

## Heating and Eating are NOT Luxuries

Over the past several months, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum has launched a campaign against Ofgem, believing that their lack of effective regulation has resulted in a broken and 'not fit for purpose' energy market. For too many older people, fuel poverty is a very real issue and despite the recent energy price caps put in place to limit escalating energy costs, the decision on whether to heat their homes or put food on the table is one which is ever more present.

On 26th August 2022, our hand delivered letter to Ofgem made it clear on behalf of our members and affiliates that Ofgem lacks a clear customer focus, with its decision-making powers skewed in favour of generators, distributors, and suppliers. We also believe that Ofgem are also giving priority to commercial rather than consumer interests.

Our demands are not excessive, merely realistic, and as we continue to rally against the many obstacles facing older people as a consequence of the current cost of living crisis, our Chairperson, Rose Jackson, made our priorities clear in a strongly worded press statement:

"It is a ridiculous situation that consumers should pay for the failure of suppliers who generate nothing but a culture of fear surrounding rising energy bills. At a time when consumers are generally facing massive hikes in their energy costs, many Scottish pensioners are facing the stark choice between eating and heating this winter.



"According to Ofgem's own research in 2014, almost 80% of Scots were rationing their winter energy use and prices were nowhere near those predicted over the next few months – the consequences of this crisis are going to be catastrophic for so many.



"Britain is lauded as one of the world's largest and most stable economies, yet it cannot secure necessities for the most vulnerable people in society.

"Money expert, Martin Lewis, was right when accusing Ofgem of having sold consumers down the river! The organisation has failed to protect the interests of customers, preferring to insulate the fat cats in their boardrooms instead. Ofgem has lost its focus!"



The Scottish Pensioners' Forum have since received a response from Nick Lawrence, Ofgem's Director of Retail, however this in no way answers our questions nor meets our demands. We have since called on Ofgem to host a meeting between ourselves and their representatives to speak directly on the urgency of this matter – we await their response!

*The consequences of this crisis are going to be catastrophic for so many.*

**Rose Jackson, SPF Chair**

For more information on our energy campaign and a digital download, please visit <https://scottishpensioners.org.uk/files/Energy%20Camapign%20Leaflet.pdf>  
Hard copies of our publications are also available, please contact 0141 337 8113

# Our Appeal to Supermarket Giants

Here at the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, we were delighted to see that one of the largest supermarket chains was offering older people lunch for £1 in their onsite cafes through the winter months. Naturally, we, and other older people's organisations, were delighted with this gesture and were happy that the initiative had gained maximum publicity for the chain. However, when we scratched under the surface, things weren't quite what they seemed!



Reports of older people trying to cash in on this deal were filtered back to us and we weren't best pleased – from being told that the onsite café was a franchise and wasn't honouring the deal to being directed 40 miles away to a store that could offer the £1 lunch were just some of the stories we heard, so we sprang into action!

We sent letters out to 11 supermarket chains across the UK, asking them for some concessions for older people over the coming months. Our Chair, Rose Jackson, was quick to point out that the energy giants were not the only ones showing record profits:

'During our recent outreach work, we were shocked to discover just how many older people were going hungry because they couldn't afford to put food on the table as well as heat their homes this winter – this is an absolute disgrace!

'Many older people have been left isolated and vulnerable over the past 2 years, cut off from family and friends, but yet now they are facing even more worry and uncertainty, how is this just and fair?

'What often flies under the radar is that since 2016 the UK state pension has operated on an old and new system, with older state pensioners being hit the most to the tune of over £2000 per year. This disparity will only continue to grow.

'We are already in talks with Ofgem in relation to the energy crisis so now we have turned our attention to targeting the big supermarket chains to ask what they can do, as a gesture of goodwill, to help some of the most vulnerable people in society.

'We fully understand that the responsibility of older people's welfare benefits and state pension lies solely with the UK Government, however, to coin a phrase from one of those we have contacted, every little helps!'

To date, only Aldi and Morrisons have responded with money saving tips and recipes – but like we said to them, this doesn't really help the digitally excluded! We won't let this one lie either!



## SPT Regional Transport Strategy

Over the past several months, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Transport Working Group have been working on a consultation response to the SPT's consultation looking at their plans for a regional transport strategy.

The 68-page consultation paper, and 38-page consultation questionnaire, were principally available online and so were hardly accessible to many of their target audience. However, we ensured that the views of our members, as well as local groups and forums, in the relevant geographical areas were fed into our response.

From our committee meetings, the issue of transport, particularly accessible and community transport, is one which is consistently raised and the consensus from our members is that access to transport services, both in urban and rural areas, only seems to be getting worse. This is a worrying trend and only serves to highlight the fact that because of this, many people reliant on public transport are being left high and dry, unable to get out and about even for essentials. It's just not good enough!

Our response can be found at <https://scottishpensioners.org.uk/files/SPT%20Consult.pdf>

# Triple Lock Reinstated but Disparity Grows



The Scottish Pensioners' Forum is obviously delighted that the triple lock element of the state pension has been reinstated after being suspended for a year. However, at our recent outreach discussion in Glenrothes, there were so many older people who we spoke to who are still on the old state pension system and who are really struggling as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis. How much state pension you receive is dependent upon when you retired. Those who retired before April 2016, receive their state pension on the old system which pays a maximum of approximately £7,500 whereas those who retired after this date can expect a maximum of around £9,600. Although both pensions increase at the same percentage rate, the differential will grow year on year. As our members know, this issue is one that we have been campaigning on for quite some time and we will continue to lobby on this until it gets sorted out!

## SPF Annual Conference 2022

We were delighted to be able to hold our first in-person conference in 3 years at the City Chambers Glasgow in June 2022, to help celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> year of campaigning work on behalf of older people across Scotland. There were over 100 people in attendance, and it was clear to see that people were happy to be out and about again! Guest speakers included **Roz Foyer**, General Secretary of the STUC, **Colin Scott**, Hourglass Scotland, **Thompson's Solicitors** and **Jim McGinn**, Unite Scotland National Care Service Campaign.



An emergency motion tabled from **Unite Glasgow Retired Members Branch** condemned the UK Government's Spring Statement for its failure to deal with the ever-increasing price rises facing older people due to the cost of living crisis and conference agreed that this should be the SPF's main priority moving forward. A full report from the conference will be included within our Annual Report 2022/23.

Looking ahead, we are working with our affiliates in **Aberdeen** and can confirm that our **Annual Conference 2023** will be held in the city. More information will follow in due course.

## UN International Day of Older Persons



On 29<sup>th</sup> September, the SPF held their yearly demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament to mark UN International Day of Older Persons. This year's theme was "**The Resilience and Contributions of Older Women**" and, as always, we were joined by our colleagues from the WASPI campaign, who the SPF work closely with on their Cross-Party Group.



For the first time ever, we held an event afterwards to mark the day at the **Scottish Poetry Library**, which was warmly received. Thanks to Carol Mochan MSP, who tabled a motion on behalf of older people, and Katy Clark MSP, who put forward a question at First Minister's Questions on our behalf.

### Motion tabled by Carol Mochan MSP

That the Parliament notes that October 1<sup>st</sup> is international Day for Older Persons; understands that the theme of this years is the resilience and contributions of older women; believes that the current cost of living crisis is having a significant and detrimental impact on our elderly population; further understands that a significant proportion of older households are affected by fuel poverty and therefore commends the efforts of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum who are campaigning relentlessly, including outside the Scottish Parliament on September 29<sup>th</sup>, for a fairer society that treats its elderly population with dignity and respect.

# Out and About



Thanks to Renfrewshire Council for inviting our information stall along to the **Strengthening Opportunities for Older People (SOOPIR)** event at the Lagoon Leisure Centre in Paisley. It was another great day, with over 300 people registered to attend, and it was lovely to see so many older people enjoying themselves. It's also always great to meet up with members of our affiliates, **the Thursday Club**, who were having a wonderful day out.



We were honoured to attend the event launching the working partnership between our colleagues at **Glasgow's Golden Generation** and the **Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society** with guest speakers including Christina McKelvie MSP, Minister for Equalities and Older People, and Bailie Roza Salih. It was a great opportunity to engage with several faith and equalities groups and we are excited to see how this work develops moving forward into the New Year.



We know that many older people will be finding things extremely difficult at the moment, and we want to remind you that the Scottish Pensioners' Forum are always keen to hear about what our members are getting up to and what concerns they may be having so please get in touch. The more we know, the more we can try to help.

**Season's Greetings to All of our Members and Affiliates and we look Forward to Working with You in the New Year**



**Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum**

**Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992**

[www.scottishpensioners.org.uk](http://www.scottishpensioners.org.uk)

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**CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992**