“That having attended the 2012 TUC Disabled Workers’ Conference on 30th & 31st May 2012 on behalf of the Council of Executives, we are pleased to submit the following report to the June Statutory meeting, and request that this report be adopted by the Council of Executives and placed in the minutes.

The two-day event was held at Congress House in London, and was attended across the board from within the TU movement, including delegates with a wide range of disabilities which obviously created many organisational challenges. These challenges were well met by the TUC and the conference ran very smoothly.

RMT’s delegation consisted of Derrick Marr and Janine Booth representing the Council of Executives, plus two delegates nominated by branches – Esme Bradbury from Stratford no.1 branch and Maria Taylor from TfL no.1 branch – who thoroughly enjoyed this new experience and took copious notes.

Guest speakers included Colin Rowe, Sasha Callaghan, Brendan Barber and a speaker from Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC). There was a panel session with John McDonnell MP and others. The top table had three co-Chairs running the event.

Right from the off, RMT played a key role in events, when the Disabled Workers’ Committee tried to rule out our Emergency Resolution regarding the changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority policy by saying that it was not an emergency as these proposals were known about in January 2012 prior to the cut-off date for resolutions. We challenged this ruling, stating that the consultation process closed in April and thus the final proposal would not be known until after the deadline. Subsequently, and notwithstanding a number of speakers and various viewpoints, the matter was put to the vote with the Chair ruling a simple majority would be required. On the first show of hands, we thought we’d won by a landslide, but the Chair requested the newly-elected tellers, who were still out of the room being briefed. So, having nominated two tellers pro-tem, the vote suddenly became a lot closer as delegates clearly changed their original vote although a marginal victory was recorded but figures were not announced.

When we came to move the emergency resolution, it was commented that not many people were conversant with the subject matter (not least of all, the seconder from TSSA), but the motion was carried without opposition, and ironically the debate on the issue was shorter than the debate on its inclusion on the agenda. The irony of this was not missed by the entire delegation and pointed out by several speakers.

RMT’s amendment on the Welfare to Work motion was accepted, which called for a campaign opposing the Workfare scheme, introduced by the previous Labour government and carried forward by this one. The amendment referred to the scheme as “slave labour” – an allegation recently denied by Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg.

RMT’s amendment to the resolution on Discrimination – disability leave, disability-related absence and sickness was incorporated into the composite, which we seconded. The composite was passed unanimously.

As requested at a joint meeting of the Equal Rights and TUC Sub-Committees, we contributed to the debate on Mentally Healthy Workplaces, making the point that while the motion stressed the role of managers in supporting workers with mental health problems, managers can also be the cause of workers’ mental health problems. This point was very well-received by the conference.

Some of our delegation attended a fringe meeting on Disability Hate Crime. The rise in verbal and physical attacks on disabled people is shocking, and much blame can be attributed to the government and the media in their demonisation of disabled people as workshy scroungers. The conference voted to send the resolution on this subject to TUC Congress, where we hope it will be fully supported.

Resolutions were also passed on the following subjects:

* A cycle of discrimination for disabled workers.
* The politics of self-interest.
* Reasonable adjustments.
* Decent state pensions for disabled people.
* Ethical reporting and unionised workplaces.
* Defending rights for disabled people.
* Media attacks on disabled people.
* Media coverage of disabled people.
* Sustainable supported employment. (eg. Remploy)
* Defence of supported employments establishments. (eg. Remploy)
* Access to education.
* Standing up for standards.
* Lost Arts. (a campaign against cuts in the arts)
* Free internet broadband.

Emergency resolutions on the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and on the Gender balance of the TUC Disabled Workers’ Committee.

A new Disabled Workers’ Committee was elected: David Bryson (NASUWT), Ann Galpin (NUJ), Mandy Hudson (NUT), Martin Kelly (BFAWU), Mark Leopard (PCS), Lesley McCallum (Unite), Robert Mooney (Community), Julie Robinson (UNISON), Patricia Roche (UCU), John Swaney (Prospect), Tony Sneddon (CWU), Robert Steadman (POA), Cliff Towson (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy), Les Woodward (GMB), Julian Allam (Unite), Manjeet Sandhu (Unite), Michelle Williams (NASUWT).

We gathered quite a few materials and interesting literature on disabled workers and disability issues which will be circulated and Executive members may wish to look at.

In summary, the two-day Disabled Workers’ Conference 2012 was a very interesting and enjoyable experience for the RMT delegation and a definite success which highlighted a growing movement within this minority group.

In closing, we ask that the RMT Council of Executives adopt this report in its entirety including the following recommendations going forward:

* That we invite a speaker from Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) to speak at this year’s AGM.
* That we ensure that disabled members are facilitated to attend the 20 October demonstration and other mobilisations against cuts.
* That we include an article about disabled workers and cuts in RMT News.
* That we sponsor Disability History Month, ordering and circulating posters and literature to branches.
* That we organise a major public meeting/rally demanding disabled access to public transport; this meeting to be held in London around the time of the Paralympic Games, in conjunction with other trade unions, TUC Disabled Workers' Committee, Transport for All and DPAC.
* That we organise a further meeting on disabled workers following these events, and invite all members interested in these issues.”