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PUBLIC WORKS:

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Scotland in UNISON

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

Council workers plan action on 'derisory' offer

UNISON local government members have voted to reject the employers' 'derisory' pay offer by 87%, with 74% in favour of strike action, in a consultative ballot.

As we went to press, the Scottish local government committee was making arrangements for a formal industrial action ballot and local campaigning strategy.

At this time, Scottish council leaders had not made an improved offer, deciding to delay until after the elections.

Mark Ferguson, chair of the local government committee and one of the lead negotiators said: "The joint trade unions have called upon the council leaders to

stop dithering and improve the offer to both reward and recognise their workforce for the outstanding response during the pandemic.

"Branches will be actively involved at local level engaging with members, media and the public."

The offer was £800 up to £25k, 2% from £25k to £40k and 1% above that with no provision to make up for years of pay falling behind inflation.

Pictured are Karen Scally, an Enhanced Provision Additional Needs Assistant in Peebles, and Edinburgh street cleaning members. Like so many council staff across Scotland they delivered services throughout the pandemic and deserve recognition.



Activists and team effort deliver NHS pay victory

UNISON Health members have voted overwhelmingly to accept the Scottish Government pay offer of 4% backdated to 1 December 2020.

And as we went to press, the government agreed to UNISON's call to pay the award as soon as possible.

Tam Waterson, chair of the Scottish health committee said: "The campaign was a success because of the way we all pulled together. This was a team effort. And it delivered a great ballot turnout and a decisive vote to accept."

"We have much to be proud of, but we need to learn from this positive experience. The health committee is undertaking a review of the campaign.

"A key priority, already identified, is improving member contact details. New digital tools offer new opportunities for



membership communications."

Kay Sillars, of UNISON Scotland's bargaining and campaigns team, outlines how the team of activists and staff built the successful campaign.

UNISON's campaign for this pay rise followed the success of last year's campaign to reopen pay negotiations which resulted

in a £500 payment to health and care workers. Activists were both the leaders and the face of the campaigns.

Campaigning is challenging when you cannot meet in person or have mass marches and rallies, but the health committee organised effectively using all the tools they could find to drive

Activists were both the leaders and the face of the campaigns'

their campaign forward and lobbying politicians of all parties through email campaigns, social media and virtual meetings.

Health campaigners talked to members through virtual branch meetings and online rallies broadcast on Facebook which were both effective in being able to speak directly to members and to answer their questions.

Activists could also use the chat function to quickly clarify misinformation and misunderstandings. Even after meetings "views" continued to mount up on the Facebook site.

The health committee of lay activists met regularly, sometimes weekly, throughout the campaign which allowed for detailed campaign planning and quick

reactions to events. The specially created campaign subgroups were able to meet at short notice to deal with emergencies and undertake detailed analysis of the campaign to support decision making at the health committee.

These meetings provided strong links with UNISON Scotland's bargaining and campaigns team, and produced strong media, social media and campaigns materials. This also provided a great basis for any reactive work.

The campaigns team and the health committee pulled together a range of activists who were able to speak to the media and to film short video clips for use on our own social media.

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NHS pay team effort

From Page 1

Branches then shared these on their own media channels. Activists were both the leaders and the face of the campaign.

Pulling together branch communications officers in a WhatsApp group proved to be an effective way of developing and sharing campaigns materials. Communications officers used the group to share ideas and support each other through a pressured time.

The pay offer, when it arrived, brought a busy period to get set up for the ballot. The team pulled together: data was sorted, webpages set up, graphics designed, and text messaging put in place.

Our UK digital ballot team supported us all through the process. The membership team did a huge shift sorting the data and alongside UNISON direct, helped members with their queries to ensure they could vote.

Branches went out to talk to members face to face where possible, providing tablets to support members without digital access. Local meetings complemented national online rallies and emails and letters which were sent direct to members.

The campaigns will now be reviewed and the lessons taken forward in the battles to come to improve members' working lives.

Owen picks up Aberdeen Uni award for branch equalities work

The University of Aberdeen has awarded UNISON Aberdeen Universities branch secretary, Owen Cox, an award for Excellence in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

A delighted Owen explains, "Our branch has worked extremely hard to contribute to improving all facets of equality, diversity and inclusion within our community."



"We are part of multiple committees including our race equality strategy group, our dignity at work and study group and our equality, diversity and inclusion committee, which encompasses all of our university networks (Disability network, LGBT+, Woman's network amongst many others.)"

Working in partnership with the university, the branch has been involved in improving the training on equalities. It has also had a role in the inception of the dignity at work and study group, and in initiatives to address hate crime. They are working with the university to look at addressing gender based violence in a proactive way.

The branch has also had a key role in looking at cultural barriers to progression, where they have asked that the university not only looks at protected characteristics, but also expands this to include poverty and nationality, and the effects of COVID-19 and Brexit on the community.

"We value working in partnership with the University and are delighted they have seen the value in working with our branch. This partnership enables our branch to speak on behalf of our community at every opportunity."

Welcome trend towards taking public services back in-house

**By Susan Galloway
Information development officer**

Public services are in the news and they have the popular vote.

The case for public ownership of the care sector was propelled onto the national stage during the pandemic.

We started to talk about the need for publicly provided internet access as a basic right.

Meanwhile south of the border public control of buses was the top issue in last week's mayoral elections in Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

Glasgow University says this is part of a growing trend in the UK and internationally in which public services are being brought back in-house in a growing number of towns,

Has your council, health board or public agency taken a service back in-house? Tell the Public Futures Project.



cities and regions.

Its Public Futures project is tracking these developments. It has captured 1,451 cases of services being taken back into public ownership since the year 2000 in 56 countries on every continent, in sectors including water, energy, telecommunications, local government and healthcare.

Energy (25%), water (23%) and local government (17%)

are the top three areas where services are being taken back under public control.

Project lead Andrew Cumbers explains, "The reasons for this are clear. Privatisation has simply failed to deliver on promises of improved effectiveness, investment and modernisation."

Within Europe, Germany and France lead the way by

reversing earlier privatisations and by choosing to create green jobs and industries within the public sector.

Meanwhile, the USA leads the world in taking telecommunications into public ownership, with 75% of all cases found in that country.

The Public Futures Project needs input on what's happening in Scotland.

Has your council, health board or public agency taken a service back in-house?

You can submit details at the Public Futures website and also find examples that make the case for public ownership <https://publicfutures.org/>

UNISON members and activists are also encouraged to complete the Global Remunicipalisation Survey.

INTERNATIONAL

Outrage at evictions and bombardment of Gaza

**By Fiona Montgomery
Information development officer**

UNISON joined in the international outrage over and condemnation of Israel's bombardment of Gaza last month/earlier this month, prior to a ceasefire being announced as SIU went to press.

General Secretary Christina McAnea called on the UK government to "take concrete action to demand that the Israeli government complies with international law and immediately stop its bombing of Gaza, ends the blockade and occupation, and allows humanitarian access to those in need."

This followed UNISON expressing deep concern about the escalation of tensions in East Jerusalem and regret at the tragic loss of life to Palestinians and Israelis.

Christina McAnea said UNISON had been "shocked and appalled by the devastating scenes at the al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem during the holy month of Ramadan."

The union condemned the planned evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, in addition to the police raid on al-Aqsa and increasing restrictions on Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

UNISON has been following the situation in Sheikh Jarrah since a 2016 delegation (including the late Sam Macartney, then chair of the Scottish international



UNISON has been following the situation in Sheikh Jarrah since a 2016 delegation, including the late Sam Macartney (pictured centre, back row), then chair of the Scottish international committee, visited the home of the Al-Kurd family. The family had had half its home taken over by settlers in 2009, and is now expecting to be evicted from the home where it has lived since the 1950s.'

committee) visited the home of the Al-Kurd family. The family

of Livorno would not handle such materials.

STUC General Secretary Roz Foyer pointed to UN criticism of Israel's actions in Sheikh Jarrah and said: "The historic Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank and its encouragement of illegal and often violent settler activity is a disgrace.

"We have an international duty both to our Palestinian trade union sisters and brothers, and to peace and justice more generally, to offer solidarity and campaign against the repressive actions of the Israeli state."

The STUC called on the Scottish Government to support

the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement.

- Some successes on pensions divestment include Strathclyde Pension Fund ending direct investments in companies found to be complicit in Israel's illegal occupation and violations of Palestinian rights.

But Simon Watson, UNISON Scotland Scottish LGPS lead, warned that transferring assets to pooled funds can hide unacceptable investments and called for transparency and for funds to note members' concerns.

For more information and useful links on BDS see unison-scotland.org/boycott-disinvestment-and-sanctions-israel/

North east event celebrates IDAHOBIT Day

By Susan Kennedy
Scotland LGBT+ lead

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) is an important day to recognise, as sadly not every country around the world have the same rights.

Equally, there are individuals that seek to undermine these progressive rights in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. We cannot let this happen!

Working collaboratively with a cross branch LGBT+ group from the Grampian region, the Scottish LGBT+ Committee and Scotland's LGBT+ lead officers, a UNISON IDAHOBIT webinar was organised with a panel of UNISON and community LGBT+ activists representing



‘We look forward to more collaboration with branches across Scotland to challenge, celebrate and support the LGBT+ agenda’
WATTY GAFFNEY

all aspects of IDAHOBIT.

The evening was both informative and enjoyed by all who attended, including some of our activists from the North West Region.

Hamish Walker, North East Scotland LGBT+ Group said: “I ask that in reflection of IDAHOBIT, you all think about your own actions and call out victimisation, discrimination and harassment, ‘which violates someone’s dignity or creates an

intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.’ The Equality Act (2010) legally prohibits discrimination (whether direct or indirect) against a number of protected characteristics including gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

Let’s unite in UNISON and commit to fighting discrimination and prejudice.”

Watty Gaffney, Co-convenor Scotland LGBT+ Committee added: “IDAHOBIT is an

important day when we stimulate interest in the work, we do worldwide and stand in solidarity to fight for equality.

“The action plan for the Scottish LGBT+ committee is driven mostly by decisions at National LGBT+ conference and large part of that work is highlighting and addressing International LGBT+ issues.

“We are proud of our affiliation and involvement with ILGA Europe and ILGA World, and our campaign work to liberate LGBT+ communities from all forms of discrimination.”

“With the success of this event, we look forward to more collaboration with branches across Scotland to challenge, celebrate and support the LGBT+ agenda.”

Glasgow heeds UNISON call to re-open venues

Glasgow City’s full council meeting in May heeded UNISON’s call and voted for Glasgow Life venues to reopen as soon as COVID allows. The leader of the council has agreed to meet with the unions and a date is awaited.

This followed on from UNISON Glasgow branch raising with the city’s SNP leadership the need to re-open all Glasgow Life venues under council ownership.

Dozens of local community centres, libraries, outdoor sports facilities and museums remain closed due to a lack of funding. The trade union opposes the council’s plan to force local community groups or charities to step in to keep the services going.

Brian Smith, UNISON Branch Secretary said: “Glasgow deserves better public services and the council leaders should be investing in, not trying to cut services.

“The council leaders are using the language of ‘community empowerment’ to try and offload the responsibility for providing some services. Of course local communities must be centrally involved in shaping public services in their areas but they should not be asked to run them.

“Our city needs responsive public services provided by workers in secure jobs, under the democratic control of the council.”

Lothian Health supporting wellbeing

By Debbie Reilly
Lothian Health branch

Over the past two years Lothian Health branch has been piloting a health and wellbeing coaching service for our stewards and members.

This was put in place initially to help our stewards. The branch recognised that stewards are often involved as staff side representatives in disturbing and stressful situations during their duties as stewards in the workplace.

During the first year, two stewards undertook training in the harmonising realignment process (HAP). This focuses on the importance of self awareness, confidence and resilience through assisting people to adopt a balanced life with health and wellbeing front and centre.

In the last year, we have offered this service to our members with great success, helping those who have come forward for the coaching. We have also put on two very successful workshops.

Those who attend the 10 sessions of the coaching process review all aspects of their lives and look at how they can support and look after themselves. This process leads to increased self awareness, self esteem, confidence and resilience as well as being more productive in and out of the work place.

This year at our AGM we agreed to have a health and wellbeing officer who will take forward our health and well-being programme, coordinate coaching and other activities.

The coaching is another resource for those requiring support and is very much aimed at those who are suffering from burnout, stress, anxiety and depression. It is not an alternative for severe mental health issues and the coach will review through the application questionnaire and a phone call, if required, to ascertain suitability.

Dundee university UNISON strike vote wins pension concessions

By Stephen McLellan
Local organiser

UNISON members at Dundee University have shown the value of standing together- despite not being able to meet each other in person.

Management at the university tried to rush through the closure of the local defined benefit pension scheme with a proposal to offer an inferior defined contribution scheme where members could expect to lose around 40% of their future pension entitlements.

The branch rallied, talking to angry members through email and online meetings and members duly rejected the proposals in an electronic ballot.

Branch secretary Phil Welsh said: “Our members were quick to let the university know that trying to force through the closure of their pension scheme while staff had been trying to manage the pandemic was an outrage which they would not stand for.

“Many of us are working remotely but that physical distance has not been a barrier to us working together to ditch this unfair proposal.

“We have stayed strong and united, and this strength is getting results”.

The branch then launched a formal ballot for industrial action.

This was enough for the university to extend its consultation on the proposals by six months.

This will give UNISON the space it needs to go in and negotiate to find a solution.

If you want to send a message of support, please contact the branch via Facebook at UNISON Dundee University Branch.



UNISON Scotland has seen two wins on pensions in recent months as members in Dundee University and in Citizens and Rights Fife fight off threats to their schemes.

CARF campaign keeps rights to local government pension scheme



The governing board of Citizens and Rights Fife (CARF) has withdrawn the risk of removal of staff membership to the local government pension scheme, following a successful campaign by UNISON Fife.

The CARF Board explored an opportunity, to see whether ongoing participation was in the long-term interests of CARF. If this had progressed it would have led to a ‘defined contribution’ pension scheme

being offered which would have been inferior to the current LGPS in place.

UNISON Fife branch and stewards worked hard along with CARF board and management to ensure full due diligence was completed before any decision was made.

The members were supported by the lobbying work via the branch to the council, as the service commissioner, and to the local LGPS Fund committee. Support was also given by UNISON

representatives on the national LGPS Scheme Advisory Board.

Fife branch vice-chair Colin Patterson, said: “We are delighted with this outcome, and that CARF will continue to recognise the hard work of their staff by offering them a good quality pension scheme.

“But we have to continue the fight for the Scottish Government to ‘Plug the Gap’ in local authority funding, so councils can afford to properly support and fund vital community services like CARF.”

Fighting for equalities in a pandemic

Here we continue our equalities feature looking at the disproportionate impact

of the COVID pandemic on our equalities groups. In this issue we hear from our disabled

members, retired members and our young members about what COVID has meant for

their members and their priorities as we begin to move out of the pandemic.

Government and employer COVID responses must be inclusive and progressive

By Alison Mitchell

Scottish disabled members' cttee

With disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on disabled workers, and one in five workers being disabled, the union must ensure government and employer policy responses to Covid-19 don't take a huge regressive step from the ambitions laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

For decades employers routinely refused reasonable adjustment requests to work from home, lacking will or imagination to create inventive solutions to keep staff in the workplace. This resulted in countless disabled workers struggling at work or being processed out the



door through incapability or ill-health retirement.

The imaginary barriers disappeared overnight on 16 March 2020 when the UK went into lockdown, and the impossible became possible.

Working from home can make a huge positive difference for some disabled workers' health and quality of life, better managing chronic pain and the worst of their symptoms. COVID-19 has presented a great opportunity for disabled workers, and one of the best

opportunities that the UK and devolved governments have to close the disability employment gap and disability pay gap.

For other disabled workers, however, home working isn't a solution, exacerbating mental and physical health problems.

They might prefer to be in the workplace with colleagues, or their role doesn't lend itself to home working.

If the employer can't provide a safe working environment then this increases the risk of dismissal through health where no suitable alternative role can be found.

The impact of COVID-19 extends to all aspects of daily life including shopping, socialising and holidaying.

For those who are deaf or

hearing impaired COVID-19, face coverings restrict the ability to read lips, body language and facial expressions, and virtual meetings or gatherings that create problems accessing and participating fully.

For those unable to take a vaccination or unable to wear face coverings or comply with other COVID-19 health and safety measures, they are further isolated and disadvantaged, at heightened risk of being refused entry to supermarkets, retail outlets, cafes and restaurants, and even to holidaying at home or abroad.

Not only do disabled people need to inform those decisions, but as a union we need to make sure the policy responses to Covid-19 by governments and employers are inclusive and progressive.

Loneliness and isolation toll on older people

By Babs Fulton

Scottish retired members' cttee
It has now been 14 long months since we have all been in lockdown due to COVID 19.

For all of us, the way we live our lives has changed completely. Sadly during this pandemic we have lost loved ones, friends, acquaintances.

Even when it's not been to COVID, losing someone during this period has been heartbreaking often without the opportunity to say our goodbyes.

Now with the vaccine roll out and lockdown easing we are beginning to see a bit of normality.

However the impact on

This is the time for UNISON to step up the mark for our retired members'

BABS FULTON



older people is not so easy to overcome. Our minds and the way we use them have all changed. Some have been stuck indoors because of isolation, our normal routine has gone with no walks to the shops, visiting our family and friends or enjoying the wee local coffee clubs, bowling, activities and even bingo.

All our social events and catch ups that keep many older people healthy and active have been missing. It definitely becomes harder when you're

older and can also affect older people emotionally with feelings of depression and loneliness. It perhaps becomes mentally and physically harder to leave the house or meet up with friends.

This is the time for UNISON to step up the mark for our retired members. The time has come for branches to work with their retired members officer and to get mailings out to their retired members, as 70% are not contactable by email, and

communication is so important for all just now.

If you are a retired member and feel like a chat and getting yourself involved in our Scottish Retired Members Forum you are very welcome to join in - it is informal and it involves UNISON retired members only, so is great for meeting old friends, making new friends from all sectors of our union and helping our Scottish Retired Members' Committee move forward.

It meets virtually by Zoom on the last Wednesday of every month. Contact Babs by emailing babsunison@yahoo.co.uk or mob 07954380753. for more information.

Address mental health impact on young people

By Millie Davidson

Scottish young members' cttee

A year on from COVID-19 and your job still doesn't look the same as it did just over a year ago.

With changes to our job roles, being relocated to other areas, pay freezes, furlough and threats of redundancies, life as a young worker has not been easy during the pandemic.

With under 25s being twice as likely to have lost their job in the past year and 58% of young people having experienced a loss in earnings compared to 48% of the rest of the

population- it is clear to see that economically the pandemic has disproportionately affected young people.

Research by the Office for National Statistics last year showed that 30% of young people have raised concerns regarding their finances due to the pandemic including worries of a redundancy in the household. This is compared to 13% of over 60s raising concerns. Financial difficulties can have a massive impact on people's mental health and ability to achieve their goals.

Other contributing factors



to mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic include social isolation and increased stress and anxiety due to this. Many young people live alone and away from their homes and have found this period of isolation very scary and lonely. Over half of 16-25 years olds

reported feeling lonely and 42% of young people have reported a detriment to their mental health. (Office for National Statistics, 2020)

As a committee we have identified and recognised some things we see as priorities for the union - as we hopefully leave this pandemic behind. These main priorities should be ensuring fair pay negotiations, resources and support for those in financial difficulties and recognition of widespread mental health issues due to the impact of COVID-19.

Best wishes for Martin Murray as he retires

By Robert Montgomery
Chair, UNISON West Lothian

West Lothian Branch lost its most well-known lay activist with the recent retirement of Martin Murray, branch secretary.



Martin addresses STUC Congress in 2015

Martin's trade union roots go back to the 1970's. He was a former branch secretary in predecessor union NALGO and was active in Post Office Union UCW.

He even contested an election to the Scottish Committee of NALGO against one Mike Kirby, then of Glasgow branch, as he describes it, several stones ago.

Martin was elected to the Scottish and Local Government Committees in one year, a feat never achieved before or since by our branch. In another first he was elected to the STUC delegation.

He also represented the union at Labour party conference, being branch Labour link.

There is no doubt that he will continue to be active, as a member of the Disability, Employment and Mental Health Tribunals. Any other spare time will be devoted to his other interest, genealogy.

While his terrible writing and even worse tidiness will not be missed, his knowledge and sagacity will be. I am sure UNISON members and staff will want to wish him all the best in a long and happy retirement.

Remembering Jimmy Luby

East Lothian branch's Jimmy Luby sadly passed away in December 2020.

Jimmy worked in waste services as a loader and was a long-standing trade unionist. He was a steward for over 30 years, initially in NALGO, then in UNISON after the merger. Prior to that was involved with the trade union in Musselburgh Wire Mill.

Jimmy was always a professional, kind man and I was privileged, as were many others, to call him a friend, not just a work colleague. He tackled management head on and had the respect of all who knew him, especially the members for whom he fought for over many years.

I think if someone was to try to describe a union steward that always believed in the trade union movement and the ideals behind them, it was Jimmy.

He will be a great loss, not only to his family, but to his work colleagues and East Lothian Council (ELC) UNISON Branch. At ELC's last JCC both management and councillors who had met with him through the years, spoke fondly of Jimmy. He will be sadly missed.

Mike Dunlop, branch secretary

We want to hear your news

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

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