

# Nearly 1000 former miners in Midlothian to get pension boost

Nearly 1,000 former miners in Midlothian could see their pensions increase by 32 per cent after funds were returned to them as part of the UK Government budget.

Reserves of around £1.5 billion which had been kept separate from the Mineworkers Pension Scheme are to be released back into it with the benefits expected to be seen within weeks.

Midlothian MP Kirsty McNeill said the move would right an 'injustice' to miners and praised the campaigning of locals in the county for helping bring the change about.

She said: "It is a national scandal that people in Midlothian who helped power our country have had to fight for so long for the pension settlement they deserve.

"This is a victory for the extraordinary work carried out by folk here in Midlothian to champion this important cause, and the direct result of a UK Labour government in the service of working people, with Scottish MPs at its heart."

An investment reserve fund was established in 1992 using profits from the pension scheme to provide a 'buffer' in case the scheme went into debt.

The fund was due to be returned to the Government in 2029 but

campaigners had fought for its release to help former miners benefit now.

The decision to hand the funds back to the pension scheme was announced as part of the new government's first budget.

It is estimated it will bring a 32 per cent boost to pensions including for 952 former miners living in Midlothian.

Sir David Hamilton, a former miner and ex- Labour MP for Midlothian, said: "I welcome the Government standing by their manifesto commitment and transferring the £1.5 billion across to mineworkers and their widows.

"This in real terms means a 32 per cent increase to their weekly pensions, which will be paid out from November 29

"I'm sure this will be warmly received by the many in Midlothian and across Scotland who have been unfairly dealt with over the years."

Speaking about the decision to hand the money back to the pension scheme, Scottish Labour Leader Anas Sarwar said: "We owe the mining communities who powered Scotland a debt of gratitude.

"For decades, it has been a scandal that the government has taken money that could have been passed to the miners and their families. Now that scandal ends, and the money is rightfully transferred to the miners."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter