

# THE MIDLAND PENSIONER



**March 2018**



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THIS IS THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



## ABOUT US

The West Midlands Pensioners Convention is the Regional Organisation of the National Pensioners Convention.

Our main objective is to promote the welfare and interests of pensioners, both now and in the future; securing dignity, respect and financial security for all in retirement.

We have a number of very active committees, including a Transport Group which holds regular quarterly meetings with Transport for the Midlands (formerly CENTRO).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

About our local branches, Trade Union Retired members sections and affiliated organisations CONTACT: Membership Secretary, Trevor Eames on 0121 733 8081 or : email [solihullratepayers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:solihullratepayers@hotmail.co.uk)

For General enquiries about the

West Midlands Pensioners Convention:  
Call 07342264482  
email : [wmpconvention@gmx.com](mailto:wmpconvention@gmx.com)

Please visit our website : [wmpconvention.weebly.com](http://wmpconvention.weebly.com)

## OUR ORGANISATION

We have local and Trade Union Branches across our Region. Each Branch is entitled to send delegates to the Regional Council which meets on the second Thursday of each month, at the offices of Birmingham UNISON, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor, Maclaren Building from 11a.m.

We also welcome applications for membership from non-party political organisations of pensioners and retired people from across our Region. Pensioners can also become individual members.

### LOCAL BRANCHES

Walsall: Andrea Stanton :01922448331  
Wolverhampton: barryhodg@yahoo.com  
Halesowen :Tony Whitehouse:07715314608  
Stourbridge: Bob Mitchell: 07984547713  
Coventry : Audrey Ross : 02477679055  
North Staffs: Owen Sloss : 07582115742  
Birmingham  
Kingstanding : Ken Smith: 0121 624 6981  
East Birmingham: Stan Simpson:0121 7830734  
B'ham/South Central: 07342264482  
Northfield: Mike Whiting:0121 477 5324  
Solihull: Mike Wragg: 0121 242 2416  
Sandwell (West Birmingham):  
Andrea Stanton: 07809565454



## **International Women's Day (IWD)**

On 8 March each year we celebrate the social, economic, political and cultural achievements of women. Its origins go back to the early 1900s – eg in 1913, Russian women held a day of observance for peace and in 1914 there was a march for suffrage in London. The date was fixed as 8 March in 1913.

In 1975, the United Nations proclaimed a UN day for women's rights and international peace. In some countries it is an official holiday.

Each year has a campaign theme – recent ones have included "Be Bold for Change", "Make it happen", "The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum" and "Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures".

Although IWD is a celebration, it is also a day to remember that we have still not achieved equality and parity for women. We do see more women in politics and all areas of work. More young women enter higher education. We have equality legislation.

Despite the progress that has been made, in the UK women are still paid less in the workplace than their male counterparts – currently the gap is 14.1% and not improving. The gender pension gap is wider – approaching 40%. The poorest pensioners are older women. Women are less likely than men to qualify for the full new state pension.

Women are repeatedly told they must save more for their retirement but while women predominate in lower paid jobs (often earning too little for auto-enrolment pensions) and take unpaid time out for caring responsibilities their opportunity to save is generally lower than for men.

So as we celebrate women's achievements on 8 March we cannot rest on our laurels – we have a long way to go in achieving financial equality for woman. That will benefit the whole of society – women, men, children, young people and the elderly.

Many thanks to Sandra Durkin, the W MPC Womens Officer for this article.

## THE BUS PASS - I FEEL A BIRTHDAY CARD COMING ON!

It may come as a surprise, especially to us West Midlanders, who've enjoyed free bus, train and now tram travel for decades, but the England-wide bus pass is ten years old on Easter Sunday!

Where previously councils had had a patchwork of travel schemes (or none!) in their areas, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, everyone has had to provide, as a minimum, bus travel free at the point of use for pensioners and disabled people: ENCTS, the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, a brilliant, cost-effective, quality-of-life provision for millions of citizens - for many of these, an absolute lifeline.

To celebrate the imminent introduction of the scheme, in darkest February 2008, I undertook a two-week (fares-paying) tour of England's coast's and borders, and have taken people on two further Round-England tours since then.

However - and it wasn't long in coming after the 2010 General Election - there have been repeated mumblings from senior Government politicians about the 'need' for 'reform', Nick Clegg for one, plus new boy Brandon Lewis, now Chair of the Conservative Party, and a 200,000 signature, pen-on-paper 'Love the Bus Pass' petition was delivered to No. 10 in batches in the months up to the 2015 General Election.

I'm convinced the present incumbents, if they ever felt they could get away with it electorally, *would* move to devalue and destroy the bus pass - if they can do it to the NHS, they can certainly do it the bus pass!

### JOIN THE CELEBRATION EVENTS

- ✓ Deliver a giant 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card to No. 10, on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> March
- ✓ Be at Blackpool Pensioners' Parliament in mid-June to launch (or join!) the Round England Anniversary bus tour.

Details: Richard Worrall, 46 Winn House, Walsall, WS2 8NW; 01922-641084, 07522-215853; [richardvorrall@yahoo.com](mailto:richardvorrall@yahoo.com)



Richard was instrumental in establishing the Walsall Pensioners Convention in 2006 and is a member of the N.P.C. Working Group on Public Transport.

He has been a Walsall Labour councillor for just over 30 years, was a member of the WMCC from 1981-1986 and Chair of the WM Passenger Transport Authority from 1992-2004 and is current Chair of the WM Combined Authority Transport Delivery Committee.

## **CARILLION'S CRASH AND THE MIDLAND METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL**



keep Our NHS Public Birmingham (KONPB) has campaigned for two years against a privately funded (PFI 2) hospital in Smethwick, but we take no delight in Carillion's collapse, nor the 4,000 jobs threatened in Wolverhampton and thousands all over the country.

Carillion had an appalling history of blacklisting construction workers with a trade union background and, some would say, questionable track record on numerous public-sector PFI service contracts. There is a suggestion that the company over-stretched itself in the unholy race for more and more public-sector private finance contracts, besides a contractual dispute with Qatar over work towards the 2022 Football World Cup.

Toby Lewis, Chief Exec of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital says "We regret this ...announcement concerning Carillion, who are the constructor for our long awaited new hospital.... We are working closely with HM Treasury and The Hospital Company as alternative arrangements are put in place to ensure that the construction of the Midlands Metropolitan Hospital is completed."

The 'Hospital Company' is the "special purpose vehicle" set up by SWBH and partners to deal with the PF12 project, as outlined in the Summer of 2016 KNOPB report.

Currently the hospital construction is delayed, while the A&E(casualty)departments and "acute" beds at the ageing City and Sandwell hospitals will remain in use for longer than planned. KNOPB will be watching the situation closely and will mount protests if the NHS services become threatened by this collapse.

We want publicly funded hospitals: to bring the MMH development back under proper public control, with sustainable financing, and to stop any service cuts required to pay for this unnecessarily complex financial package. SWBH recently stated "we may need to look at arrangements that are outside a private finance regime."

Let's hope the powers that be can come up with a viable solution for the local community, both workers and NHS patients.

The next meeting of Keep Our NHS Public Birmingham is Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30 p.m.

The Wellington, Bennetts Hill, B2 ESN: For more information e mail [btuchcc@hotmail](mailto:btuchcc@hotmail)



The National Pensioners Convention have prepared a timely Draft policy document entitled “Home Sweet Home”, on housing for older people.

Providing suitable and affordable accommodation for all generations is one of the biggest challenges facing our society, and there is little doubt that there is a shared interest in this regard between young and older people. This is not based on some kind of generational conflict, in which one side blames the other for their lack of somewhere decent to live- but on the clear understanding that critical to solving our housing crisis is the need to build more homes of all tenures and for all age groups.

Older people’s housing needs to be affordable, accessible, safe and located close to good quality public transport links and other essential amenities such as GP surgeries, shops and post offices. In addition, the housing needs to be well designed with the intention to create sustainable communities.

The “Home Sweet Home” draft policy document includes the following recommendations:

- The need to build 250,000 houses in total across the population, with 65,000 houses to be built every year for older people. This urgent house building programme should include both sheltered and supported housing options, older LGBT housing projects and lifetime homes that can adapt around the resident as they age.
- To ensure that older people are at the heart of planning decisions there needs to be a more creative and community-focused approach to planning; for example, through the creation of “Age Friendly Towns and Cities”.
- To give older tenants stronger rights there needs to be a “Tenants Charter “to raise awareness of tenants’ rights. With landlords required to register with the local authority for a five-year licence to rent their property out.
- Tackle Fuel Poverty. There is an urgent need for a national programme to improve the heating and insulation standards of existing homes so that they reach the standards of new homes built today.
- End the “Right to Buy”,
- End the “Bedroom Tax”.

These are just some of the key recommendations in this draft Housing policy document which we in the WMPC will be submitting formal responses to at the end of the consultation period. We welcome the input of our Branches/Affiliates and Individual Members Copies of “Home Sweet Home” are available on line from the NPC Website or limited hard copies are available on quest by e mailing [wmpcec@gmx.co.uk](mailto:wmpcec@gmx.co.uk) or call 0734226448

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION**

To promote the welfare and interests of all United Kingdom pensioners and older people in need, by any means deemed by law to be charitable. In pursuance of this object the NPC will:

- a. Promote policies beneficial to pensioners, retired and older people.
- b. Encourage the development of educational and other opportunities to enable pensioners, retired and older people to contribute to community activities.
- c. Act as an information resource for pensioners', retired and older people's organisations within the United Kingdom.
- d. Provide a platform where matters of concern can be raised and policies and practices developed, paying attention to the particular needs or problems of pensioners, retired and older people.
- e. Make representations to the Government, Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament, Health Authorities, Local Authorities and other statutory and voluntary bodies dealing with matters affecting pensioners, retired and older people.
- f. Act at all times without discrimination on grounds of age, gender, race, belief, disability or sexual orientation.

# WHAT'S ON

## WMPC REGIONAL COUNCIL

**MARCH**

**THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup>**

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

**FROM**

**CO-OPERATIVE ESTATES**

**AND COUNCILLOR**

**RICHARD WORALL**

**ON PLANNED EVENTS SUPPORTING  
THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
CONCESSIONARY BUS PASS**

**11.00 A.M. TILL 1.00 P.M.  
BIRMINGHAM UNISON**

**19<sup>TH</sup>FLOOR MACLAREN BUILDING**

**PRIORY QUEENS WAY**

**B4 7LR**

## **"ASK ANDY"**

### **IN MARCH**

MAYOR OF THE WMCA- ANDY STREET WILL BE HOLDING TWO "ASK ANDY" EVENTS IN MARCH.

- DUDLEY-MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup>- 19.15 -20.15.  
DUDLEY COLLEGE MUSICAL THEATRE,  
DUDLEY EVOLVE, TOWER STREET DY1AF
- SOLIHULL- MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>- 18.45-20.00.  
SOLIHULL CIVIC CENTRE. B91 3QB.

TO Register FOR EITHER OF THESE EVENTS GO TO THE EVENTBRITE WEBSITE OR e mail [wmpconvention@gmx.com](mailto:wmpconvention@gmx.com) and we will forward the link to the Eventbrite Registration site.



## **Pensioners Parliament 2018**

ONE OF THE WAYS WE CAN BUILD THE PENSIONER MOVEMENT IS THROUGH CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR AND MAKING OUR PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT A GREAT EVENT ,CELEBRATING TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S PENSIONERS.

WE KNOW MANY BRANCHES OF THE PENSIONERS CONVENTION ALREADY ORGANISE SUCCESSFUL GROUP TRIPS TO BLACKPOOL ON THE WEEK OF THE NPC PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT. IF BRANCHES OR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE WEST MIDLANDS PENSIONERS CONVENTION ORGANISING SOMETHING SIMILAR ,WOULD YOU PLEASE CONTACT US.

THIS YEAR THE PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT WILL BE HELD IN BLACKPOOL ON JUNE 12-14<sup>TH</sup>.

TO BOOK YOUR OWN TICKETS :

E MAIL: [info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org) /down load the booking form from the NPC website/ or call 020 7837 6622

### PENSIONERS CONVENTION

#### KINGSTANDING AND PERRY BARR

MEETS EVERY THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH  
11.00 TILL 1.00

AT PERRY COMMON LIBRARY  
COLLEGE ROAD  
B44 OHH

#### NEW MEMBERS VERY WELCOME.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: SECRETARY

KEN SMITH: 0121 624 6981