

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

23RD APRIL 2026

ROYAL STATION HOTEL, CARNFORTH

1. Present

Don Forrester – Chair (DF), Fran Butler - Secretary (FB), Alan Bradley (AB), Bryan Knowles (BK), Ian Catterall (IC), Ian Driver (IRD), Luis Eckersley (LE), Phil Storer (PS), Tony Moss (TM), Yvonne Hargreaves (YH)

Guest Speakers: Jez Stewart – National Secretary

2. Apologies for Absence

John Jenkinson, Peter Brough, Roly Guegan, Willie Reid, Christine Riley, Ian Diffenthal, Steve Bradley, Gordon Routledge and James Burnell.

Following notification that James Burnell sadly passed away on the 1st April, the Chairman and members send their condolences to James' wife and family.

3. Minutes of General Meeting (10th April 2025)

The minutes were approved, and accepted as a true record. Minutes of the previous AGM (16th October 2025) will be approved at the next AGM (15th October 2026).

4. Matters Arising:

- a) Hotel Facilities & Remote Access – FB has spoken to the Royal Station Hotel staff and confirmed that there is a projector, elsewhere in the hotel. This can be used with a laptop so would provide limited remote access, if required.
- b) NWRMG 'complaint' & status of EM02/2025 – The Chairman re-stated his understanding regarding the current status, explaining that to date, the CNPP Trustees have not reclaimed any overpayment. Prospect are aware that CNPP members, affected by the GMP issue, have seen a reduction in their monthly pension payments, and members have been asked to contact Prospect and/or the NWRMG, should anything change.

Jez Stewart (JS) added that he recognised there were a variety of views, but stressed that the Trustee-member relationship is innately individual, and therefore not subject to union negotiation. It is the Trustees' responsibility to assure the well-being of the scheme, and ultimately to reclaim any overpayment but, since this has not happened, it now seems unlikely.

North West Retired Members Group (NWRMG)

5. Guest Speaker – Jez Stewart - Prospect National Secretary

- a) Prospect Strategy & Future Plans – Unlike many other unions, e.g. Unite with ongoing industrial action, Prospect is financially stable with 163K members. With its diverse membership, and proven ability to work professionally with employers, Prospect is undergoing an aggressive campaign, to gain recognition in even more organisations.

Indeed, following changes to the Employment Rights Act and specifically, the Access Threshold (number of members as percentage of employees), Prospect has recently signed a recognition agreement with the General Medical Council, and discussions are ongoing with; Northern Power Grid, Fraser Nash, Eurofins, Amentum and Cavendish Nuclear. However, since the Access Threshold is now only 10%, other unions may also make representations. Under the Act, if a union makes representation and fails, access to that organisation is locked to all other unions for two years, hence the need for Prospect's aggressive campaign.

Also, a consequence of Employment Rights Act changes, and as a trade-off against Day-1 rights to unfair dismissal, the cap on unfair dismissal claims has been removed. Positive changes but Conservative and Reform remain opposed to pro-union measures.

- b) Prospect Cyber Attack – This has been shown to have been a criminal attack not a data leak. Anyone impacted was contacted by Prospect as soon as the extent/impact was understood. An independent review has now concluded and recommendations include 24-hour security monitoring and a ban on staff taking phones/laptops overseas.
- c) NEC & GS Elections – 50 nominations have been received for the NEC and voting is ongoing (retired employees are not allowed to vote as this is restricted to working members). Future votes may be managed electronically in order to secure a higher percentage vote, as returns are still very low.

The GS election is due to take place later in the year and Mike Clancy will be standing for re-election.

d) For information

- a. Some interest in reinstating a yearly conference but cost would be prohibitive, so very unlikely.
- b. Concerns raised about Prospect's ability to effect change on issues out with the union's influence, e.g. Iran or Gaza. Is there a way to have a pragmatic approach, whilst making the most efficient use of conference time?
- e) Political Fund – It is true that Prospect has a non-political stance, from the point of view of the union not being affiliated to any political party however, Prospect is not politically neutral. As such we work with the party of the day and our strength is in our members.
- f) Pensions – Members have been understandably concerned about state pension and tax thresholds etc. but the state pension has always been taxable, just below the threshold. This is particularly true for members also drawing a company pension.
- g) Winter Fuel Payment – After the climb-down by the government, WFP is now payable to everyone over state pension age, although it will be means-tested, and fully repayable, if gross income is over £35K. See <https://www.npcuk.org/post/hmrc-offer-guide-on-whether-wfp-will-be-taxed> for more information.
- h) North-South Divide – Although the differences in investment continue to be apparent, these have been less marked in areas overseen by mayors able to directly influence government ministers, e.g. Manchester. Nevertheless, many projects have fallen through the gaps, e.g. Nuclear Waste Repository/Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) and East-West Rail HS Link etc.
- i) The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) - Company number 16257217 – Aware of concerns raised by the Chairman and RMG members, regarding the imminent collapse of the NPC, JS explained that, from his investigation, it would appear there is no threat, though the NPC is clearly 'broke'. In an attempt to keep operating, the NPC has become a PLC but there has been no change in the board members.

North West Retired Members Group (NWRMG)

The Chairman thanked Jez for his full and extremely interesting presentation. Although minuted formally here, JS kindly accepted questions and discussion throughout. Members' comments have therefore been included under the appropriate sections.

6. ADC 2025 Delegate Report (delivered by Ian Driver)

A relatively quiet conference compared to the drama of recent years, with the only really contentious issue, being the data breach suffered by Prospect in June 2025; covered by motions 6 to 9. There was also a passionate debate on motion 19, regarding the proscription of Palestine Action, although this motion was ultimately heavily lost.

There were 20 motions on the order paper with 13 carried, 3 remitted, 3 lost and 1 being ultimately guillotined, plus 1 emergency motion, which was carried.

IRD indicated a wish to speak against motion 3 and point out a possible inaccuracy, likely to have unintended consequences, but he was not called. The motion was remitted, following a statement from the chair and, remission was carried with 15 votes for and 8 against.

Election of Officers

Andrew Ruffhead was re-elected unopposed as Group President. Tom James was re-elected unopposed as Vice-President. Douglas Hyam was elected unopposed to the vacant position on the Standing Orders Committee.

Guest Speaker – Mike Clancy (MC)

MC gave a very upbeat report to the conference on the continued success of the union and answered delegates' questions. "We've just over 162,000 members, the largest it's ever been," he said. "The most brutal measure of success is how its membership is growing compared with other unions. We are without doubt bucking a trend, and we do that through the accumulated efforts of reps and staff."

He talked about current pensions issues, including Capita's failure to pay the pensions to members of the Civil Service Pension Scheme (administration change from MyCSP in December). "This is a damning indictment of outsourcing to some extent," he said. "When you undervalue public services and denude public sector investment, this is the end point of it. We are in urgent talks and they (Capita) must have a problem because they are reaching out to us, but if they aren't prepared to change anything, the answer's probably no". Ensuring that processes change, so pensions are paid, is a clear priority for Prospect - members will be updated, throughout the year, on progress.

Many retired members are keen to continue to play an active part in the union and the RMG had advocated for this. The General Secretary explained to delegates that the NEC was going to put forward a rule change to the upcoming Prospect biennial conference to amplify their voting capacity, "that will give a wind of change in voting for retired members at national conferences. The NEC have been persuaded."

Secretary's Note: Additional information on the MyCSP to Capita debacle, can be found at <https://www.cspa.co.uk/news/public-accounts-committee-scrutinises-capita-over-civil-service-pensions-failures/> and Update from Capita (April 2026).pdf

Section A – Climate Change

Motion 1 (Carried) - UK Government and TUC to take active steps in the UK and elsewhere to counter global warming.

Motion 2 (Remitted) – Five measures to increase Prospect's visibility during the 'Trade Union Year of Action on Climate Change' were believed to have already been addressed.

Section B - Pensions

North West Retired Members Group (NWRMG)

Motion 3 (Remitted) – Levels of pension income and, the differences between state pensions, raised concern that this was an over-simplification c.f. employers' pensions scheme vs various taxpayer-funded second pensions, such as SERPS.

Section C - Rule Changes

Motion 4 (Lost) – Proposal to allow “elected Deputy Area Representatives (to) be recognised as valid candidates for the roles of President or Vice-President”. A 10-9 vote in favour, with several abstentions, was lost as rule-change motions require a two-thirds majority.

Section D - RMG Organisation

Motion 5 (Carried) – One bulletin a year should provide clarification of the issues, where Prospect can provide support and, the means by which to seek assistance.

Section E - Prospect Organisation

Four Areas submitted motions (6 to 9 inclusive) reflecting concern about the data breach that occurred in June 2025.

Motion 6 (Carried) - Assurance that members' personal data is now secure, plus compensation for members most seriously affected by the breach.

Motion 7 (Lost) – Motion requested that the Experian “Identity Plus” service be increased to 2 years but Motion 8 had an open-ended request, and was therefore preferable.

Motion 8 (Carried) - “Seek an extended period of cover for those whose data has been compromised”.

Motion 9 (Carried) - Review of notification arrangements – faster and more detailed.

Motion 10 (Carried) – Actively promote Retired Membership with involvement in appropriate campaigns and activities”

Motion 11 (Carried) - Utilise the experience of Retired Members in areas such as Workshops and Mentoring.

Motion 12 (Carried) – Seek to increase the Prospect mileage rate.

Motion 13 (Carried) – Recognition of NPC's work and request for additional funding from Prospect. (Note the union has already donated £2,000.)

Motion 14 Carried) - “Promote the significant, ongoing, financial and social contributions that pensioners continue to make” though the NPC & NEC.

Section F - Communications

Motion 15 (Carried) – Reference back to Resolutions #34 of 2017, #35 of 2017 and #3 of 2023. The motions asked Retired Members to; encourage young workers to take up union membership, assist companies with pre-retirement courses, and have their offer of support accepted by the Public Services Executive Committee.

Note - the RMG supported working members by its contribution to lobbying on the Pensions Protection Fund.

Section G - Finance

Motions 16 & 17 (Carried) - Campaign to unfreeze tax thresholds, and lobby to retain the £20,000 provision for pensioners contributing to Cash-Only ISA accounts.

Motion 18 (Remitted) – To ensure every community has either a bank branch or fully functioning Banking Hub, was considered too ambitious. Legislation may actually result in higher bank charges and, greater access to cashpoint machines and post offices is preferable.

Section H - Miscellaneous

North West Retired Members Group (NWRMG)

Motion 19 (Lost) – Opposition to the proscription of Palestine Action and proposal requiring the NEC to collectively sign a “Protest is not terrorism” open letter. Speakers against the motion made the following points:

- The website of Palestine Action clearly states its aim to “dismantle” the modern state of Israel.
- Palestine Action is committed to criminal acts in furtherance of its objectives, even if anti-terrorist legislation is a questionable basis for proscription.
- Arrested protestors were publicly expressing support for a criminal organisation.
- The open letter (that all NEC members would be forced to sign) explicitly defends criminal methods.
- Such a motion in the name of the RMG would undermine Retired Members’ efforts to be respected by the union as a whole.

Despite three delegates speaking in support, the motion was heavily defeated.

Motion 20 (Guillotined) – Campaign to ensure that Retired Members, living in rural areas, are not unfairly disadvantaged by the Government’s proposals for pay-per-mile taxing of road vehicles.

Note – As a guillotined motion, it was effectively remitted to the NC, who are in support of it.

Emergency Motions

EM01 (Carried) - From London Central in response to the London Councils collective (January 2026) plan to review the Older Person's Freedom Pass. The NC was instructed, to work with the NEC and NPC, to pursue (nationwide) protection of concessionary travel for pensioners.

On a related note, IRD reported that he has, again, experienced a long delay in payment of expenses, following the ADC. FB remarked that she had also experienced long delays. The secretary will monitor and report back.

Action GM2601 – FB to monitor expense payment issues and raise with Northern Office, if further problems occur.

7. National Committee Representative Report

Although little to report from the latest meeting, DF highlighted the following:

- a) The Together Alliance March (28 March 2026) – At the NC meeting (31st March 2026), Central Southern Area motioned their concerns regarding Prospect’s ‘stance’ at the Together Alliance Rally. DF reported that the motion had fallen, following a statement by the Group President Andrew Ruffhead, and the following statement was adopted:

“The RMG National Committee notes with approval Prospect’s participation in the 28 March Together Rally against the Far Right (as epitomised by Tommy Robinson and his supporters). It is, however, concerned about one of the supporting organisations carrying an extremely prominent banner with the message ‘Don’t let racist Farage and Reform divide the country’. It is also regretted that Zack Polanski’s speech lumped in Nigel Farage with Tommy Robinson. We hope Prospect will urge the Together Alliance to try & prevent future anti-racism events from being exploited by groups promoting separate agendas.”

NWRMG members were concerned at the level and complexity of debate, that Prospect would be subject to by adopting policies on future marches, or the like. It was considered not to be the job of Prospect to become involved in matters where the Union clearly has no control. In short, it is not union business to adopt a stance on the material of others, banners or otherwise.

Action GM2602 – FB to circulate the minutes of the NC meeting as soon as they are available.

North West Retired Members Group (NWRMG)

8. General Discussion

- a) Civil Service Pensions Administration – JS explained that the change in administration from MyCSP to Capita had resulted in a huge backlog. Capita has inherited approximately 89K cases and, the transition, with no apparent handover, means there is now a backlog of 140K cases. According to Capita (see Update from Capita (April 2026).pdf), they are working “to address the issues raised” but they are clearly in need of help as all MyCSP staff left, when Capita took over.

9. AOB:

- a) Consultation on Eye Tests for Over 70 – Concerns were expressed about the age specified, as this should be applicable to all drivers.
- b) GS Election & Email Notification - A number of members reported having received email voting reminders, and FB asked JS to confirm the start/end dates for the GS election. However, since the election is not due to start until later in the year, and in mind of the June 2025 cyber-attack, JS was rightly concerned that the emails may be spam/phishing. They warranted investigation but, when members re-checked their emails, in all cases, they referred to the NEC elections.

Although the emails looked genuine, all coming from the ‘Prospect Union hello@mail.prospect.org.uk’ address, since retired members are not permitted to vote for the NEC, it is clear that an investigation is warranted. This error could simply be a data entry fault, associated with the mailing list criteria, i.e. failure to exclude retired members’ branch and/or membership numbers, or it could be another cyber-attack, and an indication that personal data has been acquired. The issue should be referred to IT for further investigation.

Action GM2603 – FB to ask JS to refer the issue to IT.

10. Dates of Next Meetings:

- a) 20th August 2026 (Committee Meeting)
- b) 15th October 2026 (AGM)

Fran Butler
Secretary Prospect NWRMG

10th May 2026