

# Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council

**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

## 60+ at the NUJ Delegate meeting

May 2025

JENNY SIMS AND JENNY VAUGHAN, 60+ delegates to the 2025 NUJ Delegate Meeting in Blackpool, report here on the motions relevant to the Council's remit which includes campaigning against ageism and discrimination against older people.

Firstly, rules are to be amended so that NUJ pensioner members will be able to vote in all NUJ elections, thanks to a successful motion proposed by Derry NW Ireland branch, and seconded by 60+ Council.

The motion said: "We note and appreciate the valuable work which many retired members carry out, in serving as officers or otherwise active members in their branches and in representing members. ... it is an anomaly, then, that we do not extend that same value to their voice when it comes to union elections."

There were no opposition votes.

As 60+ delegates we also seconded motions on pensions from London Freelance and Magazine Branches.

We also spoke in support of several disabled members' motions which were applicable to older journalists, and also on ageist discrimination.

As always, financial motions were contentious: a subs increase proposed by the NEC was overwhelmingly lost in light of arguments about unaffordability for many journalists. Speakers called for a recruitment drive to attract more younger members and to expand the eligibility criteria.

### Members of Honour awards

TWO VETERAN JOURNALISTS and campaign activists, from Scotland and Ireland, were made Members of Honour – the highest NUJ award – at the NUJ's Delegate Meeting 2025: They are: James Symons, Dundee branch, and Eamonn McCann, Derry branch.

**Symons**, a former Fleet Street freelance, became involved in NUJ campaigning when he was in his fifties. He has since served on many NUJ councils and committees, including: the Scottish Executive, the Disabled Members Council, the 60+ Council (which he chaired for several years), and as a delegate to TUC and Scottish TUC conferences and the National Pensioners Convention.

Thanking the NUJ, he admitted he was shocked when he received the first letter



James Symons (on the left) and Eamonn McCann were both made Members of Honour at the 2025 Delegate meeting in Blackpool. Photograph © Jess Hurd

about his award. He said: "I thought, it can't be me. I'm going to turn this down. I don't deserve it."

Dundee branch colleague Cllr Jimmy Black said the honour was "richly deserved", and that 'Jim' was an indefatigable, representative".

Conrad Landing, Glasgow branch Co-treasurer and Co-editor, New Internationalist, said he had witnessed Jim's "exemplary work in the trade union movement and civic life of Dundee – and made an immense contribution to the SEC".

**McCann**, a political activist and lifelong campaigning journalist, has been an NUJ member for more than 50 years.

A former National Executive Council member who has held a variety of positions in the union, he said he was proud to have followed in his shipbuilder father's trade union footsteps, and was delighted to accept the award, "a crowning moment for the McCann's trade union tradition".

In a video message, Ireland's President Michael D Higgins, said the award was "a fitting and richly deserved recognition of Eamonn's life, a life lived with an unyielding commitment to truth, to justice."

He said he thought with "with fondness" of their earliest encounters: student debates when he represented University College Galway, and McCann represented Queen's Belfast.

He said McCann's life had been marked by "fearless journalism, principled activism, and a steadfast dedication to the rights of workers and the rights of all members of our shared humanity".

And, in a tribute to the NUJ, he added: "The union's continued commitment to its foundational values, and the defence of ethical journalism is more vital now than ever before".

### Pensions matters

Two pensions motions at DM were: from London Freelance Branch, on the difficulties freelancers face in providing for pensions for themselves; from Magazine Branch on the Winter Fuel Allowance, instructing the NEC to support the National Pensioners' Convention's demand for the basic state pension set at 70 per cent of the living wage level outside London. Our delegation spoke in support of both.

### FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Welcome to the latest edition of the Senior Reporter, which has been produced by editorial team members Jenny Vaughan, Derek Forrest, Jim Symons, Jenny Sims and Nicoletta Flessati.

We welcome articles (250 words max.) and letters (150 words max.) for publication. They should be sent to: [derekeforrest@gmail.com](mailto:derekeforrest@gmail.com)

About the NUJ 60+ Council: <https://bit.ly/3021u5o>

## “Older people are an incredibly valuable asset”

SCOTLAND HAS TAKEN A HUGE STEP in creating an independent commissioner for older people with the country's parliament now formally considering a bill introduced by MSP Colin Smyth.

A consultation resulted in 96.7 per cent of respondents backing the bill.

Mr Smyth said: “It's not just about standing up for the rights, services and care of older people, it's about challenging the negative stereotypes of ageing and celebrating the immense positive contribution of those in later life. That's never been more important as businesses are crying out for workers.

“Our older people are an incredibly valuable asset for our country, but far too often they are unappreciated. I want to see that change.”

As well as having the power to carry out investigations into how services provide for older people, the commissioner's role would involve raising awareness of the interests of older people and of the need to safeguard those interests; promoting the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older people; encouraging best practice in the treatment of older people; and keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of legislation affecting the interests of older people.

DEREK FORREST



**MSP Colin Smyth with the bill he introduced to the Scottish Parliament, taking the first steps towards the creation of an Older People's Commissioner for Scotland.**

## Pensions and the TUC

PENSIONS MINISTER Torsten Bell addressed the TUC Pensions Conference on April 2, with an upbeat assessment of the future for pensioners.

Despite the removal of the £200 winter fuel payment, he assured the conference that the government has no plans to remove the ‘triple lock’ system of calculating rises in the state pension.

However, the conference heard that 17 million people are not saving enough for retirement – although an increasing number – are making at least some savings.

This is partly due to the growing use of ‘auto-enrolment’ of workers in company pension schemes – though for those on low wages the amount saved will be limited.

Even with savings, poorer pensioners, of whom there are – according to Age UK – “1.9 million ... or one in six, living in poverty”.

As was stated from the floor: “We need higher pensions, not pension credit”.

The minister mentioned the difficulties faced by the self employed but offered no solution.

The rest of the conference was mostly made up of discussion of workplace pensions – the apparent revival of Direct Benefit (‘final salary’) schemes. These tend to pay more, and are more reliable than the Defined Contributions system, which has largely taken the former's place outside the public sector – and costs the employers far less.

The conference also encouraged workers – as trade unionists to become trustees of their schemes and thus be able to support “green” and ethical investment.

## Letter

### Waiting for a bus pass

*Anyone waiting for the Labour government to introduce a policy that benefits ordinary folk might be waiting a long time.*

*Take the concessionary bus pass. Although the over 60s receive free travel in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, it's not the case in England, I'm afraid, one has to wait until aged 66 to qualify.*

*The ‘can only travel after 9.30 a.m. rule’ is also draconian, and sees many older people housebound during the early morning hours – the world and its dog know that older people are early birds.*

*As for the concessionary pass for disability, the bar is exceptionally high (at least, in Stoke-on-Trent). Would-be claimants do not just have to receive high-rate PIP (both components), they also have to have no arms (which is one such prerequisite).*

*Moreover, the severely disabled can also qualify for the pass if they score 8 points or more for ‘Mobility’ which, to qualify, the beneficiary's level of disability would be so great that he or she would have to crawl to the bus stop.*

**Kevin Raftery, Salford Branch**

## Travel frustration

UK TRAVELLERS TO EUROPE – including many retired people taking advantage of extra leisure time – will have been frustrated by the EU again delaying implementation of its European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). This is a visa waiver for those from ‘third countries’ wanting to enter Europe's Schengen Area. It will apply to non-EU nationals from visa-exempt countries travelling to the EU for short stays. The system was initially intended to launch in early 2022, but has now been put back until the final quarter of 2026. ETIAS is expected to become operational after EES (Entry/Exit System), an automated IT system which will collect biometric data of people from non-EU countries each time they enter and exit the Schengen area, is up and running.

## Ageism at work

Almost one in five people had missed out on opportunities at work since turning 50 according to the Centre for Ageing Better's research into the effects of ageism.

Its recent report on the *State of Ageing, 2025*, says: “Ageism intersects with ethnic, gender, health and socioeconomic inequalities to create unique barriers to employment for older workers, leaving some groups at particular risk of poverty in later life”. See: [bit.ly/3GDOsCr](https://bit.ly/3GDOsCr)

## Redundancy support

THE CENTRE FOR AGEING BETTER (CAB) has produced *Redundancy Support for Over 50s – A Guide for Union Reps*.

It's “designed to provide union reps with an overview of redundancy and of the differing levels of support that people aged over 50 may need. It aims to equip reps with the evidence, skills and tools to encourage HR colleagues and management to consider the needs of the older workforce when making redundancies ... to ensure that workplaces (and reps) adequately support workers in their 50s and 60s through redundancy and restructure processes”.

## Top up your pension

HIS MAJESTY'S REVENUE AND CUSTOMS – in the UK has changed the deadlines for topping up national insurance contributions to get the maximum state pension.

Now, voluntary contributions can only be paid to cover six years – any gaps before 2019 can no longer be covered. Gaps for the 2024-25 financial year can be filled until April 2, 2031. For freelancers, filling gaps need not be expensive and the return on the investment is often surprisingly advantageous.

Fuller details are available online – at <https://www.gov.uk/voluntary-national-insurance-contributions/print> – but talking to HMRC on 0300 200 3500 (or +44 191 203 7010 from outside the UK) is probably worthwhile, despite the waiting time.

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