



Report from Wales Retired Members

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Activists have been out supporting CWU & RMT picket lines



Chancellor's Financial Statement

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) finally released its latest forecasts for the UK economy and government spending (grim reading).

They have produced seven forecast rounds under three Prime Ministers and three Chancellors, working towards three official forecast dates.

Over the past six months, the global energy and food supply shocks emanating from Russia's invasion of Ukraine have intensified.

Rising energy, food, and other goods prices have pushed up the interest rates set by inflation-targeting central banks to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis.

In the UK, CPI inflation is set to peak at a 40-year high of 11 per cent in the current quarter, and the peak would have been a further 2½ percentage points higher without the energy price guarantee (EPG) limiting a typical household's annualised energy bill to £2,500 this winter.

The economy, is now, in a recession.

Strikes are escalating across the economy and most worryingly our health care workers have been so underfunded & battered by the stress of coping through the COVID-19 pandemic that many are now taking or balloting for industrial action or leaving their jobs.

We have a government which is "led" by the divided Tory party. The right wing free marketeers and Brexiteers tried to install a trickle-down Reagan and Thatcher inspired economic policy. Not even their



own financial markets bought it! Instead it resulted in a run on the pound, a huge risk to occupational pensions and intervention by the Bank of England. Honey – they just trashed the economy and the UK became much poorer over one week.

It is going to be a very grim 2023 for working people and brutal for older retired people.



Report from 2022 AGM – Unite Welsh Regional Retired Members Conference, 16th May 2022

In Wales there are 7 Retired Members Branches: Swansea, Cardiff, South East Wales, North East Wales, North West Wales, South West Wales and Mid Wales.

This means that there should be 28 at the Retired Members Conference from whom 20 are elected to form the Regional Committee.

This year, 12 delegates attended the conference. It was agreed that the officers of the currently active branches Swansea, Cardiff, South East Wales & North West Wales be elected as the Regional Committee. That, at the moment, comprises 14 so we have 6 vacancies.

A priority for the new Regional Committee is going to be getting those inactive branches up and running again and then filling the vacancies on the Regional Committee. That has now been accomplished except for the two smaller branches South West Wales & Mid Wales.



National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales

Most of our retired members' activity in Wales has centred around the NPC campaigns. Unite plays a major role within NPC Wales.

The first priority for NPC Wales & NPC became the campaign to restore the triple lock for the state pension. It worked!

The state pension, benefits and tax credits will rise in line with inflation - 10.1% in April 2023.

NPC Wales welcomed the success of the campaign however that needs to be seen in context. The UK remains bottom of the OECD table for state pensions alongside the USA.

Another of NPC Wales' major campaigns is: ensuring access to information and services in a digital age.

In November 2021 the Older People's Commissioner for Wales issued statutory guidance for local authorities and health boards to ensure older people can access information and services in a digital age, and that older people's rights are protected and upheld.

The guidance has been informed by the NPC Wales as part of the Connections For All campaign.

Looking ahead, one of the most important upcoming issues is going to be on the future of care services in Wales.

Finally, NPC Wales has endorsed the "Energy for All" campaign by Fuel Poverty Action. We believe that the UK is a country with huge financial resources, and that no one should be forced to go cold, or go hungry in order to pay their energy bills.



NPC Wales therefore asks the government to implement the proposal from Fuel Poverty Action, which is calling for “Energy for All.” “Energy for All” would provide a basic level of energy for every household, enough for them to maintain enough heating, lighting, cooking, and other essential services. FPA say it should be funded from three sources:

- A windfall tax on the excess profits being made by energy companies on the back of the prices they are charging now.
- An end to fossil fuel subsidies, which cost the UK government millions of pounds every day, only to perpetuate our dependence on polluting fuels with volatile prices which are also destroying the climate
- Higher tariffs on energy used over the amount required for their different circumstances, to be paid by the many people who are profligate with their usage, contributing substantially to climate change, because they do not need to count the cost.

At present, due to fixed “standing charges,” the people who pay most per kWh are those who have cut their energy use down to practically zero, while those who pay least are the ones who can afford to heat a mansion.

Energy for All must be accompanied by a massive insulation programme, using an army of well-trained, well-paid retrofit workers, to further improve health, bring down bills, and cut emissions of CO₂. At the same time, a switch to renewable energy is urgent. Further investment and subsidies for gas and oil only perpetuate dependence on fuels which are volatile in price and lethal in their effect on the climate.