

# **Trade Union News** Skipton & Ripon Labour Party

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## **NUJ Guardian and Observer journalists to strike over sale of the Observer**

Journalists at the Guardian and Observer have voted to strike over the planned sale of the Observer newspaper to Tortoise. Union members passed a motion stating that selling the Sunday newspaper to Tortoise would be a “betrayal” of the Scott Trust’s commitment to the Observer. The trust is the ultimate owner of Guardian Media Group.

Strikes are due to take place on 4 - 5 December and 12 -13 December.

Tortoise is run by the former editor of the Times and former director of BBC News, James Harding. It has said it plans to continue to publish the Observer on a Sunday and build the Observer’s digital presence, combining with Tortoise’s podcasts, newsletters and live events.

The union motion said: “We believe the transfer is a betrayal of the Scott Trust’s commitment to the Observer as part of the Guardian News and Media family. The trust should protect a vital element of the UK and international liberal media and not seek to throw it overboard.”

Managers at the newspaper were presented with the results of a ballot for strike action which showed the vast majority of union members were prepared to strike over the deal. Of those eligible to participate, 75% cast a vote, with 93% supporting industrial action.

You can read the full **NUJ** statement at:

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/guardian-observer-journalists-vote-to-strike.html>

## **Commons Early Day Motion (EDM) on the BBC - Contact your MP**

Reductions in jobs and services at the BBC – please write to your MP and ask them to sign EDM 295 tabled by Rebecca Long-Bailey, chair of the NUJ Parliamentary Group, recognising the harm from ongoing BBC cuts on journalists and creative and accessible content. [Read the EDM in full.](#)

## **PCS**

The Con-Dem coalition government’s “naked attempt” to bankrupt the **Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union** was rejected unanimously in a recent Supreme Court ruling. The victory paves the way for the union to sue the Home

Office, Department for Food and Rural Affairs and HM Revenue & Customs for millions of pounds of compensation and costs.

This is on top of the £3 million already settled out of court by the Department for Work and Pensions.

In 2014 ministers encouraged departments to remove the check-off facility which had allowed workers to pay their union dues direct from their salary, resulting in **PCS** losing tens of thousands of members. The union won High Court victories against the four departments for cancelling check-off.

While the DWP settled out of court in 2019 for £3m, the Home Office, Defra and HMRC challenged the ruling in the Court of Appeal.

The Supreme Court has now ruled that **PCS** was entitled to sue the departments for breach of contract as a third party.

**PCS** general secretary Fran Heathcote said: “Today’s decision is vindication of our position. The attack on check-off was a naked attempt by the coalition government to bankrupt our union, thereby denying **PCS** members a collective voice in the workplace.

“It was a shameful period in the history of industrial relations in the Civil Service. We hope the new government will signal its intent to improve matters by now doing the right thing and agreeing appropriate damages with us.

“I pay tribute to all PCS members, representatives and staff who saw off this attack. Our decade-long legal battle through the courts demonstrates our determination to ensure that our union will leave no stone unturned in fighting for justice.”

More with other TU news including **NEU** action at: <https://www.pcs.org.uk/news-events/news/union-solidarity-round-25-november-1-december>

## **BFAWU**

Hundreds of Morrisons’ bakers are being made redundant as a result of asset-stripping by the supermarket’s private equity owners, the **Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)** have claimed. The retailer has announced it will close its Rathbones site in Wakefield and make redundant 400 workers, many of whom have worked there for 20 years.

**BFAWU** general secretary Sarah Woolley said: “Since Morrisons were bought out by Clayton Dubilier & Rice in 2021 we have seen the traditional cycle of private equity firm behaviour post takeover that throws workers on the scrapheap without even a glance back.

“They have asset stripped Morrisons, with our members now bearing the brunt of their mismanagement with this short-sighted decision to close the site. This treatment of people is plain wrong and unfair on the hundreds of people who work at the site and who have had their lives turned upside down by this decision.”

She vowed to oppose “de-facto fire-and-rehire” after Morrisons suggested it may keep the morning goods part of the factory open.

More at: <https://www.bfawu.org/news-from-bakers-union-union-fury-at-private-equity-owned-morrisons-bakery-closure/>

### **Amazon international action**

The ‘Make Amazon Pay’ campaign saw coordinated demonstrations across more than 20 countries take place from Friday 29 November to Monday 2 December. In the face of widespread exploitative, environmentally damaging and anti-union practices, the campaign is backed by more than 30 unions, environmental organisations, and civil society groups.

### **Calls to 'Axe Lancashire councils' get a mixed response while UNISON warns on local government reorganisation**

The Lancashire Telegraph reports that several Labour MPs have signed a letter to the government asking for a new simplified local authority structure for the county – telling ministers local leaders will never agree among themselves on such a 'vital' revamp.

Blueprints drawn up by Burnley and Brierfield Labour and Co-op MP Oliver Ryan, would see one unitary authority for the six East Lancs districts, another for Blackpool, Lancaster, Wyre and Fylde and a third for Chorley, South Ribble, Preston and West Lancashire.

But Cllr Stephen Atkinson, Ribble Valley Council's Conservative leader, said: "This [would be] civic vandalism, creating ever more remote decision making – they are removing local democracy.

“Lancashire residents will remember who took their councils away in four years’ time – and my prediction is huge disruption, less responsive and remote services and millions wasted on reorganisation, while we are not concentrating on delivery.”

Cllr Matthew Brown, leader of Labour-run Preston City Council, suggested the move by MPs was premature – including their call for next year’s Lancashire County Council elections to be cancelled ahead of replacement local authorities being established in 2026.

More at: <https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/24745754.axe-lancashire-councils-call-gets-mixed-response/>

Meanwhile **UNISON** has warned the government that local authorities must still offer the same services under their plans to abolish dozens of district councils in England. Ministers will produce an English devolution white paper outlining plans to end the two tier system of local government and replace it with larger unitary authorities.

More at: <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/morning-star/20241126/page/2/textview>

### **RMT secure improved pay offer**

**RMT** has won a substantial victory on London Underground after issuing strike dates and pursuing strong negotiations with tube management. The union accepted London Underground's latest pay offer, delivering notable improvements for members terms and conditions, including:

**Pay increases:** Lower-paid members will receive rises between 5% and 6.6%, with an average increase of 4.6%.

**Protection of pay structures:** Management's attempts to freeze pay bands and introduce detrimental "job family" structures have been scrapped.

**Enhanced benefits:** Improvements such as harmonised paternity leave extended to three weeks, three years' protection of earnings for medically displaced staff, and expanded eligibility for retired travel benefits have all been secured.

More at: <https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-secures-pay-win-on-london-underground/>

### **UNITE applies to High Court for Judicial Review**

**Unite** has taken the next step in seeking a Judicial Review, to overturn the government's decision to cut winter fuel payments to all but the poorest pensioners. On Friday 22 November the union made a formal application to the High Court for leave to go forward with a full Judicial Review of the government's decision to cut winter fuel payments.

More at: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/november/winter-fuel-unite-applies-to-high-court-for-judicial-review>

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