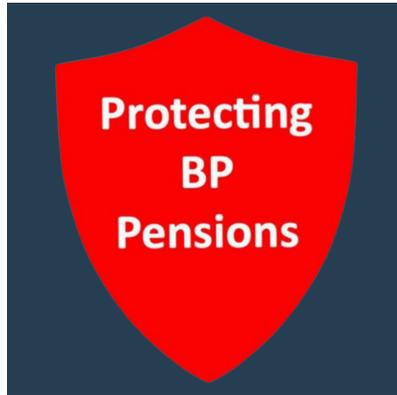


# "Beyond Parsimony"

Bulletin No. 26



## Deadline Approaching!

### *Bulletin highlights*

- *Responding to the Trustee requests*
- *Key deadline date - 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025*
- *Members illustrating sub-categories of the main complaint*
- *How the Ombudsman handles Group complaints*
- *New Pension Minister*
- *BP AGM*

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**“The Trustee with the agreement of the Company intend to follow a policy of increasing pensions fully in line with the cost of living wherever possible and provided the Scheme has sufficient resources to do so.”**

BP Pension Policy Statement (2002)

## *Welcome to Bulletin 26*

The month of April will be critical to determining how the two potential legal pathways will play out as we seek to resolve the key legal questions relating to the BP pension dispute. The Board of the Pension Fund Trustee will have an important decision to make in this regard.

We are currently providing the Board with the additional information it seeks from us to inform its decision. Our external lawyers – solicitors **Stephenson Harwood** and legal counsel led by **Andrew Spink KC** – are also in action providing answers to the legal questions posed by the Trustee’s solicitors.

We are also mindful of the three-year deadline normally observed for complaints to be submitted to the Pensions Ombudsman. This bulletin explains the steps we have taken to make sure the ‘clock is stopped’ for the complaints currently lodged by the Steering Group with both the Trustee and BP.

Meantime, just as we go to press, the Trustee has announced that it has recommended to BP a 3% discretionary increase in the pension payable from 1st May 2025. This would be in addition to the 3.5% increase reflecting the 12 month increase in RPI recorded up to December 2024.

At first sight this might appear to be an important if partial concession by the Trustee – some recognition that the pensions of its members have fallen in real value by 11% and more when compounding of that loss since 2022 is taken into account.

However, members are reminded that the Trustee ‘sounded out’ BP leadership on a discretionary increase in 2022 and recommended discretionary increases in 2023 and 2024 - increases that were well short of the guidance set out in the longstanding Pension Increase Policy to maintain the pension fully in line with RPI where the Fund has sufficient resources.

On all these occasions, BP rejected the Trustee recommendations. We await with interest the response of BP's leadership to this 2025 recommendation.

We hope you find this Bulletin a useful update on the Campaign.

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### **Best wishes**

[Suzie Baverstock](#)

[Colum Doyle](#)

[Mike Hennessy](#)

[Jonathan Popper](#)

[Mike Slingsby](#)

[Adrienne Tallents](#)

### **BPPG Steering Group**

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[Back to top](#)

## *Response to Trustee Requests*

### **Trustee**

You will recall that last month we and our solicitors received two interim responses from the Trustee both asking for more information.

The first is the Trustee's response to our Legal Route 1 (High Court Beddoe Order) request which our solicitors **Stephenson Harwood** submitted in November. The response was issued on behalf of the Trustee by its lawyers Linklaters.

The second response received was to our Legal Route 2 (Ombudsman) formal IDR (Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure) complaint which we submitted in December.

Both responses requested additional information.

Together with our legal team, we have been busy researching and providing this information which has involved seeking the permission of some former BP staff to allow their identities to be shared with the Trustee. Their evidence was provided in our original complaint but with their identities protected.

We are grateful to all these individuals for their support and willingness to go 'on the record' with the Trustee. It has also provided the opportunity for them to provide the Trustee with additional statements which we believe strengthen our evidence and claims.

We expect to complete responses to both R1 and R2 requests by end March.

This clears the way for us to submit a formal complaint to the Pension Ombudsman during April as appropriate.

## **BP**

**You will recall that we have received a response from BP - via their lawyers [Herbert Smith Freehills](#) - to our Route 2 (Ombudsman) formal complaint which we submitted in December.**

As BP has rejected our formal complaint, we will progress that complaint to the Pension Ombudsman in due course as necessary.

[Back to top](#)

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## *The Pension Ombudsman (PO) 3 -Year Deadline*

Normally, the PO will not accept a complaint made later than three years after the complainant first became aware of the complaint and then only after it has completed the IDR process with the Trustee and BP.

We have raised this matter with the Trustee and we have established that **28th April 2025** is the **most appropriate date for the expiry of the three-year period in connection with the 2022 pension increase decisions and decision processes.**

We have also raised the issue of being '*timed out*' should the Trustee not complete its response to our complaint by 28th April 2025 through its Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure.

The PO has confirmed that we may '*stop the clock*' on the 3-year deadline by submitting our complaint to the PO even though we may not have received a final response at that stage from the Trustee under the IDR.

**We will ensure that the clock is duly stopped as necessary prior to 28th April for both the Trustee and BP complaints.**

*N.B. The 28 April 2025 deadline applies only to the pension increase decision and decision process in April 2022. The disputed pension increases in 2023 and 2024, have a further 1 and 2 years respectively before they could be 'timed out' at 3 years. In the court system (Route 1) the deadline is typically significantly longer.*

[Back to top](#)

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## *Ombudsman Complaints*

## Sub-categories of Complaint to the Ombudsman

**Thank you to the 800+ members who completed our survey which has given a rich 'store' of evidence relating to the subcategories of our formal complaint.**

Adrienne Tallents and James Murphy have been sifting the database identifying a small number who exemplify the sub-category and most importantly have documentary evidence to support the example.

We are grateful to the selected members who have now submitted individual IDRPs which will ensure that their well-documented examples can be considered by the Ombudsman in support of the main complaint we have made.

## Group Complaints to the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman (PO) typically operates on the basis of handling individual complaints. It is our understanding that these individual complaints must first be submitted to a Trustee and/or scheme sponsor/employer for their consideration and then submitted to PO only after being dealt with by the relevant organisation.

However, if a number of similar complaints are received from different individuals, then the PO may combine these to form a Group Complaint. In recent exchanges with us, the PO has said *"if the parties agreed that a 'lead case' approach was the most efficient way of dealing with these cases, the PO would work with all parties to select a representative 'lead case' to accelerate through our processes. This would allow us to set out our position clearly and quickly in a comprehensive determination, which in turn supports the timely resolution of other complaints."*

If the formal joint-complaints now made to the Trustee and separately to BP by the Steering Group are not resolved then - as indicated above - we will submit them to the Pension Ombudsman in April. PO will first check the complaints fall within his jurisdiction. He will then discuss with us and the Trustee and BP how to form a 'lead' complaint and complainant.

According to the PO: *"If the parties agreed that a lead case approach was preferable then PO would encourage the parties to discuss the most appropriate way of making that work, ensuring that any potential complainants are not disadvantaged or prevented from bringing a claim to PO because of the agreed approach... the expectation of PO would be that the Determination in the lead case would then inform the Trustee/BP's own remaining complaints concerning the same issue."*

## Should you submit your own individual complaint to the Trustee and BP?

Many of you may be keen to submit your own complaint to and have your name on the record. Following detailed exchanges with the Ombudsman (PO), we have realised that this is impractical and complex to organise.

It would require 3,000+ members to prepare and submit their own individual complaints to both the Trustee and separately to BP. It would require them to investigate each complaint individually and provide a

response. If that response is negative, each member would then have to register and submit both their complaints to the PO.

Only then will the PO make a judgement as to which of this multitude of new complaints can be incorporated into a group complaint with a single lead complaint and complainant. This would carry the very real risk that the Trustee and BP delay or call a halt on our main complaint (the one prepared by the SG and summarised in the last Bulletin) on grounds that they must work through all the complaints first.

It would also risk significant delay at the Ombudsman who is already dealing with a backlog of other complaints.

That said, we are encouraged by the advice provided to us by the Ombudsman that he would expect discussion between the parties on how best to proceed.

We believe it is very much in the interests of the Trustee and BP to ensure that these discussions and agreement lead to the formation of a lead complaint and determination that can be equitably applied by the parties to all relevant members of the BP Pension Fund.

As you know, we have previously asked members not to submit complaints on this dispute to the Ombudsman for fear that a premature determination could prejudice the submission of a well worked, legally informed complaint which is what we now have in hand.

We trust, that having shared the summary of the complaint and remedies sought in our main complaint, and provided a list of the sub-category examples that are referenced in that complaint, you are comfortable that this addresses your own circumstances and the complaint you would wish the Trustee and BP to consider.

However, if you have residual concerns that you wish to discuss, please contact the Steering Group via email at [contact@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:contact@bppensionergroup.org).

*[Back to top](#)*

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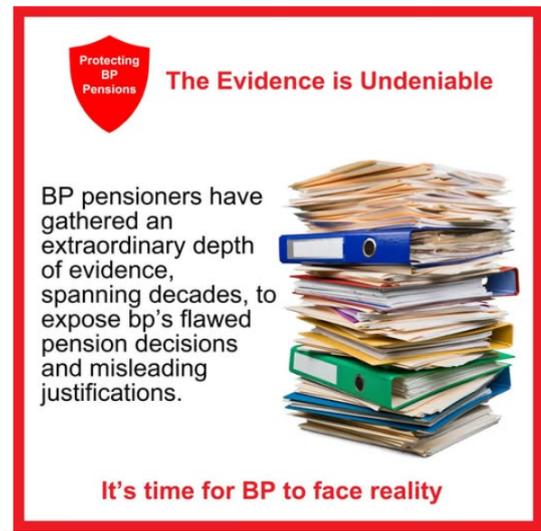
## *The Ongoing Campaign*

**While the Steering Group is extremely busy progressing matters towards a legal resolution of the dispute, the other strands of the campaign are still very much active via the Social Media, Political and AGM teams.**

The 'drumbeat' initiative has been reverberating across social media channels in February and March raising awareness of the dispute and the merits of our case among a wide range of audiences. New material and themes posted by Alex Kent, John Furniss-Wright, and Mike Slingsby for example have been appearing on a regular basis. BP Pension Fund members continue to discover and join the BP Pensioner Group each week - both through word of mouth

and by spotting this social media activity. So please take a look on LinkedIn, Facebook etc and give these posts a Like, Comment or Repost. If you would like to get more involved then contact the team at:

[social@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:social@bppensionergroup.org)



Protecting BP Pensions

**The Evidence is Undeniable**

BP pensioners have gathered an extraordinary depth of evidence, spanning decades, to expose bp's flawed pension decisions and misleading justifications.

**It's time for BP to face reality**

[Back to top](#)



The Political team continues to follow closely the Government's emerging position on defined benefit pension schemes.

Ever since the exceptional high inflation experienced over the period 2021-24, the question of pension increases granted to defined benefit pensioners has become a political issue, with Trustees unable to offer or blocked from increasing pensions to match the rising cost of living.

These issues were raised in Parliament by several MPs and, in early 2024, the Select Committee on Work and Pensions, raised the matter with the Government, shortly before the General Election. At the same time, given a large increase in the value of pension fund surpluses, the last Conservative Government commenced a consultation on releasing these surpluses.

**Liz Kendall, the Secretary of State**, has signalled to the Select Committee that a response is imminent. Meanwhile, **Pensions Minister Torsten Bell**, gave an important speech to the Pensions and Lifetime Saving Association in which he said:

*"Today's £160bn of surplus is a good 'problem' to have - Infinitely preferable to the previous problem: perma-deficits. Surplus flexibilities will allow more well-funded DB schemes to release resources back to business and scheme members - Where it is safe to do so - And where trustees agree - They are best placed to determine, in consultation with employers, the appropriate use of any surplus in their scheme. As an aside, some may want to examine the position of members with non-indexed pre-1997 accruals when considering the use of any surplus - I look forward to sharing more details with you in the response to our Options for DB schemes consultation this Spring."*

It's been a long wait since we submitted BPPG's evidence to the Select Committee in mid-2023 and **Nick Coleman** appeared before the Committee in the Autumn of that year. It looks like the wait is coming to an end.

[Back to top](#)

BPPG members made their presence felt at last year's AGM by posing a series of questions to the CEO and Chairman. The Financial Times noted that pension issues were very much to the fore – even though current senior executives weren't keen to provide answers or commit to opening a dialogue with their retired staff.

This year, the AGM is at Sunbury once again on 17th April in Sunbury.

If you're planning to attend, do please let us know

[contact@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:contact@bppensionergroup.org)

and we'll connect you to the group of BPPG members who are shareholders who plan to attend.

 **THE BP PENSIONER GROUP NEWS**  
**BREAKING NEWS - BP AGM**

[HTTPS://BPPENSIONERGROUP.ORG](https://bppensionergroup.org)



On 25 April 2024 BP transformed its Annual General Meeting venue into a fortress — a stark symbol of exclusion.

More troubling, however, was BP's evasion and attempted silencing of pensioner shareholders who dominated the questions to the Board.

A damaging blow to BP's reputation for openness and transparency.

[Back to top](#)



We also keep key mainstream and pensions journalists briefed on our dispute and there is continuing interest in further reporting as new developments occur.

[Back to top](#)

Don't forget all the documents mentioned in the bulletins are in [The Library](#) as well as all the previous bulletins if you've missed out.

[click to access all Bulletins](#)

## Next Bulletin

April and May will see the campaign **focus** on **preparing** for possible responses from the Trustee and PO complaint process, **maintaining** pressure on the key Political individuals & groups to support our campaign and **continued** media & social media action. **We will seek to keep you fully informed by bulletin or email.**

Did you receive this bulletin from an ex-colleague, friend etc? Would you like to become a member of the

BPPG and receive future bulletins & important news about the campaign? Follow this link to join  
<https://bppensionergroup.org/join/>

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## Social Media & WhatsApp groups

You may not be an active user of social media but if you have ideas for useful themes or would like to get involved then please contact the team at [social@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:social@bppensionergroup.org).

There are a few different ways you can stay in touch with the campaign, as well as this Bulletin and our two WhatsApp groups (to join click buttons below), another way to stay in touch is via social media on the [BPPG LinkedIn Group](#) and [BPPG Facebook Group](#). Links to these groups can be found at the end of every Bulletin.

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### Join the melee or just get the critical info!

If you haven't signed up to **one** of the WhatsApp groups yet - follow the link below and join the group you want to be part.

Join '*Chat*' WhatsApp

OR

Join '*Info*' WhatsApp

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[Back to top](#)

Thanks for getting involved and supporting the campaign.  
You can contact the Steering Group at [contact@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:contact@bppensionergroup.org)



## BP Pensioner Group



### BP Pensioner Group

[contact@bppensionergroup.org](mailto:contact@bppensionergroup.org)

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