TUC celebrates Glasgow equal pay women

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Inquiry into hospitals 'fiasco'

Failings of private finance cost millions that should have gone on patient care - *p3*

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October 2019 No 139

Scotland in UNISON

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

Young lead the way on saving the planet

UNISON joins huge rallies across Scotland

By Fiona Montgomery
Info and Devt Officer

Trade unionists internationally stood in solidarity with school students on #climatestrike on 20 September - and UNISON Scotland played a prominent role in helping build TU support UK-wide.

For the second annual Green UNISON Day, timed to coincide with and support the school climate strikers, branches around Scotland organised a range of workplace activities to highlight the climate emergency.

Campaigning for Just Transition, for pensions divestment, for green workplaces and climate justice, as well as public ownership of energy, branches from Shetland to South Ayrshire, Edinburgh to Inverness, Dundee to Glasgow, South Lanarkshire to Fife and Aberdeen and more, all did their bit to show support to the young people striking to complain governments are failing to safeguard their futures.

UNISON Young Members in Scotland said in a Facebook message of support, as millions supported the climate strike worldwide: "Join in solidarity with the schools strikers, to show the government that we, as a nation, care for our future and demand that appropriate action is taken against the climate crisis."

General secretary Dave Prentis praised UNISON Scotland for our contribution, in a message stressing that climate change "is the greatest single threat that humanity faces."

A UK-wide UNISON Green Week was called following the Green Network's promotion of Green UNISON Day in Scotland.

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Edinburgh

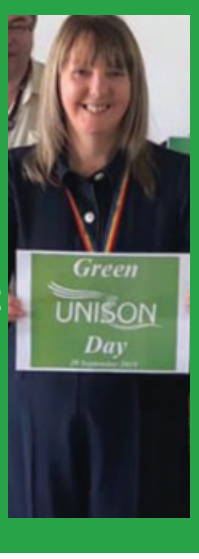
Shetland

Aberdeen

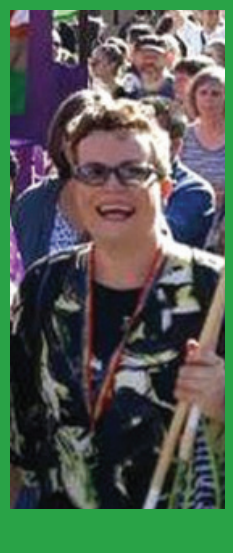
Dundee

Glasgow

"UNISON is proud to be part of an inspirational end to our Green UNISON Week. We want climate justice and a Just Transition."
LILIAN MACER
SCOTTISH CONVENER



"Today is not just a one off. As a union we want to capitalise on the energy and drive you guys have brought to this whole debate."
TARA MCARTHY
UNISON EDINBURGH



"We need to be guided and led by our young people because it is your legacy we are destroying - do not forget the power that unions have."
KATE RAMSDEN
ABERDEENSHIRE & NEC

Retired members in TV licences protest

Members of UNISON North Lanarkshire Retired Members Committee joined many other trade union and pensioner groups outside BBC Scotland in July to show their opposition to the proposed removal of free TV licences for the over 75s.

The BBC has announced that from June 2020 free TV licences to all those over 75 will be scrapped with only those over 75s who receive income-related benefits able to claim for the free licence.

This will affect up to 3.7 million pensioners.

The successful protest was part of action throughout the UK.

Retired member Andy Locke said, "Today's successful protest is just part of an ongoing campaign calling for the provision of free TV licences to the over 75s by the UK Government."

Apprenticeship agreement will benefit all

UNISON West Dunbartonshire Branch has negotiated an apprenticeship agreement with the council that will ensure every apprenticeship post has real benefits for the person involved and for the local economy

In signing up, the council has committed to developing a skilled workforce for the area's future economy as well as supporting people to realise their full potential.

Val Jennings, branch secretary said: "The Apprenticeship Agreement sets out a vow to provide high quality on and off-the-job training for every apprentice, the same terms and conditions as other council employees, and payment at the training rate.

"The council is already dedicated to delivering apprenticeships aligned with future workforce needs and the needs of the local economy and ensuring the programmes challenge job stereotyping and are available to all.

"By signing up to the agreement the guarantees for these employees have been taken even further."

Val Jennings (front second left) with the agreement.

Apprentices will also receive employability assistance through Working4U to ensure they are moving into employment when their programme ends, a guaranteed interview for any council vacancy where the essential criteria is met, and the opportunity to join a trade union if they wish to.

Apprentice supervisors will also be given more training, and each apprentice will be assigned a mentor for guidance and support.

Phoenix rise for award-winning UNISON Kinneil Band

By Stephen Low

Music editor

UNISON Kinneil band hit a winning note as they came top in the UK national brass band championships in Cheltenham in September.

It was a victory all the more remarkable following a huge setback in June when the band's premises were consumed by fire.

The date with destiny in Cheltenham had been fixed in March when the band won through to be the Scottish representatives at the UK wide competition.

This by itself would be the mark of a successful year so the band were in good spirits when disaster struck.

The band's hall, which they had occupied since 1896 was destroyed when fire spread from neighbouring premises.

The very future of the band hung in the balance – but after an emergency meeting they decided to carry on.

Digging in, they borrowed and hired instruments to fulfil their remaining engagements, finding emergency premises to rehearse in to prepare for the championship.

When the big day came round the band didn't even have proper uniforms as the replacements failed to arrive before they had to set off.

Kinneil were drawn to play seventh out of the sixteen bands who made the finals so it was a long wait until almost 9.30 in the evening when the announcement was made

that: "The 1st section National Brass Band Champions of Great Britain for 2019 are - UNISON Kinneil."

Band Secretary Robert Docherty told *SiU*: "There were tears of joy as emotions surfaced at what we had just achieved."

Although the band has made the national finals several times before – this is the first time in its long history that they have come top at UK level.

The band's origins were as a colliery band in their home town in Bo'ness.

UNISON's involvement goes back to 1983 when the union stepped in to try help ensure that Thatcher's attack on the coal industry wouldn't also take with it this strand of working class culture and achievement.

The band have been regulars at UNISON marches and demonstrations ever since - a connection that that both we and they are proud to maintain.

The band have managed to keep themselves going since June and have managed this amazing win in the most difficult circumstances but they aren't out of the woods yet and would be grateful for any support UNISON branches could provide.

Branches who want to help these brilliant musicians who have always been there when we've asked can direct support to UNISON Kinneil Band, c/o 31 Ochilview Road, Bo'ness, EH51 0LD or email robertdoherty@blueyonder.co.uk. BACS transfer details are Kinneil Band A/c 00476904 sort code 80-17-37.

Climate threat: We can change it but we need to act fast

From Page 1

Search the #greenUNISON hashtag on Twitter to see the range of action that took place around the UK.

Here, **UNISON Fife Health Branch** collected green workplace pledges at a stall where members promised actions ranging from walking and leaving the car at home, to buying second hand goods, recycling everything, and buying local for milk and food.

In South Lanarkshire, the branch invited councillors to a lunchtime meeting, collected petition signatures asking the council to declare a climate emergency, and asked members to write letters to councillors urging pensions divestment from fossil fuels. They also collected green workplace pledges.

Edinburgh and Glasgow city branches were among those offering practical support and brilliant solidarity with the school climate strikers, helping with planning and preparation and on the day.

UNISON Scottish Joint Council reps took time out of their meetings with COSLA on the day to send a solidarity picture.

> **'an opportunity has been created to develop a 'trade union consciousness' amongst young people by demonstrating the progressiveness of unions'** STEPHEN SMELLIE

Glasgow Trades Council invited trade unions to stand with their banners to welcome the marchers into George Square.

In advance of the day, depute convener Stephen Smellie praised Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who inspired the global school strike #FridaysForFuture movement.

In a Scottish Left Review article, he pointed out: "Unions should be hugely grateful that Greta didn't just say it was a protest or an action. Instead, she called it 'Skolstrejk for Klimatet' - School Strike for Climate - and immediately re-introduced to young people's consciousness the idea that to challenge power taking strike action was a powerful and energising action.

"From this, an opportunity has been created to develop a 'trade union consciousness' amongst young people by demonstrating the progressiveness of unions, engaging with their movement and offering support for their aims and actions."

Commenting afterwards, Stephen said: "It was great to see so many members and branches taking workplace action on climate change, and working to make sure Green UNISON Day went well locally, as well as standing in solidarity with the school climate strikers."

In Aberdeen, NEC member Kate Ramsden, told the climate strike rally there that already some of the poorest people across the world are suffering the impact of climate change, caused by profligacy in the west.

"Those who will suffer most and suffer first from climate change will be the indigenous populations of the South, the black and brown people of Africa, Asia and Polynesia whose lands are already under threat as the Arctic ice melts and seas rise," she said.

Kate added that it is crucial for UNISON to build on just transition and other climate policy: "As a union, we need to continue this work as a matter of great urgency. We need to be guided and led by our young people because it is your legacy we are destroying

"But unions do have power so please don't forget about us. We have millions of members, many of them young and many others with children and grandchildren and who want a future for them

"So please, get involved and tell us what more we can do. Because climate change *is* the greatest threat facing all of us today. We can change it but we need to act fast."

With Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) and other campaigners, UNISON was lobbying right up to the start of the final debate on the new Scottish Climate Act to try to get a stronger 2030 target for cutting emissions.

We will be working with SCCS, the Just Transition Partnership and more widely with other unions, with the Scottish Food Coalition and others, including continued support for the school climate strikers, to keep up the pressure to limit global warming to 1.5C. The alternative is terrifying, as the science keeps demonstrating.

Check the Green Network's Facebook page for updates: https://www.facebook.com/greennetworkunisonscotland/

UNISON welcomes public inquiry into hospitals 'fiasco'

UNISON's Scottish Health Committee has welcomed the response to its call for a public inquiry into failings at The Royal Hospital for Young People (RHYP) in Edinburgh, and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow

Thomas Waterson, chair of the committee said: "The Scottish Government has finally bowed to pressure from UNISON, patients and community groups to hold a public inquiry into these lengthy and costly delays – a decision that is long overdue.

"The failings have not only taken millions of pounds out of the public purse – money which should have been spent on patient care – but it has seriously disrupted patient care and been hugely frustrating for NHS workers.

"The whole fiasco yet again highlights the weakness of the Scottish Government's private finance system - The Scottish Futures Trust.

"Patients, staff and tax payers should not be left paying the price for this catalogue of errors and it is vital this inquiry ensures this is never allowed to happen again."

Tom noted that even after the most recent KPMG report we still don't know if, for example, the drainage system at RHYP is fit for purpose.

> **"Patients, staff and tax payers should not be left paying the price for this catalogue of errors"**
> TOM WATERSON

Tom added: "It was very frustrating for NHS Lothian health workers to have their move to the new hospital cancelled days before it was due to happen.

"Significant time and organisation goes into such a move. Now to be told that we need to wait until Autumn 2020 to move is simply unacceptable."

UNISON keeps up pressure to reopen council pay talks

Talks between the joint unions, CoSLA and the Cabinet Secretary Derek Mackay met with no firm commitment to reopen local government pay negotiations on the back of the pay award for teachers, although there was a commitment to meet again.

At the meeting in September, UNISON Scotland negotiators Mark Ferguson, chair of the Scottish Local Government Committee, and Johanna Baxter, head of local government, pressed Mr McKay to intervene on local government pay, arguing that the re-opener clause in our pay agreement had been triggered due to the Scottish Government's intervention in teachers' pay.

Mark said, "We made it clear that this political decision to treat workers differently has interfered with the bargaining machinery and our negotiations with CoSLA and is contrary to Fair Work principles and the public sector pay policy.

"We urged the Government to provide COSLA with additional monies to address these issues."

However Mr Mackay maintained his position that the principle of parity is CoSLA's and it was not for the Scottish government to interfere in CoSLA negotiating machinery.

"We reminded him that ship had already sailed!" slammed Mark.

UNISON also called for a fair funding settlement for local government in the upcoming budget and for an end to ring-fencing, pointing out that the Barnett consequentials arising from the UK spending review would see an additional £1.1bn come north of the border which local government needs to maintain service delivery without further cuts to those that provide those services.

"The Scottish Government's stranglehold of local government budgets has to stop!" urged Mark.

Young members' mood manual

UNISON's Scottish Young Members Committee as part of their 'How's Yer Heid' campaign has issued a booklet to introduce some basic mindfulness techniques.

Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses. It is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing. When we're mindful, we reduce stress, enhance performance, and gain awareness and insight. There are positive benefits for our health, happiness, work, and relationships.

The best part is anyone can do it. Find the booklet on our website.

Lyn Marie picks up TUC organising award for Glasgow equal pay women

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady presents Lyn Marie with the award

Lyn Marie O'Hara of UNISON City of Glasgow has won the TUC Organising Award for the work done by her and her sisters in the branch in organising the Equal Pay strike.

8,500 Glasgow City workers, predominantly low paid women, took part in the Glasgow Women's Strike on 23 and 24 October last year demanding equal pay – and won.

The victory followed 11 years of campaigning with 14 disputes.

The Court of Session in Edinburgh had ruled in the workers' favour in December 2017 and the Council agreed to settle out of court. But talks stalled and dragged on with little progress and finally the members' patience ran out.

Lyn Marie told the STUC Congress in April about the themed demonstrations, wearing moustaches or dressed as suffragettes, about the members' meetings and the phonebanks to reach out to all members and make them feel valued.

"We were the invisible workers became the visible workers who shut down the council", she said.

Call for pay ballot yes vote as HE branches notch up wins

UNISON is urging members across Scottish universities to vote for action in a pay ballot which closes on 30 October after employers imposed a mediocre pay offer across the UK.

While some lower-paid staff will receive more, the headline offer of 1.8% is well below the going rate for Scottish public services and insulting given the astronomical pay given to university bosses.

The ballot comes as UNISON members have notched up some significant successes following action in a number of Scottish universities.

Lorcan Mullen, UNISON regional organiser for Scottish higher education said: "Every Scottish university principal earns more than the Prime Minister and First Minister, and at least four earn more than both put together.

"In that context, years of mediocre, imposed pay offers for the rest of their staff just isn't good enough.

"The majority of HE staff being offered a rise of 1.8% is well below what we have asked for and well below the going rate for Scottish public services. Members have till 30 October to return their ballots and we urge you to do that and to vote to strike."

UNISON represents professional and support services staff in this sector and is balloting on the same timetable as academic union UCU across the UK.

UNISON is urging its members to return ballot papers, as a 50% turnout is necessary for a legal ballot following the Tories anti-Trade Union Act passed in 2016.

If you haven't received your ballot paper, please call the ballot helpline on 0800 0 857857.

Significant wins in HE

The previous issue of *SiU* reported on the success of action at Queen Margaret University, when the employer withdrew plans for compulsory redundancies after UNISON members' vote to strike.

Napier - Collective bargaining rights restored

Since then, UNISON Edinburgh Napier branch has agreed a deal to see the restoration of real bargaining and consultation around restructures, an extra day's annual leave on a permanent basis, and a settlement for eligible members.

The negotiations were prompted by a mass tribunal case built around the university's behaviours in collective bargaining, where UNISON alleged breaches of trade union law. With the considerable efforts of the branch, more than two thirds of members signed up to the claim.

Regional Organiser Lorcan Mullen said: "This is a tremendous victory for the branch, who deserve enormous credit for their dogged approach to negotiations with a challenging employer and all their hard graft in getting so many members signed up to the initial grievance.

"Proper consultation structures have been restored, conditions have been improved on a permanent basis, and the employer has finally seen the need to deal constructively with UNISON."

St Andrews' security staff win big pay rise and backpay

Security officers and other manual workers, UNISON members at St Andrews University, have won an unsocial hours payment of time and one third.

This significant win follows a prolonged period of negotiations and a threat of dispute and potential industrial action

Given that no such payment was in place before, members are set to receive an average pay rise of 12% from this change. Members also received over a year's back pay on this calculation, which is a major boost for the low-paid workers involved.

Branch Secretary Fiona McDonald said: "This is a very pleasing victory for UNISON at the university. It has been an arduous fight as the university does not do things quickly.

"Our members are also glad that things have been finalised and they will be receiving payment in due course."

Free UNISON training aims to make learning fun

Why not sign up now for one of UNISON's wide range of learning opportunities for activists in Scotland?

They are friendly and informal and you don't need any formal qualifications.

Shirley Kirk of UNISON Scotland's learning and organising committee explains: "Training is intended to make learning fun. Everyone's views and experiences are heard."

Courses are free and meals are provided. Your branch pays fees, travel and other expenses.

"Ongoing training and education is vital to the professional development of our activists", said Shirley..

Specialist courses are designed to empower and provide knowledge and skills to help build self-confidence.

This enables activists to carry out their roles more effectively when tackling workplace issues affecting our members.

It also provides opportunities to connect with activists across the Region, creating a stronger organising union.

Shirley added: "Most of our Regional non-residential courses are held in UNISON offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness or public sector venues.

"Our weekend residential courses usually take place in large city centre hotels.

> **'We look forward to welcoming you on one of our courses soon'**
> SHIRLEY KIRK

"All venues have disabled access but as disabilities vary greatly it is important you let us know at the time of application so that we can meet your needs."

Courses usually run from 0930 to 1630. Weekend residential courses normally begin at 1800 on a Friday and finish after lunch on Sunday.

For some courses you are asked to bring copies of local policies and procedures or some basic information about your branch/workplace.

You will be sent precise details with your joining instructions

"We can usually help with child or dependent care, so please advise us at the time of application", said Shirley.

"It should be possible to provide free crèche facilities on request, particularly for residential courses or make an allowance to assist with additional childcare costs.

"We strongly advise you to tell your manager now that you are arranging to go on a course. Local procedures will be different for making the request but your branch can help with this."

You can download further information on courses and an application form at unison-scotland.org/ learning/ and we also have a facebook page - search UNISON Scotland learning and organising.

Completed application forms should be signed by your branch education officer or branch secretary and returned without delay.

You should apply at least 28 days before the course begins.

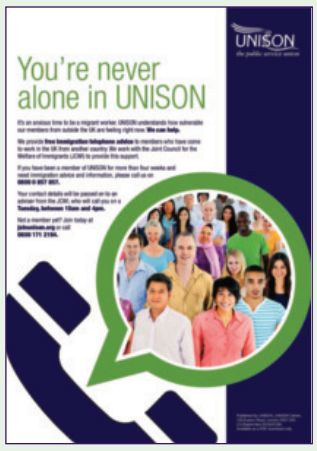
"We look forward to welcoming you on one of our courses soon", said Shirley.

More info: unison-scotland.org/learning
Facebook: UNISON Scotland Learning & Organising

Immigration advice for UNISON members

Are you, or do you know a member who has come to work in the UK from another country? If so, UNISON can provide free immigration telephone advice.

UNISON is working with the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) to provide this support.



We know that it's an anxious time to be a migrant worker. UNISON understands how vulnerable our members from outside the UK are feeling right now. We can help.

Anyone who has been a member of UNISON for more than four weeks and needs immigration advice and information, can call us on 0800 0 857 857.

Contact details will be passed on to an adviser from the JCWI, who will call the member on a Tuesday, between 10am and 4pm.

Remember, it is easy to join UNISON today, just go to joinunison.org or call 0800 171 2194.

Thanks to Gordon Lees as he retires

East Renfrewshire Branch said farewell to education convener, Gordon Lees last month as he left the council after 25 years' service.

Known for his chirpy disposition, Gordon has been involved in East Renfrewshire UNISON branch from the very start back in 1996 and takes with him his Oracle like knowledge of terms and conditions, Single Status and representation skills.

Based in Eastwood High School, Gordon not only represented members in his workplace, but many across the council and at regional level on local government and education matters.

Branch secretary Steven Larkin said, "We wish Gordon all the very best for the future, he will leave a huge gap in the branch but we wish him a long and happy retirement."

UNISON Labour Link News

Meeting with MSPs a powerful route to Scottish Parliament

UNISON Labour Link met in September with UNISON's group of Labour MSPs to discuss joint working.

The Labour group of MSPs is David Stewart, Rhoda Grant, Alex Rowley and Sarah Boyack.

Simon Macfarlane, political officer and Fiona Montgomery from Bargaining and Campaigns raised with the MSPs the pressing need to increase local government funding and to reform local government finance.

Simon said, "We drew MSPs attention to the Reid Foundation report UNISON had commissioned earlier this year on local government finance.

"The UNISON group is well placed to advance these issues with Rhoda holding the finance brief and Sarah the local government brief on the Labour front bench."

Simon and Fiona also raised issues around the expansion of early years and lack of staffing and financial resources to deliver this by qualified and appropriately paid staff.

The issues arising out of the Sturrock report into bullying in NHS Highland were also on the agenda.

Simon added, "David Stewart who sits on the Health and Sport Committee, was able to use information raised in the meeting to press the Health Minister later that day on what was happening on the promised but yet undelivered separate report in to management of the HSCP in Argyll & Bute."

UNISON LABOUR LINKSCOTLAND

Commenting on the meeting Simon said: "It was really good to meet with our MSPs and talk about issues we can work on together. Labour Link gives a powerful route in for UNISON to get things raised and addressed in the Scottish Parliament.

"I am pleased we have put dates in the diary for the next year to continue these meetings."

Get general election ready

Labour Link is gearing up for a general election as the chaotic situation at Westminster makes this prospect increasingly likely.

Simon Macfarlane, Political Officer, said, "We have circulated preliminary information to Labour Link Officers and branches on getting ready for a general election.

"It is vital that Labour Link plays a full part in the general election campaign and that public services and trade union issues are at the heart of the debate."

If your branch doesn't have a Labour Link officer please contact Simon Macfarlane if you want to discuss how you can get involved
s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk
07703 194132

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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Published by UNISON Scottish Council, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX.