

**INSIDE: Cost of living crisis • CSCS changes • Heart health**

Spring 2023 The magazine for Unite construction sector membership

# building WORKER



Construction, Allied  
Trades and Technicians

# FAIR PAY FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS



Friday 28 April 2023



REMEMBER  
THE DEAD  
  
FIGHT FOR  
THE LIVING



# INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY

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# building WORKER



Construction workers need a pay rise. Just like every other sector in the UK economy, construction workers have faced 18 months of surging bills and rising costs.

The cost of living crisis is causing real harm to construction workers' lives and this is highlighted in the feature on page 14. The article also sets out some simple ways that construction workers can ensure that they are being paid everything they are entitled to.

Ensuring you are maximising your earnings only gets you so far, the bottom line is that pay rates for construction workers must increase. The news pages cover how workers especially in the M and E section have taken industrial action to increase their earnings and help keep the wolf from the door.

To secure the pay rises you need, construction workers have to be more organised on sites and workplaces. Every member of Unite can play their part. Speak to your local rep or official to find out what you and your workmates can do to start putting pressure on your bosses to increase your pay.

The constant battle to make ends meet, which often involves long hours or working away from home, means that too many construction workers don't look after their health, which can have terrible consequences. The feature (page 10) on heart health provides some straightforward steps we can all take to look after ourselves.

On page 20 there is an advert for the forthcoming political fund ballot this May. It is essential that members vote to keep our political fund. This isn't about supporting a particular political party but allowing Unite to have a voice to campaign on issues important to you. For example the NHS and defending our rights at work. Without a political

fund Unite would lose its voice to fight for issues that are important to you.

On page 18 there is a feature which should act as a warning. Millions of people face losing their right to vote this May. Most people do not yet realise the government has changed the rules and unless you have photographic ID you will be denied a vote. Read the article and make sure your family, friends and colleagues are aware.

Finally, it would be totally remiss if we failed to remind members that April 28 is International Workers' Memorial Day. The day workers remember the dead and vow to fight like hell for the living. It is an especially important day for construction workers given our industry's appalling safety record. Speak to your local officer or regional officer for IWMD events in your region.



**Jerry Swain and Jason Poulter**  
Unite national construction officers

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Front cover credit: Mark Thomas

# Poverty construction pay

Construction employers have been forced to increase the general operative Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) rate, to avoid paying an illegally low wage.

The general operative rate was £10.26, but with the national minimum wage increasing to £10.42 an hour from 1 April, employers had no choice but to increase the rate ahead of the annual pay increase.

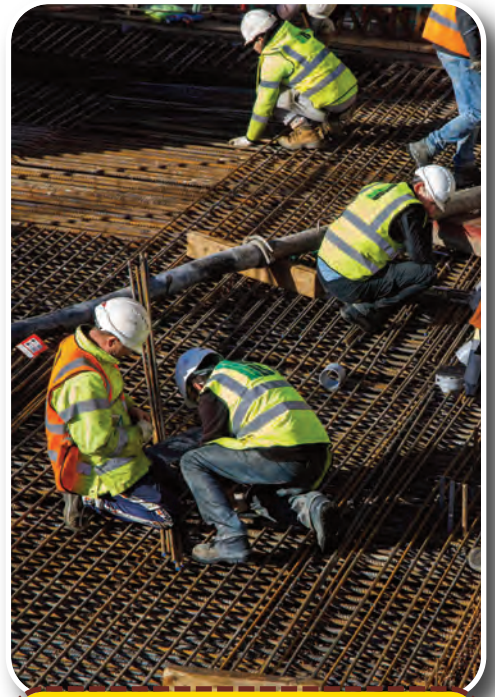
Despite increasing the general operative rate the employers' side refused to increase other pay rates, thereby reducing the differentials between different skills.

The emergency increase is an humiliation for the employers and demonstrates how far rates have fallen in real terms. Prior to the 2008

economic crash all CIJC rates were above the real living wage. Now the general operative rate and skill rate four are below this level.

Unite national officer for construction **Jerry Swain** said: "It is a dark stain on the construction industry that employers now think so little of workers who undertake hard manual labour, they are only prepared to pay them the minimum wage."

"Employers have eroded wages so far, that they now consider the value of a highly experienced site labourer to be less than the minimum wage. The employers didn't increase the rate out of the goodness of their hearts but because they are no longer allowed to pay such low wages."



**CIJC employers have been exposed paying poverty rates**

# No justice for Didcot demolition victims



The 23 February this year marked a grim anniversary.

It was the seventh anniversary of the Didcot demolition accident when four workers, **Michael Collings, Ken**

**Cresswell, Christopher Huxtable and John Shaw**, were killed while demolishing the power station in the Oxfordshire town.

Despite it now being over seven years

since the fatal accident the investigation being undertaken by Thames Valley Police and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) remains ongoing and no one has been charged let alone found guilty for the deaths of the workers.

Thames Valley Police has said the investigation looking at offences of corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter and health and safety at work violations is ongoing.

Thames Valley police has blamed a "hugely complex" investigation with "vast amounts of evidence and witness statements" for the delay

Unite national officer **Jerry Swain** said: "This was an almost unimaginable tragedy four workers went to work one day and never came home again.

"Blaming the complexity of the case for the delay, is a smokescreen if this tragedy involved anyone other than construction workers there would have been sufficient resources allocated and the case would have been concluded years ago."



Skyring

**The demolition of Didcot power station resulted in a tragic accident**

## Blacklisted workers training fund launched

Unite has launched a user friendly online form for blacklisted workers seeking retraining.

The blacklisted construction workers training fund is available to workers who were blacklisted by the Consulting Association.

Workers who qualify for the funding can apply for training within the construction industry in order to gain relevant qualifications or for training to acquire new skills to enter a different sector of the economy.

The funding behind the scheme was created by the construction companies found to have blacklisted workers and was part of the settlement to the landmark blacklisting case. To access the form go to:

<https://surveys.unitetheunion.org/230162979761868>



Unite executive council member Frank Morris (left) and Unite national officer Jason Poulter (right) launch the new blacklisted workers training fund form

## Spy cops were blacklisters inquiry finds

The public inquiry into undercover policing (Spy cops) has for the first time admitted that officers regularly passed information to employers, who used it to blacklist workers.

Construction workers have long known this was the case. When the Consulting Association was exposed in 2009, for the industrial scale blacklisting of over 3,000 construction workers, many of the blacklisted workers discovered that information the Consulting Association held on them, could only have been supplied by the police or the security

services. Up until now the police have vigorously denied that information they had gathered from the progressive groups and movements they spied on was passed to employers for blacklisting purposes.

However in the concluding statements of the first tranche of the undercover policing inquiry which covered the period of 1968-1982, Dave Barr KC the legal counsel to the inquiry, accepted that information on the people who were spied on was frequently passed to employers. He also accepted that spy

cops infiltrated unions and spied on their members as part of their activities.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Finally it has been admitted what our members have always said. For decades not only were workers secretly spied upon by undercover police officers, but information was then frequently leaked to employers who used it to blacklist workers.

"No stone must be left unturned in discovering the true scale of blacklisting by the spy cops."

## Engineering construction workers secure cost of living increase

Engineering construction workers have secured a significant cost of living increase.

Following industrial action involving engineering construction workers across the UK, this winter, extensive negotiations were held with employers.

It was agreed that workers operating under the National Agreement for Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI) will receive an extra £1 an hour from the end of February until

30 June. After that date the workers will receive an extra £0.75 an hour.

Despite the national agreement, as *buildingWORKER* went to press, local disputes involving NAECI workers at sites including Drax, Grangemouth, Torness and Mossmoran as workers sought a further increase in bonus payments, to offset soaring prices.

Unite national officer Jason Poulter said: "The agreement of the supplementary payment was an important breakthrough for our

members, who have been struggling to make ends meet.

"However employers must not be under any misapprehension that this will resolve the fundamental issues of fair pay which underlines this dispute. Local disputes to increase bonus payments will continue and employers must understand that until a fair permanent wage deal is agreed, industrial tensions will remain."

• *NAECI workers table pay claim for 2024 page 8*

# REGIONAL NEWS

## Magenta workers strike over asbestos fears

Over 100 construction workers employed by Magenta Living on the Wirral have been taking strike action in a dispute about the handling of asbestos.

Management at the registered social landlord which manages over 13,000 properties, have introduced new working practices which force workers to handle asbestos.

Despite extensive negotiations management would not consider a voluntary scheme. As a last resort the workers were balloted for industrial action and began extensive strike action in February.

The workers are currently taking a week of strike action every fortnight, the strike action is set to continue until the end of April.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "The actions of Magenta Living are deplorable. It is trying to force our members to undertake work they are not properly trained for, which risks their

lives and the health of tenants. Unite never takes a backward step when it comes to ensuring the safety of its workers and our members at Magenta will receive the union's complete support."

Unite regional officer John Sheppard said: "Strike action will inevitably lead to severe delays and disruption to repairs and maintenance to tenants' homes.

Magenta Living has been given every opportunity to resolve this dispute through negotiations but it has refused to do so."

After the dispute began it was revealed that the workforce had been instructed not to tell tenants when they were removing asbestos from their homes. Workers were told to tell the tenants that they were removing "dust".



**Magenta Living workers take strike action over asbestos fears**

## Construction like holiday camp

The mega construction project at Hinkley Point has taken a novel approach to resolve the challenge of finding accommodation for its burgeoning workforce.

Due to the remote nature of the project, to build two new nuclear reactors, the majority of the workforce, are working away from home. This has increasingly

led to workers struggling to find suitable accommodation.

To partially resolve the problem, the client EDF has secured planning permission to transform the nearby Pontins holiday camp at Brean Sands, into worker accommodation.

EDF has invested in a multi-million

refurbishment of the holiday camp. The renovation work includes the modernisation of the chalets, improvements to the electrical supply, installation of Wi-Fi and upgrading of the infrastructure.

Construction workers began moving into the development in early 2023 and numbers will steadily increase throughout this year. The camp will eventually accommodate around 900 workers.

In a good example of healthy industrial relations, Unite has been fully consulted throughout the development.

Unite regional officer Heathcliffe Pettifor said: "Unite have been fully consulted and visited the site and made recommendations prior to the purchase. It's been welcomed by workers, they need more accommodation and it's a good deal."



**The Pontins holiday camp at Brean Sands has been refurbished to house Hinkley Point construction workers**

# An apprentices' place is in their union

Unite London and Eastern regional officer Declan Murphy has been ensuring that the message of why construction workers needs to be in a union, is understood by the youngest workers in the sector.

Earlier this year he visited the college of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and met with first year plumbing apprentices. The apprentices were surprised and pleased to learn that they have rights at work and if they became members of Unite, the union could help them with any employment issues.

The apprentices will also receive a free toolbox supplied by Unite.

Declan and the other construction officers in the region are determined to give similar talks at other construction colleges as they see the recruitment of apprentices as a core part of strengthening the union in the long-term.

Declan Murphy said: "The apprentices were delighted to hear they actually have rights and there is a union ready to defend them."

Declan Murphy with the apprentice members at Haringey college



## No hiding place for Murphy's after worker sacking

Members of Unite's London construction branch took part in a demonstration at Camden council's headquarters as part of the union's campaign for construction company Murphy to reinstate four workers who were unfairly sacked.

Last year Murphy International in the Republic of Ireland, sacked four workers, including a Unite shops steward, for holding an onsite meeting.

Unite believes the real reason why the workers were dismissed was in revenge for Unite having previously organised the mechanical workers at the company and then forced Murphy to pay the correct pay rates and pension contributions.

Camden council was targeted as the Labour run authority has a large number of contracts with Murphy.

The Camden protest was just one part of a strategic plan that Unite

has in place to put pressure on Murphy International to reverse its decisions and to reinstate the workers.

- As buildingWORKER went to press Unite held a protest at the Pipeline Industries Awards held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane in London. Murphy's were the key company behind the awards which were compered by comedian Sir Lenny Henry.



**Michael Conroy** of Unite's education team has been distributing *buildingWORKER* on construction sites in the Dundee area. Every issue of *buildingWORKER* is given out on building sites across the UK as a taster for construction workers about what Unite does and how it can assist and protect them. If you are interested in helping distribute copies of the magazine in your local area for a couple of mornings before work once or twice a quarter contact your local officer for further information.



Members of Unite London building workers branch protest outside Camden council in support of the Murphy 4

# Pay and Bargaining



Getty Images

**Local government craftworkers are in dispute over pay**

## Unite prepares for red book dispute

Unite has rejected the pay offer made for local government craftworkers covered by the Red Book.

The employers offered a flat rate increase of £1,925 and a 3.88 per cent increase in allowances for 2023/24.

The offer was far short of Unite's claim of a pay rise in line with the current retail price index (RPI) inflation rate which in February was 13.4 per cent plus an additional two per cent.

Local government craftworkers have suffered over a decade of pay freezes and below inflation pay rises which have seen their incomes diminish by 25 per cent in real terms.

Further details of the dispute will be covered in the next issue of *buildingWORKER*.

## NAECI pay claim submitted

Unite has submitted the pay claim for workers covered by the National Engineering Construction Agreement (NAECI). Unite is seeking a pay increase that is at least equal to the retail price index inflation rate as at October 2022. Such an increase would also apply to all allowances.

In addition the union is seeking:

- A re-opening of negotiations if inflation increases by over two percentage points

Talks are expected to get underway this spring.

## CIJC pay claim set for negotiation

Unite has submitted the pay claim for workers covered by the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) agreement which principally covers civil engineering workers.

Workers are seeking a pay increase in line with the retail price index as at the end of 2022 (14.2 per cent).

Unite is calling for all future pay agreements to be backdated to the anniversary date of the end of June, to ensure that workers aren't denied the full pay increase due to delays in the award being processed.

The union is seeking the abolition of the general operative rate as it is no longer relevant in a fully qualified industry.

Talks were set to begin in April.

## Refractory users get a pay boost

Workers covered by the Refractory Users Agreement have secured a nine per cent pay increase. The deal was negotiated by regional officer **John McIntryre**.

The agreement principally covers the workers responsible for maintaining the brickwork in blast furnaces in the steel industry. The increase will see the pay of senior trades increase to £14.83 an hour with grade one refractory installers receiving £12.63 an hour and grade two's getting £11.28.

The pay increase came into effect from January 2023.

## Marshalls workers secure eight per cent increase

Unite members at building products company Marshalls have secured a pay increase of eight per cent.

Having rejected an initial pay offer, workers were preparing to hold a full industrial action.

Fresh talks were held and an improved offer of a four per cent increase fully backdated to January 2023 and a further four per cent from 1 July 2023 was tabled which members accepted.

The pay campaign was highly beneficial for Unite, as the union recruited well in excess of 100 new members.

**Refractory workers at Port Talbot and across the UK have secured a pay increase**



Getty Images

# Migrant workers get support

Following the end of the World Cup in Qatar, the global confederation of construction unions, the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) together with two other unions has launched a phone based app to support migrant workers.

The app will support migrant workers who continue to work in Qatar as well as those employed building the infrastructure for future football competitions.

The app means that migrant workers will be able to swiftly access up-to-date

information on their rights, employment laws and obtain support when needed.

The information provided is available in multiple languages including English, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Filipino, Hindi and Nepali.

BWI general secretary **Ambet Yuson**, said: “Language barriers, lack of confidence, and fear make it even harder for migrant workers to know and claim their rights. By launching this new digital platform, we can help ensure migrant workers have the support they need.”



Gregory Hawken Kramer

**Unions are continuing to support migrant construction workers in Qatar**

## Pope backs unions

In an unusual foray into the world of work **Pope Francis** recently backed the need for strong independent unions.

Speaking to members of the Italian General Confederation of Labour said: “There is no union without workers, and there are no free workers without a union.”

During his speech the Pope highlighted “distortions” in the labour market including: gender discrimination, the precariousness of work for young people and the culture of redundancy.



Korea.net

He also expressed concern for worker safety saying: “There are still too many deaths, mutilations and injuries in the workplace.”

Helsinki10232



**Paris is taking action to prevent deaths building next year's Olympics**

## Paris aims for safe Olympics

The council in Paris has voted to create a social charter to make the French capital, which is hosting the 2024 Olympic Games, an example for excellent safety at work. The charter aims to achieve zero death at work.

It sets out measures which will bar companies from bidding for contracts if they have been convicted of failing to comply with labour laws in the last five years.

In addition contracts will be terminated if contractors breach health and safety laws, fail to pay wages/overtime rates or comply with rules on working hours.

The charter also limits the number of subcontractors that can be employed on the contract in order to avoid the dilution of responsibility in the event of an accident.

## Extreme heat causes kidney disease

A new study has revealed links between extreme heat and chronic kidney disease.

The study has examined many workers including in rice fields in Sri Lanka and steamy factories in Malaysia and found a distinct link between extreme heat and kidney disease. The discovery will

be highly disturbing for construction workers throughout the globe, who have no choice but to work outdoors.

Professor of Medicine **Richard Johnson** of Colorado University said: “As it gets hotter, we expect to see these diseases emerge elsewhere.”

# Everyone needs a healthier heart

Julie Ward, Senior Cardiac Nurse at the British Heart Foundation

## How you can make small changes to look out for your heart and reduce the risk of heart and circulatory diseases

Right now, in the UK, over half of us will get a heart or circulatory condition during our lifetime. Today, around 460 people will die from a heart or circulatory disease (that's one death every three minutes).

But, thanks to decades of amazing research, we know the best ways to lower your chances of getting these diseases. Below are the changes you can make to protect and improve your heart health. Firstly, if you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do. The chemicals in cigarettes damage your heart and blood vessels, hugely increasing your risk of developing heart and circulatory diseases. Even if you've smoked for years, quitting will still reduce the risks. After one year of not smoking, the risk of having a heart attack is half that of a smoker.

Another way to protect your heart is through diet. A Mediterranean-style diet has been shown to help keep your heart healthy. This includes plenty of fruit and vegetables, oily fish and beans, and less processed meat.

Staying active is also important. It can be difficult to find a long, uninterrupted period to do the recommended amount of exercise each day so consider splitting this into more achievable short breaks.

Walking briskly for 10 minutes, three or four times a day, could be easier to accomplish if long hours are limiting your free time. You may even be already getting your recommended activity if your work involves a lot of physical labour.

Whilst stress is not directly responsible for heart or circulatory conditions, reducing stress in your life will benefit you. This is because stress often leads to unhealthy habits, like smoking and drinking alcohol. To avoid or reduce stress you can try getting exercise to release endorphins, practicing mindfulness or meditation, or simply chatting to friends.

Key to your heart health is knowing your numbers when it comes to blood pressure and cholesterol. Around 50 per cent of heart attacks and strokes are associated with high blood pressure. But it can be controlled if it is detected, which will reduce that risk. Similarly, high cholesterol and diabetes are associated with a higher risk of heart disease, specifically coronary heart disease where the arteries in the heart get furred up with fatty deposits.

If you're over 40, you can get these checks done for free at most NHS pharmacies, including those away from where you live if you are working away from home. Those aged 40-74 are eligible for a free NHS health check at your GP in England, with similar checks available in the rest of the UK. Go to the NHS website to find out more.

These steps are all key to protecting your heart. But it is also important to know the signs of heart problems. The quicker you can identify a problem like a heart attack, the quicker you can be treated by medical professionals.

When having a heart attack, the main, and generally most obvious, sign is chest pain. It should never be ignored, especially if it comes on suddenly, makes you feel unwell (e.g. causing nausea, sweating, dizziness) and spreads to the arm, neck, jaw or back.

These could be symptoms of a heart attack and you must call 999 immediately.

In heart failure, the main sign is swelling. Swelling is very common and can be caused by a number of things. However, swelling in the ankles, coupled with shortness of breath and extreme tiredness, could be a sign of heart failure, so don't ignore it.





**Construction workers can take some simple steps to improve their heart health**

You should also be aware of any irregular heartbeats. Sometimes the occasional skipping or jumping of your heartbeat is nothing to be concerned about, but it is always best to get it checked out by your GP. You can take your own pulse manually to count the rate and check if the rhythm is regular.

Knowing the signs of a stroke is equally important. A stroke happens when the blood flow to the brain is interrupted, and brain cells can get damaged. It can affect your speech, as well as the way you think and move, depending on which part of the brain has had the blood supply cut off. You may experience facial weakness, arm and/or leg weakness and difficulty speaking. If you have any of these symptoms, you should call 999 immediately.

It is vital to know what to do if a problem, like a cardiac arrest, affects someone around you.

A recent YouGov survey shows that only half of people in the UK say they would be confident performing CPR if a loved one had a sudden cardiac arrest, despite around 80 per cent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happening in the home.

A cardiac arrest is different from a heart attack and so the warning signs are different. The person will be unconscious, unresponsive, and not

breathing or breathing abnormally. Early CPR and defibrillation can more than double the chances of surviving a cardiac arrest.

At the BHF, we want to encourage more people to learn CPR so they have the skills to save the life of a loved one, colleague or stranger. Through our digital CPR training tool, RevivR, it takes just 15 minutes to learn.

To learn more about RevivR, CPR, checking your own pulse, or anything else in this article, or to get involved in beating heart and circulatory diseases for good, visit the British Heart Foundation website <https://www.bhf.org.uk/>

- Heart and circulatory diseases cause around a quarter of all deaths in the UK
- Over half of us in the UK will get a heart or circulatory disease
- In the UK, at least 15,000 heart and circulatory disease deaths a year are attributed to smoking
- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly (or 75 minutes of intense activity)
- Around 15 million adults in the UK have high blood pressure. As many as one third may be undiagnosed
- There are more than 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the UK each year. Less than one in 10 people survive, often because those around them don't have the skills or confidence to perform CPR

**Quitting smoking is the best single way to improve your heart health**



**Find out more about the NHS over-40s health check:**  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/)  
**Watch a video on how to check your pulse:**  
[www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/checking-your-pulse](http://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/checking-your-pulse)

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# PROTECT YOUR HEART

- Stop smoking
- Improve your diet
- Be active
- Check your blood pressure and cholesterol



For more information go to  
[www.bhf.org.uk/](http://www.bhf.org.uk/)  
or call 0300 330 3311

**OUR**



# Construction in the time of a cost of living crisis

**Cranes aren't the only thing rising on construction sites - bills are going up**

There is no escaping the cost of living crisis. In the past 12 months the UK has seen inflation rates at levels not witnessed for over 40 years.

At the end of 2022 the retail price index (RPI), the real rate of inflation, stood at an eye watering 14.3 per cent, although it has fallen slightly since then inflation remains incredibly high.

In simple terms people are struggling to make ends meet. Many workers were only just keeping their heads above water before inflation went haywire and now they can't cope.

Construction workers are in the same boat, in fact due to the unpredictable nature of the industry, with variable earnings and gaps in employment between engagements, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of runaway inflation.

When you drill down into how much specific items have increased the figures are eye watering. Gas prices have increased by 141 per cent while, electricity has increased by 65 per cent. In the course of a year from January 2022 to January 2023, average energy bills have increased from £1,250 to £3,000 per household.

It is not just energy where costs have gone through the roof, food prices are also soaring. Grocery inflation was running at 16.7 per cent in January and while this figure may decrease as the year goes on, shopping bills are still expected to be £788 more per annum for the average family.

The other major factor in the cost of living crisis is the increase in interest rates which have shot up 10 times in the last year and now stand at four per cent. This increase means that for every £100,000 someone has borrowed through a mortgage, repayments will increase by £175 a month or £2,100 a year.

There will be no respite for those renting their homes with landlords also likely to be passing on increased costs to their tenants.

Ash a Logistics worker operating on a construction site in central London,

suffering from the cost of living crisis.

He explains that he and his partner who are both working full-time are struggling. With food prices rising they have swapped from shopping at Tesco's to using Lidl and Aldi instead and buy own brand labels to further save money. "We have gone from not worrying about prices to budgeting."

On top of this they are struggling with energy bills following the dramatic increase in costs, "it has completely blown the budget". Ash found himself unable to pay his energy bill and was forced to contact his provider in order to pay in instalments. He says the energy provider was understanding "but it is embarrassing when you are working full-time."

Other financial challenges that Ash is facing is that his home is also under threat with mortgages cost increasing, his landlord is considering increasing the rent or selling up.

He reports that he no longer goes out for meals, where previously he would go out a couple of times a month to Nando's or Pizza Express.

Ash's financial difficulties are exacerbated because he hasn't received a pay rise since

before Covid. "I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel" he says.

The issue of not receiving a pay rise, or a below inflation increase is a problem that other workers from across the industry have highlighted.

Gabriel, who is employed as a tunneller on the HS2 project, also hasn't had a recent pay increase.

He too is suffering due to the cost of living crisis. "The money is coming in but it is not staying in the account. Food, energy and fuel prices are going up, it is all coming out of our pocket."

While feeling the pinch Gabriel hasn't had to make cutbacks as yet. However to maintain his standard of living he is working nights "as we get a higher rate". He is also putting in 12 hour shifts and doing a 70 hour week. Despite this there is little or no money left at the end of the week. "I am working that hard I should be able to save."

Gabriel also knows that his present working regime is not sustainable. "You won't reach pension age with this kind of lifestyle."

Like many workers he is becoming increasingly angry with the lies coming



Mark Thomas

from the government. “The government says that inflation is rising because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine but that just isn’t true, they have failed to get inflation under control.”

While employers appear happy to continue to pay increased costs for materials they have been far less willing to increase workers’ wages in line with inflation. Last summer the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) the largest construction agreement, increased rates by five per cent, which was less than half the inflation rate. Even this figure was hard won, with the employers initially trying to impose an even lower increase, which Unite firmly rejected.

Several of the other major construction agreements are part way through multi-year deals, which have seen workers receive below inflation pay increases.

However, Unite members have not been passive. Workers employed under the NAEI agreement (covering engineering construction workers) have been taking strike action in order to secure an increase in bonus payments, to help offset the cost of living crisis.

After taking extensive strike action workers at the Valero refinery in Pembrokeshire West Wales, secured a 74 pence an hour increase in bonus payments. Similar disputes remain ongoing at other sites.

Meanwhile electricians employed by NG Bailey working at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, in Berkshire, have voted for strike action over the company’s failure to pay a cost of living bonus. As *buildingWORKER* went to press strike dates were yet to be set.

Although workers will be disappointed that construction agreements haven’t increased pay more quickly there remains many benefits to be being paid via a construction agreement and it is financially worthwhile to make sure that you are receiving all the benefits covered by an agreement, which can seriously boost pay.

For example if you are paid in line with an agreement, when you undertake



Mark Thomas

overtime (which most workers do) then you should be paid at an enhanced rate, which is likely to be time and half and could be even higher depending on the number of hours you do and when you are working. Equally the agreement will set out after how many hours you should work before overtime payments kick in.

In addition if you are working away from home, the construction agreement will set out how much you should receive for overnight lodge payments, often these payments are untaxed and seriously offset the cost of working away from home.

Depending on your working hours there will also be pay uplifts if you are undertaking shift work especially if you work at night.

Finally agreements will cover fare and travel payments if you live a reasonable distance away from the workplace. Again with fuel prices and travel costs rising these are well worth receiving.

If you think you should be receiving some or all of these payments then speak to your union rep or local officer for further advice. Remember that employers don’t become rich by accident and sadly many will avoid paying you what you are entitled, to further boost their own earnings.

Regardless of whether you are paid in line with a construction agreement or not there are other ways to enhance your income, for example if you are paying transport costs and attending a temporary workplace, you are entitled to claim money back via tax. You can do this yourself or alternatively Rift (see page 21) can act for you. If you are provided with a uniform for work then you can also claim for washing it yourself.

What is without doubt is that dramatic action is needed, construction workers need a pay rise to reverse the damage that rampant inflation has done to lifestyles. Provided workers are up for the battle Unite will be leading that fight.

### Maximise your income

- Make sure you are being paid the correct rate for your job
- If paid in line with a national agreement make sure you are getting the correct rate for overtime, shifts, lodging and fares
- See if you can make a tax claim for travel costs or washing uniforms
- If not already a member join Unite
- Get organised
- Grow your union.

# Had an accident? FREE specialist legal support is just a call away

If you have been involved in an accident at or away from work, our expert solicitors are here to help.

With Unite you can **BENEFIT** from:

- Recovering 100% of your personal injury compensation
- Union funded legal representation for personal injury and employment cases
- Personal Injury claims for you and your family



Call 0800 709 007

[www.uniteunion.org](http://www.uniteunion.org)

[www.unitelegalservices.org](http://www.unitelegalservices.org)

  
unite  
the UNION

# UNITE'S POLITICAL FUND BALLOT IS COMING. 1-22 MAY 2023

# VOTE YES FOR A WORKERS' VOICE!



## YOUR POLITICAL FUND MEANS WE CAN FIGHT TO:

- KEEP WORKERS SAFE
- OPPOSE ATTACKS ON YOUR RIGHT TO STRIKE
- END FIRE AND REHIRE
- PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK
- DEFEND THE NHS AND ALL PUBLIC SERVICES
- PROTECT JOBS, PAY AND CONDITIONS.

**DON'T MISS OUT ON THE BIG YES VOTE: UPDATE YOUR UNITE MEMBERSHIP DETAILS AT [MYUNITE.UNITETHEUNION.ORG](https://myunite.unitetheunion.org)**

**SCAN THE QR CODE OR GO TO [UNITETHEUNION.ORG/POLITICALFUND](https://unitetheunion.org/politicalfund) FOR MORE INFORMATION.**



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# Securing your CSCS card as Industry Accreditation ends



For many experienced workers within construction, the phrase Industry Accreditation (IA) may evoke a sense of worry or uncertainty at the prospect of having to gain qualifications to retain their CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card.

IA was a mechanism by which CSCS issued cards on the back of an employer's recommendation rather than the achievement of a qualification. CSCS stopped issuing new cards under IA in 2010, but until now, those with historical cards issued under IA could still renew their card every five years.

In line with the Construction Leadership Council, which requires industry card schemes to operate with nationally recognised qualifications in place for all occupations, CSCS announced in 2019 that from January 2020 all cards issued under IA will expire at the end of 2024 and cannot be renewed.

Over the last 10 years, standards have been improving in construction and the expectation is that workers must be able to prove they are competent. The need for a qualified workforce has become enshrined in the Building Safety Act, which came into force in 2022.

Many workers are still under the misapprehension that it will involve time-served workers being forced off site to return to college in order to complete a qualification.

The real picture is entirely different. For the approximately 60,000 workers affected, depending on the training provider and type of qualification, the necessary SVQ/NVQ can be achieved in the workplace or remotely, via professional discussions or on-site assessments, while increased CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) grants are available to employers to support the achievement of qualifications.

Confirming the support available, CSCS chief executive **Sean Kearns** said: "The removal of cards issued under IA represents another significant step in achieving the fully trained and qualified workforce construction desires," adding that "the new guidance and support will help cardholders to either retain their card via the S/NVQ or easily transition to another CSCS card".

Many of those affected will either already have the qualifications necessary to retain their card or be holders of degrees or professional memberships that grant them the ability to apply for an academically or professional qualified person card.

Workers who no longer attend construction sites as part of their job or are in non-construction related occupations don't require a card, so their card can expire.

Kearns summed up: "CSCS is committed to delivering a fully trained and qualified workforce. We urge employers, trade associations, awarding organisations and training providers to put plans in place to support workers ahead of the December 2024 withdrawal."

Those impacted by IA can get further information, guidance and support by visiting [CSCS.uk.com/IA](https://www.cscs.uk.com/IA).

- IA cardholders will not need to attend college
- Increased CITB grants are available for employers
- Qualifications can be gained via professional discussions or on-site assessments.

- IA cards issued from 1 Jan 2020 will expire on 31 Dec 2024 and cannot be renewed
- Academically or professionally qualified persons cards are an easy route off IA
- IA cardholders who now work in non-construction related occupations do not require a card.

- Find out more about the support and guidance available – [CSCS.uk.com/IA](https://www.cscs.uk.com/IA)

**Construction workers will receive assistance to ensure they have a recognised qualification**



# Don't let the government steal your vote

Did you know that this year to cast your vote in Great Britain you must now show an acceptable form of photographic ID? No ID, no vote.

If your council has elections on 4 May you'll be asked for voter ID. But not any ID – voters have to possess one of the acceptable forms of photographic ID specified by the government.

And they don't all make sense – while an older person's bus pass will be accepted at the polling station, a young person's railcard will not.

Ministers have been criticised for misleading claims that the new voter ID demand is just the same as showing ID when collecting a parcel from the Post Office, because it is not.

While the Post Office will accept a birth certificate, a debit card, a utility bill and even a trade union card, acceptable forms of voter ID are much more limited.

Only a driver's licence, passport and over 60s travel pass are among the forms of ID that will unlock access to your vote. But some two million people, according

to the government's own research, do not possess ID that has an acceptable and recognisable picture of them, as now demanded by law. This is particularly true among vulnerable, minority and poorer communities.

There are suspicions that the ID demand is simply voter suppression, hitting communities who are not inclined to vote Tory.

A Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) has been established to provide acceptable ID for those who don't possess any of the designated forms of photo ID.

The VAC is free but awareness of its existence is poor and uptake is low. By February, only 10,000 voters had applied for one. According to one national newspaper, at this rate it will take eight years to issue VACs to all those who may need them.

The government argues voter ID will address voter fraud but that doesn't stack up. The government itself admitted that in the last general election in 2019, when millions went to the polls, there were only six cases of voter fraud.

The body responsible for overseeing elections in the UK, the Electoral Commission, fears that the government's rushed-through changes mean that the May elections cannot be carried out in a "fully secure, accessible and workable" manner.

Unite's advice to members is to make sure that your photo ID is acceptable. Even if your passport is out of date, as long as the picture looks like you, you can use it. And if not, apply for a VAC today.

Do not let the government lock you out of your vote.

- **Make sure you get your vote.**
- **To find out what's accepted as voter ID visit [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id)**
- **To apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate, visit your local council**



**Voters need to beware of being locked out of polling stations in May**

Getty Images



Mark Thomas

# Ringling in the new tax year

Allow us to be the first to wish you a very merry new tax year. Once the taxman's calendar rolls over on 6 April, it's time to make sure your next tax refund goes straight to the top of your to do list.

Remember every year, HMRC ends up clinging onto around £300 million in unpaid tax refunds. That means two out of every three UK workers are missing out on the tax relief they're entitled to. Here's how to make sure you get back what's yours.

## Don't leave it too late

The clock at HMRC is always ticking – and a lot of people are missing out because they simply don't have the time to spend on sorting out their refunds. We're talking serious money here, too.

You can claim back overpaid tax for up to four years. After that, though, your refund vanishes forever into the taxman's pockets. Even a short delay could cost you hundreds of pounds.

## Set your records straight

You've got to be able to prove what you're owed. In the building game, the biggest part of that is usually tracking your work mileage.

You'll need a list of the sites you've worked at and a record of when you were there. RIFT can hunt down a lot of the fiddly details for you, and you can keep track of everything in your RIFT app.

Other helpful documents include:

- Wage slips, P45s and P60s
- MOT certificates
- A photo ID and proof of address
- Receipts for food/accommodation expenses
- Receipts for repair/replacement of tools and protective gear.

## I'm self-employed through the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS). How does the new tax year affect me?

The new tax year's the perfect time to sort out your CIS tax refund. You'll need a list of where you've worked over the last four years, plus the usual supporting

**In the new tax year construction workers need to press go on claiming their tax claim via RIFT**

documents. You'll also want to grab your monthly CIS statements, since they show the tax deducted from your pay under the scheme. They're the key to making a successful refund claim, so treat them like money.

## Think twice before going down the DIY route

Sorting out a tax refund takes time and expertise. RIFT are the best in the tax business, and we're always ready to help.

Here's why you're always better off with us:

- 89 per cent of people say they get bigger refunds with RIFT
- 95 per cent say using RIFT gives them peace of mind
- 97 per cent say RIFT makes claiming easy
- 94 per cent of RIFT customers are claiming again with us this year.

The sooner you get in touch, the sooner you'll get your money. Call 01233 628648 to get your claim rolling with the UK's top tax experts.

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

## TV/Film

### Pinocchio by Guillermo del Toro

The story of the wooden boy whose nose grows when he lies, has been frequently reimagined. This latest version should come with a word of warning it is not for young children and is a world away from the Disney film,

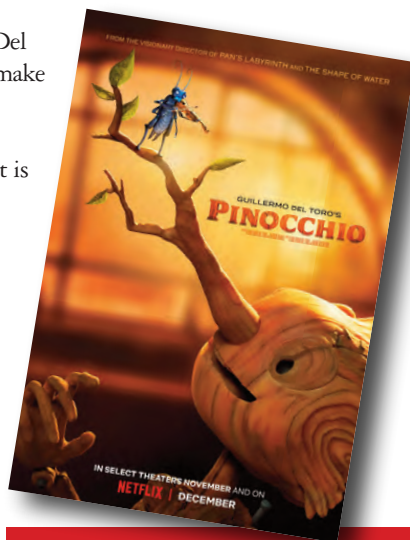
This version is by Oscar winning director **Guillermo del Toro** and is on Netflix.

It uses stop motion animation techniques and it is very dark, with the story set in Italy stalked with death and despair. **Geppetto** a wood carver, witnesses his son **Carlo** killed by a bomb during World War I and mourns his loss for 20 years. In a drunken rage he builds **Pinocchio** and the boy is given life by a wood sprite. **Sebastian J Cricket** (voiced by **Ewan McGregor** who narrates the film) is tasked with guiding him. Pinocchio comes into the world with the fascists controlling Italy. He experiences several 'adventures', including running away to join the circus, performing for **Mussolini**, forcibly conscripted into the Italian army, being burned at the stake and swallowed by a sea monster.

During these adventures he discovers that he is immortal and can't die. However at the climax of the film, in the spirit of sacrifice he forgoes his immortality in order to return more quickly to his body to save Geppetto from drowning.

The film which took Del Toro over 15 years to make is about love and disobedience, While beautifully produced it is very unsettling.

Stephen James



## Books

### Charged (How the Police try to suppress protest)

By Matt Foot and Morag Livingstone

This is a really important book, especially for anyone who has ever been on a political demonstration or involved in industrial action. It reveals how in the early 1980s the Association of Chief Police Officers, (ACPO) with the full support of the Conservative government, secretly redrew the rules on the policing of demonstrations.

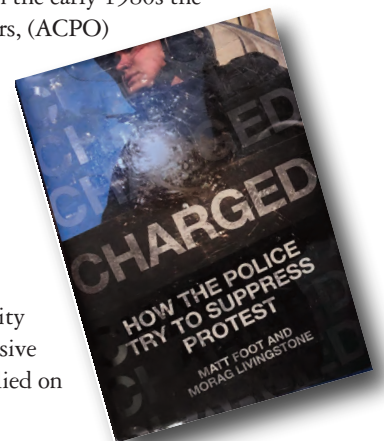
While publicly committing to reduce tensions in society and develop a more softly, softly community style policing, in reality they introduced a far more aggressive form of protest policing which relied on riot police, dogs and horses.

The book describes how this ultra-aggressive policing style was trialled during the **Eddie Shah Stockton Messenger** dispute, refined during the miners' strike and further developed during Wapping.

While the original target were trade unionists who were fighting for their jobs, the use of the secret policing manual was not solely reserved for them. As the new age travellers at the Battle of the Beanfield and a whole range of diverse groups at the 1990 Poll Tax riot discovered.

The hyper-aggressive policing didn't conclude with the election of **Tony Blair** in 1997, but was further adapted to include such tactics as kettling protesters. This is a critically important piece of investigative journalism which shows how the dark arts, employed by the state, have for decades been routinely utilised to suppress those fighting for the jobs or demanding social justice.

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](mailto:barckley.sumner@unitetheunion.org)

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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