



Unite steps up pressure on rogue HS2 employers

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**CRAIG EVANS –
LONG ROAD TO
RECOVERY**

Front cover picture: Mark Thomas

Trade unions exist to protect workers. It is our fundamental role to ensure that workers are treated fairly at work and that their health and safety is protected.

If something goes wrong, if a worker loses their job or suffers a workplace injury then our role is to secure justice for them.

There is no shying away from the fact that construction remains a dangerous industry, while deaths have declined, fatalities and serious injuries remain far too common.

The interview with **Craig Evans** (page 14-16) is stomach churning. He suffered life changing injuries in a terrible accident seven years ago. An accident that didn't just change his life but had profound effects on his family.

Thankfully he was a member of Unite and once the union was contacted our services went into overdrive.

Thompsons, the solicitors appointed by Unite, did a fantastic job in supporting him through not only his fight for compensation but the prosecution of the employers who caused his terrible accident. A service which due to his union membership he received for free and he received every penny of the compensation awarded to him.

It is a case that demonstrates how completely invaluable union membership is for construction workers.

It also demonstrates once again why it is vital that as many sites as absolutely possible have independent Unite trained safety reps to ensure that such tragic accidents never occur in the first place.

Unite members work on all types of construction sites, both new build and repair and refurbishment projects, on sites large and small.

However, major infrastructure projects play a critical role in the union's construction membership. Not only do a large number of members work on these projects but good practice established on such sites, often filters down throughout the industry.

That is why I welcome the highly successful demonstration held at the HS2 site at Euston this summer (page 9), where there are attempts to keep Unite from freely speaking to and representing workers. A naked attempt at union busting that we will defeat.

It is also essential for the future wellbeing of both the UK construction industry and the UK's entire future energy policy that there is no further delay in building.

The skills and the lessons that we have learned at Hinkley Point need to transfer seamlessly over to Sizewell, a delay in approval could result in these skills and good practices being lost.

Gail Cartmail, assistant general secretary



Covid security still a massive issue

The government's decision to end mandatory Covid restrictions this summer led to the ending of the Operating Procedures which set out how construction sites should operate since the beginning of the pandemic.

Despite the ending of the operating procedures, employers and clients still have a duty to keep workers safe, especially as the pandemic is not over.

Unite continues to advise workers that if they are concerned about their own site health and safety then they should immediately speak to their Unite rep or regional officer for advice, assistance and support.

Meanwhile, the government's decision to no longer supply employers with free Covid tests was described as barmy by Unite.

Unite believed that in sectors such as construction, where vaccination rates were lower and where workers may be reluctant or unable to obtain tests for themselves, the decision was especially concerning.

Concerns remain about Covid safety on construction sites



Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "This is a barmy and reckless decision by the government."

Unite wins important victory for former Carillion workers

During the summer Unite won a highly significant legal victory for workers who were employed by the construction and outsourcing company Carillion which collapsed into compulsory liquidation in January 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/m5ena8bd>



Unite has finally secured some justice for workers formerly employed by Carillion.

Unite was representing 263 members seeking compensation in the form of a protective award for the company's failure to inform and consult them before they lost their jobs.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal ruled that the case could proceed and dismissed Carillion's claim that 'special circumstances' meant that no protective award should be paid.

As Carillion is in compulsory liquidation the case for the company is being undertaken by 'special managers' appointed by the government's Insolvency Service and they are able to charge very high fees for such work.

The decision was important as if Unite had lost the case then it would have affected the ability of workers in other cases, when companies collapse, to take legal action in the future.

As *buildingWORKER* went to press it was confirmed that the union had secured protective award for the members it was representing.

The workers will be entitled to a protective award of 15 days pay for the failure of Carillion to inform and consult them that they were going to lose their jobs prior to the companies collapse. The workers will receive the payment from the Redundancy Payments Office.

Fall in CIS workers

A freedom of information request made by Unite, has revealed that there was a small reduction in the number of workers paid via the [Construction Industry Scheme \(CIS\)](#) in 2020/21.

In total there were 969,000 sole traders who had deductions made from their pay via CIS, as well as 7,000 partnerships and 134,000 limited companies paid in this way.

This compared to the figures from 2019/20 where 1,031 million sole traders had deductions made to their

pay via CIS, in addition there were 8,000 partnerships and 145,000 limited companies.

It is currently unclear why there was a decline, it is likely that this is a combination of workers being affected by the pandemic, a slight downturn in work due to Covid and some eastern European workers returning to the continent.

The CIS tax scheme is unique to the construction industry. The vast majority of the workers who are paid

via it are considered to be self-employed, however unlike any other form of self-employment most of these workers are taxed at source. Unite believes that the vast majority of CIS workers are bogusly self-employed.

Unite will continue to monitor the figures and in 12 months time there will be a clearer picture of what is happening with bogus self-employment in the sector.

Vigil to mark fatal crane accident

Members of Unite joined with members of the Construction Safety Campaign for a vigil on the first anniversary of the [Bow crane accident](#) in July.

On 8 July 2020, 85 year old **June Harvey** was killed when a tower crane collapsed and fell through the roof of her house.

Ms Harvey shared the house with her niece **Jacqueline Atkinson** and great nephew **Sam Atkinson** who lost their home and all their belongings as a result of the accident and suffered huge mental trauma.

They lived in a hotel following the accident but were threatened with eviction by their landlord Gateway Housing in January 2021, when they refused to move to a property they considered uninhabitable.

Following an intervention from friends they were not evicted but needed



Members of Unite and the Construction Safety Campaign pay their respects to mark the anniversary of the Bow crane collapse

assistance to ensure the property they were offered was fit to live in.

The crane collapse is still being investigated by the police and the Health and Safety Executive. The investigation has been hampered as the crane was not removed from the site

until December 2020. It is thought that the accident was caused by a failure to the concrete base that the crane was erected on.

Battersea workers donate to the NHS

Members of Unite working on the Battersea Power Station project, have presented NHS workers at St George's hospital in Tooting with a cheque for £20,000, in appreciation of their dedication and commitment during the pandemic.

The money was raised by the workers voting to give up their Christmas dinner, which would have been provided on the site and instead donate the money to the NHS staff.



Unite officer Vince McCoy and convenor Andy Rudd (far right) present a cheque to St George's hospital

The donation which was part of the thank you appeal was organised by Andy Rudd a Unite convenor on the project and Unite regional officer Vince McCoy.

Mr McCoy said: "The generosity of construction workers never ceases to amaze me."

Kier motorway workers stage sick pay protest

Workers employed by Kier on the Highways England area three road network have begun a campaign to secure full sick pay.

The 120 strong workforce maintain the motorway and major road network in Hampshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and parts of Buckinghamshire.

The workers who have continued to operate throughout the pandemic, only receive [statutory sick pay](#) worth just £96.35 a week when they are ill.

This is in contrast to office workers employed by Kier who receive three months of full pay when they are sick as do workers who are employed directly by the client Highways England.

The workers held a protest at Kier's office in Basingstoke where they unfurled a banner which read: "Kier end the discrimination on sick pay".

Unite regional officer Malcolm Bonnett said: "Kier's workers who operate in all weathers to keep the South East's

motorway network fully operational deserve full sick pay, when they are ill.

"The pandemic has exposed the fact that workers simply can't survive on SSP which is less than £100 a week.

"It is simply unjustifiable that office based workers receive full sick pay while those working on the motorway network only receive SSP."

Kier has recently been re-awarded the contract for area three for a further seven years making this a perfect time to press for improvements in sick pay.

Further activities are anticipated in the coming months unless Kier acts swiftly to end the sick pay injustice.

■ For more details on HS2 see page 16-17



Kier workers protest at the company's offices in Basingstoke over the failure to pay sick pay

Unite seeking recognition at NG Bailey

Unite is in the process of seeking recognition at NG Bailey's offsite manufacturing centres at Oakenshaw and Drighlington in the Bradford area.

Unite regional officer **Mark Martin** was requested to visit the site by Unite members but was denied access, as Unite was not recognised. The workers who are predominantly welders were concerned about proposed changes to shift patterns.

It is understood the changes are related to NG Bailey looking to expand its offsite work at the two facilities, but progress is being hindered by recruitment problems.

With offsite production work expanding in construction, it is likely to be increasingly important for Unite to gain access and secure recognition in these facilities.

Unite tackles union busting at Aldermarston

Unite has vowed to tackle and stamp out attempts to union bust on the Mensa construction project at the [Aldermarston Weapons Establishment](#) in Berkshire.

Problems began in the contract in mid-September when five workers, including members of Unite and the site's union health and safety representative, were removed from the project without warning or explanation.

There then followed a walkout of the workforce in support of the workers. Following Unite's intervention the affected workers were transferred to other projects.

The workers were employed by electrical sub-contractor *NG Bailey*, which has refused to divulge the reason for the workers' removal but blamed the principal contractor *Costain* and the client *AWE*.

In order to prevent similar problems Unite is demanding the following:

- An agreement on a procedure for dealing with similar situations where workers are made aware of the

charges against them and can answer them

- An apology from the project team to the five affected workers, a proper investigation and re-instatement onto the project
- A guarantee that removal of security passes on this project does not prevent future employment through blacklisting by the client or contractor
- Full compensation for the loss of earnings of those taking part in action to defend their work colleagues.

The dispute has sinister overtones as both *NG Bailey* and *Costain* are proven blacklisters.

Unite regional officer **Malcolm Bonnett** said: "Unite is committed to stamping out this clear attempt at union busting on the AWE project.

"It is simply unjust that workers have been removed from the project without warning or a reason given, this must not be allowed to ever happen again."

Stuart gets the message to sites



Stuart Grice distributed copies of buildingWORKER in Leicester

During the summer East Midlands construction activist **Stuart Grice** spent a day visiting sites in Leicester and giving out copies of the *buildingWORKER*.

Stuart reports getting a generally warm response from the workers who were mainly on their way to work.

The *buildingWORKER* is an excellent tool to promote the Unite construction sector and copies of the magazine are produced specifically to be given out outside building sites. Bulk copies of the magazine are sent to each region for this purpose. For further information and to take part in the distribution of the *buildingWORKER* in your area speak to your regional officer.

PAY AND BARGAINING

National construction agreements

The last few months have been very busy for Unite as most of the key national construction agreements have been under negotiation.

Getty Images



Unite has secured pay increases for workers across construction

A two year deal has been agreed for the JIB Electrical agreement. Electricians covered by the agreement will receive a 2.5 per cent increase in January 2022 and a further 2.5 per cent from January 2023.

There will also be a £10 increase in sick pay. The deal was agreed by Unite members.

Unite members covered by the JIB Plumbing agreement have also accepted a two year pay deal. Workers will receive a two per cent increase from January 2021 and then a three per cent increase in January 2023.

Workers covered by the Building Engineering and Services Association (BESA) agreement that covers workers in the

heating and ventilation sector will receive a two per cent increase in January 2022 and a further two per cent in January 2023. There will also be an increase in sick pay. The offer was accepted following a ballot of the membership.

Mechanical construction workers covered by the NAECI agreement will also see their pay increase next year. Workers will receive a 2.5 per cent increase in January 2022 and then a further 2.5 per cent from January 2023. The payments for mileage and lodge will also both increase by 2.5 per cent in both years.

The NAECI deal was negotiated by regional officer **Chris Weldon** who had been requested to lead these negotiations.

In the summer issue of *buildingWORKER* it was reported that the employers side of the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) which covers workers in civil engineering, had been offered a 2.5 per cent increase.

The offer was put to members and was accepted and came into effect at the end of June 2021.

Unite national officer **Jerry Swain** said after a series of pay freezes imposed on workers last year it was very important to secure pay increases in all of the national agreements.

“In order to secure further increases in the future it is essential that workers are better organised and prepared to take action to maximise their pay.”

Red Book Undecided

Local government craftworkers, covered by the red book agreement remain unclear about the pay rise they will receive this year.

Local government employers had offered a 1.75 per cent increase for 2021 but members have overwhelmingly rejected this offer.

The anniversary date for the pay increase was April 2021, when the pay increase is agreed it will be backdated to the anniversary date.

Wolffkran workers accept pay deal

Workers at Wolffkran cranes the largest tower crane company in the UK have accepted a three per cent pay increase for the current year.

The workers were given the option of a three per cent pay increase or a two per cent pay increase plus an additional day's holiday.

Following a ballot, members accepted the former.

Getty Images



Crane drivers have accepted a pay increase

Workers demand HS2 justice

Construction workers from across the UK descended on Euston in August to protest at the attempts of a joint venture construction company to protest at the refusal to all Unite normal access to workers on the [High Speed Two](#) project.

The [Skanska-Costain-Strabag](#) joint venture project is responsible for the tunnelling work and track project on the London section of the HS2 project. The first stage of which will link London and Birmingham, it will be completed between 2029 and 2031 and will cost between £38-£45 billion.

The tunnelling and rail development has been split into four sections in phase one and while the other joint venture companies are fully prepared to talk to Unite to develop access agreements so workers can freely meet with Unite officials during their breaks. Skanska-Costain-Strabag have refused to countenance such access.

Instead the joint venture company have said that Unite could be given a separate room and that workers who wished to discuss a matter with the union could visit them in it, after first being required to walk past the offices of site managers.

This is considered a high cynical manoeuvre by the joint venture company to effectively 'union bust. It is no coincidence that Skanska and Costain are both proven blacklists.

Over 200 construction workers took part in the protest and they were joined by former Labour leader **Jeremy Corbyn**.

During the demonstration lorries were unable to access or leave the site, which caused considerable disruption.

Despite denying Unite access to workers on its HS2 sites, the union has discovered a litany of workplace problems including workers not receiving the correct overtime rates, receiving too few holidays and not being covered for death and serious injury.

There are also growing concerns about the safety of workers on the Skanska-Costain-Strabag joint venture project following a serious accident when a 20 tonne lorry tipped over and fell into a trench on the project.

There were also three further accidents during September which resulted in several safety shutdowns.



Mark Thomas

Jerry Swain speaking at the demo

Due to the union-busting attitude of the joint venture there are currently no Unite safety reps on site making work far more dangerous than it should be.

This was very much an initial protest and further activities are planned over the rest of the year and into 2022 until Skanska-Costain-Strabag reverse their union-busting tactics and allow Unite access to the site.

In addition to pressure being applied to the joint venture Unite will also be focusing on the client HS2". HS2 has set out clear rules on how industrial relations should be conducted on its sites but has refused to ensure that its contractors follow this guidance.

Unite national officer **Jerry Swain** said: "These demonstrations will not only continue, with the ensuring reputational damage to the companies involved. But will spread to include other areas where Skanska-Costain-Strabag currently work. We will not stop until union officials are allowed on site."



Unite held a large demonstration at the HS2 project in Euston

Mark Thomas

Understanding preventing stroke

A stroke is an attack on the brain. It happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off, killing brain cells.

There are three different types of stroke; ischaemic strokes, haemorrhagic strokes and transient ischaemic attacks:

- An ischaemic stroke is caused by a blood clot that blocks off the blood supply to the brain. This is the most common type of stroke, accounting for around 85 per cent of strokes
- A haemorrhagic stroke is caused by a bleeding in or around the brain. About 15 per cent of strokes are caused by bleeding

- A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or mini-stroke, is the same as a stroke, except the symptoms only last for a short amount of time. This is because the blockage that stops the blood getting to your brain is temporary and clears by itself. A TIA is a medical emergency, the same as a stroke. A TIA is a warning that you're at risk of having a full stroke in the near future.
- A stroke strikes every five minutes in the UK
- There are around 1.3 million stroke survivors in the UK
- Around one in four strokes happen to people of working age.

Act **FAST** and



Facial weakness



Arm weakness

Construction workers who suffer from high blood pressure and with a poor lifestyle are at greater risk of a stroke.



Mark Thomas

Stroke is a medical emergency. The FAST test can help you recognise the signs

A stroke can strike anyone, at any time, so it's vital we all know how to spot the signs of a stroke in yourself or someone else.

- **Facial weakness:** Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?
- **Arm weakness:** Can the person raise both arms?
- **Speech problems:** Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
- **Time to call 999:** if you spot any signs of a stroke, call 999 immediately.

How does a stroke affect someone?

When a stroke strikes, part of your brain shuts down and so does a part of you. That's because a stroke happens in the brain, the control centre for who we are and what we do. The impact varies depending on which part of the brain is affected. A stroke can impact your language and speech, your physical abilities, your emotions and vision.

Stroke is a leading cause of disability in the UK and almost two thirds of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability. Our research also shows two thirds of stroke survivors have problems with their speech and communication and four in 10 experience depression/anxiety.

g and rokes

call 999.



**Speech
problems**



**Time
to call 999**

For some people the physical effects of a stroke may be relatively minor, while others may be left with long-term effects or a disability. Any stroke can cause 'hidden effects' such as fatigue, emotional changes and memory problems.

Recovering after a stroke

Every stroke is unique and recovering from a stroke is different for each person. Some people recover fully.

Other people have health problems or a disability. The fastest recovery takes place in the first few months. After that progress can be slower, but people can continue to improve for months and years after a stroke.

You may need rehabilitation, like physiotherapy, speech, language therapy and occupational therapy, which begins soon after the stroke, and helps stroke survivors to make the best recovery possible.

Risk factors for stroke

A stroke can happen to anyone, but there are some things that increase your risk of a stroke. Most strokes (nine out of 10) are associated with modifiable risk factors, therefore you can reduce your risk of stroke, through changes to your lifestyle.

High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor. The best thing you can do to reduce your risk of stroke is to monitor and manage your blood pressure. With simple checks, your GP can help you understand your risk of stroke, and support you to make the changes necessary to reduce your risk, which might be changes to what you eat or medication.

A balanced and healthy diet, exercising and stopping smoking can help to lower your blood pressure and your overall risk of stroke.

Getting back to work after a stroke

With the right care, support and advice many people return to work after a stroke. If you have a stroke, whether you are able to return to work and how long it takes will depend on the effects of your stroke, the type of care and support you received, what work you

were doing and the amount of support your employer gives you.

It's important to have a plan in place with your employer for your return. Your occupational therapist can advise on the best way and the best time for you to return to work. This may include talking to your employer and working with your employer's occupational health service, on how they can support you with your return to work. Your employer must make reasonable changes to your job if you need them.

Tips for getting back to work after a stroke

- Remember, you're the expert in your own needs so try to keep control over decisions about returning to work. You might want to try a slow return to work, perhaps only a few days a week to begin with, or a few hours a day. It can help you to regain some of your confidence and independence.
- Ask your employer for a copy of their policy on returning to work after sick leave. It is also useful to ask for a copy of the job description for your current role, or any alternative roles that you are considering.
- If you can, try to keep in touch with your employer during your recovery. This should help you feel less isolated and ease your worries about returning to work.
- Find out what financial support/benefits you may be entitled to such as Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), council tax discounts and grants.
- You can take your union rep to any returning to work conversations that you have with your employer.

USEFUL RESOURCES FROM THE STROKE ASSOCIATION

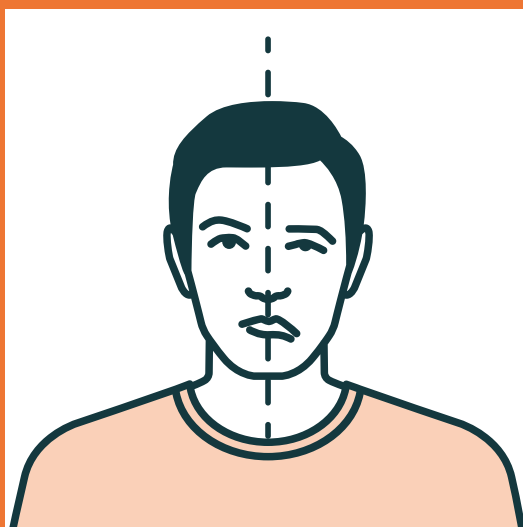
- <https://www.stroke.org.uk/resources/when-you-have-stroke>
- We have information about managing behaviour changes on our website, which you can read and share with your employer or colleagues
- <https://www.stroke.org.uk/life-after-stroke/getting-back-work>

SPOT A STROKE

Know the symptoms act **FAST** if you
someone is having a stroke

F

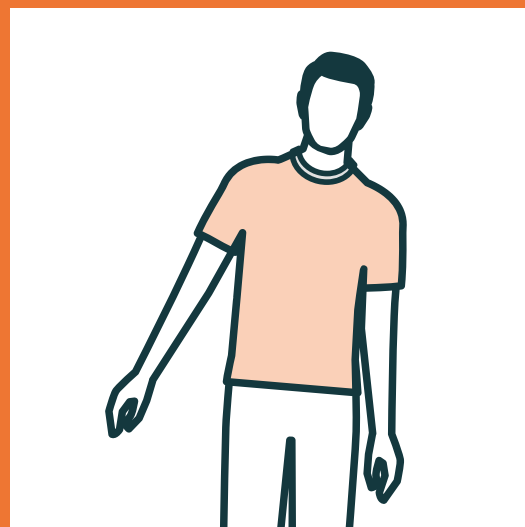
FACE



FACIAL WEAKNESS:
Can the person smile?
Has their mouth or
eye dropped?

A

ARMS



ARM WEAKNESS:
Can they raise
both arms?

A stroke can strike anyone

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DOKE
ou think



S
SPEECH

T
TIME



SPEECH PROBLEMS:
Can they speak clearly
and can they
understand you?

TIME TO CALL 999:
If you spot any
signs of stroke dial
999 immediately

one at anytime

CALL 999 IMMEDIATELY

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LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY

Thursday 2 October 2014 should have been a normal day of work for **Craig Evans** a 28 year old construction worker, but it was a day that changed his life and which he and his family will never forget.

Evans had been in the construction industry since leaving school, working for pre-cast specialists PCE Limited since 2005.

Due to a downturn in work, PCE had subbed him out at as a signaller/slinger to Dawson Piling who were undertaking work in Bicester, Oxfordshire for Network Rail.

The work involved moving large sheets of metal with a crane, which then loaded them onto a wagon. The job was progressing steadily when the workers were informed they would need to work faster as the company had other contracts that needed to begin.

Evans and his colleagues were told they would need to work in two crews. However, as it would take too long to rig a crane, it was decided that the lifting for the team that Evans was part of would be undertaken by an excavator (digger).

On the fateful day Evans began work at 07:30 and briefed the excavator driver on what needed to be done. He then walked

to his position, at which point the arm of the digger hit him and crushed him against the metal sheets.

Evans said he felt paralyzed and “thought he was gone”, he could only move his arm. He was eventually released by the excavator and was laying on the floor, but says “Everything was going black”.

He remembers being told that the ambulance had arrived but then doesn't remember anything else as he was heavily sedated.

Evans later found out that the accident had occurred as the excavator driver had not applied the isolator button and dropped his drink. As he went to pick it up he knocked a lever and the digger crushed him.

Evans doesn't mince his words. “The NHS saved my life”. His injuries were so severe that there were 14 people working on him. His family were told “he could go at anytime”.

Craig was in a coma for 15 days and it was not until four weeks after his accident that he became aware of his injuries.

When he looked below the bedsheets he was shocked to see what looked like scaffolding round his body.

This was holding him together as his pelvis had been snapped in half, as a result of this, his right leg had been starved of oxygen and become infected, leaving the doctors with no choice but to amputate it above the knee.



Evans' pelvis was shattered and required scaffolding as the bones healed

He had also suffered massive internal injuries with his diaphragm being split and his abdominal wall had ruptured.



While he was in hospital his kidneys failed, resulting in him needing dialysis.

Evans eventually left hospital four days before Christmas but remained a frequent out-patient.

It was not just the physical scars, Evans talks openly about how he suffered from depression and anxiety.

He was unable to return to the home where he lived with his mother and stepdad, due to the stairs and so moved into his girlfriend's apartment.

However, things were far from getting better. Evans had contributed to his girlfriend's rent who was at university and with less money coming in, she got into rent arrears. It was during this time that Evans admits that he tried to commit suicide.

Things finally began to pick up when Evans received his first interim compensation payment after his accident.

“In 2020 he received the final settlement for the compensation for his accident which was worth £5.2 million”

Evans was a member of Unite and while he was laying in a coma, his father who was also in the union, made contact.

Unite assigned the trade union solicitors [Thompsons](#) to the case. Evans could not be more full of praise for Thompsons, who began supporting him from the moment they were notified of his accident until 2020 when his final compensation package was agreed.

Evans explains how complete the solicitor's support was. Around five or six weeks after the accident Evans was interviewed by the [Health and Safety Executive](#).

It was not a pleasant experience, “I understand why but they were like the police”. Evans says the interview made him feel like the guilty party and not the victim. Thompsons' lawyer had to bring the interview to an end as Evans was clearly not ready for further questioning. Thompsons made it clear that no further interviews could occur unless Evans' lawyer was in attendance.

The HSE assessed the evidence and mounted a legal case against Dawson Piling, a company called Flannery who had employed the excavator driver and the driver himself.

During the case it emerged that the driver did not have all the necessary tickets to operate the machinery. The driver also made allegations that Evans was at fault for the accident.

However, when the driver made his allegations about Evans it was shown they contradicted what he said immediately following the accident. As a consequence he was deemed an unreliable witness.

Evans explains that the HSE's case was stressful. In particular the lawyers for Flannery were particularly vindictive and continued to try to blame him for the accident and it wasn't until his own company PCE got involved and threatened action they backed down.

Flannery's lawyers went as far as monitoring the twitter stories about Evans recovery, to claim that he was not as seriously injured as he claimed.

The explanation that he received for the actions of the lawyers he describes chillingly as: "If they can pin this on you and you commit suicide then there is no payout."

Both Flannery and Dawson Piling were found guilty of serious health and safety breaches as well as the excavator driver.



After years of recovery Evans is now back at work part-time

With Flannery deemed to be two thirds responsible.

Evans is sanguine about his experiences of the legal system, "there is no point in hating people, it is the world we live in and they were just doing their job."

He also rejects the suggestion that the excavator driver should have been sent to prison. "He has got to live with what he did for the rest of his life. Why should he go to prison and his wife and children suffer?"

After he got out of hospital the struggle for Evans was only just beginning. He needed to go through highly intensive rehab to improve his quality of life.

For this he needed to go private as he explains: "They (the NHS) got me upright but they didn't have the funds to do what I needed."

"There is no point in hating people, it is the world we live in"

Through Thompsons' assistance in the knowledge it would be part of his eventual compensation package, he was sent to receive rehabilitation with the private provider [PACE](#).

One of the key things they provided was a bionic leg with movable joints at the knee and ankle.

He thinks that he was the first person in the UK to receive such a leg, which cost around £65,000 and which has to be replaced every five years.

The difference between an NHS prosthetic leg and the one provided by PACE was stark. As Evans says: "With an NHS leg I could make it to the toilet. With the PACE leg I can go to Aston Villa (who he supports) and I went on holiday and didn't even take my wheelchair."

The rehabilitation that Evans undertook was gruelling but he is keen to stress that he was not the only one affected by his accident.



Getty Images

An excavator operated by Flannery crushed Evans

"You don't realise the effect it has on your family and loved ones."

He says that in many ways his then girlfriend (now wife) suffered to a greater extent. "She had it worse than me, I was sedated."

Despite the accident being nearly seven years ago it is only relatively recently that his life has stabilised.

In 2020 he received the final settlement for the compensation for his accident which was worth £5.2 million. He received every penny because of his Unite membership. In sharp contrast to the well known public injury lawyers he was originally recommended who would have taken 25 per cent. "Thompsons got me the funds to get my life back together."

He would give it away in an instant. "I would give every single penny away to ensure that it would mean that no one ever suffered like this again."

Earlier this year Evans returned to work with PCE, for two days a week, he recognises how lucky he was. "The company made a position for me and have accommodated me."

Going back to work Evans says has been good for his mental health, but physically it is a challenge. "It is very tiring and painful a prosthetic leg on a construction site means I can't do what I used to."

Because of his experiences, Evans is determined to put something back into the industry, he wants to speak at inductions to other workers about the importance of safety on sites and also wants to work with Unite and explain how being a Unite member saved his life.

Unite secures access to HS2



Getty Images

Unite has secured access to the workers on a tunnelling section of HS2

explain to workers the benefits of being a member of Unite.

The agreement is similar to the one which has already been signed with the Mace/Dragados joint venture which has won the contract to build the new Euston station.

The agreement with Align is significant as it is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the Skanska/Costain/Strabag joint venture which has got the tunnelling and track laying contract from Euston to the edge of London and which has refused Unite access to its site.

Unite is in the process of negotiating similar agreements with Align with the other two joint ventures responsible for the sections of the tunnelling and track to Birmingham.

■ Report of HS2 London demo page 9

Unite has made a highly significant breakthrough in its campaign to ensure that workers on HS2 are properly represented and not exploited.

An access agreement has been signed between the joint venture company Align which consists of Bouygues, Travaux Publics, Sir Robert McAlpine and Volker Fitzpatrick.

Align is undertaking the tunnelling and track laying of the section of HS2 from north London and through the Chiltern Hills.

The access agreement allows Unite officials to visit workers in the welfare facilities on the Align project.

During this time the official can deal with any concerns raised and also

Scaffolders demand the rate for the job

Over 60 scaffolders employed by contractor Actavo UK Limited on the [British Steel](#) contract in Scunthorpe began an all-out continuous strike in early October.

The strike is a result of Actavo refusing to pay the scaffolders in line with the appropriate industrial agreement which is the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI). The workers are currently being paid between 10-15 per cent below the NAECI rate.

At the beginning of the second week of strike action the scaffolders staged a march from the British Steel head office to the site entrance gates.

The workers took strike action earlier this year when the contract was held by Brand Energy, before they were TUPED to Acatavo.

■ As *buildingWORKER* went to press around 25 scaffolders, insulators and painters voted for strike action in a similar

Scaffolders take strike action at Scunthorpe to achieve the rate for the job



dispute. The workers are employed by Altrad to maintain the Mitsubishi Chemicals plant in Billingham Teesside. The basic rate for a scaffolders at the plant is £12.06 an hour while the NAECI rate for this work is currently £17.45 an hour.

Powering

The lights are at risk of going out in the UK.

We have recently seen a large number of smaller energy companies going bust, due to the sudden increase in gas prices.

The increase of gas prices, will be passed onto consumers, making heating and lighting our homes more expensive.

It is frankly terrifying that the ability to keep ourselves warm can be reliant on gas prices, especially as much of the gas in the UK is piped in from countries such as Russia.

The uncertainty about gas prices coupled with the urgent need to reduce the burning of fossil fuels to meet CO2 reduction targets, means it is absolutely essential that the government supports the building of new nuclear power stations and does so quickly.

The first critical priority is that the government gives the go-ahead for the [Sizewell C](#) project before the end of this year.

There are many reasons why this is such a critical time, not least because with the COP26 climate change conference in November, the government needs to demonstrate that it can walk the walk as well as talk the talk on climate change.

More importantly with the [Hinkley Point](#) project reaching important milestones, it is vital that the commitment to build Sizewell C is made now so that the skills and knowledge can be transferred from Hinkley to Sizewell.

Prior to the building of Hinkley, there had not been a new nuclear power station built in the UK since Sizewell B which was completed in 1995.

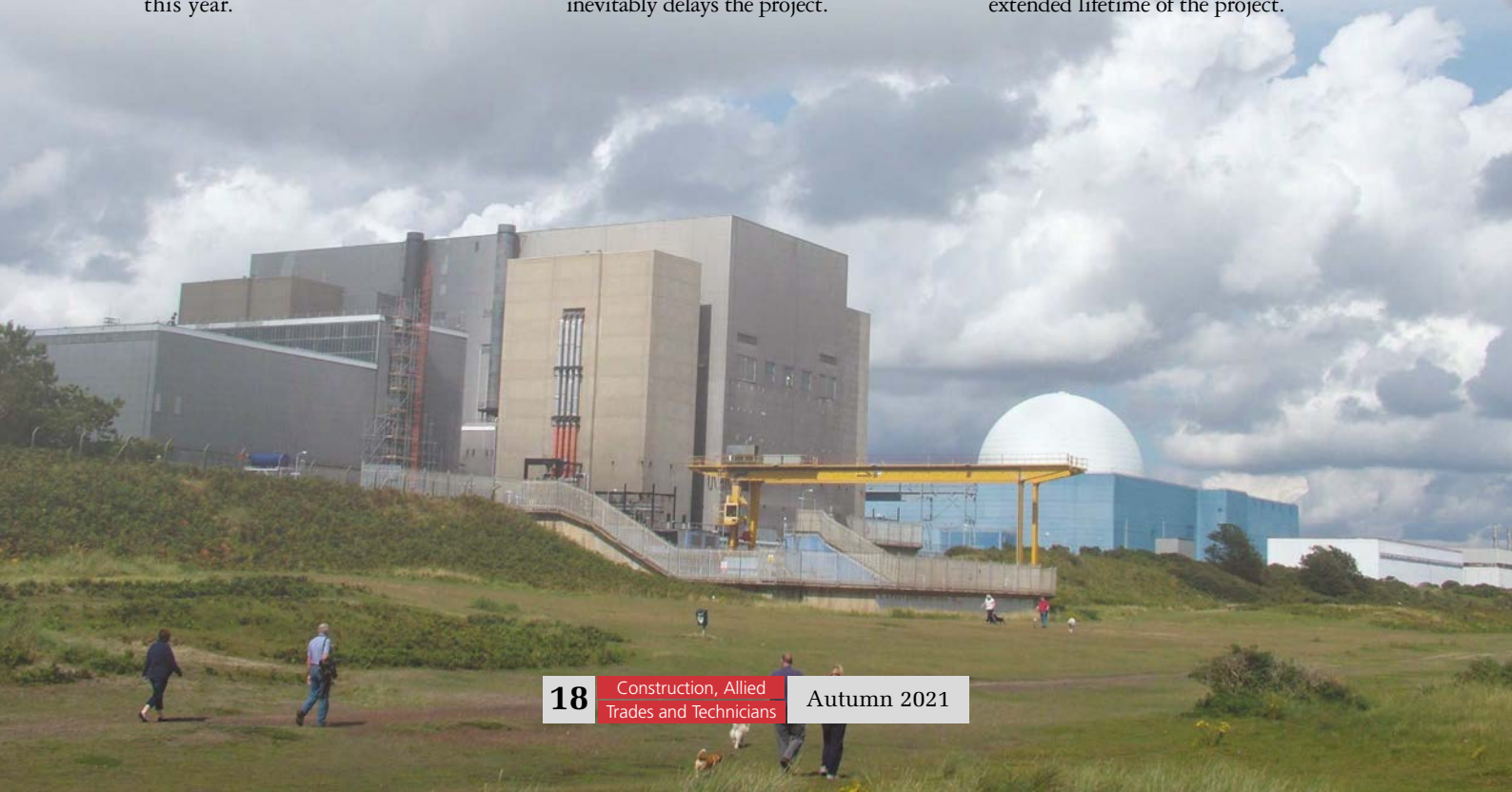
That meant that Hinkley Point had to start from scratch in developing the skills needed to build a nuclear power station. A delay now would mean that a skills bridge to Sizewell C, could be weakened or lost as workers, undertake work elsewhere. This increases costs, decreases productivity and inevitably delays the project.

Not only does the government need to give the go ahead, it needs to decide on a funding model. The client EDF took on most of the risk with building Hinkley Point but it is unable or unwilling to do so for Sizewell C.

While EDF is prepared to play a major role in Sizewell C it is also expecting the government to be prepared to accept some of the risk and provide some of the investment. A position that the government appears to be moving to, not least because the idea of Chinese investment (as at Hinkley) is increasingly unpalatable.

A new investment model is not just critical for Sizewell C but the UK's entire ability to build new nuclear power stations. Too many projects in recent years including Wyfla on Anglesey, Moorside in Cumbria and Oldbury in Gloucestershire, have been mothballed due to financing issues.

For the construction industry, Sizewell C is a huge development, which will provide thousands of jobs for the extended lifetime of the project.



the future



During the construction phase over 25,000 jobs are expected to be created, although obviously not all of these workers will be on site at the same time.

In addition EDF is committed to creating over 1,000 apprenticeships within Suffolk and in supply chain businesses across the UK. This will be an enormous shot in the arm for local young people who will have the opportunity to acquire a skill for life.

There is also a commitment from EDF that UK companies will primarily benefit from the project with 70 per cent of the construction contracts earmarked for UK firms, a higher proportion than at Hinkley.

It is not just the employers who need to learn lessons from Hinkley, it is vitally important for Unite to analyse what has worked well and where further improvements for workers can be made.

This is particularly important as good practice on such mega projects could and should be adapted and utilised on other union organised sites.

One area which it is essential to get right, concerns payments (subsistence/lodge) for working away from home and the quality of accommodation.

Sizewell like Hinkley Point is a project in a geographically isolated area of the country and as such there will be a very high percentage of workers living away from home.

Applying for subsistence should be consistent across the project and there should be a set rate applicable to the entire site.

Equally it is important that with the client likely to be providing much of the accommodation, the union is fully consulted on the specifications, costs, location and recreational opportunities in order to properly protect workers' welfare.

Another area which has caused a serious gripe at Hinkley Point and is a general concern across the entire construction industry is the quality and cost of food in the onsite canteens. With long shifts and the workforce unable to leave the site during their breaks, workers will have several meals a day in the canteens.

The quality of the food needs to be good, options should be varied and cost should not be expensive. A captive audience should not be exploited.

Another area that the dedicated team of Unite reps on Hinkley has identified as

needing to be improved for such large-scale projects in the future is adverse weather policies. Climate change has made the UK weather more extreme.

A policy and an extra payment has been developed at Hinkley for working in the rain when it remains safe to do so.

However, there needs to be a policy for hot weather working in order to ensure workers health is not compromised.

The quality of PPE also needs to be addressed with Unite members disappointed that the quality of PPE provided to managers, who are rarely on site, is superior to that provided for the rest of the workforce.

Finally, given the events of the past 18 months, future projects need a pandemic policy in place, not least because the reason that Hinkley was able to continue functioning safely throughout successive lockdowns was due to the involvement of Unite reps.

One thing is clear once the government gives the green light to Sizewell there needs to be joined up working between Unite, the client and the contractors to make the construction of this vitally needed nuclear power station a success.

BWI and FIFPRO back workers' human rights

This summer the global federation of construction workers, [Building Workers International](#) (BWI), signed a cooperation agreement with the [global federation for footballers](#) (FIFPRO), which provides footballers with a platform to support the rights of vulnerable workers before, during and after the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

The build-up to the World Cup has been particularly controversial due to the very high number of migrant workers (principally from Southern Asia) who have died while building the venues and other construction projects in the country.

The agreement sets out a framework to push for the protection and advancement of employment rights in and around football.

Since reports of the high number of migrants construction workers deaths in Qatar began appearing nearly 10 years ago, Unite together with the BWI has campaigned for improvements in working and living conditions.

This pressure resulted in an agreement being reached which allowed for inspections of the stadium sites, and secured higher pay and additional rights



Footballers have been given a platform to speak out on workers' rights ahead of the World Cup in Qatar

for the workers, involved in building the World Cup stadia.

Australia demands action on silicosis



Silica dust is choking workers in Australia and throughout the world

Unions in Australia are demanding that their government takes decisive action to lessen the risk of workers developing silicosis when exposed to silica dust.

Construction workers are at particular risk of exposure to silica which is produced when stone and concrete is cut or ground.

In addition to silicosis, exposure to silica causes lung damage and autoimmune diseases.

The Australian unions are unhappy that while the National Dust Disease Taskforce, made good recommendations on data gathering and awareness raising, it failed to introduce measures to prevent workers being exposed to the substance.

Liam O'Brien the assistant secretary of the [Australian Confederation of Trade Unions](#) (ACTU) said: "Workers with silicosis can expect a lifetime of living with the incurable disease and they need long-term health, financial and vocational support."

Asian bank ends asbestos support

Campaigners for the global ban of asbestos have secured an important victory. The [Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank](#) has amended its environmental and social framework to exclude asbestos containing materials from projects it funds. The bank has an annual spend of \$3.3 billion on infrastructure projects in Asia.

Anti-asbestos campaigners are now arranging to ensure that the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank follow suit and no longer fund projects that contain asbestos.



Campaigners have taken another step forward in the global ban of asbestos

Belgium migrant worker tragedy

Construction unions have expressed serious concerns after five migrant construction workers were killed and nine were injured after a section of a school collapsed in Antwerp.

The dead and injured workers were Portuguese, Romanian and Russian. All the workers were working for sub-contractors with Belgian company Democo acting as the main contractor. The BWI has warned that migrant workers are: "one of the most vulnerable groups in the industry's labour force."



Getty Images

Get your tax refund and cover the cost of Christmas

After a tough year construction workers should use every opportunity to ensure they can afford Christmas

The Christmas spending season starts earlier every year, and Black Friday (26 November) is already just around the corner. With average UK 'jingle bills' of £489 per person for presents alone, now is the time to get your tax refund sorted with RIFT.

Did you know

- In surveys this year, nine out of 10 people in the UK say they're expecting to spend more on Christmas shopping than in 2020
- Overall, our festive spending frenzy's set to sky-rocket by 65 per cent this year
- 28 per cent of people planned to start Christmas shopping in September
- 11 per cent have finished the majority of their Christmas shopping in November.

Covering the cost of Christmas

Despite what you might expect after the last year, there is still every reason to claim back your overpaid tax from HMRC. In fact, average refund claims in the building trade are actually up from last year.

If you've never claimed before, you can still get back what you're owed for up to four years. A typical first construction refund comes to around £3,000 – more than enough to load up on Black Friday bargains. If this isn't your first claim with RIFT, all it takes are a few updated details to get you started again.

To get your tax refund in time for Christmas, you need to set it snowballing now. With our RIFT app, it's never been easier to get back what the taxman owes you and you can track your claim's progress from start to finish.

We are the UK's leading experts in construction refunds, and we are here to handle every step of your claim. You can always get in touch when you need us, and Unite members get an exclusive discounted fee of 25 per cent +VAT or £245 + VAT if you are self employed.

No one should be leaving their cash in the taxman's hands at Christmas. If your refund claim is already rolling with RIFT, remember to refer your friends and workmates to us in order to ensure they make their own claim. You can do it online, over the phone or even through the app. Every friend you refer who claims their refund with us bags you a £50 bonus – with even more cash and prizes up for grabs the more referrals you make.

The Christmas clock is ticking, so it's time to get your refund wrapped up with RIFT.

Visit our website at <https://www.riftrefunds.co.uk/UNITE> for more info and to get started now.

This page is a counterpoint to the mainstream media and reviews important pieces of work for Unite members.

Television

Help



Jodie Comer and Stephen Graham star in *Help*

Channel 4 is currently under the threat of being privatised by the Conservative government.

The powerful drama *Help* which aired on the channel in September is an obvious reason why.

Help is a terrifying story about the effects of

Covid on a care home during the early weeks and months of the pandemic.

It stars Jodie Comer (*Killing Eve*) as a young newly recruited care worker (no doubt on the minimum wage) and Stephen Graham (*Line of Duty*, *Time* and *White House Farm*) as one of her patients who is suffering from early onset dementia.

The power of the drama is in the understated way that the pandemic creeps up on the home and its patients and then terrifyingly how they are left without resources and feel they have been abandoned by the emergency services.

Comer is particularly convincing as a care worker who is trying to do the best for her patients in impossible circumstances.

Comer and Graham are ably assisted by a stellar supporting cast including: Sue Johnson, Cathy Tyson and Lesley Sharp.

Dramas like *Help*, where working class characters are portrayed in an honest manner, are all too rare on TV.

Help is available to watch on catch up TV and is not to be missed.

Barckley Sumner

Your Recommendations

Unite members are encouraged to send ideas for future recommendations. We will cover film, television, DVDs and books. The only stipulation is a recommendation needs to be easily available. If you would like to write your own reviews please do but keep your contributions to 250 words. Send recommendations and reviews to barckley.sumner@unitetheunion.org

Books

A Woman in Berlin by Anonymous

A Woman in Berlin is a brutal account of the true horrors of war.

It is a spine chilling diary of what occurred to the Germans who were still living in Berlin at the end of the Second World War, when the Soviet army captured the city.

What is haunting about the book is the matter of fact and unsentimental way it is written, with the female narrator explaining what happens to her and her neighbours.



Berlin was in ruins after the end of the war and women had to do much of the rebuilding

The book begins at the point when Berlin is set to fall to the Soviet army and the remaining inhabitants of the city who are predominantly women, children and the elderly are awaiting their fate.

Once Berlin falls, the Soviet soldiers are initially primarily interested in obtaining alcohol, but they quickly move onto the indiscriminate rape of the women.

It is profoundly disturbing how matter of factly the narrator describes that she is repeatedly raped and her decision to find a Soviet officer who she can protect her from other soldiers in exchange for sex.

As the consequences of the German defeat are fully realised the priority becomes survival with a search for food and work in order to survive.

Stephen James

MEMBERSHIP FORM GB

Please use capitals

This address will be used for the purpose of ballots

Forename _____ Title _____
Surname _____ Gender _____
House No./Name _____
Street _____
City/Town _____
Postcode _____ Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____
Home Tel _____ Mobile _____
Email _____

About Your Job

Employer/Company Name _____
Job Title _____
Work Address _____
Postcode _____ Work Tel. _____

Which membership do you require?
 Enhanced full time (more than 21 hours per week)
 Enhanced part time (up to 21 hours per week)
 Enhanced low pay
 Enhanced apprenticeship
Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4
Date apprenticeship started _____
Date apprenticeship due to end _____
 Driver Care (a separate Driver Care application form will be sent to you.)
Date apprenticeship started _____
Date apprenticeship due to end _____

Authorisation of deduction of your trade union contribution from your pay (check-off)

Note: Not all employers operate check-off. I hereby authorise the deduction of Unite the Union subscriptions from my pay of such amounts as shall be notified to my employer on my behalf from time to time by Unite. I authorise my employer and Unite to share personal data necessary to operate check off and for my employer to inform Unite of any changes of address.

Are you paid? Weekly 2-weekly 4-weekly Monthly
Payroll No. _____

I agree to abide by the union's rules. (Rule Book is available online)

NI No. _____ Signature _____ Date _____

For Office use only

Mem. No. _____ Employer Code _____ Workplace Code _____

Political Campaigning

Unite fights for our members' interests through political and industrial campaigning on issues affecting you – from pay, pensions, and broader workplace rights to housing, equality issues and our NHS.
If you would like to be part of this, opt-in to our political fund for just 10p per week. (tick here)

Those who choose not to opt-in will not be disadvantaged in any way compared with members who do opt-in, except in relation to control of the political fund.

I support Unite in campaigning on our policies and members' priorities in the Labour Party and I would like to be a Labour Party Affiliate Supporter* (this is free for political fund payers). I authorise Unite to share my personal data with the Labour Party for this purpose. (tick here)

* I agree to the terms listed at <https://support.labour.org.uk>

Equal Opportunities

The provision of this information is to ensure equality for all and is not a requirement

Unite campaigns for equality for all and to ensure that women, black Asian ethnic minorities, disabled members, lesbian gay bisexual trans - LGBT+ and migrant workers are fully represented within the union. To find out more go to www.unitetheunion.org/equalities. Confidentiality is protected. Please complete:

Please tick your ethnic origin: Black/Asian White Please tick if you are LGBT+
Please tick if you are a disabled person: Please tick if you consider yourself to be a migrant worker

Direct Debit Details – Instructions to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Service User Number **9 7 1 4 6 7**

Name of bank/building society _____
Town of the Bank _____
Sort Code _____
Account Number _____
Name(s) of Account Holder(s) _____
On the selected day of the month: 7th 14th 21st 28th

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Unite the union Direct Debit monthly from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Unite the union and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank Building Society.

I authorise the payment above. I agree to abide by the union's rules. (Rule Book is available online)

When you join Unite, you are also authorising the Union to deduct an additional amount for your subscription to your local branch fund.

Signature _____ Date _____

Branch No. _____ Job Code _____ Recruitment Code _____

Please send completed forms to: Freepost Plus RTZC-HKGG-RZBY, Unite the union, 2nd Floor, 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN

Don't miss out!

Get your *buildingWORKER* every quarter

buildingWORKER is the magazine for all Unite construction workers. In order to keep up to date with what is happening in your industry and your union you need to opt in to receive future editions.

Opting in to receive the *buildingWORKER* is quick and simple.

To receive *buildingWORKER* for free, four times a year. You just need to contact your regional office by email, phone or in writing.

Also by contacting the regional office you can update your address, notify a change of employer and request receiving free copies of *uniteWORKS* (Unite's award winning magazine) and *Landworker* (the magazine for rural workers).

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