

tssa journal

2024

Inside your Journal:

Hear from your General
Secretary
Updates from Scotland, Wales
and Ireland
Your Campaigning Union

Plus much more!





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TSSA Our Year Highlights

As ever in the life of our union things move at pace as we fight for members' interests, and in that respect the past twelve months have been no different.

In October 2023 Maryam Eslamdoust was elected as our new General Secretary, winning forty-seven per cent of the votes cast and becoming the first woman and the first person of colour to hold this post in the history of our union or any other railway union.

This came as TSSA won from the front against the then Conservative government's plans to close railway ticket offices across England. We have represented ticket office workers for more than 125 years so our high profile and successful campaign against these ill-conceived proposals was vital. Coming together as one union and working with passenger, disability, pensioner and women's groups ensured our historic campaign was a huge success, preserving ticket offices which are a lifeline to so many.



In this period we have also continued to push Network Rail over safety concerns and plans for job losses, as well as highlighting the dangers of cuts to budgets and staff at British Transport Police.

There has been a long-running industrial dispute at ScotRail among Operations Team Manager grades over on call working arrangements, with industrial action dating back to December 2023. Meanwhile at London Underground Customer Service Managers (CSMs) have walked out over their deep concerns about the company's 'Stations Changes' proposals which have the potential to change their terms and conditions, job roles and location.

All of this demonstrates that our union, while using strikes as a last resort, will always be on the front foot in fighting and winning for you. We reflected on all of this and much more in June this year at what was a very successful annual delegate conference in Cardiff. This is always an important gathering because conference is the sovereign body of our union.

It took place in the midst of a general election campaign. Labour's victory in July was a big moment for our union, one we had worked hard for, having secured measures to bring railways back into public hands and enhance workers' rights. This change of government also gives us proper scope to engage with Ministers, for instance over a pay deal for those of you working at rail companies.

We have now seen the Department for Transport (DfT) take a major step forward with the creation of Shadow Great British Railways – the body which will pave the way for track and trains coming back together in public ownership.

Your union has also now begun a new campaign to help raise awareness of the impact of violence against transport workers and find workable solutions to ensure staff are protected at work.

We are calling on employers to take this issue seriously and implement policies to empower and protect staff, and for the Government to implement and enforce laws to ensure that those who perpetrate abuse and violence against transport workers are dealt with appropriately.

In so many ways then it has been an historic year with much progress made and lots still to fight for in the coming months and years.

Our Goals in 2025

I came into office with a mandate to strengthen our union and ensure a laser focus on members' jobs, pay, terms and conditions. Led by our Executive Committee, and our Reps across all the companies we represent we are strong, but my goal is to make us stronger still, so that when the next major dispute or crisis comes along we can again meet it head on – as we did in the pandemic, our historic national rail dispute and the successful campaign to save rail ticket offices across England.

Thankfully we now have a Labour government at Westminster which is serious about our railways and wider transport sector. I have already had discussions with the new Transport Secretary, Lou Haigh, and have been leading our pay negotiations with the Department for Transport.

I am proud that our campaign to eliminate violence against transport workers is up and running. Our members face unacceptable levels of abuse and violence and this campaign is a step toward ensuring that no member should ever face violence or intimidation at work. We are equally dedicated to eliminating sexual harassment within TSSA as a workplace. Therefore, we have introduced a total ban on alcohol within our offices and events. We take seriously the need for a safe and respectful environment for all staff and members and are fully committed to the Kennedy and Conley recommendations.



A year ago I was elected as our union's new General Secretary – this was not only a huge honour but broke new ground for TSSA and beyond - as I am the first woman and the first person of colour to lead any railway union.

Over the past year, I have stood in solidarity with fellow unions and workers across the UK. I attended a day of solidarity action in Belfast, supported the ScotRail strikes in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and stood with colleagues at the London Underground strikes, joining the picket line outside Liverpool Street station. These actions underline our union's commitment to supporting workers in their fight for fair treatment and better conditions.

We are also taking steps to support the development of our young activists. I arranged for TSSA to send a delegation to Cuba, where our young members learnt about solidarity with Cuban workers and the important work happening there.

Throughout the year, I have proudly attended anti-racism demonstrations to show our union's unwavering commitment to fighting discrimination and injustice. I have spoken out in defence of our BAME members, standing up against all forms of racism in the workplace and society.

Our union remains committed to creating a fair and equal world for all, where every worker is respected and treated with dignity, regardless of their race or background.

Early this year, I supported the launch of a new Women's Forum within our union, a platform that embodies our commitment to intersectionality, inclusivity, and the power of grassroots leadership. This forum represents an exciting step forward for our union, driven by our working members. This spring we held a successful Conference where we reaffirmed our commitment to making TSSA the most relevant and supportive union for working members. This means continuing to listen, to engage, and to act on the issues that matter most to you. We hope to see you at our Conference in Belfast next year.

And lastly at the TUC Conference this Autumn I moved a motion that was strongly supported by the other transport unions. This motion addressed the critical issue of disability access on public transport. It is unacceptable that, four years past the deadline for bringing all transport up to accessibility standards, we are still not there. We will continue to push for change, ensuring that our public transport system is accessible to all. Together, we are building a safer, more inclusive future for all TSSA members. Thank you for your continued support and solidarity as we work toward these goals.

In solidarity,

Maryam Eslamdoust
General Secretary, TSSA

Network Rail – Securing Your Future

Pay, job security, safety and wellbeing have been and continue to be major items for our Reps at Network Rail (NR) this year.

On Bands 1-4 pay, we have been in extensive discussions across several months with the company, and the prospect of a proposal is emerging. We had expected to see this before now, but NR asked for more time.

Our members in General Grades, Bands 5-8 (and equivalent) and Controllers have now accepted a pay offer which will see an uplift to pay and allowances and backpay.

Securing good pay offers across the board for Network Rail members is vital under this new government as a means of re-setting what had been a rather strained industrial climate in recent years.

However, it's not just on pay that our union is fighting for you at NR. In recent months we have raised concerns around NR's Modernising Maintenance project which includes changes to scheduled maintenance and renewals work.

This warning came as a result of our concerns around changes to established ways of working, including jobs and cost-cutting measures across all routes and regions.

Of course, we now know that Labour will scrap Network Rail as part of its plans to hand over running of the railways to a new Great British Railways (GBR) body with the aim of bringing the railways – including infrastructure and maintenance - into public ownership by the end of a first term.

As we move towards this change TSSA is committed to working with NR, to improve working relations and work together for a more efficient, safe and productive railway. We view this as a major step forward, to have one organisational body, but within that we will, as ever, be making sure your rights are fully protected.

None of this would be possible without the work of our many fantastic Reps at NR and there's always room for more of you who want get involved as a means of representing your colleagues and your union in the workplace. Contact helpdesk@tssa.org.uk for more details.



Winning in Wales

The recent below inflation pay offer from Transport for Wales (TfW) serves to highlight the importance of being in our union and being able to fight back when a company fails to make an offer that meets your worth.

We were disappointed by the two-year pay deal and the initial offer of a 2 per cent uplift. That has since been increased to 3.5 per cent for this year and just the RPI rate of inflation for 2025. The company has been told that this falls short of being anywhere near good enough given the macro-economic situation and so many still

facing a high cost of living. From the outset we were totally upfront that we could never accept a situation in which we have a multi-year pay deal which would not even deliver guaranteed minimum increases.

Sadly, all of this seems to have fallen on deaf ears and TfW have described what has been tabled as a full and final offer. They should know we are resolved to fight and win for our members across Wales in the dispute that is likely to follow.

Of course, we never take industrial action and much less strike action without due cause, but that's the situation we now find ourselves in as we go to press. As ever, we encourage the company to get back round the negotiating table with us and engage seriously and in good faith.



New Links Across Ireland

Our union was instrumental in making sure a brand-new transport hub in the centre of Belfast has a fully functioning ticket office.

Our long history is in ticket offices and we know how vital these are to the travelling public given the historic victory we had to save railways ticket offices in England last year.

The new Grand Central Station will cater for up to 20 million journeys a year and cost over £300m to build. It would have been remarkable to have done this without ticket office staff. Thankfully, in consultations over the design we made sure this was included and now we see this coming to fruition.

To ensure this happen our brilliant TSSA Organiser, Gary Kelly, wrote to every single Member of the Stormont Assembly, had meetings and contacted MPs too. This was not easy of course, but it was vital work - vital to the people of Ireland north and south and the economy of the island, as well as our members.

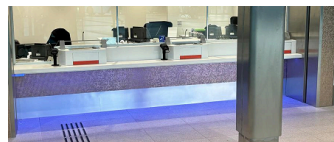
Thankfully the pressure from our union was enough to get TransLink to listen and change their plans.

Elsewhere in Ireland we will soon be starting pay talks at Bus Eireann as the current deal expires at the end of the year, so members should look out for more details in the

months ahead.

It was also good to see the all-Ireland rail review get published and the continued investment in rail in particular. We note with concerns however the creep of privatisation in the bus sector – which we will resist.

Importantly we will continue to work with sister unions to make the case for dedicated transport police officers to deal with increased anti-social behaviour across the transport network.



The fight goes on in Scotland

As we went to press ScotRail members had just accepted a pay offer of 4.5%. However TSSA members in the Operations Team Managers and ScotRail Operations Managers grades are still in dispute over on-call working.

During on-call duties members are required to stay close to their workplace, and to remain ready for work at all times. TSSA members are unable to visit family elsewhere, or to celebrate Christmas with a drink, with no consistency over compensation from ScotRail due to the lack of a formal agreement.

Despite our willingness to meet with Scotrail, at any time, to discuss and agree a formal arrangement, the company continues to drag its feet.

With no alternative, we will shortly be re-balloting our affected members for industrial action. Keep an eye on our weekly newsletter News on the Go for updates.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANSPORT WORKERS

TSSA is leading the way when it comes to tackling the scourge of workplace violence against transport and travel workers.

At the end of the summer our Executive Committee gave the green light to a high-profile campaign to end assaults and abuse of staff across our transport network.

TSSA was determined to implement this and highlight such issues after the annual report from the Rail and Safety Standards Board (RSSB) showed violence had increased, despite passenger journeys not fully recovering after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The campaign is now up and running, beginning with an online session which provided an overview of the types of abuse workers are subjected to, how to ensure adequate reporting and recovery post incident.

Much more is planned, around conflict avoidance and resolution, health and safety in the workplace training for reps and helping to minimise abuse targeted at staff.

Our union is calling for a whole range of measures – these would see the Westminster government ensure that existing powers to protect staff from assaults and abuse are being properly enforced, as well as additional legislation where required.



Part of this is a sharp increase of British Transport police patrols on railways and the transport network, but we are determined to do all we can to ensure zero tolerance policies to abuse are embedded into Great British Rail's working practices.

There should be a joint charter against staff violence with the Department for Transport and we believe it is vital that the Stormont Executive introduce Transport Police across the North of Ireland.

To make this work employers would need to assist in building a system for employees to report incidents, support staff who have been subjected to abuse and to better promote the reporting of assaults on staff.

As ever TSSA will act in the interests of members, and we know transport workers face unacceptable threats, harassment, and assaults simply for doing their jobs — keeping our networks running and serving the public. This campaign is a call to everyone — employers, passengers, and the government — to stand with us and ensure transport workers are treated with the dignity and safety they deserve.