

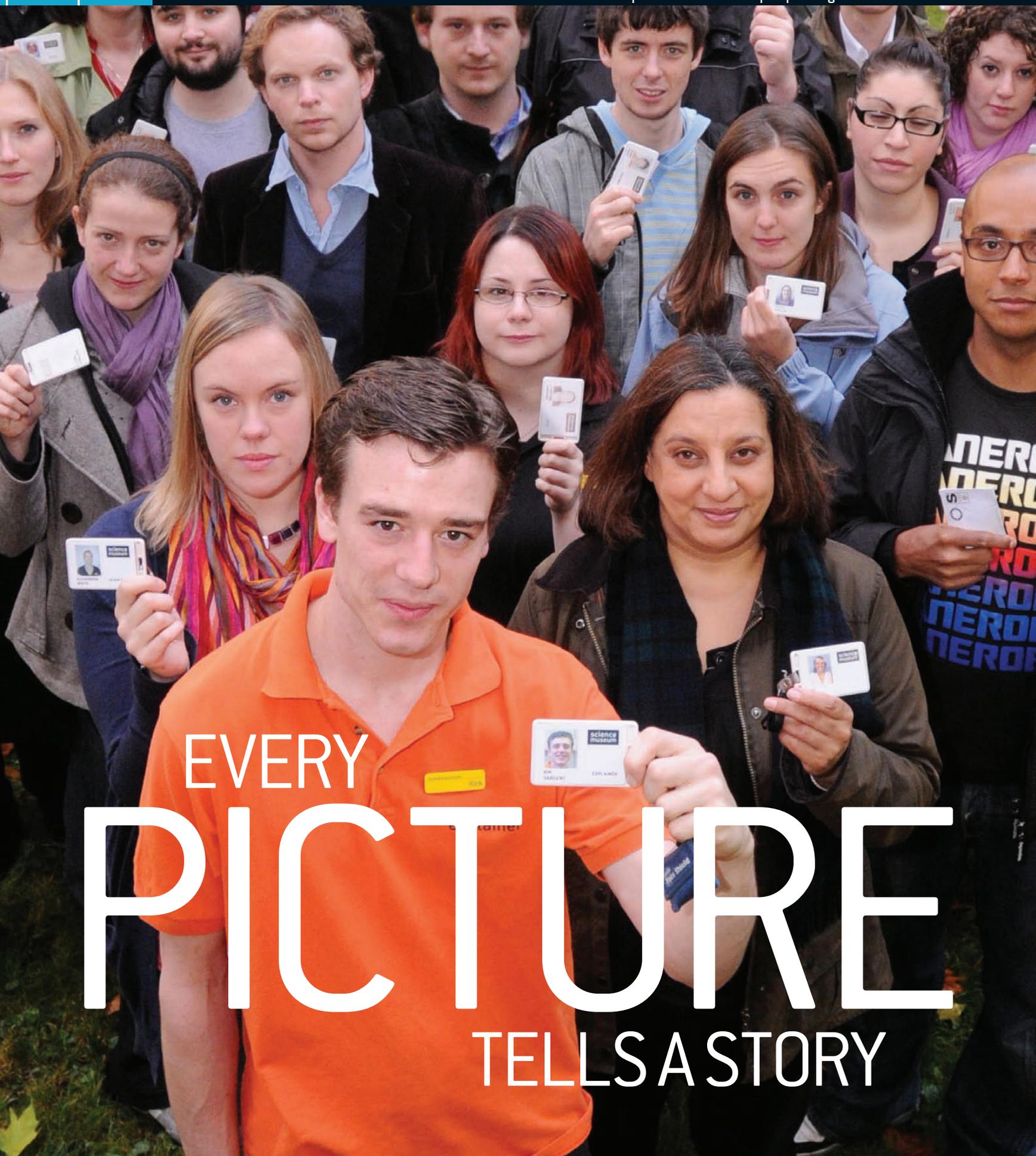
● Ofgem pensions attack ● Young professionals convention ● TUC 2009 ● Conservative party policies



# PROFILE



union for professionals • [www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk) ISSUE 7 • OCTOBER 2009



EVERY  
**PICTURE**  
TELLS A STORY

## Each and every Prospect member matters to us

Prospect exists just as much to give effective individual representation to members as it does for collective bargaining on pay, pensions or anything else. We handle more than 3,000 personal cases each year, and many more situations arise where we simply give advice about rights at work or provide a shoulder to lean (or cry) on.

Most of this work is carried out by Prospect lay reps for whom we provide training and who can give immediate advice and support to members. Sometimes more serious issues are at stake and full-time officers, including our legal services officers and pensions or health and safety specialists, are called on to assist. Usually, of course, such matters are dealt with on a confidential basis.

But two recent cases have hit the headlines. The first and most publicised has been that of Premier League referee Alan Wiley who was unfairly criticised by Sir Alex Ferguson as being unfit. National secretary Alan Leighton gives his own perspective on page 5 but I want to make two observations here.

First, at least one journalist has intimated that either Alan Leighton personally or Prospect generally has been motivated by a desire for publicity. Nothing could be further from the truth. Alan's actions and involvement are motivated wholly and solely by the desire to repair an injustice to an individual Prospect member and the wider group of Premier League referees. We would not tolerate a member in any other walk of life being abused – so why should we do



**These cases show the importance of union membership and why no one can afford to be without Prospect's protection, whatever their area of employment**

so just because that member happens to wear black and blow a whistle?

Second, if we wanted to exploit our representation of Premier League referees for the purposes of publicity we could have done so any time there was a refereeing controversy (and there have been plenty of them) over the last four years. When we concluded the recognition agreement for referees we made it clear that we would not provide a running commentary on refereeing decisions, and nor have we. We will, however, stand up for our members in all circumstances.

### Court of Appeal

The second case, also reported in this *Profile*, is slightly different but no less important.

Christine Wilson is a member in the Health and Safety Executive on whose behalf we have been pursuing an equal pay claim against her employer, the Health and Safety Executive. This has gone as far as the Court of Appeal and I am delighted that we have been successful on all points.

Christine's is only one of 81 such cases, not all in HSE, about service-related criteria as a determinant of pay. It is an indictment of the legal system that some of these cases go back as far as 2001. It was, however, a tremendous victory although we will have to see if it is appealed to the Supreme Court. If it is, we are confident of the outcome. If not, it should unlock a resolution of all the outstanding cases even though they may need to be individually litigated.

Both these cases show the importance of union membership and why no one can afford to be without Prospect's protection, whatever their area of employment.

**Paul Noon**

## WITH THIS PROFILE

There are two Prospect inserts with this issue:

**Platform** – the newsletter for members in the private and public defence industry

**Energy Lines** – the newsletter for working members in the energy supply industry sector

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## EQUAL PAY VICTORY

PROSPECT HAS won a landmark sex discrimination ruling in an ongoing equal pay case.

The Court of Appeal has ruled in the case of HSE inspector Christine Wilson that employers must justify the use of seniority-based pay systems if they mean women are paid less than male colleagues doing the same work.

The ruling is a victory for the Prospect legal team – solicitors Russell Jones & Walker who represented Christine, and legal officer Marion Scovell.

Marion said: "Employers need to think very carefully as to



■ **Wilson – employers must justify seniority-based pay systems**

whether extra years in the job really do lead to better performance, and if so for how long."

The union is waiting to hear if HSE will appeal.

■ **Court decision**  
– page 22

# A bloody injustice!



Prospect president Catherine Donaldson last month joined forensic scientists for a lab-coated protest outside the TUC against job cuts and privatisation.

Three members travelled from the Chorley, Lancashire, laboratory to join the Prospect delegation and leaflet visitors and delegates to the BT Convention Centre, Liverpool.

The government plans to close down three of the Forensic Science Service's seven laboratories and axe 30-40 per cent of the workforce – up to 800 of the 1,900 staff. Members fear the cuts are just a precursor to privatisation.

Lindsay Hoyle, MP for Chorley (above), joined the protest, helped leaflet delegates, and lent his very loud voice to the campaign. "This is about saving quality science jobs for the north-west and the country as a whole," he said. "If we

PICTURES: STEFANO CASIMIRO



■ Catherine Donaldson joins FSS members at the TUC

take out these labs we will leave the field wide open for criminals to take advantage."

Caroline Eames, a senior forensic scientist, said she came on the lobby "because only the criminals will benefit from the fragmentation of forensic science. A big loss of knowledge and experience is already under way right now as people leave for more secure employment."

## Pay: It's 1% or nothing ...

CIVIL SERVICE pay has been turned into 'a political football' by the actions of government and opposition, civil service unions have protested.

In a letter to the chancellor they have attacked the pay curbs announced this month by ministers and the Conservative party, and warned that making civil service pay a matter of deliberate political controversy "risks damaging the non-political nature of the civil service."

The unions were reacting to the government's sudden recommendation that pay increases for civil servants, salaried doctors, dentists and prison officers should be limited to 0-1 per cent in 2010. In evidence to the senior salaries review body the chancellor also called for a freeze on senior

civil service pay, currently in the middle of a three-year deal.

However multi-year deals for other civil servants and parts of the public sector will apparently still be respected, including deals affecting teachers, nurses and police officers.

Dai Hudd, deputy general secretary, attacked the haphazard nature of the announcement, which he said would leave members not in multi-year deals at a significant disadvantage. Unions will seek to clarify the exact extent of the measures at a meeting with Liam Byrne, chief secretary to the Treasury, in late October.

"Sacrifices on pay in the public interest should be shared equally across the public sector," said Hudd, who said imposing a

near-freeze seriously undermined the independence of the pay review bodies.

News of the government's curbs preceded by a few hours the announcement by shadow chancellor George Osborne that a Conservative government would freeze all public sector pay for a year, except for staff earning less than £18,000. This would save £12bn over the life of the next parliament, he claimed.

Dai Hudd said such a freeze directly contradicted Tory leader David Cameron's pledge this summer not to impose a public sector pay freeze in 2010 because he did not know what the rate of inflation would be next year. "I don't think that is the way we do pay in this country," Cameron said in a BBC interview in July.

Where do they stand?

■ see pages 16-18



## OFGEM GOES FOR PENSIONS AS UNION WARNS OF UNREST

ATTACKS ON energy workers' pensions have become a real threat after a surprise declaration by the electricity regulator this month that it is 'minded' to change the way it treats pension costs.

Ignoring protests from companies and unions, Ofgem gave objectors just four weeks to respond to its latest missive, which came despite warnings from Prospect that any attack on pension rights would spark industrial unrest.

Prospect believes the present pension principles, in place since 2003, work perfectly well, and that Ofgem has no right to interfere in this area.

Ofgem determines the financial incentives

on network companies to manage all their costs, including pensions, through its five-year price controls – the next one starts in April 2010.

For the first time, the costs of running pension schemes will no longer be treated as 'pass through'. Instead, says Ofgem, "for ongoing costs, we are minded to apply benchmarking of total employment costs (including pensions) along with total costs to set revenue allowances in all future price controls."

The change will increase pressure on companies to attack pensions wherever they can, warned Prospect deputy general secretary Mike Clancy. "This will mess with employees' livelihoods and their chance of a decent retirement, and they will not take that lying down."

Ofgem cites two principal reasons for the change:

- to bring network companies into line with unregulated companies by introducing incentives to manage 'ongoing costs' more efficiently
- to get a better deal for customers.

Prospect believes this is a trivial issue for customers, and says the added bureaucracy of implementing the changes will actually cost money.

"Ofgem also fails to understand the challenges facing the companies in recruiting and retaining a highly skilled workforce," said Clancy. "We are dismayed it refuses to take notice of our concerns and will be raising this at a higher level with government."

## MATERNITY GUIDE

AN UPDATED version of the Prospect

Members' Guide to

Maternity Rights

(No 13) covers all

the legal changes

of the last three

years. It can be

downloaded from

<http://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2006/00703>.

Hard copies can be ordered from central.services at [prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk)



# Firefighting reps tackle job cuts

PROSPECT REPS have been working hard to mitigate the impact of redundancies at the Audit Commission and Ordnance Survey.

Some 100 Audit Commission staff across 14 regions were facing compulsory redundancy in June. But in negotiations Prospect has whittled that down to 26 losses in five regions, with management instead agreeing a voluntary scheme for auditors and performance specialists.

Branch chair Chris Round said the commission had conducted a workforce planning exercise because of reduced workload in parts of the organisation.

Reasons for the fall included the merger of some local authorities into larger bodies, and the change from health trusts to foundation trusts, leading to fewer inspections.

"We challenged whether management's assumptions had taken natural wastage into account," said Round. The branch also negotiated flexible working options such as job sharing and increased part-time working.

"Most redundancies are now voluntary, and we secured agreement that where



■ Campbell – Prospect aims to keep jobs in-house



■ Round – challenged management assumptions



■ At work at the Audit Commission in Oxford – the branch negotiated flexible working options to save jobs

fewer than four posts were identified, they would go through natural wastage. Times like this really show the importance of union membership."

At Ordnance Survey, however, reps are unhappy at the scale of voluntary redundancies required by management to meet its plans to cut spending by 5 per cent a year over the next five years.

The organisation is shedding 180 staff by the end of December "as part of a crude cost-cutting exercise," said branch secretary Don Campbell.

Enough people had volunteered in order to leave on the best terms possible, in advance of government cutbacks to the civil service compensation scheme.

"But the workload is not reducing," Campbell stressed. "Our concern is that those left behind, who are already working at 100 per cent capacity, will have more to do with less time."

OS also plans to outsource work, starting with a review of printing and warehouse operations. "Prospect's aim is to keep as many jobs as possible and to keep them in-house, rather than outsourced or lost for ever," said Campbell



■ The Audit Commission's workload has reduced because of local authority mergers and changes in health trusts

## SAFETY STUDY PUTS ONUS ON EMPLOYERS

PROSPECT HAS welcomed the findings of new research into the human factors behind the rise in fatalities and serious accidents in the electricity industry.

Research by the Health and Safety Laboratory commissioned by the industry concluded that employers should be responsible for worker safety on site as well as training and communication.

It stressed the need to communicate the value of safety over performance and remove incentives – regulatory or otherwise – that could encourage people to violate safety procedures so as to enhance productivity.

Prospect and employers are working together to tackle the industry's disturbing safety record, which saw four employees and six contractors die in 2007. Accidents dipped slightly in 2008, but one employee died and stress levels quadrupled (Profile 6/09).

HSL stressed the need to involve experienced workers in drawing up procedures and asked companies to provide the necessary resources for staff to work safely.

It urged employers to:

- train experienced people on new equipment or unfamiliar activities
- ensure people do not work beyond

their competency and authority, particularly apprentices and new recruits

- monitor operational and refresher training to ensure it is completed.

Mike Clancy, Prospect deputy general secretary, said: "These results accord with the experiences reported by our members. They increase the urgency with which we need to engage with the industry to address the problems."

The findings were discussed at an Energy Networks Association safety workshop in October and will be scrutinised by the industry's national health, safety and environment committee, in which Prospect participates.

## CIVILIANS NOT TO BLAME, SAYS DEFENCE REPORT

A KEY report into how the Ministry of Defence procures equipment has confirmed Prospect's argument that inter-service rivalry is responsible for most of the delays and cost over-runs afflicting defence procurement.

Bernard Gray's report, released after months of delay, also says the department should accelerate the reversal of cuts it made in 2008 to its pricing and forecasting group – now the cost assurance and analysis service. It says this was a crucial mechanism for monitoring the progress and costs of equipment programmes.

Prospect says the Gray report lays to rest the picture of MOD incompetence as portrayed by opposition parties and the media. The report praises the department for its project management, the dedication of its staff and its improved performance as recognised by the National Audit Office.

National secretary Steve Jary said Gray's recommendations concurred with the union's analysis on how to improve the defence acquisition process.

"Prospect has called for a strategic defence review for some time, so the proposal to undertake a review in every

## FOX: LET'S MEET

SHADOW DEFENCE secretary, Dr Liam Fox, has asked Prospect to meet him and his team in November to discuss defence issues after national secretary Steve Jary wrote to him in September to counter his comments about the balance of numbers between MOD civilians and the armed forces (see Profile 6/09).

parliament and to extend the planning horizon for equipment acquisition makes sense."

He said plans to establish a new committee to oversee procurement, chaired by the permanent secretary, should help to defuse inter-service rivalry that has in the past contributed to spiralling costs in the design, specification and manufacture of equipment.

However, the union believes the committee's work should be open and transparent in order to prevent rivalry between the armed forces re-emerging.

Prospect also welcomed the statement by defence secretary Bob Ainsworth not to part-privatise Defence Equipment and Support as recommended in the report. "The minister made the right decision here," said Jary.

"MOD has at last recognised that it needs to act quickly to reverse the loss of specialist skills without which all equipment acquisitions become problematic. Privatisation would destroy what remains of MOD's in-house capability."

**Union officials usually struggle to win publicity, but when national secretary Alan Leighton spoke up for one member the media laid siege to him. It was an unusual case – but still typical of Prospect's day-to-day work, he writes**

HAVING QUIETLY represented professional football referees on a series of individual and collective issues over the last four years, I was suddenly propelled into a media maelstrom this month after a highly personal attack by Sir Alex Ferguson on Alan Wiley.

In extraordinary post-match comments after a Manchester United v Sunderland match, Ferguson unjustifiably accused Wiley of being 'not fit enough' to do his job. Referees are, of course, used to criticism and take plenty of it from fans, players and managers. Their performance is under constant assessment from TV cameras and match assessors.

Prospect and the referees agreed from the outset that it was not the union's role to comment on every performance or criticism of our members. But the comments about Alan Wiley demanded a response.

Extreme fitness is an essential requirement for their job and these comments, had they gone unchecked, would have left Alan incapable of doing his job in future. Furthermore, Ferguson implied that other professional referees in England were also unfit. The comments were an attack on the integrity and

professionalism of both Alan and his colleagues.

Having appeared on *Sky Sports News* the day after Ferguson's comments I was deluged with requests from press and TV for comment. We were able to rebut the allegations about Alan's fitness and Ferguson has now apologised for causing Alan embarrassment. He has also agreed that Alan had a good game and got the major decisions right. He has not, however, apologised for or retracted his central allegation that Alan was unfit.

Sir Alex has now been charged by the Football Association with improper conduct.



**I'm training to be a referee**

## Refs united!

■ Alan Leighton (centre row, right) with referee members of Prospect including Alan Wiley (front row, right)



In 25 years as a union official I have never received such publicity. Indeed, it is galling that it is so difficult to attract media interest on the other key issues affecting our members. Nevertheless this issue has raised in a big way the important issues of bullying, harassment and dignity at work.

Our officers and representatives take up cases like this in a lower-profile way for members, day in and day out. We will not tolerate abuse of our members in any employment context. A core part of our work is to defend and promote the professionalism of our members. The Wiley case is just one high-profile example of that work.

## Compensation: now they're talking

FOR EVERY person who sends in a letter of complaint, there are ten people thinking the same who can't be bothered to write.

So the 18,000 responses received by the Cabinet Office to the government consultation on the civil service compensation scheme are a big headache for HMG. At least 180,000 civil servants are seriously upset by its proposals and indeed the Cabinet Office accepts that the overwhelming response has been deeply hostile.

But Dai Hudd, deputy general secretary, believes civil service members are realistic and understand that their compensation for redundancy has to be broadly in line with the rest of the public sector.

"What members will not accept is radical reductions in their contractual entitlement that discriminate against them, ignore agreements and break the law."

Hudd was speaking after Prospect met up with Tessa Jowell, the Cabinet Office minister, as part of a Council for Civil Service Unions team led by Paul Noon, Prospect general secretary. Prospect told the minister that the view of staff was that the proposals issued on July 31 were unacceptable and did not form the basis for potential agreement.

"We said our preference was to try and reach an agreement and in support we made a strong and compelling case to reopen discussions on their proposals for reform."



■ Dai Hudd addresses a joint meeting of Prospect and FDA members on the compensation proposals

**Ministers expect at least 34,000 staff to leave on severance over the next three years**

The minister listened and had clearly noted the result of the consultation exercise. She said the government's aim of saving £500m by the changes need not prevent further talks on the proposals, and confirmed that she would invite all the unions to a new round of talks.

Dai Hudd welcomed the constructive manner in which the meeting took place and said 'some progress' had been made.

"This would not have happened without the pressure from members we were able to apply. The position remains challenging but it is vital that we keep up the pressure if we are to secure an acceptable package."

Since the government's changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (see

Profile 6/09) are designed to save £500m over the next three years, that means ministers anticipate at least 34,000 staff leaving on severance over that period.

The proposals would slash entitlement to redundancy compensation for most staff by a third, in some cases by two-thirds; and sharply reduce their ability to take an early pension.

All the CCSU unions are taking advice on a legal challenge, since the compensation terms are covered by the 1972 Superannuation Act and cannot be varied except with the agreement of unions.

The first meeting with the Cabinet Office has now been held on a without prejudice basis.



# See change as it happens with Oxfam dam project

DONATIONS BY Prospect members are to help a new Oxfam project in Zimbabwe, aimed at reducing people's dependence on food aid.

The union's national executive has voted to back the building of a dam and irrigation system in Gutu, Masvingo province, where climate-related disaster, political instability and hyperinflation have caused major food shortages.

The new system will irrigate 20 hectares of land, with local people employed to build the pumphouse and pump, canals, and connection to the electricity grid.

Oxfam will also:

- provide seeds, tools and training to 80 farmers to improve food quality, quantity and profitability
- set up and train an irrigation management committee to manage and maintain the system.

In the first year the project aims to help 25,000 people receive a steady supply of food. By the end of the third year, the new irrigation system will expand to support 100,000 people.

The union handed over £16,660 last month to support the project's first year,



■ **Ntombizodwa Marufu grows pumpkin, tomatoes, okra and cucumber with the help of Oxfam in Zimbabwe**

raised by regular donations from members and one-off contributions.

Oxfam's Projects Direct programme means supporters know exactly where their donations are going and can see change as it happens.

Last year, Prospect donations supported a two-year project to bring free primary education to children in Turkana, Kenya (*Profile 4/09*). It has seen a 26 per cent increase in enrolment in primary schools, and ten mobile schools are serving 1,150 children.

Sam Magee, of Oxfam's trusts and institutions team, said: "The Ruti Dam is an ambitious project. Once finished it will help many more people to grow enough to support their families and reduce food insecurity in the area by selling their surplus at local markets.

"We really appreciate your members' long-term commitment. It is donations like yours that enable us to plan ahead our work."

■ You can support Prospect's Oxfam appeal by sending donations, payable to 'IPMS Oxfam Appeal Fund', to Kay Lancaster, New Prospect House, 8 Leake Street, London SE1 7NN, or visiting [www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org) and searching for 'IPMS Third World Welfare Trust'.



PROSPECT GENERAL secretary Paul Noon was among many delegates who signed up to War on Want's Love Fashion, Hate Sweatshops campaign at this year's TUC in Liverpool. Campaign supporters have already sent 20,000 emails to 15 fashion CEOs asking the simple question: Why do you condone sweatshop slavery? All the companies targeted were named in a recent report for failing to pay workers a living wage. You can send in your email via the campaign website – [LoveFashionHateSweatshops.org/Disgraced](http://LoveFashionHateSweatshops.org/Disgraced)



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# Members' hopes dashed by EDF plan to sell Networks

PROSPECT HAS expressed disappointment at last month's proposals by EDF Group to put its Networks business – the largest electricity distribution network in the UK – up for sale.

Now the largely state-owned French company has appointed bankers to advise on 'ownership options'.

Prospect negotiator Azim Hajee said Networks members were stunned to hear that their future is up in the air once again. "They appear to have become just as disposable as they were before EDF began to bring

in three separate companies.

The group said the proposed sale was part of an asset divestment programme aimed at reducing its net debt by at least £5bn by the end of 2010, following last year's acquisition of British Energy. It would give the group greater financial flexibility to focus on developing new nuclear plants in the UK.

Hajee said over the last 10 years employees had become used to the stability of working for a significant European company and being treated as serious stakeholders, both in the UK and through the European Works Council.

"They came to accept that EDF were in it for the long term, so now they feel let down and worried about the future."

Members will expect the company to comply with commitments made to unions and the EWC to look after employees' long-term interests, so that their pensions, conditions and collective agreements remain secure.

Hajee said: "We can see no reason why the options now being explored by the bankers should rule out the French company continuing to retain a controlling stake in the distribution networks."

EDF Energy has agreed to form a joint working group with unions to maintain open dialogue during its review.



■ **High hopes** – Azim Hajee (right) with Prospect delegates and EDF Energy boss Vincent de Rivaz (centre) at the annual conference of the EDF branch in 2003

them under its umbrella in 1999."

EDF Networks employs 5,000 people across the south, south-east and London, of whom over 1,000 are Prospect engineers, supervisors and managers, who used to be



## SCOTTISH HERITAGE BODY 'CRUMBLING' SAYS STUDY

A PROSPECT study into the troubled National Trust for Scotland has reported that the heritage charity is in a critical condition, with staffing levels so low that a number of Scotland's most important buildings and gardens are falling into disrepair.

The findings, based on information provided by Prospect members in NTS, have been sent to the Scottish Parliament. They confirm the union view that NTS did not think through its cost-cutting measures earlier this year, which saw it announce 91 redundancies, the closure of eleven properties and plans to sell its grade I listed headquarters in Edinburgh.

In the event there were nearly 70 redundancies, albeit 24 were volunteers. But the total job losses were swollen to over 100 because NTS removed scores of vacant posts from the staff complement. Three properties have also closed. The union says posts essential to fundraising and communications have been lost just when they are most needed.

Indeed, the Trust's archaeology department is so overstretched that it cannot cope with the care of the St Kilda World Heritage site, west of the Outer Hebrides. The report employs a three-point system of tolerable, critical and intolerable to rate shortcomings at the Trust's more prestigious properties and they almost all fall into the two lowest categories.

National secretary Alan Denney said although the desperate measures taken by NTS had improved the financial position it should have seen the crisis coming well before it consulted over redundancies. "NTS should have adapted its plans accordingly. Instead staff are demoralised, stress is high and workers are worried about their jobs."

■ **Above:** The ruins of Balmerino Abbey, a 13th century Cistercian monastery run by NTS.

# Royal Mint staff take sell-off fight to minister

THE CAMPAIGN against the threatened privatisation of the Royal Mint moved up a gear this month as members took their concerns to the Welsh Assembly and Westminster.

The fightback began with a meeting at the Senedd, Cardiff, where Mint staff and union officers outlined their fears to Assembly members over what privatisation would mean. While the Welsh Assembly has no devolved power over the Mint, members were encouraged by the overwhelming support they received.

A week later members took their message to MPs in Westminster, where they argued that there is no need to change the Mint's business model, given its recent record of success, profit generation and meeting all ministerial targets.

Prospect negotiator Gareth Howells said: "Staff believe this success should be consolidated through investment in new technology to develop the business, with any profits returned to the taxpayer rather than a private plc."

The threat of privatisation was raised in a Treasury report published in April which recommended the "introduction of private capital (which) will best allow the business to pursue further commercial opportunities ... which come from moving outside the public sector." As a result the Mint is to be vested as a government-owned company by the end of the year.

But, said Howells: "We question the wisdom in the current economic climate of taking a thriving public service and making it dependent on private capital.



■ **Gareth Howells (right) with Mint campaigners (from left) Neil Holley, Unite; Bob Duncan, Prospect; Christopher Franks, AM; Glen Evans, PCS; John Bunney, Unite**

"Companies taking on public sector work almost always seek to increase profits by cutting jobs, terms and conditions. Management have already indicated that staff joining after vesting will be on different arrangements but we do not want a two-tier workforce."

## Catherine Myles explains how Prospect is building a vibrant forum for young members



MEMBERS FROM 27 different branches came to New Prospect House on September 30 to learn about their union, share experiences and issues of concern, and discuss how to take the youth agenda forward. They were joined by five members from Connect's youth network, who made a positive contribution to the day and gained an insight into Prospect and the jobs of its members.

Coincidentally, the convention's theme was 'Get Connected', showcasing the variety of ways young members can become active in the union and engage with their colleagues.

It proved to be an exciting day for everyone involved and an excellent opportunity to network with other members, reps and officers.

Through workshops and keynote speakers, delegates were able to choose which issues would be of interest to their colleagues and collect ideas on how best to



PICTURES: STEFANO CAGNONI

# 30 or under? We want to hear from you!

take them forward in their workplace.

So where does it go from here? This was our second young professionals convention, and by all accounts it was highly successful. Participants overwhelmingly supported the

■ **Young professionals with their conference bags, made from recycled plastic bottles**

idea of holding a similar event in the future, and some have volunteered to become part of the steering group which will oversee the network's development in the coming months.

They also told us the issues they were most keen to take forward, including:

- how to increase union membership among younger colleagues
- economic and social issues affecting young professionals
- career progression
- networking.

If you are aged 30 or under and interested in these issues, you could help us build the network into a dynamic, vibrant forum for young professionals by:

- attending steering group meetings which may eventually form the basis of a Prospect committee for young members
- letting us know how you're getting involved in union issues at your own workplace
- contributing stories and ideas for our *Young Professionals* newsletter
- participating 'virtually' through our new eNetwork. Once you have signed up for the network you will automatically gain access to the eNetwork when you log into the Prospect website.

■ If any of these options appeals, we would love to hear from you. Email [ypn@prospect.org.uk](mailto:ypn@prospect.org.uk) to express your interest and we will get back in touch.

# CHEAPER

## Car and home insurance for Prospect members

For a car or home insurance quote, call your exclusive member freephone number

# 0800 756 8305

For textphone: first dial 18001. Lines open 8am – 8pm Mon – Fri and 8am – 4pm Sat and 9am – 5pm Sundays and Bank Holidays. To help continually improve customer service, calls may be monitored and/or recorded.

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# It's good to be involved

## Trade unions and climate change make natural campaign bedfellows, Lynn Stephenson reports from Prospect's young professionals convention

FORTY MEMBERS aged 30 and under came to our young professionals convention for a day of workshops and speaker-led sessions, diverse in nature but with a shared message – it's good to get involved and make a difference.

The programme began with a thought-provoking talk from Paul Hampton, author of the Labour Research Department's booklet *Unions and Climate Change*.

He summarised five reasons for unions to engage with the debate on tackling this great issue of our time:

- **SCIENTIFIC:** a rise in global average temperatures would have a major impact on people's lives and working conditions
- **INDUSTRIAL:** around half of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions come from work-related activity
- **SOCIOLOGICAL:** climate change would have its biggest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people – a basic social injustice
- **POLITICAL:** the context in which we work is already changing because of climate change – eg the creation of carbon trading schemes, new legislation, taxation
- **ECONOMIC:** what will happen to jobs in a low-carbon economy?

Paul said unions are central to the debate because:

- they have a sustained interest in climate change – Prospect in particular has a long track record on the subject, and had raised climate change at the TUC Congress 20 years ago
- equality and social justice are key union concepts, and the transition to a low-carbon economy needs to be negotiated and agreed, rather than left to the free market
- unions are a national and international force: with 168 million members across the globe, they are the biggest voluntary organisation in the world and play a key role in raising people's awareness.

## 'A brilliant, thought-provoking, exciting and informative day'

Paul answered members' questions about how to reduce their own carbon footprint and negotiate on carbon budgeting in their workplace. Transition to a low-carbon economy could be both socially just and affordable, he said.



PICTURES: STEFANO CASIMIRI

■ Above, reporting back on the learning lounge workshop, and below, the networking exercise



■ Within five minutes the room was buzzing with conversation ...



■ Hampton – reduce your carbon footprint



■ Scovell – to the rescue with employment rights

His talk was followed by a workshop where members shared ideas for making an impact on climate change and engaging colleagues in their workplace. They discussed simple initiatives – such as reminding colleagues to switch off their computers – to bigger projects such as incentive schemes and negotiating green policies with employers.

## 'Really helped us network'

Prospect organiser Chris Perry led a second workshop called 'Prospect for beginners' – an informal quiz giving newer members the chance to learn about the union, who it represents and how it functions.

Guest speaker Kate Smurthwaite, a comedienne and activist, was unable to attend because she was unwell. Luckily, Prospect's legal officer Marion Scovell came to the rescue and gave a whistlestop tour of employment rights at work, followed by a lively question and answer session.

The afternoon's workshops featured a 'learning lounge' to showcase ways to engage members around learning opportunities, and a speaker-led discussion about international development which focused on modern-day slavery in south-east Asia.

## 'Many ideas on how to take my role in the union forward'

Krishna Upadhyaya and Jeff Howarth from Anti-Slavery International said that around 600,000 people in the Punjab region alone were estimated to be bonded labourers – when their labour is demanded as a way to repay a loan. That person is then tricked or trapped into working for very little or no pay, often for seven days a week. The value of their work is invariably much greater than the original sum of money borrowed.

Jeff and Krishna said union members could help to fight modern slavery by raising awareness among their friends and colleagues, and encouraging people to join Anti-Slavery International's campaigns network at [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

## 'Like platonic speed-dating'

The final session was a networking exercise led by management coach Lennie Egboma. She gave members a series of questions which could be used to break the ice and make connections with people they didn't know. Within five minutes the room was buzzing with conversation; by the end of the session each member had spoken to at least six others, and found people with common interests and experiences.

# Miracle recovery for crash survivor

A PRESTON member who was given only a 50:50 chance of survival after being hit by a 42-tonne articulated lorry has returned to work against all the odds.

Robert Potter, 29, a traffic officer with the Highways Agency, sustained devastating injuries when a drunk driver ploughed into his stationary vehicle on the hard shoulder of the M56 in Cheshire, where he and a colleague were waiting to assist a member of the public. The driver of a car parked in front of him was killed.

Robert's catalogue of injuries included a dislodged jaw, snapped chin, fractured rib, fractured orbital and torn septum. He suffered brain injury and multiple brain haemorrhages so severe that medical staff had to put him into a coma to treat him.

Robert underwent more than two years of therapy and rehabilitation. Although much improved, he has lost his short-term memory and required further surgery to his

chin and nose to help him breathe.

Doctors said it was a miracle he survived, though Robert has now returned to work with support from Prospect and the agency. He now participates in public safety training and is taking legal action against the driver.

He said: "The accident had a devastating effect on my life and has effectively stolen my memory. I've had a flashback leading up to, but not including, the incident that is visual and audible.

"I suffered from short attention span for a time, which has thankfully gone, and occasional mood swings which I have learnt to cope with through my rehab. I've also been told I could develop epilepsy.

"I'm now back at work doing a job I love. The accident has given me a whole new outlook on life – I intend to enjoy every minute. I cannot thank Prospect and the Highways Agency enough for the support they've provided me and my family over the



■ Potter – 'back at work doing a job I love'

last two years."

Tracey Graham of Russell Jones & Walker, the solicitor representing Robert, said the HGV driver was four times over the legal limit, speeding and driving without due caution.

"He failed to make any effort to steer the lorry away from Robert and the stationary car and, as a result, has had a catastrophic impact on his life. We are working hard to secure a payment that will go some way to compensate him and his family for the trauma they have been through and the battles they still face."

## CLAIMLINE

**IF YOU feel you have a personal injury claim or would like to talk to an expert, call the 24-hour Prospect ClaimLine on the number below. You will have the reassurance of knowing that a legal specialist will handle your claim quickly and efficiently.**

**0800 587 4543**

## 'RESPECT ROAD WORKERS' PLEA

**THE HIGHWAYS Agency is urging the public to show respect for the thousands of road workers whose safety can be jeopardised by bad drivers.**

**Each day more than 4,000 road workers – approximately one for every mile of the agency's network – put their trust in the**

**hands of 18 million other road users.**

**Between 2003 and 2008, 11 roadworkers were killed and 104 were seriously injured while working on motorways and major roads in England.**

■ **More information and resources are at [www.highways.gov.uk/20631.aspx](http://www.highways.gov.uk/20631.aspx)**

# Support for test centres is growing

OPPOSITION TO a government agency's policy of closing down road safety testing stations for heavy goods and public service vehicles mounted this month.

Industry and unions have joined forces to oppose plans by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency to switch 85 per cent of safety tests to privately run testing facilities by 2012.

Two magazines – *Motor Transport* and *Commercial Motor* – have jointly posted a petition on the 10 Downing Street website calling on the government to halt the closure of more test stations until all HGV operators have a viable alternative.

While welcoming the petition, Kevin Warden, Prospect and trade union side secretary for VOSA's 2,700 staff, said it did not go far enough.

"The petition rightly calls for a halt to the closure of any more VOSA testing sites, but only until a network of privately-run facilities is in place. What we would like to see is a rationalisation of the existing sites to create the modern, accessible capacity needed to serve the public's road safety needs for the next 40 years."

Warden said there was scope to explore

co-location with some Driving Standards Agency sites, thus meeting DSA's needs while still saving on estate costs.

The launch of the petition came soon after the Commons transport committee strongly warned against privatising the network of 90 testing centres, fearing it would significantly reduce access to testing, particularly in remote areas.

■ **Test centre members have reacted angrily to attempts to impose new terms and conditions**



At a recent meeting of VOSA trade unions, members expressed fears that the proposals had not been properly thought out and that unrealistic Department for Transport targets were setting up the agency for failure.

Even the business case, the meeting heard, has not been properly costed. DfT funding for the programme runs at around £3m a year but it does not take account of the number of staff removed from frontline activities to work on the project or consultancy fees, which last year exceeded £10m.

Prospect has criticised the agency for failing to take up £64m of funding granted by government in 2008 for investing in the stations, in favour of its privatisation agenda.

Negotiator Helen Stevens said members had already reacted angrily to an attempt to impose new terms and conditions without consultation in support of the new process.

"These would have required all staff to do shiftwork and longer hours for no more money, with weekend working and the threat of disciplinary action if they failed to accept." After strong protests by Prospect the threat of disciplinary action has been lifted and talks continue.



## LIKE SON, LIKE FATHER

THE USUAL 'like father-like son' relationship was turned on its head when Marc and Bill Howard joined Prospect.

Twenty-nine-year-old Marc took the plunge first after he joined the Highways Agency as a traffic officer in 2008.

When his dad took up a similar job at the same Watford Gap outstation a few months later, he followed his son into the union.

"We both felt the same way – we wanted the insurance and back-up from the union if we ever had a problem," said Marc.

Indeed, a few months ago Bill's vehicle was struck on the side by another vehicle while he was on duty, although he was unhurt. "That brought home to him that these things really can happen," said Marc.

Marc and Bill are not allowed to work on the same shift – but they still see plenty of each other. "We live 200 yards apart on the same estate in Northampton," said Marc.

Let's hope things stay as friendly when one of them gets promotion...

## PENSIONS 'SAFE' FROM NEGATIVE INFLATION

INFLATION FOR the year to September 2009, as measured by the retail prices index, was announced this month to be minus 1.4 per cent.

September RPI is the measure used to uprate state, public sector and many private sector occupational pension schemes each April. But a negative figure does not mean that pensions will decrease next April.

Neil Walsh, Prospect's pensions officer, said most members are protected against falls in pension income due to negative RPI. "For example, the basic state pension is increased by the RPI each year but government policy is that it should increase by at least 2.5 per cent – whatever the rate of inflation.

"Similarly, most final salary schemes, such as civil service pensions, are increased if RPI is positive but do not decrease if it is negative."



# DC – a different sort of pension

**If you don't do the homework on your defined contribution scheme you'll regret it, says Neil Walsh, Prospect pensions officer**

RECENT RESEARCH has confirmed that defined contribution (DC) pension schemes are fast becoming the norm for workers in the private sector.

Figures from the Association of Consulting Actuaries show that nearly nine in 10 defined benefit (DB) schemes are closed to new entrants. Prospect's own research shows that 75 per cent of the largest employers in the electricity sector now only offer defined contribution schemes to new entrants.

DC schemes are actually just a different way of providing pension benefits. Many good quality DC schemes, like those negotiated by Prospect in the nuclear, air traffic control and electricity sectors, are comparable to defined benefit schemes.

But in most cases we know that DC schemes involve lower employer contributions and hence lower benefits than traditional DB schemes. As a result, members of defined contribution schemes usually have to choose between making higher contributions, working longer or surviving on a lower income in retirement than their



■ Walsh – get in touch if you would like to help

colleagues in DB schemes.

These new, money purchase pension arrangements provide a completely different set of challenges for members who are planning for retirement. And, of course, the same is true for Prospect in trying to represent members of these schemes effectively.

Members of DC schemes need to:

- understand what level of income they need to target in retirement
- anticipate their likely level of projected income
- realise the risks and uncertainties that underlie retirement planning
- decide how to react if projected income falls below target
- know how to maximise the value of their pension arrangements.

Any one of these tasks can be complicated in its own right. In combination, the challenge of properly preparing for retirement can be so daunting that many members put off acting on it for years. Prospect too has to respond to the changing pensions environment in order to help members in DC schemes make appropriate plans.

Increasingly, Prospect is seeking to communicate with members of defined contribution schemes about how to maximise the value from their pension contributions and how best to plan for retirement. Branches are launching a

variety of member publications on different aspects of DC schemes and there is national guidance on the pensions pages of the Prospect website, eg on Open Pension Schemes in the Electricity Industry.

Making improvements to these schemes has risen to the top of the negotiating agenda in many branches, in particular the need to increase employer contributions which can be as low as 3 or 4 per cent. In some cases they have achieved significant success – obviously this is one of the best ways to provide a decent level of income for every retired member. A number of branches have been holding seminars specifically for members of these schemes.

While these steps are welcome they are not all happening in every area with a high number of members in DC schemes. Like all trade unions, Prospect is a member-led organisation and it takes members to get involved, whether to ask for seminars or to persuade their branch to prioritise employer contributions.

■ Prospect undertakes specific training for reps and officers who are dealing with DC scheme issues. Any member willing to take a greater role in helping their fellow members plan for retirement and push these issues up their branch's agenda is encouraged to contact Neil at [neil.walsh@prospect.org.uk](mailto:neil.walsh@prospect.org.uk).

# Public pay cuts will cost us all dear

THE POLITICAL conference season was characterised by voices from all the parties arguing that economic recovery now depends on significant cuts to pay and jobs across the public sector, and this agenda has been adopted with enthusiasm by the tabloid press.

Is this fair and is it the answer?

There is no doubt that manufacturing, construction and some parts of the retail sector have so far borne the brunt of job losses and pay freezes. It is also true that the latest official data on average earnings growth, excluding bonuses, reveal a significant gap between the private sector, at 1.2 per cent, and the public sector, at 3.4 per cent.

But the reality is more complex than a simple public-private sector divide.

As Incomes Data Services has reported, public sector bargaining units that were already part of a long-term pay deal before 2009 have done markedly better than others – not least because many such deals were negotiated when inflation was significantly higher. It is easy to forget that just a year ago the all-items retail prices index stood at 4.2 per cent, and was at a similar level in 2007.

However, the median rate for new public sector deals is currently 1.5 per cent, closely reflecting government policy until the chancellor's most recent announcement (story, page 3). According to IDS, this level of settlement contrasts sharply with experience in the private sector, where those industries and companies not much affected by pay freezes are mainly receiving increases at or above 2 per cent. For example, Prospect settlements in the energy sector are currently averaging 2.99 per cent.

That said, it is clear that the overall trend for both earnings and pay settlements is sharply downwards, in the latter case from



STEFANO CARNONI

**Political agendas intended to drive down public sector pay will do everyone real economic harm, says Sue Ferns**

## KEY INDICATORS

Average earnings (inc bonuses, year to Aug)	1.6%
Average earnings (exc bonuses, year to Aug)	1.9%
Private sector (inc bonuses, year to Aug)	1.2%
Private sector (exc bonuses, year to Aug)	1.5%
Public sector (inc bonuses, year to Aug)	3.2%
Public sector (exc bonuses, year to Aug)	3.4%
Retail Price Index (year to Sep)	-1.4%

a median of 3.5 per cent in 2008 to 2.3 per cent today.

But this impact is a consequence of economic recession, not a solution to it.

It is of key importance that political sparring does not continue to divert attention from informed economic analysis and debate. In fact, there is a remarkable degree of consensus about the need to bolster consumer confidence and demand. The Bank of England's most recent inflation report recognised that the current policy of 'quantitative easing' in monetary and fiscal policy will play a key role in stimulating economic activity – especially given the collapse in UK asset values and continuing weak levels of bank lending.

The TUC and CBI share concerns that, although the latest GDP data suggest that steep falls in output may now be behind us, the recovery is likely to be protracted and fragile. Both organisations have argued against immediate sharp cuts in public spending.

Similarly, the Work Foundation has

cautioned: "Much could still go wrong – the government must hold its nerve and not make premature cuts in the public sector before the private sector is back on its feet."

However, the last word should go to David Blanchflower, a former member of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee and the only one to correctly forecast the recession. Blanchflower has warned:

"The time for cutting public spending is not now, not next year and not the year after ... Unemployment is going to continue to rise this year and may keep on rising ... If spending cuts are made too early and monetary and fiscal stimuli withdrawn, unemployment could easily reach four million. If large numbers of public sector workers are made redundant and there are substantial cuts in public spending in 2010 ... five million unemployed or more is not inconceivable."

The Pre-Budget Report, due in November, will provide the next focus for cross-party debate. It is to be hoped that the politicians can rise to it.



STEFANO CARNONI

■ Emily Boase with National Grid reps Darryl Taylor (left) and Tony Hastie during a dispute over control room overtime pay earlier this year which won key improvements from management

## GRID UNIONS UNITE ON PAY AND STAFF RIGHTS

FOUR UNIONS at National Grid are in dispute in a bid to protect the terms and conditions of the next generation of workers and achieve a decent pay offer for all staff.

Members, including 1,000 Prospect engineers, managers and specialists, this month voted by ten to one to throw out an offer of just 1 per cent plus an unconsolidated 1 per cent lump sum.

They are incensed at a condition imposed by the company that annual leave will be reduced for new entrants, and at losing the right to company funding of private medical insurance.

The unions have withdrawn from all formal and informal joint bodies and from discussions with the company, except for matters

directly relating to operational safety, redundancies and disciplinary action.

Prospect national secretary Emily Boase said: "Our members are very upset at their treatment when National Grid posted profits of almost £3bn last year – up 12 per cent. They also feel a duty to protect the working conditions of future employees.

"That's why we will be seeking authority from the national executive to ballot for industrial action in November."

● Prospect is backing a joint union campaign to 'put an end to National Greed' as National Grid threatens 189 redundancies in the wake of plans to outsource to India shared services currently provided in Newcastle, Northampton and Warwick.



BRITISH LIBRARY

■ Workers at British Energy's Dungeness site

## ENERGY OFFER IS INCREASED

PROSPECT AND other unions at British Energy Generation are to recommend a new pay offer of 3 per cent to members after they rejected an earlier one of 1.7 per cent. EDF Energy, the company's new owners, made the offer on the basis that planned output at the company had been exceeded.

**CE ELECTRIC UK**

Members have agreed an offer for 2009 pay worth 3.83 per cent, effective from April 1.

**Paycheck****CEFAS**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 2.6 per cent, effective from April 1. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 2 per cent.

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

Members have had an offer for 2009 pay imposed by management. The deal is worth 4 per cent, effective from April 1. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 2 per cent and is the second year of a three-year deal.

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Members have had an offer for 2009 pay imposed by management. The deal is worth 3.68 per cent, effective from April 1 and is the second year of a three-year deal. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 3 per cent.

**DIAMOND LIGHT SOURCE**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 2.25 per cent, effective from October 1.

**EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT**

Members have had a pay freeze for 2009 pay imposed by management, effective from April 1. Members will receive a 1 per cent non-consolidated bonus.

**FLAGSHIP TRAINING**

Members have agreed an offer for 2009 pay worth 2.7 per cent, effective from April 1. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 2.5 per cent. Staff below the lower third of the pay band receive a 3 per cent increase to ensure progression.

**NATNL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND**

Members have agreed a three-year settlement worth 5.5 per cent, effective from August 1, 2008. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 5.14 per cent. Headline increases in year 2 and 3 are worth 2.2 and 2.17 per cent respectively.

**ORDNANCE SURVEY**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 3.9 per cent, effective from August 1. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 2 per cent. The deal is the third year of a three-year settlement.

**RESEARCH COUNCILS**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 3.6 per cent, effective from July 1. The deal is the third year of a three-year settlement.

**RURAL PAYMENTS AGENCY – HMI**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 2.41 per cent, effective from July 1.

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

Members have accepted an offer for a two-year settlement worth 1.5 per cent, effective from August 1.

**VETERINARY LABS AGENCY**

Members have accepted an offer for 2009 pay worth 2.5 per cent, effective from April 1. The minimum increase to individuals is worth 2.25 per cent.

# Efficiency pay logjam blamed on Treasury

THE NEW flexibility for bargaining units in the civil service to recycle efficiency savings into pay has proved to be a big flop.

According to a survey of 55 departments and agencies by Prospect, not one bargaining unit has so far been able to extract value-for-money savings to finance pay increases.

After intensive prompting by Prospect, this year's pay remit guidance for the first time allowed employers to use efficiency savings for pay.

But the deadline for bids from departments was so tight – bids had to be with the Treasury by the end of May even though the remit guidance was only issued at the end of March – that most employers decided not to claim.

"Another factor is that the criteria were so unclear and unachievable that many units were put off even attempting to draft a business case," said Jonathan Green, Prospect pay and public services officer. That was the case with Defra, the Forestry Commission, Tate Gallery and the Environment Agency.

Faced by competing claims on their resources it was not clear to many permanent secretaries and chief executives



■ Green – process too bureaucratic

why any further efficiencies should be used to fund pay increases, Green said.

"Agencies and non-departmental public bodies had a further set of barriers to overcome. Their savings would only count if the parent department had reached its own efficiency targets, otherwise they would simply be swallowed up by the parent body." Organisations stymied by this argument include the Valuation Office Agency, Ordnance Survey, Cefas and the National Weights and Measures Lab.

Other units said they had no further scope for efficiency savings; were tied in by multi-year pay deals; had still not settled pay 2008; or claimed they had been discouraged from applying by the Treasury.

When Prospect put these concerns to the Treasury in the summer, it expressed surprise at the reaction of employers, though it conceded there may have been confusion over the timing of submissions and pay remits.

Jonathan Green said: "The pay process is already very bureaucratic and no-one wants to delay getting their main remit through by arguments over efficiencies. If it is to work, the whole process must be made easier to use."



STEFANO CUCONINI

## STAFF PUT THEMSELVES IN THE PICTURE

MEMBERS AT a national museum found an unusual way to demonstrate against attacks on their terms and conditions – they staged an 'alternative' centenary photograph.

Twenty-six members chose the day of an official staff photograph in October to stage a protest photo-opportunity at the Science Museum in London.

They were objecting to the way the museum has abandoned agreed policies on pay and grading by imposing its own rates of pay, ignoring the rules for pay on promotion and leaving the grading of posts undefined.

The latest management ploy is unilaterally to increase the notice period individuals have to give before they can leave the employ of the museum.

Negotiator Andy Bye said the museum could not change employment contracts

without the agreement of employees. "That is the meaning of the word contract," he said.

"Because the museum has not responded to our request to withdraw these amendments, we are advising members to write direct to the museum saying they do not accept the change."

The tactic adopted by the museum is to employ new staff on short-term contracts or on contracts issued by its trading arm. The branch wants the museum to agree criteria for defining which posts are museum or trading company posts, and to commit to return to proper consultation and negotiating procedures with unions.

"We are encouraged that on the day staff posed for their photograph, management immediately called us in for a meeting to discuss the situation," said Bye.

## BVT GETS HEAVY

THE DISPUTE over changes to terms and conditions at BVT, the shipbuilding alliance taken over by BAE this summer, has got worse. Although the company has dropped a controversial mobility clause (Profile 6/09) because of fierce opposition, pay talks have ended in stalemate.

Negotiator John Ferrett says the two sides are further from agreement than when the first offer was rejected. Having agreed to drop the mobility clause, BVT now proposes to abolish the four-day week for former VT staff and to remove collective bargaining rights from executive grades.

About 950 staff are affected, including most Prospect members. "The great majority are effectively being asked to surrender the union's right to negotiate on their behalf. And for just 2.5 per cent some members would have to work an extra day a week, with no compensation," said Ferrett.

# The future's bright – but only if we work together

TRADE UNIONS must work together for growth – they cannot go on as they are. With that clarion call **Paul Noon** won resounding backing from TUC delegates for a series of reforms to face up to the challenge of the new world of work.

The general secretary was moving a Prospect motion that called for action to reverse the long-term decline in both union membership and union density.

"Less than half of UK employees are in a workplace where a trade union is present, and unionisation of younger workers has fallen over the past decade," Noon pointed out.

The figures were down again in 2008 and fewer than one in six private sector workers was now in a union. Union density for men was down more than 9 per cent since 1995 alone.

All that was during a relatively benign political and economic environment – one that would come to a grinding halt in the event of a change of government, "one which, if the past record of Conservative administrations is anything



■ Noon – unions have to be imaginative

## Treasury puts pay before safety

WORKPLACE SAFETY was never far from the agenda at this year's Congress and formed the focus for two Prospect interventions.

Seconding a motion on seafarers' safety, negotiator **Philippa Childs** described the pressures on marine surveyors, including members working for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, who are responsible for checking conditions on board ships.

MCA's inability to compete with pay rates in the private sector meant it faced a severe staffing crisis, Childs told delegates, while demographic changes and the UK's shrinking maritime workforce had also increased the pressure.

"Unfortunately surveyors working in the agency are already facing increased workloads and stress because of these staffing shortages and find it increasingly difficult to meet targets for mandatory inspections."

Calling for support, she said the union's concerns had faced "the same intransigence from the Treasury that civil servants have experienced across the board despite the strength of the arguments or a compelling



■ Graham – blood runs cold



■ Childs – staffing crisis

Pictures: Stefano Cagnoni

to go by, will not be a friend of the trade union movement."

Noon set out some 'modest steps' to improve the position:

- avoid the alphabet soup of union names and exploit the much greater public recognition of the TUC, perhaps by using a TUC card as a gateway to individual union membership
- work more closely with the National Union of Students and increase work in schools and universities to raise understanding of the role of unions
- mount co-ordinated organising and recruitment campaigns, properly resourced for the long term.

Unions should shout louder about what they do, not only in wage bargaining and protecting individual members but in mounting the case for equality, for decent public services, for fairness at work, for protecting the environment. "These are issues which chime with the agenda of people who are not yet our members," said Noon.

"It may not be easy, but it's no use blaming governments, society or even non-members for not seeing the light and joining a union. We have to be imaginative, to be co-operative and most of all, we have to be bold."

His message won support from the Society of Radiographers, who wanted to see a rebirth of small-scale activism; the FDA, who cited evidence that unions working together were more successful than working apart; the Public and Commercial Services union, who said many people did not join simply because they had never been asked; the University and College Union, who asked how unions could make themselves relevant to young members; and Unison, who pointed to the strong links between membership and successful campaigning in the workplace.

business case."

Moving the motion, Nautilus delegate **Lee McDowell** said that as a British seafarer serving on a British-flagged ship, he was one of a group rarer than the number of blue whales in the world.

Aviation safety, particularly when servicing the needs of the increasingly "commercially competitive" oil and gas industries in the North Sea, was the subject of a motion from the pilot's union Balpa, seconded by Prospect's **Garry Graham**.

The motion called for a high-level summit into North Sea safety drawing on a broader range of expertise – including unions – than previous initiatives, such as the helicopter accident task group set up after April's fatal Super Puma accident.

Graham said: "My blood runs cold when I deal with employers who talk of gold-plated safety standards – not as a boast but a commercial challenge which needs to be addressed.

"The price of safety is eternal vigilance. Our members play a crucial and pivotal role in the safety chain – they are the safety chain."



■ Challenged by Prospect Sellafeld representative **Peter Clements** (above) as to what action Labour would take to keep the lights on after 2016, energy secretary **Ed Miliband** said the lights would stay on, but that the real question was how that energy was created. That meant doing more of it in "a green and low-carbon manner."

## Clean coal: it centre of UK

BACKING A call for action to progress a diverse and secure energy policy, Prospect's **Mike Clancy** stressed the huge job opportunities in replacing the existing infrastructure at a time when manufacturing industry is contracting.

But in replacing "ageing and carbon-inefficient generation" by moves towards a low-carbon economy, he said the energy mix must be balanced with a role for nuclear, coal, gas and renewables if the UK's carbon objectives were to be achieved.

The future policy framework contains commitments on renewables and nuclear new build, he said. "But cost-effective, industrial-scale carbon capture and storage technology is an essential contribution to global emission reductions in any scenario."

Clancy said this was not only because the UK has indigenous coal reserves but because of coal's importance for energy security. The intermittent



■ Clancy – balanced energy mix

## FORENSIC SELL-OFF A

**JOB CUTS** at the Forensic Science Service were not about improving standards or new technologies, **Sue Ferns** (right) told TUC delegates. "They're about slimming down an essential service to make it attractive to a private sector buyer so that it can be sold to raise money for the exchequer."

Prospect's head of research was supporting a motion from the Prison Officers Association opposing the privatisation of prisons, the probation service and the justice system.

Ferns warned that the loss of 800 jobs – 40 per cent of the FSS workforce – would mean longer journeys to scenes of crime and the courts, and delays in analysing evidence.

"The idea of creating a commercial market



# has to be at energy mix

nature of wind power meant "conventional generation has to be available and at short notice for difficult-to-predict time periods."

Nuclear plant could not react to these volatilities, leaving gas – which has its own carbon challenge – or clean coal as the options. However, the Prospect deputy general secretary warned, it is unlikely investors would build the plant to capture and store gas at high market prices when wind is unavailable, as it might have to hang around waiting for a long time.

Moving the motion, a miners' union representative said that the four CCS plants planned by 2020 would be inadequate. He warned that the UK faced a looming energy gap as a third of its electricity – 8GW – is due to be lost by 2015.

Highlighting the UK's reliance on politically unstable countries, the NUM called for government, not private sector investment, in new technologies.

"This is not a capital venture with profit in mind but a venture to save the planet." The motion was carried.

## 'DANGEROUS FANTASY'

in forensic science is a dangerous fantasy. No other country in the world has done it."

She thanked Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle for his "fantastic support" for the campaign, which had seen local protests, early day motions, parliamentary questions, a Westminster debate and an emergency inquiry by the home affairs select committee.



## CUTBACKS TO REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS VICTIMISE CIVIL SERVANTS

THE GOVERNMENT'S plan to scrap the terms of the civil service compensation scheme is a "cynical attack" that will see "long-serving public servants have their redundancy and pension arrangements slashed at a time when the risk of redundancy is greatest."

That was the warning from Prospect as **Geoff Fletcher** (right) seconded a motion on the proposed cuts to the compensation scheme, which the prime minister highlighted in his address to Congress.

Fletcher said public servants are seen as an easy target for the cuts needed to pay for the banking crisis. The Prime Minister's assertion that the focus would be on Whitehall conjured up images of 'Yes Minister' stereotypes with the public. But that was far from the reality.

He recognised the huge challenges facing the economy, and accepted that some change was necessary. But Fletcher said members were angry that better terms had been on the table and openly discussed during the negotiations. The proposals would mean civil service redundancy terms would become "the poorest of the whole public sector."

He called on delegates to support the bid by the civil service unions to get talks reopened in order to reach an agreement.

Moving the emergency motion, PCS general secretary **Mark Serwotka** accused Gordon Brown of "using his own workers as a cheap party political broadcast." The FDA representative warned: "This affects all civil servants, not just senior civil servants ... And t here are big implications for other public servants."



■ Donaldson – specialists seen as luxury

## Evidence-based policy failing for lack of specialists

SPECIALISTS ARE vital to good government and should be encouraged and retained. That was the message from Prospect president **Catherine Donaldson**, supporting a motion calling for democratic renewal in government.

While the wording called for seven steps to renew the public's faith in the parliamentary system and counter damage caused by the MPs' expenses debacle, Donaldson focused on the need for specialists and the role of select committees.

That government policy should be supported by objective analysis and consultation sounded both obvious and uncontentious, she told delegates. But "while the mantra is evidence-based policy making, the reality is that it doesn't happen automatically.

"Specialists in many areas are seen as a luxury and not a necessity and this has given way to the use of consultants, contractisation and outsourcing." Donaldson went on to quote a previous chief scientific adviser's complaint that: "The problem with an organisation that outsources all of its resources is that if it does it too rigorously, it no longer knows even which questions to ask."

Prospect strongly supported the call for properly resourced cross-cutting select committees which could "tackle departmental silos in decision making," and help to combat the regular readjustments needed to cope with departmental changes, she added.

Mover and FDA delegate **David Watts** told Congress: "The current climate deters the worthy from entering public life and, worse, the public's disdain for politicians is rubbing off on employed public servants."

Civil service unions had campaigned for the political impartiality of the civil service to be put on a statutory basis. This was now coming before parliament and must not be lost in the general election, he warned.

The motion was carried.

## Public pension scares will mean millions face poverty

A CO-ORDINATED campaign of misinformation had put public sector pensions under huge pressure in the run-up to the general election, Prospect told TUC delegates.

Seconding the call from GMB to counter the negative lobbying by business, media and politicians, Prospect's **Alan Grey** said both public and private sector pensions were under attack.

"A series of reports, articles and publications by many of the usual suspects have peddled half-truths and myths about public sector pension provision. Liabilities are exaggerated, costs inflated and risk reduction methods ignored."

In the private sector, three quarters of companies with final salary schemes had shut them to new entrants. Latest research



■ Grey – pensions not a burden

showed that half of the firms that still had such schemes expect to close them to all members by 2012.

In the electricity sector, members were under threat from the regulator Ofgem, which right now was seeking to drive down pension provision in companies that had relatively secure pension schemes.

Grey warned: "The more employers withdraw from contributing to their employees' pensions, the greater the future burden on the taxpayer because of paying out means-tested benefits."

The deputy vice-president praised the TUC for its timely campaign to highlight the £36bn in tax relief on pensions secured by the highest paid. He called on the TUC to develop a consensus on short-term measures the government could take to prevent defined benefit schemes from closing down.

He was backed by a string of speakers including Connect's **Adrian Askew**, who stressed that as a private sector union he had no interest in seeing public sector pensions join the 'race to the bottom.'

The Connect general secretary feared an "irreversible erosion" of defined benefit pensions because of the relentless scare-mongering. He urged unions to do more to communicate their vision, seek improvements to defined contribution schemes and fight for a decent standard of living in retirement.

# WHERE DO THEY STAND?

A general election is only months away – and after 12 years of living under a Labour government, the shape of the alternative is becoming clearer. It would mean big changes at the workplace for almost every Prospect member

**P**UBLIC SECTOR jobs are certain to bear the brunt of the Conservative party's assault on public spending if it wins the coming general election.

That much was predicted by shadow chancellor George Osborne to the party's conference in Manchester at the start of October.

Osborne did not mince his words. "The next Conservative government will cut the cost of Whitehall by one third over the next parliament," yielding "a £3bn a year saving in bureaucracy alone." He warned of "a constant process of rooting out waste, eliminating failing programmes, reviewing procurement and increasing productivity."

Specific measures targeted by Osborne and a series of shadow ministers, included:

- a freeze on public sector pay in 2010-11 (*story, page 3*)
- changes to pension arrangements for public servants (*see right*)
- cuts in redundancy pay
- more outsourcing of public services
- slashing departmental budgets by a third.

It added up to what one noted economic commentator called "a deep-seated antipathy towards the activities of large swathes of public sector employees. There is a venom in the way many people talk about it and an ill-concealed relish in the idea that it will soon be put to the sword."

Confirmation that redundancy payments would be targeted came from Tory shadow culture minister Ed Vaizey who called them 'too high,' 'unsustainable' and 'inflated far above private sector levels.' He said: "A Conservative government would work with the public sector unions to reduce the levels of severance payments in the public sector to a level more akin with the private sector."

Vaizey's colleague, shadow cabinet office minister Francis Maude, provided a welcome contrast to the doom and gloom by saying, "Conservatives will be a government that positively seeks and listens to the advice of its civil servants."

But he then spoiled the effect by criticising public sector productivity, which he said had not grown anything like as fast the private sector, and

insisting that public services did not have to be provided by the public sector.

Maude said there was 'a profound need' to deliver more for less and stressed: "Whichever sector is best at delivery for the taxpayer should win the contract."

A familiar refrain was the call to cut the number of civilians working for the Ministry of Defence because, according to Dr Liam Fox, shadow defence secretary, there are almost as many civilians as serving soldiers. He announced plans to ask the MOD to cut 'administration costs' by a quarter.

No matter that Dr Fox's tally of civilians in fact work for all three services, not just the army, and that the ratio of civilians to service personnel has fallen from 1.8 to 2.4 since 1997. No mention of the fact that they have been every bit as stretched as the armed forces in coping with the string of military interventions over the last 12 years.

"Some things will have to change," said Dr Fox. "And believe me, they will."

Lest anyone was in doubt about where he stood, Tory leader David Cameron added his own spin to the public services debate.

In a series of speeches, Cameron committed his party to tackling public sector pay and the 'big problem' of public sector pensions. He stated that his government 'won't be bound' by the agreements negotiated in 2004-06 that allowed civil servants and other public service workers to continue to take a pension at 60, and only imposed higher retirement ages on new entrants.

"This needs to be looked at again," said Cameron, once again pledging to end the 'pensions apartheid' between the public and private sectors.

Laying into the 'growth of the quango state', he declared: "Too many state actions, services and decisions are carried out by people who cannot be voted out by the public, by organisations that feel no pressure to answer for

Public sector

Tories 'won't be bound' by the agreements negotiated in 2004-06 that allowed civil servants and other public service workers to continue to take a pension at 60

## Pension age and equality issues are the targets

THE CENTREPIECE of Conservative employment policy is the decision to bring in a new state pension age of 66 – ten years earlier than planned by the government.

Announced at the Tory party conference by shadow chancellor George Osborne, the measure is claimed to save £13bn a year from 2016 when the pension age is raised, though the Tories have not yet decided how fast it would rise in later years.

A review will be set up to work out how the rise should be implemented and how it would tie in with the scheduled increase to 65 in the women's pension age, which starts to take effect in 2010.

The Conservatives say they will use the savings to follow Labour and phase in a return to the link between the state pension and earnings, abolished by Margaret Thatcher in 1980, rather than the current link to prices.

At the workplace, the key policy declared by Conservative leader David Cameron is that he would make pulling out of the EU social chapter a 'top priority.'

That would mean removing a series of guaranteed rights introduced under the chapter by the

present government. These include:

- providing parents with 13 weeks' unpaid leave to care for a child under five (Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999)
- requiring companies with at least 1,000 employees to establish structures (European Works Councils) for consulting workers on issues that affect them (Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 1999).

*Although the Conservatives deny they would repeal the equality bill, they have made clear that mandatory audits would be scrapped if they came to power*

- placing the burden of proof on the employer in employment tribunals to demonstrate that sex discrimination has not occurred (Sex Discrimination Regulations 2001)
- implementation of the right for part-time workers to the same pro rata terms and conditions as full-time workers (Part-time Workers Regulations 2000).

However, at this year's Conservative conference Ruth Lea, former head of policy at the Institute of Directors, cast doubt over Cameron's ability to deliver on his pledge.

"The social chapter was a special protocol at the time of Maastricht," she said, "but it was absorbed

into the major treaties during Amsterdam. The social chapter is therefore no more."

On the domestic front, Labour is fast-tracking the equality bill to gain royal assent next spring, on the grounds that if it is not re-elected there is a serious danger that the bill will not be implemented.

The bill would enable government to enforce mandatory gender pay audits on employers from 2013 if organisations do not voluntarily disclose the pay gaps between men and women employees.

Although the Conservatives say they would not repeal the equality bill, they have made clear that mandatory audits would be scrapped if they came to power. Theresa May, shadow secretary for work and pensions, says mandatory reporting should only be required for employers found guilty at a tribunal of gender discrimination.

A big question mark also hangs over the implementation of the Agency Workers Directive, which the government has put back until October 2011 and which the Conservatives have pledged to reverse.

However, David Willetts, shadow skills secretary, has made clear that the Tories will not scrap Train to Gain, the government's £1bn flagship skills programme, but will refocus it on creating more apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship training places.

## Energy light at the end of the tunnel?

ALL THE parties agree on the need to tackle the challenges of climate change for the sake of the planet, energy security and keeping the lights on. The political differences centre on how to get there and how soon.

Priorities for Prospect include:

- a just transition to decent, green jobs, where it is not the workers who pay the price. This will require proactive government involvement to ensure proper long-term planning, the right training and financial support
- making new nuclear build a reality and addressing the related supply chain and skills challenges
- solving the crisis in decommissioning funding – new build cannot be at the expense of cleaning up Britain's nuclear legacy
- creating an energy agency that sits outside party politics to provide long-term policy continuity to energy markets
- reforming the regulatory regime in electricity supply – Ofgem's approach seems to focus on attacking the workers in the industry, with its interference in their pension provision and refusal to acknowledge the importance of health and safety in setting pricing policies.

Labour's white paper on nuclear power in January 2008 marked a turning point, opening the way for genuine interest in investment from companies like EDF Energy, E.On and others.

The low-carbon transition plan in the summer detailed Labour's plans to deliver on renewables, clean coal and nuclear. It recognised the urgent need to reinvest in the UK's engineering skills base, including public investment.

Prospect is talking to both main parties about members' concerns. Conservative peer Lord Jenkin chaired a nuclear skills event co-sponsored by Prospect this month, and the union is set to meet shadow energy minister Charles Hendry.

However, energy appears to sit low on the Conservative action list. When the *Sun* declared its

continues page 18 ▶

## 'Bonfire of red tape' promised by Clarke

FAR-REACHING PLANS for reducing the regulatory burden on business have been announced by the opposition which would have a major impact on Prospect members.

Ken Clarke, shadow business secretary, says his party's proposals would get rid of a "millstone around Britain's neck" that is stifling economic recovery and playing havoc with public services.

At the Conservative party conference in Manchester, he pledged to introduce a powerful new 'star chamber,' to be chaired by the business secretary. This will enforce a stringent 'one in – one out' requirement whereby any new law must include cuts in old laws which, together, produce a net 5 per cent reduction in the regulatory burden.

Clarke said he would also:

- add a 'sunset clause' to all regulators and quangos
- curb the powers of 'intrusive inspectors' by allowing firms to arrange their own, externally audited inspections and, providing they pass, to refuse entry to official inspectors thereafter
- strengthen the accountability of regulators and inspectorates to parliament
- allow the public to nominate unpopular regulations to be reviewed by parliament.

According to Clarke, the sunset clause would mean that regulators and quangos "will automatically cease to exist after a set period unless they can prove their continuing usefulness." This test would be in addition to the existing requirement for departments to carry out business reviews of every non-departmental public body, where the first option is abolition.

A Tory government would also consult on (unspecified) changes to employment and discrimination tribunals, which would simplify the law to make it 'easier to hire people.'

But Clarke made no mention of the system of regulatory 'impact statements' brought in by the current government and which applies to all new legislation. Presumably therefore, this would stay.

He said that people should be given the responsibility to make judgements and not be forced to "tick boxes and fill in endless forms," adding: "These new policies are the biggest and most serious attempt to lighten the load and I hope they're the spark that lights the bonfire of red tape."

Employment

Energy

Regulation



► **PUBLIC SECTOR** continued from page 16

what happens – in a way that is completely unaccountable.

“In too many cases these organisations have got bigger and bigger. They spend about £64bn a year, they start having their own communications departments, their own press officers; they start making policy rather than just delivering policy – and their bosses are paid vast amounts of money.

“Many of them will be slimmed down radically, pay levels will be completely different and some of them will be abolished.”

The Tory leader concluded: “Public sector pay, gold-plated pensions, big procurement projects – whole swathes of state activity can no longer be sacrosanct.”

► **ENERGY** continued from page 17

Tory allegiance, David Cameron laid out ten key pledges, with neither energy nor climate change among them.

Asked in a recent interview with *Utility Week* if there would be an energy bill in the first session of a Conservative government, Hendry said there would be “a lot of competition for parliamentary time.”

He claimed his party was keen to see changes in terms of information to customers on bills, social tariffs and energy use comparisons but added: “This may be done as a separate, stand-alone piece of legislation or through a private members’ bill, rather than requiring a major energy bill.”

Alongside the urgent need to progress funding and skills issues, Prospect is also concerned at the Tory plan to abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission, launched on October 1. The IPC, which replaces eight planning regimes with a single process, will oversee planning applications for major projects such as power stations, electricity networks, renewable energy, roads and railways.

It aims to slash decision times from up to seven years to less than a year. But the Tories have launched a blistering attack on the body as part of their wider onslaught against quangos, proposing instead to leave the Planning Inspectorate to make recommendations to the secretary of state.

This would not only slow down decisions on nuclear planning but also on renewables. Since Tory councils already turn down 60 per cent of wind farm applications, that is not encouraging.

To *Utility Week*, Hendry praised what Labour has done in respect of nuclear power, suggesting the Office of Nuclear Development and the new Nuclear Forum should be a model in other fields.

He conceded that despite political point-scoring, there were not huge differences between the two parties. “We’ve gone out of our way to say that if we can find common ground with the government, then we want to do so.”

But it is not clear how this marries up with David Cameron’s emphasis on ‘small government’ and the ideological viewpoint that government is the problem, not part of the solution. The question remains: are his policies green ‘lite’ or will they really provide the green light to achieving a low-carbon economy?

# Why the green agenda is a jobs agenda

**The public sector should give a lead but the private sector must be involved in any drive to foster a low-carbon economy, was the message from a TUC meeting in Liverpool.**  
*Katherine Beirne reports*

THE CHALLENGES and opportunities for employment in a low-carbon economy were highlighted at a fringe event at this year’s TUC, where business minister Pat McFadden called for ‘a new generation of green-collar jobs.’

The minister urged the adoption of a green industrial strategy and stressed that unions have an active role to play in shaping Britain’s industrial future. While forthcoming climate change negotiations in Copenhagen were crucial, he said it is equally important to look at low-carbon options for energy, transport, heating and manufacturing, and how these could provide green jobs.

McFadden said the government had already invested up to £60m into wave and tidal energy research; £15m on new nuclear; £10m on new electricity and charging infrastructure; £6m on low-carbon homes and £120m into the offshore wind industry.

But, he added, the employment potential for green-collar jobs is enormous. “Currently there are 880,000 people in low-carbon industries and the sector is going to grow by 4 per cent per annum.

“Britain’s reputation as a good place to do business stands us in good stead,” he said, citing how the new Toyota hybrid will be built in the UK. “We’re told manufacturing is dying in this country, but it is still the sixth largest low-carbon and environmental economy in the world, with the expectation of creating an additional 400,000 jobs over the next eight years.”

McFadden concluded by highlighting the government’s plans to establish a ‘just transition forum’, bringing together government, employers, unions and civil society “to shape the country’s industrial future and to give people the chance to take part in it.”

TUC deputy general secretary Frances O’Grady told the meeting, organised by Unions21: “We face the biggest challenges at the time when we’ve had one of the biggest

financial crashes,” adding that pre-crash solutions had been shown to be redundant. “The market will not get us out of this, nor will it be business led.”

On the need for major infrastructure change, O’Grady said: “We would like to see the government being as bold in getting the money into place as some of its thinking has been on industrial strategy,” for example recouping and reinvesting some of the £25bn lost in tax avoidance.

Other areas she singled out for action included the creation of more opportunities for green upskilling and apprenticeships, and work to link procurement policies to green ideals.

But O’Grady said any action needs to be informed by the voice of workers; what was needed was not just “principled people but pragmatic people and we want to get them round the table. We have to tackle what this means for all workers, including those in high-energy industries such as steel or aviation.”

Stephen Hale, director of the Green Alliance, told the meeting that as only 8 per cent of the public described themselves as environmentalists “we’re not going to inspire transformation if we only appeal to a minority.

“The environmental and jobs agendas need to come together,” he said, adding that too many green decisions were driven by ‘a cost imperative’ and not through ensuring manufacturing and employment opportunities.

“This will be an expensive challenge,” he warned, “and one at which public money should not be thrown if the policy cannot also get private money to invest.”

Horst Heuter, from the Confederation of German Trade Unions, described how the introduction of a law in 1991 that rewarded renewable energy generators with a fixed sum for each unit of electricity they produced, had helped Germany gain the reputation for having the best structured energy policy in Europe.

This feed-in tariff was high enough to attract investors and encourage domestic industry to produce the hardware needed. Germany now gets 15 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources.



■ **How to create and keep green jobs in Britain was the subject of Prospect general secretary Paul Noon’s contribution to a new guide from the Green Alliance, launched at TUC**



■ **Sue Ferns, chair of Unions21, speaking at the 2009 TUC**

PICTURES: STEPHAN LONDON



■ **Greening it (l-r): Horst Heuter (CGTU), Stephen Hale (Green Alliance), Pat McFadden (BIS), Sue Ferns (Prospect) and Frances O’Grady (TUC)**

## Chris Dragunas sums up the key benefits and concessions available to older people

### Help with health costs

AFTER AGE 60 you are entitled to free NHS prescriptions. If you get pension guarantee credit you should receive free dental treatment, travel costs to hospital, eyesight tests and help towards the cost of your glasses.

### Long-term care

If you need to go into a care home on a permanent basis this may be funded by your local authority. But you may have to meet all the costs if you have more than £23,500 in savings and capital, including the value of your main residence. Income is also taken into account, depending on your circumstances. (Advice on how to protect your assets from long-term care costs can be provided by Affinity – see below.)

### Attendance allowance

This benefit is for people who are over age 65, have been physically or mentally ill or disabled for at least six months and need help with personal care, eg dressing, washing, moving around at home or supervision, even if they live with another person.

If you need help in the day or night the rate is £47.10. If you need help day and night it is £70.35. For further information contact the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 882200.

### Disability living allowance

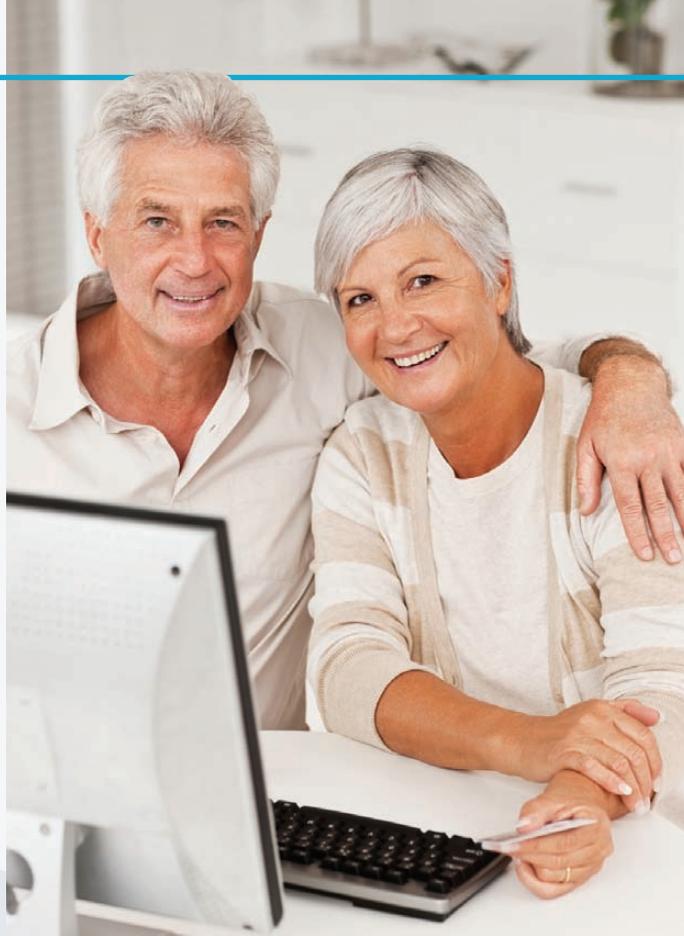
**Care:** For people under age 65 who are physically or mentally ill or disabled and need help with personal care, eg washing, dressing, getting in/out of bed, or supervision even if living with another person. It is paid at three rates: £70.35 if care is needed day and night, £47.10 if care is needed day or night and £18.65 per week if care is needed part of the day.

**Mobility:** This is for people under age 65 who cannot or have had great difficulty walking, or who have needed help when walking outdoors for at least three months. Paid at either £49.10 or £18.65 per week.

For further information contact the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 882200.

### Carer's allowance

Carer's allowance pays £50.55 per week to people who work at least 35 hours a week, earn a maximum of £95 a week after the deduction of certain expenses, and care for someone receiving the top or middle rate of DLA or any rate of attendance allowance or some types of constant attendance allowance.



## MARRIED WOMEN'S PENSIONS

WE APOLOGISE for the omission of a commencement date in respect of the change to the married woman's pension reported in the article in *Profile 6/09* about state benefits. This should have read:

A married woman can claim a pension based on her husband's national insurance contributions of up to 60 per cent (£57.15 in 2009-10) of his entitlement, once they both reach state retirement age, provided her own NICs would not have entitled her to a higher pension. As of April 6, 2010 a married woman will be able to draw a pension based on her husband's NICs even if he elects to defer taking his own state pension, provided they have both attained state retirement age. If born after April 6, 1950 married men and female civil registered partners also qualify to claim against their partner's NIC record from May 1, 2010; male civil partners qualify from April 1, 2015.

# When you're 60 – or over

**You may have to meet all the costs if you have more than £23,500 in savings and capital, including the value of your main residence**

Claiming other benefits could affect this allowance for the carer and the person cared for. Seek advice before you make a claim.

### Payments for independent living

The independent living fund pays up to £455 per week for severely disabled people aged 16 to 65 who need to pay for care or household tasks in order to live at home. You must be claiming the highest level of disability living allowance, receive pension guarantee credit, income support or income-based jobseekers' allowance and receive services/cash from the local authority to a value of £320 a week/£16,640 per year and have a maximum of £23,000 savings or capital (including that of a partner).

Local councils can also provide cash payments (direct payments) as an alternative to arranging community care services. For information, contact the social services department of your local authority.

### Help with house repairs

If you are entitled to pension credit you may be able to claim a community care grant or budgeting loan to help with the cost of minor repairs or decoration, adapting or improving living conditions. This is a discretionary scheme and should give priority to vulnerable and older people.

### Travel concessions

Eligible disabled people and people of 60 and over are entitled to free off-peak bus travel, including weekends, public holidays

and journeys across local authority borders. Restrictions may apply, eg reserved seats, temporary or tourist services, rail replacement or where extras are provided such as refreshments. Ask your local council for information.

If you are 60 or over and you have a local authority travel pass or are disabled, you can get coach fares at half price. This is a voluntary scheme and includes the major coach provider National Express. Rail companies also give reductions on many train fares to people of 60 or over with a senior railcard.

### Television licences

TV licences are free for households with a person aged 75 or over. People who are registered blind can receive a 50 per cent reduction. There are £7.50 concessionary licences for people who live in care homes or certain local authority or housing association property. See [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)

If you require any further details about this information, please visit [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk) or contact Affinity Financial Awareness on 01275 461970 or email [enquiries@affinityadvise.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@affinityadvise.co.uk)

■ *This article has been provided by Affinity Financial Awareness Limited, an independent financial adviser specialising in investment, tax planning and long-term care advice to present and former civil servants. Affinity Financial Awareness Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.*



NEC member  
**Nick Wadge**  
would like  
nothing better

than the chance to go head-to-head with the politicians who make a living out of knocking Britain's defence workers. Graham Stewart reports

NICK WADGE has a dry sense of humour and a natural talent for delivering a damning statement in the honeyed burr of the born and bred Devonian. He was also deployed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary towards the end of the first Gulf war and served in two tours of Bosnia as part of the UN task force.

Not bad for someone who started training as a chef after leaving school, before he took a temporary job with the Ministry of Defence 30 years ago.

"Like the stereotypical boy, I wanted to be a firefighter," says Nick, who now specialises in logistical health and safety and works at the Devonport naval base, Plymouth.

As one of the unheralded band of MOD civilians who have been deployed on operational duties, Nick is frank about the current deluge of media reports critical of MOD and its staff and the perceived shortcomings of the department.

"In 30 years of service I have never felt so undervalued by my employer. Having newspaper headlines thrown in members' faces day after day is not good. As public servants, we are easy targets who can't hit back.

"The majority of what's written is inaccurate claptrap. Rebuttals do not sell papers so our story gets very little coverage. For example, within MOD we have shown that outsourcing jobs results in higher costs to UK plc.



■ Nick on a regular tour around Devonport base. In the background is the Royal Navy's biggest warship – the helicopter carrier HMS Ocean

## On a mission to persuade



PICTURES: TONY CANNERY

**We must maintain our current levels of service to members and reinforce our position of being the pre-eminent union for professionals**

"Despite our pragmatic presentation of the facts, Treasury-driven, short-term savings are the only voice heard in MOD. We have successfully defended jobs; but the frustration is that if one cost-cutting measure is stifled then the department will try another to get the same result. Unfortunately we are all too often in the process of managing decline on behalf of our members."

Nick is just as blunt about politicians like Liam Fox (shadow defence secretary) and Nick Clegg (LibDem leader), who jump on the media bandwagon and lay into MOD staff.

"I have heard the saying 'never let the facts get in the way of a good story'. The soundbite nature of politics means we will always suffer from this type of comment. I would like to extend an invitation to Messrs Fox and Clegg to come and discuss their comments with Prospect members who deserve the opportunity to refute them and explain to them what they

actually do. We could view it as 'sharing best practice' between public servants!"

Although angered by the media witch-hunt, he is also clear that MOD must change. "MOD needs to stop paying lip service to the consultative process. Officials will say they do consult, but the union has heaps of evidence where agreed processes have not been followed.

"The department says it recognises that this is an issue. But that realisation needs to be acted upon. Dialogue is a two-way process."

Nick joined the union in 1985 and is currently a full-time Prospect rep. He sits on the national executive and the civil service sector executive, is a MOD group councillor and chairs the MOD health and safety committee. It is a mighty workload and luckily for Nick he enjoys every minute.

"When it's needed the support given by the union is superb," he says. "When I started at the naval base I was surrounded by the 'Devonport mafia' – two stalwart

WEBWISE

Lynn Stephenson explains how members can now access a range of web pages related to their needs

## eStructures go live!

IF YOU'VE logged into the website since the middle of October you may have noticed a number of new links on the left-hand side: eBranches, eGroups, eNetwork and eSector.

If you're curious enough to click through, you'll see that these are part of our major expansion of the eBranch system.

Since 2005, branches have been able to host their own space on the Prospect website: a private area that only logged-in members of that branch can see, plus optional public pages which they can use for recruitment or campaigning purposes.

We've now expanded the system so that sections of branches can have their own space, as can our groups, networks and sectors.

They'll help us keep members informed

about issues that are directly relevant to them, and enable those members to communicate with each other.

Many members will be covered by more than one structure. The website recognises this when they log into the site, and automatically gives them access to members-only content of all the relevant eStructures. For example, if you're a librarian working for the Department for Transport branch you would see the civil service eSector as well as the DfT eBranch and the librarians and information professionals eGroup.

But the system is designed so that you also get access to the public content of all our eStructures.

Confused? Here's how it works:



There are currently 99 eBranches, two eGroups, one eNetwork and one eSector. It would be impossible to provide direct navigation links to all of them, so we've batched them together.

If you visit the website without logging in, you'll see generic links to eBranches and eGroups. These will take you to a list of all the eBranches/eGroups that have got public pages. You can click through to see that public content.

You'll also see direct links to the Young Professionals eNetwork and the Civil Service

# UNION EYES

reps in the shape of Albert Taylor and Ernie Buckeridge, who had a unique way of convincing you to join."

He has strong praise for the way Prospect is organised. "I believe the branch structure we employ is most successful. Members need to engage more, but it can be very fulfilling to become a representative. I am honoured by the support of members in electing me to the MOD group, the civil service sector and the national executive.

"I believe that accepting a position also means accepting responsibility. With my election to the NEC in 2008, I feel I now have the responsibility of helping to ensure the smooth running of the union and carrying the voice of the membership into that process."

Nick is positive about the future of Prospect and the challenges it faces in the next few years. "I believe the union is at the crossroads. Hopefully the members of Connect will confirm their conference decision to join us and that will be excellent news.

"We have already welcomed the Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers and the Association of Jersey Civil Servants into our union family. However, we must continue to maintain our current levels of service to members and reinforce our position of being the pre-eminent union for professionals."

Away from the naval base and Prospect, Nick has a partner, Sharon; daughter, Charlie; stepson, Jake; and a Beagle called Copper. "Weekends are really busy. Jake plays rugby for the Newton Abbot Colts team. Sharon and I both support the team with fundraising and I act as the team's physio. I was extremely proud last year when I was awarded clubman of the year.

"I am also involved in short-circuit motor sport. This is stockcar and banger racing on a quarter-mile circuit. The sport has been in my blood from the mid-60s. I had a dabble at racing in the early 80s but was just not good enough. When I returned from sea I used to assist at the local track and now officiate at race meetings. What little time is left I spend cooking or walking the dog."

eSector, because they're currently the only ones of their type. (Once we set up a new eNetwork, this will change: you'd then see a generic link to eNetworks, and would have to click through to see a list of them).

When you log in, the only immediate change will be a direct link to 'your eBranch' in the status box on the right. You'll see still see the same links on the left, but when you click through, you'll get access to additional content. For example, take eBranches and eGroups. When you click through, if you're a member of one of those branches or groups you'll get access to all their pages; if not, you'll just see the public pages.

We're continuing to test the best way of delivering this new content to you. If you have any comments or suggestions we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a line at [webmaster@prospect.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@prospect.org.uk)

## YOU SAY ALLAN, WE SAY ALAN

In the wake of the Ferguson row (page 5), the apogee of Wileygate appeared in the *Daily Mail* online, where former referee Graham Poll pronounced on the affair with a 'Good week, bad week for' approach. The bad week was in fact a bad week for the *Daily Mail*. Beside the story it posted a photograph of Allan Leighton (pictured), former chairman of Royal Mail, instead of our own Alan Leighton. "Next they'll put photos of me beside stories about the postal strike," said Alan.



## GAS-MISER POWER

Retired member Bill Hyde could teach modern drivers a thing or two about fuel economy. He recalls how, in 1952, he and his brother bought a 1934 Packard Straight Eight two-seater soft top. Driven without thought of economy it did seven mpg, or, more briskly, five mpg. But they got it up to 12 mpg. How? "We drove just fast enough to keep the engine running freely, accelerated gently, watched gradients and traffic well ahead, and coasted up to corners at a speed to avoid braking. The kinetic energy recovery system fitted to Formula 1 cars produces a power boost for a few seconds, barely worth its weight penalty. How much less in cars that don't waste energy by fierce braking and accelerating?"

## SUNFLOWER KING

When Nathaniel Brown took home a sunflower he had planted at school from seed, little did he know that he stood on the cusp of fame. Nat, the son of Prospect national executive member Freddie Brown, kept a careful eye on the plant over the summer holidays. "It grew and it grew," said his dad. "When it stopped it towered over him at more than 10 feet high." After their local paper, the *Liphook Herald*, carried an appeal for giant flowers, they published a picture of Nat and his plant in the garden of their Hampshire home, under the headline "Nat's even bigger." So far, he's still in the lead.

## JUST A MINUTE...

*Profile* would like to nominate the civil service's senior leadership team – the Permanent Secretaries Management Group – for a 'briefest minutes' award. The record of its May 2009 meeting, which considered the controversial proposals to reform the civil service redundancy arrangements, ran to a mere 81 words.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

The Taxpayers' Alliance is a successful pressure group that has done much to

undermine belief in the value of public service. Prospect members who were around when the Thatcher government was privatising and deregulating public services may recognise some of the people on the TPA's academic advisory council: Eamonn Butler and Dr Madsen Pirie of the Adam Smith Institute, Margaret Thatcher's former economic advisor Sir Alan Walters, and ex-Institute of Directors policy head Ruth Lea. Hardly 'ordinary' taxpayers. For a counter to the TPA's partisan views, look at [www.taxpayersalliance.org/](http://www.taxpayersalliance.org/)

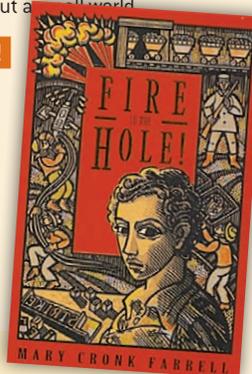
## PROSPECT'S GREAT FAMILY



Organiser Linda Wall had a great time getting away from it all on a late summer holiday in the Adriatic – or so she thought. She had gone ashore in Koper, Montenegro and was taking part in a walking tour of the old town, minding her own business, when there was a tap on her husband Dave's shoulder. "Are you a Prospect member?" asked the stranger, who had seen the Prospect string bag he was carrying. "Dave said he was but that it was my bag, as I was a Prospect organiser", said Linda. "We introduced ourselves and Alif Croxford turned out to be a member in the Ministry of Defence at Faslane who knew Alan Grey, our deputy vice-president." Talk about a small world.

## START THEM YOUNG!

It's never too soon to start teaching your children about unions – and with Christmas looming, here's a way to get them reading. A gripping American historical novel by Mary Cronk Farrell, *'Fire in the Hole'*, tells the story of 14-year-old Mick, son of a rough-hewn miner working for low wages in the silver mining district of Idaho at the turn of the century. Mick dreams of a life as newspaperman, until the miners' struggle against the ruthless mine owner turns his and his family's lives upside down. It's suitable for readers aged eight and above, and available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

An eleven-year error has been rectified at last. During a recent social encounter with Defra branch stalwart David Beddall, who retired in 1998, it became apparent that he had something to get off his chest. At the time, *Profile* reported that he worked as an animal health officer. We were wrong. David was in fact an horticultural advisory officer. Hope that sets the record straight.



# Christine's victory redresses the balance for women

## A marathon legal case won by an HSE inspector should spell the end of seniority-based pay systems

PROSPECT SECURED a landmark victory this month when the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of a health and safety inspector's challenge to seniority-based pay systems, after a legal battle lasting eight years.

The ruling in the case of Health and Safety Executive member Christine Wilson means that employers will need to have good reasons for using pay schemes where the number of years in the job determines the level of pay, if it means that women are paid less than male colleagues doing the same work.

The decision represents a major step forward in Prospect's long-running campaign against seniority-based pay systems. It should prove decisive in two equal pay cases which Prospect and its solicitors, Russell Jones & Walker, have been pursuing on behalf of Christine and fellow HSE member Bernadette Cadman.

Reacting to the decision, Wilson said: "I am delighted by the result. We have successfully challenged the injustice of women being undervalued at work. I am very grateful to the union – I simply could not have taken the case without their support."

### The seniority-based problem

Seniority-based or incremental pay schemes, widely used in both the public and private sectors, tend to disadvantage women. This is because women generally work for employers for shorter periods than men, either as a result of taking breaks to bring up their families, or they are late joiners to a traditionally male field, as in the Wilson and Cadman cases.

Prospect legal officer Marion Scovell has worked on both cases from the start. She explained that HSE's long pay scales make movement up the scale very slow, "so the difference in pay between women claimants and their male comparators can amount to thousands of pounds."

In fact, by the time of the original tribunal in 2003, Wilson had been in post as a fully trained inspector for over nine years and her three comparators were paid £5,000-£6,000 more than her.

### Cadman verdict

The latest decision in the Wilson case clarifies an earlier European Court of

Justice judgment in the 'sister' case of Bernadette Cadman v HSE. Cadman began her challenge to the HSE scheme in 2001 when she lodged an employment tribunal claim for equal pay. Christine Wilson started her claim in 2002.

In both cases the tribunals agreed that HSE's pay scheme disadvantaged women. But the decisions were subject to several appeals, and raised issues that have since been considered by different courts and tribunals at ten legal hearings.

The key issue is whether employers are required to justify the length of their pay scales where they disadvantage women. Initially, European case law suggested that challenging length of service in pay schemes was not permissible at all.

But in 2006, the European Court of Justice ruled in Bernadette Cadman's case that the employer was required to justify the use of long pay scales where the claimant provides 'evidence capable of giving rise to serious doubts' as to whether that pay system is justified.

### 'Serious doubts' test

Christine Wilson's case was the first time that an employment tribunal had to apply the new 'serious doubts' test from the Cadman ruling.

Prospect accepts that in many roles there is an initial period where experience in the job improves performance. But for how long is it appropriate to continue to reward time in the role, irrespective of whether it adds value for the employer? Prospect maintains that in most cases different levels of pay can be justified for up to five years, but no more.

Wilson's tribunal ruled that serious doubt could only be established in a few cases where the claimant could show it was completely inappropriate to use length of service at all.

However, Wilson appealed and an Employment Appeal Tribunal found the

■ *The winning team outside the Courts of Justice were (l-r): Marion Scovell, Christine Wilson, Bernadette Cadman, Emma Haworth (a partner at Russell Jones & Walker) and Ben Cooper of Counsel*

earlier ruling too restrictive and said that the length of the pay scale could be considered. But the EAT went on to say that the claimant must provide clear evidence that the pay scheme both disadvantages women and is inappropriate – 'serious doubt'.

HSE took this judgment to the Court of Appeal, where Wilson cross-appealed on whether the Cadman judgment had been correctly interpreted at her EAT.

### Court of Appeal ruling

Wilson's Court of Appeal hearing took place on June 18-19. The court agreed with the EAT, in that challenges to pay scales can include claims where the pay scale is argued to be too long, but found that the 'serious doubts' hurdle set by the EAT was too high.

In effect, its judgment emphasises that while an employee has to show that there is some basis for claiming that use of a length of service criterion is wrong, the burden of proving that the scheme is proportionate falls on the employer. This meant it could no longer evade the question.

In her judgment Lady Justice Arden emphasised that the right to equal pay is a fundamental principle and that:

"The need to protect rights arising from the use of service-related criteria is not an academic question, as it is common ground that women are often disadvantaged by the use of such criteria in pay schemes." (paragraph 35)

### Implications

Prospect will use the judgment in another 80 tribunal claims it is pursuing on similar grounds, which had been stayed pending the outcome.

Marion Scovell said: "Union negotiators have already had some success in pressing for shorter pay scales and this judgment greatly strengthens our ability to make further progress."

■ The full judgment is at <http://tinyurl.com/ygwtdt9k>



STEVEN GARDNER

**Prospect will use the judgment in another 80 tribunal claims it is pursuing on similar grounds**



■ Michael Clapham (left), chair of the Commons health and safety committee, and Paul Noon lobby MPs in 2003 against cuts in HSE resources



■ Aftermath – firefighters at the Buncefield oil depot which saw one of the largest explosions in Britain since the second world war in December 2005

# Health and safety: a law that has worked



UNIONS HAVE hailed the success of the Health and Safety at Work Act after figures issued on its 35th anniversary showed that the number of fatal injuries at work has fallen by 73 per cent since 1974, while injuries at work have declined by 70 per cent.

Prospect general secretary Paul Noon commented: "Despite all the difficulties caused by shrinking resources, the work of our members and everyone at the Health and Safety Executive is a beacon for positive intervention in the workplace.

"The views of those who deride health and safety as some sort of oppressive state interference are exposed for what they are by the HSE figures: a callous indifference to the right of every worker to go home without injury at the end of the working day."

The number of employees killed or injured at work is now at its lowest level since the HSW act was introduced by then employment secretary, Michael Foot.

The act took effect on October 1, 1974, a year in which 651 people were killed in work-related incidents. In the year ending March 2009, just 180 people died as a result

of work-based activity. The tragedy is that all too many of those victims are still the result of preventable accidents at workplaces.

The most recent Europe-wide statistics show that in 2006 Britain had the lowest rate of fatal injuries in the EU. That year, while Europe averaged 2.5 fatalities per 100,000 workers, the UK figure was just 1.3.

HSE identifies the reduction in employ-

## *The tragedy is that too many victims are still the result of preventable accidents*

ment in heavy industry as one factor that has affected the statistics, but says the legal requirement to protect workers' lives and enhance safety at work has clearly helped to drive improvements and raise standards.

Judith Hackitt, chair of HSE, said: "We now have one of the best combined health and safety records of any country in the world."

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "The Health and Safety at Work Act was one of the most important pieces of social

legislation of the past 50 years. It has helped transform the safety system in Britain.

"The act came about as a result of long-term campaigning by trade unions and safety campaigners, and has stood the test of time. But we must not rest on our laurels. While the death toll from injuries may have fallen considerably since 1974, the act has yet to have a major impact on occupational diseases such as musculoskeletal disorders, cancers and stress."

The TUC believes that while the Act placed a specific duty on employers, the lack of a specific positive duty on directors is a significant failing which the government should address at the earliest opportunity.

Sarah Page, Prospect's health and safety officer, attributes much of HSE's success to the significant contribution made by trade union health and safety representatives. "Where employers value and work with our reps, we can help reduce accidents and injury by as much as 50 per cent. The vision of employers and workers collaborating to reduce injury and ill health is as important today as it was in the 1970s."

## NOON CHALLENGES ATTACKS ON CIVIL SERVICE UNION REPS

PROSPECT LAST month hit back at 'revelations' that the government is funding politically inspired trade union activists in civil service departments.

A report in the *Times* in September quoted unnamed sources as saying that union officials in departments spent time on "far-left political campaigns and making up false claims about the Conservative party."

Francis Maude, shadow Cabinet Office minister, was quoted as saying that the government is "bankrolling a cadre of full-time trade union officials, costing millions of pounds a year."

But Prospect said staff engaged on

industrial relations work existed to represent members' views and improve the running of departments, and were banned from engaging in political activity.

Paul Noon, Prospect general secretary, said 99 per cent of staff representatives received no facility time from departments beyond the standard facilities every employer is bound to provide recognised union representatives by the ACAS code of practice.

"In the modern era of constant restructuring, new working practices, manpower cutbacks and pressures on public spending, every employer knows it is in their interest to have informed knowledge of staff views."

Facility time, as it is called, has existed in the civil service since the 1940s. A value for money study in Natural England last year showed that management benefited from union representation by six times its cost to management.

Among benefits to the employer listed by the study were improved morale and time saved on litigation, personal cases, change programmes, grievances and handling enquiries about employment issues.

A government consultation on workplace reps in 2006 found that their impact on productivity was worth between £3.2bn and £10.2bn to the economy – see [www.berr.gov.uk/files/file36336.pdf](http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file36336.pdf)

## LYONS BACK FOR ANOTHER BITE AT JOBS

GOVERNMENT departments have been told to prepare plans for another round of relocation exercises out of London.

In June, chief secretary to the treasury Liam Byrne instructed ministers to draw up new proposals by the end of September, on top of the 24,000 posts already scheduled to move out of London and the south-east under the Lyons programme by 2010.

No consultation took place with civil service unions over the decision, and trade union sides have been advised to seek details on their department's plans as soon as possible.

These should be equality-proofed, subject to a robust business case, without compulsory redundancy or relocation and with negotiated terms for staff wishing to relocate.

Meanwhile, the Office of Government Commerce is continuing with plans to rationalise the government estate in London and major urban centres, with a view to achieving major savings through asset sales.



**Malcolm Currie** is a negotiations officer at the Prospect Edinburgh office.

**Describe yourself in four words.**

Scottish, determined, caring, independent.

**What do you like or dislike about members?**

How could I dislike Prospect members when I used to be one? Prospect is such a broad cross-section this is impossible to answer. I get frustrated when our members

are so dedicated to their jobs they're not prepared to stand up against their employer. But that dedication is also one of the great things about them.

**Which aspects of trade unionism particularly appeal to you?**

Collective responsibility and cooperation are the key – but I am increasingly interested in the potential for working in partnership with receptive employers to address issues jointly.

**Would the grass be greener for you somewhere else?**

I would dearly love to move back to the Highlands, and back in nature conservation if the opportunity ever arose.

**Do you have any hidden talents?**

I'm a rugby union referee and a keen photographer.

**What is your most embarrassing moment?**

I suspect I've not had it yet! That said, possibly the time I was refereeing in Russia and there was a fight that involved all 30 players on the pitch. It was live on TV and I had to do an interview afterwards for the Russian news...

**What or who gets you rattled?**

That would have to be arrogant and obstructive employers who don't show enough respect to take on board their staff's views. Unfortunately, they seem to be on the increase, especially given the recent economic climate.

**What's on your iPod?**

I'm not a fan of iPods, but my MP3 player has a wide range of music on it – Louis Jordan, Led Zeppelin, Psychedelic Furs, Wolfstone and GoodBooks to name some, but I buy more obscure music from any country I visit.

**What's your favourite book and why?**

Just one? I suppose the first that comes to mind is *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* by Julian Barnes. I love the variety between fictional narrative, descriptive essay and art criticism.

**How do you plan to beat the credit crunch?**

You can't beat it, you can just roll with it. Thankfully, I didn't have any particular debts going in, so it hasn't affected me as badly as it might have done, but I've certainly stepped up my contributions to charity.

**What would you like to change most about the world?**

Governmental and corporate attitudes to the planet and its resources – it's difficult to see much hope until profit and re-election cease to be the primary drivers for the people who have most influence on our quality of life.

**What would you do if you were invisible for the day?**

Keep out of sight? In reality, I'd probably panic and spend the day trying to work out how to become visible again...

■ The merits or demerits of nationalisation figured in recent General Election controversies, although with perhaps not quite the same emphasis as on previous occasions. However, at least one nationalised industry – electricity – was able to produce a triumphant annual report before the result was declared at the polls. Judged by practical tests at least, the national ownership of electricity has proved to be an outstanding success. The industry's consolidated surplus – 'profit' is inexact – after payment of interest on loan and other capital liabilities was no less than £27.3m – a record figure. This may be only a modest working balance in relation to the Board's gigantic turnover, but it is certainly a tribute to the high technical and administrative efficiency of the industry. Every single area electricity board earned a surplus on the year's working.

**Electrical Power Engineer, October 1959**

■ Dear Sir, may I make a plea for correspondence between the Institution and the Treasury to be conducted in understandable English. Recent letters published in *State Service* on the technical classes pay claim have revealed a number of strange words, which I am sure are incomprehensible to the majority of readers. A look at the dictionary results in a lot of amusement, but no enlightenment. Readily understandable words, such as pounds, shillings and pence, seem to be out of place among such choice expressions as 'inter-upper-quartile', 'plussage', and 'the median man' (the last makes one think vaguely of a relative of the Piltown and Peking men).

Yours faithfully, A Bulk.

**State Service, October 1959**



■ Alan Leighton on BBC News, doing one of many interviews over the Alan Wiley affair



**Prospect stories that have appeared in media across the country in recent weeks**

## Prospect's 'reffin mad, and not just over football

IT WOULD be great to list exactly how many print and broadcast reports featured the union's response to the comments by Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson about football referee Alan Wiley (*story, page 5*).

The truth is we can't. The coverage was so extensive, Prospect had to pull the plug on its cuttings agency's monitoring of the story after a month's budget disappeared in two days.

But before the guillotine fell the office enjoyed a good chuckle at some of the more creative headlines, though special commendation has to go to the *Daily Sport*. Under a banner heading "Shut it Fergie," its October 6 report carried the subheading "Union reffin' mad over Wiley attack."

Away from the beautiful game, Prospect's warning that moves by Ofgem to interfere in pensions provision for the energy industry risked causing industrial unrest was widely reported.

*Sky News*, the *Press Association* and *Channel Four* were among the broadcast media to report deputy general secretary Mike Clancy's claims that Ofgem was seeking to mimic the pressures driving pension scheme closures in the private sector.

"Ofgem should leave pensions alone and focus on how its price regime impacts on health and safety, the skills shortage and the need to modernise the ageing energy infrastructure to meet the challenges of climate change," Clancy was quoted.

The story was also widely reproduced across regional publications and trade press such as *Professional Pensions* and *Utility Week*.

Threatened privatisations in several Prospect areas hit the headlines. The government's need to balance the nation's

books combined with Tory tub-thumping put a possible Met Office privatisation back in the spotlight.

West country media, including *BBC Cornwall* and *BBC 1 South West*, were among the stations to report negotiator Philippa Childs' belief that the Met Office is too important to be privatised. *The Express and Echo* quoted Childs: "The Operational Efficiency Programme has so far not talked about privatisation but about making it easier for the Met Office to pursue its commercial interests."

Protests by members at the Royal Mint against a sell-off reached the pages of both regional print media and specialist titles such as the *Municipal Journal*, which reported on members' lobbies of both the Welsh Assembly and Westminster.

In September, the threatened sell-off of the Forensic Science Service featured heavily in Prospect's TUC coverage.

The first day of Congress saw a *Guardian* story warn that cost-cutting in forensic science could cause errors. It quoted branch secretary Helen Kenny: "Forensic scientists have concerns about the pressure on turnaround and price," adding that such pressures could not be good for the criminal justice system.

Regional media, including the *Chorley Guardian* and *BBC Radio Lancashire*, reported on a protest outside TUC by members from the Chorley FSS laboratory – one of three earmarked for closure – who were joined by Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle.

*Public Finance* magazine highlighted the cuts facing FSS and quoted negotiator Mike Sparham. "The cuts are driven by claims that the workload has diminished, which we don't accept – no-one has seen the crime rate go down 40 per cent."

# Age 65 challenge falls – but retiring age set to go

THE DEFAULT retirement age of 65 has been upheld as lawful by a high court judge in a blow to the campaign to win justice for older workers.

But Mr Justice Blake said he might have ruled differently had the government not announced that it is bringing forward to next year a review of the default retirement age.

Several cases brought to tribunals by Prospect on behalf of older members have been held in abeyance while the court challenge to the retirement age by Age Concern and Help the Aged was determined.

The charities had claimed the default age contravened a European Commission directive against age discrimination.

Judge Blake said he could not see how 65 could remain as a DRA after the government's promised review next year. He added that if the law had been adopted for the first time in 2009 "or there had been no indication of an imminent review, I would have concluded that the selection of age 65 would not have been proportionate."

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said the ruling was still a blow to people who needed to work on beyond 65. "It will allow employers to go on using an arbitrary retirement age as an excuse to weed out staff without having any obligation to compen-

sate them or use fair processes," he said.

Andrew Harrop, head of public policy at Age Concern, said: "We will be stepping up our fight to get this outdated legislation off the statute book. Ministers still have the opportunity this side of a general election to give real help to people in their 60s by outlawing forced retirement. This judgement makes it crystal clear that this unfair legislation is past its sell-by date."

Some 1.3 million people over 65 are in work. Studies suggest as many as two-thirds of people would like to continue working in some way past the default retirement age.

## PASSIONATE ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY?

**COMMITTED to health, safety and well-being?**

**Want to make a difference at national level?**

**If so, why not volunteer to join Prospect's health and safety sub-committee? We frame responses to government consultations, share knowledge and advise members.**

**Prospect is keen to hear from female reps as they are currently under-represented.**

**Interested? Please send a note of your interest and H&S experience to group secretary Mike Clancy via [sharon.owen@prospect.org.uk](mailto:sharon.owen@prospect.org.uk)**



■ UCATT members demonstrated outside Knutsford Crown Court when Ian Kerr appeared in July this year on blacklisting charges

## Unions connected against blacklists

PROSPECT AND its future partner, communications union Connect, linked up this summer to make an historic joint submission on blacklisting to the Department for Business.

The unions welcomed the government's decision to consult on regulations to outlaw blacklisting, announced by business secretary Lord Mandelson, after the conviction in Macclesfield on data protection charges of businessman Ian Kerr for running a list of more than 3,000 excluded construction workers.

The government's main proposals would make it unlawful for organisations to refuse employment or sack individuals because they had appeared on a blacklist. Individuals or unions would be able to seek compensation or solicit action against those who compile, distribute or use blacklists.

The government consulted on draft regulations to outlaw blacklisting six years ago, but claimed 'no hard evidence was found that blacklisting was taking place'. In their submission, the unions refer to the conviction of Ian Kerr and say: "Our regret is that it has taken

one more round of evidence of the existence and activities of blacklists for the regulations, which were published in an earlier form in 2003 and then held in abeyance, to pass into law."

Laws prohibiting the blacklisting of trade unionists have been demanded by trade unions since the 1970s, after disclosure of the activi-

**'In the six years since the draft regulations were drawn up, many trade unionists will have been denied employment by blacklists'**

ties of the Economic League, for which Kerr later worked. Power to do so was taken by the secretary of state as far back as the Employment Relations Act 1999, but it has taken a decade to action it.

"In the six years since the draft regulations were drawn up, many trade unionists will have been denied employment opportunities on the grounds of blacklist records of their trade union membership and activities, and that is very disappointing," say Connect and Prospect.

Ian Kerr was fined £5,000 for operating the blacklisting database, to which 40 construction companies had subscribed. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber described the fine as 'totally inadequate'.

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■ A toy car powered by a microbial fuel cell comprised of several beakers of river sediment topped with water. The beakers contain a graphite anode in the sediment and a graphite cathode suspended in the water. Red and black wires connected to each electrode are joined by a resistor (not seen). Anaerobic bacteria in the sediment, such as *Geobacter*, colonise the anode and oxidise the organic matter in the sediment. *Geobacter* is able to transfer electrons from the organic matter to the anode during oxidation. The electrons flow to the cathode, generating electricity.

VICKER STEPHEN/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

# Inspiring women

by Pat Battams

THE FUTURE is being invented by engineers, futurologist Wendy Schultz told delegates from the Women's Engineering Society in September.

In the conference's first keynote speech, she predicted that bioscientists and engineers would soon be working together to solve the major challenges facing humanity. Teamwork would be essential and this was something at which women were particularly skilled.

Looking forwards rather than back was the theme of the conference, held at the University of Surrey. WES is proud of its past achievements but today it is seeking to inspire both present and future engineers to put technology at the core of future economic growth.

Over three days the conference – jointly sponsored by Prospect – considered engineering solutions for tackling climate change, achieving sustainability, innovation-driven technology, the future supply of energy and energy-efficient cities.

WES member Professor Dame Julia King, vice-chancellor of Aston University, told delegates that gender diversity correlated with top business performance. But in her experience, women were less likely to push themselves forward for top positions and took longer to bounce back after rejection.

"The current pace of advancement of women is too slow," said Annette Williams, director of the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology. "At the current pace by 2030 women directors will only be 18 per cent of the total. Our aim is to have an environment by 2030 in which women share the benefits equally with men."

Opportunities for women and their welcome in the workplace had changed greatly over the past 90 years, said WES president Jan Peters. What had not changed was the passion of WES members for their discipline and the desire to make a difference. WES still had a vital role to play in inspiring young women to enter engineering and ensuring that members achieved their full career potential.

To alert schoolgirls to the bright future that engineering offers, WES hosted a parallel event on the first day of conference for year 7-9 students. The girls had the opportunity to interview women engineers and to take part in hands-on problem-solving exercises devised by WES members working in rocket science, in computer science and on the Bloodhound record-breaking car.



■ WES president Jan Peters arrives at the conference dinner

Another inspiration was racing driver Alice Powell, speaker at the conference dinner at Brooklands. Sixteen-year-old Alice is the youngest driver racing in the British Formula Renault 2.0 championship, where Lewis Hamilton's racing career started. She looks forward to becoming Formula 1's first female driver.

'Inspiring Women' was the topic of a public seminar run by WES at the annual British Science Festival at Surrey University on the day before conference. Successful women engineers and scientists, including TV and radio presenter Kate Bellingham and space scientist Maggie Aderin, explained what had inspired them to follow their chosen career paths.

■ WISENET – Women in Science and Engineering – is the members' network for women scientists and engineers in Prospect. To join, contact sandie.maile@prospect.org.uk

## Minimum wage rises to £5.80

THE ADULT minimum wage rose by 7p to £5.80 an hour on October 1, in line with the recommendation of the Low Pay Commission, which was accepted by the government.

One million workers benefit from the change, which the TUC estimates will earn the government £58m in tax and national insurance contributions, and save it £44m in tax credits and benefit payments.

The threshold for the adult rate has also been reduced, from age 22 to 21.

The 2009 increase is the tenth since the minimum wage was introduced in 1998. In that time it has increased by 61.1 per cent, compared to a 34.9 per cent increase in the retail price index and a 52.1 per cent increase in average earnings.



■ **ASBESTOS:** A campaign against the hidden dangers of asbestos will be launched by the Health and Safety Executive next month. Asbestos-related disease accounts for around 4,000 deaths a year, and is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in Great Britain. See [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/hiddenkiller](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/hiddenkiller)

■ **REDUNDANCY:** The limit on a week's pay for the calculation of statutory redundancy payments increased from £350 to £380 from October 1. The new limit also applies to the calculation of basic and additional awards for unfair dismissal, payments under the insolvency provisions and any award under the flexible working provisions.

## IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY, WATCH OUT FOR LYME DISEASE

DOD GREEN/GETTY IMAGES



IF YOU work or walk in the countryside, you need to be aware of the dangers of Lyme disease, which appears to be increasing as our climate warms.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread to humans by infected ticks. Ticks are small, spider-shaped insects that feed on the blood of mammals, including humans.

The most common symptom is a red skin rash that looks similar to a bull's eye on a dart board. However, if Lyme disease is left untreated, further symptoms can follow including:

- fever
- muscle pain
- joint pain and swelling
- neurological symptoms, such as temporary paralysis of the facial muscles.

The ticks that cause Lyme disease are commonly found in woodland and heathland areas. These types of habitats have high numbers of tick-carrying animals, such as deer and mice.

Parts of the UK that are known to have a particularly high population of ticks include: Exmoor, the New Forest in Hampshire, the South Downs, parts of Wiltshire and Berkshire, Thetford Forest in Norfolk, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Moors, and the Scottish Highlands.

For more information and resources, see:

■ [www.fctu.org.uk/healthandsafety/lymedisease/lymedisease.asp](http://www.fctu.org.uk/healthandsafety/lymedisease/lymedisease.asp)

■ [www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/health.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/health.htm)

■ [www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk](http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk)

## GET 20p OFF YOUR TAX BILL

PROSPECT is often contacted by members who want to know if their union subscription is eligible for tax relief.

Unfortunately, Prospect is a trade union and not a professional institution so your subscription does not qualify.

But one part of the union subscription is eligible for relief – the amount used to provide death benefits to members' dependants.

Prospect's expenditure on death benefits in 2007 was just under £68,000, which represents 67p – or 0.35 per cent – of a member's subscription.

So for a basic rate taxpayer the 67p that is eligible would yield the magnificent sum of 13p in tax relief.

But because Revenue self-assessment return forms require taxpayers to enter figures in whole pounds only, the claim can be rounded up to £1 – which almost doubles the amount of relief to a princely 20p for a basic rate taxpayer.

Enjoy!

## NEGOTIATING PITCHES IN PROSPECT

THE CHART of Prospect negotiating pitches in Profile 6/09 did not indicate how members working offshore from the UK mainland or overseas are looked after in the union structure. Differing arrangements are in place for these groups as shown below.

### OFFSHORE MEMBERS

**Northern Ireland Overseas members**  
Handled across different negotiating pitches according to employer

**Guernsey Jersey**

Handled by Prospect Midlands (Frank Allen)



PROSPECT PRESIDENT Catherine Donaldson presents Long Service Awards to Sue Gregory, GE Healthcare branch secretary, and Simon James, GE Healthcare vice-president, at their annual delegate conference in September. Both Sue and Simon have given tireless support to members and the branch committee for 15 years. They will be taking redundancy at the end of March after the sale of the Radiochemicals Business at Cardiff to Quotient.



ANDREW WATERS (centre) was presented with a Long Service Award in July by branch chair Steve Martindale (left) and branch secretary Russell Brown, after 18 years of service to members. Andrew joined IPMS, as it was then, in 1990 having been recruited into the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture. Andrew soon took an interest in union work and in 1993-94 was elected to the post of PHSI sub-section secretary of the Inspectorate Section of MAFF branch. Sadly, a year ago Andrew suffered a stroke and though he has recovered, is unlikely to return to work.

## It's back to the kitchen for Peter

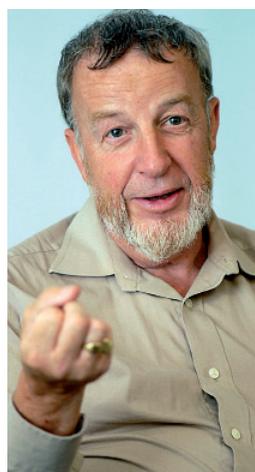
WORKING AS a cook in Mansfield hospital was how Peter Rowe became a trade unionist. He went on to become a negotiator for Prospect after moving to the National Unilevers Managers Association, which merged with Prospect's predecessor union IPMS in 1990.

In September Peter retired as negotiator for the Midlands office in Lutterworth, where he looked after branches including the Audit Commission, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, EDF power stations and several regional airports.

"What I like is making a difference on behalf of members and helping them," said Peter. "To me, sorting out someone's personal problem is more important than the winter of discontent."

Peter says he will miss the comradeship of working in Prospect, both with colleagues and lay members. His parting words were: "Don't forget the collective strength of trade unions – that is what they're about, not the panacea of turning to the law for every problem."

■ **Rowe:** 'What I like is making a difference on behalf of members and helping'



Peter is a keen student of labour movement history, especially managerial trade unions where Prospect has come to occupy a leading position.

"All too often it's the managers who get clobbered during takeovers and restructuring as they are unrepresented and so are easy pickings," he says.

Peter hasn't yet decided what he will do in retirement. But as well as fishing, he is certain to find time to indulge his favourite pastime – cooking and eating Mediterranean, French and Thai cuisine.

## Staff on the move

■ Since **Peter Rowe's** retirement (see left), Rose Willis has been seconded from London to the Prospect Midlands office. Her position as negotiator on the agriculture pitch has been filled by Jane Rodger from Connect, also on secondment.

■ In **Chertsey**, following the departure of Joe Pilkington, organiser Richard Tabbner has been promoted to negotiator for the south-east regional team working to David Luxton. He will be replaced as organiser by Linda Wall, who moves over from the heritage/law pitch at headquarters.

■ **Beverley Hall** has been temporarily promoted to the post of international development officer as part of the ongoing Bargaining for International Development project.

■ **Patrick Gallagher**, a former English lecturer from Yeovil College, has been seconded to Prospect's union learning team. Patrick will cover the south-west of England where he will work as a development officer on the union's programme to consolidate career and learner support for members across four sector skills councils. Email: patrick.gallagher@prospect.org.uk

This project is funded by £244,000 from the union learning fund until March 2011.

### MIDLANDS EVENTS

The following events have been organised by the Midland Technical Group for November and into 2010.

Contact Peter Green on 0121 550 5759 or peter.r.green@lineone.net to register an interest and obtain a programme card. This is important for all the visits as there are restrictions on numbers.

#### LECTURES

**NOVEMBER 11:** Belbroughton Church Hall. Speaker: Anthony Perry, Environment Agency, on Midlands flood defence schemes.

**JANUARY 19:** Romsley Church Hall. Speaker: Andrew Lound, local historian, on Titanic-Midland connections.

**MARCH 16:** The Merry Hill Shopping Complex, Brierley Hill. Speaker: Richard Rhodes, on the history of trolley buses.

**MAY 12:** Belbroughton Church Hall. Speaker: Frank Anderson on the forensic investigation of fires and explosions. AGM follows this lecture.

#### VISITS

**NOVEMBER 6:** All-day visit to Cosford Aeronautical Museum, nr Wolverhampton.

**JANUARY 26:** Morning visit to Avery Scales Museum, Smethwick. Meet at 10.00 am.

**FEBRUARY 17:** Morning visit to Midland Road Control Centre, Quinton. Meet at 10.00 am.

**APRIL 13:** Afternoon visit to Joy Mining Machinery, Worcester. Meet at 2.00 pm.

### BENEFITS TO MEMBERS

JANUARY-OCTOBER 2009

#### BENEVOLENT FUND

■ Number granted 15  
■ Total granted £22,140

#### DEATH BENEFIT

■ Number granted 50  
■ Total granted £46,734

#### PERSONAL INJURY SCHEME

■ Applications approved 189  
■ On books 341  
■ Number won 93  
■ Value of awards £3,236,173





## Book appeal to Battersea power station workers

TWO HISTORY buffs are producing a large format 'coffee table' book on Battersea power station. It will feature photographs and text on its history, former workers' memories and past and present plans.

Annie Graham and her husband Steven say former workers are a key part of the story. "We would like to get in touch with anyone who worked there or knew of a friend or family member who worked there, so that we can include their personal memories and stories. So far we have had fantastic feedback but would like to talk to more people to give readers an insight onto how it felt to be inside the power station in a totally different age.

"The smells, the heat, the noise and dust.

What it felt like to be there either as an engineer, manager or apprentice. We want personal stories, anything that happened that was either funny or interesting."

Contributors will be credited and can have their photo included in the book.

■ Please get in touch at [annie@asapasap.co.uk](mailto:annie@asapasap.co.uk) or call 07970 936982.

### EX-FIDDLERS FERRY MEMBERS

Retired engineer Peter Dawson is planning a get-together of former employees of Fiddlers Ferry power station for a tour of the station to see the changes over the last 30–40 years. If you are interested, please contact Marie Mason at Prospect Liverpool on 0151 728 9028 or email [marie.mason@prospect.org.uk](mailto:marie.mason@prospect.org.uk).

## SEPTEMBER 1–OCTOBER 8

Prospect regrets to announce the deaths of the following members, notified to headquarters between September 1 and October 8, 2009:

Mr G A Adams	02/10/09	Western Power Distribution
Dr T Barrett	09/09/09	Institute for Animal Health
Mr F Bates	17/09/09	CEGB Headquarters
Mr T Burrows	05/10/09	Hyder Utilities
Mr H Clatworthy	25/09/09	Central Southern Retired Members Group
Mr R J Clow	06/10/09	Central Networks – East
Mr W J Cole	21/09/09	South West Retired Members Group
Mr W M Crane	18/09/09	Innogy
Mrs C Cronin	28/09/09	EDF Energy
Mr T C Dean	21/09/09	Wales Retired Members Group
Mr E Dobson	15/09/09	Innogy
Mr J E Foster	29/09/09	Scottish Power
Mr J M Gerrard	04/09/09	Scottish Power
Mr D Hanmer	04/09/09	Audit Commission
Mr R F Harper	21/09/09	London Electricity
Mr W C G Harris	25/09/09	South West Retired Members Group
Mr G Heap	03/09/09	Central Networks – West
Mr K Herrington	21/09/09	South East Midlands Retired Members Group
Mr L D Hewitt	24/09/09	Central Southern Retired Members Group
Mr S R Hobbs	21/09/09	RWE Npower
Mr E G Horsley	24/09/09	Northern Electric
Mr K Horsman	30/09/09	National Grid
Mr A Irving	18/09/09	National Grid
Ms S Jennings	22/09/09	English Heritage (RCHME)
Mr A D Loft	14/09/09	London Electricity
Mr J R C McNeill	14/09/09	Innogy
Mr K Milwain	21/09/09	Scottish Power
Mr P Mountford	21/09/09	Avon Valley Retired Members Group
Mr K Ostle	15/09/09	Cammel Laird Shipbuilders
Mr W A Painter	25/09/09	British Energy
Mr E B Paisley	11/09/09	British Energy
Mr H Pickering	25/09/09	CMMDI Retired Members Group
Mr L H Robinson	07/10/09	Central Southern Retired Members Group
Mr H Rowbotham	21/09/09	Defence Acquisition and Maritime (South)
Mr P L Stubbs	29/09/09	Central Networks – West
Mr K Tapping	09/09/09	Serco Technical and Assurance Services
Dr S Thirgood	06/10/09	Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
Mr J Thwaite	29/09/09	North West Retired Members Group
Mr A J Turner	28/09/09	Magnox Nuclear North and South Sites
Mr E L West	05/10/09	EDF Seeboard
Mr G J West	07/10/09	South East England Retired Members Group
Mr N Whitaker	11/09/09	Ministry of Defence
Mr R Whyte	01/09/09	Scottish Power
Mr D Worrall	01/10/09	E.ON UK
Miss D M Wright	01/10/09	Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

### AVON VALLEY

Annual general meeting, November 4, 2.00 pm, Bath Sports and Leisure Centre (BLC), North Parade, Bath, lounge of the Bath Rugby Club Hampton Stand Hospitality room.

Entrance under the BLC, through the car park far left, through the iron gate into the building opposite, on the second floor (lift available). Guest speaker from Age Concern. Coffee, tea and biscuits from 1.45 pm. Further information: contact Pat Lomasney (secretary) on 01934 834510 or [plomasney@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:plomasney@tiscali.co.uk). For members in postcodes BA, BS, SN and SP.

### EAST ANGLIA

Annual general meeting, November 25, 1.00 pm, Red Lion, Whittlesford, Cambridge. Join us for a chat and refreshments beforehand. Opportunity to question Neil Walsh, Prospect pensions officer. For further information contact the secretary at [lesrnicolls@btinternet.com](mailto:lesrnicolls@btinternet.com). For members in postcodes EN, NR, IP, PE, CB, CO, CM, RM, SS and IG but all members welcome.

### EAST MIDLANDS

Annual general meeting, November 17, 11.00 am, Prospect Midlands office, Unit 4, Midland Court, Central Park, Leicester Road, Lutterworth, (junction 20 M1), tel 01455 555200. Motions for the 2010 annual conference can be submitted to the secretary.

Tea and coffee at 10.30 am and light lunch. Contact Tony Beech on 01283 585622 or [tony.margy@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.margy@btinternet.com). All members welcome but only those in postcodes CV, DE, LE, LN, NG and NN may vote.

### LONDON CENTRAL

Annual general meeting, November 3, 11.00 am, New Prospect House, 8 Leake Street, London SE1 7NN. For members in postcodes BR, CR, E, EC, HA, KT, N, NW, SE, SM, SW, TW, UB, W and WC.

### NORTH-EAST

Annual general meeting, October 29, 1.20 pm, North Biddick and District Social Club, Bone Mill Lane, Fatfield, Washington, NE38 8AJ. Guest speaker: Craig Marshall, past president of the Prospect energy sector. Contact Peter Gilroy (01670 354613). For members in postcodes NE, DH, SR, DL and TS.

### SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

Annual general meeting, November 26, 1.00 pm, Angel Leisure Centre, Angel Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 5SF. Light refreshments provided. Contact Derick Jackson (secretary) on 01474 814541 or [d.jackson123@btinternet.com](mailto:d.jackson123@btinternet.com) or Dave Laws (chair) on 01303 239336 or [dave.laws@btopenworld.com](mailto:dave.laws@btopenworld.com). For members in postcodes BN, TN, CT, DA, ME and RH.

### SOUTH-EAST MIDLANDS

Annual general meeting, November 4, 2.00 for 2.30 pm, Friends Meeting House, 12 Southdown Road, Harpenden AL5 1PD. Very limited on-site parking for disabled drivers, unrestricted on-street parking in Southdown Road. Trains can be met at Harpenden station by prior arrangement. For info phone Peter Welbank (chair) on 01582 763634. Pre-conference meeting January 12 at same venue. For members in postcodes AL, HP, LU, MK, SG and WD.

### SCOTLAND NORTH

The next meeting of the Scotland North area will be on Friday November 20 at the Station Hotel, 78 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB11 6GN at 2.45 pm for 3.00 pm. Speaker Dai Hudd, Prospect deputy general secretary. Contact R P Ellis (secretary) on 01382 644218 or [gillroger@waitrose.com](mailto:gillroger@waitrose.com) for catering purposes. The committee will meet at 12.00 pm. For members in postcodes HS, ZE, KW, IV, AB, PH, DD, FK (postcode 7 et seq), PA (postcode 20 et seq) KY.

### SCOTLAND SOUTH

Annual general meeting, November 4, 2.00 pm, Holiday Inn Express, Picardy Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3JT. Guest speaker David Mannion, chief executive of Age Concern, Scotland. Contact Sandy Welch (secretary) on 01698 813343 or email [welch@abs28.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:welch@abs28.fsnet.co.uk). For members

in postcodes G, KA, ML, EH, TD, DG, FK 1-6 and PA 1-19.

### SOUTH-WEST MIDLANDS

Annual general meeting, November 25, 1.30 pm, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, Glos, GL7 6JS. To obtain parking permit, share transport and further details please contact Terry Clift on 01235 526042. For members in OX & GL.

### THAMES VALLEY

Annual general meeting, November 11, Reading International Solidarity Centre, London Road, Reading. Tea and coffee available from 10.00 am. Buffet to follow meeting. Guest speaker Prospect president Catherine Donaldson. Contact Elenor Hutcheson on 01344 305405 or e-mail [nellhutch@yahoo.com](mailto:nellhutch@yahoo.com) for further details. All members very welcome but only members in postcodes GU, RG and SL may vote.

### WALES

Annual general meeting, November 3, 11.00 am, Dockside Room, National Waterfront Museum, Oystermouth Road, Maritime Quarter, Swansea SA1 3RD. Coffee/tea at 10.30 am, buffet lunch provided. Car parking on site. If you wish to attend, please advise the Prospect Wales office: Landore Court, 51 Charles Street, Cardiff CF10 2GD; 029 2066 7770; [wales@prospect.org.uk](mailto:wales@prospect.org.uk). Please bring your membership card. For members in postcodes SY, SA, LD, CF and NP.

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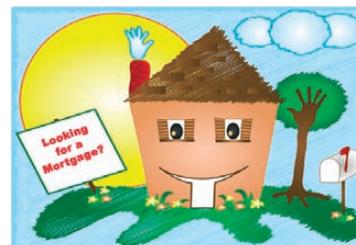
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# VIEWPOINT

Letters should be sent by email to [profile@prospect.org.uk](mailto:profile@prospect.org.uk), via fax on 020 7902 6665 or by post for the attention of the editor, New Prospect House, 8 Leake Street, London SE1 7NN. Emails preferred.

PrizeLetter of the month receives a £10 book token

**StarLetter**

## Short-term job cuts come with a price tag

Statistics on the numbers of military and civilian personnel (*Profile 6/09*) do not tell the full story. Much of the reduction of military strength has been in combat service support functions (logistics, maintenance, medical and administration) and that has been achieved by civilianising some of those functions and, more often, by outsourcing them to civilian contractors.

The effect of transferring functions is that the military shrinks consistently because troops have to be diverted to force protection tasks – guarding the civilian workforce that provides “food, medical supplies, new equipment, communications, intelligence, training, transport, engineering, and scientific

know-how” in operational theatres. One example shows how civilianisation degrades combat capabilities. During the Cold War, the chefs of the Army Catering Corps provided food to formation headquarters and, when they were not preparing food, guarded the headquarters’ location. Today, civilian contractors provide food at bases like Camp Bastion and a reinforced infantry company has to be deployed to guard the location, thus reducing the number of troops the commander has for aggressive patrolling into the Sangin valley.

What has happened, therefore, is that a quick saving on the costs of training a chef to be a soldier (about £75,000) has been at the cost of paying for a civilian

chef and a reservist who has been called up to protect him or her. There is probably still a saving for the exchequer but the cost of the reservist’s absence falls to his or her employer. That cost eventually finds its way back to the exchequer when the employer offsets it against the tax bill. The final bill to the country will probably be more than the initial saving.

I am not suggesting that we should resurrect the ACC, but I do think Dr Fox’s words reflect what seems to be a widely held perception. As well as quoting statistics to put the record straight, Prospect and the other civil service unions should be spelling out to the general public that short-term savings come with a price tag of higher costs.

■ **John Johnston, Germany**

assuming everyone not only has a computer, but also has internet access.

I have two sets of neighbours who do not have a computer and, therefore, no internet access. Although they are not Prospect members, I am sure there are members in the same position. Contact information should include an address and/or phone number for these people.

It should be realised that a large proportion of the population do not have, and sometimes do not want or need, the latest electronic gadget.

■ **David Mitchell, Devon**

**Just as the phone became a standard household item, so has the computer. Most people prefer email to phones as it saves time, money and the environment compared to the post or phone. In fact many individuals will only provide an email address for non-personal calls. We would be happy to pass on to Kew any communication you provide us with.**

## Time to engineer improved status

I write in full support of Robert Miles (*ViewPoint 6/09*). Engineering is a vital part of every activity in society, without which it could not function. Yet the profession has no real status, often being treated with contempt by politicians and the general public. Compare this with the status of lawyers, accountants and other prominent, less valuable professions. Our profession is the only one which directly creates real wealth.

Engineering bodies are part of the problem. The Engineering Council (UK), for instance, refers to those on its register as ‘registrants,’ a demeaning title. Why not ‘registered engineering practitioners’ or ‘registered engineers?’ Other professional bodies would not dream of referring to their qualified members as ‘registrants.’

Our own professional bodies have let us down over the years with their complete failure to raise our status, which instead has declined.

Status is important. Raising the status of the profession would result in a massive increase

in membership, quickly and with little effort. Engineering professional bodies should have this issue as their prime objective. Failure to do so will ensure that bright young people shun engineering as a career. Prospect too should see this as a top priority.

■ **Bill Brunger, Gravesend, Kent**

## Engineers need title deed

The title ‘engineer’ is misused these days. Many people who call themselves engineers would at one time be ‘technicians’ or the like. One possible way of raising the status of engineers in the public eye would be to give chartered engineers the courtesy title of ‘doctor.’ I believe this is the practice in some other countries. Doctors of medicine have this title so why not engineers?

■ **Andy Anderson, Newnham, Glos**

## Dot com misery

*UnionEyes 6/09* (Archive Fun) asks interested members to contact [a.moore@kew.org](mailto:a.moore@kew.org). In this you have followed the current trend of

**MIND MAZE** OCT09

Which letter is missing from the following series?

**Q, N, X, F, A, H, ?**

■ **Solution to appear in the next issue**

**Thanks? Solution** Sept09  
Answer: SHORELINE

## Nouvelle build will be UK’s Waterloo

Adrian Bull (*ViewPoint 6/09*) talks about the impending start of a new build programme in the UK starting with EDF, the French nationalised electricity generator, supplier and builder. This will probably be the way things go, due to the state of UK heavy industry:

- Overall project management will be EDF staff, as it’s their money.
- Main turbo-generators and electrical equipment will probably be Japanese.
- Reactors and pressure vessels will probably be built in France.
- Reactor fuel may be manufactured in France, if it’s cheaper than the UK.
- Auxiliary plant, pipes valves etc could be UK.
- Senior supervisors will probably be French.

For the actual construction phase, there is a large pool of workers in eastern Europe.

■ **Edward Hurst, Hythe, Kent**

**Crossword** Oct 2009

**ACROSS**

- 1 Mother bold, not half, taking elephant in foolish ritual (5-5)
- 7 Mug, loud one (4)
- 9 William is able to make cooking vessel (8)
- 10 A few snowflakes left in woolly surroundings (6)
- 11 Cause of the gloomy weather? (10)
- 14 Was intimidated on a Wednesday (8)
- 15 One who fails to honour their class commitments (6)
- 16 One French male and all the others creating a disturbance (6)
- 18 Meeting of US legislators (8)
- 20 In district court one name inside, it is not clear (10)
- 23 Rigid court room (6)
- 24 Withdrawing labour while the iron is hot? (8)
- 25 Dust out the stable (4)
- 26 Dared to have questioned another’s right (10)

**DOWN**

- 2 One continuing turning up inside (4)
- 3 Some herbal make of fragrant ointment (4)

- 4 Sailor brings up notes about bird (?)
- 5 Record case stand (?)
- 6 Eccentric from afar to attend (?)
- 7 Solidly based old-fashioned number taking precedence (4-6)
- 8 Sketch-writer? (10)
- 12 Removing inequalities before night away? (7,3)
- 13 Defender I’m aggravating without a load of care (4-6)
- 17 Huge antic, it was disastrous (?)
- 18 Accountant Stan devised a game of cards (?)
- 19 Such history is only to be expected (?)
- 21 Image covering one king first (4)
- 22 Remarkably neat bet (4)

■ **Solution to appear in the next issue**

**ANSWERS SEPT 2009 – ACROSS:** 1 Prospective 9 ID card 10 Gumtree 12 Telling 14 Thinner 15 Engineering 16 Hug 17 Tom 19 Conspirator 22 Antonio 23 Deficit 24 Payment 25 Junkie 26 Steelworker.

**DOWN:** 2 Red flag 3 Sea-lion 4 End 5 Tight-lipped 6 Vamping 7 Branch 8 Refrigerate 11 Streetlamps 13 Greenbottle 18 Methyl 19 Connect 20 Refiner 21 Tactile 25 Jaw.

## I will not accept HMG's treachery

Profile 6/09 reported on the cut in redundancy payments to civil servants and the noises coming from Prospect. I notice that Dai Hudd seems to think that civil servants are willing to listen to a government play fast and loose with our terms and conditions.

Well I, for one, am not. Too many times we have been asked to compromise and cave in, and have done so. Just as all the political parties are positioning themselves to make cuts across the public sector after the election, the so-called working man's party (Labour) are threatening the terms and conditions they are about to use to slash us all with, to save the very money they have wasted on the crooks in the square mile.

I understand that when we go to the Treasury and ask for a pay rise we should not expect one. I can live with that but when they propose to take from us terms and conditions that we already have and which are put into legal statute, I get very annoyed.

If I broke my contract through intentional neglect, I would expect to have my employment ended; breach of trust and all that. This action is the same kind of treachery.

I hope and expect that Prospect will defend us against these actions, in the courts if necessary. If the union can't defend something that already belongs to its membership then I no longer see the purpose of being a member.

If Mr Hudd thinks, at the very time this government is willing to sacrifice so many civil service jobs, that I can see the reason to negotiate or compromise on a lesser deal than we already have, then I ask him and any other union rep working on my behalf to think again. My terms and conditions are there and hopefully there to stay.

Please behave like a union should and make sure you defend everything that you have already won for us.

■ **Malcolm Brumby, Leicestershire**

**Negotiations with ministers and the Cabinet Office are still proceeding on the review of the civil service compensation scheme. The official proposals have already been substantially amended and Prospect continues to press for further changes – see page 5.**

## What job security?

Regarding Paul Root's letter in *ViewPoint* 6/09 – public sector workers are not and have never been well paid in comparison with private sector workers doing similar work.

In the past ten years over 60 per cent of Ministry of Defence staff at my place of work have been transferred to a private company, with many subsequently being made redundant. Most of the rest will follow over the next couple of years. So where is the job security that public servants enjoy?

As for good pensions, successive

## Politicians make Alice in Wonderland seem sane

David Loxley is quite correct in his analysis of the impossibility of converting CO<sub>2</sub> back into a usable fuel (*ViewPoint* 6/09). It would be interesting if Alison Tottenham (*ViewPoint* 5/09) would explain the process she had in mind.

Both Jim Mason and Martin Beaney (*ViewPoint* 6/09) are enthusiastic for 'renewable energy.' But all renewable energy systems harvest dilute energy that is either chaotic in its occurrence, or available only on a time-dependant basis; and thus demands huge installations, back-up, and is expensive.

The enthusiasm for renewables originates, I am convinced, from the apparent power of their source on a human scale, and thus appeals to the lay community, but in reality they are quite puny. They have their uses in remote situations, but not in industrial applications.

Nuclear energy is a proven, safe, compact, economic and reliable source of power. It would make the UK non-dependent on fossil fuel from politically unstable areas.

governments have tried to undermine them while ensuring their own gold-plated pensions are never touched. I am sure that after the next election the hard-earned pension rights of public servants will again be threatened, whichever party is elected.

■ **Peter McCluskey, Dunbartonshire**

## Nuclear reactor claims not supported

Perhaps Adrian Bull (*ViewPoint* 6/09) will tell us where the AP1000 reactor of 'proven and international design' has been built 'elsewhere in the world.' If he is speculating that one will be approved and operated successfully in the USA before a licence is sought and granted here, he could make that clear. Internet searches indicate that the prototype AP600 was not successful.

The Westinghouse AP1000 is being assessed by the UK Nuclear Installations Inspectorate as part of the GDA (Generic Design Assessment) procedure. The nuclear directorate's newsletter dated September 2009 on the now two-year-old GDA programme states of the two designs submitted for assessment (the AP1000 and the Areva-EDF UK-EPR) that:

"The present position is that neither design is complete, which makes our assessment more difficult. The greater the shortfall in the content and clarity of the information submitted by the requesting parties, the more difficult our assessment becomes, with a greater chance of TQs (technical queries) being elevated to become more serious 'regulatory observations' or 'regulatory issues.' This in turn is likely to lead to more areas being excluded from the GDA confirmation (using what are presently called



The CVs of a large number of senior MPs reveal not a single example of a study of science or engineering beyond O-level. Would a science or engineering graduate be selected by HMG as a law officer? Yet to have a non-scientist as an energy minister seems somehow to be quite normal.

Makes Alice in Wonderland seem rational.

■ **Richard Phillips, Newbury, Berkshire**

'exclusions'), and the less meaningful the GDA confirmation will become as a means of providing design assurance."

Several observers see a government policy of 'fast track new build' as dangerous, if only because of the pressure placed on the NII. There are similar concerns about the government's proposed restructuring of the inspectorate in a statutory nuclear corporation when no defect in their performance has been described. HM inspectors would cease to be civil servants and would be appointed by an industry-linked corporation.

It is now becoming clear that the government was pushing for approval of reactors, some of them untested, and that the timescale for any low-carbon benefit from nuclear new build exceeds that available to mitigate global warming. Benign renewable sources such as tidal and geothermal energy are the areas for priority.

■ **Christopher Gifford, Pontypool**

## Pay freeze affects us all

In your article "Multi-year deals lift energy sector pay" (*Profile* 6/09) you state: "Only one pay freeze was recorded. This applied to senior staff at RWE npower, who are on personal contracts (*Profile* 4/09)."

I am a personal contract holder working for RWE npower and I am affected by the pay freeze. However, I am most definitely not 'senior staff.' To my knowledge, at most modern (ie gas-fired) RWE npower power stations, all directly employed RWE npower staff are on personal contracts. Therefore, the pay freeze applies to all RWE staff at these stations such as myself, in one of the lowest pay grades at the station.

■ **Darren Potter, Didcot, Oxfordshire**

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