

# NEWSLETTER

## Unison North West Region Retired Members Committee

### RETIRED MEMBERS' SECTIONS

Your Regional Retired Members' Committee are concerned that we do not see colleagues from a number of retired members' branches in our region. We are the largest region of our union having 23,206 retired members.

There are 101 Branches of UNISON in the North West and out of these 30 branches were represented at our conference last year in Bournemouth and 22 were represented at our AGM in January this year. FOUR of the SIX largest retired members' sections did not attend either of these.

Your committee members are willing to assist Branches to activate the retired members sections and would ask someone to get in touch with us. We would be very pleased if some of your retired members come to the Open Meeting at Arena Point which is advertised below. Lunch will be provided. Please inform Val Rothwell (at regional office) by September 3rd if attending.

### OPEN MEETING

20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019

REGIONAL CENTRE  
ARENA POINT  
MANCHESTER  
11 am to 3pm

Speakers:

**Kevin Lucas**

Regional Office

**Janet Finney**

Thompsons Solicitors  
(Power of Attorney)

**Michael Forster**

President  
Health Campaigns Together



## Government's Attack on Education Workers' Pensions is a Threat to all LGPS Members!

The Government has issued a Consultation Document on proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), most of which are of little impact on workers, but one proposal is to remove the current legal obligation for "post 1992 universities", (formerly polytechnics), sixth form colleges and Further Education Colleges to offer new non-teaching staff access to the LGPS. This move would introduce a two-tier workforce on this important condition of service, and presuming that a cheaper, (for the employers), pension would be offered, would add to the growing problem of pensioner poverty.

Nobody should think that this would only affect future Education workers, the LGPS requires a constant flow of income from working members and employers in order to pay existing pensioners, and to gain additional income from investing the Fund. This move would reduce income into the Fund, eroding its long-term viability. **Moreover, if the Government get away with this measure, they will be tempted to look for other groups to remove from the Scheme, reducing membership when it needs to be maintained if not increased.**

The proposals only apply to institutions in England, thereby creating anomalies between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. UNISON opposes these measures, and has urged branches to lobby employers to reject the proposed changes. The consultation ended on 31 July.

The issue was debated at UNISON's Annual Conference in June, and Conference called upon the National Executive Council to campaign against the proposal by seeking support from employers, working with the TUC and other affected trade unions, lobbying MPs and members of the House of Lords, legal action where appropriate and the possibility of Industrial Action initiated by Service Groups.

Keep in contact with your Branch Retired Members Group for further information on this issue.

## A Chance for Better Buses in Greater Manchester!

Andy Burnham's recent announcement recommending that Greater Manchester buses are brought back into public control is a great step forward on bus reform. There is now a real opportunity for Greater Manchester to deliver an integrated bus service that actually works for us and starts to reverse the decline in bus use. It's called 're-regulation' or 're-franchising' and this can really support our communities by introducing affordable fares and a simple smart card with a cap on daily spend that works on all buses across the region.

Our Regional Retired Members' Committee welcomed this news, noting that the 'Better Buses for Greater Manchester Campaign' with the support of NW Regional UNISON and many UNISON branches, has been actively campaigning over the last year to urge Andy to re-regulate buses.

Wigan Metro UNISON retired members' section were recently surveyed on this issue and overwhelmingly reported just how important a decent reliable bus service is. 18% rely entirely on buses to access their community and of a further 71% that do have access to a vehicle, 87% also use buses on a weekly basis.

Members also described significant difficulties in the current services including inadequate or non-existing services to more remote areas of the borough and previous helpful services being cut. So re-regulation is definitely the way forward. This would give our combined authorities control over fares, routes and timetables and the ability to use profits from busy routes to pay for more socially necessary routes which have previously been cut and also to expand the bus network.

Since Thatcher deregulated bus services outside London in the 1980's numbers of travelling passengers in Greater Manchester has declined by 40%. The direct opposite of what's happened in London where bus use has doubled! So all efforts to increase the numbers using our buses is really welcome. The introduction of the 2 year pilot project of 'Our Pass', giving free bus travel to young people aged 16 to 18 is a fantastic initiative but can only really work if all young people have access to truly integrated bus routes operating decent frequent services.

And although at the moment under the Bus Services Act 2017, only Mayoral Combined Authorities have franchising powers, there is scope for other types of authorities to request these powers which would involve further secondary legislation. However a success in Greater Manchester would be a real boost to encourage other local authorities to take this step.

Pascale Robinson, Organiser of the BBfGM has identified that £18.4 million has been paid to shareholders of the bus companies every year for the last ten years on average whilst 8 million miles of routes have been cut from Greater Manchester's network since 2010 alone.

Pascale commented:

'We're really happy that the official assessment recommends moving ahead with bringing our buses under public control. But unfortunately since Andy's recommendations, private bus companies have been showing their true colours – from threatening legal action to spinning misinformation about higher costs for taxpayers. All this shows that they care more about their shareholder profits than they do about passengers and that's exactly why they need regulating. And why the BBfGM will continue campaigning to make sure our Greater Manchester Mayor sticks with passengers and staff and keeps on going with this pledge to give us better, regulated buses in Greater Manchester.'

A public consultation is likely to start in October and could run for 8 to 12 weeks. So the Regional Retired Members' Committee is encouraging every retired member in Greater Manchester to take part in this and to look out for campaigning events across the region in the coming weeks.

You can find out more about BBfGM at [betterbusesgm.org.uk](http://betterbusesgm.org.uk)

### Broken promises already.

You will all know about the hardships suffered by women because of last minute changes to eligibility for women to the state government pension scheme. This means that women born in the 1950s could not claim their state pension until they had reached the age of 66. This left very little time for this group of women to save so they could support themselves. The government's decision is under judicial review.

During the Tory Party election campaign, Boris Johnson pledged that he would look at the original government decision. But apparently he is already back peddling on this decision.

Please join the WASPI campaign to support this group of women getting justice. You can find information on [www.waspi.co.uk](http://www.waspi.co.uk)

*Mary Whitby (member of the North West Regional Retired Members Committee and co-opted on the NWR Women's Committee).*

### Contact Information

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### Acknowledgements

Conference photo sourced from related article on Unison's website.