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Issue 277 27th January - 2nd February 2020

Public Works Loan Board Rate

No one who wants to see investment in public services is going to throw their hats in the air at the PWLB raising their interest rates. That doesn't mean that isn't still the best mechanism for public bodies to fund the building or refurbishment of facilities and infrastructure. The alternatives put in place by successive occupants of Bute House (PFI/PPP/NPD and now MIM) – are all more expensive than borrowing via the PWLB. This can be seen in Audit Scotland's recent report into Local Authority finance. Despite being only 17% of overall council debt – such schemes account for 30% of interest payments.

Councils and others at the sharp end may well feel they condemn the UK Government for 'profiteering at the expense of tax payers. Parliamentarians having pushed public bodies into even more expensive options should be perhaps be reflecting on how they cut the commercial interest rates being paid on the revenue financed schemes they brought in down to the PWLB rates that they find so objectionable.



Too much of Scotland's FOI law is not fit for purpose

UNISON Scotland and Campaign for Freedom of Information presented a [new report](#) at the Scottish Parliament saying that too much of Scottish Freedom of Information law is not fit for purpose.

UNISON Scotland also [highlighted](#) the impact of austerity cuts to public services on FOISA, including through cuts to staff numbers and increasing pressures on staff. [and it's not much better elsewhere in the UK.](#)

Briefing 111: Early Learning and Childcare: outdoor learning

The Scottish government has now published its [guide](#) for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare. The government is committed to including increased opportunities for outdoor play in its early learning and childcare expansion programme. The guide is also aimed at schools and out of school care services. It is likely that the guide will mean that employers will move ahead with plans to expand outdoor learning. This may lead to ELC staff and other UNISON members being asked to spend increased time working outdoors. It is therefore likely that branches will be working with employers across education teams regarding changes to members work.



[Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign AGM & Conference](#)
[Saturday 8 February , Glasgow](#)



UNISON, along with many others, will be [marking](#) Jan 27th as Holocaust Memorial Day. This date was chosen as it was the date of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by Soviet soldiers. Today is the 75th anniversary.

UNISON Renfrewshire will be marking the life of Jane Haining, the only Scot known to have perished in a Nazi death camp. The details of that event are [here](#)

UNISON Scotland is serious about giving our reps the tools they need to do the job. Our 2020 programme of training courses is [online now](#).

PICK OF THE MEDIA

23/01/20 *heraldscotland.com*

[Governments must set targets to protect renewables job.](#)

22/01/20 *edinburghnews.scotsman.com*

[Well done Edinburgh Council.](#)

20/01/2020 *unison-scotland.org.uk*

[IBM workers gear up for industrial action as job losses loom.](#)

20/01/20 *energyvoice.com*

[Cosla calls for “fair funding” to help councils tackle climate change.](#)

27/01/2020 *historyworkshop.org.uk*

"Just like a pay-day loan, in retrospect it's hard to believe that it could ever have seemed like a good idea.' [interesting long read about PFI](#)

[UNISON's General Secretary Dave Prentis BLOG](#)



PUBLIC WORKS:

TOOLKIT

Public Works is the UNISON Scotland campaign for jobs, services, fair taxation and a Living Wage... and against austerity.

This toolkit provides branches with campaign resources to save our public services from the cuts driven by an austerity that is a political choice not an economic necessity.

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