



# the ACTIVIST

GMB News From Around The Region

Issue 118: October 2021

## In this issue...

- GMB hold energy crisis talks with glass employer
- Historic Hermes pay ballot
- GS: Budget response
- TUC and unions warn Government over winter of chaos
- NHS and ambulance workers ballot for industrial action
- Join us for the Equality Forum online
- CQC: Care sector ready to implode



L to R: Darran Travis - GMB Organiser, Denise Jeffrey - Leader of Wakefield Council and Jane Hamill - GMB activist pictured with the directors from Stoelzle Flacconage

## GMB UNION HOLD ENERGY CRISIS TALKS AT MAJOR GLASS MANUFACTURER IN KNOTTINGLEY WITH LEADER OF WAKEFIELD COUNCIL

GMB Union has met with senior management at the Knottingley glass manufacturer, Stoelzle Flacconage and the leader of Wakefield Council, Denise Jeffrey, to hold emergency talks over the impact the energy crisis is having on the company.

The management team has expressed their deep concern about the massive hike in energy prices, seeing what they pay for a therm (unit of energy) increase from 80p to a whopping £3.20.

This, combined with the rising cost in transport and raw materials, is a recipe for disaster for the company, says GMB Union. The increase cannot be passed on to the customer, so the company is calling on the Prime Minister to urgently offer support by way of a subsidy or price cap.

Councillor Jeffrey committed her support to the glass manufacturer and said she would write to the Prime Minister to request Government intervention to protect jobs. In the meantime, where this leaves the 376 employees at the site is of grave concern and GMB Union has said it will do all it can to ensure there are no job losses.

**GMB Organiser, Darran Travis, said:** "The uncertainty that this massive hike in the cost of gas will place on the glass industry is very worrying. Increases on this level cannot be passed on to the customer, and without Government intervention I am very concerned about jobs in the area.

"This area is still trying to recover from the demolition of the mining industry. Glass is still a major employer in Knottingley and to have a future it needs Government support. I thank the leader of Wakefield Council for taking time out to meet and recognising the immense pressure the industry is currently working under."

**GMB Representative, Jane Hamill, who has worked at Stoelzle Flacconage for 33 years said:** "We all recognise these are worrying times. For a community like Knottingley with three major glass producing companies, it would be a devastating blow to lose any jobs - the Government needs to act now."

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## HISTORIC HERMES PAY BALLOT

Pictured is Rachel Belk, GMB Representative, with Darran Travis, GMB Organiser, at Hermes in Horbury. They were taking part in the Hermes pay ballot roadshows, encouraging members to cast their vote before the ballot closes on the 14 November.

GMB is consulting with members who are SE+ and Worker Status Couriers on the final offer, after the conclusion of some intense and lengthy negotiations.

### The pay offer includes:

- Historic first time consultation
- 3.5% for all couriers who earn less than £30k
- 1.5% for couriers who earn over £30k (starting to level up lower paid)
- Cover and protection of rounds for couriers who are expecting a baby/partner expecting/reservists/jury service
- Introduction of diesel index rates
- Packets to be audited via technology (packet racket)
- Annual leave, pension and sick pay to be discussed further in 2022
- Voluntary working on bank holidays will be an extra 25p per parcel.

**Darran Travis, said:** "This is a massive step forward, the first-time members have negotiated and voted on a pay offer."

"I thank the Hermes reps for the work they have put in to improve members terms and condition."



## BUDGET 'REEKS OF VACUOUS GESTURE POLITICS'

GMB has responded to Chancellor Rishi Sunak's budget speech on Wednesday.



### Gary Smith, GMB General Secretary, said:

"The Chancellor's budget is big on headline-capturing announcements but scant on detail. Saying you will lift the pay freeze that has ground down public sector workers is meaningless if we don't even know if wages will increase above inflation."

"Public sector workers must be guaranteed a proper real terms pay rise if the Conservatives are to start making up for their ruinous decade of austerity."

"The planned increase to the minimum wage is not enough to lift people out of poverty and it won't level up our regions and nations."

"If the Government really wants to end the scourge of low pay and insecure work we need substantial wage increases across key areas of the economy - public services, social care, supply chain sectors and the so-called gig economy - and massive industrial investment to onshore the green jobs of the future."

"Much of this spending is not new money, the announcements are vague at best and the Chancellor is relying on a very precarious economic recovery - it all reeks of vacuous gesture politics."

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## TUC AND UNIONS WARN GOVERNMENT AGAINST “SLEEP-WALKING INTO A WINTER OF CHAOS”

The Government “risks sleep-walking into a winter of chaos” unless it takes decisive action to curb the rise in Covid cases, the TUC and union leaders have warned. In a joint statement – signed by unions representing millions of public and customer-facing workers – the union leaders call on ministers to urgently intervene:

“With hundreds of Covid outbreaks at workplaces being reported to health authorities each week, events feel ominously reminiscent of last winter. The Government must act now to reduce the spread of Covid. Failure to do so will risk public health, frontline services, and the economy. We cannot afford a laissez-faire approach to managing the pandemic – we need clear and consistent leadership.”

**Highlighting the need to keep workers safe, the union leaders call for a range of measures:** “As unions representing staff in frontline jobs – in retail, transport, public services and across the economy – we call on ministers to introduce the following measures.

“First, make the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport mandatory. This can’t just be left to individuals’ discretion.

“Second, remind employers of their legal obligation to manage the risks of Covid-19. That means carrying out and publishing thorough risk assessments and consulting with unions on necessary preventative action.

“Third, employers who fail to adequately control risks must be met with tough and decisive enforcement action. And regulators, including the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities, must be given the additional resources and funding they need to keep people safe at work.

“Fourth, we urgently need an uplift in the rate of Statutory Sick Pay to the rate of the real living wage, and for it to be available to all workers. The failure to support workers to self-isolate has massively undermined test and trace and forced people to choose between following public health advice and being plunged into hardship.

“Last, employers must support the roll-out of booster jabs by giving staff paid time off to get vaccinated.”

**Warning against further delays the union leaders say:** “We all want to beat Covid once for all and to avoid further lockdowns. But without decisive action now we risk sleepwalking into another winter of chaos. Frontline services are already under immense strain. Dithering and delaying will only make the situation worse.”



## GMB BALLOT AMBULANCE SERVICE AND NHS MEMBERS FOR STRIKE ACTION

GMB is to ballot all members in 22 NHS trust across Yorkshire & North Derbyshire after workers overwhelming rejected a ‘miserable’ pay cut.

The industrial action ballot will open on November 10 and close December 15. Any strikes would take place in the new year.

More than 9 out of 10 GMB members in the NHS have rejected the Government’s pay offer of 3%. GMB has been campaigning for a restorative increase of 15%, or £2 per hour (whichever is highest) to replace what has been lost from NHS pay packets over the last decade. GMB was the only union to reject the last NHS pay deal in 2018.

**Ben Kirkham, Lead NHS Officer for GMB in Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, said:** “GMB members are feeling undervalued, disenfranchised, and angry with the wall of silence they’ve received from the Government. 94% of our members rejected the extremely inadequate and miserable offer of 3%.

“The hypocrisy of Government as they joined millions of people in applauding NHS workers, whilst unashamedly trying to cut their pay - you cannot treat NHS and ambulance workers like this. Like many other workers, NHS staff showed their outstanding commitment to serving the public during the challenges of the last 18 months.

“Facing further cuts after a hike in National Insurance, increased pension costs and the huge increases in energy bills, GMB members have been left with no other choice and will be balloted on whether they wish to take formal industrial action.

“NHS workers know their worth and so do the public – it’s a shame that the Government doesn’t.”

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## ZOOM IN FOR THE EQUALITY FORUM

The Regional Equality Forum will take place via Zoom on Saturday 6 November at 10am. **Follow the link to join the meeting:** [Equality Forum Link](#) Meeting ID: 870 6415 5283

### Up for discussion at the forum will be:

- Next year's campaigns
- Regional delegates to the national equality strand meetings (LGBT+/disability/race/women)
- Delegates to the strand summits
- How to develop membership of the forum
- Branch plans for 2022

## Free Bus Sunday

Bus travel throughout West Yorkshire will be FREE on Sunday 31 October 2021 to mark COP 26 and help raise awareness of next month's United Nations Climate Change conference in Glasgow (COP 26).

*Try it for a day  
for a better tomorrow*



 WESTYORKS-CA.GOV.UK

 Tracy Brabin  
Mayor  
of West Yorkshire

 West  
Yorkshire  
Combined  
Authority

## CQC WARNING SHOWS CARE SECTOR 'COULD IMplode'

GMB says the warning from the CQC shows the care sector 'could implode' unless worker pay, terms and conditions are improved. Ian Trenholm, Chief Executive of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), said social care staff are taking up roles in tourism and hospitality and urgent action is needed to prevent a 'tsunami of unmet need' rippling across essential services this winter.

**Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, said:**

"Mr Trenholm is spot on. The care sector is past a crisis, it's on the verge of collapse. We face 170,000 vacancies by the end of the year and that's before November's cliff edge vaccine deadline forces more career carers out of the door."



## Calling all GMB reps

local government, councils & schools

**3 easy steps**

**to organising**

**a workplace ballot**



- 1** Request your ballot information from us: 0345 337 7777
- 2** Arrange a meeting with your members so they can vote
- 3** Contact GMB to arrange to have your ballot papers returned



If you need support running your ballot then don't worry, a member of our team will come in to your workplace to give you a hand

**Together we can  
MAKE WORK BETTER**

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