

# SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 60/Autumn 2023

## SPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ABERDEEN 2023

On 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023, The Scottish Pensioners' Forum held our 31st Annual Conference at the Townhouse in Aberdeen, our first time back in the city for over 10 years. The theme of this year's conference was "Coming out of Covid – What's Changed?" and delegates in Aberdeen certainly had a lot to say on the matter. Guest speakers included **David Linden MP**, SNP Westminster Spokesperson on Social Justice, **Mercedes Villalba MSP**, North East Region and **Linda Carmichael** of the WASPI Campaign, Aberdeen.



solidarity between workers and pensioners, as well as younger and older people. We can, and do, work well together."

**Linda Carmichael** spoke to delegates on the UK

**WASPI**

Government's denial to fully compensate 1950s born women for the lack of notice given to them as a consequence of the changes to the 1995 and 2011 Pensions Act and spoke on how many women had suffered long term effects to their physical and mental health due to the continued strain of the campaign.

**The Lord Provost of Aberdeen, Dr David Cameron**, extended a Civic Welcome to delegates saying that "older people should be respected and revered for their continued contribution to society in their later years" and commended the Scottish Pensioners' Forum for their work in campaigning for older people's rights and welfare across Scotland.



**David Linden MP** addressed guests saying "there has to be a better system for pensioners in Scotland, the UK state pension is no way near

generous enough sitting at around a quarter of the average wage and it is put to shame by countries such as Luxembourg and Austria at 90%"

**Mercedes Villalba**, a long-time supporter of the work of the SPF stated "we must celebrate the



A motion calling for the reinstatement of a named Minister for Older People in Scotland was



unanimously passed and we have since contacted the First Minister of Scotland for a second time to make such demands. Conference delegates also voted to call for the strengthening of **the Scottish Government's Older People's Strategic Action Forum** as the direct mechanism for engagement with the Scottish Government.

Looking ahead, we are hoping to hold our next annual conference in Stirling or Motherwell. More information on this will follow in due course.

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992

# 68 Is Too Late Campaign



In our last edition of Scottish Seniors, we highlighted our involvement in the '68 is Too Late' campaign alongside Unite for a Worker's Economy and the National Pensioners' Convention – and a lot has happened since then!

In May 2023, our organisations held coordinated demonstrations in both London and Edinburgh, where a 38,000 strong petition was handed in to the Department of Work and Pensions. In June 2023, we promoted the campaign at our Annual Conference in June, where it was endorsed by delegates. Again, in June 2023, we attended the NPC Conference in Blackpool where once again the campaign was endorsed by delegates there.



In July 2023, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum addressed delegates at the STUC Youth Conference to speak about the campaign and the need to safeguard the state pension for future generations and we were delighted when delegates unanimously agreed to get behind it. The campaign continues to go from strength to strength and it won't stop there. We have already engaged in several campaign strategy meetings on the best way forward and with a General Election looming, we aim to make our voices heard, loud and clear.

We would greatly appreciate you getting behind the campaign, created by Josh Berlyne of Unite the Union, which can be accessed here

<https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/don-t-raise-the-state-pension-age-68-is-too-late> or scan the barcode.



## Honour the Triple Lock in Full in 2024

Our affiliates at Prospect the Union have raised a petition with the UK Parliament stating: The UK Government has already reneged on its manifesto when it legislated to increase state pensions by less than the triple lock in April 2022. The triple lock does not mean that pensioners' total incomes are increasing in real terms. It only applies to state pensions. Many workplace pension increases are capped at 2.5% or 5%. Annuities and Pension Protection Fund compensation are frozen for many. The triple lock helps keep pensioners' total incomes from falling too far below inflation. The online petition can be accessed here <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/646906> - we would greatly appreciate your support!



# Let's Be Heard Listening Project



The Scottish Covid Inquiry's listening project 'Let's Be Heard' was launched on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 and we were delighted to meet with their representatives to discuss how to promote and assist in making older people's voices heard, being as they were so disproportionately impacted during that time. The project is the main channel for people to share their



experiences of the pandemic and any lessons they believe should be learned from the response to the pandemic in Scotland. The Scottish Covid Inquiry is investigating the devolved strategic response between 1 January 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. We recommend that you get in touch with them via their website at <https://lbh.covid19inquiry.scot> or by writing to Freepost SCOTTISH COVID-19 INQUIRY.

The Scottish Pensioners' Forum held an in-person session in Glasgow on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and an online event on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Formal reports from these sessions have been submitted to the inquiry on participants' behalf.

## Cut Their Profits, Not our Ticket Offices

We were more than happy to get behind the campaign of our affiliates, RMT, to challenge the closure of ticket offices across the UK, including the Avanti ticket office at Glasgow Central Station.



The petition states:

Older and disabled people, and people on low incomes, are less likely to have access to the internet and are excluded by the push to online and electronic ticketing. These plans ignore the much wider role that ticket office staff provide in offering advice and expertise and they also provide a point of safety and security. We



couldn't agree more! Their online petition can be accessed here

[Cut their profits, not our ticket offices! | Megaphone UK](#)

## If You want to Beat the Rush, Let's Prioritise the Bus



The Better Buses for Strathclyde campaign was launched recently and we were delighted to offer our support to it. Accessible and regular public transport has been a long standing issue for the SPF and the campaign's aim to bring together bus users and employees from across Strathclyde's 12 council areas to put pressure on the SPT, to utilise the new powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to deliver a fully-integrated, accessible and affordable system. We're sure that other transport systems across Scotland will follow suit.

# Super? Markets



At a recent Westminster committee, all of the main supermarkets said they were working with their suppliers and producers to keep their prices down. An investigation by the RAC and AA, now shows that they weren't being entirely truthful as prior to Covid their profit margin on forecourt fuel was 4.6p/per litre but is now 10p/per litre - all this despite the wholesale price dropping. This is not caused by Covid or the war in Ukraine it is simply greed. If the UK Government is serious about trying to control inflation, especially the rise in food prices, instead of pushing up the cost of mortgages and essential services suffer and squeeze people's purse strings even further, they should be taking action against the supermarkets and their record profits. (Bill Martin, Executive Committee member)

# Chile Remembered

At a time when it's never been more important to stand in solidarity with refugees arriving in this country, many of us will look to history to learn from



the atrocities committed by fascist regimes in the past and importance of providing a safe haven to those they hunt down.

Last month seen the 50th Anniversary of Pinochet's violent fascist coup against the democratically elected Socialist Government of Chile in 1973. Many of us will remember hearing the news of trade unionists and left-wing activists murdered and tortured by the fascists using arms provided by the UK and sponsored by the US. It's estimated 8,000 'disappeared' during the coup, while many others fled abroad.

The UK Tory Government silently welcomed the coup with an eye on the protection of British financial interests. However, many on the Left in Scotland offered refuge with towns like my own in Cumbernauld welcoming refugees, offering work and housing. Special mention should be given to the workers of Rolls Royce in East Kilbride whose selfless act of refusing to refurbish Hawker Hunter engines for 4 years, destined for the Chilean Air Force, was just one example of effective workers resistance.

Chile's fascist dictatorship eventually died down and elections returned in 1989. Many refugees returned, but some chose to stay and settled in communities across Scotland.

Let's learn from history and stand up against fascism wherever it emerges and welcome all refugees into our communities when needed. (Andy Locke, Executive Committee member)

# Out and About



Over the past few months, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum has been out and about delivering outreach meetings in Greenock and giving presentations to retired members' branches in Forth Valley and Dundee. We were delighted to be asked to present meritorious awards to long standing Unite members at the British Legion in Grangemouth.

While in Dundee visiting Unite the Union, we were able to pop in to the Blether Café, run by our colleagues at Dundee Pensioners' Forum, to speak to older people who rely heavily on this service to help combat loneliness and isolation. What a great day it was!