

Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

Looking again Waspi decision

A CHARITY BOSS SUSPECTS that the UK government decision to reconsider a rejection of compensation for Waspi women is a bid to fortify its legal position in the face of a court challenge.

Women Against State Pension Inequality (Waspi) campaigners say more than three-and-a-half million women born during the 1950s were not properly informed of a rise in state pension age designed to bring them into line with males.

They launched a judicial review after the government turned down their claim that women affected should receive payouts, although ministers apologised for a 28-month delay in sending letters telling the affected women of the age change.

But a document about a 2007 survey – unseen by then Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall when the government decided against compensating Waspi women – has led to the issue being reconsidered.

Caroline Abrahams, Age UK's charity director, told Senior Reporter: "Although we are glad the government has said that they are now reviewing some new evidence that has come to light, they are also downplaying suggestions that this will lead to the women impacted being given any compensation. Instead, the government's action seems to be motivated by a desire to strengthen its position in advance of a legal challenge that is due to come before the courts soon."

She added: "On the one hand, there were so many women impacted by this state failure that the bill for compensating them all in full would be huge, and probably unaffordable given the weakness of the public finances.

"On the other hand, the relevant government ombudsman looked in detail at what had happened and was clear that a wrong was done.

"There needs to be a proper resolution, even if it's a compromise of some kind. In

the meantime, time is not on the side of the women affected, who deserve some recompense and closure before it's too late."

Ms Kendall's successor, Pat McFadden, has told MPs that just because reconsideration was under way, this would not automatically result in financial restitution. He said checks would be made to ensure no other relevant information was still to come to light.

In 2024 a parliamentary ombudsman recommended that each of those women affected should be compensated by between £1,000 and £2,950, but had no power to enforce this.

There's been a slightly more optimistic view of the reconsideration decision north of the border, however.

Linda Carmichael, co-chair of Waspi-Scotland, told us at the beginning of this month (December): "WaspiScotland believes that the recent statement by the UK government that it will look at evidence, that it had not previously considered, to be a very important milestone in our 10-year-long campaign.

"We, and many others, recognise this injustice and over 33,000 women – and their families – in Scotland are still bearing the brunt of this. We shall continue to fight for those who have passed away and those still suffering from this injustice."

She added: "We certainly do not want the judicial review due to be heard on December 9 and 10 to be delayed, causing further hardship and stress."

DEREK FORREST

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

SPEAKING AT THE TUC PENSIONS committee on 4th December, Ken Bluestone, from Age International – the international arm of Age UK, outlined the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

This is not least because, Age International says: "In 2050, more than 2.1 billion people will be over 60 years old ... Yet older people worldwide are being subjected to daily violations of their most basic rights." Ageism, he said, is endemic and attitudes need to be reframed.

<https://www.ageinternational.org.uk/policy-research/protecting-rights/the-campaign-for-a-convention-on-the-rights-of-older-persons/>

December 2025



Getting a grip on digital ageism

Rhian Bowen-Davies, Older People's Commissioner for Wales, has called for urgent action from government, the tech sector and others to address the issues to prevent older people becoming excluded in an increasingly digital world.

In her report, *Exploring Digital Ageism*, Rhian Bowen-Davies says: "Tackling digital ageism is essential to ensure fairness, rights and inclusion for older people as society becomes increasingly digital."

Highlighting the significant barriers to digital inclusion faced by older people due to the growing issue of digital ageism, the report includes "stereotypes, poor design, cost and tailored support", which can lead to exclusion from essential services.

It says: "Older workers face systemic barriers relating to employment, with advertising and recruitment systems replicating ageist biases, older employees often lacking access to digital training, and workplace cultures that often stereotype older people as resistant to change.

"These factors contribute to exclusion and push people to exit the workforce earlier than they might have planned."

Exploring Digital Ageism – Executive Summary (HTML) – Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Photo © 2025 Older People's Commissioner for Wales

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, Nicoletta Flessati, Jenny Sims, Jim Symons. We welcome articles (250 words max.) and letters (150 words max.) for publication. They should be sent to: derekforrest@gmail.com

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

Dismay at cuts to Scottish news coverage

PLANS BY ONE OF THE LEADING BROADCASTERS north of the border to cut news coverage has caused anger and dismay – especially among older Scots, who rely on television more than other sectors of the population.

The STV proposals – aimed at saving £2.5million after it announced losses of £200,000 in respect of the first six months of this year – have also come under fire from politicians representing a range of views, and from trades council members.

As well as losing about 60 staff, the company wants to have a news programme currently produced for the north of Scotland in Aberdeen presented from its Glasgow HQ, including stories from across central and northern Scotland. This already happens at weekends. STV also has smaller offices in Dundee, Edinburgh and the Scottish Parliament.

Currently, STV produces two news programmes – from Glasgow and Aberdeen – which include five minutes of news from Dundee and Edinburgh for viewers in those areas.

Nick McGowan-Lowe, the NUJ's national organiser for Scotland, told MSPs that shutting down the Aberdeen news programme would be “cultural vandalism”. He



Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ official, addresses MSPs on the situation at STV. Photo © Scottish Parliament

accused STV of financial mismanagement and “knee-jerk reaction”.

On December 8, it was announced that NUJ members had voted 94 per cent and 98 per cent in favour of strike action and action short of a strike respectively in their fight against compulsory redundancies. Turnout was 82 per cent.

In a statement posted on the union website, Nick said: “This is a dispute about quality journalism, and making sure the north of Scotland can continue to have access to reliable, trusted, quality news coverage that is rooted in their communities.”

DEREK FORREST

SPF on the threshold

The Scottish Pensioners' Forum (SPF) has slammed the UK government's decision to freeze the tax-free personal threshold (£12,570 a year), warning that it will push more low-income OAPs into financial hardship as their living costs remain high.

SPF chair, David Edwards, branded the move “a stealth tax on those who can least afford it”. The forum says this will result in more pensioners with already limited incomes paying income tax for the first time, reducing the real value of their state pension. Those just above the pension credit threshold, many already struggling with household bills, will be disproportionately impacted yet again.

Mr Edwards said: “Low-income pensioners are being punished because the tax threshold stands still while everything else gets more expensive.

“Calling this responsible budgeting is like patching a leaking roof with wallpaper – it solves nothing. This decision is up there with the incompetence they (UK government) displayed over the winter fuel allowance last year – it truly beggars belief.”

He added: “The SPF is urging the UK government to re-evaluate the freeze. Any failure to act will only further compromise wellbeing and widen existing inequalities for older people.”

DEREK FORREST

NOTE: NUJ 60+ Council vice-chair Derek Forrest has been co-opted onto the Scottish Pensioners' Forum executive committee, joining fellow Senior Reporter editorial team member Jim Symons.

More Budget reactions

Reactions to the Budget have been mixed – for pensioners, the reinstatement of the £200 winter fuel allowance and the retention of the ‘triple lock’. Worries in Scotland are echoed by other campaigning groups.

Among these, Independent Age (<https://www.independentage.org/uk>) believes that “the UK government has missed an opportunity to tackle an issue that affects almost two million older people”.

It points to a gloomy future: “Our research shows that without decisive government intervention, pensioner poverty could almost double by 2040. Worryingly, nothing in this Budget suggests we are steering away from this alarming trajectory.”

The Centre for Ageing Better (CAB), in a section called “What does the budget mean for older people?” saw moves to cut energy bills by £150 from next April as positive, but “while we welcome further funding to tackle fuel poverty through the Warm Homes Plan, it is disappointing that the government has had to reduce the budget for energy efficiency measures to balance the books.” For more from the Centre, see: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/ageing-better-responds-governments-autumn-budget>

TUC Pensions Committee

THE NUJ NEC has elected Jenny Vaughan to the TUC's Pensions Committee. She attended her first meeting (on line) on 4th December.

The meeting discussed the launch in

NPC in crisis

The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) has launched an emergency appeal to enable it to survive and continue its work “albeit under a Company Limited by Guarantee”.

Jan Shortt, general secretary, said in a letter to affiliates, including the NUJ: “In the last ten years NPC income has not kept pace with its expenditure and inflation. It has been able to survive by making administrative savings and by spending its very limited cash reserves. Those reserves are now very close to being exhausted.”

The emergency appeal was suggested by members of the NPC's Executive Council at its November meeting who were shocked to be told the national officers were calling for dissolution of the NPC because of its dire financial situation.

Shortt has since written to affiliates, quoting from the statement: “Officers have reluctantly, collectively and unanimously decided to issue staff with three months' notice of redundancy and they will leave NPC employment on January 30th 2026.

“In addition, we feel that there is no other option but to recommend closure. A motion to this effect will be proposed and debated at a Special NEC meeting as required by clause 8 of the NPC constitution ‘Dissolution’.”

The meeting will be on 20th January. JENNY SIMS

Senior Reporter editors would welcome any stories from members involved in any way with the NPC in the past

July of the government's Pension Commission. Its intended focus was on workplace pensions, but its remit may include the state pension.

The issue of pensions for the self-employed who have no workplace pension to contribute to, and an unpredictable income, was raised and acknowledged as a problem – and one which affected several unions, including the NUJ.

There are to be further discussion of the Commission at the next TUC Pensions Committee meeting.

Ruth Weiss 1924-2025

NUJ life member Ruth Weiss died on 5th September this year, aged 101. Ruth will be remembered throughout Southern Africa as a journalist whose work played an important part in the struggle against apartheid. She continued to write into her 100th year. See <https://ruthweiss.net/blog/>

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