

**Happy festive season to all our members ...especially to those delivering services over the holiday**

**Social work at breaking point**  
UNISON Scotland survey paints a bleak picture - p3



**Get your entries in for UNISON Scotland's Communications Awards p3**



**PUBLIC WORKS:**

December 2019 No 141

# Scotland in UNISON

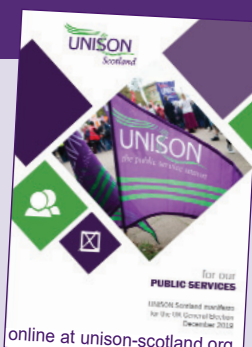
scottish council activists bulletin ..... Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

**UNISON Scotland launches manifesto for general election**

## Make this election for public services



**“It’s vital that members use their vote and their influence to ensure that public services and the people who work in them are high on parties’ agendas’** MIKE KIRBY



**“We can and must end child poverty. We need a government that invests in public services, that enables the creation of well-paid secure jobs and a decent benefits system’** LILIAN MACER

By Stephen Low  
Policy officer

**The general election is hugely important for the future of UNISON members and the services they deliver.**

“It’s vital that members use their vote and their influence to ensure that public services and the people who work in them are high on parties’ agendas”, said UNISON Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby launching UNISON Scotland’s manifesto for the December 12 poll.

Almost all of UNISON Scotland’s members work in areas which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, this

election still matters though. Westminster has a huge influence over the overall levels of public spending in Scotland.

While the Conservatives want the election to be all about brexit there are many other reserved issues that matter including; most economic policy, much welfare spending and rights at work.

So the results of this election will have a huge impact on UNISON members’ lives in and out of the workplace.

To highlight this and help push the issues that matter to our union, UNISON Scotland has published *For Our Public*

*Services* - UNISON Scotland’s manifesto - available on the website. In this manifesto we set out the issues that UNISON will expect the political parties to address in the election.

Foremost among the concerns expressed is ‘undoing the damage’. This is a reference to the series of surveys and reports published by UNISON Scotland.

What we see in these surveys are an overworked, underpaid and stressed workforce trying hard to deliver quality services without adequate funding.

It is made clear that we need a government that will invest in services and give citizens

the high quality services they deserve.

In order to do that the manifesto argues for a progressive tax system that raises enough money to pay for public services. Companies using aggressive tax avoidance measures should be excluded from all public procurement.

### **Fairness at work**

The manifesto also has a focus on a better deal for our members at work. For almost a decade workers in public services have been experiencing a real terms decline in the value of their wages.

Cost of living rises this year do nothing to address that injustice – nor impact on

the spiralling levels of personal debt many face.

Highlighting that almost a quarter of children in Scotland live in poverty, Lilian Macer, Scottish convener, said: “We can and must end child poverty. We need a government that invests in public services, that enables the creation of well-paid secure jobs and introduces a decent benefits system that supports, rather than punishes children and families. Universal Credit is clearly not working.”

The manifesto finishes with a series of questions members and branches can ask those seeking support.

*Turn to page 2*

## Victory at QMU: Members stay in house after 100% strike ballot

**C**ampus operations staff at Queen Margaret University (QMU) are celebrating after an executive board decision to keep members in-house.

As part of a broader tender exercise, staff had been working under the threat of outsourcing for over a year and this threat was finally lifted after strike dates were announced for November.

Members had previously voted 100% for strike action on a 75% turnout and had very

valuable support from local UCU, EIS unions and the QMU students’ union.

UNISON regional organiser Lorcan Mullen said: “I am delighted that QMU has at last taken the decision to keep these members in-house.

“With their 100% strike vote and conduct throughout the local campaign, these members have shown commendable resolve and unity in the face of a serious threat to their future job security, pensions and incomes.

“Other employers within

Scottish higher education should also take note. UNISON will not allow further outsourcing of low-paid workers without a similar campaign. Wherever possible, we will also work to bring presently outsourced members back in-house.

“Those who clean, guard, shape and feed university campuses are as entitled to quality pensions, sick pay and employment conditions as academics or managers, and UNISON has shown here its ability to organise members to fight on that principle.”





# Glasgow takes a stand as branches gear up to fight cuts

**As councils begin to consider budgets for 2020, branches across Scotland are gearing up to campaign to protect our public services, and the staff who deliver them, from further cuts.**

Glasgow City UNISON has acted quickly on the news that the council is planning for “budget gaps” of £51m in 2020/21; £44m in 2021/22; and £47m in 2022/23 on top of around £400m in cuts to jobs and services in the last decade.

Writing to the council, branch secretary Brian Smith has warned: “This can’t go on.”

“The people of Glasgow, the services which they rely on and the workers who provide them are not to blame for the austerity politics of successive national governments or the decisions of previous Glasgow administrations to continuously defend gender pay inequality.”

He has also warned the council that the trade unions will fight using any means necessary to ensure a new pay and grading

scheme to deliver equal pay, requiring significant additional year-on-year revenue funding, is delivered.

The branch has once again called on the council to resist further budget cuts and has asked to meet with the different political groups to look at alternative strategies.

## Threat to financial sustainability of councils

UNISON has heard first hand from our members about the

impact of budget cuts and staff shortages, and the threat this creates to the financial sustainability of local government.

In a response to the government’s *Pre-Budget Scrutiny: long-term financial sustainability of local government*, the union states: “It is clear that local government has borne the brunt of cuts over the last 10 years.

“A range of reports, while using different methodologies, confirm the significant financial pressures local

authorities face.

“Demand for services has also risen further increasing pressure on budgets.”

UNISON has warned that without action to tackle equal pay, to introduce a replacement for the council tax, new tax powers for local authorities and investment in adequate funding for services, local government will be financially unsustainable with a real risk that this layer of democracy will become an administrative arm of central government.

# STUC Women’s Conference focusses on child poverty

STUC reports by Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson

**The theme of the STUC Women’s Conference in October was ‘Fighting to eradicate child poverty’ and UNISON played a major part in the debates.**

Setting the scene, conference chair Joyce Stevenson of the Communication Workers Union said: “Until we lift women out of poverty we will never lift children out of poverty.”

Backing came from UNISON’s **Kate Ramsden** who slammed “the disgrace” of a society which allows almost one in four children to grow up poor – most of them in families who have at least one parent in work. Child poverty could be eradicated tomorrow if the political will was there to do it.

UNISON’s **Pat Rowland** supported an EIS call for more

supports in school to mitigate the impact of child poverty. She slammed cuts in support assistant posts and called on the Scottish government to deliver on the promise of Additional Support for Learning legislation and the legal obligations of the Fairer Scotland duty.

**Tina Makedenge won backing for**

**UNISON’s call for more support in the workplace for women with premature or sick babies.** She told delegates that a pre-term birth can put an enormous strain on families, particularly if the baby is seriously ill.

In those circumstances, “the time between the birth and the baby returning home should be



Tina Makedenge - see more reports on the website

treated as paid compassionate leave, with maternity leave then starting,” urged Tina.

**UNISON won support for a call to tell the story of the women in the trade union movement who have made a difference and who have inspired other women.**

**Davena Rankin** warned: “We know that if we don’t record and

publish our fights and victories then men will write the history books, claiming our victories as their own and erasing women from the narratives.”

**Delegates remembered the 39 victims who died in the back of a lorry the week before and stood in solidarity with the 37,000 other people who are forced to flee their homes every day because of violence and persecution.**

Maria Feeney of Unite paid tribute to UNISON members **Helen Duddy** and **Helen Anne Hawkins** for their work in the Wishaw to Calais initiative which provided so much support to those trapped in Calais.

To applause she said: “No human should ever be considered illegal.”

**Helen Duddy** backed Maria in the debate: “Too many families are having to grieve for loved ones forced to make

precarious journeys to escape war, oppression or poverty.”

**Delegates backed a call for research into the health effects of split-shifts.** **Jean Kilpatrick** highlighted a UNISON survey of members in Glasgow’s arms-length organisation Cordia which brought in split shifts in 2015.

Members said they were left exhausted, unable to function or had their mental health affected by the rotas, some describing themselves as “zombies” by the end of the seven day shifts.

**A week on from the historic decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland**, the conference backed a range of measures from the FBU to defend abortion rights at home and internationally.

**Katrina Murray** paid tribute to the late Inez McCormack of UNISON who spent many years fighting for the change in Northern Ireland.

## Use your vote for public services

From Page 1

These questions challenge would-be MPs in parties about what they will do to raise our wages, make corporations and the rich pay their fair share, improve our rights at work get us a vote on any brexit deal and others.

It’s the answers to these questions that will determine whether candidates are worth supporting.

As Mike Kirby puts it: “Public services are central to the quality of life of our citizens. Not only are public services essential to those in need: they are the glue that holds our society together.”

We need to raise our voices about that in the days ahead – then go out on December 12 and make sure that message is heard.

## Following in mum’s footsteps – Eileen Dinning wins STUC award

**UNISON equalities officer Eileen Dinning was the proud recipient of the STUC Women’s Meritorious Award for her outstanding work in the trade union movement.**

The award was presented by chair Joyce Stevenson, who paid tribute to Eileen’s 12 years on the STUC Women’s Committee, describing her hard work and warmth and welcoming approach to new members of the committee.

Joyce also pointed out that



Eileen Dinning

Eileen’s mum, Helen Dinning had also received the Meritorious Award. In her acceptance speech Eileen paid tribute to her mum as

“a great role model,” who never stopped campaigning for women’s rights right to the end.

“I am so proud to have walked in her shoes,” said Eileen.

Eileen pointed out that in 2019 the agenda is much the same as it was on her first Women’s Conference. “This is nothing less than a downright scandal,” said Eileen, calling on us all to keep up the fight for all

women and their rights, and highlighted her optimism at the young women getting involved.

Eileen thanked all the women who have supported her over the years and paid tribute to UNISON for enshrining equalities in our work.

“Women are not a minority. We are 51% of the population. We are not powerless. We can make change when we stand together.”

She called for us to press for recognition of women’s unpaid work.

“Let’s finish what we started!”

## Scottish Borders UNISON branch says relax...



**UNISON Scottish Borders Branch has backed up its successful Record It & Report It campaign against stress and violence at work - reported in July’s SiU - by offering members techniques to take care of their own mental health when dealing with stress at work.**

The branch concluded its *Go for Growth* campaign in May with a Tai Chi

taster lunch time session at Scottish Borders Council HQ.

Tai Chi is a form of exercise that began as a Chinese tradition. It’s based in martial arts, and involves slow movements and deep breaths. Tai Chi has many physical and emotional benefits. Some of the benefits of Tai Chi include decreased anxiety and depression and improvements in cognition.



## Get your entries in for the Communications Awards 2019/20

### Don't be too modest! Enter the UNISON Scotland Communications Awards.

Not only is this competition a good opportunity to give you and your branch some well-deserved recognition for the

excellent work you do, but it will also help us build a stronger union by sharing best practice, your innovative ideas and your enthusiasm.

The award categories are:

- Best printed publication
- Best campaign

- Best online presence
- Special recruitment prize
- Chris Bartter award for creativity

As usual, the UNISON 'family' is sponsoring the awards with prizes of £150 for first, £100 for second and £50

for third.

Branches and self organised groups can enter on the UNISON Scotland website. The closing date is **Wednesday 22 January 2020**. The awards will be presented at the February Scottish Council meeting.

# UNISON report shows social work staff at breaking point

West Dunbartonshire social work members back strike mandate over 'alarming issues'

**UNISON has warned of a social work crisis as cuts have left the service struggling to cope.**

*Save from Harm* is the latest in UNISON's damage series of reports which looks at the impact of austerity on Scotland's public services. It has revealed a dedicated workforce working hard to support the public but who are under enormous pressure.

In a reflection of the national picture, social work members in West Dunbartonshire UNISON have voted to consider industrial action for the second time this year amidst concerns for children and families in Dumbarton and the Vale and a failure by management to take action.

They have condemned the "slow progress" to address "alarming issues" and unanimously backed renewing their ballot to keep pressure on West Dunbartonshire Council.

Branch convener Val Jennings said: "Members remain dismayed and dissatisfied at the slow progress made to fully address what they feel are alarming issues.

"They believe that the progress that has been made has been achieved due to the overwhelming mandate we have to take industrial action if necessary.

"Members now wish to renew that mandate to maintain the pressure to see matters

**'Staff are working through breaks and staying late in order to protect service users, which is having a terrible impact on their own health and personal lives'** JOHN WATSON

progress to a full resolution."

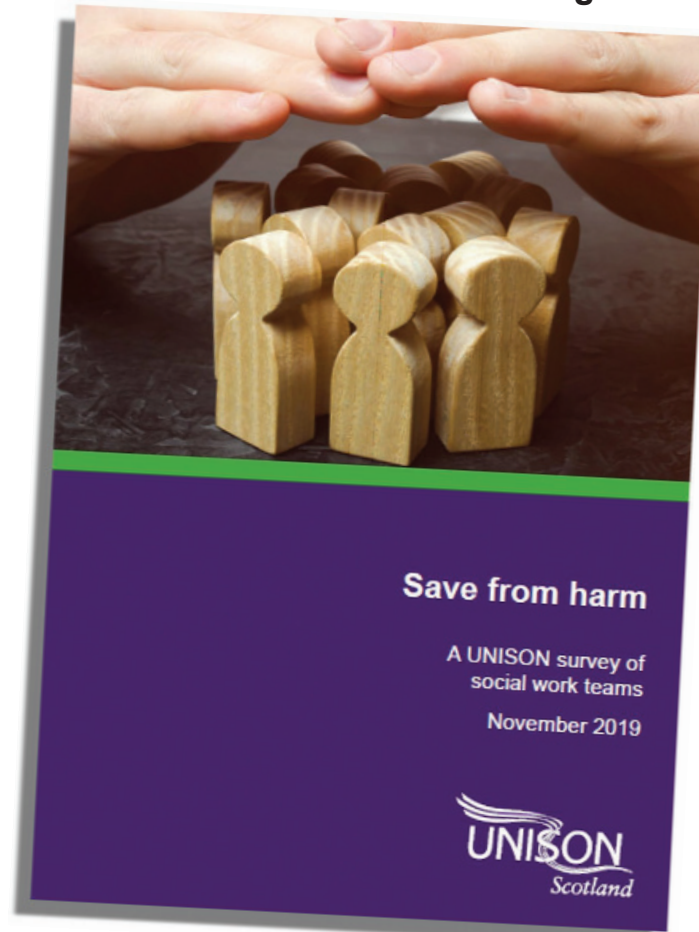
UNISON's *Save from Harm* report lays bare the impact of major budget cuts which have left social work teams across Scotland severely underfunded and services that have now reached breaking point.

It also revealed that violence at work is a major issue among staff with two thirds having experienced physical or verbal abuse at work.

Joe Lynch, UNISON regional organiser, and John Watson, a social worker member of UNISON's Social Work Issues Group, were interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland about the damning report.

Joe said: "Our dedicated staff are going above and beyond to support the public but they are under enormous pressure with heavier workloads and too few staff. They feel exhausted, undervalued and suffer violence regularly.

"Social work teams are severely underfunded and we



See the full report at [unison-scotland.org/socialwork](http://unison-scotland.org/socialwork)

are facing a social work crisis. The dedicated people working in our social work teams deserve better and so do the people who rely upon them."

John added: "Social work teams are so under-resourced that we now spend the majority of our time reacting to problems rather than preventing them.

This is not the kind of service that people deserve and it only ends up costing more and

putting further strain on other public services such as the NHS, police and schools.

"Staff are working through breaks and staying late in order to protect service users, which is having a terrible impact on their own health and personal lives.

"We need proper funding put in place for these vital services and urgent action to prevent violence in the workplace."

## Take care on election rules

**The Lobbying Act has strict rules about what the union can do during an election period, with spending restrictions on public campaigning which include things like staffing and other resource costs.**

Communications with our own members are not included in the costs.

However, it is best to be safe than sorry so check out the guidance on the website.

## Quiz night success will support self organised groups in Grampian



**Grampian Health, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Branches held a cross branch Quiz Night in October to help support UNISON self organised groups (SOGs) in the Grampian area.**

The funds raised will support participation in various events that help to raise public awareness such as Grampian Pride, Aberdeen MELA and other events linked to self organisation.

Local organiser, Ann McEvoy said, "The night was a great success and is the first of various events that are being organised to raise awareness and funds. Aberdeen City Branch team 'No idea' defied their name to win by the skin of their teeth.

"The next is a Race Night at the famous Ashvale Restaurant in Aberdeen on Valentine's Day.

"So if you don't know what to get for your loved one, or where to take them for a Valentine's treat, bring them along for a night of fun. I'm sure they won't forget that night in a hurry!"

## Sickness absence: From the punitive to something more supportive

**Many branches across Scotland have been faced with draconian imposed sickness absence policies. SiU spoke to one branch, the City of Edinburgh, about how they stood up to the challenge.**

The year is 2017, the employer wants to introduce a new sickness absence policy. "Nothing wrong with this in itself", said branch secretary Tom Connolly, "but a major problem for us if the policy is designed to be nothing more than a punitive measure aimed at blaming the worker.

"Imagine being off work ill, your line manager can't take account of your individual circumstances and has to issue a



**'It was challenging, it ran to the wire, but we got there'**

TOM CONNOLLY

formal warning. On top of that you will also lose your next pay step - unacceptable."

There was lots of dialogue but no movement and the policy went forward to councillors in 2018. But the branch was not giving in. It had been campaigning and lobbying. In a deputation to the council committee, the branch made its views crystal clear.

Workers were facing warnings and losing pay steps, line managers were unable to use their own judgement, disabled workers and women workers were shown to be at greater risk."

UNISON gathered the evidence and continued lobbying, campaigning and raising with management.

"It took time and work to

analyse, research, make contacts and publicise but eventually our arguments were winning the day and the employer was at last engaging constructively," said Tom.

"This created an opportunity because it was clear the employer was looking for a collective agreement, rather than an imposed policy we would continue to resist.

"To get that, they would need to accept our points. It was challenging, it ran to the wire, but we got there."

Key changes moved the process from a punitive to a more supportive approach. Managers can use discretion and all links to pay were removed.

References to disability and domestic abuse were integrated from the previous policy and some of the wording from UNISON's model sickness policy was included. The result was a collective agreement that will be monitored and reviewed.

"It is a good start", said Tom. "We would have liked more clarity on the menopause and Trans issues. While there is guidance on both, we are pushing for clear policies. We will not become complacent and we will monitor closely. There is always room to develop and improve."

• *Does your branch have a story to tell about local agreements? Let us know about it via addresses on the back page.*



## Campaign for better conditions at Glasgow Life

**UNISON, Unite and GMB have mounted a joint campaign to improve conditions for workers in Glasgow Life, the arms length external organisation (ALEO) that runs the city's**

**cultural, sporting and learning services.**

Workers have fewer holidays, poorer overtime rates and poorer dismissal and grievance procedures than other council and ALEO employees.

The unions are also concerned about staffing levels, privatisation of catering at the Burrell Museum and an 'unaccountable' board where Glasgow councillors are in

the minority.

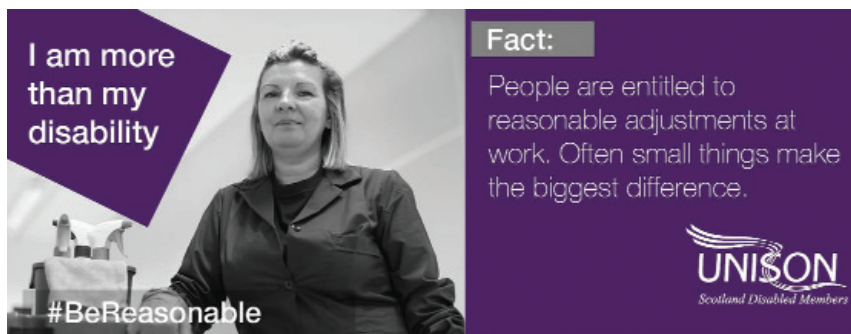
The unions are calling on members to contact their councillors and MSPs on these issues, hold workplace meetings and take part in campaigning activities.

## UNISON disabled members launch 'Be Reasonable' campaign

**UNISON Scotland's Disabled Members' Committee has launched its new campaign which aims to challenge attitudes to disabled people in the workplace.**

The *Be Reasonable* campaign highlights the need for employers to adjust their thinking when it comes to reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.

Alison Mitchell, UNISON's Disabled Members Committee, said: "UNISON is in a position to influence employers both nationally and locally, to affect policy and to affect attitudes to diminishing health (including disability) among decision makers, managers, staff, and members.



"Some of that will involve challenging and influencing deep-rooted attitudes..

"Some of our members don't have a platform and are unable to articulate themselves and look to us. Our members have different experiences, experience different levels of ill-health or disability, and have differing confidence to stand up, to be seen, and to be listened to.

"Disabled workers want fairness not favours, and the

*Be Reasonable* campaign aims to dispel some of the myths surrounding disabled workers.

"Through UNISON we can influence employers, affect policy and change attitudes. Most importantly, we want to make sure disabled workers have a voice in the workplace."

Branches and activists are encouraged to share the *Be Reasonable* campaign materials on the website with members through meetings, events,

newsletters, websites and social media. You can download copies at [unison-scotland.org](http://unison-scotland.org).

People with disabilities are entitled to reasonable adjustments at work. A reasonable adjustment is anything that helps the person to carry out their normal duties. Often small things make the biggest difference.

A reasonable adjustment can be as simple as changing a harsh light bulb for a soft one. In fact, 70% of reasonable adjustments cost nothing at all.

You can contact the Disabled Members Committee via their Facebook page or by contacting UNISON Scotland equalities officer on 0800 0 857 857.

## Tony and Margaret elected to STUC Disabled Members Committee



**Congratulations to UNISON's Tony Slaven and Margaret Gillmurray who were elected on to the STUC Disabled Workers Committee at the recent STUC Disabled Workers Conference.**

## Organising for a 'Glasgow Green Agreement'

**UNISON Scotland's Green Network is to work with branches at developing green issues into our bargaining agenda in 2020 - a crucial year for international climate talks.**

Depute convener Stephen Smellie highlighted the bargaining agenda plan as part of a five point set of priorities in the network's annual report to Scottish Council.

Following on from the success of Green UNISON Week UK wide, with its focus on 20 September and solidarity with the school climate strikers, members want to step up climate emergency action.

The United Nations climate conference – the Conference of the Parties (COP) 25 - is taking place in Madrid this month (December). Next November, COP 26 will be in Glasgow.

Stephen said: "UNISON should strive to engage with the preparations for this and ensure that workers' voices are heard, our members are engaged in the process and that the necessary links are made between workers and communities, unions and environmental groups and the progressive forces in our country and those in the global south to make sure the world leaders face up to the crisis that they are responsible for creating and for solving."

The network's priorities include pension fund fossil fuel divestment, developing branch Green/Environment reps, encouraging an audit of the union's and branches' own activities to cut emissions, and encouraging branches to send motions to NDC and other conferences.

Stephen said: "In the year up to COP 26 we should seek to get green issues taken seriously by all governments and employers.

"This requires us to identify a bargaining agenda to take forward which will contribute towards achieving the carbon free targets, whilst improving our members' workplaces, terms and conditions, health and safety and our communities.

"It is an exciting prospect that the Glasgow COP creates the prospect that the treaty that saves the world could become known as the Glasgow Green Agreement!"

## Support imprisoned union activists

By Fiona Montgomery  
Info and devt officer

**Child prisoners in Palestine, a Colombian hip hop exchange with South Africa, the crisis in Zimbabwe and political repression in Latin America were all discussed at the joint regional international seminar in Newcastle last month.**

And the Scottish delegation provided strong input, focusing on our Brazil project, Turkey's appalling treatment of trade unionists, solidarity with the massive protests in Chile, links with Cuba and the delegation visit there late last year, as well as ongoing BDS work in Scotland.

International relations officers joined colleagues from Northern Ireland and

North West regions, hosted by Northern region for the annual event.

International Committee member and SEPA UNISON Co-Chair Louise Giblin spoke about the rural 2 de janeiro community in São Paulo in Brazil that we have been working with and major difficulties they are having due to changes to land reform policies by the far right Bolsonaro government.

A letter writing campaign to new MPs elected this month asks them to raise these issues with the Foreign Office in the hope international pressure will help the community progress their food project.

Depute Convener Stephen Smellie described the situation



Stephen Smellie reports on Turkey at the joint international seminar

in Turkey, following a UNISON delegation earlier this year and visits to attend trials. Members are asked to join in a letter writing campaign to support imprisoned TU activists.

In October UNISON General Secretary Dave

Prentis wrote to the Foreign Secretary condemning Turkey's invasion of northern Syria and calling for suspension of arms sales.

Oscar Mendoza, survivor of torture under the Pinochet regime, who has been living in Scotland since and was heavily involved in the late 80s and 90s in Chile solidarity campaigns, wrote a report for us on the background to the current massive protests against the neoliberal Pinera government and for a new constitution. He updated it with a warmly received video message for the meeting.

These and other updates are on the UNISON Scotland website.

## SDS branch embraces green agenda with rewilding initiative

**In a great initiative, UNISON Skills Development Scotland (SDS) branch has started a grove of trees as part of their UNISON Green campaign, working with the Scottish Highlands rewilding charity, Trees For Life.**

Branch chair, Jennifer Muir said: "We started the grove in September 2019 and planted 101 trees initially. We now plant one tree for each new member who joins the branch. As the grove is public, anyone



can contribute so it also allows members to get involved."

Jennifer added: "We wanted the branch to take part in the

UNISON green campaign and show solidarity with the global school climate strikers, but also for our contribution to have a

lasting impact and to keep green on the agenda past the campaign dates."

The branch is now planning to nominate a green officer onto their branch executive, which will be a completely new role with a focus on how they can do more.

"This is a positive, sustainable and long-term commitment, and the start of our contribution to tackling climate change," said Jennifer.

## We want to hear your news

*SiU* is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact Kate Ramsden (editor) [katearamsden@gmail.com](mailto:katearamsden@gmail.com), Danny Phillips [d.phillips@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.phillips@unison.co.uk), Trisha Hamilton [t.hamilton@unison.co.uk](mailto:t.hamilton@unison.co.uk)

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