

Happy festive season  
– especially to those  
delivering services  
over the holiday



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December 2022 No 159

# Scotland in UNISON

Scottish council activists' bulletin Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members



By Fiona Montgomery  
Policy Officer

**Thousands marched for climate justice in Edinburgh and worldwide last month as fears grew that the Paris 1.5C target is at severe risk.**

But the loud and defiant message from all Global Day of Action protests was: “We are not yet defeated.”

UNISON Scotland was in Edinburgh and was represented in Egypt at the COP27 climate talks.

Depute Convener Stephen Smellie attended the Sharm el-Sheik event for UNISON, as one

of two TUC delegates on the International Trade Union Confederation delegation.

He said in advance of the talks: “We must not lose sight of the fact that the climate crisis is the most important issue facing working people throughout the world.

“The current energy crisis is a manifestation of that wider and deeper crisis.”

Several themed ‘stations’ along the Edinburgh march route highlighted issues including the need for no new oil and gas; demands for loss and damage payments to the countries most affected; calls to free Egyptian political prisoners including Alaa Abd el-Fattah, and action on Just Transition and the cost of living crisis.

And trade unionists at COP27 marched with civil society representatives inside the venue, angry that no outside protests were allowed.

Their slogans included ‘No climate justice without labour rights’ as they called for a just transition for workers and communities.

In an opening ITUC statement, Rebecca Okello, of the Central Organisation of Trade Unions in Kenya, said on behalf of the 210 million workers in 165 countries represented by the global trade union movement: “No climate justice without labour and human rights – we are not yet defeated!”

She added: “Labour rights are human rights and human rights should be respected

and guaranteed everywhere. It is going to be a difficult COP because the window is closing on us to tackle the climate crisis.” She added that there is no longer time to avoid difficult issues such as the lack of money for climate finance and the stalled mitigation plans in the G20 countries.

Stephen Smellie was leaving for Egypt as SiU went to press. He said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres “hit the right note” at COP in warning: “We need all hands on deck for faster, bolder climate action... We are getting dangerously close to a point of no return. The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch.”

## Not so much a Care Service as a Complete Shambles

By Stephen Low  
Policy Officer

**UNISON Scotland joined many other organisations to give the National Care Service Scotland Bill a frosty reception. It won't take profit from care, it will take services from councils and health boards.**

Scottish Government's plan is that all of social work as well as social care and community health will be put in the hands of new quangos (Care Boards) who won't deliver care themselves – they will only issue contracts – and they will have the power to ban councils and health boards from even bidding for these. This isn't what we wanted from a National Care Service. Or what anyone was expecting.

The proposals are a shambles. The Scottish Government should pull this Bill and start a process of real ground up engagement to

design something first – and then legislate. As part of UNISON Scotland's campaign against the Bill, we held an event bringing together a “coalition of concern” about the provisions of the Bill, which included COSLA, Quarriers, Social Work Scotland and Parkinson's Disease Scotland. UNISON Scotland was represented by Mary Madden, an adult social care worker.

**Kick profit out of care**

The bill is currently being examined by parliamentary committees who asked for views on the bill, which will set up a service that won't deliver care, only issue contracts. UNISON Scotland submitted written evidence and Regional Secretary Tracey Dalling will give evidence in person.

Councils, of all political persuasions and Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) from Shetland to the Borders also sent in responses. They were joined by all sorts of professional bodies, and experts on everything from child protection to accountancy. Like ourselves, they found little to welcome, and much to criticise. Even the Parliament's Presiding Officer has had a go.

One big complaint is about the lack of detail. In their assessment the Law Society of Scotland use the phrase “it is not clear” 27 times. Marie Curie complain that “there is very little contained in the bill itself about what the National Care Service will deliver”, and “nowhere... is it defined which health services should be included in the National Care Service.”

The Scottish Government figures about set up and running costs are rubbished by every accountancy body going. Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) say “Inaccurate and incomplete” and “wholly

unreliable”. Chief Financial officers of IJBs say estimates are so poor they prevent giving “any reasonable professional opinion”. Any number of people wonder why the Scottish government can't say whether Care Boards will pay VAT or what will happen to the pension entitlements of staff transferred from the public sector.

**“The Scottish Government should pull this Bill and start a process of real ground up engagement”**

For a bill that could see 75,000 workers transferring out of council employment, it is woefully light in detail. UNISON Scotland will continue our campaign to have the bill withdrawn in favour of the National Care Service that Scotland needs.



# Bonfire of workers rights

By Dianne O'Donnell  
Comms and Campaigns Committee

**In its rush to finalise Brexit, the UK Government plans to axe over 2,400 laws by the end of next year – all because they originated in the EU.**

This will have a devastating impact on basic workers protections. The controversial Retained EU Law Bill, introduced by Jacob Rees-Mogg has set a fast-moving conveyor belt in motion, which will see all protections for workers and UK citizens that come from EU law, fall off a cliff in December 2023, unless the government decides to produce new and equivalent UK laws. This deadline is referred to as the “sunset” date for EU law.



UNISON's Head of legal services, Shantha David presented UNISON's submission to the Retained EU Law Bill Committee, telling the Committee that working women stand to be the most affected and that the bill “will strip out some very basic employment rights.

“These include annual leave, maternity, and paternity protections as well as TUPE protections during outsourcing.” Shantha also pointed out that the government still has not published a complete list of all affected legislation, despite the deadline being just over a year away so there is no clarity on which workers protections will stand in place. Shantha said: “If it is the government's intention not to get rid of workers' rights and legislation that protects employees, then it would be a lot simpler to set out what is protected.”

# Police staff cuts will threaten public safety

By Danny Phillips  
Comms Officer

**UNISON Scotland has called for urgent intervention from the Scottish Government to prioritise public safety and properly fund the police service.**

The Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee met in October to scrutinise the Scottish Government's budget for 2023/24 and its impact on policing, as well as other areas of criminal justice. The Police Service and Scottish Police Authority have provided written evidence which threatens massive cuts to the police service in Scotland unless the Scottish Government significantly increases funding. The submission warns that significant cost savings can only be delivered through a pay-freeze or by funding cost-of-living pay awards by reducing the size of the workforce. It said around 4,500 jobs may need to be cut unless the service receives proper funding. Michelle Brewster, UNISON Scotland police branch secretary said: “These figures by Police Scotland are deeply alarming and threaten the safety of everyone in Scotland.

“Police staff in Scotland have already borne the brunt of cuts over the last decade and there has already been more than 2,600 job losses. To threaten to cut thousands more will completely decimate the service and pose a huge risk to public safety. “Over the years police staff pay has been frozen and it has never recovered, so to suggest police staff might have to take a pay freeze when we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis is a slap in the face for hard-working police staff. “The police service is already the thinnest of thin blue lines. Cuts of this magnitude could see large scale job losses to forensics, fraud, analyst and counter terrorism. It's impossible to make such dramatic job reductions without putting the safety of the public at greater risk.”

# Members reject NHS pay offer



**As we went to print, UNISON Scotland's Health Committee had just announced that NHS members have rejected the Scottish government's final offer on pay.** The announcement came following a two-week consultative ballot which saw over 60 per cent of members vote to reject the Scottish

government's flat rate pay offer of £2,205. The strike ballot was suspended pending this consultation and now that the members have spoken, UNISON Scotland's health committee planned to meet to discuss next steps. Wilma Brown, chair of UNISON Scotland's health committee, said:

“Our members have voted in their thousands and their message is loud and clear – the Scottish government's pay offer just isn't good enough. “Ministers need to understand the anger of health staff who are working in an under-funded, under-staffed NHS. These are unprecedented times and NHS staff are struggling to make ends meet.



“This should be a massive wake-up call to the Scottish government. They need to come back to the negotiating table with an improved offer or prepare themselves for the first strikes in the NHS since devolution.” Matt McLaughlin, UNISON Scotland's head of health, said: “Nobody wants to take strike action but without an improved pay offer, our members will be left with no choice. “The ball is in the Scottish government's court. We are calling on Humza Yousaf to come forward with an improved offer so our dedicated health workers can get on with delivering services.”

# HE strikes continue

Davena Rankin  
HE committee

**UNISON Scotland members working at Glasgow Caledonian, Robert Gordon and Napier Universities are continuing their action for decent pay.** UNISON members will now be joined on their picket lines by EIS and UCU colleagues who have secured mandates for strike action. The planned strike action for November will seriously disrupt campus activities at all three universities and additionally graduations at Glasgow Caledonian. The strike action is having an impact locally and nationally with the employers body, University and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) offering to open negotiations five months early for the 2023/2024 pay round with the possibility of an additional payment in February 2023 which would mean an eighteen month pay deal.

**Glasgow votes for local deal** While action continues in the three universities in tandem with local negotiations, UNISON Scotland members at the University of Glasgow have voted to accept a supplementary,



consolidated local offer that brings their 22/23 pay settlement up to 6-12.9%. This is the first time a University has broken ranks with UCEA's imposed pay offer with a consolidated uplift. Co-Branch Secretary Sally Baxter said that “This is a clear victory for our members who took strike action. Like our colleagues in HEIs across the country, we took industrial action against the imposed, disputed offer from the UCEA.

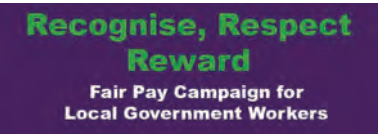
The supplementary offer secured at Glasgow represents a significant improvement on the national position with the lowest paid now set to receive a permanent £2,332 annual pay rise.” “This breakthrough was won and negotiated by unions working together. When we are united, we can never be defeated.”

# Members accept council pay deal

By Jane Aitchison  
Comms & Campaigns Committee

**UNISON members overwhelmingly voted to accept COSLA's improved pay offer in a ballot of all Scottish council members in September.** The deal is currently being implemented and equates to a total pay bill uplift of 7.5% with 87% of Local Government workers receiving fully consolidated uplifts from the date of implementation of between 5-10%. Advice on back pay for members on universal credit is available. Fears that industrial action would need to be restarted were quelled when COSLA agreed to implement the pay offer in full, including the

extra day annual leave and the payment of SSSC registration fees (for those working in social work, social care and early years) in perpetuity COSLA had claimed these elements were for only one year.



Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland head of local government was very clear that this pay deal was only achieved through members' collective strength and industrial action and this forced the Scottish Government to accept it had a role to play and come up with more money. “The lesson the Scottish Government needs to take from this

is that they need to fund local government, and the workers that serve our local communities, properly and UNISON will continue to lead the campaign for investment in councils and for staff to get the pay and recognition they deserve.” Mark Ferguson chair of the local government committee said “I want to thank all council workers, particularly those who took industrial action. Without your commitment we would never have secured this deal. “I am pleased we have secured this pay rise. But let's not pretend it will be the only thing that protects council workers against the cost of living crisis – we have much more work to do and we are already running our next campaign for improved council services and better pay and conditions for all council workers.”



# Polly wins landmark legal ruling

By Fiona Montgomery  
Policy Officer

**Polly Jones was sacked by email. From the second she read the words, feeling like she'd been punched in the stomach, she knew her employer was totally out of order.**

She knew her trade union UNISON was the best place to go for help. But it wasn't clear at first what the legal options might be, especially as she had only been employed for six months.

That was in the run up to the snap general election in December 2019. The email came five weeks after Polly asked the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), if it was OK if she were to stand as a Scottish Labour Party candidate.

The chief executive said no, and Polly withdrew her application to stand in her home constituency of Argyll and Bute. Like most people, she needed her job – which was head of membership and policy. She was utterly shocked to be sacked.

Nearly three years on Polly is celebrating after establishing a new point of law and agreeing a settlement with the SFHA following a long legal fight. She was reassured and pleased to be backed throughout by UNISON through the Housing and Care Scotland branch, with support from Mandy



Mandy McDowall and Polly Jones celebrate win

McDowall, Regional Organiser, and UNISON and Thompsons Solicitors legal colleagues, including Michael Briggs, now an Advocate.

Mandy is proud that they were successful in winning a key ruling at the Employment

Appeal Tribunal that 'participation in democracy' is a philosophical belief, which is protected under equality legislation.

The case may open the door to many other employees, such as civil servants and council officials, who may want to stand for election but whose contracts currently bar them from doing so.

Polly said: "I am delighted my case has wider implications. It protects us all from employers that want to restrict broader political activity outside work whether that's campaigning, or simply being involved in a political party.

"It was a horrific experience and I felt it was deeply unfair. My advice is to join a union and build strength in your workplace. You never know when you'll need it."

Karen Osborne, UNISON Scotland's legal officer said: "Polly's case means that if a worker is dismissed or suffers a detriment because they have requested permission to stand for election, or in some other way demonstrated their belief in participatory democracy, they can bring a discrimination claim under the Equality Act as this belief is now a protected belief."

Mandy added: "Branch members are so pleased Polly's determination has led to this landmark legal victory."

The financial settlement has been donated in full to Living Rent, Refuweggee, and UNISON's There for You welfare charity.

# Charter launched for women in energy

By Lindsay McNaught  
Chair of Energy Service Group and Branch Secretary for Gas Scotland

**Representatives of UNISON's Gas Scotland branch joined energy sector colleagues at the Houses of Parliament, as UNISON launched its Women in Energy Charter for Good Practice.**

The charter has been designed to help employers in the energy sector to support women to move into traditionally male-dominated roles.

It is based on the results of a survey carried out by UNISON, EDF and Centrica, which asked female employees of the two energy companies whether they would like to move into these roles, and what barriers they faced in doing so. A massive 90% of those surveyed said they would be more likely to make this transition if they were given suitable training and support.

This joint initiative recognises that as we move to a net zero economy, the energy sector will face a huge challenge in developing and recruiting people with the technical skills needed to make this transition. One way to do this is to make use of its huge existing pool of female workers by encouraging them to switch from office-based to operational roles, such as installing smart meters and repairing equipment in people's homes.

Matthew Lay, National Energy officer at UNISON, said at the event: "There are not enough workers in the industry with the right skills to get anywhere near the numbers we need for decarbonisation. Our aim is to create pathways and opportunities for women in the energy sector to be able to take up these jobs. It's only by engaging and getting women into those roles that we can get anywhere near net zero."

The event was attended by several Labour MPs including Kerry McCarthy MP, shadow minister for climate change and net zero. She opened the event by talking about Labour's

Green Prosperity Plan, which aims to create hundreds of thousands of new green jobs, insulate 19 million homes and establish a state-owned energy provider.

"We need to be able to hit the ground running when we get into power," she said. She praised UNISON's charter, saying: "Women must be at the heart of the energy sector."



Neil Tomany, Alice Bremner Watt, Lindsay McNaught and Kristopher Reid

# New tutors trained and raring to go



New lay tutors and staff at Equalities for Tutors October 2022

**UNISON Scotland's Learning and Organising Committee has welcomed a new group of tutors as a number of both staff and activist tutors complete their Lay Tutor training.**

UNISON Scotland is unique across the regions with our pool of lay activists tutoring the regional education program and they will be a very welcome addition to increase the existing tutors.

Lynne Rankin, Vice Chair of the L&O Committee told of how the new tutors were raring to go. "Following the last training session on Equalities for tutors in October, many of the enthusiastic new group from across all sectors have already enquired about tutoring in their own branch or on the regional program," said Lynne.

"Some had waited a few years for the final part of the training due to the pandemic; whilst unfortunately some couldn't attend for various

**Look out for the new regional activist and member learning programmes for 2023 coming soon!**

# International solidarity awards in Sam's memory

**Have you been impressed by a UNISON member or branch doing great international solidarity work?**

**International Committee Co-Chairs Kaila McCulloch and Tony Caleary are inviting nominations for the second Sam Macartney Award for International Solidarity.**

As SiU went to press, the first award was due to be presented to Sam's wife Teresa at a launch event in Glasgow City UNISON branch office.

Kaila and Tony jointly thanked branches who donated generously to support the award in the name of our former Chair, then Co-Chair. This provided a £750 total award amount split between three organisations doing work close to Sam's heart, with speakers from each at the 18 November event.



The commemoration lecture in Sam's name was by video link from Israel. Assaf Adiv, Executive Director of MAAN Workers Association, spoke about their work with Palestinians on a number of UNISON supported projects. Sam met with MAAN when he was part of the UNISON 2016 delegation to Palestine and Israel. MAAN is the sole workers' organisation in Israel that unionises Palestinians employed in the West Bank settlements as well as those working in Israel.

Eurig Scandrett, Chair of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and Arthur West, chair of the Scottish Friends of Palestine, also spoke about their work and current campaigns.

Kaila said: "It was so good to present Teresa Macartney with the first award, for all that Sam contributed over many years on international campaigning. We are now looking for nominations about individuals or branches whose international solidarity work demonstrates a commitment to supporting workers facing adversity."



Sam with Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che.

Tony added: "We are keen to hear about strong work supporting international campaigns, demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment to international solidarity? Does this work deserve recognition and celebration? If so, please nominate them for this important award that remembers Sam."

Nominations can be sent by email to Fiona Montgomery [f.montgomery@unison.co.uk](mailto:f.montgomery@unison.co.uk) by 15 May 2023. Please include a brief description of the work undertaken and who you are nominating (branch or individual).



# 2023 to be Year of Black Workers

**UNISON Scotland has pledged full backing to the decision to designate 2023 as UNISON's Year of Black Workers.**

**This is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our Black members but to also acknowledge the additional barriers they face in the workplace and in society in general.**

This follows on from the success of the Year of Disabled Worker and was agreed at the October meeting of the National Executive Council (NEC), following a recommendation from the National Black Members Committee (NBMC).

The NBMC has developed a calendar of events for 2023 but it is really important that all branches get involved and look at how they can mark the year for their members.

NEC member, Davena Rankin said: "The last couple of years have presented significant challenges for all UNISON members. COVID has impacted both personal and professional lives, with members losing colleagues and loved ones whilst struggling to deliver services.

"All members have experienced below inflation pay rises while prices soared. Public services continue to be underfunded and understaffed.

"Black members have faced all of these challenges but also have to fight racism on a daily basis," added Davena, pointing out that over the last two years, there has been a disproportionate impact on Black workers and communities during the pandemic. Black workers were more likely to contract the virus and more likely to die from it.

Research carried out by UNISON highlighted that there was a widespread failure of employers to conduct individual and specific risk assessments. It also highlighted problems with the supply of appropriate safety kit.

"The workplace challenges faced by Black workers go beyond the impact of COVID," warned Davena. "Black workers are more likely to be under-employed, more likely to be in insecure work, over-represented on zero-hours contracts and in low paid jobs making them more vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis. They also face an ethnicity pay gap.

"These are just a few examples of how institutional racism plays out on a daily basis. The Year of Black Workers is our opportunity to highlight these challenges and demand action."



# "Year of Disabled Workers – what a year, what a journey!"

**As we near the end of 2022, the Scottish Disabled Members Committee (SDMC) looks back at the Year of Disabled Workers and all that has been achieved so far.**

**If you don't know what Year of Disabled Workers is, where have you been?**

It's a 365-day long campaign to support disabled workers in all aspects of their working lives. It's helped provide a campaign focus for action across the many disability workplace issues that our members continue to raise.

We've been busy throughout the year delivering a series of webinars, hosting awareness raising stalls, writing articles, and attending Scottish party political conferences to promote the campaign, the last of these being the SNP Conference in Aberdeen.

The campaign was conceived in Scotland and it's fitting that we mark the end of the year with a bang.

To mark Disability History Month, SDMC hosted a Question Time webinar on 22nd

November which was a political panellist debate with UNISON's General Secretary Christina McAnea, MSP Pam Duncan Glancy, MSP Maggie Chapman MSP, among the panellists, with questions on a range of topics.

We also have an early day motion being put to the Scottish Parliament to coincide with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December, seeking cross-party support for the campaign and key pieces of work planned for 2023.

But 31st December doesn't mark the end. This is an organising journey that will continue into 2023.

We've still more engagement to do with branches. While many signed up to support the campaign, there were some well kent branches notably silent and we'll be herding them in, in 2023.



Christina McAnea has committed to write to all branches asking them to press for the development of a disability policy and a disability passport in their workplaces in 2023.

The disability employment and pay gaps are evidence that the way the labour market is set up and operates disadvantages disabled people. UNISON was instrumental in developing the Disability Employment Charter that sets out what action the government needs to take to address the disadvantages that disabled people face in their working lives. We're calling for all Scottish branches to press their employer to sign up to the Charter's asks.

## Branch thrilled to sponsor local girls' teams



**UNISON Moray is thrilled to be sponsoring Moray Girls Football Club (MGFC).**

The young players will wear football tops with UNISON Moray on the front.

Branch secretary, Karen Donaldson said: "A lot of thought was put into raising awareness around the importance of trade union membership to the younger generation of Moray.

"By supporting MGFC we are reaching young females throughout Moray who can benefit from knowledge of the trade union movement and share this with their wider friends and family. UNISON Moray supports young members' equality in the workplace, and our Young Members Officers provide a powerful voice in the workplace, allowing young members the chance to develop their skills and knowledge plus

the opportunity to be active in their local branch."

She pointed out that our union is also more than 70% women. "This was the thinking behind this sponsorship," said Karen, adding that the branch was keen to support a Moray wide charity.

Remember if you are a UNISON member and under 27 years of age you are automatically entitled to become a young member.

Photos by Denis Collins.



## Awards showcase NHS talent

Gordon B. McFatter

UNISON Lothian Health Branch.

**UNISON staff and stewards were proud to represent our trade union at the Scottish Health Awards in Edinburgh on Thursday 3rd November 2022.**

UNISON Scotland and branches sponsor three of these awards, which not only recognise talent in our NHS but showcase UNISON as the UK's largest public service union with a strong Health Branch membership in Scotland.

Well done to healthcare staff who were nominated for an award. A special congratulations to the Covid and Flu National Vaccination Programme Team from the Scottish



Government Partnership, who won the Top Team Award sponsored by UNISON Scotland.

Well done also, to Brenda Kirk, Clinical Nurse Specialist and Team Leader for the Disability Nursing Team for Specialist Children's Services from NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, who won the UNISON

Greater Glasgow Clyde & CVS Branch sponsored Nurse Award.

Finally, congratulations to Margaret Sloan, working as part of the Older Peoples' Mental Health Liaison Team from NHS Tayside, who won the Support Worker Award sponsored by UNISON Lothian Health Branch.

The awards were hosted by Fred McAuley who was entertaining and a good sport when seasoned Shop steward Wanda Fairgrieve, who was presenting an award, challenged his pronunciation of her first name.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Humza Yousaf worked the room, whilst many suggested in conversation with him that he needs to work harder to deliver a real terms pay increase for all agenda for change staff.

## We want to hear your news

*SiU is your paper,  
we want to hear your stories*

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