



## **CEC Special Report**

# **Political Strategy**



**MAKE  
WORK  
BETTER**

**GMB CONGRESS 2025**

**CEC SPECIAL REPORT**

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## List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAC	Central Arbitration Committee
CAC	Conference Arrangements Committee (Labour Party)
CEC	Central Executive Council (GMB)
FPTP	First Past the Post (electoral system)
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
MP	Member of Parliament (UK)
NEC	National Executive Committee (Labour Party)
NHS	National Health Service
NJC	National Joint Council (local government negotiating body)
NPF	National Policy Forum (Labour Party)
PEI	Political, European & International Committee (GMB)
PR	Proportional Representation (electoral system)
PRB	Pay Review Body (public sector pay setting panel)
SAF	Sustainable Aviation Fuel
SSSNB	School Support Staff Negotiating Body
TULO	Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
WASPI	Women Against State Pension Inequality

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This special report sets a refreshed strategy for “political trade unionism” following the 2024 general election. It argues that workplace power must be matched by political influence so that laws and budgets reinforce, rather than block, our members’ industrial gains. The report replaces the union’s 2018 political blueprint and builds on the 2012 report while responding to new realities: a Labour government elected on the promise of change and an end to austerity, the urgent need to make work pay, technological disruption, the net-zero transition, and rising far-right populism.
- 1.2 GMB helped design Labour’s flagship employment rights package and is now lobbying to keep it watertight as the Employment Rights Bill progresses through Parliament. The union’s campaigns for school support staff (re-establishing the SSSNB), Amazon Coventry workers (strengthening recognition law) and British Gas engineers (banning fire-and-rehire) show how industrial action feeds legislative reform.
- 1.3 GMB will press ministers to reverse cuts to the Winter Fuel Allowance, compensate the WASPI women, reform Pay Review Bodies, resist welfare cuts, secure new nuclear projects such as at Sizewell C, and build a domestic Sustainable Aviation Fuel industry.
- 1.4 GMB will always defend workers against anti-union forces. This report sets out clearly that Reform UK’s agenda – scrapping employment law and cutting £50bn from public services – is a direct threat to members and pledges a campaigning response.
- 1.5 GMB will strengthen grassroots political capacity. Regions will be supported to build and lead campaigns from the ground-up tailored to their specific devolved and local structures.
- 1.6 We will Work through Labour – and hold it to account. Through our representatives on Labour’s NEC, National Policy Forum and Conference Arrangements Committee, plus wider coordination through TULO, GMB will push pro-worker policies and challenge government mis-steps.
- 1.7 In conclusion we will:

- 1.7.1 Secure the passage of the Employment Rights Bill without dilution and press for the remaining New Deal pledges (equal pay reform, procurement/insourcing standards).
- 1.7.2 Equip industrial and organising staff to exploit new rights (e.g. workplace access, fast-track recognition).
- 1.7.3 Intensify lobbying on key industrial priorities ahead of the 2026 elections.
- 1.7.4 Expand political-education programmes so more GMB activists become councillors, MSPs, MSs or MPs.

## **2. Reasons for presenting this Special Report**

- 2.1 This report seeks to detail the strategic direction for how GMB uses political trade unionism to make work better and achieve our industrial aspirations. This will build on and bring up to date the political priorities for the union in the context of present realities and anticipated challenges.
- 2.2 At GMB we often say that there are no political 'superheroes,' and no politician is going to come to the rescue of our members. But our members must have an organised political voice. If we do not do politics, politics is done to us.
- 2.3 Decisions that affect GMB members are not just taken by employers, they are also taken by elected politicians and governments, from council chambers to Parliaments. Pay, pensions, working hours and conditions, employment rights, our ability as a union to represent people at work and the future of the industries our members work in – these are just some of the issues the government and politicians shape and decide, and the union must organise to influence the political agenda.
- 2.4 Union-busting employers, bad bosses and the mega-rich spend vast amounts of money on buying influence. We cannot outspend bad bosses. But, our members can beat them by getting organised. That's where we rebalance power and win.

- 2.5 The previous Special Report on politics was passed at Congress in 2018 and so much has changed in the years since. In the UK, we have had years of political chaos. Brexit negotiations created economic uncertainty, affecting jobs and trade agreements. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in protections for workers' rights, particularly in our essential sectors. Economic crises, including the cost-of-living crisis and inflation, have created the conditions for industrial unrest. Legislative challenges, such as crude attempts to curb strike rights with Minimum Service Levels, highlight the increasing need for strong political advocacy from trade unions.
- 2.6 Previous political reports have given the union clear direction and delivered results for GMB within the Labour Party, with whom we have a historic and enduring relationship. GMB Congress in 2012 passed a strategy built around increasing participation in politics and getting more trade unionists elected as MPs and political candidates. We would not have an Employment Rights Bill going through Parliament now and the New Deal for Working People if that methodical, disciplined work had not been done over a lengthy period.
- 2.7 Now is the time to reassess and recalibrate our approach. After 14 years of Tory-led rule, we have a UK Labour Government elected on the promise of change and an end to austerity. These new conditions demand that we reprioritise engagement with the government to ensure commitments made to our members are delivered now Labour is in power.
- 2.8 We are also living in a time of profound change in the world economy. Neo-liberalism has evidently failed, driving inequality and division. We are seeing rising voter volatility and new political forces emboldening the far-right are on the move. A vast upheaval and reform of public administration and governments is on the way, and new uncertainties and fears around AI and robotics will change the world of work. And the transition to net-zero offers opportunities but also significant threats to unionised industries and workplaces.
- 2.9 This new CEC special report will help ensure our political and industrial activity remains aligned as we face these significant challenges.

### **3. History and lessons for our work**

- 3.1 GMB has always understood that **a strong union in the workplace delivers power on the shop floor**. A well organised workplace, with prominent, capable GMB representatives listening to members and bringing their issues to life, is the building block of our union. But, even in our earliest days, we understood that power does not end here. So much of what affects and governs working life comes from other sources, not least laws and regulations passed by democratically elected political representatives. It is a truth that many of the major gains in the lives of our members have come from laws and budgets passed in Parliaments, and exerting influence on decisions taken elsewhere, in the political world, is vital.
- 3.2 Our history has shown that we, and our sisters and brothers in other unions, can't afford to sit out politics. Will Thorne warned: *"you will never get any alteration in... conditions or wages, unless you join together and form a strong trade union. Then you will be able to have a voice"*. The principle of strength through collective will is something that GMB has pursued in our political activity. We have historically understood that industrial victories need political backup. Campaigns to secure advances for our members have often required a political expression. We have learnt, through often bitter experience, that if unions stay silent in the halls of power, our enemies set the rules.
- 3.3 It was this same drive to be **'in the room' to influence decisions** affecting the lives of working people that led our predecessor unions to join with others in seeking support for our causes and issues at Parliamentary level. Setting up the embryonic Labour Party, backing the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, sponsoring candidates in the 1906 General Election, securing the election to Parliament of Will Thorne, GMB General Secretary. These early forays into representational politics, that began our historic and enduring relationship with the Labour Party, were expressions of an understanding that politics mattered in achieving progress for GMB members.
- 3.4 Having a political expression to our activity remains a crucial element for so much of what we continue to do in today. Wherever political decisions are taken that affect the lives of our members – UK Parliament, devolved legislatures, regional mayors, local councils – GMB takes action. This work is made possible through our union's Political Fund, an essential tool for any

union wishing to exert influence in politics. The fund only exists because of the consent of our members, who have been required by law to vote for it. In 2023, we conducted a ballot of all GMB members on its continuing use and an overwhelming majority (96.52%) said 'Yes', a powerful affirmation of the importance of our union being active in the political world.

- 3.5 From the earliest days our union, we have been **a dynamic presence in politics**. This activity has manifested itself in numerous ways, not least the deliberate approach to ensuring there is a GMB presence with the politicians who take decisions affecting the lives of our members. Today, more than 270 current members of parliament are GMB members, continuing our strong relationship with those at the centre of political power. It is noteworthy that in 2012, GMB Congress recommitted our union to ensuring more activists went into politics, and over a decade later the results of this positive decision can be seen in the support secured for key policies and ambitions.
- 3.6 The current Labour Government's bold agenda on workplace rights, through the Make Work Pay pledge and brought to life in the current Employment Rights Bill, is testament to having powerful trade union, and specifically GMB, voices heard. The range and nature of the policies included in Labour's election winning manifesto, to improve the world of work and rebalance power away from the anti-union agenda of the previous 14 years, would not have been achieved without a strong GMB influence.
- 3.7 Being active players in the political arena matters as much today as it did throughout our history, no least in tackling injustice and discrimination. Mary Macarthur – suffragette, GMB activist and a trailblazer for women's rights – saw how the system ignored working women: *"Trade unionism means rebellion...the political world preaches to [women] submission...as it refuses them the parliamentary franchise"*. Mary organised women not only for better pay but also for a voice in Parliament and this battle remains today. More than 50 years after the passing of the Equal Pay Act, women throughout the country are still denied equal pay. Righting this continuing wrong requires action at an industrial level, but it also needs political activity too. That's why we consistently pressure government, councils, and politicians to make good on ending this historic and ongoing discrimination against women.

- 3.8 Our members lives are affected by the decisions taken in the workplace, but also by the actions of those occupying political office, at a variety of levels. GMB's history shows that we understand **the importance of exerting influence in the political arena**, and we have successfully done so across many years. The challenge is to ensure we remain a strong, effective, and relevant political force, so that we can keep making work better.

## 4. Labour's New Deal for Working People – Employment Rights Bill

### 4.1 The New Deal in Opposition

- 4.2 The Labour Government's commitment to the New Deal for Working People grew out of longstanding trade union policies on work and rights. After the 2019 election defeat, the new Labour leadership carried forward this agenda in collaboration with GMB and other affiliated unions establishing the 'Power in the Workforce' taskforce with Andy McDonald, unions and advisers from the Leaders and Deputy Leaders Office which co-wrote the original New Deal.
- 4.3 From the outset, Labour's New Deal was shaped by GMB working closely with TULO (the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation) and other unions. **GMB was central to the agreement** of the original memorandum of understanding that became the taskforce, covering what would be addressed in the final paper, the timeline of work, and who was involved.
- 4.4 By September 2021, at Labour Party Annual Conference, Angela Rayner unveiled the New Deal for Working People, saying its "driving mission" would be to "end the poverty wages and insecure work that blights millions of lives". The New Deal then went through years of policy development, including the Stronger Together process in 2022 chaired by Party Chair, Anneleise Dodds MP. Again, GMB was involved in and through the Labour Party National Policy Forum (NPF) on which our union has key representatives.
- 4.5 The Stronger Together policy process was built on and tabled at Labour Annual Conference 2022, cementing commitments in the New Deal on



things contained in our agenda, such as government procurement and valuing trade union recognition and access.

- 4.6 The NPF final-stage meeting took place in July 2023, where **GMB secured further commitments** under the New Deal on the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) and Equal Pay. GMB supported final document as it was endorsed and voted on at Labour Party Annual Conference in 2023 and spoke in the debate, with our President telling conference “That this report had the New Deal at its heart”.
- 4.7 Going into the final manifesto process the Party initiated a major refresh in May 2024 as they repackaged the New Deal as Labour’s plan to ‘Make Work Pay: Delivering a New Deal for Working People’. GMB voted in favour of the Labour manifesto containing this key plan at the final Clause V meeting before the General Election. The manifesto also reiterated the Party’s commitment to introduce an Employment Rights Bill within the first 100 days of a Labour government.
- 4.8 **New Deal in Government**
- 4.9 With Labour’s election victory in July 2024, the New Deal commitments began moving into legislation. The government introduced an Employment Rights Bill on the 10 October 2024 to codify many of the New Deal reforms, within the promised first 100 days.
- 4.10 We welcomed the Bill as the crucial first step in bringing the New Deal to life. The General Secretary praised it as **a “groundbreaking first step” for workers’ rights** and stressed importance of unions being “front and centre” of the legislative process and that the laws be drafted with “no loopholes” that bad employers could exploit.
- 4.11 As of early 2025, the Employment Rights Bill is progressing through Parliament. It has passed the Commons stages and is now in the Lords. Inquiries and consultations have come and gone, and more are expected. Throughout these processes GMB has had a massive impact on Government thinking, helping to strengthen legislation around statutory recognition following our members experience in Amazon. We continue with this work in the face of **attacks from employers’ groups and the**

**Conservatives and Reform**, who voted against the Bill. As the bill moves forward, it is vital the Government holds firm and recognises how popular the new rights are with the voters.

- 4.12 For GMB, the Employment Rights Bill is the culmination of years of advocacy that our members have helped shape and fought to protect. If enacted as intended, it would represent the most significant expansion of workers' rights in Britain for a generation and will impact positively on key areas of our membership.
- 4.13 **GMB representatives in schools** have been at the forefront of fighting for recognition and reward for our school support staff members. Historically, these workers, mostly low-paid women, had no dedicated national pay body; most were covered only by local government pay frameworks. It was GMB lobbying and campaigning that found a receptive ear in the previous Labour Government of 1997–2010, and in 2007 it announced the establishment in law of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, or SSSNB, in England. This would set pay, terms, and conditions for roles such as teaching assistants, administrative staff, caretakers, and catering staff, and GMB was represented on it. However, before the SSSNB could really address the key issues, the 2010 election ushered in the Coalition Government, who proceeded to abolish it.
- 4.14 Our members have persistently kept the reinstatement of the SSSNB on the political agenda. By 2023–2024, even the Conservative government began to acknowledge support staff issues – for instance, in 2023 the Department for Education classified school support staff as an official low-pay occupation, reflecting evidence GMB had provided to the Low Pay Commission.
- 4.15 The major breakthrough came with the prospect of a Labour Government and GMB reps demands through the National Policy Forum (NPF), the internal policy development process of the Labour Party. It was **GMB words from the NPF that were included in the final Labour Party manifesto**, stating that “Labour will value and recognise the professionalism of the entire school workforce... by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body”.

- 4.16 In October 2024, the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, announced the reinstatement of the SSSNB. Furthermore, learning from the past, the SSSNB will cover academies as well as council-maintained schools. Conservative MPs have continued to resist aspects of this, even attempting amendments to limit the SSSNB's reach in academies, citing "flexibility" concerns, but as of 2025 the momentum is firmly behind the GMB members in schools, and we will continue to push on the Government to go further.
- 4.17 **GMB members at Amazon Coventry** have been involved in a long fight for union recognition. The organising drive began in the summer of 2022 when warehouse workers, angered by low pay and punishing productivity targets, sought help from local GMB activists. Within six months more than 700 had joined the union, giving GMB the numbers it needed to lodge the UK's first-ever formal request for union recognition at Amazon in December 2022.
- 4.18 When that request went in, Amazon told the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) the site employed 1,400 people; yet by the time the company filed its formal response on 22 May 2023 it claimed the headcount had rocketed to 2,749 – a jump of some 1,300 workers in just 27 days, achieved largely by busing in temporary staff from other depots. The sudden influx sliced union density below the 40 per cent "likely support" threshold set in UK law and blocked the application at the first hurdle.
- 4.19 Refusing to accept management's stonewalling, GMB members in Coventry launched rolling 24-hour strikes that echoed across Amazon in Bristol and Rugeley, creating a supply-chain squeeze big enough to force the company into crisis talks and to draw MPs and the media onto the warehouse floor. Although the August 2024 recognition ballot ultimately fell 28 votes short, the dispute kept Amazon's anti-union tactics on the front pages and in parliamentary committee rooms.
- 4.20 GMB used the evidence gathered from members to press ministers for reform, and the Government has now amended the Employment Rights Bill to outlaw the "flooding" of bargaining units that Amazon pioneered in Coventry. Our members there may have missed the historic first-union victory by the narrowest of margins, but they have written new rules that will level the playing field for every worker who follows.

- 4.21 **Centrica's 2020 ultimatum to its 7,000 British Gas engineers was stark:** accept contracts that meant 36 per cent pay cuts, longer hours and reduced allowances, or be dismissed and rehired on the new terms. GMB balloted the workforce and an overwhelming 89 per cent voted to strike, setting the stage for the 43-day strike that began on 7 January 2021 – the longest continuous industrial action over fire-and-rehire in modern UK history.
- 4.22 Picket-line images of engineers braving sub-zero temperatures dominated national news bulletins, while GMB's digital campaign reached more than six million people and turned "fire-and-rehire" into a household phrase. Centrica cancelled some 300,000 customer visits during the dispute yet still pushed its plan through, ultimately sacking around 500 skilled engineers who refused the cuts before a deal was imposed later that year.
- 4.23 The public outrage sparked by the strike travelled quickly to Westminster. Labour MP Barry Gardiner's Ten-Minute Rule Bill to ban fire-and-rehire attracted rare cross-party support, and the proposal was written directly into Labour's 2024 general-election manifesto commitment to "make work pay". Throughout 2023-24 GMB fed detailed case evidence into select-committee hearings, white-papers and ministerial briefings to keep the pressure on lawmakers.
- 4.24 That political effort paid off: the **Employment Rights Bill will outlaw fire-and-rehire** practices outright, and even Centrica's chief executive has since declared his support for the change. The stand made by British Gas engineers has driven the legislative reform that will protect millions of workers from the same threat.
- 4.25 As the Employment Rights Bill makes its way through Parliament, we will continue to push to ensure it delivers what has been agreed in the manifesto. We will also ensure that GMB colleagues with industrial and organising responsibilities are fully appraised of the bill's implementation, so our union is able to maximise the opportunities afforded by different part, such as rights to access workplaces and regulations on recognition.

- 4.26 **There is still a lot more to do**, as there is more in the New Deal than just the elements contained in the Employment Rights Bill: promised changes on equal pay, procurement and insourcing and elsewhere need to follow and we will continue to fight to ensure Government legislate. We will also keep pushing to ensure the made to build a new nuclear power station at Sizewell C and to establish a domestic Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) industry are kept.

## 5. Wider Political Priorities

- 5.1 GMB members, along with millions more working people, have been at the sharp end of political failure in our country. Entrenched inequality, pay not keeping pace with rising prices, attacks on basic employment standards and trade union rights. At the 2024 General Election, GMB members, in common with **people across the UK voted for change**, rejecting the 14 wasted years of Tory rule and the failed neoliberal approach that has done so much harm, especially to the low paid, disabled, and those who need help to get by. And, we expect change to be delivered.
- 5.2 The last Tory government left the nation's finances in an extremely poor state, and it will take time to repair the damage caused in so many areas of our society. The election of a Labour government is a fantastic opportunity to help deliver real, sustainable growth, along with significant improvements to the world of work that can benefit those who suffered under the last government. The New Deal for Working People is a key part of the work required to fix the problems facing our country and a central reason why many voters backed Labour at the last election. It not only symbolises a clear change with the past, it also delivers something very different to what has gone before.
- 5.3 Taking decisions that show a break with past failures is essential if public trust in politics is to be restored. Labour campaigned in 2024 on a slogan of 'change', capturing the mood to rid the nation of a tired, discredited Tory government. But, as GMB has said, **change cannot just be a snappy slogan**, it has to be brought to life in the policies of government. Without this, GMB members will rightly ask serious questions.

- 5.4 One of the first significant actions taken by the new government was changing the eligibility for receipt of the **Winter Fuel Allowance**, effectively withdrawing it from millions of pensioners, many of whom make up the GMB Retired Members Association. This was a major mistake on a number of levels. Fuel bills are a huge cost to pensioners who live on fixed incomes, especially when the basic state pension, often the only significant source of income for those who have worked in low-paid jobs, is just over £9,000 per year. Many pensioners are also just above the threshold to be able to claim the allowance, often because they sacrificed salary while at work only to find they are ineligible to receive assistance. With CEOs of major energy companies receiving multi-million-pound salaries, it is unacceptable that millions of people who have worked hard all their lives are now losing the necessary help they received from the government. GMB opposes the government's change to the Winter Fuel Allowance and supported a motion at Labour Party conference in 2024 on the matter. We will continue to lobby the government and engage with MPs to press for its restoration.
- 5.5 Our union is similarly dismayed by the decision of the government regarding the **Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)** campaign. The Parliamentary Ombudsman recommended compensation of up to £2,950 for women who were not properly informed of changes to pensions in the mid-1990s. In opposition, many Labour MPs, including now cabinet members, openly supported the WASPI campaign, demanding compensation for those who suffered detriment. Refusing to accept the clear recommendation of the Ombudsman is not what GMB members expect of a Labour government, especially one promising to change our country for the better. GMB has publicly campaigned against the government's decision. We have also directly communicated our objections to the Secretary of State and with the group of Labour MPs. We will continue to make representations and remain in contact with the WASPI campaign regarding further options for GMB support.
- 5.6 Making change a reality and demonstrating things are different from the failures of the past is vital for the legitimacy of this government. The nation's **public services and the people who deliver them** have suffered hugely during the 14 years of Tory-led government, with chronic underinvestment, cuts to real-terms public sector pay, increasing privatisation, and demonisation of public servants and their unions. Austerity, a policy of

choice not necessity, has left deep scars in the NHS, education system, local government, and so many other areas of the public realm. A new approach is needed where services get the funding they need, and the workers who are so vital to delivering them are properly rewarded. A key element is securing reform of the Pay Review Bodies that play a hugely significant role in setting public sector pay. Without reform, the PRBs will continue to fail in the task of properly recognising the incredible work undertaken by public sector workers in the face of rising demands against the backdrop of years of underinvestment.

- 5.7 Addressing the deep problems in our society and economy is a generational challenge, but a better future will not be achieved by targeting those who are in need of the greatest support. Government plans for cuts to welfare payments will affect many, including the disabled, and appear to be the bluntest of tools in tackling the financial challenges facing the country and will only feed disaffection that will be exploited by some, including the far right. **GMB is opposed to cuts in support to those who need it most** and will continue to ensure our members voices are heard by government.
- 5.8 Labour was formed to give voice to the working people of this country and the trade unions who represented them. It is essential that the party remains committed to this purpose and does not lose touch with its traditional supporters, who look to Labour to stand up for them. After years of cruel austerity and cuts, this means delivering what was promised – change.
- 5.9 **The new Government is also reorganising the democratic building blocks of the state.** In England, widescale change in local government could impact how we organise and also potentially affect many of our members and reps working here. For parts of the country covered by crossover of county and district councils, and for areas where unitary authorities are considered to be failing or with a small geographic responsibility, the plan is to create a simpler structure, with larger authorities and fewer elected politicians. A practical outcome of this process has been the suspension of local elections in some authorities ahead of the creation of new organisations in 2027.

- 5.10 This reorganisation could potentially have a significant impact on GMB structures and members across different localities. For example, GMB may currently be running equal pay campaigns in a local authority that is joining with another, where we do not have live activity. There may also be variations in terms and conditions of employment, particularly under Part 3 of the NJC national agreement. And, we know from experience, that merging entities can often give rise to demands to cut costs, including jobs and terms and conditions. There are also considerations regarding any impact on release time for GMB reps.
- 5.11 **GMB is a federal union** with seven regions, and we are set up to be closer to where political power is spread, enabling us to be effective in responding to this challenge. Our regions are already taking action. In Essex, GMB London Region has made representations to local MPs and councillors expressing concern at the lack of information surrounding devolution plans and criticising the vague assurances made on funding and resources. GMB regions and at a national level will continue to work together to ensure our members' voices are at the centre of this process.
- 5.12 Recent years have also seen the establishment of **Metro Mayors**, covering significant geographic areas and with wide ranging responsibilities and powers. Covering combined authorities, their strategic role gives them influence over key elements, such as transport, skills, housing, and infrastructure investment. With devolved budgets from central government, they are important figures which GMB will engage with to advance the interests of our members, which GMB regions are well placed to do.
- 5.13 GMB has maintained a clear, consistently reaffirmed policy commitment to the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system for UK General Elections. We should resist any proposed changes that risks boosting parties that have policies or demonstrate through their voting record an undermining of our members' rights at work. FPTP ties every MP to a single geographic constituency, a link our members see as vital for holding representatives directly accountable on local workplace issues.
- 5.14 Wales and Scotland will see elections in 2026 and the prediction of more political upheaval. In both cases GMB is working hard to ensure the issues that matter to our members are front and centre of the political debate.



- 5.15 **In Wales**, we're in discussions that seek to maximise the potential of the Welsh Government's social partnership legislation, delivering fair work and unionised jobs through government contracts and regulation throughout the nation. Through responsible procurement we can do more to emphasise the importance of good, safe unionised work and the benefits of reindustrialisation. We're also ensuring that GMB union members views are heard and enacted in the reform of our NHS and schools systems. And, we're pushing for progress on new nuclear. It's vital that GMB members campaign for new nuclear at Wylfa, and that we maximise its potential to not only power Britain but also drive long term secure jobs to breathe life into the left behind communities of North Wales.
- 5.16 **In Scotland**, GMB is raising the voice of members from island shipyards to inner-city schools as the parties prepare manifestos for next year's Holyrood elections. The closure of the country's only oil refinery at Grangemouth has only increased the urgency of our fight for an industrial strategy capable of securing jobs in oil and gas while building new supply chains in renewables. Elsewhere, we continue to campaign to protect frontline public services; win a new future for the Ferguson Marine shipyard; and raise the voice of members across the drinks industry to ensure its global success is fully recognised and fairly rewarded.
- 5.17 **In Northern Ireland**, GMB members welcomed the return of devolved government at Stormont. Our public-service members were hit first and worst by the cost-of-living crisis and the absence of a functioning Executive to tackle it. Since the restoration of devolution, GMB, working with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Northern Ireland Committee, has engaged proactively with the new NI Executive to make work pay through their Good Jobs Bill. We are also putting pressure on the UK Government to protect Northern Ireland's dynamic aerospace sector, in particular the future of Spirit Aerosystems in Belfast.
- 5.18 Across the UK we are seeing new political forces emerge, including **the rise of Reform UK**, who are a relatively new political party. Formed by individuals who have a long presence in domestic politics who were instrumental in leading UKIP, it is pitching itself as a disruptor, an anti-establishment party. Its rhetoric speaks of being a "common sense" party for working people –

but as GMB, we judge parties and their leaders by their policies and actions, whether they defend workers' rights, create good jobs and a fair economy, and protect workers and communities. And, we will evaluate if the positions taken are fundamentally at odds with the rights, jobs, and industries that GMB fights for every day.

- 5.19 GMB's mission is to make work better – from safe conditions, better pay, fair contracts and the freedom to organise. Reform UK's policies threaten to roll back decades of progress in worker protections and trade union rights.
  
- 5.20 **On employment rights,** at the 2024 General Election, Reform's manifesto openly promised to "scrap thousands of laws...including employment laws" as part of cutting "red tape", saying "we must make it easier to hire and fire so that businesses can grow." GMB has fought to end the hire and fire culture we have seen across much of the economy; we cannot accept a return to the days when workers had little recourse against arbitrary dismissal. Our union's campaigns against the use of fire-and-rehire tactics by British Gas showed the importance of stronger – not weaker – legal protections for employees.
  
- 5.21 While GMB has been campaigning to strengthen the Employment Rights Bill moving through Parliament, Reform UK has vehemently opposed these advances. In fact, in Parliament, Reform MPs voted against the bill.
  
- 5.22 Key Reform leaders have followed an anti-union agenda. New Reform Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire, ex-Tory MP Andrea Jenkyns, has historically voted to restrict trade union rights. Following Reform's victory at the recent local elections Nigel Farage spoke of taking action to "reduce the scale of local government back to where it ought to be" and advised council workers in different roles to be "seeking alternative careers very, very quickly".
  
- 5.23 GMB has spent generations securing rights on fair hours, sick pay, and protection from unfair firing. We will vigorously oppose any attempt by Reform UK to erode the rights and voices of working people. A healthy economy isn't one where employers can hire and fire at whim – it's one where workers have stability, respect, and a collective voice.

- 5.24 From GMB's perspective, **Reform's approach to the economy prioritises the few at the top** while neglecting the needs of workers, communities, and regions that have already been left behind. We know from experience that real wage growth for our members comes from strong unions not fantasy trickle-down tax policies. It is noteworthy that Reform opposed extending overtime pay and proper sick leave from day one in the Employment Rights Bill.
- 5.25 Reform's promise to cut government spending by £50 billion a year raises could lead to drastic cuts to key public services and decent public-sector jobs. GMB represents hundreds of thousands of key workers in councils, schools, the NHS and more, and we know that "efficiency" cuts often translate into job freezes, outsourcing, or real-term pay cuts for the people delivering vital services – more austerity.
- 5.26 GMB fights for an economy where everyone – not just a wealthy few or certain regions – can prosper with a decent job. Reform language flirts with divide-and-rule tactics rather than truly inclusive policies. They blame immigrants for low wages and housing issues, claim "multiculturalism" is a problem, and stoke culture wars (attacking "woke ideology") in their manifesto.
- 5.27 Energy is a critical industry for our members – from gas engineers and oil rig workers to nuclear technicians and wind turbine manufacturers. GMB stands for an energy policy that protects workers' jobs and the future of their communities, while also tackling the climate crisis responsibly. **Reform's energy policy rejects a balanced approach.** GMB will not endorse any policy that pretends the climate challenge can be wished away or simply doesn't exist. We believe in tackling it with workers' interests at the core: Who is training the North Sea engineer to work on a carbon-capture system or an offshore wind farm? Which new industries can a displaced coal power plant worker move into? A responsible energy policy must answer these questions, but Reform offers nothing.
- 5.28 In summary, our union – through principled, collective action – has helped win safer workplaces, fought for better pay and conditions, and negotiated transitions in times of change. **We will not stand by while any political force seeks to undo those gains or pit workers against each other.**

- 5.29 GMB is “the union for all workers”, and that means we evaluate every party by one criterion: does it improve or worsen the lives of working people. On workers’ rights, on economic fairness, and on a secure energy future, the Reform Party fails that test. We reaffirm GMB’s commitment to campaigning – politically and industrially – for policies that deliver decent work, justice, and security for the very people that Reform would leave vulnerable.

## 6. Building political trade-unionism in the GMB

- 6.1 GMB’s political power has always grown out of the industrial power we organise on the shop-floor: our influence in Parliament is only as strong as the union we build in every workplace. It is our members and reps who are GMB’s best advocates and enable them to develop into and thrive as political representatives is a key task for the union.
- 6.2 The work begins with **the Political Fund** – our campaign fund. Every member should understand that the fund is how we finance the drives that win better pay, stronger rights and safer conditions. Every rep should feel confident explaining this connection and, just as importantly, showing members a clear route from any workplace issue to political action. GMB training has a crucial role to play in helping reps understand the role of political campaigning and how the union resources it.
- 6.3 Political power at the workplace is also enhanced by equipping reps to act as workplace campaigners. Every pay claim, safety dispute or recognition fight will carry a parallel strategy to shift the ground beneath the employer. Supporting reps by developing campaigning skills and approaches enhances individual capabilities and strengthens the union from workplace to workplace.
- 6.4 However, **a single template will not work everywhere**. GMB is a federal union, mirroring an asymmetrically devolved UK. Regions must have the freedom – and the resources – to organise in the way that best suits their political landscapes from the ground up, whether negotiating with a metro-mayor in England, ministers in Cardiff Bay or councils in Scotland.

- 6.5 When we organise this way, the voices of Amazon warehouse workers, British Gas engineers, school support staff – indeed all our members – will lay their own pathway to travel from the shop-floor to council chambers, devolved parliaments and Westminster alike. Political trade-unionism will no longer be a specialist pursuit; it will be the everyday practice of a union determined to win for working people wherever decisions about their jobs and lives are made.
- 6.6 GMB has, over many years, **supported members into political office**. We are one of the Labour Party's earliest supporters and Will Thorne, our first and longest serving General Secretary, was a Labour MP. Many others have followed in his political footsteps and more than 270 current MPs are GMB members.
- 6.7 We believe the Labour Party and Parliament needs more political representatives with a trade union background. Working with TULO colleagues, we assist with content and delivery at 'political training schools' for future candidates. GMB regions and national work together to encourage our members and activists to take part. This is a valuable, long-term process for GMB that helps build a strong cohort of future candidates with trade union values.
- 6.8 At the 2024 General Election, GMB supported and gave endorsements to a wide range of candidates. Again, reflecting the strength of our federal structure, decisions on **candidate support** were made from our regions, rather than centrally driven. This helps our GMB regions to devise strategies that include the development and maintenance of long-term political relationships with regional representatives. Regular liaison and engagement between GMB political officers at national and regional level help ensure there is coordinated oversight of the status of political relations across the union.

## 7. Working across the wider movement

- 7.1 We know the importance of working together with others who share our values to deliver a better world for workers. That's why **GMB has strong and well-established relationships** with sister unions at TUC level, as well as with other Labour-affiliated unions within TULO (Trade Union and Labour

Party Liaison Organisation), to advance our policy and political agenda, and ensure our members' voices are heard. This is particularly important with respect to our efforts with fellow TULO colleagues, as we redouble our work to secure policies and actions that deliver social and economic justice for working people from a Labour Party that is now in government.

- 7.2 The relationship with Labour is formal – we have seats on the party's governing body (NEC), we are a key contributor to policies, GMB members, activists, and staff have become Labour Parliamentarians, Councillors, and undertake senior party positions. It is also an emotional connection, with so many GMB people over the last 100+ years giving their time, resources, and support to advancing the Labour cause.
- 7.3 **Union members have been the bedrock of support for Labour for generations.** So, when the new government takes decisions that hurt workers or those in need, it is entirely right that we are angry and feel that our support is being taken from granted. GMB's position as a key union affiliate to Labour gives us the ability to deliver this message directly to the leadership of the party and MPs, whilst also holding them to account with our fellow TULO colleagues, and we reserve the right to use all options at our disposal to ensure our members are listened to.
- 7.4 Having a voice in Parliament, or wherever political power is exercised, is crucial. Our historic and enduring relationship with the Labour Party has provided a vital route for influencing and advancing the interests of GMB members in politics. It is understood that the bonds between people and their traditional political party of choice are becoming increasingly strained, with electoral volatility on the rise. **GMB members, in line with the wider public mood, will hold a range of political opinions.** At this time, it is important for GMB to be able to look to our principles, the direct interests of our members, and our mission to make work better when coming to judgment on political support. GMB has our own compelling political values, based on industrial democracy, solidarity and the pursuit of economic and social equality. In large part, these values closely align with those of the Labour Party and it should be no surprise that there is such a long and deeply held shared history between us. Certainly, the same could not be said of other UK political parties and their values.

- 7.5 There have been and will be differences of view from time to time, and these may be significant, and in recent times there have been decisions taken that we fundamentally disagree with. However, there are also real benefits for GMB members, as seen with the current Employment Rights Bill working its way through Parliament, which will repeal huge amounts of anti-union member legislation and deliver big improvements to collective rights.
- 7.6 It is worth remembering that neither the Tories or Reform supported improvements to key trade union rights. It is **judgements on support for policies and action in power**, along with due consideration of the broad range of political opinions of GMB members, that will guide any statements of support made at election time.
- 7.7 Along with other TULO unions, we are also able to influence the policies of the Labour Party through the National Policy Forum (NPF) mechanism. GMB has representatives on the various NPF policy commissions, ensuring we are able to articulate our members' views and wishes directly into the policy process. This is the route we used to ensure many of our union's positions were included in the New Deal for Working People, from which the landmark Employment Rights Bill has emerged. We are possibly four years away from the next General Election and the NPF process, that will set Labour's manifesto, has just restarted with GMB present. But, it is important that the work undertaken as part of this isn't just about what is offered to the country in a few years' time. It should also be a place to reflect on the policy decisions being taken now and options for different decisions, something that GMB will press.
- 7.8 Labour Party annual conference is another key moment for pursuing issues that matter to our members, but there are real frustrations with certain aspects. Motions can be agreed but not enacted due to the rules of Labour conference, which are almost impossible to change given the requirements on voting. It is **vital for union voices to remain heard**, and we will continue to focus on maintaining the trade union majority status on the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), which acts as the standing orders committee for Labour Party conference and a significant entity for the organisation of what is discussed at conference, the way composite motions are structured and discussed, and defending the right to reference back on CAC reports.

- 7.9 Political activity is regularly reported to both the GMB Central Executive Council (CEC) and our union's Political, European, and International (PEI) Committee.

## **8. Our voice, our future**

- 8.1 GMB has always spoken with a strong voice in the matters that affect our members' lives. Being a robust, articulate presence in the workplace is vital to making work better, and we are at our best when we listen and campaign on issues at the building block of our union's life. But, decisions taken elsewhere – not least in the political world – have a huge importance too, and for over 135 years we have understood that if we do not do politics, politics is done to us. This principle continues to guide us as we look to successfully navigate our way
- 8.2 This report shows that in dealing with contemporary matters and in facing whatever political challenges that may come our way, our union will continue to be a powerful player and advocate for our members' interests.