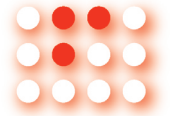
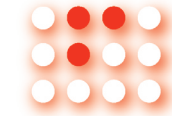


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Wales to ditch parts of 2016 Trade Union Act

Rules making it harder to call strikes in public services will be scrapped in Wales if the Welsh government has its way.

Ministers have published a Bill to repeal parts of the UK government's 2016 *Trade Union Act*.

Welsh Labour has pledged to ditch restrictions on industrial action in the NHS, the fire service, schools and other devolved services.

The Welsh government insisted the assembly has the power needed to change the law on taking industrial action, despite earlier rows with the UK government.

The *Trade Union (Wales) Bill* will also overturn changes to the time allowed for union officials to spend on union work, and to the way union members pay their subscriptions. But it will not overturn a new threshold for turnout in ballots, which requires half of union members to cast a vote before industrial action can take place.

The National Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee is examining the Bill and has invited people to have their say on the proposals.

Martin Mansfield, general secretary of the Wales TUC, said: "This hugely welcome and important Bill is about protecting the ability of unions, employers and the Welsh government to work in partnership in devolved Welsh public services.

"The Welsh government is today putting partnership into practice. The First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary promised to stand by Welsh public sector workers and they have delivered.

"The 'Welsh way' works in preventing industrial action. Our social partnership is all about delivering better services for our communities and dealing with disagreements before they become disputes. Without this Bill the UK *Trade Union Act* would turn back the clock on devolution and threaten to undermine our existing social partnership.

"We have a progressive majority in Wales with Welsh Labour, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrats all supporting partnership instead of the UK approach.

"The Westminster government must respect the democratic will of the people of Wales rather than attempting to interfere in services they were not elected to run."

www.heart.co.uk/wales/news/local/ams-to-challenge-the-trade-union-act

www.assembly.wales/en/newhome/pages/newsitem.aspx?itemid=1668

www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/public-sector/union-issues/trade-union-bill/welsh-government-bill-put-%E2%80%98partnership

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Inflation rates at highest since 2014

Price inflation has hit its highest level for nigh on two and a half years.

In December, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 267.1 and the annual rate of inflation rose to 2.5% from the 2.2% the previous month. That's the highest rate since July 2014.

Rising food prices and air fares were the main contributors to the rise in the inflation measure favoured by union negotiators.

Meanwhile, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) – the government's preferred measure – was up to 1.6% in December from 1.2% the previous month. Again, that's the highest rate since July 2014.

Inflation under the CPIH measure, which will become the government's preferred measure from March, was up to 1.7% from 1.4%. That's this measure's highest rate since July 2014.

	Price inflation			
	RPI ¹	RPI	RPIX ²	CPI
Nov 2015	259.8	1.1	1.1	0.1
December	260.6	1.2	1.3	0.2
January 2016	258.8	1.3	1.4	0.3
February	260.0	1.3	1.4	0.3
March	261.1	1.6	1.7	0.5
April	261.4	1.3	1.4	0.3
May	262.1	1.4	1.5	0.3
June	263.1	1.6	1.7	0.5
July	263.4	1.9	1.9	0.6
August	264.4	1.8	1.9	0.6
September	264.9	2.0	2.2	1.0
October	264.8	2.0	2.2	0.9
November	265.5	2.2	2.5	1.2
December	267.1	2.5	2.7	1.6

¹ January 1987=100 ²RPI except mortgage interest payments

Only six of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than the overall 2.5% rise for December.

Rises of 9.4% in the cost of women's clothing and 8.5% for children's clothing contributed to the 7.2% annual rise in the clothing and footwear group.

There was a 5.6% rise in bus and coach fares which contributed to the overall rise of 4.3% in the fares group. "Other travel costs", which includes air fares, posted a 4.6% increase.

The motoring group's 5.2% rise included a 9.4% rise in petrol and oil.

The housing group's overall increase was 2.4%. However, mortgage interest payments were down by 6.0%.

The fuel and light group saw a 0.4% decrease. A 4.7% decrease for gas was, in part, offset by a 31.2% increase in oil and other fuels.

The food basket's overall decrease of 1.2% included price cuts of 8.5% for eggs and 4.7% for milk products. However, there were increases of 7.2% in oil and fats and 1.4% for fresh milk.

More than 2.5%	%	2.5% or less	%
Clothing & footwear	7.2	Catering	2.5
Motoring expenditure	5.2	Housing	2.4
Tobacco	4.7	Leisure services	1.9
Fares etc	4.3	Personal goods & services	1.9
Household goods	2.8	Alcoholic drink	1.7
Household services	2.7	Leisure goods	1.4
		Fuel & light	-0.4
		Food	-1.2

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/dec2016

Retail inflation eating into earnings growth

In November 2016, growth in average weekly earnings stalled with a 2.8% rise against the previous month's revised rise of 2.9%.

And inflation is eating into the increases. If retail price inflation is taken into account, there was a real-terms increase of just 0.6 percentage points in November against an increase of 0.9 percentage points the previous month.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Pay gains are being slowed down by rising prices, and this week's figures showing a sharp hike in the cost of everyday goods suggests there is worse to come.

"If working people are going to feel a difference in their finances, their pay needs to grow faster.

They will want to know what Theresa May has planned to deliver the 'fairer Britain' she promised in their wages."

Manufacturing earnings growth held steady at 2.0% in November, while in services, growth was up to 2.8% from the previous month's rise of 2.6%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth edged down to 3.1% from 3.2%.

The public sector, excluding financial services, saw growth steady at 1.5% – well below the inflation rate for the two months.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy edged higher to 2.8% in November from 2.6%.

Manufacturing growth was down to 2.2% from 2.4%, while services growth was up to 2.6% from 2.4%.

In the private sector as a whole, earnings growth was up to 3.1% from 2.8%, while in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was down to 1.4% from 1.6%.

£ a week	Average weekly earnings ¹				
	Whole economy	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector ²
Sept 2015 (r)	493	573	477	491	495
October (r)	494	575	478	492	494
November (r)	495	576	479	494	495
December	497	579	480	496	494
Jan 2016	498	578	482	497	497
February	494	575	478	492	498
March	500	581	484	500	499
April	503	583	486	503	500
May	502	586	485	502	499
June	502	586	486	503	500
July	505	587	488	506	498
August	505	588	488	504	504
September (r)	506	588	489	506	500
October (r)	508	587	491	508	502
November (p)	509	587	492	509	503
% annual change					
Single month	2.8	2.0	2.8	3.1	1.5
3-month average ³	2.8	2.2	2.6	3.1	1.4

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, including bonuses, but excluding arrears. ² Excludes financial services. ³ Average of the seasonally adjusted data for the latest three months compared with three months a year earlier. (p) provisional (r) revised

The regular pay figures, which strip out bonuses, showed a 2.7% rise in November against a 2.6% rise the previous month.

The increases in the year to November for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 1.7% (2.2%); services 2.7% (2.5%); the private sector 3.0% (2.9%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.6% (1.5%).

The average rise for regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending November edged up to 2.7% from 2.6% for the October period.

The sectoral increases were: manufacturing 2.1% (2.3%); services 2.6% (2.5%); the private sector 3.0% (2.8%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.4% (1.5%).

The table below is based on the median average earnings figures published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2016. The original median figures have been updated by the 1.2% increase in average weekly earnings for the whole economy between April 2016 and November 2016 to give a rough estimate of earnings now in the various occupational groups.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	545.20
All male	584.70
All female	486.30
Managers	807.20
Professionals	734.50
Associate professionals	600.80
Admin & secretarial	428.40
Skilled/craft	504.00
Services	357.10
Sales	359.20
Operatives	473.10
Other manual jobs	360.70

www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/jan2017

UK unemployment at nine-year low

UK unemployment fell to its lowest level in almost nine years, official figures show.

In the three month period September to November 2016, the overall number of unemployed people under the Labour Force Survey count fell by 52,000 to 1.6 million compared with the previous three-month period's figure of 1.66 million.

The number of unemployed people under this count was last lower in the December period 2007, just before the economic crash.

At 4.8%, the unemployment rate is at its lowest level since the three months to September 2005 when it was 4.7%.

The fall in numbers was mainly due to less women being out of work. The number of unemployed women fell by 44,000 to 721,000, and their unemployment rate fell to 4.6% from 4.9% in the period to August 2016.

The number of unemployed men fell by only 8,000 to 883,000 and their unemployment rate remained at 5.0%, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted

	Claimants ¹		LFS ³	
	(000s)	% ²	(000s)	%
December 2015	771	2.2	1,694	5.1
January 2016	742	2.1	1,691	5.1
February	736	2.1	1,700	5.1
March	754	2.2	1,692	5.1
April	763	2.2	1,671	5.0
May	776	2.2	1,646	4.9
June	779	2.2	1,641	4.9
July	778	2.2	1,632	4.9
August	788	2.3	1,656	4.9
September	793	2.3	1,604	4.8
October	807	2.3	1,616	4.8
November (r)	808	2.3	1,604	4.8
December (p)	798	2.3		

¹ Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants ² Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.

³ The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

There was a large monthly fall in the other main unemployment measure – the claimant count – which only includes claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In December, unemployment under the claimant count fell by 10,100 to 797,800 from the revised

figure for November of 808,000. However, the joblessness rate in December was steady at 2.3% for the fourth consecutive month.

The number of male claimants fell by 10,700 to 503,400, and the fall was enough to cut their joblessness rate to 2.7% from 2.8%.

For women, there was a small increase of 600 to 294,400, but their joblessness rate was steady at 1.8%.

Regions In the three months to last November, unemployment was down in seven of the UK's 12 regions/countries and increased in the other five.

The largest falls were 27,000 in Yorkshire and the Humber and 26,000 in London.

However, there was a 22,000 increase in the East region and 11,000 in Scotland.

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 4.8% in seven of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rate was 6.8% in the North East.

In December, the claimant count fell in 10 of the 12 region/countries, was unchanged in one (South West) and increased in one (London).

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.3% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.1% in the North East and 3.6% in Northern Ireland.

Region	Dec claimants		LFS Sept – Nov	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	52,200	4.1	87,000	6.8
North West	108,200	2.9	189,000	5.3
Yorkshire & the Humber	75,900	2.8	133,000	4.9
East Midlands	45,500	1.9	107,000	4.5
West Midlands	86,500	3.0	161,000	5.6
East	49,900	1.6	145,000	4.6
London	118,700	2.1	266,000	5.6
South East	62,200	1.3	157,000	3.4
South West	42,500	1.4	104,000	3.7
Wales	42,100	2.8	66,000	4.4
Scotland	81,500	2.9	139,000	5.1
Northern Ireland	32,700	3.6	50,000	5.6

www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/jan2017