**NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION**

**Notes of NPC National Council Meeting**

**Held in the Diskus Room, Unite the Union,**

**128 Theobalds Rd, Holborn, London WC1X 8TN**

**12.30pm, Monday 20 January 2020**

**Marion Wilson in the chair:**

Marion welcomed everyone to the meeting and clarified that this was the National Council meeting not the Executive Committee meeting as some had thought. It was agreed that those EC members present could participate in debate, but could not vote.

Marion updated the meeting on the position with Ron (President) who is still unwell and Peter (Vice President) who is improving at home.

The presentation to Neil Duncan Jordan was deferred until further down the agenda.

1. **Minutes of National Council held on 11 April 2019: Agreed with addition of Jenny Sims attendance.**
2. **Matters arising:**

* National Officers report – June - Smart Ticketing - trying for a long time to get this discussed. Very little detail about how the service be delivered and by whom.
* National Care Service - two things EC asked us to do was to have a broader idea on funding. and to look at structure. Structuring a government service is not for the NPC, there are highly paid Civil Servants to carry out that role. Jonathan sending out a final draft document on this shortly.

**Update and discussion on campaign for free TV licences for over 75s.**

* TV licence – how many signatures have we received? A 634,000 AGE UK signature petition was delivered alongside our own and other organisations paper signed petitions to Downing Street. Age UK have had no response yet – we will let you know when we do.
* Keen to see more awareness of the TV licence issue - early day motion launched in February last year. Worth to check if this motion is still live and if not, can we get a new one? Need a new early day motion. *EDM is still live, but events have overtaken it with MPs and parliament.*
* Parallel campaign on people not getting pension credit? Jan said the amount of cost to the government on pension credit is currently £1.6bn. We must understand that this age group is a proud generation of people (pensioners) who don’t want to admit they are in difficulty and don’t ask for help with the application form. Currently local councils are working with older people to find it they are eligible and helping them make application. Likewise, members can ask their trade unions to do the same.
* TV licence also pays for radio, so we need to bear that in mind.
* Data Protection: It is the job of TVLA and DWP to monitor who pays. We wrote to both asking them to confirm they would not share data. So far not received an answer. The onus is on the person receiving pension credit to supply a copy of the letter to TVLA.
* Thames Valley and Oxford NPC – worth noting some GP’s have advice sessions on pension credit – also check Citizens Advice.
* Jan spoke about the scams around non-payment of TV licence fee already happening. These are nothing to do with TVLA.
* We are clearly targeting the government who abdicated their responsibilities to older people and moved part of a wider package of universal entitlements to an unelected broadcasting company.
* The BBC is currently under threat. NUJ and BECTU are working closely with the BBC in an effort to preserve jobs and broadcasts.
* A press release calling on the Prime Minister to keep his promise raised media interest with a ‘comment’ piece in the Daily Express.
* Every MP has been written to with an explanation of what a free TV licence means to those over 75, and asking them to support us in getting the government to take back responsibility.
* Prospect: Encouraged all members to write to their own MP on the matter.
* Wales: Has the full support of the Welsh Assembly and the First Minister for the campaign.
* Jan will circulate a template letter for use with MPs and local media.
* How many are affected – 3.7 million who are not on pension credit currently. That figure may change as older people decide to apply for pension credit. MPs will have figures for each of their constituencies.
* Very important that we defend the BBC as well as pressing the Government to keep the concession.
* Decriminalisation – Prime Minister said he would consider decriminalisation, but it would then be left to the BBC to take individual civil court action against non-payers.
* NUJ: Endorse what BECTU is saying about the BBC and add that NUJ also concerned about loss of broadcasting standards in the event of the BBC losing the licence fee.
* RMT: disappointed the motion wasn’t brought forward today. Don’t think it has been overtaken. Some people say they can’t pay or won’t pay if the benefit is scrapped. It is fine to send letters to Tory MP’s and appealing to newspapers, but we need to take more direct action. In Liverpool we marched through city twice and protested outside BBC and got a lot of public support. Seeking support of NPC to organise protests outside BBC local radio and TV stations. The NPC need to consider firing a few more bullets. What about a national day of action?
* NW Region Pensioners Association: what is worrying is that pensioners are being used as a political pawn over the licence fee. We inadvertently helped to push the retirement age up. Government have a cunning plan to use us, so the BBC is eliminated. Important that what we put out is not aimed at the BBC - take the point that Janet, Jenny and Andy Bye have made, and that the Government are the ones who ought to be responsible for the benefit.
* Civil Service Pensions Alliance: it’s important that we have a broad campaign and work with Age UK to deliver this campaign.

1. **General Secretary’s Report**

* Scams. We are aware of lots of scams, many in relation to the TV licence. Scamming letters normally have inconsistencies; i.e. postcodes, date of renewal is often wrong. Heading looks genuine but don’t rush to take it to post office of pay. If unsure ring Action Fraud – ring TV licence people.
* Latest scam is an email saying something is wrong with your direct debit – asked to click on link. A TVLA email will always have your licence reference number and the last part of your post code in the subject heading.

We worry for the elderly, frail and vulnerable feeling they haven’t paid. This is an honourable generation. Trading standards only contactable locally. TVLA site are dealing with a huge number of scams. If you know anyone vulnerable – help them to check letters like this to avoid scams.

* UCU – really concerned about this - it’s the Government’s role to protect people. I have received these. Government need to set up a lot more agencies and be helping to prevent them. We should campaign and press the Government and the police to do more about this – it’s a very serious matter.
* RMT: TV Licence scamming – good to get a leaflet out – vulnerable people don’t know what to do. The worst thing you can do is scam senior citizens. There is a lot of support for these issues among members.
* Can we campaign on this re: having to go online to pay?
* Thames Valley: The people sitting in this room are our pamphlets – let’s use the resource in this room rather than spend money we don’t have.
* One of the problems we’ve got is the Government isn’t listening – they don’t want us to contact MPs or the press.
* We can put on the website and circulate to affiliates and regions to take up locally. There are different versions of scams across the country.
* ASLEF – latest fraud is around your bank account – you get a letter saying they have paid a substantial amount into your account. Don’t follow up or any letter asking you to pay back.
* **Accommodation in Southport**?
* Book early otherwise might not be able to get anything.
* Prospect: need to get online to book now. We tried to book directly with the hotel. Might be worth looking at hotels.com as they have an allocation.
* Unison: Unison retired members held conference in Southport. Felt it was a great place to have a conference. But Britannia Hotel Prince of Wales – there were numerous complaints about this. People did tell me that taxis were cheaper – huge range of different restaurants.

**Report agreed.**

1. **Financial Report**

First opportunity to present the report – grateful to Mohammed for producing the figures – still draft, and to be finalised. Financial benefits are a one off. Have another projected deficit for 2020. Finance Working Party looking at how we can reverse this. Not Shown the initial budget, and draft projections for 2020. Have explanatory comments in the margins. Our estimates are conservative and we hope that our projections are worst case scenario. Thank you to all affiliates for their support with meeting rooms etc.

Thanks to Unite for their recent initiative asking all branches to affiliate to NPC at national level. Unite have 3,500 branches. Sets a standard for others to follow.

Thanks to Finance Working Party for their support over the year. Thank you to Prospect for their additional donation.

**Questions:**

* Martino: Will fees stay the same this year & when are the forms going out?

Barrie - Fees staying the same – forms going out in Jan

* Joe: Question about conferences – Women’s & Transport WP’s – charges for the conference. Concerned we are charging too little? Can we ensure that our charges reflect costs?

Barrie: Will take on board.

**Report agreed:**

1. **Motions:**
2. **North West Region motion on Climate Change**

Proposed: Ralph Moses, North West Region

Seconded by: Various delegates

*(for future reference, motions should begin with ‘This National Council……’)*

Ralph spoke to the written motion which had come from Merseyside Pensioners Association. It was initiated by younger members in the area who NPC regionally has supported in their Strikes for Climate Change and other activities. We believe the NPC should support the motion.

The Chair opened the motion for discussion from delegates.

* John Hibble RCN – I live in a part of the country where young people have been demonstrating. North Lincolnshire is getting floods and tidal surges that are flooding villages. It is not something to be ignored. Local councils are building barriers but more needs to be done. We’ve lost houses to cliff erosion – necessary we do the best we can on climate change.’
* Bill McDowell – opposing the wording in the last sentence. ‘The knowledge of the young put us to shame’ – I think this is a bit divisive – support it without the wording – I feel that’s an attack between the old and the young.
* The point is well made, and I think these things happened on our watch. I think their taking up the action is commendable.
* Rosie – think it is very important that we work closely with young people in our campaigns. It is important that we make it clear to young people they have our support.
* How dare they label these young activists for climate campaign as disruptive – we are all activists here and need to support them.

Right of reply: Ralph will accept the Council’s decision on the relevant sentence.

The Chair asked for delegates to vote on the proposal to delete the last sentence in paragraph 3 of the motion.

38 in favour of deletion of final sentence.

17 against deletion.

**Carried: sentence will be deleted**

The Chair then asked delegates to vote for the motion as amended. The motion was carried with two abstentions.

*NB: Slight adjustment required to last sentence in last paragraph. The Pensioners’ Parliament is now the Annual Convention.*

There was a suggestion that we contact the National Environmental Research Council and ask if they can get an expert to speak at one of the sessions at the Convention. Jan asked for assistance in identifying young people who would be able to attend a session at Southport.

1. **NUJ Recruitment & Retention**

Proposed by NUJ

Seconded by Tony O’Brien

Jenny Sims spoke to the written motion highlighting the need to raise our profile, recruit new members, be more proactive.

The Chair then opened up the motion for discussion.

* Barrie, Thames Valley: I’m unhappy about the whole tone of paragraph three. I’m sure what is meant is sensible – but worried about the tone – are you suggesting the officers to be more effective. I don’t like the wording – hope someone suggests its deleted.
* Dot – I’m going to vote against this motion – the NUJ is talking as if they are on the outside of the organisation. When it comes to this meeting – it is a motion of the National Council – it should be a motion. The website is being looked at. The Annual Convention Planning Group has taken on board the idea of a session on digital inclusion.
* Rosie, Chair of Women’s Working Party and former NUJ member. This motion made me very angry when I read this – I just felt this was preaching to us. Some working parties are very new – takes time. I circulate my newsletter, which is very well received. I propose this motion be withdrawn.

The Chair asked delegates to vote on the proposal to withdraw the motion. With two abstentions the **motion was withdrawn**

1. **Annual Convention Southport**

Jan reported plans were continuing and Bev will visit venues. Entertainment already booked.

1. **Any Other Business:**

Yorkshire & Humberside have a Transport Group and have produced a Manifesto ‘Better Buses’. One conference already held, others in the pipeline. Would be grateful to any region who wishes to support their manifesto – can provide speakers if asked.

**Presentation to Neil Duncan Jordan:**

Neil left the NPC at the end of July last year.

Marion: Neil was a tower of strength, always kept aware of what was happening, producing amongst other things the Campaign News and the Message. He is going to be sadly missed. Thank you to Jonathan for keeping things ticking over while we are in the recruitment process.

Jan: Neil was with the NPC for nearly 20 years doing everything that needed to be done. When I became General Secretary Neil helped me with the many areas of work I needed to know and do. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for supporting me in what is a very unique organisation.

Dot: 17-year friendship, work comrade and friend. I think Unison have got a good bargain in you. Without Neil it would have been very difficult to do our jobs as officers. We work as a team to make sure the NPC kept its head above water. I missed Jack Jones - we work together with Joe Harris – that team showed how it was possible to work together well. Ageing process – Neil gave us the possibility of the younger generation’s understanding the issues of older people. Thanks, Neil, for all you have done for us.

Neil: I’ve gone from a big fish in a small pool to being a small fish in a big sea. Great to see how healthy the NPC is looking – I see much more support.

I’d like to mention the people I’ve met, including Jack Jones – I remember going to is flat to negotiate a new contract.

Rodney Bickerstaffe was always supportive of any campaigns.

Frank Cooper – we had our disagreements, but always got the work done.

Ron – very sad to hear he’s not so well. The amount of effort he puts into the job of President is amazing.

Joe Harris, General Sec. – a person in their 30s can be at one with someone in their 80s – age gap irrelevant because we both stood for the same thing.

Met every single Pensions Minister for the last 19 years. NPC is a small organisation that punches well above our weight. Meeting union leaders was always interesting.

Increasingly we have got to be seen as equals in the debates around older people – our views are just as relevant. Our views and policies weren’t always endorsed by other organisations, but as time goes on we find we have been right all along.

The fact we are resolute about social care being free at the point of delivery forces the other groups to take a view on it. Pensioners issues don’t figure - pensioners are seen as a drain on resource and unnecessary – we have got to turn that around.

I’m grateful for the 19 years – but wanted another challenge and what a challenge. Lots to be done for working people and lots to be done for retired people. Should be proud of what NPC has done.

Neil was presented with a cheque from all NPC affiliates.

Marion: We should be proud because given the size we are; we achieve a great deal.