

Scotland in UNISON

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

GREEN UNISON WEEK AND COP26 GLASGOW CLIMATE TALKS

We can't just call for change, we need to be part of it

By Fiona Montgomery
Information development officer

The climate emergency takes global centre stage in Glasgow in November when the United Nations climate talks come to town.

It's time now for branches to plan for mobilising members to join the trade union blocs on the massive Saturday 6 November Scottish march and rally.

UNISON activists UK-wide will join demonstrations on 6 November in Glasgow, London and in local 'hub' events, representing millions around the world who will also protest in their own countries.

Online People's Summit

A Glasgow and online virtual 'People's Summit' is from 7-9 November.

On Friday 5 November there will be global youth climate strikes by Fridays for Future, with millions of young people inspired by Greta Thunberg taking action and seeking widespread support from trade unions and others – also in September and October events.



Green UNISON Week 18-26 September

For Green UNISON Week between 18 and 26 September, branches are encouraged to show solidarity with global youth climate strikers and to organise local green actions.

Branches who haven't yet can appoint green environment reps –

with new training coming soon – and push for green workplace agreements in work beyond COP26.

As UNISON Scotland delegate Tony Slaven told Special Delegate Conference (SDC) in June, moving our motion on climate change and COP26: "The decisions taken or not taken in

Glasgow will affect all our lives... We can't just call for change. We need to be part of it."

COVID's impact and restrictions mean far fewer international delegates and protesters than hoped will be able to travel.

Unions will be asked to donate to funding appeals for legal

UNISON has joined the environmental movement in this struggle to save life'

STEPHEN SMELLIE

advice for protesters, for visa support and other support for global south participants.

UNISON Scotland depute convener Stephen Smellie, speaking in the June SDC debate, said: "This is a battle against the vested interests of capitalist exploitation of the world's resources and its people, that we must win."

"UNISON has joined the environmental movement in this struggle to save life."

COVID safety

All protests and events organised by the COP26 Coalition and UNISON and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland in November and in the build-up will be organised in line with relevant COVID restrictions and guidance. Please follow the guidance.

Edinburgh fights plans to close council care homes

UNISON City of Edinburgh branch has launched a campaign with care staff to save council run care homes.

The campaign follows proposals put forward by Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board to close Clovenstone, Ferrylee, Ford's Road and Jewel House care homes.

Furthermore, Drumbrae will also close as a care home and switch to hospital-based complex clinical care.

The proposals mean large scale disruption for care residents and 270 care home posts will be deleted and a further 160 care home jobs put at risk. Care staff are the process of writing to Edinburgh City Council leader councillor Adam

McVey as part of UNISON's ongoing campaign to step in and save these council run care homes.

UNISON is also running an online petition to show councillors the depth of feelings of residents, staff and those in the wider community.

Over 100 people signed the petition in one day. Further campaign action and demonstrations are planned.

The branch's Facebook page warns: "Scotland's care system already relies too heavily on homes that are run for profit. Edinburgh can buck that trend by supporting council-run care homes that focus on providing quality care not the making of money."



If we are to have a high quality, rights-based service, with universally-applied standards of fair work...

How can this be done if Edinburgh care homes are to be closed without replacement, with the loss of experienced staff, and what remains being passed on to the private sector?

More information at www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk/save-our-care-homes

STUC Youth Conference

By Andy Crosbie

Scottish Young Members Committee

Like many events over the past 18 months the STUC Youth Conference took place via zoom on Saturday 26 June.

This included debate around various issues affecting young workers such as youth unemployment, pay, pensions, young carers, and political education.

Alongside the debate on motions, there were also workshops on unions in the workplace and attracting young people to join, various community organising campaigns, and trade union centres internationally.

All in all, it was an interesting and informative day, and we'd like to congratulate Fred Bayer for being elected to the STUC Youth Committee to take these important issues forward over 2021/2022.

Hopefully, with the successful vaccine programme many of our members have been supporting, we will be back in person at the Golden Jubilee in June 2022.

UNISON slams Skills Development Scotland's refusal to pilot four-day week

UNISON has lambasted Skills Development Scotland for refusing to pilot a four-day week - despite it being Scottish Government policy.

The union called for the organisation to set up a four-day week pilot as part of last year's pay deal. UNISON balloted its members, who overwhelmingly supported the idea, but the plan was rejected by the employer.

UNISON is now calling for an urgent meeting with the new Cabinet Minister for Skills and Fair Work to discuss a way forward.

The four-day week is supported by most political parties in the Scottish Parliament, including the SNP who said it would establish a £10 million fund to allow employers 'to pilot and explore the benefits of a four-day working week'.

UNISON has pointed out that Skills Development Scotland, as lead organisation for Fair Work, is ideally placed to develop this policy.

Derek Cheyne, UNISON Skills Development Scotland branch secretary, said: "The four-day week is something that has worked successfully in New Zealand, Iceland, Sweden and even Microsoft in Japan - and their productivity increased. We are simply asking Skills Development Scotland to trial the idea.

"Let's see what the difference is. All the evidence suggests it's a win-win for employer and employees. We would set up a joint employer and trade union group to monitor this new way of working."

Implementing 'The Promise' - finding out what members need

UNISON Scotland's Social Work Issues Group is to survey all our members in children and families social work to find out what they need to allow them to fully implement 'The Promise' made by the Scottish Government to all children and young people in care and care leavers.

SWIG member Kate Ramsden said: "UNISON has long recognised that our social work members are key to the proper implementation of the Promise.

"The way that care is delivered for our children depends on a workforce that has not only the knowledge and skills, but also the time and the professional support to deliver practice based on developing relationships with children and young people.

"We know that cuts to council services over the past decade have left many social work services woefully under resourced to meet the laudable aims of the Promise, with overworked staff and a lack of resources to meet the needs of

...about taking a long hard look at what 10 years of austerity has done to our social work services'

KATE RAMSDEN

children and their families.

"We want to find out what our members need to ensure that they can practice in a way that delivers for our looked after children.

"This is not about tweaking procedures and processes. If the

Promise is really to deliver in the way that care experienced children and adults have asked for, this is about taking a long hard look at what 10 years of austerity has done to our social work services and to repair that damage so that our members can provide the kind of service they all want to provide with the time and resources that they need."

If you are a children and families social worker or support worker please watch out for the survey which will be sent out in August.

Scotland shapes COVID recovery at online special conference

By Kate Ramsden

SiU editor

UNISON Scotland played a key role in our union's annual delegate conference which, in a first for the union, was held online.

Both UNISON Scotland motions were debated, and both focussed on the kind of COVID recovery we want to see. See full reports on the UNISON Scotland website.

COVID recovery must be a Green recovery

UNISON Scotland delegate, Tony Slaven won support for our motion on climate change, telling conference that a long-lasting recovery from COVID must be a green recovery.

As Scotland gears up for COP26, delegates overwhelmingly backed Scotland's call to ensure the needs of workers and public services are central to the outcomes.

Tony highlighted that COP26 will not just be a meeting of heads of government. It will also be a gathering of activists and campaigners from around the world.

"We need to ensure that the voices of workers are heard as part of that and that the case for public services and increased

Let's make sure no worker has to choose between keeping the public safe and feeding their families'

LILIAN MACER



public ownership is understood to be part of the solution to climate crisis."

This was further emphasised in a conference fringe meeting which confirmed that action on climate change is now one of UNISON's absolute top priorities.

Addressing the fringe, Scotland depute convener, Stephen Smellie urged branches to step up campaigning on pensions divestment, recommending the guide on the UNISON website.

...and must have fair work at its heart

UNISON Scotland also won support for a COVID recovery to have fair work at its heart.

Scotland convener Lilian Macer led on a wide-ranging composite which put a focus on employment rights to protect the workforce and strategies to tackle institutional racism,

disability discrimination and other workplace discrimination and inequality.

Lilian told delegates: "Every single one of us in this virtual room knows the problems that exist in our labour market.

"We see first-hand, in workplaces up and down the country, the cost of austerity, of the under funding of public services and of work that is increasingly precarious."

Lilian warned that to recover from the pandemic we need a boost to the UK economy and fair work must be at the heart of that.

"Let's make sure no worker has to choose between keeping the public safe and feeding their families"

Putting the spotlight on Post COVID syndrome

South Lanarkshire again led the way in Scotland, as the only Scottish branch to have a motion debated.

Although other branches had submitted motions, they were not high enough up the agenda to be heard.

The branch threw a spotlight on Post COVID syndrome, winning backing for UNISON to campaign for its formal recognition as a disability and a recognised health condition.

South Lanarkshire's Ian Doig said: "COVID is a major health issue, and the problems associated with the after effects of COVID are likely to be a significant feature in fitness to work."

Tracey Murray, South Lanarkshire branch moved an amendment. As a result, UNISON will press for COVID to be regarded as a health condition in its own right from the point of diagnosis, where future scientific and clinical evidence supports this.

Resources Review

In other news, the Branch Resources Review was approved after a lengthy debate and will come into force from January 2022.

No branch will be worse off, as a three year transition phase was also agreed.

UNISON teamwork delivers 'life changing' win for student paramedics

Student paramedic members have had a massive win. From September they will now receive a £10,000 bursary equal to the one provided to nursing and midwifery students.

This follows an organising campaign by UNISON, alongside a grass roots campaign, - 'Pay Student Paramedics' - over many months so that paramedic students in Scotland would receive an annual bursary.

The call for a bursary had received cross-party support but when the parliamentary elections concluded, things got awful quiet from Scottish

Government.

However, following pressure from UNISON Scottish Ambulance Branch and UNISON Scotland Health Committee, the Scottish Government has announced that hundreds of paramedic students in Scotland will receive an annual bursary of £10,000 as part of a new scheme.

An estimated 668 students will be eligible for the Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (PNMSB) for courses starting this September.

UNISON Scottish Ambulance branch steward, paramedic and student mentor Gary Henry congratulated student paramedic

colleagues on this win: "I know from working as a student mentor that this will give permanent and life changing security for our student paramedics," said Gary.

He called on paramedics to keep up the pressure on the universities and the ambulance service to address issues around travel time to placements and health and safety.

He encouraged all student paramedics to join UNISON. "If you know a future paramedic who starts their course in September, then please make sure you get them signed up to UNISON."

Adrian Moore, local organiser, described the campaign as

"textbook", with every part of UNISON doing its bit.

"Teamwork delivered this win. Student paramedics on the ground, UNISON Scottish Ambulance Service branch committee, UNISON Scotland Health Committee and staff colleagues, have shown the strength we have in UNISON, and won what equates to an annual £9 million support package for student paramedics on the frontline."

The wider UNISON campaign to have all allied health professional students treated similarly continues but a campaign roadmap may have been discovered.

Higher Education pay ballot now open

This year, while Higher Education management were quick to offer warm words and praise for the staff who kept universities running and students and staff safe, they offered a 0% 'pay rise'.

The Service Group Executive (SGE) launched the 'Thanks for Nothing' pay campaign and members overwhelmingly

rejected the offer in a consultative ballot last year.

Industrial action ballots ran in universities during July in England and are now running in Scotland.

Members based at Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Robert Gordon University, Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow and the West of Scotland will receive ballot

papers at the start of August.

Davena Rankin, SGE member and branch secretary at Glasgow Caledonian University said: "Staff have been working incredibly hard to keep our universities running during the pandemic and universities are in a position where they could recognise this work with a pay rise."

"It's really important that

members use their ballot papers to send a clear message to management. All staff deserve a decent pay rise and the only way to achieve one for this year is for members to vote yes to industrial action."

In Scotland the ballot closes on 27 August and the ballot helpline (UNISON Direct: 0800 0857 857) opens on 9 August at 12 noon.

Pay: Branches gear up for action after government 'slap in the face' for council staff

By Kate Ramsden

SiU editor

As talks with COSLA local government branches across Scotland are stepping up a gear for a ballot for industrial action on the current pay offer.

It comes as UNISON, along with Unite and GMB have written to the Scottish Government condemning their decision not to provide additional funding to COSLA to improve the local government pay offer.

In a hard-hitting message to the Cabinet Secretaries for Finance, Local Government and Education, the unions have also called out reports that in their discussions with COSLA the Cabinet Secretaries allegedly sought to argue that local government workers were 'not on a par with health workers and so could not expect a similar offer'.

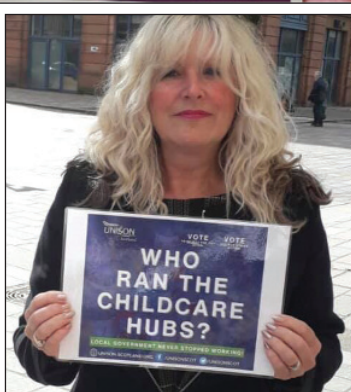
Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland's Head of Local Government said: "If these comments are true they are a disgrace and nothing short of a slap in the face to every single local government worker across Scotland.

"For Government Ministers to stand on their doorsteps and clap home care workers for their pandemic response but then in private say they are 'not on a par' with their colleagues in health is the height of hypocrisy and disrespect.

"If it hadn't been for these workers our NHS would have



Above: Falkirk members get the message across. Right: Glasgow highlights one of the essential services council workers provide.



Scottish Government and COSLA.

"We urged COSLA to put concrete proposals to improve the offer on the table if they wanted negotiations to progress", she added.

Around the country branches are taking action to engage their members in the fight ahead.

Here are just a few examples:

Falkirk Council Branch is working hard to engage members in 'Campaigning Today for a Better Tomorrow.'

Janet Robertson, branch secretary, said: "UNISON members and activists in Falkirk have been working tirelessly to promote our local campaigns to protect terms and conditions while fighting for better pay.

"We have been pointing out that local government workers have worked tirelessly through the COVID months, providing essential services."

Inverclyde Branch stewards have put together an excellent video setting out all the reasons why their members deserve a decent pay rise. They point out that in the last decade, local government workers have seen up to 25% wiped off the value of their pay. See the video on their Facebook page.

Aberdeenshire branch has urged all its members write to the council leader calling on him to use his influence with CoSLA to improve the pay offer.

Glasgow City UNISON members have been pictured with placards telling Scottish council employers they are worth more. "Who ran the childcare hubs?" reads one placard, pointing out that many of our colleagues in Health could not have got to their essential work without our council members providing care for their children.

Menopause - a hot topic

By Karen Gordon and Lynne Rankin
East Renfrewshire Branch

UNISON East Renfrewshire branch is pleased that the council are introducing a menopause policy after it was agreed on 21 June this year.

Women in the branch formed a small working party and worked together to draft a menopause policy using the UNISON template as a basis, with input from other branches across Scotland, taking on board suggestions and lessons learned from those that had already introduced a menopause policy. The branch is even being cited as co-authors of the policy.

We are delighted to see this come to fruition after many discussions and delays over the last few years. We hope it will raise awareness for managers and educate colleagues about the symptoms menopausal and perimenopausal members face.

It aims to also encourage them to be more sympathetic and to be able to offer practical solutions and adjustments for their staff to maintain attendance at work or provide support when they can't. We also hope that it takes away any embarrassment that raising the topic can cause

We are now looking forward to a joint launch of the policy with the employer in the near future, that will include manager awareness sessions, UNISON goody bags with fans and UNISON member learning menopause sessions, which will include how to cope with symptoms, changes to lifestyle etc.

East Lothian forces u-turn on changes to flexi-time

UNISON East Lothian Council Branch has forced a u-turn by the employer on proposed changes to flexible working policy, retaining members' right to two days flexi per flexi period.

The branch has thanked its UNISON members who replied to East Lothian Council on proposed changes to the Flexible Working Policy and to the impressive numbers of members who responded to the UNISON consultative ballot.

The branch has also thanked Labour councillors who gave support and the Joint Trade Unions who were instrumental in the rejection of the changes to the policy proposed by management.

UNISON branch secretary, Mike Dunlop said: "The branch engaged in long talks and debates with management over this policy and the outcome gives both UNISON members, employees, and services the flexibility to deliver services to the East Lothian public.

"It is a fantastic result and the flexi time stays at two days per flexi period over 13 periods per year.

"This is what can be achieved when members speak to us and ask us to be their voice. We are now calling on our UNISON members to encourage their colleagues who are not in UNISON to join.

"The more members the stronger the voice."

Collective action win for Argyll & Bute Social Work Emergency members

By Genna Luge

Argyll & Bute branch comms officer

The Argyll and Bute branch of UNISON have won the nationally agreed Scottish Joint Council standby rate, backdated to 1 January 2021, for their members in the Social Work Emergency Service.

A UNISON ballot of social work members returned a 93%

vote to accept on a high turnout.

Mary Watt, branch secretary said: "The Argyll and Bute branch working jointly with their sister union, Unite, has been involved in years of discussion, pilots, working groups and ongoing talks with the employer to secure a reasonable proposal on a revised approach to the Social Work Emergency Service.

"In particular we pressed them to adopt the Scottish Joint Council Social Work Standby Rate from January 2021, with an option for staff involved in availability to move on to standby.

"The proposal substantially addresses the issues that members have been raising for years and gives a firm path forward for the service.

"It shows the benefit of collective action and

membership of UNISON."

Mary added, "We know the agreement will require close monitoring and there is further work to be done on the future model. But we see this as a victory and thank our members for their perseverance, professionalism and solidarity.

"Through collective pressure we secured a proposal that offers significant improvement for workers and the service."

UNISON backs Windrush Festival and 1960s Black Power event

By Danny Phillips
Communications officer

UNISON Scotland is delighted to support the Windrush Caribbean Film Festival. Virtual films and events are running from 30 July to 29 August.

The theme for this year's festival is the history of carnival in Britain, with a special focus on carnival arts including music, mas, costumes, photography and more.

UNISON has 100 free tickets to distribute. Please see our website for details.

We are also sponsoring Black Empowerment in Conversation on Friday 6 August - an evening of four films and conversation: *Let's Grow*; *Cut Me Loose* *Wales and Slavery*; *Caribbean Eye* - and the main feature *Black Power* an examination of the Black Power movement in the late 1960s in the UK, surveying both the individuals and the cultural forces that defined the era.

Black Power

Black Power A British Story of Resistance documents the tortuous fight for justice for black people in the UK.

This film is a series of astonishing interviews with past activists, many of whom are speaking for the first time about what it was really like to be involved in the British Black Power movement, bringing to life one of the key



'This festival is about us all celebrating our culture and recognising our intertwined history together' CHARMINE BLAIZE



cultural revolutions in the history of the UK.

Charmaine Blaize, UNISON Scotland activist and member of Black workers committee said: "I am proud my union is supporting the Windrush Caribbean Film Festival.

"This festival is about us all celebrating our culture and recognising our intertwined history together.

"Scotland has a complicated history with the Caribbean and we want Scots to investigate the good and bad of our history.

"And what better way to

do this than through film, music and carnival.

"UNISON's Black power evening should be a great night, informative and entertaining. I would love to see as many of you as possible there."

During the festival, audiences can stream films and engage in discussions, from the comfort and safety of their own homes."

You can buy tickets for £5 at Windrush Caribbean Film Festival website.

Save the Date: 2021 Scottish Women's AGM and Conference

The Scottish Women's AGM and Conference will be held online on Saturday 2 October (10.00 - 3.30). Calling notices have been sent out to branches and it is open to all women members based in Scotland.

The conference will focus on COVID and its long-term impact on women with a legal update from Thompsons Solicitors. There will be a session on using equality impact assessments to keep workplaces safe and one focusing on encouraging and supporting women to become more active in UNISON.

'The conference will focus on COVID and its long-term impact on women...' DAVENA RANKIN



The AGM will agree Scottish motions to 2022 National Women's Conference. It will also elect delegates to the STUC Women's Conference (online 25 & 26 October), the Scottish Women's Committee and regional reps to the National Women's Committee.

Davena Rankin, chair, Scottish Women's Committee said: "I am really looking forward to welcoming women back to our first conference since the start of the pandemic. Conference was cancelled in 2020 as we knew that women were far too busy delivering services and supporting family members to take time out to attend."

"We know that women have been disproportionately impacted through COVID whether they continued to travel to work or juggled caring responsibilities whilst working from home. Our conference will give women the chance to share their experiences and look at how we can work to improve things going forward."

If you would like to have a chat about getting more involved or would like more information on any of the positions up for election, please email Davena Rankin on D.Rankin3@unison.co.uk

UNISON Inverclyde says 'Join UNISON' as it sponsors Greenock Morton



Morton players Reece Lyon and Lewis Strapp are pictured with UNISON Inverclyde advertising board.

UNISON Inverclyde is delighted to continue our sponsorship of Greenock Morton for the 2021/22 Championship season with a trackside advertising board at the Sinclair Street end of the ground.

Branch communications officer, Dougie Maclean said: "We are delighted to continue our sponsorship with Greenock Morton in what will hopefully be a successful season for the team and also once again being able to spread

UNISON's message in the wider local community."

Greenock Morton's commercial manager Lesley Ann Web added: "Many thanks to our friends at UNISON Inverclyde for their continued support for the new season."

Introducing Scotland's NEC members

Following the recent National Executive elections ballot, UNISON Scotland members have elected Jim McFarlane, Kate Ramsden, Davena Rankin and Stephen Smellie back onto the NEC. We also have a new NEC member, Lyn Marie O'Hara, who was elected unopposed after Maggie Cook stood down.

You can contact your NEC members through the Facebook page, UNISON Scotland on the NEC.

Please get in touch if you have any queries or thoughts.

Added to that, on a UK wide vote, Scotland's Gordon McKay was elected to a national Health service seat and Katrina Murray to a Disabled members seat.



Jim McFarlane



Kate Ramsden



Davena Rankin



Stephen Smellie



Lyn Marie O'Hara

We want to hear your news

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