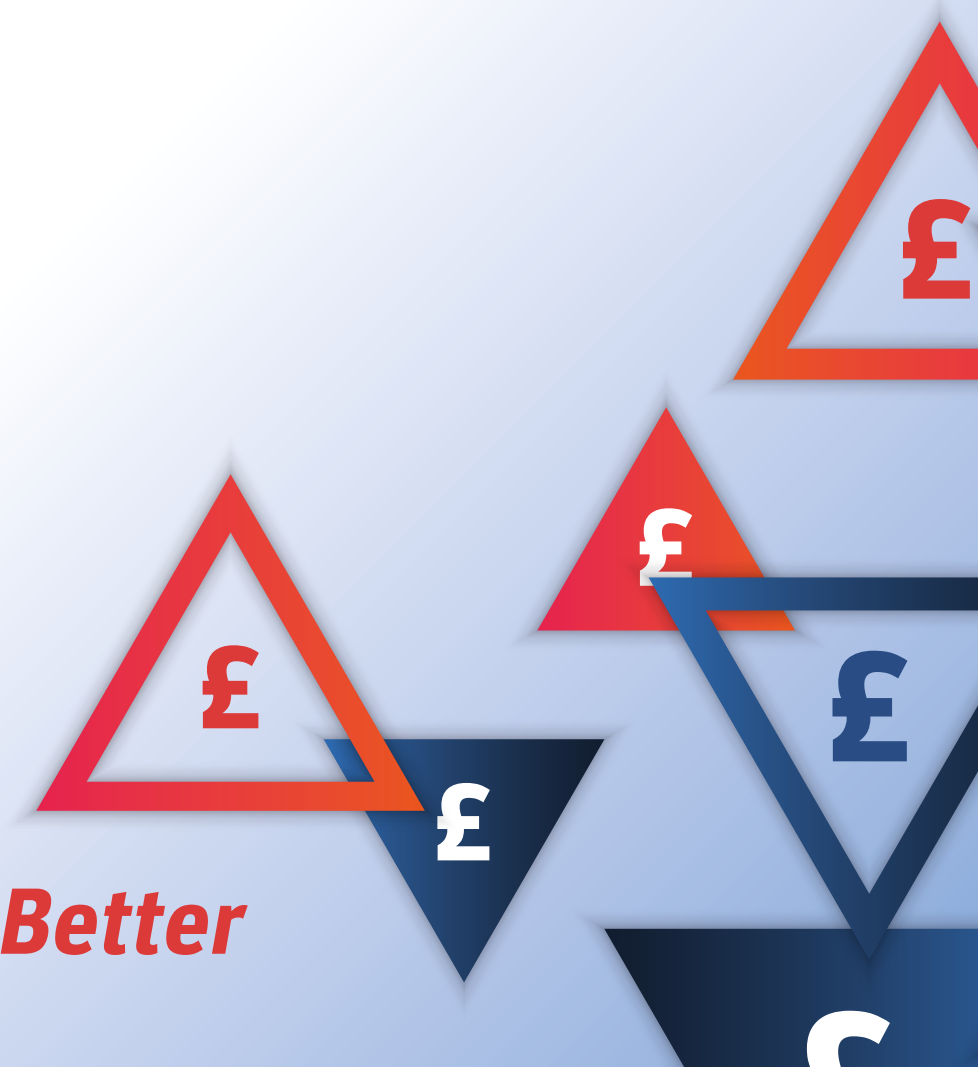




# POA Annual Conference 2023

## Verbatim Report



**We Deserve *Better***

# POA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

**Tuesday 9th – Thursday 11th May 2023**

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Tuesday 9th May 2023

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, I'll bring you to order. Thank you, Conference. A very good morning to you all, and it is a very good morning unless you're a Brighton fan, of course. Pat Rodohan is the Mayor of Eastbourne and I'm grateful for his attendance today to open Conference. So, on behalf of the POA, Pat, you're very welcome to formally open Conference, and welcome to the POA Conference 2023. Conference, Pat Rodohan, Mayor of Eastbourne.

<Applause>

He's obviously finishing his cup of tea in the back but he is here, I've seen him. He wants to make a grand appearance because he's a Mayor, that's what it is.

<Applause>

You're very welcome, Pat.

**PAT RODOHAN – MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE:** Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Welcome to address Conference.

**PAT RODOHAN – MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE:** Thank you. Welcome back to Eastbourne and I hope you have time to enjoy our wonderful, flat seafront Promenade, our Carpet Gardens and our renewed bandstand. Above all, welcome back to our renewed and modernised Winter Garden, and I hope that you enjoy a great conference. Last year I talked about how investment by the Council had encouraged inward investment into Eastbourne; today I'm going to give a little potted history of Eastbourne.

The name Eastbourne derives from east of the Bourne river or stream, which nowadays flows underneath the town centre. And, as with many underground passages, you won't be surprised that over many centuries an unofficial part of the Eastbourne economy was smuggling. Excavations on the Downs at the edge of Eastbourne tell us that there were settlements here going right back to the neolithic period and there's evidence of Roman baths. But for centuries Eastbourne was just a large village, depending on farming and fishing.

In 1232 it was granted the right to hold markets and by the end of the sixteenth century the population was still only a thousand. There was little change until the elite discovered in the eighteenth century that bathing in the sea was good for one's health, and in the 1780s King George III's family spent the summers in Eastbourne. By 1851 the population was still only 3,500 but in 1849 change came. The railways came to Eastbourne and there was a big increase in visitors and in population. Eastbourne was largely owned by the Duke of Devonshire and John Davies Gilbert; you could have called them Eastbourne's first developers. But we have to thank them and their architects for our elegant houses and wide streets.

By 1851 the population had reached 10,000. The pier was built in 1872, Devonshire Park behind it, of tennis fame, opened in the same year and that year they switched on the first electric lights in Eastbourne. Devonshire Park theatre opened in 1884 and in 1883 Eastbourne was granted a corporation and a Mayor. I'm the 77th Mayor of Eastbourne and I wear the same chain of office as the first Mayor.

The Italian Gardens at the end of the Promenade going west were built in 1905; the Turner Art Gallery was founded in 1923. Eastbourne was badly bombed during the war, with many fatalities, but it recovered quickly and by 1951 the population had increased to 57,000. The Congress Theatre next door opened in 1963 and the Turner Art Gallery moved next door in 2009. By 2022 the population had increased to 103,000.

The Turner Art Gallery is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and is hosting the prestigious Turner Prize just this summer. And, unlike you yourselves who discovered Eastbourne many years ago, the travel writers have suddenly discovered Eastbourne and it has become the "in place" in the UK to visit this year.

Many famous people lived in Eastbourne. Charles Dickens was a regular visitor and he gave readings in the Lamb Inn, which is a very old pub not far from here. Lewis Carroll of Alice in Wonderland fame was a regular visitor. George Orwell of the 1984 novel fame went to school here. Tommy Cooper, a magician that some of the older ones will remember, lived here and I can assure you he was just as funny offstage as he was onstage. Michael Fish, a BBC weatherman who guaranteed us that there was not a hurricane on the way in 1984, lived in Eastbourne and went to college here. And somebody that you all will have loved, ex-Prime Minister Theresa May, lived here for some time and went to college here.

I could go on but I guess I'm over time and I wish you a great conference. Do keep coming back to Eastbourne.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Pat. If you stay there, I do have a small gift to give you, but the delegates will have noticed that there's a slight accent there which doesn't belong to Eastbourne. Pat was actually from lovely Leitrim in the northwest of Southern Ireland. He moved to London in 1961 where he met his wife Barbara, and he has two sons. He came to Eastbourne in 1972 and he loves serving his community as the

Mayor. I know you've got a love for Gaelic football, maybe you can start bringing that to Eastbourne, that would be interesting. Pat's hobbies include walking, swimming, yoga, meditation and reading and he loves supporting his chosen charities, which are Amaze, who support children with learning difficulties, Community Wise and Holding Space, who help families with mental health issues, something that's close to all our hearts. So, Pat, it's been a great pleasure. I give you this small token of our appreciation. Conference, Pat Rodohan.

<Applause>

Thank you, Pat

<Applause>

Conference, before we commence business we've got the tech guys at the back who just want us to do a short reminder and demonstration of the voting system that we have in place. We do have new delegates here who are unfamiliar with it and it's just a quick reminder for those who were here last year. So I'll hand over to our tech guys, who are going to do a short presentation, and we'll have one dry run of the voting system.

**TECHNICAL STAFF:** Right. Good morning everybody. You should have all received at the start of the day a smartcard and a voting device. To ensure the smartcard has been inserted correctly, it needs to go all the way down. There is a little arrow that will disappear, just in case anybody has separated their smartcard from their device. What will happen is, once the Chair declares voting open, you'll get three options will appear. You will be asked to select 1 for "For", 2 for "Against", or 3 to withhold. It will be a lot clearer once we run a test vote in a moment. What will happen is, once you've cast your vote, you will receive a message of a vote received. If you wish to cancel your vote, simply push the X button, this will retract your vote and allow you to cast your vote by pushing 1, 2 or 3 again. What will happen is, once the vote has closed, you'll go back to the original screen, which should have a blue bar at the top, the POA logo and your branch name within the blue bar.

Can I just ask everybody to confirm that the label at the top of their card, as well as the blue bar, is correct with their branch name, just to make sure everyone does have the correct branch. If you don't have your card yet, or anyone has failed to pick one up, we are at the back corner there. Just simply come and speak to us and we'll issue you with your branch card if you haven't picked it up at the start of registration.

So, if we move over to a test vote. So, if we declare the vote open. So, if everyone could cast their vote by simply selecting 1, 2 or 3. If you get a message saying 'Please insert smartcard', that's simply your smartcard hasn't been inserted correctly. Just make sure it has been pushed down all the way. So, I can see we have got people voting. So, if we can just get a few more people voting. If you are having any issues with the keypads, just raise your hand and we'll come over and give you a hand. Does everybody seem to be okay and comfortable with the process? Yes, it looks like we have almost all the votes in. So, if we close the vote and the results are in. There we go. So, 91% of you have voted yes, 9% of you have voted no. Is everybody happy with the process or does anyone need a hand or further explanation?

So, does anyone else have any questions or issues? No? Well, if I hand back to yourselves. Thank you very much.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. Conference, is everyone happy? We'll continue. I'll now hand over to the Chair of the Standing Orders Committee for his report back to Conference. Over to Dave Todd, Vice Chair, NEC. Thank you.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Good morning, Conference, Chair, invited guests, observers. Welcome to Eastbourne, the POA's 82nd Annual Conference. As Chair of Standing Orders, it's my intention to set out the order of business. I'd like to thank the Standing Orders Committee for conducting the business of the union. I would also like to thank Nicola, who has worked tirelessly in the background with the committee. You will note that, in your Delegate Programme, we have several fringe meetings during Conference. Can I urge delegates to support wherever possible? Food and refreshments will be laid on 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 82nd Annual Conference. For the avoidance of doubt, each delegate should have an Annual Conference Agenda booklet, a Report Back booklet, Conference Papers 1–3, one Appeal to Conference. All documentation was contained in your delegate's pack which you picked up this morning. If you need any assistance during the 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 this hall and take a seat. All delegates must take up seats on the floor of Conference. I'm sure there's enough seating for all delegates. Delegates, observers, providers, invited guests and honorary life members must wear your identification badge throughout to assist the security team. Whilst we have no specific security threats, will everybody 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 invited guests must take up seats in the appropriate designated area.

In moving Standing Orders Committee Report to this 82nd 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; Ben McIntyre, Swaleside. Can I call on the Chair to ask Conference to approve the scrutineers and tellers?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, with a show of hands could you show your approval for the scrutineers and tellers? Thank you, Conference, that has been carried.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Thanks, Conference. The 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 yourselves of the rules throughout Conference. Delegates are reminded the rules governing Conference and procedures are set out in Conference Paper 3 of 2015. If you are unsure on any issues, please feel free to speak to the Standing Orders Committee. We're here to help, despite what some delegates think.

For the 82nd Annual Conference we received 110 conference motions within the prescribed time. The Standing Orders Committee contacted branches and 17 motions were reworded in line with conference policy and approved by the branch. Two motions were withdrawn before publication of the agenda; 29 were returned as not meeting the criteria from this to appeal to the NEC. One was overturned by the NEC and one is subject to appeal to Conference. Following the NEC's determination on all appeals, giving us an agenda for this year's Conference of 81 motions in the conference agenda booklet. The Standing Orders Committee received one emergency motion, which is placed in your conference booklets you received.

Conference, you're reminded that the section containing proposed rule changes will require a two-thirds majority and the rest of the conference agenda a simple majority. Therefore, Conference, we now have an agenda of 81 motions as contained in your conference booklet and three conference papers.

Conference, in order to expedite business throughout the week, your attention is drawn to the inside of Annual Conference Agenda, which outlines the reporting of the 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 includes the NEC, FTOs, invited guests, observers and honorary life members. Any branch who wishes to second a specific motion should ensure they speak to myself or Mick Pimblett as soon as possible and we'll update our agenda packs. Delegates should be aware, if you second a motion you must speak at the time, as you will not be allowed to speak once the debate has started. Again, delegates, if you intend to speak on a motion on behalf of your branch, will you please come forward to the front of the Conference and occupy one of the seats during the moving of the motion. The Chair will call you to the rostrum to address Conference. Any delegates addressing Conference must give their full name, 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 custom and practice, 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 Special Hospitals AGM will take place at some point during Wednesday morning.

Chair, can I now ask you to hear the appeal? Just a reminder to the Durham branch, you may not go into the body of the motion during the appeal to Conference.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Dave. I now call Durham to address your appeal to Conference.

**CRAIG ROBSON – DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, NEC, I'm appealing against the NEC's decision to reject it. We had a motion last year of 107, you can't carry it out without having this new motion, that we renegotiate the OSG Agreement, that's it.

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

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. On behalf of the Standing Orders Committee I'll address the appeal of the Durham motion on their motion listed as Appeal 1 in the Appeals conference booklet. Conference, if you cast your minds back to last year's Conference, a motion was passed that Conference reaffirms current policy set out in Annual Conference Motion 107 of '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. The Standing Orders Committee when sitting must abide by the conference rules set by you. If Conference allows this motion to go on the order paper, then rule 12.8 would have to be changed and no rule change has been received as a conference motion to enable this. Therefore, Conference, we ask you to reject this appeal.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, Conference, with a show of hands?

**CRAIG ROBSON – DURHAM:** <inaudible>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** If you wish to reply, you may reply.

**CRAIG ROBSON – DURHAM:** Yes, that's all well and good but unfortunately because of F&S the OSG Agreement is a waste of time now. We need to renegotiate it. Because of F&S you're asking OSGs to do...

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Craig, you cannot go into the body of the motion.

**CRAIG ROBSON – DURHAM:** I know but that's what you're having.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You'd have nothing to say, Craig, if you carried on, mate. Thank you. Conference, you've heard from the Chair of Standing Orders, you've heard from Durham. With a show of hands we're asking you, do you accept this appeal? All in favour, please show.

All against. Thank you, Conference, that has clearly been rejected.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** I'll now ask the Chair of Conference to seek Conference's approval for the adoption of Standing Orders Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, again with a show of hands, do you accept the Standing Orders Report? All those in favour of accepting this report, please show. Any against? Thank you, Conference, that has been adopted. Dave, Thank you, very much.

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

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, it's that time of year again when we respect our colleagues, our friends, our loved ones that we've lost, including our former Commander-in-Chief, Her Majesty The Queen. If you are able to stand, I would ask you to stand and observe a minute's silence. Thank you, that minute's silence will begin now.

Thank you, Conference. Please take your seats. Conference, National Executive, delegates, observers, honorary life members, invited guests, friends – welcome. Welcome to this, the 82nd Annual Conference of the POA, and it's so good to see everyone again looking so fit and healthy. I hope you all have a really enjoyable week. I'd like to thank the NEC, the full-time officers and all the support staff for the unwavering work they've conducted over the last 12 months. And, of course, congratulations to those on the NEC who have been re-elected for another term. At the end of Conference we say a fond farewell and a happy and healthy retirement to Dave Cook and we wish a warm welcome to Phil Hannant from Frankland, who has been elected onto the NEC who takes his place.

I'd like to thank the Retired Members Committee, who continue to work tirelessly to improve benefits for our retired members' section. I know how difficult that is with some companies who we're trying to get benefits off but I know you're trying your best, you keep chipping away. But you know, Conference, most of all I want to thank you, each and every one of you, for the work you do on behalf of the POA, for the support you give me and the NEC, and for the way you represent your members. I know how difficult it is. I know you work tirelessly. I know you answer emails and phone calls and texts on your rest days, on your days off, on your leave, at all hours of the night, relentlessly working on behalf of your members in extremely difficult circumstances. Wherever you work – in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man – wherever your workplace is, in escort services, secure hospitals, immigration removal centres, public or private sector, I am immensely proud of each and every one of you.

During the course of this week, Conference, we do have some guest speakers. They include Steve Reed, the Shadow Prisons Minister, Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, Paul Nowak, recently elected TUC General Secretary, Amy Rees, the CEO of HMPPS, and Damian Hinds, the current Prisons Minister. We have some awards to give out on Wednesday afternoon in the form of Cronin Clasps and we have fringe meetings. They include Thompsons Employment Rights, focussing on workers' rights in a time of crisis, Public and Private – stronger together, Women in the Workplace, and we also have a panel taking questions as part of the Hope Not Hate campaign, which we are proud to support.

Our chosen charity is the MND Association for motor neurone disease. A very dear friend and an employee of the union recently lost a close relative to this incurable disease and I hope whatever we raise can go in some small way to funding research into a cure for this horrible disease. Please don't forget to visit the stalls while you're here and thank you again to Eastbourne for hosting us. I know they do everything they can to make this week run smoothly.

There is one person who can't be here this year and I know she's watching at home. I'd like to thank my amazing secretary, Nicola Hubert. I know she's had a really difficult couple of years. Nicola, I hope you and your family are well, we're thinking of you, we miss you and I can't wait to see you again.

At the back of the hall there will be some directors from HMPPS. I'd like to thank them for granting facility time for us all to attend this Conference and they are very, very welcome.

Well, Conference, you don't need me to tell you that it's been a really busy 12 months. Overshadowed, of course, by the death of Her Majesty The Queen, but certainly not overshadowed by the resignation of Dominic Raab because he wasn't a bully – work that out for yourself. We continue to gain benefits for our members all over the United Kingdom. In Scotland, for example, who do have the right to strike, they recently brokered a deal with their Government on a pay award that the membership accepted, which works out at between 4.5% and 15%. It's amazing what the right to strike can do. I'd like to congratulate Eddie Cruse from HMP Polmont, who has been elected to the Scottish National Committee. He takes up post at the close of Conference and he replaces Willie Carle, who retires at the close of this Conference, and we wish you well, Willie, in your retirement.

Northern Ireland continue to harbour positive industrial relations with their employer. It's a rebuilding process but they are working hard for their members there. If you get a chance, please go over to the Northern Irish delegation and send them your solidarity because the risk is just heightened for our members in the POA over there. Let's hope we don't go back to the dark old days of dissident action against POA members in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland, we are all with you.

In the secure hospitals, we recently conducted a statutory ballot over last year's pay offer. That was overwhelmingly rejected but, unfortunately, because of the draconian laws in place from this Government we never met the thresholds. It's so important that, when we hold a statutory ballot, that we get at least 50% of our members to vote, and we didn't meet that threshold.

We've recently held another indicative ballot in the workplace in the secure hospitals over this year's pay award. That has been overwhelmingly rejected, so now we have got options. So, we'll work with the other health unions who are opposed to the pay award and don't accept it and maybe we can hold another statutory ballot in relation to this year's pay award for them, and hopefully this time we can meet the thresholds. I know that the branch officials in our secure hospitals have put a lot of hard work into getting that statutory ballot up and running. I'd like to thank them for that. It's

just a case of getting people to vote when that letter comes through the door.

Do you know something, colleagues? If you think things are bad in our prisons, then you need to take some time this week to speak to our delegates from the secure hospitals because things are just as dire there. They have exactly the same problems as us all – staffing shortages, can't recruit, can't retain, poor pay, austere working conditions. And, you know, before the pandemic, like you all, and since the pandemic, they have always been heroes. But during the pandemic the focus was on A&E doctors and nurses – quite rightly, haven't got a problem with that. But our members in secure hospitals, behind that big grey wall, hidden out of sight, were just as heroic as everybody else, working, looking after the most dangerous criminals society has to offer with minimum PPE. In conversations with them only a few weeks ago, they were telling me about the problems their members face. They are burnt out, working excessive hours in overtime to make ends meet. Things are that bad in the secure hospitals that on some occasions during nights they have one member of staff to supervise two adjoining wards. When that member of staff takes a break at the nursing station, because they're sitting still in front of a computer screen, when their senior managers view CCTV they're accusing them of falling asleep on duty and disciplining them, just because they viewed CCTV and think they're asleep because they're having a break at a nursing station and are sitting still at a computer screen. Disgraceful behaviour from senior managers in their industry.

They're telling me that they've got staff who are using food banks. They've got staff come the last week of the month before payday who are phoning up branch officials and saying to them, "I cannot afford to put fuel in my car. I can't afford the bus fare and I can't afford the train fare to work, what do I do?" We've got branch officials taking staff on their weekends off to food banks because they can't afford to purchase food for their families. We've got POA members committing suicide and threatening to commit suicide, and that comes on the shoulders of branch officials who are sitting down with them and trying to counsel them and convince them not to commit suicide and to get them help. That has a knock-on effect on you as branch officials. We will work tirelessly over the next 12 months to address all those issues in the special hospitals and, if you get time, converse with the delegates from the secure hospitals, listen to what they've got to say. Things are just as bad. To those delegates from the secure hospitals I say thank you so much for everything you do. We are right behind you and we will address those issues.

We continue to build solid industrial relationships with the private sector, most recently getting recognition rights with G4S at the newest prison in the country, Five Wells. The reason we have such positive relationships is because we are open, we are honest, we are transparent. We never shy away from announcing that, yes we do, we want all prisons in the public sector because we don't think it's right that you should make a profit from someone's incarceration. If you are incarcerated by the state, the state should look after you. They know that but it doesn't stop us working with them and they're grateful for the work we do. But we want better working conditions for our members in the private sector, we want safer staffing levels and we want better pension rights. That's why we want them back in the public sector.

I recently visited a private-sector prison and I was appalled to go onto one unit where there was one member of staff looking after 60 prisoners. Sixty prisoners all unlocked at the same time. The reason for that was, because just like us, the private sector cannot recruit staff and cannot retain staff. Every now and again a unit manager was flitting between these wings to see if the member of staff was okay, but they wouldn't stay there, wouldn't stay there all morning or all afternoon. So, for the entire morning, one member of staff had been looking after 60 prisoners, burnt out, stressed out, couldn't even go to the toilet. It only takes seconds to become a hostage. Clearly unsafe.

Now, the reason it was so unsafe, and I don't blame the private sector for this, I blame the Government because the contracts that the private sector sign have penalty clauses in. So if they can't run a regime, if they can't deliver what they've promised to deliver on that contract, they get fined. And if they get fined it affects profits, it affects share price, it affects their company. So I don't blame private companies for that, I blame the Government. You should never put profit over staff safety and that's why we want them back into the public sector. You know, on that unit over lunchtime, when they were trying to do the roll check, they didn't even bang up the prisoners. You had one member of staff running round the landings trying to do a head count while prisoners were playing snooker, walking in and out of each other's cells and cooking on the landings outside their cell. They didn't even bang them up to do a headcount. It's no wonder the roll was always late.

They are the sort of working conditions we don't want, and I would sincerely hope in the closed estate in the public sector that, if you are on a wing on your own, then you are in patrol state and nobody gets unlocked at all. We will work with the private sector to put those issues right and get safe working conditions for our members.

You may have noticed over the past 12 months that an immigration removal centre by the name of Manston in Dover was in the press. That was a holding centre for asylum-seekers who were only supposed to stay there for a maximum of 48 hours. It was designed to hold 1,000 people. When our full-time officers visited, Manston had over 3,000 people waiting to be moved on, some who had been there for weeks. The young, the old, families, people with severe health conditions, sleeping on cardboard on a cold concrete floor. Inhumane, degrading. We intervened. Mitie were grateful for our intervention. We highlighted it in the media, we went to Government officials and we said, "You need to put this right." I don't care what your opinion is on asylum-seekers, I don't care what your opinion is on immigration, no-one should be treated in such a degrading and inhumane manner, nobody, no matter who they are. If it wasn't down to the POA that would never have been remedied. So I say be proud of your union and well done POA.

<Applause>

And when we're talking about privatisation, can anybody in this hall tell me anything that has been privatised that actually works better? Because I'm really struggling to find anything at all.

During the course of the year we held our first ever Supporting Women in the Workplace workshop. You know, colleagues, there were some absolutely horrendous stories coming out from our female delegates about their experiences in our workplaces: sexism; inappropriate behaviour from work colleagues; bullying from senior managers; a reluctance to grant work-life-balance shift patterns; a reluctance to approve flexible working; not acknowledging that when you return from maternity leave you've now got childcare issues. And did you know that the employer hasn't even got a policy in place for women who are going through IVF treatment? The maximum they get granted is five days special leave while, as we all know, IVF

doesn't always work on the first occasion. So, now our colleagues going through a really traumatic set of circumstances, in some instances have to report sick to go through prolonged treatment.

On a positive note, the employer did attend that workshop, they did take on board everything that was highlighted and they are going to work with us over the next 12 months to put those issues right, produce policies that are fit for purpose and protect our members in their workplace. I'm so grateful to our NEC, Jackie Marshall, Sarah Rigby and Angela Montgomery, who worked tirelessly to get that workshop up and running. It was a massive positive.

It wouldn't have escaped your attention, of course, that we've recently had a thematic review into the experiences of Black staff and prisoners. I don't know who has read it but if, like me, you have, for someone so proud to be a prison officer and proud of the job I do and proud of the service, proud of the uniform I wear, that was an extremely painful and difficult read. I know you've got a copy of it in your packs and if you want to know the experiences of your Black work colleagues, read from page 45 onwards. Some of the things that came out there, and some people will say, "But, Mark, it was only a small sample of Black and minority ethnic staff, how can you make a conclusion off that?" Well, I say it's a damn good job they never went into every prison in England and Wales and interviewed Black staff. Imagine how damning that would have been. And I've read the response from the employer. It's full of buzzwords and management speak with great intentions but lacking in substance. We must not let this employer tick a box like they constantly do. We've engaged with the union, tick a box. We've consulted with them, tick a box. We've interviewed our staff, tick a box. We've got an action plan, tick a box. That is not good enough. We need to get to the root cause of the issues. The employer needs to get into every jail and interview as many Black and ethnic minority staff as they can find and find out a true reflection of what's going on in our workplace, how they feel, what the issues are. But, more importantly, they need to put it right. They need to get out into the communities and engage with community leaders and find out why Black and minority ethnic people in our communities are not joining this service, find out why and put it right.

Now, I accept changing cultures takes time but we haven't got time. We must educate and we must eradicate all forms of bigotry, prejudice, racism, sexism, misogyny. Get rid of it, cut the cancer out of our workplace, cut the cancer out of our union.

<Applause>

Now, I'm very proud of this union and I'm proud of the work you do and I know I've got you on board with these issues because I know you work tirelessly locally to make people feel welcome and supported. That's the vision for this union – we are a diverse union, we must be welcoming, we must respect everybody and embrace respect for everybody, no matter what. No matter what the colour of their skin is, no matter what their religion is, no matter how they identify, no excuses. We must make our work environment supportive and welcoming, just like the POA is. I can guarantee you this, colleagues, as long as I'm the leader of this union, we will continue to root out and kick out bigoted, prejudiced, racist, sexist people. They are not welcome in this union, they are not welcome in society and they are certainly not welcome in our workplaces.

<Applause>

I have to mention safety in our workplaces, colleagues, because it hasn't escaped your attention that, since we started expanding regimes, lo and behold, violence is yet again on the increase. And over the past couple of weeks we've had several branches invoke the Health and Safety Protocol. We had an incident at Wetherby where their staff had had enough of being used as punchbags, had enough of being carted off to hospital. Nobody was listening, so they invoked the Health and Safety Protocol and retreated to a safe place. It never happens until it happens.

Only last week we had Feltham invoke the Health and Safety Protocol because nobody was listening to them. I know, in the past few months, Werrington have invoked the Health and Safety Protocol because of the violence they experienced in their workplace because, again, nobody was listening. What's the common theme? They are all part of the Youth Custody Service dealing with prisoners under the age of 18. It never happens until it happens.

Look at history and learn from history: "Oh, that's pretty, that cladding on that high-rise building, isn't it?" "Yes, it's lovely. Is it safe?" "Yes, of course it is, it's been tested, it's fire retardant, it's not a problem." Then we have Grenfell. It never happens until it happens.

I recently watched a documentary. It was about the space shuttle Challenger. The space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after take-off in January 1986 and the engineers who were working to refurbish the solid rocket boosters, the very things that exploded, they refurbished them after every take-off. They'd been warning their directors and their bosses that the rubber seals, the rubber O-rings that joined the rocket boosters together, were starting to degrade and fail. They said to them, particularly in cold weather they become brittle, which means they could fail, which means that fuel could leak and it could end up exploding. It would be a catastrophic incident. And it was all logged, it was all documented. Time and time again, their bosses, their directors, failed to listen. And they interviewed the daughter of one of the engineers, who on that fateful morning was driving to the launch site with her father in the car, and she said, "My father was very animated and he was banging on the dashboard as he was driving to the site." She was like, "Father, what's wrong? I've never seen you like this before, what's wrong?" And he said, "They're refusing to listen. They're not listening to me. They just won't listen. The space shuttle is going to explode." On that morning, because the temperature was that low, they had to remove icicles from the space shuttle. They held an emergency meeting before the launch and the engineers said, "Don't launch, it's not safe. We fear there will be a catastrophic incident." They launched. They refused to listen. Shortly after launch, the solid rocket boosters failed, exploded with the loss of seven lives. It transpired that for three years the engineers had been warning the bosses and the directors that there would be a catastrophic explosion if they did not refurbish and renew the rubber seals and completely overhaul the solid rocket boosters. And they failed to listen.

Now, the reason I'm giving you these examples is because this should resonate with every single one of you in this hall, because it certainly resonates with everyone on the NEC, because we've all been there and I'm sure you've all been there. Think about it. "Oh Governor, do not unlock this wing this afternoon, it's been bubbling all morning. There's something going to go off, there's a bad atmosphere. Let us just play safe, let's do some target searching – we know there's weapons on the wing – do some target searching, play it safe. We'll gather more intelligence, maybe we'll be able to ship

a few people off and calm the wing down." What does the Governor do? "Oh no, no, no, no. Do I have to order you to unlock? Get them unlocked, come on, get them out." What happens? You unlock, all hell breaks loose. Staff end up in hospital, prisoners end up in hospital, there's carnage. Why? Because our leaders refuse to listen to you.

Or maybe you go to your Governor and you say, "Governor, we've had an incident on the exercise yard every day this week. Let's not put the exercise out today, let's just make the yard more secure. Maybe we're missing a bit of razor wire where they're all climbing up the fence. Maybe we can restrict the numbers on the yard. Let's just play it safe, let's not get them out, let's make the yard more secure. Let's review the risk assessments, let's keep our prison safe." "Oh no, no, you've got to get them out. You've got to give them exercise. Do I have to order you to get them out?" So you get them out on this yard, what happens? There's a major incident, Tornado was called, NTRG are coming. Why? Because your leaders are not listening to you, and I'm sure we've all been here with this one: "Governor, we're not unlocking the association tonight. The cleaners have just tipped us the wink, there's going to be some scores settled, two rival gangs have got weapons, it's all going to kick off. So we're going to search the leaders that we know are going to kick off and we're just going to lock it down, play it safe." And what do your leaders say? "Get them out, get them out before I order you to get them out." So you get them out, what happens on association? There's mass fights, there's mass violence, there's injuries, there's blue lighters, there's claret everywhere. Why? Because your governors refuse to listen.

These are indefensible decisions. Why? Some of the governors I've had the privilege to work for, and I do mean privilege, have been people who have worked their way through the ranks, have taken on board staff concerns, listened to local committees. But, more importantly, have acted because they want the same thing as each and every one of you – they want safe prisons. So, why are we getting so many leaders refusing to listen to the staff who, day after day, shift after shift, deal with incident after incident? Remember this – action is lawful if you are at risk and we will never, ever repudiate any action you take, we will always support you. You have my word.

What Wetherby and other branches did was lawful and was in line with the legally binding Health and Safety Protocol. If you are at risk as an individual, it is your right at work to invoke that legally binding Health and Safety Protocol. Now, I've recently written a letter to the Secretary of State for Justice, who this week is Alex Chalk, I don't know who it will be next week. And I've now got it on public record – there will be a death in the under-18 estate due to excessive violence and a lack of protection. That's on public record. And HMPPS, with their dithering and delaying, their analysing, their review of PAVA in the closed adult estate, then we'll make a decision, then we'll make a recommendation, that's going to take months. My members haven't got months, neither have the people they care for. And I'm positive as a parent, any parent whose young, 15-, 16-, 17-year-old child was being attacked by six assailants armed with knives, stamping on their child's head, I'm certain that they would support any one of us spraying those assailants with an irritant that made their eyes sting and water in order to save the life of their child. I'm pretty sure we would get their approval for that. I don't care what the reform groups say, I don't care what the children's charities say, I don't care. They don't live in our world and they don't deal with what we have to deal with. We need PAVA for our staff in the under-18 estate, no dithering, no delaying, get it issued and get it issued now.

<Applause>

We've recently had Cookham Wood receive an Urgent Notification. I quote from Charlie Taylor, some of the reasons they got an Urgent Notification. "There was a breakdown of behaviour management because staff had no faith or trust in their senior leaders. Cells were full of weapons but staff were reluctant to search the cells because they knew they wouldn't get the backing from their governors." How sad is that? 90% of prisoners at Cookham Wood are Keep Aparts, which means if you're from a different postcode as soon as you're unlocked, I'm going to try and kill you. Staff had no confidence in leaders. Well, it's all well and good getting an Urgent Notification but it's funny how the former headmaster, Charlie Taylor, doesn't give us any solutions. Maybe he and his merry cohort of inspectors, many of which are failed governors, should go into Cookham Wood for a few months and show us how it's all done. Show us, Charlie, how are you going to unlock everyone at the same time so they're not banged up for prolonged periods? Show us how all these Keep Aparts are going to behave for you. Show us what you're going to do with a prisoner who, every time you unlock their door, wants to attack staff or kill another inmate. Show us how you're going to get them all 21 hours a week education with very minimal staff because I believe at Cookham Wood half of them are on the sick. No wonder! And isn't it funny that his recommendation to Government, a professional qualification for those working with under-18s, has made matters worse? Because now we've lost a lot of experience because why should I do a professional qualification to work with children when I've been working there for 20 years? What's a piece of paper going to improve? Well, it hasn't improved a single thing because that estate has got more violent, got more volatile, got less respectful despite the professional qualification.

Sometimes in life, sometimes in workplaces, in order to change bad laws we have to break bad laws. And violence over the last three months has seen two serious assaults every day on our members. That means hospitals, getting carted off to hospitals, some with life-changing injuries, and 23 assaults on staff a day that don't require hospital treatment.

That's why I asked you in my recent update, let's remove ceramics from our jails. And I know that's going to be aggravation for a lot of you, no matter what estate you work in. Let's get rid of these weapons from our cells. Put them in stored prop. I'm fed up of reading reports of staff getting attacked with ceramic cups and ceramic plates. Serious injuries, sharp-edged weapons once they're smashed. Rely on us to get it off the DHL canteen list, but let's rely on you to get those weapons out of our jails, out of those cells.

And you know something else, Conference? I am absolutely fed up with people quoting to me, "Oh, our Governor wants to unlock a full wing and he's saying it's a 30:1 ratio." There's no such thing as a 30:1 ratio. How on earth do you expect one member of staff to safely supervise 30 prisoners? It's impossible. The 30:1 ratio came from the failed benchmark experiment which left us in the crisis we face now. And I know it's used on profiling exercises but that's down to us. We need to tackle that. We need to eradicate that. There's no such thing as a 30:1 ratio, the ratio is what you decide with your leaders. It's based on risk and the potential for risk. We need to get away from this ratio. If you don't think it's safe, don't do it, don't agree it. We will always back you.

And, of course, we're in the middle now, aren't we, of Operation Safeguard. Our jails are that full that we now have to use police cells when people are convicted by the courts. And it all comes at an expense to us, the taxpayers. We're paying for it. Why? Because of the Government's failed policies.

Because since they've come to power, they keep closing public-sector jails. And the knock-on effect of Operation Safeguard is increased population pressures – people languishing in your segregation units that you can't transfer out or swap because we haven't got the head space. Longer reception opening hours to satisfy police cells, which means more excessive hours working for our members. And, of course, as our colleagues in the open estate will tell me, that means more unsuitable people getting hurriedly recategorised because the spaces are in the open estate. I was talking to a friend of mine who works in Liverpool Reception. He said, "Mark, you wouldn't believe the people we are sending to Kirkham. Never in a million years would we categorise them to Cat D and send them to Kirkham. Watch the absconds go through the roof."

We are in crisis. That is down to the Government. With their austerity measures, with the closure of prisons, with their failure to invest in our infrastructure, we are in crisis. And now they're asking HMPPS to save over £37 million from their budget. And how are they going to do it? One HMPPS, what does that even mean? Well, as far as I can tell, it means they're going to regionalise headquarters – seven different regions. That means more directors' jobs, and I'm talking about Band 12s, the people who are on over £100,000 per year. They're going to create more of them. And we know what that brings – it brings seven different interpretations on policy and guidance because you know locally how it works – one Governor interprets it this way, one Governor interprets it that way. They've now offered a VEDS package for HQ staff, non-ops, who don't have to work with prisoners. They'll be absolutely swamped with requests for that. Everything they do is a disaster and I cannot see One HMPPS working at all. Can you think of anything they've done that has worked? I can't.

We are in crisis. We are in crisis with recruitment and retention. Thousands less staff than when this Government came into power. For every four new recruits, we keep only one. There are no green shoots. In fact, the only green shoots are the green shoots that prisoners smoke in their cells because now we can't even staff enhanced gate security. We've got all this sexy new modern equipment to search staff as they enter our prisons and, in some jails, they're only operating it two or three times a week because we haven't got the staffing levels to even staff that security at the gate.

We are in crisis. We are in crisis over pay. How disgraceful are the recommendations to the pay review body from HMPPS in relation to our closed grades! Listen to what they've said: "In future we will continue to invest in the F&S bands and incentivise staff to opt in and have no plans to submit proposals to invest in closed grades in future years." The closed grades, the experienced staff, the very people who've kept this service afloat for the last decade. The people we rely on to pass on their experience and to nurture young, inexperienced staff. Nothing. What a way to motivate a workforce: "You're worthless. We're giving you nothing in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. We don't appreciate you, we don't want you and that's what we think of you. We're giving you nothing now, we're giving you nothing in the future." Shame on you, HMPPS!

<Applause>

It wouldn't be so bad if they give you 12 months' notice: 'Well, we're going to give you an award this year but in the future, we think F&S will be above you so in the future I'm afraid you're going to have to opt in.' They haven't even given you 12 months' notice. It would have been a start.

Of course, in other industries, what do they do when they want better pay? They go on strike and we've seen strikes all across the country: in the NHS, nurses, doctors; postal workers; rail workers; bus drivers; teachers; lecturers. And I say solidarity to them all because, if we could strike, we would. I would be balloting you for strike action every year over your derisory pay awards. And, of course, the OSGs, they do have the right to strike and the indication was they're up for it.

But you've got to have faith in us, okay? We want above-inflation pay awards for everyone. It would be very wrong of us as a union to ballot a section of our workforce when the majority of them received an above-inflation pay award, which the OSGs did last year. That's what we want for you all, so when we're asking for it and we're getting it, why would we ballot them for strike action? We wouldn't, it makes no sense. Let's see what happens this year. Have faith in us, we've got that in our locker and I can guarantee you, if we need to, we will ballot the OSGs for strike action at the right time over the right issues. And if they're ever on the picket line I don't want to see any POA member crossing a POA picket line. So, let's see how that pans out.

But look at how draconian this permanent injunction is. Just look at the things that I am prevented from saying to you or telling you to do. These are some of the things that I would never, ever say to you but I would love to say to you. I would love to say to you, "Will you stop working overtime and Payment Plus? Will you just stop it?"

<Applause>

"Just stop it for four weeks, five weeks, six weeks. Short-term pain for long-term gain. Just stop it, stop making it work. Let them see that they're relying on your goodwill to run our prisons." But I can't say that and I never would say that to you because we're under a permanent High Court injunction. And I would love to say, "For pity's sake, will you stop volunteering for tasks that give you zero additional pay? Because as long as you volunteer, I will never, ever be able to convince the pay review body to pay you for those additional skills. If it takes you training to get an additional skill then the first question you should be asking is, 'How much additional salary am I getting?' Stop volunteering for stuff, will you?" I'd love to say that to you but I can't and I never would.

<Applause>

Because we're under a permanent High Court injunction. And I would love to say to you, "If you're forced to go on detached duty, or you're forced to bump, bump off. Just have a mutiny, just say no." I'd love to do that, love to say that to you, what are they going to do? Discipline us all? I don't think so. But I can't and I never would because we're under a permanent High Court injunction.

I would love to say to you, "Stop volunteering to take part in pilots, will you? Because if you don't volunteer they can't get the pilots off the floor. Just stop it. Stop making it work. They've got that many pilots the sky should be full. They've got more toolkits than a mechanic. That many volunteers, it's

a wonder they pay us for absolutely anything. And they conduct more deep dives than a nuclear submarine. So will you stop volunteering for pilots and making it work?" I'd love to say that to you but I can't and I never would because we're under a permanent High Court injunction.

And look at all these bright ideas and schemes, what have they done to improve your working life? Just take a look at a few of them. Structured supervision. We're now going to train Band 4s on a pilot scheme to sit down with Band 3s and listen to all their problems. Now, you're not just going to get workplace problems, oh no. You're going to get the full hit – private life, work life, the lot. And you're going to have to take all that on board. You're not trained counsellors, you're not trained psychotherapists, you're trained prison officers, but you're going to get hit with all these Band 3 problems. Who's going to sit down with you as a Band 4 and do structured supervision with you? What about the Band 2s and the Band 5s? Are they not worthy, have they not got problems? Here's an idea, why don't we employ in every jail a counsellor, a mental health nurse, a psychotherapist during the core day so that, when we're involved in a traumatic incident or our head goes, we can go off the landing, sit down in a room with a trained professional and offload and get some real help. How about that for an idea? It would only cost 35 to 40 grand a year. I bet you, you'd get that back in the first year because the sickness would reduce. Structured supervision.

And then we've got new colleague mentors and buddies. I remember back in the day when training SOs and POs used to do that job. It worked perfectly well then, why can't it work now? And how has any of this improved your life? Has it helped you pay your bills? No. Has it helped you pay your increased mortgage payments? No. Has it helped you put the heating on in your home whenever you like? No. Has it helped you put fuel in your car? No, it hasn't. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis I'll tell you what improves your life – it's your take-home pay that improves your life. It's the take-home pay that improves your working life. It's your take-home pay that improves your mental health. It's your take-home pay that improves your private life. And in other industries, if the take-home pay is not good enough, they can take strike action, but we can't because we continue to be the most restricted trade union on Planet Earth.

And you know something, Conference? Look at that. We deserve better. We deserve better from HMPPS in relation to our pay, we deserve better from them in relation to detached duty. We deserve better from them in them refusing to allow us to carry PAVA on external duties, including bed guards and escorts. We deserve better from them when it comes to safety at work. Because it's their failed policies, their failed pay structures, their failed recruitment and retention toolkits and their failed safety projects which is failing each and every one of you. We deserve better.

We deserve better from this Government when it comes to our unrealistic retirement age of 68. How the hell do you expect us to work in the most hostile environment workplace in Western Europe to the ripe old age of 68? It's cruel, it's unrealistic, it's unachievable. We deserve better from the Government who refuse to give us our right to strike back. The basic human right of any worker – withdraw their labour if they are in a genuine trade dispute with their employer. We deserve better.

We deserve better from the Chief Inspector of Prisons, who continually regurgitates unrealistic reports, blaming you on the front line for all the problems that mean we cannot deliver. It's down to the Government and their failure to invest, their failure to pay us properly. It's not down to you and it's not down to your managers. It's down to the Government. We deserve better from them.

We deserve better from the pay review body, who consistently award you below-inflation pay rises. And we deserve better from opposition politicians who refuse to put in their manifestos guarantees that will improve your life. Simple things like give us a retirement age of 60 and give us our right to strike back. If opposition politicians want our support, they need to get them in their manifestos.

We deserve better in the YCS estate, who have zero protection at all. Would you send a firefighter into a burning building, give them a water pistol and tell them to quell the flames? No, you wouldn't. Would you send a police constable into an inner-city housing estate to deal with violent 15-, 16- and 17-year-old youths armed with knives with nothing more than a polo shirt and a body-worn video camera? No, you wouldn't. So don't expect my members to do it. We deserve better.

We deserve better in the open and the female estate, who have zero protections as well. And we deserve better for our OSGs who are the lowest paid amongst our workforce but do such vital tasks that keep our prisons running. We deserve better for our psychiatric hospitals, who now have an imposed pay award from this Government that doesn't improve the lives of their members. And we deserve better for the private sector, who are forced to endure unsafe working practices in the pursuit of profit over safety.

We deserve better for our colleagues who seek promotion. But now they've abandoned the apprenticeship scheme and can't even provide enough spaces on an assessment centre, what chance is there for them? And we deserve better, Conference, from Phil Copple, who last week published on the intranet a disgraceful and insulting address to you as a workforce that failed to link the inhalation of Spice NPS at work with the adverse health effects it has on POA members. Just because the science says they cannot find traces of Spice in your system after an exposure, it doesn't mean that Spice does not affect you. Clearly there is more research and experiment to be done in that field but Phil Copple doesn't link it at all. Well, I'll tell you what, Phil, tell that to your staff and my members who are convulsing on the floor of your landings after inhaling Spice at work. Tell that to POA members and your staff who after inhaling Spice at work travel home and are aggressive towards their families. Tell that to the staff who collapse after inhaling Spice on the landings. Tell that to the staff who ended up in hospital because they've inhaled Spice at work and tell that to the staff who are suffering to this day after inhaling Spice years ago in the workplace. I'll tell you something, Phil, you got seriously wrong – it's an insult to your staff, an insult to my members. You need to apologise and you need to apologise now.

<Applause>

Conference, we deserve better because your employers have done absolutely nothing for you. So let this be the year, let this be the year when POA members wherever they work stand in unity and demand better. Let this be the year when POA members say to their employers, "Our goodwill has gone." You cannot run the service on volunteers. You cannot run the service on overtime and Payment Plus. You cannot run the service with zero

additional resource for zero additional funding. You will respect us, you will listen to us and you will take note. Because, Conference, no longer will we accept violent workplaces. No longer will we be bullied into working unsafely. No longer will we accept excessive hours working because together in unity anything is achievable. When we rise, they will shrink. Solidarity to you all. Thank you.

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference. I will now hand over to Steve Gillan for the Finance Officer's report.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman, NEC and Conference. Conference, colleagues, I can advise that Conference that, in line with rule 12/17 of the union's Rules and Constitution, I have received no finance questions related to the audited accounts of the union. I took note from last year and have not solely relied on our audited finances being produced in Gatelodge, as some delegates stated they received a Gatelodge during the movement of last year's finance report. That is why, this year, when the Executive approved the finances, they were reproduced for every single branch in the country on 5 April 2023 by way of Branch Secretary Circular 007/2023.

As in previous years, although not required to do so under the Rules and Constitution, all NEC and full-time officer monthly claim forms have been brought to Conference for year-end December 2022 and if required by any delegate can be looked at. An arrangement should be made through myself or Joe Simpson. If anyone wishes to scrutinise those forms, they will be made available during the week on a laptop, as they are now done digitally to save money on paper. Our accountants are also present and can be asked any questions in relation to the audited accounts of the union.

Colleagues, it is now my duty on behalf of the National Executive Committee to present the union's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2022, commencing with the income of the union. There was a small decrease in membership during the year of '22 and, as a result, income decreased by £6,000. Pleasingly, though, we have seen a significant increase from last year in the opening five months of 2023 by an additional 550 members since year-end. If this is maintained it amounts to an additional £102,000 in revenue over the 12-month period to December 2023.

The closure of Union Learning and Learn Direct last year resulted in a surplus of £230,000 and accounted for an overall income of the union for the year to 237 as the normal bid money was no longer available, apart from the Welsh Union Learning Fund. With this increase in income and a small decrease in costs we generated a surplus for the year of £440,613. I will now highlight the main areas where cost changes arose.

Salaries and superannuation costs decreased by £210,000 because of reduced staff and a corresponding reduction in pension and National Insurance costs. The change to electric vehicles also gave a significant reduction in the tax and National Insurance costs compared to the petrol/diesel vehicles. You will recall me stating last year that staff pay rises were via a formula of RPI, CPI and the average earnings. Conference, had the formula been applied this year it would have meant a payment this year of 10.5% consolidated for all staff, which would have vastly increased the salaries and superannuation, which would have been unaffordable. I applaud the GMB, the staff-recognised trade union, for agreeing to set aside that formula for one year because it was pretty clear to everybody – the staff, myself, the Deputy General Secretary and FTOs – that this was not affordable going forward for this trade union. A consolidated pay rise would have added at least £85,000 per year going forward. So the staff accepted a negotiated settlement of 5.5% and a non-consolidated rise of £1,500 to ensure that the finances of the union going forward were essential to maintain. This effectively has saved the union £43,000 year-on-year moving forward so I commend the staff for doing that and moving away from the agreed formula that has been in place probably since the 1990s.

Conference Paper 3 last year also outlined that the NEC allowance would rise by RPI for lay-led NEC officials. That increase took place in June 2022 at a rate of 10%. The RPI will be applied this June, that would mean a rise of 14.1% and I've got to say that, whilst that increase seems large, as you would expect last year, which Conference accepted that Conference paper, put together that they hadn't had a rise in their allowance since its inception since 2014. So, yes, it does seem a rather hefty increase, but Conference accepted that RPI increase and that will take place in June for those lay officials who are not employees of the union. I thank them for their approach in this as well, the National Executive Committee, because for many years they didn't even put forward motions to come to Conference for any such increase in that allowance. It was actually me, as General Secretary, that recognised that they face the cost-of-living crisis as well as anybody else in running their own vehicles, putting petrol in, insuring the cars, buying suits, different things. So I think the Executive have been very tolerant since 2014 and I don't think this is a massive increase because it actually adds about £12,000 to the overall costs of the National Executive Committee.

Conference, as well, because we have made some crucial savings over the last financial year in 2022 and, of course, we've still got to be vigilant moving into 2023. We're now halfway through the year. As I've said, we've seen that increase in membership, which is pleasing, and we need to maintain that. Mark mentioned in his opening address about voluntary recognition agreements and I'm pleased to say we're in the middle of another negotiation, this time with MTC, another private company that deals with asylum-seekers at Manston. Hopefully by the end of this month we will have that voluntary agreement signed off after decent negotiations, which should add another couple of hundred members in relation to that.

Conference and meeting costs increased to the usual levels following two years of virtually any costs due to the pandemic and there being no Conference or meetings. Travelling and meetings expenses again increased by £73,000 to £254,000. We expect these may increase further but continued use of online meetings should keep costs below pre-pandemic levels. Information technology costs decreased by £100,000 to £181,000 following a programme of upgrading in 2021 and previous years. Repairs and renewals decreased by £50,000 following the completion of the refurbishment carried out at Cronin House in 2021.

Covid welfare expenses are £15,000 this year, distributing more of the Covid grant received in 2020. £8,250 is still available for distribution in 2023. Legal and professional charges have decreased by £5,000, this maintains the reduction in work being carried out by Thompsons under the agreed cap fee. £960,000 of cap payments were refunded in 2022 and £591,000 is available for refund in 2023, of which we have received. This is a significant saving and we have placed that in our instant access account and, in many ways, has assisted this trade union in keeping subscriptions down at

£15.60 and maintaining financial stability for the POA. Thompsons since 2008 have not increased their fees. Sorry, in 2003 we were paying the same cap retainer as we were – sorry, I got that wrong. In 2023 we are paying the same cap retainer as we were in 2002, some 21 years later. The refunds from Thompsons are significant over the last few years and amount to £1.4 million, although I do not expect that to continue in future years, given the level of legal challenges that this union have done and continually instruct our legal providers to do.

Turning now to the balance sheet, Conference. Our net current assets increased by £1,079,000, principally due to the amounts held in the general fund bank following the refund from Thompsons and in the Scotland bank account following the sale of Calder Road. The overall net assets of the union increased by £687,000 and now stand at £5,719,000. The sale of Calder Road produced a profit on sale of £326,000. In accordance with the union rules, this was paid into the Provident benefit fund, which also assists the POA not being liable for corporation tax on the profits. This gave sufficient funds in the Provident benefit fund to contribute the full amount of death benefits paid during the year. Finally, colleagues, I must also report on the amount paid by the union in death benefit which, sadly, was £187,350.

Colleagues, I must report on our contingency liabilities. As you know, the POA at times we can be a litigious union and we challenge things on a national basis to protect your interests, but that doesn't come cheaply. We estimate our contingency liabilities on legal challenges, on various pensions, challenges including the cost cap, right to strike, agency workers being used to break strikes, amount to at least £600,000 in costs and exclude further challenges in 2023 which are being taken forward.

Colleagues, I stated I would come back on the issue regarding the freezing of subscriptions for 2023. We have continually frozen subscriptions for a period of time and gone against the Conference Paper, with your permission, that outlined our financial plan over a three-year period with those built-in subscriptions. We have had to adapt as a Finance Committee. The Executive know how difficult it is for our members during a cost-of-living crisis and there is no doubt in my mind that we run a tight ship financially without skimping on protecting the interests of our members. We have returned from a pandemic with lots of costs rising and we have had to balance the books. I am pleased to say we have done that last year, as you can see, with the income over expenditure. On behalf of the NEC I am very happy to announce, with your permission, we will once again freeze subscriptions at the pre-pandemic level of £15.60 per month. I would also seek permission that the branch rebates are capped at 5.5% instead of the double digits that it would have been. If we want to maintain this level of subscriptions then we all need to help and that would assist.

Further, some branches actually returned the rebates to Paula because they've got excess money in their accounts and they say they don't actually need it. So the reality is, if there's branches in that situation, please contact Paula so as we can help the wider membership as well by keeping those particular subscriptions down. But I say that with a caveat. I haven't got a magic wand on the financial aspects of this trade union going forward. So we may well be in a position next year where we can't actually freeze the subscriptions any longer but the year-end results will outline that position for 2023 as well.

Long may it continue because we don't want to run a profit in this union. Every penny we want to spend on the union's members but the reality is we've got to have surplus money in order to do that from time to time and to run those legal challenges that actually assist all our members, no matter where they work, whether it's in Northern Ireland, whether it's Scotland, England and Wales, private sector, special hospitals. So keep recruiting members, you've done a wonderful job so far with the additional 550 members this year.

I very rarely give credibility to any branch because I know how hard that you all work out there. But I think there's one branch in the country that I've got to mention and that is Hull. Because the local committee there have effectively nearly got 100% OSGs in the membership and I can't think of another branch in the country that does that. So if you can maybe tap into their knowledge on how that is achieved and let's get cracking and get more OSGs into our membership as well, that would be really, really helpful.

In concluding the Finance Report, colleagues, it's not always rosy. We do have sleepless nights at times trying to balance the books, trying to be fair and appropriate to everybody as well. I am really grateful last year that you've done the right things by putting in looking at things that were wrong over the years, such as the amount that you get, as well, as branch officials for coming to conference, for hotels, for evening meals and different things and, rightly, you surpassed that by saying we could increase those amounts. So I commend you for that. That now concludes the Finance Report. You will see in the background that there's a gent there called Mark Dallas who works for MKC. He is actually going to be giving an overview after the Welfare Report on investments. We have met Mark on about three occasions and the Chair is going to ask that motions 65 and 66 are heard directly after Mark has addressed Conference. The Chairman is also going to open up for a Q&A just in case you want to clarify anything that Mark Dallas has to say in his report. Thank you, Chair, that concludes the Finance Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Conference, we need to ask you to adopt the Finance Report and in adopting it what Steve just said about the freezing of subs and the cap on your grants will come into play. So just a show of hands will do. All those who wish to adopt the Finance Report, please show. Thank you. Any against? Steve, that has been adopted. Thank you.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Moving on to the Welfare Fund, Chair. Colleagues, it is now my duty to present the Welfare Fund's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2022. Members' contributions were almost unchanged, with a slight decrease in the number of contributing members' reduced subscriptions received by £7,000 to £311,087. The gift aid due on these contributions for the year amounted to £70,000. All of this amount has now been received from HMRC.

The Welfare Fund did not apply for a grant in 2022 from the CSIS Charity Fund as we hold healthy reserves in our fund. The CSIS have had their own reserve problems and were grateful to the POA for being honest with them. All of the above have resulted in a reduction in income of £21,000 from last year to a total of £381,000. 82% of membership contributions were given out as grants during the year and, of the total grants of £314,000, £53,000 was provided for the residential rehabilitation courses delivered by the Firefighters' Charity. The other costs, including travel and subsistence and stress and bereavement counselling helpline, increased by £10,000 to £29,000.

Turning now to the balance sheet. As at the year end, the charity held just over £1,263,000 in the bank. The other debtors of £61,000 are mainly with the gift aid due from HMRC. Overall the surplus in the year of £37,000 helped increase the overall reserves of the charity to a total of £1,325,000. Looking forward, I can advise Conference that once again this year I have spoken to the CSIS charity fund, as over the years they have assisted our members and retired members facing distress and hardship, especially when we were starting out in 2003 with our Welfare Fund. They are grateful again that I will not be making an application as I simply cannot justify it with having a healthy reserve in the bank. Over the last 10 years, we have received at least £70,000 in bid money from the CSIS and I've got to say they did put a caveat in the letters over the last couple of years that their reserves have been depleted because of inflationary pressures, like everybody is suffering. So we decided not to put that bid in and they were extremely grateful but also said they will obviously take future bids from us if that arises in the future.

I would also like to go on record as thanking David Evans, Mick Ricketts who have been stalwarts of this impressive committee that assist our members in their time of need. I would also like to thank Stewart McLaughlin, Wandsworth, Wendy Price, Drake Hall, along with Jaswinder Nagra and Doshi Preeti, the accountant of GFTU, for all their hard work and their knowledge that they bring to the meetings.

And let me conclude by saying this, colleagues. This is one of the best funds that the POA have ever set up. I know that things are dealt with on a confidential basis but I know you, as branch officials, will know the amount that we go to in order to assist your branches because, after all, it is funded by POA members for POA members. You should be exceptionally proud of yourselves that we have such a fund that I don't think can be reached anywhere in the trade union movement, with £1.3 million in it. Thank you, Conference, I move that Welfare Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Same dance again.

<Applause>

Quite right, something to be very proud of. Same dance again, Conference, just a show of hands. Please show if you are in favour of adopting this report. Thank you, any against? That has been adopted. As Steve said, I am now going to invite Mark Dallas to give us a presentation in relation to motions 65 and 66. It's your money, you've got the option to invest, and I will invite questions after the presentation for anybody who has got any concerns or queries. Thank you, Mark.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** Good to see you all. I've travelled down from Reading and I was hoping to get a bit of sunshine down by the sea but that's eluded us, so hopefully that will clear up later. When Steve asked me to come and address you, I said to him, "Do you want a formal presentation?" He said, "No, no, just come and talk to everybody just like you have with the committee." So, that's what I'm going to do. Just five minutes and three things, really. The first thing is a little bit about me, the second thing is a little bit about MKC and then the last thing is how we would propose that we would advise in relation to your funds.

So, for me, I've worked in this sort of arena helping and advising unions for some years now. You may be familiar with a company called The Lighthouse Group. I worked for The Lighthouse Group and they have advised unions for many, many years. But they were sold a few years back, hence the reason that we moved away and we're now part of MKC. So, as I say, I am familiar with and I already advise some unions for their funds, so it's an area I'm familiar with. MKC as a firm, we are a firm of independent financial advisors, so we're not tied to any firm. We're not forced to use any provider, we can give you holistic whole-of-market advice, which is really important in this day and age.

The third point, in relation to how do we set about investing and advising what you do with money. Sitting and listening, I think it's very clear that we're living in a world now that is very volatile, isn't it? Nobody really knows. If you think in terms of a few years back, we were worried about Brexit, and then we had coronavirus, and then we've had the horrific situation in Ukraine, and we see what we're seeing in the news today. I think that really shows us that nobody really knows what the future holds. So how do you go about investing money?

I think the starting point is very much, and Steve has clearly demonstrated the cash position that you're in, but also he's demonstrated the situation that you have liabilities and you have to think about that. Now, people have always said cash is king. Well, to a degree it is but, as we well know, we've got inflation and if you look at the interest rates where we are, sadly if you look at your building society savings, if you have many, I certainly don't, but if you look at the interest rates, we get the providers are very slow to pass on those returns. So very much it's a case of identifying your cash reserves first and, as Steve has said, to cover the liabilities. So the work that we would do is to sit down with the committee and establish what that cash reserve should be and where that should be placed.

But from that, once you've done that and established what that cash amount should be, then it's a case of, well, what do we do with the balance? Clearly, we, as potential advisors, and a duty of care at the committee and we have, for those funds, what do we do with them? So we have to establish the level of risk that you're prepared to take and the committee is prepared to take on your behalf. So that is one of the first jobs to do and what that normally is is anything, a scale between one and ten. I said a moment ago we're living in a very volatile world and how do you deal with that volatility? Because nobody really knows what's round the corner, do they? The only real good way of doing that is to have a well-diversified and well-managed portfolio of investments that match the risk that has been decided. And not only from that point but also looked at and reviewed on a regular basis.

What do I mean by that? So, if we establish a risk and we start managing those funds, of course there are various areas that you're invested in, some do better over time than others. If you're not careful that risk can become outbalanced and, before you know it, if you are a 5 out of 10, if those investments have not been redistributed to make sure you're still a 5 you become a 7 or maybe a 3. So part of active management is very much a case of making sure that your risk is established and then that risk remains constant throughout that period of time.

So that's generally how we would tend to manage and invest. As I say, making sure we're regularly reviewing what you've got. And as Steve, you said, there's so much has changed and if you think, if you're sitting at your next Conference and looking back, "Well we didn't see that coming," you've got

to alter your strategy as you move along because, as we've said, nobody really knows what the future holds.

So that's all I wanted to really say this morning. I didn't want to make it too complex or complicated. But I'm aware that might there be some questions?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, we'll find out. Conference, if anyone wants to ask a question please come to the rostrum and feel free to ask away. Just identify yourself for the verbatim report, name and branch, and then ask away. Thank you.

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Specifically we need to know what investment or, yeah, what areas you're going to invest in. What I mean by that, are we going to be purchasing stocks, shares, real estate, investing in commodities? Because that's what our members really need to know.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** Okay, so a really good question. As I say, in terms of the volatility that we have in the world, I said that the only real way to have a well-diversified portfolio of investments. What do I mean by that? So, generally they are collectives, so it can be a mixture of all sorts of things but dependent on the percentage of those is subject to the risk you take. So generally there may be, if you are lower risk, there will be more low-risk-type assets. I was going to say equities and gilts but you've seen in recent months they're not quite as less risky as people would have thought. So they're collective investments which can be in different countries, which can be in different types of asset classes.

But there's another thing I would like to add as well. You may be familiar with ESG, which is this Economic, Social and Governance, which is one of the things we can look to overlay and discuss with the committee in terms of not only the type of areas that you invest in but what they themselves invest in. So, if you have very strong opinions about certain areas that must not be invested in, we can overlay that, so it's not just about the particular geographical areas and types of assets but also any strong feelings that you and the committee may have as to what areas they are investing in – fossil fuels or particular labour in parts of the world. So it's a diversification. But what we can perhaps do, Steve, is we have literature we can make available to show you, once you've come to the agreement, if you do give us the go ahead, as to how we structure those investments. We can give that an actual deep dive into that if you'd find that useful. Does that help?

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Yes it does but it's not specific, but you'd have to publish a paper on making it specific.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** Sorry, say that again, I didn't hear.

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** It's still not specific, you're giving a very broad outline of areas. Yeah, areas of investment rather than saying, "This is exactly what we're going to invest in." Because you might not know yet, I don't know

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** And we don't. I think that's the important thing. So I can only really just give you a general outline because we haven't established the risk and we haven't established the timeframes. We would need to do that and once we've done that we'd have more details to how we would structure that. Is that alright?

**SAM GOUGH – BRANCH COMMITTEE, CHANNINGS WOOD:** Very much a similar question, mine's around the ethics of the investments. It is our members' money.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** Absolutely.

**SAM GOUGH – BRANCH COMMITTEE, CHANNINGS WOOD:** And we want to see a return on that but then it's a case of being very transparent of the companies that you're investing in, if it's a company. Also where the lines of the boundaries go because are there actually people that maybe sit on the board who have interests in those sorts of companies on a private basis? I think that all needs to be transparent. For instance, look at Rishi Sunak recently, he's come under scrutiny for his investments for not being very clear, so we need to see that. And you see a yearly report, I'm pretty certain the FTSE100 opens daily so is that not something that should be maybe read maybe six-monthly, quarterly, maybe even monthly? If the investments aren't working it is our money, we should be able to say we're not happy what we're going into that. People's values are different so are you investing in things like fossil fuels or green sort of energy? So I think it needs to be very clear on what you want to invest in and then maybe should be put to vote if we're happy for that company business, you know. Even if it's like Government bonds, things like that, we need to be very clear on we're branching into a different world there. So we could be, as the POA, where we want to be seen to be. Like I said, we represent our members and it's very passionate about that. We want to make sure we don't blur the lines a little bit, if that makes sense.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** I totally get that. Okay, yes. So, two main questions there really. It's how often it's reviewed and then secondly what it's invested in. So, forgive me, we manage those funds on a daily basis but in terms of how the review for your money, normally with the unions I work with you've got quarterly statements. They're online anyway so you can look at them daily if you wanted to. We generally say don't do that because that's what you're, you know, if you decide to move forwards with ourselves, that's what you're retaining us to do. But it's all online so you can look at it daily and it shows the daily fluctuations. But in terms of things like rebalancing the assets, that would normally be done on a quarterly basis and in terms of reporting, normally unions would look at quarterly statements, but we are flexible with how you want that done. But because we're just at the initial stages of this, there's some of these things that we need to just iron out and agree. But, yes, forgive me, I didn't mean we only looked at it on an annual basis in terms of the annual report and then the quarterly reporting or other reporting you decide you need and want.

The second question was, and it's a really good question, where your investments are structured. So the tools that are available now with investments can do a really good deep dive and you can look at those specific things. So I said a few moments ago, if you have any particular strong feelings about areas, which we'll identify with the committee, we can make sure that money is invested not in those areas, if that makes sense. So, as you say, if you say, "Right, I've got really strong feelings about fossil fuels. I want a filter to filter that out." Again, we've got to look at those things. So I don't know if

there's a mechanism, Steve, that we could perhaps filter for the members to say, "Look these are the areas that we feel really strongly about that we do not want to get involved in." Because that would help us in our preparations as to how any recommendations would be made. But absolutely, and very valid points. Thank you, very much.

**JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I think in the interest of transparency it might be good to advise on any management fee for the portfolio and any costs incurred with financial advice to the union.

**MARK DALLAS – DIRECTOR, MKC WEALTH:** Yes, okay. Again, because we have not done the report and recommendation yet we haven't agreed that. So it's a bit premature but we can certainly do that, if that's alright with you, Steve, when we make the recommendation. It's all there, everything is totally transparent.

**JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Thank you. I am aware that we're going to be voting on a motion soon, at the end of your speech, regarding this going forwards, giving autonomy for the NEC to carry on and potentially invest in the future. I think before voting on any motion it would be best advice that we see a transparent management fee of the fund before voting on the motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can't see any more speakers. Any more? Any more questions, queries, clarifications? Okay, thank you, Mark. So we're going to move on to motion 65, proposed by the NEC. It's your money, you can invest if you wish but we do need a seconder. Do we have a seconder for this motion? Thank you, Lincoln. Steve Gillan for the NEC.

### Motion 65

**Conference recognises the benefits presented by our Financial Advisor that it is financially prudent for the National Executive Committee to invest money rather than just holding in a deposit account given the inflationary pressures at present. Conference therefore approve the NEC invest monies as advised by our financial advisor and have autonomy to do so within the parameters of the Rules and Constitution primarily Rule 14. Conference also recognise that investment is not an exact science and that the value of the investment can go up and down, therefore it is in the interest of the POA to have a long-term ethical investment with regular yearly reports to Conference regarding the portfolio.**

### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chair, Conference, NEC. In moving motion 65 there have been some very good questions actually by a variety of delegates and it was the same questions, in actual fact, that we've had with Mark, that the Finance Committee asked and we've thought long and hard about this. But the most crucial thing for the Finance Committee was not so much about the investments, because I've been on the Finance Committee since 2002 in one capacity or another, this isn't the first time that we've wanted to go down the route of investments. In actual fact, we've had portfolios before that we actually cashed in because they weren't working at that time. Then when I became Finance Officer in 2006, I'll be honest with you, I was very reluctant to recommend any form of investment because I don't like gambling with other people's money and it's a heavy responsibility.

However, having said that, what's brought it to the fore is the fact that, in the instant access account, of course we will have many contingency liabilities, which I outlined in my Finance Report. But we've got £2 million in that instant access account and in the Leeds Building Society we've got £1,036,000 and we've had that since 2008 and it's never really grown, quite frankly, because the interest rates have been very, very low. Now, the issue is we could get criticism as a Finance Committee and as an Executive to say, "Well, why didn't you invest the money to try and realise a better performance for POA members going forward?" In actual fact, by just keeping it in the Leeds Building Society, or any building society, you're actually losing money because of inflationary pressures and your money is just stagnating.

So, we took all that on board with realities to it. Now, we still don't know how much we will invest if this motion goes through. There's still much to be done. Channings Wood were absolutely correct when they said about ethical investment. Now, someone's ethics will vary across the piece. I bet you if you were to ask 30,000 of our members what they found ethical, it would be very diverse, quite frankly. So that's what we've got a Finance Committee for and a National Executive Committee for and an Annual Conference for, to say when you get your reports, whether that's on a quarterly basis. I mean, you've heard from Mark that they will look at it on a daily basis effectively and, if it's not working, they'll come to the Finance Committee and advise us. That's what happens in other unions. And, yes, it's not an exact science. Some of it will go up and down. You'll have low, medium, high risk. I'm a cautious person anyway when it comes to other people's finances, I'm cautious when it comes to my own as well. Having a defined contribution pension from the POA, I certainly wouldn't look at it every day because it would give you nightmares, it fluctuates that much. Up and down, up and down and God knows what.

So the reality is, it's your trade union, it's your money. I actually think that, and the Executive believe, that we should go for this because at the moment our money is stagnating, just sitting in an account, not growing whatsoever. So you mentioned costs, I think it was Hull that mentioned costs, and they're quite right to do that. There's a negotiation to be had but most firms do have management fee costs. Some of it ranges, if it's complex, to specialist between £3,000 and £5,000, if it's standard £750, if it's simple £300. So, there will be costs to it, we're not denying that, but the reality is we could end up gaining more for our members by having this investment. So, it's all we're really asking you to do is support the motion and trust the people on the Finance Committee and your Executive in order to invest the members' money accordingly and, at any time if you don't think it's working, you can pull the plug and cash in the portfolio or whatever at any stage you so wish to. Thanks Conference, please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Lincoln, do you wish to speak? Anybody else wish to speak?

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON:** NEC, Conference, I'm going to advise that we reject this motion. I am not averse to investing money and making money, the only thing that I see about this motion is it's just not detailed enough for me. I want to know, essentially, what percentage of our savings we're going to actually invest. We haven't got that figure. I want to know the risk that they're looking to take before investing our money. And also, we need to look at the ethical side of life. Now, I'm not talking about investing in fossil fuels, or something like that, but we do have some deeply religious members and some of them might see this as gambling as well. So we really need to have some kind of review, looking into if that's the perception or not. I just don't feel this motion is detailed enough for us to vote on it just yet, for us to say, "Yes, invest our money. No, don't." What I'd like to see is the NEC come back next year, next conference, with actually a detailed report with all those figures and facts and we can actually make an informed motion at conference. Until that point, I would like you guys to reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, again I'm here speaking to ask you to reject this motion and the reason is, just like the comments we've heard, there's not enough specifics into exactly where our money is going to be invested. The likelihood is that our investments, or the money, is going to be invested in stocks and shares, in real estate potentially, and in commodities. Currently the financial markets are in turmoil, I think is the best way to describe it, investors are actually selling their stocks and shares and buying government bonds instead. I can't see this union buying government bonds. Just in terms of the principal issue of making profits, just like prisons aren't for profit, unions shouldn't be here to make a profit either. So, if anything, within the motion it's mentioned that inflationary pressures are high, well, when there's high inflation there's also high interest rates so potentially the safest place to keep it is in the bank.

However, if you don't agree in keeping the money in the bank, me personally I don't, there's other things you can do with it as well. I'll get on to that in a moment but in terms of stocks and shares, which is the essence of where the money is going to be invested, we've got to look at the ethics behind that, I think it was mentioned by the branch earlier. Because when you're investing in stocks, shares, commodities and real estate, the only thing that's happening is the rich people in the world who are the company owners are getting richer and the poor people get poorer. We're pushing up the price of real estate by investing in real estate and company owners get richer. As there's more money invested in companies the terms and conditions for those workers tend to get worse. We're all working class here so for that reason we should be supporting working class arrangements to, yeah, we should be supporting our money going into supporting working class people and not companies on the FTSE100.

But if you are talking about ethical investments, well, I think Steve said there's many ways, thousands of ways, in which people have a varying opinion of what is an ethical investment or not. Me personally, I keep it fairly simple. The most ethical investment that we can make with our money is to give it to charity. Putting food in the mouths of hungry people is the most ethical thing we can do as a union. That also comes with an added bonus, and you might think, well, what's the added bonus of the union giving away our money to charity? Well, what it does is it keeps our bank accounts empty. And you might think, well, why do we want to keep our bank accounts empty? There's a good reason for that, because if we ever breach Section 127 of the Criminal Justice Act by going on strike as prison officers, the first thing the Government will want to do is come in and seize our assets. But if there's no assets to seize, there's nothing for them to take. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

**JAMES SHAW – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WANDSWORTH:** Conference, NEC, speaking in support of this motion. While the money is in the bank at the moment, it's losing money. The banks are not passing on the interest rates, interest rates that they're going to be charging us for our extended mortgages. It's running at about 7%, the banks are paying out, they're not passing it on. They're giving you about 1%, 1.5%, if that. So I take on board what our colleagues just said about passing money on to the charities. We've got a good history of giving to charity but, at the end of the day, we talk about ethics. How far are you going to take that? How many people, who is going to decide? We've got an NEC, we've elected them, I think we should trust them, actually, to be able to make those decisions and then come back to us. At the end of the day, as Steve said, if they're not happy with it then they won't go ahead with it. Okay? So, support the motion please Conference.

<Applause>

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** NEC, Conference, I'm speaking to reject the motion. I think what a lot of people have said – we're a union, we're socialists, I don't want to be backing capitalists. And what are we going to put in? A million? What are we going to get? 10%? Is it worth risking all that money for a hundred grand? You can get 3% in the banks, over that now, to be fair, so let's keep our money safe, not put the money into shareholders and please reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers, Conference? Right to reply, Steve.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, very much, Chair. There is no easy answer to this, Conference, to be honest with you. Everyone will have their views. I welcome the debate but we've got a trade union to run, quite frankly, and the Rules and Constitution are pretty clear that the trustees should be in charge of investments. I hope that if the motion is rejected that no-one will come back and criticise this Executive for not taking more care of the money when we could have invested but you didn't want to invest because you didn't know where we were investing the money.

Now, at the end of the day, Mark Dallas has outlined the low, medium, high risk, where those investors may be, whether they're ethical or not. And if you put this motion through in relation to it, then we will enter into those negotiations and debate and we'll be fully transparent with yourselves. Do you not think that we have our reservations? The reason these motions are in front of you is because to sit and do nothing isn't feasible. It's all very well

having money in the bank but that can be evaporated because of inflationary pressures and then when we're losing money you point an accusatory finger at us and say, 'Well, why didn't you take steps to do something about it?' So we are trying to do something about it.

Now, let's talk about, I mean, Bill did mention, I agreed with much of what Bill said about stocks, shares, different things. Where I disagree is when he says have nothing in the bank in effect because then if we breach Section 127 then they've got no assets to take. I'm afraid that's just not feasible these days and I've explained it time and time again. This Executive, past and present Executives, have even looked at moving our money abroad and different things in order to do that. You can't do it these days because of money laundering laws. That's the facts of the matter. If we breach the permanent injunction and are contempt of court and we're deemed to have done that, there won't be a union because they will take all our assets and different things and what have you. That's a fact, there's no getting away from that so to pretend otherwise isn't realistic. We've got to get in the real world here.

Now, there's plenty of other unions, right, up and down the country, including the TUC, which is the umbrella organisation, that actually does ethical investments. Now, let's face it, if you're paying for something, they're not going to do it for nothing, the management company. Does your bank do it for nothing? Because Unity Bank actually charge us for every cheque we cash, for every transaction we do, and they've put it up time and time again. That's the reality. We pay it, you don't. We pay it nationally, those charges. But think back to your own bank accounts, the reality is you would like to see a little bit of growth there sometimes and sometimes you've just got – we're a trade union, we're an organisation, I get it and I think one of the delegates said we're all socialists. No, we're not, actually. Not everybody in the POA is a socialist, far from it. I've been in the union over 30-odd years now, 34 years. Let me be clear – not everybody is a socialist in this trade union. We're trade unionists, yes, but not everybody is a socialist.

So, everybody has different views, which I very much welcome on behalf of this Executive. But also let's be clear, we're trying to make our financial position better, better for our members collectively. You just passed a finance motion in order to try and keep subscriptions down. If we can increase our money, that means this Executive can come back and hopefully keep our subscriptions down lower for the benefit of all our members so as they've got more money in their pockets. Think about that. So please support the motion, Conference, and give us a chance to try and produce something in order that's transparent, worthwhile and that we invest appropriately and ethically and safely on your behalf. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. If we can get motion 65 on the screen in preparation for the vote. Okay, that vote is now open, so press your buttons for or against. It's just a simple majority for this. Thank you, Conference, that vote is now closed and, as you can see, that has been carried.

On to motion 66, do we have a seconder please? I've got it on my screen, has it not come up? It's been carried. Is it up? Yes. It does work. Secunder for this motion 66 please? Thank you, Lincoln.

#### Motion 66

#### Welfare Fund

**Conference recognises the benefits presented by our Financial Advisor that it is financially prudent for the Welfare Committee/ NEC to invest money rather than just holding in a deposit account given the inflationary pressures at present. Conference therefore approves the Welfare Committee/NEC to invest monies as advised by our Financial Advisor and have autonomy to do so within the parameters of the rules and constitution primarily Rule 14. Conference also recognise that investment is not an exact science and that the value of the investment can go up and down, therefore it is in the interest of the POA to have a long-term ethical investment with regular yearly reports to conference regarding the portfolio in respect of the Welfare Fund.**

#### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** To be fair, the same applies to motion 66. In order to save time the same arguments are exactly the same as they were in 65.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Lincoln, do you wish to speak? Watch them knees.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Conference, NEC, once again just urging you to support the motion. We've got to have a bit of faith in the guys behind us and the Finance Committee. They've not done bad over the past few years. This is a chance just to help reduce membership fees or keep membership fees where they are and support our members. So please support this motion because this is going to actually help raise more money for the welfare of our members. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can't see any more speakers. Anybody? Anything, Steve?

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** No, that's fine. Thank you, Chair.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, we can now open the vote. Cast your votes please. Okay, thank you, Conference, that vote is now

closed. Hopefully we can see the result on the screen. That also has been carried. Thank you, Conference.

Okay, so we can get through a few motions before the lunch break, starting with motion 1 from the NEC. Do we have a seconder for this motion please? Thank you, Preston.

#### Motion 1

That Rule 8.6 is reworded from.

**Rule 8.6 Retired members are eligible for membership of the retired members section within one month of their final retirement date.**

To

**Rule 8.6 Retired members are eligible for membership of the retired members section on their final retirement date.**

#### NEC

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, moving the motion on behalf of the National Executive. The motion reads that rule 8.6 is reworded from “retired members are eligible for membership of the retired members’ section within one month of their final retirement date”, to “retired members are eligible for membership of the retired members’ section on their final retirement date”. Conference, it’s just a tidying-up motion. We’ve had some talks with the retired members’ section, they would like to see this change. There has been some confusion in the field, unfortunately, around criteria and eligibility. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Dave. Preston do you wish to speak? Anybody else? Okay, we can now open the vote please. Okay, that vote is now closed. We can display the result and that has been carried, Thank you.

Motion 2 is Durham, do we have a seconder for Durham please? Who was that? Moorland, thank you. That motion has been formally moved which means he doesn’t need to speak, it’s self-explanatory. Point of order, please approach.

#### Motion 2

In light of the new electronic system now available at Conference. The following Rule

**Rule 12.13 Voting on all motions at Conference will be by a show of voting cards (one per branch), but a card vote based on branch membership may be demanded by at least 10 branches, this to include any appeals of motions to Conference. Votes from branches in favour, opposed and abstaining will be called for by the Chair in both voting card and card votes on all Conference motions.**

Is changed to;

**Rule 12.3 Voting on all motions at Conference will be digital and should be for how many members each branch has. This to include any appeals of motions to Conference. Votes from branches in favour, opposed and abstaining will be called for by the Chair on all Conference motions.**

#### DURHAM

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference, it may be a typing error but obviously in our order paper the motion you’re being asked to look for a rule change, rule 12.3. 12.3 is “in these Rules, Conference refers to both Annual Conference and any special conference”, it doesn’t actually refer to how we vote at Conference. So I’m not too sure if this is a typo error or a complete change to 12.3.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, for pointing that out, I’m going to let the Chair of Standing Orders clarify that. I think it’s a typo but we’ll clarify it now. That point of order is upheld, by the way.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Yes, you’re absolutely right, Stewart, there’s a typo and apologies to Conference from the Standing Orders Committee. Thanks for pointing it out, Stewart.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** So, Durham, silence on audio mic’s gone off? Oh, we’re back on, there we go. Just about to shout. So over to Dave Todd in response on behalf of the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, the NEC are seeking rejection of this motion. If this motion is passed it will be detrimental to the smaller branches, make no mistake about that. Yes, a smaller branch has smaller numbers but it’s still an entity in this conference hall to have a vote. There’s already a mechanism in place. Yes, we’re trialling this electronic voting, but anybody can call a card vote and that’s how

you would action this. But we trialled it last year, it was the first year, it cost us £15,000. Conference directed we're to get it again so we've done a three-year deal at a cost of £9,000 per year.

Now, that's all well and good but we don't know going forward what we're going to do. You might direct us that you want it at every conference but we've got it for three years going forward. What we'd like to do is have a feasibility study over those three years to see if it's actually cheaper for the union to buy the tech.

The other thing you'd need to consider with this, you still adopt scrutineers and tellers. Do we need scrutineers and tellers going forward? If the tech fails we will need them. So, with that in mind, Conference, please reject.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Dave. Durham, do you wish to respond? Okay, we can open the vote please. Okay, we've now closed that vote and displayed the results and that motion has been lost.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Card vote!

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I love your optimism but his call for a card vote needs the support of 10 branches. Thank you, Conference. Motion 3, we have a seconder from Prison Service College, Northern Ireland. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Steve Gillan.

### **Motion 3**

#### **CHANGE RULE 23 FROM**

#### **RULE 23 NORTHERN IRELAND AREA COMMITTEE**

##### **Membership**

**Rule 23.1 The Union will have a Northern Ireland Area Committee comprising:**

- (a) an Area Chair (Northern Ireland);**
- (b) an Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland);**
- (c) an Area Secretary (Northern Ireland); and**
- (d) the Branch Secretaries of each penal or secure establishment and Special Hospital (if any) in Northern Ireland.**

##### **Functions**

**Rule 23.2 The Northern Ireland Area Committee will protect and promote the interest of the members in Northern Ireland, including (but not limited to):**

- (a) appointing its own Treasurer;**
- (b) co-operating in advancing the national policy of the Union;**
- (c) maintaining permanent contact with the National Executive Committee through the Area Secretary.**
- (d) assisting the National Executive Committee and General Secretary in carrying out the Rules and objects of the Union;**
- (e) fulfilling the requirements of Rule 23 and administering and safeguarding all Northern Ireland Area Committee finance;**
- (f) keeping written attendance records of the names of the members present at each meeting of the Northern Ireland Area Committee;**
- (g) keeping written minutes of all resolutions passed by the Northern Ireland Area Committee;**
- (h) sending copies (signed by the Area Chair or Area Secretary) of those attendance records and minutes to the General Secretary on request; and**

- (i) furnishing any returns of information required from time to time by the General Secretary or Finance Department.

Rule 23.3 The Area Committee will deal primarily with the matters of interest to all penal or secure establishments and Special Hospitals (if any) in Northern Ireland. Branches in Northern Ireland may refer local matters which have not been dealt with to their own satisfaction to the Area Committee for further consideration and action if necessary.

Rule 23.4 The National Executive Committee will allot to the Northern Ireland Area Committee a sum of money to meet its working expenses. The Treasurer of the Northern Ireland Area Committee will be responsible for the administration of this money and will render an account twice yearly to the General Secretary or the Deputy General Secretary.

#### Elections and Appointment

Rule 23.5 The Area Chair (Northern Ireland) and the Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland) will each be elected every 5 years by a secret workplace ballot of the full members in the Union's Branches in Northern Ireland under Rule 25.

Rule 23.6 If a vacancy occurs for Area Chair (Northern Ireland) or Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland) between elections:

- (a) the replacement will be elected by secret workplace ballot under Rule 25; and
- (b) the person elected will serve the balance of the term of the person replaced.

Rule 23.7 A Northern Ireland Committee member:

- (a) must be a full member of the Union; and
- (b) ceases to be a Northern Ireland Committee member automatically on ceasing to be a full member of the Union.

Rule 23.8 The Area Secretary (Northern Ireland), will send details of the election results immediately to:

- (a) the General Secretary; and
- (b) the Northern Ireland Office.

Rule 23.9 The Area Secretary (Northern Ireland) will be an employee of the Union who shall be:

- (a) appointed by a panel that will include the Chair of Northern Ireland and at least two (2) of the following

The National Chair

The General Secretary

The Deputy General Secretary

- (b) Shall have their appointment approved by the National Executive Committee.

#### Meetings

Rule 23.10 The Northern Ireland Area Committee will meet whenever it deems necessary, but not less than twice yearly. A meeting may be called at the request of:

- (a) the Area Chair (Northern Ireland); or in his/her absence
- (b) the Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland); or in their absence
- (c) the Area Secretary (Northern Ireland); or in their absence
- (d) a majority of branches that make up the quorum of the Northern Ireland Area Committee.

Rule 23.11 The Area Chair (Northern Ireland), or if he/she is not available the Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland), is responsible for convening the Northern Ireland Area Committee meetings. Except in cases of urgency, at least 48 hours' notice will be given to all members of the Northern Ireland Area Committee by circular or by printed public announcement.

TO

## RULE 23 NORTHERN IRELAND AREA COMMITTEE

### Membership

Rule 23.1 The Union will have a Northern Ireland Area Committee comprising:

- (a) an Area Chair (Northern Ireland);
- (b) an Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland);
- (c) the Branch Secretaries of each penal or secure establishment and Special Hospital (if any) in Northern Ireland.

### Functions

Rule 23.2 The Northern Ireland Area Committee will protect and promote the interest of the members in Northern Ireland, including (but not limited to):

- (a) appointing its own Treasurer;
- (b) co-operating in advancing the national policy of the Union;
- (c) maintaining permanent contact with the National Executive Committee
- (d) assisting the National Executive Committee and General Secretary in carrying out the Rules and objects of the Union;
- (e) fulfilling the requirements of Rule 23 and administering and safeguarding all Northern Ireland Area Committee finance;
- (f) keeping written attendance records of the names of the members present at each meeting of the Northern Ireland Area Committee;
- (g) keeping written minutes of all resolutions passed by the Northern Ireland Area Committee;
- (h) sending copies (signed by the Area Chair) of those attendance records and minutes to the General Secretary on request; and
- (i) furnishing any returns of information required from time to time by the General Secretary or Finance Department.

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Rule 23.6 If a vacancy occurs for Area Chair (Northern Ireland) or Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland) between elections:

- (c) the replacement will be elected by secret workplace ballot under Rule 25; and
- (d) the person elected will serve the balance of the term of the person replaced.

Rule 23.7 A Northern Ireland Committee member:

- (c) must be a full member of the Union; and

- (d) ceases to be a Northern Ireland Committee member automatically on ceasing to be a full member of the Union.

## Meetings

**Rule 23.8** The Northern Ireland Area Committee will meet whenever it deems necessary, but not less than twice yearly. A meeting may be called at the request of:

- (a) the Area Chair (Northern Ireland); or in his/her absence
- (b) the Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland); or in their absence
- (c) a majority of branches that make up the quorum of the Northern Ireland Area Committee.

**Rule 23.9** The Area Chair (Northern Ireland), or if he/she is not available the Area Vice-Chair (Northern Ireland), is responsible for convening the Northern Ireland Area Committee meetings. Except in cases of urgency, at least 48 hours' notice will be given to all members of the Northern Ireland Area Committee by circular or by printed public announcement.

## NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman, National Executive Committee, Conference. It looks quite daunting this motion, doesn't it? Pages and pages of it, but, in actual fact, it's very simple. We are actually asking you to take out the Area Secretary Northern Ireland. I'll now explain why. It isn't that the Area Secretary Northern Ireland has been made redundant or we're doing away with the job altogether because that's not, it couldn't be further from the truth. The reality is we've had effectively an Area Secretary in Northern Ireland since probably 1986, 1987. We then had the situation where the present incumbent resigned her position after a period of sick absence for about a year and the individual, which I don't really want to go into, has determined to resign that position and take the union to an employment tribunal for constructive dismissal against the POA and named individuals. Now, what I'm not going to do, I'm not going to go in to the ifs and wherefores of this particular case because it's ongoing. All I will say is that the POA are going to robustly defend our position and named individuals in the litigation so I will say no more on that apart from to thank the last incumbent for all the hard work over the years during the Troubles and so forth, it must have been a very difficult environment. But, at the end of the day, now, we need to move forward. Where we had the individual on sick for a period of, say, 12 months, myself and the Deputy General Secretary had to put a system in place to fill that gap of the Area Secretary in Northern Ireland and we've done it with Ivor Dunne, the Area Chairman, Morris, the Vice Chairman and, I've got to say, the Area Committee, who have been fantastic in supporting the manner in which we've put certain things in place to make sure their needs were covered. We put a system in place that myself, Joe, some of the FTOs and, indeed, our support staff led by Angela Sinclair, made sure that the Area Committee were very well served.

Now, when I took this motion to the Executive it was actually on the back of speaking, actually, to the Area Committee and the Area Chairman, because I wouldn't do anything behind their back. I wanted their support and I'm pleased to say the majority of that Area Committee have supported this particular motion. Because we now want to put a business case forward for the savings that we will make from that post to empower the Area Committee, on behalf of the members in Northern Ireland, with autonomy under the rules to take forward. So that will mean we can now give them the necessary tools, the additional training, that they may well need, along with the tools of the trade as well, such as mobile phones, laptops and God knows what. I actually think Northern Ireland, over the years, if I'm truthful, you know, we've gone from a position of 3,000 members at the height of the Troubles, but the reality is, since the Maze closed and other establishments closed, the membership is now a third of what it was during those troubled times.

So I, as General Secretary, and the Deputy General Secretary could no longer justify to the Executive a continued Area Secretary being paid at the rate that they were being paid at with the ongoing costs of car and pension as well. But that's no reflection on the last incumbent who did a very, very good job and deserved every penny that they got during that. I'm just saddened that it's come to that position where that person has chosen to go down a particular avenue.

So, with that, Conference, we would ask you to endorse this particular motion. It makes sense. We will continue to work with the Area Committee to make sure that the membership in Northern Ireland are best served by the systems that we jointly put in place and, of course, like anything, we will review it on an ongoing basis as well. Thank you, Conference, please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. I can see speakers there. If the seconder wishes to speak they can speak now.

**JON MORRISON – BRANCH SECRETARY, PRISON SERVICE COLLEGE NORTHERN IRELAND:** National Chair, NEC, Conference, first time speaker at Conference, please go easy on me.

<Applause>

I'm seconding the motion and asking the support of Conference for the motion. Sometimes change brings opportunity and certainly with our Area Secretary being off sick we did seize an opportunity to try something different, try a new model. Through the NEC we got fantastic support and I would like to acknowledge the support from all of the NEC, but I would like to point out a few people in particular, being Steve Gillan, Joe, Mike and, by no means any less, Angela, who has been our saviour throughout our time. As well as being Branch Sec for PSC Northern Ireland, I am also a member of the Northern Ireland Committee and have seen first-hand the changes and the difference this has made. The help, support and expert advice as

well as the challenge we have received from the NEC has helped us as an Area Committee and helped us achieve the things that we have achieved recently.

The promise of investment and the promise of continued help and support, we believe, would help us grow as an Area Committee and we see it as building us as an Area Committee rather than a disadvantage that we don't have an Area Secretary. We also welcome the fact that this is something new, something that we haven't tried before, and we are glad, with the General Secretary, that this would be put in with a two-year review period to make sure that it works to meet our needs. It is based on the fact that the facility time given to our Area Chairman continues that allows us to cover that.

With all that, we believe that it does move the Area Committee to a stronger position and that's why I'm asking Conference to support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, and well done. That's our first cherry popper, watch the floodgates open now. Well done.

**BRIAN DOHERTY – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAGHABERRY:** Chair, NEC, first-time speaker at Conference.

<Applause>

I would just like to say this is a very positive move. The review is definitely welcomed. As a branch secretary our committee wants to uphold the rules of the constitution to protect the rights of our membership. One thing that I would like to say is the NEC must do more to assist Northern Ireland. I know that you do but I would like for you to get a wee bit more involved than what's happened in the past. Post-Covid we'd like to see maybe the National Chair to visit Northern Ireland. We haven't had your attendance in Northern Ireland in quite some time.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Not for a few years. What you have to do is invite me. I never refuse an invite, not from a cherry-popper anyway.

**BRIAN DOHERTY – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAGHABERRY:** The reason why I say this here is more or less to show solidarity. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, well done. I told you the flood gates would open.

<Applause>

**JONATHAN THOMPSON – BRANCH CHAIR, MAGILLIGAN:** National Chair, NEC, first time speaking at Conference.

<Applause>

This kind of feels like a Northern Ireland half hour at the moment. I just want to endorse again what my colleagues have said, again. Again, this is change for us in Northern Ireland and quite a big change. I've been with the POA now 24 years, I've been in the job 24 years, and all over those years there has always been an Area Secretary in Northern Ireland, so this is a massive change for us now. And hopefully, as I say, it's a positive change, we'll see. Obviously the fruit is in the, and the devil is in the details sometimes, whenever things come through. But at the same time I would ask Conference to support this motion today. As I say, moving forward we'll have a review and with Steve's help and, as I say, I'll endorse again what Angela has done for us and Joe and the rest of the NEC. And hopefully, as I say, over the next couple of years we'll see change and we'll just ask for your support. Thank you, very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. That was our hat-trick, at this rate we'll be following Everton. Any more speakers? Anything, Steve?

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Yes. Chair, I'd just like to come back on a couple of positive issues, if you like. I think you've heard from the Northern Ireland branches and we want them to get more involved in Conference. And it's a journey together that will ensure that they do. So it's great to see the delegates getting up from Maghaberry, Magilligan, PSC and so forth. I think that's a real positive. The only thing I'd say to Brian Doherty, Maghaberry, be careful what you wish for, Brian, when you say you want more input from the NEC. Because, and I say because, you don't want us running Northern Ireland for you. And I say that with a word of caution because under the Rules and Constitution, under Rule 23 and so forth, you've got complete autonomy. And we don't want to interfere in that autonomy but we will come and visit Northern Ireland, I've done it regularly so has Mark, to be fair, and we'll do it in the future as well.

I've got a reasonable relationship with Ronnie Armour and we will actually push for that additional facility time as well because I think it does warrant it. We've got a major job to do over there, especially with the heightened security issues, as we all know, for that poor police officer getting shot. We hope we're not returning to that sort of nonsense that we've seen in the past that so blighted our membership and their families. So I take my hat off to Northern Ireland Area Committee, the Area Chairman and the Vice Chairman, I think they've all done a wonderful job. We will assist you but we're not taking over in Northern Ireland, we're taking you on a journey to make you stronger so that your members in Northern Ireland become stronger as well. Thank you. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done to the first time speakers. Okay, the vote for motion 3 is now open. Cast your votes. We need at least 66.6% to vote in favour of this because it does involve a rule change. And we can now close that vote, display the results. And, as you can see, that rule change has been carried.

On to motion 4, Pentonville. Do we have a seconder please?

#### Motion 4

**That the NEC enter into negotiations with HMPPS and any other relevant parties to have tinned items removed from canteen lists and the packaging replaced with a less dangerous and environmentally friendly alternative.**

#### PENTONVILLE

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** Conference, NEC, this motion covers many aspects. The issue of tinned goods and other goods on the canteen list has been one that I've been raising with our SMT for the past 12 months with some minor success. Most contents of the tinned goods that are on our canteen list must be cooked. The prisoners in our establishments don't have access to cooking facilities, so instead they use modified kettles to cook. They smash the kettles, take the elements out to make small hotplates to cook food and the Governor wonders why there's no kettles in our jail. We're sure this is the case in many of your establishments. This poses health and safety issues, it's clearly dangerous. They also make home-made extension leads which our Governor thinks is ingenious. I think it's dangerous, someone is going to get electrocuted and killed but the Governor thinks it's very clever.

Regarding health and safety, prisoners and staff are expected to carry heavy boxes because they're spending more and more on their canteen. Now, if there's a single prisoner or member of staff at your establishment or mine that's had manual handle training in the last 12 months, I'd be very surprised. This is just a litigation waiting to happen, prisoners and members of staff.

Weapons – tins are used as weapons to assault each other. We've spoken about the level of violence that goes on. At Pentonville, it's just off the scale. The Governor will tell you it isn't, but it is. Obviously they're using the tins for self-harming. Then there's the morality – why are we selling food to men that needs cooking that don't have the facilities to cook it? That's immoral. I've told the Governor he's immoral about doing that and if he wishes to continue that's on his conscience.

Maybe we're selling this stuff to prisoners because DHL need their pockets relining, I don't know. The contract is £275 million, I think, over the last three or four years, with an option to extend that. They're an American logistics firm making money out of people that we incarcerate. And we've gone through the issue time and time again about why are we making money out of people that we're putting behind bars but, you know, we do. If HMPPS wishes to continue selling this type of foodstuff, then it should replace the tins with alternative packaging which is more environmentally friendly. I'm not a massive environmentalist but I'm sure some of us are, but we can reduce our carbon footprint in each and every jail by getting rid of tins, bottles of water, that type of thing.

Now, we all go shopping – well, my wife goes shopping – and you can get the small servings of individual baked beans, whatever, in the plastic containers. Now, I'd rather get hit round the back of the head with a plastic container than a tin of beans but there's been no movement on that from our local branch at the moment. So I see no reason why it can't be, these tins can't be removed, replaced with much safer and environmentally friendly packages. So I'd ask you to support the motion.

<Applause>

**SARAH PAGE – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM:** Conference, Chair, NEC, invited guests and observers, it's still as scary. It was my first time last year and I'm still shaking. I just would like to ask you to back the motion. In the youth estate we don't have tins or anything that's just been mentioned. So obviously at Feltham we've got an adult side and the child side and both the canteen sheets are different so there's no reason why this can't be supported. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done Sarah

<Applause>

No more speakers so Sarah Rigby responding on behalf of the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL COMMITTEE:** Chair, Conference, in favour of motion 4. This shouldn't need to be a motion to Conference. Our employer claims to have a zero-tolerance approach to violence yet is happy to supply prisoners with many items that have the potential to be used as weapons. Tinned items are just one of them. It is already current Conference policy to get rid of ceramic items, yet they too are available to order on canteen sheets in many prisons. Decency is usually the justification for having these items readily available to prisoners but what about treating staff decently? There are other options available to use instead of tins – plastic pots and pouches, as has been described – readily available in shops yet, for some reason, tinned products remain the option of choice for our canteen supplier.

The NEC are happy to try and progress this further with the employer, but this also needs to be raised locally, again as has just been mentioned. Items available on the canteen sheets for prisoners to purchase will vary at each establishment and there is usually consultation with prisoners through a forum to allow them the opportunity to request particular items are added or removed. POA committees locally should also be consulted on this. I am aware of at least one establishment who had the decision to remove ceramic items from their canteen sheet following a member of staff being assaulted by a prisoner using a ceramic mug. After any incident like this there should be an investigation into what has happened, with recommendations to try and prevent a repeat of the incident. The removal of ceramic mugs on this occasion was the obvious way to reduce that risk. Any risk would be further reduced by removing tinned items entirely. We ask that you support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any response from Pentonville? Okay, we can open the vote now for this. Please cast your vote. We can now close that vote and as you can see it was very close. It's been carried

<Laughter>

The next motion 5 is an award and because Cookie is a man of dignity he is just going to go in the back and make himself a cup of tea. Do we have a seconder for this motion? We do, it's Swaleside beat everyone to it so we have got a seconder. Please feel welcome to come and say a few words if you wish, and over to Steve Gillan on behalf of the NEC.

### Motion 5

**That Conference award Dave Cook Honorary Life membership of the POA due to his outstanding work at local and National level.**

### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Well, Chairman, Conference, Executive, it gives me great pleasure in moving this motion that awards Dave Cook honorary life membership due to his outstanding work at local and national level. Dave joined the Prison Service on 1 June 1993. He became a local official at Swaleside in early 1994. He was elected Chairman in 1996. He remained Chairman at Swaleside up until 2018, when he took his place up at Executive level.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about Dave Cook and some of the outstanding work that he has achieved on behalf of this union. There will be some in the hall that will remember this, there will be some that don't. Way back in 2003 I was Vice Chairman and, at that time, Colin Moses was the National Chairman. It was announced by Martin Narey that the Isle of Sheppey would be privatised in total. Through the TUC, Colin Moses, myself, Brian Caton had a meeting with Brendan Barber at the time and Brendan was quite helpful to us in getting a meeting with the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke. Colin, Brian and myself, mainly Colin actually, persuaded the then Home Secretary that this wasn't the route to go down and the then person that was in charge of the Prison Service was effectively Martin Narey. I always remember the rug being pulled from under Narey's feet by the then Home Secretary Charles Clarke to say that it would be put on hold to look at alternatives in relation to performance improvement plans, as they called it back then, to put in place down at the Isle of Sheppey.

So we'd done, I suppose, the easy bit. The hard bit was for all the branch officials down at Sheppey and this is specific to Dave Cook, actually, because I don't want to undermine any other official that was there. But Dave, to me, stood up as the Chair of Swaleside, embraced everything in relation to it. My job as Vice Chairman was made easy, Colin put me in charge of that particular piece of work, but I didn't have to advise the likes of Dave Cook because he was so spot on with everything that he'd done in relation to that. History will then demonstrate that the Isle of Sheppey was saved from going in to the private sector because of his outstanding work, along with others such as our Vice Chairman, Dave Todd, and various other people down on the Isle of Sheppey at the time as well.

But the other parts that Dave has been magnificent on, before it became fashionable Dave, well, the two Daves actually, always organised the POA at Tolpuddle. If you've never been to Tolpuddle you don't know what you're missing. You should go down there for a great weekend of trade unionism and socialism, you'd thoroughly enjoy it, I can thoroughly recommend it. But Dave Cook was magnificent during that time as well. Year after year giving up his family time to go down and organise people on behalf of the POA in relation to it.

And that's not just talking about all the local work he's done. I've seen him in action at national level as well and he's a good person, a good man, but an outstanding character who is POA through and through, so please support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

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

**JON ROBERTS – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE:** Chair, Conference, I've not known Dave very long, about five or six years, but he's always been there whenever we've had a problem to give us a hand. He's always there on the telephone and the advice he gives is second to none. I'm sure most of you have met him in the bar at some stage, he is a thoroughly nice guy, easy to get on with. He has supported, as you've heard, the POA and its members for 30 years, so I'd ask you to carry this motion, not only for all the hard work he's done but for what he can do in the future. Thank you.

<Applause>

**FIKRET SINCİK – BRANCH CHAIR, MAIDSTONE:** Conference, Chair, NEC, I just would like to take that opportunity to thank Dave for his non-stop help and advice for myself and the rest of the committee. Just support the motion please, Thank you.

<Applause>

**TYLER TIERNEY, BRANCH SECRETARY – COOKHAM WOOD:** Chair, Conference, NEC, I'm advising you to support the motion. Dave Cook has been second to none. Cookham Wood have had our fair share of issues anyway over the years, many phone calls late night, he's had phone calls from members at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and he's always been there. One story I'll tell you, he came into Cookham Wood to do an investigation with a particular governor. I've never seen anyone stood so speechless when confronted with Cookie and the way he dealt with it, it was absolutely second to none. He's a great guy. I'd say we've proven a very good experiment here, I think the NEC has done a really good job. 68 is far too late and Cookie is obviously representing that. I think he's done us all proud, so please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. No more speakers so we can go to the vote. Motion 5, vote is now open. We can now close that vote, thank you, Conference. That has been carried. Now even if I shouted him to come back to stage he probably wouldn't hear me anyway so it's pointless. We'll just leave him in the back. Cookie, you can come back.

Motion 6, NEC, we have a seconder from Barlinnie. Steve Gillan.

### Motion 6

**That Conference award Willie Carle Honorary Life membership of the POA due to his outstanding work at local and National level.**

### NEC

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chair. Motion 6, that Conference award Willie Carle honorary life membership of the POA due to his outstanding work at local and national level. It gives me, again, immense pride to move this motion to give Willie Carle honorary life membership. The history of Willie, Willie joined Barlinnie in 1987. He was elected onto the local committee in 1992 and then he was elected as branch chair in 1998 but due to serious personal circumstances he had to step down from the role as Chairman, although he did continue as a committee member. He has always had a passion for health and safety, as described by the Scottish National Committee. His knowledge on health and safety has assisted many of his members at Barlinnie and, indeed, across Scotland.

Luckily for us, Willie came back as branch chair in 2007 at Barlinnie and then in 2010 he became the branch secretary and Partnership Liaison Representative under the Partnership Agreement in Scotland. Willie, with all his outstanding work on health and safety and his diligence in representing his members through difficult times – and it's been said to me, and I've known Willie Carle for a long, long time, he's a quiet man of Scotland, actually, but he gets on with the outstanding work absolutely brilliantly on behalf of his members. That's why he is so respected throughout Scotland and that's why he was soon elected after 2010 onto the Scottish National Committee where he remains to this very day, and he's at Conference. Extremely influential and Joe Simpson once said to him as well, "What that man doesn't know about health and safety isn't worth knowing." So clearly Scotland were in safe hands with the knowledge of Willie. I can only say thank you, Willie, and if you get this honorary life membership through this vote at Conference, you'll have fully deserved every accolade going. Thank you, so much. Thank you, Conference

<Applause>

**JOHN DICKSON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** Chair, NEC, Conference, fully support this recommendation for Willie. He is, as Steve says, a quiet, unassuming gentleman of the union, quite the opposite of me, to be fair. I'm mad as a box of frogs usually. But Willie is one of the first people we go for when we want some really sound, proper, in-depth advice and he's always been there for us.

One of my favourite stories from Willie himself was something that I wouldn't have done but he went out to visit a colleague who was not feeling too well and had been off for a number of months. Willie went out by himself to visit him at his home. And he was sitting down talking to this member of staff who then disappeared into the kitchen and came back with a puppet on his hand. And he had to say to Willie, "Don't talk to me, talk to the puppet." And, to be fair to Willie, for 45 minutes he stood talking to a puppet rather than the member of staff because that member of staff was so unwell and that's what he had to do. I'd have actually ran out of the house after five minutes if that had happened to me. So that's the type of gentleman you've got there with Willie, who was willing to stand there and support that member of staff, even if it was mad what he was dealing with. Please support this.

<Applause>

**WILLIAM YOUNG – BRANCH CHAIR, GLENOCHIL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I support this motion fully. Willie Carle has been there for us through thick and thin. He has helped me out with my health and safety going forward when I was fresh into the branch. And, I've got to say, this guy is so laid back when it comes to doing things, he's practically horizontal but he makes it look so good. If he was swimming you wouldn't think there was a ripple in the water but he's obviously going full tilt to get it done. So please support this motion. Thank you, Willie.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, we have no more speakers so we can open the vote for motion 6. We can now close that vote and display the results. Thank you, Conference, that has been carried.

It's been a long morning, Conference, I can see you need refreshment. So, just to remind you, we have fringe meetings at lunchtime where refreshments will be available. We have one on level 5 in the Johnson Room with Thompsons Solicitors. I would advise delegates, well, at least one delegate from each YCS branch to attend that meeting because Thompsons are going to go through your rights under the Health and Safety Protocol, so that would be useful to you. And then we have, at the back of the hall, in a little room on the side, we have the Women in the Workplace fringe.

If I can ask you to get back for, say, quarter to two, we'll get through a few more motions before our first guest speaker and then continue with business afterwards. So see you at a quarter to two, thank you.

<Break>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. We'll crack on with a few more motions before our first guest speaker, who should be ready round about 2 o'clock. We're on to motion 7 from Lincoln, which is a debate, so it doesn't need a seconder or a vote. So, Lincoln, if you can approach, open a debate and I encourage as many debaters as we can possibly get.

### Motion 7

**That Conference debate the effects both physical and mental health impact on staff who have carer roles out of the workplace.**

**The ability to perform both roles effectively and the assistance available.**

### LINCOLN

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Conference, asking you to take part in this debate, please. The motion reads that "Conference debate the effect of both physical and mental health impact on staff who have carer roles out of the workplace, and the ability to perform both roles effectively and the assistance available." I'd just like to start by giving you a bit of a background as to the reason for Lincoln bringing this motion, and hopefully a good debate, and offer others the support that is now being put in place. A member approached me, both physically and mentally exhausted, following a road accident on the way to work. She explained that she was caring for her husband, who was recovering from cancer. She was also working and having to use leave to attend hospital appointments with her husband and care for him during bad periods. Unfortunately, her husband was diagnosed terminal and given six months maximum. I searched for a policy to see what support was in place for staff during these stressful times, and for a caring service, to my surprise, I could find nothing.

I contacted my fount of all knowledge on policies, my area rep Jackie, who also could not find anything but she did manage to contact Tracey Varela from HR, who confirmed there was nothing in place. Through my member, I managed to contact Sheena Goodey from Carers First Lincolnshire. Carers First are commissioned through Lincolnshire County Council to provide unpaid carers' support to those under 16 years of age. Sheena came to a meeting and offered to help me attempt to create a local policy. I again contacted Jackie, who in turn contacted Tracey. Within a fortnight, a meeting had been arranged at Lincoln between us all and a plan to work information into our prisons and start a national policy was put into place

Colleagues, in my experiences I've never known anything like this, to move so quickly and the wheels were put in motion, with the POA at the forefront, working together with HMPPS and raising awareness and offering support available, which can be found on the internet, and we also have the Probation Service involved. At local level, we sent out a simple survey with five questions: "Do you know what an unpaid carer is?" "Do you consider yourself to be an unpaid carer?" If you have answered "Yes" to question two, "Do you know where to access support?" "Is your role operational or administrative?" And, "Are you employed by HMPPS?" As is typical with most things, we had to chase people up and found that many people had no idea of what was available and where to go, to gain any advice. Then information to who does qualify and reissued the survey with far more responding, as they now was interested as qualifying because there may be some financial or other assistance available. An article was placed in Gatelodge, which led to me receiving several queries from the staff in several circumstances to my member and being able to signpost them in a direction to gain advice and assistance.

So, what is the definition of an unpaid carer? An unpaid carer is someone who looks after a relative or a friend who, due to ill health, physical or mental illness, disability, frailty or addiction, cannot manage without support. Importantly, and this is one that most people don't realise, is that this also includes parents looking after children who are affected by conditions such as autism and cerebral palsy, who just see themselves as parents, when in reality they are carers. A working carer, as definition, is an employee with caring responsibilities that has an impact on their working life. These employees are responsible for the care and support of older or disabled family members, partners or friends who are unable to care for themselves. One in seven carers are juggling work and caring, many seeing it as a normal way of life. Each year, unpaid carers save the UK economy £132 billion, the cost of a second NHS, the majority being overlooked as carers as they are unaware of the right support and information available.

So, how can we help? The MOJ is signed up as a member of Employers for Carers, the EFC, that have online resources to support employees and their families with caring roles. This means that you also have access to EFC's free online information. They have a toolkit to help start conversations that can be very hard for individuals to talk about in the workplace. This will also help managers to initiate open conversations. We have carers' passports. The purpose of this document is to enable a carer and their manager to hold a supportive conversation and document the flexibilities required to support the carer in combining caring and work. The document is designed to be a living document, to be reviewed every year and in response to any changes in the nature of the caring responsibilities. It's important to note that relevant department procedures are followed. Also, when a passport is reviewed, should a manager change or the employee's role change, there is no guarantee that the previous arrangements will

remain in place. The first section is an overview of the caring responsibilities. This includes a summary of the caring responsibilities, the impact on the working life, any further information that could help the manager understand the impact the employee's caring responsibilities have on them and their work. The next section is an overview of the employee's role and their team. The following section is important as it gives the employee a chance to ask for any flexibilities that would help combine caring and work. And this could include things such as fixed rest days, time off for medical appointments and things that may occur at short notice. There is another section with dates on, which actions have been implicated and ones that require reviewing. Final section is for any other actions that are agreed, for example contacting the Employee Assistance Programme for counselling, local council for carers' assessment or the Charity for Civil Servants.

As stated, this is a live document that can be reviewed as and when required, setting out requirements and expectations from both sides. This is particularly relevant with a member who is caring for someone with a terminal illness, as needs will alter on the passing of the person who was being cared for and the needs and support can change quickly, particularly after the death. The law, if you familiarise yourself with carers' legal rights, as these things have changed over years, as Government realises the importance of unpaid carers saving the UK economy as least £132 billion – in practical terms, the cost of a second NHS, a point I mentioned earlier, but I think it's well worth mentioning again, and I make no apologies for doing that.

The Equality Act 2010 protects a person who experiences discrimination because they are associated with someone who has a disability, and carers also have the right to take unpaid time off work for dependants in an emergency. The Working Time Regulations 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998 have also been used in the past to stand up for carers' rights and those in their care. E-learning, there are lots of courses available to introduce staff to unpaid carers, provide carer awareness and support managers to understand how they can support working carers. This includes case studies and best practice. There are various organisations that offer additional support. Carers UK is a national carers' charity who provide advice and support for carers and the people they care for. They champion the rights of carers and host Carers Rights Day, this year November 23. And Carers Week is 5 to 11 June and information can found on their website, [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org).

Colleagues, I hope you agree that unfortunately this is an issue that's going to be more commonplace over the future years, as we become more aware of needs and people caring. I thank the team that worked so hard in progressing this issue – Sheena Goodey from Carers First, Tracey Valera and Carla Mallet from HMPPS, Sarah Carter, Clayton Matthews and Kim Jiggins at HMP Lincoln, and of course the legend that managed to push everything and get it going, Jackie Marshall. I would like to finish with Kim's own words of a typical day that form part of her carer's passport and brought home not only to me the stress she was under but also her line manager, who struggled to finish reading it. So, this is a typical day: "At 4.15, my alarm goes off. Sometimes I am so tired I cannot open my eyes because they are so sore. But I get up, I must, there is no choice, I am a carer for my husband, Brian, who is dying. Getting up at this time allows me to have enough time to do my caring role before leaving for work, as long as nothing goes wrong. I go downstairs quietly, so I don't wake anyone by making the dog bark. Let them out and then put the kettle on and get his first tablets of the day ready, which line his stomach. Brian has to live downstairs now, he can no longer use his body and is totally dependent on carers. Our house is full of specialist moving equipment in the rooms he uses – a hospital bed, a wheelchair, an array of things to help him with his personal needs. On top of that, my daughter has moved home to be able to spend time with her father and give me some support, so space is limited and we are all adapting to the continual changes. I like to wake Brian up with a hot drink. His hospital bed makes it easier for me to alter his position without hurting him and, once he is sitting up, we have a drink together. I try to get 10 minutes with him so we can have a chat before I set off to work. I never know if this will be our last chat. We sit and chat, it isn't long before he needs me to help with his personal needs. If he needs to use the commode, I have to use a mobile hoist to move him from the bed, and this is also used to get him in and out of his wheelchair. He also has various pieces of equipment which he can use to urinate in, but often this results in a need for clothing or bedding changes throughout the day. He has nappies he can wear, but wants to try to be independent and often refuses to let me put these on for him. Dependent on how Brian's night has been, I may have bedding or clothing to change. If I don't have, Brian is washed and dressed after he's had his breakfast, usually by the first carer of the day, who comes after I have left for work. From the commode, he will be hoisted to his wheelchair and I will take him to the garden, regardless of the weather. I wrap him up and wheel him into the gazebo we have had put up in the garden, so he gets out of the house and into the fresh air. I normally leave him outside for 10 minutes while I pop upstairs to get myself washed and ready for work. When I'm dressed, I bring Brian back inside and move him to the commode again with the hoist if he needs to use it. Otherwise, I will use another piece of equipment to get him into his recliner, while I make him some breakfast and sort out his morning tablets. At the moment, he has 30 different tablets to take during the day. Thirteen are taken in the morning. Because Brian is on morphine-based painkillers, he is regularly constipated, so must have laxative drinks. This means his bowel movements are not predictable and he can call for assistance at any time, day or night. It is not uncommon for Brian to get annoyed taking his tablets, there are so many to take during a 24-hour period. Before I leave for work, I move Brian from the recliner to the wheelchair and then from the wheelchair back to the bed so he's comfortable and safe. I make a selection of snacks for him to access during the day in case he's hungry. He will eat things like boiled egg and fruit, so I always have plenty close by for him for access. Brian needs his food cutting up, and help eating as he only has the use of his right arm, so I have to be mindful of this when I prepare his snacks. At 5.50, I leave for work. I have been up and caring for an hour-and-a-half already. My drive to work takes an hour, along with a further 10 minutes to park and get settled into my temporary office. Work have been supportive, they have helped me shield Brian by giving me a role where I work alone. I drive to work with my thoughts – they are always about Brian: "Is he going to be OK today?" "Is he still going to be there when I get home?" "Are the children going to have a difficult day with him?" All these thoughts are going through my head, especially as the weeks trickle away and his time gets shorter. My biggest fear is not being with Brian when he passes. Sometimes I don't know how I am still able to get myself up and to work at such an early time of the day. I find it so hard to stay awake at my desk, even getting up and walking around doesn't help. I still sit down and keep falling asleep. I'm struggling now, I am asking for help. All I have felt like doing today at work is crying. I have the attention span of a gnat, I feel so emotional and have pain in my chest, like something is not quite right. I just need some sleep. I don't understand why my head hurts so much. I shouldn't be like this. Why is it like this? It's not fair. Brian was given a prognosis of six months. That was two months ago. He has had radiotherapy treatment since then, but we don't know if it's had any impact on these timings. We could be looking at weeks or months. I have two adult children. My son lives at home and my daughter has temporarily moved back to be able to spend time with Brian and provide me with some support. Both my children have full-time jobs, which they are doing from home, so Brian cannot spend weekdays in his recliner watching the TV during the day because my son works in that room and my daughter in another. My children are not providing high levels of support to Brian. We have carers coming in three times a day to support him when I am out at work and I do everything I possibly can when I am at home. My children do not get along. My son has a personality disorder and finds it difficult to cope with the challenges going on at home, so having them both at home has its challenges as well. I have always been a carer to my son, but at the moment we are all focusing on Brian. My son struggles with his mental health. His condition means he can have outbursts and be quite demanding while I'm at work. I often get calls because my children

are bickering or arguing. My son sometimes shouts at his sister and Brian. He has recently punched a hole in the kitchen door, so my daughter says she is scared of him at times. She will ask me to go home, to defuse the situation, but I can't because I'm at work. My stress levels get higher and higher as the day goes on. Their relationship leaves me in the middle, sorting out their disputes and trying not to take sides or make things worse. It's killing me to have to deal with Brian, let alone my adult children. It literally hurts my heart. We should be working together as a family to give Brian the best time he has left with us. I have even found myself having a conversation with my son to say he cannot cope, he may need to move out of the home for a period. I feel so sad, I am his carer too and always will be. While I'm at work, carers will come in three times during the day to care for Brian. They will be there lunchtime and later in the day to get him changed and ready for bed. My children have support in between if Brian needs anything. They juggle this around their working day and I've made it through another working day, it's time to leave and head home. As with the morning, I have 10 minutes to get back to my parked car, an hour drive home and shopping to pick up en route. In the morning I think, "I'm on my way to work." In the evening I make calls to check with my family how Brian has been. Have the children managed? Have there been any sibling blow-ups? And I speak to them all, gauging what the atmosphere will be like when I walk in 14 hours after I have left. Brian can be moody, he is frustrated, he is in pain and he feels let down by medical professionals. He feels they have sent him home to die. Armed with the latest information, I rally some more energy. I might have finished work, but my caring role starts again the minute I walk through the front door. I normally get home between 7 and 8, depending on shopping requirements. We sometimes have a takeaway that I collect and bring in. On occasions, my daughter will cook. The reality is, I am often too tired to want to eat and, once I walk into the house, I start caring for Brian again. We never eat meals together, the food is often cold and when I eventually sit down to eat, and have no routine any more. Our routines are caring for Brian, I'm at home, I have missed calls from the hospital, there are some appointments for Brian I need to attend because he cannot retain information and I want to know everything about his health so I can support him and my family. Tomorrow I will have a slot in some calls to the hospital to make sure I can attend the appointments. Sometimes they are open appointments, which means the time is not definite so I need to take time off work. I don't have any time left to actually take time off work. I have used all my holidays, carers' leave and I am accumulating TOIL, that I plan to pay back when Brian's passed. You see, I want to work, it's important to me. I need to financially now, and when Brian has passed, what I want during this critical time, while we are taking every day as it comes, is to be able to ask for flexibility. Work have been supportive. They have helped me to shield Brian. Can I ask them to be more flexible, as well? The carer has already got Brian ready for bed, and thankfully I haven't had to change him. We managed to sit down in the room, I watch a bit of TV and go outside a couple of times. I'm exhausted. I can't be bothered to cook, so I order a delivery. I know it's not healthy but I also must eat. Remember, if Brian is sitting down in his chair, even a trip to the garden means using a hoist to get him into the wheelchair and then back to his chair. There is skill to using a hoist and specialist equipment – it doesn't make the jobs easier, it just saves carers' backs when manual handling the patient. Brian was quiet tonight and the call from the hospital worried him. At 2300 hours he was ready for bed so I moved him into his room and started the night-time routine with the commode, tablets and hoist him into bed. In an evening, he'll take 12 to 16 tablets, depending on his pain. He hates taking these tablets, it can take him quite a while to get through them all. I make sure he's safe and settled before I leave him and head upstairs to my own bed, look at the clock and it's after 2300 hours, after 11 o'clock at night. I'm working tomorrow, my alarm will go off in five hours. I don't sleep well any more, my mind never rests and I worry about Brian, his low mood tonight, his frustration with his situation. The impact caring is having on me, the impact it's having on my job, the conflict between my children, and it's half past one in the morning. I must have fallen asleep and I can hear Brian shouting downstairs, so I get up to go and see him. He needs to use the commode. This may be the first of several calls tonight, I never sleep any more and my alarm goes off at 4.15 every day. Tomorrow night, I'll see if my son will put Brian to bed for me so I can get to bed an hour earlier, but I know I will be called during the night. Difficult nights are becoming normal. And after all, I'm a carer now. I'm also a carer for my son and I feel sad that I am asking him to be a carer too. When Brian passes, my daughter will move back to her own home. That will stop the sibling disputes and I will continue to care for my son with a personality disorder and mental health problems, because I am a carer."

After Kim suffered the bereavement of her husband, she felt as though she wanted to improve how carers are recognised and supported in the workplace. Brian passed away with his family by his side in mid-November. In facing new challenges trying to cope with the loss of Brian together, she began bereavement counselling. Kim began a phased return to work in April '22 and expressed an interest in being a carer champion when she returned to normal duties at HMP Lincoln, wanting to make positive change in carer policies within the Prison Service.

She is now the main carer champion within Lincoln Prison and a key member of the Ministry of Justice team, working on the pilot project and future roll-out of information across the UK to support working carers. If anybody wants any information or I can be of help, please don't hesitate to collar me. Colleagues, please join the debate.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Paul, I did allow some Fergie time for you there, because you did bring out some important issues.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Sorry. Thank you.

**PAT DOBSON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM:** Conference, NEC, just to move on just a little bit, because it was brought on, above, before, that there's actually no policy regarding this. I don't know how many people are aware of this, but there is actually a developing body of case law derived from the Equalities Act and it's called "associate disability". And effectively, that means that you, the employee, might not be disabled but somebody you care for is. And that's a body of case law that's now in force. And I know it is because I only did a case a few months ago at a tribunal dealing with that very issue. And all I'm saying is, if you've got members who are having issues like this and maybe having problems getting a care plan, research that. It'll give you some information that, if necessary, you can challenge the employer on. Thank you

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Pat. I can't see anybody else wishing to contribute, so over to Ian Carson for the NEC.

**IAN CARSON – NEC:** Chair, Conference, asking you to join this debate. Firstly, I want to thank Paul and Lincoln for bringing these most important

issues to conference. We heard what Paul had to say and I could feel the emotion from here. Lincoln have asked us to consider the effects, both mental and physical, for those with carer roles. Well, quite simply, and Paul's story said it all, the effects can be devastating, completely and absolutely devastating, particularly where there's little or no support. You go and ask for support and there's seven regularly used, regularly trotted-out words that come to you when you go and ask. We all know what they are, it's "not in the interests of the business." That's generally what we get told, unfortunately. We work for an employer who try desperately to give the impression that they care, and to be honest I know a lot of good managers who would try and help. Unfortunately the majority don't, which is astonishing given the current staffing crisis. Staff are the Prison Service's most important asset. I'm going to repeat that, in case the tape missed it. Staff are HMPPS's most important asset. Now at the moment most staff with a carer role struggle to balance the demands of that plus their time at work. There are a number of options and Paul's highlighted them – you've got the carer passport, work-life balance, self-rostering, reduced hours, partial retirement. There are a range of different bits of policy out there that you can go and try and access to help. Unfortunately, my experience, staff go and ask and the usual seven words are trotted out: "Not in the interests of the business." Far too often, that's the case.

I just want to add one piece of advice to the information that Paul gave, which I think is really important that everybody understands. If you've got a loved one that needs a care package, they're generally written up by a social worker or social services. They will happily write you into that care package, no problem. Most social workers I've come across, and I've been dealing with some recently, will happily write the role that you play in your loved one's life. Whether it's a bit of shopping, whether you take them out, whatever it is you do. And you become part of that care package and you have that recorded. So that when you get told, "No", which is far too often the case, that becomes the basis on which you submit your grievance, because that's generally where we end up. Conference, these are really important issues, please join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

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

I'm now going to introduce our next guest speaker. He's Steve Reed, MP, Shadow Prisons Minister, so very important to the union. Steve was elected MP for Croydon North in a by-election in 2012. Steve was a key member of Sir Keir Starmer's successful leadership campaign. Following his election as Labour leader in April 2020, Keir appointed Steve to the Shadow Cabinet as Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. In November 2021, he was appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Justice and Shadow Lord Chancellor. Prior to entering Parliament, Steve was elected Leader of Lambeth Council in 2006, where he pioneered the cooperative council model that gives communities a bigger say in local decision-making, and introduced the UK's first public health approach to reducing violent youth crime. In 2013 he received an OBE from Her Majesty the Queen for services to local government. Steve has been vice chair of the Local Government Association, an executive board member of London Councils, co-chair of the Vauxhall Nine Elms regeneration partnership and chaired the London Young People's Employment and Skills Board. Steve is currently honorary president of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network, a vice president of the Local Government Association, and is chair of Labour Together, an influential grouping that brings together Labour politicians from all traditions in the party to reshape it for the future. Prior to entering politics, Steve worked in publishing for 18 years. Please welcome Steve Reed. Steve you are very welcome to address Conference.

<Applause>

**STEVE REED MP – SHADOW JUSTICE SECRETARY:** Thank you very much. And thank you for that very comprehensive introduction. It's a great pleasure for me to join you here today at the POA Conference, it's my first time at the Conference so it really is a great pleasure to be here to speak with you. And first of all, I want to thank you and your members for the incredibly demanding work that you do. You do it in the most challenging circumstances because, as you know better than me, we have a Government that has broken the criminal justice system from end to end. Our prisons are an integral part of the wider criminal justice system that this Government has broken. The Conservative Government cut the police, leading to a collapse in arrests and charging. They closed courts and left us with the longest trial delays in history. But perhaps most pernicious of all is the fact that barely two in a 100 reported rapes leads to a trial. And for those few victims who ever get their day in court, the average wait now is three years. This Government broke the Probation Service with a botched privatisation, followed by a rushed renationalisation, that's left the service facing a shortage of staff, unmanageable workloads and morale at rock-bottom. No Government that cared about keeping the public safe would ever have let this happen.

The same cavalier approach to public safety has damaged our prisons, too. I'm grateful to Steve Gillan and the POA for making sure the Labour Party are fully aware of just how tough the situation in our prisons has become. The service in England and Wales is facing a severe recruitment and retention crisis because the Government has repeatedly undermined prison officers on the front line. Assaults on staff have more than doubled since 2012, with over 7,500 assaults in the last year for which figures are available alone. Despite the efforts of prison officers to drive down drug use by prisoners, use has gone up by over 400% since 2010. With violence and substance misuse escalating like this, it's no accident that there are over 1,400 vacant prison officer posts today or that resignations have nearly tripled since 2012. Staff sickness rates are escalating, including for mental ill health. Prison overcrowding, driven by spiralling reoffending rates, has reached crisis levels. It's shocking that the previous Justice Secretary wrote to judges telling them not to lock up convicted offenders whose crimes merit a custodial sentence.

Overcrowding doesn't just deny justice to victims, it also makes it harder for prison officers to do their job and it makes it harder to ensure a focus on rehabilitation, so an offender leaving prison is less likely to offend again. Inspection reports make for grim reading and show the full extent of the crisis in our criminal justice system after 13 years of Conservative failure. HMP Exeter failed to improve after its first Urgent Notification and received a second one shortly afterwards – the first time that's happened in any prison. Inspectors found the highest levels of self-harm in the country, for this kind of prison, and 10 men had taken their own lives in the prison since 2018. Prison officers in HMP Exeter have been significantly overstretched, with chronic staff shortages – leaving, quote, "prisoners locked up for long periods of time", according to the inspector. Just two weeks ago, another report detailed scandalous failings at Cookham Wood YOI. They found young offenders making weapons out of scavenged metal objects because they felt so unsafe. A quarter of young offenders were held in solitary confinement for days and two highly vulnerable young offenders were held in solitary for over 100 days. The inspector said solitary confinement had become normalised and education was hardly ever delivered.

These are just two examples of prison officers being driven to breaking point after 13 years of Conservative mismanagement of our Prison Service and our criminal justice system. We've seen the probation services neglected, with lacking wider support to stop reoffending, vacancies and retention problems overstressing officers. These conditions are driven by political choices and they have created a perfect storm, and prison officers have been left to pick up the pieces. Offenders kept in conditions like these come out and they reoffend because they have been made more violent, more dependent on substance misuse, less able to tackle the root causes of their offending behaviour. The Government has created a criminal justice system that breeds criminals instead of stopping criminals. And it's your members on the front line, doing their best in such appalling circumstances, who are left feeling under-supported and undervalued. This clearly cannot go on. We need change to rebuild the criminal justice system from end to end. I've been clear that Labour will deliver a criminal justice system that prevents crime, punishes criminals and protects communities.

Labour has already announced plans to recruit more neighbourhood police. We will stop low-level offenders before they become lifelong criminals by strengthening and enforcing community sentences. We will open specialist rape courts and we'll tackle the courts backlog by increasing the number of Crown prosecutors. Labour will create the world's first trauma-informed criminal justice system, which means reforming the prison system to use learning from the science of childhood trauma to intervene to tackle the root causes of reoffending. We understand so much more today than three decades ago about the impact of trauma in early childhood. A child's emotional and cognitive development can be profoundly affected by traumatic experiences in the very earliest years of their lives. And those are experiences such as growing up with a drug-addicted parent who is unable to offer the stability, the boundaries or even the constancy of love that that child needs, or violent or abusive behaviour in the household. Trauma like this can affect a developing young mind, normalise aggression or distort their sense of right and wrong. And that trauma can take hold and find expression later in life in criminal behaviour that puts other people and their communities in danger. We'll work with the courts, youth offending institutions, prisons and probation to cut reoffending by tackling the deep-rooted trauma that often lies behind crime and criminality.

All that will help, but I know we need to go further. My colleague Angela Rayner, Labour's Deputy Leader, has announced Labour's plans for a New Deal for Working People that has fairness at its heart. Every working person deserves a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. But under the Tories we've seen the worst decade for wage growth since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Conservatives' failure to grow the economy is why we have the highest rates of personal tax for 70 years, but wages falling in real terms. That's what lies behind the Conservatives' cost-of-living crisis. The last Labour Government grew the economy 50% more on average, every year, than this Tory Government has managed. Now, given the sledgehammer the Tories have taken to the economy, fixing the problem will take time, but our Green Prosperity Plan will bring back the growth that will let Labour improve living standards for working people once again.

But boosting people's income is not just the right thing for them, it's the right thing for our whole economy. Strengthening workers' rights, tackling insecure work and improving wellbeing in the workplace will boost productivity. Strong workplace rights are also key to creating the right conditions for business innovation and sustained economic growth for everyone. This will help to tackle the cost-of-living crisis by ensuring everyone is paid enough to live on. Labour will strengthen the protections available to all workers by banning zero-hours contracts, outlawing bogus self-employment and ending qualifying periods for basic rights which leave working people waiting up to two years for basic protections, including for unfair dismissal, for sick pay and for parental leave.

I understand the real concerns about conditions facing prison officers across the country. Your General Secretary, Steve Gillan, has made me, Keir Starmer and others in the Shadow Cabinet fully aware of your concerns. I understand this needs to be tackled if we want to overhaul the criminal justice system so it works for everyone, not least those of you who are on the front line. The first duty of any Government is to keep the public safe, and doing that requires a functioning and effective criminal justice system. It's time to give prison officers the professional status and professional respect the job deserves. It's time to make our prisons places where offenders are punished, yes, by being deprived of their liberty, but also places where they are rehabilitated, so they come out less likely to commit crimes again. I'm fully committed to working with the POA and others to achieve all of that. Last week, we had a major set of local elections up and down the country. Labour won our best results in a generation. This is a country crying out for change. Our criminal justice system is crying out for change. And change can only come with the election of a Labour Government. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Steve. Steve Gillan, General Secretary, is just going to respond to you, if he may. And then I've got a gift for you, so don't go anywhere, please!

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Chairman, thank you Conference, thank you NEC and thank you Steve Reed for your speech. It's fair to say, as Mark identified, that Steve was elected first in 2012. So, we don't hold Steve or the current Shadow Cabinet responsible for the broken pledges of the past, which many of you in this room will remember, in respect of our restoration of full trade union rights and the right to strike. And Steve is correct in his speech, there has been dialogue behind the scenes. I've had direct dialogue with Keir Starmer, as part of the TUC Executive, where we meet with the Shadow Cabinet, and some of the Shadow Cabinet were unaware of our plight, that we were actually under a permanent injunction and had been found guilty of alleged contempt of court for actually defending our members' health and safety. So, we need, Steve, that right to be wronged and we will continue to have that dialogue to ensure that that's a commitment in the Labour Party manifesto going into the next general election, because once bitten twice shy. And I've explained this behind the scenes that in 1997, and I hate looking back in anger but sometimes you've got to, when you've been let down so badly – and we were let down badly by the Blair, Straw, Prescott administration at that time, where they pledged wholeheartedly to cease privatisation of prisons and also to restore our right to strike. And they did neither, quite frankly, and they had a golden opportunity to do so with such a massive majority when they got in in 1997. And, quite rightly, Jack Straw did point out to us on numerous occasions when he was challenged on that commitment – and we've got the letters, we've got the videos back in those days, with John Prescott addressing our Conference and Jack Straw as well, where they said all those things. We had the letter from Tony Blair to our then General Secretary David Evans about those particular issues, which I will send you a copy of. And Jack Straw quite rightly said to us, "But none of that was in our manifesto, so we haven't broken any pledges." And do you know what? It stuck in the throat, because we thought that we had a gentleman's agreement – or our Executive back in the day thought that that was going to happen.

Now, what I do know is that you're quite right, Steve, you said that Labour have produced the New Deal for Workers. And I've got to say, I've read it, I think the Labour Party should be commended on it and the Shadow Cabinet should also be commended on it because there's some fantastic stuff in there for working people. And some of it doesn't cost a penny and I think that will become attractive. It doesn't cost a penny to restore trade union rights and a right to strike, and in part of our union, in Scotland, the Scottish Government restored the right to strike against this draconian legislation and the sky hasn't caved in. We are no threat to any Government if we're treated fairly and appropriately, and I think there's time for an adult conversation to happen and for the last 30 years to be scratched under both governments – the past Labour Government, the past Tories, the coalition. And restoration of our trade union rights should be forthwith if a Government of Labour is restored because it's clear in the commitments within 100 days. It says, "Labour is committed to strengthening the rights of working people by empowering workers to organise workers to organise collectively through trade unions. Labour believes this is the most efficient way to tackle the challenges identified in the green paper. Labour is committed to repealing anti-trade union legislation which removes workers' rights." Well, we applaud that.

And then it goes on to say, "Including the Trade Union Act 2016, in order to remove unnecessary restrictions on trade union activity, Labour will also strengthen trade unions' rights of entry to workplaces to organise, meet and represent their members and potential members and to contact remote workers. Labour will simplify the process of union recognition and establish a reasonable right of entry to organise in workplaces. Labour will also end the current complexity and remove barriers to workers being collectively represented by a recognised trade union in their workplace." Also pledges to increase facility time for trade union reps, to use secure electronic ballots in the workplace for elections, around that as well, so we welcome all those sorts of stuff from an incoming Labour government within the first 100 days. But we also need a Royal Commission. You quite rightly identified the mess that our criminal justice system is in and the POA, since 2016, have been calling for that Royal Commission. A root-and-branch review about changing things for the better. We don't want any more reform because reform means to us privatisation and budget cuts. We've had enough of that over the last 30 years and we want to see real change that is meaningful, that puts prison officers and operational support grades, POA members, at the heart of that criminal justice system in making prisons and the criminal justice system a proud and effective operator.

You mentioned, quite rightly, the youth justice estate. I've got a slightly different view, Steve, to most politicians on this. The intervention is too late by the time they are incarcerated. They need to be dealt with before they are incarcerated. And do you know what? People talk about children in our care. These children are causing my members immense damage. Only recently, eight members of staff were assaulted by a so-called "child" at Feltham and taken to hospital and we're having that on a regular basis at Cookham Wood. Now, there was a recent issue at Cookham Wood involving a young prisoner, where he was nearly beaten to death by four or five other prisoners and I – if it wasn't for the professionalism of the staff, God knows, we'd be talking about the death in custody of a young person. And our Chairman has already identified that he fears, and we all fear, that that's going to be a reality in the coming months if we don't get to grips with what's happening in the youth custody estate and our juvenile estate. Because the reality is, if police officers are good enough to use PAVA and control mechanisms on these youngsters in the community, then we should be afforded that as well within secure establishments. And we will continue to campaign for that, to protect youngsters in our care but also to protect our members as well. So, Steve, I welcome a continued dialogue but it's got to be a meaningful dialogue that delivers for POA members. No longer can we accept any broken promises. Broken promises are confined to the past. We're used to that, we've suffered for 30 years without having a decent, basic, fundamental human right – of the right to withdraw our labour when it's necessary. We've got effectively, "collective begging" rather than collective bargaining for the simple reality both governments have restricted us and not given us any adequate compensatory mechanisms for not having the right to strike. I will continue, behind the scenes, as will Mark and the rest of the Executive and the TUC, to campaign to put that wrong right with the current Shadow Cabinet and to make as strong a case as possible for the restoration of those trade union rights because it means a lot of us. And also, not just a Royal Commission but a decent pension age for my members as well, because 68 is far too late considering the violence in our jails. So, thank you very much for attending our Conference, Steve, and we will keep up the constructive dialogue that we've had so far. Thank you very much

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you so much for addressing Conference, Steve. You are very welcome at POA Conference. And just to reiterate what our General Secretary has just said, if you want to do yourself a favour, put two things in your manifesto that will get the support of prison officers – one, restore our right to strike, and two, more importantly, I think, do us all a favour will you? Be realistic, give us a retirement age of 60. Conference, Steve Reed.

<Applause>

Conference, I'm going to allow Joe Simpson to address you about motion number 8.

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chair, NEC, Conference. The National Executive Committee are seeking the withdrawal of motion eight. I'll tell you why. This is entirely down to me. It was my motion that I brought to the National Executive Committee for them to bring to you and I apologise to my colleagues on the NEC and I apologise to you, as well, because it's a worthy motion that needs putting in place. But, and I don't know how this has happened, I've put ACAS in there instead of the HSE. So, on that, Chair, I would seek Conference's permission to withdraw the motion. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** With the proviso, Conference, that we'll bring it back next year, with the correct wording. So, just a show of hands, do we have permission to withdraw this motion, please? Please show. Thank you, Conference. Any against? Joe, that's withdrawn.

So straight onto motion 9, which is an NEC motion. Do we have a seconder, please? Thank you, Brinsford.

## Motion 9

Conference recognises the stressful working environment which our members work and the problems they face in trying to deal

with their mental health.

Each workplace has its own individual challenges for our members therefore Conference instructs all POA Branches to enter into negotiations with their Governor/Director/CEO to implement the HSE Stress Management Standards to improve the working environment for our members.

## NEC

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 9 talks about the stress management standards, which the HSE has had for quite some time. The Prison Service are signed up to this, they do want to deliver it. However when we've been walking round I have seen no sign of this at all. Conference, ACAS launched new advice for employers on managing stress after a third of British workers believe that their organisation is not effective at managing stress in the workplace. I think we can all agree that our managers don't manage stress in the workplace. Conference, stress is a major cause of sickness absence in the workplace and costs over £5 billion a year in Great Britain. It affects individuals, their families and colleagues by impacting on their health, but it also impacts on employers, with costs relating to sickness absence, replacement staff, lost production and increased accidents.

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they're not managed properly. These are demands, control, support, relationship, role and change. On the Demands, this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and then the working environment. This is where managers have to put in place risk assessments to manage that. And when we look at profiles and we talk about workload, we always see on the officers' profile "wing duties". What are "wing duties"? Are they costed properly? Because all we hear is, from management, "Yes, they're costed and they are put across on an average." No, what we have to go back to is, we need for instance, one A-shift. That officer will do patrol, the next officer will do this, then we need two officers for an hour to do exercise. LBB should be costed and it shouldn't be put in there, because what that does, that adds to the stress and the workload that you're doing. We've complained to management about the custodial manager rank, one of the most put-upon ranks in the prison service, for the simple reason, it just says "managerial duties". And everything that comes down that a Governor needs to do, they pass it on to the CM, and the CMs now need to have a proper profile that is costed for the work that the employer needs them to do.

Control – and what this is, this is to allow you as a worker a say in how you do that work. That doesn't happen, we know that doesn't happen. Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues. That's non-existent and the reason why it's non-existent is because there is no stress risk assessments in place in the Prison Service. Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Your role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles. On that one, colleagues, what we're seeing is, a lot of people who leave the Prison Service don't understand why they're here. I was in Wetherby recently and they sent out their job advert for a youth justice worker, so a lot of people were applying for the youth justice worker and then found it shocking that they were actually called a prison officer. And Wetherby are now going to have to have a look at that, to rectify that because people were turning up for work thinking they were just going to do Monday to Friday and go home. That's not the case, and this is what we're saying about the role.

And then, Change – how organisational change, large or small, is managed and communicated in the organisation. That never happens. All of a sudden, they'll come along and say, "We need to re-profile, this is what we're going to do, we'll give you the Annex A for 28 days." Our colleagues in the private sector, and I was speaking to my colleagues from Five Wells, they were informed last week that all of their profiles and work shift patterns were changing on the Monday. No consultation, nothing, so we have got a proper disputes resolution in that and then we'll be changing with it. These all come about from the stress management standards, and we now need to look at them as a union and go back into your workplaces – because each workplace is different, it has its own different challenges. And we need to get these in place to protect our members, to ensure that they're not being overworked, to make sure that they're not being stressed because of the role that they cover.

If you need any further resources, if you go onto the TUC they have a full suite of "Trade unions and mental health". It is a very good resource sheet and I would ask you to go and have a look at that. But the other thing that we need to start doing, colleagues, is talking to each other. We need to start asking and saying to people, "How are you? How are you today?" Many of you in the room know what I have gone through over the last two years, last three years. If it wasn't for my colleagues on the NEC, I don't think I would have got through it. It was hard, they all were on the phone, they were either texting, ringing me up to make sure that I was okay and that my partner was okay. And also, I'd like to thank the Full Sutton branch. When I lost my eye, they decided to come along and take me out, and took me to the local cafe, sat and talked to me and helped me through that period as well, because it was stressful. And that's what I'm saying, we now need to start talking to each other. But I think the real reason that Full Sutton came along and they wanted to see me, because when I came out of the door, they all got out the car, because they all thought I had an eye patch on and they were going to take the mick. Conference, this is a very important motion and we must get these in place, to protect our members in the workplace. Please support.

<Applause>

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

**JOHN DICKSON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I'd like to second this motion, actually. In Scotland, what we've got now is, we've got a company called Optima, and if you mention the stress word, you automatically get referred to Optima. And the member of staff gets a chance to sit down and talk to them and explain what's going on, etc. What I've noticed in the last wee while of doing this job now for 26, 27 years is that there's a lot of young staff coming in and they're showing quite a lot of mental health issues coming in to the office just now, for various reasons. I won't – you all know, you've all been there. I've got a mother who's bipolar and she has dementia, as well, so I've been dealing with stuff on the periphery and looking at this. And I'm a dementia champion, I did that course that we did in Scotland as well. But what I've recognised is, there's been three members of staff that's come into the office and I've noticed straightaway, just from life experience more than anything else, that they've been depressed. I've noticed one person in particular, actually had bipolar and I've helped them, point them in the right direction. But that's not our role,

that's the role of the organisation that we work for; that's the role of the Scottish Prison Service. And I'm talking only from experience from where I work at this moment in time, but there's nobody there within the Scottish Prison Service to champion this. But what Joe said there about the stress risk assessment, we have that at Scotland, it's there, it's in place, but unfortunately yet again, it's the POA who go to HR and say, "Have you carried out the risk assessment, for stress?" And they go, "Oh, no, we've not done that." But again, the onus lies on the people that you're actually working for, but it's the POA that's stepping up to the front again.

Also, especially in England, where your staffing levels and the violence that you have got, hyper-vigilance is a real, real thing and each and every one of us as a prison officer experiences it day to day on the landing. Hyper-vigilance can cause you strokes, heart failure, stress, you name it, it's all there, and that's when you're sitting waiting for the incident to happen – because you know it's about to happen. With Spice, for example, you're sitting hyper-vigilantly, watching them. You don't know if they're going to die, you don't know if they're turning into zombies, you don't know if they're going to attack you, you don't know if they're going to attack other prisoners. These are the things that Joe's saying up there now that we have to look at. I've also just informed all the members at a lock-up meeting that, the minute we are one member of staff short, report it in the accident book as a near miss. Don't listen to their excuses about, "Ah, we'll do this, we'll do that" – we have got safe minimum staffing levels and if they don't actually comply with that, report it in the accident book and get it there because, further down the line, officers are going to suffer from PTSD – simple, straightforward. And if you have not got a record of it, you won't get any claims. So, now's the time to get your members and tell them to start doing that. Please support this motion, colleagues.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, John. Any more speakers? OK, we'll open the vote for motion 9. Cast your votes now, please. And we can now close that vote. And as you can see, that motion has been carried.

Now on to motion 10, which is an NEC motion. Do we have a seconder, please? Thank you, Moorlands, just pipped you to it! On behalf of the NEC, Sarah Rigby.

### Motion 10

**That Conference instructs the NEC to enter into negotiations with HMPPS to establish clear guidance for managers who manage staff undergoing IVF treatment.**

### NEC

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC on motion 10 that, "Conference instructs the NEC to enter into negotiations with HMPSS to establish clear guidance for managers who manage staff undergoing IVF treatment". At the end of last year, the NEC ran a women's workshop to try and increase awareness and support for the issues faced by our female members working in prisons. We asked for both female branch officials and female members to apply to attend, as we wanted to use the workshop as an opportunity to try and increase the number of female branch officials. The number of female members in the POA has increased, yet the number of female branch officials does not yet reflect this. The workshop covered a variety of subjects and issues, and everyone who attended was encouraged to share their experiences, good or bad, to allow the POA to highlight with the employer where policy needed improvement or where staff need more support. HMPPS allowed facility time for the women who attended and two Prison Service HR managers also attended, so there was a good cross-section of staff to enable discussion and debate.

HMPPS policy is inadequate when it comes to providing real, tangible support for staff on a number of issues. This is particularly relevant when it comes to anything that's related to maternity policy. Current HMPPS guidance allows for up to five days special leave per year for women going through IVF treatment. This is just not good enough. What about women who have to go through several rounds of IVF before the process is, hopefully, successful? The many medical appointments and the emotional pressure whilst also trying to work in an operational frontline role would have a significant impact on anybody. There is not enough support or flexibility for women who are faced with this process and there's not enough training for managers to enable them to guide and support their staff through it. We would ask you to support this motion so we can push for clear guidance that adequately supports women and their partners going through IVF treatment.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Sarah. Moorland to speak, first.

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm speaking to you today to request that you support this motion. I want to share a personal story and, although it isn't directly linked to IVF, I do believe you will see why I'm sharing it. Two years ago I went to A&E with severe stomach pains. At the time, I was told I was pregnant. The world completely changed – life-breaking news. Less than 12 hours later, I was being rushed into emergency surgery as it was an ectopic pregnancy and they believed my fallopian tube had ruptured, which can be life-threatening. At this time, it hadn't – the decision was made to squeeze out the embryo rather than remove the tube, due to the fact my other tube was non-functional and they didn't want to leave me infertile at such a young age. A couple of weeks later, after numerous trips to the hospital, back and forth, blood tests, injections, examinations, I was rushed back into surgery. This time, my tube had ruptured and it did have to be removed, along with the other tube as that was severely infected. Once again, my world had been turned upside down and without warning, at 30 years old, was told I was infertile and would never be able to conceive naturally. What I can say is, I was provided with support from work. I was allowed time off and I did come back on a phased return, but I know that this is not the case at other establishments, and other members that may have been through similar situations have probably had zero support.

What I can say is, there is an extreme lack of understanding around these issues. I still, to this day, have managers asking, "When am I trying again?" or "I'm over 30, I need to get a move on, I'm not getting any younger". Not everybody is aware of my situation but comments made to me can be

another crushing reminder of the difficult situation I've faced and how difficult a journey would be if I did go for IVF and try for a family. Working in a prison can be difficult enough. I can say that having no clear guidance or understanding from managers does put me off exploring IVF and, although I have had support previously, I cannot say with certainty that I would get that support again. Guidance and information would provide a better understanding of how to treat fertility issues. And it would erase the stigma faced around these issues. A better understanding in the workplace would maybe stop unwanted and hurtful comments. I am extremely passionate about this motion and I do ask that you support. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Jade, thank you for sharing that with us; that's extremely brave of you. Thank you.

**JOHN GURNEY – BRANCH CHAIR, LITTLEHEY:** Like our lady speaker just now, I want to share the topic that's been brought forward, and it was brought forward today at the lunchtime meeting for the women's group. I've represented a husband of a couple who work at our place. She was an OSG, he was an officer, and they were going through IVF. Sadly, through their long battle, they had five miscarriages – three of which were before fertility, two afterwards – seven cycles of IVF treatment, numerous surgeries, numerous appointments, time off work. Support – none, hit-and-miss. There's no policy, "Oh, you can have five days' special leave" – "Oh, well, you've been off sick, I've got to give you a warning." "Why?" we said. "What have they done? They're just trying to do what anybody as a couple would want to do." They had to fight and the stress levels were rising, which culminated towards the end, where her husband sadly had to take off work for depression, having a breakdown. Through that, she asked, "Can I go on light duties? Can I have a work-life balance? Is there anywhere else?" In the end, after all those years, over 10 years as an OSG, the only way that she could find respite was to become a civilian, drop in pay. Is that right? No. Did she get the support? No. Our line managers do not have the tools at their disposal and through Jackie and her work hopefully this will come and we will have a policy on IVF and lots of other issues that there isn't policies for which concern women in the workplace. There's lots. I attended that meeting today and, although I work with Alice, it opened my eyes even more. We've got to give the tools to our line managers. We can't leave it to their managers to tell them, "There's nothing in policy so just give them a warning." Please support this motion, it is really, really important.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you to the speakers there. Let's open the vote for motion 10. Thank you, Conference, if we could now close that vote. You can see for yourself the results. Thank you so much for supporting that, that has been carried.

Conference, it's now time for a cup of tea. If we can have you back at twenty past three, we can get through some more motions before close of play. Thank you.

<Break>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference, I'll now bring you to order. Just before we continue with the motions, it's been brought to my attention that in the midst of the delegates we have someone celebrating their 40th birthday. Because we're such a good NEC and we appreciate everything you do we have a birthday card and a gift to award to him. Gary Rourke from Hindley. Now, inside this card there's a big, round 40 badge and I think it's only right, because I can do this, I can propose something and you can approve it. It's only right that, from the moment I give Gary this card, he has to wear the 40 badge for the entire duration of Conference, including when he's socialising, and whoever catches him not wearing it has to decide what fine he pays, and whatever fine he pays be put towards the charity. It's only fair, isn't it? So, I propose to you Conference, that we force the birthday boy to wear the 40 badge for the duration of Conference and he gets fined if he gets caught not wearing it. All those in favour, please show.

<Laughter>

I do love a stitch up! Gary, come and get your card and your badge.

<Applause>

40 years young. Look at him. Where was your paper round, the Gaza Strip? Round of applause for the birthday boy.

<Applause>

Someone will have to show him how to put it on. Right, you've had your moment of glory, do one!

<Laughter, applause>

He'll probably need a first aid kit in a minute when he pricks his finger. Right, we're on to motion 11 from Pentonville. Do we have a seconder please?

## Motion 11

**The NEC enter negotiations with HMPPS to ensure that all operational managers including Governors in the closed estate and other appropriate establishments carry the same PPE, cuffs batons, anti-ligature knives and PAVA spray that uniformed grades**

have to wear.

## PENTONVILLE

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** Dave, Conference. This motion, if not proposed previously, I think should've been. Now, most of us here are required to carry PPE, some of us will be carrying PAVA in our jails where it's been rolled out and most of us will be carrying it very soon. Now, all this PPE is in stark contrast when I joined the job, when we just was given a wooden stave. Some of us may remember that with a long pocket down the side of our trousers, often a copy of your local newspaper was down there instead of your stave, but things have changed. This increase in the amount of PPE that we've got to wear – cuffs, baton, PAVA, fish knife – all of that stuff is indicative of the loss of control that we've got in our prisons. Thirty years ago it was about talking to prisoners, i.e. our IEP skills would deescalate, we'd be able to talk to prisoners. For some reason that's been eroded and now we need all of this PPE to maintain controls, and that even may be as far as maintaining control where you've got gates on your wings where you never used to have them, where you've got stairs caged off where you never used to have them. That's all loss of control. The levels of violence displayed in the prison and the willingness for prisoners to use extreme violence, all of the time, which has been quoted before about gangs of prisoners picking on one other prisoner because of the postcode. It's not a postcode lottery. There's a postcode conflict between them.

I've got a duty of care to prisoners and that's why I wear all of my PPE when I'm on duty. I wear the whole lot. But once you come out of uniform, it seems you don't have to wear that PPE. So, the question I've got is, where is the Governor's duty of care to us? They don't seem to have it. They've abdicated their duty of care to us because they don't carry their PPE. If I was attacked by a prisoner and couldn't access my PPE, whether that be the PAVA that I might be wearing or my baton or my cuffs, and the nearest member of staff around to assist me is a governor grade who's not carrying any PPE because he's walking around doing whatever, then god help me because that Governor either can't or won't help me. I'm going to get a good hiding! Now, if a Governor was attacked I'd be able to protect that governor grade because I've got my baton and I've got my PAVA, and I've got my cuffs and I carry them regularly. There seems to be an anomaly here that we're all human beings – I go to work and I want to go home again and so does that Governor. I'm going to protect the Governor, but he's not going to be able to protect me. I don't see the sense or the logic in that and it needs to be addressed.

I don't see any reason why governors don't carry PPE the same as the rest of us, unless that they don't want to hurt their backs. We all know how heavy carrying that PPE is because we all should have an OH referral when our backs start playing up because it's quite heavy, or they don't want to crease their suits from Marks & Spencer. I don't know what the reason is. In short, to help us all to be protected – that's prisoners, staff, governors, visitors, everybody that comes into our establishments – we should all operationally be carrying PPE.

One other thing, I spoke to the PGA rep at our place and it's not even gone on to their agenda about them carrying PPE. So, it might be that we need a bit of cross-union cooperation, that you talk to the PGA and ask what are their reasons for not carrying PPE because I don't see the logic in it. I don't see the logic in it. And if a member of staff stood around while an incident's going on and didn't get involved because you've got all this PPE, he'd be on a hearing for why he didn't get involved. But the Governor can be, well, a bystander and let us all get involved. It takes three of us to do C&R – if there's only two of us there's no C&R involved, that's when we get our batons and our PAVA out. Why aren't they carrying it? I don't see any logic in it. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chairman, Conference. I'd like to support the motion but I don't think it's achievable. You have a massive problem with it because the governors have got to do C&R to carry that stuff and they've got a letter from Ian Mulholland which says they don't have to do it, believe it or not. But they can claim RHA at £7,000 and they've got directors who will support them and not let the corruption team look at this. However, there's no minutes, because I've asked for the minutes. No minutes to show these discussions taking place. Mulholland's no longer in the job and the person that negotiates for the PGA unfortunately passed away. So, I don't know who's doing the negotiations but it got to the point where Rory Stewart, when he was a Prisons Minister, was asked on three occasions, "Should governors claim RHA if they don't do C&R?" And he said it was a very difficult question. It wasn't, Rory. It was fraud! That's what they were doing, they were committing fraud. Eventually, he did answer the question in a written reply in Hansard 2019. He says all governors have got to do C&R. They don't do it, they rely on Mulholland, you've got directors who are supporting them not doing it relying on Mulholland's letter. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Craig. I can't see any more speakers so replying for the NEC is Dave Cook.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, NEC, Conference. If you'd just indulge me one minute, this is a personal message from myself, and that is thank you very much from the bottom of my heart for the award that you gave me today. Honorary life membership is the highest award I think you could ever be awarded. I realise what an honour that is, and despite leaving the NEC and also retiring from the service, I will continue to support and promote the POA wherever I am and whenever opportunity that I have. Thank you

<Applause>

Chair, NEC, Conference, responding to the motion in support of the motion. In the past years we've had motions about having our senior and operational managers to wear uniform, the uniform that you and I have had to wear in our working lives, along with the police, the fire and rescue services and the armed forces, to name a few. All their senior managers wear a uniform. When you see the police commissioner, the police chiefs standing up and defending their forces, they are wearing a uniform because they're identifying themselves as operational members of their forces. Why is it ours don't? They're hiding behind a suit. It's very hard to understand who is non-operational and who is operational. If we, as a union, are

asking for them to go into uniform then it's only right that we should be demanding they wear the same PPE that you and I have to carry.

The PPE that you carry is not there just to protect you, as was said by Chris when he moved the motion, it's about protecting everybody in our establishments. You may have to use your PPE to protect other people from harm. That's what it is there for. Our operational managers should not be standby watchers in any situation. They should be reacting and they should be supporting and they should be protecting the health and safety of everybody around them. If they're not carrying it, then they can't and won't do it.

Yes, Craig, it is. Whether it's achievable or not, that may be one of the things. As you say, we've had these motions about wearing uniform, we've not achieved it yet, we are fighting the PGA and everything else because they're adamant that they will not have their members wearing uniform. Does that mean we shouldn't be demanding it and we shouldn't be asking for this? No, it doesn't. It means we need to be demanding it and we should keep asking it until such a time as we achieve it.

I've been advised, as an NEC area rep, in some of my establishments where governors are actually helping to run the regime. They're lining the routes so we can unlock the prisoners and send them off to their workplaces. Instead of doing the right thing and reducing the regime to the level of staffing that we have, they're using governors to try and get prisoners out of their cells and into workplaces. Well, if they want to do our work, they wear our kit. It's as simple as that. Please support.

<Applause>

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

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** Thanks very much, please support it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. OK, we'll take that to the vote then. Vote's now open. We can now close that vote and as you can see that has been carried. Thank you, Conference.

Motion 12 – Pentonville. Secunder please.

## Motion 12

**NEC enter into negotiations to review the current Razor policy, including Risk assessments and S.S.O.W. and the manner in which they are issued.**

## PENTONVILLE

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** NEC, Conference, this is about the issuing of razors. The issuing of razors seems to have become, at Pentonville anyway, a haphazard process, with no accountability for how many are issued, who to, and getting them back again. At my establishment, most of the self-harming is done using razors, and this is confirmed by the completion of the <inaudible> and uploading that information onto the IRS system. In addition to this, most weapons used against prisoners and staff are improvised razors, with slashing rather than stabbing, because it's easy – there's plenty of razors around. I'm aware of the push recently for risk assessments to be re-written regarding razors and that's been done at our place, so I'm assuming it's been done everywhere else, but it seems to have mainly been ignored and the issue is still, as I say, haphazard. It seems the risk assessments are given lip service because it's deemed to be a difficult problem to solve and nobody wants to grasp the nettle or move forward with solving this problem. I'm sure there's an answer out there and it's for management, in conjunction with this union, to find it and implement it. So, for the safety of everybody in our establishment, please support the motion.

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

<Applause>

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Conference, in support of this motion. I think we should be taking it further. We should be removing razors full stop and going to electrics or batteries. Why are we giving prisoners items they can harm themselves with and us? Support the motion.

<Applause>

**PAUL MALLIBAND – CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, guests, delegates, the solution is already in our hands. A few years ago, at Whitemoor I believe it was, there was a very serious incident and all razors were removed. I believe that, to this day, all prisoners at Wymott have electric razors. They don't have razor blades. In 2018 I was asked to look at the Risk Assessment Safe System at Work for the issuing of razors at Preston and I refused. I said the control measures that they had in that document were unworkable and wouldn't sign it off. There was then a big kafuffle with governors and all the rest of it going, "Well, if you're telling your members not to issue them, no one's going to get a razor." At which I said, "Oh, has the light bulb turned on? Thanks very much." And then Covid struck before we got a chance to resolve that matter. Now, during Covid that was straightforward. Everyone were locked up and we had to put control measures in place for the issuing of razors, and we only did it at lunchtime with double the staff that we've all got now. When Covid left they decided they'd run a pilot, they picked some prisons for electric razors, they picked some prisons to carry on with existing ones and Preston was one of those prisons. We decided that we would put control measures in place that were workable. We only issued,

during that trial, razors at the beginning of lunchtime, as we'd done during Covid, and then we collected them back in before we unlocked after lunch. Over a nine-month period we had no incidents of self-harm in Preston prison where a razor had been improvised to self-harm. We had no incidents of anybody slashing anybody with an improvised weapon with a razor at all.

At the end of the pilot they told me at a health and safety meeting that the results were inconclusive because we had no data because nothing had happened. I mean how thick are these people we're dealing with? "Yeah?" I went. "Well, if you've not given them the opportunity to run around all over the place getting hoards of razors and you don't know where you've given them to and then don't collect them back, and expect incidents when we do it this way, there's nothing. How much are you being paid?" So, we sent the results off. Alan Scott, he's still sat on these results. He won't produce them because it's quite clear that what we've got going on at the moment puts prisoners and staff at risk and they need to do something about it. They should have electric razors in every jail and, if you've not put the control measures in place, if you need copies of the Risk Assessment Safe System at Work, we'll gladly send it to you from Preston, it's not an issue. No one should be getting slashed with razors anymore. We should only issued them during lockdown period, control periods and collect them back in before we come out. It is really that straightforward. Alan Scott needs to get his finger out and actually protect everybody. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**STEPHEN MACCORMICK – BRANCH COMMITTEE, EXETER:** Conference, we don't have razors. We took the decision to get rid of them and went fully electric. It's far, far better. We've got different problems. We haven't got any electric razors so we've got a lot of beardy fellas wandering about. They're not being collected in, they're not being cleaned to be reissued, they're getting broken. But, our slashing up has gone through the floor. You haven't got, "Oh, I need a cap, I need a cap!" It's just not happening. The ones that are determined to slash up are using a tin and we've already passed a motion about getting rid of them. It's a no brainer, just get rid of them. It made our lives so much easier. Just hand them out when they come in at reception, done, that's it, "You've got a razor, if you haven't got one in a week's time that's your luck out sunshine." Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can't see anyone else, so Geoff Willets responding for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf to the NEC asking you to support this motion. Firstly, I want to thank Pentonville for bringing this motion, which indicates serious health and safety issues for our members. The NEC are in constant negotiations regarding health and safety issues with the employer and they've been progressing, not only the razor policy but issues concerning tin cans, porcelain articles within all establishments and all categories. Employers have the duty, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure, so far as reasonably practical, the health and safety and welfare of the employees at work. The management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess risks. They must make sure that they know about the main risks in the workplace and the things they need to do to manage the risks responsibly. The management of Health and Safety At Work Regulation 1999 require the employer to put in place arrangements to control health and safety risks. Colleagues, local health and safety reps are reminded they can legally inspect the workplace and facility time must be given. Colleagues, use this resource to ensure the health and safety of our members. Conference, support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Geoff. Any response?

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** I'd just like to thank those that have come up to support the motion. The subject of electric razors has been brought up a couple of times by various people. It feeds a little bit back to the previous motion about the canteen that I put forward. If they can sell all this inappropriate stuff on the canteen, they can sell appropriate stuff, so let's maybe push to have electric razors put onto the canteen so instead of buying tins of beans they're going to whack me with they can buy an electric razor and take some responsibility for themselves. Let's support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. The vote for motion 12 has now opened, Conference. Thank you, Conference, we now close that vote. Thank you for your support, that has been carried.

Motion 13 – Wandsworth. Secunder please.

### Motion 13

**That non-effectives for the purposes of profiling be reviewed to increase to a real figure that reflects sickness, (from the monthly HMPPS returns), all training requirements and leave (taking into account 37-39-41 hour weeks and long service additional days).**

### WANDSWORTH

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The issue of non-effective, I've only got the Wandsworth experience, but for at least the last 12 months at Wandsworth, with the potential Band 3 group of 315, it's now been whittled down to about 280 because we're carrying that many vacancies. Over the last 12 months we've had anything from 25 to 30 officers on sickness absence, with

a further 25 to 30 easily on restricted duties. Add 15 to 20 on temporary promotion, that 315 is now possibly down to 90 to 100, which our Governor thinks is a really good figure, but on some occasions it's been as low as 50 and as low as 40 and sometimes in the high 30s, of course, with a prison of about 1,550 prisoners, sometimes topping out at 1,600. Over the course of the year there's enough evidence to show that 20% non-effective is absolutely useless when it comes to profiling in a jail like Wandsworth. You may have similar experiences in your own establishment. The impact of that failure to recognise what's really absent in the jail, and what's really not available, impacts everything. There are backlogs and programmes, as you will have heard, with people trying to get work-life balance and flexible working.

Of course, the only time you'll ever hear "meeting the needs of the business" is when someone wants to change their shift pattern or attendance. Apparently, attendance management, where you're running at sometimes 60-70% non-effective, that doesn't meet a business need, but the people still running the place are still in charge of it. So, how do you accommodate all of this? Well, realistically, increase the non-effective. You can't manage on 20% anyway, which as we've seen in the actual motion itself, there's additional days for longer service – three sets of working hours for the week. It can't be met. Every time we re-profile on 20% we're failing immediately because we can't profile on 20%. It's got to be higher. That's why the motion calls for a review. Let the NEC do their bit to review and see what the state of the prisons are with their non-effective, then we can move on with the more realistic figure that reflects the needs, not only of the service but also the needs of our members. They've got to get the time off. They've got to have a shout at getting the work-life balance application. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Stewart. No other speakers so Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC in support of the motion. Thank you, Wandsworth, for bringing this motion. We know that lots of establishments are running on 30% or more non-effectives. In addition, there's many things which non-effectives don't cover, such as maternity, restricted duty, special leave, which leaves us even shorter. Conference, the current 20% is inadequate. Please support the motion and allow the NEC to try and negotiate a more realistic figure. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Straight to the vote then, Conference. The vote is now open. Thank you, Conference. We now close that vote and that has been carried.

Motion 14 – Wymott. Secunder? Brinsford, thank you.

#### Motion 14

**That Conference instructs the NEC to utilise whatever means available to get PAVA & SPEAR into those prisons already assessed suitable to use it.**

#### WYMOTT

**IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads that Conference instruct the NEC to utilise whatever means are available to get PAVA and SPEAR into the prisons already assessed suitable to use it. Conference, in what other organisation can you have the same employer, contract, setting, yet have different forms of PPE as protection? The rollout of SPEAR and PAVA has been a disgrace. Who wouldn't want to protect their workforce, especially against some of society's most violent people? The requirement for PAVA was first piloted back in 2018. Since then every tactic has been used to avoid rollout. All staff trained in FMI, then 15% trained in C&R, 15% trained before implementation. We've been told by the Governor at Wymott that we'll be carrying PAVA by September. Unfortunately, he was non-committal on what year that would be. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Ian. No more speakers so Terry McCarthy on behalf of the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, responding on behalf of the Executive, speaking in favour of the motion. You all heard the National Chairman's speech this morning endorsing this Executive's continued commitment towards the rollout of PAVA. Wymott are right, the rollout of PAVA and SPEAR has been a disgrace. They can throw Covid into the mix and blame that, but the real blame for the delay in rolling out PAVA and SPEAR is the intransigence on behalf of the Prison Service and the ridiculous readiness assessments that they imposed upon us. Total nonsense. But, as a result of the constant pressure given by this Executive, there's not many jails in the country that haven't got a PAVA presence. But that's not good enough. This is now a serious health and safety issue. PAVA is a brilliant deterrent, it's a brilliant de-escalation tool. For every three times that PAVA's drawn, it's only discharged once. This Executive will not rest until PAVA and SPEAR is rolled out to all members of staff – not just the closed estate – the open estate, the female estate and probably more importantly our colleagues in the YCS, who turn up every day in the most violent workplace in the country without the means of any sort of protection from the children in their care. Please support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. Motion 14 vote is now open. We can now close that vote. That has been carried,

thank you.

Motion 15 – Maidstone. Do we have a seconder for Maidstone please? Whatton, thank you.

### Motion 15

**For the NEC to renegotiate the staff to prisoner ratio for prisons. The current 1 (staff) to 30 (prisoners) ratio (for Cat C prisons), with prisoners becoming more fractious and prisons having more new and inexperienced staff on the landings, is open to abuse from some managers who see it as a way to reduce the staffing numbers on the landings. When they do this, staff feel unsafe and are persecuted for refusing to unlock.**

### MAIDSTONE

**STEVEN HAMBLETT – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAIDSTONE:** Chair, NEC, Conference. First time speaking at Conference.

<Applause>

This motion was submitted by our branch because some of our members felt that our SMT or Senior Management Team were basically abusing it. Now, we know the 1-to-30 ratio was just a guideline used for benchmarking and to reduce the staffing numbers on the wings. Numbers should be based on the risk assessment of the tasks involved. Now, we were thinking of withdrawing this motion, but we decided against that and want to use this as an opportunity to get branches to share your experience and difficulties with SMTs. I can't call them Senior Leadership Teams because I don't think they're leaders. We, at Maidstone, went through a re-profiling exercise about a year ago and we're currently going through another one following another change of Governor. We've had to continually fight with our SMT to get safe staffing levels on our residential units. Our SMT continually tried to use the 1-to-30 ratio and abuse it, putting staff in unsafe working conditions. We have a lot of new and inexperienced staff and the SMT are basically using the ratio, and in the words of our chairman, acting like tinpot dictators making our new staff think that unsafe staffing levels are the norm. We will continue to fight them on this but we'd like to hear your experiences and any solutions. Please share your thoughts and support this motion

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well done, Steve.

<Applause>

**JIM SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR WANDSWORTH:** Conference, Chair, NEC. The last two POA governors monthly meetings, they keep trotting out this 1 to 30 and we've been asking them for months, "Prove it" and they haven't been able to prove it. They keep promising to come back every month and say, "I'm sure we can find it somewhere." And the last comment we had from them was, "It must be the best rumour in the prison service" because they all believe it. The other thing was that our last set of profiles, they based that with their 1 to 30, the branch rejected the profiles and to date they haven't been implemented and it would appear they've no intention of implementing them. With that, Chair, continue the debate.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON:** NEC, Conference. Reference this motion, I hope you all approve it. Now, this mythical 1-to-30 ratio, yes, it's what the benchmarking was way back when but the NEC have already pointed out that was a failure anyway but they still hold on to this 1 to 30. I would like to see it added a bit more the fact that the geography of each wing is different in each prison. They've got a standardised 30 to 1 for Cat D, wrong Cat Cs, but we've all got different wings, we've all got different styles. You've got some that are open, where it doesn't matter where the staff go, you can see where they are. Most of the wings at my prison are closed, so they've only got individual landings that staff have to go onto, so if there's a cell bell or something like that and a member of staff, because they're rushed off their feet because there's only two on a wing for us, might potentially go answer that on their own and you can't see what's going on. So, for a safety aspect I think the ratios are absolutely rubbish. I think that we need to really take into consideration the layout of each wing as well for this. My reason for this I think we should definitely support this motion and I hope you all do too, thank you

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Don't worry, I'm not going to go on as long as I did last time. Quite simply, there is no such thing as 30 to 1. There is no such thing as the ratios. It was all replaced by those three letters the RMP. That's all you need to quote – Regime Management Plan. If they can come and produce this 30 to 1 or whatever ratios they're trying to produce, let's see it, because it's not there. It's as simple as that. The RMP replaced it. Thank you, please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers, so Dave Cook on behalf of the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, NEC, Conference. NEC responding to the motion and we're asking you to reject the motion.

<Small applause>

The reason why we're asking you to reject this motion is because it talks about renegotiating the staffing levels, the staff-prisoner ratios, and as you heard our Chairman say this morning in his opening speech, there are no prisoner-staff ratios in our prisons. That was a flawed concept brought in by the benchmarking team, it was a cost-cutting exercise by the Government and by the Prison Service about reducing our levels of staffing on our landings. It had nothing to do with safety of us or the people we care for. That's where it was seriously flawed. It doesn't take into account risk assessments, safe system at work or the geographical layout of your prisons and it was brought in at a basis that, if a Cat C in the north costs this amount of money to run, a Cat C in the south should also cost the same amount of money. That's how they based it on and it was absolutely flawed from the outset. It's gone. It's dead. It's buried. Thank you for the last speaker because, exactly that, we have three things in our <inaudible> you have three things.

One thing you need to notice that governors only start talking about staff-prisoner ratios when they want to re-profile you. Because most of our prisons are now so seriously depleted in their staffing levels, as a previous motion said about the non-effectives and everything else, the only way they can run a regime now is by reducing the number of staff they need to do the work that they're asking you to do. They're trying to do more with less. They're trying to work us into the ground even more and more by saying, "We only need 1 to 30." If you pass this motion then this could be very damaging, especially to the smaller branches. HMP Ford don't have 30 prison officers for their prisoners and some of the open estates, but also the women estates, have far less numbers of staffing. It's damaging. Whenever you're in discussions with your Governor and they want to talk about re-profiling, you fall back on three things, the risk assessments, the safe system at work and the RMP. Those are the things that will set the correct safe staffing levels for the work that they are asking you to carry out. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Maidstone, do you wish to reply? No. OK, the vote is now open for motion 15. Thank you, Conference, we can now close that vote. The results show that that motion is lost.

On to motion 16 – Brinsford. Secunder for Brinsford, please. Thank you.

### Motion 16

**Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to implement changes for the reinstatement of full time POA Reps in all establishments and that the locally agreed profiled weekly POA facility time becomes non-flexible to prevent SLT's pettily cancelling facility time.**

### BRINSFORD

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Our motion reads: Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to implement changes for reinstatement of full-time POA reps in all establishments and at all locally agreed profiled weekly POA facility time becomes non-flexible to prevent SLT pettily cancelling facility time.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any more speakers, please? Andy Baxter for the NEC.

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reject this motion. The motion directs the NEC to engage with HMPPS to implement changes for the reinstatement of full-time POA reps in all establishments. Conference, we understand the sentiment of the motion, however, facility time is set by Cabinet Office, it's not set by HMPPS. The next element within the motion asks for profiled weekly POA facility time to become non-flexible to prevent SLTs pettily cancelling facility time. Colleagues, we know that at times relations get strained. This motion's obviously from a branch that feels its facility time gets cancelled too often. This isn't the case in all establishments. Some of our committees have good working relationships with their SLTs – these relationships stand or fall on a local basis. Prescriptive attempts to standardise could jeopardise existing productive working relationships. Facility time to be non-flexible – are we really saying that at times of acute staff shortages, such as meals and meds being delivered at the cell door, could it ever be a defensible decision to say that POA facility time sits above such critical tasks? Project time should be requested and agreed for pieces of work, joint work, like our MPs, re-profiles, ballots relating to re-profiles, time must also be made available to represent members. Also, remember health and safety facility reps time must be made available for health and safety training, inspections, investigations, risk assessments and to attend health and safety committee meetings. If you're not getting that time then please raise the issue with your NEC rep. You could also take the opportunity to speak about specific issues with our guests from HMPPS Employee Relations – they're sat that the rear of the hall. Conference, please reject this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Mick, do you want to reply?

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** No.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, straight to the vote then, please, motion 16 votes now open. Thank you, we can now close that vote. The results display that that motion is lost.

Motion 17 has been seconded by Garth and I invite Verne to address Conference.

### Motion 17

**Conference authorises the NEC to seek to implement that when a member of staff is dismissed, and this is overturned for whatever reason by the PGD hearing the appeal that the Governing Governor who made this decision is investigated by a director level who will deem suitability for the post.**

### THE VERNE

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Chair, Conference, NEC. The motion reads: Conference authorises the NEC to seek to implement that when a member of staff are dismissed, and this is overturned for whatever reason by the PGD hearing the appeal, that the Governing Governor who made this decision is investigated by director level who will deem suitable for post.

Conference, you could argue that this motion isn't strong enough, but Conference, it's a start. Some ruthless governors have left some of our members suicidal, and this has happened. These decisions sometimes get justly overturned, but these actions do not have to be justified to anybody. They can do what they want and there's no recourse. This motion may make them think twice and stop them treating our members with contempt. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Simon, and welcome back.

**NEIL ROSS – BRANCH CHAIR, GARTH:** Chairman, NEC, Conference. Garth supporters this motion from The Verne and are more than happy to second it. I'm guessing we've all witnessed some appalling cases whereby our members have been suspended and left hung out to dry by the governors preceding these hearings, only for the verdict to then be overturned on appeal, with the member often having no case to answer. These governors should absolutely be taken to task for their incompetence and have their suitability for chairing disciplinary hearings officially questioned. I take note of The Verne's next motion, motion 18, which is a continuation of the disciplinary process chain whereby PGDs uphold these nonsense verdicts, which are then overturned in an employment tribunal, should also be taken to task.

Colleagues, as part of these motions I'd like to go back further to the beginning of the disciplinary process chain. Let's see incompetent investigating governors also taken to task if they complete a flawed, unjust investigation which leads to a no-case-to-answer verdict. They too should have their suitability formally questioned. Personally, I've represented members in cases whose treatment throughout the disciplinary process is absolutely beyond belief. Often suspended, treated as already guilty and left hung out to dry for months on end. Investigations so poorly done that I've been able to write pages and pages of objections. Some of these investigating governors seem to think they are judge, jury and executioner and they have no grasp of disciplinary procedures or rules. Hearings chaired by even more incompetent governors who clearly have no concept of procedural justice or how evidence should be properly tested or weighted. Colleagues, something has got to be done about it. These people can't keep treating our members with this much contempt in cases that are an absolute witch-hunt. They need taking to task and must answer for their incompetence. Conference, please support this motion and motion 18.

<Applause>

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Just going to add one point to this motion and that is around when someone is dismissed, and dismissed unfairly. The Governing Governor who is making that decision, or the director, they're actually breaking the law because unfair dismissal is protected by the Employment Rights Act. Just like when the member, at the same time, potentially could be bullied, victimised or discriminated against by the Governor in question, they're breaking the Equality Act. So, it's much more serious than we initially perceive. Governors are potentially, well, are breaking the law when there's unfair dismissal and they should be held accountable for their decisions in those cases, because when a prison officer breaks a local policy we're the ones charged with gross misconduct and kicked out the door, and yet governors are not held to account when they're breaking the law. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Bill. Nobody else, so over to Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Conference, Chair, NEC and delegates. The NEC is against this motion for the following reasons. All of you here and the NEC will have defended members where they have been dismissed by the Governor. You will have had lengthy discussions and deliberations with PGDs about governor dismissals and many of you will have been successful with PGDs being willing to overturn decisions made. Adding this additional layer will actually tie the hands of all of you and those of the NEC when defending our members in enabling them to remain in employment. The trade union will support any member in respect of dismissals and will support them on a range of provisos. I take the point that's been made by one of the speakers where he states that, in dismissing an employee, governors are acting illegally. Well, technically that's not the case. Any employer, and that includes a Governor, had the right to dismiss if they consider the evidence is present. The PGD has the right to look at that and that is the process. I appreciate that there are individual governors out there who misuse that, but that doesn't mean that the process should be changed.

The grievance process is the way forward and I appreciate you are all desperately unhappy about the grievance process, as are the NEC. The NEC is fighting your case to have a robust grievance process to deal with governors who behave badly and do not give due process and procedural justice a voice. With this in mind I ask you to support the NEC, and your colleagues who've successfully overturned unfair dismissals at the earliest opportunity, and to reject this motion.

<Applause>

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Chair, Conference, NEC. I've listened to quite a lot of what's been said, and I'm not sure the NEC have quite got this in their argument. We've actually had PGDs telling governors to dismiss and they will uphold. This was over a hire car, which was overturned at the tribunal. And PGDs, to what kind of system is this? They need to be accountable. This will give them some accountability and it will make them think twice before they dismiss our members, and the effect it's had on them is profound. It doesn't just affect them, it affects the families, it affects their colleagues and you lose faith. I think this is a simple win which will make them accountable. Some of what's happened you couldn't make up. Support the motion, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That vote for motion 17 is now open. Thank you Conference, we can now close that vote. That motion has been carried.

<Applause>

Motion 18 being seconded by Garth. Welcome back, Simon.

### Motion 18

**Conference authorises the NEC to seek to implement that when a member of staff is dismissed, and this is upheld by the PGD hearing the appeal and is then subsequently overturned for whatever reason by an Employment Tribunal that the Governing Governor who made this decision and PGD who upheld this decision are both investigated by a director level to deem suitability for the post.**

### THE VERNE

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Now, this is a continuation from the last motion. Conference, authorise the NEC to implement that, when a member of staff is dismissed and this is upheld by the PGD hearing the appeal and is then subsequently overturned, for whatever reason by an Employment Tribunal, that the Governing Governor who made this decision and the PGD who upheld the decision are both investigated by director level to deem suitability for both their posts.

There's not a lot more to be said from what I haven't said in the previous motion really. We've had a PGD not in the service anymore, but told the Governor to dismiss our member of staff and he will back it up. This member of staff has not recovered fully mentally and what they've gone through is, when you see it first hand, it means that little bit more to you and you can see it. But let me tell you, it's an unpleasant situation and I think there needs to be some accountability. If that was a Band 3 member of staff, they'd get dismissed on the spot – they'd be hauled over the coals. The higher you get, there seems to be a popularity contest and you become bullet-proof. This motion will make PGDs accountable and think twice before they dismiss our members. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON:** Conference, NEC. I would like you guys to vote to support this one, even though I did agree that 17 should've got rejected. Because the difference between that and this one is now it will go to a tribunal and, if it gets upheld at the tribunal, then the PGD and the Governing Governors will be held accountable, so there's more pressure on them to actually look into a case properly and not just go with the Governing Governors, for the example my colleague just pointed out. Like I said, the responsibility would then fall on the PGD and they're more likely to support a member's reinstatement. So, from my point I'd like you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. No more speakers. Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Conference, NEC, Chair, delegates. As rightly stated by both of the speakers, this motion follows on from 17, which is in respect of the PGD upholding a dismissal by a Governor. This is part of the disciplinary process and the response to that disciplinary process is to go to ET. Tribunal decisions to overturn dismissals are on a range of grounds, not necessarily in respect of the evidence that was before the PGD. They relate to dismissal and in that category the reasons of dismissal can be varied. The victory at a tribunal of reinstatement is victory enough for the POA and sends a message, both to the PGD and, dare I say it, to HMPPS. Where that happens I am aware that there is an investigation already into the conduct of the processors. And that already exists. Now, you might not see that, and I accept that. Procedural justice is key to this because you need to see that that justice is done and that doesn't happen currently, but having this motion be passed today is not going to resolve that. So, for that reason I ask you to reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Chair, Conference, NEC. What this motion's about is stopping it getting to a tribunal. The mental stress this causes our members getting to this stage, they've lost their jobs, they've been dismissed, they've lost all sorts of confidence. This might stop it getting to that stage, and in turn will reduce their stress. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Simon. The vote is now open for motion 18. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That vote has also been carried.

On to motion 19 – Wymott. Secunder please. Thank you, Brinsford.

### Motion 19

**That Conference seeks to amend PSI 06/2010 to provide an electronic footprint if permission to extend an investigation is required.**

### WYMOTT

**IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT:** Chair, NEC, Conference. The motion reads: That Conference seeks to amend PSI 06/2010 to provide an electronic footprint if permission to extend an investigation is required. This is a well-meaning motion to something that's been an age-long problem. Obviously, being under investigation is stressful, which is taken to a new level if the person concerned is suspended. The investigation PSO has strict timescales which much be adhered to. Rarely they are. Often when challenged paperwork is retrospectively produced. Unfortunately, for those under investigation a fudged paper trail doesn't keep them informed or reduce stress. If extensions are required by email it would be more difficult to simply box off. Wymott has a two investigation struck off for not following correct procedure, which is highly unusual. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers, so Geoff Willett for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to reject this motion. Firstly, I want to thank Wymott for bringing this motion, which highlights a vital issue for our members. They raise a very important subject and we thank them for that. The NEC are in negotiations with the employer around the whole document of PSI 6/2010 and the NEC's position is that a change to the policy via this motion may stifle these negotiations. There is a number of elements around the policy that need to be incorporated over 13 years of employment law that needs to be adopted within a new policy. The body of the motion states, "To provide an electronic footprint if permission to extend an investigation is required." Conference, this is already a requirement. When a commissioning manager has a justifiable reason to extend a process, a CM13 form is completed and submitted to SOP. This then generates an extension letter creating a further trail and extending electric footprint. I understand this form is not always shared, but through means of subject access request it's obtainable. As you can see this already exists. Conference, we ask you to reject this motion and let the NEC negotiate the whole of the document in its entirety. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, that vote is now open, motion 19. Thank you, Conference, we can close that vote and display the results. As you can see, that motion is lost.

On to motion 20. I've got word for Moorland you wish to withdraw this motion? Just a show of hands will do Conference, do we give Moorland permission to withdraw this motion? Any against. Thank you, Conference, that has been withdraw.

21 – Brinsford. Secunder please. Thank you, Hewell.

### Motion 21

**Conference we direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to implement changes that all disciplinary investigations into any staff member be conducted using suitably trained impartial and competent external managers who are not part of the local Senior Leadership Team.**

### BRINSFORD

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion reads: Conference, we direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to implement changes that all disciplinary investigations into staff member conducted using suitably trained impartial and competent external managers who are not part of the SLT.

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

**LUKE RICHARDS – EXETER:** We're asking you to vote against this. I'm sure many of you have done investigations before where you go into a room with a Governor, the Governor tells you what the crack is and you come out of it, you speak to your member and you said, "Look, this is what the Governor's offered you, this is where we can go or we can go down a full investigation route." I believe bringing somebody in that you don't know is not going to have any care for that member of staff, any sort of rapport with you, any build-up that you've got, any belief in your union. They're going to come in, see the member of staff, see the charge that the member of staff has got, tick the boxes and see the member of staff off. So, we're asking you to vote against this.

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. My experience of doing investigations, up to and including employment tribunals, that sometimes I have to rely on the incompetence of the investigating officer.

<Laughter>

"Extended timescales we grievance." "You can't grievance an investigation." "Yes, you can, read a bit further in PSI passed the numbered paragraphs and it says you can." That was dealt with by a deputy governor at Scrubs. Yes, investigations going on too long, I'll leave to the member, "Let me know when are we going to fight this grievance." "Yes, charges dismissed." It's a stressful process but unless we're confident that all our branch officials are going to be up to the level of fighting a professional investigator I would say reject this motion so we can save the jobs sometimes on the basis of the incompetence of the investigation, but also the evidence which is often presented is challengeable. So please, reject.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Stewart. Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Speaking against the motion. Conference, be careful what you wish for with this motion. Trained, competent, impartial managers conducting investigations, it sounds ideal. At the end of the day they're still managers. Let's look at the real world. There's no doubt that the majority of investigation officers aren't up to the job of providing or delivering a competent investigation. But that's only to our advantage, isn't it? How many times, as local officials, have you gained wins because of the incompetence of an investigation? How many times, as local officials, have you been able to influence an investigation because of the relationships you've built up at a local level? Trained, impartial, competent investigators. That fills me with dread. Voting for this would be like turkeys voting for Christmas. Please reject.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, we'll take that to the vote. Motion 21 vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can close that vote and display the results. That motion is lost.

Motion 22 – Feltham. Secunder please. Cookham Wood, thank you.

## Motion 22

**Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to amend PSI 01/2017 – Attendance Management Policy, to include "work related stress" under section 2.141 – sick leave excusal arrangements as per the document entitled "Sick Leave Excusals" (All HMPPS Staff – Prison/HQ and NPS) on the My Hub under HR. At present it only includes disease, injury and assault whilst on duty, where as the SLE document includes work related stress. There's no point in having guidance if it's not in the policy.**

## FELTHAM

**SARAH PAGE – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM:** Conference, Chair, NEC. Motion reads: Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to amend PSI 01/2017, the Attendance Management Policy, to include work-related stress under the section 2.141 – sick leave excusal arrangements as per the document entitled Sick Leave Excusals on My Hub under the HR section. At present the PSI only includes disease, injury and assault whilst on duty, whereas the document on My Hub has work-related stress. There is no point in having guidance if it's not in the policy.

I had to re-write my speech because the National Chairman covered most of it talking about the things in a powerful way which are the causes of work-related stress. There's no point in me reiterating what was said earlier on. Everything Mark mentioned contributes to our mental health and because of all the issues we're facing there are more people off with work-related stress. It's also linked into motion 9. Our employer has a duty of care, under the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, to look after our welfare and potentially disciplining us for being off due to our working conditions – as affecting us mentally – is not looking after our welfare. If the policy is changed to state "work-related stress" under the Sick Leave Excusal arrangements, we'll be able to use the policy to support our members when incorrect decisions have been made. Being disciplined for not being at work due to working conditions only causes more stress. The employee compact states we have a duty of care to look after ourselves and our wellbeing. Taking time out because we know we need to get ourselves fit for work is doing exactly that. Although, the document on My Hub includes working-related stress, as it's not included in the policy it's pointless. We need a more robust policy in order to protect our members. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said, Sarah. No other speakers so Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on motion 22 on behalf of the NEC asking you to support the motion. There have been many changes and amendments to HR policy and guidance since the HR department was brought into the wider MOJ. There's a real drive to have identical policies across the entire MOJ rather than different ones depending on which department you work for. The attendance management policy has not yet been looked at but it will be at some point. There are many additional guidance documents that run alongside the policy, and I am aware that this has already been highlighted as an issue by some HR managers. Following the introduction of the Attendance Management PSI in 2017, an Attendance Management Guidance Document was also published at the NEC's request. This was to try and reduce some confusion around how the new policy worked and what the expectations were. An absence due to work-related stress would still be covered within the policy as an injury sustained at work but the actual wording is not within the PSI, it's only in the accompanying guidance. We completely agree with Feltham that the wording should be included within the policy itself and, moving forward, when the employer revisits the Attendance Management Policy Document, we will ensure that we raise this as an issue and ask for work-related stress to be included in the policy framework rather than in a guidance document that some managers choose to ignore. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply, Feltham? Straight to the vote then. Motion 22 vote is now open. We can now close that vote. Thank you, Conference, that's been carried.

Motion 23 – The Verne. Secunder please.

### Motion 23

**Conference authorise the NEC to seek a rise of at least 10p per mile to single mileage rate allowance to keep up with the ever rising cost of fuel.**

### THE VERNE

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Conference, NEC, Chair. Motion reads: Conference authorise the NEC to seek a rise of at least 10p per mile to the single mileage rate allowance to keep up with the ever-rising cost of fuel.

Conference, 45p isn't enough to cover the wear and tear on the cars and the ever-rising cost of fuel. When this came out, fuel was under £1 a litre, this 45p. Cost has gone up by over 50% since this was introduced, so a 20% rise is not asking a lot and is in line with what the nurses' fuel allowance went up to last year, which was 59p from 45p. That would keep us up in line with them. Also, in the '90s, for staff who had a car of 2-litre you could claim 63p a mile. It's a small pay rise which would help our members

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

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Asking you to reject the motion. It's too prescriptive. If you say it's got to be 10 pence and they offer you 9 pence you've got to reject it. Simple as that. You're asking the NEC to get something <inaudible>. If they offer you 9 pence, the NEC has got to reject that because you've said you want 10 pence. Please reject the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Craig. No other speakers so straight onto Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to reject this motion. I want to thank The Verne for bringing this motion. The sentiment of the motion is to seek in the employee single mileage rate for our members, and I think we would all agree the cost of fuel fluctuating constantly hits the pockets and budgets of our hard-working members. However, the motion is unachievable, as HMRC set the mileage allowance – and HMPPS play no part in calculating this, they simply adopt the HMRC rates.

The POA have no direct relationship with HMRC to negotiate a new rate. HMRC rate applies to all employees, private or public mileage, across the entire Civil Service. The current rate paid by employers is set by HMRC at 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and then 25p a mile for each mile after 10,000 in a tax year. If this rate is increased above the current HMRC rates, this motion, if carried, would put a burden on our members to pay income tax on the mileage paid above the HRMC rate and put them under a duty to declare the surplus as income. This could lead to members having to submit tax returns through self-assessment. Colleagues, the NEC understand the sentiment but ask you to reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Geoff. Any reply?

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** I'm not entirely sure, Conference, to be honest. The thing I don't quite get is the nurses union last year managed to negotiate a rise for themselves and they don't have to do a tax return. They've had theirs rise from 45p to 59p. I've heard what Craig said, if they offer you 9% we can't accept that by this motion, but if we do accept it we might go away with a win here. I'm not sure about the tax thing so up to you. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Simon. OK, the vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can close that vote now and display the results. That motion is lost.

Motion 24 – The Verne. Secunder please.

#### Motion 24

**Conference authorise the NEC to seek a rise of at least 10p per mile to single mileage rate allowance to keep up with the ever rising cost of fuel.**

#### THE VERNE

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** My last one. Chair, Conference, NEC. Conference authorise the NEC to negotiate the closed grades preserve their terms and conditions upon promotion. I think we need to encourage these staff to progress. We've got a lot of stubborn staff who don't want to sign on to F&S but they've got loads of experience and they could make more of an impact if they were promoted and they could bring on a lot more staff. I think it would give new staff a greater opportunity to tap into their knowledge and let them stay on. I think it will motivate the more experienced staff to give promotion a go before they leave and I think they should be able to stay on their current terms and conditions if they so wish.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Simon.

<Applause>

No more speakers. Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests. Unfortunately, seeking rejection of the motion. Understand the sentiment but the problem is you're volunteering into it. I'm a closed grade Band 3 myself. I'd never seek promotion. And that's the only reason, you're volunteering in to take a promotion and they'll never <inaudible> their own.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any reply? Doesn't look like it. OK, we'll take that to the vote. The vote is now open. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That motion is lost.

Motion 25 – an indication from The Verne they wish to withdraw.

**SIMON JOSLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, THE VERNE:** Permission to withdraw 25 and 26.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, we'll take them one at a time. All those in favour of motion 25 being withdrawn please show your hands. Thank you. Any against? Motion 25 is withdrawn. 26 – permission to withdraw. Again, a show of hands will do. Any against? Motion 26 is also withdrawn, which leads us to 27 Hewell. Secunder for Hewell please?

#### Motion 27

**Conference to mandate the NEC to engage with the employer to recognise over 20 years service by introducing medal clasps.**

#### HEWELL

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion 27 reads: Conference to mandate the NEC to engage with the employer to recognise over 20 years' service by introducing medal clasps. As many of you are aware, the Prison Service Long Service and Good Conduct Medal was established on 17 December 2010 after this union and certain members fought for the honour. Currently, there is no provision for ribbon class to recognise further periods of service. As it stands staff receive absolutely nothing, unless they've got a decent Governor who bungs them a handful of Love2Shop vouchers.

We ask Conference to mandate the NEC to engage with the employer so that there is recognition for staff of continued service up to 30 and 40 years. There is precedent for this. The fire service already have a 30- and 40-year clasp. As of January this year the Police Federation announced they'd been given permission to issue their staff a 30-year clasp. Conference, allow the NEC to bring us in line with the rest of the uniform services and get our members up to way above 20 years' recognition they deserve for public service. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MICK BODY – BRANCH CHAIR, BIRMINGHAM:** Chairman, NEC, colleagues. It may be of interest for you to know that I've done over 20 years' service and it doesn't count to the employer. Our eight years that we did with G4S doesn't count, so we cannot claim our long-service medals. I think there needs to be a bit more clarity on the 20 years' service, whether it's going to affect our colleagues also in the private sector, whether you can engage with those as well, because we don't qualify at Birmingham.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Mick.

<Applause>

No other speakers. Ian Carson for the NEC.

**IAN CARSON – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion for all of the reasons so eloquently laid out by Hewell. I just add that a clasp or a bar on a medal is designed to be added to an existing medal. That's what it is. In the forces it indicates a campaign or an operation but importantly can be part of a civilian decoration. We are more than happy to take this matter forward on behalf of our members to recognise their commitment. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Ian. No replies so we can go to the vote. That vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can close that vote. That motion has been carried. Apparently, we're getting another medal for the Coronation – Five Years Qualifying Service, so we're all going to end up like Mutley soon, aren't we?

Motion 28 – Pentonville. Secunder please.

### Motion 28

**NEC to negotiate with employers for the introduction of the PE CM role This position should be a separate specialist position on the annex G and be included in the gym staffing figures. Being allocated the 10% of the groups effective hours for departmental management tasks the remaining hours will be used for PE delivery.**

### PENTONVILLE

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** NEC, Conference. I've been asked to put this motion forward by our PE department as I understand many of the branches have had some communication from their PEIs on this motion. Once you become a PEI, after putting in many hours of hard unpaid work to develop themselves, your avenue promotion ceases. You're a Band 4 and, if you want to continue in that hard-earned grade, that's it. There's no Band 5. So, if you do want to get to the Band 5, you've got to sacrifice all that hard work you've put in and come back into uniform, black and white, and go back onto the landings. There's currently a national shortage of PEIs and these places could be filled on the PE shift pattern by PEI CMs. It gives the PEIs an avenue of promotion, as I've said, as well as having a PEI CM to protect the PEIs from cross-deployment. As we all know or should know, PEIs shouldn't be cross-deployed on a pre-planned basis, it's non-emergency so your SMT or whoever on their RMP can't say, "In a month's time we're going to be X amount of people short, use the PEIs." They can't do that. If they had a CM in place, they have someone there to fight their corner. Support the motion, please

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

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Yes, I was approached by our own PEIs regarding this motion and one called into the PEI office yesterday. At Wandsworth we're regularly getting our PEIs cross-deployed. We had pointed out that the delivery of gym can actually be a useful control measure to prisoners if they think they're going to be denied it if they misbehave, but if they get no gym at all, those that want it may just play up for the sake of it. Also, at Wandsworth a couple of years ago there was a lot of falling out amongst the PEIs and of course the Band 5 who was meant to be overseeing them was not a PEI Band 5, was looking after other duties in the prison, and it ended up with a great deal of internal fighting and hostility. I believe a dedicated PEI Band 5 would've not only smoothed things over but it would've increased the delivery of gym to the prisoners and given them something to work for. So, just on Wandsworth's experience we would say please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Stewart.

<Applause>

**RICKY HYSLOP – BRANCH CHAIR, BERWYN:** NEC, Conference, speaking in support of the motion. I think PE departments over the years have been left at the back, and one of the things is why, through the benchmarking, they took the SOs and CPOs out of the system. PE departments have been left to run themselves, which in some parts have lost their way. I think with the position of the CM PE would bring some of those positions back. It's shown in some of the areas which were piloted last year and some of the places that are running, despite CM PE, as in how it's improved the delivery of PE departments, not only for the delivery of prisoner PE but also staff wellbeing. There is some fantastic work going around the circuit with regards to the pushing and delivery of some of this wellbeing for staff through the CM PE post, so I ask you to support this position.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Ricky.

**JAMES EVANS – THORN CROSS:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking against this motion. I understand where it's come from. I feel the passion. But you're asking a Band 5 to do Band 3 work. You're opening Pandora's box. Please reject this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Jim.

<Small applause>

**GAVIN SAWBRIDGE – BRANCH CHAIR, ONLEY:** Former PEI, temp CM on H wing at the moment. First-time speaker.

<Applause>

Just on the point that's been raised by the gentleman there, it's not Band 3 work, it's Band 4 specialist work protected by the MoU, which means the <inaudible> departments can't be touched for certain reasons unless it's a last resort, in line with the RMP, which you should all have in the establishments as per Phil Copple's stipulation and any <inaudible> expectation.

I support the motion basically for those reasons. Band 5s, the avenue was stopped for PE departments with PE departments have Band 4s in place as specialists, have a Band 5 in place as a specialist as well would help things like that to the <inaudible> departments working together to deliver PE. If you had someone there who understands the implications of running the PE department it also would help out with the leave and everything else that has to be overseen, so just have a specialist role in place would make sense. Support the motion.

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

<Applause>

Another first timer, PEI, has popped his cherry at Conference, I'm sure, well done. Anymore speakers? Doesn't look like it.

<Microphone problems>

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Speaking in favour of this motion. We're happy to support this motion but with a caveat. And I want to put to bed any rumours that might be rocking round about our engagement over these proposals spread by the employer. If we are to achieve a CM PEI position, which we all agree is needed, then it must be fully funded and in place in every PE department in the country, no matter how big or small that department is. The job description must stipulate that the PE CM performs all the duties of a disciplined CM, including Oscar One and nights. If we allow the PE CM to dedicate themselves slowly to PE duties, then we're not only stifling any future promotion prospects of our members but it's also vastly unfair on any other CMs. During past engagements with the employer, it was clear that they were not willing to fully fund this position and the job description did not match the CM tasks. They either fully fund it or they don't. This is their mess, not ours. Can you remember when every PE department in the country had a PE SO in place? We haven't anymore.

Finally, if they don't fund it in every department, we've got a massive equal pay claim, because we all know that, despite our advice, PE staff in every department in the country are fulfilling management tasks. Course reviews, monthly returns, diary details. That would form part of the CM role, so those at Band 4 who were doing those tasks would have an equal pay claim. That's why it needs to be fully funded in every prison in the country. If they can manage to fund a safer custody CM in every prison in the country, no matter how big or small, they can make a CM PE post as well. Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Terry. OK, there's no comeback on that so we'll take that to the vote. Motion 28 is now open. We can now close that vote. Thank you, Conference, that's carried. We'll continue to pursue that post.

On to motion 29 – Pentonville. Secunder for Pentonville please. Don't all shout at once. Thank you.

### **Motion 29**

**NEC enter talks with HMPPS to review the current Officer Apprenticeship training, as this branch feels that it is not fit for purpose.**

### **PENTONVILLE**

**CHRIS MOSTYN – BRANCH CHAIR, PENTONVILLE:** NEC, Conference. Permission to withdraw this motion because HMPPS have carried it for us because they've abandoned the current apprenticeship package to replace it with goodness knows what. So, I don't see the need for the motion to be voted upon because, thanks very much HMPPS, you've carried it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** OK, let's sort this out for you. Brinsford, as a seconder, are you happy for Pentonville to ask Conference to withdraw it? Yeah, okay. Show of hands please, can they withdraw this motion? Thank you. Any against? That motion has been withdrawn. Thank you, Conference.

Motion 30 – Hull. Secunder for Hull please. Durham, thank you.

### Motion 30

**For the POA NEC to engage with HMPPS to create a new, long-term solution to detached duty requirements. Aiming to stop the over recruitment of staff in areas of the country that are within 10% of their targeted staffing levels.**

### HULL

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. Our motion, motion 30, reads: For the POA NEC to engage with HMPPS to create a new, long-term solution to detached duty requirements. Aiming to stop the over-recruitment of staff in areas of the country that are within 10% of their target staffing levels.

Now, it's not lost on me that there'll be many members in here that are running red regimes thinking what a charmed life I must have at Hull to be requesting for you to stop recruiting staff for us. I think it would be a good time in Conference for people to get up and debate detached duty at the moment and see how it's really affecting people across the country.

Just to give a bit of an overview of how it's affecting us in HMP Hull, and various other jails, predominantly in the north of England. Our target staffing figure at HMP Hull is 235. Anything above 84-85% they can ask for staff to go on detached duty. We've also now become a front-loading site with staff, due to the economic climate and especially the area, it's easy to recruit in Hull. There's not much prospects for people in the city and they like joining the Prison Service. Due to that we have opened up numerous recruitment campaigns and in the summer we'll be from 235, what our target is, we'll be up to 275 staff in post. Then another recruitment campaign's just finished where we've had another 180 applicants and we average a conversion of about 60% of applicants get through into a post. By the time we get to summer, it looks like we'll be sending 77 of our staff on detached duty. When the new applicants come in, that'll be up to over 100, going on to 120 staff getting sent on detached duty.

The staff that get sent can be absolutely anybody and it's getting to the point soon where, if it's that many – we have some volunteers – grateful for them if that's what they want to do that's their choice. But it's getting to the point now where staff are going to be compelled to go on detached duty. Now, for the new apprentices, POELTs, our new starters in the job, when staff leave the job and they didn't realise that they might have to work weekends, they didn't realise that they might be expected to stay till 9, 10pm at night. What message do we send to them when they walk through the gate and a month later they're getting told they've got to go do the next two weeks 200 miles away from their family and that, due to the high level of front-loading and the overpopulation of our staff, that that's going to happen every six weeks on a rotating basis. They're not going to stay in the job and it's pushing our experienced members away as well.

I've got experienced staff who have done 20, 30 years in the job who've said, "As soon as they compel me, I'm done, that's it." So, I'd like to invite anyone, any of the receiving sites up to speak because I don't think the detached duty is working. It's a sticking plaster over a gaping wound in the Prison Service. The over-recruitment in areas to then cart people off 200 miles away from their family for two weeks at a time doesn't solve anything. Prisons run, as we all know, on staff-prisoner relationships. I've got no relationship with someone in a jail that's 200 miles away from me that I see for two weeks, and then I'll see them again maybe 10 weeks' time when I'm next compelled to that site. It leads to an increase in violence and it doesn't help anyone here. We know the problem with the recruitment in areas – it's down to money. They're not paying enough. It's simple as that. The conditions in some of the establishments are terrible and it's not the solution. I ask any one of the receiving sites, is the 70-100 staff that we're going to be sending you, is this fixing the problems for staffing crisis? If it is, please let us know. Please support this motion, thank you.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Happy to support the motion. Durham have had a very particular experienced position. We have 216 target staffing figure for our officers. We were told at the Governor's meeting last week that area have recruited some more for us. We don't want them. We are now up to 330. Work that one out. I have got no commitment whatsoever to go to Swaleside, to go to Berwyn or to go to Wayland. If that many people are getting sent away and they've got the same as me, got no commitment, you're going to have a hell of a job in them jails. They need to recruit in the areas and they need to pay more and until they get that sorted you're going to have this going on for years and years and years. And something else, you want to see some of the characters that they are recruiting.

<Laughter>

I'm not saying everybody. The NEC have seen a photo of one of ours and he's resigned. I'll tell you what, we've got TV reality stars coming to the place now! Fancy them going to your jail, Belmarsh, going to your jail – he's a TV reality star! How the hell would you like him to work with you? That's what we're getting in now. They'll take anybody and that's the problem. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**PAUL MALLIBAND – CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference, delegates and guests, calling on you to reject this motion because it asks for us

to create a new term solution to detached duty. So, what you're effectively doing is asking the NEC to let the service off the hook because they can't recruit and retain. I'm telling you now that my members at Preston will never forgive an NEC that compels us to go out onto detached duty, which is exactly what you're asking to do. Reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Nobody else, so Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC in support of the motion. Just so you're aware, Conference, detached duty is a temporary measure. That's what they told us in 2013 when this round started. Ten years with no end in sight. The current demand is 349 against a pool of 414 volunteers, but all of those volunteers are not in the right place and many can't be released. As yet we're still avoiding compelled detached duty away from home but it's not fair on those establishments where they are deliberately over-recruiting, as when compelling eventually does kick in, which is something we will fight to the end. They know we don't agree with it and we will continue to fight against it, but it's likely to occur due to the department's failure to recruit and retain staff. But it's those establishments that are front-loading who will be the ones who will be the victims of compelled detached duty and it's like to be the northeast first.

We know what the department need to do. Reduce the violence, protect the staff and give frontline staff the pay that they deserve and then they might stay. Please support the motion and let us go in and talk to them. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Jackie. Any reply from Hull? The vote's now open for motion 30. We can now close that vote and as you can see that motion has been carried.

Conference, that brings us to the end of day one. Just to remind you at 5:10pm we have a National Committee for Secure Healthcare Services meeting in level 5, Wellcome Building, the Johnson Room. Apart from that I'll see you bright and early tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. Enjoy your evening and thank you for today.

<End of Tuesday's business>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Morning Conference. Just a few things going on this morning. We've got a few guest speakers. I've got an announcement here. Chesterton Grant at the back of the hall, apparently their free prize draw will be drawn after lunch so please get your contact cards in. Thank you from them.

I'll get through as many motions as I can this morning – it is a busy morning. I'll introduce Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, to you. Rachel will be addressing Conference, and then I'll hand over to Steve Gillan, who's going to do the AGM for the secure health services. We'll be looking at motions 73, 74 and 75 during that AGM. And then we've got another guest speaker, Paul Nowak. Plough on with some motions, have a break and then we've got fraternal address from the Southern Ireland delegates, and then as I say before lunch we'll just crack on with business. Alright?

So without further ado, sitting to my right is Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central.

<Applause>

Rachael Maskell MP, having first spent 20 years working in the NHS as a clinician in acute medicine and serving in the trade union movement, including as a national official for equalities, the voluntary and community sector, became the Head of Health at Unite. She was elected to Parliament for York Central in 2015, having held five shadow ministerial roles, including Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment and later for Employment Rights. She is now on the Health Select Committee and working to advance opportunities for those disadvantaged by the inequalities and injustices within society. As a committed trade unionist, Rachael will always stand by working people in their fight for a better future and to ensure that their power is realised through building organisation and opportunity. Rachael, you are very welcome at the POA Conference and I'm happy for you to address our delegates. Rachael Maskell.

<Applause>

**RACHAEL MASKELL – MP, YORK CENTRAL:** Good morning, Conference. It's a real honour to be with you today and I say to all trade unionists, you have been such a remarkable example of what working people can achieve over this last year. Thirteen years of a Tory Government and what have we been given? Pay cuts and a cost-of-living crisis, and yet you are there, building our society, fighting back and showing the way forward. I can never be so proud of our movement as I am at this time. And I know it is tough, and I know the journey is long, and I know the fight is hard, but one thing I do know is that comrades are on every step of that journey, linked arms together, believing in a better future and fighting for it all the way.

The health service in particular has been so hard hit. The scars of Covid have impacted on every single person working across that service. I've seen the brokenness, I've seen the pain that the period served, because people stepped up, beyond the course of duty, and did everything they possibly could to serve the people they're there to care for. And yet, as Covid took so many lives, including those working in the NHS, every morning, you turned up for your shifts and you fought not only the virus but all that was going on, the lack of PPE, the lack of care and support for you, and of course those long hours often meaning that you sacrificed your homes, your family life and so much more. But through that devastation, you held on to the hope that, at the end, it would all be recognised, that the Government would come in by your side and repair the health service, repair you and restore your dignity. But what did we see?

We saw this Tory Government walk away, turn away from you after all that time, give you a pay cut and expect you to beg for all that you have. Well that's not good enough, but that's what a Tory Government gets you, and that's why we've got to see change. Change across our country, change for a better future and more hope in the future, and that's why I have hope that, when we get a Labour Government, we will see that change. But nothing is ever given to working people. We must remember our history through the years. Absolutely everything we have had to fight for, whether it was our weekends, our holidays, whether it's equality rights, we have had to go out and fight, and we will have to go out and fight again. And whether or not we have repressive laws, which this Government have introduced, banning your right to protest, saying you can't make a noise and can't cause disruption, saying that you don't have the right to strike and to use your power to advance your future. Well I say you can and you must, because that's what working people have always done and that's what working people always must do to ensure that you get a fair deal.

And of course when it comes to pay in the NHS, that pay cut, first introduced with Government expecting you to say thank you. Well you didn't. And you balloted and you've now rejected that pay, and of course I recognise it's in a difficult place. These things are never easy. Of course Government want to split the unions and pick different unions up, but to reject that pay offer was the right thing to do because to accept a pay cut after you've given so much would be wrong. It would be wrong for working people and it would be wrong for yourselves. And of course we're not at the end of that discussion. We know that cost of living still is high, we know that the energy prices have gone up 54%, food 18.2% – those bills have to be paid.

I look at my own city, 23.1% increase in the cost of housing over the last year. It's getting harder to live, it's getting harder to do your work and then come home to be able to have any dignity in your home life. And that's why it's so important that you fight back and get the pay you deserve. But when I've been on the picket lines with the nurses and the doctors and the physios, what I haven't heard was just that cry for more money, it was a cry for respect. It's a cry for dignity. It was a cry to be the nurse in which you were trained, because when the state has pummelled everything out of you, then we know that so many colleagues have had to leave because they cannot take any more, because they are broken by the system, because the very thing which made them a nurse or a doctor or a psychologist or whatever they trained to be has been taken away as they're rushed around seeing far too many patients, working far too many hours and just feeling, going home at the end of the shift you haven't been able to deliver the care that you know you could if only things were a bit different. Those picket lines have, yes, been full of honks from cars and cheers from the workers as they hear those beeps, but also they've been filled with tears of brokenness, of workers that are just there weighing their future – can they do any more, can they continue in those environments? I met a nurse, 52 years of nursing – how incredible. But she was still on that picket line fighting, never did she expect to be there. She was a member of the RCN, first time they've balloted in their history for industrial action. But she was there because she said not only

do my patients matter but my colleagues matter too, and that is a solidarity that our trade union movement brings us all. Whether you are working in the NHS or in the Prison Service or any part of our public services, you deserve the dignity for your labour. And that is not what this Government has given you at all. But we must fight to make sure that a future Labour Government understands that pain, that journey that you've been on, and properly rewards you. But that could be 18 months away and my goodness we've got a fight on our hands up to that point.

I just think about the legislation which is going through Parliament and the House of Lords last night, the Minimum Service Level Bill, looking at restraining striking workers, already reaching those thresholds, as we know, for those that have balloted for industrial action, it's incredibly difficult. But with this Bill, it will say, once you've gone through all those thresholds, once you've passed all those tests, the Government will then say to many people, including health-sector workers, you don't have a right to take industrial action, and of course what they'll do, they'll spread it out to make sure that as many people as possible are included, breaking your strike and breaking your power. Well, we must resist that and we must push back. And it was really interesting yesterday, at the Health Select Committee we had the BMA and the RCN there, but we also had the employers, and it was the employers who were saying, "I don't want this Bill", that "it will be a real hinderance to our industrial relations. It will actually harm the relationship we have with the trade unions and the ability to make progress." And I think taking that, that the employers and the trade unions were united, they were frustrated with what was happening because employers understand that staff are leaving and they've got a problem on their hands. They've got to fill those vacancies and therefore they were with the trade unions saying we need the Government to shift, but where is the Secretary of State for Health? He's quite happy to go in front of a media camera but he's too scared to speak to workers. Well, he's going to have to face it one day, and that is because our movement is marching and it is rising. It is rising because there is a cause to fight for again. And that is the future of our NHS. Our NHS, which will be 75 years old this year, an NHS which was born out of the belief of working people, that there needs to be fairness and justice across society, including in health. Ensuring that that Labour Government of 1945 would deliver the most transformative social change there could ever be. And of course it was against the oppressive forces of state, as well as the oppressive forces of so many in society, the nay-sayers which said you can never deliver this. But Nye Bevan believed that the power of working people was stronger and the power of working people was worth fighting for. And as well as building the social housing, which he did, fit for heroes as they returned from war, he also built our NHS, and it stands facing this Tory Government as a legacy of that Labour Government, but also to show what socialism can achieve when it comes together.

And as we celebrate 75 years and each person working across that service, including so many of you here today who are working in those forensic centres and special hospitals, we know that the toil and the labour that you have put in has been part of that legacy of the 75 years. And yes, we will celebrate that so much, but we must remember what Nye Bevan said. He said the NHS will last as long as there are folk with the faith to fight for it. Well friends, I say have that faith and have that fight because the vultures are circling and the vultures want to make profit from that service. We know that fine well because we have seen it encroaching through Covid, especially, but continuously under this Government. That they are after our NHS. That they are wanting to privatise every part of that NHS, and they've done it in spades so far and they will do it some more. We know so much of the social care part of our service is already out in the hands of the private sector, ready to profit out of the sick, the ill and those that need the support. But we know the agencies are moving into those spaces where there's those vacancies, and of course they will pull you over and then they will do you over. So, I'd say stick with the NHS and stick with Agenda for Change, whatever it brings, because it is that agreement that will take us through this time, and we must see off the private-sector encroachment of the NHS as we move forward with a Labour Government.

But there are so many other things that we need to achieve, as we heard at the Committee yesterday from the trade unions. Issues around better flexible working, better career progression, recognition, childcare and everything from staff parking right through to being able to access work. We know that we need homes for key-workers, and we need to ensure that there is security in employment and good terms and conditions. And of course we've still got issues to address around the anti-trade-union legislation as well, which we have had to suffer with for so long. Well I say to Labour as we come into power, and I trust with a sweeping majority, one that really crushes the pain which has been inflicted on our country over the last 13 years, is that we must really believe in what we can achieve when working people come together, when our country comes together, when our society moves forward, with all that it can achieve. And therefore we must take advantage of that time to put right so many of the wrongs that we've had to endure, some for decades and some under this Government. And of course, as we come together, we must rebuild our movement too, we must organise and ensure that every worker is a member of trade union, that they realise the power of solidarity, they realise the potential of themselves and of their colleagues and what can be achieved together. And there is so much more that we need to address. We don't live in an equal society. We still face discrimination. We still have so many areas around flexible working and low pay and so many of these employment rights that we want to see. I will be bringing forward a Bill to address bullying at work. We do not yet have a legal definition of bullying at work on our statute books, and yet we know it's just about the biggest issue any employee will face in their workplace, and I trust you'll get behind that Bill and be able to one day see that come into law. There is so much more that we can achieve together when we come together, and that's why I'm so proud to be with you today as a trade unionist myself all my working life, but also believing that, when the trade union movement rises, demands and moves forward, there is so much more that we will achieve. Thank you, comrades.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, I class Rachael as real Labour, working class, worked in the NHS for 20 years, a trade unionist, knows what working class people face, but more importantly knows how to fix it. She gets it. And what an honour it is to have you here at POA Conference. Conference, please show your appreciation for Rachael Maskell.

<Applause>

Thank you, Rachael.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Rachael, thank you very much for that inspirational speech. You're very welcome to stay here and listen to the three motions that we have during our Annual General Meeting of the Secure Hospitals. Just a little bit about Rachael. I knew Rachael well long before she became an MP, and she championed the trade union movement, she was a friend to trade unionists as a Unite member, but more importantly she was a good friend to the POA over the years as well and we know that with Rachel she's not afraid to stand on a picket line, and no

Labour MP should be afraid to stand on a picket line supporting workers. So I congratulate you, Rachael, standing on picket lines with workers in the NHS and we will be supporting your Private Members Bill on bullying because it's so important, and we'll liaise with you in due course on that, and how best to take things forward. So Rachael, thank you so much and I hope you enjoy listening to the next three motions. Thank you.

<Applause>

Now moving on. Motion 73, moved by Ashworth. Rampton to second.

### **Motion 73**

**Conference to support the Campaign to abolish the current Pay Review Body and replace with collective bargaining.**

**Conference believes that the unfit Pay Review Body for Health should be abolished and replaced by collective bargaining between the Government and Agenda for change trade unions. The Conference is invited to support the campaign with others for abolition of the PRB.**

**Conference is further invited to support action to undermine the Pay Review body and show publicly how unfit the PRB is.**

### **ASHWORTH**

**PAUL NOWELL – BRANCH VICE CHAIR, ASHWORTH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, we are asking for your support in this motion. The motion is to support the campaign to abolish the current Pay Review Body and replace it with collective bargaining. We believe that the Pay Review Body, the PRB, is not fit for purpose and needs to be replaced by collective bargaining between Government and the Agenda for Change trade unions. The PRB, rather than being independent, is a tool of the Government of the day. Its Chair is appointed by the Prime Minister and the other seven members by the Health Secretary, and all these posts are salaried. Our members are facing pay freezes in real terms, changes to pay structures, increases in pension contributions, and this has led, as we heard yesterday, to some of our members to struggle even to get to work, but they can't afford to put petrol in their car and they have to choose between getting to work and feeding the kids. Our area of nursing is one of the most difficult areas of nursing, I think, in the country, working with people with criminal backgrounds and forensic problems and mental health problems is massive, and yet we have people that are still using food banks. The POA gives to the local food banks in Merseyside to support our members because we know that they're using them. Staff are working excessive hours, ridiculous hours, to try and make ends meet, and this is all due to the fact that we have a Pay Review Body that ain't fit for purpose. Conference is further invited to support the action to undermine the Pay Review Body and to show publicly how unfit the PRB is. I call for you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Paul. There's no further speakers. Angela Montgomery to respond on behalf of the NEC.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference delegates, I find myself in the position that it's difficult to follow such an impassioned speech by one of our branches. The Pay Review Body has consistently been overshadowed by its need to follow Government guidelines. It has failed to consider the issues of inflation, of pay increases and this has ultimately led to members of the staff who work in the NHS being paid significantly, year-on-year, less than they should have been. We're looking to you to support this motion to move towards collective bargaining. This year, in effect, we had collective bargaining by the back door when the Health Minister was forced to sit down with all of the health unions. We would like this to continue and we're looking for Conference today to support that by passing this motion so we, as one of the 14 health unions, can collectively, hopefully in the future, have full collective bargaining, which will ensure proper pay at market rates. I urge you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Angela. Ashworth, do you want to come back on anything or not? Thanking you. So Conference, motion 73 we'll now put to the vote. As you will see, Conference, that motion has been carried. Just to clarify the issue, because I know we've had debates on pay review bodies before, this is an NHS Pay Review Body that was actually being voted on, in case no one had quite realised that, and of course our members in the secure hospitals do have the right to strike, unlike us where the Pay Review Body is supposed to be a compensatory mechanism for not having the right to strike, but of course we will strive to get sectoral collective bargaining for us as well in due course, and hopefully that will happen under a new deal in respect of the first 100 days of the Labour Government, but we wait and see. Yesterday, as I said, I hope there's no rollback on that new deal, but I'm sure with MPs like Rachael, she'll do her darndest to work hard behind the scenes to make sure that workers' rights are not attacked any further, or eroded, but actually enhanced. Thank you.

We move on now to motion 74, again that one is Ashworth. Paul, you're welcome to come back and Rampton to second.

### **Motion 74**

**We ask Conference to support the POA Branch at Mersey Care in negotiating equivalent terms and conditions for those members on Bank Contracts (Zero hours) with those on permanent contracts.**

**PAUL NOWELL – VICE CHAIR, ASHWORTH:** Thank you. Chair, NEC, Conference, it's me again. We're asking Conference to support the POA branch at Merseycare in negotiating equal terms and conditions for those members on bank contracts, i.e. zero-hour contracts. These are something that is used in the NHS an awful lot. So over the years, they've got rid of overtime and introduced this bank work instead. So regular staff have to work bank hours which is additional plain hours, and it also gives people who want a more flexible working conditions the opportunity to work a flexible zero-hour contract, which if the terms for everybody were the same, would be alright for some because they could op in and out when they needed to, to do the hours. But it isn't the case. People who are working bank hours get considerably different terms and conditions. One of those terms and conditions that is different is you've got two members of staff on one of the wards maybe at Ashworth, one's substantive and one of them's a bank nurse. There's an incident and both of them get involved in the incident and both get injured to the degree that they both have to be signed off work by their doctor. So they'll put in what's called work-related absence, so WRA. So they put in the work-related absence, once it's agreed the substantive member of staff will be paid their enhancements whilst they're off and it won't go towards their sick record, so they will still be recorded as sick but it won't be going towards anything to deal with being punished in the future under the policies. For the bank nurse it's different. They'll be paid for the shifts that they'd got booked in, so you can only normally book your shifts in a week in advanced, so they'll be paid for those shifts that they would have worked, and then that's it, they get nothing. There's no comeback, they can't say look at the last 12 weeks and say can I have an average of that. Absolutely nothing. They get nought. And it goes on. The bank contract, the zero-hour contracts, are awful for our staff. They don't get half the rights that everybody else gets and we think it's a disgrace, and for that reason I'm asking Conference to support the POA branch at Ashworth in negotiating equal terms and conditions for bank contracted staff. I call for Conference to support this motion.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Paul. No further speaker. Dave Todd to respond on behalf of the Executive.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, the NEC are more than happy to support this motion. Any workforce that has two-tier working needs to be ground down, everybody has equal rights within the workplace, nobody suffers a detriment because of their contract that they're on. Colleagues, we've already started down the road on this, we've done a bit of prelim work with the legal team and hopefully we'll have a legal challenge coming very shortly. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you very much. Ashworth, do you want to come back? No, thank you very much. We'll put that motion 74 to the vote. As you can see, Conference, that's now closed and the vote is carried. Thank you.

Moving on to motion 75, Angela Montgomery to move on behalf of the Executive, Conference Paper 3. Just before Angela starts, Conference, I will tell you that this will require a 2/3 majority because it's a rule change, so it needs over 66%. And the seconder is Ashworth.

### Motion 75

**That Conference accept Conference Paper 3 on the changes in respect of Secure Health Care Services to ensure that staff working across mental health services both private and public sector are enabled to become members of the POA.**

### NEC

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, Conference, NEC, delegates, this paper is looking for Conference to acknowledge the changes in psychiatric care since the formation of the POA, and the movement from secure psychiatric care being experienced in large, locked institutions known previously as asylums to health trusts delivering mental health care for a range of patients. It is also looking to acknowledge the fact that much of secure psychiatric care has been contracted out to the private sector and the dangers of this cannot be underestimated. Winterbourne View Hospital treated patients in the most appalling manner for profit. Staffing was low, staff were not fit and appropriate, but the private sector did not care about that because it was about profit. The rationale for changing the current rules is to reflect the changes which have taken place from when the secure psychiatric sector was governed under the Home Office and is now delegated to numerous mental health trusts. In terms of why we are looking for the change, we are aware as we have members who work in the private sector that they are almost entirely ununionised. Very few staff who work in these contracted-out provisions are in a trade union and this goes to the care that is provided, because it is extremely difficult to protect patients and protect staff in those situations without active trade union involvement. So I urge you all to support this motion in order that we can support our members in the private sector and the public sector in the same way that we would be able to do previously.

The POA is committed to supporting people who work in the forensic psychiatric sector. As my colleague has stated, it is a tough job, it's not an easy job, and should this measure be passed, we will be looking to provide a better service to all. Thank you.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you Angela. I don't see any other speaker so, without further ado, I'm going to move to the vote. Just a reminder, two-thirds majority. That is now complete, the vote, and I'm pleased to say that is carried.

Conference, that concludes the three motions in respect of that. Just before I close this AGM, Conference Paper 3 wasn't just written by the Executive.

Again, we took into consideration the views of Rampton, Broadmoor and Ashworth, and it was them that approached us in order to actually deal with this issue. Of course, Carstairs comes under NHS Scotland, so it's totally different in respect of NHS England. So, I'm pleased that this has gone forward, those rule changes, and we will look forward to supporting our colleagues in the secure hospitals moving forward over the course of this year and into next year on recruitment and different things as well and the representation of our members in a very difficult environment. So, thank you very much, once again, to everybody for all the hard work that you've done in those committees. Thank you so much and then I'll now close and hand back to our National Chairman to continue with the packed agenda that we have for today. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. Just one for our tech guys. This screen's still not working so I can't see if there's people waiting to speak. Just have a look at it at the break, please.

Where are we? We're on to motion 31, which is Parkhurst. Formally moved by Parkhurst, if they have a seconder, who is the seconder please? Albany? Thank you. Formally moved. It's self-explanatory. Do Albany wish to speak? For the NEC we have Sarah Rigby.

### Motion 31

**The NEC clarify jointly with the employer on the maximum number of red hours that can be profiled in each week as a percentage of hours worked. This is to stop Governors profiling excessive red hours in some groups of unified staff.**

### PARKHURST

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC in favour of motion 31. We already have some existing conference motions in relation to red hours that remain live. There's one from Lancaster Farms that's very similar that asks for a defined upper limit percentage of unsocial hours worked. Both of these motions push for some clarity on how many red hours operational staff can be expected to carry out each week. Unsocial hours currently include the hours worked outside of 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday, the weekend, public and bank holidays and night duties. The current guidance states that staff in those qualifying roles will work around 20-30% of their hours as unsocial. This percentage is provided as a guideline only and will vary. For example, the percentage may be higher during some weeks, such as a week of night shifts. We all know one group of staff who undoubtedly work far more than this, our OSGs. The staffing numbers in this group mean that, in the majority of our prisons, the OSGs work far more than HMPPS's own guidelines say they should. We included evidence of this in this year's Pay Review Body submissions. Please help us to help you. If staff at your establishment are working significantly more than the 30% upper limit, then dispute it. Even ask for legal advice on it. Until we challenge this and you can provide us with working examples of the abuse of red hours for our members, we will find this difficult to progress. We will continue to challenge HMPPS on this subject and will seek to gain some clarity on what they consider to be the upper limit of unsocial hours that should be profiled for operational staff. We ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. That vote is now open.

Thank you. We can now display those results. That has been carried.

Motion 32, Wandsworth. Seconder please?

### Motion 32

**That Operational Support grades are not considered operational until they have completed their national training. This would protect them from covering their duties that can include ACCT supervision during night shifts, gate duties, searching staff and visitors.**

**It would also raise the issue that OSGs are entitled to their training as much as Officers, who are not considered operational until they pass their training.**

### WANDSWORTH

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, POA Conference, in bringing this motion, the experience at Wandsworth is that there have been attempts to poor-perform OSGs who've never received any proper training. The probation period for OSGs is six months. OSGs joining the job see the webpage, the benefits and the training. Then they arrive at somewhere like Wandsworth to be told, yes, there aren't any training courses going on at the moment. You can learn from the OSG stood next to you. I've also had some OSGs who've had to regrade, join the job, one week of shadowing and then start set of nights the following week. Totally inadequate training on ACCT, certainly not to any national standard that would be done during the two-week training course that they're entitled to receive. Prisoner did take his own life. She's now regraded, still wondering that, if she'd ever received the training, could she have said the right thing to that young man before he killed himself?

But this is of course the benefits we have from a responsible, caring employer. Why would you recruit staff and not train them, when that's what you've promised to do in the job advert? You go to somewhere like Prison Service Headquarters, or any headquarters building, you'll find security staff at

the gate proudly displaying their security industry authority licence, because they have to do training to get that licence before they would be put in the responsible position of making sure who goes in and out of a building and what they're carrying. Prisons, what does the employer give us? OSGs who, for their own reasons at the top of the service, choose not to train them. Big hole in our wall, those gates. How does someone then effectively search, escort, if you haven't trained them? The problems we have with the lack of training for OSGs is that, yes, they feel very undervalued and then, when an officer who, for whatever reason, hasn't finished their training, for some reason back-squading or injury, oh, they can turn up and do an OSG's job. Further rubbing it into the noses of the OSGs. Oh, so an officer on restricted duties can do my job, which they haven't been trained to do, and I haven't received the training either.

I think what's good enough for Prison Service Headquarters at their entrance and security should at least be applied to all prisons in the country because why would you want to leave our gates less secure with untrained staff?

It's a complete abdication of responsibility by the employer. Now, how far we can go in actually getting the ruling that you don't operationally deploy an OSG until they've received the training as all officers enjoy, I don't know. But please support this motion to get the message back to Prison Service Headquarters – stop treating the OSGs, my members, like second-class citizens.

<Applause>

**KEITH STUTELY – BRANCH CHAIR, FORD:** Chair, NEC, delegates, this is the second time speaking and it doesn't get any easier.

<Applause>

I urge you to support this motion. I happen to believe that the OSGs are the most undervalued members of the Prison Service. I have worked in various jobs across my 50-some-odd years on this planet and I think this is the only time that – I originally started as an OSG, I'm now an officer – and this is the only time I've gone into a job where I've been told, "Oh there you go. You've got two weeks' shadowing. Get on with it." Never given any formal training. I think it's a disgrace. We should treat our OSGs as what they are, valued members of the service. So I urge you to support this motion.

<Applause>

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Good morning Chair, NEC, Conference. I will ask the Conference to reject this motion on the wording of, unfortunately this motion is, it also says about supervision of ACCT on the grounds that they already have no responsibility with regards to the ACCT documents in their contract. If you actually check the day contract you'll actually see that they have no responsibility at all when they go onto nights, so therefore it should be the officers who should be dealing with that. OSGs also don't receive any training at all on ACCT training as well, and that is the only reason. Otherwise if that wording in that motion was not there, then I would actually support it. But due to the fact that it says ACCT supervision, that is the reason why I'll be asking the Conference to reject this motion. With regards to training, I fully understand where Wandsworth is coming from. RPE training should be 100% on nights, that is a legal requirement, and please check to see that is 100% on nights and to comply with an 80% on days.

First Aid should be done every three years, and I would say I know many people here who've not even had first aid after their initial training. That's officers not just OSGs etc. So because of, unfortunately, the wording, I'll ask the Conference to reject this motion. It needs to be amended, and so therefore we can then repeat it. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers, so Ian Carson for the NEC.

**IAN CARSON – NEC:** Chair, Conference, Ian Carson responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion for all of the reasons so eloquently laid out by Stu from Wandsworth. But I would like to add that this is part of what we consider to be safety-critical training across the estate and, at the moment, and I've been doing the job for a lot of years, this is the worst it's ever been. Why would we want to put ourselves and our colleagues in a precarious position by allowing them to undertake work they're not trained for or, at the very least, shifting responsibility to managers. And I take the last speaker's point, but it quite often happens, doesn't it, that during the night state you're down to no Band 3 staff left in the prison and everybody's just got to muck in. The responsibilities then lie with those that's left, and we have to make sure that they're able to do that work. Because if things go catastrophically wrong, it'll be them stood in front of the court answering for why a prisoner's died. So we have to focus on this. The simple fact is that governors are responsible for training. We've got to make them accountable. And astonishingly we understand that, across the estate, in some places the RPE figure's down to 30%. Why would we allow that to happen? Just think about it for a moment, Conference. The pandemic's about to end, we're all sat here making a plan, we're all sat here and we're able to influence the plan, and so we're going to decide what we're going to do first. I imagine that 100% of people in this hall would say we need to concentrate on the training. I was at dozens of meetings with colleagues on the NEC when we said to the employer, "Focus on the training, because we need the training to be done and then you can unlock regimes." I had the same conversation with two area managers. "Do not allow prison governors to open regimes because the training isn't in place." And what happened? Simple choice, training, ping-pong and pool. And what did they choose? They chose the ping-pong and pool, colleagues. We absolutely and wholeheartedly support this motion. Let's get it sorted. Please support, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Conference. Stewart's sitting down, so he doesn't want to reply, so to the vote please. Thank you. That vote's now closed and, as you can see from the results, that has been carried.

Conference, it now gives me great pleasure, and it is a pleasure, to introduce Paul Nowak, newly elected General Secretary to the TUC. Paul has been an active trade unionist and campaigner throughout his entire working life. First became a union member when he worked part-time at Asda aged 17. Paul worked in a call centre for Cheshire County Council's bus information line in the late '90s after working on an agency contract in a BT call centre. He has also worked as a hotel night porter. Before becoming a trade union official, Paul had always been employed on temporary and agency contracts, so understands the insecurity of never having a permanent contract. Paul was a member of the first intake of the TUC's organising academy in 1998 alongside Sharon Graham, now General Secretary of Unite, and Roz Foyer, the General Secretary of the Scottish TUC. Aged 26, he became an organiser for BIFU, the financial services union, which is now part of Unite. In 2000, Paul joined the TUC's staff, later becoming Regional Secretary for the North of England and subsequently Head of Organising, reporting to the General Secretary. In 2013 he was appointed TUC Assistant General Secretary and in 2016 Deputy General Secretary. At the TUC, Paul led the campaign against the Government's plans for regional pay in the public sector, introduced a leading change programme to develop the skills of senior trade unionists and work closely with member unions to defend public-sector pensions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Paul led union efforts to improve the Government's safe-working guidance with significant success, ensuring millions of workers had a safer environment to work in. He supported Frances O'Grady in securing furlough and led efforts to secure support for the cultural industries, aviation and transport.

Paul is married to Vicky. They have three grown-up children and live on the Wirral in Merseyside, also known as the Dark Side.

<Laughter>

Paul is of mixed heritage and is the grandson of immigrants. His grandfathers came to the UK during the Second World War from Poland and China respectively, before settling and raising families in Liverpool. He's a lifelong Everton fan – and I was going to say, Paul, I feel your pain, but after Monday's performance Up the Toffees! – and in his spare time can either be found spending time with family, playing the guitar with friends or exploring Britain's canals because he does have a houseboat.

It gives me great pleasure to allow Paul Nowak to address POA Conference. You're very welcome, Paul.

<Applause>

**PAUL NOWAK – GENERAL SECRETARY, TUC:** Well, thanks Mark for that introduction, that long introduction. I'm not sure you needed to know about my dodgy guitar playing, but there you go. Listen, just let me say, right up front, Mark, and to Conference, it's an absolute honour to be here today at your Conference, to bring greetings and solidarity on behalf of the whole of the TUC, 48 unions, 5.5 million workers up and down the country. Everybody from supermarket workers to paramedics to factory workers to carers to bus drivers to airline pilots, every conceivable occupation and profession. And it is a TUC family that is united by a shared goal, which is to stand up and crucially to win for working people. Let me start my remarks just by paying tribute and thanking Steve Gillan, your General Secretary, for all the work that he does on behalf of the POA and the TUC. I've known Steve for longer than I think I care to remember. I think we both had a full head of hair when we started in these jobs, Steve! But Steve is a brilliant asset, not just to your union but to the TUC and the wider trade union movement. He's a strong voice for the POA on our Executive Committee and General Council, he's a stalwart supporter of our trades councils, he's a fantastic champion for your members, but for working people generally. Thank you Steve, for everything that you do.

Comrades, I also want to thank you, every single delegate in this room, every POA activist and rep back in prisons and secure hospitals for being such a powerful force for good. A strong voice for those working in your sector, obviously, but also a whole range of other work that this union has led the way on, whether it's tackling anti-racism as a core priority, joining with five other unions to fight in the courts for pensions justice, and making international solidarity part of your union's DNA. And I also want to put on record my appreciation, the TUC's appreciation, for the day jobs that you do. A difficult, demanding, dangerous work, as I saw first-hand when Mark took me round Liverpool Prison a few years ago. Violence, riots, suicides, dirty protests, fights, drugs, you have to deal with all of that and more. The best of human instincts dealing with sometimes the worst of human instincts. So let's be clear, POA members are some of our most important key-workers, on the front line of our criminal justice system. Not just keeping inmates safe. Keeping all of us safe in our communities.

And we saw that in particular when Covid swept through our prisons with such devastating effect, when prison officers put their own health and safety on the line, many suffering unbearable stress, some becoming seriously ill, some even losing their lives. So as the Covid enquiry begins to lift the lid on the desperate health and safety failings in our workplaces during the pandemic, including our prisons, we should say loud and clear that we demand justice for the victims of Covid-19 and we will hold this Government accountable for that mishandling of the pandemic.

We'll also be holding Ministers to account for their appalling mismanagement of our prisons. Since the Tories came to power, uniform grades have been slashed by around a quarter, 18 prisons have been shut down, the prison population, 83,000 late last year, and the consequences are absolutely plain for everybody and anybody to see. Rehabilitation undermined, reoffending rates souring, prison assaults doubling. There are now, on average, eight assaults on prison staff each and every day. Eight too many. Every prison worker, every prison officer must have the right to work free from violence and fear, and that's why the Government needs to get its act together on prison violence and why assaults against staff should be addressed consistently through the court. It is time to protect the people who protect us. And where better to start than getting rid of the damaging plans to make prison officers work until 68. Unfair, unjust, unworkable. As your "68 Too Late" campaign makes clear, the work that you do is physically draining for everybody, for anybody, never mind somebody at the age of 66, 67 and 68, and people working in the prison services, it's just plain wrong to expect you to work for 40, 45, 50 years and expect prison officers to do more for less for longer. So today I'd use your Conference to urge Government to see sense. Let's have decent pensions for prison officers, a fair retirement age and dignity for everybody working in prisons who's given a lifetime of public service.

<Applause>

And while we're at it, let's invest in our justice system because you can't run prisons or a criminal justice system on the cheap! We should also never run prisons for profit. The incarceration of citizens is the responsibility of the state, not an opportunity to make a quick buck. So again, let's say today, no more competition, no more fragmentation, no more privatisation, let's invest in a publicly run, publicly owned, publicly accountable Prison Service.

<Applause>

Now brothers and sisters, these are tough times for POA members and they're tough times for working people right across our country. It is clear, 13 years of Conservative Government have broken Britain. We all know it, we've all experienced it. Jobs that don't pay enough, our public services decimated by cuts, trains that don't arrive or are cancelled at late notice and a Government that is more interested in dividing working people than supporting working people, typified by their inhumane, degrading spiteful migration policies and that dreadful Illegal Migration Bill that's going through Parliament today. And Mark mentioned this, but I am the proud grandson of migrants to this country, people who came to this country during the Second World War to help the fight against fascism but also to build a better life for themselves and their families, and I am absolutely clear the TUC I lead will stand with all working people, wherever they were born, whatever their religion, whatever the colour of their skin, and we should never turn our back on those seeking asylum or fleeing poverty, persecution or war. Never turn our back.

<Applause>

Now when I took over as General Secretary of the TUC in the New Year, I said I had three key priorities, and the first one is simply this, supporting unions and their members through the cost-of-living crisis. And as your motion to our Congress last year made clear, the cost-of-living crisis is actually in large part a wages crisis. Since the financial crash of 2008, workers in this country have lost on average £20,000 from their pay packets in real terms. Under the Tories, UK wage growth is the weakest in the G7 group of countries. The weekly shop is going up, our rents are going up, our mortgages are going up, the bills are going up, everything is going up apart from our wages. We live in a country where prison officers are struggling to afford to put the fuel in their car to go to work, where staff at prisons like Nottingham are setting up foodbanks for their own colleagues, and where prices are going up nearly three times faster than wages. But we have to remember this, it's not a cost-of-living crisis for everybody. It's not a cost-of-living crisis for everybody – top bosses' pay is booming. Chief executives of FTSE 100 companies last year saw their pay go up by 23% to 39% from the year before. Dividends for shareholders gone up three times faster than wages, and if you're a city banker – I'm looking round, I can't see many – but if you're a city banker you've had your best year for bonuses since the financial crash. And here's one statistic that tells you everything that you need to know. Last year, Porsche motorcars saw their sales go up by a third. That is their best-ever year for sales in this country at a time when millions are struggling to get by. Now, I don't begrudge anybody a nice car, but I care more about prisons, prison officers, and I care more about the public and I care more about patients and our public servants than I do about Porsche dealers.

We need a fundamental economic reset in this country. That's why, ahead of the Budget, the TUC said that the Government should make different political choices. But that Budget, there was nothing on investing in public services, there was nothing on public-sector pay, there was nothing on fair taxes, which is what we need fund our schools, our hospitals, our prisons and all of our other public services. And we all know that fair taxes are the bedrock of any civilised society. So instead of dodging their taxes, it's time the wealthiest in this country paid their fair share. It's time we had a proper windfall tax on the energy giants. £4 billion, BP charged us in the first three months of this year. It's time that we equalised capital gains tax with income tax. It is time to raise tax on the wealthy, not on working people in this country.

<Applause>

That's how you boost pensions and benefits, that's how you put money back into our communities and that's how you deliver fair pay for public-sector workers – and that does include your members, who suffered year after year of pay freezes, real-term pay cuts. Your union is right to demand a genuinely independent Pay Review Body empowered to deliver fair pay. It's the very least you deserve in light of that strike ban. I'll say more about that in a moment. And there is a stark set of facts. There is a huge recruitment and retention crisis in our prisons. One in seven prison officers leaving in 2021, six in ten of you don't think that your pay is reasonable compared to other people doing similar jobs, and the fact is that better pay is crucial to reducing reoffending, delivering rehabilitation and protecting the public. So again, I say today, and you'll have I think the Minister or the Secretary of State here tomorrow, I'd say this to him, you should say this to him as well. It is time that the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Justice Secretary, address the staffing crisis that's risking public safety. It's time they got their chequebooks out and it's time they gave prison officers the decent pay rise they well and truly earned. And if they won't give you that pay rise, they need to give the POA the right to bargain for better pay and the right to take strike action for better pay as well.

<Applause>

Now that right to strike is one that has been exercised by hundreds of thousands of public-sector workers over the last few months, and I've been proud to join thousands of workers on picket lines this winter and spring. Many people have taken strike action for the first time, and I've said the same message to each and every one of those workers that's taken that difficult decision to take strike action: the TUC will stand with any worker, every worker, involved in industrial action. We're doing what we can to help unions beat the ballot thresholds, to co-ordinate strikes, to provide practical support and crucially to resist attempts by this Government to play one group of workers off against another. It's not about decent pay for nurses but not prison officers, or decent pay for teachers but not railway workers. We want all of our public-sector workers to get a decent pay rise and, because our unions are standing up for workers, because we're standing up for those decent pay rises, that's why this Government wants to kick lumps out of our rights at work. And that brings me on to my second priority, which is the pushback on these attacks on rights and crucially to stand up for working people.

We've got a Government that has moved a million miles away from when Boris Johnson was waxing lyrical about how, in post-Brexit Britain, he was going to extend and enhance our employment rights. I didn't believe him then. Frankly, I never believe Tory politicians when they talk about rights for working people. We've heard today, you'll pick up the papers today and see the Government is ploughing ahead with part of its EU Retained Law Bill.

Practically speaking, what will that mean? The Working Time Directive up for grabs, the legal underpinnings of paid holidays, of paid breaks, limits on unsafe working hours and crucially Ministers are also hell-bent on attacking that fundamental British liberty, the right to take strike action, a right that many of you have been denied for almost three decades. And the reality is that that restriction that you've experienced could be the experience now for NHS workers, for fire fighters, for teachers, for rail workers, for Border Force staff and many others. We estimate potentially one in five workers directly affected by that. Rachael talked about this earlier but, just be clear what that minimum services level legislation will mean, it will mean someone can take part in a democratic, lawful industrial action ballot, beat all the thresholds, beat all the barriers put in the way by the Government. They could vote positively for strike action and their employer can instruct them to work and, if they don't, they could face the sack. That is a political attack on trade unionists and on trade unionism, pure and simple. So we are working with the House of Lords to try and damage and dilute the Bill. The House of Lords defeated the Government four times on the Bill late last month. We're exploring ways to defeat the legislation in the courts if it gets onto the statute book, and we're also organising an emergency protest when the legislation goes back into the Commons in a few weeks' time. But I just want to be absolutely clear and unequivocal, if that legislation does get on the statute book and the Tories have got the parliamentary maths, to make it clear, we will fight to defend the right to strike and any worker who loses their job as a result of that legislation, because we won't stand by while nurses and teachers are sacked for exercising the right to strike, we will fight to defend every worker, exercising that democratic right to take strike action. And let me also be unequivocal, that means prison officers as well because, if OSGs can take strike action, if workers in psychiatric hospitals employed by the NHS can take strike action, if your members in Scotland can have the right to take strike action, all prison officers should enjoy the same fundamental human right to withdraw their labour.

<Applause>

So alongside the POA, we'll continue to raise the UK's anti-union laws at the ILO, we'll continue to work with the POA on that challenge that allows, those new regulations that allow employers to use agency workers to bust strikes, and we'll continue to press a future Labour Government to restore full trade union rights for prison officers.

And that brings me to my third priority, which is securing political change in Westminster, and that means an election of a Labour Government on a manifesto that delivers for your union and for working people and for unions up and down the country. Labour is committed to delivering a new deal for working people within 100 days of being elected. A set of commitments, won by unions, shaped by unions and I think, hope and expect will be delivered by an incumbent Labour Government. A ban on zero-hour contracts and fire and rehire, repealing that anti-strike legislation and other anti-union legislation and give us access to the workplace. Introducing new fair pay agreements to raise standards across whole sectors of the economy. A whole package. Day one employment rights. A whole package of measures designed to reset the balance of power in our workplaces. All clear steps in the right direction and all clear commitments that we will expect Labour to deliver within that first 100 days. And I want to see a confident Labour Government delivering on that package, a worker-friendly package, and I want to see a strong, united Labour and trade union movement making the change that we need.

It is time to fix broken Britain, to be bold and to demand political change. That political change though – winning fair pay rises, standing up for our members, defending the right to strike – won't happen because we wish it to happen, it'll happen because we organise for it, we fight for it and we vote for it. And so my overwhelming priority, and I'll finish with this, brothers and sisters, is building a stronger and growing, thriving trade union movement, making our movement more diverse, more representative, more inclusive. Because whatever happens in the future, whoever is in Government, whoever is in Number 10, our best defence has always been strong trade union organisation. You know that from your experience in prisons and in secure hospitals. When we've got reps, when we've got strong union membership, when we've got confident members, then we can stand up, take on the bad bosses and win. And we have to be a movement for all workers in all of our magnificent diversity, and that means a movement that tackles racism, it's a movement that tackles discrimination, and it's a movement also that stands up and tackles sexual harassment in our workplaces, but in our own movements as well. And I know Steve has been working closely with us on this at the TUC but I just want to send the message not just to ever sister in the room but to every brother as well, we have to make the trade union movement a zero-tolerance environment for sexual harassment and we have to call out bad behaviour, we have to stand up to bad behaviour and we have to change the culture of our movement, because a movement that isn't safe and inclusive space for women isn't a movement that's fit for purpose. So, no ifs, no buts, no exceptions – all of us working together to tackle sexual harassment.

<Applause>

Now, I've been a trade union activist for over 30 years, I've been involved in left wing and progressive and Labour politics for over 30 years. We've all got a different idea of what we want from the trade union movement. There are unions with different histories, different traditions, different cultures, people have different politics, some people are members of the Labour Party, other people aren't, people vote for different political parties. All of that, I think, you can put to one side because, at its core, at its core, trade unionism is about friendship between working people and it's about solidarity between working people. Whatever your politics, whatever your background, wherever you're coming from, that sense of solidarity between working people, women and men, black and white, young and old, unity really is strength. So comrades, let me close on this point – we are always stronger together when we fight together. When we organise together, that's when we win together. Thanks very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** What a great speech. I've got to know Paul fairly well over the last few months. He's always been a supporter of the TUC and he's always been a supporter of the POA. He's worked his way through the ranks and, if ever there was the right person for the job, Paul is it. Working-class lad with working-class views and working-class morals. I know the TUC will fully support the POA in whatever we do and they will fight and lobby Government to get our right to strike back.

Now Paul's quite right that everything's going up, but we don't worry about that in the POA because we've got structure supervision pilots going on and we don't need anything. That'll cure the lot!

<Laughter>

Conference, please show your appreciation for Paul Nowak.

<Applause>

Right, we'll plough on until the break at 11. We're on to motion 33 and that is Frankland. Can we have a seconder please? Who was the seconder? Got you, thank you.

### Motion 33

#### The POA NEC negotiate with the HMPPS to set minimum educational requirements for new OSG and Prison Officers.

### FRANKLAND

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Motion 33 reads, the POA NEC negotiate with HMPPS to set minimum educational requirements for new OSGs and prison officers. The Prison Service likes to bill itself as a professional service, along with the POA who use the term professional trade union. Yet the Prison Service seems to pride itself on its recruitment campaigns with the statement, "No formal qualifications required." I'm not saying formal qualifications are the be-all and end-all of being a prison officer or an OSG. Far from it. But having the basic ability to communicate by reading and writing has to be a good starting point, along with basic numeracy skills. Frankland has over 100 OSGs and officers start in the past 12 months and there's a significant portion who've really struggled with the basics. This is evident when I look at emails I receive <inaudible> entries, use of force forms and other reports. In C&R training it's drilled into us how important our use of force forms are, but some staff struggle to put things down on paper, which could have future implications. Other professional people also see the reports prison staff complete. OMiC was a significant investment in boosting prison officer numbers a few years ago. This was sold as professionalising the service, yet I think we have gone back over. We are currently sending staff away to Newbold Revel at significant expense and hits to our staffing numbers in order to bring staff up to basic levels. Police, fire fighters and nurses, who we like to compare ourselves to, have a minimum educational requirement and their pay reflects it. Thank you.

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

<Applause>

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Chair, Conference, NEC, I don't know what order I've got that in but I'm a bit thick <laughs> so asking for a rejection of Frankland's motion. Styal branch believe educational requirements to be an OSG or prison officer are not necessary. Understand the sentiments of Frankland that some people struggle with reading and writing, numerical things, but our experience is members with a basic education, we're at the requirement of minimum education, quite adequate. We have members who are currently employed in our prisons who are very capable in taking all operational tasks. Individuals who are naturally very good at the jobs, but not academically gifted, have found it very hard recently. There's one girl in particular, she's great at her job but then because she needed level 2 in maths she's found it very hard and in the end we had to intercede and she was, she never passed her level 2 maths, but she's still a prison officer. Basically we just want you to reject the motion. As you can see, I'm not very articulate myself but I've been a prison officer for 34 years. A lot of my colleagues we've not got O'levels, we've not got GCSEs, but we've been doing it long enough, and I can read and write, and I can do my basic counting of a landing. So, please reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you – and you are articulate, very articulate, so don't bring yourself down. Well done.

**SAM GOUGH – COMMITTEE MEMBER, CHANNINGS WOOD:** I think we should be rejecting this one. Education should be there for everybody but unfortunately it's not, it's a postcode lottery and there are families, there are people of all backgrounds that struggle maybe to get the same education that some are actually privileged to. I think by putting in the wording "minimum education" you are cutting off a huge pool of talent. What's to say they don't turn round and go, "You have to have a degree"? I never went to uni, does that make anyone with a degree in geography a better prison officer than me? Is that what we're saying? I think instead we should be looking at those who have the will, people with a passion that want to do the job and investing in them, looking at the training instead. Look at the interview process, is it more robust? I think education doesn't change and make you a better officer. I think we should be actually looking at those who maybe not afforded the same education that all of us have had or some of us have had, and instead maybe supporting them in their life now, if they want to do the job. It could be they're looking for a change in their career later on in life and they never went to uni, never went to school like that, but actually they've got some talent, they've got some skill, they've got something they can bring to your establishment. We say we're in a recruitment crisis. This isn't going to help. We say we're working class. It's quite an elitist thing to say that only those of an education can come and join us, so I think we should reject this, else it'll be a rocky slope to who knows what. Thank you.

<Applause>

**SARAH PAGE – FELTHAM:** Chair, NEC, delegates, I again think we should reject this motion. They forced a degree on us in the YCS and what we've lost is all of our experience, all our jailcraft, and we've got people coming out of university at the age of 19, 20 years old – I'm not being ageist, but they've got no jailcraft, which is good to build them through it, but we don't need the education side of it, we need people, like you've just said, with a backbone to be able to do the job and you don't need a degree to be able to do that. So I think we should back the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers, so Angela Montgomery, oh, we've got one more. Well done.

**MICK BODY – BRANCH CHAIR, BIRMINGHAM:** There's a lot of clever people in the Prison Service who are quite thick. We call them prison governors. OK?

<Laughter and applause>

The most important role in being a prison officer is having life skills. You don't need to have a degree, just compassion and enjoy life and have life skills. That's what's most important.

<Applause>

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

OK, over to Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, Conference, delegates, the NEC asks you to reject this motion for a number of reasons. The role of the POA NEC is not to set educational qualifications and, as outlined by the speakers before, and very eloquently stated by the last speaker, educational qualifications does not mean you are brilliant. There are numerous, and all of you here are brilliant prison officers and/or OSG – all staff, OK! All of you are absolutely brilliant. This is a people business. This is not about educational qualifications, it's about the ability, as stated, of being able to engage with some of the most difficult, challenging, damaged people that we have in our society, to keep them safe and to keep each other safe. If I thought educational qualifications would give you that, I'd say fine, but it doesn't, and you all know people who have degrees, lots of qualifications, but struggle to tell a prisoner to go behind their door. You all know that, and I think at the end of the day jailcraft is the issue. It is about engaging with difficult people in a difficult place. And actually, I think on one level HMPPS having an open process, where anyone who has the passion to do the job can do the job, should be supported. The issue is, the support that people get when they start, and that that support should be ongoing, and that staffing is at the correct level, so I would say support the NEC and reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Frankland, do you wish to reply?

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANLAND:** I just want to make one more point. I'm not asking that prison officers need to have degrees, just a basic couple of GCSEs. We've had a massive influx of staff the last 12 months and basically some of them cannot read or write. I don't think it's healthy. Thank you.

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

<Applause>

The vote's now open, Conference, cast your vote. Thank you Conference, we can now display those results, and as you can see that motion is lost. Of course, the Government got rid of the union learning fund. We could have improved things there.

Motion 34, Cardiff, seconder please. Hull.

#### **Motion 34**

#### **REMOVAL OF PAM ASSIST/OCCUPATION HEALTH TELEPHONE CONSULTATIONS**

**That Conference mandate the NEC to negotiate with our Employer, that where a member's continued employment is being considered all Occupational Health consultations should be face to face and not conducted by telephone.**

#### **CARDIFF**

**PHIL TUCK – BRANCH CHAIR, CARDIFF:** Chair, Conference, NEC. Morning Conference. Before I start may I just say, if I insulted anybody last night, they probably deserved it.

<Laughter>

And if I didn't insult you, I'll get round to you, I promise!

Motion 34, removal of PAM Assist occupational health telephone consultations. This motion, I believe, speaks for itself, as I'm sure we all have at least one person in our establishments whose ongoing medical condition is never going to improve or, if there is going to be improvement, the prognosis is years rather than weeks. Of course, that doesn't actually sit well with our managers and they can't wait for them to actually get better to return to it properly, so the process for dismissal on medical inefficiency begins, and at the top of that list comes the need for an occupational health referral and subsequent report. Now whether this is just a local concern for Cardiff or more widespread, I don't know, but these occupational health consultations are normally carried out by telephone. Now I can't quite understand the need that a blind medical review carried out by an unknown unseen medical professional, apparently, who can assess your condition, overturning a previous doctor's appraisal, and make a subsequent recommendation in a report to your manager on whether you remain in employment or not, I don't think that's exactly fair. Conference, is it decent? After all, that occupational health report could have an impact on your eventual remuneration payment when you do leave the service. Conference, think about it, just think about it, and once you've done thinking, hopefully you'll join me and mandate our NEC to negotiate with our employer that, where a member's continued employment is being questioned or considered, any occupational health consultation should be at least face-to-face and not conducted by telephone – and after all, don't we actually deserve a little bit better? Please support.

<Applause>

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

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference, I just went through a telephone consultation. They phoned us up and they said, "You've got arthritis in your left knee." I says, "Yes." "You need a knee replacement." "Alright." She said, "Been to see your doctor?" I says, "No." She says, "You need to go and see your doctor." So I made an appointment, I was at my doctor's surgery for 7 o'clock because that's what you've got to do to get an appointment in my surgery. I seen a healthcare practitioner, not a doctor, and I went in, I says, "I've come to apologise." She says, "What for?" I said, "I shouldn't be here." She says, "Why are you here?" I says, "Occupational health says I've got to come here." She says, "What they said?" "He says I need a knee replacement to carry on my duties as a full-time prison officer." She says, "You're not going to get a knee replacement. You can walk." I says, "I know, that's why I'm apologising." She says, "What do you want us to put on your record?" I says, "That I can't have a knee replacement. Thank you very much." And that was it. I had another doctor phone us up afterwards. He says, "You're entitled to a medical retirement." I said, "I'm not. I don't meet the higher criteria." He says, "But you're still entitled because the Prison Service can't give you a job." I says, "Pre Fresh Start, I've got reserved rights. I don't want medical retirement. I want medical inefficiency." "In that case I'll advise the Governor to give you medical inefficiency." Great! But <inaudible> we did used to go to occupational health. We went to a place in Newcastle. It was dingy, we used to have a POA rep used to go, where people, if they wanted, POA rep. We always wondered why they stopped us that, giving advice to staff, but he always sat with somebody else and we didn't know what the other person was doing there. So we did a bit of digging and we found out the doctor had been struck off, but he was working for occupational health. So the caveat is, if you get this through and a member of staff goes on a face-to-face, and they want assistance, they are allowed to have assistance, whether it's a POA rep or a friend, and that's all I'll say. Because you've got to be careful with some of these people that they're recruiting. Please support.

<Applause>

**STEPHEN MACCORMICK – COMMITTEE MEMBER, EXETER:** Conference, I'm asking you to reject this motion. How many times have you had guys that have been off on restricted duties and they need to get clearance to come back to work. That is a pain to get. If you can do it for a quick phone call, "Yeah, I'm fine. Yeah, my doctor says it's OK, my physio says it's OK. I can go back to work." They can then just send you off, you can get back to doing your job. If you've got to wait to get an appointment to see someone face-to-face, you can be ages waiting. You're stuck in the gatelodge, restricted duties, whatever it is. I don't think it's any improvement for our members. Yes, there are times when you want to go face-to-face and there should be more of that available, but this is proposing making it all face-to-face. Sometimes, if somebody's off with mental health, they might not want to have a face-to-face appointment. It might be easier for them to see somebody, talk to somebody on the phone. That's got to remain an option. Yeah, we could push to have the choice and a better balance of what we're doing, but we need to keep telephone appointments. I ask you to reject. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers. Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC on motion 34. We would ask that you reject this motion. We can see the motion is well intentioned and there is no doubt that, if somebody specifically requests a face-to-face consultation, this must be considered as part of the process, but it's important that there is a blended approach. The current occupational health contract is a remote contract, but offers both telephone and face-to-face consultations as an option. As things stand, the default position is a telephone consultation, but if a face-to-face is requested either by the manager or by the member of staff being referred, this can be requested as part of the referral. Optima will consider the request and then respond accordingly. There is an appeals process if Optima do not agree that a face-to-face appointment is necessary. It would require a change to the current contract to allow individuals to actually choose what kind of appointment they want at the outset. Optima report they would see someone face-to-face if they considered it was a complex case, if there were severe mental health problems or if someone did not have the appropriate access to Teams or a telephone. We would not want to see the option of a telephone consultation being completely removed as, in certain circumstances, they very much assist POA members. I'm aware of several members who've been through the IHR process who had severe mental health issues and they were just not well enough to leave the house and turn up for an OH appointment in person. It's incredibly difficult to support and guide people through the IHR process when they're so poorly and they need to find a way of getting through the process as best they can. The telephone consultations assisted and made a significant difference in the cases I've just referred to. It's important our members continue to have an element of choice when they are required to access occupational health. If they would rather have a telephone consultation than a face-to-face one, that is their choice. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Cardiff to reply. No? OK. Let's take it to the vote then. Motion 34, votes now open. Thank you, Conference. That vote is now closed. The results can be displayed and, as you can see, that motion is lost. Cardiff, I get why you brought that, I really do, but I have just experienced this. I've had to support a close friend and colleague through IHR, and he was that unwell that I had to sit in a room with him to support him while he had telephone consultations because he simply couldn't face anyone. And he got it approved. So if you've got members out there who need a face-to-face and want a face-to-face, request it. But I understand why you brought that. Thank you, Conference.

On to 35, Cardiff. Secorder for Cardiff please. Thank you.

### Motion 35

#### DUTY OF CARE

**That the NEC should negotiate with the employer to put in place a process where staff who are injured in the course of their duty should receive necessary consultation and/or rectifying treatment via medical services outside the NHS in order for them to return to work sooner. The cost of which should be met by the employer.**

#### CARDIFF

**PHIL TUCK – BRANCH CHAIR, CARDIFF:** Conference, back up here again – suffering but I'm still here. Motion 35, this motion comes to what I believe is a necessity of the Prison Service to evaluate the current policy which, following injury to staff in the workplace, sees too many of our working colleagues being dismissed from service, mostly due to length of expected recovery, and the intransigent way the service is unwilling to compromise when it comes to the overall health and safety of our members. As an example, recently I was requested to represent a member of staff from another establishment. Their story was quite simple. They had been involved in a use of force incident where staff had fallen on top of him, resulting in a serious knee injury which necessitated surgery. The clinical opinion was that he was not fit for work in any capacity in the short term. His doctor stated that, with his interpretation of the relevant UK legislation, a knee condition would be considered a disability because it had lasted longer than 12 months and would have a significant impact on normally daily activities without the benefit of appropriate treatment. Conference, with that said, why would senior management, through their line manager, reject the advice of a doctor and ask for a fortnightly occupational report? Why then would their senior manager keep rejecting the findings of the occupational health review, which they themselves had requested and as the prognosis was, in their eyes, "too long of a time period to maintain". We need to remember that, within their own policy guidelines, which is PSI1 of 2017, the <inaudible> policy chapter 2.14.1-2.14.6 states that, if a member's been assaulted on duty or not on duty as a result connected with their duty, they are entitled to six months' sickness excusal while they remain in service.

From my own experience this is simply not the case and some staff have been subjected to numerous occupational health checks in a relatively short period of time which appear to be simply driven by the need to get the required answer to dismissal, medical inefficiency. Conference, it's both my branch as well as my own belief that, if you have been injured through the course of your duty, the best option to return you to work as soon as physically possible is to seek appropriate rectifying medical treatment outside of the NHS and then there should be an option available to management that should be utilised at the earliest opportunity, with the cost being met by the employer. If this was the norm throughout the service, it would immediately show that our employer understands the value of our work and our contribution with our own establishments, as well as the service as a whole. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Phil. Can't see any speakers, so Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking against the motion on behalf of the NEC. Sadly, we cannot support this motion as it is not achievable. The employer will not be awarded the funding for Prison Service staff to access private healthcare. I know from personal experience after we looked into this following a horrific assault on one of our members at HMP Swansea. The employer was unable to authorise any money to be paid to the individual who was assaulted to enable him to access the healthcare he needed. Time actually really mattered in this case as a better outcome was anticipated if he could access the treatment quickly. HMPPS made enquiries and informed us they could not allocate any funds for him due to it being taxpayers' money and everything needing to be authorised by Treasury. There were also concerns about any future claims and the far-reaching effects that this potential use of funds could have on the wider Civil Service.

We completely understand the sentiment behind it. Our members continue to be injured and assaulted and NHS waiting lists are making it more and more difficult to access treatment. This can impact how long members need to be on restricted duties and in turn can place them under more pressure when they're worrying about losing their job because they cannot return to their contracted roles. The employer will say, "Managers have discretion" but we can all tell horror stories of managers who have lost all empathy and understanding and who are simply unwilling to allow any deviation from a cold and uncaring management of attendance policy.

We would also like to remind Conference that there is support available through the POA in some circumstances. We have the Welfare Fund and the application is available on our website. We also have the Fire Fighters' Rehabilitation Centres – again, there's more information on the POA website. Please access and promote these additional support services. That's why it's there.

We will continue to push for improved services for staff who are injured in the course of their duty, and will continue to challenge the employer when

particular issues or cases are brought to our attention, but we do have to ask you to reject this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Sarah. Cardiff, do you wish to reply?

**PHIL TUCK – BRANCH CHAIR, CARDIFF:** I'll just finish before I sit down and say if you don't ask, you don't get. Please support!

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** <Laughs> Thanks Phil. OK, that vote's now open, Conference. Thank you, Conference. We can display those results, and as you can see, that motion is lost.

36, Littlehey. Secunder please for Littlehey? Hull.

### Motion 36

**That Conference mandate the NEC, to enter into negotiations with our employer, to have Long Covid recognised as an underlying medical issue.**

### LITTLEHEY

**JOHN GURNEY – BRANCH CHAIR, LITTLEHEY:** This motion was brought by several of our members who unfortunately are experiencing Long Covid and the effects of Long Covid. The reason they brought this, because they've all been assigned to Long Covid rehabilitation through hospitals and have been told that this is going to affect them for the rest of their lives, in some way or another. We at Littlehey have had to go in and defend some of those people through sick warnings, and on one occasion we've attended a farm where the Governor wanted to get rid because the OSG was told she could only do three of her seven nights because of the fatigue and the brain fog that could lead to her making mistakes, which would subsequently put us in a hearing to get rid of her under the code of discipline. We all know that the NHS and all the specialists have said nobody knows what the effects of Long Covid's going to be, how it's going to affect people and where they are. Well, in the workplace, especially with us, it's going to affect them massively. Some of our OSGs have left because they're so worried that they will be sacked rather than medical. But our Governor is clearly going down the lines that it's taxpayers' money, you should attend work – if you can't attend work then she has no other option but to go down this route. We're experiencing line managers not using discretion on sick. Long Covid is something that we have seen at Littlehey nearly take the lives of two of our members and, luckily, they are back with us but working non-uniform jobs. All I would ask you to do is to mandate our NEC to at least enter negotiations to see Long Covid entered as an underlying medical condition and be treated the same as other underlying medical conditions. Please support.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, Dave Todd, NEC, responding. More than happy to support Littlehey in this very, very good motion. Very good motion. We're already doing it, I'll give you the assurance, through the Whitley process and also through the TUC campaign for Long Covid. So there is a multi-trade-union approach to this. We wouldn't win it alone. That's why we've invested heavily within the TUC campaign along with other public-sector trade unions. I've got to say, I'm really envious of the health sector because they had funds set aside for rehabilitation, so some of our members in the secure hospitals could apply for a grant. If they needed a treadmill, for example, that grant would cover it. Our employer didn't do nowt like that. So yes, Littlehey, more than happy to support. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. That vote is now open. And we can close that vote and display the results. That's been carried.

37, Littlehey. Secunder please. Thank you Moorlands.

### Motion 37

**That Conference mandate the NEC, to enter talks with our employer to have the 5 days leave which OSGs get after 10 years service, to be given to all OSG's irrespective of length of service, including new starters and operational bands 3 -5.**

### LITTLEHEY

**JOHN GURNEY – BRANCH CHAIR, LITTLEHEY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, this was brought by our members and it was in light of, over the years, pay and terms and conditions affecting us every year, year on, and also in regards of retention. At Littlehey we are, like most of you probably, with the

OSGs, lost so many of our OSGs through this and even some of our new starters that are getting passed six months to a year throwing the towel in for whatever reason. So it's brought from the floor that we should perhaps look at some ways of giving them something to help them, and it was from the floor that they suggested could we reduce the term that you serve to get the extra five days' leave and from 10 years for OSGs and I believe the same for officers – if I'm wrong, I apologise – so that that would happen after year 1. It's only a small thing, it may not be achievable, I understand that, but they asked us to put this forward and for our NEC to explore this, so please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No one speaking so over to Geoff Willets for the NEC.

**GEOFF WILLETTS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC and asking you to support this motion. Firstly I want to thank Littlehey for bringing this motion. It highlights an important topic for debate. Scales of annual leave against number of years of service have always been a topic of conversation in the past, but then days are passed. The employer needs to be more inclusive, proportionate and fair, and this motion completes this on behalf of our members. This motion, if carried, will only be a positive move in the right direction and one that will encourage recruitment and retention for all grades, especially with the retention rate like a revolving door. Colleagues, we have heard from branches during Conference about the low staffing levels, problems amongst the OSG group and other grades. Conference, happy to support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That vote is now open. Thank you. We can now display those results. That motion is carried.

38, Albany. Secunder, Parkhurst, thank you.

### Motion 38

**For the NEC to challenge HMPPS on the guidance for the OSP Scheme and remove the guidance that states; members of staff on sick monitoring cannot participate in the scheme.**

### ALBANY

**MATT SAWYER – ALBANY BRANCH:** Chair, NEC, Conference, the OSP schemes are designed to give stability in an establishment. They come with a bonus payment after completing five or nine hours of Payment Plus per week over an agreed amount of time. The current guidance says that members of staff currently on sick monitoring are not eligible to participate in the scheme. Staff on sick monitoring are still allowed to do Payment Plus, they just can't get the bonus. With the current cost-of-living crisis, people are struggling. I don't believe it's fair or right to stop people gaining the bonus just because they were unfortunate enough to get a sick warning six months ago. I would encourage the NEC to engage in talks with the employer and remove the guidance stopping staff on sick monitoring from taking part in these schemes. I hope you will agree.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well spoken, thank you. No speakers, so Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

**SARAH RIGBY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, speaking in support of motion 38 on behalf of the NEC. At prisons where staffing shortfalls become severe and prolonged, an application can be made to the operational resilience and support panel, who will explore available options to support the prison. The bonus payment scheme offered to the current staffing group at the prison would usually be the first option. If this does not provide the adequate support needed, the next step would be to send staff from other prisons there on detached duty. The guidance in regard to the bonus payment schemes highlights strict criteria that must be met before a scheme can be confirmed and offered to staff. The guidance includes the line, "Staff who are currently on sickness monitoring and restricted duties will not be eligible for the bonus payment." This prevents a number of staff from volunteering to work the additional hours for the same level of payment as their colleagues. Not allowing them to work the additional hours on the bonus scheme is, in effect, punishing them for being ill. It also has the potential to lead to other staff in the estate being ordered to complete national detached duty. Guidance for national detached duty claims that, in extreme cases, where all avenues of support have been explored and the use of bumping does not release the required number of volunteers, this may result in the need for staff to be compelled to undertake a period of detached duty. It is entirely possible that, if HMPPS allowed staff on sickness warnings to sign up to work a bonus scheme at their home establishment, it would reduce the chances of staff being ordered to that same establishment on national detached duty. We ask you to support this motion to put us in a strong position for when we have further conversations with HMPPS about it. We would also ask that you encourage any member subject to this detriment to raise a grievance about it. We have already approached HMPPS about the issue and their response was that they were open to further conversations about it. We want those conversations now, not in several months or several years when they eventually get round to it. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No reply so we can take that to the vote. Thank you, Conference. We can now display those results. That motion has been carried.

On to 39. Hopefully the speaker will now be ready to deliver this motion. Moorlands, do we have a seconder? Thank you. I thought she'd stitched you up then, Jade.

### Motion 39

## Glasses Vouchers

**This Conference instructs NEC to negotiate with the employer for an increased financial package towards eyecare for those who require it.**

### MOORLAND

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, two months ago I decided it was time to get my eyes tested and get myself some new specs. I'd not been since Covid, so prior to my visit I checked out if there was any additional benefits or a system in place to help with costs. I noticed I was entitled to a free eye test and a £40 voucher. In the cost-of-living crisis this was great to see and I was actually chuffed to bits how simple it all seemed. I went to my nearest Specsavers a week later for said eye test. All seemed fine. So far, so good. When it came to paying for my new frames, I whipped out my £40 voucher only to be told I could only use this if I had VDU and that that was very unlikely until I was over 45. Imagine my shock and horror! I read the smallest of small prints, I really should have gone to Specsavers sooner!

<Laughter>

But Conference, this got me thinking, without my glasses, I can't do my job. Without my glasses, I can't keep myself safe, I can't keep my colleagues safe. Conference, without my glasses, I can't see. On this basis, and in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis, everything is going up. Well not everything. Our wages aren't, but – why does our employer not recognise this vital piece of equipment? Conference, this motion is to instruct our NEC to negotiate a better and more attractive financial package of eye-care to help our colleagues who need it. And why stop there? Whilst they're at it, Specsavers also do hearing aids. Let's explore that too. Our colleagues can't afford to constantly replace scratched, broken, old necessary kit. Our members need help. It may not seem like much, but every little helps. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Jade. They are very nice glasses though! The NEC, Geoff Willits.

**GEOFF WILLITS – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion. Firstly I want to thank Moorland for bringing this motion, which highlights an important issue for our members, especially amongst the ever-growing cost-of-living crisis. The antiquated voucher needs to be in line with current eye-care requirements that allow our members above-minimum-quality items and not putting our members into a financial detriment. The increased amount of visual IT equipment that our members now undertake in their duties continues to escalate and can only have a detrimental impact on our members' visual health. Colleagues, just to remind you that members of the POA can access the members benefits via the POA website and are entitled to free eye tests, discounted eyewear and also additional vouchers for family members. Conference, support this spectacular motion!

<Laughter and applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That nearly come off then, Geoff, nearly!

<Laughter>

Straight to the vote then. And we can now display those results. What a vision. That's been carried.

<Laughter>

Getting the dad jokes now, aren't we?

40, Moorland. Thank you.

## Motion 40

### Operational Grades in OMU

**There is limited scope for progression and promotional opportunities, for B3 operational grades, along with increased resilience pressures across the estate, therefore this Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with the employer that via natural wastage and future recruitment all prison offender manager job roles should be advertised and recruited for operational staff only.**

### MOORLAND

**SALLY JAMESON – BRANCH CHAIR, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, delegates, first time attending and speaking at Conference.

<Applause>

Conference, you'll all know in this room the scale of the retention crisis that we're currently facing in the service and the operational instability that that is bringing, and whilst pay is a main driving factor behind that, we also know at Moorland, when we ask staff that are leaving why they're going, it's because of a lack of progression opportunities and a lack of career on offer, and that's one of the driving factors as to why our members are looking elsewhere, and that's why the branch have asked for us to bring this motion today. For a number of years prior to OMiC, many prisons had a whole group of Band 4 operational offender supervisors. Then under OMiC that changed to prison offender managers and, whilst some jails have retained operational prison offender managers, a lot of them have re-rolled out to civilian jobs and, where there's a mixture, there's often veiled threats to do so if the operational staff don't agree to different working hours. What these governors are forgetting, and dare I say some of them are quite short-sighted and lack any vision, is that these staff provide a whole layer of operational resilience that is lost when those jobs are re-rolled out.

During the pandemic, at Moorland they were a pool of unified staff that covered jobs when Covid struck. They were a group of staff that responded to incidents so that house blocks weren't depleted and they provided a whole other addition to our operational grip. But as I said before, it's not just about that. It's actually also about the promotion opportunities and the diverse range of opportunities that it gives, particularly to Band 3 prison officers. We have lots of people now going off to the police and you ask them, "Why are you going to the police?" And they say, "Oh, my mate went two years ago, and they've already had the opportunity to do x, y and z" or "this promotion and that promotion". So why is it that, in other services, all these opportunities and avenues are opened up to people, but in the Prison Service we constantly see avenues closing down, particularly for the operational grades. And I just want to be really clear that this motion isn't about sacking any civilian staff, it's not about making anyone redundant, but it is about saying that, when you have a natural turnover, when people resign or retire, that those jobs are re-advertised and recruited for operational staff only. Because if we don't get a grip of this and if we don't turn around the current trend, we're just going to see another round of Band 3 officers leave because they want a career somewhere else, and we're also going to see a continued reduction in our operational resilience, so please support this motion today. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Sally. Dave Todd for the NEC

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding on behalf of the NEC. Again, more than happy to support. Moorland's explained really well all the pluses to it, but it's not just a national job, that's all I'd say. Go back, put your SFCs in, enter into consultation. If they say no, enter into dispute. We'll do it on a national scale. It's not just OMU department. It's all other departments. There seems to be a big mass exodus of job advertisements for operational grades in favour of non-op roles. We do oppose it. We'll continue to oppose it. Get your SFCs in. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Dave. We can go to the vote. Conference, we can now display the result for that. That motion has been carried.

I'm looking around, I can see there's quite a few people need a cup of coffee, so see you back at quarter-past-eleven please.

<Break>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, I've been reminded to remind you that, when you get up to speak, can you just please announce your name and your branch for the verbatim report. We will get through a few more motions before I invite a guest speaker up from the Southern Ireland POA. So I call on Liverpool to move motion 41 and we have Preston as the seconder.

#### Motion 41

**That Conference mandates the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS a national agreement: that after completing temporary promotion for a period 12 months or over, staff attain substantive promotion without the requirement of assessment or accreditation.**

#### LIVERPOOL

**ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL:** NEC, Chair, Conference, motion 41. Conference mandate the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS a national agreement that, after completing temporary promotion for a period of 12 months or over, staff attain substantive promotion without the requirement of assessments or accreditation.

Colleagues, we ask this. Some of us in this room, probably very few of us now, but some of us remember a long time ago when you had to do at least four years of any grade before promotion was considered. I think under the current climate, if we did that, as we said earlier, after four years now there would probably only be one or two members of staff left still waiting to be promoted. But going back on to today, our service is in turmoil. A lack of leadership is obvious, particularly on the shop floor. We all see it every day. So when we have, or we're about to, promote people at the first level – the 3s to the 4s, the 4s to the 5s – these are the managers that affect our working day, our members' lives every single day. These aren't the managers behind the desks, in the offices, these are the lads and lasses out there with us making the decisions operationally. We have to get it right. So if we've got those staff with the practical experience gained on the landing, when we have them we need to keep them. We need to support them. These are the people who can speak to the prisoners, who can manage staff, who can deal with incidents. Maybe they're not the good actors so when they go to the assessment centres they're not as strong as others. Maybe they haven't got the skills on paper for the board but they are the people who can do the job because we've seen it day in and day out. And they're the people I would urge, through this motion, that we support. Colleagues, please

support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. I'll let the seconder, Preston, speak and then come on to Wandsworth.

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH COMMITTEE, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, delegates and guests, thanking Liverpool for bringing this motion. I've got a number of members at Preston across all grades, 4s, 5s and even a 7 – even a 7, a POA member – acting up and have done for some time. Some of them, I've got a Band 4 who is over two years, they put a substantive advert out recently and told that individual that he could apply for the job he'd been doing for two years without any criticism whatsoever to that individual carrying out that role. And he's a good 'un, yeah?

That shouldn't be allowed to happen. The rules say that they really should be reviewing any acting up after three months but, with the changes of governors and stuff like that at Preston, we've had a situation where dithering sometimes is to our advantage but not in this case, when it's actually detrimental to our members who have got families, mortgages and don't know whether that extra pay that they're going to get is going to get taken away, you know. So I'm pleased we've got the opportunity to do it.

What we should never forget, regardless of what grade he's acting up to, it's always the Band 3s on the shop floor that suffer because it trickles down and they leave us short. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I am delighted to hear the positive experience of your temporary promoted CMs. However, the Wandsworth experience in the last few years has been a rush to get a CM's post filled. Someone who is three months out of probation now a temporary-promoted CM. I have had to sit through far meetings, attendance warning meetings with temporary-promoted CMs who clearly do not have the knowledge or experience to make the right decision in issuing warnings or making recommendations. And the temporary promoted CMs who, now they're CMs, go onto a wing, "We're going to run the wing like this." "Why's that?" "Well, I'm the CM." Risk assessments, weekly inspections in the workplace? No, sometimes a wing can go for nearly 5 to 6 weeks without a single inspection by the temporary-promoted CM because no-one told them they needed to do it. And when the union is asking questions at the Health and Safety meeting, which very few CMs, temporary or otherwise, attend at Wandsworth, we are fighting constantly against temporary promoted grades where there is no standard or level reached that they really can do the job. So I can only give you the Wandsworth experience on this but be careful if you do pass this motion. Some branches, if you share my concerns about some temporary promoted managers, we could be stuck with them forever after 12 months.

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

<Applause>

**LOUISE JAMES – ACTING BRANCH CHAIR, HEWELL:** NEC, Chair, Conference, first time at Conference.

<Applause>

First time I've got up here and spoke, I think I've forgotten what I've come up here for now. Our experience at Hewell, we've got over 40 people temped up in operational staff, that's from Band 3s, Band 4s, Band 5s. As my colleague just said, we've got some people who are temped up with just over 12 months' experience. Where does it affect? It affects the pool of officers – they're the ones that are suffering, the ones on the ground floor, the ones that we expect to do the day-to-day jobs. It's all very well for temped-up staff. If they've got the vacancies, advertise them, and if they haven't don't temp people up. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, well done. That's our second cherry popper of the morning, keep them coming. Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, responding in favour of this motion. How many times have we seen staff acting up for extended periods with the carrot of substantive promotion dangled in front of them to be taken away at the last minute? How many staff deliver outstanding work whilst acting up to a higher grade? But they can't pass a JSAC or a CMAC.

If you act up for an extended period of time, I'm talking here over a year, that job should be yours if there's no performance issues. Morally it's the right thing to do but it also eases the burden on the Band 3 rank as the burden of acting up is always carried by the Band 3 rank. Making posts substantive after a set period would allow recruitment into the Band 3 rank. Please support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, the vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can now display that result and, as you can see, that motion has been carried.

Motion 42, Brinsford. A seconder for Brinsford please? Thank you.

## Motion 42

Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS to ensure that utility vests be issued to all operational staff as general issue.

## BRINSFORD

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, NEC, Conference, motion reads, “Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS to ensure the utility vest be issued to all operational staff.” First, I’m not just going to stop there, I’m going to go a little bit further. So, we know the vest isn’t great, the quality is really, really poor, but it is a step in the right direction, it’s helping staff. We’ve got staff that were off sick with a bad back, they’ve come back to work and they’re still in the job. The vest has helped, it’s taken the pressure off their lower back pain, it’s been really good for them. And that’s our job as union reps is to make sure our staff remain in the job if that’s what they want.

There is somebody with a vest who is going to come up and show you what it looks like. He’s a supermodel in his spare time. If you’d like to come up Paul?

<Wolf-whistle and applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** <inaudible> in the buff.

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Okay, it also comes in black, believe it or not.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** It does, Joe’s got a <inaudible>. You’ve dropped the baby.

<Laughter and applause>

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Thank you. I don’t want it now, I’ve got one.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Nice to imagine <inaudible>.

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** So I’m asking you to support the motion, thank you.

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

<Applause>

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, in support of the motion. We’re all hearing, now we’re all carrying all this extra kit on our belts, of staff with lower back and hip problems. If that’s the solution we should go for it. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Paul, you look as if you’ve just been shopping in Ann Summers.

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH COMMITTEE, PRESTON:** I don’t know whether it looks better with the tie out, personally. NEC, Conference, I didn’t really want to speak to it but just to prove that the NEC don’t just stage manage conference, Mick asked me to do this so I’ve been set up. This thing is a pile of crap. Right, let’s not mess around, right? If this is what you’re wanting then be careful what you wish for. There’s no back in it, so there’s no back up, okay? You’ve got this bit for your fish knife, your baton goes here and there’s a hole in the bottom that it can fall out of, okay? You can put your body-worn camera on here, if they’ve bothered to put the clip on the back. There’s the wrong clip on here, aren’t they, so that will be useless. And you still have to wear the utility belt with your baton if you’ve got them, and your PAVA if you’ve got them. And that’s it. And, I’m sorry, that’s not acceptable. This is actually a health and safety risk, yes? They gave me this, not because it’s tactical, DSTs wear tactical vests, right? This was apparently to alleviate the stress on some scar tissue that I’ve got from a hernia operation.

I have another member of staff who applied for this who has a bad back, and do you know what they said to him? Look at ill health retirement. Right? We need an alternative, I agree, but from what I’m hearing when I took this to the Health and Safety meeting, they absolutely ripped the backside out of me because it comes in black as well. But this isn’t the vest that we’re supposed to be being issued anyway. So, is it a step in the right direction? <inaudible>. It’s a big insult to me because we lock <inaudible> regularly at Preston. Right, be careful what you wish for.

<Applause>

**FRANCIS RICHARDS – BRANCH COMMITTEE, EXETER:** I’m supporting this motion, not for the reason of bad backs or anything like that, for the pure reason I was involved in a restraint a couple of weeks ago. After that restraint a prisoner handed me my PAVA back because the PAVA had

come off of my belt. That is not the first time that has happened in our prison, it's not the first time a prisoner has picked up a set of cuffs or a baton or a radio. One of our colleagues one day is going to get PAVAed in the face by a prisoner or hit by a baton that we have dropped due to the belts that are just not fit for service anymore. That isn't fit for service either, but our DSTs that wear their own utility vests that are a lot better issue than that. There's no reason why we can't push the Prison Service to buy better standard vests but belts are no longer safe. They are going to get one of us hurt one day. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Five minutes, Paul, five minutes.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** I thought he was going to join in with the dirty Leeds chants that I normally get when I get up here. Contrary to belief, this is not another variation on the utility belt.

<Laughter>

I am urging you to support the motion but, as I can see with the quality, not in the model, I thought the model was lovely, but the actual quality of the vest is garbage. So, please, let's give the NEC a little bit of authority to go and negotiate and make sure that we get a quality job that will do, or a vest that will do the job that it's designed to do. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MICHAEL MABBOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, BURE:** Chair, Conference, first time at Conference and talking.

<Applause>

I'm in support of the utility vest. The one that has been displayed is the cheaper model. We've got two staff that we've successfully got vests for. The black one, which is a better one, is about £80 for the service, which is nothing, it's a drop in the ocean. We have the powers of a constable when we're on duty but we're wearing the quality of kit of 30 years ago. Why can't we come to the forefront and be equal to, not just in the kit that we have, in pay and conditions. We're in support of it. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, well done.

<Applause>

Over to Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding on behalf of the NEC, happy to support the motion. And I'll put it out there now. We've got the employer sitting at the back – listen to what the delegates have said. You've been listening to what the NEC have been saying for at least two years, now listen to the delegates. You've heard it first hand. Get a grip of what you're supplying as PPE and give us something fit for purpose. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That vote is now open, Conference. Thank you, we can now display those results. That motion has been carried.

Conference, before we progress with business I'm going to introduce Karl Dalton, who is the General Secretary of the POA Southern Ireland. He's very welcome to address Conference to tell you the issues they have over the pond. Karl Dalton, General Secretary Southern Ireland POA.

<Applause>

**KARL DALTON – GENERAL SECRETARY, SOUTHERN IRELAND POA:** Thanks, Mark. Chair, NEC, Conference, it's an honour to be here to speak to you today and thank you for giving me the opportunity. I bring fraternal greetings from Southern Ireland on behalf of our NEC and all our members, and we wish you the best for your conference.

I suppose I'll keep this short enough. I've been attending the British POA Conference since 2008 and during those years the information gathered and the help we've gotten from yourselves has been invaluable. We've gone into meetings on a range of issues and we've visited your prisons, and we would like to personally thank all the delegates I've met throughout the country over the years. Issues that you have had for years that are only new to us, like regime management plans, the information that we got was invaluable because you had seen the problems and you'd gone through it, so it was hugely helpful for us. Incentivised regimes, which was only new to Ireland – so you'd had it for years, so we were able to come over, see how you were doing it, see where the pitfalls were and, again, hugely helpful. So the cooperation and the help we've got has been brilliant. National Violence Reduction Units, you've had them for years under various guises and names, we only got it introduced but, again, we came over, we saw what you had, we saw the problems, we saw how you developed it and it was hugely helpful.

So what I'm saying is, you've been brilliant to us. We hit the ground running in negotiations. A lot of the nasty thoughts that come through management's minds in England will eventually land on the shores of Ireland and it helps us to be preprepared. So a big thanks from us at that.

At home we're facing the same issues you are facing here. One of the biggest things is staff shortages. Our problem is slightly different to yours – our staff shortages are due to the failure of management to be able to security clear staff. So we've people coming for the job and 6 or 12 months later they still haven't been cleared. So we've classes starting their training that should have 40 in it and they might have anything from 10 to 15, and that's a huge problem.

With that comes overcrowding. We had Covid and the prison management had the opportunity to put a building programme in place while the courts were closed and prisoner numbers were dropping, everything was fine. Now we're back to prisoners sleeping on floors and, as we all know, the impact on staff having to deal with that extra violence is huge for us and that the assaults on staff, obviously, have gone through the roof with the overcrowding, as history shows it always will. So that's an unfortunate thing back home for us and we're dealing with it and we know you face similar issues.

Mark spoke yesterday about a range of issues facing your members on a daily basis and it's clear for us, sitting at the back of the hall, that HMPPS has failed to recognise the fantastic job done by your members. For far too long they've undervalued your members. The professional service provided by your members deserves to be recognised and I hope you get that in future pay awards. I hope that the NEC, with all their efforts, are successful in getting what you deserve, which is recognition. The only way to recognise staff is through pay because that really tells you what they think of you. You deserve better and I hope that your future ministers and governors recognise what everyone else can see, the fantastic job you do and what you should be paid for it.

Mark also spoke yesterday about the High Court injunction which creates so many problems for your NEC. Some of our experience may be helpful or it may be food for thought. So you spoke yesterday about the right to strike and we believe it's everyone's right – every worker should have the right to withdraw their labour in pursuance of better terms and conditions. Unfortunately you don't have that. Now, I hope in the future you do, through all the efforts and the support of your TUC etc., win back that right. In Ireland we have the right to strike, we still have maintained that. And, again it's been helpful what we've heard from across the water here over the years, and our predecessors, because we were prepared. Every time they came to try and take the right to strike off us we were prepared to fight for it and we've managed to maintain it. I suppose the food for thought, during a recent discussion we have the right to strike and it's been utilised on occasion. We also have, what we all know, every prison, every place where there's your members, it's run by the staff with professionalism, and Mark spoke several times about it yesterday, it's the ability to go that extra mile, to volunteer, to put yourself forward and make it work. Everything runs on the basis of goodwill.

So we had a recent row with the Prison Service and we merely told our staff, "Go out and do your job professionally, as you always did, but do it according to the rules." Every prison in Ireland had queues outside it with our police bringing prisoners in, our own escorts going out with the <inaudible> to the courts and all our staff doing just their job and demanded to be treated fairly as a result of that. It was a hugely successful thing and obviously I'm not suggesting you do that, and Mark said yesterday that you couldn't do it and he would definitely not tell you to do it, but food for thought from our perspective is it worked really well for us. Whereas we had the right to strike, we didn't utilise it, we just utilised the professionalism of our members and it was a great success for us.

Finally, I want to wish you a successful and productive Conference and wish the best and a speedy recovery to all of your members that are out injured whilst carrying out their duties on behalf of the state. Again, from Southern Ireland, we wish you all the best. Thanks very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well, thank you, Karl. If you'd go back to the rostrum, Karl, I've got a little gift for you. You're always welcome at POA conferences and, as you can see for yourself, Conference, our brothers and sisters in Southern Ireland are facing similar problems to the rest of us – staffing shortages due to a lack of recruitment and the insufficient protocols they have in place to actually vet people. But we all know about the vetting problems that we've faced in our job. It's not the time it takes, it's the quality of candidates that we're getting due to a lack of vetting that's the problem.

So, we welcome you, we appreciate everything you do and thank you for those fraternal greetings. Once again, Conference, Karl Dalton, General Secretary, Southern Ireland POA.

<Applause>

Well, now move to motion 43 from Brinsford. Seconder please? Thank you Whatton.

### Motion 43

**Conference direct the NEC to engage with HMPPS in order to implement change that we mandate the NEC to move away from black and white uniform and negotiate to introduce a uniform that is fit for purpose.**

### BRINSFORD

**MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD:** Chair, NEC, Conference, motion reads, "Conference direct the NEC to engage with

HMPPS to implement a change that we mandate the NEC to move away from black and white uniform and negotiate to introduce a uniform that is fit for purpose." So, guys, the uniform survey took place earlier this year. Everybody had their say in that. I'm only really interested in POA members – talking to them they all want to go into a uniform that is fit for purpose. White shirts, you get blood on them, you can see it, it ruins your day – got to go and find another shirt. When you get home at the end of your shift if it's all dark colours you can chuck it all in the wash together. Really simple. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do Whatton wish to speak? Okay.

**SAM GOUGH – BRANCH COMMITTEE, CHANNINGS WOOD:** Chair, NEC, Conference, we put this to all our members at our establishment and they all voted to reject this one for the sole fact that we're proud to wear black and white. Yes, we're not arguing the quality is poor, that there's this buy cheap, buy twice, mentality we need to get out of, but we're proud to wear the uniform, we don't want it to go. Just maybe improve the quality of it, the boots, the shirts, the top. Yes, reject it.

<Applause>

**KEV BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL:** NEC, Conference, guests, I'm speaking in support of this motion. Brinsford talked about the physical aspects of the uniform – washing, the fit, the comfort – there's also the emotive side of the uniform being fit for purpose. In HMPPS we clearly identify as male and female in uniform, that's what we wear. Black and white, I agree, looks smart but it's not fit for purpose. We have an inclusivity policy from the employer, from our union, yet our uniform isn't inclusive so I'd like you to support this motion for change and get an inclusive workplace. Thank you.

<Applause>

**FRANCIS RICHARDS – BRANCH COMMITTEE, EXETER:** Like Channings Wood, we're also rejecting it. Our members also like wearing the black and white. We're a Cat B local and we feel that when you come in to custody you should be greeted by somebody in a tie, in black and white, who looks the part, who has ironed their shirt, who looks the business so when you come in you go, "Fuck, I am in prison here, aren't I?" I've worked at other jails where the staff wear the polo shirts and it kind of looks more like a mufti day out than it does a Prison Service. So we would like you to reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** I too am asking you to reject the motion. Black and white makes you stand out quite easily on the landings. But, I've got to be honest, the quality is about as good as the Derby County shirts so please let's <inaudible>.

<Laughter and applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Are you from Whatton?

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WHATTON:** Yeah, I've changed my mind.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** You need to speak after the proposer of the motion, unfortunately. Sorry.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER – BRANCH COMMITTEE, WHATTON:** Alright, I'll just drop off. It's alright.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I did ask, didn't I, if ...? You know, we did ask. Any more speakers? Dave Todd for the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, the NEC are taking the unusual stance of taking a neutral approach on this because we want you to tell us what to do. Currently the policy is of the POA that we wear black and white. Lots and lots of branches are doing that but there are lots and lots of branches that aren't. My home establishment, I think there was about six or seven different colour polo shirts. Other establishments have got polo shirts. So you tell us what you want, Conference. We'll try and get it but it's our policy, we have to abide by our policy. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Brinsford are sitting down so we will take this to the vote. The vote is now open. We can now close that vote and display the results. That motion is lost.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Card vote please.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do we have the support of 10 branches for a card vote? Yes we do. We'll take it to a card vote. The tech guys at the back will get the system ready for a revote under a card vote for motion 43. Just waiting for my screen to go blank. Okay. And that card

vote is now open. Just vote the same way you did last time. That card vote is now closed, display the results. That motion is lost.

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference. Motion 44, Moorland, and the seconder is? Thank you.

#### **Motion 44**

##### **Alternative Accommodation**

**This Conference notes as a result of COVID-19 there was an increased use of alternative accommodation that did not match cell certification PSI. This Conference moves that's going forward no further accommodation which does not meet the cell certification PSI should be implemented across the estate.**

#### **MOORLAND**

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, the pandemic brought to light a number of challenges to the Prison Service and to our members. And I will say, on an unrelated note, how proud I am of the way all of our members handled this time, how we went to work, day in, day out, with Covid lingering over our heads. It was scary, it was upsetting and it was the unknown, but we did it and I just wanted to say that I am proud and we can hold our heads high how we stood on the front line.

<Applause>

Like a number of prisons nationally, we at HMP Moorland opened a provision of special accommodation units. This was designed to see us through the global emergency and stop the spread of Covid. For those who have not seen these units, imagine a glamping pod – en suite, single rooms, doors that we cannot lock, windows that open freely. The last time I checked, I worked at a prison, not a holiday camp. We put white shirts on, not red coats.

Now, Conference, we can all appreciate the reason that these were put into prisons. It was all well and good during the national emergency but that time has passed. These pods do not meet the requirements of the cell certification PSI and are most certainly not up to the security standards expected in a prison. The staff facilities are dire and it is an absolute joke. If the Government wish to increase the capacity, they need to invest in our prisons, invest in our facilities and invest in our staff. Please support this motion to ensure this type of alternative accommodation is no longer implemented in the prison estate. Let's stop the spread of special accommodation. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No speakers so over to Ian Carson for the NEC.

**IAN CARSON – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. Moorland's arguments are very persuasive and compelling and well done Jade. Quite simply, cell certification cannot be made up on the hoof. I listened to Jade speaking and it reminded me of the temporary accommodation that we had put into Holme House in the 1990s, it's still there now. It's not fit for purpose, it never was. The requirements for this sit under Section 14 of the Prison Act 1953, please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Okay, the vote is now open. Thank you, we can now display the results. That motion is carried.

Motion 45, Maidstone. A seconder for Maidstone please?

#### **Motion 45**

**For a pensions forum to be put in place to assist those members coming up to retirement or deciding to go part time. The changes to the pensions, and the complexity of going part time is causing staff excessive amounts of stress and anxiety, at one of the most stressful times of their lives. Prison managers are not trained to assist and complete the forms. The agencies that staff deal with appear incompetent at best. The decision-making process around how to take your pension has been made so complex by changing circumstances, it is almost impossible for staff to make an informed decision. Those approaching retirement or wishing to go part-time at that time of their careers, need the right support and help to ensure that the transition goes smoothly and without a hitch.**

#### **MAIDSTONE**

**STEVE HAMBLETT – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAIDSTONE:** Chair, NEC, Conference, the motion reads, "For a pensions forum to be put in place to assist those members coming up to retirement or deciding to go part time. Changes to the pensions and the complexity of going part time is causing staff excessive amounts of stress and anxiety at one of the most stressful times of their life. Prison managers are not trained to assist and complete

the forms; the agencies that staff deal with appear incompetent at best and the decision-making process around how to take your pension has been made so complex by changing circumstances, it is almost impossible to staff to make an informed decision. Those approaching retirement or wishing to go part time at this time of their careers need the right support and help to ensure that the transition goes smoothly and without a hitch.”

Now, after we submitted this motion, there was nothing in place. Days later, Shared Services announced a pension hub to help staff that are approaching retirement and, for those of you that were here last year, I believe it was Jade from Moorlands who had a speech about how good SSCL were – very diplomatic. I’m not going to be as diplomatic – they’re about as useful as a one-legged man at an arse kicking party. If it isn’t stressful enough for staff worrying about whether they’re going to get what is rightfully theirs, dealing with Shared Services isn’t good enough.

We need a forum put in place to help them fill out the forms correctly. We had members who want to take partial retirement have gone part time – we had one who submitted the form, was told it was the wrong form but they didn’t tell him what form he had to submit or how to fill it in. So we ask for the NEC to set up a forum to aid staff at the most stressful time of their lives. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, in support of this motion. I’m sure this goes for many of us, pensions are a minefield. How many of us in this room, unless we’re Joe Simpson, understand how pensions work? And what help is there for our members? Like my colleague said there, filled in the wrong form, no-one tell him what one to fill in. We need something to help our members. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**CRAIG ROBSON - BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, Conference, I’m a part-timer, I’ve been part time for 7½ years. I understand the difficulties. I don’t know who is going to go on this forum, though, because I’ll be honest with you – although we’ve got Joe, Joe will tell you it’s difficult. He’s asking me for what my figures are. I’ve wrote my figures out on a bit of paper. I’ve been in touch with Shared Services, I’ve been in touch with the Civil Service Pensions, they still can’t tell us. I’ve emailed them again this morning. I’ve been waiting over a week now for a reply. I’m supposed to be going next week, still haven’t got a reply. It’s very difficult.

As I say, I’ve worked mine on the PIN 40 formula. My Chairman has got one for a PIN 40 formula for somebody else, it didn’t even hit the first year, it went straight to 40 years. We don’t even know how they’re working them out. Nobody knows. Whether Joe’s got to go to the Cabinet Office and say, “You need to have something sorted out for everybody, to be fair for everybody,” because it’s not fair at the moment because we don’t know what’s happening. To be fair, we’ll get the answer that we’ve got to wait until October this year because of the McCloud judgement. What for? They should have put everything in place before all of this. So we still don’t know what’s going on with the McCloud judgment.

You know, and who are we putting in, who are we giving this job to? They’re not professional people. I’ve just come to see Joe the other day, I’ve got somebody at home who is arguing they should have medical retirement based on the old – they had a classic scheme. Because his brother is a pensions advisor. My advice to him is appeal against it and see what happens. That’s all he can do but it’s not good enough. It’s not good enough and we need to have something, but who do we put in that place and who do you put in that forum? I’d like to know who it’s going to be. It’s not for me.

I pick things up on Twitter all the time, people contacting us and saying, “Why is my branch official not telling me that?” Because they don’t know. We just pick up what we get from other people and we learn from our mistakes. We shouldn’t have to learn from our mistakes though because we could be giving bad advice. And, for me, for the part-timers, I would say be very, very careful going part time and what you wish for. I say it to everybody – it’s everybody’s own financial arrangements that they need to look at because some people it wouldn’t suit them for part time. For instance, I’ll give you my ex-Chairman last year, he was in a car accident, didn’t work PP, acting up CM. Always going to retire at 60. Thirteen weeks he was on the sick after his car accident, not seriously ill but he couldn’t come back to work. I said, “What are you going to do, John?” He said, “Aye, well it’s getting close to it, isn’t it?” He said, “I can go off now, get more than two years’ wages as a CM” – he said, “It’s more than I’ll ever get coming to work,” he said, “and I’ll retire in two years’ time with no loss.’ That’s what he did.

Same as a colleague from Berwyn last year, did exactly the same thing. And that’s what you’ve got to look at. Do you want to continue after 60? If you don’t, don’t take part time because your part-time wage, your pension or your medical inefficiency starts from when your part time starts. So, for instance, I’ve got 7½ years although I’ve got 36 years in the job. So be careful, you’ve got to look at all these things and these are the aspects you’ve got to look at. This is the way to be – 68 is too late, by the way. This is the way to do it, please support.

<Applause>

**JOHN DIXON – BRANCH CHAIR, SHOTTS:** Chair, NEC, Conference, we put a motion something similar to this at Scottish Conference last year so I’m just going to explain to you why we did this. We have got something similar going on. We’ve got a member of staff, for example, who retired and he was getting x amount of money for his pension and they found out that he was actually getting more money than he was getting so they’re now hunting him for £20,000 and he’s having to find that to pay it back. Thompsons is on the back of that and they’re helping this individual out. So there’s wee things that happen here and it’s not the member’s fault and it’s the actual processes.

So what we’ve asked for in Scotland was to have a resettlement area, which we got in the military. When you left the job, there was a resettlement officer and you went in, you had the paperwork, you had the forms. Depending on where you were going to they would give you the council or the district that you were going into, etc. And they would explain every single part of the process. We’ve asked for something similar in Scotland, that we have a resettlement area in our college, for example. And this shouldn’t be an onus on the union – this just be put on to the employer. The employer

should be putting this down and making sure that we, for all the service that we have provided, that we are looked after in our retirement. The onus is on them to put something in place and do it now. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, before I allow Joe Simpson to reply, can I just clarify from Maidstone – are you asking the POA to set this up or the employer? The employer? Right, okay. Cookie, off you go.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Make your mind up.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** To me, to you – to you, to me. Right, it's Chuckle Brother One who is going to address you on this. Or is it Chuckle Brother Two?

<Laughter>

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Who do you want to do it?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Cookie, do your job. I know you're about to retire but come on!

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Wow. I've ripped my notes up.

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Just say, 'Support' and sit down.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, NEC, Conference, responding on the motion. And on the basis that we're asking the employer to do this, we are now for this motion. But, I mean, before I start, I've only actually got one question and this is one that's bearing in all of our minds – Joe, where's my money?

<Laughter>

I thank Maidstone for bringing this because this is something that has been ongoing and, of course, everybody will be aware that I'm actually going through this process myself. And the experiences of our members going through their retirement or partial retirement and everything else is very varied. Some have an absolute nightmare and some have an easy ride through it. For years we've been asking HMPPS to put something in place to look after the staff that have served the service and the people that we look after for year after year and everything else, approaching retirement, to aid them through the final steps to do that.

At last they did it, they brought in Shared Services, award-winning Shared Services, as we discovered last year and they brought a pension hub. Let me tell you about the pension hub, and I know that there are a few other members that are here who are also going through the same process as I am. The pension hub, all they will do is monitor the process, that's all they do. They do not negotiate with the pension provider in any way whatsoever, that is down to the individual who is facing retirement. So all they will do is make sure that, at a particular time, certain forms are sent and then they will chase you up saying, "You need to send those forms back." They don't tell you how you're supposed to fill them in, they don't tell you what forms that they should be, etc., etc. So it's very restricted on it, it really does need to be improved. If you're going to help our members at the end of their service go through and have a nice easy ride through to retirement, then they have to do far better than they are at the moment.

To be honest, what we did have years ago, and many members will remember this, we had a retirement course. So as a member was approaching retirement or semi-retirement, they could go away for a two-day course where they had professionals, the Prison Service paid for it, professionals on tap where they could actually talk through and walk through the process of retirement. Our service should be investing in those that have give their time as members of staff and worked their way through it. So they should be investing in re-introducing a retirement course so we can have professional people, proper financial advisors who fully understand the pension schemes that we are subject to and be able to provide the advice that we retire.

When they really cocked up our pensions and they've introduced three, four, five different types of pensions and it depends now because we're on the Alpha scheme, some of us are on the Classic, etc. etc., the fact is that you now get two sets of figures and it's down to you to understand what those figures are and what should be best. And you're asked to actually choose which option you have. You only have the one choice, you only have that one opportunity to make the choice. It's not good enough, there is room for improvement as we've heard and all the speakers have actually said. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Dave, and thank you Maidstone for that clarification. The vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can now display those results. That motion has been carried.

Wakefield, motion 46. Are Wakefield here? Wakefield, can I just clarify? Is this an actual, just a question that you want answered? Yes, okay. So there's

no need for a seconder or a vote. Joe is happy to answer this question.

#### Motion 46

**Can I know why it is that in 2017 examples were asked for a test case to put to the Government regarding the change to the pensions. I believe that all members, regardless of whether they submitted a complaint should be entitled to the same compensation. This should not be subject to whether or not we submitted the form we are all effected by having our pensionable age increased.**

#### WAKEFIELD

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, Chuckle Brother 2 responding to the question from Wakefield. Conference, back in 2017 when we decided that we were going to challenge the imposition of the new pension, never did I think it was going to be this hard. Never. And if you think you get bombarded with questions, you need to see what I get, not just from members but also from my colleagues on the National Executive Committee. That's all I hear, "When am I going to get the money?"

Conference, back in 2017 no examples were asked for for a test case, none. What we asked members, for those who were forced over into Alpha from whichever pension scheme they had come in, they had to go onto our website and fill in a questionnaire, which we would then look at to see if they were eligible to take their case for discrimination to an employment tribunal. Once all that was settled, then the employment tribunals were looked at and then we asked people if they were prepared to be a lead claimant in the tribunal because the lead claimant goes forward. If they win, we then turn around and say, "We have another 4,000 people who are behind us." That's what we'd done, we'd sent out three circulars in 2017 and the last one, the National Executive were begging members to put in for the claim. It was your pension and we wanted you to get your pension back.

Conference, the question is everyone should be paid compensation, whether or not they made a claim. Conference, that's not the way claims for compensation for injury to feelings works. It's only payable to someone who has made an employment tribunal claim and, although tribunal claims can be made collectively by naming lots of individual claimants, they cannot be made collectively in the sense of saying that everyone in the same boat, whether or not they made an individual claim. That's why we asked everyone to sign up to the survey. Trying to negotiate a non-legal settlement for injury to feelings for non-claimants would be futile. The government has made it quite plain that it will not do so and if it reached that sort of settlement with us it would have to do the same for other Civil Service unions which filed no claims at all. The only unions to claim on the pensions within the Civil Service pension scheme were the POA and the Defence Police Force. PCS didn't make a claim, the PGA didn't make a claim, FDA nor Prospect nor GMB. We were the only trade union.

And can I just say this. I know it's a long time coming and people are asking where the money is. It's been the most exasperating experience of my career on the NEC because you're dealing with people who are absolute rob dogs and they don't want to pay that compensation. Every time we thought we had a settlement in place they put yet another stumbling block in place. And unfortunately Ivan Walker has decided to retire and that made another delay to the claim because we had to get Thompsons to take over it again and it's just been a nightmare to deal with it.

All I would say to everyone, please, and I keep saying this, please be patient. You will get the money. This is an absolute victory for this trade union. Victory, because of the people who put in that claim. In that claim every member of the public-sector pension scheme, it doesn't matter who you are, will get seven years back in their original pension scheme. But we still need to go on and get us back to where we were, and that's 60.

Wakefield, I hope that answers the question. Thank you, Conference, thank you, Chair.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Joe. On to 47, Liverpool. Thank you, Preston.

#### Motion 47

**That Conference mandates the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS a national agreement: Flexible working hours to negate the effect of pension abatement, for staff with Reserved Right Pensions, who have been re-employed on a part-time basis**

#### LIVERPOOL

**ROGER MORAN – BRANCH COMMITTEE, LIVERPOOL:** Chairman, NEC, Conference. Colleagues, this motion reads, "That Conference mandate the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS a national agreement. Flexible working hours to negate the effect of pension abatement for staff with Reserved Rights Pensions who have been re-employed on a part-time basis."

Colleagues, this relates often to our longest-serving staff, in some cases, as we've heard in the last couple of days, over three decades of loyal service, who can if they so wish embrace part-time working to try and adjust their lives in preparation for a hard-earned and well-deserved retirement – yet, in doing so, can suffer a financial loss. This is simply wrong. Colleagues, please support this motion.

<Applause>

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

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH CHAIR, PRESTON:** Chair, NEC, Conference, guests, I'll be as brief as I can. I'm very pleased, again, that Liverpool brought this. We would have framed this but I wasn't in work in January. Fifteen months ago I approached local management at Preston for pre-Fresh Start members of staff, five of them who were all having their pensions abated by £2,000 a year. Let's be really clear, shall we, what is a pension? A pension is deferred wages that we earned, so they're taking £2,000 a year off them because there's a local management decision that anyone who goes part time at Preston has to work 19½ hours. Well, when you calculate 19½ hours and you look at the pensions of some of our pre-Fresh Start members of staff, they're on more money when you combine the two than the salary that they would have been earning had they still been working full time. We asked them to adjust their hours down so that the correct form would be sent off to pensions so that they could calculate on the lower number of hours and thus release the £2,000. That's the nub of it. They said no.

As Mark said in his opening address, "not in the needs of the business". Those are the seven words that they used. I didn't think we were a business, I thought we were a service. Fortunately, that Governor and his Dep departed Preston and we got a new one in, a temporary one. So I grabbed the opportunity and in the introduction it was, "I only want to talk to you about five members of staff who need their hours adjusting downwards," and got an agreement in principle. Nine months later, after Shared Services and everybody and their dog where we were asking them to calculate what actual hours do they need to work going forward, it took Terry McCarthy to actually calculate it out. Because they seem incapable of using a calculator.

We've now got a situation where those five members of staff from the 21st May, with new profiles that are being introduced, will lower their hours to 16 hours so that their money can be released and they will work less. Two days a week, basically. Support the motion because governors should not have the right to tell our members who have earned their pensions that they can't draw all of it because they want an easy time in detail. It's not acceptable, support the motion.

<Applause>

**WILLIAM YOUNG – BRANCH CHAIR, GLENOCHIL:** Chair, NEC, Conference, I'd don't know if you are aware of this but during Covid they did away with the abatement rule because they required staff to be in, and they were asking retired members of staff to work extra hours. And they did away with it, they basically said, "We need you in so we will not punish you for being partially retired or retired, we need you back to work." Now, I don't know if everybody is aware of this as well – because of the way the pension works, when you get to 60 and you want to take your Classic pension you then get hit by the abatement rule because you're in receipt of your pension, therefore you have to reduce your hours by, I believe, 20%, it may be slightly more. That's going to affect everybody that has got their pension in Classic.

So we asked in Scotland, can we do away with the abatement? "No, it's a Government required thing." We need that changed because they've made us have a split pension. We can all ask for it in Alpha if we want or we can say that's a better deal than Classic, but it's going to affect all of us. So we need to support this motion, we need to get something done about the abatement rule and we need our NEC to action it. So please support the motion. Thanks very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, over to Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

**TERRY MCCARTHY – NEC:** Conference, speaking in favour of this motion. Can you imagine working for 30-odd years and you decide to go part time. You draw your pension and because you're working 19½ hours a week, you get told you've got to lose part of your pension because it exceeds the wage that you were earning. This is what's happening across the estate because some prison governors are refusing to be flexible with working hours for part-time staff, even though it is in their gift. So I'm aware, as Preston have just described, that some branches do have local agreements in place whereby nobody who goes part time will suffer pension abatement. Now, we want this to be a national agreement but not just for Reserved Rights staff, for staff moving forward into the future. So please support the motion. Pension abatement is immoral and shouldn't exist. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Terry. That vote is now open, Conference, thank you. Thank you, we can now display those results. That motion is carried.

Over to 48, Hewell – it's a debate so no need for a seconder or a vote. Please join in the debate, especially those of you who are first-time delegates, a good opportunity to get up and say a few words.

#### **Motion 48**

**For a debate on all of the recent balloting of POA Union members to talk about issues which prevented some branches from being involved and therefore not sending in returns for the said ballots.**

#### **HEWELL**

**LOUISE JAMES – TEMPORARY BRANCH CHAIR, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, invited guests and Conference, recently we had a ballot for vacant positions within the NEC and for the Assistant General Secretary. The ballot concluded with a 5.9% turnout in returns by members. This is an appalling

statistic which we should all be ashamed of. No, we cannot force members to vote and we cannot advise how they should vote, but we can ask them if they voted.

This postal ballot has cost the union and its members in excess of £30k, money that cannot be wasted like this. Prior to this ballot, we had a ballot of members for their nominations for the above positions, which was completed at local level. Over 60 establishments did not make a return – that's 60 establishments. Why is this? What is the reason? Many of these establishments are present at Conference and I invite them up to speak about any issues they may have had in conducting a workplace ballot which prevented them from returning a result.

We have also had an indicative workplace ballot on pay, 20 months ago, for Bands 2, 3, 4 and 5. Once more, we had over 60 establishments fail to declare and return results, resulting in a 7% turnout. Why was this? What was the reason? Some of these establishments who failed to make any returns are on both lists of recent workplace ballots. So once more I invite these establishments to partake in this debate.

I invite all establishments to join me in this debate. It is an important debate. We need to find out why this is happening in both local and national ballots and I invite all reasons and ideas in trying to combat this issue.

Another question to ask ourselves is, why are so many ballot slips left in pigeonholes? Why aren't staff supplying home addresses to the POA? Why aren't local committees sending out reminders prior to national ballots to the membership to ensure that we have the correct details? We need to help with the communication to help our trade union and not hinder its progress. We all know that the employer loves to see the poor returns and it loves to see us fail in our lack of contact in any kind of communicated action. We need to be more savvy and we need to be more organised. We need to be more effective. If the Government returned our right to strike, we would be ashamed at these turnouts. We would never have enough of a turnout to be able to take action. Please join in with me with this debate.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can't see anyone else. Stewart, thank you Stewart.

**STEWART MCLAUGHLIN – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH:** I've been Branch Secretary at Wandsworth now for about 22 years.

<Applause>

Please don't applaud – throw money!

<Laughter>

I'm a committed trade unionist, I'm a delegate to the local Trades Council and I am disappointed year on year as a scrutineer and teller to see how little our members are given the chance to vote on issues that impact them. Occasionally branches will come through and say, "Oh, we didn't get the notice." "Well, didn't you read the circular?" "No, I didn't read it" "So you didn't read the circular on the POA webpage?" "No." "You've got 300 members in your branch?" "Yes." "So they're not reading the circulars either?" It is actually a responsibility for all of us – it does rest with the branch officials. A committee of seven, a committee of five, is no-one checking anything? Those branches that aren't attending Conference this year, some of them are the same that didn't attend last year. Not attending your Annual Conference – this is where we get to speak on behalf of our members, the elected officials. You wouldn't give much truck to an MP that never turned up to Parliament and you certainly wouldn't re-elect them for a second term.

So perhaps we will have to take a good look at ourselves. I know we work behind the high walls of prisons but, my goodness, we don't live behind them. Do we? Thank you for listening.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Stewart. Thank you, Stewart. Joining in the debate for the NEC is Steve Gillan.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you very much, Chair, Conference, NEC, guests. Thank you Hewell for bringing this motion and thank you for your wonderful speech. And thank you to Stewart McLaughlin from Wandsworth as well. Sometimes we've got to be self-critical, actually, and this is probably one of those occasions because we're not just talking – and I'll split it in two here – we're not just talking about workplace ballots, we're talking about statutory ballots as well, i.e. to elect your national officials. And, unfortunately, it's not just this trade union.

I'll start with national ballots where you have got to do a postal ballot in order to elect your National Executive Committee. Yes, there are anti-trade union legislation there but we've known about that since the days of Thatcher, quite frankly. And we can not keep relying on criticising that for the poor turnouts. Now, listen, I sit at TUC level, at General Council, Executive and we've debated that there as well because it's not just this trade union, it's actually the majority of trade unions where the members are not engaging in the process of election.

Now, I'm not naïve enough to think that every single member in the POA is a trade unionist, unlike the very people here and up here as well, the activists. And I suppose there's one way of looking at it in respect of a national ballot – if the majority of our members don't want to vote then they must be satisfied with the people up here that are elected to do their job. That's one way I look at it – so if you get a 5% turnout, 95% of our members must be happy with what they've got already and see no need to vote. That's one way of looking at it.

I would love to see 100% of our members turning out in these ballots but, even when I was a local branch official, way back in the '90s, I used to collect the ballot papers after the elections when we'd gone through the process of holding branch meetings, encouraging our members to vote, and collecting maybe 200 ballot papers out of 300 that people haven't been bothered to vote. And I used to take them to the following meeting and say, "Why haven't people voted in the election?" And people used to make all sorts of excuses – they didn't know where to get the ballot papers. Well, the reality is, it's a feeble excuse and we've all got a responsibility to try and make sure that people are voting in these national elections.

Now, of course, we're campaigning along with the rest of the trade union movement to remove the obstacles of the anti-trade union legislation to get electronic ballots in place to make it easier for our members to do that. But, I've got to say, if people can't put a cross in a box and put their ballot paper in an envelope, which is paid for centrally for everybody, and put in a post box, are we convinced that they'll actually switch their computer on and do it on a computer? Not 100% sure about that.

So it's an educational process and I'm delighted that Stewart and Hewell have got up on this motion because it is really important. It's an education process and it's about learning together, not being critical of each other. Because you're all volunteers and I respect that, that you give up your time on a voluntary basis to assist your members, and the amount of hours you put in I commend. But we need collectively to move forward to try and make sure that our members are educated in order to vote in crucial elections. It's their trade union and they have a right to say what they need to say.

On workplace ballots, we do have scrutineers and tellers that come to Cronin House to count ballots and different things, and sometimes that stats are dreadful, even on a consultative ballot. I'm not embarrassed to say it, of course any trade union would spin the figures to say, "Yes, most of our OSGs were balloted, in actual fact 98%, or whatever it was, said they're prepared to take strike action in a consultative ballot." But the turnout was about 28%. Now, if only 28% are turning out in a consultative ballot, they wouldn't get over the threshold of 50% if we went to a statutory ballot. That's why myself, Mark and the Executive never called a statutory ballot – because we've got to be sure that we're going to get over those thresholds and we've got to become more organised in our workplaces in order to do that.

Even on consultative ballots that we do, you know, some branches don't return. And I've got no idea. We've debated it at NEC level and we're not here to kick anybody or any branch whatsoever. It's the same as the monthly returns that some branches return on a religious basis, others don't, to keep the membership data up to speed.

So, I'm happy to debate this with you but the reality is I'm not here to kick you. I think what we need to do is learn collectively and try and make it better, with better communication at all levels to ensure that our members – it's their union and their vote, it's their money. And at the end of the day, I just feel that collectively it's not a new thing, it's been around for decades. Don't believe that it was any better in the good old days because there weren't any good old days back then either, and we were afflicted by the same issues. The trade union movement in general has been afflicted. And, yes, we have been demoralised by anti-trade union legislation, as you've heard from our guest speakers, but that doesn't stop people from organising. Organising to say that, in actual fact, they don't care what anti-trade union legislation you put in front of us, we will defeat it because we are bigger and we're braver and we're bolder than that.

So, it's your union, take that clear message back, and I thank Hewell for being brave enough to bring this motion, which we should all be able to self-examine. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** That's it, Hewell, thank you. That's the debate done, you've done well, you've made your point. Excellent, well done.

Just a few things before we break for dinner. Dinner? Tea? Dinner, tea, yes? What is it, Joe, breakfast, dinner and tea? Yes, not lunch, dinner. Just before we break, London and Southeast branches can you stay behind in the hall, please, Cookie wants to have a word with you and introduce you to your new NEC rep. We've got fringe meetings, we've got Public and Private – Stronger Together, that's on level 5. And at the back of the hall there we've got the Hope Not Hate panel. So please attend these fringe meetings, there are refreshments available to you. And see you back here at half past one. Thank you.

<Break>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** <Taps microphone> Working again now, yeah. Because we've got representatives from the private sector employers in the hall this afternoon, we're going to start today's proceedings with motion 62, which is a debate, so we don't need a seconder or a vote, so I'm going to ask the delegate from Northumberland to start the debate. Motion 62, Conference, thank you.

## Motion 62

**Conference debate the consequences and implications of a member from the Private Sector or secure health being elected to the NEC in the future.**

## NORTHUMBERLAND

**PAUL FOSTER – BRANCH CHAIR, NORTHUMBERLAND:** Chair, NEC, Conference, this is motion 62, Conference debate the consequences and implications of a member of the private sector or Secure Health being elected at the NEC in the future. I bring this matter to the attention of Conference

for the benefit of all POA members although it'll probably never have crossed the mind of the vast majority in the room today or the membership. Currently there is no provision or protocol if a POA member not employed by HMPPS is elected to the NEC, surrounding their <inaudible> employment, facility time and what happens at the end of their term of office. First thing to highlight, that this is not an election speech. Me <inaudible> elected and I'll not be back every five minutes, I'm far too old for that. I'm not a prospective candidate so you're free of that one!

I would like the debate to bring this potential issue into the minds of the NEC and the membership in general, and hopefully lead to a workable solution. The private sector now has 2,000 members and is the fastest-growing membership area of the POA. With most newbuilds and the awarding of new contracts largely going to the private sector, it is only going to increase further. If this matter is not resolved, or at least a protocol put in place, the POA could miss out on talented individuals purely because of where they work, who they work for or the role they perform within the criminal justice sector. The current situation is neither fair nor <inaudible> for all POA members. Conference, please join the debate.

<Applause>

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

**RAY SOMERS – BRANCH SECRETARY, ICE IMMIGRATION:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking for my second-last time – hopefully. I brought this, well not personally but Ralph Valerio brought this to Conference a few years ago and I assisted in writing a speech which he brought in, claiming it was his, but it highlighted the indifference there was between private sector and yourselves, the public sector, because there was no aspirations that we would ever get up there and sit on that top table up there, because it just wouldn't happen. And why? Because we don't have that sort of rapport with our managers. They give us facility times and most of us will agree that they are very good at giving us facility time to go and deal with things, but now just imagine turning around and saying for two or three days a week I've got to go away and do union business for the union itself, but you're still going to pay my wages. So it's an aspiration that we need, but it's an inequality that is there between the private and public sector, and somehow that's got to be breached, and I also am not campaigning for this because I am on my retirement shortly as well. So please join the debate, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Can't see any other debaters. Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on the debate on behalf of the NEC. The rules and constitution of the POA are very clear regarding eligibility for election to the NEC. Rule 10.6 states that candidates for election as National Executive members must be full members of the union who are willing to stand. Rule 4, full members, states that the qualification for full membership is employment in any penal or secure establishment, health trust, private healthcare provider, associated training establishment, Prison Service establishment, secure units, private sector escort or custodial services in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland or the Isle of Man. I think it's very clear that members from the private sector, the mental health sector and indeed our colleagues in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man have the right to be candidates for election as National Executive committee members. The NEC have long recognised the need for diversity, not only in the workplace but also within our own organisation. A diverse and inclusive movement is essential to connecting with and representing the diverse membership that we now have. Currently, members in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the private sector, the mental health sector, amount to 26% of our membership. The National Executive Committee would welcome candidates from these sectors to be candidates for election as NEC members. The actual consequences and implications mentioned in the motion would obviously involve negotiations with the employers, regardless of where that may be. That'd be above my pay grade, that'd be a job for the General Secretary.

<Laughter and applause>

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

We'll now continue with the motions in order, beginning with motion 49 Whatton. Do we have a seconder for Whatton, please? Thank you.

#### **Motion 49**

**For the NEC to give monthly update on Disputes that a branch has submitted.**

#### **WHATTON**

**MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH, WHATTON:** Hello NEC, Conference, it's only a little motion, it's one I would just like to see that the NEC feed back to us monthly on any disputes that a branch has submitted. The only reason for this is that we can go months – sometimes six months, sometimes longer – without actually getting any update from anywhere without chasing it ourselves, and I would just like to see the NEC just feed back to us on any disputes we've got when they have their meetings about it. That's pretty much it, guys, thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you Whatton. Feeding back to you now is the Chair of the Disputes Committee, Dave Todd.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, the National Executive Committee support this motion because it's already in place. There's a standing agenda item on one of the monthly NECs where we discuss any feedback or any requests for further information, so all you

have to do is speak to your NEC rep. Equally so, I would say communication is a two-way thing. If we ask for extra added information, then please supply it, don't leave it hanging. We're just as annoyed at the amount of time disputes take to resolve. So in agreeing with the motion, please take on your own responsibilities as well. Thank you Chair.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Let's take that to the vote then. Vote's now open. Thank you, Conference. We can now display that result. That motion has been carried.

Motion 50 is a debate. Durham?

### Motion 50

That we debate Bulletin 8 fresh start.

### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Conference, Chair, National Executive, we debate Bulletin 8, Fresh Start <microphone problems>. I brought this debate to look at Bulletin 8 Fresh Start. This is the closest thing we have to a contract of employment, and in principle some 37 years ago it was all new and looked good. It is dated now and some things don't exist. So I joined prior to Fresh Start – coming to the jails it was accepted at national level. So what were the changes? Well for me it was a rise in basic wage from £6,000 to £13,000 overnight, with contract hours which worked out £3,649 or nine hours. I had to pay for my quota. I eventually moved on to Fresh Start on 1 April 1988, that was at Highpoint. We were told by the Governor of Highpoint, he was <microphone problems> so I eventually moved onto Fresh Start at Highpoint. The Governor came to us and said, "If you don't move on to Fresh Start, I will pay all the contract hours and you'll get no overtime." We signed over. We were one of the last five to go over, so I never even seen nine hours. We went to eight hours straight away. So what should have happened? So as we reduced the hours, half the hours were supposed to be as a saving for your TOIL and the other half went to your basic pay. That never happened. The TOIL went sky high because Swaleside opened and we used <inaudible> to Swaleside, that's what in fact happened. Not a bad thing, but what happened to the TOIL? Governors weren't really interested – TOIL went up, not interested. Nobody was going to pay it back. So a lot of the things in Bulletin 8, it's here, the old version, still here, and I thank, I think it was Mark Hooper, who noticed recently and put a copy of Bulletin 8 out for you all so you can see it. It's all outdated. It needs to be looked at again. The only good thing that did come out of it was a letter by Ian Boon – and those who remember, we used to get Gatelodge extras – and it was about working extra hours, the contract hours, and how we were working it. And he put that out. If any Governor tells you that's not what Bulletin 8 says, shove that in their face and say, "That's what Boon says. It's his interpretation. You haven't got an interpretation. That is the interpretation you work to. It's there in black and white." Governors don't like it. Management's interpretation, the man who negotiated with the POA put it out, so they haven't got a <inaudible>. All I'm saying is, is it fit for purpose? Do you want to renegotiate it? Do you want that option to renegotiate? It's entirely up to yourselves. If nobody comes to debate now, I'll take it that nobody wants to go further with Bulletin 8. What I would say as a caveat though is, if you do accept that we go to renegotiate Bulletin 8, the NEC will either come back to you and say we can't get anything – you need to get something out of it! So whether that's an increase in basic pay, whether it's an increasing in staffing, whether it's an increase of leave, whatever, you need to get something out of it. You're not going to go and take all the flack of management and get nowt out of it. So please come to the debate if you want to.

<Applause>

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

**JAMES EVANS – BRANCH, THORN CROSS:** Chair, Conference, NEC, Bulletin 8 is very old, has its problems. It's been our bible. The one thing I would like you all to just think about, those who haven't done any profiling work, it protects every other weekend. If you move to working three weekends in four, you could run your jail with less staff. Please bear that in mind. Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Jim. Dave Todd joining the debate on behalf of the NEC.

**DAVE TODD – VICE CHAIR, NEC:** Conference, Chair, invited guests, happy to join the debate. I'll make it short and sweet. It is outdated, Craig, you're absolutely right. But as James has just said, we've got those protections in there and they're still utilised today. I'll go more into it in the motion, but to throw something away when we're not at the point to renegotiate anything, I just think, yeah. Thanks Chair.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. That's the debate.

On to motion 51, Durham. Can we have a seconder for Durham please?

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Permission to withdraw.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Permission to withdraw from Durham, this motion. Conference, do Durham have permission to withdraw – just a show of hands will do.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Do you know how long it took me to do this reply!

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any against? That's been withdrawn. I think the point we were going to make, Conference, is that it is a historical document, it does offer a lot of protections. The employer would love us to renegotiate Bulletin 8, would absolutely love it, like nothing better. I ain't giving that away on your behalf unless we get something in return, and what I want in return is your retirement age reduced to 60. So that's the offer on the table.

On to motion 52, Durham, can we have a seconder for Durham please? Thank you.

### Motion 52

### That we debate the POA.

### DURHAM

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** Chair, NEC, Conference, honorary life members and guests, I think that covers all the bases, apologies to anyone else, the motion reads we debate the POA. Wow! I put in six motions from the Durham branch this year and every one was rejected. One we let go, but I think if the motion comes to fruition I think NEC might regret, but we'll act anyway. The others were all accepted eventually apart from our appeal. On this motion it appears the NEC didn't know how to deal with it, until I gave some assurances. It could have been held in camera, but I don't think we need that at the present time, so let's make this clear. This motion is not about slagging the NEC off. I might have 2,650 good reasons to do so, but it's not about that. Still not finished with that one!

This is to have a look at ourselves, to see what we think is working, what isn't working and to see if there's anything we can do. We, as a Conference, whilst sitting, we are the custodians of this union, so anything that comes out of this debate might have to come back to Conference at a later date with a motion or I would hope in the spirit of the motion the NEC might listen and put things in place for the future. I will not see the changes, as after this Conference I'll be ... <microphone problems>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I think we're back on.

**CRAIG ROBSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, DURHAM:** The NEC have already started with an OSG Committee and a Young Members Committee. This, I believe, is a positive start. I don't know what the committees will do, or are they more of a forum to bring issues of their groups to the NEC, but it's a start and I wish them well. The debate we appeal would have covered the OSGs and I hope the OSGs come up with it, because the debate that would have been is that because of F&S, the OSG agreement has changed massively and we need to look at that. I hope the OSGs come up with something about that. So, I joined this union June '87, at Wakefield Haverford Road. The then <inaudible> Chair, John Bartell, addressed us, and we joined. I was already a trade unionist so it was nothing new to me, but for others it was a fresh start was being voted on. Yet, after the vote, no one appeared to vote for it. Remember that? It was a good piece of business – it wasn't perfect but the idea was simple, to give some life after members retired, as at that time the last two years of your service, you were guaranteed any overtime that was available, so you worked yourself into the ground to get a bigger pension and you were lucky to see the two years of it. A bit like today, but then the starting pay went from 6,000 to 13,000 overnight. Can't see any of that at the minute of course. We had legislation put into Parliament, Section 126 of the Criminal Justice Act, for an independent Pay Review Body for compensation, for the right not to take industrial action. Well, we all have an opinion on that, and further we now have a permanent injunction against us to stop us taking any action, regardless of it's to protect our health and safety or not. At the Conference in Southport, some will remember, I think it's my recollection we had to sit in camera as the legal advice was 13 motions could reach the law. We even had our in-house solicitor spell it out to us, what might happen to us if we took action. So we took action, and the POA being what it is, missed out the first two actions and we moved to level 3 of the solicitor's predictions, £300,000 fine and a permanent injunction. No one's had that happen to them in this country. POA remember. So we are here now. We appear to be a campaigning union, whether in publications or on Twitter we support the teachers, the postal workers, the RMT, the Colombians, the Liverpool Dockers, ASLEF, the Seamen and probably many more. We would probably support the prostitutes and sexual performers' union if they had one. But I'll not ask how we would support them but I'll let you work that one out for yourselves.

But you know what? That's good trade unionism. But I never hear support of the POA and its members. The union that has had more draconian measures than any other union in the country. The RMT had a great Twitter account when they were taking action, and I would tweet them and Sky News, the BBC and LBC, at every opportunity whenever they would mention the strikes, as inevitably they would mention the pay reviews and their independence. What a great opportunity for them to say, "Well tell that to the prison officers when the Justice Secretary intervenes in their pay deliberations, or when you see the submissions that don't come from the employer but the Government, who can't even get it in on time and get the <inaudible> the date should be."

<Applause>

Anyone with the belief HMPPS puts in the submissions, have a look at last year's submissions. Governors will be responsible for the retention of their staff. Turkeys voting for Christmas springs to mind. I attend the Durham Miners Gala, unfortunately not last year, but I'm aware Mick Lynch attended and he was at the club but I don't know what was said, if he spoke, but over the years there's only one mention of the POA. It's the man behind me, Steve Gillan. The arena is a big amphitheatre with a big house, Durham Prison overlooking it. I spoke to Steve after Jeremy Corbyn spoke at Durham. Whatever you think of Corbyn, Corbyn spoke very well that year at Durham, even had a woman challenge him on the stage. He was excellent. The things he said were spot on. If they weren't massively socialist, he just put common things about taxes and stuff like that, it made sense, so I asked Steve why did Corbyn not mention the prison officers? The answer you get from him is, "Prison officers don't win votes." Teachers win votes, nurses win votes, prison officers don't win votes.

So where are we now? We're going to the Court of Human Rights, we've been there before, we were told we should be at the ILO. So I don't know what the legal argument is this time but I hope it meets the bar this time for all your sakes. We might have to look at other means in the future. I read an article in Canada which is where a state decided they would like to ban their health workers taking industrial action, so the day in their parliament came and they got the legislation through to start in four weeks' time. Plenty of back slapping and, "We showed them who the bosses are!" So two weeks before the date, the union turned up to the minister in charge to speak with him, and you can see it now, treat you like something you've just scraped off your shoe. The union presented the minister with 5,000 letters of resignation from the date of the ban. They were not breaking the law. They just exercised their right to seek new employment. Needless to say the legislation was scrapped before the date was to take place. All rescinded their resignations – just one way of thinking outside the box. I think that's what we might have to do in the future, think outside the box. To make it clear, I'm not advocating this action, but it's interesting to see how others reacted to similar circumstances. It was mentioned many Conferences ago that maybe we should have Conference as a training aid. I know we have fringe meetings but just maybe part of Conference should go into a closed sitting, have a warts and all conversation of what is going on in the country, to give clarity to assist delegates and members. Just a thought, but this wouldn't have an agenda and I can think of umpteen things we could discuss now.

We have a policy campaign, "68 Is Too Late." Well let me tell you, 62 is too late and I'm here to prove it. The vast majority of my career spent on the landings, so out of 36 years, at least 33 on the landings, up and down stairs, takes it toll on your body, arthritis in my knees, hips, shoulders, no cartilage in the bottom three joints of my spine, so last year I was involved in a C&R incident. End up with the leg man, full relocation, and you push back, spring up like a gazelle, get out the cell and the door's shut – all well and good but my spring had sprung and someone had to assist me off the floor. The gazelle had gone.

<Laughter and applause>

So, just a little background. When I joined the job, I was pre-Fresh Start with a reserved right with the entitlement to retire at 55, but that meant I could go part-time so I became a reemployed pensioner, that has lengthened my career. The benefit was I was no worse off than a full-time officer as you don't pay National Insurance contributions on your pension, but this is something I think the POA should embrace, to advise staff what they can do with current legislation. It's not to give financial advice, and that's up to the individual to work out themselves, but the options are there.

We spoke to a delegate last year, I spoke about it this morning, and asked why he was still here. It was clear he wasn't well and the then Chair told him the same and a delegate from Preston gave him similar advice. Well, he contacted me this year, he eventually took on board what we said. I know he spoke to Steve as well, and he got medical inefficiency, which at 58 was more than he could earn if he continued to 60, and he left the job. As it happens, my ex-Chair has done exactly the same thing. So it's my turn. I'll be leaving after Conference, in the not too distant future, but that's where the learning comes into, as part-time is different to full-time, especially if you have taken your pension. We have members who have retired and are still arguing what they're entitlements are, so it is clear we need some learning as branch officials. Branch officials are not aware of what they can do and cannot do. I pick that up on Twitter. People are paying a loss when they contact you privately, they question, "Why is it my branch official doesn't know that?" We all learn, we use the system, it's a learning process. I thought my retirement age on Alpha was 67. It's not, it's 66 and 5 months and it's linked to my old age pension. Just one thing about part-time, it's very good but you need to work out what you will get if you're dismissed on medical inefficiency or when you're going to retire, as you might not be working for very much. So I hope this gives you an insight that 67 isn't too late but doesn't have to be 67, there's ways and means to this.

As I've already mentioned, the NEC are setting up a Young Members Committee, and as you will see it's a different job to what it was now when I joined, but we need to look at what they now want as it's not a career anymore to our younger members. It might be useful to mention the RMP. It's a valuable tool. Yes, Durham's RMP and we still haven't finished it yet. That's how much we've got in it. I'd like to thank you Ian Carson. The Governor decided that he wanted to choose who was going to be on the RMP from the Committee. I told him it's got nothing to do with you. I choose, the Committee choose, so nobody went on. Two years went by. Guess what? We've chose now. They want to discuss with us, Ian Carson comes in, he speaks with the governors. So that's what we have. So we have become a digital union, we have progressed with technology, but is that a good thing? And it had savings in postage and paper but it must be a nightmare for our colleagues in membership with the amount coming in and leaving. It's hard enough for me to keep up with that at branch level, so I apologise for my nil returns, but as area recruiting Tyne-Wear area and they do their training in Durham, it appears that Durham – the <inaudible> is Durham's but I don't know who they are. So 216, 330 we've got now, I haven't got a clue, the Governor doesn't now. She apologised to me last week that we have another 20.

I send out the circulars when I receive them but get the message, "I haven't time to look at it." No excuse but that's what I get. Cost some people £2,650 if they didn't look at them last time. You used to have Gatelodge extras and they would be in the tearooms, offices, messes, and out came the Boon letter and the survey. Whether people would read the hard copies, I don't know. And I suppose I'm shooting myself in the foot but the Gatelodge doesn't appear to be read these days. Where branch notes were abundant, that's stopped. So I would suggest that this was made digital. Some years ago, we decided to reduce the amount sent to branches. Well maybe it's time to save some more money and dispense with it altogether. We don't have a Finance Officer at present and I would advocate we don't have one in the distant future. I don't see the benefit anymore. The legal forms have changed but can I suggest we change the wording of the self-inflicted death form, as due to our ageing population not every one is self-inflicted. So to Standing Orders and NEC, I hope it wasn't as bad as you thought it would be, and I hope some good and openness comes from this debate, so I'm hoping others will want to contribute to this debate as this <microphone problems> doesn't work and what you want to see in the future from this union. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

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

**PAUL MALLIBAND – BRANCH, PRESTON:** NEC, delegates, guests, I want to thank Craig for putting it on the order paper. If people's backsides were twitching a bit, well – hard luck. Mark was quite clear – he apologises for nothing and neither do I, okay? I wasn't sure whether we would end up

in camera here. If I do say something that could cause us a problem then I'll take personal responsibility for it.

1939 we created this organisation, not us – I think there's still a couple up there that were around at that time!

<Laughter>

Eighty-four years ago, okay? We've had 18 National Chairs in that period of time, it's actually on 17 because one of them did it twice with a gap. Personally I only recognise 16, okay? I've got a couple of favourites – who hasn't? Really pleased to see Colin Moses here today. And then the current one, who's doing a great job as far as I'm concerned – and growing into the role. And his performance in front of the Justice Committee deserves all our applause.

<Applause>

I've got members coming to me <microphone problems> never read a circular, telling me, "Hey, did you see Mark Fairhurst?" I didn't need to watch it. I knew what he were going to say, but if we've got members watching it, happy days. I said I only recognised 16, so this might be the controversial bit. I don't recognise the person who was elected in 2016 to '17. Any individual who uses anti-trade-union legislation, and is the National Chairman of this union, against the union because he spat his dummy out and couldn't get his own way isn't worthy of still having his name in our diary and it should be removed.

<Applause>

Worse, if you create a rogue organisation to challenge us, then you deserve everything you get, and those prisons who aren't present who are still on our books, who signed up to that organisation – which is dying on its feet, thank the Lord – we should be at the gates of those jails with leaflets, re-recruiting our members. How dare they? That's probably why they're not members of the TUC, because they'd be up for the Bridlington Agreement for poaching our members. And I make no apology for saying it – and if people are insulted in the south, who thought that he was the bees knees, get over yourselves, okay?

<Laughter>

Six General Secretaries. Harley Cronin – 24 years he held office. We have a Cronin Clasp Award in his name for the fantastic work that he did setting this organisation up, and Stewart McLaughlin's far better placed than me to give a proper history lesson. I'm merely scratching the surface. We've had four others who've spent nine years in office and then in 2010 we get a bloke called Steve Gillan, who to date is still in place. 23 years. Next year that man equals what Harley Cronin did.

<Applause>

We've seen we're not good at praise, are we? We're certainly not good at accepting it and we always blush and all the rest of it when it happens, but we seem to wait to give people honorary life membership till they're not functioning in the union anymore. Why do we do that? I know there's a motion to look at it, and I think it's appropriate. But we've got an award in the name of Harley Cronin and we should already be looking, from branches, to create one in his name because that man's done a fantastic job in this union and some of the troubled times that we've had with the injunctions and all the rest of it. I don't know how he's survived as long as he has and I consider him a personal friend.

Full-time officials behind them. I've heard people moan that we pay them the amount, and you see the thing on the return that you have to do for legislation, and the NEC sat in front of them and the admin staff. We must be the worst employer on the planet because we expect these people to be available to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and yet we're telling an employer we're not working more than 39 hours a week. Fantastic! Wow! But that's what we expect. Our expectations of these people is unreasonable – it's unreasonable and we need to do something about that. We have to give them downtime. There are officials who burn out in the branches. What do you think's going to happen here eventually?

And I like the motion as well that you've put on the paper about planning for the future with training courses – absolutely appropriate! Are we in good hands <microphone problems> 45. I've touched perhaps that that motion needs exploration in how we issue that award. We've got a retired members section that was revamped last year and they've got about 3,500 members at this moment in time, with lots of plans of stuff to go forward. As Steve outlined earlier, the finances of the union are currently stable and recruitment's essential and that's down to you lot on the ground. And we have a welfare fund that is the envy of the trade union movement. I think we're clear, and I'm concentrating on all the positives here because there's always stuff we'll fall out over and that bit's easy, but we do good we forget to mention.

Annual Conference, here we are, hundreds of us. Some haven't turned up – I don't know what we do about those and I think it's not the first time with some of them as well. It's not just about motions and gobshites like me who get up here and carry on banging on all the time, it's about the networking that everybody does and the stuff you take back, because it can be a lonely place in an establishment over a year. And I know that there's a motion on the order paper as well about possibly looking at biannual Conferences. They're only asking you to do a discussion paper but by god, reject it! You deserve an Annual Conference, where you all come together and share experiences.

<Applause>

MPs and Ministers rolling in here, coming out with their claptrap winds me up no end! Steve's telling us yesterday, "We're not blaming you for the

broken promises of the past.” Well why not, it’s still the same party. And I don’t care what their espousing they’ve put in their so-called manifesto. There’s nothing that specifically says, “We will give the POA the right to take industrial action” is there?

<Applause>

There’s nothing in there that says, “We’ll take your retirement age back to 60.” It’s not there, right? I had the Gatelodge with Jack Straw behind bars, I was going to bring it as a prop, but I’ve already done the prop bit earlier that Mick Harrison set me up for!

<Laughter>

Why are we inviting these people here if we, we, are not allowed to ask them questions, because they’d probably not come and speak if they had to open themselves up for that. Don’t invite them anymore.

<Laughter and applause>

This Conference needs to be more central for everybody. You’re probably discussing a biannual Conference because of the cost of it. Well, let’s go more central instead of three-quarters of the union coming right down to the furthest southern tip of the country and it costing us a fortune. We need to be more central. Right? You need to think about that going forward, give them a steer, yeah? And we need to get rid of this electronic voting, I’m afraid, if it’s costing us £9,000 a year, because it certainly weren’t costing us that for scrutineers and tellers.

Branch officials, you are the lifeblood and the cement that holds all these bricks together, you know. This top table can’t operate without us. The burden of that leadership that you carry while striving to get our members what they want is a voluntary task and it’s the only one you should be doing.

<Applause>

As I’ve said, you need to be careful about burnout. This is my last Conference as the Chair at Preston because I am burnt out. I applaud the members for not electing me to the NEC. They put the right guy up there and I really wish Phil well. Our members expect us to lead on their behalf, that’s why you’re here. That’s why we have low turnouts in elections, not because we’re not communicating – there maybe some branches that don’t do it as well as others but there are others who do all the returns, who do the ballots, who sit in the gate with a ballot box and all the rest of it – but our members, whether you like it or not, and they are the democracy of the union, expect us to lead on their behalf, and by god do you lot do a good job! Whether you sit there and don’t come up here and all the rest of it, and it is daunting no matter how many times you’ve done it, give yourselves a pat on the back. You should be proud of that history.

Overall I think we punch way above our weight for the size of the organisation. We’re very respected within the trade union movement, as you heard from Paul earlier. We campaign across the political spectrum without affiliation, and that’s key that. I know we’ve debated it in the past – don’t be hoodwinked into thinking that we can support any particular political party because they change their mind like the weather! We should be proud and we should continue the history that we’ve currently got. And we’ve all just had a celebration last weekend, haven’t we, and I’ve heard all sorts of catchphrases prior to us coming to Conference, so here’s one for you: Long live the POA and God Save the POA!

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Colleagues, NEC, guests at the back, also on my last Conference. Last year, I’ve got to be totally honest, I was really worried about the way the union was going. I felt that we’d lost a lot of experience and it wasn’t going to go very well. <Microphone problems>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** If it goes off again Paul, play your musical socks!

<Laughter>

He’s got musical socks on.

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** I have.

<Laughter>

You can’t hear – and I can’t get me leg up there!

<Laughter>

Hello?

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yeah, we’re back on!

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** I can't get me legs up there! Sorry, yeah. I think it was the best Conference that I've been to, because the sprouts were there from the new people that were coming in and starting to take it, and all basically I want to say about this is that you are the future of the union. It's your union. I've had my time and I've taken it and I've enjoyed every minute of it. I've won some splendid victories, and I've lost a few bits. I managed to keep my jail open, which I think is my biggest achievement, but that was with the help of the NEC and everybody else. It's now great to see people like Jade coming up here and speaking and driving it forward. So please basically, all I'm saying for the POA is, it's your union, not theirs. They will guide or they will go with your guidance. So please take it forward and never give in the fight. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** Conference, I was originally going to say this in a later debate that was brought forward from HMP Moorland, but I do feel that it just fits now. I do want to pick up about what was said earlier about the lack of engagement and the need to future-proof this union. I do want to see bums on those seats because we need to be talking on this motion, because it is an important one. We have seen, over the last year, the contempt in which the Government holds workplaces and unions up and down the country. What is important, though, is that as a union we buckle up, remain steadfast and build a robust defence for these continued attacks. We've brought <microphone problems>

Hello? We need to discuss on this motion today as a union community. We can discuss how we can build the POA to be as strong as it needs to be. It has been noted that not all branches attend Conference, it's been noted that not all branches are holding ballots. I have been told some branches don't have an active committee. What is it that we can do to support the union to ensure that our strength remains? Due to the recruitment crisis, we have to refocus our energies on how we, as a union, inspire our members to become the next generation of activists and carry the campaigns of the future. Our guest speaker, Paul Nowak, said earlier that we are at our strongest when we organise together. We need to organise for our future and the future of the union. These conversations have to happen now. If we don't, we might not be prepared for the battles ahead. I want you to come up to suggest ideas or raise issues that you may be facing that are preventing your local Committee attending Conference or not being able to have an active Committee. Do we need more support, do we need to support each other more? I'm in an email chain with other branch officials, which is extremely helpful. The younger or newer officials or any of us really do sometimes not know the answers to everything. We like to ask questions. It helps with knowledge, it helps me with my confidence, it provides a support system. A lot of the time it is just to dispute what a Governor has said – "All the other jails are doing it." There's a lot of that checking. But it's definitely helpful. There must be ways that we can future-proof this union. Can we look at additional training? People in this room could be up there one day as future trade union leaders. Getting this right now could be critical for the future. Please get up and speak on this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Just before we continue with this debate, I don't know about you but this technical issue's doing my head in and it's unfair on people, so they've asked for a 20-minute break so they can fix it. So I'll see you back here at twenty-to-three. Sorry about this.

<break>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference, I think we're back up and running now. We were in the middle of a debate and we had at least one more person wishing to contribute to the debate from the floor, and then we've got the NEC response. Thank you for your patience, Conference.

**JORDAN COOMBES – BRANCH, HULL:** Chair, NEC Conference, throughout a lot of this debate there's been a lot of mention to the ladies and gentlemen sat behind me, but I think what we also really need to look at is who is the POA – and it's not these guys say behind me, it's every one of us and every one of our members at our establishments.

As I mentioned yesterday, in Hull we're one of the sending sites for detached duty at the moment. I'd like to share just a small part of the story from one of my colleagues that came back to us after doing a weekend away on detached duty. This member of staff has 30 years in the service in the high security estate, in category B jails as well. He's worked with the likes of IRA prisoners, he worked in the '90s in no-go, where there was no-go areas in some jails. He came back from his weekend away and said he's never felt more scared in his full 30 years than he did when he was at this establishment on the landing. I think we need to ask ourselves, what are we doing to tackle this at the moment?

In Hull, we're fortunate. We do have the staff in place and we've got a good operational grip. And other jails are in a similar position as well where they have a strong operational grip. But we've got stuff in place to tackle these things – the RMP is such a great tool. I know from my own establishment, if the staff aren't in place, if that wing's not getting unlocked, if it's not safe to do so, the staff aren't on the wing, they're retreating to a safe place, and this is what we need to make sure is happening in each establishment across the country. We have our health and safety agreement. We can't instruct people to go to a safe place, I know that, but everybody who works in our jail needs to be aware of their own personal health and safety rights and that message isn't getting through to some of our young new staff that are starting.

I think we also need to look at, in the future – and I know there's invited guests from HMPPS here – there's been some quite shocking reports recently from the Inspector of Prisons. And although it was well before my time, I've read through the Woolf Report from the '90s and how many of the same triggers leading up to riots are evident now and are building and building. Prisoners haven't taken the roof off of many jails yet because they don't need to in a lot of establishments. They're going unchallenged by a lot of staff that I know we've sent on detached duty, who've gone and said, "We're in a position where we don't feel safe to challenge prisoners." They don't feel safe to challenge prisoners because they know that, if they do, they're going to end up getting airlifted to hospital like some of our colleagues have.

It's going to get to the point soon where one of our members is going to lose their life, and I think we all need to have a big thought about what we're

going to do when that moment happens. I won't be instructing anyone at Hull to retreat to a safe place, to go a sterile area, because obviously it would be unlawful for me to do so, but I know the staff off their own back would be doing exactly that if it was to happen in Hull. If a member of staff gets murdered, one of our members, what do we do from there? Thank you.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Can't see any more debaters so I'll hand over to Steve Gillan to join the debate.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you chairman, NEC, Conference. Craig, thanks for bringing the debate from Durham, it's extremely worthwhile and it's been probably the best debate this week actually, about our trade union. As Jordan said from Hull, it doesn't belong to any individual, it doesn't belong to this National Executive Committee, it belongs to each paying member. But let me be clear, this POA is the best trade union in the United Kingdom.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Hear, hear.

<Applause>

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** It's the best trade union in the United Kingdom because of you, the delegates that come and represent your branches. The young members, the middle-aged members and the older members, because we can all learn off each other. I've never stopped learning, even though I've been around for 33 years, because the day you stop learning and taking advice is the day that you hang your keys up and you lose your passion for this trade union. I welcome all the new faces at Conference, all the new volunteers that have stood at local level to make the difference for this great trade union, who in many respects is the envy of the trade union movement for what we achieve by not having the right to strike over the last 30 years. That's the reality and we've pushed the legislation from time to time to the very boundaries.

Have we made mistakes along the way? Of course we have, because we're only human. That's the reality. But the pernicious piece of legislation that came in in 1994 by a Conservative Government and not repealed by a Labour Government, and continues to this day – one day we will get rid of it, mark my words, because you can never give up.

<Applause>

We will never give up on the campaigning. I pledged that to the outgoing general secretary in the year 2010, Brian Caton, a great man as well, and before that David Evans. This union isn't about any one individual, this is about the collective, and I pledged to Brian Caton, it's a matter on the verbatim report, "We will struggle and the struggle will continue until any government is brave enough to restore our trade union rights. I will never be a general secretary that signs up to a no-strike agreement."

<Applause>

We introduced a Welfare Fund in 2003 and it was because there was a gap, a gap that the employers left, and we needed to fill that, and by god have we filled that. You heard the welfare report earlier in the week – you fund it, our members fund it, to help each other, and by god do we help each other in our time of need. £1.3 million we've got in that of your money and our members' money. Don't ever let anybody run this trade union down because, when I joined the job 33 years ago, I remember attending my first branch meeting at Chelmsford and I remember some old hands who were maybe in their early 50s, saying, "What are the NEC doing for us?" That was 33 years ago. I remember marching to the front and saying, "What are you doing to help yourself? The union isn't the NEC, the union is you, the grassroots member, so get up off your knees and do something" – and to be fair, Chelmsford did and they were a very active branch.

But let me tell you, when I joined lots of people were criticising all the new recruits. "They're not up to the standard in my day." And do you know what, to a certain extent we're saying the same now and it's not right. There's lots of very good individuals, young people coming through, young people, that are actually our branch officials, quite frankly, who haven't got much time in the job as yet, but by god are they good branch officials. I look around and it's pleasing to see young branch officials and women coming forward representing this trade union, because there was a time when we used to look out, and I sat down there as a young branch official as well, and it was all men. That's the reality – with the odd exception, with Wendy Price, sorry Wendy, I know you've been around a long time, but the reality is she was about the only female in the hall at times.

But now it's different, isn't it, and we've even got one branch official who is that respected politically that she is the parliamentary candidate in the next general election in Doncaster, and that is Sally Jameson.

<Applause>

And by god will we campaign to get her elected in that constituency, because it would be tremendous to have that young, intelligent woman who's a prison officer getting elected in that constituency and representing that constituency in Parliament, but also I don't believe Sally will forget her roots as a prison officer and that will give us a helping hand with one more friend in Parliament. I offer her good luck and I also pledge, when the time comes, I will be there putting leaflets through doors on her behalf as well, no problem with that.

I think Craig mentioned, we've got women's workshops, we've got young members committees now, and that is the way forward. You'll hear motions further down the line about how we want to educate people going forward, the young people of the future, and existing people as well, to get them up to a standard where they've got the confidence to be the future leaders of this trade union. Because not being funny, apart from Sarah on the exec, we're all of a certain age, aren't we? The reality is, no-one lasts forever. Sorry about that, Dave. No-one lasts forever, but do you know what, the

future is bright in the POA and we've got to recognise that because, the more we talk ourselves down, then our members believe it as well. The more negative we are, the more negative our members will become. When we talk it up and rise as one, we take our members with us. That's the reality. What a tremendous trade union, and we always will be.

We've also got, I mentioned that fantastic Welfare Fund. Let's not forget about the representation, not just at national level but at local level, and I'm not going to embarrass any branch official here at the minute but sometimes this is what we're up against, you in the field are up against. We've got members that try and trip up our local officials. I don't want those sort of members in our union, quite frankly, because what they're looking at is pound signs to get compensation if they think someone's advising them wrongly. I even recently had someone write to me and produced a transcript of a telephone conversation that they had with a local official. That is heinous, quite frankly, and I've told this individual member that, if they want to sue the trade union, go ahead, but our full support is behind that local branch official who'd done nothing but put themselves out in order to help that member in their time of need.

<Applause>

We will always stand shoulder to shoulder with our branch officials in the field, for the simple reason we know what a difficult job that you have to do keeping everybody happy in your branch. I don't underestimate that. I've seen it, I've done it, we've lived it and we've seen it time and time again. But I also want to pay tribute as well in this great union for some of the providers that we've had, and I make no apology for saying this, brilliant trade union lawyers that we've got, who do not represent employers or insurers, they only represent the trade union members. That's the reality of stuff.

Now, if you've been to the Hope Not Hate fringe meeting, I tell you what, you would have heard the support that our lawyers gave to Matthew Collins and Nick Lowes in Hope Not Hate when they were under immense political pressure. That's the sort of people I want watching my back. That's the sort of people I want watching my back, quite frankly. So be proud of yourselves, and our members should be proud of themselves, because there is no better trade union and we're growing and learning all the time.

There was once a time I used to come to Conference and all we'd done was talked about ourselves, very insular. The reality is now we don't just talk about ourselves, we've got international sections – we're affiliated to Justice for Colombia, one of the most dangerous countries in the world, and I make no apology for this either. I've affiliated every single branch in the country to Justice for Colombia and we've paid for it centrally because I know that, if I just put the advert out, we might have got a handful of branches to affiliate. That is true trade unionism, standing shoulder to shoulder with our international colleagues, so I've affiliated every branch in the country and paid for it centrally. In 2024 you will get an affiliation form to reaffiliate and I would ask you to do. I would also ask you to get fully involved and read the Gatelodge article this month about affiliation to your local trades councils. That's how you get yourselves known and the issues that affect POA members, by turning up at your local trades councils and talking to other trade union affiliates, whether it's the FBU, whether it's ASLEF, whether it's RMT, whether it's Unite, Unison, etc., and once you start doing that at local level you will build up an alliance with other trade unions.

We've had to start somewhere and one of the proudest moments of my life, actually, was being asked to speak at the Durham Miners Gala in front of all those people in Durham. And you know what, I remember my first trip to Durham when we were abused by some for going. They said, "What the hell are you doing here? You locked our members up." And guess what, it was other trade unions that came to our assistance and shouted them down. And that's why David Hopper invited me to speak. He said, "You and the POA are a brave trade union. The POA, not me, the POA are a brave trade union – you're always welcome at the Durham Miners Gala."

And we've always been welcomed at Tolpuddle and we've always been welcomed on May Day rallies around the country. And let me tell you, Stuart McLachlan and others attend May Day in London all the time, and I've been there myself on a few occasions along with other delegates, when we've been verbally abused and different things, saying, "What are you officers of the state doing here?" When you reason with these individuals and talk back to them and bring them into our world, they understand.

I remember sharing a platform on your behalf, because that's what I do – I don't go to these things because I just want to turn up, I'm doing it, as Mark does, as Jackie does, as all the NEC do when they get invitations, we go there promoting the POA. I remember I was being heckled. There was a platform of myself, Tony Benn and Bob Crow, and when I stood up to speak – I wasn't General Secretary then, I was actually Vice Chairman – I got heckled by individuals in that rally room, saying, "What is that officer of the state doing here? Far-right individual", what have you. God, if anybody knew my politics then they wouldn't call me far-right, would they, for god's sake. But the reality is that's what people give people labels, because we're prison officers or former prison officers they think, until you break those barriers down – and by the way, I pay tribute to the likes of David Evans in the past, Mark Healey who's there this week, Colin Moses, Brian Caton, and all those others who'd gone before us, who promoted the POA in the best interests of this trade union. I'm just keeping the seat warm for the next person coming along, that's the reality of things, but while I'm here I'll do my very best, as I know each individual along that table will. Don't let anybody ever talk down this great trade union. Thank you, colleagues.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. What a fantastic debate and thank you for the kind words from individuals, and now we know, don't we, Wendy Price has been around – for a long time.

Motion 53, Frankland, do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

### Motion 53

#### The POA develop an alcohol and drug strategy to support POA Members.

## FRANKLAND

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC Conference. Motion 53 reads that the POA develop an alcohol and drug strategy to support POA members. During my Prison Service career and time spent as a branch official, I've seen numerous colleagues suffer from the effects of alcohol. Many have lost their jobs through it and a significant number have lost their lives through it.

We have members going through their battles currently at Frankland and we do our best as branch officials to help them. The problem is that, when members come for help, there is not a lot I feel we can do for them compared to other issues. If a member comes with financial issues, I can use the Welfare Fund. When a member has physical and mental issues, we can help them with the Firefighters charity – we can also provide stress, counsel helpline numbers and various other services. When members come to us with alcohol and drug problems, we as a Committee struggle to offer them anything but personal support.

I've included drugs in this because it's becoming a massive issue with staff now as inevitably our workforce reflects society. I feel as a union we should be doing something to help our members. That's why this motion asks for a strategy to be developed, even if it's just a simple agreement with a counselling or rehab service. I think we need to be offering something at least as a union. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Dave. Any speakers? OK, over to Dave Cook for the NEC.

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, NEC Conference, Dave Cook responding on behalf of the NEC and we're asking you to reject the motion. Whilst we fully understand why this was brought forward and why it was seen to be a good thing, the employer at the back of this room would absolutely love you to pass this motion forward because it abdicates their responsibility for the staff that they have. The employer already has, or should have, alcohol and drug policies for looking after staff because of the stuff that they're going into. Addiction is an illness, it's a sickness, and it should be treated like all the others.

However, we are a trade union, we're a small trade union. Yesterday when the General Secretary passed the Finance Report, he announced the fact is that the subscriptions have been frozen for another year. If you pass this motion, the subscriptions will not stay where they are because we cannot afford that. It costs thousands of pounds for one individual to go through the correct and proper treatment.

I don't know about you but how many times have your governors actually come up to you and recommended, "Can you refer this person to the Firefighters charity to assist them?" Because the governors have no ability to do that. They know about our Welfare Fund and our General Secretary has just addressed about the fact we have a Welfare Fund. Other trade unions absolutely cannot believe we have a Welfare Fund as good as it is. How many times have governors come to you and asked you to refer their staff to the Welfare Fund for assistance? This is the responsibility of the employer. If the employer wants to actually provide this sort of facility then we're a small trade union but we manage to fund this. Why is it that HMPPS as a massive organisation couldn't do something of a similar nature?

The employer would love you to pass this because it abdicates their responsibility and passes it on to the trade union, knowing that we will fund this. Fully understand why, and I've had colleagues and friends who have suffered with alcohol and drug issues, but the other issue is we are all serving members of HMPPS and we're all bound – we are, first of all, we're employees of HMPPS. If somebody comes to you and announces they've got a drug problem, that now puts you in a really invidious place because you're either there as a trade union or you're there as an employee of the HMPPS. What do you do? On that basis, we're asking you to reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Any replies? No, OK, straight to the vote then. The vote's now open. Thank you, we can close that vote, and there you can see that motion is lost.

54 Frankland, seconder please. Walton, thank you.

## Motion 54

**The POA NEC fully support all trade unions in their current industrial campaigns within the legal constraints that we are currently restricted by.**

## FRANKLAND

**DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND:** Chair, NEC Conference, motion 54 reads that the POA NEC fully support all trade unions in their current industrial action campaigns within the legal constraints that we are currently restricted by. Simply this came as a result of our branch meeting in January discussing motions. It was clear from our members they were feeling frustrated at what we can do as a union in supporting our colleagues who are in the midst of their industrial action at the time. Our members are confused and a bit apprehensive about injunctions and stuff like that, what we can and can't do to show our support and solidarity for those taking action.

The local committee reassured them that the POA is fully supportive of all the actions and struggles with other unions and this motion will hopefully

provide just a simple public show of support from POA Conference from all our members to all unions that continue with their campaigns, even the rail unions who've cancelled our train back on Friday. In a nutshell, can the NEC send a message of support on behalf of POA Conference 2023 to all unions currently taking action. I think this motion is probably achieved through Mark's opening speech where he offered his solidarity, but nevertheless can we do something please?

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Dave. Straight to Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, Jackie Marshall speaking on behalf of the NEC in support of the motion. Anti-trade union legislation is hammering all trade unions and the Tory Government won't stop until they succeed in preventing every union from taking any sort of action. As you already know, the hands of the POA are tied. The court injunction already in place stops us from standing outside our gates. It stops us from instructing our membership to start at their start time because they say that's industrial action. It stops us from instructing the membership to not volunteer for any specialist post such as Tornado, negotiator and others – they say that's industrial action. We can't even tell you to follow their policies. If every prison followed the LSS to the letter, every prison would come to a standstill.

Now, me with a background of security, I believe we should be following the LSS and I always do, but we know shortcuts are made in prisons, most of it to save time. But if we tell you to follow the LSS that would be industrial action as well, so there's not a lot we can do to support other unions but we do send them messages of solidarity and we do speak at their rallies, as I did following the early February strikes. We do everything we can. There's nothing to stop individual branches writing to unions and offering their support. Even if the PCS are out in your establishment, you can write to them, offer your support of solidarity. But if there's anything else that you think we can do with the legal constraints, please let us know, we'll be more than happy to do it, so please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Jackie. The vote is now open. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That motion has been carried. Thank you, Conference.

55 is Hatfield, I believe they want to withdraw this motion but just want to address Conference first.

#### **Motion 55**

**That members subscriptions, for all members, be frozen at the current level (for at least the next 12 months) due to the unprecedented financial pressure which members are facing at this time.**

#### **HATFIELD**

**SHANE MCCANN – BRANCH CHAIR, HATFIELD:** Chair, NEC Conference, I'd like to put on record our thanks to the General Secretary for the finance officer's report yesterday and his freezing of member's subscriptions, so thank you. In light of the report, Hatfield seek permission form Conference to withdraw this motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, all those in favour, please show. Any against? That's been withdrawn, thank you Hatfield.

Motion 56 is a debate, I'm going to invite Belmarsh to open a debate.

#### **Motion 56**

**Conference debate Local and National Industrial Relations specifically as to how we can have good IR on a National Level yet poor IR at Branch level.**

#### **BELMARSH**

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, motion 56. The motion reads, Conference debate: local and national industrial relations, specifically as to how we can have good IR, good industrial relations on a national level yet poor at a branch level. Conference, the NEC over the past year or so have declared that national industrial relations are good. We don't for a minute dispute the fact that industrial relations between the NEC and our employer are professional, however what we are challenging is the fact that industrial relations have been declared as good.

We don't believe it's possible to have good industrial relations nationally when it is poor at a local level. What do we mean as poor? Well poor to us means Committee members not being taken seriously. Poor to us means vacancies at OSG and at officer level. Poor to us means regular assaults on staff with no changes to regime. Poor to us means the draconian attendance management procedure. Poor to us means no actions being taken after accident reports in prisons. Poor to us means risk assessments and safe systems of work not being adequately reviewed, despite hundreds of incidents in our establishments every year. Poor to us means staff are being bullied, victimised and harassed by their managers. Poor to us means disciplinary action taken at the drop of a hat against low-ranking staff with no accountability for managers. Poor to us means RMPs and local

agreements not being adhered to. Poor to us means managers showing no flexibility on annual leave requests. Poor to us means unresolved local disputes.

We, like many committees in the room, have professional relations with our SMTs. However we would never declare good industrial relations with our senior management teams if our members are being treated badly. The same should apply to the NEC. Conference, please join the debate.

<Applause>

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

**JIM SHAW – WANDSWORTH:** Conference, NEC, chair, I thank Belmarsh for bringing this. Wandsworth's industrial relations I would describe as in the toilet really, so where did it start? Well, we go a long way to demonstrate that we're representing our members, not going to the Governor with our own agenda. Our agenda is their agenda. When I have members with health and safety issues, I will go and sit and talk to them, ask them what they want. They tell me they don't want to work alone on a landing. Some of you will be shocked but that's where some of them have found themselves. Why are you doing it? Well, I was ordered to.

We talk about the health and safety and about two working in line of sight of each other. After it I ask them, "What do you want?" It's very simple, give them a questionnaire, "Do you want to work in line of sight with each other or do you want to carry on doing what you're doing now, which you're telling me is unsafe?" They circle it in private – that's my evidence of consultation. I think I'm doing the best I can for my members, so that when I go to the Governor, I say, "There's my evidence. And the Governor says, "Well I've had a word with them and they're saying something different." I don't care what the Governor's being told by somebody else when they go to them and say, "What's Jim Shaw been saying to you then?" "Oh well, yeah, I didn't really think that."

I'm tired of them using this, it leaves me nowhere, and if any of you have had the same experience, tell us. About this time last year, funnily enough, we had a massive issue where a member of staff had a jug of boiling water thrown in their face. To get the management to do anything, we had to go to the Health and Safety Executive. It took three months but the day that we went to the Health and Safety Executive, they took remedial action on that day, but they were irritated. It was so simple – it was one day's work and they'd put in the remedial work to make that done.

Where does it leave us now? I've now got governors who just go to their own staff and say, "I've surveyed your members and they're telling me something different," so at the last monthly meeting we spoke to the Governor and said, "We'd like an industrial relations protocol and we'd like industrial relations involved in it." It tends to be the younger, newer governors who actually think that anything that we put forward must be bad and therefore they must fight us against it. Join the debate.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Jim. Ian Carson joining the debate for the NEC.

**IAN CARSON – NEC:** Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to join this debate. Firstly I want to thank Belmarsh for bringing this important issue to Conference because quite simply, when you've got a member who's got the conduct and discipline policy rammed down their throats and is potentially looking at dismissal, IR saves the day. We all know that, it can save the day. Good IR can be the difference between a final written warning and dismissal – and it's a sad situation but that's the way it is, Conference.

There's a branch official in here who I'm going to point out. Neil Mack, he gets people off on codes of discipline that Michael Mansfield couldn't get off, but he does it through his IR and it means that our members keep their jobs, and that's probably one of the most important things that we need to remember. A Governor who relies on the input of local Committee to ensure the safe running of the jail may not dismiss staff. Where the consequences are the other way around, they will, to answer Belmarsh's specific question.

IR can be different in two jails that are next door to each other on the same street, and it can change week on week. One measure of the state of IR is the number of jails in dispute and I know it's something that's coming on in one of the next pieces of work we're going to go through. Currently about 10% of prisons are in dispute, which tells me that across the estate IR is good because there's a direct link, isn't there? You could ask the NEC, "What's IR like this week?" and Mark might say, on behalf of the trade union, "Well, it's quite good." You ask him the same question in two weeks' time and he might say it's poor or deteriorating because it changes, doesn't it, depending on what's going on.

There's three things that I want you to remember about IR, Conference, because I run workshops in my area when I get problems around industrial relations – three things that you really need to focus on if you want maintain good IR. Evidence and facts, how you present them. It's evidence and facts and how you present them, and evidence and facts and how you present them. We win our arguments and we maintain good IR through our knowledge and the way that we do business.

Let me tell you something, somebody very, very well-placed within the organisation once said to me. "The POA can't get you promoted but they damn well can get you sacked, and you can end up on a spell on special operations where you're in charge of the broom cupboard." Evidence and facts, SFCs, annexes, consultation logs, minutes of meetings, that influences IR. Please join the debate, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Ian. That concludes that debate. Motion 57 Belmarsh, seconder for Belmarsh please. Brinsford, thank you.

### Motion 57

**Conference instruct the NEC to not declare good National Industrial Relations unless a Conference Motion has been passed.**

### BELMARSH

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, motion 57 reads that Conference instructs the NEC not to declare good industrial relations until a Conference motion has been passed. Further to the points that have already been raised in the debate, Conference should be in charge of declaring the current position in industrial relations and not the NEC. What this motion is asking for is for you to have the power to declare it before the NEC declare it – and whatever you choose, that's what the NEC declare. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Bill. No other speakers? Steve Gillan for the NEC.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Thank you chairman, executive and delegates. Conference, we're going to ask you to reject this motion and the reason we're going to ask you to reject this motion is because it's extremely restrictive, because Conference happens once a year for a week and then the executive go back, you go back to your branches, and things happen in between.

Let me give you an example of that, I know it's an extreme example, but we had a pandemic where virtually we didn't have any conferences for two years. But let me tell you, industrial relations at national level was very, very good. That's a fact, there's no getting away from that, they were very, very good. Myself, Mark and the rest of the executive, we had dialogue every single day. But the nuts and bolts of that, myself and the National Chairman also had probably dialogue with Phil Coppell and his directors on a daily basis, updating us on a variety of issues. We had regular meetings with the Secretary of State, Robert Buckland, at that time as well. Everything that we asked for, myself and Mark, we got. We didn't win everything but we got, we got increased facility time for yourselves at local level to implement the stuff that we'd agreed at national level. There wasn't a fag paper between this Executive and the Prisons Board, on anything, quite frankly, because there was no manual to tell us how to deal with the pandemic.

But declaring sometimes that there is good national industrial relations should never be seen as a sign of weakness but a sign of leadership, because it's dead easy to declare that things are poor all the time when they're not. For example, I'll give you another example, every single one of you sitting in this hall today are here on facility time that was granted by the employer. What, should we turn around and say, well, you're here on facility time, the employer's paying for you to come, but they're still crap.

I think sometimes, and I think we've made great strides in this union because you can't be at loggerheads and go in and bang the table and shout and scream. I've been there and we've done that in the past, and let me tell you it wasn't very successful. I actually think by having good industrial relations at the top can actually influence what happens at local level. Don't get me wrong, it doesn't mean because there are good industrial relations and that I and Mark have got a good working relationship with Phil Coppell, Richard Vince, Amy Reese – employee relations doesn't mean that we agree all the time. In fact, we robustly disagree on many issues, and we disagree with Government on many issues, and we know sometimes the employer is restricted by Government and it's not actually coming from the employer but it's coming from this Conservative Government.

The reality is, don't restrict us in what we can do because if you do then the reality is, every time we've got to do anything, we've got to come to Conference first. That's not what the rules and constitution say. It says, "Conference are the ruling body when Conference is sitting. Outside of that then it's the National Executive Committee. Then outside of that it's the National Chairman and General Secretary, in that order. That's the reality of things. So please don't rip up the rulebook, don't rip up our flexibility and don't say when we declare sometimes good industrial relations at national level that that's a sign of weakness, because it's not. I urge you to reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Belmarsh, would you like to reply?

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Yes, please. Chair, Conference, NEC, the only point I would like to add is that the General Secretary has just come up and he has stated that this motion is restrictive. I disagree with the fact that it's restrictive, and the rationale he gave was that we only have Conference once a year and on that basis whatever is determined by Conference will be how IR is perceived for that following year.

The reason why I disagree with that is because the NEC only declare it once or twice per year in POA circulars that IR is good, so if it's only declared once or twice a year in POA circulars and we only have a Conference once a year, I don't see it being restrictive in any way, shape or form.

Just touching on the point where the General Secretary talks about professional discussions, absolutely we don't doubt that discussions at the top table between the NEC and the employer are professional, they should be professional. The difference that needs to be stressed is industrial relations is about how we're being treated. And how we're being treated, we believe it should be within our gift as a Conference to determine how we feel we're being treated. Please support the motion.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Bill. Conference, the vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can now display those results. As you can see, that motion is lost.

Motion 58, Belmarsh, seconder for Belmarsh? No seconder, that motion falls.

That brings me on nicely, Conference, to a really enjoyable part of every Conference, and that is when we give out the awards. And this year the awards are in the form of Cronin Clasp winners. Now, as usual Conference, I take absolutely no responsibility for reading out the stitch-ups that are in front of me, so don't shoot the messenger. Cronin Clasp winter, first one, David Nicholson, HMP Corton Vale.

<Applause>

David started in the Scottish Prison Service on 18 July 1983 and has worked in many establishments during this near 40-year period. David has had a variety-packed career working previously in HMP Barlinnie, HMP Peterhead, HMP Longriggend, HMP Low Moss and detached duty in Northern Ireland at the Maze. David is currently working through the transitional period between HMP Corton Vale and the new HMP Sterling. David, all throughout this time, has been a staunch member of the POA, joining the local branch at HMP Corton Vale in 2000, and during this time served as local branch secretary and then chair, stepping down in 2020 due to ill health.

David is a well-respected colleague who, throughout his career as a POA rep, has supported staff with vigorous determination, and his knowledge of policy both local and national is exceptional. This only benefits the local branch when supporting staff in their time of need. David has also supported at both SNC and NEC during security at Scottish Conference from 2004 to 2013, and national Conference on occasions, just like this one now. David's knowledge has been a great asset on the changeover of a full new local branch here at HMP Corton Vale. His experience and knowledge relating to health and safety and trade union duties has been a huge support during this transition.

The branch are extremely proud that David is awarded this for his commitment to staff, to the POA as a trade union. Congratulations David. Written by Mark O'Hare, HMP Corton Vale branch secretary. Please show your appreciation for Cronin Clasp winner, David Nicholson.

<Applause>

He doesn't want to say any words. That's fine, he doesn't want to say any words. Well deserved, well done David.

Our next winner of the Cronin Clasp, Jim Shaw, HMP Wandsworth.

<Applause>

Jim Shaw has been part of Wandsworth POA for many years, beginning in the 1990s. Jim was elected to the Committee and then found himself as branch chair after a very short time. Like all good families, there were some disagreements and Jim had to step aside for a few years. He made a return and was back as branch chair, Committee member and health and safety rep.

Jim has always been prepared to challenge decisions made by management, citing that it is the membership he is serving, not the management. On an issue about damaged cell door observation panels and the risk of boiling water being thrown into the faces of members, the branch voted to refuse any more receptions until the observation panels were fixed. On that day, I and Jim were walking by the gate to prevent any returns from court to enter the prison. When we got a call from the Scrubs as to why they were taking Wandsworth receptions, Jim knew that the action had been successful.

On a national day of action we took on 29 August 2007, Jim was out in front and keeping the members informed, and that the action was right and was just. What a day. We felt like true trade unionists and a powerful message had been sent to this employer. Jim has also been on the streets of London on protest marches and May Day marches behind the Wandsworth branch banner, reminding those outside prison walls that we are a trade union and we won't remain silent.

His trips to Tolpuddle were highlighted in one year where, having hired a camping spot, he and the other Wandsworth reps forgot to bring a tent.

<Laughter>

This was the year the other rep demolished the POA food table and later forgot where he and Jim had pitched up, so we went and stood a tent up a couple of Germans. He left them in a distressed state but later returned to cause further distress.

Jim is always at POA Conference as a delegate and would add his views to the debate, sometimes earning applause and hostility on the same motion, but this never silenced him and he is always good company after the day's proceedings, being able to talk to those who held a different view over a social drink.

In recent years the Wandsworth committee had been unsettled, but his return last year has shown members how a branch chair should be, lead the Committee, lead with the authority of the branch, and remember who put you there, the members. Stuart has said it's been a privilege for him, as branch secretary, to work alongside Jim, and he has thoroughly earned the award of the union's highest honour for a branch official, the Cronin Clasp. That was written by Stuart McLachlan.

Jim Shaw, well deserved, well earned. Cronin Clasp winner, Jim Shaw.

<Applause>

I've just persuaded him to say a few words. He's never lost for words, is he. Go on, Jim.

**JIM SHAW – CRONIN CLASP WINNER:** Well, I want to say, thank you Stuart. Erudite as usual. I couldn't have functioned without Stuart, without his direction. He's kept me out of trouble, most of the time, with good advice. When to push, when not to push, when to lean back, and it's always good to have somebody who's a details person. Stuart is a details person – I'm the emotional one, go to the Governor and say it's all awful. Also I'd like to say thank you to Nicki, my wife, who has to listen to all the woes of what goes on at work and never complains, so thank you. I won't bore you anymore so thanks very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** This next one, I am pleading the fifth amendment on this next one. I don't know if Jackie's managed to stitch him up with the photographic evidence that's going to be displayed on the screen, but I take no responsibility for this. I hope it's going to be a surprise to him because he's been saying, "It's my last Conference and my wife's coming. Why is that?" Well, now you know why your wife's here, because she's proud of what you've achieved and she wants to see you receive this award. Paul Ray, HMP Lincoln.

<Applause>

At the beginning of the film Alien, it says, "Be afraid, be very afraid. You can't hear screams in space. Be afraid, be very afraid." Paul Ray joined the Prison Service on 13 December 2002. He has been the branch secretary of HMP Lincoln since 19 October 2017 to the current day. Paul has been the backbone of the union at Lincoln for many years as a committee member before moving to branch chair and finally branch secretary.

Lord Jeffery Archer, 2002. One of his many friends and colleagues, Nigel Masters, commented when they were both part of the group who dispatched Lord Archer when he was removed from North Sea Camp in 2002, just over a year after Paul arrived. Fast forward to Christmas 2021. Paul and Nigel were attending a lunch at the Hardrock Hotel, Marble Arch, where the guest speaker was Nigel Owens, the Welsh rugby ref. The MC announced that Nigel was running a little late, however they did have another celebrity there, Lord Jeffery Archer.

Paul and Nigel looked at each other and laughed, as they're both mentioned in his book that he wrote whilst at North Sea Camp. They waited until the right moment, i.e. after having a few more pints, and Jeffery was holding court after lunch. They both approached him, "Ah, Jeffery, so good to see you again." "So good to see you as well," he replied. "You don't remember us, do you?" said Paul. "No," he replied. "Well, we are the officers you mentioned in one of your books who put you on the van when you transferred out of North Sea Camp." We've never seen a man of 60 years of age move so fast to leave the building.

Benidorm 2017. All wearing dresses, Paul was designated <laughter>, it's worked, it's worked. Listen, you can identify whoever you like. Paul was designated the beer kitty holder, which he kept in his bum bag. It's a Leeds thing. We'd been out for some time and became tired and emotional. On leaving the bar we heard a thump and turned to see Paul face down on a road with his dress up around his waist. He'd cut his nose quite badly – however a Geordie lady came forward and announced she was a first aider, before bending over and falling on top of him.

It gets better. An ambulance arrived, and after some initial treatment, took him away to hospital. It was only then we noticed he had the beer kitty. Suddenly there were three hairy arsed officers running down the road, chasing the ambulance in their dresses. One caught up and banged on the back of the door, another Leeds thing. Paul thought one of us wanted to go with him. He made sure he was OK and comforted him. That's what he thought. Eventually the ambulance stopped and one of the paramedics opened the door. Paul's colleague jumped in, grabbed his bum bag with the kitty in, jumped out again, leaving Paul dejected on the stretcher.

Paul has helped numerous POA members since he joined the committee at Lincoln either by being a rep or just being there when someone needed to talk. He's been instrumental in helping to set up and run a carers pilot at Lincoln, which will hopefully lead to a new policy for staff who are carers. He's been a massive asset to the membership at HMP Lincoln, his knowledge knows no bounds. When his retirement comes, he will be greatly missed, but for now we will use him and abuse him. There is no-one more worthy of this award than Paul Ray. That was written by Sean Scourfield, branch chair at Lincoln. It gives me great pleasure and an honour to award Paul Ray with the Cronin Clasp. Paul Ray.

<Applause>

Now, whether he wants to say a few words or not, he's saying a few words.

**PAUL WRAY – CRONIN CLASP WINNER:** Marching on together. If I could get my legs up I'd let you hear my musical socks. I'm truly honoured. Gobsmacked. From the people that I know that have won this award, I really don't feel that I'm worthy, so I'll just mention a couple. From when I first joined the job, who I thought was my good friend, Nigel Masters, but he seems to be a sewing machine specialist now of stitching me up, thank you. His sidekick at the time was Phil Camplin, who's also a Cronin Clasp winner, was very instrumental in getting me onto the POA on my very first day.

When I got to Lincoln, Barry Lawkin, god bless him, hugely instrumental, and one of my great mentors, Mick Shaw. I never thought that when I was literally C&R'd to sign my name up to be the branch chairman, that it would end like this, so I'm truly honoured, and thank you.

Jackie, you've been an immense support. Geoff, thank god you're an idiot so I've got you. But there's one person who I couldn't have done it all without. I'm sorry Sean, it's not you, but thank you to my secretaries and everything as well. But one person that I couldn't have done it all without, and that's my wife.

<Applause>

We know what we're signing up for when we take the roles. Our partners don't, so thank you darling, you've been a star. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, they're all going for photographs now outside. Let's leave the stage with a rapturous round of applause for our Cronin Clasp winners.

<Applause>

If the delegates from their branches would like to join them for a photographic opportunity, we're going to get some photos printed off for the awards ceremony this evening, so if you want a photo, delegates, please feel free.

Conference, we're now on to motion 59, which is a debate, so I'm going to invite Belmarsh to start the debate.

### Motion 59

### Conference debates the service members get from Thompsons Solicitors.

### BELMARSH

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, motion 59 reads, "Conference debates the service members get from Thompsons Solicitors." Sorry, I can't read my own handwriting there.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I'm like that all the time, Bill, don't worry about it.

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** That's it, super. Right, I encourage every branch to join this debate and give a summary of the service that their members at their jails get from Thompsons Solicitors. All too often I hear the words from my members that the service they get from Thompsons is poor, and that's why this debate has been brought prior to the motion. POA members at HMP Belmarsh are fed up of the lacklustre service that we get from Thompsons. A firm who, to us, only appear to show appetite in personal injury and discrimination cases. How often have they supported your members in cases of their terms and conditions of employment being breached, health and safety issues, bullying, harassment and victimisation cases, national contracts and national agreements being breached, or even unresolved disputes which should be going to ACAS or other agencies for arbitration. Pay disputes is another one.

Last but not least I was going to mention pensions, however I had a word with the General Secretary in the afternoon break and he's assured me that Thompsons have had no involvement in the McCloud case to date. That has all been dealt with by Ivan Walker Solicitors, so don't mix the two. I could stand here for an hour talking about how that case has been managed, but it's not about me or my personal experience, this is all about the members and the membership, what sort of service they're getting on the ground floor in regards to the basic service that they expect from Thompson Solicitors. Conference, please join the debate. You have an opinion, good or bad, we need to hear it.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Bill.

<Applause>

**ANDY HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL:** Chair, Conference, over a decade ago, Thompsons took over from Whitley, who were the sole provider for the POA and dealt directly with the POA and no one else. The introduction of Thompsons as our legal provider was agreed by Conference. A decade on and Belmarsh have quite rightly brought this debate to Conference to see where we're at. A large organisation who represent a large number of trade unions. The verdict from Styal branch so far is representation at coroners court over the years has been first class. Representation of our members at police or criminal proceedings, first class. Personal injury claims, this is the biggest gripe of our membership at the moment, but that's not fault of Thompsons, that's down to us at Conference to change that policy. Large criticism for our membership is a lack of cases being taken on when accidents and assaults have occurred in the workplace. The threshold of 50% chance of success does hamper Thompsons in the pursuit of personal injury claims in an ever-increasing difficult compensation climate. Because of this, member's claims are often rejected. This is the biggest complaint of our members. However, it is down to us as a Conference to bring this as a motion to raise that threshold of success through Conference motions, otherwise a first-class provider in our opinion. Please join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Andy, very articulate as usual. Joining the debate for the NEC is Nick Pimblett.

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Chair, NEC Conference, responding to motion 59 on behalf of the NEC. Conference, the debate is one which the legal aid scheme is run is set out in the POA's rules of constitution. As you're aware, the rules and constitution are set by you, the members, at annual Conference following two-third majority vote. Thompsons are bound by this criterion on our instructions. The rules of constitution state that the criteria for support to members' legal claims is as follows: the claim must be worth more than £1,000, it must have more than a 50% chance of success. The value of the claim must not be disproportionate to any proceedings that may take place, and the Legal Aid Committee or the National Executive Committee, in accordance with the rules, may exercise discretion as they see fit.

The exercise of the Legal Aid Committee's discretion not to grant assistance or not to continue to support a claim does not prevent any member from continuing the claim on their own behalf using other solicitors. Furthermore, a refusal or withdrawal of support does not mean that the individual does not have a potential claim that he or she could pursue. It merely means that the claim no longer meets the POA's criteria laid down by you, annual Conference. A member can appeal any decision for Legal Aid Committee to the NEC, whose decision is final. As previously stated, any eligible member whose request for assistance is refused at the outset or during the currency of the action has the right of appeal to the Legal Aid Committee and the National Executive Committee.

Currently, POA members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have 1,890 cases open with Thompsons. In Scotland there are 163 cases open. The number of claims loaded in the last 12 months is 753. There have only been 49 appeals through the Legal Aid Committee and 19 appeals to the NEC. In addition to this, Thompsons have assisted our members in Police NHS investigations, deaths in custody, coroners courts and criminal injury compensation authority, there have also been a number of successes in victim's right to review, where our members are assaulted in the workplace and the police or CPS decide not to prosecute due to it not being in the public interest.

Thompsons have also provided advice on piloting prisons, collective bargaining agreement at Gatwick IRC, Pay Recommendation 3, revised rules of constitution, batons in the offensive weapons act, the Boon letter, free flexed and fixed guidance, HMPPS disciplinary policy, the Bill of Rights, judicial review, the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business Regulations 2022, PIM 40, the POA employment handbook, shielders, ballots in <inaudible>, freedom of information with requests to HMP Berwyn, care and management of individuals who are transgender.

Since Conference 2022, Thompsons have recovered over £3 million in compensation for our members. This is on top of the other work that they've done for us in mostly criminal cases and in coroners court. The damages they cover are 100% of what's being rewarded, and there's no reduction for Thompsons or for POA fees. Unlike other companies, Thompsons are 100% committed to claimant-only work and they will only represent injured or mistreated people, and will never represent organisations, insurance companies or employers.

Another important fact that we sometimes don't take into account is that Thompsons do not represent prisoners, which many other solicitors do. This is a clear red line for the POA. As previously stated, over the last year there's been many legal challenges. The POA still manage to operate within the cap of £1.2 million, and that cap of £1.2 million has not increased since 2008, and in partnership with the POA and Thompsons, has demonstrated real value for money for the POA membership. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

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

Motion 60, Belmarsh, do we have a seconder for Belmarsh? Durham.

#### **Motion 60**

**That Conference instruct the NEC to source a new supplier of legal services.**

#### **BELMARSH**

**BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH:** Chair, Conference, NEC, motion 60 reads that Conference instruct the NEC to source a new supplier of legal services. Conference, it's your monthly subscriptions that pay for your legal services. If you're not happy with your legal services and you think you can do better, now is your chance to bring about a change in legal provider. Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Durham, do you wish to speak? No. I can't see any other speakers. Responding on behalf of the NEC, Steve Gillan.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY, NEC:** Thank you chairman. As someone that's been around for the last 33 years, I remember three different firms of solicitors, one being Mishcon de Reya, then Lees Lloyd Whitley took over in 1993 – nearly bankrupted this union in the end – and in 2008, myself, who was finance officer, and Colin Moses had to go and meet with Thompsons.

Just prior to that, Thompsons, when I used to turn up along with Brian, Colin and various other executive members at that time, they used to be there at every single trade union forum, people from Thompsons. The chief executive at that time was a guy called Geoff Sheers, and he used to talk about us coming over to Thompsons at that time. But you know what, we were loyal to Lees Lloyd Whitley at that time and we stuck by them until the situation became untenable because they were effectively skint and dragging us down potentially with them.

It was Thompsons that stepped in to save the day in respect of that. They'd changed chief executives and Steven Cavelier was the then chief executive. We as an executive made the decision back in 2008 to go with Thompsons and to cut our ties with Lees Lloyd Whitley. And it was a good job we did because, as it unravelled, Lees Lloyd Whitley had a trail of destruction everywhere and Thompsons were the ones that assisted us in sorting it out. Because we had legal claims coming in where people hadn't been paid and they were coming directly for us for that payment, which in looking after your interests I refused to say, "No, our provider had been paid, you go to them or their insurers, but you aren't getting a penny from us."

Lees Lloyd Whitley then tried to sue us for £2 million as a breach of contract and we had to carry that liability for several years in our accounts, and report it to Conference as well. That was a heavy burden that myself and the executive at that time carried because you just never knew how legal courts work. We're not always that successful with injunctions and different things, and with a claim of £2 million it was a big issue. Having said that, we held firm, with the help of Thompsons, and lo and behold we actually got, instead of them having a debt of £2 million to us, we actually got £200,000 back off them by suing their insurers.

There was another big case, and some of you will and won't remember it, and this was the Iqbal case. Some of you will, some of you won't. It was around 2007 when we took national action and a prisoner said that they had been unlawfully detained in the cell because of our action. An employment tribunal awarded Iqbal £5 as compensation and we all laughed at the time and said, "Best £5 we've spent, to be fair." But there was a sting in the tail because Iqbal appealed. He appealed to the Court of Appeal and he got legal aid in order to do so. Thompsons, after we'd kicked it into the long grass for a long time, Richard Arthur from Thompsons advised us that we need to do a cross-appeal against the Iqbal win in the employment tribunal, and that's what we've done.

They recommended that we went to the very best, or one of the best, silks in Britain, which was Michael Beloff KC. In the Court of Appeal, Michael Beloff argued successfully that it wasn't false imprisonment because it wasn't our responsibility, it was HMPPS's responsibility to unlock them. I didn't understand the legal arguments because some of these legal arguments went back to the 1800s, but the reality was we won with the assistance of Thompsons.

Now, there was another sting in the tail at that Court of Appeal because, if Iqbal had been successful on the false imprisonment, then the quantum of £5 was increased to over £100 compensation – and it doesn't take much, because we knew there was litigants waiting for 83,000 prisoners for the outcome of the Court of Appeal for then their lawyers queuing up to do the POA on the back of it with claims, which would have amounted to about £11 million and we would have been destroyed, quite frankly.

In relation to what has been said, Mick covered a lot of it in the debate, but even today, and I can't say who it is or what branch it's from because we don't know if the individual wants publicity, but we got told this morning, the Legal Aid Committee, that a member has been successful through Thompsons and has been awarded £300,000. That's a magnificent result and we know of numerous cases like that over the years.

The rest of the trade union movement, for example the Fire Brigades Union, ASLEF, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Unite, Advance, NEU, BECTU, Prospect, NEHT, Bakers Union, RMT, URTU, UCU, NUJ, Royal College of Midwives – they're all with Thompsons. They're with Thompsons for a reason. It's because they're the best trade union outfit in Great Britain, frankly, that look after the interests of trade union members, our members, on a daily basis to the best of their ability. Will they make mistakes? Of course they make mistakes. Do we punish their mistakes by getting rid of them and putting out to tender? Of course we don't, because we're not in the blame game.

But let me tell you, they've got a new chief executive, Claire Mellor – first female chief executive in 120-year history – and let me tell you, I have regular meetings with Claire, as does Mark, as did Mick Pimblett on behalf of the Legal Aid Committee, and there's time to time when errors are made, we point them out, to improve the service, not as giving them a kicking or anything like that. We're used to that sometimes in His Majesty's Prison Service for the simple reason that it's the blame game in the Prison Service, they always look for someone to blame. As a trade union we don't, we look to make things better and make them better together, so please reject this motion and show your solidarity with a great trade union outfit, Thompsons. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I can see Bill's sat down so we'll go straight to the vote. Thank you, Conference, we can now display the results, and as you can see, that motion is lost.

Motion 61, I've indicated from Moorlands that they've covered what they had to say in a previous debate, so permission to withdraw. All those in favour, please show. Any against? Thank you, that's withdrawn.

We've done 62, we're now on to 63, the NEC. Secunder please. Thank you. Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

### Motion 63

**That Conference Accept Conference Paper 1 Race Action Plan policy replacing the existing policy.**

### NEC

**ANGELA MONTGOMERY – NEC:** Chair, Conference, delegates, I put before you Conference paper number 1, which is the POA's race action plan. The POA has a commitment to proactively supporting all members in eliminating race discrimination within its trade union. The recent HMIP report is

contained in your pack and it states very clearly the experiences of BAME employees within the Prison Service. This is a five-point plan for the next 12 months. We are looking to record membership information and you will be a part of this process.

Secondly, we are looking to hear the voice of BAME members, and together with HMPPS we will be looking to reach out to BAME members through yourselves to put forward their voice and to run workshops for BAME members, in the same way that we have for women members, in order to ensure that the POA is a truly exclusive trade union, which we are.

The third part of this plan is training, and the NEC is a great believer in training. As the General Secretary has stated previously, we are all here to learn. None of us is perfect, none of us gets it right every single time. But we are all here to learn and training is key to that.

We regularly have discussions about training and whether that should be face to face, animations or any other variety. The NEC have a commitment to face-to-face training. Animations are all very well but they don't give anyone the confidence to challenge and respond to racist behaviour in the trade union or in the workplace. Again, we are in liaison with HMPPS, your employer, but also with the TUC in the development of that training, and the POA has a motion at the Black Workers Conference to ask the TUC to develop that training for small trade unions. We're not a big trade union, we're not like Unite and Unison, so we need support in the development of that training to be tailor-made for branch officials, because you are the first port of call for our black members and you need support and training in the issues which black members will come to you for. And I fully expect that you will rise to this challenge and you will support black members by going on the training and reaching out to them to understand their experiences better and supporting them in the workplace.

That is part of supporting local committees, but what I would also say is, if any of you in this room have any issues from today, you have an NEC who will support you, who will talk through cases with you – and if they don't know the answer, they will find someone who does. You should have confidence in them. I'm sure Mark, Steve and all of the NEC have no issue with you picking up the phone and saying, "Look, I've got this issue here, I think it's this." Use them, they are there for you.

Finally, the POA has a good track record of responding to racist behaviour and actions by members. We will be looking in the next 12 months to look at what different types of actions we can take and developing what is already in the rules. This is important for all of us in the trade union movement and this will feed into the wider TUC race action plan. I ask you to support this, thank you very much.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Do we have any speakers? OK, we can take that to the vote. Oh, we've got Pat – welcome Pat.

**PAT DOBSON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM:** I'd like to thank the NEC for bringing this because it absolutely is the right direction we should be moving in. However the motion mandates everybody in the NEC, everybody in this room and moving forward everybody in POA to fill a form in. First instance, there's nothing wrong with that, but I've got to say, my family came to this country as immigrants. My parents and my grandparents remember walking down streets in Liverpool with signs on windows saying, "No dogs and no Irish." Historically, we understand discrimination – we've spent generations getting out of a box, being pigeon holed.

This motion mandates us to get back in the box, and it does that for one reason and one reason only – the form. I've filled in many of these forms, but there's one thing missing off this form that is on all the other forms I've ever filled in. Every section on that form should have another line, and it says, "Prefer not to say." We can mandate that we push the form forwards, absolutely, but it should be up to every single individual to opt out declaring the very limited choice that is on that form. There should be an opt out. All I'm asking is, can we have an assurance or a qualification that that extra line will be added to each section of that form. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Pat, thank you for raising those points. Just to update Conference, it's actually been altered. It's now been published on our website and every form that gets published in the future will have "Prefer not to say" on it, so it's already been rectified, and thank you for bringing it out and making us aware of it, Pat. Thank you.

**LUKE RICHARDS – BRANCH, EXETER:** We're supporting this motion, however the only concerns that we have from Exeter is myself stood here in front of you, <inaudible> little white one, I'm white through. I'm a traveller. I was born and raised a traveller, had the same experiences growing up where I wasn't allowed in shops, wasn't allowed people to play with me, wasn't allowed kids that my friends, that hatred is there on both sides due to the hatred to us.

Now I'm stood up here a prison officer that my family think is disgusting. I won't lie, they think we're scum, they think that we represent a country that still opposes them. My only problem with going down this route is, like they're saying, some people don't want to say what they are. Some of us are still scared that we'll be persecuted. The other part is we're going into a place where staff do need to be taught what to say to people from different backgrounds – but not just our black colleagues, also our traveller colleagues, also our colleagues from all different cultures and backgrounds. We can't just focus on one background, we have to go completely broad spectrum because, if we want more people from my community in this job, which trust me, it benefits me and my staff on the wing because travellers won't assault me so they won't assault my colleagues, so it does work well. If we can get as many people into this job as we can and show the people that we are a caring service at the end of the day – that's why we're there, we're not just there to close the door, we're there to be their dads, brothers, to look after them – but we have to be broad to everyone, not just one area. We have to go for all cultures, all acceptances, and go full hog for it. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Well said and that's down to our employer. Let's hope they don't tick a box – get out into those communities and recruit minority people into our service. Well said. Any more speakers? OK, we can take that to the vote then. OK, we can display the results. That motion is carried.

Motion 64 from the NEC. Secunder please. Thank you.

#### Motion 64

**That Conference Accept Conference Paper 2 Sexual Harassment Policy replacing the existing policy.**

#### NEC

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, moving motion 64 on behalf of the NEC. Conference, I'm not going to say much. Motion 39 Conference paper 4 from 2022, which was accepted by Conference, informed us of TUC rule 1B, which 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 its own employment policies."

Paper 4 also said, "Conference confirms, as an affiliate to the TUC, that the POA are committed to protecting women as employees within the POA workplace and indeed all women in POA membership, irrespective of workplace, to ensure the necessary motions are put in place ready for Conference '23, to update our rules and constitution along with the staff handbook to ensure sexual harassment policies are enhanced and relevant."

The paper talks about the working group reporting back with a clear policy. I'd like to thank those members from the field who took part in the production of this policy, and ask Conference to accept Conference paper 2 with the amended form as discussed over Conference motion 1. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Can't see any speakers. OK, that vote is now open, thank you. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That motion has been carried.

65 and 66 we've already done. 67, NEC, Jackie Marshall. Do we have a secunder please? Thank you.

#### Motion 67

**Following the success of the Women's workshop in 2022, Conference supports additional workshops at a frequency determined by the NEC.**

#### NEC

**JACKIE MARSHALL – NEC:** Chair, Conference, moving motion 67 on behalf of the NEC. I'm sure you've heard quite a lot about this in the last couple of days but at the end of November last year we ran a workshop called Supporting Women in the Workplace. The workshop was to establish what obstacles our female members were facing in the workplace to make sure that we were raising the right issues with the department. We also wanted to see what was preventing women joining local committees. The two members of the department who attended were horrified at some of the stories they heard. There has been nothing but good feedback from the workshop and we know that at least two of the delegates have been seconded onto their local committees to deal with women's issues. We have also started some work on parental and fertility guidance for managers, which will benefit both male and female members. We want to continue this work and ask that you support us in organising future workshops to allow us this to happen. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**LOUISE JAMES – ACTING BRANCH CHAIR, HEWELL:** I'm in support of this. At Hewell we don't do enough for the women in the workplace but this workshop has just opened a whole new opportunity for women to come forward and to speak about what's happened to them and what is continuing to happen to them in the workplace. I came forward at the beginning of the year in support of one of our OSGs because it's very easy to think, "Oh, an OSG has only been in the job 12 months." Too many establishments are sweeping under the carpet about sexual harassment towards women but to men also. It has to stop and it has to stop now. I've come forward and I've reported my case to find out that this person has also been reported numerous times before and it's been swept under the carpet. But it's not going to be swept under the carpet anymore. I ask you to support these workshops for every woman who works in the Prison Service.

<Applause>

**GARY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, Conference ...

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Just one moment, usually we only allow one delegate to speak from a branch. I'm sorry, I'm bound by the rules. Sorry.

**GARY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** That's fine.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Oh, show off – come on, show off.

**GARY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** NEC, colleagues, and my wife, who wants to see what I actually do when I come, yeah, speaking in support of this motion. Some of the things that's come out of that first meeting that Jackie and the team held has been quite eye-opening. We've had some issues at Lincoln and we're now far more aware, so I would encourage you to get your female members to attend these forums so that they can express the problems and make us a truly diverse union. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** No more speakers? OK, we can now open the vote. Thank you, Conference, we can now display the results of that. That motion has been carried.

Motion 68, NEC. Secunder please? That motion falls. Too late.

Thanks for that clear message, makes our life easy. Been a long day.

Conference, just to remind you before I invite our final guest speaker for the day, who's just popped in on her way from the House of Commons, just to remind you that tomorrow morning we haven't got many motions left but we have got two very important guest speakers, one of which is the HMPPS CEO, Amy Rees, who ultimately granted you facility time to attend, and then we've got the Prisons Minister, Damian Hinds. It's important that you attend – no early darts, get yourselves here, listen to what they've got to say. I will respond on your behalf with questions based on what they announce. If they're willing to take questions from the floor then that's fine, I will ask them, but don't expect them to, that's all I'm saying. I do plan on getting you away at the latest before 12:30. That's the plan, and I think it's an achievable plan.

Popping in from the House of Commons and a massive supporter of the POA, she's our little pocket rocket, Mary Kelly Foy, MP for Durham.

<Applause>

Mary Kelly Foy is the Member of Parliament for the City of Durham, having first been elected in 2019. She is the daughter of Irish immigrants and was born and raised in the north east of England. Before working in Parliament, Mary was a counsellor in Gateshead with responsibilities for public health. She's a proud trade unionist and is a member of Unite and Unison. Mary is passionate about fighting for working people, including prison officers where she has raised issues such as the pension age, prisoners' education and welfare in prisons. There are three prisons in the City of Durham, so Mary is very much aware of the situation prison officers are facing right now. It's a great privilege and honour to announce that Mary Kelly Foy is addressing POA annual Conference. Mary, all yours.

<Applause>

**MARY KELLY FOY:** Thank you, Mark. Chair, NEC, Conference, thank you so much for inviting me to speak to you today. It's a great privilege and a pleasure to stand here and address you, just as it is to stand up for prison officers and the POA in Parliament. As Mark said, as well as the amazing Durham Miners Gala in my constituency, I have three prisons, Durham, Frankland and Low Newton, and I'm regular contact with the reps at those prisons, Phil, Craig, Keith, and Dae.

I know from the many conversations that I've had with them that the situation is getting worse, not better. And like so many workers across the country, they feel let down by the Government and their employer for a whole host of reasons – low pay, rising violence, no right to take industrial action, and the unrealistic and quite frankly cruel pension age. Less than a year ago in the House of Commons I reminded the then prisons minister, Victoria Atkins, of her previous promises to meet with you to discuss pension age as a standalone issue, but she then resigned from the Government less than a fortnight later without keeping her word. I then asked the Justice Secretary in February if he would agree to open negotiations, and he also resigned. Amazing – it's been crazy!

<Laughter>

But he told me that obviously they weren't going to revisit the retirement age issue, and I know that that went down really badly with a lot of the members in this room. I believe Liz Truss, when she was justice secretary, made an offer of essentially state pension age minus three years, which was overwhelmingly rejected by you all. Instead of getting back around the table to hammer out a deal that would be acceptable, the Government have just walked away, just like they've done with so many other workers. How do they keep getting away with this? Because they know how hard it is for you to fight back.

Almost 30 years ago your right to strike was taken away. A fundamental human right to withdraw labour taken away by the Tories. In fact, you've got no right to take any kind of industrial action at all, even inducing a prison officer to take action is a crime, and that's an absolute scandal. Every worker should be able to withdraw their own labour, but prison officers, who give so much to society every day of their lives, often at great personal risk, are

denied that fundamental right. Even worse, the Government then use it to exploit you further, whether it's on pension age, on pay, or even when it comes to protecting your own health and safety. No wonder morale is so low amongst prison officers I speak to in Durham.

But we have to be hopeful, change is coming. And I believe you heard yesterday from Steve Reed, the shadow secretary of state for justice, saying that a Labour Government will do everything it can to clear up the mess made by the Tories, especially in the criminal justice system. And that's why I fully back the POA's call for a Royal Commission on prisons and the wider criminal justice system, another promise made by the Tories but never delivered.

From prisons to probation, courts to the CPS, our justice system is in very bad shape, and savage austerity cuts and privatisation have wreaked havoc on the whole of society. While the super rich can buy their way out of trouble, everybody else is left paying the price for this injustice. The fact is that Government treat prisons like warehouses, places where they can hide away the problems in our society. All too often prison officers are left to deal with the consequences of our broken society.

As your General Secretary, Steve, said in his Morning Star feature, you can't fix society until you fix society's prisons. People are coming out of prison more criminalised than when they arrived – and that means more reoffending, more victims and dangerous communities. What's missing, as you all know, is rehabilitation, which we know is impossible in unsafe prisons. And that's what's missing from the Government's new Victims and Prisoners bill, which we'll be debating next week in Parliament. Without rehabilitation, without safe prisons, the Victims and Prisoners Bill will just produce more victims and more prisoners. The new Victims Code isn't enough, and locking up prisoners for longer is not the answer, and all of you in this room know that.

Many of you in this room know what's wrong with the prison system, and you are the ones really who've got all those good ideas of how to make things better, and that's why it's so important for politicians like me to keep listening to you and your union. As a member of the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group, I try to use my role to hold the Government to account, whether it be on fair pension age, better PPE or for your right to take industrial action, and I promise that I will keep on listening and make sure that our ministers listen. They might not take any action but I'll make sure that they keep listening to what we have to say. Hopefully when we do get a Labour Government, we can all work together to build a justice system that we can all be proud of.

Finally, thank you so much for everything that you do to keep our communities safe, for your courage and your bravery in the face of such contempt from this Government. And thanks again for the opportunity of speaking to you today. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Mary Kelly Foy.

<Applause>

Pocket rocket. We've done well today. I know it's been a long day. It's warm outside, someone's already asked for an early dart. I'll just take TOIL off you, don't worry.

Tomorrow morning we've got nine motions left, we've got two guest speakers. We'll open Conference with the fraternal address from honorary life member, Andy Hogg. I know for some of you this is your last night and you want to socialise, so enjoy yourselves, stay safe. We start at 9:30 tomorrow, that'll give you time to pack your kit and put it in your car. So we'll see you at 9:30 tomorrow morning. Thanks for today and have a good night.

<End of Wednesday's business>

Thursday 11th May 2023

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. Good morning everyone. I'll bring you to order. Just a few things before we commence. Many of you are probably not aware that this is the 38th Anniversary of the Bradford Football Disaster. That fire at Bradford City FC. We're a massive supporter of the charity that is in relation to that disaster. I don't know if you're aware of this but every Easter we sponsor a football tournament, which is organised by John Boddington, and that's held in Bradford every Easter and they have youth teams from all over Europe competing in it and we are very proud to sponsor that.

We've got an announcement about a prize winner, Gary Mann, I don't think you've collected your Farm Foods bottle of Moët yet – if you haven't can you go to the back of the hall and pick it up? I've had a text about our two speakers this morning. Apparently, Prisons Minister is coming into Eastbourne Station about 9:50. He's going to meet up with Amy Rees. He's going to speak first at 10:30, followed by Amy. They've asked me to leave the questions till they're both on the stage at the same time. They've said they'll take two questions from the floor but, look, that's not going to work because people are going to miss out, aren't they? How do you expect me to choose the appointment of questions you're going to throw from the floor? So, what I'm going to say to the Minister is, about our retirement age, is he going to commit to reopening negotiations with this union for a standalone retirement age deal. And with Amy Rees I'm going to ask her about PAVA in the YCS estate and obviously mention the open estate and the female estate. I'll probably get a few more questions in as well and I will respond to them based on what they've said, because I've got a few bones to pick with the Prisons Minister after what he said in Parliament the other day about comparing us with seafarers. At the first meeting with me and Steve, I actually said, "Please don't compare us with seafarers." And he's done it again. I blame the special advisors, they just give their, "Here you are, that's what you respond with." And they just regurgitate former Prisons Minister's statements about prison officer retirement age, so I'll pull him on that.

Right, we'll get on with business. We'll get it done and dusted and we'll see what they've got to say. It gives me great pleasure to invite Andy Hogg, honorary life member, to send us for eternal greetings on behalf of the honorary life members. Andy, you're looking great, off you go. Andy Hogg.

<Applause>

**ANDY HOGG – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER:** Thanks Mark. Chair, NEC, invited guests, honorary life members and, of course, these hard-working delegates on the floor of Conference. I'm absolutely delighted to have this opportunity to address you on behalf of the honorary life members, and even more delighted in the fact that I'm now included in that number following last year's Conference, when you gave me probably the proudest moment in my time with the POA by bestowing on me that great honour and privilege. I'm pleased also to be able to take the opportunity to thank my good friends Phil Fairlie and Alan Blackwood of Carstairs when moving and seconding the motion and for their kind words during that period. I'm not entirely sure they got the right man but I'm very grateful anyway.

I have to say, though, that my time working with Carstairs branch in the special hospitals and the private-sector committees in particular, always demonstrated to me that you never stop learning in this job. It doesn't matter how long you've been around and how complex but interrelated the membership at the POA is, it's a big family. There's a lot of brothers and a lot of sisters and we should take our time to cherish that. And not just cherish it, but nurture it. These committees play an important part in the role of the organisation and we should respect that as well. It's a very humbling experience to be recognised by your peers in this way and you have my deepest gratitude and thanks for that and a commitment to continue to serve you in any way I can going forward. I know that is a sentiment of HLM colleagues at the back – we're always there if you need us.

I've nothing to add very much more than that, Conference. Even though it's been a couple of years, it still hits the heart strings going so when the <inaudible> get through the address if I dwell on it too much. It's a pleasure for me, though, to be able to welcome on board the latest HLMs, Dave Cook and Willie Carle, both of whom I know well. In fact, Willy and I go back a very long way, having started together in the Prison Service in Scotland in May 1987. It was the 25th of May to be exact and it's only just a couple of weeks short of 36 years ago, and I'm pretty sure that none of us would've even anticipated sharing a spot in the Scottish National Committee, let alone being honorary life members some 36 years later. In fact, I'm not entirely sure if we were actually going to pass the course when we got there. But pass it we did <inaudible> have to stand on the shed door at mine and have him toddling off to Longriggend. And when I talk about Longriggend, it gives me an opportunity as well to actually acknowledge your award to Davey Nicholson, a guy that I met at Longriggend some 30-odd years ago when I started in the service. And can I say, when you talk about outstanding service to this union, that's a man who thoroughly deserves that recognition and is a deserving recipient of getting a Cronin Clasp. So, well done and congratulations to Davey, and indeed to the rest of the awards that were issued yesterday.

Conference, it's safe to say that over 30 years in and around the Prison Service, coupled with countless Conferences, meetings during our involvement with the SPOA and the POA, we've seen a lot of change across all the sectors that we represent. Some of that has been positive change, especially around protecting our members health and safety, and yet we still see persistently high levels of assault and injury to our colleagues, including to their mental health. That remains and shall always remain unacceptable. It's not just part of the job and it never should be treated as such. A glance at Conference agenda reminds us that it remains one of our biggest challenges going forward. We know, of course, that the demands and challenges our members face on a daily basis across all the sectors we represent, whether there's actual physical violence, whether it's threatening violence, whether it's just plain intimidation, we also know that not only impacts on the individual concerned but on their families as well. I hope that if the Chief Executive, and now the minister, takes anything away from what they hear today and what's been reported back through this week, it's that members that she has responsibility for need and deserve her support to ensure the policies are in place across all areas of this service to protect the health and wellbeing of our members and her staff. No ifs, no buts and above all no compromises. The health and safety for our membership, wherever they operate, must be sacrosanct.

Another area, Conference, where we share your pain and frustration is around the continued restriction on prison officers across England and Wales from exercising the common right to withdraw their labour and support over pay and terms and conditions. It's a fundamental right. We have witnessed

countless trade unions across the public, private and civil sectors exercise this past year, voting with their feet against uncompromising Government and employers. Now, what's the UK Government's answer to the growing industrial unrest? Has it sat down with the unions to try and find solutions and compromise? No. Their answer, typical, is yet to consider yet more anti-trade union legislation. Restricting the rights of other sectors to take industrial action and, as the TUC rightly come under pressure from those unions to defend union members against that attack, the POA, you can be assured, will be there supporting their colleagues. I sincerely hope that those same unions and the TUC don't forget to galvanise their collective strength around the POA and support us in our continued and long fight to get those rights returned to all of our members.

For those areas where we do retain that ability to ballot, it's incredibly important, Conference, that we encourage each and every member to cast their vote. Whatever you think are the rights and wrongs of the thresholds and ballots, and they're wrong, it's sad to see that those limits are not being reached, especially when ballot returns show overwhelming support for action from those that took the time to vote. Conference, never forget that workers' rights are human rights. We must do everything that we can to get that message across and guard against apathy becoming an even bigger problem for this union than the restrictions. That will stop our members' progress and that is not something that any of us have an interest in.

Conference, before I conclude the address on behalf of the honorary life members, I would like to take a minute to acknowledge a passing last year of one of our members, John Sharon, who's an honorary life member. Many will know John from his time in service with the HPOA and the POA, along with his attendance at Conference over the years. I had the privilege and pleasure of working with John over many years and I learned a lot from a guy who not only spoke his mind but was knowledgeable, determined and resilient and very articulate. Great attributes, not only to learn from but served this union just as he did with distinction and he'll be sadly missed.

Another point, I'm glad, and I missed this article in the Gatelodge, somebody told me that a fellow had brought about Tam Adams. Now, Tam sadly can't make it down here because of the distance and the travelling as much, but equally, and probably more importantly, because Tam reached his ninetieth birthday just in January there as well and Tam's been attending Conferences since, well, since I've done all these years as well. It reminds me of a story when I mention Tam Adams is to recognise the type of character he was. Just two or three year back, Tam stood at the podium, I think, in Southport and was delivering the fraternal address on behalf of the honorary life members, to which he proudly pointed out <laughs> that he'd drawn his pension for more years than he had currently served and that he was really proud of the fact he went out on a <inaudible> pension, and his finishing line for me, at the time, was, "and George Osborn hates me!" <Laughs> But Conference, that's the nature of Tam! And all that remains is me to thank you on behalf of the honorary life members for your kindness and your friendship shown to us, all <inaudible> over the last few days. It's been an enjoyable and informative Conference. I think the quality of the speaking has been excellent, I think they're smashing, first-time speakers I think have been really high quality as well, but it's been enjoyable. It's been a great Conference. Learnt a few abbreviations and it's always quite useful, and I hope we can tell you the progress of the union. You do a terrific job on behalf of this membership and it doesn't always attract the thanks that it should. But I know that the honorary life members, when I'm speaking to them, do recognise and acknowledge your efforts. So please, take care, look after each other. We wish you every success going forward. Good luck.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Andy. It's an absolute pleasure for you to be back addressing Conference. What I've noticed, and you must've noticed it as well, Conference, that whenever you meet colleagues and friends that you've worked with who've retired or left the service, they always look fit and healthy and stress-free. I've just been talking to a dear friend at the back who I used to work with – he looks fantastic since he left the job. Same for Andy, who's been unwavering in his representation of members in Scotland – a great career, a great asset to the union and I'm made up that you're having a happy and healthy retirement. Andy Hogg.

<Applause>

I'm just going to get Steve Gillan to make a few announcements and we need to adopt the Annual Report.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chairman. NEC, Conference. As usual we'll move the Annual Report as in keeping with previous years. The Annual Report is a good reference document. We don't print it off and put it in the packs anymore because it's quite a substantive document, but it's a good reference document. It's on our website. You'll have received emails with regards to it as well with the links to that document when you get back to your establishments etc. Please read it because it's got all the work that the Whitley Committees have done, good reports in there. Please read the parliamentary report because there's some outstanding work that Charley Allan has done for us over the last year and we continue to try and influence politicians in everything that we can do. So again, Chair, that's the report from the Annual Report.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, can you just, with a show of hands, adopt this Annual Report. Happy to adopt it, just please show. That's adopted, thank you.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** There's a couple of other announcements. One – you will recall the National Chairman said that the charity that we had in mind was Motor Neurone Disease. He mentioned Nicola Hubert's father sadly dying from that horrific illness that there's no cure for. Well, the Finance Committee have determined to give a donation of £5,000 to Motor Neurone.

<Applause>

I have another couple of announcements, Chair, in relation to Mick Body at Birmingham. Sadly, Mick's brother was elected as a councillor last week in a constituency up near Birmingham and he sadly passed away very suddenly. You know what, Mick has maintained his dignity here. He could've just asked to go home but he didn't. He's remained here because he said, "I've still got the business of the branch to do." And that speaks volumes for me. I can't speak highly enough of Mick Body. He's been a tremendous character over the years, leading by example of Birmingham, and I think

it goes without saying the work that he does on behalf of his members is absolutely outstanding. But there was one wish from his brother – sadly, he never saw that wish through – and that was to do a fundraiser to build a playground for young children to make it a safe place for them. The Welfare Committee this morning have determined that we're going to make a donation of £3,000 to that.

<Applause>

I'd just also like to mention Pat Dobson because, again, Pat told us that his father-in-law was critical and sadly has passed away. And, yet again, Pat has remained at Conference to do the business on behalf of his branch. Pat, thank you so much and it speaks volumes of what you, the delegates, do on behalf of your members. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Steve. Okay, let's get through these motions. We are starting with motion 69, which is the NEC motion. Can I have a seconder please? Thank you.

### **Motion 69**

**Conference recognises trade unions have long fought for equality and their memberships have become more diverse as the population and society have changed.**

**The POA Equality Committee needs to be restructured to meet the needs of its members with protected characteristics and ensure their voice is heard not only within this trade union but with employers, Government, and society.**

**Conference instructs the NEC to set up a working party from within its membership to restructure the equality committee and bring back its recommendations to Conference 2024 for debate and disposal.**

### **NEC**

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on motion 69 on behalf of the NEC. Okay, Conference, here's the deal, I've been coming to Conference now for many, many years as a local and national representative. This is my very last day and my very last motion that I will be putting forward to Conference and I am really hoping you aren't going to send me away with a negative and I'm hoping this motion's going to go through. <laughs> Motion 69 is quite self-explanatory so I'm not going to go through it all and I'm not going to say too much about it, but it's any trade union that has policies and has committees and everything else. It's only right that we look at ourselves and every now and then we carry out a review to make sure it's fit for purpose, that it's still relevant, what they're achieving is appropriate and it's representative of our members. And that's what this is asking for, is a review of the equalities committee. This is no reflection at all upon the people who are doing that work. It's just a case of, for us to be a progressive trade union we have to look at ourselves every now and then to make sure we're up to date with it. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Yeah, no pressure, Conference, it's his last motion and he wants to go away with a smile on his face. No speakers, so we can take that to the vote please. Thank you, Conference, we can now display those results and as you can see Cooky's happy, that's carried.

<Applause>

Motion 70 – NEC. Secunder please. thank you.

### **Motion 70**

#### **Future Generation POA Leaders**

**Conference recognise it is important to plan for the future to ensure existing and potential future trade union leaders of the POA are trained to lead the POA to the highest standards so that the POA membership benefits as a trade union whether those individuals become future NEC Officials or Full Time Officers. Financial investment in education and political leadership courses are critical to ensure we are planning for future generations so that we can have the very best leaders moving into a future generation.**

**Conference therefore endorses a feasibility study of suitable educational and political training to ensure we are planning for the future of the POA. The feasibility study will look at the costings over the next 10 years and produce a Conference paper that can be considered by delegates at Conference May 2024.**

### **NEC**

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference. It gives me great pleasure in moving this important motion about future generation of POA leaders. I think we do need to plan for the future. You will have the last say in what we produce for you next year if this motion goes through, but we want to look at a variety of issues so as that we can invest in education and political leadership courses for you, the membership, and delegates and indeed NEC members. I was very, very fortunate that I was put forward and applied for a scholarship to send two British trade unionists to Harvard University for six weeks. Now, we wouldn't have been able to have afforded that and I was very fortunate that I was one of the two trade union leaders that actually was selected for that scholarship, which lasted six weeks at Harvard University in America. Just to give you a flavour, for that six weeks if we were to have funded that ourselves it would've cost £30,000 just for one person to go to Harvard. And I've got to say, it was an enlightening six weeks. It was absolutely immense, with some of the professors, political leaders that used to write speeches for Obama and different things, teaching trade union leaders trying to raise the standard, and that's what I think we've got to plan for. I think we've got to plan for young people coming through who demonstrate a willingness to learn, even if it's putting them through media training and different things about speeches, speech-writing and so forth. So, I would like you to support this motion. We will take it away. We'll look at all the political education and training that we can and all that sort of stuff. We'll do a Conference paper for you so that you can then consider it. I would imagine, out of that, we will look at a criteria for individuals to apply, should it be not cost-prohibitive or anything like that, but may well be, just to give you a flavour, we may well look at ring-fencing part of the subscriptions for those future leaders. So, Conference, we ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

**JADE THOMAS – BRINSFORD:** Conference, chair, NEC. Proud OSG, first time at Conference.

<Applause>

I understand the sentiments of the motion, wherein we have an awful lot of experience leaving the Conference floor and we're relying on new officials to take their place with a lack of relevant training. Conference, I'm not sure how we'll successfully achieve these higher training standards but I believe in our NEC and I'm sure they'll agree that, for our union to continue successfully, we must train and nurture young workers so that they can progress into higher positions within the POA. During my time here we've heard from different branch officials that this will be their last time at Conference and that leaves gaps that currently any of our officials can fill. Who is better to fill them than new, impassioned, young workers who can offer a fresh perspective on issues within our workplace and the same dedicated service as our experienced members? This is only achievable with the aid of all of you here today. Conference, our young workers are the future. Invest in the future and support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Well said. Well done.

<Applause>

Well done.

**TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH, COOKHAM WOOD:** Chair, Conference. I apologise my voice don't hold out, but after an extensive night of networking with our committees we are where we're at. Young workers, we're the lifeblood of this union. No-one's here to gain themselves, no-one's here to get promotion, no-one's here to push their own agendas. We're all here for the POA. The POA is us, through and through, it's hand-in-hand with what we do, it's our values as a person. You've seen so many speakers up here this week, young members that want to fight for this union, that want to be that next stage, that want to see us go for the next 30 or 40 years. We ask ourselves, "Why don't people stand for the NEC? Why don't young workers stand for the NEC?" But yet, we tell our branches all the time that these guys live out of suitcases, they spend their lives moving from hotel to hotel. Young workers, why do I want to do that? I want to start my family, I want to get a mortgage, I want to be at home with my friends and family. There's a reason why the NEC – obviously Dave Cook, old and decrepit.

<Laughter and applause>

No, all jokes had. There's a reason why there's a certain age demographic on the NEC, because these people live out of suitcases, they go from hotel to hotel, from branch to branch. We don't see that. We don't understand it. We don't understand why, as a young member, am I going to stand and say, "Oh yeah, I'll go for an NEC position, that's great, yeah." We'll live out of a hotel, we'll live out of a suitcase. Fortunately, well, I say fortunately, I've just become a dad and I don't want to be away from home.

<Applause>

Why wouldn't I want to be at home? We've got the support in our branches from Committee members, and I pay tribute to my chair, absolutely brilliant, but why am I, as a young member, going to walk away from that? Because, I'm happy at Cookham, I have a good laugh and my Committee stand around me and give me support. But I don't want to live out of a suitcase. The work this NEC do, I pay tribute to them – and Cooky, I suppose.

<Laughter>

It's brilliant – you can't fault it, you really can't. But the young members of this union, the ones that are coming through, they're the ones that are going to be standing here. We've seen many voices this week that are going to be, hope, on this top table next year. I said last night, it's a pretty dark day, pretty dark week for this union, the amount of guys we've got leaving. Preston, some really, really, really good union reps leaving this union and we

need to stand behind them, realise who's going to be replacing them. Who's going to be stepping into their shoes next and that's where we need to put our funding and our support, because ultimately we're next. Thank you very much, Conference.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Tyler. And I've heard all about your networking.

<Laughter>

No more speakers. We can take that to the vote. Thank you, we can now display those results. That's being carried.

71 – NEC. Secunder please. Thank you.

### **Motion 71**

**That Conference agree a review of the criteria for HLM is overdue as we see increases year on year to the highest award that can be given to any individual in the POA. Conference therefore agrees to a review led by the National Chair, Scottish Chair, Area Chair Northern Ireland, General Secretary and one HLM with a policy outcome to be considered by Annual Conference 2024.**

### **NEC**

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, Chair. NEC, Conference. This is a simple review of our highest award, which is honorary life member. I think we're probably the only trade union, in the trade union movement, that has so many honorary life members and I don't think we've had a review, certainly I think the last review that we had for the criteria for honorary life member was back in probably about the year 2000, so it's well overdue for a review. That's not to say that anyone who's got it doesn't deserve it – I have an opinion on some, but that's my own special opinion. The reality is we've got to ensure that we don't diminish that award by just giving it out willy-nilly. I think it's time for a review to look at the criteria to make sure that that highest award is for outstanding work of this union, because it is the highest award to be given. Now, you will have the final say on that when we bring back a paper, if this motion goes through. It will be led by the National Chairman, the Scottish Chairman, the Area Chair Northern Ireland, myself as General Secretary and someone from the honorary life members, so as that we can have a policy outcome to be considered by yourselves for next year. I think that is fair, I think it's appropriate. It does need tinkering with a little bit, I think. There's nothing sinister, there's no preconditions attached or anything like that. It will be an open and honest review, but you will have the final say on what you want that criteria to be. Thank you, Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

**PAUL WRAY – BRANCH SECRETARY, LINCOLN:** Final time and this will be my last one, I think. Fully support this motion. It is the highest honour that can be awarded to a member. We saw Dave deservedly get it this year, so please support it. I'd just like one caveat or something in there, that if you're daft enough to support Derby County you'll never qualify. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. There's no more speakers so the vote is now open. Thank you, we can display those results. That's been carried.

72 is an NEC motion. Can I have a secunder please? Thank you, Lincoln.

### **Motion 72**

**Conference gave its mandate to the NEC to return to giving evidence to the PSPRB to improve the pay of its members.**

**Conference instruct the NEC to visit selected workplaces to listen to the opinion of its members prior to putting in its pay submissions to the PSPRB.**

### **NEC**

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, moving the motion on behalf of the NEC. The motion reads: Conference gave its mandate to the NEC to return to giving evidence to the Pay Review Body to improve the pay of its members. Conference instruct the NEC to visit selected workplaces to listen to the opinion of its members prior to putting in its pay submissions to the pay review body. Conference, it's a simple motion, the NEC are seeking your permission for the pay submission team to visit to certain sites, speak to members on the ground, listen to their concerns and reflect their concerns in the submission to the Pay Review Body. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Andy. There's no speakers so we can take that straight to the vote. Thanks, Conference, we can now display those results and that has been carried.

73, 74, 75 we've already done so we're onto 76 – Parkhurst. Secorder for Parkhurst please. Thank you, Albany.

### Motion 76

**That the NEC actively pursue the removal of the wording “probability” and replace it with “beyond reasonable doubt” on disciplinary procedures for staff that fall under the disciplinary process.**

### PARKHURST

**GLEN HOLMES – BRANCH CHAIR, PARKHURST:** Chair, NEC, Conference. We know this has been spoken about at Conference before on several occasions and we know it's a rule that's been put in place for employees and most jobs and we get that it's something that, at this point, is out of the hands of our NEC. It doesn't mean it's right. It doesn't mean it's fair. How can prisoners have charge after charge thrown out because beyond reasonable doubt? Over the last few months we've had staff that have been sacked – no evidence, but because governors don't like a particular person it's been, “It's probable that was said, on probability, I'm getting rid of you.” Then the area manager agrees, no evidence, the area manager said, “No evidence at all, we don't know what was said, but on probability it was said so I'm sacking you.” It's not right, it's not fair. Even if it's not achievable we're not saying, “Do it now,” we're saying, “Pursue it.” Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**GARRY WESTON – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL:** Chair, NEC, Conference. We've all seen colleagues under investigation and plenty that have been accused of things they haven't actually done but have been found guilty by a Governor on his word alone. “I think you've done it, so you've done it.” It's outrageous. It's not fair and it's not proper. Support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Nobody else so Mick Pimblett for the NEC responding.

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking against the motion on behalf of the NEC. Colleagues, the court system has already established over several centuries a clear set of principles in relation to two questions that form the bedrock of due process, in both the criminal and the civil courts. As you're all aware the balance of probabilities is different and lower standard of proof to beyond reasonable doubt, which is a standard applied in the criminal justice system. The strict rules of evidence and procedure which govern our civil and criminal courts do not apply in workplace investigations. However, when it comes to setting the standard of proof, that is the evidential threshold that needs to be met to conclude, that yes, the issue or complaint did happen. The Civil Standard of Proof is used by employers and that is to balance the probabilities. The balance of probability provides a marker for the decision-maker and other parties, importantly, that if the matter were to proceed to the employment tribunal or another civil court, this is the standard that the judges would endorse and use – meaning that they will be less likely to undo or criticise the employer's approach or decision. This is commonly understood to mean that the event is more likely to have happened than not. So, if a judge were to decide there to be a 50% chance that something happened, it would not meet the standard and he or she would need to conclude that it did not happen.

The motion refers specifically to disciplinary procedures and, whilst I understand the sentiment of the motion, I believe that it would be impossible to achieve. In order for the disciplinary award to be fair, the employer must demonstrate that they have a genuine belief in the misconduct, also that there are reasonable grounds for holding that belief, and also that a reasonable investigation into the misconduct had been undertaken. Furthermore, any disciplinary award must fall within a range of reasonable responses. In addition to this, the more serious the allegation, the less likely it is that the event actually happened, and thus the stronger and more cogent should be the evidence before a court determines that on the balance of probability the event did occur. This principle has been readily applied in a number of different settings over the last 60 years and we refer to it as Halsbury's Laws.

For the NEC to actively pursue the removal of the word probability and replace it with beyond reasonable doubt would obviously require a change in law. But it is a complex constitution with many different sources of law. This particular law has been in place for many, many centuries. The most effective way to secure this change would be by getting the Government of the day to support our cause. This can often be done by demonstrating huge public support – we could launch a petition, start a Twitter campaign, get the issue on the front page of newspapers and commission polling to show that the public overwhelmingly support our strategy.

Going to petitions – at 10,000 signatures a petition on the UK Government and Parliament site, you get a response from the Government. At 100,000 signatures, a petition on the UK Government and Parliament site will be considered for debate in Parliament. The most recent petition in 2015 regarding this was to urge Parliament to amend UK employment law to extent protection to employees by preventing employers being able to dismiss staff following disciplinary processes if their conclusion of guilt was reached via a balance of probabilities. It got seven supporters, colleagues. Didn't even get the 10,000 required for a response and nowhere near the 100,000 for debate in Parliament. I'll be honest with you, I do not hold out much hope from either our present Government or any future Government.

To finish, the balance of probabilities is also used on behalf of our members. What would happen if other civil matters that our members bring, that are currently judged on the balance of probabilities, such as discrimination, personal injury, unfair dismissal, unlawful deduction from wages, constructive dismissal etc., were to be judged on the standard of beyond reasonable doubt? I will tell you now, colleagues, the employer would be very, very happy

if that happened and it would open the floodgates for our employer to treat our members with even more contempt than they do now, with very little opportunity for legal redress by our members. Conference, reject the motion.

<Applause>

**GLEN HOLMES – BRANCH CHAIR, PARKHURST:** Thanks for that. It doesn't get someone their job back though when they've been sacked, does it? They go to court, don't get their job back. You say it's unachievable to get people to stop working overtime, PP, TOIL. We know it's unachievable but we go back to our branches and we keep trying to achieve it. We try to pursue it, to get things done that's right. At the end of the day, Bob Crow said, didn't he, "If you fight you might lose, if you don't fight you'll always lose." Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks, Glen. That vote is now open, Conference. Thank you, Conference, we can now display those results and as you can see that motion is lost.

77 – Moorland. Secunder for Moorland please. Thank you. You've done all the work this week, haven't you?

### Motion 77

### Pension Age

**Conference condemns Government for refusing to lower the retirement age and requests an update from the NEC about their continued campaign to reduce the pension age.**

### MOORLAND

**JADE LANCASTER – BRANCH SECRETARY, MOORLAND:** I've done a lot of work. Conference, Chair, NEC. Conference, one thing that every single one of us in this room can agree on is 68 Is Too Late. It's been mentioned several times at Conference – it's cruel, it's unrealistic and we deserve better. It is a national disgrace that our employer does not recognise the physical and mental demands of our job and the audacity to think it is acceptable to ask us to work to this absurd age. This is the biggest and most important campaign our union is running because of the direct impact that it has on the health and quality of our members' lives. It does pain me to say, over the last couple of years at HMP Moorland, we have lost far too many colleagues. We have attended far too many funerals, and Conference, this has brought home to our branch the harsh reality that far too many members do not get to enjoy a long, well-deserved retirement after years and even decades of service. We deserve better.

This is yet another example of how the current Government does not have a single shred of respect for our service. During the pandemic we were the hidden heroes. They were happy to clap for the key-workers on the Thursday, they were happy to talk about us as hard-working frontline staff. Yet, it is not a shock to any of us that, when it comes down to it, they have not put their money where their mouth is. What can we do as a union to ensure this campaign stays strong, relevant and is taken seriously? Conference, my branch have asked for this motion to be raised to ask our NEC for an update on the progress of this vital campaign, and also to expand on what can be done next and what can we do at a local level to ensure a further chance of victory. We all need to take ownership of this important campaign. Conference, we deserve better, let's demand better. Thank you.

<Applause>

**PAUL MALLIBAND, BRANCH – PRESTON:** I really wasn't going to do this. Chair, NEC, delegates, some invited guests. How could I not get up and speak to this when we're going to condemn our Government. I'm a lifelong socialist and I make no apology for it. I was in the Labour Party many years ago and left in 1997 and I've never gone back, and it doesn't matter who it is, because none of them represent us. Why? Because they're corrupt.

<Applause>

There are millions of people in this country who are disenfranchised from the political system and they wonder why people don't turn out and vote. Right, well, we know why, because they're not interested. There's 600 people who get elected into the den of thieves and then live off the back of us and have the audacity to tell us that, "You're not worthy of public money" and yet vote for their own pay rises, yeah? Not a chance. It's disgraceful what is going on in the country and anybody who believes that the cost-of-living crisis in this country is not some stage-managed exercise by the current Government needs to wake up and smell the coffee. It is a deliberate act of vandalism!

<Applause>

They take public money and then tell us that we're not worth a pay rise. It's not good enough. I'm not a democrat and I'm not afraid to say it, and they drive home the reason why – 68 years of age rolling round fighting with people, young people, who are twice the size of most of the people who work in there. Somebody's going to die and they don't care, and do you know why? Because apparently we're an expendable commodity and they've already done the costing of what they'll have to pay us out. That's not good enough. It's not good enough. And that's any Government, even the one that's potentially going to be coming in, as I said yesterday, are not giving us the commitment they want on this particular issue. It's affordable and they need to give it to us, very simply.

Somebody's going to come and address us shortly. Do you know what they do when we don't like things at football matches? And I've never been a hooligan, but there you go. At Celtic Park, when we don't like something that's going on or we're not getting what we want on the pitch, we turn our back on the field of play. Well, if that's the field of play and they aren't giving us what they want, then we'll all stand up and turn our backs, eh?

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** And start doing a <inaudible>.

<Laughter>

Andy Baxter for the NEC.

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to support this motion. To clarify, the 68 Is Too Late Campaign is not the NEC's campaign. This campaign belongs to every member within this union. It also crosses over into the world of our secure hospital colleagues and our Scottish colleagues, and as such every member should take it upon themselves to raise this issue with their local MP in writing or at a ward surgery. Our campaign is known and recognised by trade unionists, by members of Parliament, by members of the House of Lords, by the Treasury, by our employer and by the administrators of our pension scheme, the Cabinet Office. We were addressed yesterday by Mary Kelly Foy, Labour MP for Durham City. Mary, alongside other MPs, has been tireless in raising the 68 Is Too Late issue in the Houses of Parliament and the POA thank her, and all MPs across all parties, for their steadfast support. Our National Chair, Mark Fairhurst, raised the issue to the Justice Select Committee. He asked the Justice Select Committee, "Would you want your grandparents in their late sixties rolling around the floor with a violent 21-year-old?" He informed the committee, "We're a unique workforce in a unique environment, we need a bespoke policy around retirement." He informed the committee that only politicians can bring around the change that is needed, only politicians can put the pressure on the Treasury and the Government to make the change. Mark concluded to the Justice Select Committee, "We're less than 5% of the civil service pension scheme. Make us unique, allow us to retire earlier with no reductions to our pensions."

Colleagues, we're not asking for enhancements. All we want is an option to put into pay what we have paid from 60 with no reduction. We know we hold the moral high ground. POA members cannot be expected to apply control and restraint to younger, fitter, ever-more violent prisoners at the age of 68. Victoria Atkins stood here at POA Conference '22 and promised to go away and look at, amongst other things, retirement age. However, as you heard yesterday, Victoria resigned seven weeks later. There have been no meetings with Government around our members' pension age. You'll recall also from last year's Conference, Earl Attlee gave Conference a steadfast undertaking to raise the issue of prison officer retirement age in the House of Lords. Earl Attlee was good to his word and the POA thank him. He raised a short debate on 16th June '22 and a subsequent debate on 22nd March '23. Numerous speakers supported Earl Attlee in the debate, raised the issues around prison officers being expected to work through to the retirement age of 68.

The response through Lord Stewart of Darlington in that debate was that, "the Government don't consider the job of a prison officer is sufficiently comparable to that of a firefighter or a policeman to justify a downward reduction in the qualifying age for a full pension." Lord Stewart added, "Firefighters require a much higher level of fitness than prison officers and they do life-threatening work, and the work of police officers in the Government's view involves a higher risk of fatality or serious injury." He continued, "Since Lord Hutton did not include prison officers it would not, in the Government's view, be appropriate to reopen that issue." The Government then responded that, "during a trend of increasing pension ages from a global view, any Government concerned with controlling public expenditure in the future would have to think long and hard before lowering a pension age and would go against the grain of wider economic pressures and demands. Government don't believe people joining the Prison Service are focussed on pension age and they contest that impact." They conceded that, "following the McCloud remedy, a detailed discussion of pensions should take place when that remedy is clearer and should also take place in discussions relating to pay." The Government believes that prison officer pension position is symbolic. They do not believe that cause and effect exist between a higher pension age and retention. The Government state that the pension issue is not closed and that the remedy from McCloud will need to be assessed first. Government admit it's a difficult issue, they don't want to indicate the position's closed and would want to find a way to move forward constructively.

It's clear to the POA, although Government make the right noises, they're keen to avoid this issue as long as they're able to. Government responded to Earl Attlee and stated that, "Prison officers can work until 68 because they work in a controlled environment." You all know that's a pitiful response. We say back to Government today, if our working environment is a controlled environment then why do we need air ambulances air lifting seriously injured staff and prisoners to hospital with life-threatening injuries? Why have we needed to introduce pepper spray, rigid bar handcuffs, SPEAR training? Why do we see people attempting to kill others by stamping on their heads? Why do we see terrorist-related crimes in our prisons? Why do we see homicides in our prisons? Why do we see men, women and children self-isolating due to fears for their safety? Why do people need to manufacture and carry weapons? Why are the levels of mental health illness amongst staff soaring? Why are more staff than ever being diagnosed with PTSD? Why do brave, younger and older experienced staff leaving the profession tell HMPPS at the exit interview one of the biggest drivers for them leaving the operation is the operational environment? Why have we had to introduce trauma risk incident management control programmes? We all know our prisons are not controlled environments, they're chaotic reactionary environments.

Yesterday morning, Gordon Henderson, Conservative MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, secured a Westminster Hall debate on prison officer pension age. Yet again, we had excellent cross-party support in that debate. Gordon Henderson, Conservative, opened the debate and stated that moving the motion felt like Groundhog Day – he'd previously moved an identical motion in October 2019 and again in November '21. He stated he'd also raised many parliamentary questions about the scandal that many prison officers are expected to work until they're 68 when their counterparts in the police and fire service are able to retire at 60. Janet Daby, Labour, put issues around the retention crisis to the minister. Jim Shannon, DUP, raised the impact of working in dangerous and violent conditions and its impact on prison officer mental health. He stated, "It's a huge demand to ask people to work in these conditions until they're 68." Liz Saville Roberts, Plaid Cymru, joined the debate. She reinforced the link to Minister Hinds between pension and retention. Liz also challenged the minister's comparison between seafarers and prison officers. Ian Lavery, Labour, raised the

Prisons Act 1952 that gives prison officers the power of a constable. He challenged why prison officers were denied the pension protections given to police officers and firefighters. As part of his response in the debate, Damian Hinds responded that, "Prison officers pay much less for their pension than their counterparts in the police and the fire service." Colleagues, this is true, but the POA point out that prison officers are paid significantly less than police officers and firefighters. He was asked directly by Ian Lavery if he would give a commitment to meet with the POA for constructive talks to discuss these issues. The minister responded, "I was just about to raise discussions with the profession and the POA. I'm lucky enough to speak to prison officers frequently and I'm always happy to speak to the POA."

Colleagues, as I said when I began, it's your campaign. Tell your members next year there is a general election. Tell every single member. Tell their families, speak to the candidates in the election, ask them the question, "Some prison officers are expected to work to 68 – what are you going to do in relation to prison officer pension age?" Colleagues, the 68 Is Too Late Campaign will continue until we achieve an acceptable outcome for all POA members. Support this motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Andy. OK, the vote is now open. Thank you, Conference, we can close that vote. That has been carried.

78 – NEC. Secunder please. Thank you.

### **Motion 78**

**At Annual Conference 2022 the NEC sponsored an emergency motion on supporting the Ukrainian people. During the debate delegates brought to the NEC's attention there were other areas of the world which should be supported.**

**Therefore, Conference instructs the NEC to formulate an international policy which will include contact with international organisations and sister unions abroad to share experiences and work in solidarity. Solidarity means speaking out when fellow trade unionists are under threat – in Colombia, Burma, or Palestine, for instance. Solidarity also means working with sister trade unions to build their organisations on their own terms. Unions are involved in a number of projects which aim to assist trade unions abroad to increase their capacity, to defend their rights and to enable them to promote development by improving the lives of working people and creating a more just society.**

**Conference believes the POA and its members should be at the centre of these projects.**

### **NEC**

**JOE SIMPSON – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY:** Thank you, chair. Chair, NEC, Conference, moving motion 78. If you look at the motion, it's quite self-explanatory. At Conference last year the NEC sponsored an emergency motion on supporting the Ukrainian people and we got delegates coming up to the rostrum asking about other areas. It's something that I've been involved in ever since I became a branch official and then came onto the national stage. Conference, it's vital that this trade union has an international arm so we can reach out and we can take on good practice from other unions, but also to help other trade unions who are not in such a fortunate position as us, not that we are.

Conference, we're often told that the rights workers have in the UK are only possible in developed countries. Conference, we went through an industrial revolution which was marred by shoving bairns up chimneys and also by the difficult and horrible working conditions and days and appalling industrial accidents and diseases. The argument runs that developing countries need to do the same before they can have their modern workplace rights. No they don't. We've already got them, Conference, and we should be looking at helping them do that.

The International Labour Organisation, an arm of the United Nations, defines decent work, "There's opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. Freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all men and women." That's what every trade union should strive to achieve, colleagues.

Conference, I've been in touch with the Brazilian prison officers. They now have a copy of our RMP because they wanted to know what we'd done in our workplace. Hopefully, their governors will make a better job of it than we do or that our governors do. Conference, you already know that we're affiliated to Colombia and also in Brazil's prisons. When I was speaking to the contact over there, almost 100 inmates lost their lives in the first week in January alone – brutally murdered, the guards apparently unable to stop the bloodshed. Their number one problem is overcrowding, their second problem is gang warfare and their third problem in Brazilian prisons is the lack of resources. Does that ring true here? Because we are going through the same thing.

Conference, what we are asking is to set up an international committee so we can look at the work, help and advise those trade unions who are trying to get up off the floor through different pressures. I have attended Colombia and I was absolutely shocked when I met some of the trade unionists out there who dared, dared organise and dared go on strike, because all they wanted to do was sell their wares – it was a farmers' union – wanted to sell their wares in their local markets and make money for their families. They were murdered. Murdered for doing that. If we went the same way, I am sure, absolutely sure, that there's some governors out there who would sponsor that for some of you, but all I'm saying is we now need to get stuck into the international trade union movement and start helping them to get a better life and a better trade union. Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. There are no speakers so the vote is now open. Thank you, we can close that vote and display the results. That motion has been carried.

Conference, as you can see, our two invited guest speakers have arrived. I'll first introduce the Rt Hon. Damian Hinds MP who, at this moment in time, is our current Prisons Minister. Doing quite well, Minister, because you've been in post for several months now, so well done. It's alright, he's a northerner, he's got a sense of humour. Damian Hinds was appointed Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice on the 27th of October 2022. He was previously Minister of State, Minister for Security, between 13th August 2021 to 7th July 2022. He previously served the Secretary of State for Education from 8th January 2018 to 24th July 2019. He was elected Conservative MP for East Hampshire in May 2010. Damian attended St Ambrose Grammar School, Altrincham, before completing a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

Shortly after entering Parliament, Damian was elected to the Education Select Committee and served until October 2012. Previously, he chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility. He previously served as Assistant Government Whip from July 2014 until March 2015. Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury from May 2015 until July 2016 and as Minister of State for the Department of Work and Pensions from July 2016 to January 2018. Damian spent 18 years working in the pubs, brewing and hotel industries in Britain and abroad. You'd have a good week with our delegates if you like that. Damian and his wife, Jacqui, have three young children, and it gives me great pleasure to allow Damian Hinds, the Prisons Minister, to address Conference. Damian Hinds, Prisons Minister.

<Applause>

**DAMIAN HINDS – PRISONS MINISTER:** Thank you very much, Chair, for that introduction, and Conference, thank you for your welcome. I know a lot has happened since the last Conference when my predecessor, Victoria Atkins, was here to speak with you. I do recognise, as Mark said, there have been a lot of Prison Ministers recently and I'm sorry for that. I am going to do my best to try and increase the average tenure and I hope you might invite me back next year.

As Mark said, I've done a few different jobs around Government. My last three were as Education Secretary, Employment Minister and Security Minister. I think in a strange way of fate, those three things have come together in the job that I do now, so if anyone ever tells you there's no HR succession planning in Government, there's your answer right there. Because, as you know more than anyone, education and work and safe and secure prisons are absolutely fundamental to what you do and what your colleagues do. And it's been a great pleasure to meet a number of your colleagues, one or two who I recognise here today, as I had a chance to tour around a number of establishments around the country, including Cookham Wood, Thorn Cross, Winchester, Wormwood Scrubs, Cardiff, Eastwood Park, Ashton Grange and Full Sutton. I'm looking forward, I hope, to being able to meet many more of them and you in the months ahead.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it takes a very special kind of person to become a prison officer. I think to a lot of people it's probably not an obvious career choice that they would make, and certainly there are many, many other easier options that you could have taken. When I was at the Department for Education as Education Secretary, I often found myself talking with teachers about how the teaching profession is viewed, about the esteem of teachers. Look, it's certainly true that parents in particular can be more demanding, sometimes the media can be quite critical, but actually people are still in awe of teachers. It's because they know that, not only is the teacher's role a vital one in society but crucially it's one that, no matter how much training the rest of us get, we couldn't do it – and yours is like that. It is an invaluable job in society, which the vast, vast majority of people know that they simply could not do.

There is a difference, of course. Everybody knows a teacher, everyone's met a teacher or at the very least everyone went to school. They know what a school is like and that is the difference compared to this profession. Not everybody does know, because so much of what you do is unseen. That doesn't mean that it is unappreciated. I often remark that everyone clocks a sign for a prison. I know exactly where on the A3, and I've always known exactly where, as I drive from London to the constituency, exactly where the sign is for HMP Send. Growing up in South Manchester, we all knew exactly where Styal was, and of course everybody knows Strangeways. Everyone clocks it and then they move on mentally. They know that what's happening behind those walls is an absolutely vital function and they are really, really pleased that someone else is taking care of it. That someone, of course, is you.

Let me go back to teachers just for a minute, and there's a reason for this. I would say there's a big leverage effect with being a teacher because what goes on between that teacher and that kid or that class of 28 kids has a massive leveraged effect on those children later in life. It will affect their prospects in work, obviously their family prospects, pretty much everything that happens to them through their life. A big, big leverage effect. But for prison officers and OSGs, it's like that leveraged effect times 10. Because the effect of what you do with those individuals isn't just an effect on that individual and their future, it is a beneficial effect on whole communities and our entire society. Also, like teachers, I suspect that, in your work and in deciding to go into this line of work, I suspect that you're motivated by children. Some of you, of course, are working with children, some of the most challenging children in our society in the youth estate. Many more of you will be working with quite young adults who've barely stopped being children. This is exceptional work. All of you will see the children of prisoners and you'll think about their futures growing up in those circumstances. But I also mean more children than that, I mean all our children. Your own children, nieces, nephews, family friends and the world they will grow up in. You are motivated, I think, that they should be able to look forward to an adulthood of opportunity in safety and security, that the scourge of drug-dealing be gone from our streets, that our daughters should feel safe when they walk home at night.

Now, there is obviously no good level of crime except no crime at all. All crime is a tragedy for someone and every crime has a victim. And it's hard to talk about crime coming down because people, frankly, tend not to believe the statistics, because if you personally have been the victim of a crime that is what looms large in your minds. If you know someone who's recently been a victim of a crime, that is what looms large in your mind and any statistics can seem rather far off. Of course, any year there is some type of crime that does go up and sometimes those are abhorrent crimes that

we find particularly despicable, then there's relatively new types of crime like computer-based fraud. But there is also real progress, really significant progress, and you are at the heart of that. The British Crime Survey, which asks people about their actual real-life experience of crime, and they measure which statisticians say is the most reliable measure of crime, tells us that crime overall has been falling for an extended period. If we look at now compared to 2010, violent incidents are down by over 40%, theft over the same period by almost half. And many things have contributed to that picture but, let's be clear, the Prison Service had made enormous contribution.

One part of that contribution, of course, is keeping dangerous people behind bars. The other key one is about the power of rehabilitation, all the work that you do to get offenders' lives back on track – stabilising and settling with a routine, supporting prisoners to stop using drugs, getting them into learning, employment and employability, strengthening family ties in preparation for release. And it's because so much offending is actually reoffending that this is the single most important thing we need to tackle. That is how, as a society, we will get crime further down. And we know that the reoffending rate is coming down, including for robbery, down 17 percentage points, criminal damage and arson down 8 percentage points and sexual offence is down 3 percentage points. None of that happens by chance. Now, there are important things about buildings, about technology, about initiatives that are put into place and I'll come back to some of those soon. But, fundamentally it is about people, it is about you, it is about the concerted efforts of over 20,000 prison officers over 5,000 operational support grades and all the operational managers and non-operational colleagues right across the Prison Service. And on behalf of our society, we must make sure that these dedicated public servants, you and your colleagues, are properly compensated, have the right career paths and can feel safe at work.

There are early signs of improvement in recruitment following the 2022 Staff Pay Award, which was announced in July last year. That includes an increase in application volumes and we expect, and hope, to be able to bring more positive news on recruitment numbers and on retention when next quarter's data are published next week. Now, across the public sector, colleagues, it is true, the Government's focus is on giving workers a fair and reasonable settlement while also taking the steps needed to bring down inflation and protect households' budgets, which is essential to address the cost of living. We, of course, have the Prison Service Pay Review Body process and I look forward to receiving their recommendations in June. We can only deliver on capacity if we have enough people in our workplace, clearly. And they will only be able to deliver the kind of essential work that truly cuts crime if they are well-trained and well-motivated. I share the POA leadership's view that we must carry on investing in learning and development so that our staff continue to evolve as professionals and have the full opportunity to build long-term careers in the Prison Service. We've got to advocate for the people we have and by demonstrating what a rewarding career it can be to be a prison officer also attracts new recruits to the service. We're currently recruiting, as you will know, at all sites with an immediate or future need for staff. And as you'll also know, since 2022 we've streamlined the recruitment process and we're starting to see the average time for hiring and training prison officers fall month-on-month.

Now, as important as it is to bring in and train new staff, it is just as vital that we retain the brilliant staff we already have in the Prison Service so we can keep the experience on prison landings, that experience which is essential for keeping colleagues and prisoners safe. We realise that managing high volumes of new recruits, of course, itself comes with its own challenges and that's why we've worked to improve the joining experience with increased clarity in marketing materials and support for new joiners, including the introduction of new colleague mentors, who are now in place in every prison and the feedback I've heard on that mentoring has been positive. I'm really grateful for the work that our experienced staff do to support new colleagues because, as I'm sure you would also reflect yourselves, giving them a positive and supportive early experience is crucial to keeping them in the job.

We've also been working to better understand the drivers for people who do leave the profession and exit interviews with departing colleagues have highlighted the importance of staff experience, of course, in the place of work. And that's pointed to a number of other key areas we are committed to improving, including on health and wellbeing and career progression, and that I will come on to in a moment. You'll be well aware as well that HMPPS is determined to address discriminatory workplace culture, and I'm very supportive of the work that the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit is leading in this space. I want to say something about the issue of diversity and inclusion. Prison officers and OSGs are among our finest and most important public servants, represented by a professional body which is clearly committed to the very highest of professional standards. Like all professionals they deserve to work in an environment free from racism, sexism and prejudice of any kind, and the Government is as determined as the POA is make the Prison Service a welcoming and inclusive place to work so that talented people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, can thrive and contribute to the national mission to protect the public and bring down crime.

By creating a more inclusive workforce, we also give ourselves the best chance of resourcing the Prison Service in the optimal way, with the best, most-talented staff, who are valued and motivated in their work to help rehabilitate prisoners and protect the public. A service that reflects and understands the communities it serves in our modern and diverse country will always be more effective than one that doesn't. So, we've published, as you know, our response to HMI's thematic report on the experiences of black prisoners and staff and made a commitment to changing the culture of HMPPS for the better. We continue to take a zero-tolerance approach so that we can create a culture where incidents of racism or discrimination are dealt with swiftly, seriously and fairly. The work of the POA this year on supporting women in the workplace, alongside the work of HMPPS to raise awareness of such issues as the menopause, has been truly impressive. While a lot of progress has been made, there is still a lot to be done. I'm truly committed to working with you on this to deliver better outcomes for our staff and the prisoners in their care.

As I said earlier, it is fundamental that you should all be able to do your jobs safely. I want you to have no doubt that the health, safety and wellbeing of staff is priority for me and something I take, and all my colleagues take, very seriously. It is some mercy that assault rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels but any assault on our staff is utterly unacceptable. We're doing everything we can to address violence in prisons and continue working in partnership with the police and the CPS to successfully prosecute prisoners who assault staff. Since last year's Conference, of course, the Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, the so-called PCSC Act, doubles the maximum penalty for common assault or battery against an emergency worker, including against prison officers, and I am very pleased that that has come now into effect. We know that the duties of colleagues working in prisons place you at a higher risk of exposure to serious and potentially traumatic incidents at work. That's why we've ensured that support for staff is in place, including trauma risk management, so that trained colleagues can identify symptoms and signpost those affected to assistance and support where needed.

PAVA spray, alongside new personal safety training, has been rolled out in 85 prisons in the adult male estate to protect staff from incidents of serious

violence, and the new generation of body-worn video cameras are available to all Band 3-5 officers on duty in all 106 public-sector prisons. Both, I believe, are important tools in efforts to help keep our staff safe. It's important of course they're all trained to deal with challenging situations, which is why the five-minute intervention training is important. Staff need to be properly equipped with the equipment and with the skills to deescalate and manage situations in a fair, just and, of course, effective way. These continue, Conference, to be my priorities and the priorities of HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice, of course, working with you to improve recruitment, training and, of course, safety.

I want to thank Mark and Steve for the invitation and opportunity to be here today and speak with you. I also want to thank the POA for your straightforward approach, courteous, constructive and so clearly with your members' interests at heart. You are also always direct and clear and, quite rightly, do not let up when pressing for their interests. I know you will continue to press for those interests in the year ahead.

Alongside the ongoing priorities I outlined there are two other big things in the year ahead. First is addressing capacity, and you know well that we have had a big increase in remand numbers, which of course is partly to do with Covid and its impact on the court backlog and being full makes your job harder. It becomes more difficult to organise purposeful activity and of course it can cause tensions within the prison population. Increasing doubling-up in cells and pausing non-essential maintenance have been necessary steps in the circumstances but these are not things that any of us want to be doing. That's why we're continuing our ambitious building programme. One of our priorities is deliver 20,000 additional modern prison places. This is the largest prison-building programme since the Victorian era. But it's not just about making sure we have the requisite number of places, it's also about making sure we have a modern prison estate able to rehabilitate and thus cut crime. We have a new prison at HMP Five Wells which opened last year, HMP Fosse Way will open shortly and construction is well underway at HMP Millsike, bringing over 3,000 new prison places between them. Together, we can build further on the progress on rehabilitation with innovation and investment in drug treatment, and investment also in accommodation, Approved Premises and Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 to support high-risk offenders and those on home detention curfew, and our new Temporary Accommodation Service with up to 84 nights for anyone at risk of being homeless upon release.

The really big-time specific thing is about employment. There is a unique opportunity with unemployment as low as it is and at a time where there are a million or so vacancies across the country. How many of those jobs could be filled by ex-offenders desperate for a chance to prove themselves? We know that being in paid regular employment opens up so much else and makes it much less likely that you see those same individuals coming back through the gates. Holding down a steady job indeed can reduce the odds of reoffending by up to 9 percentage points. That number of people, the number of prison leavers going into jobs, is increasing and there are important initiatives around the prison employment leads, the employment advisory boards, the ID and banking initiative, which has come in ahead of schedule. We are also beginning work to refurbish workshops with the launch of the Employability Innovation Fund, and soon to deliver a new Prisoner Education Service to raise levels of numeracy, literacy and skills to help secure those vital jobs.

I also would like, if I may, to touch on your work during the pandemic and, like so many on the Covid frontline, prison officers lost their lives. I want to pay tribute to them and today in remembrance of them. In terms of our prison population overall, as you will recall well, Public Health England and Public Health Wales had projected an appalling death toll in English and Welsh prisons, given the close proximity in which prisoners are inevitably held. But that didn't happen at nearly that scale. Although every death, of course, is a tragedy for the families of those who have died, there are many, many people alive today who would not have been but for your lifesaving work, and the Prisons Officers Association were fundamental partners and leaders in that. Life-changing and life-saving. That is what prison officers do.

I want to end today by thanking every person in this room and by committing to use my time, as Prisons Minister, to support the Prison and Probation Service in delivering its priorities for staff and for prisoners, while also helping to champion the work that you do for the wider public. I'd like you to leave this Conference knowing that we appreciate the crucial role the POA plays in improving the Prison Service, particularly in the whole area of reform, and we welcome the constructive ideas and expertise that you bring. By working together, colleagues, we can create a truly transformative Prison Service, which rightly rewards and supporters the brilliant people working in it every day. Thank you.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. If you remain here I'll just respond to you and then I've got a few gifts to give you. Firstly, I know you were in the House of Commons yesterday responding to a debate about prison officer retirement age. And I don't blame you for this, I blame your special advisors, but once again another Prisons Minister made a statement that the reason our retirement age is not in line with firefighters and the police is because we have been compared to seafarers. I'm fed up getting compared to seafarers by Prisons Ministers.

<Applause>

Unless, of course, a Prisons Ministers can provide me with the evidence that suggests that a seafarer, whilst their on the deck, gets assaulted by a shipmate with a sharp-edged weapon or gets faeces and urine thrown over them or goes back to their cabin and finds their cabin-mate ...

<Applause>

Or goes back to their cabin and finds their cabin-mate has smashed it up and barricaded the door because in the galley the chef refused to give them more chips.

<Laughter>

That's just an excuse not to reduce our retirement age – and you said it there yourself, we are in an occupation which has got a higher risk of serious harm. The same argument you used to justify not lowering our retirement age because you said, "Firefighters" – well, not you, the Government –

“firefighters and police constables are in an occupation that's more at risk of serious harm and death.” Well, it won't escape your attention that not so long ago at Whitemoor we nearly had a terrorist atrocity and if it wasn't for the bravery of the people sitting in front of you we would've had a murder on duty of a prison officer. That's how dangerous our environment is.

<Long applause>

We're sending more and more people, unsuitable people, to the open estate because they're the ones who've got the bed space because of this Government's austerity regime against the service. You're asking the service to save another £37 million worth of budget. The people in front of you are dealing with dangerous people – the open estate, the female estate haven't got cuffs or batons. And when we come to the YCS estate, for a Government that's supposedly tough on crime, why are you so weak when we're dealing with it under 18 years of age, criminals in our prisons? There's going to be a murder. I've written to the Secretary of State for Justice, and you've read it, and it will be on your watch – there is going to be a murder if you don't issue our members, your staff in the youth custody estate, with PAVA and issue it immediately.

<Applause>

I am really, really concerned. Concerned for the people in our care and concerned for my members. Assaults are on the rise. Over the last three months, assaults are on the rise, 23 assaults on prison staff each and every day, two assaults per day with staff ending up in hospital. We're fed up being used as punch bags and we want protections in place.

<Applause>

My members are going home to their families with life-changing injuries because of the children attacking them at work. It's not on. It needs to be sorted. Recruitment and retention, well, I'm glad you think it's a positive picture, but it's really not because my delegates have been telling me in some prisons we're struggling to unlock people to give them showers and phone calls. And if recruitment is so great, why is there a desire to send over 300 people on detached duty, getting to the point of forcing people to live hundreds of miles away from their homes because we can't recruit staff? And if you want to retain staff, pay us what we're worth, give us an above-inflation pay award.

<Applause>

I have got a few questions for you but I'll wait for Amy to finish her address. And I do welcome you here, and I do appreciate your address in Conference, but that's it from the sharp end. Don't believe the hype. This is the reality, the brave people in front of you are fed up, stressed out, they're getting assaulted at work on a daily basis and if they're working with children God forbid you don't want to protect them at work, because the police constables don't ask how old you are before they spray you with PAVA. You wouldn't send them into a housing estate to deal with violent youths under the age of 18 armed with weapons – they used whatever means necessary to make themselves safe and make that arrest. Why are we so different? We shouldn't be. You need to get it issued, you need to listen. Listen to the people in front of you and act before it's too late. I've warned you and the papers will be all over it.

<Applause>

Now, I have got two gifts here for you, Minister.

<Laughter>

We are in a seaside town – what do we get when we're in a seaside town? We got rock. I was in a shop – don't you start laughing, I've got some for you as well. All these flavours in this rock shop and I thought, “What can I get the Prisons Minister? I know. He's a northern Minister, he's got a sense of humour, I get on well with him.” So, I got him a traditional, a traditional bar of rock from Eastbourne and we've got a little gift, which I hope you'll enjoy, especially at Christmas, crystal glasses. Prisons Minister, Damian Hinds.

<Applause>

Our next guest speaker is our boss, our CEO of HMPPS, Amy Rees. Amy Rees was appointed Director General Chief Executive HMPPS in August 2022. She was previously the Director General of Probation Wales and Youth in HMPPS, responsible for the leadership of the Probation Service, managing the deployment of rehabilitation services across both custody and community, with accountability for public protection protocols across both public and private providers. Amy also covered all HMPPS operations in Wales, including public and private prisons, the probation system and the Ministry of Justices relationship with the Welsh Government. From September 2021 Amy also took on responsibility for the Youth Custody Service, including current operations and supporting its work to shape the future of children's services in custody. Her previous posts include Executive Director for HM Prison and Probation Service in Wales, where she was responsible for both the prison and probation system in Wales and the lead interface with Welsh Government on behalf of the MOJ. Amy started her career in the Prison Service and worked at several establishments including HMP Lewes, High Down and Bristol before being appointed the Governor at HMP Brixton in 2008. Her previous roles include Head of Workforce Strategy, where she led a comprehensive restructure of public-sector prisons, Deputy Director on the Transform and Rehabilitation Programme responsible for designing and delivering the organisational restructure of the probation services, and Principle Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Justice. You are very welcome, Amy, to address POA Conference. Thank you. Amy Rees.

<Applause>

**AMY REES – CEO, HMPPS:** Hi, morning all. Thank you, Steve, and thank you, Mark, and thank you all of the NEC for having me today. I'm really very genuinely grateful for the opportunity to address Conference. Thank you all for listening to me today. And I do want to start by thanking genuinely, and from the bottom of my heart, each and every one of you who undertake work in His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service every single day. As the Minister said, it's a really challenging job.

I think I'm making everyone a bit nervous – I'm not stood behind the lectern, I haven't got loads of sheets of paper. Well, I'm not stood behind the lectern because I'm a bit small so it's better if you can all see me. Also, because I don't think reeling off lots of stats and figures to you is going to make you believe or convey what I want to today, which is very much that I want to be here to improve things for you. I want to be here to make things better because I do believe you deserve it, but also because I do believe it's the best way for us to achieve what we really want to, which is reducing reoffending and protecting the public. You are the people ultimately who will do that.

I wanted to start, if I may, with a story. So, as many of you know, not long after I took over, really, really soon, sadly, the late Queen Elizabeth died. It felt like an end of an era for some of you, it will have been sad, it certainly had lots of emotions, but it really called for me to reflect and reflect on, in particular, the word service. I'm sure lots of you felt lots of things if you watched the funeral. Sad – she was, after all, a mother and a grandmother, had been a big figure in our society. But also the thing that really came across to me was the theme of service. It really made me think about all of you and all of us who work in this service, and I felt the weight of the crown that we all bear and the HM of HMPPS more keenly than I had felt for a long time, because what we do is service. I was struck again on Saturday at the Coronation service. I don't know if many of you watched it – good display of British pageantry again. But I was really struck by what the King said when he entered Westminster Abbey, when he was addressed by a 14-year-old lad, and what the response was from the King. The King said, "I come here not to be served, but to serve." And it is in that spirit I absolutely come to you all today to address Conference. I don't have delusions of grandeur, not trying to put myself in anywhere near the same league as the King, but it is that view of service. The sentiment that I want to give you today is I absolutely want to improve things. I want to serve. My absolute priority is to improve things for you, on the frontline, to get the best outcomes we possibly can.

So, a couple of words about the challenges, which I know the Minister has covered. It's the performance of Probation Service since unification – as you know we've brought it back together – and also capacity. Now, I know lots of you know the work that we've been trying to do on capacity. We have opened up the Criminal Justice Strategic Command to try and work, as best as we can, with partners, with police, with courts, with the CPS and others. We have also opened Prison Capacity Gold, we have also utilised safeguard spaces, we have also made the best use we can of the open estate, which is now occupied at 97%. I am extremely grateful for the work that's gone in to make that happen. I also wanted to reassure you very directly that operational capacities continue to be set by operational staff on what is safe and reasonable for us to do that. We have no plans to change the way we do that. We will continue to do that in a safe and reasonable way dictated by operational staff.

I wanted to just chat to you quickly, if I may, about the three priorities and what we're trying to do about those things, many of which the Minister has covered so I will be brief. The first is we want to be resolute about professional standards. We want people to feel able to challenge unacceptable behaviour where it exists, to report it and to believe that something will be done about it where it is reported. I am, again, grateful for all of you and particularly for the POA and the leadership they have shown in this area to try and ensure everyone can be respected and treated fairly at work. As the Minister mentioned, we launched TUBU, the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit, in September 2020. We've done quite a few things under that unit – we have massively increased a mediation service, which I'm really pleased to tell you is beginning to get a lot more uptake so we're going to increase 10 more mediators so people, peer-to-peer or peer-to-managers, are choosing to use mediation services. We have opened a confidential staff helpline, we have got an investigation service and we have been doing our climate assessment of where there might be issues in individual establishments or sites.

I also wanted to directly talk about the race thematic, as the Minister has. Lots of you will know we've had the Race Action Programme for a couple of years now. We've done some good things under that, including just recently we've launched a learning website which has had 6,000 hits in the last four months. If you haven't been able to look at it and you would like, to it's a good site, people are giving us really positive feedback about it. We have also created the Allyship so that people can support our members of staff where needed, and we have been doing one-to-one mentoring to make sure people can progress through their career and get the promotion and progression if they are seeking to do that. In terms of the thematic, it was difficult reading – and as the Minister said, we know we have more to do. There are two immediate actions that will come from it. One is that we're creating a race disparity unit so we can really look at what is going on and make sure we address it where it exists, for staff and for prisoners. And the other is that we are ensuring that we have a professional standards unit that will be able to support operationally anyone who wants to know how to deal with racism in the workplace for prisoners and for staff. I do recognise and I do realise, those are just things and the most important thing is our commitment to making this different, and both Phil Copple and myself are absolutely committed to ensuring that we are resolute about these professional standards at work.

The second issue I just want to briefly touch on is how we make HMPPS a good place to work. I know that the two main things that we need to do in that are staff recruitment and staff retention. Again, the Minister has touched on it, I know there are still massive geographical variances. I am very grateful for the staff who are on detached duty in order to support those where we are still struggling. I hope you will see, when the next set of data comes out on May 18, that there are improvements, but there is still more to do. I absolutely do recognise that. Also, in terms of safety, I know a massive theme for Conference, we have rolled out the body-worn video cameras, we have rolled out PAVA to the adult male estate, we have been looking at the airport style security that I know lots of you will have in establishments. But again, I absolutely recognise there is more to do and that is why it features so hugely on the priority list of both me, the Minister and all of the leadership of HMPPS.

Finally, I just wanted to say a quick word about One HMPPS, which is actually the structural change that takes us back to being in the service of improving the frontline. What I want to do under One HMPPS is headquarters smaller. I want to slim it down and I want to move the management much closer to the frontline so that we create regions, like we have in Wales, so that probation and prisons can work together, so that we are really focussed as an organisation on the service and delivery at the frontline, not on things that happen at headquarters. I also want to be clear as part of that work we are trying to reduce the number of change initiatives. I know lots of brilliant things has come about with the change, some of which we've been talking about today, but I think the change load is too heavy and we need to focus absolutely on what we are doing at the frontline. I have set

the ambition that we would like to halve the change programmes in the next year. We are also having a real focus on purposeful activity and what we do in regimes, and this is because many of us know that the best way to ensure safety is to make sure we have a reasonable and predictable regime in our establishments.

Just quickly, before I finish, I'd like to return, I think, to the story of the Coronation. And again, if any of you were watching it, I don't know if you remember but we were invited to take an oath of allegiance to the King, which some of you may or may not have done. It really reminded me that so much of life is about perspective, because 1,000 years ago when that ceremony started you may have been invited but if you had not done it you might find yourself having your head chopped off. Obviously, on Saturday anyone who didn't take part – you were only invited – no one got their head chopped off. But, it reminded me of the importance of perspective, and from my perspective I know there are things that you are unhappy about in this Conference today. I know there are things you desperately want changed, but I also know that the sentiment that I come here with you today is real. I want to make it better for you. I really do believe there is common ground on which we can move some of these issues forward for the benefit of you, of members, of the POA, NEC but also for all staff and ultimately the benefit of society. I really am here in the service of you and all the men and women who do so much to keep society safe every day. Thank you for your service.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Amy. I'll just respond to a few points, if I may. First of all, you said you as CEO want to make things better. Well, that's something we all agree on and we want to work with you to make things better, but the evidence is there as why things are not so good, and your own staff survey – which we don't take part in, and we encourage people not to take part in, the reason being, of course, as you well know, we want to be allowed to set specific questions for operational staff because that survey covers the entire MOJ. Give us our own survey so you can get a true reflection of what's going on in your jails. But even from the limited responses from operational staff it's there for you to see – bullying managers, people in front of you who get bullied and victimised on a daily basis by your governor grades. There's a lack of leadership, there's a lack of visible leadership on the landings and there's no wellbeing in place whatsoever for your staff and my members. When you introduce structured supervision, I'm afraid that doesn't cut it. How much extra are you going to pay them, the Band 4s, when they sit down with Band 3s to listen to all their problems? You're not going to pay them anything, so why should they do it? If you want additional skills, pay us additional money, simple.

I'm glad that when we last met you took on my offer to review the fitness test and include us in that review. Amy's true to her word. She's got our submissions on a review of the fitness test – we want it scrapped. It's Conference policy, we want it replaced with health screening. I'm glad you held up on that promise. Thank you very much for that, it's most welcome.

<Applause>

You've been a prison officer, Amy. You know the script, you know what we're expected to carry now in work, we've got to carry all that on a belt. I can't understand why there's a reluctance to issue utility vests, a smart, professional-looking utility vest that will evenly distribute weight and make us look professional. Now, I know there's opposition from certain directors in relation to that and I know you're worried about us intimidating the little darlings, but you know when your grannies go to Tesco and see the security guard with the stab-proof vests and all kinds of equipment on them, they don't feel intimidated, and we're dealing with criminals. Come on, let's be fair here, just consider it. Don't rule it out of scope, don't issue it for people with muscular skeletal injuries, just seriously consider a professional-looking utility vest for our members and your staff on the landings to make their life a bit easier.

<Applause>

I'm glad you mentioned professional standards because professional standards are important. But, unfortunately, your staff have got no faith in what's in place at this moment in time, because they bear the brunt of some governors who have got no empathy, sympathy whatsoever and just want to target them. And they've got no faith in TUBU, and they've got no faith in your whistleblowing policy and I've had experience of the whistleblowing policy.

<Applause>

I represented 12 POA members who whistle-blew. It was investigated by one of your directors and the person it was against, there was no case to answer and is still in post. That's your whistleblowing policy. Is it any wonder people don't use it and have got no faith in it, because everything, as these people in front of you will tell you, at a higher level seems to get swept right under that carpet?

<Applause>

And you're right, the thematic review into the experience of black staff and prisoners was a painful read, a very painful read. But you know what, you want to take a lead from the POA – when there's racists and bigots in our union we kick them out!

<Applause>

All too often in HMPPS we are forced to work with racist staff who have been found guilty on an investigation and keep their jobs or get moved sideways or get promoted. It's not on. It needs to be cut out, you need to root them out, you need to kick them out. We don't want to work with them, don't force us to.

<Applause>

And if you want it to be a good place to work, I want it to be a good place to work because I love being a prison officer, I'm very proud to wear that uniform. Detached duty, don't force people to go on detached. I know you haven't done it yet but we're on the cusp of it. Please don't force people to go on detached duty away from their loved ones, hundreds of miles away. You've got volunteers there, use the volunteers and if you need more, well, you know what, just use the Regime Management Plan and if that means restricting regimes, so be it. You shouldn't force people to go on detached duty. You've got First Deployment Schemes where you're giving people 650 quid a month extra for the first two years of the service to encourage them to go to prisons that find it difficult to recruit. You've got bonus schemes. You've got Winchester telling me that their new recruits are getting 45p a mile to travel to and from work, and with the market supplement on top someone who's just completed six weeks' training is now earning more than a custodial manager. You know the money you're spending on all these, just sack it and give us a decent pay rise, that'll encourage people to join.

<Applause>

And finally, Amy, if you want to make it a good place to work, have a word with your governors, will you? When they're telling custodial managers, line managers, "You cannot use your discretion, you must issue a sickness warning." When you've got governors saying, "I'll consider a sick leave excusal when you come back to work." Well, if I've been assaulted or injured at work, I'm entitled to a sick leave excusal straightaway. Don't try and starve me back to work. It's no good me coming back to work after a prolonged absence due to an assault at work and you saying, "Oh, don't worry, I know you're on half pay but you'll get your back pay from Shared Services." What, the award-winning Shared Services? I wouldn't rely on them to pay me in Smarties, never mind getting my pay right!

<Applause>

Look after your staff. Get your governors to look after your staff. If I'm struggling to cope and have come back after a prolonged absence, I know policy says you're only entitled to 13 weeks on a phased return, but let's have some empathy with you. If it needs extending, extend it. Because guess what? We can't work from home. We're not governors, we can't have a laptop and work from home and just do a couple of days a week in the prison because we're struggling. We have to be there on the frontline. So, let's have a bit of empathy, let's have a bit of sympathy, but more importantly, let's have respect for these brave people who keep this ship afloat.

<Applause>

Now, Amy, I was walking round that rock shop and unfortunately for you I know quite a bit about you because one of my executive joined the service with you.

<Laughter>

And I know you've got two kids and I thought, well, I can't really get Amy a bar of rock and leave the two kids because you know what kids are like, you go home with a bar of rock from the seaside and the kids, the first thing they say, "Where's mine mum?"

**AMY REES – CEO HMPPS:** My husband might say the same.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** So, I've got three different flavours and I was wondering what flavour are you?

<Laughs>

This could get messy, couldn't it? <Laughs> I've got, hear them first, cookie dough, strawberry cheesecake and candy floss. I wonder which flavour are you.

**AMY REES – CEO HMPPS:** Candy floss.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Good answer. Please show your appreciation for Amy Rees.

<Applause>

Told you <inaudible>

**AMY REES – CEO HMPPS:** You keep your promises, I know, I know.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I would get you a bar of rock.

What I'll do, I've got the questions in my head and you've got a microphone there if you want to bring it to you. I'm only going to ask one question each, first with the Prisons Minister, if I may. Question, you know it's coming, we've discussed it many times – retirement age of prison officers. I know, especially when my members write to your MPs and ask about the retirement age of prison officers, everybody gets exactly the same response that, "You knocked back a deal in 2013, you knocked back an offer in 2017." Well, that was then, this is now. Our workplace is becoming more violent.

More and more of my members are suffering PTSD. You really can't expect a 67-year-old to roll around the floor with a violent 21-year-old prisoner. It's cruel. It's unrealistic. It's unachievable. We want to retire with dignity, we don't want to die in service. Respect us. We make up less than 5% of the Civil Service Pension Scheme. We are a unique occupation and we deserve a lower retirement age. And, in the long term, it will be cost-effective anyway because once we reach the age of 60 most of us will retire because we've had enough. So, what we're after, is we're after a standalone offer from the Government – we're after entering into negotiations. And I know you have to go to the Treasury but luckily enough you used to work in the Treasury so you know all the scams!

<Laughter and applause>

I suppose I'll ask you two questions at the same time related to the same subject. The first question is, do you agree that the retirement age of 68 for prison officers is too high, and secondly, will you commit to entering into negotiations with this union with the objective to achieve a standalone offer to reduce the retirement age of prison officers to 60? Over to you, Minister, thank you.

**DAMIAN HINDS – PRISONS MINISTER:** Thank you, Chair. And obviously I've heard what you've said and I do know your argument and we've talked about it before, as you rightly said earlier. We had a debate in Parliament just yesterday actually, a short debate on this subject. I don't think you're expecting me to sit here and say something new, and I'm not going to try and dissemble or mislead. You also know what our position is and you know all those arguments as well, you know the arguments about the Employee Contribution Rate and the Employee Contribution Rate, which are also different, of course, to some of those other services. It is a unique profession. And by the way, just to be clear, I didn't say prison officers are like seafarers. What I said in Parliament yesterday was referring back to a decision that was made in 2007, specifically about the Royal Auxiliary Fleet, and that was something that was cited at the time. I don't think you can compare what prison officers do to other occupations, other professions, I think it is unique. Mark, what I will say is we will continue to talk and there are different facets to this as well, like making sure the career paths are there, the career opportunities are there at all different stages in people's career because I do want to retain our dedicated staff as much as possible.

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** So, if you were going to give a yes or no answer do we agree that prison officers should be forced to work to the ripe old age of 68.

**DAMIAN HINDS – PRISONS MINISTER:** What we're talking about, of course, is the pension age, and there isn't a retirement age in this country.

<Outcry>

There isn't a retirement age in this country and hasn't been for some time. I want there to be opportunities for people. Some people join the Prison Service actually at quite a ...

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** It's a one-word answer!

**DAMIAN HINDS – PRISONS MINISTER:** Okay. So, I'm not in a position to give you the one-word answer you would like to hear.

<Outcry>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** <inaudible>

**DAMIAN HINDS – PRISONS MINISTER:** No, that's fair ...

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** What was the point in you coming then? What's the point in you coming <inaudible>?

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Conference. You know what? At least he's got the bottle to face you.

<Applause>

And you know something else, Conference, you may not think it but he needs to see this, the strength of feeling is out there. It's no good me sitting in meetings with Damian Hinds and relaying what you're telling me. He's seen it now for himself. And whether you like it or not, he's a decent man, we get on well with him and I know he will do his best for us. And why will he do his best for us? Because of this reaction, so thank you for that, and thank you, Prisons Minister. Thank you so much.

<Applause>

Amy, just one question. I'm glad we've got a CEO who's worked her way through the ranks and has experienced everything that the prison officer role has to endure. So, Amy, you're working with under-18 criminals in the youth custody estate, you're there, armed with your polo shirt, your cargo trousers and your body-worn video camera and you witness four 17-year-old children repeatedly stabbing and stamping on the head of a 15-year-old child. Do you, (a) intervene straightaway, throwing yourself in the middle of the melee, putting your own life at risk, or do you, (b) stand back and do nothing because you think, "If I do intervene I could die here"? The point being, Amy, would it not be the sensible option to stand back at a safe

distance, draw your PAVA, deploy it, spray an irritant into the face of the four violent assailants, saving the life of a 15-year-old child and not putting yourself in danger? Wouldn't you agree that's the best option? That's my only question.

<Applause>

**AMY REES – CEO HMPPS:** I will try and answer you as directly as I can. The time for that decision is very shortly upon us – it will be this summer when we have all the data, as we promised from the rollout of the adult male estate. What I absolutely promise this floor is we will make the decision looking at every bit of evidence. We will involve you, the POA, and I will come back and give you a yes or no answer pretty soon.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you. Thank you both. Conference, please show your appreciation for Amy Rees and Damian Hinds.

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference. We have two more motions to get through. Motion 79 is an NEC motion. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you. Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

### Motion 79

**Conference pays tribute to the important campaigning of Justice for Colombia on behalf of our trade union movement to support trade unionism, human rights, and peace in Colombia.**

### NEC

**MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking to motion 79 on behalf of the NEC. Conference, motion 79 reads: Conference pays tribute to the important campaigning of Justice for Colombia on behalf of our trade union movement to support trade unionism, human rights and peace in Colombia. Conference, in June 2022 Colombia elected its first progressive government, the Historic Pact Coalition headed by President Gustavo Petro and Vice President, Francia Marquez. This is the first progressive Government in Colombia's history. It has received strong support from trade unions, social movements, conflict victims, young people and the pro-peace movement. It was elected on a platform of social investment, peace-building, environmental protection, ending corruption and human rights. Colombia is one of the world's most unequal countries. Under the right-wing Government, which left <inaudible> last year, poverty increased from 35% to 42% of the population. Under Labour Minister Gloria Ramírez, a former president of the main teachers' trade union and a long-time human rights defender, the Ministry of Labour has proposed progressive labour reforms to improve material conditions for Colombian workers. The reforms guarantee trade union rights, clamp down on exploitation and outsourcing and they provide job security and tackle discrimination. They also intend to formalise the vast informal sector in which women are overrepresented in areas such as care work and street vending. This will increase workers' access to state support, pensions and other benefits.

The Petro-Francis Government inherited a human rights crisis from the previous Government. Over 1,400 social activists and 360 former <inaudible> guerrillas were killed from the signing of the Peace Agreement on November 2016 to the end of 2022. 2023 has already seen 60 social activists murdered, including a number of trade unionists. Colombia remains the world's deadliest country for trade unionists. According to the International Trade Union Confederation, 13 were killed last year and 22 the year before that. More than 3,000 have been murdered since the 1970s. Although Colombia has elected its first progressive Government, it will take many years, if not decades, to address deep-rooted problems of conflict and inequality. The Petro Government is offering dialogue to a range of different armed groups to seek new peace agreements. It is hoped this policy, known as Total Peace, can reduce the human rights crisis and conflict. Total Peace also to fully implement the 2016 Peace Agreement with the FARC.

Many of these changes would not have been possible without the campaigning and pressure from Justice for Colombia on behalf of trade unions. But there is still more work to do. Justice for Colombia, I pay tribute to you. Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thank you, Mick. Can't see any speakers so straight to the vote, please. We can now close that vote and display the results. That's been carried.

Last motion, 80 – NEC. Secunder please. Thank you, Send. Andy Baxter for the NEC.

### Motion 80

**SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS, WOMEN, AND YOUTH IN IRAN**

**That Conference notes the ongoing revolutionary uprising in Iran, spearheaded by women and young people. Sparked by protests against the death of Mahsa Amini, the uprising foregrounds issues of women's rights and opposition to gender apartheid, but also raises issues of social freedom and equality, with people demanding the right to democratically determine their future**

through their own councils and direct representatives.

## NEC

**ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:** Chair, NEC, Conference, moving this motion on behalf of the NEC. Solidarity with workers, women and youth in Iran. Conference notes the ongoing revolutionary uprising in Iran, spearheaded by women and young people. Sparked by protests against the death of Mahsa Amini, the uprising foregrounds issues of women's rights and opposition to gender apartheid, but also raises issues of social freedom and equality, with people demanding the right to democratically determine their future through their own councils and direct representatives. In September '22 protests erupted across Iran over the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurd who'd been detained for inappropriate dress. The demonstration was the largest in years, quickly involved into calls for the ousting of the Supreme Leader and an end to the Islamic Republic. Security forces responded with deadly force. The authorities extensively and unlawfully fired live ammunition, metal pellets and tear gas and subjected protestors to severe beatings. Amnesty International recorded the names of hundreds of protestors and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces, including dozens of children. Hundreds were blinded or sustained other serious eye injuries due to security forces firing metal pellets. Thousands more sustained injuries for which many did not seek medical care due to fear of arrest. Peacefully protesting university students and school children were expelled and subjected to violent raids, beatings and other ill-treatment. The authorities repeatedly shut off or disrupted internet and mobile phone networks during protests to suppress mobilisation and hide the scale of violations by security forces. Colleagues, by supporting this motion you confirm the POA's solidarity with all oppressed people of Iran and support those fighting gender apartheid under the cruel regime. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Thanks Andy and we can take that straight to the vote. Thank you, Conference, and we can display that result. That motion has been carried.

Thank you, Conference. First of all, happy birthday to Wendy Price.

<Applause>

The girl who's been around for a long time. Now, a gentleman never asks a lady's age, but I'm no gentleman. Happy birthday, Wendy.

Just a few thanks before I sum up. Of course, thanks so much to all our support staff – Angela, Paula, Isil, Stevie Lewis, everybody who puts all this together, it just doesn't happen overnight. And, as soon as this Conference finishes, they'll be back on it planning for next year. They get here early, they leave after the rest of us, they do a tremendous amount of work, so thank you so much for the support staff for everything they do for us.

<Applause>

We couldn't run a Conference without our security staff and at times it's a thankless task, it's long hours, but they're so essential to running Conference and I'm glad they volunteer for it. I hope they've had an enjoyable week. We do appreciate everything you do for us and when you look at the security here it's probably more enhanced than the security in some of our prisons. So, thanks to the security staff, you do a great job.

<Applause>

We've got our tech crew at the back and people who set up the stage and do the electronic voting. We've had our hiccups during the week but they've put it right and I'm sure it'll be perfect next year. Thanks for everything you do, we do appreciate it.

<Applause>

We've got our photographers, we've got Jess – she's that good a photographer you don't even know that she's here. She does a great job for us and we've got our tradition, haven't we, Karen and Paul, who go around taking photos here, there and everywhere, probably in pubs when you're socialising but you don't realise that either. We do appreciate all those photos – you do a great job for us, thank you so much for that as well.

<Applause>

And final thanks to the Eastbourne staff. They've hosted us well again, nothing is too much trouble. We appreciate that as well. Thank you, Eastbourne.

<Applause>

Well, it's been a busy week, hasn't it? It has been a busy week. I've thoroughly enjoyed it. I don't know about you, but I have thoroughly enjoyed Conference this year. I think there's been a fantastic atmosphere. It's clear to me that you appreciate your NEC and that is so, so welcome. We have got your back, we always will. We have got your back and it's nice to know that you've got ours. That's come across loud and clear during this Conference. And, you know, I love meeting as many people as I can and I haven't been able to get around as much as I can, and what you've got to understand is, it's not intentional. When you're at Conference everybody wants a piece of you and you've got commitments and you've got to go here and go there. I'd love to go out socialising with you and come and say, "Hello" and "How are you doing?" and "What's happening in your jail?" I

haven't had the opportunity to do that as much this year. I'm sorry about that, but as I say, it is a busy time for all of us. But, you know how I can get to know you, is when you invite me into your jails. I love addressing branches, I love walking around, I love engaging with people on the frontline, my colleagues, your members, and finding out the reality of life on your landings. And I do get it, I know what it's like. I'm in my 31st year as a prison officer. I'm still very proud of what I do, but not as proud as I am leading an absolutely amazing set of people in front of me who do amazing work locally with amazing branch members. My biggest thanks are to you. I'm so, so proud of you, you make my job so rewarding. I couldn't ask for any more, so thank you so much, Conference, to you, for everything that you do.

<Applause>

We've had again, haven't we, a load of new speakers, first-time delegates getting up to speak. It's absolutely fantastic! The future is bright for this union, a lot of young members getting up to speak and delivery has been amazing. And for those who haven't got up to speak for the first time, now you know what it's all about, now you know how Conference runs. Maybe that final jigsaw piece has finally clicked into place, you know the structure of it, you know what to do now, maybe next year you'll speak on one of your own motions or you'll get up and think, "I like what he's saying or she's saying, I'm going to engage with that as well." So, don't be scared, the first-time delegates have done an amazing job. We've had some great speakers as well from the experienced staff. And, of course, we've got a few retirements, haven't we? We've got a few experienced delegates who maybe won't be here next year. We can't afford to lose that experience but, as I said to the award-winners last night, although we can't afford to lose that experience I know you're doing your best to pass that on to your branch committee members and we appreciate that. And, Cookie, I am going to let you say a few words when I've finished before I let Steve formally close Conference. You know what, Cookie, you've been an absolute pleasure to work with. Your experience from a local level has resonated at a national level. Your knowledge, your commitment to the cause is second to none. And I am sorry to see you go but I am so delighted that another one of my friends is going to retire and start enjoying life and just chill out and spend all that money I know you've got in your bank.

<Laughter>

And I know, Craig, you're planning on retiring. Look, I'm not just saying this to you, Craig, I'm saying this to everyone, right, from my own personal experience, this is from the heart. At times we don't get justice for ourselves and we go through traumatic incidents or investigations or maybe we're whistle-blowers and we don't get the result that we desire because it gets brushed under the carpet and sometimes it eats away at you and it stays with you and you can't let it go. That affects your mental health and it affects your personal life. And, do you know what I've found – and this does work, believe me this does work. Just let it go. Let it go, start looking after yourself. Rebuild your personal life, rebuild your career if you're still in work. Let it go because you're the bigger person. And karma is a bitch! So, let it go and look after yourself. It does work. It does take a lot to do that but it does work.

While I'm talking about mental health, please start talking to each other. Please start talking to each other in tea rooms, when you're socialising. Let it go, let it loose, tell someone what you're experiencing, what you're going through. I'm the world's worst. Men are the world's worst. We don't talk enough. I know there's not enough support in place in your workplace, I know we rely on each other to get through difficult times, but please, please will you just talk to each other and get some help if you're really struggling because people commit suicide, people are struggling, people are getting PTSD. We need to help each other. We'll do everything we can, but please, will you start talking to each other and start offloading on each other and start helping each other out. Please don't bottle it up. Don't be like me, don't bottle it up. Get it out there.

<Applause>

We've had some great motions passed – one about razors. And we've been asking since 2017, "Will you get rid of razors from our prisons, please?" It'll reduce self-harm, it'll reduce the improvised weapons getting made to attack us, since 2017, and they still can't make their mind up. "Oh, we'll pilot this, we'll evaluate that, we'll deep-dive here ..." Oh, come on! It's not hard. Whitmoor got rid of their razors years ago, it never caused any issues for them. What's so hard about issuing an electric razor? Just get rid of the razors, make a decision. Since 2017, they still can't make their minds up. That's what we have to deal with, people who can't make a decision. This is your safety and they still can't make a decision to get rid of razors.

I attended a fringe meeting – Women in the Workplace. There was one of my female colleagues telling the people who attended that fringe about her experience going through IVF treatment and the unsympathetic approach from the employee and the distress that she went through. These are brave people telling us about their personal lives and personal circumstances, and Jade got up and told us about what she'd experienced. Brave, brave people that I lead and am proud to represent. What an amazing union. They shouldn't have to go through that. I can't believe that the Civil Service haven't got a policy for IVF, because it doesn't always be successful the first time and these are people who are going through trauma and are getting tutted at and told, "Oh, you want a phased return, you're on restricted duties, oh what, you need another our off to go to the hospital, you need to do this." Unsympathetic from managers because they don't understand, they don't understand and we need to educate them. And we shouldn't be afraid and it shouldn't be a taboo subject to talk about these things. It shouldn't be a taboo subject to talk about our mental health and how we're feeling and how distressed we are. It shouldn't be a taboo subject to talk about the menopause and IVF and all these problems our female colleagues experience in the workplace. So, you've got my guarantee that the NEC, over the next 12 months, will work doggedly to get an IVF policy in place to improve your experience in the workplace. We'll do our best, I promise you that.

<Applause>

And, of course, we passed a policy about long-Covid. It's out there, it's real, it exists, it's affecting our members, it's affecting a lot of workers and the TUC have got a massive campaign about getting long-Covid recognised as a workplace illness. Join the campaign, write to your MPs, write to your MPs about long-Covid – "Do you support, do you recognise long-Covid?" Write to your MPs about your retirement age, get your retirement age lowered, invite them into your prisons, show them your working conditions. What I would love to see everybody here, when we have rallies in London, whether it's supporting the TUC, whether we're lobbying Parliament, whether we're having our own rally. Come down to London, join us, we'll

pay your travel expenses. Get there with your hats and your whistles and your flags and your banners and let's march the streets and let's have our voices heard. Support us – it's a good day out and I'll get into the ribs of the finance officer and we'll even buy you a pint when it's all over. Notice him sweating there.

The health and safety protocol, please don't be afraid to use it. Please keep yourselves safe at work. And, you know, whenever it's been used there is always a build-up, it never happens spontaneously. Over a course of weeks, maybe months, certainly days there is a build-up of incident after incident, where staff are saying, "I've had enough. I have had enough and nobody's listening." When there's a build-up, let us know – phone your NEC rep, phone me, I'll always answer your call. It might be a simple thing that we make a phone call to employee relations and we get our heads together, we have a word with your SMT and we force them to sit in a room with you and sort it out. Because the way I envisage the health and safety protocol working is you go to your senior leaders and you say, "Look, we've got problems here. My members are coming to me with these concerns. We need to sit down, we need to sort it out, we need to work through it and we need to solve it so I can go back to my members and say, 'This is what's in place, we recognise what you're going through, we're going to put it right and we're going to put measures in place to reduce your risk and make you safe.'" While you're doing that they're carrying on at work. Now, if you can't get a resolve we get involved and you quite rightly used that health and safety protocol. And I've said, if you are in imminent risk, if your safety is at risk, then you're quite right to invoke, as an individual, the health and safety protocol and you retreat to a safe place. I wouldn't want you to do anything less. I don't want you being punch bags, I don't want you ending up in hospital. That's the way it's supposed to work. It's legally binding. Me and Steve were in a meeting with the employer and we mentioned it's legally binding and they said, "Is it?" So, if they didn't know, how do you expect your governors to know? It's legally binding. Once you say, "Health and safety protocol," they've got to sit down with you and they've got to try their best to resolve those issues. So, if you need to use it, use it but get us involved. Don't leave us out of the loop, let us know what's going on because there's a build-up. It's not as if staff turn up at the gate, "Oh, I'm on an A shift today, I really can't be bothered. What could I do to get a day off? I'll tell you what, I'll pretend to feel unsafe and I'll sit in visits all day." That doesn't happen! There's always a build-up. So, please keep yourselves safe and don't be afraid to use it.

You've heard it there, PAVA in the YCS estate, apparently there's going to be a decision in summer. Amy didn't say which summer of which year, but hopefully it'll be this summer. Now, one of their concerns is a legal challenge from reform groups and children's charities. You know the script. The Government really shouldn't care about legal challenges because they always win legal challenges. Why do they always win legal challenges? Because they've got the judiciary in their pocket, the judiciary are part of their establishment. They shouldn't worry about legal challenges and why? Well, we all know why. They had a legal challenge over their policy to ship people to Rwanda and then they went to appeal – they won the appeal and now it is legal. So, if they don't care about a legal challenge to send asylum-seekers who need our help to a country that is rife with human abuses, why are they going to worry about someone legally challenging them to issue us with PAVA to deal with violent young thugs under the age of 18?

<Applause>

Just have a look around. Look at how powerful you are! Would you want to take on this army, because I wouldn't? Look at how powerful you are. Get back to your branches and embrace your membership and encourage them to unite and support you and back you and it's safety, safety, safety over regime, regime, regime. Your safety is paramount and non-negotiable.

<Applause>

We get nothing off anybody. Nothing is ever given to us without a fight, and by god, as long as I'm your leader I will fight, fight, fight to keep you safe at work, to reduce your retirement age, to increase your pay!

<Applause>

We, as an NEC, will not relent until we achieve that. You inspire me, you motivate me, you keep the fire within burning hotter than ever! We will not be suppressed. We will not be silenced, we will rise up, we will challenge, we will prevail. I say Slava Ukraine, solidarity to you all, and long live the POA. Solidarity Conference. Solidarity. Thank you.

<Long applause>

Thank you. You do get me emotional you lot. I've been choking back tears at fringe meetings and choking back tears then, you sappy lot. Thank you so much, I appreciate everything you do for me, I really do. Cookie, do you want to say your goodbyes, mate?

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** Bye.

<Laughter>

Colleagues, friends, for the very, very last time, Dave Cook, Swaleside. They were the words I used for many years as I walked up to the platform to address motions and everything else, and it's a really sad day for me that I can't say it again after today. I also can't say, "Dave Cook, NEC," and it's quite an emotional time. But, I have to say thank you to you guys, the people that sat here before, the people that are sat here today and the people that will sit here tomorrow because, without your support, without your help, I could never have done what I've done over the last 30 years as a member of this union. I particularly need to obviously thank my colleagues on the NEC. Good, good friends on the NEC. Good, good friends on the floor. There are many of us who have come through over the last 20-odd years that I've been coming to Conference, we've been turning up. Unfortunately, I've been getting headaches because they've been friends <laughs> and they've been buying me drinks and all that sort of stuff. But, life progresses and everything else, so thank you. Thank you to every single one of you for the support and help that you've given me through my 30 years of being on this union.

POA support staff, you just don't see them but, believe me, on the NEC the support that they've given me as an area rep has been absolutely immense. Angela, Nicola, Debbie who was my first secretary and Carol who's my secretary until about 10 minutes ago <laughs> and the rest of the support staff that they've done. They've maintained my diary, they've maintained what I'm doing and they've also kicked me when I've failed to do something, they've reminded me and they've pushed me and they've helped me throughout everything. So, to all the support staff, literally all the support staff, thank you, thank you very much.

Two people I really, really want to say thank you to. First one's sat on the top table, Dave Todd. He's been beside me for over 20-odd years together – he's my brother. He's my brother. And just like brothers we've argued and we've fallen out – he says he's my son, but he's my brother.

<Laughter>

But just like brothers we've fallen out and everything else at times, but we've never been afraid to actually point out to each other when either one of us was wrong or we thought the other one was wrong or anything else. Just like brothers we've always seen the way, we've always accepted each other's viewpoint and we've got through it and we carry on. So, Dave, as a brother, thank you very, very much.

<Applause>

The board addressed this year and the other person I'd like to thank from the bottom of my heart is my wife and my family. Without her support I could never have ever achieved and done what I've done in my working life, in the military but also in the Prison Service, she's been beside me. As a man I'm a very selfish man, I've been allowed to do things, as a father and as a husband, and she's never ever said no to me. She's never stood in my way of any ambitions or things that I've achieved or wanted to do. When I became a union rep, a branch rep and everything else, she's put up with all the pain that that has brought with it, and you know about this because you do the same. The phone calls and everything else, the times that I've had a phone call from Dave at 6 o'clock in the morning, rushed into my jail and my wife didn't know if I was going to be locked up that night. And, of course, if that had happened I was gambling with everything that I had for my family, the mortgage, the car, literally everything, my kids' educations, all that sort of stuff would have gone if I'd be jailed. But, I did it without fear because Dave was beside me and he assured me, but also because I had the strength of her support.

When you go home today, if you've got a loved one at home that you're going home to, give them a cuddle and say thank you. Because they are the people that allow us to do what we do and they're so much overlooked.

<Applause>

People have asked me over the last few days what I'm going to do when I retire. I say this to my son who's sat at the back – I'm going to spend all the money I've got!

<Laughter>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** I hope you spend some tonight with us.

<Laughter>

**DAVE COOK – NEC:** And they're only going to inherit what I've not managed to spend. But, throughout my life, as I said, I've been quite selfish and everything else but now, more importantly, is that I dedicated whatever life I have left on this planet to my wife because she's been there for me through the past 54 years. Boy am I in trouble if I've got that wrong.

<Laughter>

Fifty-four years of marriage and now I have to now dedicate what I've got left for her. So, look after yourselves, take care of yourselves. Thank you very much.

<Long applause>

**MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR:** Conference, thank you for an amazing week, a very positive week, it's been fantastic. I'm going to get Steve Gillan to formally close Conference. See you all again next year. Steve.

**STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY:** Conference, it gives me great delight to close Conference, and I promise you I won't keep you as long as Dave Cook did. Dave never ever does a few words, but I'll tell you what, what a legend he was, as a local branch official and as an NEC member. A great friend to this union and a good friend to me as well.

I also want to pay tribute to all the support staff. It's been said by the National Chairman about the work that they do. I couldn't ask for a better group of people. While Angela, Paula and Isil are at this venue, helping yourselves and different things, helping us, keeping everything smooth running, we've still got people in the office as well, such as Debbie, Carol, Helen and others, and mine and Mark's secretary, Nicola, who is just immense, even though she's had obviously a bad couple of years when her father died and what have you. But we'll give her every support because we look after

each other and we will continue to do that.

My full-time officers and Deputy General Secretary. I couldn't wish for a better team of people, because that's what we are. We're a team. We look after each other, we have our fallouts from time to time and we have discussions, but we all come together. I couldn't do my job without them, quite frankly, so thank you for that. And the Executive, you ain't going to get a better Executive and togetherness from this Executive, quite frankly. I think this Executive are a decent bunch of people who work hard on your behalf. They put themselves out and, yes, at NEC meetings we have our debates and things like that. We don't always agree, but we come ultimately to a conclusion and once that conclusion is made it stays in that room. I'm grateful to the Executive for the great debates and motions that we produce for Conference and different things.

And as for the National Chairman, I've got to say Mark is an excellent National Chairman and I enjoy working with him. I can't say that for everyone in the past but I've got to say Mark is a friend, I consider to be a friend, but also a very, very good National Chairman who speaks eloquently on your behalf no matter where he goes.

<Applause>

And obviously we're losing some delegates this year. I've watched this over the last 30 years to be honest, I've seen some great characters over the years – funnily enough one of them is sitting at the back, Brian Goodman. When I was a young delegate starting out, I used to listen intently to Brian Goodman, who was always immaculately dressed at Conference, moving motions on behalf of his members at Wandsworth. You couldn't get a better orator than Brian Goodman. And there were others, Mick O'Dwyer and various other people that I've seen come and go over the years. I'm afraid that's the circle of life, isn't it? I've got to say I've enjoyed, at times, listening to Craig Robson – we've not always agreed, but what a character, what an absolute character and Craig will be missed. Paul Malliband, an intelligent man, leads from the front on his branch, same as Paul Wray. Those sort of people will be missed. But, let me tell you, there's other people coming through and I can see some of the characters developing, young people, which I think is absolutely fantastic to see and watch and we are in safe hands. And, no matter what the Minister says about our pensions, we are a little bit like Glasgow Celtic and their motto, the POA, we never stop. We will never stop fighting for what is right and the pension age will have to change because we will force them to change because we will continually be at them all the time. In fact, we're making plans for the 19th June, a parliamentary reception on two key issues of policy that you have set us, the Royal Commission and pension age. And already we've got cross-party support of MPs coming to that parliamentary reception and we will be putting a circular out inviting a spread of delegates from across the country, we'll get a balance to it as well and you'll be invited down to that parliamentary reception. So, our work will continue.

I also want to say it's never easy when your branch tell you they want certain motions on the order paper and then you've got to get up and speak on it when it might seem a bit controversial. I thought Bill Buparai, on behalf of Belmarsh, when he moved the motion that was ultimately defeated about Thompsons and industrial relations and different things. I think Bill done it with guile, with craft and he done his branch proud, quite frankly, in respect of that. And that is what we are all about, having decent debates, not falling out with each other over the debates and different things, and when it comes to a conclusion it doesn't matter whether the NEC are overturned or whether branches are overturned. It's about us setting that policy and respecting each other. So, thank you Bill, for the way you moved those motions in a dignified manner. It couldn't have been easy but you've done your branch proud, so thank you on that, Bill.

In respect of the Scottish National Committee, I thank them, obviously, for their attendance, the Area Committee from Northern Ireland, the private sector and indeed our secure hospitals. What a trade union – and let me tell you, it is in safe hands because you tell us what to do and that should always be the way.

Thank you and have a safe journey. It's been a fantastic Conference from some fantastic people. Safe journey home, thank you.

<Long applause>

**END OF CONFERENCE**