of the pandemic because no expert in the world could confidently predict everything that's going to happen with the virus. But it's also not at all certain that we will have further problems of the scale and the nature that we've had over the last year or so, and so it's right that we try to take the opportunity to move things forward, but also standing ready to respond in case we have further serious setbacks – because if that happens we know what to do, because we've done it.

We will seek to build back delivery and we will seek to maintain baseline controls. We will seek to incorporate learning from the pandemic experience, reflected in future regime design work, but there's a lot of recovery to do. The prison population in lots of ways is bent out of shape because of the pandemic and its impacts on normal flows of prisoners through the system – from reception prisons into the training estate. And we have to be prepared for bumps on the road, at least bumps on the road, even if we don't have a major setback. We are still very susceptible as a system to having local outbreaks and we should expect to still have them in the future. Thankfully as things stand we should expect them with confidence to be much less serious or deadly, but we'll still have those kind of disruptions. We'll still have to respond locally to those conditions.

But I'm hopeful that we've got a reasonable basis to move forward and make progress, and enable us to do our core work to a better level, and I want

to say a bit about our recovery objectives and ambitions. There's probably three things to touch on. One is that Prison Strategy White Paper, second is around our enduring priorities as a system in addition to the ambitions set out in the White Paper, and thirdly I just want to say something about how we go about it as well in some important respects.

The Prison Strategy White Paper sets out a 10-year vision, and a lot of the ambitions beyond the first couple of years are not necessarily firm commitments that are funded, they are aspirations about direction of travel. There are quite a lot of firm commitments for initiatives that are funded over the next couple of years, and the system following the spending review is having really significant additional investment put into it. Over three years, £515 million on improving our reducing reoffending activity across both probation and prisons, and £120 million to improve our substance misuse work across prisons as well, working in partnership with health colleagues. Those kind of levels of investment are potentially game-changing for us and they're of a different order to anything that we've seen in our careers. The Deputy Prime Minister is the Justice Secretary, as you all know, very focussed on improving employment and accommodation outcomes for people leaving prison, very focussed on us improving education, training and work for prisoners within prison, very focussed on improving our work to tackle drug problems and to improve resettlement in general. It's necessary for us to structure expectations about what we do during in '22/'23 in particular because all those ambitions are ones that we share, they are all the right things to be ambitious about, but '22 and '23 remains an abnormal year for the system. It remains abnormal because the system has, in many cases, to get up off its knees again after another significant Covid wave. We need to try and undertake this work of building back and we're doing it from a starting point as I said, of well over 1,100 officer vacancies across the system and with a growing number of prisons facing much more acute challenges from a staffing point, which will hold them back. But if we can make the progress in the staffing position that I hope for, if we can utilise this additional money, we can start to build back safely. And if the pandemic doesn't disrupt us unduly in doing that, we can make significant progress.

We also have enduring priorities, some of which are reflected in the White Paper, some of them maybe less prominent in the White Paper, but the system will always have priorities around security, about making sure that we work professionally, prevent escapes, prevent absconds from open conditions, to try and reduce the releases in error that we have, because our first duty to the public is actually to carry out the orders of the court. That means making sure that people who are committed to custody don't leave custody before they're due to. We have challenges and priorities around counterterrorism work – you'll have seen the recent publication of the Jonathan Hall review – and some more positive work for us to do in the next period building on the progress we've been making in the recent past. But the scale of the threat that we have to manage in that space is very significant. There may not be huge numbers of prisoners that are presenting an extremist or terrorist threat, but we know that the harms that can be done by small numbers of extremist people can be out of all proportion to their numbers of them. We know that from what we've seen in the community and sadly we also know that from what we've seen in our own prisons, particularly in the terrorist incident at Whitemoor in the recent past and the very serious threat to life – the very serious harms that can be done to our own people from that. And I know that that is something that will be acknowledged in the course of this conference as well, for those colleagues and former colleagues who've been on the receiving end of those risks in a real and life-changing way. So, as with so much of what we do, again a lot is at stake there.

And safety will continue to be a major priority for us. We will take forward the next generation of safety initiatives and work to try and build on the progress we've made in the recent past. In the last year before the pandemic, we started to see a consistent trend of reducing assaults in our system. We've seen a more significant reduction during the pandemic. Building back will entail some risks, but also we must have a determination to keep on reducing violence and also a determination to do better in respect of self-harm and self-inflicted deaths. One of the incredible remarkable achievements I thought for the first Covid year was that, in all of those restrictions that we had to deal with, the living conditions that prisoners had to contend with, that you – we, our staff – looked after people, including so many vulnerable people, with such skill and commitment that self-harm reduced and that the number and rate of self-inflicted deaths was lower than any year for the previous seven years, in 2020. That is a remarkable testament to people's skills.

But it's right that we have the ambition to keep on making our prisons safer. My declared ambition is that we keep on working so that violence and self-harm, self-inflicted deaths, reduce to the levels that we saw at the turn of the last decade and, if we get them down to those levels, which in many respects over the modern period were historic lows, it's likely that the system is functioning well in a secure and healthy way, and that we'll be able to go even further and do even better than that. We can make that level of progress. But making that level of progress is the ambition we should set ourselves. A part of that is actually to try and pick up again the Offender Management in Custody model. That's been massively disrupted by the pandemic, like so much else in our prisons, but having better case management of prisoners, having effective key work delivered in our prisons by skilled prison officers, is something that we remain convinced of the evidence base for to improve safety but also to have positive rehabilitative impacts as well. And it also helps professionalise further and draw on the skills of our prison officer staff. So in many cases we virtually need to reintroduce this again in our system, but of course OMiC is something that several years ago we received a significant injection of money and it was the single biggest part of an increase in the number of prison officer posts, by 2,500 between 2016 and 2018. So I'm determined that we pick that up and take that forward and it will help make our prisons safer as well.

Just a couple of quick words about how we go about some of this. We've organised a number of the change initiatives into the Transforming Delivery in Prisons programme. That includes some of the work on future regime design but it also includes work around how we can improve our employment offer, what we can do for our current and future workforce to modernise conditions, improve flexibilities, enable us to be an employer that people want to stay with because of their working conditions.

I think the work that we're doing on diversity and inclusion also remains critical for us and I think we have to recognise as an organisation that we've got work to do in that area. I was really pleased that the Race Action Programme colleagues were invited to have a stand at the Conference this year, but we have to recognise that, in different ways for different reasons, involving people of different grades, falling short of what we need and what we expect and what we demand. Too many of our colleagues, whether they're women or from LGBT communities or from ethnic minorities, still experience bullying, discrimination and harassment, are still not feeling properly included and belonging, who have to put up with too much in the workplace from whatever quarter. As a public service, we've got a legal obligation not just to stop that but also to promote equality and I'm really pleased that we're working together, HMMPS and POA, in that vital work, and it's important that we continue to do so.

A couple of years ago when I was briefing our Governors, as the pandemic was getting under way, I said that it was going to be really tough. I

didn't want to underplay what we had to deal with. But I also said that we would withstand it, and we have. And now, looking out across all of those challenges, but also those opportunities, I say that we're going to do well in the next period. That doesn't promise plain sailing. I'm realistic about the fact that there'll be setbacks, there are going to be real strains and we have a difficult few months ahead of us as well. But I also genuinely believe that we've got important achievements ahead of us. We've got a lot to deal with but we've also got a lot going for us as an organisation. And I think that our employee relations is on a more solid footing to deal with those challenges and to make that progress than at any time that I can remember as a senior official in the organisation.

Thank you very much for your time this morning. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Phil. I'll just respond to a few points, if I may, and then just stay where you are because we have got a gift for you as a sign of our appreciation for your attendance today.

Totally agree that we've worked constructively and positively together. Welcome that approach and long may it continue. I don't want a conflict model of negotiation and consultation. I want to work constructively because I believe my members get more benefits from that. The fact that we've been given facility time this week to attend Conference is testament to the importance you place on our consultation and input, but it's a pity the Government don't realise the value of trade unions in the workplace with the restrictions on facility time. And that plays out for some of your local Governors because I know from the branch officials in front of you that some of them do have difficulties securing facility time in their establishments, so we would like to see that addressed in some way if at all possible.

We, like you, have got concerns about an expanding prison estate with a decrease in workforce. That's down to pay, pure and simple. The private sector are now recruiting staff on a higher starting salary than prison officers in the public sector. Other public-sector bodies pay more – we can't compete with them. Private industries pay more and give bonus schemes for actually taking a job. There's a lot of work out there, safer environments, better pay that are people are leaving to join. And that's a shocking statistic, that for every four recruits we can only keep one. That's unsustainable. F&S is a broken pay model. It needs fixing. And I've offered you, time and time again, to scrap F&S, sit down with this union and come up with a pay structure that rewards experience and retains staff. Call it what you want, Fresh Start 2, I'm not bothered – just you need to scrap the F&S pay structure, you really do.

With your pay submissions, they go some way to addressing some aspects of the insignificant pay that we're all subject to but, and I've said this to you before, the most experienced staff you've got, a lot of them are in front of you now and for the past 10 years they've kept the ship afloat. They're now burnt out, demoralised, fed up, feel unappreciated, and your recommendations were for a 2% rise for those staff. I'm sorry Phil, that's an insult. A complete insult.

<Applause>

I've said that to you before and I know your hands might be tied by Government, because they scrutinise everything, but we have to fix that because you can't afford to lose more experience. And while I'm on about scrapping things, get rid of Shared Service Centre, will you?

<Laughter>

And for at least 18 months during the pandemic, Phil, our prisons have never run better without staff being subject to the fitness test. Scrap the fitness test. Give us a health check instead. You've got experienced staff now suffering from long Covid who are struggling to pass the fitness test, but passed the Annual C&R Basic Refresher, so they are capable of performing the full range of prison officer duties. They just can't pass the fitness test because they've got long Covid.

<Applause>

You'll notice our theme today behind you on the screen is building safe workplaces. We are never going to build a safe workplace in the YCS estate for under-18s unless you agree to roll out PAVA. We've got a member of staff here who was airlifted to hospital and as part of his rehabilitation he's helping us out this week, to get him back into the swing of things with colleagues, likeminded. I hope it does aid his rehabilitation. Do you know, if he'd had PAVA that would never have happened to him. And I know the political pressure and reform groups, but you know what? It's time to make a stand. Join us on our campaign to issue PAVA to your staff in the youth custody estate for the protection of your staff and for the protection of the prisoners we look after, because they are far from children. They're as big as you, as heavy as you and more violent than you. That's the type of people we're dealing with in the under-18 estate. Please, on behalf of the POA membership and our youth custody estate, roll out PAVA to them.

<Applause>

And just one question, you may or may not have an update on this but there is a lot of concern with the recent announcement about 91,000 civil service jobs that are going to be cut. Any news on how it affects us on the front line?

**PHIL COPPLE – DIRECTOR GENERAL, HMPPS:** OK, thanks Mark. I guess there's several things that you've raised where, and I think it's been touched on earlier this week with the Minister and other conversations that are taking place with POA officials separate to Conference, that there's work going on and that does include consideration around PAVA and the youth custody service, and where we get to with that. There's work being

done I think that indicates a willingness to explore it, not dismiss it out of hand. But I'm not in a position to say where we'll get to with that, but we're obviously engaged in that work and we'll engage with you further around that.

I think similarly we've got an open mind around trying to think about the policy objectives of the fitness testing and what's the right way to make that the most appropriate approach going forward – as a service and also for certain individuals where there are any particular challenges. I think that the Fair & Sustainable issue – in some respects, this is why this year's pay award is very important, about what that signals for the next few years as well – it may well be that some of the aspects of Fair & Sustainable that concern you the most as a Union are things that end up largely becoming yesterday's argument because of what might happen with pay awards, what might happen with the two-tier pay arrangements in particular. There may be ways of addressing some of that.

In terms of the announcement at the end of last week around civil service headcount reduction, a couple of things to say. I know that the Minister touched on that. I think that there's an announcement made, there is media coverage of it, and then we have to – across all Government departments and as a civil service – pick up and work through the implications of it. At this point we're still in the position of waiting for clarification around some of the details. We're still waiting for what we expect to be commissions for work and returns from each department to go to the centre of Government about department plans. I think that my expectation is that the focus of that announcement is on bigger parts of the civil service that are not engaged in frontline operational roles. I don't think I've seen or heard anything from the wider Government, and certainly not from our Ministers, that would indicate that, in our world or in other important areas of policy and operations, that what they want as a Government is a future in which there are fewer prison officers and fewer immigration officers, for example, as another example of a civil service workforce that's in a frontline operational role. Actually quite the reverse, it seems to me, certainly for the prison system. As I said earlier, we've got a system that is set to expand significantly in the coming years and a good proportion of expansion is scheduled to take place in the public-sector Prison Service and that will require more prison staff, including more prison officers.

We've also got significant investments – and I touched on some of the big ones about reducing reoffending and drug strategy – and that's going to require more prison staff, and in some cases more prison officers as part of spending that money as well, and trying to take those ambitions forward. But I also think for my part, just to be clear with you, that again when we're in those situations where I'm in the room and other senior colleagues are in the room and we're saying what our assessment is and we're bringing forward the evidence that we've got, I don't see any prospect for a sustainable, in any way, sensible reduction in prison officer numbers being a part of the response to that initiative across the whole of the civil service, because we've got a particular set of challenges. We've got a particular environment. We've also got our particular history as well and we're still below the number of officers that we had 12 years ago, despite some of the investments and increases in officer numbers since 2016.

I don't see us being in a position in which we play a part, as a frontline operational workforce, in significant civil service headcount reductions at all. As I say, quite the reverse. Everything from the Government's stated plans, everything from our Ministers, everything from our budget allocations for the spending review period – they point to a system that's getting bigger and trying to do better in some key areas, all of which mean more staff.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Phil. Well I know what football team you support, and you know what football team I support, so it could be a quite interesting gift in this box. But what you'll be pleased to know, Phil, is unlike your predecessor this isn't an empty box to keep your false promises in, because you haven't made me any promises yet!

<Laughter>

Conference, please show your appreciation for Phil Cople.

<Applause>

Conference, I'm going to hand over to Steve Gillan for the AGM of the National Committee for Secure Health Services.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you very much, Conference. This won't take long but it's always been an important, integral part of a POA Conference, the AGM for the National Committee for Secure Healthcare Services. As Chair of that particular committee, I commend those branches – Rampton, Ashworth, Carstairs and Broadmoor – for the magnificent work that they also have done over the last two years during the Covid pandemic. They had the same issues as what we all had in the workplaces, and during that period of time we held monthly meetings with those delegates and Committees, to try and guide them through what we've never experienced before, any of us, and I think they've done a magnificent job. And we're now back to the quarterly meetings instead of monthly meetings with them, but most of their time, I'm sure for you as well, it didn't really mean that they had time to put Annual Conference motions in for this year. But to their credit, because we held those monthly meetings most of the issues that they had were dealt with outside of Conference. So in respect of that I'm going to ask Angela Montgomery, who's the Assistant Secretary to the Special Hospitals, indeed to make a few statements on some of the work and challenges that we've had, and then I'm going to invite each branch delegate from the Specials – unfortunately Broadmoor couldn't be here today, so it'll just be the three branches to get up and give an overview of some of the challenges that they had. Over to you, Angela. Thank you.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT SECRETARY, SPECIAL HOSPITALS:** Thank you. Conference, delegates, NEC, Chair, I'm not going to take too long on this because I want you to hear from those branches themselves. The key issues have been clearly keeping patients safe, keeping themselves safe and keeping their families safe through what has been an unprecedented time for the Special Hospitals. During that time we have had pay negotiations, we have had issues about compulsory vaccination for healthcare staff, and we have had issues raised regarding staff coming back from long Covid, which was contracted at work, and their ability to go back into full-time employment in the post in which they were originally appointed to. I, like Steve, would like to commend those branches for the work they did. That was done on behalf of us all and they are a credit to this union. Thank you.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much Angela for that. Can I call on Rampton please, first? Thank you.

**KAREN HENRY – BRANCH CHAIR, RAMPTON HIGH SECURE HOSPITAL:** Conference, Chair, NEC, delegates and invited speakers, firstly I give you an apology. I'm certainly not accustomed to public speaking. Rampton High Secure Hospital is in Nottinghamshire, which I am told is somewhere 'up north'. We have been asked to address Conference about what it's like operating within a secure hospital setting during a global pandemic. We are one of a limited number of high-secure hospitals in the UK. We deal with some of society's most dangerous, troubled and disturbed people, in an environment not too dissimilar to most of your prisons. We deal with personality disorder, mental health, learning disability, women's and death services. Rampton holds a number of 255 patients. The wards are split down into smaller units and, depending on the nature of the ward, both staff and patient numbers vary. Some wards can require as many as 12 staff – if only we could achieve those staffing levels. On paper there are 2,158 staff working in the hospital, with 500 POA members. Incidents are often without warning and it can change from the mundane to life-threatening within a matter of seconds. A new admission onto the ward can sometimes upset the fine balance and make an already-difficult mix worse.

The approach the hospital took initially was carrying on with the normal routine, with little disruption to the day-to-day running. We soon realised that we needed to adapt our working practices, which included wearing full PPE in line with Public Health England requirements. We were fortunate to have enough PPE. Initially we became the main stores for other hospitals in the forensic division. Therapist education staff were redeployed to the wards to help carry out essential activities. Training was suspended. Basically it was all hands to the pumps. <Inaudible> saw a change from just one AM and one PM to the ward. This sees the outbreak spread. Covid got a grip on the hospital. <Inaudible> visits ensured that patients could remain in some kind of visual contact with friends and family. Whilst not ideal, these proved useful at times. The first outbreak where ward staff and patients suffered symptoms was in the Learning Difficulties Directorate. The affected ward was isolated, setting the tone for dealing with the virus going forward, isolation being the key.

Patients who tested positive were asked to remain in their own rooms and the whole ward was isolated from the rest of the hospital. In times of crisis, the team must work together in order to be effective. This was successfully implemented on the ward and has been the model applied when other wards also had positive cases. We worked tirelessly, demonstrated a great deal of compassion and flexibility to ensure the safety of all in what was very uncertain times. On reflection it ran as smoothly as we could have hoped, given the numbers of staff coming down with the illness and patients needing our care.

Hospitals aren't prisons, but we must never forget care should underpin everything we do. Covid-19 still impacts on the hospital today, but we are more methodical and resilient in our working practices. Many positive pieces of work occurred during the peak of the pandemic, including vaccination rollout and weekly PCR testing of patients. That was easier said than done in our setting. New contingency plans were put in place to support the hospital when staff shortages were at their highest. The management and POA worked jointly in solving problems as they arose. There was no script to work off. Decisions were taken that literally could have meant life or death for people.

Let's not forget, we all had concerns and fears for ourselves and our families. The virus didn't discriminate. It's easy to forget that with the passage of time. Many in this room will remember driving to work, not passing a single car. Society hid. We couldn't. Managers were visible throughout, offering support to a workforce going through the unknown. Rightly so, those with pre-existing conditions were shielded from the start. Those who could work from home did, or were moved to a non-patient area forming small bubbles. Admin, social workers, psychologists and doctors concluded their sessions via Teams, trying to avoid crossover, flexibility being the key. The introduction of advanced nurse practitioners was planned as part of a transformation within the healthcare team. While the concept of agency staff is something we don't agree with, the speed and flexibility of their deployment certainly helped. At first one of our wards was completely refurbished and turned into a Nightingale unit, a mobile mortuary put on site. Thankfully we didn't need it.

Today we are proud to say that Rampton Hospital has won four awards, even while working through the pandemic – Innovation of the Year, Mental Health Nurse of the Year, Mental Health Team of the Year, Excellent in Coproduction. The NHS also received the George Cross and our trust had a replica of this made into a badge for the staff as a memento.

Conference, to conclude, hopefully the worst is now behind us. Rampton rose to the challenge and faced it, literally showing the NHS at its best. The clap for the carers might have stopped, but never forgot it costs nothing to be kind. Thanks for listening. Where's the bar?

<Laughter and applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much Karen, on behalf of Rampton. And I now call on Carstairs please. And just to save a little bit of time as well, if the Ashworth delegate could also make their way to the rostrum and take a seat please. Thank you.

**ALAN BLACKWOOD – BRANCH CHAIR, CARSTAIRS:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, like our colleagues in England, Covid has had a significant impact on the high secure forensic services in Scotland. Initially everything was moving very fast – there was lots of conflicting information and misinformation. Scotland was adopting a different social distancing and infection control guidance from the rest of the country so, depending on your preferred news outlet, you could have very different understanding of what you could and couldn't do while at home, when visiting relatives or even within the workplace. The branch Committee became the focal point for members seeking reassurance and understanding of how Scottish Government guidance would impact upon them. This was a real challenge as we, like everyone, struggled to get a handle on accurate information to communicate to our members, as guidance was changed daily. The branch face-to-face meetings were halted, Covid closed normal meeting spaces, so communication was mainly done by email or bulletins, which could be outdated by the time members returned from their days off duty. Now, we were targeted as a specialist service within the vaccination programme, so all staff were able to benefit from early vaccination. Controversially the

estate hospital obtained vaccinations for all of the patient group and the uptake was very good, and that was ahead of other key-worker services across the NHS. But on reflection it's likely that this approach significantly reduced the health impact on the members and Covid absence rates that other boards experienced. Staff embraced infection-control measures and changed uniform and wore PPE at all times within the site. We had no obvious supply issues and patients did not wear PPE at Carstairs. This is a change from our colleagues down south, as it was felt that that could escalate mental health difficulties and make patient assessment more difficult.

The Scottish Government put all boards on emergency measures and, in Carstairs, the management introduced a streamlined command structure, allowing quick reactive decisions depending upon the rapidly changing Covid picture. Very importantly, the POA were involved by management within the command structure discussions and invited to attend daily planning and decision-making meetings, ensuring our members were represented in decisions made affecting them. An interim operating model was developed in partnership, which considered the members' health and safety, infection control, risk assessment and shielding guidance. This group also developed the model of how our members would care for our patients on a day-to-day basis, providing operational guidance across the workforce for the patient's day – provision of activity, medication, diet, access to fresh air – using all of the available staff on site, including allied health professional colleagues. So this provided a multidisciplinary approach to safety and care. All non-essential staff worked from home. Over the two-year course of Covid, the operating model, which we contributed towards, changed around 25 times – with wards adopting two or three household bubble models, with limited patients out of their rooms for periods in small groups. Some patients couldn't tolerate long periods within their room and were managed differently, with additional staff, with particular impact upon our Intellectual Difficulties Service. The primary operational impact has been upon staffing levels due to Covid infection and staff shielding, but the infection control measures and bubble model allowed us to work with smaller patient ratios within offender day areas, often mitigating the staff losses. Wards operated in very controlled conditions and this has coincided with a lack of recruitment at the state hospital, which I'll come to.

The routine has been demanding and very task-orientated by the staff response. General resilience and adaptability allowed care provision to continue without the anticipated behavioural response for the patient group, who were being locked up for very long periods. The patient behaviours have not escalated as anticipated and I'd attribute this directly to the skills and experience of our members working on the shop floor.

Training was particularly affected, with little or no training of any sort, face-to-face, over two years. In particular this impacted on our PMVA, SRK and basic life support. Risk assessments were updated to reflect the lapsed training. I'm pleased to say this is now back on track but it remains on the corporate risk register. Digital and IT services were improved significantly to allow virtual professional visits and court proceedings. There were lots of teething troubles but this has now been resolved. The enhanced use of the knowledge is now well embedded and it looks likely to develop further going forward. So we've been holding branch meetings and members meetings via Microsoft Teams – a challenge, but it has been successful and it has actually increased attendance. Staff side pushed the membership wellbeing issue very, very positively – certainly contrary to some of the mental health challenges faced in the Prison Service displayed yesterday, but a real concern we had was staff burnout, recognising the impact on staff mental health in particular. Charity funding and budget was made available and a dedicated staff wellbeing zone was provided, with relaxation space, complementary therapies and other resources made available for all staff, seven days a week – and very well used, good uptake, and there is a commitment from management to maintain this facility going forward.

I think I've described some fairly positive outcomes from Covid considering the challenges across the wider NHS, the wider prison service. However, Covid and pension reform changed working practice over the last two years, have influenced members to retire early, so combined with a lack of recruitment, our inability to attract new staff – for example two months ago <inaudible> or agreed full-time equivalent of just below 300 staff. That's unheard of at Carstairs. So we now find ourselves being conditioned to work with less staff. After all, we could do it for infection-control reasons so obviously now you can do it for operational reasons. So that's where we continue to lock up our patients for extended periods during the day. So we continue to challenge staffing levels locally and the impact upon our gender, risk and skill mix, staff safety and patient care. And as a result staff that have been recruited to <inaudible> members are typically straight out of college, and again that's very unusual for Carstairs. Immature, naive to the high secure setting and the <inaudible>. There's little life experience among some of the new recruits and they've never seen an angry man and they've never worked, some of the people employed over the last two years, outwith the Covid methodology, with little face-to-face contact with the patient group. So, as we return to normality, it's presented real challenges. This is a real concern and a major concern for our branch. We want to support and assist individuals to flourish while being fully aware of the dangers of working within a high secure service, to keep all of our members safe. Thanks very much.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much, Alan. On behalf of Carstairs, much appreciated. Ashworth?

**DAVE WHALLEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, ASHWORTH:** Chair, NEC and Conference, it's quite clear listening to the last few days and my colleagues from the special hospitals just now, we've all shared some challenges within our branches, but today I'd like to talk to you about a couple of things that we did at the Ashworth branch during the Covid pandemic to continue functioning as a branch, as well as what we did in way of supporting our members out on the shop floor.

When Covid first hit, all our health and safety reps at the Ashworth branch volunteered their services to the trust to help set up and staff the swabbing sites, and also the fit mask testing as some parts of our trust they had to have the fit masks on. Remember when Covid first hit and they were swabbing and everyone was all in the big hazard suits with the masks that fit? Well, our health and safety reps pioneered that and ran that for the trust. They still lead on that today. It was a really good opportunity that they volunteered. Ulterior motives aside, it gave our health and safety reps the opportunity to still see our members on the shop floor, face-to-face, when the restrictions were applied, and it helped them to maintain the health and safety of our members at the coalface.

During the Covid pandemic – obviously like all of us – we ensured that our branch remained open every day. We embraced all the new technologies that we've all struggled with. I think we started off with Skype, progressed to Zoom and then we're all on Teams now. It's how we went. Again, like

our colleagues in the health special hospitals, all our reps hold clinical posts. Some are full-time reps that work extra shifts on the wards, and some of them, like myself, were a nurse on the ward who gets time off to do my union duties. Well, through the pandemic we all worked on the wards. We were all put on the outbreak wards and we faced all the same challenges that yourselves did and our colleagues in the special hospitals. We were supporting colleagues who contracted the Covid virus, supported their families, especially the members who passed away, and we continue to support those families to this day. With our members that caught Covid, to help with the rehabilitation we started walking groups as a branch. We engaged in meditation classes for brain fog and we even, thanks to our Branch Chair, engaged in yoga classes to try and help with this physical recovery and recuperation.

Moving along with the branch and what we did as a Union – and I'm sure our General Secretary won't mind me using him as an example given his previous roles within the NEC – but like him, as a branch we are, shall we say, careful with our pennies. We don't have our goody bags when we stand with our other healthcare unions, trying to recruit and organise our union. They have all these nice little shiny bags, got things inside – cups, rulers. We're proud to say that our membership's based on the service that we provide, representing our members, getting the results that we do, and the word of mouth that follows that. I'm proud to say that, during the Covid pandemic, our membership has continued to grow as a branch. I haven't got the exact numbers on me but, similar to our colleagues at Rampton, we've passed the 500 mark as a branch and it continues to grow. Our organisation, which is Merseycare Trust, has just taken over a neighbouring trust and we see that as an opportunity to further extend our membership. And that, as a branch, is something that we're keen to explore.

Again, it's been touched on as well by our Carstairs colleagues and by Angela, NHS <inaudible> Directive, job for a job, something that we had to deal with and still deal with today, supporting members for whatever reason – personal choice or underlying health reasons – they couldn't or wouldn't accept the Covid job. I think it got passed through Parliament on three occasions and it was finalised in January this year, wasn't it, that if you don't have a job we're going to terminate your contract in the NHS or anything that's health-related that the CQC, Care Quality Commission, has overview. So I think the deadline that the staff were given was in January. You have to have your first job if you haven't already had one by 6th February, which will enable you to have your second job and be vaccinated by 31st March. The trust, the employer, was quite clear that they would follow the direction of the NHS Executive – and any staff that wasn't vaccinated, they would be looking to terminate the contract, so as a branch we had to jump in on that.

There was protests at three meetings that these members had to go through. The first was an informal meeting where they were just asked about their Covid vaccination status. The second one was a formal that we'd jump in on and the third one, if it progressed to the third one, would be the termination meeting. As we all know, the Government, after reconsideration, did a U-turn on that and thankfully no one lost their jobs, but leading on from that the support that we're giving our members now is <inaudible> touch with the pension review, the hurt to feelings, a lot of stress and anxiety that our members went through at the time. It's not just you're going lose your job, it's your career. There's people that have invested 20, 30 years as a qualified nurse, and it wasn't like they could – well Ashworth's going to sack you or Merseycare's going to sack you, you can go and work in another hospital or go work in a care home. It's your career gone as well. It's affecting your mortgage, the car, your career. There's a hurt to feelings there that was just something I think as a branch that we could maybe bring to Conference next year.

I think really other than that, I think that's where I'll wrap up and I'll sign off. I'll just say thank you for listening. It was my first time at Conference, my first time addressing you, and I thank you for your time.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Dave, thank you very much for that speech on behalf of Ashworth. Just finally from me, just on that particular bit, there's a very important issue that Dave raised there in relation to the Government U-turn on the vaccinations and sacking staff. We, along with other health unions, we worked very closely with that. We were opposed to it but we encouraged our members to have the vaccination, but we sought legal advice from a top QC on that and we were ready to do a legal challenge in relation to that. But not just a legal challenge because sometimes people forget that the special hospitals have the right to strike, and we wouldn't have hesitated on a statutory ballot in relation to that if it had affected the majority of our members and if they so wished to take that industrial action. But I'm pleased that Government, after the pressure that trade unions put on them actually – they don't do U-turns for nothing. The reality is it was the pressure that the POA and other trade unions placed on Government, that's why they've done a U-turn from a dreadful position that they were putting people in. So the reality is I just wanted to also thank Dave Todd, National Vice Chairman and Mark Fairhurst, the Chair of our Union, for their input in the special hospitals. They attended every single meeting on a monthly basis as well so, once again, thank you to all. You're a credit to this trade union. Thank you very much. The AGM is now closed and we'll have a 15-minute comfort break. Thank you.

<Applause>

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference, if I can bring you to order, ask you to take your seats. Thank you Conference. I'm very pleased to welcome our next guest speaker, Dr Patrick Roach, who is the General Secretary of the NASUWT, the teachers' union. Patrick Roach was appointed as General Secretary in April 2020, having previously served as Deputy General Secretary for 10 years. Patrick was formerly a teacher of politics and sociology in further education and was a researcher and lecturer in education, social policy and equalities in higher education.

Patrick Roach is Chair of the TUC anti-racism taskforce. The taskforce will hear from black workers about the experience of everyday racism at work and set out the action needed to address structural discrimination and disadvantage. Members of the taskforce include senior leaders from across the trade union movement and civil society organisations, who will be investigating the systemic discrimination BME workers face. Conference, please welcome Patrick Roach.

<Applause>

**PATRICK ROACH – GENERAL SECRETARY, NASUWT:** Well, thanks very much Mark for that very warm welcome and for those very kind words. And thanks Mark and Steve for your invitation for me to address this conference today. Can I just say that it really is a privilege, it really is an honour, for me to be addressing this conference today. And on behalf of my own union, the NASUWT, we want to extend our warmest fraternal greetings and solidarity from the teaching profession to you, the Prison Officers Association.

You know, we and our members have a huge amount in common. Teachers, like members of the POA, face similar issues and challenges, highlighted especially over the course of the last two years but also over the course of the last 12 years of a Conservative Government. Our members are vital key workers who share a passion for public service. They want to make a difference to the lives of the people that they serve. They're delivering vital statutory services, often to people who would rather be somewhere else. But they're struggling to do their jobs in a context of underfunded services, privatisation, excessive workload pressures, demoralisation of the profession, stress and burnout of the profession, a recruitment and retention crisis, and the daily experience of violent assault, of verbal abuse, making the stressful job, as well as a damaging job to our members' health and wellbeing. Throughout the last two years, like teachers, your members have kept the country going and you should be applauded for that. But you also need to be better rewarded as well.

I want to be very clear, from the NASUWT, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the POA and your members in your fight for better pay, safety at work and a better deal for prison officers. Because your fight, colleagues, is our fight too. You know, when the country came to a halt, your members kept going. When our members followed the rules, the Government broke the rules. Our members went to work, often without PPE or adequate risk assessments, without access to Covid testing, without early access to vaccinations, no social distancing, required to work in poorly ventilated workplaces, putting their lives on the line each and every day. So it's unacceptable that prison officers, teachers and other key workers applauded at the height of the pandemic should now be treated so shamefully by the Government.

And you know, whatever the Prime Minister tries to claim, the pandemic is still with us. We know of many key workers getting Covid not just once but multiple times, including following the Government's reckless decision to remove Covid safety measures and access to free tests. And long Covid – long Covid is a ticking time-bomb, colleagues. According to the ONS, long Covid has increased fastest amongst key workers. So that's why our campaigning together as a movement to get long Covid recognised as a disability is so important and why we must continue to lobby on that issue. And it's why we must also continue our work together to ensure that our members' safety at work remains a priority, and work together to highlight and to challenge racial injustice and the devastating impact of racism exacerbated by the Government's reckless handling of the pandemic.

I also want to say that the NASUWT stands with the POA demanding that the Government also steps up to deal with the worst cost-of-living crisis that we've seen in 50 years. You know, for my own union, teachers have seen the value of their pay slashed by 19% since 2010 and the assault on teachers' pay has been most harshly felt by women, part-time workers, black workers and disabled workers. And I know that colleagues in the Prison Service have endured a similar assault. Both of our unions are having to deal with so-called independent pay review bodies that have demonstrated – year in, year out – that they can no longer claim to be independent. And they're also guilty of allowing themselves to be used to roll back progress on equality. I know that you've been vocal in criticising the current Pay Review Body arrangements and I want to say this – we are with you. Time's up. If they won't deliver for our members again this year, we must campaign together to address that failed and rigged pay review system to get it finally abolished and to ensure that our members' right to free collective bargaining is assured. And I hope that we can work together on that.

<Applause>

You know, when I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, I know I don't look that old but there you go, racist attacks on our streets were commonplace. Discrimination in the housing system was rife. There were profound health inequalities and, under Margaret Thatcher's premiership, we saw the discriminatory use of police stop and search, we saw levels of black youth unemployment three times higher than for whites. But, you know, whatever progress has been made since then, it was made because of our trade unions. Our trade union and community organising, that's what made the difference then and that's what's going to have to make the difference again now.

It was our trade unions that provided shelter and protection for many black workers. It was our trade unions that fought back to stop the National Front and the BNP. It was our movement that campaigned, together with Neville and Doreen Lawrence, to seek justice following the racist murder of their son, Stephen. It was our movement that campaigned and exposed the appalling treatment of the Windrush generation and we continue to fight for the rights of those who were so badly wronged. And although we may not always have got it right, we should never forget that throughout that period black workers have demonstrated time and time again their belief in the power of trade unions and trade unions' ability to deliver real change.

Colleagues, our fight for justice is not over. And now we have to stand together again and reinvigorate our fight for racial justice. Because today the same prejudices that I experienced when I was growing up are still with us. Injustices that affect our everyday lives – access to a job, the right to work, the right to live safely without fear, the right for our children to be confident that their life chances will be better than those of their parents' generation. You know, all credit to Marcus Rashford, but it shouldn't take a footballer to have to tell the Government to wake up to the realities of injustice, of poverty, of deprivation, that has been endured by too many young people for far too long in this country. You know, for workers the realities of employment insecurity, precarious employment, zero hours contracts, they're commonplace. And the failure of regulation by this Government has made work less secure and less safe.

Tackling racial injustice, colleagues, means fighting for economic justice for everyone. So across all sectors we've got to recognise the importance of that fight. We have to recognise that black workers are bearing the brunt. The latest TUC research confirms today that unemployment amongst black workers is over twice as high as for white workers, and the gap is widening. Since the start of the pandemic, the gap between – the unemployment gap between black and white workers widened from 69% to 120%. That's the worst that we've seen since 2008.

On top of that, we have a 24% ethnicity pay gap. Black workers paid less and less and more likely to be passed over for promotion and denied career development opportunities. Young people from black backgrounds more likely to be unemployed, regardless of their qualifications. Black women twice as likely as white workers to be employed in insecure jobs. Black workers twice as likely to see their employer using fire and rehire tactics against them to drive down their wages, their pensions and to impose inferior working conditions. And we know that we see the impact, devastating impact, of outsourcing of public-sector jobs as well. And when black workers do manage to keep their jobs, colleagues, they're more likely to be working in lower paid, insecure jobs, where they're more likely to be exposed to the risks to their health. At the height of the pandemic, black workers were 3-4 times more likely to die as a result of Covid than other workers. In the NHS during the first lockdown, 95% of doctors who died due to Covid were from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds. Just think about it, colleagues – 95%.

Lack of safety at work, poor working conditions, lack of regulation, inspection and enforcement of statutory rights, low pay, insecure and precarious employment, outsourcing, the use of fire and rehire – these are the issues. That's where the fight for racial justice begins in our workplaces. So the anti-racism taskforce of the TUC is determined to support you, to support the POA, to support all of our unions in taking action to secure a better deal for all working people. And, as a taskforce, we began our detailed programme of work in September 2020 at the height of the pandemic. I'm grateful to Steve and to POA colleagues for your continuing support for the work that we've been undertaking, for giving us the opportunity to speak with union members, to open the doors to trades council so we can talk about this important agenda. We're also indebted to the POA for your support for the work of the TUC Race Relations Committee and for the wider work of our movement in combatting racism and fascism. And it was good, again, to see POA colleagues in force at the last TUC Black Workers Conference just over a week ago, where you were once again a visible and vocal force helping us to set the agenda for our movement.

I want to commend the POA. Over many years you've played a vital role at the forefront of our calls for equality and for economic and social justice. Your voice, colleagues, your voice is helping us to set the agenda and demonstrate our capacity as a movement to lead by example.

In the last 18 months, our taskforce has been engaged in a comprehensive programme of labour market research, evidence gathering, which has revealed the shocking scale of inequality within our society. Colleagues, contrast the work that we've been doing with what the Government has been doing. Their Inclusive Britain Action Plan lists over 70 actions but it ducks the real questions of institutional and systemic racism. Instead, the Government wants to reduce burdens on employers – have we heard that before, colleagues? They've refused to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap monitoring, even when employer bodies are saying that a voluntary approach won't make any difference. The Government's got no plan to ensure that employers in receipt of public-sector contracts take racial justice seriously. No commitment to equality impact assessments. I mean, my own union took the Government to court over that at the height of the pandemic, and we won. But the reality is, colleagues, that it shouldn't be left to trade unions to have to take legal action to get the Government to obey the law. No commitment in their action plan to strengthening workers' rights or to tackling employer abuses. And we probably know why the Government deliberately – deliberately – chose to exclude trade unions. No mention of us, colleagues, no mention of us in their vision of an inclusive Britain.

But, you know, where the Government fails, that's where our unions can and must step up. We know what actions need to be taken. It's down to our unions to secure the change that we want to see, starting by reaching out to our black workers, reaching out to our black members, inviting them to join us, inviting them to be active, as I know the POA and other unions are doing. We have to put racial justice front and centre of our campaigning effort too, colleagues. So when we established the anti-racism taskforce I said at the outset that we wanted action not words. We said that we wanted to see our movement leading by example, that we wanted to see more black workers leading the work of our unions at every level – politically and industrially – that we wanted to see our unions taking action against racial injustice in the workplace, taking on bad bosses and challenging the causes of systemic racism. We said that we wanted to see the Government held to account, including holding the Government to account over its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in the public enquiry which our movement helped to secure.

So on all those fronts, colleagues, that's what we've been doing these last 18 months or so. And we've asked every union to work with their black members, with their black staff, with their executives, to agree action plans for tackling racism within the workplace, demonstrating that our movement won't just talk the talk, colleagues, but that we'll walk the walk. We're asking every union to take action to ensure that black workers are represented in your democratic structures. We're asking every union to work with us on your collective bargaining agendas and priorities. We're asking every union to consider the use of strategic litigation to challenge systemic injustice in the workplace and we're also developing tools to help you to do just that. We're asking every union to work with us on the Covid-19 public enquiry. We've made it a priority and now we're asking every union to ensure that the voice of your members, the voice is heard in that enquiry, helping us to build an evidence base of what happened to your members, every one of your members, including your black members, what happened during that pandemic and what lessons need to be learned to ensure that history doesn't repeat itself again.

<Applause>

And also through the work of the taskforce on supporting unions as employers. We want to show our commitment to leading by example, benchmarking our progress and holding ourselves to account so that we can demonstrate that we are model employers. And I hope that every union will not only take part but bring along many black workers to Congress this September. Because that is going to be a turning of the page in terms of our movement's commitment to tackling racism. We want your union and all unions to help us to set that agenda, to sign up to our charter, our manifesto for anti-racism within the labour market. Because, colleagues, wherever and whenever racism, inequality, injustice exists, our movement must always take action and we must always call it out. In our workplaces, in our communities, in our unions, we must never stand by whilst racism and any form of injustice exists. And we will never allow those who seek to divide the interests of working people, black and white, prison officers and teachers, to do so without being held to account. It's our values that matter, colleagues, our values matter to working people and it's our action that will secure the change that we want to see.

So, colleagues, thank you for your support; for connecting with our fight against racism at work; for helping us to shape and take forward this important agenda and helping us to win a new deal for all workers. Colleagues, thanks for listening. I hope to see many of you in London on 18th June as we

demand better – better in terms of economic justice, better in terms of racial justice and a better deal for all workers. But, in the meantime, stay safe, stay active. Solidary, colleagues.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Stay there, Patrick. Well, thank you Patrick for a really great speech and we stand in solidarity with you over absolutely every issue you've just highlighted. And I know the people in front of you, our delegates, our branch officials, have done some commendable work in their workplaces to eradicate all forms of bigotry, discrimination and racism, and they will continue to do so. We welcome everybody into this Union, we're an inclusive Union and we're an inclusive and diverse workforce. This Union has a proud tradition of tackling racism and it always will, so thank you for that.

<Applause>

I do have a small gift to give you, Patrick, and you've just let us know that you're in London for the TUC rally in June. Well, at £7 a pint the ale is on you. Conference, Patrick Roach.

<Applause>

Conference, I have to admit we're now on to my favourite part of Conference, dishing out the awards. And we've got quite a few because obviously we haven't had a conference for a few years so don't be thinking they're getting away with it. And I see a few worried faces – in defence of me, I have had nothing to do with what I'm about to read. For once, I'm blameless. Unless, of course, I joined the job with you and know you very well, in which case be afraid, be very afraid. Just a reminder to the award winners, there will be photographs outside to the left of the stage. Apparently there's a nice area outside there.

So, the first award is the David Evans Health and Safety Award from 2020. This is awarded to Rob Atkinson who at the time was at Stocken – he's now at Gartree. He's unable to attend today but I believe that the delegate from Gartree is going to collect this award on Rob's behalf.

Rob joined the Prison Service and the POA in 2006 as an OSG. In 2008 he became an officer at HMP Stocken and joined the POA committee at HMP Stocken in 2011. He took on the Health and Safety Rep role. During his time he has built his knowledge on safe systems of work, risk assessments, profiles, RMPs, MSLs, health and safety inspections. He has also built on the knowledge by completing stage 1 of the Health and Safety TUC course and completed the National Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety at the Workplace in his own time.

Rob is also an RPE trainer, ensuring operational staff fully understand the limitation and risks of using this equipment. Rob is extremely dedicated to protecting his members within the establishment, ensuring a working environment that is safe, decent and secure. He is not afraid of challenging the Governors when the boundaries are pushed. Rob has seen the Stocken membership through two protests in regard to health and safety. These both saw health and safety improve within the establishment, resulting in updated risk assessments, safe systems of work and a fixed RMP that works for the establishment. Rob dedicated his time assisting with training at the local POELT centre, focussing around RPE while enrolling new members at every opportunity into the POA. Due to this vast knowledge, Rob gained respect from the SMT and was called upon when issues did arise.

Rob is a dedicated man to the POA and has carried out many hours of his work in his own time to support the membership, and many staff and management did turn to Rob to explore his knowledge he had in different policies and procedures in order to assist them. That is written by Liam Clarke, HMP Stocken Committee, and I'd like to invite the Gartree delegate to the stage to collect this award on behalf of Rob.

<Applause>

**JOHN COX, GARTREE:** Thank you, Conference, Chair, invited guests. Just to say that Rob sends his apologies. He's gone for another job interview, hard to believe, and he sends his thanks.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** The David Evans Health and Safety Award 2022. This goes to Wayne Hudson, Cookham Wood. Really great that Wayne's here after what happened to him. And again I am blameless in reading out this address.

Wayne has just passed 30 years of being a union rep. He has been at Cookham Wood since 2008 and joined the branch just two months after getting there. He was then elected to Health and Safety Rep and he has been unwavering in his support of the membership at Cookham ever since. Prior to Cookham he worked at the Post Office and, as his colleagues will all tell you, he really doesn't like to talk about it. Wayne has worked tirelessly over the last couple of years working on risk assessments, safe systems of work, local operating procedures in line with the Covid policy to keep people safe – often working over his contracted hours to get the job done, also putting his own interests second. He has regularly been having input into safe systems of work around the establishment and he attends most, if not all, meetings pertaining to the safety of staff. He has also mapped the entire working office space in Cookham, providing each office with a safe working gap to ensure staff are safe.

Wayne has made huge steps in safety at Cookham in ensuring that procedures are followed. Wayne has always made it his personal mission to advise and inform people of health and safety procedures. We are a relatively new branch in post and have been through a rocky few years. However, through all these trials and tribulations, Wayne has remained steadfast, bringing all his experience and knowledge to the floor. Wayne has provided

so many members with the knowledge they need to work safely.

When I joined the job, Wayne quickly got me a joiner's form and got me signed up. He then pushed me to join the Committee, taking me under his wing and teaching me all he knows – and it's not just umbrage at the Post Office.

Congratulations, Wayne, on winning the award – and keep up the good work! A man of many talents, cat noises and Carry On-style jokes and a sense of humour obviously tuned to perfection in the Post Office. However, this hides a caring and serious side to the man who has a real sense of justice for those that need a voice. And that's written by Tyler Tierney. Wayne, please come and collect your award. And I believe your wife's coming with you – we have a gift for her as well.

<Applause>

There you go. Conference, Wayne Hudson.

<Applause>

**WAYNE HUDSON – HEALTH AND SAFETY REP, COOKHAM WOOD:** Thank you so much, Conference – this is a total shock. I've not written anything down because I didn't know it was happening. So, thank you so much. I dedicate this to our members, colleagues, both current and past. I got into health and safety because my dad was a thermal nuclear worker at Chatham Dockyard and a lot of his colleagues died of asbestosis-related conditions. Luckily enough my dad will be 80 this year and he's not doing too bad. But most of all I dedicate this to my wife and my children who have put up with years of training for health and safety. And I dedicate this to you, my family. Thank you. And the POA as well. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Next we have the Steve Oxby Branch Rep of the Year award from 2020. And this goes to Karen Henry from Rampton.

Karen is the first female branch Chair at Rampton Hospital, which in itself is an achievement. Karen was brought on to the POA branch Committee by Steve Oxby. Steve took Karen under his wing and attempted to teach her everything he knew. However, Karen became known by Steve and the rest of us as R-Div, which has stuck. After Steve's passing, Karen was mentored by Brian Catton as he was the only one that could understand what was coming out of her mouth, something to do with a Barnsley twang. All this has stood Karen in good stead and given her a good footing and understanding of her role as a branch Chair. As much as Karen has this footing, there has been a lot to take on with reassuring members that they have not been forgotten and are important to the POA.

Karen has been a large part of the push for better communication between Committee and members, even looking at new roles for members to get involved to help the flow of information. Karen has worked extremely hard over the last two years to bring staff-side health and safety out of the red and into the green. This is a continued struggle keeping on top of this.

Since becoming Branch Chair, Karen has worked hard for POA members. A lot of this has been done in her own time – going to meetings, staff-side managerial and staff-related. These have been at all times of the day, even coming in at 7am for staff members and talking to them through difficult periods in their lives – never asking for anything back, just happy to do her bit to help members when needed.

Karen does a lot of her Union work at home on a hospital laptop and, with all this hard work Karen has been doing for the branch, it's started bringing forgotten aspects of the branch back in line with the needs of the branch and its members. Karen is passionate about staff wellbeing and has gone into local prisons in her own time, with no cost, to deliver holistic therapies to staff members. She has also carried this out at Rampton. On top of this, Karen has now become Trust staff-side Chair for the Forensic Division – that's the first chair since Steve Oxby himself – adding even more on to her job role and more for her to learn. Everything Karen has achieved within these roles has been of benefit to our members and the POA as a whole – like the open day she arranged for both members and the POA, bringing communication back to Rampton. That was written by Martin Handley, POA Committee. Karen, well done, and please come to the stage to collect your gift.

<Applause>

Well done, Karen. She wants to say a few words. This is one of the hippies on the beach last night.

**KAREN HENRY – BRANCH CHAIR, RAMPTON:** I remember a celebrity giving some advice on award speeches. He said, 'Remember the three Gs – be grateful, be gracious and gerroff. It's a pleasure to receive this award, so thank you. Steve Oxby did introduce me to working on the Committee some 15 years ago. He phoned me on the ward and asked if I'd like to be a union rep. I replied, 'What do you want somebody like me for?' He said that Brian Catton had told him he needed the Barnsley bird on the Committee. I said, 'If Brian Catton had have said that, he'd have called me the posh Barnsley bird.' Steve, though, did call me R-Div. I never knew why – I think it's because I used to just get everything all wrong when I first started.

I took on the role as Health and Safety and continued to be the lead for this at the hospital. In due course, I took on the role as Branch Chair and, like they said, I am the first girl ever to take up this position at Rampton Hospital. I feel sorry for Nick having to share the office with me and he also often remarks that he needs a translator. I would not be standing here today to receive this award if it wasn't for the support of my local Committee – Rachel and Ian from Wymott, who are still a great support today, Brian Catton, who was on speed dial for the first few months, and Dave Todd who I'm sure

he'd wished he'd have given me the wrong phone number. It was 0898 wasn't it Dave? Steve was my role model, my mentor, my hero. I hope to follow his example.

<Applause>

Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done. Now, on to the Cronin Clasp winners, first looking at 2020. Oh dear. I joined the job with this guy. I might be adding a few bits to this, John. John McLean, HMP Haverigg. John has been a member of the branch Committee at Haverigg for over 27 years, only having been off the Committee for around six months in all of this time. He's held many roles during his time, which have included the branch Secretary, and in the last five years that of branch Chair and Secretary. John has been the one constant on the Committee during all of these 27 years.

John went part-time in October 2020 and retired in December 2021 after 29 years of service. He has represented too many members to mention. Even over this period, his skill as a negotiator is unquestioned. His professional representation during disciplinary hearings has resulted in him never, ever having had a member dismissed. He prides himself on giving every member the same vigorous approach when he has to assist them in whatever they need.

John's knowledge and skills are admired by his peers. He is always the first person they contact when they need help and John is always there when he's needed. He gave up a lot of his own time coming into work during time off to assist any member in need of help and worked tirelessly on behalf of the membership. We also know he is very proud to represent grassroots members and being a branch official, serving every position throughout his time – and John was Haverigg's branch Secretary at the time of this nomination. It is for all these reasons, which are just a few, that the Haverigg branch wish him to be highly recognised by the POA in being awarded the Cronin Clasp for his long, unswerving service to the membership. We cannot find enough words to thank him for his endeavours over these 27 years, apart from him being recognised by the POA NEC and the wider POA family.

On a personal note, when I was attending Conference for the first time, John informed me it was appropriate to wear a suit when guest speakers were in attendance. I hadn't arrived with one so I went to the local Debenhams and brought one back into Conference, all dapper, sat down. Then the speaker arrived – David Blunkett with his blind dog.

<Laughter>

John didn't see the relevance of it – my wallet did. We all saw the funny side of it later on in the Vic. John will be a great loss to the POA family and it will be strange to actually get a good night's sleep at Conference without Foghorn Leghorn in the next bed to me.

Thirty years ago I joined the job with John – same section – and we had a lot more hair in them days. The things I could tell you about him. But, John, it's like Vegas, training college. What goes on at college, stays at college. One of the good guys, John – come and collect your Cronin Clasp. Well done.

<Applause>

Is that right? Have you just had your teeth done? He's got turkey teeth! Turkey teeth Rylan! John, well done. John McLean.

<Applause>

**JOHN MCLEAN – CRONIN CLASP RECIPIENT:** So, that's what it feels like up here. Conference, Chair, Mark, little did we know 30 years ago that you'd be the National Chairman of the POA presenting me with a Cronin Clasp. A bit bizarre really. Anyway, I don't know what's easier because normally you sit there in the audience and you just get a shock when your name gets read out. This time, fortunately, I managed to write a few bits down. So Chair, NEC, Conference, fellow POA delegates and retired members, it is a great honour and privilege to accept this procedure award. As a member of the Haverigg Committee for over 29 years, it's been humbling to be nominated by your peers.

It's somewhat strange for myself and other Cronin Clasp members to have been informed prior to coming to Conference. I still don't know what's better. Anyway, it would be also remiss of me not to mention the retired members like me. I think it's morally wrong that they haven't got a voice and I hope that next year you'll bring motions to rectify that. Because I'm not going anywhere and I know that some of my colleagues in the back are not going anywhere.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my wife and my children for all their support because, like all of you, without their support it would be impossible to do what we do. In closing, I want to dedicate this to my mum and dad, really. They're not here now but they taught me about morals and about what was right and what was wrong, and they taught me to stand up for everything that I believed in. So many, many thanks and good luck.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Al Miller, HMP YOI Aylesbury, Cronin Clasp winner for 2020. Officer Marshall Miller, known universally throughout the POA and HMPPS as Al Miller. Retired from the service in September 2019 after 27 years of loyal and unbroken service, all of which

he had served at Aylesbury. Joined the POA in 1992 at the college and joined Aylesbury local Committee as soon as a vacancy arose on it. And he served on that Committee in various roles throughout his career.

Colleagues at Aylesbury have been witness to the personal battles he's had with local and senior managers for the protection and betterment of our members over the years. Many of his former colleagues remain in awe of his doggedness and quiet diplomacy to get the job done. Never one to be a table-thumper, he would remain calm and keep cool and wait for the moment to deliver the killer blow, be that representing members during disciplinary hearings, agreeing profiles or shift patterns or dealing with national issues that affected the Aylesbury membership. This is a skill that he learned in part from the late and great Tony Waite, another POA legend.

Aylesbury has never been an easy jail to work at and it has had its moments when it has been in the national headlines for all of the wrong reasons. They have, quite literally, had staff carried out on stretchers into ambulances. But Al always being there to steady the ship and to guide and support the local membership through it all. There are many at Aylesbury who owe their jobs and their careers to Al Miller and his negotiating and diplomatic skills. Those skills are sorely missed now that he has retired from the service.

As a former Governor of Aylesbury, local colleagues remember many sparring matches between Al and Mike Spurr over the years when he became the CEO of the service. However, we have it on very good authority that even Mr Spurr had the highest respect for Al, having worked with him at a local level. Al told a colleague one day that Aylesbury, being a relatively small jail, couldn't have a massive impact on a national dispute but a national dispute can have a big impact on Aylesbury. So, again, he always puts his local membership first.

He was always at points to say that it wasn't his branch or his Committee or his Union – as the membership, it belongs to them. It was their branch, their Committee and their Union. He would always act as the branch directed within the confines of the law and, on occasion, just outside it – but always with integrity, passion and resilience. In general conversation, Al was sat many, many years ago with a hypothetically given choice – would you prefer the Cronin Clasp or a Butler Trust Award. And without hesitation he said the Cronin Clasp. When asked why, he said because the Cronin Clasp comes from being nominated from the membership, the people he has represented so eloquently over the years. It is an award, a recognition that comes from the bottom up rather than from the top down. This sat very well with Al's moral compass and his political principles, and therefore it is only right that when the time came the branch put Al forward for the Cronin Clasp in recognition of all the hard work and sleepless nights he's put in over many years for our numerous colleagues, both past and present.

He embodies everything that the Cronin Clasp was brought into existence to represent and to recognise, and therefore we can think of no more-deserving recipient of it than Al Miller. And that was written by John Hogan. Al, please come and collect your Cronin Clasp.

<Applause>

Well done, Al.

<Applause>

**AL MILLER – CRONIN CLASP RECIPIENT:** Chair, Conference, NEC, delegates, I'm both honoured and humbled to be here. Honoured that my branch nominated me – I'd like to thank them for doing it, especially John. And it's both an honour to stand here where some great and good people have been recipients of this award. It's not something that is given out willy-nilly every year, but it is special and it's very special to me. Now, as mentioned by John, the late, great Tony Waite – and I'm sure that some of you in this hall will remember him – taught me a lot. If I was half the delegate, the man, he ever was, very pleased to be in the same shoes as him. Conference, enjoy your Conference and thank you again, John, and the branch. Good luck, colleagues.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** James Starkie, HMP Preston, Cronin Clasp winner from 2020. James, also known as Jimbo, joined the Prison Service in March 1989 at Preston. He went on to Wakefield Officer Training School and, on completion of that training, he was posted to HM YOI The Mount. Being a reet northern lad from Burnley, he volunteered for detached duty and spent time at Coldingley, Blundeston, Garth and Preston. It seemed to do the trick as he got posted to Preston in 1991, where he has remained in post to this day.

In 1998 Jim was elected on to the branch Committee, a role he held until 2007. Having cut his teeth, which is the way at Preston, the branch Chair's role came up for election. Jim stood and was successful. He has remained in position, unchallenged, until December 31st 2019, when he decided to step aside. Jim is also a bit of a travel agent and every year organises a trip away with the Thickies, a term that came about when years ago they asked for somebody to temporarily act up – and none of Jim's <inaudible> had passed the then-SO's exam. This term has stuck with them ever since. Every year it's somewhere different from the past – hot places, colder places – but Jim would still find a pawn shop. I don't know what type of pawn shop, it doesn't mention. The Thickies have taken in many countries, including Poland, Spain, Estonia, Malta, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Corfu, Bratislava – and this year's destination is Portugal. We believe it's in October, so you know where to avoid. Every year they have an award for the person who messes up more than any other. I would love to tell you the title but there would be points of order galore. The winner of the award has to wear a bib with the title embroidered on it, wear it and travel back in it. Jim was the proud owner of this in 2018, as voted by his peers. He still has an outstanding Stage 4 grievance ongoing about it.

A lot of members don't realise that the branch's money can be used to help members. An example of this was when a member became tragically ill and couldn't move freely off his drive. Jim organised for this member's drive to be concreted to allow him access in his wheelchair. Another time was the purchasing of a bicycle to be given to one of the members' children. Jim also organised the purchasing of some football cards, with half the money

going to charity and half going to the winner drawn. Jim must have got a job lot as there are still about 47 left in the POA office.

Jim is not the loudest of speakers and every branch meeting the members were huddled together – not to keep warm when we were outside on the car park but so we could hear Jim speak. Jim has also been known to play hide and seek in the cupboard in the POA office. Sometimes he was dressed, others – well I'll leave it there.

Jim went away one year to conference with the then-branch Secretary to sunny Portsmouth. Jim left the keys to his brand new car at the branch Secretary's house and they travelled down together. Jim didn't realise that the Secretary's husband, and a member, decided to redecorate the inside of Jim's car with bags of rubbish, party poppers, streamers – the works. Jim, as you can imagine, was not impressed, but the photographs were on show for all the staff to see on C wing. Thanks, Jim, that was funny.

Jim leaving the Committee for pastures greener is sadly a loss. He's taking a lot of experience with him. However, he is still a branch member and, as such, the branch has become stronger with that experience. All that is left to say from the branch and the Committee is thank you Jim for your service as an official to the branch and the Union as a whole. And that's dedicated by Paul Malliband. Please, Jim, come and collect your award.

<Applause>

**JAMES STARKIE – CRONIN CLASP RECIPIENT:** Chairman, NEC, Conference, for the last time. I've got to say, it's an honour and a privilege to come up here and collect this award. Certainly I didn't expect to last this long when I first started, but times move on and things happen like this. I'd just like to say that, with the bib incident, it's not nice. It isn't nice, it wasn't my idea but it's funny when you don't have to wear it. And the nakedness in the cupboard, yeah? Can you hear that? It's only half the story, that. Yeah.

So just a few thank-yous. I'd just like to thank the Committee for putting me up here today, for sorting me out down here this week. The Committees past, NEC past and present for helping us out, all the advice and whatnot – dug us out of a few tight spots a few times. Last but not least, my wife and family who, as you know, when you join the job, especially when you're bringing children up, you do miss out on a lot of stuff. And the phone calls at night and stuff like that, meetings you have to attend there – thank you for your support all the way through. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Cronin Clasps from 2022. Kev Jephson, HMP Ford. Kev was nominated for the Cronin Clasp on behalf of HMP Ford's Committee and their branch. Kev's career spans from 1994, when he was first elected to become a Committee member at Coldingley, and his progression to branch Secretary here at Ford in 2005. Kev has seen 10 branch Chairmen and seven Governors. During this period Kev has steered not just the branch and Committee in turbulent times with the residing Governors over issues but national issues the POA has been dedicated in fighting against.

Kev's knowledge on all policies, national and local, have been a godsend to the membership here at Ford. He has assisted Committee members to deal with the investigations and tribunals to a successful conclusion. Kev's dedication to the POA is 100%, so much so that a previous Governor had written to Steve Gillan, the General Secretary, complaining about Kev's conduct as branch Secretary. Well, the result was that the Governor lost and the branch Secretary won. Dedication comes in many forms and this was seen when Kev broke his leg and was off for three months, but remained on call at any time when many investigations against staff were taking place – and, more recently, when Kev was facing a particularly bad period of prostate cancer in 2014 and 2017.

Kev's dedication to the Union, as you can see, cannot be questioned but honoured for his drive and commitment. I think any Committee in this Union will see him as a huge asset and is clearly worthy of the Cronin Clasp. And that's written by Colin Usher, Ford branch Treasurer. Come and get your award, Kev. Well done.

<Applause>

**KEV JEPHSON – CRONIN CLASP RECIPIENT:** If you think it's hard there, it's harder here. I'd like to thank my Committee. Like Mark said, I've had 10 Chairs and I've had seven Governors. I've been threatened, I've been abused and I'm still here – so I'd like to thank them. I'd like to thank my family, my parents and all I'd say to you is, you are the future of this Union, you are the present – please enjoy. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** John Gurney, Littlehey, Cronin Clasp 2022. John joined the service in 1990 at Bedford and transferred to Littlehey in 2000, where he joined the local Committee and soon became the Secretary through some tough times. John has, over the years, held every position on the Committee. As some would say, he cannot leave well alone, but most notably John was the Chairman when he instigated the branch withdrawing to visits and refusing to work as the governing Governor at the time endangered our health and safety.

Most of the branch would see John as the most passionate of POA reps and it is true to say that John can sometimes let this passion affect his grammar when writing to the Governor, as he writes it as he sees it – which has resulted in him having to have his emails checked before he sends them, in most instances.

John has been ever-present for the staff at Littlehey and someone they always have trusted to make the right call. He has been at the forefront of

improving our working conditions here over the years and letting whoever is in charge know that they won't get away with it, as I'm sure Jackie Marshall will agree.

We at Littlehey have been lucky to have had some good Chairmen here, and John has continued this trend, sometimes at a personal detriment but always for the good of the staff. Written by Steve Rising, POA branch Secretary. Well done, John, come and collect your Cronin Clasp.

<Applause>

Well done, John.

**JOHN GURNEY – CRONIN CLASP RECIPIENT:** Well, as you can probably understand, I'm pointing to Jackie, I knew nothing about this. Jim, my Committee – God, you can keep a secret! Normally I'm the most chattiest person there is, but I'm stuck. But I've got to thank a lot of people and please bear with me. There's people on this top table that I had the privilege to, when I first came to the Committee and join this floor, and I've taken a lot of inspiration from them. Joe Simpson, I love watching him – points of order every year. Jackie Marshall, the same, diligent. And I took some inspiration from that and I went away thinking as a Committee we've got to challenge – but when we challenge we've got to challenge properly. And I'm proud to say that, in all the time that I've been on the Committee at Littlehey, one thing we've done is we've challenged our Governors, our managers, because we know that the policy is right. What they don't know is how to put it forward. We will stand together, we work hard. Without my Committees over the years, I wouldn't be here today. I'm receiving an award for their hard work, for their diligence. The NEC's hard work has got me here, where I am – on the pinnacle of getting the Clasp – but without people like yourselves on the shop floor and without these people on the top table and the hard work the Committees do, I wouldn't get this.

Well, I'm going to go back to my branch, carry on working. My Governor said to me only last week, 'You're 64, John, don't you want to pack up?' And I said, 'You'll go before I'll go.' Governors really do try hard, and we've heard it today, to bully our members, to pressurise them – and some of them do crack and they leave. One thing I want to leave behind with my Committee is keep fighting, keep working hard, you'll get the results you deserve. This Union will get stronger and this Union will win its fights and we'll support this top table and we'll get there in the end. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Paul McLennan, Moorland, Cronin Clasp 2022. Paul has given over 20 years' service to our union and nearly 10 of these as Chair of branch at Moorland. Paul has seen his members through the toughest of days of poor control, low staffing levels and even lower morale, always standing side by side with staff. He is known for his high intellect – often outsmarting Governors, to their annoyance, both in disciplinary hearings and local agreements. Indeed, Paul managed to ensure that Moorland's RMP and safe systems of work were second to none, enshrining maximum safety in numbers for staff and a solid resilience throughout the jail. So much so, it was used as a template for other establishments. Sadly, Paul had to take ill-health retirement due to an injury he sustained many years ago in the workplace. However, even whilst off work, he still remained a solid support for the Committee and members at Moorland, always on hand to advise. Paul has finally managed to get his double knee replacement, which is unfortunately why he cannot attend today.

So, as well as wishing Paul a full recovery, today we honour Paul with the Cronin Clasp to thank him for his service to the Union, for being steadfast in his values and for always being on the side of the members. That's written by Sally Jameson. Is there someone from Moorland to come up and collect his award? Jade, would you like to do that? Thank you.

<Applause>

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** So, obviously Paul is absolutely gutted that he can't be here but like it's due to medical health reasons, but the NEC have kindly offered to come to Doncaster to re-present the award to Paul. I know he's going to be absolutely chuffed to bits and I presume he would dedicate this to SSCL. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** We come to our final award, which is the Mabel Hempton Award for bravery – which is not an annual award, it's very rarely given out. And this is the Mabel Hempton Award 2022, which goes to Neil Trundle who will collect on behalf of the branch, the branch being HMP Whitemoor.

The staff at HMP Whitemoor have been successful in their nomination for the Mabel Hempton Bravery Award. This nomination follows the terrorist attack at HMP Whitemoor on January 9th 2020. They would have nominated the staff for this award in 2020 but it was decided against it as the trial was still outstanding and, indeed, was only heard in September of 2020. The details of the terrorist attack are: a member of staff, Neil Trundle, was subjected to a cowardly attack on A wing on Thursday 9th January 2020 by two prisoners with bladed weapons, and both prisoners were also wearing suicide vests. They turned out to be fake.

Neil was repeatedly stabbed in his head and body and was covered in blood, as were the walls of the prison near him. The general alarm was pressed and numerous staff responded, not only from A wing but from all areas of the prison. Another alarm call from the central control room was put out over the radio for all available staff to attend A wing and more staff attended this cowardly attack. If staff had not responded as quick and in such a brave manner then I have no doubt that Neil Trundle would have been killed.

On responding to the alarm, staff put their own safety at risk as it was quite clear that the two prisoners were armed and had suicide vests on. Not one member of staff retreated. They wanted to help and rescue their colleague and their friend. In the following minutes, staff managed to disarm both prisoners and also remove the suicide vests, again having no regard for their own safety. They wanted to protect Neil and they wanted to protect other staff who were present.

I personally saw the weapons and suicide vests as I had responded to the alarm and, at the time, you could not tell the suicide vests were fake. SO15 were that concerned about one of the suicide vests when they arrived that they evacuated the security department. During the time that it took to disarm the prisoners, as well as remove the suicide vests, a number of staff received injuries, ranging from being punched, stabbed and slashed. Four staff had to attend hospital due to their injuries – these were Neil Trundle, Jane Cowles, Tom Duden and Jacob Camileri. Although these four were the ones that received varying injuries, a large number of staff were involved in the whole incident and, as I have said, if it was not for their bravery then one of our colleagues would have been killed in this cowardly terrorist attack.

Following on from this attack, the trial was heard in September 2020, where both prisoners were convicted. A number of staff were required to attend court and give evidence against the terrorists. They had to relive the whole episode once again, not only on the day but in the days and weeks leading up to the trial. It would be fair to say that some, especially Neil Trundle, will never forget this cowardly attack. Their bravery has been recognised by the POA Welfare Fund Committee, who made a donation to the Whitemoor branch, and this was distributed accordingly. I personally thank Steve Gillan and all involved in the Welfare Fund Committee.

I would like to thank all of the National Executive for their support at the time of the terrorist attack and since. Mark Fairhurst, Dave Todd and Terry McCarthy attended the branch within days of the attack and spoke to as many of the staff as possible that were involved, and I know that my members were grateful for these visits. Steve Gillan was in constant contact with Neil Trundle, and this began as early as the night of the attack. I can't emphasise enough that, if it was not for the bravery and the quick response of staff at Whitemoor then Neil Trundle would have been killed during a terrorist attack at HMP Whitemoor on January 9th 2020. Neil would have left a wife and young family if this had happened, but I'm glad to say that this is not the case. I am so proud of both my branch members and staff at HMP Whitemoor that Neil is still alive today. If it was not for the staff at Whitemoor, Neil Trundle would not be with us today. And that's written by Niall McIntosh.

I personally visited shortly after that terrorist attack and I met with some of the staff who had been injured who were still displaying the injuries, the physical injuries that is, of being slashed with sharp-edged weapons – stitches still in their fingers. And they'd returned to duty after only a few short weeks because they wanted to get back to their colleagues, didn't want to leave them in the lurch. True bravery, commendable. If it had been the police it would have been all over every newspaper in the land, front page headlines. But we're behind a big grey wall. If ever anybody, any group of staff, any branch, deserved the Mabel Hempton Award for Bravery, it's Whitemoor. So, Whitemoor, please attend the stage and quite rightly get commended.

<Applause>

**NEIL TRUNDLE – HMP WHITEMOOR:** Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the POA for this opportunity for the Mabel Award. I did read up – a very courageous lady who, like myself, was unexpected. She was going out for her lunch but these perpetrators obviously knew what they had in mind to do. It is without my colleagues that a minute and a half, I believe it lasted, but it seemed like ten minutes, I must admit, without my colleagues – especially Tom, who is here, one of those first on the scene. There was also a nurse and a young lady who is no longer in the staff, in the job. There are quite a few people who have left the Prison Service now, especially because of that incident. And it is with my thanks to them that I am still here. I'd like to give a big thank you to my partner, Samantha, and my children because of quite a few injuries and she puts up with my 'Ouch, ouch,' all that sort of problems. I must admit, I'd get a bit annoyed with it as well – but, yeah, she's had to put up with a lot.

I'd like to thank my number one Governor, which is Ruth. No pressure on me whatsoever to come and go, talk to staff, read emails and stuff like that. So I'm very grateful for her. It is a difficult job. It's made even more difficult with staff who are not there long-term because they either see it as a short stop-gap or members have left the service. New staff – Tom was relatively new-ish himself – and those young staff who came to my aid, they did get stuck in, they knew their training. We have a good training team, C&R team, hence I was able to defend myself for so long. And, yes, very honoured to receive this for Whitemoor, for those who are no longer in the service who were at the time and also for those who are in the service. Unfortunately, this is when things go wrong, so I thank you all for this invitation. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, we will reconvene at two o'clock. Thank you. Just to remind you, Conference, there is a fringe meeting in the Mallory Hall – Justice for Colombia. Refreshments available free of charge.

<LUNCH BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. Apologies for the delayed start. We're just going to open this afternoon's proceedings by letting our very talented barrister who won our pensions legal challenge against the Government to address you and give you an update on where we are with pensions. So, please welcome to the stand Ivan Walker.

<Applause>

**IVAN WALKER:** Good afternoon everybody and thank you very much for inviting me along. What I want to do is to give you a brief overview of what we've been up to since 2015 with the pension schemes. It's going to be a bit of a summary because the last hearing we had arranged on the subject was listed to take 10 days and I don't think you want 10 days' worth. So what I wanted to do was to go through the tribunal proceedings which we've

already been running, and which I think you probably know about, and then also talk to you about some of the things which are in the pipeline.

So, starting off with the employment tribunal, you probably know that the basic issue that we raised is that the changes made in 2015 were discriminatory on the grounds of age, and it turned out that we were right. The upshot is that the tribunal said that anybody who was already in the pension scheme in 2012, regardless of their age, is entitled to be treated as if they were still a member of their old section of the Principle Silver Service Pension Scheme. For most people that would be Classic. Now I use the words 'entitled to be treated' quite carefully because it means, if you want to be treated as a Classic member you can, if you don't want to be treated as a Classic member you don't have to be, which is quite important because, having run through the numbers for quite a few people now who were affected by the 2015 changes, in some cases people are better off in Alpha. So, what's going to happen is, once the new arrangements are in place, each year you're going to get two benefit statements. You get two quotes for what your benefits are – one assuming that you choose to take this period of service in Classic or Premium Premium, whichever one you were in, and the other if you want to take it in Alpha. Now that means you're going to get a lot of information, probably more information than you really want, each and every year. But what's really going to matter is that, when you reach the point where you want to retire, you'll get two quotations. If you want to be treated as Alpha, this is what you get. If you want to be treated as Classic, this is what you get. You choose. So you're basically being offered the best of both worlds.

Now that all flows out of the age discriminatory arrangements made in 2015. Again I think you probably know that the Government has had another go, and as of April of this year everybody who was in Classic or Premium, whichever, they're now actually in Alpha. Everybody has been transferred to Alpha. The people who were protected from the changes back in 2015 have all retired now, so the older people who were protected are basically up to <inaudible> now. But what it means is that, for everybody else, the period of service we're talking about is seven years. The pension you built up between 2015 and 2022 – you can have that counted as Alpha or you can have it counted as Classic and it's your choice, you choose. It'll be fairly obvious in most cases which is the better because one will have bigger numbers next to it than the other.

Now that was the main thing that we tried to get out of, or we did get out of the employment tribunal proceedings, was to get people back into the pension scheme that they should have been. But that's not the end of it, because in tribunal proceedings if you put a claim in for discrimination, you can also get compensation for what lawyers call non-pecuniary losses or injury to feelings, what you would call anger, upset, anxiety. Listening to a lot of people, as I have done, who went through this process, it's very clear there are a lot of people who were really, really upset – who were really, really angry about what happened. Now you can never put a figure to the upset or anger or anxiety that somebody's been through, but the tribunal has got to have a go, and we were due to have a hearing on this question of injury to feelings – it was the first of the batch for prison officers working in England and Wales. Just before that came up for a hearing, we reached an agreement with Government Legal Department. You may not remember this but, when the question of injury to feelings was first raised by the POA, the Union sent out a circular saying everybody's got a claim for injury to feelings because everybody was upset or angry about this but, if you think you suffered more than most, then fill in this form and send it back to us. And the deal that we've come up with, with Government Legal Department, is this. If you were one of those people who said that you were more upset than most, if you want to they will settle your case for £5,250. Anybody who didn't fill in that form, they'll settle your claim for £2,650.

Now, that applies to the people who filed the original survey back in 2017. You may remember that the POA reopened the survey again in 2020 and we're going to have another fight with the Government Legal Department about those people because, according to them, if you filed the claim in 2020 and the Government had already said in 2019 they were going to fix everything – well, you can't have been that upset or that angry about it. I'm not saying I accept that, I'm not saying that that's right, but what I'm saying is we're going to have to have a fight with them again. So the people who filled in the survey in 2020, cases are yet to go to the tribunal. We don't yet know what the result is going to be but we do know we're going to have that extra fight.

So, far as the 2017 claims are concerned, just to tell you what the process is now, we've got to put together the formal agreement. You're probably aware of something called a COT3, which is the formal agreement you make to settle tribunal proceedings. What's going to come out of that is a process where the POA and/or the Government writes to the people who are entitled to these claims to say, 'If you want to settle your individual case, please sign here and we will send you a cheque.' We don't know precisely when that's going to happen, but I would say within the next couple of months. That's for the 2017 people and at the moment it's for the people in England and Wales, but the same story will roll out across the country. Now, I've talked so far about prison officers. We've also got claims in for secure psychiatric nurses in the special hospitals. They're being dealt with differently because it's a different pension scheme, and in some ways some of the people in the NHS schemes are probably worse affected than prison officers. Some of them, their pension age went up from 55, the state pension age. We've got a hearing listed for the NHS claims coming up in September. It'll take a little bit longer to get those cases sorted out but they are being sorted out. They are going to the tribunal.

So, that's the first bit of what we've been up to. Now the Government has said it's going to correct this sorry mess for everybody right across the public sector, the first stage of which was to stick you all into Alpha in 2022, but they also know that there are some people out there who have already retired – they retired some time from 2015 through to 2022, whenever it might have been, and they were retired on the terms of the wrong scheme. The most typical case is somebody who used to be in Classic, was ill-health retired under the terms of Alpha and didn't get pension enhancement that they should have done, the 6 2/3 years that people know about.

The Government's bright idea is to sort all of these people out by October 2023 – '23 not '22. POA said that's not good enough, so we issued another case, this time in the High Court. We issued it as a test case for one person, just to make the point you can't do this – October 2023 won't do. Government rolled over. They gave this fellow his arrears of pension, his arrears of lump sum, interest at 8% on both of those. They paid his legal costs and there were all sorts of horrible tax complications coming out of this which I'm not going to bore you with, but they also agreed that, if there were any tax charges coming out of this, they would pay the tax. So it was an absolutely comprehensive clean-sweep victory for this fellow.

The reason for taking that case was, as I say, it was a test case to make the Government do what they know that they should be doing, and they do know that – that's why they rolled over. So Joe, Steve and I have been negotiating with the Cabinet Office about settling this issue for everybody who has already retired – so-called immediate-detriment cases, as they've come to be known.

The details of that are still theoretically confidential but I can tell you we have reached an agreement with them. It needs to be formalised, but essentially the story is going to be this: if somebody has already retired, usually on the grounds of ill health, they're missing their 6 2/3s or they're missing something, they will do a calculation for that person – assuming Alpha, assuming Classic – and offer them, 'Which do you want?' Most cases, Classic will be better, the old scheme will be better. They will pay arrears of the lump sum, arrears of pension, they will pay 8% interest, there won't be legal costs this time because we don't sue them, and again they'll pay any tax that comes out of it. I think the really important point about this memorandum of understanding is the timing of it.

As I said, what really stuck in the throat to start with was the idea that this is not going to happen until October 2023. Now the way the Cabinet Office is approaching this is they will do these calculations aiming for 31 July of this year and we should have these cases sorted out, paid out, within a couple of weeks after those second calculations have been done. So we really sped the process up there.

There are going to be some other people who haven't yet retired but who do retire on the grounds of ill health between now and October 2023, and they're going to do the same thing for those people. Whether you qualify for ill health or not, from April '22 they will test you on the Alpha criteria. But if you qualify for an ill-health pension, same deal – they'll do two calculations and offer you the best of both, and again that should all be sorted out. The target day for the past case is 31st July this year. People are going through the process now. They should be sorted out on a business-as-usual basis.

Now, the next thing that we've been up to, this whole sorry mess that the Government caused, according to the Government, has cost them £17 billion, which is quite a lot of money. While all of this was happening, they had another look at the cost of Alpha. You probably know that, with any pension scheme, you get the actuary to go over the scheme every three or four years, and this valuation process was going on while we were going through these court cases. Do you know what? It turned out that Alpha is much cheaper than they thought it was going to be – to the extent that, if they brought it back into balance, they would reduce your pension contributions by 3.5%. So it was a big difference. The unions, through the scheme advisory board, sat down with Cabinet Office and said, 'How do we want to use this 3.5% – do we want to reduce contributions, do we want to improve benefits, do we want to do a bit of both?' While that deal was being done, the Government turned round and said, 'You know what – that £17 billion which we've just wasted, tell you what we'll do – we'll charge it all to the people in Alpha. We won't give them this 3.5% cut, we won't improve their benefits, because all of a sudden it turns out Alpha is just as expensive as we thought it was, or even more expensive, because of the £17 billion that was chucked into the basket.'

POA again has said we're not putting up with that, so there is another court case running. This time it's a judicial review, which basically says, 'No, if you discriminated and if you cost yourselves £17 billion, the bill stops with you – don't say that you can get younger members in Alpha to pay for the mistakes you made with the older people in the old pension schemes.'

We don't have a hearing date on that yet. It's still with the courts to decide whether or not we've got permission to go forward with the claim – with judicial review you need permission. We're confident we'll get permission. We should get a hearing on that within the next year, something like that. But the result of that will be that, if we win, and I think we will, the people who are in Alpha will have their benefits retrospectively improved or they'll have their contributions retrospectively reduced, so we're doing something for Alpha people as well.

Now, everything I've said so far comes out of the 2015 pension scheme changes – starting with the tribunal, going on to the judicial review. There are other issues about pensions which we all know about and which I've been discussing with Joe. The most immediate one is pensionable pay. How do you calculate the pay on which your pension is based? And in particular that old bugbear, Payment Plus – is it pensionable or is it not? Should it be part of your pensionable pay, should it be included when your pension is calculated? Now, the way PP has developed over the years is – you'll know much better than I, but as I understand it you get PP these days for doing the basic core duties of a prison officer. This pay is just the same as any other element. And so the argument is that, because it's not some sort of additional overtime pay or something like that, it is actually part of your core pay, it should be pensionable. There is a case – it happened to be in a court clerk rather than a prison officer – which produced exactly that result. We're putting together a test case specifically on the subject of PP. We'll probably have to run it through the internal dispute process first but, assuming that they decide not to give us everything that we want, that will end up with the Pensions Ombudsman. And I know that PP and pensionable pay and other elements of pay which should be pensionable has been a bugbear for you folk for a long time, but this is something which we're actively taking forward.

Another one that Joe and I have been talking about is abatement. Abatement is the question where you retire, you come back, you start picking up your wages as a prison officer again but your pension just disappears into a puff of smoke. Basically, they take your pension off you again. We're examining whether abatement can be challenged as unlawful. It's something we're exploring and I'm not going to say I'm terribly hopeful about it but it's something we're looking at.

The last thing that I wanted to mention is I think the last remaining real bugbear and probably one which is bothering most of you the most, which is the changes which have just been made. Everybody's been pushed into Alpha, so everybody has now got a pension age equal to their State Pension Age. Now, bear in mind that the pension you've built up until 2022 will still be based on the pension age of 60, so when you get to the age of 60, you'll be able to take the pension you've already built up without any actuarial reduction. That will be paid to you plain and square. What's at risk is the pension you build up in Alpha after 2022 and that will be actuarially reduced. I would mention that, having been through these figures, you shouldn't necessarily assume that the actuarial reduction that's made is as savage as some people think it is. As I said, going through these numbers comparing specific people – what would their position be if they transferred to Alpha, what would their position be if they stayed in Classic – some people are better off in Alpha. So, if you get to the age of 60 and you want to know what your pension is going to be, get the quote because you may find it's not as awful as some people fear. You don't have to stick around until you're 68. You are allowed to retire at 60, so don't get trapped into that way of thinking.

But this is something we're going to have to have a look at, to see what we can do to stop the pension age going up from 60 to 66/7 or 8, because again you'll know much better than I do – the idea of a prison officer working on the wings until they're 68 is frankly crackers. As a lawyer, we might be able to do something about changing the way that the early retirement reductions are made. I think pushing the pension age back down to 60 is probably going to be more of a political question than a legal one, and ultimately I think a lot of it's going to come down to a common-sense question.

If you've got loads and loads and loads of prison officers just disappearing at the age of 60, is it realistic to expect prison officers to work to the age of 68? Because the answer to that I think is fairly clearly no. So I think the way that the demographics of the Prison Service works, it's going to rub their noses in it that it's just not realistic.

So that's a pretty quick scamper through what we've been up to on the pensions front. It's been great to do it because we keep winning.

<Laughter>

Let's just keep winning. That's all. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you very much Ivan. Thank you for all your continued efforts, and I'm sure we'll get much more success with you on our side. Thank you very much!

Conference, Ivan's around for the rest of the afternoon so, if you want to converse with him about pensions, feel free to have a word with him. And finally on that subject, what have the POA ever done for me? It's the most expensive diary in – that's what we've done and that's what we'll continue to do, so go back and tell them!

Right, let's get on with some motions. OK, we're onto motion 33, which is from the NEC. Can we have a seconder for the motion please? Thank you. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Joe Simpson.

### Motion 33

**Conference ratifies Conference Paper 2 on the campaign to achieve a pensionable age of 60 for those members of the Civil Service and others Pension Scheme.**

### NEC

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chair. NEC, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC on Conference Paper 2. Our retirement age. You've just heard Ivan – all the work that we've done and everything that we've achieved up to 2022, when Government decided that they were going to put us all into Alpha. And also changed our colleagues' pensions in the NHS, who will also go to State Pension Age. And we've also got colleagues in the private sector who were TUPE'd over until the Fair Deal, who their pension age will now go up to State Pension Age. And as Ivan's said, the only way we're going to do this, and the only way we're going to achieve it, is through a political campaign. Colleagues, being a former prison officer and a POA member, and I'm a POA member still, I always thought that we could change the law in our tea rooms. I always thought we could change the law by whinging. That isn't going to happen. We are going to have to campaign and campaign hard. And this means every POA member, no matter what pension scheme you're in, no matter when you joined, we want a pension age of 60. I'm being very careful about how I speak here. When I'm talking about a pension age of 60, I'm talking about you being able to take your pension at 60 – not retiring at 60, because there are some of our members who are fit and well, who can go beyond 60 and who want to go beyond 60. And pensions mean different things for different people, and they may not want to retire. They may want to carry on working, so that's why I say the pension age of 60.

We have got support from right across the political movement and we've got support right across the trade union movement. We now need to build on that. You've all seen the different debates that have been taken on in the House of Commons, in the House of Lords, about our pension age. And everybody agrees, everybody agrees that we should have a pension age of 60. Then comes the 'but'. How are you going to pay for it? I'm not interested how you're going to pay for it. I'm more interested in my members having the right to their pension from the age of 60. That's what we want.

So we need to go back to our prisons, we need to mobilise our members and we need to start writing to constituency MPs, to your own MPs, and we need to give them a massive headache. And we have got to put across to them, until you change this, we are not going to go away. That's what we've got to do. It took this Union and its members collectively 10 years, 10 years, to get a smoke-free workplace, but we've done it. If this takes another 10 years, Conference, we have got a duty as a trade union and as trade union members to start making the biggest noise we can and start making people, especially the political class, listen to our members.

We've got a parliamentary scheme now where you can get your MP to come in and walk in your shoes, do the work that you're doing – come in, see what you're doing. In our special hospitals, in our prisons, everywhere – get them in! Tell them you want to come in, whether they be a Tory, whether they be a Lib Dem, whether they be Labour – whatever they are, get them in and show them the work that you do. And when you get the stock answer, because we'll get the stock answer that comes in, thank you to all those colleagues who have written to their MP and it comes back and it says, 'The POA had this deal back then. The POA had that deal back then.' Yeah – and? We didn't like it. And as a trade union, we should be able to turn around and say, 'We don't like it. We want a deal that suits our members, not our political masters.' We decide what is the best deal for our members. And we're not just talking about England and Wales – because, believe it or not, Westminster thinks that we're only talking about England and Wales. No, we're not. We're talking about Scotland, Northern Ireland and our colleagues in the special hospitals. We're talking about every POA member. Not everybody in this hall is a prison officer, but everybody in this hall is a POA member, and that's what we've got to get across to them. We've got to get involved in our regional TUCs, taking motions to the regional TUCs around the country. Get stuck into the Trades Councils because they will help as well and they will put pressure on MPs and everything like that.

We can win this but we've got to put ourselves out and we've got to go for it – and we've got to put all our eggs in one basket and take them on! Because eventually we are going to come to a general election and this trade union should mobilise and turn around and say to the MP, you want my vote? I want a pension age of 60. If you don't give me it – me, my family, my friends are all going to go out and campaign against you in this community. They keep turning round and keep saying, 'How you going to pay for it? The police pay this, the fire brigade pay this.' When there's a fire in your workplace, who turns up? You don't dial 999 and the fire brigade come and put it out. You do! When there's a fight on the landing, or when there's a riot in a prison, we don't ring the police up to come and sort it out. You do that! So Minister, stop comparing us to seafarers. We are POA members. We are firefighters, we are the police, we are drug workers. We work every day on the landings – we're marriage guidance councillors and we're negotiators. You get all of that. 68 pension age is not good enough for our occupation. We need a pension age of 60. Conference, please accept this motion and let's go get our pensions back. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Joe. Would the seconder like to speak on that motion? Any more speakers. Straight to the vote then. Oh, we've got one. Paul. Got to be quick you know!

Hey listen, I wouldn't take on board the marriage guidance councillor thing he's just mentioned because most of us have ended up divorced!

<Laughter>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** First of all Joe, is this reserved for the NEC?

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** No it's not mate! Leeds fans.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** <Inaudible> being a Leeds fan. Colleagues, I'd just like to reiterate everything that Joe's said. Before Conference started, I was extremely worried about the way that the Conference was going. There's a lot of new faces here. One thing that really is impressing me is new speakers, speaking with passion and talking about the way this is going.

<Applause>

So just to back up what Joe has said – let's take that passion, let's take it back to our branches, let's ram it up these MPs, let's show them what we do, we mean business! Please colleagues, take that back, take that passion and let's get this job done! Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more? Pregnant pause. No. Now we can go to the vote, thank you. For or against, cast your votes now.

Thank you. Conference, that poll is now closed. As you can see, that motion is carried.

Conference, I don't think Stafford have attended for motion 34. I've got no indication now. I haven't received any requests to formally move, so in their absence that motion will fall.

Motion 35, Frankland. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### **Motion 35**

**That the NEC proceed with the process started to formally ballot our OSG members to take lawful action as a response to the recent pay award and that all other members give their full support to our OSG colleagues.**

### **FRANKLAND**

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion 35, that the NEC proceed with the process started to formally ballot our OSG members to take lawful action as a response to the recent pay award, and that all our other members give their full support to our OSG colleagues.

Frankland's got approximately 110 OSGs. We've had a good surge in the last few years of members, and we've now got about 80 that are POA members. They voted in the indicative ballot and they sent 100% return back to support the ballot for strike action. A lot of our OSGs have been asking over the last few months what's happening, what's happening, we want this sorted out, our pay's dire, blah blah blah. And obviously it's been delayed for various reasons, so a lot of them are getting into our ribs. I'm blessed to have my wife work there as an OSG so she also gets into my ribs – on my annual leave, my days off and my nights. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Phil. Would the seconder like to speak? OK, next speaker please.

**RACHEL HARGREAVES – BRANCH CHAIR, WYMOTT:** Chair, NEC, Conference, we support this motion but we need clarification. When OSGs at Wymott were balloted they unanimously decided that they were not in favour of strike action. I even had OSGs asking me to consider their membership, simply because they couldn't afford to take strike action. Our OSG colleagues are severely underpaid for the work they do. However, we need to seek assurances that they could potentially be compensated as per previous union policy. Can funds be made available to our members if they need it, and if they were to take lawful protest action? I understand that withdrawing labour by the OSG group will have a considerable impact on the estate. Wymott simply would not unlock due to health and safety concerns. Not having trained staff in comms will grind our jails to a halt. But we need assurances that our lowest paid and most exploited members will be protected if needed. When officers take protest action – yeah, we lose a day's pay, but we can make that up by doing some form of overtime, PP or a bed watch. This is a luxury that is not afforded to our OSG colleagues. Their overtime rate is pitiful and not always readily available. Our OSG colleagues supported us when we had our protest meetings. We must now ensure we have protection for them. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Rachel. Any more speakers? Steve Gillan responding for the NEC.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chairman. Conference, the NEC asks you to reject this motion – not because we don't want to go into a statutory ballot but we don't believe it's correct at this time and moment. When the National Chairman and myself saw Dominic Raab and Victoria Atkins in their office, we mentioned OSG pay, we mentioned prison officer pay, we mentioned everybody's pay. We wanted to have the OSGs taken out of the Pay Review Body, the remit group, because we believe, as they have the right to take collective action, it should be free collective bargaining – backed up, if we don't like the outcome, we can ballot them for industrial action up to and including strike action. Dominic Raab said he would think about it but he never gave any commitment. Now, let me tell you why, at this moment in time, that we do not want to go to a statutory ballot. Because I'm a great believer, as are the Executive, that you don't set yourselves up to fail. If you go to ballot, you need to win that ballot. And I'll be quite honest with you, because the way the anti-trade-union legislation is at this moment in time, we do not have the confidence that we'd get over the threshold.

Now let me explain why, and I won't go through every detail because the Trade Union Act of 2016 has made it more difficult for certain workers in a group to get over that threshold. You'll have seen it with other groups. PCS went to an indicative ballot. The indicative ballot said 98% of the members would vote for some form of action but the actual turnout was less than the 40% threshold. So, if you'd had a statutory ballot, you'd fall at the first hurdle. I don't want to fall at the first hurdle.

But just listen to some of the processes that need to be put in place at this minute in time. So for example, only where such ballot produces a majority in favour of industrial action and at least 50% of those eligible to vote have voted, will the action be lawful. Further, in the case of important public services, which we will be, at least 40% of those eligible to vote must have voted to support the action. So in effect, for every person that doesn't vote, that's a 'No' vote. That's the reality of the legislation. Even if we do move to a statutory ballot, and we may move to a statutory ballot, the notice to ballot you've got to give to the employer – which would be HMPPS on this issue, no later than the seventh day before the opening day of the ballot, the first day the ballot paper is sent out – it must state that the Union intends to hold a ballot, identifying what that trades dispute is, identifying the dates that they're taking the action. The notice must also contain a list of categories of employee to be called out and a list of the workplaces at which they work, the total number of employees affected, the number in each category and the number in each workplace. An explanation of how these figures were arrived at must also be produced.

So, that's the first hurdle as well that you'd have to get over. You've got to identify the OSGs, where they work, whether it's in the gate, whether it's up in comms, whether it's anywhere else in the establishment, the numbers and so forth. That's got to tally up a matrix with your membership lists. The sample ballot, not later than the third day before the ballot, the employer must receive a copy of the ballot paper. Ballots in each workplace – the general rule is that separate ballots must take place at each workplace where those numbers are entitled to vote. You can have an aggregated ballot only in three exceptional circumstances – if there's a common interest in the trades dispute, which there would be, a common occupation, which there is, or a common employer, which there is. So we might get away with an aggregated ballot. But let me tell you, Government lawyers will be over us like a rash if we get one or two items wrong in that ballot process. You look at the times where the RMT and other unions who have the right to strike are run into court on technicalities because they can't get the ballot process right. That's the reality of things.

So this Executive do not want to rush in to that process. If we're going to have a statutory ballot – and we'll keep the pressure on HMPPS and indeed Government, because let me tell you what they've done, as soon as we left that meeting they did the Pay Review Body submission and, guess what? With just the threat of moving to a statutory ballot, what did they do for the lowest-paid workers? They put a decent submission in for once. So the reality is, let's just stop, think, trust your Executive with this process – because we'll have to be guided by our lawyers as well on which sort of ballot, whether it's an individual ballot for each establishment or whether it's an aggregate ballot and so forth. The last time that we held, for our membership, a strike ballot that I sanctioned in relation to the Ashworth, it took us three months to get it correct. That's the reality. That's the hoops that we have to jump through. And by the way, we were successful on that as well because our people won. And I'm a believer that, if you're going to do something, you don't just hold a statutory ballot to fail. You want to win it. And if we want to win it then that's great.

And on the Wymott point – listen, I fully understand and I accept that there will always be those individuals that don't want to lose money during a strike. In fact there's no worker anywhere in Britain that wants to lose money. Ask the miners, who were on strike for a year. That's the reality. But sometimes you've got to fight to get what you want. We have got a trades dispute fund and it's building up – so yes, we would use the trades dispute fund. We wouldn't be able to pay everybody a full wage. It's just not conceivable, it just wouldn't happen. So I've got sympathy with our lowest-paid. That's why we're pushing the department, HMPPS, and we're pushing politicians – because there's a reason that our OSGs are low paid, there's a reason that prison officers aren't getting paid enough. It's because they thought they could get away with it. And the tide is turning because this Union

is a fighting union. You've just heard about our pension campaigns. We put your money to those campaigns. That's the reality of things. This is a fighting union. There ain't no other union in the criminal justice system like the POA. We are a fighting union, a campaigning union, and we fight your causes. No one else does. So we will continue in the vein with our OSGs. We want you to reject the motion and leave it to this Executive because, if we do decide to have a statutory ballot on a legitimate trades dispute, we're going to visit every single jail in the country and talk to your Operational Support Grades that are in membership and tell them why we're doing certain things and get them onside so that we come out with a positive ballot. Let's hope we don't have to go there. We never have had to go there with the OSGs. Maybe we should have done it years ago, but the reality is now we've got them worrying about our next step. Let's keep the pressure on. Don't push us into holding a statutory ballot at this minute in time when we don't need to. Keep them guessing. Keep them guessing when this Executive are going to do certain things. Thank you Conference. Reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Steve. Frankland to reply?

**PHIL HANNANT – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND:** Just a brief reply, yeah, thank you very much, Steve, for that explanation and everything. I look forward to reporting the vote back to my wife and my branch!

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Phil. I think I know where that motion's come from now!

<Laughter>

Conference, to the vote please. Cast your votes for or against now.

And that poll is now closed. That motion is lost.

Motion 36, Moorland. Can we have a seconder please? Brinsford, thank you.

### **Motion 36**

**Conference condemn the limitation on the trade union in relation to the draconian measures that Government have imposed on the POA. Conference call on the NEC to take all possible measures including the repeal of Section 127 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which makes it unlawful for someone to induce a prison officer to take industrial action or to commit a breach of discipline. Thereby reinstating the leverage of the union and its members.**

### **MOORLAND**

**STUART SUSEK, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, November 3rd 1994, the Government passed the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Section 127 made it unlawful for prison officers to take industrial action. Since this was introduced, our employers have taken us through a raft of changes to our terms and conditions – and to our health and safety. Starting with benchmarking, it resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs – the years of experience that this service has never recovered from. Our workload was increased, we became firefighters, first responders, mental health workers – the list goes on. How did our employer respond? They brought in Fair & Sustainable. It resulted in colleagues standing side by side with the realism of £3,000-plus pay difference. So why am I stood here? Conference, I want your help. I want your help to campaign to seek and revoke Section 127 of the Public Order Act. This Government doesn't want to listen to any independent body that suggests a pay increase that reflects the difficult and challenging circumstances we work in. They want us to remain a hidden service so they don't have to address the impending staffing crisis and the poor pay. And they don't want to celebrate the incredible way our service has managed this Covid pandemic. Conference, we've been on a real-time pay freeze since 2015. At the moment our members, with the cost of living, are going to go into financial hardship unless they take up vast amounts of PP. Today, up and down the country staffing levels are getting dangerous. The more we open up, our thin line of protection will be getting stretched. We can't retain the staff and we're relying on our good will to extend our shifts and give up our rest days. But for how long can this continue? Our staff will burn out. It happened before, it will happen again. As far as I can see, our concerns are not being listened to. Section 127 limits our bargaining power, the ability to make our employer sit down and truly listen to what we need. Repealing this Act would give us, a trade union, a level playing field – the same level that our other public-sector trade unions have. So Conference, please support this motion and make our voices heard today. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said Moorland. Any more speakers? Responding for the NEC, Joe Simpson.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chair. NEC, Conference, Moorland, from the bottom of my heart thank you very much, because everything that you said at that rostrum is absolutely true! Let's go back to 1994. I joined the Prison Service and the POA in 1987 when I was only 8!

<Laughter>

And I enjoyed the trade union rights of every other trade union member in the country. And I think the first time I went on strike wasn't for pay, it wasn't for better conditions for our members or anything like that. It was for Government to give the money to give the Governor at HMP Manchester so that our remand visits were improved, all the facilities in there. We balloted for strike action at Strangeways – what happened? The Governor got the money. And I'll tell you how that happened. He called in – at the time Pete Hancox was the branch Secretary – and he turned around and he says, 'I've asked for the money and they've said no. Over to you.' That's the power that we had.

And the reason why they took the trade union rights off us is because they are afraid of that power. And they should be afraid of that power because, can you imagine if we still had it? Would we be retiring at 67? Don't think so. Would we have better pay rises? Yes, we would. Would we have the same staffing crisis that we have now? No, we wouldn't. Would we have poor working conditions? No, we wouldn't. Would we have PAVA in the YCS and in the female estate and the open estate? Yes, we would. Would we have equipment vests? Yes, we would. That's the power that would be in our hands. And I will reiterate what I said in my last speech on pensions: campaign, campaign hard, because if we get our trade union rights back first, we can go on strike to get our pension age back down to 60, so we win on both ways. Conference, this is the right campaign. We need to start talking to MPs, we need to start talking to regional TUCs, to trades councils, and get the right to strike back. We are an independent trade union and we should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect by the employer by having that level playing field. Conference, please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** With to reply? OK, no reply so we'll take it to the vote. Cast your votes now please, for or against.

Thank you, that poll has now closed and that is carried.

37, Durham? Do we have a seconder for Durham please? Portland. Thank you.

### Motion 37

**That Conference accepts that RMPs are fundamental to the safe running of prisons and that the role of branch officials in the design/running and compliance checking of an RMP can be both difficult and time consuming. Therefore, Conference instructs the NEC to create an RMP sub committee under Rule 10.12a taking volunteers from the Executive, with the NEC choosing the make up of this committee which will be communicated to all branches by close of play following the next full NEC meeting following the close of Annual Conference 2022. And that this committee becomes the single point of contact for all RMP-related matters.**

### DURHAM

**JON NEWTON – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM:** Chair, NEC, Conference, following the previous RMP debate, motion 20, motion 37 reads: 'That Conference accepts that RMPs are fundamental to the safe running of prisons and that the role of branch officials in the design, running and compliance checking of an RMP can be both difficult and time consuming. Therefore Conference instructs the NEC to create an RMP subcommittee under rule 10.12a, taking volunteers from the Executive with the NEC choosing the make-up of this committee, which will be communicated to all branches by close of play following the next full NEC meeting following the close of Annual Conference 2022. And that this committee becomes the single point of contact for all RMP-related matters.' There was a push for policy-compliant RMP in every establishment, driven by NEC previously. Due to the Covid pandemic, it seems to have lost a little bit of its way or at least slowed. We can fight to have it introduced locally and help each other regionally but really it needs to be driven hard by the NEC nationally. In the meantime I'd request again, if you don't have an RMP, SFC your Governor and go into dispute if necessary. If nothing else it'll bring it to the attention of the CEO and give the NEC evidence that it needs, if it doesn't produce a single point of contact requested at this motion. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Durham. Any more speakers? Jackie Marshall responding for the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, Jackie Marshall speaking against the motion on behalf of the NEC. I agree with Durham, RMPs are fundamental to the safe running of prisons and the role of branch officials in that design and running and compliance-checking of an RMP can be both difficult and time consuming, it's true. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes. The motion also instructs the NEC to create an RMP subcommittee under rule 10.12a, taking volunteers from the Executive, with the NEC choosing the makeup of this committee. The NEC do not believe this is necessary. All members of the NEC are capable of advising on the RMP. There is no one specialist amongst us. Not so long ago, you should have all been asked by your NEC reps if you'd got an RMP, and if you hadn't did you need any help? The majority replied that you did have an RMP and you didn't need any help. There's been one branch in my area who've asked for help and I went down and gave them some help. If they need further help, I'll go down again. If any other of my branches need help, I'll go in there, just like all of these would do. We'd all do the same. The motion asks for a single point of contact, colleagues. You've got that. It's your NEC rep. You are the specialists in your establishments, you know the running and what's safe and what's not safe. The next person who knows most about your establishments is your area rep. Please reject the motion and do business with your NEC rep. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Durham to reply.

**JON NEWTON – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM:** We cannot vote with our feet colleagues. Vote with your fingers. Thank you!

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. We'll take this to the vote. Please cast your vote now, for or against.

And that poll is now closed. That motion is lost.

Motion 38, Steve Gillan on behalf of the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### Motion 38

### Conference Paper 3 titled 3 year Finance plan.

### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Conference, delegates. Before I do start on the Conference paper, you've got to bear in mind this Conference paper was written by 31st January and of course things have deteriorated substantially in the cost-of-living crisis, and the Executive are not deaf or blind to that particular issue. In fact the National Chairman even said this morning with regards to the rate of inflation – now at 9% and it's our members that are on the receiving end of that. We had an Executive meeting this morning and I recommended to the Executive that there shouldn't be an increase in the subs in 2022 and you have my pledge that, if we come back next year and we're in the same position, then we may have to defer the rise in subscriptions for 2023. So I hope, Conference, you can accept that position that we're not going forward with the rate increase, on the proviso that you help us to help keep costs down in relation to subscriptions. The only way that you can do that actually is go back to your establishments, map your workplace and recruit. Because if we get an increase in members at local level, that may well help us in the long run as well to help you keep our subscription rates at a reasonable rate. We've got no qualms about coming next year, if we're in a good or reasonable financial situation, to say that we'll defer any increase as well. But as you've heard within this, certain things have also got to be done to assist you as well. And I'll go through those particular issues, but I want to come to legal. In fact I'll do the legal thing first.

You've heard from Ivan Walker, our solicitor, about all the legal challenges that we're doing. That does cost money, Conference, that does cost money. I'm pleased to say, if you look at the work that Thompsons have done on your behalf – and by the way they're not, no solicitor firm is perfect. People used to complain about Lees, Lloyd Whitley in the past and before them Mishcon de Reya, people complained about them. That's why we've got the structures that we have, but let me tell you, when we've said in the past about saying to Thompsons, 'We think you've got this wrong,' as an Executive, which we're entitled to do, 'We want you to pursue this case' – we've done that on 16 occasions over a period of time and, guess what? We've lost every single one of them at a cost to the Union. In fact, two of them were settled and we lost 14, so the solicitors did get it right. They applied the law, not as we would want the law to be, but they applied the law on cases. Do they always get it right? No, they don't. But let me tell you, read that booklet. £5 million worth of compensation for our members over the last couple of years. They don't act for insurance companies, they don't act for employers – they only act for trade union members and you get 100% compensation. So, I'll leave that there, leave you to read that.

Wandsworth, many years ago, in fact it was probably about 2010, brought a motion that we looked at the travel and subsistence rates and reported back to Conference. I think it was about 2010 actually, when I first became General Secretary, and that piece of work was done. We reported back and certain things were done. However, we're now 2022 and I recognise, because I talk to branch officials, that they can't actually book accommodation within the parameters that were set, probably in 2010. So the POA/NEC seek your support in raising hotel rates for London, which is currently £90, to £150 per night, and outside London from £65 to £100. That doesn't mean that you have to go up to the maximum. If you can still get a good deal then you get a good deal, but after Covid the reality is the hospitality industry is in the knacker's yard and they're trying to claw back two years' worth of losses. I know, because we've booked this place, and let me tell you it hasn't come cheap. We're also looking at keeping your rate at 45p per mile and 2p per passenger when POA members, delegates, are required to attend business for the POA. If we went above that HMRC rate, you'd be taxed on that and we don't want that to happen, but if HMRC raised the rate above 45p then we would pass that on to you within that finance manual.

Conference, as well NEC members, as far back as 2013, under a review – because if you remember facility time was cut and it was deemed that to supply <inaudible> officials with a car was costly for the Union, so therefore Pete Hancocks, who was the independent person when we did Conference papers 1 to 10, Pete moved it that NEC members would get £10,000 which they'd have to pay the tax and National Insurance on, and they'd get 31p per mile. Conference, that's nearly 10 years ago and there hasn't been an increase in that. The NEC haven't whinged or whined about it, but I took it to them that we needed to get up to somewhere that was realistic for them, because quite frankly it wasn't fair on them, just like the current finance manual isn't fair on delegates.

So what we're proposing is that it goes up from 31p to 35p for NEC members. We're also saying as well that, for overnight subsistence for everyone, delegates and everyone, for Conference to increase to £36 for the evening meals with over-fives rising to £7 instead of £4.25 and over-10s to £15 and abolishing the over-12s. These increases are identified to be reviewed at Conference 2025. Further, that the £10,000 that the NEC get is increased by the Retail Price Index in June 2022, 2023 and 2024 to keep pace with inflation, as they've not had an increase since 2013/14.

Conference, these are significant rises but necessary to be fair to our branch officials, Scottish National Committee, Area Committee Northern Ireland and National Executive Committee when they're on POA business, and that includes you. And I recognise this comes at a cost and I've said, because I've done the calculations on the 33p increase this year, next year and the year after, that would cover those sort of increases. I want to do an analysis at the end of this year and, if we're OK by the end of 2022 and we've increased our membership, because the work you're going to do in getting into your members and POELT training and different things, because you get the facility time for that, and recruit them up, then I might not have to do that next year. But it all depends. We don't want to go into deficits or anything like that, where we've got the added costs of Conference and I'm going to have to look at other venues and different things to see which ones are competitive. And I apologise if we've dragged everybody down to Eastbourne,

but you know the reality is, it doesn't matter where we all do it in the country. People keep telling me, 'Hold it in the Midlands' – they've still got to come from Northern Ireland and Scotland and so forth and from the South West and the Isle of Wight. So we'll try and please everybody but we've got to balance it on cost and what's affordable for this trade union.

Something that's dear to our hearts is the death benefit. I've got to say it is distressing for colleagues, families, the NEC, you as delegates, when one of our own passes away, so therefore I want you to endorse this increase of £5,600 for death benefit. Honorary life members will get that as well, because we pay their costs. There was a mistake actually at the bottom of one of the Conference papers, which was about branch rebates, and I said that the branch rebates in January 2022 went up by 5.5%. That's inaccurate and I apologise for that error. It didn't. It went up by 2.5% because it was taken from the year before, because the figures only come out in the January, so they weren't applied to the branch rebates as I'd stated 5.5%. But looking at some of the money that's been held by branches, you're quite well off anyway for doing the business of the Union and joining in, and the campaigns that Joe spoke about.

So I actually think I've pretty much covered everything in there. I've dealt with the cars previously. That should give us a significant saving for the Union going forward. We might not see the benefit in 2022 end of year accounts but we should see that benefit filtering through financially in 2023, '24 and '25. But clearly we'll keep an eye on everything as we come out the other end of Covid.

Just a couple of other things. The cost-of-living crisis is a big issue and that's why we did say, the Executive, this morning, because I wouldn't want to throw the whole paper away because there's some important stuff in there, but you have my word we will not be giving that increase of 33p in 2022. And if I can get away with it next year we won't apply it next year either or the year after. If we're in a good financial position there's no need to raise subscriptions. But I'm a realist. We've got a Union to run. There's a Union comparable to our Union who their fees are double ours and they've got double the amount coming in. We are a decent-sized Union that's got decent-sized costs and so forth, but we don't want to make a profit out of anybody. Every penny that we save, we reinvest back into the campaigns for this Union on a variety of issues. Our legal bill has – some of the stuff that we're campaigning for, and by the way we've just launched more proceedings in the European Court of Human Rights, because the Court of Appeal only last week rejected our appeal on the judicial review for Recommendation 3. But we're a fighting Union, we're not giving up. We will continue to get pay justice for our members.

Conference, I just want to go back. I know the Finance Report was passed on Monday but a couple of branches have legitimately asked what does it mean on the membership statement, which will go out to the members once it's been to the Certification Officer and so forth. After this, there's a column called 'other benefits', and a couple of branches have said, what is that, the benefits that you, as General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and other full-time officers are getting? It isn't a benefit. It's what the Union have had to pay out for the car and fuel benefit in kind. It's also to put our tax allowances right and it's also about the miscellaneous expense grant that the Chair of Northern Ireland gets and the Chairs of Scotland get. So when you tally that up, and I'm hoping that come next year that other benefits will have substantially disappeared – and it accounts for a massive saving for the Union, because that's money that the POA are paying to HMRC on our behalf to make sure the first column of the salary. So my salary, Gillan £79,110 – it isn't £137,000, the salary is £79,000 and it's the same for Joe Simpson, the same for the other employees etc.

So I think it needed clarity because there will be those out that want to mischief-make on social media and different things. We've already seen the Tax Payers Alliance attack, we've seen other individuals attack. I'm not really bothered about attacks. It's about explaining to you what our payroll is and I've told you, our payroll actually is in good form compared to what it was. And by the way, I've had to cut, since I came in 2010, the cloth accordingly, because back in 2010 we were receiving more money into the Union than we are now, simply because we had more members. VEDS came, wiped £1 million of POA money away. That's the reality. Then there was a freeze on recruitment and we only can recruit into membership when the employer is actually recruiting. That's the reality. So I hope that's given that explanation. I fully hope you endorse Conference Paper 3 and that you can tell your members that, whilst there are improvements to the financial manual for them, for the death benefit etc. and when they're out on POA business, but they will not be getting an increase in subs from June 2022 because we recognise that they're going through a living hell with the cost-of-living crisis. Thank you Conference, please support the motion for the Conference paper.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, thanks Steve. I asked him certain questions about the tax, about pensions and various things. People do see the end figure and they seem to forget sometimes what our pay is. So when I say our pay it means Prison Officer Closed Grade, £32,000 or £16,000 part time, they say that's what you're on. They're not really because you get 27% plus, you get pension scheme, 20%, God knows what. I have got a problem and I know we can't speak about it here, but I've had words with Steve and I'm not trying to nit-pick but I think we need to look at some of the conditions of employment. And Steve said, I think it was yesterday or the day before, that they're well-paid up there, some of the full-time officials, they got a 5.5% pay rise this year. Good. I hope I can get 5.5%. I've had 5% the last seven years, so I have got a problem with that. The problem being – and I don't know the scheme, I know it goes back into the 1990s or something like that – but the point is, if inflation's that high now, how much are we going to have to pay out next year? I welcome Steve saying that we're not going to put the subs up this year, I'm pleased he's done that because I'll have people complaining about it, but as I say, I just think we need to look – and I know Conference can't deal with it, I believe that might be something at the background with <inaudible>, I just ask that maybe this report should be brought back next year and given a little more meat on the bones. That's all. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers, so Steve Gillan to reply.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** I'll just come back on just a couple of comments that Craig has mentioned there. Some of our support staff who've been in the POA for a long, long time would actually tell you that they've had a formula that was negotiated way back in the 1990s, with the GMB and the POA back then, and they devised a formula in respect of that. Now sometimes they're given reasonable pay rises, other times they're

not, but I didn't hear anybody come to Conference in 2001 when prison officers got between 5.8 and 6.1% and Sir Toby Freer recommended that, and the support staff got 1%, but nobody came and said, 'Well, shouldn't you be raising theirs?' There's a distinct difference. Support staff, with full-time officers, Joe Simpson and myself, we're not prison officers anymore. We're paid for by the POA as an employer and a trade union. And you know I've seen things in the past where, in 2017 when Joe Simpson was up for election and when I was up for election in 2020, anybody can stand for that you know – the circulars go out, the terms, conditions are there. And by the way, if you're voted out five year later, you're out of a job. That's the reality.

Let me also tell you, you don't get a defined benefit pension that you do in the Prison Service. You get a defined contribution. And without going into it, a defined contribution isn't as good as a defined benefit, and I'll tell you why. The defined benefit tells you what you're going to get at the end. I don't know what my pension's going to be when I come out the POA. Quite frankly I've got to keep an eye on it every single year and let me tell you, my pension didn't rise last year. Everything that was paid in, it stood still because the market's crashed. Same for them. So you can't keep comparing Prison Service employees. And let me tell you, the staff at Cronin House, the support staff, and in Northern Ireland and in Scotland, they deserve every penny that they get. And I'll tell you why they deserve every penny they get – because when they retire, their defined contribution in my words is deplorable, quite frankly. Their pension scheme is probably one of the worst in the trade union movement, and I don't say that lightly. And I wish I could do something about it, but I can't for the simple reason that we can't afford it and people don't like it when the subscriptions go up. So please don't think you can keep comparing prison officer salaries and the full-time officer salaries and the support staff salaries.

I will commend this Executive because they've never, ever flinched when the formula has come out. I can't say the same in the past, where people have said we should cut the wages. I've seen it with Joe Simpson. Some people have gone on social media saying they'll take a 30% pay cut and then they said the same about me – and I'll take a pay cut and I won't take this and I won't take that. What sort of trade union is that, where we want to fire and rehire? Because that's effectively what it is – and we've got a motion on the order paper. We should be proud that we pay our staff a decent wage which is affordable to this trade union and, when I'm up for election – I may not be up for election, I may retire in 2024/25, I don't know – but if I'm up for election and people think, and I decide that I am going to stand again and they fancy doing it, feel free, but let me tell you you've only got a job for five years. That's the reality. You can take that risk. Craig, I'm not on the defensive, but what I'm saying is I never set my salary. Joe Simpson never set his salary. It was one in a review in the nineties by other Executives and it's stood the test since. And I'm not prepared to rip up terms, conditions of my support staff to start again. I defend my support staff and I defend their right to be in an independent trade union that we negotiate with. And by the way, I came out that trade union, the GMB, because I recognised that there was a conflict of interest in me being in that Union, having to negotiate with our people and our reps. And by the way, Nicola Hubert and Paula Larwill are not demanding people but they'll stick up for themselves in the workplace and they'll negotiate hard. And I'm proud of them for doing that because I don't want a Union that rolls over. I want a Union that pushes us hard and I then argue their case with the Executive. Thank you Conference. I hope as trade unionists you all understand that.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Steve. We'll take it to the vote. Cast your votes now please, for or against, to ratify this Conference paper.

And that poll is now closed. That motion has been carried.

Thank you Conference. We're going to take a break now. Back at four o'clock please.

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, Conference. Thank you. We've just got one more guest speaker. Then we're going to launch this POA film and then we'll get you away and we'll have a full day tomorrow of motions so we can crack on with that.

It's my pleasure to introduce to you Gabriel Keaveny from the Southern Ireland Prison Service Delegation, the trade union that represents prison officers in Southern Ireland. I'm sure he'll give you an interesting address. When I went to Southern Ireland Conference it opened my eyes to the absolutely fantastic work the trade union are doing over there with terms and conditions of prison officers, especially surrounding pay. I know it's a more expensive place to live but they've done a really grand job with terms and conditions, so without further ado, please welcome Gabriel to the stage.

<Applause>

**GABRIEL KEAVENY – SOUTHERN IRELAND POA, FRATERNAL ADDRESS:** Thanks very much, National Executive and Conference. It's great to be back. To be honest with you it's great to be attending Conferences again where we can share ideas. You will know us for years, anyone that's been around a while. We continue to work closely with your National Executive Council and indeed we continue to work with some of your branches. We've visited a number of them over the years and we're most grateful for that opportunity. The information we share, of course, at those forums, the learning that we get, is of huge benefit to us when we go back to Ireland and in our dealings with the Prison Service. But I listened this morning to your Director General and I suppose I do wonder at times, when I look at senior managers in the Prison Service, both here and in Ireland, what planet that they're living on! He spoke about issues of reduction in reoffending and work-training initiatives and safer workplaces, and everybody here at Conference knows that these can only be delivered in a prison that's well-run, well-staffed, implements a proper regime management policy etc. etc., none of which appears to be certainly evident from our visits. And that's not being negative about your places of work at all. He spoke about issues about Covid and the thing being broken a wee bit, but we were attending Conference for years – it was broken long before Covid.

Say, in Ireland for instance, it only took a global pandemic for them to introduce a regime management policy. We had been negotiating with them for years and years and years. Governors had predicted the complete collapse of the whole world if we had a <inaudible> or if we locked prisoners behind

the door. So in one sense the global pandemic was helpful to us, because at last they introduced what was known as a Covid regime management plan. And I notice on your Twitter feeds and some of the statistics that you share in that, the reduction in violence prisoner-on-prisoner, reduction in violence prisoner-on-staff, reduction in the amount of contraband that was smuggled into the prisons, etc. etc. and that all took place in the context of a pandemic. So, we did work collaboratively with the Irish Prison Service during the crisis, and once again prison staff obviously not just played a role but played a really, really good role, a good function for society, during the pandemic, without really asking any questions. We got on with the job. We did what was expected of us. And that's what prison officers do.

But now that the pandemic is over, the Prison Service want to go back to what they term the 'normal regime'. That means an increase in assaults on staff, more violence in the prisons and more violence in our place of work. That's their 'normal' and that's what your DG was talking about this morning, and ours is at the same lark. So it's the POA has to deal with that 'normal' and represent members who are on the front line, day in, day out, dealing with a very, very difficult part of society. But he also spoke about pay – and Mark is right, since 2005 we have an annualised hours system and our pay rates are certainly as good as you will get across the civil service or public service in Ireland. We have no retention issues and we have about 98% saturation in relation to trade union members. So on that front we are reasonably happy. Our pay, for people who may not be aware, is determined nationally, so there is no local – maybe some local bargaining clauses but we are in the room with police, teachers, nurses, firefighters – we're all in the one room and we're dealing with Government. And that's helpful to us because we're a small trade union, so rather than being picked off, when you're there the collective is obviously stronger than the individual. And that certainly has delivered for us, we believe as a small union in Ireland, has delivered for us over the years our national pay structure, and our pay is equivalent, and in some cases slightly higher than An Garda Síochána or the police.

So rather than go through – I often go through a number of issues with you and tell you, share what's going on – but I think you know that at this stage, but just from a historical perspective, we're 75 years in existence this year. You'll see some of my colleagues are going round with <inaudible> and pens and all sorts of malarky, but we were formed in 1947 and there was a couple of key years from that over the 75 that we would think were important to us. In 1980 we were affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We're a fully fledged trade union, we have the right to strike at any stage, although we rarely have to use it, but we have the right to strike. It kind of fits in with what Joe was saying, when you have the actual tool in your armoury it's a wee bit easier to talk to them, to be honest with you. Even during Covid we exercised what was termed adhere to SOPs directive, which we issued to our members. And we couldn't give a visit, they couldn't unlock, the prisoners were late for court, there was mayhem to be honest with you. So that certainly encouraged the management to listen to us. That issue was about vaccines, where they wanted to vaccinate the prisoners before us. So we made a bit of progress on that.

But to go back to the history, 1980 we were affiliated to Congress. 1983 we had a major lockout at a prison called Mountjoy – most of you will have heard of it, where staff were called on parade and asked would they follow Governor's orders and they said no, and they were put outside the gate and they were locked out. In 1988 we had a four-week strike for the ability to negotiate our own rosters and that was successful, even though that was a very, very long dispute. In 2005 we introduced an agreement called the Proposal for Organisational Change. That was negotiated in the Labour Relations Commission, took 14 months for us to deal with it. And that's our current terms and conditions of employment. And then in 2009, these are just a couple of years that came to mind when I was going to address you today, we had a review carried out of our own organisation, and we implemented significant change from how the POA works, and that's still pertaining today. But at our 75th anniversary dinner, we asked a retired Deputy General Secretary, Eugene Denehy, to address Conference after our meal, and he reflected, particularly for younger staff – and who wonder sometimes what the POA does for you – you know, he talked about split shifts, when you would come into work at 8 in the morning, work until 1, go home and come back in and do a 12-hour night shift at 8 o'clock. He spoke about no guaranteed rest days when he joined the job. He spoke about POA officials being transferred for doing their job, typically from Dublin to Cork, and at that time it was nearer working in London. All these things took place because you were active in the trade union.

Also, funnier stuff. If you arrived in with a better bicycle than the Governor, that also would lend to the transfer, believe it or not, or certainly a car! That was a gonner altogether. So these things took place. So at times as prison officers I think we're not good enough at praising ourselves and at looking positively at what we've achieved. But I always say this – if there was no POA folks, like my time is done in the job as such, if there was no POA I'll tell you one thing, we would be in a sorry state if we had to leave it up to the bloke that was here today talking in a monotone accent about the future.

<Laughter>

So what I would say, folks, if we continue to act collectively, we continue to share information with one another – with yourselves out in the branches, all that's vital – and if we continue to do that, because it does sadden me sometimes when you see some of the comments about, we're all in this for one cause and that's to make the workplace better for each and every one of our members. And if we work collectively and not individually, I think we'll achieve that. Thanks very much for the opportunity to talk to you folks.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you very much Gabriel. Always a pleasure to listen to you speak. POA strong as ever the world over, so well done for continued good work for your members in Southern Ireland and I'd like you to accept this gift as a small token of our appreciation. Gabriel.

<Applause>

OK, Conference, I'm hoping this is going to work. It's only been getting worked on for about nine months, edited, re-edited. Hopefully it's not going to be like the Benny Hill Show. Conference is ready when you are to roll the POA film!

<DOCUMENTARY SCREENING>

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. Just a few things. Don't forget to hand in your handsets on the way out. There's a short meeting for the private sector with Joe Simpson and Mick Pimblett. It won't last long, we won't keep you long. I know it's been a long day. That's in the Mallory Hall, level 0. And we'll see you tomorrow morning. We'll have a good day going through a lot of motions tomorrow. We've got a lot of time for motions tomorrow. We'll see you in the morning at 9:30. Have a good evening and thank you for today.

Monday 16th to Friday 20th May 2022

Thursday 19th May

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Good morning, Conference, I can bring you to order we'll make a start. Just a few announcements before we commence. Firstly, Ian Byrne sends his apologies – he can't make it so that means we've got a full morning to crack on with some motions. Reference Ivan Walker's update on the pensions – our poor legal department have been inundated with emails, 'Have I put a claim in or not?' We're going to put a circular out next week explaining how to check if you've put a claim in or not, so for now just don't encourage anyone to inundate our legal department with emails. We will cope with that next week when we send a circular out. Scrutineers and tellers, I do have a task for you before the morning breaks so prepare yourselves.

Moving on with business then, we are at motion 39, the proposer is the NEC. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Angela Montgomery. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### Motion 39

#### Conference Paper 4 Sexual Harassment policy.

### NEC

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – NEC:** Chair, NEC, delegates, guests. Good morning. Sexual harassment and the way forward. Events of recent years have thrown into sharp focus the extent of sexual harassment and the sexism and misogyny that underpins it, and in particular the lack of support and justice for victims and survivors. This is a reality for most women. As shocking as the statistics and personal accounts are, they do not come as a surprise. Women in the trade union movement and women POA members have battled for decades against sexual harassment in their workplace and sadly within their Union. This reflects the state of being in both wide society as well as the wider trade union movement.

In 2008 in response to an increased awareness of sexual harassment as a workplace issue, within union workplaces and outside of them, the TUC General Council reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating all forms of sexual harassment and violence against women. It stated that there are three specific actions for affiliated unions, of which the POA is one, as employers and those who have responsibility for lay membership.

Firstly, to ensure that all unions have effective policies on sexual harassment in place, and that these are communicated to all staff and local representatives. It is important that the democratic membership organisations, of which we are part, are free from sexual harassment. Secondly, that all unions have a fair and effective procedure in place to deal with complaints which recognises the value of including an independent expert presence in those meetings. Thirdly and finally, to implement sexual harassment policies in all Union branches or other relevant structures within the POA.

Subsequently, the TUC rules have been updated to reflect this renewed focus and the TUC rules are explicit and robust and state our shared commitment to the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment and violence against women. Rule 1.b states, 'It shall be a requirement of affiliation that an organisation has a clear commitment to promote equality for all and to eliminate all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination, both within its own structures and through all its activities, including employment practices.' The rules make very, very clear that sexism and sexual harassment are not a women's issues, they are an issue for every single member sat in this hall. Part of changing the workplace landscape and tackling and effectively responding to sexual harassment is building and embedding a preventative approach, not just within the POA but the whole trade union movement. Preventing sexual harassment means tackling the culture of unequal power, sexism and misogyny that allows it to thrive. As such, cultural change requires action from the top. It must be driven by leaders and that includes the leaders of our movement. Leaders are responsible for championing and embedding meaningful change across their organisations to tackle and prevent sexual harassment. Leaders are instrumental in setting a consistent tone, narrative and actions from the top that send a clear message throughout the organisation that sexual harassment is not tolerated. This is as true for the POA and the trade union movement as it is for any organisation, whether that be a prison, a secure hospital or any other place where our members work.

The TUC Council has set up a working group consisting of a group of leaders, including from our movement, across a range of affiliates. It was established in March 2021 to drive a programme of work to support the TUC and other affiliated unions to prevent, tackle and respond to sexual harassment of workers within their organisations and within our wider movement. The POA are fully involved in that working group and your General Secretary has played a leading part in ensuring that this work has been carried out and will continue to do so. The TUC are looking to support Union leaders to deliver meaningful cultural change that creates safe, inclusive working environments, free from harassment, for trade union employees. Secondly, it is to ensure that unions have robust internal policies and procedures to prevent and respond to sexual harassment within their organisation. And thirdly, to ensure cultural change is part of a broader endeavour to address the under-representation of women and minority groups within the trade union movement, identifying and tackling power imbalances, increasing women's agency of power within the Union workplaces and the wider movement, thereby addressing inequality.

By helping to oversee progress we will be developing guidance and sharing best practice. The TUC working group aims to support leaders in driving that cultural change and embedding a preventative approach to sexual harassment. To summarise, the work so far has been that the working group has worked closely with legal experts to help clarify unions' legal responsibilities under the current legislation and under the hard-won preventative duty, which makes it clear that unions have a legal responsibility to both employees and members, and any effective strategy will need to address both. Any strategy must take an intersectional approach, by which those individuals who come from a range of minority groups would also be included. Research

has shown that sexual harassment is more prevalent for younger staff, disabled women, black, LGBTQ+ and migrant workers, and unsurprisingly it is greater to those insecure forms of work and that their experiences of sexual harassment can be compounded by other discrimination.

In building sustainable change there will be a continuation to support leaders through specialised leadership training. Externally the TUC will continue to campaign to ensure that the preventative duty announced in July 2021 is designed so it is robust and effective and able to deliver the transformative change necessary in order to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace and the cultures that allow it to thrive. Delegates, I don't need to tell you as you all work in a secure setting what those cultures are because you will have all witnessed, supported and represented members where sexual harassment has been a significant issue for your members. Conference, we're looking to you to confirm, as an affiliate to the TUC, that the POA are committed to protecting women as employees within the POA workplace, and indeed, all women who are POA members, irrespective of their workplace. To ensure that the necessary motions are in place for Conference 2023, to update our Rules and Constitution along with those in the Staff Handbook, to ensure that those policies are enhanced and relevant. We are looking upon Conference to agree that we would setup a subcommittee to lead on this important strategy for the POA, using TUC materials by the Women's Committee, the EC working group and reporting back with a clear policy which is enshrined in both POA Rules and Constitution and the POA Staff Handbook. The subcommittee is to consist of myself, as assistant general secretary, Sarah Rigby, NEC, Jackie Marshall, NEC, and we are looking at volunteers from the field consisting of three POA branch members or branch officials which will be advertised. I don't think I need to say much more about this, except to say all of you are part of our change. All of you will play a key role because you are, in effect, the local leaders in your local Committees, in your local workplaces, and I have every faith in you that you will fight sexual harassment in that workplace and within your local Committees to ensure that women have their say, are represented and more importantly, that they are safe at work. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any speakers, Conference? Straight to the vote then. Cast your vote now please, for or against. We can close that poll now – that is carried. Thank you for your continued work at a local level on this issue, you are making a difference, so thank you.

Motion 40, Angela Montgomery for the NEC. Can we have a seconder for this please? Thank you Wandsworth.

#### **Motion 40**

#### **Conference Paper 5 Race Relations policy.**

#### **NEC**

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – NEC:** Chair, NEC, delegates and guests. Yesterday you heard a powerful speech by the Chair of the Antiracism Taskforce, where he set out in some detail the TUC Antiracism Action Plan. The POA, as a trade union, endorse every element of the TUC Antiracism Action Plan to ensure our Rules and Constitution and Staff Handbook are clear that race discrimination is an issue that will not be tolerated within our Union or respective workplaces. Looking for Conference to accept that we must continue to work with the TUC and employers where our black and minority ethnic members work and indeed in wider society to eradicate the poison of racism in our trade union, the POA, the wider trade union movement and society in general. Further, looking for Conference to endorse the ongoing work which needs to be done on a POA Antiracism Action Plan, and the POA will continue to work and make that action plan become a reality.

I don't need to tell you, delegates, that there is no place for racism in the workplace. And we say that continually to the employer, whoever that employer is. But there is also no place for racism within the trade union movement or within the POA itself, and this Union is committed to ensuring that is the case. We cannot challenge our employer if we ourselves have issues, and we need to reflect good practice in terms of our trade union in order, dare I say it, to shame the employer, because progress has been somewhat slow – I think we would all agree. I urge you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any speakers? To the vote then. Please cast your votes now. That poll is now closed and you have carried that motion. Again, thanks for your work on the front line in relation to this subject, you are making a difference, we are improving things.

On to motion 41, Moorlands please. Secunder for Moorlands – Lindholme, thank you.

#### **Motion 41**

#### **Conference instructs the NEC to stop sending out circulars encouraging the use of the Tax Refund Company which charges astronomical amounts of money to our members to claim tax back. The NEC should instead send round circulars giving information to members on how they can claim their own tax back for free.**

#### **MOORLAND**

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Conference, every year our NEC send out a circular promoting the use of the Tax Refund Company. This is a mechanism to claim back tax via code correction, for which every pound that you can claim back, 48p is kept by this company. If that's not enough they have a minimum charge of £38. This is an absolute outrage! Members at HMP Moorland have used this tax firm to get back their uniform allowance, when you can actually do this yourself, for free, following a 10-minute process on the

Government website. So our members have taken advantage of this company and, rather getting back their full entitlement, they have ended up with extremely small amounts. It's costing our already low-paid members money and we want it to stop. We ask for your support to stop the NEC promoting this money-grabbing scheme and to instead send out information to our members with instructions on how to amend their tax code for free. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Lindholme, do you wish to speak on this? Any more speakers? Responding on behalf of the NEC, Steve Gillan.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you very much, Chair. Conference, I think Moorland executed the delivery of that very, very well. However, we're going to ask you to oppose the motion, with a clarification as well on it. I think Jade has effectively said Moorland's motion is specifically about claiming back the uniform allowance, and yes we can put a circular out because I wouldn't want anybody using the tax firm specifically for that particular allowance – that's so easy to claim back at no cost. But, you know, it's more complex than that because each individual has a legal responsibility. It's not down to the employer and it's not down to HMRC. You, as individuals and all our members, have got a legal responsibility to make sure that their tax code is correct and everybody's situation actually is very different, so we wouldn't be able to advise every single member. For example, I know that this company has been around, not just for the POA but for every trade union in Britain is put out, and for our own members since it's been going since the 1990s some of our members have received lots of money back. Yes, they've paid for it, for the expert advice, because it's complex. If you phone up HMRC and you're lucky enough to get through to them – because not many people do, and I've tried this myself to be honest with you – if you have got the knowledge the person on the end of the phone is just going to fob you off in reality.

£653,000 has been recovered for our members by this tax company. But Jade is absolutely right – the simplicities of the uniform allowance I wouldn't advise anybody to go through this company because you can do that yourself very, very easily online and different things to claim it back. You can only claim back for the last five years, you can't go back any further than that. So we would put a circular out to that effect on the simplicity of it. But people's tax codes can be more complex and what we want to do is give individuals a choice. Of course any individual can phone up HMRC themselves and sort it out, but they might not have that knowledge to do it and, if they want to rely on the tax company that we advise each year, give them that choice to do so. So, let's not throw that away, because some of our members – in fact over the years 3,992 members have used it successfully and they've got lots of money back that they didn't even know they were going to get back. So, I'd rather that there was a halfway house here that we can put a circular out to clarify what Jade has just said but give our members a choice. Let's not slit our own throats on this one. Thank you, Conference. Vote against the motion with that clarification from me. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Wish to respond, Jade? OK. To the vote then please. Cast your votes now for or against. That poll is now closed and as you can see that motion is lost.

I don't know if Stafford are in the hall for motion 42. No. I have had no instructions from Stafford to formally move so that falls. On to motion 43, Albany. Do we have a seconder for Albany?

### Motion 43

**Conference to extend the current Long Service Badge scheme, to reward those who have completed 25 years, 30, 35 years and in some cases 40 years POA service.**

### ALBANY

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER, ALBANY:** NEC, Conference. We're asking for the current Long Service POA Badge Scheme to be extended so it recognises the membership that have served at 25, 30, 35, 40 years. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Coldingley.

**JASON WATTS, BRANCH CHAIR, COLDINGLEY:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Coldingley would like to support the motion. We are really unlucky. We've got the new pretend union at our establishment, whose diary is half the price of ours, with some benefits but not as good as the POA's. I actually prefer Stafford's proposal, sorry Albany, of a five-year pin for junior members. I'm a bit nervous, I've done this once before, sorry.

<Applause>

Thanks! I believe we should definitely support our newer members for the longevity of the Union, so support the motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done, Coldingley.

<Applause>

You think you're nervous. You want to be an Everton fan.

<Laughter>

Responder for the NEC, Dave Todd.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding on behalf of the POA. Colleagues, we seek you to reject this motion. We will be explaining why in the next motion. Please reject.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any response from Albany? OK, straight to the vote then please. Cast your votes now. That poll is now closed, that motion is lost.

44, Preston please. Seconder for Preston. Thank you. Lancaster Farms.

#### Motion 44

Conference congratulates the NEC on implementing ACM 74-18.

Conference now wishes to expand this and introduce a Platinum Badge for members who have 30 years and above.

#### PRESTON

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. I gave you a day off yesterday but it's not going to be the case today. It wasn't me who was supposed to be up here – my branch sec has refused to come up here. Probably doesn't want to pop his cherry.

<Laughter>

Again, yeah. The motion states, 'Conference congratulates the NEC on implementing ACM 74-18.' Dave Cook, the NEC member, Southeast, campaigned for years for the Union to adopt the 10-, 15- and 20-year badges. I've had Governors telling my members to take these badges off their ties and stuff – so if we put too many of them on we're going to need a very long tie all the way down to our feet, OK? The reason why we only asked for a platinum 30-year badge is because, let's face facts committee, if you've got members over 35 years they should be here having an award on behalf of the Union. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Farms, you wish to speak? No. Happy to take speakers.

**ANTHONY COOK – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Chair, NEC, delegates, invited guests. Chair, can I just start by clarifying something, the <inaudible> report, is that <inaudible>.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** It's for POA branches and it'll be published on the website so the general public can view it.

**ANTHONY COOK, BRANCH SECRETARY, LEICESTER:** Good. Obviously I support this motion. We've got several members at HMP Leicester that have been in for longer than 35 years and I highly support the motion for the 30-year pin. The reason I asked if it goes to the employer, and I hope at some point the employers actually look at this, is my non-operative members only last month raised an issue with me in regards to the medals that have been recently supplied to operational staff. Now, don't get me wrong, I have no issue with that whatsoever. The issue we've got – and unfortunately it was too late for me to bring as a motion and I will be bringing it next year – is that non-operational do not get a thing, and quite frankly myself and my members think that is disgusting. But in the case of the motion, please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? Responding on behalf of the NEC is Mick Pimblett.

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The NEC ask you to support the motion from Preston for all the reasons so eloquently explained by Paul, on the proviso that the badge will not be made out of real platinum and will be in platinum colour. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any response, Paul? OK. To the vote then please. Cast your votes now. Thank you that poll is now closed,

that has been carried. Before too long with all these badges we'll end up looking like Liverpool fans.

<Laughter>

Sorry, I had to get that in. 45, Durham. Secunder for Durham please. Wakefield.

#### Motion 45

**Local Committee Members work tirelessly on behalf of the membership and receive no additional incentive related benefit. To promote Committee positions and to encourage more involvement to all elections. I propose all local POA Committee members receive free membership for period of time they occupy an elected role on a local Branch Committee.**

#### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, committee, honorary life members. I've got a speech – somebody's wrote it for us, so it's not mine. The local Committee members have worked tirelessly on behalf of their membership and received no additional incentive-related benefit. To promote Committee positions and to encourage more involvement to all elections I propose all local POA Committee members receive free membership for period of time they occupy on an elected role on a local branch Committee. Right, without this integral link between branch and national officials the ethos, sentiment and very messages we convey would lose all sense of personal connection. The local branch officials transcend and understand the essential communication from NEC level. Without this bridge the Union would be faceless to its members. In turn the local branch Committee members are responsible for informing the NEC of what are the important issues of each branch – an essential link between those representing and being represented. The NEC would be blind without this connection. The value of this role has long since been spoken but not rewarded in a time where communication is paramount. A continually changing workforce can leave official positions empty and the requirement to attract new officials has become a necessity.

We, the POA, need to recognise the essential role, not just with acknowledgement but also with respectful incentive and inclusion. Each of you whom I am speaking to now will give up free time, travel and endless amounts of enthusiasm to help members in need. You are all too often at the end of your own personal mobile phone when someone's problems require support and all too often do this willingly to help others, impacting on your daily life, family life and personal plans. Well, it's time to accept what you deserve. It's time to calculate what little it would cost and it's time to help secure the future of our branches and to recognise this essential role played. For as little as 3% of the annual POA income all local officials could have free membership. I'll repeat this for you, as little as 3%. The figure equates to now more than the expenses cost of only one National Executive Committee member. Let's put that into perspective. 840 local officials could be incentivised for the cost of one National Executive. Which do you believe is the greater future investment? Now, I'm not suggesting that's a choice that needs to be made. We don't need to get rid of an NEC member – we need them too. So, to finance this investment I'd even go as far to suggest the funds are already saved. NEC travel being reduced due to virtual meetings, the laptops have already been purchased to ensure this. I know Steve said they're dealing with their cars and stuff like that. Taking this principle forward will offer no further financial requirement. The financial resources have already been saved by our NEC to fully support this motion.

I am sure there could be sentiment offered by the NEC that this saving could be utilised elsewhere, money spent on other requirements, and I occupy my position here today despite no incentive at all. However, colleagues, I urge you all to think about this to secure a local branch future. Is this therefore to secure NEC future and, most importantly, to secure the representational future of our membership. People like you, all of you out there, should be appreciated for your efforts, commitments and involvement. If the role of the branch official really is that important role, and the NEC all believe it is, then let's show what, with only 3% of the slice, a tiny proportion of expenditure to promote, secure and invest in the role we all commit. The NEC require branch officials to ensure you are pursuing the correct fight and the membership elect local officials to ensure the message is received and local business is progressed. The local branch official, an essential role and integral link and future need, it's a reinvestment, a wise investment and a future investment.

I was going to end there. We had a local meeting, area meeting, Ian Carson organised it. We had branches there and branches that represented up there that are struggling to get Committees. I don't know if Wetherby is here today. Wetherby are struggling – they've got a branch Secretary and he can't get anybody else. In fact, he wants to come off. I was up there for election – was it last year or the year before, Steve? The year before, we're in line with the NEC now. I put out my notification. Now, I've done this since I was 55, I'm part time. I said, 'If anybody wants to stand or put up against us, a vote of confidence will do. I'm not going to debate a vote of confidence, I'll step down because, if you don't think I'm doing it enough, that's fair enough.' I do a lot from home. I know you get a lot of emails and phone calls from us from home and WhatsApps and God knows what. We do that. So, this year or last year I put up saying, 'I will leave it to the latest possible point where I'll stand.' But I was part time. If anybody stands after I put my name down I'll remove mine. Nobody put their name down so I'm still branch Secretary. My wife didn't know. My wife thought I was coming off the POA. I was meant to start picking the kids up and I was talking to this PO and the PO says, he asked us a question, she says, 'He's not in the POA anymore!' I says, 'Nobody stood so I'm still branch Secretary.' 'Oh no, not again!' We get that. We do forms and the Governor will phone and says, 'There's a form on at 11 o'clock.' 'Yeah, I'll come in.' Got no car parking spaces so I drive into Durham, 11 mile there, 11 mile back and vent I've got to pay for car-parking spaces. It's just so simple.

I'll address something else. 36 branches haven't turned up here this week. Why? I'm here on rest days this week – Friday's my day at work. I'll be honest with you, I've never claimed the facility time for them. I've claimed facility time for Friday. I didn't claim for <inaudible> or Sunday because I believe I'm here to represent my membership and I'll do it in my own time. I haven't got that problem, but I think just to give a little bit would help so we can recruit in the future. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**ALI PHILO – ACTING CHAIR, WOODHILL:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. I'm sure each branch of the POA have struggled at times to fill their Committee positions, but a free ride is not the way to encourage our members to join the Committee or do their level best to support their members when needed. It is the right way to encourage the wrong people to put their names forward at ballot stage. My rough calculations would see this motion remove just under £924,000 from the Union in a five-year period. We at Woodhill have had three Welfare Fund applications supported, along with a trial at the Old Bailey successfully defended by Thompsons in the last few years. This would not be possible in the future for branches who need this support if we remove these funds from the coffers. The POA pot will eventually run dry. Not only does it remove funds from the POA it would also prevent any Committee members from accessing these benefits as stipulated in the Rules and Constitution by effectively making ourselves lapsed members. There is no waiver rule for Committee members. How can we go back to our branches and look them in the eye and say our achievement this week was not to pay our subs? At a time of financial uncertainty it does nothing for our personal credibility with our members. We lead by example for our branches. I am proud to pay my subs and stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone in this room and within our branches. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

**JOHN MUMFORD – BRANCH CHAIR, DARTMOOR:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Asking you to reject this motion for all the reasons just put. It'd create a divide and you'll end up with Committee members trying to get on the Committee for the wrong reasons instead of the right reasons. I think POA Committees would turn into an elitist entity and, again, the only reward I need is the look on a member's face when I've saved their job. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

**ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The thunder has been stolen. Again, I can only agree with everything that's previously been said. It's a great sentiment. I understand it. We, as local branch officials without doubt are the harpies of the Union, ably supported by the NEC behind us, but we're on the front line. We're where the problems all come to. However, my concerns, as have previously been said, again, I want to be a paying member. I'm proud to be in the POA and not to be part of what everyone else is doing would somehow take me away from that. I want to look particularly – it's the disengagement with the young, low-paid members – I want to look them in the eye and say, 'We're all doing the same.' I can't tell them they should be on the – they should be on the same pay as me. I can't get them on the same pay as me just yet but I can't not say to them I'm not even paying the same subs as them. It just doesn't feel right, although I understand the sentiment. We're all equal. We've got to be seen to be equal, particularly now, and finance is going to hit us all. We must be equal in this Union. I do what I do, as John said previously, because I believe it's right. I know it's the right thing to do and I want to challenge the wrongs that's done to my members. And that's the reward, as John said, the reward is the 'thank you', to know you've saved someone's job. So again, colleagues, please don't undermine that. That's our reward – it's doing what we do every single day and seeing them small rewards. I'm sure being up on the NEC you see a much bigger picture. The reward I get at branch level is friends and colleagues thanking me when they're on the brink and you've pulled them back from that. Colleagues, don't undermine that good work. Vote against the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** For the verbatim, that was Roger Moran from HMP Liverpool.

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Seeking to reject the motion. Colleagues, how does it look to our members if this motion is passed? Yes, we are elected officials and, yes, we are hardworking and receive no additional payment incentives. But Conference, we're all here because we all believe in the trade union movement and what we do on a daily basis. Perhaps that is our vocation. I don't know. We believe we're representing our members and fighting for workers' rights. We understand the rationale of Durham's motion and recruitment of members, especially junior members into the Union, never mind the Committees. But to stop paying subscriptions to the Union we represent sends the wrong message and to the wrong people as to why we work so hard for this Union. This is a vocation, like I've just said, no two ways about it. The younger generation born in the Thatcher era and afterwards have been misled and uneducated about the rules of trade unions in our society. It is up to us as trade unionists to educate our younger members and impart to us as a trade union and to encourage involvement in the union movement.

Personally, I have a young daughter. She's 22 now, recently left university, now teaching. First thing she did – perhaps it's from me, I don't know – first thing she did when she was fully employed, she joined the teaching union. I'm pretty sure she'll be running for a trade union post herself soon. But it is up to us to educate our junior members, like I've just said. At no point have subscriptions for being a member of a trade union been an issue. We do this job because we are who we are, social engineers and fighters for basic workers rights. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said, Andy.

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – CHAIR, WHATTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Well, Woodhill stole my thunder. Last time I talk about this to you in the pub.

<Laughter>

On a serious note, essentially the points that everybody else has made is the exact points I would make. If we do agree to this motion then yearly it will be just under £183,000 a year that the Union will be short of funds from what we pay, so those funds are going to have to be claimed somewhere else to make up for the finances so they'll likely have to increase the subscriptions. We all know the cost of living, we all know the financial detriment that our younger, our lesser-paid members are, such as OSGs. I know my prison's already lost at least two OSGs that have told me that they've done

it to cut costs because of the cost of living and our lack of a decent pay rise for at least a decade. I would encourage you to reject this motion on those grounds alone, but I think we would lose the confidence if we did vote to give ourselves free subs from our branches as well. But more importantly, if you look at the Rules and Constitution Rule 8.1, to be a full member you need to be fully paid up, so no arrears, and you have to pay your monthly subscriptions. If we do vote for this then we won't be sat here now because we won't be allowed to vote at Conference, so we'll just be shooting ourselves in the foot. That's it from me, thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL HARRISON – CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. We ask you to reject this motion for the same reasons everybody else has said. I would not want to go back and tell my membership that we're not paying for our membership. It's just not right. They'd kick us out the gate straightaway. We'd probably lose more members than we would gain and we would get the wrong people on the Committee. We do it because we're passionate about everything we do. We get the wrong people, it'll just go right down the pan. That's it. Just reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, asking you to reject this motion. I really haven't got much more to say now, it's pretty much been said. Ask yourself why – why do we do this job, local officials? Almost everybody in this room is or has been a branch official. We do it for several reasons. We do it because we've all got a strong sense of what's right and wrong. We do it because we're all prepared to stand up for those colleagues we've got who aren't as able to look after themselves, particularly when they're in crisis. By introducing a financial incentive, we run the risk of losing all the selfless dedication that you've all got. Could you really ask a brand-new member of staff to pay into a Union and not pay into it yourself? I couldn't. That wouldn't sit right with me. Colleagues, this is a divisive motion, please reject. Thank you.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference. I hear what you's all say. It was mentioned that we're all equal. We're not. We're all different ranks in the POA, all get different wages. We're not all equal. I'll tell you something now, you've got 36 branches who haven't been represented here this week. We all know the reason why. But if that's the reason, why now? Because they haven't got branch Committees, then we've got a problem because it'll be more than 36 next year. Please support the motion. Oh by the way, sorry, Preston, I'm <inaudible>, at least after this I will be.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** To the vote then. Please cast your votes now for or against. Poll is now closed, that motion is lost.

46, Cookham Wood. Seconder for Cookham Wood. Feltham, thank you.

#### Motion 46

**The NEC Appoint one member of the NEC to provide specific representation to the 4 secure Youth custody estate sites. Due to the unique nature of the sites. Cookham, Feltham, Wetherby, Werrington**

#### COOKHAM WOOD

**TYLER TIERNEY – COOKHAM WOOD:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Firstly, I want to start by saying thank you to this NEC that's behind me. Wayne Hudson, as you all know, went through quite a serious assault and the support I had and the branch had from this NEC was ten to the dozen, so I'd like you to join me in a round of applause for the NEC, if possible.

<Applause>

I bring this motion before you, Conference, to ask you for your help. In the YCS, staff do not feel represented. We don't operate under HMPPS, a lot of their rules and procedures – who are governed by the YCS, not democratic, unelected – and they tell us what we've got to do and a lot of the time we've got to get on with it. Our RMPs are having to be sent to the YCS for them to approve, to send them back to our Governor to say, 'No, they're not good enough. Talk to your POA, get them to re-do it.' We're seeing that on a daily basis. We're being told our education can't come under our RMP because that's going to affect the unlock figures for the young children. The Youth Custody Service at Cookham operate under a completely different set of circumstances in terms of investigations on staff. If we're involving the use of force on a child, you are looked at by LADO, you are looked at by other local authorities, Barnardo's, IMB, our own safeguarding departments, the MMR team. That's six sets of different people that are looking at every restraint to look for wrongdoing in our staff.

Staff on the front line are asking for specialised support. Our NEC do fight tirelessly for our members, but who on this NEC has experience in the YCS estate? This motion affects more than just the four YCS sites – you've got secure schools, you've got STCs, you've now got the new Oasis building they're trying to open in what was Midwest TC. We need specialised support. Please do support this motion and help the staff out that are in the YCS estates. I think all branches that are in the YCS are going to stand up here today and talk, and everyone's got something to say. We need support – we need that frontline help from our NEC and from you guys. Thank you. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Tyler. Feltham, do you wish to speak?

**SARAH PAGE – CHAIR, FELTHAM:** Chair, NEC, Conference, guests. Chair of HMP Feltham, for the past two weeks I have to add. This is my first time at Conference.

<Applause>

We support Cookham Wood in this motion because we need someone at the NEC to be our voice and to challenge the YCS on their proposed – and I say proposed tongue-in-cheek – as they seem to make decisions in which they're just agreed to by their minions, the SMT. Our Governors don't have our backs and they're just ticking boxes on their way up the ladder. It makes us vulnerable not having the <inaudible> representation as we need someone with specific knowledge of the complexities of the youth estate to challenge the thinking of the YCS, who quite frankly are a law unto themselves.

We spoke in motion 20 about the RMP and Tyler has just spoken about it also, and the pressures from the YCS and Governors to ensure that children get their 30 hours of education they're entitled to. And although I've only been in the role for two weeks, on a daily basis I'm challenging that RMP with the orderly officer, who is also under pressure from the YCS to make sure that we're running the correct SSOWs. With regards to restraints, as Tyler has rightly just said, they're investigated by social services, mainly the LADO, the Local Authority Designated Officer – who doesn't even work in the prison, they work externally. They don't understand what we do in the prison, as well as safeguarding, Barnardo's, the IMB and of course the Governors. This investigation can actually lead to a mark on your DBS preventing you from working with children in the future, and I've known of social services actually turn up at some of our members' houses to investigate the welfare of the children, of their own children, because a report has obviously been put in to this LADO. It's not fair or right for our members to be subjected to this using MMPR techniques correctly and with the appropriate force. Just to clarify, MMPR does not stand for Mighty Morphing Power Rangers if any of you were under any... We go to work, as all of us do, to protect the public and help those in our care to rehabilitate and hopefully change their ways and thinking. In order to do this we need to know we are safe and can carry out our roles without fear of being investigated for doing our job.

Another point I'd like to make is how we don't have a segregation unit but a rehabilitation and reintegration unit, again, decided by the YCS. They can be placed on a Rule 49 but it's rare. I was involved in an incident where a child had a female colleague of mine in a headlock on the floor. To this day I still don't remember how I got to the head and released her, but I do remember her being dragged away from the scene by her legs and not knowing if she was breathing at the time. He was placed on the R&R but after he'd done his 72 hours they wanted him back on the wing before the girl had even come back from her duties of being off sick. I argued the case – I wasn't POA Chair at the time – and they listened to me and luckily enough they didn't bring him back. But again, that's a YCS thing because we can't segregate children.

Lastly, I'd just like to analyse what the motion wording is actually asking. We're not asking for a full-time representative, we're asking for one member to provide specific representation and, if that means one member spends 30% of their time representing the youth estate, then at least we've got representation. The POA motto is unity and strength – we need you to unite with us to support this motion to give us the strength to challenge the YCS. Thank you, Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

**CARLTON CASWELL – COMMITTEE MEMBER, WETHERBY:** Chair, NEC, retired members, invited guests, Conference. I'm nervous.

<Applause>

I ask you to support this motion. Over the years we've seen many changes – uniform from black and white to a soft uniform because of these children, brought in through the backdoor a long time ago by an NEC. No consultation with staff, just brought in. C&R – there used to be a C&R trainer. That went out the window because they brought in MMPR. We're now going through another stage of MMPR where it is being run by psychologists, not by staff, and it is all about behavioural management with reducing pain-inducing techniques. No rigid cuffs – we are now going to some sort of Velcro cuff. It's absolutely ridiculous. We've also lost all our Band 4 supervising officers because all that work has now gone on to the Band 5s. No change to the job description – they've just decided to do it. Absolutely ridiculous. We need a member of the NEC to represent us because we are just being rolled over, over and over. Colleagues, I ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, the NEC speaking against the motion. There's no doubt that the YCS is a unique estate and they've got their own attendant problems, but so has the high security estate, so has the Cat B estate, Cat C estate, the open estate and the female estate. The problem with giving one person specific responsibility for one particular area is that everybody else forgets about it then and it goes to rat shit. And that's what happens. At the moment there's three members of the NEC representing the four YCS sites. All those three members are totally committed and dedicated to ensuring that the YCS estate runs smoothly. I myself was in Warrington for a whole day last Thursday sorting out issues within Warrington, and we got some good results that day. We've also got a YCS Consultative Committee, with members from the field attending that. Regular meetings will be up and running now Covid restrictions have been relaxed. The Chair of that Committee, which is me, is the single point of contact for HMPPS on all YCS issues. Once a month there's a meeting with the YCS hierarchy attended by the National Chair, the Vice-Chair and

myself and believe me there's no punches pulled in that meeting. Helga and Mark regularly clash heads. But YCS, we've got their interests at heart, but Conference please reject this motion. Let's not put the onus on one particular person, there's three members of the NEC representing YCS at the minute. What more can we do for them? Please reject, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Terry.

**TYLER TIERNEY – COOKHAM WOOD:** Chair, Conference, NEC. If we can't have a single rep to contact, correct me if I'm wrong but the high security estate have Dave Todd as their point of contact. We're regularly told we can second OSGs onto our Committees. Why can we not second one of our NEC to do this? We're not asking for a single point of contact for every little thing that goes on inside our jails, we can still use our area reps for that. We want a specific point of contact for the YCS – the policies and procedures they're putting to us. That's what we need, that's what we want. Please support this motion, Conference, and support your colleagues in the YCS.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. To the vote then. Please cast your votes now for or against. That poll is now closed, that motion has been carried.

<Applause>

Terry McCarthy's workload is about to increase.

<Laughter>

<Applause>

I hope everyone's got your number. Look on the bright side, we'll save a fortune with all these RMP workshops in the youth custody estate, won't we? Right, where are we?

Motion 47, NEC Dave Todd. Can we have a seconder please? Thank you.

#### **Motion 47**

**The POA recognise the Ukrainian people in their struggle to maintain their sovereign state and live in a democratic society, further the POA recognizes the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian state.**

#### **NEC**

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. Happy to move this motion on behalf of the NEC. Colleagues, it's not a political motion. It's merely a support of motion 4, the people of Ukraine. We've all seen the news. We all see the horrors every single day that's happening out there – children can't play in playgrounds, landmines are being left by the Russians. It breaks your heart, it does. If it doesn't break your heart you're not human. We need to push out beyond our own boundaries. The POA are known in many, many different countries. Obviously you've seen the circular around the welfare donation that we sent, but we do need to be more international, more caring for people who are suffering. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any speakers?

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. I support this motion, not only this motion but with regards to what the media is actually saying to us with regards to what's happening. Every day we are hearing Ukraine, the people suffering. But for the last 70-odd years Palestine is suffering exactly the same and no one –

<Applause>

Because we don't see it in the media or not as often or we seem to be immune from what is actually happening. Just last week there was an American reporter who got killed by the <inaudible>. You might have heard about it. Not much media hype has been given, but exactly the same thing is happening in Ukraine unfortunately and it's been blown out of proportion. So, we should actually ask if something along for Palestine as well is actually put forward, maybe next time.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You're very welcome as a delegate to propose to your branch a motion for next year's Conference. Get it signed and ratified.

**ABDUL SAMAD – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WORMWOOD SCRUBS:** The human suffering, you know, it doesn't matter where it is. We should all actually support to <inaudible>. Please support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**VITO BELLO – CHAIR, HOLME HOUSE:** Chair, Conference. Terry McCarthy said this is not a political motion. It strikes me as being a little bit too political so I wouldn't support this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Vito. It was Dave Todd, not Terry. I know they look similar, but.

<Laughter>

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** <Inaudible>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Dave Todd to respond. Oh, hang on, we've got another speaker Dave.

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, delegate, invited guests. I call to reject the motion because I believe that they should be supporting all causes, not just picking on Ukraine. Palestine, like our colleague said, there are atrocities going on around the world and I just think picking just one – in Korea 2014 we didn't do anything. I just think now it's just that we're jumping on the bandwagon. We do need to be more international, we do need to get out there but just to pick this one – I think for next year a motion to support all atrocities, I think that we'll be putting forward at Hull. Thank you.

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Supporting this motion. I don't think he's jumping on any bandwagon. Wandsworth branch is affiliated to the Battersea and Wandsworth Trade Union Council and we recently passed a motion supporting our fellow workers and the citizens of Ukraine, having been invaded by Russia. It's what we do as trade unionists. We only have a Conference once a year so we'll never be able to get up to speed with every conflict on the planet every time it arises. It's very important to just remember as trade unionists and other trade union organisations are supporting the people of Ukraine and are condemning Russia's invasion of it. This motion does just that, like a lot of other trade unions. Check their websites, check the trades councils. You'll see that we are all doing it. Please support this motion in the spirit of trade unionism.

<Applause>

**FIKRET SINCIK – BRANCH CHAIR, MAIDSTONE:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. I'm sorry, my first time. My legs are shaking.

<Applause>

Please support the motion – but in the meantime we've just spoken about racism. We can't just pick and choose which one we're going to support, which one we're not going to support. If it's what we talk about, Palestine, if that's going on 70 years and we've never done anything about this, we're just pick and choosing who we're going to support – feels like, I don't want to say the racism, is wrong things to say. I'm against any war around the world, suffering, but we should be standing together. Support this motion. Hopefully next time we will put Palestine motions through, as well for other countries.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Dave Todd to respond.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Thank you, Chair. Just in response. Colleagues, there was a Justice for Colombia fringe meeting on yesterday – that's Colombia ticked off the box, we support them. I, along with other NEC colleagues, and there was a branch member from the floor, went to Palestine for a peace delegation. So we are in those other spaces as well. Just to answer Holme House. I'm not going to do anything political about it, all I'm doing is telling the Ukrainian people that we support them. I'm not going to follow it politically – that's why I said it's not a political motion. Thank you, Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. We'll take this to the vote. Cast your votes now please, for or against. That poll is now closed, that motion has been carried, thank you for that, Conference.

On to 48, Hewell. It's been seconded by Lincoln. Please approach with your point of order.

## Motion 48

**That Conference mandate the NEC to re-engage with the PRB.**

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair. If this one gets through, the Durham one will fail.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yes, it's been confirmed by Standing Orders that it will.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** My point of order, I think the Standing Orders Committee should have pulled this motion. I think they'll speak about giving evidence to the Pay Review Body. Engage doesn't mean that. It means joining the Pay Review Body. The Pay Review Body recently put out a job advert. I looked at it. The only problem is prison officers couldn't apply for it – the only reason was you wouldn't get any pay because it would have come to abatement. The motion says 'engage'. Engage means joining with them and I don't think that's what the motion is going to be. It's going to speak about against the Pay Review Body.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Reference to point of order, Craig, that was a point of order to raise when we were going through Standing Orders. And Standing Orders has been approved by Conference, so your point of order is out of order.

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. Our motion reads, 'That Conference mandate the NEC to re-engage with the Pay Review Body.' For too long now we have been denied the opportunity for the NEC to negotiate on our behalf with the Pay Review Body. What has this got us? Small awards for F&S staff and non-consolidated awards for closed grades.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Let me just address this point of order. If you just step aside for a moment so we can address Conference with the point of order. Thank you.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference. He's veering from the motion already. The motion states 'engage'. Engage means participate or become involved in an organisation engaging a variety of activities. It doesn't say – he's talking about something totally different, he's talking about giving evidence. Engage doesn't mean that. Engage means joining with them. We cannot do that. The issue here is that he withdraws the motion and votes against mine. That's the easy way to deal with it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Reference your point of order. I don't think he's saying that at all. I think you need to give him a chance to explain to Conference what their body of this motion is, and engage has many different interpretations depending on what dictionary you look at. Participate or become involved in a game is engage, attract the attention or involvement of someone is engage. I think we need to give this delegate the opportunity to explain the body of the motion.

<Applause>

So, my ruling to Conference is the point of order is out of order.

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Can't remember where I was now.

<Laughter>

What has this got us? Small awards for F&S staff and non-consolidated awards for closed grades, but absolutely nothing for our future pension payments. We should all receive the same – a fair award for the work we all do. We should forget about the past and the old mandate and look to the future with a new mandate that unshackles the NEC and allows them to negotiate fully with the Pay Review Body and let them get us a fair award. No matter the rank or grade, we all deserve it. The NEC need to be involved with this process from the start and not when the employer has made their decision. Conference, please allow the NEC to fight for our pay and support our motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Lincoln, do you wish to speak? Thank you.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Chair, NEC, retired members, guests, delegates, colleagues. Really important motion. As the saying goes, 'You've gotta be in it to win it.' I know we tend to get ignored but, if we're seen to be nothing, we're doing nothing. We need to be getting in there. We don't want to be like Everton. Mark like Fat Frank, has many contacts, but we don't want to be relying on Chelsea not turning up, like they did do for Leeds. We don't want to be like Derby or Sunderland – big name clubs but still getting beaten by the smaller clubs like the Mighty Lincoln City. We need support of our Union and we've got fans and members who support us, like dirty Leeds. As Leeds say, 'Marching on together' – and that's what we do. Please give them the chance and support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Paul, it's a good job I can't point of order people.

<Laughter>

The way we're going, we're going to join you in your league soon.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference. Asking you to reject it. I've never heard such utter rubbish in my bloody life! What have we ever got from this mob? I'll tell you something now, right. The Prisons Minister came here on Monday and gave a speech. Phil Copple come to our jail when he took the knee. On a book by the way when he took the knee. If you watch it, have a look at the picture. He's on a knee because I challenged him and said, 'Withdraw the pay submissions.' He says, 'They're not mine.' She confirmed it on Monday and Phil Copple confirmed it. It says here, 'HMPPS submission to the Prison Service Pay Review Body.' It wasn't HMPPS, it was the Government that put the submission in. It got that bad when they went to the oral hearing. They took two Ministers with them to make sure they shackled and said what they had to say. Go through it! You read through: 1.14; 1.18; 1.86 – Governors couldn't carry out some of this, are going to be responsible for recruitment and retention. They can't do it. It's impossible! He said yesterday they only retain one out of four staff. Why? They've done nothing for you. Done nothing for F&S, and I'll bring something else about what Copple said yesterday and Mark challenged him on. F&S. Copple is quite correct, and me and the Chair have had a little bit of a spat with Mr Copple. We took him on but he still hasn't come back with it yet. He said, 'F&S could be gone.' Well, it will be gone very shortly, as soon as the last closed grade goes F&S is finished. And if you hadn't caught up you will never catch up because they'll have got what they wanted then. It's not an independent body. We've been through this before. They follow the same guidelines. The first independent body was mentioned – they all got 6% but didn't, got 6% spread over 18 months. So we should've known then. It's nothing new this. It's an absolute shambles.

The other thing is that the POA went against the policy of this Union. So, I'm sorry, but if you're going to bring this, the POA went against our own policy again because, once we're not sitting, like I said the other day, they can turn round and say, 'We're not going to put a submission in this year.' If that's what you want them to say, you've got it now. We've got a policy now that says we don't submit, yet we've put through submissions the last year. To be fair, it's not bad but unfortunately as soon as we put that submission in it was out of date. 9% inflation. Next week it might be more or next month it might be more – therefore that will not fit in with that. Honestly, we don't want to be involved. The other point I'd say is that the POA have always said that we have collective bargaining. That's the way forward. That's what we should be trying to achieve and not going with this. I know Steve said we're going to the International Case of Human Rights. I spoke at Conference many years ago about the human rights. We got there and they said, 'What are you doing here? Should've gone to the ILO.' Now, I would imagine that <inaudible> would've gone to the barristers and took advice on that. That was poor advice in my view. We need to be doing something, but to give evidence to this – honestly they're a shambles and, if we don't get it again this year, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? He said 2% for closed grades. Just to put it in context, I got 2% or 2.5% two years ago and I got 2% or 2.5% three years ago – soon as they had given me that rise I pulled away from F&S again. F&S are never going to catch – that's still £7,000. And I'll tell you the reason why they're doing it – because closed grades wouldn't go back on to them and revert to F&S and take a £7,000 pay cut. That's what they wanted you's to do. And we're not going to do it! And the reduction in our pension. That's why we're sticking out and saying, 'No, why should we do that?'

I wrote to my MP at the time, Davey Anderson. And Davey Anderson wrote to the Justice Minister at the time, 'Why should my constituents sign for F&S?' They said, 'They shouldn't. Nobody's going to sign for a pay decrease.' But by going with these all the time, we need to make a statement saying we're not going to do it. Steve wrote a letter to them. I don't mind Steve writing letters to them. Steve wrote a letter saying everything I told you the last five years, exactly the same. He says, 'No change. In fact, it's getting worse.' The NEC will probably pull us about it afterwards and say it's incorrect. It was quoted a few years ago. When we put that submission in there it cost us £50,000 to put it together, right? £50,000 we're going to waste again. So, somebody at F&S might get a pay rise but the closed grades are not, or they'll get 2%. What's that going to do for paying for my bills? They're talking about energy bills. I read on Sky yesterday, a therm of gas was 200 pence or 250 pence three weeks ago because of the war – it's back down to 30 pence. 30 pence a therm. Bills haven't been reduced. My gas bill's gone up by £150 – my utilities bill, £150! 2% is not going to cover that. It's not going to cover my pension rise so I'm going to pull out of the pension scheme when I get home and I'm going to go into the new insurance scheme because it'll be cheaper for us – because I've got no intention of staying that long.

The bills are just going up. This is not working. It's not going to work. I don't know what the NEC is going to do when we get kicked into touch. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, WHATTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. You can't seem to shut me up now and I do apologise. My colleague from Durham, he does raise a good point. It does cost a lot of money to submit to the Pay Review Body and I completely understand where he says the last mandate for the NEC was not to engage and then during Covid they decided to. I still think that was the right decision to make to engage. We want a pay rise, let's be honest. I'm closed terms, as I'm sure my colleague from Durham is. I have not had a decent pay rise for as long as I can remember. But we're not going to get that unless we submit to the Pay Review Body, because we're just going to get the exact same we've had for the past 10 years, which is the sum of absolutely nothing. So, we need to submit to the Pay Review Board. We need to evidence why we deserve a pay rise. We need to show not only the Pay Review Body, which is our only means of asking for a pay rise, as far as I'm aware. I'm sure you'll correct me. How else would we submit that evidence? How else would we prove to the Government what we actually do and what we do on a day-to-day basis? How it affects us, how it affects our families, what we've all done through Covid and why we deserve a pay rise – if we don't submit any evidence of this. If we just sit back and then expect the Pay Review Body to come up with their own sums, we're never going to get the pay rise that we want. We're never going to get the recognition we want. And I completely understand where you're saying, we're closed terms, we've been offered from the Government submission, I think it was, 2% for closed terms. Correct me if I'm wrong because you know better than I – 5% for Fair and Sustainable. I get it, but Fair and Sustainable, they need to catch up with us and we need to submit that evidence why we should have an equal pay for all Band 3s and not this two-tier system, which frankly is disgustingly unfair and we need to evidence that. The only way we're going to do this is by submitting to the Pay Review Body. I ask you to please support this motion, engage with the Pay Review Body, evidence and prove why we need this pay rise, why we need equal pay and why we need actually to be recognised for the hard work that we do do. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Calling on you to support the motion. This is a technical motion. Craig, I love you to bits but all your comments belonged in motion 51 and that's your own motion where we debate what we do about what we submit. This is a technical motion. We, as a Conference, prevented our NEC from engaging with the Pay Review Body previously because they were completely ignoring us. And that was absolutely the right decision to make at the time. What we've done since due to Covid is that there's been a judgement made by our NEC on our behalf, outside of Conference, which is the duty to do to re-engage with a new Chair of the Pay Review Body who seems somewhat more sympathetic to the cause of prison staff. That was the right thing to do. This motion merely calls to remove that and allow them, with our permission, to re-engage. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Dave Cook on behalf of the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, Conference. Responding on behalf of the National Executive and speaking in support of the motion. Before I get actually into it I want to clarify one point. Our submissions to the Pay Review Body do not cost this Union one penny. It is absolutely at no cost to this union. I just need to clarify that point on behalf of the Union itself. Before we can get into this you need to understand why we're re-engaging or going back into the Pay Review Body, which is basically the words that are coming through. To do that you need to understand why we withdrew from it in the very first place. There's many in this hall who were not here at that time when that decision was made. You need to understand why we withdrew before you can understand why we wish to re-engage and put submissions back in.

A few years ago, when they took away our rights to strike and they injuncted this Union and took all our rights away, a compensatory mechanism was put in place a couple of years after that, after we went to courts and recognised that it was unfair treatment to the workforce. Compensatory measures were put in place. Section 128 of the Criminal Justice Act is that compensatory measure. One of those compensatory measures was the introduction of a Pay Review Body, an independent Prison Service Pay Review Body. We expected great things and the greatest thing that we were expecting was the word 'independent'. However, as time went on and each year Pay Review Body after Pay Review Body had made recommendations, it was obvious that there was massive interference from the Prisons Ministers and also from the Government. I think one of the first awards was about a 6% pay rise, which Craig alluded to, but that was staged. Rather than give it to us in one lump as what we would deserve, because we recognised that we were underpaid, the Government decided to stage it.

The Government provide a remit letter to the Pay Review Body outlining the boundaries of where they've got to look and investigate and also make their recommendation within. We disagreed with that. How can they be independent if the Government are directly interfering with them? So, after some very poor reports and everything else a motion was brought to this Conference that we withdraw from it. I was at Conference that day as a delegate, and I still believe that that was the right decision that we made, as a trade union, at that time. However, for years we didn't make any submissions or anything. We wouldn't engage with them. People were saying to us, other trade unions were saying, 'How can you not be in the room? How can you not be in there fighting for your members when they're talking about pay for your members?' We fought that off and everything else and years have shown, if you're not in it you can't win it. You can't influence from outside. And we did lose that influence.

As Paul has mentioned, we've got a new Chair of the Pay Review Body. And believe me, they are highly critical of the Government and their interference within their role. The Chair as written to the Government outlining their absolute disgust at the role. The Rules and Constitution allow the NEC to re-engage and to make decisions when Conference is not sitting. You are the ruling body of this union, except for when Conference is not sitting the NEC then make the ruling body. Doesn't mean we can do it willy-nilly or anything. We have to come up and we have to justify our decisions to you and our membership and that is rightly so. During the pandemic – and it was unfortunately some virus came along and attacked the world – we made the decision that we would re-engage because we realised that the political viewpoint had actually changed. We had a Pay Review Body that was clearly on the side of prison officers and prison staff – so we thought, you know what, we need to engage with them. So, in 2021 a pay submission was put forward and it was a good pay submission from the Union. Let me remind you, the result of that was Recommendation 3, a £3,000 pay rise to all Band 3s. That would never have happened before. OK, the Government interfered and they refused to take it on board. We challenged it legally – we were allowed to challenge it legally because we were part of that process. You can't do it if you're not part of it.

This year the NEC sat and we made another decision that we would re-engage and we would put new submissions in for this year. We've actually put in submissions and, if you look at some of the other motions, we've actually done some of the stuff on there. Once again, I believe it is a very good submission. We are at the whim of the Government and everybody else, but if we're not there we cannot represent you. We cannot give good representation for our members. The Pay Review Body comes round to your establishments to speak to you. Up to that point you couldn't talk to them because we'd withdrawn. We have to be in it to win it. And for all the points that people have spoken up there and the moving branch, about why we need to do this, it's all been said. Please support this motion and allow us to represent our members as best we can – in what is a very poor process but at least we can get something if we're there. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Would Hewell like to respond?

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Conference, with all due respect to Durham and their argument against re-engaging, what has not engaging got us? A big fat next to nothing. Unshackle our NEC, allow them to try and get us a better deal. What have we got to lose? Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, we'll take this to the vote. Cast your votes now, for or against. That poll is now closed, thank you. Conference, that motion has been carried which means 50 now falls. OK, if we go to a tea break now, have you back for twenty-past-11 please. Thank you.

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. If we can take our seats. An announcement before we carry on with motions. In regards to Robert Stitt, who's the Head of Security Team, I know he's around here somewhere – there he is. NEC, the local branch Committee of Dumfries would like to nominate Robert Stitt for a long-service award from the POA. Robert has been a prison officer and a local branch member for all of his time employed here, over 35 years.

<Applause>

He was elected onto the local Committee over 10 years ago and has served with both enthusiasm and dedication. He's not standing for re-election as he is currently part-time. That's why he's always smiling. We would greatly appreciate it if the NEC could consider this award for Robert as an acknowledgement of his service to the Union and the local membership over the years. Many thanks. And that's signed Alistair Wilson.

It gives me great pleasure to award a long-service certificate to one of the nicest men you could ever wish to meet and an essential part of our security team. Robert, come and get your certificate.

<Applause>

**ROBERT STITT – HEAD OF SECURITY:** Chair, NEC, delegates, invited guests, a great honour for me to come and help support the NEC and delegates for a few years now. An absolutely honour, just like it's an honour to get this award of recognition for my 36 years, 3 months I think it is. Great, great Union. Over the 36 years, can't fault it. I keep saying to members at Dumfries – and non-members, we've only got 5 of them. A small establishment, we've got over 100 members with about 85% take-up, the 5 non-members that we've got, I keep reiterating and telling them why, why, why? Because there will be a day that you'll need this fantastic Union association. As I say, I'm classed as a dinosaur back home in Dumfries in my home establishment, obviously because of my age and length of service. I take that as a complement. Chairman, NEC, delegates, this rubber stumps I'm now officially a dinosaur. Thank you!

<Laughter and applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Now get off me stage and get back to work!

<Laughter>

Scrutineers and tellers, you thought you were going to have an easy week. Oh no. We need your assistance. I believe you've all got ballot slips reference the electronic voting, you will tell us if you want to keep it or not, just like we used to do card votes in the past before we got all this modern tech. Can you hold those ballot slips up in the air and make sure the branch name's on them? Scrutineers and tellers go round and collect them and take them to the registration outside please when you're ready.

Have the scrutineers and tellers missed anyone? Everybody got them in? Looks like a full house. Thank you.

OK, we can progress with some motions. Motion 49, Hull. Secunder for this motion please. 51, sorry! Well done Dave. It's my Vice Chair confusing me, because I thought we were on 49.

**VARIOUS SPEAKERS:** 49.

Because it's about allowances – yes, I was right! Thank you for confirming that, Conference. It is 49, Hull, and we have a secunder from Scrubs.

#### **Motion 49**

**That the NEC should engage with the HMPPS Pay Review Body to have staff awarded additional pay, to be further negotiated, for every additional role/specialism they undertake as part of their job.**

#### **HULL**

**JORDAN COMBBS, BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Mr Raab, the Prisons Minister, Phil Copple – all have spoken with us letting us know about the plans for the future with their White Paper. Now, no matter how many times the Minister tries to reinvent the wheel, without staff being treated fairly and getting they pay they deserve for the work they do, we'll undoubtedly see a continuation of retention issues. So, what did Mr Raab and the Minister and Phil all have for us in their addresses to us? It wasn't a pay rise, was it? It was a load of thank yous. Last time I was on the phone to British Gas, they wouldn't accept thank yous. First aid, ACT assessing, negotiators – all crucial roles in our prison system, all voluntary, all unpaid. But don't worry, because you'll get a thank you. It's simply unacceptable and we're not asking for the world in this motion, just to be paid

what we're worth for doing the jobs that we do. It's been touched on a few times about younger members of staff maybe lacking a bit of knowledge about trade union movement in the past and it's something that I certainly was guilty of myself. I joined the job at 22 years old. I'm nearly 30 now – I know I look a bit older, it was a tough paper round – and when I looked at the job when I was 22, I had a few managers coming up to me going, 'Do ACT assessing, it'll put you in good stead for the future. Do your negotiators.' I'm there, being a professional badge collector at the beginning, getting everything on my sash going, yeah, I'll do negotiates, I'll do ACT assessing. It wasn't until I joined the Union and then later on came on the Committee that I thought, why am I doing this? What is the reason for me doing this? What have I got from my ACT assessing? A chair thrown at me, a fist thrown at me. What have I got from my negotiators? A drain cover thrown at me and the occasional thank you. And I think one of the big issues that we face at the minute is younger members of staff, like myself, who are getting – not forced but let's just say very heavily encouraged into taking these additional roles on. And we don't understand the damage that we're doing to all of us just by volunteering for these. So please support the motion and let's get paid for what we deserve.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said.

**IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT:** Chair, NEC, Conference, at Wymott one of our young in-service members took to haranguing reps, asking, 'What are you doing about my three grand?' Obviously at local level we are restricted in what we can do to influence pay. That said, we did raise it with the Governor and the DDC. The DDC's answer was, as expected, textbook – 'If I could give a double-digit pay award I would.' Collective shrugging of the problem goes right up the food chain. Why do we not see Governors or directors speaking out like <inaudible>? In fact these days not speaking out is the key to promotion within the Prison Service. Manage by not managing. So back to the £3,000, our retort was, 'What you doing about it?' Simply, why would anyone pay for something when you can get it for free? The penny seems to have dropped locally. Conference, remember you can't spend a thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Dave Cook for the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the National Executive. With your permission Chair, I'd just like to clarify one point reference motion 48. And whilst that motion has been carried, that will not prevent this trade union from pursuing the policy of free collective bargaining, including the right to take industrial action, so that we will still be pursuing that motion whilst we still engage with the Prison Service Pay Review Body. Thank you Chair.

Speaking in support of this motion for all the reasons that have actually been said so far, and I'm actually going to cut my time down because he's nicked most of what I was going to say. I sit in on the health and safety meetings, the Whitleys with the employer. They're introducing a new first aid policy. There wasn't that much wrong with the old policy. They've now brought a new policy in. The problem with this is, that policy is built on staff volunteering to become first aid workers. They're looking for volunteers to do this. One of the issues that they have with the trial sites that they actually put this in, and trialled this policy, is the fact is they can't get enough people trained in first aid to address the legislative requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and they're saying to us, 'What can we do? Why can't we get these volunteers?' And I've got to be honest. Joe Simpson's answer is every time, 'Pay them. Pay them an allowance for the work that you want them to do.' ACT assessment, there is massive responsibility on an individual who's carrying out an ACT assessment, it's about life and everything else. Do they get paid for that? Absolutely not. But because of volunteering, they could find themselves in a Coroner's Court and having everything else taken away from them if it was deemed that they acted wrongly. Negotiators, Tornado, we're doing this for free. We should not be classed as charity workers. We should and must be paid for the work that we actually do. I need to clarify one point on the motion itself. It says here, 'To be further negotiated'. Pay submissions are not a negotiation. We submit the pay evidence to the pay review body along with the employer and along with other recognised trade unions and then it is considered. It's not a negotiation. However, if you look at this year's pay submission we did actually write in there about paying our staff for the work that they're actually doing on a voluntary basis. But I also have to understand the employer's point – why am I going to pay for something I'm getting for free? So we need to educate our members as well. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply from Hull?

**JORDAN COMMBS, BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, NEC, sorry, just one last bit on this last bit of paper that I missed.

<Laughter>

I've got to say, I took my time to have a look last night. I was interested with the 9% inflation figure at the moment. Turns out the 9% inflation figure is an average for the inflation figure. If you actually break down the numbers from the Institute of Fiscal Studies, the poorest 10% of households in the country are actually facing 10.9% inflation. The top 10% of households are facing 7.9%. We're living in a two-tiered society at the moment and everyone up to the 50% of households, those bottom 50, are roughly averaging 9.9% inflation. So please support this motion as I can't keep taking 10% pay cuts. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. OK, let's cast our votes on motion 49. For or against. And that poll is now closed. That motion

has been carried.

On to motion 51, I'd like to invite Durham up to start the debate. It is a debate, so no seconder required.

### Motion 51

**That Conference debate the POA pay submissions and the impact below-inflation pay awards have had on POA members.**

### DURHAM

**JON NEWTON, BRANCH CHAIR – DURHAM:** Chair, NEC, Conference, for years we've received below-inflation pay rises. Durham branch say it has to stop. What was once a decent-paid job has now become a less-attractive and a far less-viable career choice. The hard-working staff in prisons are in effect slapped in the face by our employer and Government every year. Not only has the pay rise also slipped back six months, and those few who do receive something get it backdated without interest, but increments are disguised as a pay rise and falsifies figures and statistics for Government. The introduction of historically a less-than-independent Pay Review Body has been a con. We've been mugged and had our right to strike taken away for free. The pay review are a smokescreen for Government to award nothing. They're Government puppets. POA submissions are published on the POA website for all to see. That's been done against the previous Conference motion, I'm sure with the best intention but what's the point of the motion if NEC go against it? I'm not sure if all that work of putting together and putting forward pay submissions is actually a waste of time but I do know that we have to do something. It is not acceptable that we are more or less forced into doing overtime just to make ends meet. What's been said previously is maybe the focus should be on getting back our right to strike and pursuing collective bargaining. Conference, there's lots of opinions here. Join the debate and voice them.

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY, LINCOLN:** Colleagues, NEC, invited guests, thank you Durham for bringing this debate and, like my previous colleague, I do encourage you to get in because pay is the most divisive tool our employers have got and the main gripe from our members. As I said earlier, you've got to be in it to win it. I'm not going to mention football teams this time, so that still leaves me free to mention Derby and Sunderland for the Chuckle Brothers behind me, but I remember why we withdrew from the pay submissions. At that Conference we had submitted the best pay submission that I'd ever seen in my time, and I still believe it was a magnificent thing. It covered all the points that we wanted to do and it was ignored. So, I felt at the time that we were totally correct to withdraw because they weren't listening to us at all.

We've now had the pandemic and suddenly in my opinion it is time to reengage. I've looked down the agenda. Motion 54 brought by Durham is superb as far as I'm concerned because it's giving us a base level of where we start, starting with inflation pay rises minimum. You need to catch up with us, employers. To our employers at the back, I'll just tell you a little story. I went to Asda the other day and I did my shopping and I got to the checkout – she told me how much it was and I clapped. And funnily enough they still wanted paying! I couldn't believe it. So from my depleted wage already they wanted more money. So let's listen, the allegedly independent Pay Review Body, to pay our full amount that we are due. And colleagues, your support behind motion 54 as I do believe that is a really good motion. Our employers, a fair pay rise and listening to that will retain our staff, so let's get our submission correct and support the NEC. Thank you everybody.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers for this debate? Over to Jackie Marshall.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking in this debate on behalf of the NEC. I'm sure most of you are aware that following the Pay Review Body recommendations in 2015, we stopped engaging with them and challenged their independence. For several years no submissions were put in by the POA. In 2020 after continually attacking and questioning their independence, particularly around the remit letter from Government, there was a shift. This shift was demonstrated by their recommendations in 2020, particularly Recommendation 3, which the government didn't accept and refused to pay. So in 2021 we put submissions in both written and oral, and we did it again this year. As Dave Cook said, it didn't cost us anything other than time. Hours and hours of work goes into the written submissions. They're not something we take lightly and they're not written on the back of a fag packet. The below-inflation pay awards or nil pay awards that we've had over recent years have been nothing but a pay cut. We've got members using food banks – and that was before all the rises that we've just had in gas, electric, National Insurance and everything else.

Prisons Minister Victoria Atkins was here earlier in the week and she said we're the unsung heroes of the justice system. 'Thanks to your professionalism, commitment, more prisoners didn't die in the pandemic. We value your hard work. Pay matters to you so it matters to me.' She talked about the highly trained sniffer dogs and their handlers. 'I know how passionate and determined you are to rehabilitate offenders. We value you and we want a career path for you and your members. You do a tough job.' She assured us that they'll take the Pay Review Body recommendations seriously but she didn't make any promises. And what have the department put in their pay recommendations? 2% for closed grades – absolutely appalling, and nothing but another pay cut. And they wonder why they're losing hundreds of frontline prison staff every month. Everything is going up except for our wages and the number of prison staff, because their recruitment and retention isn't working. Think about what Mark said in his opening speech and what was said for motion 49. If you can't remember, take a look at the verbatim report or the live stream. Make them pay us what we're worth. Thank you Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do you know what, you can say another word, of course you can!

**JON NEWTON, BRANCH CHAIR – DURHAM:** I'd just like to add, Conference, hopefully Lord Attlee, if he's still here, will have listened and understands our collective frustration and disappointment with Government. Take that back.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you for that debate. There's no need for a vote on that so we're straight on to motion 52 and Hull. Do we have a seconder for Hull please? Thank you Brinsford.

### Motion 52

**That all band 3 staff are paid equally to the same top pay scale. At band 2, 4 and 5 the difference is minimal, at band 3 its 20%.**

### HULL

**JORDAN COMBBS, BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests, we've heard a lot about pay this week from all corners of the spectrum – the Chair, Lords, Conference colleagues, Ministers, yesterday Phil Copple. At present the majority of Band 3s, around 30% of F&S we believe, please correct me if I'm wrong, are paid around £6,000 less than the closed grades, a gap of about 20%. This has been the same since the ill-fated <inaudible> scheme was launched in around 2009, which then became Fair & Sustainable, a joke in name itself. An officer 2 joining in 2009 would have earned today around £70,000 less than a closed-grade colleague doing the same job. So not only is this low pay stopping people from joining the service, once they're in the pay gap is causing people to leave. We need all staff on the same top pay-scale, which rewards experience and motivates people to stay. All parties seem to agree pay needs to be improved but talk is cheap. What we need to see in the service is action from the Ministers. Please support this motion for equal pay scales.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Hull. Brinsford, do you need to speak on this? No? OK. Lincoln are on a roll.

**PAUL WRAY – LINCOLN:** NEC, colleagues, invited guests, just to make a point, what we are asking for, or I do understand Hull are asking for, is to ensure that the new Fair & Sustainable grades are risen to the closed grades' rate of pay. Because I know what you lot are like at the back there. You'll see that and think right, NEC and Conference is endorsing you to cut our wages on closed terms and conditions. We want a fair day's pay, we want our fair rate and all our members to be on the same. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Can't see any more speakers so I'll hand over to Geoff Willetts, responding on behalf of the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. I'd like to thank Hull for bringing this motion to Conference that highlights the pay disparity between Band 3 officers. The unfair grading of our members has been evident over the years with a financial impact to our members' livelihoods, with ever-increasing costs. This is something that NEC recognise and have included this in a recent POA pay submissions to the Pay Review Body. Therefore we ask you to support this motion. Thank you Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply from Hull?

**JORDAN COOMBS, BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests, I'd just like to say thank you for Lincoln for pointing that out. That's what experience brings. First time at Conference and I will learn the lesson that, when we say these type of things. And you can imagine the employer thinking, 'Conference said drop 'em all down', so thank you very much Lincoln.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** First time at Conference, just give your name for verbatim please.

**KEV BRANKLING, BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Oh sorry, Kev Brankling, HMP Hull.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** And he deserves a round of applause – first time at Conference.

**KEV BRANKLING, BRANCH COMMITTEE HULL:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, we'll take that to the vote. Cast your votes now please.

That poll is now closed and that's carried.

On to motion number 53 and Durham.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER – DURHAM:** Permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, just a show of hands will do. Durham wish to withdraw this motion. If you approve that, please show now. Thank you, Conference. That's withdrawn.

Motion 54, Durham.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER – DURHAM:** Permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Again Conference, if you give Durham permission to withdraw, please show your hands now. Thank you Conference. 54 is withdrawn.

On to 55 Durham.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER – DURHAM:** Permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, same again. Please show your permission to withdraw. Just a show of hands will do. Thank you Durham, that's withdrawn.

55 Rislely. Sorry, 56 Rislely.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER – RISLEY:** Permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Permission to withdraw, Conference. Same again, just a show of hands. Rislely, that's been withdrawn. Thank you.

57 Frankland. Secunder for Frankland please? Full Sutton, thank you.

#### **Motion 57**

**The NEC engage with employer to gain an increase in the 17.5% unsocial hours allowance.**

#### **FRANKLAND**

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, motion reads the NEC engage with the employer to gain an increase in the 17% unsocial hours allowance. Since our branch proposed this motion, the POA has asked for an uplift in this allowance in their submissions to the Pay Review Body, as have HMPPS. It appears that both parties agree that it needs to be increased. So in a way this motion's partially achieved I suppose, but until we get the 17% increase we need to keep on pushing for it. This allowance has never been uplifted since F&S came in. We've already heard this week that most POA members are working weekly averages of 20-30% in unsocial hours and beyond. Just please support this motion, it's a way of trying to get us more money. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Full Sutton, do you wish to speak?

**FULL SUTTON:** No.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** I've got a slight query on this. Is it a 17.5% for the F&S or is it 17.5% included for the closed grade, because the closed grade already have the 17.5% build into their salary so if it went up would the closed grades get an increase as well?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I think Frankland will confirm that when they reply to the NEC. Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, responding on behalf of the NEC and happy to support a good motion from Frankland. And clearly in the submissions you saw we've already done it. Craig, we've asked it for everybody. Whether the Pay Review Body will consider that or not, whether Government will as well, is another thing. So yes, good motion, we support.

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Just for Craig, I think Dave has answered that one. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Frankland. Straight to the vote then please Conference. Cast your votes now, for or against. OK, that poll is now closed. That motion has been carried.

On to 58, Moorland. Secunder for Moorland please?

## Motion 58

**Conference instructs the NEC to seek an operational allowance for all front line staff because clearly the unsocial hours allowance as it stands does not provide adequate recompense for the additional challenges they face.**

## MOORLAND

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** This motion has been brought today and it will make a real change to how we are paid but ultimately to give the employer the ability to recognise our frontline duties. Currently we do receive an unsociable hours allowance. Our proposal would be to change this to an operational allowance. The 17% we currently receive is not adequate compensation for the operational duties that we do. It's not enough for the additional work, it's not enough for the additional responsibilities and it is not enough for the additional training and everything that we face on a daily basis. The current allowance of 17% has remained unchanged for almost 10 years. An operational allowance recognises our operational role and, most importantly, would allow the employer to give a pay rise to that allowance, just like our Governors get. I know you may be worried or afraid of this major change that you would see to the payslips, but it is important that serious consideration is given to the benefits that it could unlock for our members. Let's allow the NEC to do what we elect them to do, which is to negotiate a positive change, and let's back them to undertake this vital work. We are a frontline emergency service and our pay should reflect this. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers? Dave Cook for the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR:** Chair, Conference, speaking in support of the motion. To be honest we're already doing a lot of this and, in the last pay submission we put in, we mentioned an operational allowance for frontline staff. The question now is, because we've actually carried motion 57, which says we're actually going to try and increase the unsocial allowance to make it more reflective of the role that we do, this motion is now asking for us to actually remove it at that point, so there is a bit of a clarification within that point itself.

Yes, unfortunately within the pay scales and the pay and everything and that, the unsociable allowance is becoming very, very blurred as to who should and should not get it. And we're finding examples throughout the prisons estate and elsewhere where some people are getting it who are not operational staff and frontline workers. Therefore that's actually saying there, where is the recognition for those who actually walk the landings and face these dangers and the role that they need to do day after day after day? If HMPPS have allowed that line to become blurred, then we have the right to now turn round and say, 'You now need to put an operational allowance in place that fully reflects the roles and responsibility of frontline workers working in our prisons.' Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Moorland to reply? You OK? Straight to the vote then. Please cast your votes now. And that poll is now closed. That motion has been carried.

On to 59, Preston. Seconder for Preston please. Kirkham, thank you.

## Motion 59

**Conference instructs the NEC to include a shift allowance for carrying out Orderly Officers duties, in any future submission to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB).**

## PRESTON

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Trying to cut me off here before I start!

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You've got a green light. Make the most of it before it starts flashing red!

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** I don't like red. NEC, Chair, Conference, I know you're all sat there thinking – why is he stood up there with a Conference motion? Well, I'll tell you why. Because I've got 20 Band 5s who do – well 18 of them do orderly officer duties in the prison and often what they say to me is, 'What do you do for me? All you do is stand here and rip me to pieces every day because I'm not following the RMP.' But they're my members. They're our members in every jail and they're only a small group of people that we want to kick the crap out of every day, don't we? Because it's their fault that our Governors don't give them the resources to actually run the regime. Because it ain't your Governors, with the suits sat in the offices, that are running it. No, no, no. It's our members, Band 5 orderly officers, and from what I'm told there's enough of them sat in this room today so hopefully we'll get some support for this. So, for clarity, Paul Malliband, started in the Prison Service as an OSG on a temporary contract, yeah? Then left because there was no prospect of becoming an officer. And as soon as I left the suits at the back introduced a succession programme for OSGs to become officers, so I applied to come back in within the 12 months and they made sure that they didn't let me come back for 13 months so it couldn't be classed as continuous employment – fantastic! 2003, that. And I became an officer. A Governor once said to me some time ago, 'When am I ever going to see you sat over the other side of the table taking some responsibility?' 'What do you mean?' 'Well, when are you actually going to become a supervising officer or a CM?' And my response was, 'Please go easy. I'm not that incompetent!'

<Applause>

That is really tongue in cheek and it was for his benefit and not for our members, who painstakingly, day in and day out, come into the jail at half-six in the morning to a ravaged detail that they then somehow have to juggle to make sure that we can deliver the regime that the Governor wants us to deliver while he's sat drinking his coffee in his office, knowing full well we can't, and then comes down and kicks the crap out of the CM. And then I come along and kick the crap out of the CM, and they don't know whether they're coming or going half the time. It is not acceptable. The PGA Conference this year will have a motion on its floor from duty governors asking for a bonus when they carry out duty governor duties. Well I'd like to find one of them people when things are going wrong at Preston because they're hiding in their offices or they're claiming that they're dealing with adjudications and stuff. It's not good enough. I said to my Governor recently, and we'd just had two DICs at Preston, 'Are you going to be there accounting for what potentially we did or didn't do that day?' And his response was, 'No, it'll be the orderly officer. They were in charge of the jail.' There you have it in a nutshell.

Phil Cople, monotoned as he was – yeah, I actually think that he's like that because the Tory Ministers have destroyed him to that point! It's not us that's done that to him, it's them, because he's talking to a brick wall! Because he can't even get what he needs to run the service and he knows it. I'm glad Mark didn't give him an empty box because he can sit and look at the fact that we actually valued him more than his employer did when he came and spoke to us. He said, and I quote, that 'the Pay Review Body's recommendations are not unaffordable'. That's what he said. He actually said that there, so why isn't he making sure that they implement Recommendation 3 that they refused to put in place? I'll tell you why, and we hear it on this Conference floor. Why are we afraid to be political? I've been a political animal since I was 10. I lived my first strike at school because the school dinners were crap.

<Laughter>

And we barricaded ourselves in the dinner hall and they brought the police. And an headmaster stood there with a megaphone shouting at me through a door, 'Come out or we'll get you arrested.' I went, 'You don't know anything about the law. I can't be arrested under 12.'

<Laughter>

It's in us, isn't it? Orderly officers accountable for everything that goes on in the prison, everything! I don't want them re-JESed. Somebody said to me the other day, 'Well JES gives them their pay.' OK, £38 grand top CM wage, 38 grand – all-night orderly officers are CMs, 38 grand a year with everything that goes wrong at night. It's not acceptable. Not when Band 7 Governors are on what, £48-50,000. For what? Do they come in when we ring them up in the middle of the night? No, do they hell. 'Get on with it!' 'We've three escorts out. We haven't got a C&R team in the prison.' They're not interested. They don't get off their backsides but their rules say they should come in. They don't. It would be a small amount. I've not asked for it to be re-JESed for a reason. Because if we re-JES it, we have to re-JES everything above it and they're already getting enough money. By God have they been looked after by the Government! Everything above Band 7 and 8, just happen not to be POA members them, don't they? Band 8s and above. They've been looked after. Their pay rises are OK. Their pay rises have equalled or exceeded inflation. They might not this year. I won't be going to my pocket for my tissues for them. It's a small amount of money for the responsibility that we're asking for and we want it as an allowance. I haven't said how much but I want some recognition for our Band 5s for the responsibility they take trying to look after us and run a regime for Governors who don't give a crap, for the responsibility and the decisions they make because they're the first people who get called to a Coroner's Court. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**SARAH PAGE – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM:** I've been up here once and now you're not going to get rid of me. I just want to share some statistics with you, sorry it took me a while. I was going to come up for one of the previous ones. I recently applied for a job at Border Force. Glad I didn't get it or I wouldn't be here standing up for our rights right now. So, to be a Border Force officer, you're on X amount of money. Just to let you know their allowances: Heathrow 20-40%, Gatwick 39%, Dover/Folkstone 43-48%, Bristol 35%, Portsmouth 40% and Luton 40%. We need to be standing up for what we deserve. Please support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Dave Cook for the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking against the motion. I fully understand where this is coming from and why it's been brought to this Conference today. I've been stood there on many, many days on shift and everything else as an orderly officer, trying to pull things together and fix a broken regime. But I do not believe that actually providing an allowance is the answer. First of all it's divisive. At the end of the day, Band 5s are not the only ones who work in very complex and very difficult roles that they actually do. There are many other members of our Union who do very complex and difficult roles. Why are we not rewarding them? More importantly, rather than giving them a small amount of an allowance, what we should be doing is tackling the amount of work that is being put upon the shoulders of our Band 5s. Giving them a few quid does not reduce the amount of anxiety and stress that they go through every day they're at work. What does is addressing the workload that's being fed from above and put onto our Band 5s' shoulders. Time after time after time, the NEC sit in meetings with the employer when they come up with new schemes and new ideas and everything, and one thing we always ask is, 'And who's going to do this work?' And the answer comes back, time after time after time, the Band 5. This is the same time, by the way, that your Band 5s now have to meet with all of us every two months as part of the performance management plan that they're putting in place. Christ alive, I couldn't do my staff SPDRs because of the amount of work that was being thrust upon my shoulders, and now the employer seems to think that, somewhere within the glass or the pot, there are spare hours for our Band 5s to do this. It's not good enough. We do not reward this by giving them a few quid. It will not help our members. Tackle the workload. Take away the complexity. Give them the support

they need. Throwing a few quid at them isn't going to keep them safe. It's not going to keep them away from harm. Fully understand why this is here, but we're getting it wrong. Don't throw a few quid at them, don't think that is going to buy their continued working and everything else. Give them the skills and knowledge that they need to do the role that they're being asked to do, but more importantly reduce the amount of work or increase the number of staff resources in our prisons to help them. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Preston to respond? No, OK. Let's take it to the vote then. Cast your votes now please. That poll is now closed. As you can see, that motion is lost. Conference, just to announce the results of the ballot for those who returned the slips: in favour of electronic voting to continue at next year's Conference, 90. Against 4. Abstentions 1. So we will continue with electronic voting. Thank you for directing us with that. I'm going to draw this morning's proceedings to a close there, and ask you to reconvene at 2 o'clock for our first guest speaker. Thank you Conference.

<LUNCH BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference, I'll bring you to order.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER:** Point of order! Chair, delegates, invited guests, my point of order is I had a branch meeting on the final motions that were sent out as a branch sector. Today I find we've got an extra motion, number 64 – it's now in the booklets we've been supplied at Conference. Point of order is how can that be on the motion paper if it wasn't sent out as a final branch circular? 64 is in the booklet – it wasn't in the one that we voted on as branches prior to coming to Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** It was an emergency motion that was sent out as an emergency motion.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER:** So I had a branch meeting and I voted on the booklet that my branch gave me a mandate for. How do I vote on that if I haven't got a mandate for that? This should have been sent out before these booklets were supplied. We haven't got it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** The emergency motion came in after the booklets were published. That's why it was an emergency motion.

**UNKOWN SPEAKER:** So has this been adopted by Standing Orders then?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference adopted Standing Orders, so point of order is out of order. Thank you. Conference, just a few announcements. First of all Steve McKenna from Northumberland, ex-Brixton and Newcastle supporter, it's his birthday today so wish him a happy birthday.

<Applause>

There's nothing like your mates stitching you up at Conference, is there?

We also have another guest speaker, Doug Nichols, who's Chair of the GFTU, General Federation of Trade Unions, which we're affiliated to. He'll just be telling you what's on offer for you as branch reps, free of charge, because we're part of that organisation. And I'm pleased to announce that we now have our first guest speaker of today – Grahame Morris MP, a massive supporter of the POA. Grahame has indicated that after his speech he's happy to take questions from the floor, so it would be useful for you to grill a backbench Labour MP and enquire why the Labour Party are not doing things that you would like them to do on your behalf, or the difficulties that you've got in your branches that you wish him to take forward. So, feel free to question him on anything he addresses you about today.

Grahame Morris has been a Labour MP for Easington in County Durham since 2010. He's a long-standing champion of the POA's campaigns in Parliament, working with the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group asking Ministers written and oral questions, submitting early day motions and raising issues on behalf of members in debates. Most recently he introduced his Prisons (Violence) Bill, which seeks to establish a specific duty on HMPPS and private prison operators to minimise violence in prisons. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Grahame Morris MP to address Conference.

<Applause>

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** Thanks very much indeed, and thanks Chair, Executives and delegates – thanks very much indeed for the invitation. I also want to express thanks as well for the support that the POA gives to the Durham Miners' Gala. It doesn't go unnoticed that the POA have been such fantastic supporters of the Gala over a number of years. And we've had some difficult times and I know you haven't met as delegates at the Conference for two or three years, and similarly the Durham Miners' Gala has been in abeyance because of the pandemic, so we're looking forward to welcoming perhaps many of you here today to Durham on the 2nd Saturday in July. So, can I bring solidarity and greetings from the Durham Miners' Association too?

It's an absolute pleasure to be here and I'm delighted to accept the invitation. There have been so many changes – the political landscape's changed quite dramatically since the last POA Conference, but members are still facing exactly the same challenges of being undervalued, a lack of recognition, poor pay, harsh terms and often quite dangerous conditions. So I want to begin by acknowledging what a challenging three years it's been for you and

for your members, and to express appreciation for your efforts. I know all too often prison officers are overlooked. We stood and clapped for frontline workers at the height of the pandemic but we should never forget the contribution that's been made by prison officers to maintaining the fabric and infrastructure of our society and keeping us safe. I know that for months on end many of you faced critical staffing shortages as well as risks to your own personal health, and I want to pay tribute to every one of you for your perseverance and for your contribution. I can assure you it is appreciated.

We can all remember the warm words and gestures from Government Ministers about key workers. Sadly however, but not unsurprisingly, this hasn't materialised into real-world thanks in terms of pay rises or genuine improvements to terms and conditions. To advance trade union campaigns over the past three years, the POA have been in the vanguard and have continued to sponsor the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group, of which I'm proud to be a member. It's a coalition, the POA and its sister unions – Napo, the probation officers' union, the PCS, the UCU that represent prison educators, and the Police Federation of England and Wales. So once again, thanks for your valuable support. It is a very useful forum to discuss issues of common concern in the criminal justice sector and to support, that is really noteworthy. There's over 100 MPs who are working cross-party as members of this Group, the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group, and these are MPs and Peers, members of the House of Lords, they make up the bulk of the POA's parliamentary support and they have made numerous interventions on behalf of the Union, including asking written and oral questions on behalf of the Union, tabling early day motions (EDMs), which are a kind of an expression of opinion in an attempt to get Ministers to change policy or acknowledge a particular issue, participated in debates, in select committee sessions, in legislation that affects prison officers, and we've written letters to Ministers on a range of issues including the retirement age, because we know that 68's too late in terms of retirement age for yourselves in such a physically demanding and often threatening work environment.

I was asked to say some words about my Ten-Minute Rule Bill. I brought that forward in the last session of Parliament. The formal title was the Prisons (Violence) Bill. It sought to establish a duty on Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and private prison operators to minimise violence in prisons. Informally we referred to it as the Safe Inside Law – and again seeking to bring forward legislation to minimise violence in prisons. Sadly, despite receiving cross-party support, my Bill fell when Parliament was prorogued last month in late April. And sadly we've just had the Queen's Speech, it concluded yesterday, and there was no mention of prison legislation amongst the 30 Bills in the Queen's Speech. However, I'm determined that this Bill's not going to be lost and I intend to secure another slot – I've entered the ballot – and bring it before the House again because legislation is desperately needed.

I understand the Prisons Minister, Ms Atkins, addressed the Conference earlier in the week and when I presented my Bill there was some cross-party support – Labour MPs and Scottish Nationalist MPs, Welsh Nationalist MPs and members of the Conservative Party on the Government benches, who were supportive of it. And the Minister sat on the front bench nodding in approval. So I thought well, this is a shoe-in this, we're going to get this through. But unfortunately that wasn't the case. The sky-high levels of violence plaguing our prisons makes rehabilitation particularly difficult. Many think it's almost impossible. Meaning, offenders are often leaving prisons more damaged and dangerous than when they arrive.

I was chatting, when I was picking up my credentials, to one of the officials about the terrible death of David Amess, and he was one of the officers who was escorting him for his court appearance. These are individuals that you have to deal with on a daily basis and that needs to be acknowledged and recognised. If we don't make the necessary interventions, if we don't have the resources, what's going to happen is we're going to see more reoffending, see a revolving door of reoffending that clogs up the criminal justice system, costing tens of billions of pounds a year and causing misery for millions of victims and their loved ones, who have to live with the consequences of more crime. When the Prison Strategy White Paper was published, it was a golden opportunity for urgently needed change, and indeed my Bill, the Safe Inside Bill, aligned with the White Paper's stated aim to reduce prison violence. And in fact what we did was we used the same terminology, the framework of key performance indicators, KPIs – or management targets as some of us might say in old money – to achieve this. And indeed KPIs are already used in private prisons to reward or penalise operators, but the Government's new strategy extends these targets and adds new ones to public sector prisons too. It's obvious these new KPIs need to include safety, safety for both prisoners and for staff, but curiously this commitment is entirely missing from the White Paper. Essentially my Bill sought to correct this omission and it would have enshrined a statutory duty on prison management, whether they're in the public sector or the private sector, to minimise violence both to staff and to prisoners – and if KPIs are the method that the Government are choosing, that's exactly the avenue that I sought to use in my Bill and put forward as a proposal.

Currently, I'm sure you'll be aware that the only prison safety targets and the only assaults that are counted are serious assaults, which must involve hospital treatment. This definition needs to be extended to all kinds of violence if Ministers are serious about zero-tolerance approach to bad behaviour in our prisons. Penalties could include fines for both public and private sector operators and the money raised going towards making injury compensation schemes fit for purpose by widening the scope of claims, removing the unfair barriers throughout the process and lifting awards to reflect the bravery and commitment shown by prison officers and indeed other workers who are involved in this sector.

Even Ministers accept that staff cuts of more than 25% in the name of austerity have triggered this crisis. We've witnessed their recent rush to recruit more prison officers but it's absolutely clear, resignations are going through the roof and the number of officers leaving the service, even with the latest recruitment campaign, is far higher than the numbers joining. I've had a recent experience, Chair, of a good friend of mine who applied to be a prison officer and went through the whole training process, and within his first week of starting work he said, 'This isn't for me. I can't hack it.' So it is extremely demanding and it isn't a simple matter to recruit the right calibre of staff and there must be the levels of support and the levels of remuneration to reflect those responsibilities. The White Paper actually calls for an additional 5,000 prison officers to run the new generation of private prisons, but how will they do this in the light of their latest failed recruitment drive?

The second part of my Bill sought to enshrine into law a range of initiatives designed to protect prisoners and staff from violence and encourage staff, especially prison officers, to remain in the job. I firmly believe that the experience of yourselves, your collective experience as prison officers on the ground, should inform policy and legislation. Now Mark said, he gave me a little bit of advice before, he said if you can share with us how our members can best engage with Members of Parliament to influence policy. Well this is another example. I'm a County Durham MP. My constituency is Easington – it was formally a coal-mining area. I've got the Coast of County Durham and there's quite a number of prisons, not in my constituency but within easy travelling distance, so a lot of my constituents are prison officers and it does have an impact when, individually and collectively, prison officers, or any group of workers, write, email or contact their Member of Parliament. And it's quite powerful. And if that's done in an organised way,

so it isn't just the MP for Easington raising issues, but if it's done right across the country and people are making their views known to their elected representative, whichever party they're in – I mean I'm a Labour MP, but there are Tories, there are Conservative MPs, who were supportive of what we were trying to do. So it is important and it does have an impact. Please be assured of that.

As such, my Bill was largely informed by the Safe Inside Charter, by discussions that I've had with prison officers, both officials and individual members in my constituency. And I thought what I'd put forward was a set of reasonable and straightforward principles for a safer system of work, and it was endorsed by the Joint Unions in Prison Alliance, which is a coalition of nine national prison unions, including the Prison Officers Association, the University and College Union representing the prison educators, the Royal College of Nursing, the BMA, the probation union Napo, and the PCS, Unison, GMB and my own union, Unite. And these unions have long called for the Ministry of Justice to adopt the Charter and mandate other prison employers in the private sector do the same. But there are other vital steps that must be taken to hold on to staff, to improve staff retention. Make the Government accept all the Pay Review Body recommendations, including the £3,000 pay rise for entry-level prison officers, and make future advice from the review body legally binding on Government. Cancel all plans for new private prisons until we can get to grips with the explosion of violence in our prisons because the figures clearly demonstrate that private prisons are up to 50% more violent than publicly run prisons. Bring prison officer pension age back down to 60. It's not just an issue for those approaching retirement. It's an issue for those who are entering the service, because 68 is just too late for those who are engaged in physically demanding and potentially hazardous occupations, like being a prison officer, where you're having to grapple with people who are far younger and fitter, and many with malicious intent.

<Applause>

I'm not used to applause – I'll go on a bit further!

<Laughter>

Above all, my aim with the Bill that I was putting forward was to focus minds on the terrible conditions facing prison officers, and indeed prisoners, and to start a national conversation about how we can resolve this crisis. But it's time to put words into action. I get a bit weary – I was in a meeting yesterday with the Cancer Minister, who represents a constituency quite near here, I think it's pronounced Lewes although I thought it was Lews. But I met Maria Caulfield and we went through the process, gave her a six-point action plan on Catch Up with Cancer. We had leading cancer specialists – oncologists, therapeutic radiologists, academics – and she said, 'You know, we don't have a ringfenced budget for cancer.' I said, 'Well I understand that but politics, especially party politics, is about political choices and we had a ringfenced budget for HS2 and we had a ringfenced budget for the Elizabeth Line, for Crossrail 2. We had a ringfenced budget for the Cancer Drugs Fund. So if the political will is there, then the action should follow.' And if the political will is there to tackle a crisis in our prisons, to address the recruitment and retention crisis, then these issues can be resolved, but it requires a political commitment either from this Government or a subsequent Government who understands and is prepared to put words into action. Please continue to put pressure on your own MPs – email them, make them aware of the issues you face. It's too easy, when you're working in a closed environment with high walls, to remain insular, but please, please understand that it does have an impact. So thank you once again for inviting me to speak. I'm more than happy to answer questions. I'm going to be here for the rest of the day, so if you want to chat to me privately I'm more than happy for you to take that opportunity. So, please do come and speak to me and share any issues or matters that you want me to raise, because it's your own experiences that should inform the views and actions of politicians and I'm more than happy to do that. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Over to Conference. You've got the perfect opportunity to grill an MP. Now is your opportunity. Anybody like to ask any questions? You've got off lightly here, Grahame! I've got a few points for you Grahame. So, in order for Labour to convince people to vote for them, particularly prison officers, they're going to have to pledge in their manifesto that you restore our right to strike back, that you restore our retirement age to 60. And to convince public-sector workers to vote for you, you're going to have to pledge that you will give them above-inflation pay rises. Is that a possibility?

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** It is a possibility. I think it's more than a possibility, but it requires individual and collective effort to persuade the people who are in a position to deliver that change that this is the right way forward. I've been sacked twice, so I'm sackless now! The second time I was sacked was because I didn't believe in the public-sector pay freeze and I spoke out against it, because my view – and we were in opposition at the time, the Labour Party, I was junior PPS in the Shadow Treasury Team under Ed Balls. I think if you want to persuade millions of people, millions of electors that your party is worthy of electoral support, you've got to give them a peg to hang their hat on. And if what you're offering is a sustained pay freeze when the cost of living is rising – we know about the gas bills, the energy bills, the increased price of food and fuel, about the National Insurance increase, about the levels of inflation – it's just not sustainable. And when a Pay Review Body, a Government-appointed Pay Review Body makes recommendations, they should be implemented. That's not revolutionary, is it? I don't think it is. I think that's reasonable and I think it's quite reasonable that we make those points both within my party and more broadly, and seek support from the people that we elect. As for the issue of retirement age, I think there's an irrefutable case to bring the retirement age down for prison officers. I don't think it's sustainable. And that in itself is having an impact on recruitment, because people look at the alternatives. There's quite a few of the security staff in Parliament I've been chatting to recently who were prison officers, who've left the service because of the pressures and the aggravation that they're facing, and they've opted for better terms and conditions. So, unless Ministers and politicians are prepared to acknowledge that and to take some action, then the situation is only going to get worse.

There was some interesting information that's just come out today. I don't know if you had a chance to see it? It flashed up on the news alerts on my phone. Two things actually that are relevant. I was going to mention in my remarks, but the Government have announced an additional 1,500 probation officers are going to be appointed at a cost of £300 million. That's laudable, but if you don't get the basic nature of the problem, if prisons aren't able to offer the levels of rehabilitation, opportunities to take up, training opportunities, apprenticeships, so that people are aware that there is an opportunity to turn their lives around and improve their lot, we just get into this vicious cycle, this revolving door, where the criminal justice system is choked up. We

see the same people reoffending, their behaviour in prison deteriorates. People who join the Prison Service because they see rehabilitation is a vital part, hand-in-glove with being incarcerated and punished for breaking the law, that there should be an element of rehabilitation where that's possible. The Education Select Committee – that's chaired by a Tory, Robert Halfon, who I think is the MP for Harlow – has produced a report today about prison education where it's hugely critical of the Government's failure to recognise the value of the prison education service. I think they've called it Another Brick in the Wall. It must be a pun on Pink Floyd's track. But the pieces of the jigsaw are all there if someone's willing to put them together. I don't think there's a single magic bullet. So, I don't think reducing the pension age by itself or giving the right to strike by itself is going to solve the problem. I think we need a kind of a broad-spectrum antibiotic. We need to fight this on a number of fronts. We need to address the issue of staffing, we need to address the issue of pay, terms and conditions, we need to reduce the retirement age down to 60, we need to get rehabilitation and the prison education service functioning the way it should because there's enormous benefits in that. Otherwise we're just going to face an explosion in the prison population with very little prospect of actually turning people's lives around. So I think there's an awful lot that can be done. I don't decry the 1,500 new probation officers. I think that's part of the solution, but it can't be just seen in isolation. We've got to tackle the basic problem and the basic problem is within our own prisons.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Grahame.

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** I'll try and give a shorter answer.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, you won't be able to give a short answer to this one! Could you just explain to the delegates the whip system in Parliament and the sanctions you face if you defied a whip, and just highlight how difficult it is for you, as an opposition party, to actually influence anything in Parliament because of the Tory majority?

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** Yes. Well, that's a really good question. The whip system applies – it's a method of party discipline across all parties – and the Conservatives have a majority of 80, although they've lost a couple of by-elections recently. I think there's another one in the pipeline. But they have a huge parliamentary majority so it's very difficult in the current circumstances. In the last Parliament, when Jeremy Corbyn was the leader, we actually defeated the Government 40 times – 40 times! It seems a dim and distance memory. But of course at that point in time there were a group of about 20 Tory rebels, including some very high-profile MPs, Anna Soubry, the former Solicitor General, and a number of others, who were prepared to vote against their own Government. There's precious few are prepared to do it there now. Many of the newly elected Conservative MPs in what are referred to as 'red wall' seats – and I'm from County Durham and until the 2019 election all seven Members of Parliament from Durham were Labour and now only three are, and four are Conservatives. So they've got a huge majority even though their majorities are quite small by comparison. They have a huge parliamentary majority, so it's difficult to defeat the government. The House of Lords is a different kettle of fish. The cross-benchers, and even some Conservative MPs, are more open to argument and seem to be less subject to the rigours of the lash, sorry, of the whip.

<Laughter>

The Chief Whip is affectionately at the Head Lasher where I live. But there are a number of sanctions that can be applied. You can be put on various committees, delegated legislation committees, statutory instruments, bill committees. It's usually considered a punishment to serve on the Finance Bill Committee. I think I've done five in my twelve years! And I did try, the last time – it wasn't the current Chief, it was a different one, to protest my innocence, and I did do in Ian Mearns and Ian Lavery as the potential individuals, but just for good measure she put them on the Finance Bill as well. I did point out collective punishment was forbidden under the Fourth Geneva Convention but it didn't cut any mustard.

<Laughter>

There are things that the party whips can do to make your life difficult and they have control over the office accommodation as well, so you can end up sharing an office or sitting in the cloisters or whatever, and of course they can stop you going away on visits that interfere with the parliamentary schedule – select committee trips and so on that prevent you doing that. They used to be able to remove you from select committees, but since the Wright Reforms – Tony Wright was the MP for Southampton – and since the Wright Reforms were introduced the whole House now votes on the composition and the chairs of select committees, rather than the whips picking them. So, they no longer have that power. But yeah, there are things they can do and they can make your life very difficult. Putting you on bill committees that are sitting late in the night and on Fridays and so on, when you want to spend time in your constituency and do your constituency engagements and surgeries and so on. I don't know if that answers the question, Mark.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yeah, it does. It sounds like bullying to me if you ask me!

<Laughter>

And finally, Grahame, there's been a lot of female politicians from across the spectrum come out and disclose incidents of sexism and misogyny. I'm just wondering, what are Parliament doing to tackle that and what are the Labour Party doing?

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** Excellent question, and even quite recently we've had some examples of that. There was a report that was published, initiated commission by the Speaker of the House of Commons, and there are mechanisms where staff and members can report initially anonymously their concerns about inappropriate behaviour, bullying or sexual harassment, and there are mechanisms in place to identify those individuals. They then refer to the Standards and Privileges Committee and a number of MPs have been forced to resign and have lost their seats as a result. So there are procedures that are now in place that weren't previously, and it is possible for both staff and members to access them.

I was a bit concerned today – in fact a journalist from the Sunday Times contacted me, not about sexual harassment, it was about failures of the

ambulance service in the northeast, the Northeast Ambulance Service. And there have been some absolutely appalling failures and delays in the service, culminating in an individual from my constituency, an old man who had a fall. He was hanging some washing up and he fell onto a spiked fence and the spikes punctured his lung, and it took an hour and a half for the ambulance to come. And his daughter, who was a nurse, was giving him CPR and begging them to send the ambulance and to put it in the highest category, and her father died in her arms. Now it's not the first case – that's a particularly awful example – it's not the first case that we've had of failures in the ambulance service. And indeed a whistleblower had identified some of the – some of this is down to staffing, not having enough trained crews available, not deploying enough resource. Individuals within the service on the front line had blown the whistle and identified the problems. And senior managers had sanctioned them, took action against them and covered up the failures they'd identified, which could, if corrected, have saved lives – including the life of my constituent, because they had identified these failings some years ago. So it is important that we protect whistleblowers and that we take what they say seriously. I'm not suggesting for a minute that there aren't individuals who've got their own agendas, but we should have openness and transparency and there should be protection for whistleblowers. I'm concerned that one of the Bills in the Queen's Speech, one of the 38 Bills, removes that right that was hard fought for. So there are things that we've been doing. I hope those systems are in place in the Prison Service.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Grahame. Well you've always been a magnificent supporter of the POA. We appreciate absolutely everything you do for us, especially when you ask those awkward questions that the Prisons Minister doesn't like to answer and bats away. Thank you for your continued support and please stay there while I show you a token of our appreciation. Conference, Grahame Morris MP.

<Applause>

**GRAHAME MORRIS MP:** Thanks very much.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. We'll get a couple of motions out the way before we invite our next guest speaker to address you.

We're on to motion 60 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you Cardiff. Steve Gillan for the NEC.

#### Motion 60

**This Conference express concerns with the Governments White Paper on Prisons (2021) as yet another media stunt and a further tinkering at the edges of what they believe is wrong with our Prisons rather than dealing with the real issues.**

**Conference calls upon the NEC to call for the motion passed in 2014 to be enacted by Government,**

**That Conference accept that the role of the Prison Officer and all operational grades, including the remuneration package as a whole has fallen behind other civil servants and professionals from the public and private sector due to the Government austerity measures and constant drive for efficiency savings.**

**Therefore, the POA call on the Government to set up a Royal Commission to look at Prisons, their role within the Criminal Justice System and society as a whole.**

**The POA call for a major public enquiry into this matter of great importance, which should involve research and consultation, both with experts, the relevant trade unions and the public. The results to be published and recommendations acted upon by Government.**

**We believe this a more sensible option to look at the service to cease the political points scoring and deliver a first-class prison service which the public needs and deserves.**

#### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thanks very much, Chair. Conference, delegates, just before I move the motion there, Grahame Morris does a lot of parliamentary work for us, as you know. That's what our political fund is all about so when you start recruiting members, make sure that they tick the box for the political fund. It's not about affiliation to the Labour Party. It's so that we can do our parliamentary work with all parties, to help you and to help our wider membership. There seems to be this myth that if you tick the political fund box, it's just for one specific party and it's not. Of course there are unions that are affiliated to the Labour Party and they use the political fund specifically for that. We're not one of those unions, but we do find the political fund is very helpful – very useful and it makes us able to carry out our political work with all politicians of all parties on your behalf.

Grahame also mentioned that the POA are big supporters of the Durham Miners' Gala. And we are – he's absolutely right on that. And I've been very privileged, on two occasions as General Secretary, to be asked to speak at the Durham Miners' Gala. And it's probably up there with the highlights of me being General Secretary to get our stories across to large audiences in the wider trade union movement. And God rest his soul, the late David Hopper was a champion of POA members as well. I've got to take my hate off to Durham branch because they open up the club on the day. If you've never been to the Durham Miners' Gala, please try and attend. It's probably one of the best trade union movement issues that we want to continue and we will continue to support the Durham Miners' Gala. And the DMA are massive supporters of the POA as well.

This motion, we moved in 2014 and you'll see it written down. I'm not going to read it all out. But I've got to say as well, we need to reinvigorate that.

And it's actually on the back, mainly, of what Grahame Morris was speaking about and all that parliamentary work – and I'll be speaking to Grahame later to see if he can get this in some of the speeches in relation, in the House of Commons, to coal – if you pass this motion for a Royal Commission.

What is a Royal Commission? A Royal Commission is a major ad hoc formal public enquiry into a defined issue. It is independent of Government and takes experts as an independent panel that have got more authority than probably a judge has. We've had them in the UK before, we've also had them in the Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia, etc. We know – and I'm not going to go into everything because we've done it all week, about the crisis in the Prison Service around pay, terms, conditions, the right to strike. If with devolved responsibility in Scotland for the criminal justice system, if they can restore the right to strike in Scotland, they can restore the right to strike in England and Wales and Northern Ireland service. That's the reality.

But I want to make clear when this goes forward, if you support it – it's about the Government's White Paper in prisons. That's about England and Wales. The reality is we wouldn't be asking for the Royal Commission to look at Scottish prisons because we haven't actually discussed it with our Scottish National Committee – who as I say, they've got the Scottish Government there, devolved responsibility, and it's the same for our colleagues in Northern Ireland. We would want to discuss that further in Northern Ireland with the area Committee. So this is specifically at the moment about England and Wales, public and private prisons, so that we can finally get it out into a public inquiry about the state of our prisons – the terms, conditions, the pay and all the issues so that it gets a public hearing, rather than hiding all the time about the issues that affect our brave men and women working each day on behalf of the country.

So I actually think this is a good motion. The last time that it was passed in 2014, it fell on deaf ears. They didn't want to do it because they try and silence everything. The reality is, we will use our political fund for our allies in Parliament across the board. Conservative Party – we've got some decent MPs there that are on our side. We've also got in the Labour Party many MPs that are on our side, such as the Grahame Morris of this world, and others. You know who they are. You see them speaking on our behalf in Parliament all the time. Mark and I, if it's passed, will continue dialogue with Government as well to try and raise these issues on your behalf. It's about time that we sorted our prisons out once and for all and made them fit for purpose – professionalise it so that you are paid a decent wage, so there isn't a recruitment and retention issue, that we get the rewards that we thoroughly deserve as a trade union, with expert evidence given by the POA as the only recognised Union for the grades that are represented in the Prison Service and in the private sector as well. So I commend this motion to you. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Would anyone like to speak on this motion? OK, we'll take it to the vote. Please cast your votes now for or against. And that poll is now closed. That has been carried. Thank you for that. We will take that forward.

We're going to do one more motion before I invite our next guest speaker to address you. That is motion 61 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### **Motion 61**

**Conference we are seeing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which have now reached a tipping point for so many in our communities. The figures are devastating for one of the richest nations in the world and highlight the inequality of the UK in 2020.**

**The Trussell Trust reports in 2021 they have seen an increase of 11% in the issue of emergency food parcels but more alarmingly between April and September 2021, almost 2,000 parcels were provided for children every day on average, compared to almost 1,700 in 2019.**

**Therefore, Conference endorse and support the campaign for the right to food by calling for Enshrining the 'Right To Food' into law which would clarify Government obligations on food poverty and would introduce legal avenues to hold Government bodies accountable for violations.**

### **NEC**

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on motion 61. Conference, this is something that's been close to my heart for 12 years. And I remember when Steve Gillan stitched me – I mean gave me the pensions portfolio and I was dealing with a person called Danny Alexander. Does anybody remember him? He was the Chief Secretary at the Treasury. He was Lib Dem when the Tories joined with the Lib Dems to form a Government in 2010, and we were arguing with him because he was one of the instigators to take away our pension and take it from 60 up to State Pension Age. And one of the reasons why he was saying that was because he turned round and said, 'We need that money so we can reinvest it into social and into the people of this country.' A week later, he was in the press opening a food bank in his constituency and he was dead proud of that! Dead proud of that, thought it was great. I wrote him an email and to this day I'm still waiting for a reply. I don't think he liked it when I started it with, 'Dear Cloth-head!'

<Laughter>

Conference, the right to food and its variations is a human right protecting the right of people to feed themselves in dignity, implying that sufficient food is available – that people have the means to access it and that it adequately meets the individual's dietary needs. The right to food protects the right of all human beings to be free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right to food doesn't imply that the Government has to give free

food. However, if people are deprived of access to food for reasons beyond their control, the right requires the Government to provide food directly.

Conference, we were supposed to be joined this week by Ian Byrne MP, and I've seen him speak on this and he has started the Right to Food Campaign. And I heard him speak a couple of times on it and he joined with the Fans for Foodbanks in Merseyside to start this campaign in order that people will have – or there will be legislation to make this a legal requirement of every Government. And in his address he's saying that something must change. And with him partnering with a grassroots organisations – I don't know if you've seen it on the TV, sometimes Ian Byrne is outside I believe Liverpool ground, Anfield, and other football grounds, and football fans actually when they're going to the game drop off food parcels for those people to come in. I spend a lot of time in South Shields and I've been doing a lot of work with the Veterans Agency and doing food parcels for them. Some of those veterans, who I've met, are in a poor state and they need this Bill as well. And the reason why the National Executive Committee decided to bring it was because we needed to lend our voice to this campaign as a trade union. In March 2022 the Right to Food Campaign wrote and delivered an open letter to Chancellor Rishi Sunak, and they asked him to make the right choice to end food poverty by making provision for five key campaign asks. And it's CHOICE written down the left – so the C: Children in Britain should not be going hungry. The Right to Food Campaign calls for universal free school meals. H: How much money is factored in for food when setting minimum/living wages and benefits? Government to state how much of minimum/living wages and benefits on which people are expected to live is for food. The O: One in three children in Britain currently live below the poverty line, leading to health and life expectancy inequality, malnutrition, obesity and other problems. We call for the right to food to be enshrined in law. I: Independent enforcement of legislation. Right to food legislation must be accompanied by oversight and enforcement powers granted to a new, independent regulatory body that will hold Government to account. C: Community kitchens provide a workable solution. Government should fund dining clubs and meals on wheels services for the elderly and vulnerable, school holiday meals for those in need and cookery clubs for the wider community. And E: Ensured food security. Government must ensure food security and take this duty into account when setting competition, planning, transport, local government and all other policy.

Conference, we are allegedly the sixth-richest nation in the world and our children go to school on empty bellies. And when they're away from school, when they're on school holidays, sometimes they don't get any food at all. That is an absolute disgrace and it shouldn't be tolerated.

Conference, we need this legislation as quickly as possible because some of our members are on minimum wage. Some of our members who are off sick for whatever reason and go on to half pay and nil pay, they will need this legislation, so Government will assist them in order that they can eat. Conference, it is a really important campaign and I hope that you will support this motion so we can lend our voice to it. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any speakers, Conference? <Inaudible>

<Applause>

**JORDON BRANDOM – BRANCH SECRETARY, NOTTINGHAM:** Chair, NEC, Conference, as you can see, unlike my colleague at Preston, I've never had to strike about a food bank.

<Laughter>

So here we are. We at Nottingham, we fully support this motion and we'd like to explain why. Rent in Nottingham has risen faster than Nottingham Forest's rise back to the Premier League, or as I like to remind Jeff, <inaudible> demise!

The first three days of our staffs' working week is just to satisfy the greedy landlords in our city. These are then surviving on the crumbs of earnings which they have to choose to feed their families or themselves. Just as recent as last week, we have had members come forward and explain that they can't afford to get to work or they are struggling with bills. In fairness to our Governor, he instantly acted on this and, although he doesn't have the power to raise wages, he created a food bank for those staff in need. He asked for donations from anyone that can afford to, and while this is a temporary solution we are so proud of the staff that have come together.

Like a lot of you, at HMP Nottingham we currently over have 70% of staff on new terms and conditions and we have now more and more experienced staff leaving in droves. This statement alone highlights that most of our staff are on the lower end of the pay scale. Pay is only the start of this crisis though. Rising bills, fuel prices and food costs are impacting more and more, where the Government's choices are forcing us all to go into poverty. The fact that officers have to make these vital choices shows what the Government think of the staff in our jobs. We ask you all to support this motion so we can get the NEC to put pressure on the Government and actually get them to take some accountability. Thank you.

<Applause>

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** I wasn't going to get up on this but Joe hinted on schools and stuff like that and I alluded to when I spoke before. My daughter just started teaching and she loves the job but she'd only been there about a month or so and she noticed these kids coming to her school in inner-city Manchester were hungry. So, she went to the headmaster and said, 'Look, can you give me some money so I can buy a toaster?' So he did. He gave her about £25 and she bought a toaster. Now, out of her own money she was buying loaves of bread every day, butter and jam, out of her own wage, which was poor anyway. But she spoke to me about it and I thought, that can't be right in 21st century Britain, but it's happening. So please support the motion.

<Applause>

**JOHN DICKSON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** I just got a text from one of my Committee members and it's quite apposite for this actually. It's written by a fellow called Andrew Davison – don't know who he is, but he says, 'Lee Anderson MP says food banks are unnecessary as with better cooking and budgeting people could make meals for 30 pence a day.' I would like to note, MPs claim £25 a day subsistence for food and, in the interests of levelling up, I suggest it is reduced to 90p a day. That's what they should be looking at colleagues, that's how they should be doing it, and let's see the proper levelling up. The other thing I've got for you – I was happening to watch a news article round about the Wolverhampton/Birmingham sort of area, I think it was, and there was a fly on the wall thing where they were actually going round and interviewing people – and sadly a gentleman came up and they asked him who he was voting for in the next election and he said, 'The Tory Party, I'm voting Conservative.' 'Oh, why is that?' 'Because they've just introduced a new food bank.' That is the sad indictment of today's society, colleagues, where people think food banks are a bloody good thing. Please support this motion!

<Applause>

**RICKI McNEIL – BRANCH SECRETARY, HMP BERWYN:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm going to tell you a story, it's personal. Food banks, amazing things. You think it cannae happen to you – it's only people who are on a lower wage? No. I got a story. Me and my wife, we got into let's say financial difficulties. OK, we're too proud, we're both prison officers, we're too proud to ask for help but the pastor of my church suddenly turned up at my door, two bags of food from a food bank. He took my car keys and away and filled my car up and gave us £100 from the church. Food banks, it's anybody that falls into hardship, OK? And it shouldn't be the case. The Government should be doing something about it to make sure that people don't get into that position in the first place. I was on a good wage and it still happened to me. OK, probably bad decisions financially on me and my wife's part, but it can happen to you. So food banks are brilliant, I support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Ricki. Thank you Conference, and thank you Ricki for sharing that, very brave of you. Thank you. To the vote then Conference. Cast your votes now. And we can close that poll now and as you can see, that has been carried.

Conference, before our break I'm just going to introduce Doug Nicholls, who's the General Secretary of GFTU, which we affiliate to. I caught him on the hop. He only came out for a loaf of bread and a pint of milk, but I thought while he's here he might as well explain to Conference what's actually on offer from GFTU, free of charge. You might come across a training course that you like the look of – you can access it totally free. And Doug, I'm reading this from Wikipedia, so you could end up as a mass murder by the time I've finished!

It says Doug Nicholls is a British trade union leader and a writer. He was a part-time youth worker in Oxford in 1975 when he joined the Community and Youth Workers' Union, CYWU. In 1982 he moved to Coventry to work full time in the field and in 1987 he was elected as General Secretary of the CYWU. He was Secretary of the Coventry Trade Union Council in 1984 to 1994 and the Secretary of the Coventry Miners' Support Committee during the Great Strike from '84 to '85. In 2007 Doug took the CYWU into a merger with the Transport and General Workers' Union. A few months later, the Transport and General Workers' Union became part of Unite the union and Doug served as the National Secretary of Unite until 2011. Doug was elected to the Executive of the General Federation of Trade Unions in 1995 and served as its President from 2007 until 2009. He was elected as the Federation's General Secretary in 2012. Please show your appreciation for our good friend Doug Nicholls.

**DOUG NICHOLLS – GENERAL SECRETARY, GFTU:** Thank you Mark. Steve, Joe, other friends – many of whom in the room we've seen on our education courses and we've been working with closely since you came into affiliation – it really is a great pleasure to be with you. One of the great things about the GFTU is we say we are like a family, and we mean it. We build close, abiding friendships and we look after each other. And at our Executive meetings we go round the table with all of the 27 unions just to get an idea of what their key concerns are and what they're doing and what their real pressures are. And over the years since your affiliation, either Steve or Joe have been presenting the issues that the POA faces. And you can hear the jaws dropping around the room and you can hear also the great respect now that more unions have for the work of prison officers and of the struggles of the POA. It's nothing short of miraculous what you do and there is huge respect for the incredibly important social role that you play against all the odds, all the odds. We're pleased as a GFTU to give all the support we possibly can on your central concerns.

And let me just say something first about the question of collective bargaining. It's related to the last moving debate that Joe and others moved. It relates to the question of poverty. In this country, the huge gap between the rich and the poor started to narrow just after the Great Strike of 1926. That's when all the statistics show that the difference between the super-rich and our people started to narrow. And over the years it kept narrowing and narrowing, because unions became bigger, became stronger, and they fought for collective bargaining, the right to determine the value of your labour in negotiations with your employers. And we were successful. The unions grew, collective bargaining coverage grew and grew and grew until 1979/1980 – 80% of workplaces were covered by collective bargaining. And it was also around that time that we saw the greatest narrowing between extreme richness and the poverty of our people. We saw greater equality. And the percentage of the gross domestic product of the country that went into wages and into our pockets was far greater than it is now – and there were no food banks of course. So collective bargaining has a direct relationship to the question of poverty and inequality, and that's why we're so committed at the GFTU to support every inch of the way of your struggle to get the basic right of free collective bargaining restored to prison officers. And a couple of questions come to my mind in your campaign. When watching all the documentaries and hearing your Union's issues in the Prison Service – I don't know what your position is on this or whether it's controversial or not – but it seems inappropriate to me, even if individuals are absolutely brilliant, that people are expected to do your demanding work at the age of 18, but even more unacceptable that they're expected, if they join at 18, to work 50 years until they're 68 before they can get the pension.

<Applause>

So we're with you all the way, brothers and sisters, and the GFTU, you may have looked at the article I did for your journal, the Gatelodge, in Winter '21, where I set out some of the many, many benefits to individual members of affiliated unions like yourselves, to branches of affiliated unions and to the national union itself, of being part of the GFTU family. The GFTU goes back 125 years and it was one of the main bodies in Britain, one of the

main bodies that fought for the welfare state. I was given a skip-load, literally a skip-load of documents once that someone had found about the history of the GFTU, huge ledgers, great big leather ledgers they'd found, where trade unionists would come to the GFTU in times of need – when they had no pensions, when they'd been locked out for their trade union activity, when there'd been a fatality or a serious injury in the family etc. They would come to the GFTU, which had pooled resources from the pockets of working people, to create a humungous fund to help workers in difficulty. It was the unions that provided directly that welfare provision in times of need – unemployment, illness and all the rest of it. It was the unions that provided it and, alongside it, campaigned for the creation of the welfare state. And in fact, when the welfare state was eventually won, the GFTU had a big conference to decide what its future would be and some said, 'Well we've won it now. We'll give up. We'll dissolve the organisation.' But others said, 'No, there'll be a permanent need for a trade union federation supporting small and specialist trade unions and enabling them to keep independent and providing them with services. But above all' – they said at that time – 'there's a need for improved trade union education.' And one of our many services, I think there's about 70 that we provide to individuals and unions, is the provision of free education, and that's not determined by anyone. Curriculum is planned by us, by our affiliated unions and their education officers. We get together and we decide what's the best way of learning, and what are the best subjects to learn.

So have a look at our website GFTU.org.uk for the whole range of courses that you're entitled to, free of charge by and large, from the GFTU to help your development within your Union and to help promote trade unionism generally. There's a new round of reps courses being advertised at the moment and we've completely redesigned the curriculum there to make sure that they are meaningful and taught in an exciting way, and that unions who come together on those courses share their best experience. So have a look at those. But also, and again in relation to the debate you've just had, we've got some seminars coming up on economics – not a word that many of us like using a great deal, and a word that is deliberately misused to bamboozle and confuse people about the state of the real economy. The economy is not like the weather. It doesn't just happen randomly. It happens because of actual active decisions being taken by the companies and the people in high places and the people elected to make these kind of decisions. So, when you see more and more of our elderly – not just facing that decision as to whether to heat or eat but actually facing acute illnesses caused by the cold, and I'm dreading this winter I tell you, in terms of what's going to happen to many of our elderly population – when you see the real suffering that this is causing for our people and then the next day you see the £5 billion profits going into just the pockets of the shareholders of one of the energy companies, you know that there are decisions being taken that we can reverse and that are wrong. So, we've got some of the greatest economists in the land who are on the trade unions' side doing some seminars for us in June to really get to grips with what's becoming too familiar as the cost-of-living crisis. A completely unnecessary set of measures to make it more difficult and endure suffering for our people that need not be there, can easily be reversed. So we want to get some inspiration back into the movement about straightforward measures that we can make to reverse these kind of things.

So education, as always in the trade union movement, is at the absolute centre of us thinking about the decisions that need to be taken – and that can be reversed if they're wrong – that we as a movement can push along. Much of our education takes place in our brilliant hotel in a place called Quorn, near Loughborough, and that's open not just for the Union, which thanks very much to Joe and Steve holds lots of its own education events there, but it's open to you as individual members if you need a bit of relaxation and a little break away in the nice countryside of Leicestershire, at discount rates of course. So that's an asset for you there as well. Also alongside a whole range of other discounted and other products that can help you as an individual or the branches. But we're not selling a range of services just like that. We're selling the solidarity, traditional, of the Labour movement for each other.

And I've been my whole life in the trade union movement, most of it as a General Secretary, and I think this year is the most challenging year that we've faced. We had a hard time when Thatcher was there, getting rid of all the industrial productive economy, but now it really has got beyond a joke. And I think that call to come together on June 18th through the TUC to make our voices heard, as we haven't done for very many years, is a vital call – but the ongoing work that we do together in organisations like the GFTU is even more important than it's ever been. That sharing and caring, that solidarity between all of the unions, is much more vital now than ever. I've just been on the phone to Ian Lawrence of the National Association of Probation Officers, your sister union. He sends his greetings, as do all of our 27 unions and our affiliates. And I was just thinking that it was Napo that reversed the privatisation of the Probation Service. It looked as though that was going to be a forever disaster, a total calamity that would not be easily reversed, but a small, dedicated, strong, united campaigning union reversed the completely ridiculous privatisation of probation and that was a great victory. And I'm looking forward also to the day when POA, with our support and others, makes sure that all of the prison system is where it should be – like gas and energy and water and all the rest of it – in public hands. So, there's lots for us to do and we can do it, even if unions seem relatively small and sometimes isolated. The President of the GFTU was involved in a recent battle against fire and rehire. Much against my fears at the time, the determination in a relatively small town reversed the decision of a big, notorious employer to fire and rehire. So it can be done. It can be done despite this inclement weather that we're in, and we look forward to doing more of it and having more victories and seeing more of you at GFTU events over the coming period. It's a pleasure to be with you and good luck with the rest of your Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Doug. It's always a pleasure to listen to you speak. You'll always be very welcome at POA Conference. The General Secretary's just informed me that, as long as you're not averse to moths, he's going to open his wallet and take you for a drink for your attendance today! Conference, please show your appreciation for Doug Nicholls.

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference. Just for your notation, in relation to motion 64, I can confirm that circular 7 of 2022 was sent to all branches on 29th April. We'll break there for tea, back at 25-to-four please. Thank you.

<BREAK>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference, if we start to take our seats. Conference, our next guest speaker is Barry Gardiner

MP. Barry Gardiner was first elected to Parliament in 1997 as the MP for Brent North. Locally, people refer to Barry as one of our most effective politicians – he gets things done. Nationally, he pioneers changes to our laws in the House of Commons and is a hugely effective campaigner. From roles in the Shadow Cabinet to being affectionately referred to as ‘The People’s Gardiner’, Barry’s current campaign to end fire and rehire has seen a huge response from across the labour movement and across the political spectrum. Despite support from across Parliament, the Government decided to talk out Barry’s end fire and rehire bill and promised to bring forward their own proposals – a promise they have now, of course, reneged on. Barry’s campaign goes on and we will continue fighting for better worker rights until this evil is no more. Barry is one of the hardest-working MPs I know and one of the nicest fellows ever. Please welcome Barry Gardiner to address conference.

<Applause>

**BARRY GARDINER MP:** Conference, thanks. It’s great to be with you and the only trouble is there’s no way I can ever live up to the introduction. But let me just start by telling you what happened when I first decided to do the campaign on fire and rehire. I’d talked to people about it and they said, ‘No, no, no, don’t worry. It doesn’t matter, it doesn’t apply to me. You see, I’ve got a contract.’ And people just could not understand that they had a legal document, a contract that said as long as they performed these services, did this, produced that, then they had a job and they had terms and conditions. And they didn’t understand how it was possible to be just told that you’re fired when you’ve done nothing wrong. There are ways you can be fired in English law. You can be fired for gross misconduct – a few MPs that might benefit from being fired on that one. You can be fired because of incapacity – so, if you’re long-term sick and can’t perform your work. You could be fired for some sort of statutory one – so, if you’re an HGV driver, for example, and you lose your licence then obviously you can’t perform your job. The trouble is that there’s another reason that you can fire somebody in English law and that is ‘some other substantial reason’. Some other substantial reason – it’s a catch-all. And what employers do is they say, ‘Oh well, we need to restructure the business because otherwise we’re going to go into liquidation or we’re not going to be competitive.’ And in the past, the courts have been reluctant to look beyond that. They simply say, ‘Well, it is a substantial reason,’ and the courts don’t bother to look and find out whether it’s actually true or not that they need to do this otherwise they’re going into liquidation.

It always was the case that this could happen as a last resort. But certainly what happened in the pandemic was that employers began taking advantage of this legal loophole to restructure and to do so without necessarily having to pay redundancy. You see, if you fire somebody because they refuse to sign a new contract – a contract that takes £5,000, £10,000, sometimes £15,000 off your wages, that changes your terms and conditions, changes your shift patterns so that you can’t see your kids at the weekend – if you refuse to sign that new contract you can be fired simply for refusing to sign that new contract because it’s ‘some other substantial reason’.

This is what has been happening up and down the country and, when I won the private members’ ballot – I don’t know if you know what a private members’ ballot is but basically it’s just like your school tombola. If you’re an MP you put your name into the hat. If your name gets plucked out, instead of winning a bottle of whisky, you win parliamentary time and you’re allowed to then decide what you want to do with that parliamentary time, what piece of legislation you want to introduce, and you’re given the time to get it onto the statute book. You can only do it on a Friday morning when nobody else is there, or few are actually there, but you do get the time to do it. And as long as you get fair wind you can go into Committee, you can pass all through the parliamentary stages and you can actually get it onto the statute book.

So, I looked at this and I thought, ‘This is just wrong, there’s no two ways about it.’ Nobody, nobody, that I have ever met in over a year’s campaigning on this has stood up and told me, ‘Well, actually I think it’s right. I think this is what should be done.’ Even the Prime Minister, even the Prime Minister has actually said it’s unacceptable. You’ve got Jacob Rees-Mogg, who stands up on his hind legs and says, ‘I tell all my capitalist friends that this is no way to do capitalism.’ So when I was looking around for a Bill that I thought, ‘Maybe we’ve got some chance of getting this onto the statute book,’ I thought, ‘Hey, this has got to be a winner. Nobody thinks it’s right, even the bloody Tories don’t think it’s – sorry, the Tories don’t think it’s right. So we’ve got a real chance of doing something here.’ If I’m honest, the other reason I wanted to do it was because I knew it was something that, in the labour movement, could unite everybody in the Labour Party and the labour movement. Because, quite honestly, I get very fed up when we spend more time fighting amongst ourselves than actually fighting the Government and trying to fix things.

So that was the reason that I chose this Bill, because everybody agreed with it. At least they did when they spoke, they did when they spoke. And I’ve seen some of the most awful examples of fire and rehire. You wouldn’t believe some of the companies that are doing it, whether it’s British Gas, British Airways, Go North West buses, Tesco’s, Asda. Who had Weetabix this morning for breakfast? Anybody eat Weetabix for breakfast? Nobody’s owning up to it – that’s good because they’re another one that’s been doing fire and rehire. All of these companies.

Clarks Shoes – look at what you’re wearing on your feet – Clarks Shoes, founded in 1824 by two Quakers, two Quaker brothers. They set up a model village in Street in Somerset. I don’t know if you’ve ever been there – it’s one of the prettiest little places you could ever imagine. They built these houses for their workers, absolutely beautiful. Those guys would be turning in their grave to see what Clarks Shoes has done to its workforce and the way in which they’ve been trying to get them fired and rehired. When I was down there on the demonstration, I have to tell you, there was one of the guys – we were on that green, that little green in front of the Clarks Shoes place – and he said, ‘Do you mind just stepping onto the grass with me because I don’t want my children to hear what I’m going to say to you?’ And I said, ‘Yeah, sure.’ And he said, ‘Look, I need you to understand what it means for me if I have to sign that new contract. You see, at the moment I have a two-bedroomed flat and, if I have to sign that contract, I’ve got a real problem because every second week my two kids, the two that are running around over there, eight years, six years, both of them under 10.’ He said, ‘They come to me every second week because my wife and I are separated. But if I have to sign that contract I won’t just lose my home because I won’t be able to afford the rent on it, I’ll lose my family as well.’ And, time and time again, those are the stories that have come out over the past year from different places where this is happening.

I went to JDE, Jacobs Douwe Egberts, you know, the coffee people. Actually in the pandemic they made record profits, record profits, it was something like – I’d better not give you the figure because I’ll get it wrong but it was hundreds of millions of profit, right? And this woman said to me, she said, ‘You know, this used to be a really great company to work for that my family has given over a hundred years of service to this company. My father worked here, my husband works here, I’ve worked here for 34 years and my son works here as well now. Over a hundred years of service.’

And she said, 'I just cannot believe what they're doing to us.' And she was being told, unless she signed the new contract, she'd have £11,000 taken out of her pay each year.

So, let me point this out as well because I know many of you may well be sitting here thinking, like the guys I spoke of at the beginning, 'But it can't happen to us. We're public sector.' Well, I'm sorry, it's been happening in the public sector as well and it's happening in those areas which are the privatised parts of the Prison Service and so on, in the companies that are employed there. And when people are TUPEed over and then ultimately after a few years they lose their rights. So it can happen to all of us and we have to do something about it because it is not right that you can go into work in the morning, that your boss can come in and say – to an entire workforce, right, an entire workforce – 'You're fired and unless you accept £10,000 off your wages, changes in your terms and conditions, you cannot have your own job back.'

I said earlier that they were beginning to use this as a way of getting around redundancy payments and that's why I think it's really begun to take off. Now, you'll have seen what happened with P&O and suddenly there was a huge outrage in the public, in the media, when people saw that an employer had actually sacked all their seafarers on Zoom. Right? That was just disgusting – 800 people sacked over a Zoom call. That put this into people's minds but, you know, that wasn't fire and rehire, that was fire and replace. They had no intention of taking the same people back. And that's the way in which our whole workforce these days is being casualised. That insecurity is not by chance.

I was in Elstree the other day talking about fire and rehire and there was a woman – Anita, I think her name was. She was sitting at the back and she sat there during the whole meeting, didn't say a great deal. And then as we were finishing up she put her hand up and she said, 'I didn't realise until you said all this' – and we were doing a screening of the documentary on the campaign – 'I didn't realise this actually happened to me last year. But I didn't know that that was what it was. I just accepted it. I just thought, "Well, if they're doing it, it must be fine".' And so many people are in this position.

I just think that we need to fight back because we took the Bill through Parliament, we got it to the Second Reading and actually I even went to the Tory Party Conference, right? That's how desperate I was to try and engage people. It wasn't confrontation. I wanted to include people because I thought they all agreed. I thought they all actually knew that this was wrong and they wanted to do something about it. And I turned up at the Tory Party Conference, I was speaking at one of the fringe meetings there by a teachers' union, the NASUWT. Got to the registration desk and – unlike today where I had two charming guys on the registration desk, had a nice chat – got to the registration desk and I was told, 'No, sorry, your pass has been cancelled.' I said, 'What do you mean, my pass has been cancelled?' 'No, you're not allowed to come into the Conference.' I said, 'But I'm speaking at a fringe event with the NASUWT.' 'No you're not.' And they cancelled the pass. And it was only actually when the Daily Mail found out – because their journalist was standing in the queue and he started saying, 'Oh yeah, this is a good story' – that they then actually had to have a confab and after about two hours of wrangling I was reinstated, but only for the hour of the fringe meeting.

So it became clear that actually, for all their warm words, the Government was not going to play ball on this. And when we got to the Second Reading debate, that's when it all comes to a head and we have a proper debate about it, they just filibustered it. They filibustered it out. It was shameful because they knew what they were doing.

And when we had the P&O dispute and those Tory MPs stood up and started saying how terrible it was that this had all happened, how really dreadful the management at P&O had behaved, you've never seen a bunch of people look so shirty and ashamed, shifty and ashamed. Because they knew that, just a few months before, they'd had the opportunity to pass legislation that would have stopped P&O in its tracks. Because Clause 1 of the Bill actually would have stopped them because it made the penalties for doing this greater than the rewards that they achieved by breaking the law.

And there you have Peter Hebblethwaite, the Chief Executive of P&O, who actually got in front of the select committee and he said, 'Yeah, we knew we would be breaking the law and actually I would do it again.' And yet that man is still allowed to be a director of a company in the United Kingdom. There is a fit and proper test to be a director of a company in the United Kingdom and I cannot for the life of me understand why the Government hasn't applied it to somebody who has wilfully broken the law and publicly stated that they would do it again.

So, the Government didn't play ball, ultimately. They filibustered it, they talked it out, and I think they thought that was the end of it, until P&O came on and people then were so horrified. And the Government has said that they will change the guidance. What use is guidance? You've got a company that is prepared to break the law and you're saying that a voluntary code of conduct is actually going to stop them doing the wrong thing? It's not. And decent companies, decent companies want legislation because, if they've got legislation that's the baseline and the cowboys can't undercut them. But at the moment, if people are constantly doing this and they're able to undercut the companies that actually don't want to do it, those decent companies feel that they've got no choice because they're losing out to people who don't care.

So what can you do? The first thing I want to do is to say a huge thank you to your Executive Committee because they've supported the campaign right from the beginning. They've been brilliant and I'm really grateful for all the support that they've given. But we need to be doing this throughout the country. We need to actually be getting awareness of this throughout the country through trades councils. If you're members of trades councils, really good to affiliate to trades councils and get it happening there, and making sure that we're working with colleagues in the trade union movement across the country to make sure that this can't happen. We're working with local authorities because actually there's a lot of power in procurement, because the local authority can say that they are not going to favour companies if they're using bad employment relations practices. They can't actually ban them from a contract but they can give them a points system, a marking system. And a lot of the local authorities – I've been working with the metro mayors – they've now put in place good employment charters. That means that they'll mark a company that wants a contract on whether they pay the living wage, whether they deal with people fairly, whether they don't use fire and rehire, whether they're sustainable – all those – and they give them points so that they can exclude companies who are engaging in bad employment practices.

So there's lots that we can do working with local councils, working with local trades councils. And I would just urge you, you are the activists in your movement, you are the people, that's why you're here at the Conference. You're the people who other people will listen to. This is a fight that has to go on because it is about the way in which our Government is trying to spread insecurity throughout our lives. Not just in employment, although obviously

there, but look at what's been happening in terms of the way in which inflation is eating into people's incomes – the cost-of-living crisis. Look at the unwillingness to do anything about sorting out the energy costs for people. People are insecure in their homes – leaseholders, the leaseholder crisis. People are insecure in the health service – look at what's happened with the Health and Care Bill and the way in which that's undermining our public health service. This is all about creating insecurity because, you know what, if you're insecure you'll tug your forelock, you'll thank whoever it is for what you're being given and you'll say, 'That's fine, I'm not going to cause trouble.' That's why we have to fight back. Because it's not about tugging our forelock – that was two centuries ago and the trade union movement has fought through all that for every right that we've ever won. And that's why it's important that we don't allow all the things that we've won to be eroded and to slip back.

If you're doing a job in the gig economy at the age of 17 when you're still doing your A-levels, and something like that, and it's convenient for you, fine. But actually if you're a young couple trying to build a life together, trying to have children, trying to get a house, how can you do that in jobs that are insecure? Employment rights are the basis of a secure economy and I'm just grateful to you all for the opportunity you've given me to speak to you today about it. Please, join the campaign. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, thank you, Barry, very interesting. A despicable practice that needs to be outlawed, I'm sure we'll all agree. And I'm sure there's delegates on the floor who know someone or who have got family members who've been affected by fire and rehire. It does affect us all. Believe me, it's happening via stealth mode in the public sector – it is happening. So you mentioned there, what use is guidance? Delegates only know too well that it's no use at all unless senior managers adhere to it. And all too often we experience in our workplace senior managers ignoring guidance and doing their own thing, and that's what creates so many disputes in the Prison Service. That needs to be tackled so you're quite right, there, we fully support you on that. As a token of our appreciation, Barry, I'd just like you to accept a gift and thank you so much for addressing conference. Conference, Barry Gardiner.

<Applause>

Thank you Conference, on with the motions then. We're about to move Motion 62 on behalf of the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### **Motion 62**

**This Conference condemns all businesses that use Fire and Rehire tactics on workers.**

**Furthermore, this Conference condemns Government for not supporting Barry Gardiner MP and his bill which would make this practice unlawful.**

**Conference resolves to support Unions lawfully engaged in protecting their members against Fire and Rehire tactics and call on businesses to instead enter meaningful negotiations with workers and their representatives.**

### **NEC**

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chair, NEC, Conference. Listening to what Barry's just said, I think you picked my notes up and he's read from them because I think I've got the same speech as him here. Conference, I think sometimes our colleagues who are MPs have got to be a little bit politically correct because they go back into the House of Commons. Barry, it might come as a bit of a shock to you but Tories lie. You only have to look at the Prime Minister, a convicted criminal of his own law that he introduced. And where is he? Still there, denying that he's broke the law. He's a liar. And then we come on to the fire and rehire. It's absolutely abhorrent, it really is. And we all heard him turn around and say, 'Yes, this Government's going to do something about it. It's absolutely disgraceful what they're doing and this Government's going to act. So we're going to give you a code of practice.' How many times do you go in front of your Governors and your directors and they come along and say, 'Yeah, I've read that but it's only guidance so I don't have to take any notice of it.' This is what they do, they absolutely cloud the issue.

There's a very good book called *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*. I don't know if anybody has read it – I've read it. And if you haven't read it, just get a copy of it and just read one thing and it's called the great money trick. When you read it, the penny will drop because that's exactly what this is. That's exactly what this is. So British Gas come along and they were frightened because it looked as though they were going to have to declare bankrupt. They must have done because they fired all of them workers and then rehired them on worse terms and conditions. Worse terms and conditions. The only reason why they had done that was so they could pay their shareholders more money. The only reason they had done that was because they can and the law allows them to do it.

What Barry had introduced into Parliament was to stop that or to put the bar so high that it would be virtually impossible for companies to do it. At the moment the bar is so low for trade unions and for trade union solicitors in actually running an unfair dismissal case. That's how it's against us. And now it's gathering momentum again because people are talking about it. And Barry was quite right, we need to get into our regional TUCs, we need to get into our trade councils and start that debate again, because we've been talking for the last four days about how our colleagues who are F&S grades are paid six, seven, eight thousand pounds less than us. Think about that.

What happens if they come along, the employer, and turn around and say, 'That's your new contract. If you don't sign it the door's over there.' Because you've got to look at how many people are on F&S contracts and how many people are on old terms and conditions. Once they get that balance right it could happen.

I remember Colin Moses at TUC many years ago, and it was when the Government built the first private prison, The Wolds. He turned around and said to the TUC and affiliated trade unions, 'If they can privatise a prison, they can privatise anything.' Boy, have his words come true for the trades union movement. Not just Tory Government, Labour Government done it as well. In fact, there have been more private prisons under Labour than there ever was under the Tories. So, you've got to look at it.

Colleagues, we have got the right to be treated with dignity in our workplace. And we have got a right to be paid a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Without the legislation to stop this from happening, it's going to keep on coming at us all of the time. The Conservative Government, this Government, has got the majority to overturn this and they don't want to do that because I bet you they've got shares. I bet you they've got shares in P&O. All of a sudden their dividend has gone up. 'If we do something about this that means I'm going to have less money.' Greedy bastards – that's what they are, greedy bastards.

<Applause>

And that's the first time I've sworn at Conference in 25 years. This is how passionate I feel about this. They are not doing this for anybody else but for themselves and this trade union needs to lend its voice to this campaign. But also the trade union movement needs to get its collective backside together and start taking some action on this and we need to see it real quick. Conference, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Joe.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Sorry I swore.

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE HULL:** Chair, Conference, invited guests. Hull fully support this motion. It's something close to our hearts due to Hull's prison's close proximity to the docks. Once the disgraceful P&O story broke on Thursday 7th March we were appalled. If it can happen to these workers it can happen to anyone. Thursday night the Committee spent the night on the phone – we felt we had to do something. Friday morning we sent a circular round at work inviting members to join us for a march down to the P&O offices at dinner. We wanted to show our support and solidarity with the RMT and condemn the actions of P&O. Despite such short notice at dinner, two dozen members joined us and we set off to the sound of car horns. This was an especially proud moment for me as we marched past the docks where my dad struck outside in the eighties as Thatcher ripped the industrial heartland out of this once-proud country. We cannot allow fire and rehire to continue. Business leaders thinking they can act with impunity. We need to stand strong and send out a solid message that this disgraceful practice will not be tolerated. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers so we'll take it to the vote. Cast your votes now please. And that poll is now closed and that's been carried. Thank you very much.

Motion 63 has been seconded by Liverpool. Speaking on behalf of the NEC Sarah Rigby.

### Motion 63

**The POA fully support the proposed Hillsborough Law that came from a review of the experiences of the Hillsborough families.**

### NEC

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. I think it's fair to say that each and every one of us here today has had to fight for what they believe in. It's who we are and it's what we do. We know that to get a fair and just outcome we sometimes have to bang on some doors and do everything we can to be listened to and to be heard.

The proposed Hillsborough Law comes after many years of fighting and many years of banging on doors. The families of the 97 victims continue to fight in order to be heard. Education is key here – the untruths and the misconceptions cannot go unchallenged. The review into the experience of the families was carried out by the former Bishop of Liverpool and was published in 2017 after years of campaigning for justice. The review includes 25 recommendations to reform the justice system and to support bereaved families. Some of the recommendations are, there should be a public advocate to act for all families of the deceased after a major incident, there needs to be better access to money for legal representation at inquests, a charter for families who lose a loved one through a public tragedy which would be binding on all public bodies, a requirement that any criminal trial following a major inquest takes place in a court with the relevant expertise and status rather than at a Crown Court.

The law would also put in place a professional responsibility for all public officials to be open and honest when something goes wrong. All of the recommendations would help to assist and support bereaved families and survivors in any other disaster situation that involves public bodies being held to account. The law would be a lasting legacy to the 97 victims who were unlawfully killed and to their families who continue to fight the injustice. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. It's a very personal issue to me. On that fateful day, 15th April 1989, I was a 19-year-old lad.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Take your time, mate.

**ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL:** The worst thing I thought I'd see that day, possibly, was a Forest win. I'd have had to live with that. Sadly, what I had to live with, and I've lived with it ever since, was some haunting memories that have lasted a lifetime. Your support with this motion would allow access to the British justice system. That should be a natural right for us all, not a 30-year fight for a few. Please, colleagues, support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done Roger. Any more speakers? Okay, we'll take it to the vote. Please cast your votes now. And that poll is now closed and that is carried.

Motion 64 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Ashworth, thank you. Speaking on behalf of the NEC, Sarah Rigby. I took you all by surprise then.

#### Motion 64

**The POA recognise that there is no place in politics for misogyny, this conference demand an investigation into the recent despicable alleged comments from MPs within the Tory party against the deputy leader of the Labour Party.**

**This investigation should be a cross party investigation, no political representative should have to endure such comments and all parties should strive to strike out any such discrimination from members of parliament.**

#### NEC

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC asking you to support the motion. On 26th April this year an article in the Daily Mail reported on comments alleged to have been made by Tory MPs in relation to the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. The article implied that, as a female MP, the only way Angela Rayner could pitch herself against the intellect of the Prime Minister was to cross and uncross her legs while she was sat in front of him. This latest attempt to undermine her restarted the age-old debate on sexism and misogyny in politics. The article in the Daily Mail went one step further with its offensive and unacceptable comments and also made reference to her comprehensive school background in comparison to the Prime Minister's Eton education. It failed to mention the fight she had to get to where she is and what she has achieved in the face of adversity. The discrimination faced by working-class female MPs has been well documented and is impossible to ignore.

As individuals and as a trade union, we have a duty to promote respect, dignity and equality for all. Misogyny and sexual discrimination have no place in an equal society or an equal workplace. The promotion of equality does not start at the door of the POA. If a female POA member experienced similar unacceptable comments or behaviour in the workplace or from within the Union, we would quite rightly expect and demand a full investigation. We have made progress in eradicating bigotry from our workplace and from our Union but there is more work to do. That work has started with Conference Paper 4 being accepted by Conference today.

We must demand respect in every workplace and support anyone who experiences such degrading treatment. This is not about where your political allegiance lies, it is about doing the right thing. The person who made the comments to the Daily Mail reporter has not been identified and Downing Street have said that currently they will not be asking for an inquiry to try and find out who it was. MPs across all parties have spoken out and condemned the article, with women from all walks of life sharing their own stories of misogyny and sexism. As long as there is no investigation and no steps are taken to identify the individual who made these comments to the Daily Mail reporter, the shock and disgust expressed in response to the article is lip service, nothing more. Hollow words and empty gestures will not strike out discrimination. Please support the call for a cross-party investigation.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do we have any speakers? That will be a no. Okay, we'll go straight to the vote. Cast your votes now please. And that poll is now closed and that motion is carried. Thank you Conference.

We're now going to move on to the Ten Year Anniversary Motions. The NEC have had to propose these motions because they're coming towards the ten-year anniversary. They're still policies of the Union but we need to decide as a Conference if we want these to continue as policies of the Union.

Looking at Motion 65, do we have a seconder? Whatton, thank you. And speaking for the NEC is Andy Baxter.

#### Motion 65

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 13/93 and supports the use of local agreements for the continuing**

**self-interest of local membership. Whilst recognising the need to take account of local variations, all local agreements should reflect national policy.**

**Conference, in recognition of these principles, reaffirms that all agreement should be in writing and registered at national level.**

**NEC**

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reaffirm this as POA policy. Conference, the NEC believes it's important to reaffirm this policy. Local agreements are some of the key pieces of work delivered by branches on behalf of local members regarding local situations. The NEC believe it's vital that local agreements reflect national policy of this trade union, and can I remind delegates that local agreements must be in writing and registered at a national level. Conference, please reaffirm this policy.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any speakers? Whatton, do you want to speak? No, okay. Straight to the vote then Conference. Cast your votes now please. That poll is now closed, that motion has been reaffirmed so that's carried.

Motion 66, do we have a seconder please? Parkhurst, thank you. Dave Cook for the NEC.

**Motion 66**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 22/13 that this union is committed to ensuring if any prisons are clustered the committee (branches) of those prisons involved will, if requested by them, remain as individual committees (branches) and not become one branch”.**

**NEC**

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, Conference, asking you to reaffirm this motion. This motion was brought in at a time when the prisons on the Isle of Sheppey were actually going to be clustered. Part of that clustering system was that they were going to also propose that the three branches were actually going to be formed into one branch – entirely unworkable because of the distance between everything. Fortunately, the Isle of Sheppey wasn't clustered but this is very relevant, even today, particularly on the Isle of Wight.

This is asking us, if they do cluster any groups of prisons then it's down to those branches to decide whether they want to go into one branch or they actually want to remain as the branches of which they are. And we feel that this is extremely important for the future restructure of the Prison Service. Please reaffirm this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Dave. Any speakers? Okay, to the vote then, please cast your votes now. Thank you. That poll is now closed and that has been carried.

Motion 67 has been seconded by Holme House. Speaking for the NEC is Jackie Marshall.

**Motion 67**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 42/10 and continues not to engage in any staff survey conducted by the employer due to the attitude of HMPPS and the political spin placed on outcomes.**

**Furthermore, this Union continues with the policy of non-participation in any future HMPPS surveys and instead conducts its own survey to act as a direct contrast.**

**NEC**

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC asking you to keep this motion alive. Motion 42 of 2010 reads, 'Because of the political spin used by NOMS management board regarding the outcomes of staff surveys and the fact that information gathered in these surveys is used against POA when submissions are made to the Pay Review Body, this association adopts a policy of non-participation in any future NOMS surveys and instead conducts its own survey to act as a direct contrast.' And that was from Holme House.

Colleagues, we do run some surveys ourselves. We've got a menopause pilot running at the moment in two establishments and we've sent emails out to our members to ask them to complete that survey. We've got a carers' pilot running – again we asked our members to complete that survey. We did the Gail Kinman survey – again members were asked. The annual people's survey by the department, there's no bespoke questions for operational staff and it's mainly filled in by non-op staff and the information is used against us. So let's keep it going. Don't fill in any of their surveys unless we ask you to. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Jackie. Would anyone like to speak? We'll go straight to the vote then. Please cast your votes now. That poll is now closed and, as you can see, that has been carried and reaffirmed.

68 has been seconded by Liverpool. Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

#### **Motion 68**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 57/07 that Conference encourages branch officials to undertake all Code of Disciplines, Appeals and Civil Service Appeal Boards for medical in-efficiency payments compensation. This would enable the NEC and full-time officers to concentrate on national issues.**

#### **NEC**

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, for the executive asking you to reaffirm this motion. This issue has already been discussed this week. A lot of things are much better done at local level without NEC involvement. Having said that, the NEC will always be available for any advice and guidance, should it be required. Please reaffirm, thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No speakers indicating. We've got one there. Yes? Thank you Paul.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Just looking to support that but what I would ask, there's been a lack of training through Covid. We only had two officials that were trained for the majority of the Covid period. I would ask that if we can get some training on <inaudible>, that it's local or something, it will ease – make this motion a lot easier to carry, whether it's local or a little bit regional. But speaking with some delegates prior to this, it was something that seemed quite a popular idea. If the NEC could take that back. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Paul.

<Applause>

Conference, Joe Simpson will be making an announcement about branch officials' training at the end of today's session. So bear that in mind. No more speakers so let's take this to the vote. Cast your votes now please. That poll is now closed and that has been carried.

69, a seconder please? Thank you. Speaking on behalf of the NEC Sarah Rigby.

#### **Motion 69**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 64/09 that the POA calls on the Government to renationalise and bring under public control all utilities/public transport and essential services.**

#### **NEC**

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, the motion is self-explanatory. We've brought it back to Conference to ensure Conference policy remains relevant and up to date. Please support the motion. I just hope it doesn't disappoint Moorland too much, you know, with them being such strong supporters of shared services.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Okay, no speakers so we'll take that to the vote. Cast your vote now please. That poll is closed and that's been carried.

Motion 70, a seconder please? Thank you Brinsford. Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

#### **Motion 70**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 67/10 that when a member of staff is suspended from duty for any reason, the hours for that member are not included in "non effectives"**

#### **NEC**

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion and reaffirm this policy. This motion originated from Lancaster Farms and is still prevalent and relevant amongst establishments now. It highlights the overflowing problems of inadequate, non-effective levels within growing pressures on detail departments. Additional shortfalls for the staff to obtain leave without having a detriment to our members would require a time off from the workplace. There is no place in the current non-effectives for staff that are suspended. The current non-effectives are for sick leave and training. Detailed departments should not be including suspended staff in the equation. Conference, support this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Geoff.

<Applause>

No speakers so we'll take that to the vote. Cast your vote now. That poll is now closed and we've carried that motion.

Motion 71, do we have a seconder please? We don't. Steve Gillan is just going to explain to Conference why we wish to withdraw this motion.

#### **Motion 71**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 81/96 that no individual, Branch or Branches be allowed to conduct enquiries into Union matters without first gaining prior permission from Conference.**

#### **NEC**

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Yes, thank you Chairman, thank you Conference. Clearly this goes back 26 years and we all know that the management of the Union shall be vested in Conference, the NEC and its officers in that order except as otherwise provided in the constitution. Clearly we were going to ask you to support this but we've had a little bit of a rethink after I discussed it with the Chairman and the officers because I'm not sure that it's actually lawful, to be honest with you. Bearing in mind that the Trade Union Act of 2016 gave the Certification Officer more powers. So we're going to ask you for permission to withdraw to seek clarification from our lawyers and then in the future we could bring it back in future years once we get that clarification. So, on that basis, Conference, we ask for your permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, just use your handsets if you give permission to withdraw, just vote for please. Thank you Conference, that poll is now closed and you've given us permission to withdraw and we will get back to you on that when we've checked it out thoroughly. Thank you.

72, do we have a seconder? We've got one from Chelmsford I believe. Andy Baxter for the NEC.

#### **Motion 72**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 84/10 that the POA does not recognise the current definition of "unsocial hours."**

**Furthermore, conference mandate the NEC to seek a change so that all hours worked outside 0800 – 1700 Monday to Friday are deemed as unsocial hours.**

#### **NEC**

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reaffirm this motion. The definition of unsocial hours was imposed on us as part of the imposition of prison officer 2s. The prison officer 2s were the forerunners to Fair and Sustainable, having a separate allowance to cover working unsocial hours. The Prison Service definition of unsocial hours remains those hours worked outside of 7am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. The NEC are asking you to support them in trying to achieve all hours worked outside of 08:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday to be deemed as unsocial hours.

As attendance patterns and roles change or reshape for some of our members, it's imperative that we strive to protect and extend what are deemed to qualify as unsocial hours. Please reaffirm this policy.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Andy. Chelmsford, do you wish to speak on this? No? Okay, let's go to the vote then. Please cast your votes now. And that poll is closed. That's been carried.

Motion 73, seconded by Full Sutton and speaking on behalf of the NEC is Geoff Willetts.

#### **Motion 73**

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 96/08 that the NEC negotiates the issuing of an incapacitation device for use during planned cell removals.**

#### **NEC**

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, the executive believes this motion highlights a very important issue around the health and safety of our members. The issuing of such a device would reduce the personal injuries to our members. The high levels of violence, assault and abuse needs to be reduced, never mind the malice allegations of excessive use of force that comes with conducting your duty. Implementation of this device would reduce the chance of staff being injured or dismissed. We heard yesterday from Jade at Moorland how SSCL treats our members really, really well. Conference, I would like to thank one half of Lincoln's delegates for volunteering for being a guinea pig in their own PPE. This only request is to wear a false red nose, oversize red boots and a squirty flower as apparently this is a normal dress when attending his chosen football event. Conference,

support this motion and give the executive the direction to protect our members. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Anything from Full Sutton? Okay. To the vote then, all those in favour or against please cast your votes now. Thank you Conference, that poll is now closed and that has been carried.

We're on to 74, do we have a seconder please? Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Geoff Willetts. He must be getting his steps in for the day.

#### Motion 74

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 107/07 that Branch Officials, adhere to the OSG agreement, so as to protect Prison Officers jobs and, protect legally, OSGs who are asked, or indeed told, to carry out Prison Officer roles, in breach of the said agreement.**

#### NEC

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. This motion plays a vital part in the protection of staff within their roles. We all know that protection set out in the OSG agreement and understand the importance of making sure we protect our OSG colleagues. The OSG agreement is there to protect the OSGs in the same way Bulletin 8 is there to protect our officers. Please support this motion and protect the grades set out in the policy. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No speakers so we'll go to the vote. Please cast your votes now. That poll is now closed and that's been carried. I don't like stitching people up but he took the wrong speech up.

<Laughter>

And he's got the wrong teeth in.

Motion 75, that's been seconded by Lancaster Farms. Speaking on behalf of the NEC Jackie Marshall.

#### Motion 75

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 128/07 that the NEC negotiate with HMPPS to ensure each establishment has the adequate resources to implement the ACCT policy, which is currently nil resourced.**

#### NEC

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC asking you to reaffirm Motion 128 of 2007 which reads, 'That the NEC negotiate with the Prison Service with a view to properly funding the ACCT documentation system which is currently nil resourced.' And that was a motion from Lancaster Farms. Please keep this motion alive, particularly with the new ACCT document – it's so complex we need an officer for every open one. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Jackie. Lancaster Farms do you want to speak? No, okay. You got barred out of a pub last night, didn't you? Disgraceful behaviour. Okay, we'll take it to the vote, cast your votes now please. That poll is now closed, that's been carried.

Motion 76, do we have a seconder please? Thank you Scrubs. Dave Todd for the NEC.

#### Motion 76

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 143/05 that the NEC will continue to negotiate the return of the Courts and Escort services back into the public sector.**

#### NEC

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. Proposing on behalf of the NEC. Very similar to Motion 69 which you've just readopted, this is around private courts and escort services. We do highlight every time the contract comes up. Unfortunately, I'm not going to lie, the contract has just been re-awarded, as you probably know. So it will be a campaign rather than a negotiation but please support. Thanks Conference.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference, happy to support the reaffirmation. We have GEOAmeY in the Northeast

– they're crap, utter crap.

<Applause>

I believe Hull and Leeds have similar problems with them. They're supposed to put a bus on or a van and they collect all the courts. But because they haven't got the staff they don't put that bus on. So we have four vans turn up at half past seven, our knock-off – they're bringing prisoners in. It's unsuitable. The nurses can't see them. As I said yesterday about mental health, mental health nurse goes home at half past eight, so we've got to deal with them prisoners. At Christmas they came out with an excuse was the reason why the van wasn't on was because they were putting Christmas decorations up in the court. And they get away with it. I know the NEC's brought it up, I know it's been looked at. We've got a dispute in about it. Something needs to be done about it. They need to be got rid of. We need to take over again. It's an absolute shambles. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Craig. Okay, to the vote then. Please cast your votes now. That poll is now closed and that's been carried.

Long day Conference, thank you for today. We've got three motions left which we'll do in the morning, then we'll close Conference and get you away early. I know a lot of you have got long journeys. There is a fringe meeting that's on level zero in the Mallory Hall, that's Show Racism the Red Card. Very relevant when you consider what's going on on the terraces these days and it's a very interesting fringe, I'd encourage you to attend that. I'll just leave Joe to make an announcement about branch officials' training.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Yes, thanks Chair. Paul Wray brought up a very valid point about branch officials' training and Covid. As you come into Conference you'll see a load of books on the side and, just to assist Paul, they have got a book on the guide to championship sides' league grounds and who sells the best pies. We are, we'll be there. Mighty Mackems.

Conference, 75 of our colleagues have put in for branch officials' training this time round. We are holding it at Hillscourt in Birmingham. Conference, we will be inviting all 75. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, thank you for today. Have a good evening and I'll see you tomorrow morning at half nine.

## POA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022

Monday 16th to Friday 20th May 2022

Friday 20th May

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Morning Conference, I'll bring you to order. Just one announcement. You can leave those cards in your handsets if you need to get off. They will get collected so there's not an issue with that.

Good morning. You have a very, very, very happy National Chair this morning. He still supports a Premier League team!

<Laughter and applause>

Up the Toffees!

We will get through these three outstanding motions and then we'll close Conference. We won't keep you long. We know you've got long journeys. We'll get you away as soon as we can.

So we have motion 77. It was originally proposed by Wandsworth 10 years ago and they've indicated they wish to second it again. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Jackie Marshall.

### Motion 77

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 163/07 that this Conference fully endorses our current campaigns on Trade Union Rights, anti-privatisation and to achieve a truly independent pay review body. Therefore, Conference seeks to ensure that it maximises our involvement with the broader Trade Union and Labour movement.**

**Accordingly, Conference seeks that every branch affiliates to their local Trades Council, that the Union provides delegates to all regional TUC and that we seek to maximise the numbers of POA members attending TUC rallies and events supported by the POA, by providing assistance with transport costs via the political fund as authorised by the NEC.**

### NEC

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on motion 77 on behalf of the NEC. Conference, I'm not going to read the motion out. You've got it there. It's quite a lengthy motion, but what I thought I would do, because we do have many new branch officials in here, is just explain some of what trade councils do. So, trade union councils promote working class solidarity in local communities. They are local groups of trade unionists elected from branches whose members live and/or work in the area. They promote effective solidarity in disputes and joint campaigns on issues such as health, education, welfare, transport, women, black and ethnic minority people. So just a couple of examples of what they do. I'm on the Executive of Shropshire and Telford Trades Council. We've got Tommy Robinson, the British far-right anti-Islam activist and convicted criminal, on multiple counts of violence, fraud and other crimes, lives and regularly holds events in Telford. Our trade council always and always will march and rally against him. And the other example I've got, I'm sure many of you have heard about the Shrewsbury 24, whose convictions have recently been squashed. Shrewsbury and Telford Trades Council played a massive part in those convictions being overturned. That's the type of work that the trade councils do. Now it's not a lot to affiliate to a trades council. I think Stoke Heath pay £30. And then what you do, you can claim that back out of the political fund so it actually costs you nothing as a branch. So I'd urge you to join in with your trades councils and get support on any big issues that you've got in your local establishments. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference, seconding this motion. We are affiliated to the Battersea and Wandsworth Trade Union Council and it's been absolutely worthwhile. Echoing what Jackie said, but also if we're going to campaign and organise, your trades council are one of the best places you can learn that skill. They're committed and experienced trade unionists, and my trades council we have RMT, GMB, PCS and loads of other trade unions in the borough of Wandsworth. You'll also, by getting involved, it'll build your confidence as reps in speaking, and you'll realise you don't have to wait once a year for a Conference to take an issue that you feel passionately about. You can take it up with the trades council. Bring your members on board, take it to the trades council and affiliate to them. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. We'll go to the vote. When you're ready, cast your vote now.

Thank you Conference. That poll is now closed and that has been carried.

78 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you. Speaking on behalf of the NEC, Terry McCarthy.

## Motion 78

**That Conference reaffirms current policy as set out in ACM 211/01 that HMPPS reintroduce Jail Craft Courses and that these should be mandatory for all OSG's, Nursing Grades and Civilian Grades prior to taking up a post in any establishment.**

## NEC

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, on behalf of the Executive, asking you to reaffirm this motion. Starting any new job can be particularly daunting, particularly so in the Prison Service. It's bordering on criminal negligence not to provide any new starter with the tools that may help them prevent any pitfalls that will be in front of them. Jailcraft courses won't make any new starter the finished article but they will certainly go a long way towards helping them avoid any pitfalls. Please reaffirm. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Terry. Don't have any speakers so we'll go straight to the vote, Conference. Cast your vote now please. That poll is now closed and that's been carried. Thank you for that.

Final motion, 79. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you. Joe Simpson for the NEC.

## Motion 79

**24A/12 Conference welcomes the release of Lilianny Obando on the 1st March 2012 from the Buen Pastor prison Bogota and recognise the part that the POA played in that release.**

**Further, Conference supports the Justice for Colombia Peace Campaign and asks members to contact their MP asking them to call for peace in Colombia**

**Conference notes that more information is available on this at: <http://www.justiceforcolombia.org/campaigns/peace/>**

**Conference continues to support Justice for Colombia and their campaigns, and encourage branches and individual members to affiliate to Justice for Colombia, to support their work in solidarity with Colombian trade unions.**

## NEC

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Thank you Chair. NEC, Conference, the National Executive would like to reaffirm this motion from 2012. And it's very important that we do, because we've been talking about international matters here when we brought the motion on Ukraine. Quite rightly we were challenged from the podium by delegates as to why just Ukraine. Well, we've been involved with Justice for Colombia for a very long time and Steve Gillan, when he was out there in 2012, that delegation secured the release of Liliani Ebandor. Colombia is the most dangerous country to be a trade unionist in. Yet it doesn't stop them from organising, from doing marches and for challenging Government on workers' rights and also the right to learn, which has got quite a few people murdered in the past. And the peace process came about and the right-wing Government that was elected the following year decided that they didn't want that, and that they would renege on it. That peace process took too long to come about and it's too much to abandon now, especially for those people who want it. When they secured the release of Liliani they had to pay £2,000 bail – and out of all the 10 delegates that were there, trade unions and politicians and they were all using the business cards to get money out, and all of their business cards were refused. So it was up to Steve Gillan with his M&S card to get the £2,000 out, and he had to explain that one to his wife when she got the statement.

Conference, please support this motion. It is vital that we stay in Justice for Colombia. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Joe. We don't have any speakers, so straight to the vote please Conference. For the final time this week, please cast your vote.

That poll is now closed. That motion has been carried. Thank you Conference. That completes the order paper.

Well, we've done it. A week-long Conference after a couple of years away. A few thanks first of all. To the security team – without them we couldn't put this event on. Long hours, often monotonous work, but vital to the running of this Conference. Thank you so much to all the security team.

<Applause>

I'd like to thank the Eastbourne staff. Nothing has been too much trouble, they've catered for all our needs and we were looking for a venue for quite some time and they pulled out all the stops for us. It's served our purpose, it's served us well, so thank you to Eastbourne for all your help.

<Applause>

The technical team behind you keep us running, keep everything on track. They set up the stage and we've got the new gizmos that you've all been using, the electronic voting. Thank you to them for their set-up, for demonstrating it. It's worked well and you've indicated you wish to keep it. So thank you so much for all your hard work this week. Without you, this wouldn't be possible. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

We've got our support staff, our backroom staff, the girls who register for you each morning, who keep the emails flowing, keep the paperwork photocopied, keep you on track. They are a vital cog in this wheel. We've got Steve Lewis, the next Steven Spielberg, who streams all this live when he needs to. He's a vital cog in this wheel. But I'd just like to make a special mention for someone who can't be here this week, because she's looking after her ill father. That's my secretary, Nicola Hubert. Nicola, I know you're watching this. We miss you. I hope everything's alright at home and our thoughts are with you.

<Applause>

I'd like to thank our official photographer who does this for a living, Jess. Look forward to viewing the photographs. And then our unofficial photographers, Cannon and Paul. Nothing rock-on Tommy about those two though!

<Laughter>

Cannon was telling me he's been coming to Conference for over 40 years! Well, they will always be welcome here and I hope they've enjoyed the week. Most of all I'd like to thank my NEC full-time officials for all their hard work this week, for all their support. This NEC, the people you see on front of the stage, work tirelessly on your behalf. Long hours, over weekends, late into the night, answering your texts, your concerns, your emails, your phone calls, even when they're on annual leave. That's the commitment these people give to you. Thank you NEC and full-time officials for everything you do for me and for the membership.

<Applause>

Conference, you are our parliament. Democracy will rule. You guide us and you shape our future. And you did that from the very first motion, motion 1. You decided that you wanted to carry it. That's democracy. You know what, having a read of it, you were right! That motion is going to help the smaller branches and all they were asking for was, when there's NEC elections, let us send them out electronically because we find it really difficult to hold branch meetings. The ICE branch, members all over the place, even in France, makes life easier for them. So that's the right thing to do and that's how we do business: democracy. The electronic voting, you've decided you like it. We're keeping it. You've guided us in that direction. Your decision. The way it should be.

The highlight speech for me this week has to be, without doubt, the pocket rocket Yorkshire lass from Moorlands, Jade. Yes, she was having conversations with the NEC about her speech, how she was going to get up here and tell you all about our fantastic shared service centre, until the NEC pointed out to her that, when you have a vote of confidence, your motion actually says you've got confidence in the shared service centre, and if it's carried we all love shared service centre. You would not believe the profanities from such a mild, meek Yorkshire girl.

<Laughter>

But she came up, she turned it around and she produced a speech so sarcastic she could be earning a living as a comedian. Fantastic, the way you turned it around. Well done, Jade!

<Applause>

You definitely do deserve a round of applause after turning that motion around! But well done also to our first-time delegates who came up to the rostrum nervous as hell and delivered their motions to you. And I loved the fact that we've now adopted what the TUC do. First-time delegate, first-time speaker, round of applause – it puts them at ease. It's a really nice gesture. So please continue that. And I hope the little words of encouragement from behind you, I hope that helped you settle your nerves as well. You've done all fantastic. It's great to see we've had so many varied speakers, so many new speakers. It's welcome and long may it continue. And of course, once you get used to it, we can't keep you away. We had a delegate from Whatton who had a bungee cord attached from his chair to the stage!

<Applause>

That's what we want – we want more people speaking! I think this week has been different. The atmosphere has been fantastic and I feel, and I've spoken to the NEC about this, I feel there's a different attitude from the floor towards this National Executive. I felt that you appreciate everything we do on your behalf, and that is most welcome. We've had our moments – we always do – but I just wanted to put two things to bed. Retired members, let me tell you there are no issues between me, anyone on the Executive and the retired members, none at all. I and we value them. They do have a voice. If we didn't care about them and didn't value them, why did we purchase a Zoom licence for the Retired Members Committee during the lockdown so they could keep in touch with each other? If we didn't value them, why have I insisted that there has to be at least one National Executive Committee member on all their meetings as well as an FTO? If we didn't value them, why did I travel to London last week to meet the new Committee

face to face, in person, to welcome them? And you know what? Know what they told me? They said, 'Mark, we don't want to be a branch. We don't want Executive powers. We don't want to bring motions to Conference. We don't want to have a vote at Conference. We're not interested. All we want to do is improve life for retired members, improve benefits for retired members.' That's great. 'We don't want to meddle in your affairs and, when we need you, we'll come to you. And we will need you, because some of the ideas bouncing around, we might need to come to the Executive and say we want you to fund this.' We've got one of the Retired Members Committee working on security and Joe Simpson tells me he's been bouncing ideas off Joe all week. That's great, that's what we want. So, let me put that to bed here and now. We value the Retired Members Committee and I can't wait to work with the new Committee to get all these ideas they've got off the ground.

Another myth – private sector. It was great to meet delegates from the private sector this week. And I had a conversation with two and they were saying, 'Mark, is there a "them and us" in the POA between the public sector and the private sector?' Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, it's true that I and we want all private-sector prisons returned to the public sector because I think that, if you're incarcerated by the state, the state should be responsible for you. I don't think it's morally right that you should make money off someone's incarceration. That doesn't stop us working with the private sector and, if they return to the public sector our members there will have better terms and conditions, safer staffing levels and better pensions. But I'll tell you something. The private sector are here to stay. Four of the five new-builds will be given to the private sector – and me and Dave Todd, when they were going through the bidding process for Five Wells, sat in a room with the directors from the private sector and we were honest with them and I said, 'At least you know what you're getting.' Yep, we don't agree with private prisons, but it doesn't stop us working constructively with them. And you know what? We are valued by the private sector. You heard today at Conference that we've got recognition rights with Serco, who've just taken over one of our immigration centres. We've got recognition rights with G4S and a really positive relationship with them. I've done business with G4S when I was representing something. It cut through all the red tape, you have decision-makers in the room. Yeah, it's hard negotiating, but you get the deal done, you get it over the line. I love working with the private sector. There are no obstacles. So we value the private sector. There is no 'them and us'. You're part of our family. End of. Nothing more to say on that. You're very welcome and I want a strong private-sector membership and I want recognition rights in every private sector jail because we need to grow this Union and we need to get stronger. So, just let me put those two myths to bed.

The speakers we've had – you've seen for yourself, the Prisons Minister, she stood up here, she was positive about the POA. Got a really great relationship with the Prisons Minister and Dominic Raab, the Secretary of State. He took time out to give a video address. Not many other unions can say that. The last Tory Minister I can remember addressing Conference was Jeremy Wright when he was Secretary of State. Usually they're wary about what's going on. I went in the back room with the Prisons Minister after she'd addressed you. She was absolutely delighted. The impression you've created to her will only increase the positivity. And she gets it – she gets all our issues. And you've seen it for yourself – the door is still open on discussions about getting our retirement age back to 60. The stumbling block is funding from the Treasury. But we've got them on board. Everybody – the general public, cross-party politicians – everybody realises that we cannot work in that environment into our sixties. It's absolutely ridiculous. So the door is not closed on that.

Phil Cople addressed us, our Director General. He told you about the positive industrial relations that we've built. So positive that you've been here for a week at the employer's expense. And for those who haven't had facility time – private sector, secure psychiatric hospitals – we're still badgering your employers to get you that facility time.

It's unheard of. Usually we get one or two days and we're grateful for that, but that's testament to the good relationships we've got. And you heard it from Phil Cople himself – we haven't made life easy for him. We still have our disagreements. It's been tough. But we're doing it in a constructive partnership way, and that's the right way to do business on your behalf.

You <inaudible> Building Safe Workplaces, everybody has to acknowledge we're never going to build a safe workplace if the retention crisis continues. Shocking statistic from Phil Cople – for every four new recruits we only keep one. How damning is that? If that doesn't encourage the Pay Review Body to give us a substantial pay award, if that doesn't convince the Government to accept and implement all the recommendations, we will lose that many staff from resignations – losing them all over the country, we will never recover from it. We will be tied trying to run regimes, tied trying to rehabilitate people, and it'll all go to pot. They have to give us an above-inflation pay rise and reward us and recognise for the commendable work you've all done on the front line these past two years. Staff attrition has never been so high. Average Band 3-5s, 12% – highest they've ever been. 16% for OSGs. It's something that simply has to be remedied.

PAVA and your safety. You heard it there from the Prisons Minister again – receptive, open-minded to issuing PAVA in the Youth Custody Estate. And we will keep pressing that and I think we've got a good chance of getting it. And I know you want it in the other estates – we do too. And we heard an address from one of the delegates about the open estate, and I just want to highlight to you how difficult things are for us when we try and get PAVA in the open estate. This is a Tweet from HMP Hatfield: 'Last year's safety stats at HMP Hatfield. Number of assaults on staff – zero; number of assaults on prisoners – zero; number of self-harm incidents – zero. Great place to work, great place to rehabilitate prisoners.' I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is. How am I ever going to convince the directors to issue staff at Hatfield with PAVA with those statistics? So, it's going to have to be in whatever you estate you work where you think you should have PAVA. It's going to have to be on an individual basis, and we've asked for the evidence from you. If you've got evidence that your jail is unsafe and you need PAVA, give it to your NEC rep so I can sit with Steve Gillan in front of the Prisons Minister and say, 'There you go. For the last 12 months in the Open Estate look how violent it's been. Look at all these incidents our members have had to deal with, with absolutely zero protection.' Please give us the evidence and we will fight for you.

I want to touch on mental health. You made it clear that you want to condemn the employer for the lack of mental health support in place for our members on the front line. You know, the sad thing is it's actually improved. The mental health support from the employer has actually improved, but it's clear it's still not good enough. I have a really close friend and colleague, worked with him for decades in Liverpool, and we've both got 30 years in the job, dealt with all kinds. You know the score. Getting called at 3 in the morning to deal with people smashing up the block, people attacking us with knives, sharp-edged weapons, trying to slash our throats, dealing with deaths in custody, walking into cells, your feet sticking to the floor because of the coagulated blood. He got his jaw broken in an unprovoked attack. Not a bit of help from the employer. You want the care team, you want counselling, you OK? Go home – chill out for a few hours? None of that! You know what, Conference? We're prison officers, you shrug it off –

it's normal, just get on with it. You normalise those sort of incidents, and the sort of things that you experience. That's not right. Six months ago it all came on top – 30 years of incidents, Covid, he lost a few family members and he had to go sick. He's very unwell. He's in a hospital. And I phoned up the Governor and said, 'Look, this is what's going on. He's really unwell. He's about to go on half pay. The OH report that he's had says his absence is linked to all his experiences throughout his career. You can give him a sick-leave excusal. Ease the burden. He doesn't want that burden as well.' Because I was worried that it would spark another episode. Guess what? He never got the sick-leave excusal. 'It could open a can of worms and I've got people getting cancer treatment.' Well, give them a sick-leave excusal as well.

What sort of employer, and this is not all Governors – what sort of employer says to people fighting life-threatening illnesses or so affected by the job that they're seriously unwell, what sort of employer says, 'We're going to put you on half-pay after six months.' Some people don't even get that, some people go on half-pay after four weeks because they're young in service. What sort of employer does that? Where's the empathy, where's the sympathy? If it was a Governor grade it would be, 'There you go – here's a laptop, work from home, I'll keep you on full pay.' What about us? People fighting for their lives, people seriously ill – do the right thing. My mate on half pay, it did spark another episode. His wife's on half-pay because she's been off six month dealing with the stress and worry and what he's going to do next. I've taken it to the top. Mentioned it to Jo Farrar, who passed it down the chain. All the directors are well aware what's going on – still nothing. How many people does this Union have to bail out who are suffering financial hardship because they're fighting for their lives and this employer's put them on half pay? Sympathy and empathy for your staff, HMPPS. No excuses!

<Applause>

Some of the motions you've passed keeps this Union firmly on the trade union map. And you maybe sitting there thinking, 'Well, what difference does it make, we've supported the call for fire and rehire to made illegal?' Well I'm telling you now, it will make a difference, because that's now this Union's policy. Barry Gardener will be going to the Tories, trying to get this through Parliament. He'll keep pushing it and the Tories will be looking at the long list of unions who've supported this campaign and they'll come across those three little letters, P – O – A. The POA are at it again! Yeah, we are and we're not going to stop, because it's the right thing to do. So you will make a difference and you are making a difference because we'll continue to campaign for that. The Hillsborough Law, you backed that. Getting Hillsborough on the syllabus in schools to educate people about the cover-up from the establishment and what the establishment does to working-class people. Eventually, as the generations go through and learn about it, we might be able to stop the vile chants on the football terraces. 97 families affected – working-class people blamed, demonised and smeared and lied about. We supported Hillsborough as a Union and they got justice in the courts, and we will continue to support them because it's the right thing to do, and that's down to you! You should be proud of carrying motions like that. The Right to Food Campaign, we've backed that. How sad is it that children starve, that families on low incomes have to decide, 'I'll just have toast this week so I can feed the kids.' Food is not a luxury, it's a right. So, please don't sit there thinking I can't make a difference – because you are and you will make a difference.

You've also stood up – and continue to stand up – and eradicate all forms of discrimination, bigotry and racism in your workplaces and in society. These are the things that the general public don't hear about prison officers. Prison officers, the most professional people you will ever meet. Firefighters, police constables, paramedics, councillors, teachers, peer mentors, parents – we do it all, hidden behind a big grey wall. The only headlines we get are when something goes wrong. And even then the headline is, 'Police go in to quell a riot.' No they don't! Tornado squads, prison officers go in to quell riots. It's about time we got better publicity. You never hear a headline about the amount of lives we save, about the times we go into cells, sit down on a bed with a prisoner and talk them out of committing suicide, and care for them and make sure they're alright. They're never headlines, are they? Happens every day in our jails. You are part of the most restricted trade union on planet Earth. I can't tell you to do a single thing, but you know what? We are the POA, a campaigning, fighting, never-give-up union, and under my leadership we will always be a never-give-up fighting union.

<Applause>

You've heard it this week. We continue to be successful. We continue to get wins and rewards for our members. You, all of you, are amazing people. We value you. You are my passion, my motivation, my strength, my desire and my inspiration. You always will be. Go back to your establishments, stand by your beliefs, stand by your principles, stand by your morals – but most of all stand by your members. We are with you, we are for you. Solidarity to each and every one of you. Thank you Conference!

<Applause>

Well, thank you Conference. It's a lot better than a sitting ovation, I can tell you! I'll let our General Secretary, Steve Gillan, officially close Conference.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Well – follow that? I don't intend to. Fantastic speech, Chairman – very, very well done. I've got to say, I've been to a lot of Conferences over the years – as a delegate, as a Vice Chairman, as a Finance Officer and proud to be your General Secretary for the last 12 years – and Mark is right. And I don't intend to rehearse everything that Mark has said. I think he's chaired Conference brilliantly. He's done it with humour, empathy, compassion – all the things that make an excellent Chairman, Mark achieved that this week. And it's great to be back together again with such wonderful men and women that make up our delegation to Eastbourne, to this Conference. What a wonderful group of people you are, and your members should be absolutely proud of each and every single one of you, because you have been excellent this week – from the experienced people down to the first-time delegates, as Mark said. Absolutely superb. You should go back to your establishments, as Mark said, with your heads held high. And believe me, you're the heartbeat of the POA. Not me, not the Executive, not the full-time officers – you and the membership are the heartbeat and I'm ever so proud to be your General Secretary.

I also want to pay tribute to my staff, the support staff. Mark's mentioned the people here, Angela, Paula, Isil, Katherine and Steve Lewis, but there's still back at Cronin House working hard on your behalf and I'll pay tribute to them. And Mark mentioned his secretary – she's Nicola Hubert, who's also my secretary and has been probably for the last 20 years actually my secretary, and I can't speak highly enough about Nicola. She's going through a very bad time at this minute but, let me tell you, she works every single day. I've tried to get her to take time off. She won't. Because she loves

working for the POA, for you, the membership. And I pay tribute to Nicola, my secretary. I also pay tribute, as Mark says, to the security staff, and he's done all that so I'm not going to go into it, but I want to talk about my fulltime officers – from Andy, Mick, Angela, Phil and June in Northern Ireland. I couldn't do my job without them, because they're just a great team of people to be honest with you. They work hard, they play hard as well, but they do the astonishing administration for this trade union to back up a wonderful National Executive Committee. There seems to be a togetherness on this Committee and I'm very proud of them all. Take Dave Todd for example, working round the clock to make sure that Standing Orders goes without a hitch. Absolutely superb, Dave. And the rest of them – Dave Cook, Terry, Jackie and everybody else on there, absolutely superb. They've done the business for this trade union and I'm ever so proud of them.

I also want to pay tribute to my Deputy General Secretary, Joe Simpson. Joe is the best Deputy General Secretary that I've worked with. He is my right-hand man, and Joe's come through some difficult times. He had cancer to the eye, had his eye removed, and he lost his son at the age of 30 – and let me tell you, that man is a trade unionist through and through. He's never stopped.

<Applause>

He's absolutely fantastic. And I want to talk about the Pay Review Body. The Pay Review Body – Durham, when Durham brought their motion that we didn't give evidence to the Pay Review Body, I want to commend Durham for that, because you endorsed that strategy and that strategy that they put forward has been successful and it's paved the way – now I can't say too much but the new Chair of the Pay Review Body wanted a meeting with me off the record, Chatham House rules, so I can't say what the conversation took place, but I can reveal when I had that discussion with him, I went back to the Executive and recommended to the Executive, during the lockdown and Covid and different things, that I think we've got a different Chairman and a different Pay Review Body that is actually keen to listen to us. And by the way, they are listening to us and we're turning the tide, I think, but the proof will be in the pudding. Because we also warned them – Dave, Mark and myself, at a face-to-face meeting where we could look them in the eye – and we challenged them and said, 'Do not let us down. Because our membership not only need but demand a decent pay award above inflation.' Now whether we get that or not, I don't know, but we will wait and see. But the jury is still out and we told them that. We told them the jury's out on them. Because let me tell you, when people talk about low pay, and we said this to them, and I pointed a finger at them and said, 'You created that. You created, since <inaudible>, low pay for our members. You've got to take responsibility for that and remedy it.' They created it, as did HMPPS – they created the low wages. Only now can this Pay Review Body recommend – by God, I would love to go back to free collective bargaining, but free collective bargaining means the right to strike as well. We haven't got that. So we've got to work within the parameters that we've got and I'm glad that you've now endorsed us to continue giving evidence to the Pay Review Body. But let me tell you, if they don't deliver, we may well be back at Conference supporting the calls from Durham and different things, because we're not wasting our time sitting in front of a body that doesn't take you seriously. That's an important, very important business. So I'll say enough on that but the jury's out. And yes, myself and Mark, we've had a good relationship with lots of different Ministers. Quite frankly we've got a good relationship with this Minister. Warm words though do not pay the bills. I don't mind them standing up here and telling you what wonderful people you are. We already know what wonderful people you are. We don't need to be told it. But it doesn't pay your bills or your members' bills, so they've got to deliver. No more warm words, deliver a decent pay rise for all grades that we represent.

<Applause>

We've now produced a documentary, where we've come from and where we're going, and I'd like to pay tribute to Stewart McLoughlin. What a wonderful historian Stewart is. Absolutely fantastic. And he's been around the POA for years to be honest with you. He even taught me, as well, some things that I didn't know in that documentary, quite frankly, so Stewart, thank you so much for your input into that documentary, and we'll try and get it out as quickly as possible. There's a couple of little issues in it that we need to tidy up and we'll get it out so as our members can view it. It's their Union and they should be proud of where we've come from, but where we're going. There's no better union than the POA.

<Applause>

And Mark did mention retired members and honorary life members. And look, I'm not going to add too much to it, but the reality is most of you know who Pete Hancox is, retired member, he has been around a long, long time and at the end of the day he's a passionate guy. I've seen him in action before at NEC meetings where he's lost his temper and different things. We are a forgiving family. We all make mistakes from time to time, but Pete will always have a place in this Union, the same as every other honorary life member and retired member. But they've got to recognise that there's a different Executive now. Their day's gone. We are the Executive, you are the delegates. You're the most important people. So we'll stay focussed on that and take the positives, because I've watched this week and I know this trade union is in very, very safe hands with some tremendous young people coming through, men and women, and I'm ever so proud of you. Thank you so much and have a safe journey home. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. That's Conference closed. See you next year.

<Applause>

<End of Conference>