

**INSIDE: 1972 Building Workers' strike • Mental health • Pensions**

Autumn 2022 The magazine for construction sector members

# buildingWORKER

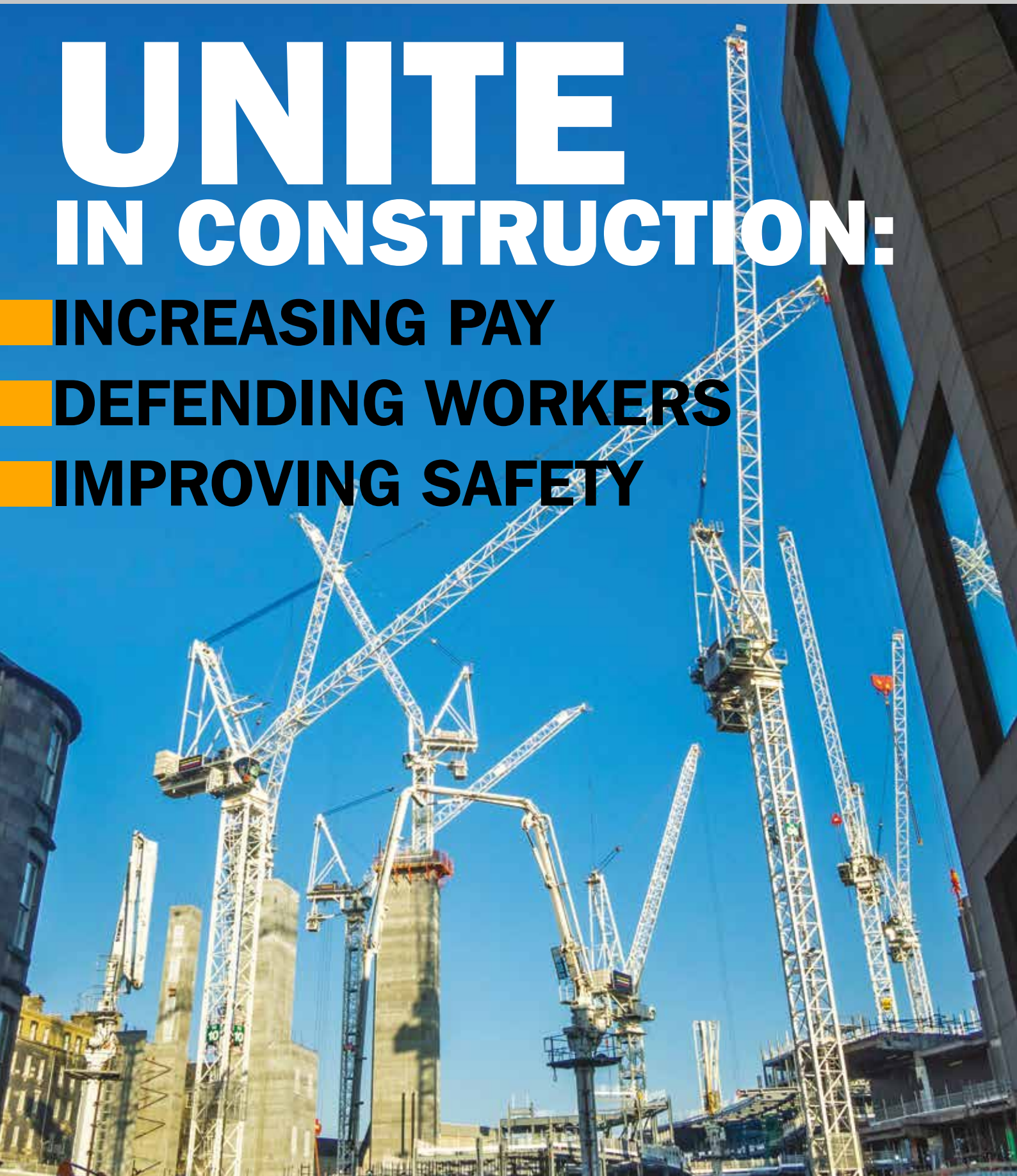


# UNITE IN CONSTRUCTION:

**INCREASING PAY**

**DEFENDING WORKERS**

**IMPROVING SAFETY**



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# buildingWORKER

It is just over a year since Sharon Graham was elected as our new general secretary. From day one Sharon has been crystal clear that the union's complete priority is the jobs, pay and conditions of its members.

That commitment applies as much to construction as any other sector. In this issue of *buildingWORKER* that pledge can be seen to be clearly bearing fruit. In a tough industry Unite is increasingly winning for workers.

What is ever more clear is that we achieve our greatest successes in workplaces where we are best organised for example the recent cost of living increase at Hinkley Point.

With this in mind the work highlighted on page 20 being undertaken in the London and Eastern region to use *buildingWORKER* as an initial recruitment tool before following up on specific issues raised by workers is hugely impressive. Hopefully other regions will be able to take a similar proactive approach to recruiting construction workers and strengthening our collective voice.

This issue also deals with the thorny issue of pensions which are particularly problematic for construction workers given the nature of their work. Obviously if you think you might have paid into the Lump Sum Pension scheme (page 18) make sure you claim it, this is your money sitting in someone else's bank.

Equally the B&CE's article about pensions on (page 16-17) is really important. The golden rule is that pensions are deferred

pay. Remember that if you decide to opt out of the automatic enrolment pension scheme, you are giving your boss a three per cent saving on the money they owe you and which goes straight into their pockets.

Most importantly please read the article by Mind on (page 10-11) .

Tragically far too many construction workers are dying every year of suicide, one death is far too many and while things might be slightly improving, the industry is not doing nearly enough to prevent further loss of life.

Unite has already supported significant initiatives (congratulations to the members who raised money for Mates in Mind this summer page 6-7) to support workers with mental health issues but we need to do even more.

As a minimum every cabin and canteen should have the poster (centre pages) about mental health prominently displayed. Pressure needs to be placed on employers and clients to ensure that workers are given the ability to freely speak to someone, without fear of financial penalty, about any mental health concerns. When these initiatives have been successful Unite has been front and centre in making sure they are effective.

Finally, enjoy this issue of *buildingWORKER*, please ensure that fellow workers see the hard copy or the electronic version and stay safe.



*Gail Cartmail*

Gail Cartmail, executive head of operations

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Mark Thomas

Cover photo: Getty Images



# Huge drop in construction inspections



Getty Images

## Unionised sites like Hinkley Point are safer

A freedom of information request made by Unite has revealed a huge drop in construction inspections.

The number of unannounced proactive construction inspections made by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has declined by 31 per cent since 2013/14 when there were 11,303 while in 2021/22 that figure had declined to just 7,793.

Proactive inspections are considered critical in construction, it is only the possibility of a knock at the door by the HSE, which prevents many employers from cutting corners on safety.

Construction remains the most dangerous sector for fatalities in the UK, with 30 construction workers losing their lives last year.

The largest declines in the number of inspections occurred in Wales (down 57 per cent), followed by the South East (51 per cent) and London which has tended to have the largest number of fatalities per year (46 per cent).

Unite also discovered a large decline (51 per cent) in the number of enforcement notices (which require employers to make safety improvement to sites) being issued from 2,293 in 2013/14 to just 1,119 and 2021/22.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “These figures are shocking, as they demonstrate that the HSE are either unwilling or unable to ensure the safety of construction workers.

“Construction is a dangerous industry, made more dangerous by unscrupulous employers who risk workers’ lives by ignoring safety laws. If the HSE fails to ensure safety, then deaths and injuries will increase.”

# Electricians warned on rogue charging

Both Unite and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) are warning construction workers not to be overcharged for acquiring cards and tests.

CSCS posted its warning after receiving an increased number of complaints from workers who have been overcharged for receiving a CSCS card.

The cost of a CSCS card is just £36 while the separate CITB Health, safety and environment test costs £22.50. In some cases third party sites are charging workers over £60 just for their CSCS card.

To ensure you pay the correct amount construction workers are

advised to apply directly through the CSCS scheme by going to [cscs.uk.com/apply](https://www.cscs.uk.com/apply).

Meanwhile Unite is warning all its electrician members to avoid rogue companies charging excessive amounts for undertaking the Electrotechnical Certification Scheme (ECS) test.

If workers take the tests with Unite it costs £54 for non-members and just £48 for members.

Many rogue operators are charging £78 for the test and an additional £5 for revision materials which can be

found free online.

The test can be booked at: <https://www.learnwithunite.org/ecs-book-online/>

Further information about the tests can be found at: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/why-join/member-services/education/ecs-health-and-safety-assessment/>

■ Meanwhile CSCS announced in July that apprentice cards will be free. The change was made to ensure that employers were registering apprentices on the appropriate card. Many employers were registering apprentices as labourers.

## Workers left in limbo for Queen's funeral

Thousands of construction workers were left in limbo following the death of the Queen.

The problem was caused by the failure of the employers' side of the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) to honour the additional day's bank holiday for workers operating under the agreement.

Instead they said it was up to individual employers to either pay its workers an additional days holiday, make them work on the queen's funeral, use one of their existing days of holiday or be unpaid for the day.

The CIJC blamed the lack of notice given to them of the queen's death for the decision not to grant an extra bank holiday.

Unite are aware that one section of the HS2 told its contractors that they were

not required to pay its workers, unless additional bank holidays are covered in construction agreements.

The CIJC, which principally covers civil engineering, was the only major construction agreement not to honour the bank holiday for the queen's funeral. In contrast agreements such as the NAECI agreement (mechanical engineering) and the Joint Industry Board (both electrical and plumbing) all honoured the extra bank holiday.

Major projects such as Hinkley Point and the Silvertown tunnel also ensured that their entire workforce received the additional bank holiday.

Unite national officer Jerry Swain said: "The CIJC has abdicated its responsibility and left thousands of construction workers in limbo, not knowing if they are required to work or if they will be paid.



Joel Rouse/Mod

**Construction employers disrespected the Queen and left workers in limbo**

"This is a hugely disrespectful act to the Queen and the royal family."

- If any member believes that they should have been paid for the bank holiday or have other issues about the day of the funeral, they should contact their Unite rep or local officer for assistance.

## Sharp increase in CIS working

A freedom of information request by Unite has revealed a sharp increase in Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) workers.

In 2021/22 a total of 1.047 million workers were recorded as working as sole traders under CIS, this was a 7.5 per cent increase on the figures for 2020/21 when 969,000 were recorded as working under CIS by the HMRC.

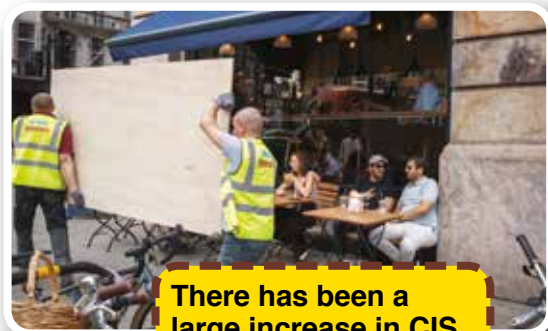
In addition there were 7,000 workers recorded as operating as partnerships under CIS and 137,000 workers operating as limited companies.

The increase in CIS could be as a result of an artificially low figure in 2020/21,

potentially as a result of the pandemic and workers being on furlough.

The figures are alarming as it means that over half of the industry is officially registered as self-employed.

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



Getty Images

**There has been a large increase in CIS construction**

majority of CIS workers are bogusly self-employed.

Workers operating under CIS are denied even the most basic employment rights including holiday pay, unless they are considered to be workers rather than self-employed. If this is the case they receive holiday pay.

# Ian receives Jubilee medal

Unite activist **Ian Wagg** has been awarded the Queen's Jubilee medal for his services to the community.

Ian has been a member of Measham Community first responders since 2009. When he received his medal he had undertaken 2,950 hours of voluntary work on top of his full time employment.

Ian supports the East Midlands Ambulance Service and works with paramedics but also acts as a first

responder in order to to begin treatment on people suffering from a life threatening condition.

When asked why Ian undertakes his voluntary work he said: "For our community." Ian has been working since 1972 at the same company in Measham, originally it was called Red Bank and it is now Forterra plc.



He is a machine operator/chargehand. He has been a union member since starting work, initially in the T&G and has been the senior steward at the company for over 20 years. He is also a health and safety rep, mental health committee member and senior first aider at work.

**Ian Wagg is a Unite activist and is an emergency first responder**

# Kier Group workers secure sick pay

Following an intensive campaign by Unite, construction giant Kier has agreed to begin paying sick pay to its entire 19,000 workforce.

Previously many of the company's blue colour workers, including workers on highways maintenance contracts, only received statutory sick pay which is worth just £16 a day.

In future all workers with the company will receive sick pay worth up to £100 a day.

Unite general secretary **Sharon Graham** said: "This is a much-needed step forward in an industry which is notorious for insecure pay and has an inadequate safety record.

Unite regional officer **Malcolm Bonnett**, who has led the campaign to secure fair sick pay said: "Unite has been campaigning hard to end the discrimination on sick pay for construction workers."

**Kier highways maintenance workers will now all receive sick pay**



Getty Images

Unite will now be expanding its campaign to ensure that all employers pay a fair rate of sick pay.

# Chester-le-Street workers secure pay increase

A group of construction supplies workers were forced to threaten strike action in order to improve low rates of pay.

The 124 members of Unite were employed by Birtley Group Ltd which produces lintels and Bowater Doors which produces UPVC doors. Both companies share the same premises in Chester-le-Street, Durham and are

owned by the same company Hill and Smith Holdings PLC Ltd.

After announcing a total of 16 days of strike action throughout August and September, the employer sought fresh negotiations.

As a result of the negotiations the workers were offered a much improved

pay offer of nine per cent backdated to January, when inflation stood at 7.8 per cent. Following a ballot of members the improved pay offer was accepted.

Unite regional officer **Pat McCourt** said: "This was an important win for our members and Unite will now build on this success in future negotiations. At Birtley and Bowater."

## Manchester workers secure compensation after being left jobless

Unite together with employment lawyers Thompsons solicitors have secured payouts for 12 workers who were left jobless following a failed TUPE transfer.

The workers lost their jobs in 2019 when Manchester Working Limited (MWL), the outsourced maintenance arm of Manchester council, transferred its public buildings and repairs service to Engie Services Ltd (now Equans Services Ltd).

However when it came to the transfer the 12 workers, including three members of Unite, were told that they were not part of the transferred

contract, while MWL told them they no longer worked for the organisation.

The case was for a failure to inform and consult and the workers will receive nine weeks gross pay which is worth a total of just under £65,000 (in total). The three members of Unite had already secured compensation for having been unfairly dismissed.

In addition Engie had also to pay four weeks gross pay in compensation to 45 colleagues who were transferred but where the company had failed to inform and consult the workers in the required time frame.

Unite regional co-ordinating officer **Andrew Fisher** said: "This is a clear example of how employers often try to avoid their legal obligations and responsibilities to their workers, by riding roughshod over employment rights simply to try to save money. It is often only trade unions who have the knowledge that such actions are unlawful and are able to advise and support employees in such claims.

"I have no doubt if they had not been members of Unite these employers may well have got away with this unlawful action at a great financial cost to our members."

## Unite members climb Snowdon for mental health



**Unite members are prepared to climb every mountain to support improved mental health**

On August 17 members of Unite's construction sector climbed Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales, to raise money for Mates in Mind, the charity which campaigns for improved mental health awareness in the construction sector.

The climbers raised over £6,000 for Mates in Mind, in what became atrocious conditions when the walkers reached the summit.

Those taking part in the climb included **Stuart Grice**, **Lewis McCauley** and **Alan Lambert** from the East Midlands, **Jamie Bramwell** and **Lee Hughes** from the North West, **Darren Burrows** and **Brian Sutherland** from Scotland as well as **Charlie Roberts** and Unite's regional women's and equality officer **Jo Galazka** from Wales.

■ See page 10 for the article by Mind on mental health in the constructions sector.

# PAY AND BARGAINING

## Balfour Beatty electricians in holiday pay deal

A long campaign by Unite has secured full holiday pay for electricians employed by construction giant Balfour Beatty.

From January 2023 all electricians employed under the terms of the Joint Industry Board (JIB) or the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) (the appropriate industrial agreement for electricians) will receive full holiday pay on all their annual leave.

Currently the workers receive full holiday pay (which is an average of actual earnings) for 20 days of annual leave, for the remaining 12 days they only receive holiday pay which reflects basic pay

In addition the 280 workers who will benefit from this change received a one off payment of £250.

Unite national officer **Jason Poulter** said: "This was a very important agreement and has settled a longstanding grievance for electricians employed by Balfour Beatty. "Unite is now working to ensure that other construction employers begin paying workers their full holiday pay."

## Hinkley workers secure pay increase

Unite secured a cost of living increase for Hinkley workers

Getty Images



Workers employed by the BLYOR consortium at Hinkley Point have secured a significant pay increase to help tackle the cost of living crisis. The complicated deal was brokered by Unite.

The workforce received a four per cent increase in pay and on all allowances from 1 August backdated to 1 June. This payment will continue until the end of 2022. The workers will then receive a pay increase in line with the retail price index (RPI).

In addition the workforce will also receive a one off lump sum payment of £600 to resolve outstanding payroll grievances.

The milestone bonus payment has increased until the end of 2022 and will be paid at 10 per cent of earnings, provided workers are in full attendance for a weekly period.

## Sanctuary repair workers get pay boost

Over 300 workers employed in the repairs department of Sanctuary Housing Association have secured a pay increase worth a total of 13 per cent.

In addition workers will receive a £500 retention bonus. While the pay deal was very welcome, Unite remains committed to resolving issues of bullying that exist in the repairs department. Unite is seeking to secure similar pay agreements at other housing associations.

## Monumental masons receive pay increase

Unite has secured a substantial pay increase for monumental masons, who undertake work on cemetery monuments and are covered by the National Monumental Masons Agreement.

Talks were held this summer and a 12 per cent pay increase was agreed for all craftworkers and general operatives. In addition industry sick pay which is paid on top of statutory sick pay (SSP) has increased by £10 from £115 to £125 a week provided an employee has at least two years' service. In addition providing the length of service is met industry sick pay will be paid from day one rather than day three and it will last for 12 weeks rather than the current 10 weeks.

Holiday entitlement will increase by one day for every five years of service up to a maximum of five days for 25 years of service.

Unite regional co-ordinating officer **Shaun Lee** said: "This shows that Unite will ensure pay and conditions are improved for working people who should not have to pay for the government's mismanagement of the economy."

Getty Images



Monumental masons have secured a pay increase

## Qatar deaths under reported



Getty Images

**Qatar construction deaths have been under reported**

Migrant workers are at greatest risk of experiencing heat stress at work in Qatar and the BBC found that when they complained about labour laws being broken they found themselves placed in jail.

Ahead of the World Cup, new research by the BBC has uncovered concerns that Qatar is under reporting the number of migrant workers dying from heat stroke.

Climate change is leading to more frequent extreme weather conditions in the Gulf states with temperatures frequently exceeding 50 degrees.

Meanwhile a number of human rights groups including Amnesty and Human Rights Watch has called on Fifa to pay £356 million in reparations to migrant workers whose human rights have been compromised while building the World Cup and its infrastructure.

## Occupational health and safety recognised

In June the International Labour Conference (ILC) agreed to recognise occupational health and safety as the fifth International Labour Organisation fundamental right.

Occupational health and safety joins, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of

child labour and the elimination of discrimination with regards to employment, as a fundamental right.

By the ILC agreeing to occupational health and safety becoming a fundamental right it is now expected that all of the organisations 187 member states, are expected to respect and promote all the fundamental rights.

## UN rejects asbestos claims

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have strongly rejected claims by the International Chrysotile Association (ICA) that they are pro-asbestos.

The ICA is funded by the asbestos industry and had claimed that the WHO and ILO supported the continued use of chrysotile (white asbestos), which is still commercially available.

The WHO said: "The WHO reiterates its policy, which remains unchanged, that the most efficient way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of all types of asbestos."

## Pollution causing cancer

A new report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) has revealed that pollution is causing over 10 per cent of all forms of cancer.

The report found that exposure to air pollution, second hand smoke, radon, ultraviolet radiation, asbestos and certain chemicals all increased cancer risks. According to the report many of these environmental and cancer risks can be reduced by reducing the pollution levels.

The warning is particularly important for construction workers who are frequently exposed to many of these pollutants.

## Asbestos mask concerns



Getty Images

**Concerns have been raised about the safety of some asbestos masks**

The European Trade Union Confederation has highlighted concerns about the safety of some asbestos masks.

An investigation in France has revealed problems with the Proflow asbestos masks which is manufactured by the US 3M corporation.

The proflow mask is the most popular in Europe for asbestos removal workers, in France alone it is estimated that they are regularly worn by 25,000 workers. The problem with the mask relates to how the airflow is regulated.

# IMPROVING M HEALTH IN CO

Mind works with employers of different sizes and sectors to help them create mentally healthy workplaces. We know that mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression are common in every workplace, and the pandemic has made things worse. In 2020/21, we surveyed over 40,000 staff. Two in five (41 per cent) employees surveyed told us their mental health had worsened during the pandemic.

Although mental health problems are common across the UK, mental health is a particular concern in the construction industry. The national average suicide rates for men are three times higher than that of women, but devastatingly, these rates triple again for men working in the sector.

According to the British Safety Council, people are 10 times more likely to die by suicide than from on site accidents in construction. While health and safety is rightly taken very seriously, mental health hasn't always been given the attention it deserves. But that's starting to change as stigma decreases and awareness increases across all workplaces, including within construction. Employers also have legal duties under both the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Equality Act 2010 to protect and promote the mental health of their staff and make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, which can include staff experiencing mental health problems.

Although attitudes are shifting, with initiatives like Mates in Mind playing a key part in driving progress forward, too many people are still not getting the support they need. So, what are some of the key causes of mental health issues in the construction industry, how can

you protect your mental wellbeing, and what can you do if you're struggling?

## 'Toxic masculinity' and 'macho' culture

The causes of poor mental health are complex, and vary from person to person. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that although suicide amongst men had decreased, the male suicide rate was still three times higher than the female suicide rate in 2015. Given this, it stands to reason that in typically male-dominated sectors such as construction, there is a higher rate of workers sadly taking their own lives.

Men are still less likely to talk about their mental health than women, and less likely to have strong social networks on whom they can rely for support. They are also less likely to seek help from a health professional if and when they are struggling with their mental health.

Some companies in the industry are taking steps to tackle the traditionally 'macho' image of building sites by encouraging staff to talk about problems that might lead to stress, anxiety or depression.

## Job insecurity and unreliability

We spend, on average, a third of our lives at work. So it's no surprise that our jobs and work conditions are hugely influential on our mental health and sense of emotional wellbeing. Worries about job insecurity are widespread, negatively impacting the mental health of more than two thirds of workers in the UK, construction is no exception.

The construction sector is sensitive to economic conditions, as both private demand and public work tend to fall off during recessions or crises. Longer periods of unemployment can lead to a loss of understanding of working conditions and safety, leading to more risk-taking and unsafe conditions.

The Living Wage Foundation defines work insecurity as underemployment, unreliable pay or hours, being in non-permanent work, or in low-paid self-employment. Research from the Foundation found that nearly one in five (19 per cent) of construction workers were both low-paid and in insecure jobs, making it one of the worst-affected industries in the country.

Further polling from the Construction Industry Early Leavers Survey revealed that job insecurity was a common concern among workers, with nearly one in four (23 per cent) mentioning it as a reason for leaving construction.

## Environment and isolation

Routine causes of stress and poor mental health at work - including long working hours, heavy workloads and poor relationships with colleagues - can be commonplace in the construction industry. If you're based on site, it can be hard to do things outside of work to help keep you mentally healthy, such as taking regular exercise and eating a healthy diet. The physical environment - such as light, noise levels and temperature - also has a massive impact on our wellbeing, and these things are much harder to control if you work outside than if you're based in an office.

# MENTAL CONSTRUCTION

## Getting help and making changes

■ Mind is a proud supporter of Mates in Mind, which aims to address mental health and suicide within construction by raising awareness and understanding the causes and signs of poor mental health. Their ultimate goal is to reach the point where everybody working within construction can talk openly about mental health and suicide, and know that if they do, they'll be met with support and understanding.

We hope that initiatives like these will help shift attitudes towards mental health.

■ It's really important that your employer takes the time to put in place measures which will properly tackle the causes of work-related stress and poor mental health, promote wellbeing for all staff, and support employees experiencing mental health problems, including suicidal feelings. Small, cost-effective initiatives such as flexible working hours, sick pay, generous annual leave, regular catch ups between staff, and access to Employee Assistance Programmes – confidential support lines – can make a huge difference.

■ If you have the time and resources available to do so, meeting the basic building blocks of everyday self-care will help you manage your mental health and mood. We know that getting outside, exercising, eating a balanced diet and maintaining social ties are all essential in helping you cope and feel your best.

■ Being open about how you're feeling and talking with somebody – whether they're a loved one, colleague or expert – is one of the most important first steps. Sharing feelings can be a huge relief for lots of people, but if you don't feel able to do so, you can contact your GP, speak to the Samaritans, call Mind's Infoline or access information on support through Mind's website. Visit [mind.org.uk/work](http://mind.org.uk/work) and [www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/](http://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/) for more resources.

■ If you're experiencing a mental health crisis, you can call the Samaritans on 116 123, call 999, or take yourself to A&E to keep yourself safe and get

Mark Thomas



**Employers should provide support to workers on mental health issues**

# Don't suffer in

Many construction workers experience mental health problems.  
Construction workers have triple the risk of suicide.

If you need help speak  
to your Unite rep or  
local officer

Go to [mind.org.uk/work](http://mind.org.uk/work)  
or call the Mind infoline  
on **0300 123 3393**

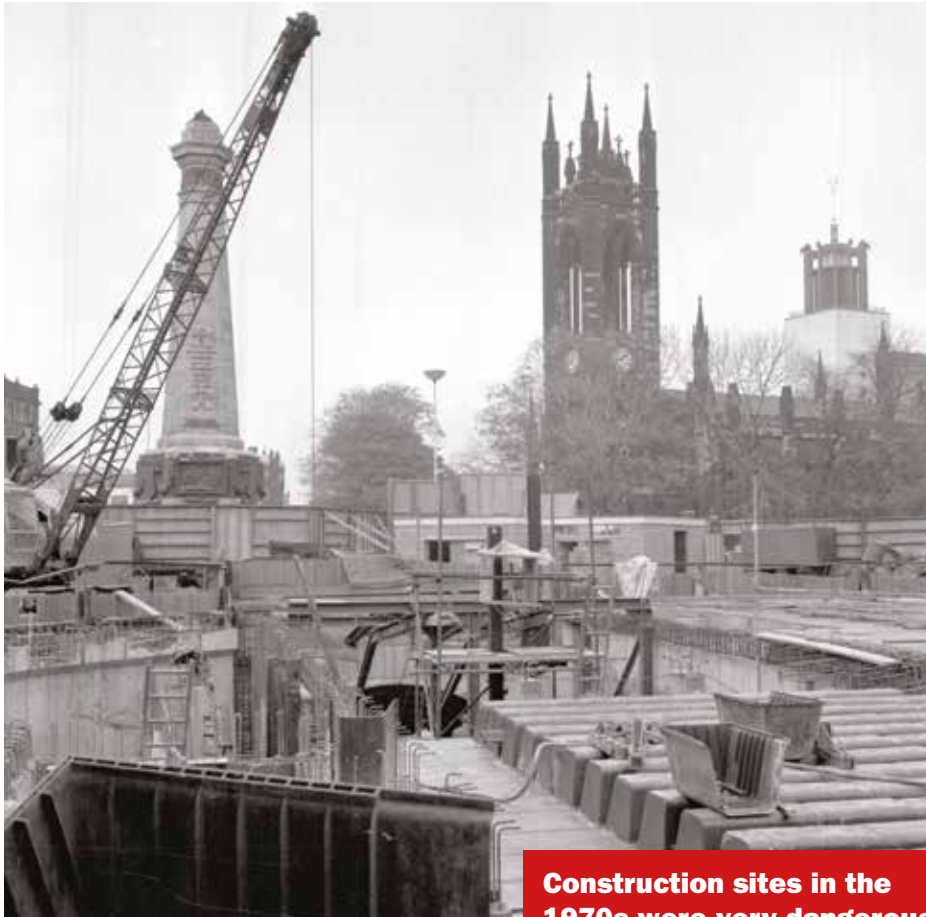
If you feel suicidal call  
The Samaritans on  
**116 123**

*Fighting for*  
**JOBS • PAY • CONDITIONS**





# BUILDERS STRIKE



**Construction sites in the 1970s were very dangerous**

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the 1972 national builders strike. The first and so far only time that construction workers have been involved in national industrial action.

The early 1970s were a time of considerable industrial turmoil as workers demanded decent pay and construction was no different.

What marked the national builder's strike as dissimilar from other disputes was that as well as the issue of pay the workers were demanding a dramatic improvement in safety.

**Terry Renshaw** who was in his mid-twenties and who was working as a painter and decorator at the Shotton steel works in North Wales recalls. "Safety

was horrendous. On average there was a construction death every day."

Renshaw had only been on site for four months, when the strike started and during that time there had already been two deaths.

A noticeable feature of the strike was that it was led by the rank and file. Rank and file construction workers fed up with the abysmal pay rates and terrible safety, created a 10 point Building Workers Charter, which was the centrepiece of the dispute.

As well as a dramatic improvement in safety, the workers were calling for a significant pay increase of £30 (a week) for 35 hours.

**Jimmy Woods**, who was then a young Liverpool joiner recalls, many of the leading activists involved in the charter were members of the Communist Party (CP) and the dispute "was very well organised".

With increasing pressure from the rank and file, the leaders of the principal unions, construction union Ucat and the T&G which are now both part of Unite, called strike action which began in June 1972.

Initially strike action was targeted at key sites being taken out on strike. Sites such as **Terry Renshaw's** were deemed to be strategic and began strike action.

The workers on the remaining sites such as **Jimmy Woods'**, who was working on house-building in Liverpool, were asked to pay a levy of 50 pence a week to support the striking workers.

The targeted strike action was not fully successful, some of the employers agreed to the workers' demands but others were more resistant. It was then decided to stage an all-out strike from August onwards.

**Tony O'Brien** who was working in London recalls: "[The] strike was forced on the leadership by rank and file workers, [it] always started from below. We stopped work and started flying pickets, [we] forced the leadership to call an all-out strike."

The additional action and the picketing of sites that continued to work was successful. For example **Harry Chadwick** who was a young joiner recalls that **Wigan** was very well organised. "Every day 100's of construction workers met at the **Wigan** casino car park and then were told where to picket". Chadwick recalls going on coaches to picket at sites across Lancashire.

# E REMEMBERED



**The dispute was principally led by rank and file construction workers**

The increased industrial activity forced the construction employers into making a vastly improved offer to the workers, in late September.

The ending of the strike came as a relief for those involved. Chadwick had been on strike for 12 weeks, Woods site was called out later and despite strong financial support from other workers such as the dockers, Woods said: "It was a difficult time for all the families."

Skilled trades saw their pay increase to £29 a week, while the pay for labourers also rose to around £26 a week.

However, safety and the level of fatalities did not significantly improve until the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act came into effect and required a further push under the Blair government.

The strike had been a success but there were ramifications. On the 6 September a group of North Wales building workers visited a series of sites in Shrewsbury. Despite receiving a police escort and being directed by the police to various sites, five months later 24 of the pickets were arrested on trumped up charges, several of them

including the late **Des Warren** and **Ricky Tomlinson** were jailed.

It was the greatest miscarriage of justice in the modern trade union movement's history and it took 47 years until 2021 for this grave injustice to the Shrewsbury Pickets be overturned. One of these workers was Terry Renshaw the youngest of the pickets.

The other issue following the strike was that many of the leading activists in the strike began to find it difficult to find work in the private sector and were forced to take work in the public sector mainly with councils. Years later it was proved that there had been widespread blacklisting.

The movement of leading activists into councils meant that they became very well organised to the detriment of the private sector. Renshaw who experienced this blacklisting said of working for a council: "Pay was lower but the conditions were higher and there was a pension".

It wasn't just Renshaw who experienced blacklisting. Harry Chadwick found out decades later, when the Consulting Association was exposed for blacklisting

over 3,000 construction workers, that he had been blacklisted. His crime was to have been campaigning for justice for the Shrewsbury Pickets, despite continuing to work in the private sector he found it difficult to find work for much of the rest of his career.

The shadow of blacklisting hung over construction for decades but the legal action taken by Unite following the exposure of the Consulting Association blacklist and ongoing action by the union, is finally ending this dreadful practice.

Woods, who went on to become a construction official at Ucatt, points out another result of the strike. While employers were forced to gradually improve safety, there was a marked change in employment status. "Workers were by and large directly employed but after the strike there was a move to self-employment and then eventually agencies and umbrella companies." He also notes that it was at this point "there was a massive decline of apprentices" a problem the industry is still failing to rectify.

What is beyond doubt is the 1972 building workers strike was a watershed moment for the construction industry and its legacy still shapes the industry today.



**Building Workers march for better pay**

# Your Pension – THE FACTS



Getty Images

**Construction workers need to ensure their pension saving are being properly protected**

## Make life easier put all your pension pots in one place

If you've worked for more than one employer, it's likely you'll have several pension pots. You may be able to bring them all together – known as transferring them – into one scheme with The People's Pension. By bringing together your old pension pots, you could find it easier to manage them all and save money.

## Is it a good idea to bring all my pension pots together?

There's no right or wrong answer to this question – it depends on the type of pensions you have and your personal circumstances.

Some people prefer having all their pension pots in one place to make it easier to keep track of them. However, costs are also very important. Think carefully about how much you're paying in charges for each of your pension pots. By transferring them all to The People's Pension you could save yourself some money as they offer a rebate on their management charge – currently returning over £1m a month to their members.

That said, if you're coming up to retirement and your current scheme doesn't offer the retirement income option you want, transferring your old pots into one scheme that has the flexibility you need could be a good idea.

You'll need to give some thought as to how and when you want to take your tax-free cash – normally up to 25 per

cent of your pension savings. If you take money from your pot that is not part of your tax-free cash entitlement, and you still want to carry on working, then you could end up with an unexpected tax bill. It might also affect how much tax relief you receive on any money you pay into your pot in the future.

Normally, if you take any non-tax-free cash from your pension, you may only receive tax relief on contributions into your pension pots of up to £4,000 a year instead of the normal £40,000 annual allowance. This is known as the Money Purchase Annual Allowance (MPAA).

If you have a 'defined benefit' scheme, it's recommended you read MoneyHelper's information on transferring out of a defined benefit scheme, as you could be giving up some valuable benefits.

The trustee of The People's Pension and B&CE Financial Services Limited (who administer the scheme) are not able to offer advice on whether or not you should bring all your pots together. It may not be suitable or available for everyone. Whether it is right for you will depend on many factors.

### Before you decide, you might want to consider:

- Your personal circumstances
- The nature of your other pension arrangements
- Whether you're planning to access your pension savings in the next five years\*
- Whether you could be giving up a guaranteed benefit – like guaranteed annuity rates
- Whether the provider you're moving your money from charges you for doing so.

### Why transfer to The People's Pension?

Did you know...

- 1,000s of people transfer to The People's Pension every month
- They have over 5.9 million members saving with them
- They are trusted with over £17bn of pension savers' money
- 100,000+ employers are with The People's Pension.
- They don't charge you for transferring your old pension – your current provider might
- It's your money for life. If you change jobs, you don't have to stop saving with The People's Pension
- Investments matter. Choose from one of their three investment profiles or self-select from a range of investment funds. Climate is key – from the mid-2020s, they'll invest all new contributions into net zero investments.
- The People's Pension give back over £1m to their members each month through a rebate on the



Getty Images

management charge. The more you have saved with them, the more you'll receive as a rebate.

### If you're with The People's Pension, transferring to them is simple

All you need to do is give them the details and The People's Pension will do the rest. They'll:

- Contact your existing pension provider
- Request the relevant forms from the provider
- Make arrangements to ensure your savings are transferred
- Let you know once the transfer is complete.

You may like a personalised illustration before you transfer.

Although The People's Pension doesn't give financial advice, they'll be happy to do everything they can to help you.

Find out how to transfer, what you should consider before transferring and more on their website at [www.thepeoplespension.co.uk/pension-transfer](http://www.thepeoplespension.co.uk/pension-transfer).

### I've lost my old pension details

Don't worry, the government's Pension Tracing Service is free and can help

### Sorting out your savings could save you pounds

you find them. Visit [www.gov.uk/find-pension-contact-details](http://www.gov.uk/find-pension-contact-details) to find out more.

### Be alert to pension scams

STOP! If you're offered early access to your pension or a transfer to a scheme that seems too good to be true, chances are, it is.

The Pensions Regulator website has useful information on how to avoid pension scams. It's also strongly recommended you download the 'Don't let a scammer enjoy your retirement' ScamSmart leaflet, which explains how to avoid pension scams in four easy steps: [www.fca.org.uk/publication/fca/pensions-scams-leaflet-screen.pdf](http://www.fca.org.uk/publication/fca/pensions-scams-leaflet-screen.pdf)

\*Under HMRC rules, if you transfer to The People's Pension, you might find that you can't take a pension pot of £10,000 or less all in one go (as a small pot lump sum) if:

- It's been less than 5 years since you made a transfer in or
- It's been less than 3 years since you made a transfer out
- Your pension savings with The People's Pension, plus any related pension scheme you're a member of, are £10,000 or less.

# Have you got a Lump Sum Retirement Benefit savings from B&CE?

Did you work in the construction industry from 1982 to 2001? If so, it's possible you might have Lump Sum Retirement Benefit (LSRB) savings from B&CE and you could be entitled to claim benefits from the scheme.

## A bit about B&CE, provider of LSRB

B&CE began business in 1942, created by construction industry unions and employer federations. Construction workers usually moved around a lot and they often missed out on paid holidays. So, B&CE set out to help construction workers build up holiday pay.

Over time, construction workers needed more financial products. We listened to what was needed, built products – like LSRB – specifically for the construction industry and our membership grew.

## How the LSRB Scheme worked

The LSRB Scheme ran from 1982 to 2001. Construction employers that signed up to LSRB contributed payments through the stamping of holiday cards. This went towards a lump sum payment to the worker at 65 years of age. There was also the option for workers to make 'additional voluntary contributions' (AVCs) to build up extra benefits.

It's not possible to join any more. B&CE closed the scheme to new members in 2001. But if your employer set this up for you in years gone by, you can still access the savings.

## How you could have LSRB savings and be entitled to benefits

To qualify for a payment from LSRB, you must have built up enough qualifying weeks of service in the Scheme between 6 April 1982 and 8 April 2001. If you were employed in the construction industry during this time, you may have accrued this number of qualifying weeks.

The amount you'll get at 65 is based on the number of weeks your employer paid into the scheme, multiplied by the benefit rate when you reach 65 (currently £8.50). Although, the scheme trustee reviews the LSRB benefit rate annually, there are currently no plans to increase this rate.

## If you meet these criteria, you may be eligible to claim:

- You have built up 80 qualifying weeks' service within the scheme. This only includes service built up by 8 April 2001, when the scheme was closed.
- You can claim your full benefit at age 65. It may be possible to claim earlier if you're in ill health or retiring early, but your LSRB may be lower. More information can be found on the guide on the LSRB webpage at [www.bandce.co.uk/lstrb-scheme](http://www.bandce.co.uk/lstrb-scheme)

## Your options if you have LSRB savings

If you have Lump Sum Retirement Benefit savings, you can get a one off 100 per cent tax free lump sum payment when you're 65.

Alternatively, if you're interested in other ways to access this retirement saving, you could transfer to another pension scheme or provider – such as The People's Pension (also administered by B&CE). You can find out more about retirement decision making on the LSRB webpage at [www.bandce.co.uk/lstrb-scheme](http://www.bandce.co.uk/lstrb-scheme)



**Older construction workers may have paid into the lump sum retirement scheme**

## Contact B&CE about the LSRB Scheme

To find out more about the LSRB Scheme from B&CE and to contact them if you think you may have LSRB savings, complete the short form at [www.bandce.co.uk/contact-us-lstrb](http://www.bandce.co.uk/contact-us-lstrb)

# Bridging the construction

## GENDER CHALLENGE



**The attendees on the Building Bridges Together project visited the Battersea Power Station development (Unite's Declan Murphy far right)**

This summer Unite was involved in a unique initiative to improve the understanding of the challenges facing female construction workers and share solutions that are being developed in order to better operate in a male dominated industry.

A large group of female construction workers from North America, principally from the United States, visited the UK for an extended study tour, which was organised under the umbrella organisation Tradeswomen Building Bridges.

During their trip the female delegates visited a large number of major London construction sites to meet female workers and to discuss how workers, unions and employers are beginning to break down the barriers which prevent women from entering the construction industry.

The sites that the delegation visited included the CW Contractors site at Canary Wharf, the Skanska site in Blossom Street, the Battersea Power Station development being built by McAlpine's, the Bovis Lendlease site in Bishopton and Mace's work at HS2.

There was also a useful session with EDF, who are the client for the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point and who will be building a similar development at Sizewell in Suffolk. This discussion included how EDF had been encouraging a higher number of women onto these keynote construction projects, especially by promoting apprenticeships and training among potential female entrants.

A particular feature of the trip was an event held at Holborn where the North American contingent met with female construction workers from the UK, where they were able to share experiences and discuss how to overcome common challenges.

The event was opened by Unite's executive head of operations Gail Cartmail and in addition there was a detailed presentation from Josefine Krantz of the Swedish construction union Byggnads on behalf of the global federation of construction unions Building Workers International (BWI) on tackling the macho culture in the sector.

Unite South East activist Tracey Whittle who attended the event said that it was extremely informative. It

helped to "inform" both groups about problems found in the sector and how they are being overcome.

Tracey said the opportunity to allow individuals to talk about their feelings was a very useful opportunity and putting everyone's contributions together gave a very comprehensive overview.

Tracey also highlighted the "mentoring system" operated in the United States for female trade union construction workers as being something that could be set up in the UK.

Tracey also found the conversations about the different challenges faced by workers in different nations enlightening for example the situation with childcare in the USA was an eye opener. In the UK the primary issue is about affordability, while in America some states provided childcare while others provided nothing at all.

Finally the American delegates were full of praise for the NHS, explaining that in the United States workers had to be in work to secure medical insurance and if you lost your job you would not be covered.

# CONSTRUCTION SPOTLIGHT:

## London activists hits the sites

Throughout the summer and into the autumn construction activists and Unite officials have been hitting sites in the capital to recruit workers and inform them of their rights.

Arriving at construction sites early in the morning the Unite members have been leafleting and speaking to construction workers on their way into work.

The activists often give out copies of the *buildingWORKER* which is a key tool in the union's recruitment campaigns.

Additionally during the July heatwave Unite gave out free bottled water at a major construction site where workers were denied access to water despite the thermometer reaching record levels.

During August and September activists focussed on ensuring workers were receiving the five per cent pay increase that was agreed by the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) worryingly many workers including those on major sites had not received the increase.



**LEFT:** Unite stalwart John Cahill (left) got a warm response from workers at the HS2 site when he told them employers owed them a pay rise



**ABOVE:** Unite giving out water on McCleer and Rushe site in Wandsworth as workers had no access to water fountains during a heatwave (Unite acting regional officer Declan Murphy right)

**RIGHT:** Unite's Clinton McCree speaking to workers about their pay rise at the Ethereal site in Croydon distributing the *buildingWORKER*



**LEFT:** Unite activists Lee Dove distributing the *buildingWorker* at the Wates site in Piccadilly

**RIGHT:** Unite leafleted the HS2 site in Euston operated by Skanska/Costain/Starbag to inform workers their pay should have increased by five per cent (Unite official Vince McCoy left Unite activist Mark Wilkins far right)





# COVERING THE RISING COST OF CHRISTMAS

The last few months of the year tend to be the most expensive for all of us, with the average UK household set to fork out an incredible £1,023 on food, gifts and decorations in 2022. Compare that with the typical family monthly take home pay of £1,926 after tax and you start to see just how deep we're having to dig into our pockets to keep the lights on and the stockings stuffed through the festive season.

The cost of living crisis is forcing so many of us into difficult decisions about where our money's going, 77 per cent of us are looking for ways to shrink our Christmas budgets compared to previous years. That's no mean feat, given that the whole season's basically designed to prise the cash right out of our hands.

Household spending tends to rocket by almost 30 per cent in December, and finding ways to pare that figure back is heaping extra strain on families across the country.

Worse yet, some of those tricky decisions are set to have long-lasting consequences. In a typical year, one out of five Brits are loading up our credit cards with Christmas shopping bills in the run-up to the festive season. Those are expensive debts that you could be dragging behind you well into the new year, with an average household taking four months to pay off the balance even when the cost of living isn't soaring.

The debt dangers don't even end there. Each year, many more of us are finding ourselves dipping deep into our overdrafts

or coughing up around 30 per cent interest on buy now pay later schemes, just to get ourselves through the December spending rush.

With the bells just starting to jingle faintly in the distance, now's the time to take control of your finances by claiming back when the taxman owes you in time to get your payout this side of Christmas.

Tax rebates are on the rise all through the building trade, with refund amounts up by as much as eight per cent since 2020 for people who work "on the books". For those who are self-employed and taxed through the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS), tax refunds have risen by 10 per cent in the last 12 months alone.

However you work, claiming the tax refund the law says you're entitled to is the best way to cover your Christmas costs this year. Talk to RIFT about getting back what HMRC owes you, and see what happy customers like **Anthony Green** are saying about us on Trust Pilot: "Rift is a great service didn't have to do much to get my tax refund and didn't take long to get it just in time for Christmas which was a bonus so recommend them."

**Contact RIFT on 01233 628648 or visit our website at <https://www.riftrefunds.co.uk/claim/unite> We are pleased to offer a discounted fees to Unite members.**

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

## Film

### Where the Crawdads Sing



*Where the Crawdads Sing* is a film version of the 2018 novel of the same name.

The film is set in the North Carolina marshes, which are beautifully shot.

It stars **Daisy Edgar Jones** (*Normal People*) who is terrific as Kya. Kya's family live in the marshes in a shack. At the beginning of the film in the early 1960's Kya's mother leaves and she is followed by her brothers and sisters. Kya, the youngest is left with her father a drunk and who also eventually disappears. Kya is forced to survive alone.

A love triangle later develops between Tate, a good natured boy who teaches Kya to read but leaves to go to university (before later returning) and Chase a local hotshot who pursues Kya for sex.

Kya discovers that Chase is already engaged and rejects him. He attempts to rape her and vandalises her home. A few days later Chase is found dead at the bottom of a fire tower and Kya is tried for his murder.

What makes the film powerful is its message about discrimination. Kya is treated as 'marsh trash' by the local town. In fact apart from Tate the only other people who treat her with dignity is 'Jumpin' the black owner of a waterside shop and his wife, who are also subjected to constant racism. This is a moving film and well worth seeing.

Stephen James

#### 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@uniteunion.org](mailto:barckley.sumner@uniteunion.org)

## Books

### Mr Wilder and Me by Jonathan Coe

*Mr Wilder and Me* is a novel principally about the filming of *Fedora* one of Hollywood's director **Billy Wilder's** final films.

*Fedora* was filmed in the 1970's, while Wilder's heyday was in the 1950's and 1960's when he made classics such as *Some Like it Hot* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

The story is narrated by Calista Frangopoulou who during the shooting of *Fedora* is working as a Greek interpreter on the film.

While the main plot is interesting the subplot is what makes the novel important. I had no idea that Wilder was Jewish and had begun his film career in the 1930's in Germany, before being forced to flee when the Nazi's came to power.

In the novel Wilder meets a young holocaust denier while at a dinner, there is then a long section of other 50 pages which is written in the style of a play. It recounts how Wilder was forced to flee first to Paris and then to America. After the war ends he returns to first London and then Germany to make a public information film about the concentration camps which becomes *Death Mills*.

What is haunting is that Wilder becomes obsessed with watching all the footage that the Allies had obtained in the hope of seeing his mother who he believes must have perished in the holocaust.

This is a powerful novel and well worth reading for the powerful messages layered into the main story.

Barckley Sumner



Wilder and Me is focussed on the shooting of *Fedora*

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Basic full time (more than 21 hours per week)  
 Basic part time (up to 21 hours per week)  
 Basic low pay  
 Other (eg Unemployed member of the community, under 18, full time student, retired members or permanently disabled members who are not in paid employment)  
 Basic apprenticeship  
Year 1  Year 2  Year 3  Year 4  
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](http://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

On the selected day of the month:

7th  14th  21st  28th

Account Number

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

## 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).

### East Midlands

**Tel: 0116 253 2020**

membership.eastmids@unitetheunion.org  
102 Bath Lane, Friars Mill,  
Leicester LE3 5BJ

### Scotland

**Tel: 0141 404 5424**

membership.scotland@unitetheunion.org  
John Smith House,  
145-165 West Regent Street,  
Glasgow G2 4RZ

### IRELAND

#### Dublin

**Tel: 00 353 1 873 4577**

membership.ireland@unitetheunion.org  
Unite House, 55/56 Middle Abbey Street,  
Dublin 1 D01 X002  
Republic of Ireland

#### Belfast

**Tel: 02890 232381**

membership.ireland@unitetheunion.org  
26-34 Antrim Road,  
Belfast BT15 2AA

### South East

**Tel: 01753 313 820**

membership.southeast@unitetheunion.org  
Unite House,  
Chalvey Road East, Slough,  
Berks SL1 2LS

### South West

**Tel: 0117 923 0555**

membership.southwest@unitetheunion.org  
Tony Benn House,  
Victoria Street,  
Bristol BS1 6AY

### London and Eastern

**Tel: 020 8800 4281**

membership.londoneastern@unitetheunion.org  
33-37 Moreland Street,  
London EC1V 8BB

### Wales

**Tel: 02920 394 521**

membership.wales@unitetheunion.org  
1 Cathedral Road,  
Cardiff CF11 9SD

### North East, Yorkshire and Humberside

**Tel: 0113 236 4830**

membership.northeastyorks@unitetheunion.org  
55 Call Lane,  
Leeds LS1 7BW

### West Midlands

**Tel: 0121 553 6051**

membership.westmids@unitetheunion.org  
Unit 2, Holt Court, Heneage Street,  
Birmingham B7 4AX

### North West

**Tel: 0151 559 2004**

membership.northwest@unitetheunion.org  
Jack Jones House, 2 Churchill Way,  
Liverpool L3 8EF

### GIBRALTAR

**Tel: +350 200 74 185**

Unite House, 43-45 Town Range,  
Gibraltar