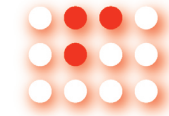


# FACT

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## Strip blacklister of Big Ben contract

Over 70 MPs have so far signed an early day motion (EDM) tabled by Labour MP Chuka Umunna which calls for Sir Robert McAlpine to be stripped of the contract for the restoration work of Big Ben and for it to be awarded to a firm without a history of blacklisting.

The majority of signatories of the EDM so far come from the Labour Party, a smattering of SNP MPs, one Liberal Democrat – Stephen Lloyd – and the only Green MP, Caroline Lucas.

The general union Unite has given its backing to the MPs. It branded McAlpine's involvement in the restoration of Big Ben as a "stain on democracy". It said: "It was grossly inappropriate that a firm currently being sued for blacklisting should be awarded a multi-million pound contract to restore a national symbol of parliament and our democracy."

Unite is currently suing Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd on behalf of victims of blacklisting having already secured millions of pounds in compensation for blacklisted workers from firms involved in the Consulting Association.

Howard Beckett, assistant general secretary with responsibility for legal services at Unite, said: It is

simply reprehensible that a firm that was engaged in the pernicious practice of blacklisting should be allowed to fill its coffers at the taxpayers' expense."

In 2009, the Information Commissioner raided the offices of the Consulting Association and found a blacklist of over 3,000 construction workers. Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd not only helped to found and fund the Consulting Association, but provided two of its chairs.

[www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/401](http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/401)

[www.unitetheunion.org/news/unite-backs-mps-call-for-sir-robert-mcalpine-ltd-to-be-stripped-of-big-ben-contract/](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/unite-backs-mps-call-for-sir-robert-mcalpine-ltd-to-be-stripped-of-big-ben-contract/)

## Retail price inflation remains at 3.9%

Retail price inflation was unchanged, but it may not be the end of its rise.

In September, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 275.1 and the annual rate of inflation in the measure favoured by union negotiators was steady at 3.9%.

Food prices and a range of transport costs helped to push up inflation in September but these effects were offset by clothing prices that rose less strongly than this time last year.

Seasonal food prices in October can push up inflation and the September rise in British Gas prices

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will also feed in. Clothing and footwear prices tend to rise in October and added together these factors may help push up the October inflation rate.

In September, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index Housing (CPIH) – now the government's preferred measure – edged higher to 2.8% from 2.7%.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) makes up part of the triple-lock guarantee on the basic state pensions and the September rate is used for uprating when required. As the September rate was 3.0% that rate will be used for next April's rise in the pension as the other factors of the triple lock are average earnings which are well below the CPI rate and a 2.5% increase if earnings and inflation are lower. A 3.0% increase would increase the basic state pension for a single person to £129.70 a week.

	Price inflation			
	RPI <sup>1</sup>	% increase on a year earlier		
	RPI	RPIX <sup>2</sup>	CPIH	
August 2016	264.4	1.8	1.9	1.0
September	264.9	2.0	2.2	1.3
October	264.8	2.0	2.2	1.3
November	265.5	2.2	2.5	1.5
December	267.1	2.5	2.7	1.8
January 2017	265.5	2.6	2.9	1.9
February	268.4	3.2	3.5	2.3
March	269.3	3.1	3.4	2.3
April	270.6	3.5	3.8	2.6
May	271.7	3.7	3.9	2.7
June	272.3	3.5	3.8	2.6
July	272.9	3.6	3.9	2.6
August	274.7	3.9	4.1	2.7
September	275.1	3.9	4.1	2.8

<sup>1</sup> January 1987=100 <sup>2</sup> RPI except mortgage interest payments

Six of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than 3.9% in August.

The 9.9% rise in the clothing and footwear group included a rise of 13.2% in women's clothing.

The motoring group's rise of 6.3% included rises of 6.0% in petrol and oil and 19.1% for vehicle tax and insurance.

A 14.2% increase in bus and coach fares contributed to the overall rise of 2.1% in the fares and other travel costs group.

The food group's increase of 3.2% included a 4.6% rise in bread, a 19.5% rise in butter and 11.7% rise in fish prices. Soft drinks, on the other hand, were down by 2.2%.

The fuel and light group recorded an increase of 5.6%, which included a 9.0% rise in electricity prices and a 16.2% increase in domestic oil prices.

The housing group's overall increase of 1.9% was tempered by a 5.2% decrease in mortgage interest payments.

More than 3.9%	%	Less than 3.9%	%
Clothing & footwear	9.9	Leisure services	3.5
Motoring expenditure	6.3	Food	3.2
Leisure goods	5.9	Alcoholic drink	3.0
Household goods	5.8	Catering	3.0
Fuel & light	5.6	Household services	2.7
Tobacco	5.4	Fares etc	2.1
		Housing	1.9
		Personal goods & services	1.8

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/september2017](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/september2017)

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceinflationdetailedbriefingnote/september2017](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceinflationdetailedbriefingnote/september2017)

## Weak earnings growth hits living standards

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady breathed new life into the "Britain needs a pay rise" slogan on the release of the latest average weekly earnings data.

In August, average weekly earnings growth was provisionally estimated to be 2.2% against the revised rise for July of 1.7%.

With retail price inflation rising by 3.9% in August and 3.6% in July there was a real-terms decrease in earnings of 1.7 percentage points in August against decrease of 1.9 percentage points in July.

O'Grady said: "The chancellor must help struggling families when he gives his Budget next month. This means ditching the artificial pay restrictions on nurses, midwives and other public sector workers. And investing in jobs that people can live on."

The sectoral figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show manufacturing earnings growth was down to 1.6% in August from 2.0% the previous month. Meanwhile, services

recovered somewhat to 2.3% growth from 1.7% in July. In the private sector as a whole, growth also recovered to 2.4% from 1.7%.

In the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was down to 1.7% in August against 1.9% the previous month.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy was steady at 2.2% in August.

In manufacturing, growth was up to 1.6% in August from 1.3% the previous month. The rise in services was steady 2.4%.

In the private sector growth edged up to 2.4% from 2.3%, but in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was down to 1.5% from 1.6%.

£ a week	Average weekly earnings <sup>1</sup>				
	Whole economy	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector <sup>2</sup>
June 2016 (r)	492	579	475	490	500
July (r)	497	578	482	495	499
August	496	579	480	494	503
September	497	580	481	495	500
October	498	578	483	497	501
November	500	579	484	498	503
December	499	579	483	496	502
Jan 2017	499	581	484	497	503
February	499	582	484	498	504
March	502	581	488	501	505
April	504	585	488	502	505
May (r)	504	584	489	502	508
June (r)	506	585	490	506	505
July (r)	505	589	490	504	508
August (p)	507	589	492	505	512
<b>% annual change</b>					
Single month	2.2	1.6	2.3	2.4	1.7
3-month average <sup>3</sup>	2.2	1.6	2.4	2.4	1.5

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

The ONS also produces regular pay figures which strip out bonuses. For the whole economy, growth was up to 2.2% from 2.1% in July.

The increases in the year to August for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in

brackets, were: manufacturing 1.7% (0.8%); services 2.3% (2.2%); private sector 2.4% (2.2%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 1.8% (1.8%).

The average rise for regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending August dipped to 2.1% from 2.2% in July.

The three-month sectoral increases were: manufacturing 1.2% (1.0%); services 2.2% (2.3%); private sector 2.3% (2.3%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 1.6% (1.7%).

The following table is based on the median average earnings figures for April 2016 published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The original median figures have been updated by the 2.0% increase in average weekly earnings, including bonuses, for the whole economy between April 2016 and August 2017 and so give a rough estimate of earnings now in the various occupational groups.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	549.50
All male	589.40
All female	490.10
Managers	813.60
Professionals	740.30
Associate professionals	605.60
Admin & secretarial	431.80
Skilled/craft	508.00
Services	360.00
Sales	362.00
Operatives	476.90
Other manual jobs	363.50

[www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2017](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2017)

## UK unemployment falls but claimants rise

There was a 10th consecutive fall in unemployment, latest official figures show.

The number of unemployed people fell by 52,000 to 1.44 million in the three-month period ending August 2017 on the previous three-month period ending May, according to Labour Force Survey data.

The total unemployment rate was down to 4.3% in the period ending August from 4.5% in the three-month period ending May.

The number of unemployed men fell by 56,000 to 775,000 and their unemployment rate was cut to 4.4% from 4.7%.

The number of unemployed women, however, increased by 4,000 to 668,000 but their unemployment rate was steady at 4.2%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted				
	Claimants <sup>1</sup>		LFS <sup>3</sup>	
	(000s)	% <sup>2</sup>	(000s)	%
July 2016 (r)	774	2.2	1,630	4.9
August (r)	777	2.2	1,658	5.0
September (r)	778	2.2	1,606	4.8
October (r)	782	2.2	1,612	4.8
November (r)	789	2.2	1,600	4.8
December (r)	783	2.2	1,594	4.8
January 2017 (r)	765	2.2	1,580	4.7
February (r)	762	2.2	1,559	4.7
March (r)	784	2.2	1,541	4.6
April (r)	796	2.3	1,530	4.6
May (r)	801	2.3	1,495	4.5
June (r)	806	2.3	1,484	4.4
July (r)	803	2.3	1,455	4.3
August (r)	802	2.3	1,443	4.3
September (p)	804	2.3		

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

<sup>3</sup> 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 an increase on the other main unemployment measure – the claimant count – which only includes claimants receiving Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In September, unemployment under this count increased by 1,700 to 804,100 from the revised figure for August of 802,400. In fact there has been a wholesale revision of these figures going back to December 2014.

The fall in numbers was, however, not enough to affect the joblessness rate which remained at 2.3%.

Male claimants were down in number by 300 to 502,500, but their joblessness rate was unchanged at 2.7%.

The number of female claimants increased by 2,000 to 301,600, but their joblessness rate was unchanged at 1.8%.

**Regions** In the three months to August 2017, unemployment was down on the previous three-month period in eight of the UK's 12 regions/countries, unchanged in one and up in three.

The largest falls were 30,000 in London and 17,000 in the West Midlands.

The three regions to post an increase in numbers were the North West (4,000), the East Midlands (8,000) and Scotland (9,000).

Numbers were unchanged in the South West.

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 4.3% in six of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rates were 5.8% in North East and 5.2% in the West Midlands.

In September, the claimant count increased in the eight regions/countries, was unchanged in one – the East – and fell in three.

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.3% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.4% in the North East, 3.2% in Northern Ireland and 3.0% in the North West and West Midlands.

Region	Sept claimants		LFS June – Aug	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	54,000	4.4	75,000	5.8
North West	112,000	3.0	158,000	4.4
Yorkshire & the Humber	75,800	2.7	128,000	4.8
East Midlands	47,200	2.0	98,000	4.2
West Midlands	86,300	3.0	149,000	5.2
East	49,400	1.6	122,000	3.9
London	120,700	2.1	241,000	4.9
South East	65,700	1.3	158,000	3.3
South West	44,600	1.5	101,000	3.6
Wales	38,600	2.5	60,000	4.0
Scotland	80,500	2.8	113,000	4.1
Northern Ireland	29,200	3.2	41,000	4.7

[www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2017](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2017)