

SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 45/October 2017

CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL CONSULTATION SPECIAL EDITION

The Scottish Government have recently launched a consultation on *Free Bus Travel For Older and Disabled People and Modern Apprentices* which sets out their aims to raise the age of entitlement to concessionary travel for older people to 65 or over and to extend the scheme to other parties

Prior to the launch of the consultation and over the past several months, members of the SPF have been in talks with Transport Scotland and Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf to discuss the many benefits the present scheme has for older people and how maintaining the current age of entitlement is beneficial to all older people across Scotland.

We have been asked to engage in further meetings with both parties prior to the consultation end date.

Despite assurances that there will be no changes to those already in receipt of their entitlement card, the SPF feel that it is necessary to safeguard the benefits associated with the scheme for future generations at age 60+ and recently launched our campaign *Hands Off Our Bus Pass* seeing us going out and about collecting signatures and encouraging people to complete the consultation and have their say.



HANDS OFF OUR BUS PASS

Keep the Concessionary Travel Pass from Age 60

Getting Out and about helps combat loneliness and isolation. Walking to the bus stop gives older people a bit of exercise and reduces dependence on medical and care services and gives us independence.

- More people need to use buses to cut overcrowding and pollution in many parts of our town and cities.
- More use of buses helps to save services and routes threatened by cutbacks.
- Buses are a social service, so re-regulation is important.
- Life expectancy in some areas of our towns is very low. Raising the age for concessionary travel means sections of our communities will never benefit.
- Many people using a bus pass can afford to pay. But recouping costs can be made from income tax. Means Testing of benefits is expensive, but a reformed tax system that taxes those that can afford it to help those that can't benefits society as a whole.
- Our bus pass is a gateway to other services such as concessionary theatre and cinema tickets as well as exhibitions.
- Many people are forced into early retirement through redundancy and ill-health. Raising the age for concessionary travel will hit them financially.
- Why not extend concessionary travel to rail and ferry services too?



People before profit
**HANDS OFF
OUR BUS PASS**
unite Glasgow Retired Members' branch
Unite the Union.

The SPF would like to commend our affiliates at Unite the Union's Glasgow Retired Members' branch for their extensive work to highlight this issue and fully endorse and support their campaign *People Before Profit: Hands Off Our Bus Pass*

Information on the consultation and a link to start the consultation can be found at <https://consult.gov.scot/partnerships-and-concessionary-travel/national-concessionary-travel-scheme/> and closes on **17th November 2017**



SPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE, DUNDEE 2017

Rose Jackson, SPF Chairperson welcomed the delegates to the Conference and introduced Provost Ian Borthwick to deliver the formal civic welcome which would open conference proceedings. In his address Provost Borthwick warmly welcomed delegates to Dundee and called on those in attendance to work together to campaign for better pensions and services for older people in Scotland.



Following the Civic Welcome, the Conference was addressed by Lesley Irving, Head of the Scottish Government Equalities Unit, who was there to represent Jeanne Freeman MSP, Minister for Social Justice who was scheduled to speak but was called to an urgent meeting in Strasbourg. In her delivery to conference, Lesley referred to the 'Great Get Together' which had taken place recently in memory of murdered MP Joe Cox. Lesley then highlighted the problems associated with loneliness and isolation for older people in Scotland.

Under formal conference business, delegates adopted the SPF Annual Report of Work, The Financial Report, and the Auditor's Report and went on to endorse the SPF draft policy on *The Dignity and Rights of Older People in Scotland*. The document points out that the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. The SPF believes that this right should not diminish throughout an individual's natural life cycle as, all too often, when people age, there is a common misconception within society that their contribution becomes less valuable than that of their younger counterparts.

Two motions to conference were then submitted for consideration by delegates.

- Motion 1. *'We move that the Executive Committee of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum conducts and supports a campaign to release surplus funds from the National Insurance Fund and to set the Basic State Pension, for all, above the official poverty level and linked to average male earnings.'* This was moved by Sam Gibson, Unite Retired Members Branch Lanarkshire. **The Motion was defeated.**
- Motion 2. *'This Conference is aware of the loneliness and isolation experienced by many pensioners. It therefore urges the STUC to encourage its affiliates to set up retired members' branches and regional committees where these do not already exist. We believe that union members will benefit from this type of contact which can have a social as well as an educational and business function.'* Moved by Maureen Gardiner, Individual Pensioner Member. **The Motion was carried.**



The next speaker was Derek Young, Senior Policy Officer at Age Scotland, who emphasised the need to change society's perceptions of what it means to grow old. Derek spoke on Age Scotland's campaign to tackle loneliness and isolation and delivered a presentation on some of their recent work. of Age Scotland was the next speaker

In the afternoon session, Helen McFarlane, Programme Director of 'Our Voice, a project of the Scottish Health Council highlighted how it was necessary for more people and organisations to work together to improve health and social care conditions across Scotland. Helen emphasised that in order for people to be able to make decisions on their own care and treatment, local authority health and social care providers must involve them and the wider community in the design and development of local services and Helen emphasised the importance of several key elements for example openness, flexibility and inclusion to ensuring a strong working partnership, thus affording people control over their own treatment.



The final speaker of the day was Erik Cramb of Dundee Pensioners' Forum who spoke on the many issues surrounding funeral poverty and the collaborative work being carried out in Dundee involving Dundee Pensioners' Forum, the churches, the local authority, CAB and the Scottish Government to create a social enterprise company limited by guarantee, that will, provide services such as cars, flowers, catering etc. and will challenge current costs. A comparison website on funeral director's charges was also being established,

MEETING WITH JEANNE FREEMAN, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

Members of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, along with members of Scottish Seniors Alliance, met with Jeanne Freeman MSP at Holyrood in September to discuss issues of concern for older people. In a joint letter previously sent from SPF/SSA, both organisations listed items for discussion however due to time constraints, the following issues were prioritised:

A Minister for Age, Ageing and Older Peoples issues. The SPF was informed that it was the First Minister's remit to decide which Ministers she would like in place and who would be best suited to the post. Ms Freeman advised that her Ministerial portfolio included working with older people.

The reinstatement of The Older People's Consultative Forum. The Minister indicated her support for a consultative forum which could deal with such issues as the Winter Fuel Allowance and fuel poverty as well as any other matters presently being devolved from Westminster. Ms. Freeman indicated that it was her intention to hold the first meeting of the new group in November 2017 and that its remit would in no way replicate the work already being done by the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing, chaired by Sandra Whyte MSP.

Fuel Poverty and the Winter Fuel Allowance. Evidence was produced in support of increasing this allowance. The Minister replied that eleven benefits had been devolved to the Scottish Government, including the Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Allowance. She advised that the transfer of funds from Westminster in 2019 would be based on the spend undertaken in 2018, so there would be no new monies linked to the transfer. Ms Freeman also raised her concerns surrounding child poverty. It was stated that the only benefits to increase would be those already mentioned in the SNP Election Manifesto, i.e. Carers' Allowance, and extending winter fuel support to families with disabled children.

Funeral Poverty. The Minister acknowledged the disparity of charges throughout the country and the problems of poor practice in many areas. Any harmonisation of costs should be downwards and therefore an increase in prices should not be seen. The Scottish Government is encouraging a social enterprise approach regarding funeral directors and the SPF was advised of such a partnership in East Ayrshire. At the moment many people have pre-paid funeral plans, and many more think they have put enough money aside to cover costs however as the small print shows, this is not always the case. Currently an additional payment of £700 is subject to intrusive questions. Angela Constance MSP is working on social security payments to be effected by 2019 whereby if someone is eligible based on the qualifying criteria then the money will be released immediately. If someone is on a low income then they will know when making arrangements what they are entitled to. The Minister emphasised that social enterprise was the favoured way forward rather than any form of 'nationalisation'.

Concessionary Travel Scheme. The Minister referred to the SNP Election Manifesto commitment to extend eligibility to other groups. The SPF restated its policy of retaining eligibility for those aged 60+ and argued that it should be extended to cover rail and ferry travel, and in addition to this there should be improvements made to rural services in order to help combat loneliness and isolation. The Minister said she would pass the SPF's comments to Transport Minister Humza Yousaf MSP although she herself believed that the age for concessionary travel should be pegged to state pension age, 65 and rising.



SPF ELECTED OFFICE BEARERS 2017/2018

As always, our Executive Committee members are elected each year at our annual conference and are made up of representatives from local forums, faith groups, ethnic minority groups, affiliated organisations and individual members. At the first meeting of the new Executive Committee in July 2017, the following members were elected as office bearers for the year 2017/2018:-

Chairperson: Rose Jackson (STUC Unison Scotland)
Vice Chair: Colin Wakeling (NASUWT)
Vice Chair: Jim Bradley (Individual Pensioner Member)
Treasurer: Maureen Gardner (STUC Unite)
Secretary: Grahame Smith (STUC General Secretary)
Asst. Secretary: June Whitelaw (STUC USDAW)

OUT AND ABOUT



Since our last newsletter, the SPF have been out and about in Dumfries and Inverness to ask for your views on loneliness and isolation and how more can be done by government, both at local and national level, and within communities to help people make the transition from working lives into retirement. Thank you to all of you who came along to have their say and to the members of Unite Retired Members Branch Inverness for helping to organise the event there. As part of our commitment to helping reduce



loneliness and isolation for older people in Scotland, we will be visiting other areas over the coming months. Also, if you have any forthcoming events you would like us to attend with our information stall, please get in touch. We would be more than happy to come along.

UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS OCTOBER DEMO



To mark UN International Day of Older Persons we once again held a demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament calling for recognition for older people's contribution within society in line with this year's theme ***Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society.***



Guest speakers included Richard Leonard MSP, Claire Baker MSP, Derek Young, Age Scotland and SPF Chair Rose Jackson, Treasurer Maureen Gardner and Executive Committee member. Elinor McKenzie.

A more detailed report on this event will be made available in future publications

CAN YOU HELP?

WOMEN AND DE-INDUSTRIALISATION HISTORY PROJECT

At the SPF we are often approached by research students for assistance and we are always more than happy to help. In this instance, Emma Partridge, a final year History student at the University of Glasgow, contacted us as she is working on a research project about the impact of de-industrialisation on women in the Glasgow/Clydeside area.

Emma would like to make contact with women previously involved in factory work, who either had to take early retirement or find alternative employment. She is interested in hearing about the personal experience of factory closure and industrial decline in the area. If you or anyone you know can help Emma with her research please contact her at 2075139P@student.gla.ac.uk



Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

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