



the ACTIVIST

GMB News From Around The Region

Congress Special: Issue 102 June 2021



[Click here to watch Gary's speech](#)

WELCOME TO CONGRESS 2021

NEW GMB LEADER PLEDGES UNION WILL ORGANISE, CHANGE AND WIN FOR WORKING PEOPLE

Newly elected GMB General Secretary, Gary Smith, told delegates at the GMB's annual Congress, **GMB will organise, change and win for working people.**

GMB's 103rd annual Congress, where the lay member ruling body of GMB decides GMB policy, took place online this year due to the ongoing pandemic. (see pages 1-6)

Gary Smith, GMB General Secretary, told delegates at the GMB's annual Congress:

"We hold in our hands a very special gift. A trade union that can make a real difference to the lives of working people and their families. But with that power also comes responsibility. If our union doesn't stand for decency and equality, then we stand for nothing. The recommendations of the Monaghan Report into bullying and sexual harassment will be fully implemented. No if's, no but's.

"We pledge to fight for good jobs and proper pay, to achieve pay justice for working women, and to reduce the cost of being a member of GMB. We can do this by organising workplace by workplace, campaigning on the issues that matter to our members and their communities.

"We are in control of our own destiny. No employer is going to welcome us with open arms, there are no political superheroes that will ride to the rescue of unions and there is no constitutional settlement that lends itself to a more favourable environment for unions either. If we want to make work better then we must do the hard work by ourselves. So GMB will organise, we will change, we will be different, we will be better, and we will win together."

RECOVER
REBUILD
RENEW

GMB UNION Congress 2021

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GMB subscriptions in 2021 will be frozen for all full time, part time and student members.

Share the news.



Your subs will not increase this year:

This week, Congress approved the freeze for 2021 as we work to make union membership more affordable.

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CONGRESS DAY ONE: SUNDAY

What a great start to our first online Congress, give or take the odd IT glitch. It kicked-off with an opening video and a speech made by Barbara Plant, National President. Although the traditional carrying of the GMB national banner into the conference hall couldn't take place this year, there was a montage of GMB banners from around the UK, displayed to the sound-track of Jerusalem.

Throughout the day delegates debated, moved and voted on motions, that included everything from Union Organisation, Equality & Inclusion, Employment, Social Policy and Industrial Policy. **We also had two Special Reports: Taskforce for Positive Change and Energy and the Environment.**

Gina Harding from GMB Organising Branch and Dave Berry from Sheffield Mcp & Lt Branch were first up from our region when they addressed Congress to speak on **Motion 42: Political Activity**. The motion called on Congress to significantly expand its political training to ensure GMB lay activist understand what is required and as such felt able to stand for political office.

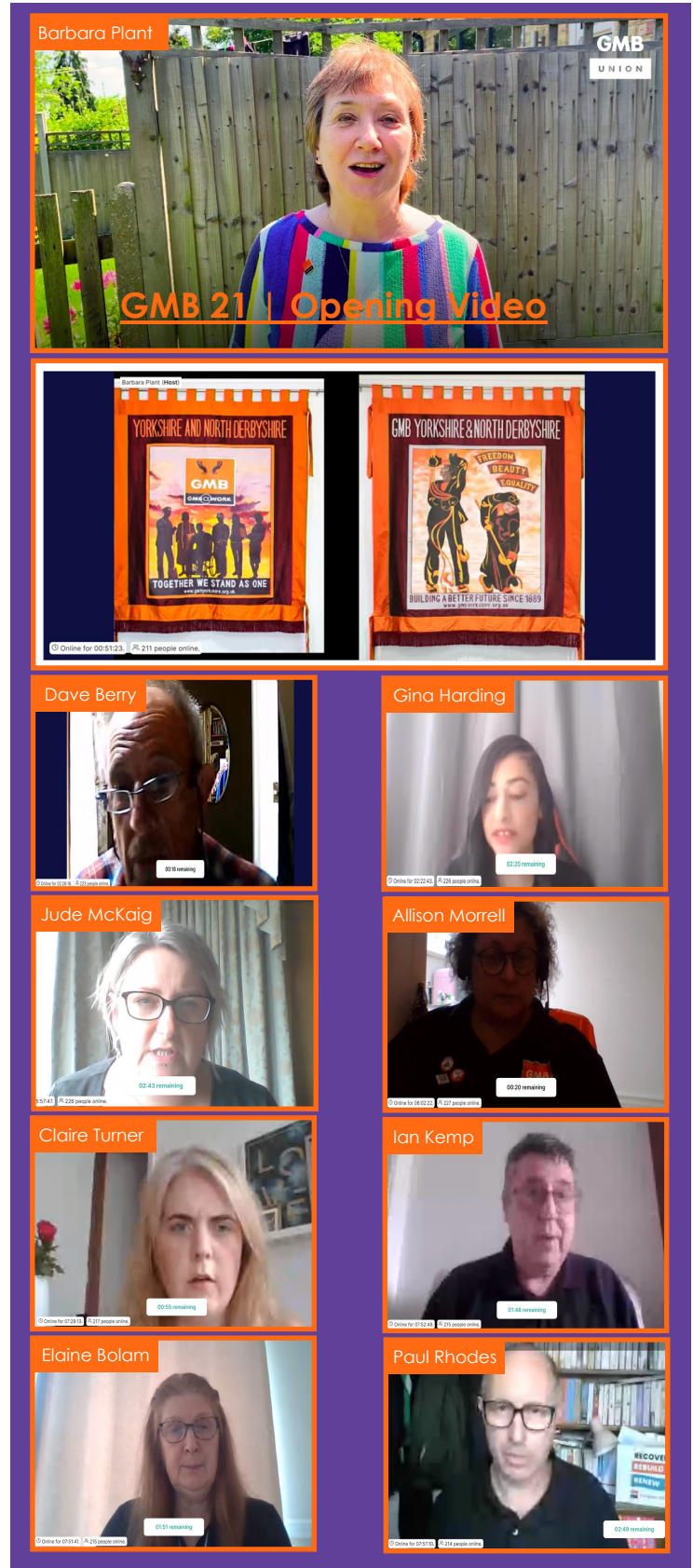
Gina Harding was back at the virtual rostrum again, this time to speak on behalf of the region and support the [CEC Special Report: Taskforce For Positive Change](#). It was another fantastic speech from Gina.

On Sunday afternoon, we saw Jude McKaig from GMB Organising Branch and Allison Morrell from Doncaster Central Branch moving and seconding **Motion 69: Long Term Health Conditions in the Workplace**. The motion called for more training for both managers and work colleagues on a variety of long-term health conditions, including diabetes and mental illness, as many who have such conditions often feel misunderstood and marginalised at work. They both did the region proud with their speeches.

The second special report of the day was the [CEC Special Report on Energy and the Environment](#). Amanda Burley, from Leeds Civic Branch, spoke on behalf of the CEC in support of the report and Claire Turner from GMB Smart Metering Branch in Leeds also addressed Congress, supporting the report.

It was the turn of Elaine Bolam from Rotherham GMB Branch and Ian Kemp from Parkgate Branch to visit the virtual rostrum. They both did a fantastic job moving and seconding **Motion 117: PCS Poaching GMB members**. The motion called on Congress to note the situation with G4S and called on the CEC to urgently deal with the matter.

Paul Rhodes from West Yorkshire Police Support Staff Branch was our final delegate speaker of the day, and he spoke eloquently on the referred **115 Motion: Personal Protective Equipment**.



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CONGRESS DAY TWO: MONDAY

We did it - the first ever digital day at GMB Congress. And what a day it was - one full of passionate speeches on motions delivered by delegates from right across the UK and across our great union.

But it didn't stop there. We had another jam packed day of Congress business to get through on day two.

There were more motions from across the industrial sections, plus guest speakers including Labour Leader Keir Starmer, and the General Secretary's Report. (See page 4)

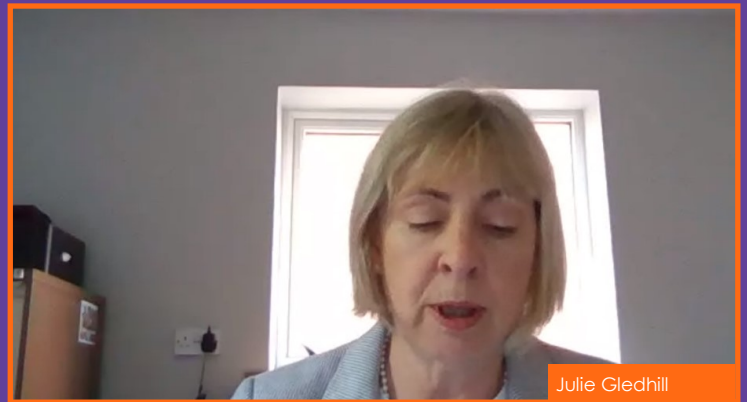
First up from our region was our very own Regional President Cath Pinder, speaking on behalf of the CEC in support of the [CEC Special Report on Procurement & Spending](#). Julie Gledhill from Parkgate Branch also spoke in support of the report.

Chomping at the bit to get in on the debate was Dave Berry from Sheffield Mcp and Light Branch, who opposed **Motion 166: Proportional Representation For UK Elections**, put forward by North West and Irish Region. It was a fantastic speech from Dave and consequently, the motion fell.

Our last speakers for the Monday morning session were James Cooper from York General Branch and Cindy Gavin from Leeds General Branch, moving and seconding **Motion 238: Let Us Tackle Rough Sleeping Once And For All**. The motion called on Congress to help tackle the plight of rough sleepers by lobbying the Government to introduce more homeless shelters as a matter of urgency.



Cath Pinder



Julie Gledhill



Dave Berry



James Cooper



Cindy Gavin



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CONGRESS DAY TWO

It was an honour to listen to Deborah Goodman, the great, great, great grand-daughter of Will Thorne, founder of the GMB. She was presented with the GMB Eleanor Marx Award, before addressing Congress.

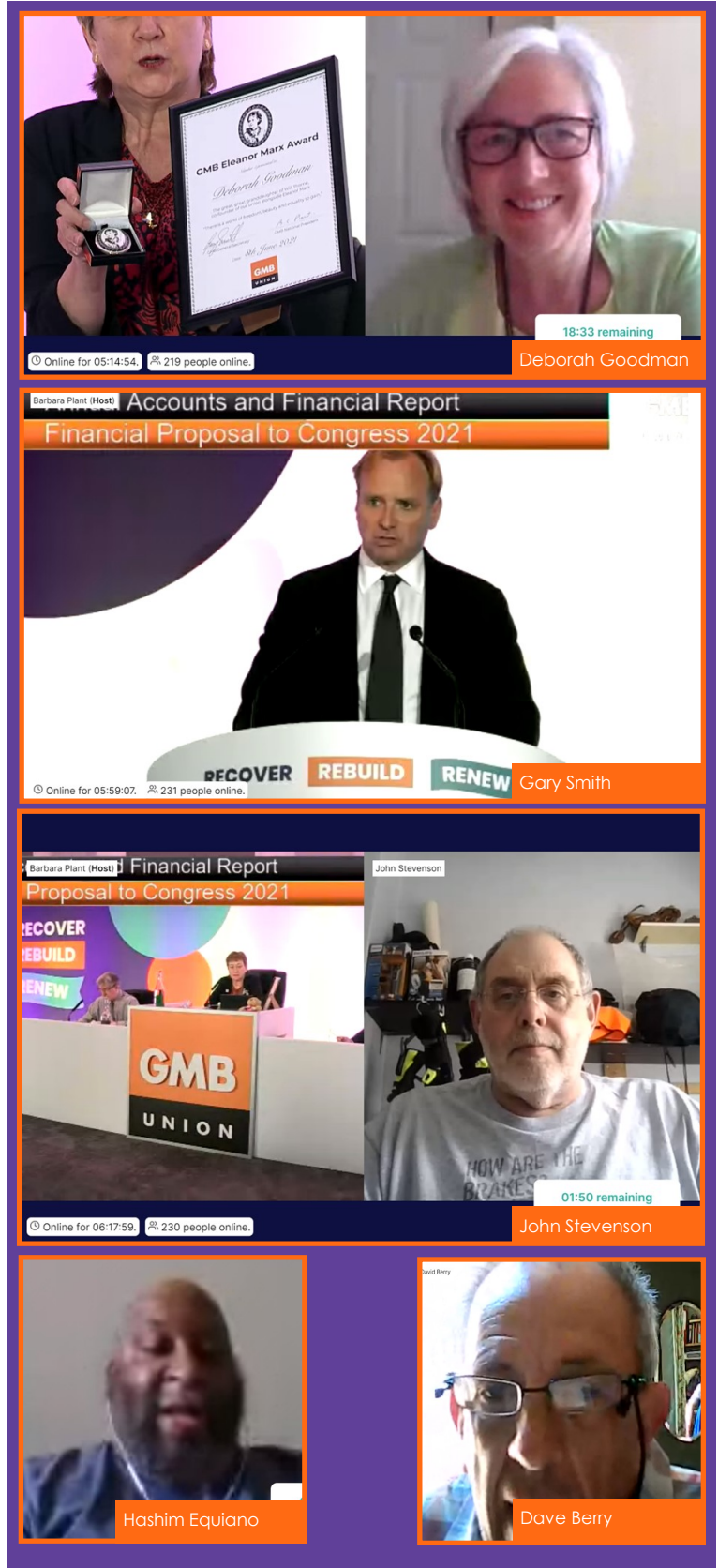
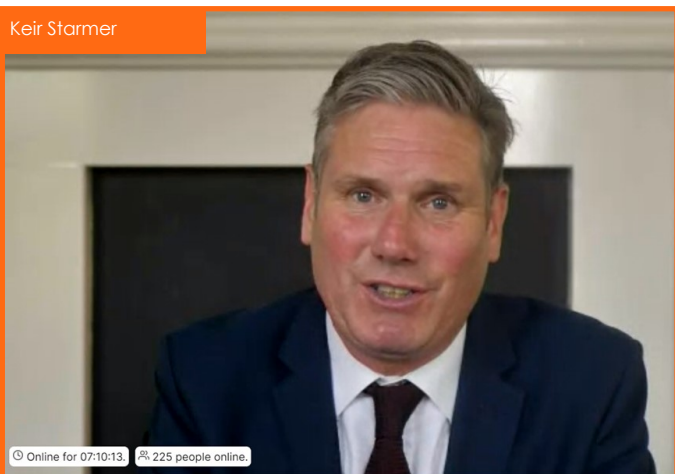
She spoke of Will's life's battles and that of her own family's struggles, saying "The Will Thorne blood is definitely in our veins."

Don't forget you can catch up with what happened at Congress by visiting: [Congress TV](#)

Gary Smith made his first speech to Congress in his new role as GMB General Secretary & Treasurer, when he moved the Annual Financial Statement & Financial Report. John Stevenson from Sheffield Local Government Branch spoke on behalf of the region in support of the report.

Hashim Equiano from Leeds Local Government Branch and Dave Berry from Sheffield Mcp & Light Branch were back on the virtual rostrum in the afternoon, moving and seconding **Motion 30: Adversity Support Funding**, and both did a great job doing it.

Keir Starmer: Leader of the Labour Party, addressed Congress. In his speech he paid tribute to the GMB leadership, congratulated Gary Smith on his appointment and praised the work of GMB activists up and down the country and our ground-breaking campaigns.



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CONGRESS DAY THREE: TUESDAY

In Tuesday's business we heard more motions from across the industrial sections, a CEC statement on pay and the cost of living, and of course, we had the closing ceremony in the afternoon.

First up to the virtual rostrum for Yorkshire & North Derbyshire was Paul Howard from Asda South Branch. He was speaking on behalf of the region in support of the [CEC Statement: Pay and The Cost Of Living](#)

The last session before lunch saw Amanda Burley from Leeds Civic Branch speaking on behalf of the CEC on **Motions 183 & 186 on Social Policy: Equality & Inclusion**. These motions called for GMB to join other education sector unions to campaign to persuade the Department of Education to offer clear, strong and enforceable legislation, policies and guidelines on LGBT+ relationships education.

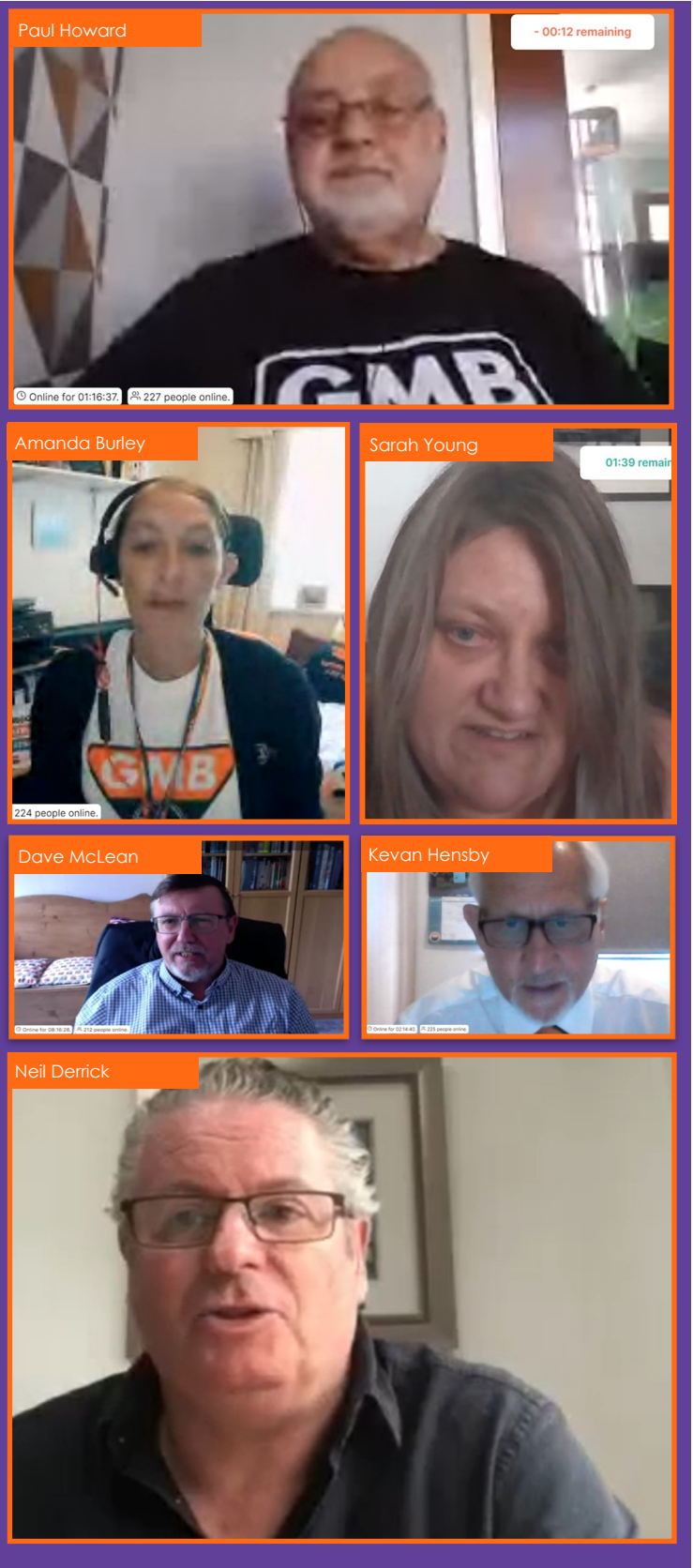
Sarah Young from Sheffield Health Branch did us proud in the last session of Congress, speaking on **Motion 261 Composite 12: No Trade Deal on Our NHS with the USA** which called on Congress to reinstate the NHS as a national target in order to protect the NHS in the best possible manner and further campaign to abolish the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to prevent any private interest and profiteering from OUR NHS.

Congress 2021 came to an end and although the traditional singing of the Red Flag couldn't take place collectively in the Conference Hall – we still did our bit virtually! [Click here](#)

Neil Derrick, GMB Regional Secretary, said: "This year's historic wholly digital Congress has been very different from our usual experience, but it has allowed the essential business of our union to carry on. However, to the credit of our regional delegation, the experience still felt collective - with the usual good humour and mutual support. That's key to our region.

"Once we got past the IT hiccups and into the full swing of Congress, it was business as usual for the Yorkshire & North Derbyshire delegation and our fantastic speakers.

"I want to thank the staff and officers for supporting me and the delegation, and to pay tribute to Cath our President, all our delegates and CEC members, for sticking with it this week. Next year we will, I'm sure, be together in Harrogate as our region hosts Congress for the first time in many years."



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THE RED FLAG

The people's flag is deepest red
It shrouded off our martyred dead
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold
Their hearts' blood dyed to every fold

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Beneath its folds we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

It waved above our infant might
When all ahead seemed dark as night
It witnessed many a deed and vow
We must not change its colour now

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Beneath its folds we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

It well recalls the triumphs past
It gives the hope of peace at last
The banner bright, the symbol plain
Of human right and human gain

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Beneath its folds we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

It suits today the meek and base
Whose minds are fixed on pelf and place
To cringe beneath the rich man's frown
And haul that sacred emblem down

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Beneath its folds we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here

With heads uncovered swear we all
To bare it onward till we fall
Come dungeons dark or gallows grim
This song shall be our parting hymn

Then raise the scarlet standard high
Beneath its folds we'll live and die
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

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POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL FAILURES WILL FUEL CLIMATE AND EMPLOYMENT CRISES

GMB has warned political leaders 'political and industrial failure' over the last decade on energy and environmental policy must end if we are to avoid the 'double disaster of a climate crisis and a jobs crisis'.

Ratified by delegates to the union's Congress on Sunday 6 June, GMB's Central Executive Committee (CEC) Special Report on Energy and Environment sets out the realities of Britain's energy use against our climate change targets and the scale of employment supported by the industries that provide our energy mix.

The union, forged in the late Victorian era struggles of East London's gas workers, backs the principles of the 'just transition' on energy, but has called for honest dialogue between the labour and environmental movements to defend jobs and influence Government policy as the country pursues its 'net zero' targets.

Gary Smith, GMB General Secretary, said: "Climate change is real, the climate emergency is happening, but the debate over energy and environmental policy must go hand-in-hand and over the last decade it has been mired in political and industrial failure.

"There is a huge gulf between our climate change ambitions and delivery. We export to the rest of the world the jobs we need to support a recovery and transition to a low-carbon economy, and we give billions of pounds in subsidies for big energy to do it. That's unjust, wrong and as a union of jobs and work we make no apologies for calling that out.

"If we want to avoid the double disaster of a climate crisis and a jobs crisis, then we need a balanced energy policy across our regions and nations that supports workers and communities on the journey to 'net zero'. What we can't have is empty slogans that play fast and loose with the livelihoods of energy workers."



LOW PAY BRITAIN: FURLOUGH CLIFF EDGE WILL KILL OFF RECOVERY

GMB has responded to the [Resolution Foundation's 'Low Pay Britain' report](#), which shows low-paid workers have been worst affected by the pandemic.

The pandemic has exposed the deep inequalities in the UK economy after a decade of politically driven austerity. It's just wrong that carers are paid less than £10 an hour, and millions in the so-called gig economy don't even have basic employment rights, never mind decent pay.

A furlough cliff-edge will also exacerbate pay inequality, increase unemployment, and damage the credibility of the Government's 'levelling-up' agenda - killing off a recovery before the country gets back on its feet.

The scale of the challenge is enormous but it's one we must rise to meet. We need proper value for our key workers, stronger and better rights at work, and a proper industrial plan for jobs and investment in our forgotten communities. GMB will certainly be organising and campaigning to achieve this.

REVEALED: MORE THAN 100K REDUNDANCIES PLANNED SO FAR THIS YEAR

Hundreds of thousands more jobs are under threat if the furlough scheme is wound down too soon, warns GMB. More than 100,000 redundancies were planned in the first four months of the year, according to research.

The figures, obtained by GMB under the Freedom of Information Act, were discussed at the union's annual conference, this week. At least 105,000 potential redundancies were notified to the Insolvency Service by 1,200 employers between January and April.

Employers are only required to report potential redundancies when more than 20 are planned, so the true figure will be higher. According to the ONS, some of the worst affected sectors include services, hospitality and manufacturing.

[Click here to see full article](#)

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HANCOCK LYING TO MPS OVER CLAIMS THERE WAS NO PPE SHORTAGE

Matt Hancock is lying to MP's when he claims there was no Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shortage during the pandemic, say GMB. The Health Secretary [told a committee of MP's](#) 'there was never a point at which NHS providers couldn't get access to PPE'.

GMB members across the NHS reported shortages of PPE on numerous occasions and GMB contacted the Department of Health and Social Care on several occasions to raise this. At one stage GMB NHS members were even issued with emergency guidance advising people to reuse disposable PPE.

Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, said: "Matt Hancock either has no idea what happened under his watch during the pandemic, or he is lying through his teeth. Our NHS members have been let down by the Government throughout the crisis – and lack of proper PPE is probably their number one complaint. Many were left terrified for their lives treating covid positive patients with either inadequate or non-existent PPE.

"It appears Mr Hancock is either too incompetent or too untrustworthy to remain Health Secretary."

VACANCY FOR A POLITICAL OFFICER

GMB's Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region is currently seeking applications for the role of Regional Political Officer based at regional office in Wakefield.

For full details, including the job description, please read the job advert [here](#). The closing date for receipt of completed applications is **1.00pm on Wednesday 30 June 2021**.



BRING BACK FACE COVERINGS IN SCHOOLS TO LIMIT CORONAVIRUS DISRUPTION

Four education unions representing teachers and support staff are calling on the Government to reinstate face coverings in schools to limit coronavirus spread.

With infections on the rise once more, the unions have issued a joint statement demanding a range of safety measures to keep education on track and reduce the risk of further closures.

The unions that have signed are GMB, UNISON, Unite and NEU. The joint statement says: "Education unions are deeply concerned that secondary school age students now have the highest rates of Covid-19 infection of all age groups, according to Public Health England (PHE) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, and those rates are rising.

"At the weekend, the Health Secretary acknowledged that 'a huge proportion of the latest cases are in children', that they pass on the virus to the local community and face risks from long Covid. That means over the next few weeks more children and young people are likely to be off self-isolating and missing out on face-to-face education.

"PHE has advised that the Delta variant is more transmissible, can lead to more serious infections and vaccines may be less effective against it. Action must be taken now to make face-to-face learning safer over the remainder of the school term. Outbreaks mean bubbles, classes or entire year groups must be sent home. The priority must be to avoid any further loss of education.

"This includes the rollout of vaccinations for pupils, following the Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) view that these are safe for those aged 12 and over. This will help reduce transmission, school disruption and the risks of long Covid." [Click here to see full article](#)

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