**REGIONAL SECRETARIES MEETING ON ZOOM**

**Notes of meeting held on 8 October 2020**

**In attendance:** Ron Douglas (Chair), Chris Brooks (Anglia), Tony Garner (Eastern), Keith Evans (GAS), Barry Todman (London), Martin Dent (Northern), Ralph Moses (North West), John Martin (Northern Ireland), John Lean (South East), John Paine (Thames Valley), Sandra Durkin (West Midlands), Paul Russell (Yorkshire & Humberside), Dereck Roberts (NPC Wales), Fran Griffiths (NPC Wales), Jan Shortt, Bev Morrison, Jonathan Saffir.

**Apologies:** Mick Newton (East Midlands), Pat Turner (Wessex), Peter Rayner, Ellen Lebethe, Dot Gibson.

The Chair asked for a minute’s silence for those members who we know have passed on this year:

Ralph Baxter, Phyllis Preece, Charlie Wheatley, Derry Thorpe. Barry also told us of the passing of Ted Knight, stalwart of London Region.

Ron spoke of the tragedy of COVID in care homes; the pandemic continuing across the country and the world. He gave an update on his own personal position and treatment.

1. **Minutes of meeting 13 February 2020:**

Agreed.

1. **Matters arising:**

* TV licence issue: Jan reported that residents in a care home had received letters from the BBC addressed to ‘The Resident’ Room – whatever number they occupied. The care home itself also received a letter. They have an exempted licence already.
* John Paine spoke about residential flats. Where there is a manager, they should apply for an exemption for residents.
* Regulations are different, so best checked out locally.
* A meeting is arranged with Tim Davie, Director General of the BBC and their Policy Officer for 21 October.
* Target 11 November (Armistice Day)/13 November (kindness day). Demand change – disrespect towards older people.
* Has every MP received a copy of ‘Goodbye Cinderella’ booklet?

1. **Update from General Secretary:**

Jan confirmed that every MP had received a copy of the National Care Service booklet.

A briefing will be sent out on the outcome of the meeting with the BBC. We will then all need to consider the next steps in our campaign. It is necessary to continue with the campaign given that the government have attacked one of the universal entitlements that supplements an inadequate state pension. The rest will be at risk further down the line, including the triple lock.

The TUC’s production of their report on care includes a lot of the areas covered by the NPC ‘Cinderella’ booklet, but stops short of saying how it should be funded.

Jan reported that the TUC, through Jack Jones (Pensions Officer) and Mary Robertson (Senior Policy Officer) were working with the NPC. In the TUC report ‘A Better Way Forward’ all the information on state pensions came through discussion between Jan and Jack Jones. Mary will continue to work with us on care and some other issues.

Jan was exploring if there was a possibility of an opportunity to speak to the TUC General Council when it meets. The difficulty is that the Trade Unions affiliated to the TUC would have to agree. We will keep trying.

Jack Dromey’s office has been really helpful in us looking at a Lobby of Parliament via zoom. However, as there is hardly anyone in parliament, it might be better to set up another webinar on human rights of older people.

Dereck raised the issue of the Resolution Foundation being on BBC4 Radio with the usual subject of older people, pensions etc. The NPC should be there.

Jan reported that she had been on every BBC local radio station, BBC5 live, Channel 4 radio, BBC Breakfast time, quoted in lots of newspapers. We do raise our frustration that the ‘think tanks’ like the Resolution Foundation get air time and sometimes the only person asked to respond on behalf of older people is Roz Altmann.

We keep plugging away.

1. **Recruitment & Retention:**

It was the intention to consult on a strategy for a long campaign on recruitment and retention, but unfortunately it was overtaken with the pandemic. Clearly, most of us are unable to take the traditional route to recruitment at the moment, so we need alternative ways of reaching people.

We have had some new members through the website and I had requests for joining forms from Enfield Over 50’s forum after their webinar at the beginning of the week.

Unite the Union have published and circulated a really good leaflet which goes out to all their members and have also asked very branch to affiliate to the NPC. It is a good model for other Trade Unions to follow.

We have a lot of support from our Trade Union affiliates, but in some areas affiliation to local branches of NPC seem a struggle. A lot depends on the person dealing with retired members, so perhaps rather than contact national officers, it might be better to make personal contact with regional officers.

Sandra suggested that the Veterans Association who have branches in local areas could be asked to affiliate.

Marion raised the issue of gender balance and that there are a lot of extremely competent women out there. Gender balance is an issue for NPC Executive Committee and National Council as well as some working parties.

1. **Update on Campaigns:**

Bev, our Campaigns Officer had produced a report which included future work. Ron thanked Bev for all her hard work since joining NPC and her addition to the team had clearly benefited us.

1. **Regional Reports:**

Ron asked for any additional points to regional reports already submitted.

* **West Midlands:**  Using zoom for Regional Committee meetings; telephone and email to those on zoom. Still producing the Midland Pensioners newsletter. Slightly down on affiliations as groups are not meeting. Good support from Trade Unions – staying positive.
* **Northern Ireland:**  Arranging a session with Jonathan on zoom. Age Sector Platform has gone. Need to lobby for older people in Northern Ireland. NPC group is planning to take on some of the work.
* **Anglia:** Communicate through website. East Anglia Daily Times gets regular letters. Raised the matter of speeches by Prime Minister and Rishi Sunak about the ‘sacred duty to balance the books.’
* **Eastern:** Looking into zoom meetings. Supported by Trade Unions in the region.
* **Yorkshire & Humberside:** No regional meetings held. Transport Group has held zoom meetings with people around the country and also with the regional TUC. Encouraging members to put pressure on local councils on franchising (those with Metro Mayors). Meeting of five officers to talk through how to campaign and communicate within the region.Currently restrictions in place which could change. Grateful for the Campaign News.
* **South East:** All information goes out to affiliates. Zoom meetings with officers progressing what can be done about an AGM and election of officers. Thanks to Unite who pay for zoom meetings. The groups are not particularly active. Issue of local hospital changes and the moving of specific units. Traffic problems on the M20 would potentially impact on those needing emergency treatment. Helping with the campaign. The annual joint venture with France has not been able to take place. On gender balance, it is difficult to get women involved, particularly now that childcare and caring for others is so prevalent.
* **Northern:** Martin introduced himself as the new Regional Secretary. Email is working well, zoom is not. The region is looking at standardisation on public transport in the region and a new initiative around saving the pound coin.
* **Wales:** Fran introduced herself as the new Regional Secretary for Wales. They are looking at a Transport survey and also digital inclusion/exclusion. Dereck spoke about the issues of care homes – human rights and end of life care – can’t see their families before dying. The Commissioner for Older People for Wales is taking these issues up. Zoom meetings in place, healthy finances, some members not online. Being equal, top-down decisions.
* **North West:** Nothing to add except Trade Unions in the region are very helpful.
* **Thames Valley:** Thanks to everyone in NPC. The pandemic has blocked development in Thames Valley. Trying a zoom meeting for AGMs in Thames Valley and Oxford. Campaigning has stopped due to restrictions and the general public not wanting to stop to talk to people.
* **London:** Amnesty International report showing disregard for the human rights of older people. Not a lot going on in the first 2/3 months, no able to do almost all we did before except face to face meetings. Weekly bulletins go out – mailouts ongoing. Some affiliations outstanding but otherwise good with some new members. Large Executive with about 50% on zoom. Encourage members to write to MPs asking for comments on ‘Cinderella.**’** Supported demo on TV licence. Winter deaths this year – big expose on the day.
* **Scotland:** Get all the information everyone else gets. No face to face meetings, but will contact and ask if they are willing/able to meet on zoom. See what happens.

1. **Information Officer:** Winter deaths figures are usually out third week in November – last year was 27 November. Jonathan reported that:

* Visits to the website – a 35% increase in 6 weeks.
* Worked and enabled the Older People’s Day webinar
* Social media
* Day to day work on affiliations, consultations, social media, keeping the office ticking over.

1. **A.O.B:**

Marion asked why we couldn’t start meetings at a different time since people did not have to travel at the moment.

1. **Next meeting:** 10 December (time to be consulted on).