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revitalising our public services

scottish council activists bulletin

# Scotland in UNISON

October 2006 No. 63

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## New phase in Scottish Local Government Pensions campaign

# Timetable to build new Scottish pension scheme

by John Stevenson  
SiU Editor

**A new Scottish local government pensions deal has taken a step closer with unions and employers set to start hammering out a timetable on 1 November.**

This follows the Scottish Executive recognising a Scottish scheme would need more time to develop, breaking any remaining links with the English scheme timetable.

"It is likely the scheme will be developed towards summer 2007 followed by consultation, parliamentary work and setting up systems. This probably means implementation in early 2009", said Dave Watson, UNISON's Scottish Organiser (Policy).

Unions, the Convention

of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and the Scottish Executive all come together under the oddly named SLOGPAG (Scottish Local Government Pension Advisory Group). This body is tasked with developing a new-look Local Government Pension Scheme for Scotland.

At SLOGPAG's meeting last month, CoSLA tabled a revised list of key issues that reflected separate discussions with the unions. For full details of the key issues and UNISON's position, see [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/pensions130906.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/pensions130906.html).

"In addition we have added a review of pension fund governance and indicated that there may be a number of other amendments to the scheme that reflect our



**UNISON members at the Aberdeen pensions rally earlier this year - will the new talks bring a breakthrough on a new scheme?**

consultation with members", added Dave.

Any new scheme would also have to include an equality impact assessment.

"CoSLA have retained actuaries who will work up detailed costings of a final salary scheme at different accrual rates using actual Scottish fund fig-

ures. This is the essential starting point for discussing a new scheme and will give us a clearer indication of the costs."

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## UNISON Scotland at SNP Conference

UNISON Scotland attends all conferences of the main political parties in Scotland so we were in Perth last week for the Scottish National Party Conference. We had a UNISON stall and hosted a fringe meeting with speakers from UNISON Scotland at other events.



Shona Robison & Dave Watson

Our fringe event on 'How should we Revitalise our Public Services?' had UNISON's Dave Watson as the main speaker with Shona Robison MSP, the SNP Shadow Health Minister.

Sofi Taylor (UNISON NEC) represented us in the Oxfam 'Public not Private? How to End Global Poverty' event with John McAllion (Oxfam in Scotland), Pete Wishart MSP and Linda Fabiani MSP.

Dave Watson also represented UNISON in a fringe event on 'The Scottish Energy Challenge: 2011 and beyond', hosted by Airtricity Developments (UK) Ltd. This included Richard Lochhead MSP, Shadow Environment Minister, and Brian Wilson (former Energy Minister). Dave highlighted UNISON Scotland's pamphlet 'Scotland's Energy - Scotland's Future' with a focus on renewable energy.

We were also represented at a fringe meeting on 'EU Competition Rules and Public Services' by Kenny MacLaren (Information Development Officer) who spoke alongside Councillor Kevin Stewart and Ian Hughton MEP.

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## Say no to racism - and show it

by Kevin O'Neil  
Information Development Officer

**It is that time of year when we march through the streets of Glasgow to say no to racism and fascism - and branches are urged to not just say it but show it by turning out in force with their banners.**

The STUC is calling on all trade unions, civic and community groups, political parties, public authorities and the media in Scotland to support and promote the Annual St Andrew's Day Event against Racism and Fascism on 25 November.

The event started out as a counter demonstration to right wing racists from the BNP who tried to make St Andrew's Day

their own day for action.

For many years now, the STUC has organised the march and for the second year the Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance is co-sponsoring the event.

*It has become an important event for all those who wish to eradicate racism in Scotland, attracting cross-party support and a turnout of thousands of marchers.*

The theme for this year's event is 'Love Scotland: Hate Racism'. The march will close with a celebration at the city's ABC Concert Hall in Sauchiehall Street. The event will include guest speakers, live entertainment, food and beer stalls and solidarity and craft stalls. If you are coming along then please pay a visit to the UNISON Scotland stall.

UNISON Scotland has also

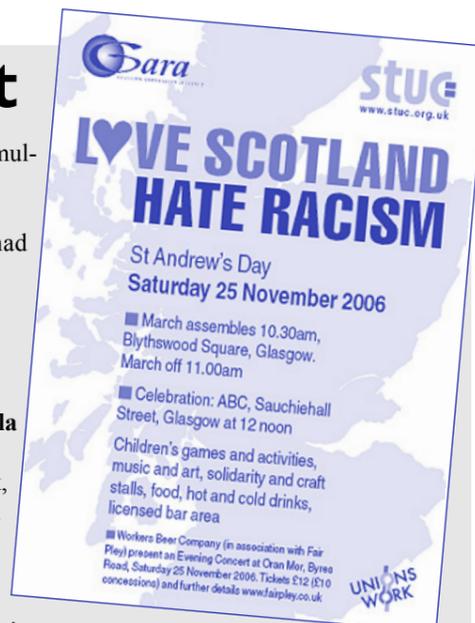
had a presence at two multicultural festivals this year. At the Glasgow Mela on 11 June we had a stall with our *Many Cultures Working in UNISON and Asylum Myths* promotional materials.

The Edinburgh Mela from 2-3 September in the capital's Pilrig Park, saw UNISON Scotland staff and activists distribute our anti racist materials.

The Edinburgh Mela is Scotland's biggest multi cultural festival with over 20,000 people passing through on both days. We were also joined by staff from *Show Racism the Red Card* who distributed some of their educational materials.

UNISON Scotland will con-

tinue to be at the forefront of combating racism and fascism. If you would like to assist at St Andrew's Day March and Rally, contact Kevin O'Neil on 0870 7777 006 [k.oneil@unison.co.uk](mailto:k.oneil@unison.co.uk) [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms/antiracism.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms/antiracism.html)



## Making campaigns successful



East Renfrewshire maps out their campaign

Running a campaign looks easy until you think of the planning, the aims, the targets, how you will involve members, what materials you'll need and how you can get media coverage.

Not least, what targets do you set and how do you know when you have won? These were all issues that participants wrestled with at this year's UNISON Scotland Strategic Campaigning school.

"We need to think of the campaign when we set the policy if we are to be really effective", stressed John Stevenson, Communications Chair and one of the tutors.

## Pensions

From page 1

The regulations implementing the tax changes have been tabled in the Scottish Parliament on 6 October. The regulations abolishing the Rule of 85 (see *Judicial Review below*) and for the more favourable Scottish transitional arrangements will be put forward shortly with an implementation date of 1 December 2006.

The minister has now published his approach to the proposed Discretionary Compensation Regulations. This has been the subject of consultation in England where the main proposal is to remove employer discretion to award compensatory added years for those made redundant or retired on the grounds of efficiency over the age of 50.

Following representations from UNISON the minister has decided *not* to publish similar proposals in Scotland. Instead he has indicated he may consider the issue again once the UK review of severance arrangements in the Teachers Pension Scheme has been completed.

Dave said: "We are pleased that the minister recognised the strength of our argument that we should avoid different provisions for staff working in the same workplace. This is a welcome decision that shows that ministers in Scotland are seriously listening to our concerns"

### Seminar 22 November

"The very welcome agreement on scope and timescales means we now have time to develop the Scottish LGPS", said Dave. "We are planning an LGPS seminar on 22 November in Glasgow from 11am to around 3pm. Details will follow and we anticipate being able to look in detail at the issues surrounding the new scheme."

### Judicial Review - Rule of 85

The decision of the judge in UNISON's case in England has been received and we lost the case. In his ruling, the judge said the consultation process was not flawed and even if the Department for Communities and Local Government had wrongly interpreted the European Directive on age discrimination to mean that they could not protect low-paid women workers in this instance, they would still have made the same decision based on cost.

See [www.unison.org.uk/pensions](http://www.unison.org.uk/pensions)

## Careers service should be returned to democratic control

UNISON has called for Scotland's careers service to be returned to democratic control.

Ministers want to move Careers Scotland out of Scottish Enterprise by April 2007 and a Scottish Executive consultation on the plan closed last month.

UNISON Scotland's response supported option four in the consultation which would see Careers Scotland run by local authorities on a regional basis.

The move was given decisive backing by Careers Scotland staff in a union survey. Up to 90% of staff are UNISON members.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser (Policy), explained that UNISON is strongly opposed to other options in the consultation. These included merger with or setting up another quango.

"We believe that the Scottish Executive should move quickly now to arrange for councils to set up four regional boards, based on the existing regional areas operated by Careers Scotland," he said.

"The careers service is a good fit with the range of responsibilities which local authorities have and ministers have rightly identified the importance of joined up service delivery. To create another centralised unaccountable

Our members overwhelmingly backed this option against any of the quango options

James Corry  
Branch Secretary

quango would be sheer folly."

James Corry, Scottish Enterprise Branch Secretary, said: "Our members overwhelmingly backed this option against any of the quango options.

"Scottish Enterprise has not been a supportive home for Careers Scotland and our members would welcome moving to local democratic control working with colleagues delivering similar services.

"We are also urging the

Scottish Executive to return the vacancy handling service to Careers Scotland as it plays a key role in our remit of reducing the number of young people not in employment or training."

Dave Watson added, "There was supposed to have been a bonfire of the quangos, yet quangos now take a considerably greater share of the public sector budget than councils. Careers Scotland is a prime example of a public service which can be incorporated into existing democratic structures."

UNISON Scotland's full consultation response is available at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/careersdemerger.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/careersdemerger.html)

## Runners raise funds for Motor Neurone Disease



Campbell Peden, South Ayrshire Branch Communications officer hands over a cheque for £250 to "Ralton's Runners" who took part in the Great Scottish Run in memory of one of their colleagues and South Ayrshire

UNISON rep John Ralton who sadly died earlier this year.

All the runners were raising funds for the Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Association. Also in picture John Kerr Branch Education Officer.

## 'Worst' pay offer and holiday cut sparks college strike ballot

Support staff at James Watt College of Further and Higher Education in Greenock are to ballot for strike action following the breakdown of pay talks.

The college made a final offer of 1.4% after a claim for £500 or 2.5%. To rub salt into the wound most of the money would not be consolidated into salaries, staff would lose three days leave and have to accept new conditions.

Robin Taggart, UNISON Inverclyde Service Conditions Officer said, "It is extremely disappointing that the college have closed the door on further talks towards a fairer settlement for this year.

"Without doubt this must be the worst pay offer I have ever experienced and to cut their

annual leave entitlement as well, compounds the insult."

Those affected are technical and administrative staff, cleaners, wardens and catering staff. UNISON is highly critical of the College's pay policy which means 20 senior managers draw salaries totalling over £1m compared to £5m for 340 support staff.

Neil Coyle, Senior steward at the college said, "People feel angry and insulted. Every year we are reminded of how critical we are to the college and students and then we get presented with a pay offer that most of us thought was a joke.

"There is a strong desire amongst our members to fight this all of the way."

## Biggest challenge faced by activists and staff

by Glyn Hawker  
Scottish Organiser

Achieving equal pay across all sectors and bargaining groups is a key priority in UNISON's objectives for 2006.

In Scotland, at this time, this priority is providing many of us with the biggest challenge that we have faced as UNISON activists and staff.

Most Universities and Higher Education establishments are making good progress in reaching local agreements on the Framework Agreement.

Police and Fire as well as some of the Non Departmental Public Bodies are also engaged in developing and implementing job evaluation schemes at a local level.

In getting to this point our activists have had to learn and use negotiating skills in ways



that they have never needed in the past.

The Agenda for Change agreement in Health is being implemented in Scotland. The scheme was designed to prevent continuing and future sex discrimination.

Health activists have been working hard, non stop, for more than two years to ensure their colleagues have been correctly matched to the new grades.

It has taken much longer than we hoped and has led to frustration that is usually brought to us rather than the employer - where it really belongs.

Thousands of Health members in Scotland have made enquires about potential equal

pay/back pay claims to the Equal Pay Unit at Thompsons Solicitors in Sheffield and more will do so in the coming weeks.

Many of these members are, quite understandably, asking why they have not received back money when friends and neighbours in Local Government have.

Local Government branches and activists are under the greatest pressure right now as they battle to introduce equality proofed agreements on the Single Status agreement.

Falkirk Council has issued notices of dismissal and re-engagement to their staff. North Lanarkshire has behaved similarly. Others have given notice or intimation of an intention to do the same.

The issues vary between groups of members and service

groups but fundamentally we are all engaged in a very hard slog to achieve equal pay for our members but the rest of the work has not gone away.

The Scottish Management Team has recently agreed a work plan to bring together all the strands of the strategy so we can share information and best practice and, if necessary, take some tough decisions about what must be de-prioritised or not done at all.

I have been asked by Scottish Secretary Matt Smith to take on responsibility for ensuring a Scottish wide overview and strategy for Equal Pay.

I would be pleased to receive suggestions for how we can best communicate with each other over the coming months.

We need enough information without it becoming too much.

## Classroom Assistants research points to unfair pay

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

**An Equal Opportunities Commission formal investigation into the role and status of Classroom Assistants in Scottish primary schools – called Valuable Assets – has shown they were working at high levels of responsibility but at the bottom end of pay.**

The staff are mostly part-time. This meant that their pay was at

the lowest of local government pay scales and indeed is little more than the statutory minimum wage. Carol Judge, UNISON's Scottish Organiser (Local Government) said, "UNISON is pleased to be working with the EOC to carry forward this important research.

"We are aware that Classroom Assistants do a wide range of jobs, jobs that can contribute significantly to the learning and teaching of children.



**Classroom Assistants undervalued**  
- Carol Judge

"We have said for some time that they are undervalued for what they do and will be looking forward to the forthcoming investigation into the higher level roles and the impact of the part-time gender pay gap."

The research has found that

Classroom Assistants are 99% women who mostly work (and are paid for) term time only.

They typically are aged 31-50. However their salary is paid over the whole year resulting in an hourly rate of between £5.05 and £8.93. The current minimum wage is £5.05 per hour for workers aged 22 and over.

The results were reported to a meeting of UNISON's Local Government Group in Edinburgh last month.

## Dawn raids slammed as UNISON issues guidance on asylum seeker children

by Chris Bartter  
and John Stevenson

**UNISON and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) have launched a guidance booklet for social workers in Scotland. It advises on ethical practice for social work staff dealing with asylum-seeker children.**

A commitment was made by the UK Immigration Minister back in March to ensure that asylum-seekers' children would be assessed and each would have a lead professional appointed. In addition immigration staff dealing with children would have to have enhanced disclosure checks.

These commitments have not yet been implemented, but UNISON is exerting more pressure following a spate of recent 'dawn raids' by immigration officials outwith the agreed protocol.

Reports say one raid resulted in young children being separated from their parents and driven off by



Mandy McDowall, Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson at the launch

people who were strangers to them.

Co-authors of the booklet, Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson of UNISON, formally launched the advice with Ronnie Barnes of BASW at an SSSC conference in Edinburgh on 19 October.

Kate said, "We are concerned that immigration law compromises children's rights under Scottish law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"We hope this guide will support our members in ensuring

wherever they can, that the welfare of the child is paramount.

"This is a guide for ethical practice and we will not be part of giving a humane face to inhumane practices like 'dawn raids'."

Co-author of the booklet, Ruth Stark of BASW said, "Social Work is a discipline which is underpinned by principles and ethics. A key part of that is to advocate for people's rights within the UN Conventions."

After the recent 'dawn raids',

UNISON's Scottish Secretary Matt Smith wrote to First Minister Jack McConnell calling on him to act urgently.

The letter said: "These actions fly in the face of the very protections that Scottish child care legislation, guidance and policy seek to ensure."

"We entered constructively into talks with the Scottish Executive and backed an agreement that meant asylum seeker children would be assessed, would have a lead professional and their services would be inspected. The Home Office was meant to consult to ensure children's needs were recognised. This is just not happening and we need to know why", said Matt

"As a nation we should be proud of these laws which put children first. How can we reconcile that with 'dawn raids' that treat innocent children like criminals?", he added.

The booklet will be circulated to branches and is at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/socialwork/asylumbooklet](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/socialwork/asylumbooklet).

## Fourth option needed as Stirling and Renfrewshire reject stock transfer

**As we went to print, news was breaking of Renfrewshire council house tenants' close rejection of housing stock transfer.**

This followed Stirling tenants' rejection a week earlier and brought renewed calls from UNISON for a 'fourth option' to allow investment in council housing like that on offer to transfers, PFI or arms-length companies.

Renfrewshire UNISON's Mark Ferguson pledged the union's commitment to tenants.

"We always said we would fight alongside them to get direct funding and to get the Scottish Executive to change its policy", he said.

Lesley Russell, UNISON Stirling's Joint Branch Secretary said, "We are pleased tenants have delivered such a decisive vote in favour of retaining demo-

cratic control over their houses.

"They have refused to be coerced by threats to future investments. Now they deserve serious investments in stock improvements."

UNISON has fought against council house transfers for some time alongside tenants, other trade unions and housing campaigners.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser for Policy said, "This result and the previous decision in Edinburgh, shows that there is a pressing need for the Government to allow democratically accountable councils to have the same ability to invest in housing as other stock owners.

"Direct investment would be cheaper and deliver faster improvements, yet government persists in forcing tenants into unwanted stock transfer."

## Don't impose, negotiate!



**Falkirk Council UNISON members have lobbied their council and the SNP Annual Conference in Perth against threats to tear up everyone's existing contracts and impose new pay, grades and conditions.**

This is an attempt by the Council to impose their proposed job evaluation on staff rather than negotiate

the changes needed by equal pay legislation and the single status agreement.

Gray Allan, UNISON Falkirk's Branch Secretary (pictured centre) said, "Members have shown their anger about the council's threats.

"UNISON has made it clear that we do not accept their attempt to force people to accept worse pay and conditions".

## New rules outlaw age discrimination

by Kate Ramsden  
Communications Committee

**New laws which came into force on 1 October will outlaw discrimination by employers on the grounds of age.**

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 make it illegal for employers to discriminate against employees, trainees or job seekers because of age and ensure that all workers, regardless of age, have the same rights to training and promotion.

### What this means for you

You can no longer be forced to retire before 65 unless your employer can justify this because of the needs of the job.

You will have the right to request to work beyond your 65th birthday and your employer must consider this.

You'll get at least 6 months notice of your retirement date so that you can plan better and be sure it is not being used as a cover up for unfair dismissal.

The upper limit for unfair dismissal and redundancy has been removed and there are now no age limits for statutory sick pay, maternity, paternity and adoption pay. However benefits can continue where they depend on length of service of 5 years or less and reward loyalty and experience.

The regulations don't affect the age at which you can claim your pension and there are exemptions for many age-based rules in occupational pension schemes.

For more information go to [www.agepositive.gov.uk](http://www.agepositive.gov.uk)

## Communications awards are back

The Scottish Communications Awards have been re-born after a gap of four years.

Branches and self organised groups are invited to submit entries for the best publication, best use of electronic media and best campaign.



Winners will be presented with a cash prize and certificate at December's Scottish Council and can incorporate the competition symbol in future publications. All entrants are promised a helpful critique.

"We know that there are many excellent publications and websites out there and that a great deal of campaigning work goes on day in, day out. We think it is important to recognise and reward this, and that is why we are delighted to see the Awards reborn!"

said Chris Bartter, on behalf of the Campaigns and Communications Committee.

**Entries must be submitted by 3 November.** For Rules and Entry forms see [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/awards](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/awards).

# Water: resist the drift to privatisation

**Keeping water in public hands is more efficient and more sustainable, a special STUC water conference was told last week.**

Delegates from a range of organisations gathered in Glasgow for the conference. The main aim was to launch research commissioned from the Public Interest Research Network (PIRN) at the University of Strathclyde; "Scottish Water - The Drift to Privatisation".

Professors David Miller and Christine Cooper presented the findings of their research into the regulation of Scottish Water, the various factors that are tending towards the privatisation and the policy options ahead.

Professor Miller's key message was, "It is clear that the international financial

**"Although mutualisation sounds attractive it only provides a façade of democracy as the banks would control the organisation and all services would be privatised"**

**Dave Watson**



institutions, together with EU directives are exerting pressure on the Scottish Executive to privatise Scottish Water.

"Some suggest that mutualisation is an alternative to privatisation, but our research shows that in the current context, mutualisation is simply privatisation by the back door.

"There are alternatives to privatisation which would have the advantage of being

more efficient, more sustainable and more democratic. A revitalised public sector utilising models from countries like Sweden could keep water in public hands and have the added advantage of costing customers significantly less".

Other speakers at the conference included economists Jim and Margaret Cuthbert who argued that water privatisation is inevitable unless the pricing model used by the

regulator is challenged.

Kirstie Shirra from the World Development Movement presented a short film and led a discussion examining the international experience of water privatisation.

On behalf of the STUC water unions, UNISON's Dave Watson told delegates: "Scottish Water should remain publicly owned and accountable. Although mutualisation sounds attractive it only provides a façade of democracy as the banks would control the organisation and all services would be privatised."

The next steps for the trade unions will be to work with others to promote the analysis in the PIRN report, oppose privatisation and develop the Scottish public service model.

## Scottish Black Members training marks success



**This year's Scottish black members training weekend brought in new and old members to learn and organise, to contribute to the work of UNISON Scotland - defending the rights of its members by eliminating all forms of discrimination at all levels, reports Ismail Donmez, Scottish Black Members Secretary.**

Lothian Health's Tina Makedinge praised the input of Bob Cotton Award Winner, Ghulam Rasul Shahzad, who was brought up especially from England to tutor on the course.

Glasgow's Akinola Obefemi agreed, "The tutors were master of the topics they lectured. They got us really involved."

Hamid Rasheed, Scottish Black Members Chair, said, "It all started when the SBMC realised that there is lot of goodwill and support for our cause in the Scottish Learning and Organising Committee and Scottish Branches.

"Our aim was if branches are happy to cover the cost of training of more than one delegates, then they must get the best Black tutor in the UK

"Organising the training weekend was a daunting challenge. It was in 2004 when we last had such an event. There were loads of problems and obstacles in our way, for example there are no fully qualified Black tutors in UNISON Scotland".

He thanked Anne Cascarino, Scottish Learning and Organising Officer, for her support in getting the event together. The measure of the success was that:-

- 85% delegates were new to the training event
- Excellent interactive tutorial inputs, with high levels of delegate satisfaction
- Highly motivated delegates' participation in all the training exercises
- Explicit commitment of Scottish Branches to send more than one delegate this year compared to past years.

## UNISON sponsors UK Asian Football Championships

**UNISON Scotland is proud to sponsor the UK Asian Football Championships (UKAFC) for the first time this year.**

The UKAFC, now in its eighth year, is the highest profile Asian football tournament in the UK.

Asian players are still under-represented in the professional football leagues. The championships aim to be a showcase for current talented Asian footballers and also to breakdown the barriers for Asians in sports in the future.

They aim to challenge racism and inequality and breakdown the stereotypes and perceptions at all levels of the game not just by playing but by participating in workshops to build plans for anti-racist work in football

during the weekend. The event also brings together all the communities of Glasgow in a sporting arena for a fun day out.

Asian football teams from across the UK have competed for the eight places in the finals with one place reserved for a Scottish team as hosts of the event.

The early rounds for this year's championship will be played at Glasgow Green on 3 & 4 November with the final at Ibrox Stadium on 5 November.

The following teams have qualified for this year's tournament: Sems (Scotland), Sporting Benegal, London Apsa, Blackburn, Smethwick Rangers, Albion Sports, London GSA, Smethwick United.



Entry to all games is free so please go along to this fun family event. For further details contact: Kevin O'Neil Information Development Officer 0870 7777 006 Email: k.oneil@unison.co.uk Or visit: www.semsa.co.uk

## Palestine and Lebanon: NEC gives £5,000 for humanitarian aid

**UNISON's National Executive has donated £5,000 for humanitarian relief in the Lebanon and Palestine through Medical Aid to Palestine (MAP).**

After the horror of the conflict in Lebanon throughout the summer months, the eyes of the world have moved on to other causes, but the work of reconstructing that country is just beginning.

Over one million people have been displaced by the fighting in the south of Lebanon and the damage to the infrastructure by Israeli bombing raids is immense.

As well as dealing with the refugee crisis, water and energy supplies are disrupted, many roads and bridges have been destroyed and there remains a need for emergency medical supplies.

Medical Aid has been working with local organisations to provide emergency assistance and the NEC



**Report from NEC member Jane Carolan**

donation will be used to help in emergency relief.

Meanwhile the crisis in Palestine itself continues. Following democratic elections there, western governments have been intent on punishing the Palestinian people by withholding aid and refusing to deal with the leadership they elected.

This has led to the Palestinian Authority facing a funding crisis. For those who work in the public sector it has meant wages have not been paid. But more than that, as the authority cannot pay any of its bills the Palestinians face shortages of medical supplies, electricity, food

and water. MAP's emergency projects emphasise the need for essential drugs, medical equipment, and food.

As well as providing financial assistance, the NEC and the General Secretary have been involved in the political campaign over the summer months in the call for a ceasefire in Lebanon, taking it to the highest levels of government by writing to the Foreign Secretary and taking adverts in the national press in an effort to influence public opinion.

UNISON has also sought to provide support and material help to the Lebanese trade union movement.

At this time of the 40th anniversary of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the support of the trade union movement for the Palestinian cause remains crucial, and the demand for a free Palestinian state is as urgent as ever.

UNISON has a long involvement with the PGFTU, the Palestinian

trade union federation, and has provided a variety of material support as well as solidarity over the years. This involvement is set to continue.

Our union is also involved in the new campaign "End the Occupation" that is intended to focus on the abuse of Palestinian rights and the denial of the Palestinian People of their own state as long called for in international law and UN resolutions.

Further information on these campaigns can be found at the UNISON website. If branches wish to make a donation to MAP or find out more about relief efforts, then check out [www.map-uk.org](http://www.map-uk.org) or [www.scottishpsc.org.uk](http://www.scottishpsc.org.uk).

## New on the web

- Western Isles Health Branch is Scotland's newest branch website
  - Lifelong learning updates
  - New-Look LGPS for Scotland Briefing
  - Transforming Public Services Response
  - National Standards Relating to Healthcare Support Workers in Scotland Response
  - Local Government Pension Scheme Key Issues Briefing.
- [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/updates.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/updates.html)

## We want to hear your news

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