

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Ministers make a move on free transport rules

Ministers have made moves to tighten the rules surrounding the national free bus travel scheme.

In a parliamentary order which comes into force on April 1, the government has decided that services on which a majority of the seats can be reserved in advance of travelling should be excluded from the concession.

This will include long-distance coach trips.

Park and ride services in some areas may also be excluded.

Routes on which the stops are up to 15 miles apart will however continue to be cov-

ered by the free bus travel rules. Peter Rayner, NPC transport advisor said: "Free bus travel benefits both the pensioner and society in general - helping the environ-

"Free bus travel benefits pensioners and our society"

ment, reducing the need for health care and enabling older people to make a valuable contribution to their local communities."

The NPC continues to campaign for a comprehensive free travel scheme that includes other forms of public transport such as trams, metros and local rail services, and which is available to all pensioners when travelling throughout and across all parts of the UK.

NPC calls for new Post Office bank

A new coalition representing trade unions, small businesses, think tanks and pensioners has been formed to campaign for the creation of a Post Bank.

As part of the coalition, the NPC believes this new bank would provide more financial services to people and businesses currently not served by high street lenders, and strengthen the role of the Post Office Network - making it more viable for the future.

The coalition believes that the Post Office and its network of 11,500 branches (almost twice the number of the major high street banks combined) is a unique national resource which must not be either privatised or allowed to decline.



Around three million people are still denied access to basic finance in the UK, including the most disadvantaged, pensioners and those in very remote rural areas.

Instead of using government money to service existing bad debt, the Post Bank would provide stable finance where it is needed most, in the heart of our local economies.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "The Post Office network provides an everyday lifeline to millions of older peo-

ple, many of whom rely on the services it offers and its valued place in local communities."

"Pensioners have lost faith in the financial sector and the launch of a new, People's Bank at the Post Office will offer some much needed security to those who feel their money is currently under threat."

Supporters should write to their MPs asking them to sign Early Day Motion 1082 in support of the Post Bank.

The Post Bank campaign commands support from MPs of all parties, small businesses, trade unions and many pensioners
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National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,
London EC1V 3QN
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www.npcuk.org



Campaign Dates

6 April

Pensions' Action Day. Protests, demonstrations, meetings and events are being planned across the country. Visit the NPC website for details

7 May

Meeting of NPC regional secretaries to discuss current issues/concerns

2-4 June

17th Pensioners' Parliament, Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Includes a march followed by Question Time session with Pensions Minister Rosie Winterton, sessions on dignity in care, the economic crisis and the general election, plus entertainment from The Bachelors and guest speakers Rodney Bickerstaffe and Sir Michael Parkinson. Credentials priced £3 available from the NPC office

NPC elects first woman secretary

The NPC has chosen its first female general secretary in its 30 year history.

Dot Gibson, current vice president and secretary of the Greater London region was elected with 63% of the vote at the NPC's recent special delegate conference in Coventry.

Ms Gibson started her working life with the Transport and General Workers' Union and eventu-

ally became a type-setter in publishing.

She succeeds Joe Harris, who stepped down after leading the NPC for eight years, and has already made her media debut as general secretary, appearing on the BBC's Question Time Extra programme at the end of March.

Ms Gibson said: "The campaigns and concerns of Britain's older population are not just for today's

pensioners, but for our children and grandchildren as well."

"When the general election comes, all political parties will have to take the demands of pensioners seriously."

At the conference, Frank Cooper was also re-elected as president, Syd Ashby, Joe Harris, Pat Healy and Peter Rayner were all elected as vice presidents and David Kippest as treasurer.

Time for a General Election strategy

The NPC has agreed to launch a general election strategy later this year, which will aim to put the concerns of older people before all the major political parties.

Plans are being made to draft a 'Pensioners' Manifesto' that will focus on some of the key issues and demands on pensions, care and the cost of keeping warm.

Candidates will

be asked for their views on these issues and their responses will be publicised as widely as possible.

The Convention will also consider staging a series of hustings meetings across the country, at which pensioners can put forward their views to the candidates.

Joe Harris, NPC vice president said: "In some constituencies pensioners can determine who will

be elected, but to do so effectively, they need to know which candidates will support the kind of policies that will benefit older people."

The NPC hopes to launch the Pensioners' Manifesto at a special session on the general election strategy at this year's Pensioners' Parliament.

Similar plans are also being made in relation to the European elections in June.

Tagging the elderly?

ANHS Primary Care Trust in Buckinghamshire is to begin giving satellite tracking devices to 20 dementia sufferers, as part of a new trial.

The NPC has warned that whilst new technology can be used to enhance and improve the care of older people, it should not be seen as a substitute for human contact and personal care.

The use of this technology also raises serious questions surrounding civil liberties and the rights of the individual.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said:

"We would not want to see this type of virtual

care replace the need for proper personal care provided by trained staff."

"Older patients should be treated with dignity and respect at all times, and the rights of the individual must be protected during any such trial."

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this bulletin please send their email address to the NPC