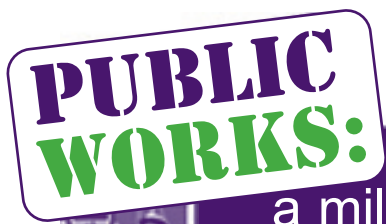


Members give huge Yes to political fund - p3



a million voices for public services

December 2014 No.111

# Scotland in UNISON

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

## Engage the people in devolution plans

**Devolved powers only matter if there is the political will to use them to create a fairer Scotland'**

by John Stevenson  
SiU Editor

**While welcoming many of the Smith Commission proposals on new powers for Scotland, UNISON has called for a wider public engagement as the process goes through parliament.**

And the union's briefing on the proposals (available on the website) gave the key warning that: "Devolved powers only matter if there is the political will to use them to create a fairer Scotland."

In a statement on the day of publication, UNISON Scottish secretary Mike Kirby said: "The Commission received a remarkable number of submissions, and that civic engagement must be

developed as the proposals now make their way through the Westminster process."

UNISON Scotland convener Lilian Macer welcomed the positives but also pointed to missed opportunities.

"The referendum has shown us in UNISON that the people of Scotland care passionately about public services and social justice.

"There is a real appetite within our membership to take control of their own destiny and to make a meaningful contribution within a socially just Scotland.

"Whilst there are some positives in the Smith Commission, the failure to devolve the minimum wage and equalities legislation is a significant missed opportunity.

"Only limited



**Marching to the GMB pipe band playing Jingle Bells - where else could it be but Glasgow? The UNISON Scotland contingent joined the STUC's St Andrew's Day rally against racism on 29 November.**

devolution of housing benefit, falling short of separating it from universal credit, has the potential to create confusion and administrative challenges."

"The Smith agreement constitutes a shift of some

powers to Scotland, particularly fiscal measures, although more work is needed on the mechanisms to ensure they deliver the spirit and intention behind the agreement. It can only

take us so far.

"Our role now is to work with other trade unions and civic society to continue the campaign for the levers and enablers to deliver real social change for Scotland."

### Communications Awards 2014

**Don't be too modest! Enter the 2014 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 categories are:

- Best Printed Publication
- Best Campaign
- Best online presence
- Special Recruitment Prize

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

Branches and self organised groups can enter on the UNISON Scotland website at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms) by the closing date of **Wednesday 14 January.**

The awards will be presented at the February Scottish Council meeting.

## Bhopal: Hardship but incredible courage and kindness

by John Stevenson  
from delegation reports

**UNISON Scotland's Sam Macartney and Scott Donohoe were part of a trade union delegation to Bhopal in India to mark the 30th anniversary of the Union Carbide disaster that resulted in 25,000 deaths, left 120,000 chronically ill and continues to maim generations.**

The anniversary rally took place on Wednesday 3 December with a march by all the families and supporters to the Bhopal plant walls.

Later a new movie about

the disaster called 'A Prayer for Rain' featuring Martin Sheen was screened. Many of the survivors and their families attended, some having never set foot in a cinema before.

"I was very moved by the fragile condition of many, yet they came and sat through an event that must have brought back horrific memories to them all", said Sam Macartney, chair of UNISON Scotland's International Committee.

"During my time here I have witnessed some terrible hardship and deprivation. But also some incredible courage and kindness."

A view backed by Scott



Donohoe, Health and Safety chair, who said: "The levels of poverty in Bhopal are truly shocking."

On a roasting hot day, water was provided along the route. Many were fasting for 30 hours to

### What you can do to help

- Donate to the Bhopal Medical Appeal
- Build awareness by inviting Sam or Scott to speak at a meeting after their trip.

mark the 30 years since the disaster. A fast Sam joined because: "It is the least I could do after what we have seen."

On the previous days, Sam and Scott took part in a demonstration (pictured) after being shown around the Bhopal Sambhavna medical aid clinic which supports the victims and their families.

The Chingari rehab clinic supports over 200 children who have suffered

due to the poison from the chemical spill from the Bhopal plant.

Since its inception in 2006, Chingari, founded by gas victims Rashida Bee and Champa Devi Shukla, has helped 740 children and grandchildren of gas victims.

There were visits to the workplace of the women who have taken the fight to the courts and the Indian government.

Turn to page 2.

## FE suffers 'social engineering' cuts

A view from the front line by steward Dougie Deans

The media across the UK have been reporting on the meltdown of Further Education.

Our own FE sector in Scotland has suffered at the hands of the Scottish Government that has set in motion social engineering to "Keep University Fees Free" by robbing the further education sector budget.

The government has hidden behind a voluntary severance scheme (redundancy by a different name) and we in the sector have lost a wealth of experience and skills which we will find difficult to recover even with replacement staff in some places.

UNISON members have fought long and hard to deflect forced college mergers through a range of awareness raising events via the media, local communities and presentations to Holyrood but all to no avail.

We appreciate all sectors including police, fire, councils and the NHS are experiencing difficulties but at the start of this recession caused by the bankers' greed, retraining and education were seen as building blocks to get the country back on its feet again. It seems that statement was away off the mark.

Another statement which is driving the knife further into further education was the parting shot from first minister Alex Salmond. The Scottish Government's commitment to providing free university education is now "writ in stane", he declared as he unveiled a monument to his administration's "biggest achievement".

How blunt can you get about "writ in stane"? "We took great delight in robbing the FE budget to Keep Uni Fees Free"?

## Bhopal: We will not forget them



Wreath laying by UNISON branches at Edinburgh's Greyfriars was one of a number of events across Scotland.

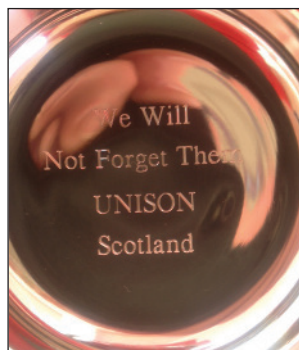
From Page 1

"They have their own trade union now but they still haven't received justice for the disaster", said Sam.

After a "harrowing but moving" visit to the Bhopal People's Disaster Museum, Sam and Scott joined families, activists and campaigners on a torchlight rally to the old factory walls.

"This was incredible. Real torches steeped in paraffin were carried through the city for about two miles", said Sam.

See the website, blog and facebook for more updates and photos. Most of all donate to the medical appeal at bhopal.org.



Presented to trade unions and NDOs by the delegation.

## Fighting PFI at Lanarkshire Health

Lanarkshire Health Branch is campaigning to bring 'soft' facilities management services, currently provided by PFI providers, back in-house as the contract comes up for its seven year review.

The branch has produced a

petition and written to all local MPs and MSPs.

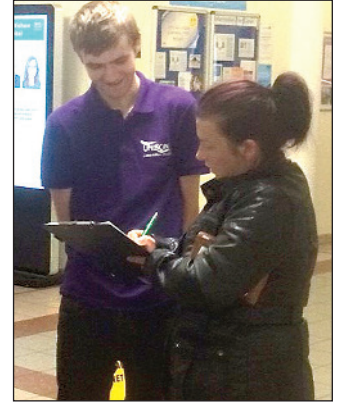
"We have been collecting signatures at NHSL hospitals and from the general public at weekends", said assistant branch secretary Margo Cranmer.

"We have also met with several Lanarkshire MSPs and

MPs who have all pledged support for our campaign.

"We have also written letters to the new Cabinet Secretary for Health as well as the ministers for Public Health and Sport and Wellbeing.

Photo: The branch gets another petition signature.



# 17,234 Can we really afford that any more?

by David Malcolm

Police Scotland Branch

UNISON Police Staff Scotland branch took to the streets of Perth during the Scottish National Party's conference on 15 November with a clear message; police staff are bearing the brunt of unjust cuts and we want that to stop.

During the Scottish parliamentary elections the SNP pledged an additional 1,000 police officers for the streets of Scotland based on an arbitrary assumption.

There was no meaningful research carried out, there was no recommendation from the police service, it was simply a figure plucked out of the air to outdo the pledge from the Scottish Conservatives of an additional 500 police officers.

Now that the political promise has been fulfilled with police officer numbers maintained at 17,234 there is still pressure on the Police Service of Scotland to make savings under the ongoing public sector budget cuts.

For the next year an additional £107 million is still to be found on top of what has already been saved with the majority of those savings already coming from the redundancy of police staff.

UNISON Police Staff Scotland branch wanted to get that message to the SNP, that their party in government has to re-think this pledge and allow the Chief Constable to find a balance letting police officers carry out the jobs requiring a warrant card and police staff to deliver best value matching



Eighty trade unionists from PCS Scotland and the Glasgow, Renfrewshire, Dundee and Scottish Police UNISON branches plus bedroom tax and disability rights campaigners took their anti-cuts message to SNP conference delegates in Perth on 15 November, reports Glasgow City's Brian Smith.

Hundreds of UNISON "No Cuts" leaflets calling on Scotland's politicians to refuse to make any more Tory cuts were distributed to delegates including to MSPs, MPs and Councillors. Speakers from PCS, UNISON and the anti-bedroom tax federation made the arguments for politicians not to make any

more cuts while leading a mass campaign to win more money from Westminster. As we went to print, the UNISON Scottish Council planned for 6 December was to be asked to consider whether to support similar lobbies of the Scottish Labour and Scottish Tory conferences in the spring of 2015.

fingerprints, taking calls, writing court files, caring for prisoners, answering the radio and tasking the police with their duties.

It is clear to those who work in the service that the additional extra officers are not on the streets but instead backfilling the posts vacated by redundant staff.

And while we are not asking for police to lose their jobs we are asking, how much more can police staff be expected to take?

How much more of us will be axed to allow for this outdated

manifesto pledge to continue?

UNISON Police Staff Scotland branch secretary George McIrvine took this question to Perth ably assisted by a team of branch activists from the length and breadth of the country.

They were looking for the new members of the SNP party, who claim their membership has increased dramatically, to seek out the answer from their party and influence the policy to maintain this unfounded

minimum number of officers and let the Chief Constable make decisions on policing for Scotland.

Even if every member of police staff was made redundant there would still not be enough savings made to meet the expected £107 million target.

There is another way and UNISON believes that a balance can be found with the right amount of police staff and officers delivering best value policing for Scotland.

## 'The colours of Edinburgh' - the city at its best

Review by Kate Ramsden  
Comms & Campaigns Committee

By his own admission, John Stevenson's booklet, 'The Colours of Edinburgh' is not a tourist guide but a subjective collection of photographs from a lifelong Edinburger, to share a love of the city and its colours. Well, it is all the better for that.

In its pages John's passion for the city of his birth and his life shines through, from the beautifully crafted photographs, to the quirky "interesting facts" to go with them,

set out with John's usual humour and lightness of touch.

The photographs themselves are the stars of the booklet and show Edinburgh in all its seasons and at its absolute best.

From a summer evening to a winter blizzard on the Royal Mile, to a "dreich, wet and grainy night" on Fleshmarket Close, to sunset over the castle - all evoke a real sense of the city for

those of us who know it and I am sure will be a spur to visit for those who don't.

The beautiful architecture of the city is also celebrated, not just the buildings but also the bridges which form both the foundations and the connective structures of a city built on seven hills. The stunning photograph of Dean Bridge from



below is a particular favourite for me.

But as the title would suggest, what grips about the book is the colours. John shows in his photography a great eye for colour and every photograph has its own particular and authentic shades and hues, depending on the time of day, the time of year, the weather.

Proceeds of 'The Colours of Edinburgh' will go to UNISON City of Edinburgh's Welfare Fund and to Community HEART. At a mere £3 per copy from the City of Edinburgh Branch this is a great buy.

## Huge vote to keep UNISON's political voice

In a massive majority to keep UNISON's voice, 87% of members balloted have voted to keep the union's political fund.

"Our members have spoken loud and clear that they want UNISON to continue to promote

their interests at European, national and local levels", said Lilian Macer, UNISON Scotland convener.

"This is in spite of the government's cynical 'gagging act' that aims to reduce the lobbying power of trade unions

while the Tories happily sit back and pocket millions from corporate and financial elites."

General secretary Dave Prentis said: "UNISON campaigns hard to defend jobs and decent employment standards, to promote public

services and equality, and to protect the health and safety of our members, and this is possible because of the political fund."

This is the third successful vote since the Thatcher law that requires a ballot every 10 years.

## Holiday pay Don't delay

by Peter Hunter  
Legal Officer

UNISON's ground breaking holiday pay campaign continues to make progress with employers across Scotland waking up to the reality that workers must get their normal wages when they take the 20 days leave guaranteed by the EU Working Time Directive.

The position will become steadily clearer as tribunals apply the principles set out in UNISON's 'Lock v British Gas' case. What is beyond doubt is that workers who rely on commission to earn a decent wage should still get that level of payment when they take their 20 days of annual leave required by EU law. It has now been expressly confirmed that this right extends to overtime.

Although claims for other payments such as shift allowance have yet to be finally determined by a tribunal it is clear from the commission and overtime cases that holiday pay should reflect all regular payments that are linked to the performance of work. In future your holiday pay will look pretty much like your normal pay, at least for the EU guaranteed minimum of 20 days.

Early reports on the Lock case speculated that these holiday pay claims could be back dated for 10-15 years, back to the introduction of the Working Time rules. A recent EAT decision has rejected the backdating argument on the basis that that most, if not all, old claims will be time barred.

The safe response, as in all such situations, is to take advice and ask to lodge a claim if you believe you have been short changed. As with all tribunal cases, there are strict time limits for when a claim must be submitted: for these cases it is three months, less one day, from date of the last alleged underpayment following a period of statutory annual leave.

If you think you may have been underpaid talk to your local UNISON rep or branch now. The strict time limits mean that you might lose out if you delay.

## 'Dangerous decision' to cut mental health service



GAMH campaign: UNISON members, service users, community groups and the public lobbied Glasgow City Council on 12 November to warn 'cuts cost lives'.

by Danny Phillips  
Communications Officer

UNISON has announced an escalation in its campaign to save Glasgow Association of Mental Health (GAMH).

The union is contacting city councillors to demand face to face meetings to ask them if they will support the campaign.

UNISON has also written to the leader of Glasgow City Council, Gordon Matheson, for urgent talks.

The union understands that GAMH managers have met with Glasgow Council officials.

GAMH managers say officials tell them they will be recommending that councillors make the decision to cut GAMH funding by 40%.

UNISON and GAMH

managers and staff maintain that a 40% cut to their funding will effectively close GAMH and end a central part of the city's community mental health services.

Deborah Dyer, UNISON's organiser for the voluntary sector said: "We are appalled by what is happening. The council know what a dangerous decision this will be and they are therefore all trying to blame each other.

"Officers first said they were making the decision, now they see the strength of feeling they are wanting the councillors to officially cut the service."

"Hundreds of vulnerable people with complex mental health problems face an uncertain Christmas.

"They have no idea if the

People with complex mental health problems face an uncertain Christmas'

Deborah Dyer

support services they need will be available in 2015.

"We have written to council leader Gordon Matheson to demand an urgent meeting and to ask he be true to his word when he said he would do everything he could to promote mental health in Glasgow."

UNISON is accusing the leader of breaking a promise to the people of Glasgow. The Director of Public Health Report at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde said 'mental health is one of the most important public

health challenges we face in Glasgow'.

Gordon Matheson said to the report: "All of the resources of this council will be brought to bear on mitigating the harmful effects of the current financial crisis and ensuring the financial success of this city.

"In doing so we hope to contribute not only to protecting jobs locally but also to encourage growth and economic opportunities for our citizens and will be a key partner in promoting good mental health and well-being in Glasgow."

Deborah Dyer said: "When Gordon Matheson said this I don't think anyone thought he meant that he would decimate Glasgow's community mental health services by shutting down GAMH."

## There are no jobs on a dead planet

by Fiona Montgomery  
Info and Development Officer

Climate activists around the world are stepping up campaigning to focus on crucial United Nations talks in December 2015.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland chair Tom Ballantine told UNISON's International Committee last month that the focus here and abroad in the next year is on pressing world leaders to agree a binding deal to cut emissions.

The Paris meeting next December follows the UN talks in Lima, Peru, earlier this month where SCCS campaigners and

Scottish politicians promoted the Scottish Climate Change Act as a good example of strong legislation to protect the planet.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called world leaders together in New York in September urging the importance of a global deal, warning there is no "Planet B", as millions took part in demonstrations here and around the world.

The ITUC's Sharan Burrow highlighted trade unions' calls for a Just Transition to a low carbon economy and for climate justice, saying there are no jobs on a dead planet.

There will be plenty of opportunities for UNISON and

other SCCS members to support a range of lobbying, campaigning and events in the build up to Paris, including promotion internationally of a short film on Scotland's world leading Act.

SCCS work will include lobbying during the General Election campaign, mass lobbies of MSPs at Holyrood and MPs at Westminster next June and demonstrations in Edinburgh, London and around the world next summer.

Tom updated the Committee members in Glasgow on the overwhelming climate science showing the need to prevent global temperatures rising by

more than 2 degrees.

He said: "We had Scotland's biggest ever climate change demonstration, The Wave, in Glasgow in 2009 for the Copenhagen talks.

"Next summer we need a really big mobilisation to show world leaders there is massive support for a strong global deal."

Work will also continue in pushing the Scottish Government for sufficient action to meet Scotland's ambitious targets, after the first three were missed.

Details of events, the SCCS film and other campaigning will be carried on the UNISON Scotland and SCCS websites.

## Scarey sign-up



In an imaginative initiative, Ayrshire and Arran Health branch mounted a successful Halloween recruitment event in October. There was great engagement and members received a 'scream' egg and dooked for apples.

# UNISON report shows OTs struggling to maintain service

**A** report by UNISON has exposed that Scotland's occupational therapists are struggling to maintain the level of service their patients need in light of budget cuts and staffing shortages.

Those surveyed in the report – *Under Pressure: Scotland's occupational therapists speak out* – said they had huge concerns about the impact cuts are having on the service.

An overwhelming majority (82%) reported increased workloads, 60% reported having to cope with reduced members of staff and almost half (48%) reported funding cuts.

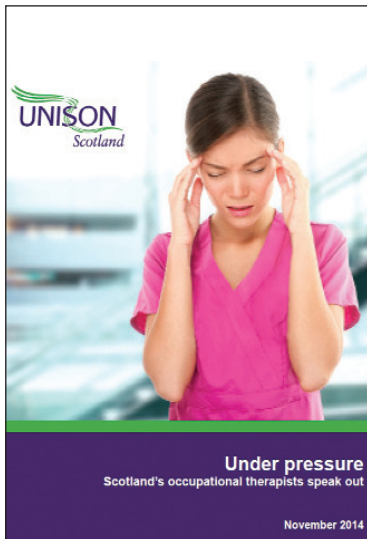
There were recurring themes among the concerns: assessments being overruled because of resource pressures; and failure by management to replace absent colleagues, specifically for maternity leave which, given the virtually all-female composition of the workforce, is more common than in many other groups of staff.

When asked if they regularly worked more than their contracted hours 60% of respondents said they did – an extra five hours a week was the average.

While the majority (58%) of respondents reported their standard of living had dropped in the last 3-4 years.

Some of the views included:

- “Staffing has gone down in the last few years but the same level of service is expected. You begin to dread someone saying they are pregnant because you know you will be left really short during



mat leave which is an unpleasant feeling because you want to be pleased for people's good news.”

- “Senior managers are now scrutinising OT recommendations and refusing some, despite a qualified OT having made the clinical decision.”
- “Everything costs more but pay doesn't match the increase. I have to be careful to only buy essentials when shopping.”

Sandra Dee Masson, an occupational therapist and vice chair of UNISON Scotland's Health Committee, said:

“Occupational therapy plays a vital role and yet isn't taken into account when planning services and looking forward to patient care.

“Failing to properly utilise occupational therapists in the planning process completely undermines the effectiveness of change. There are instances where patients are discharged from hospital with inadequate OT consideration which results in readmission.

“Better investment in and coordination with occupational therapists would not only improve the patient journey, but it would improve outcomes, deliver better value for public money and improve the working lives of a dedicated group of workers who are very definitely under pressure.”

Dave Watson, UNISON's head of bargaining and campaigns, said: “The picture that emerges from this report is one of a dedicated but frustrated workforce wanting to deliver a service but finding it increasingly difficult to do so.

“Pressures on budgets and changes to service delivery mean they are increasingly unable to deliver a service to the standard of which they are capable. Workforce demand is increasing while the workforce itself is diminishing.

“This is played out against a backdrop of the majority of the workforce finding that their own personal circumstances are becoming more difficult as inflation and minimal or absent pay rises eat away at the value of their wages.”

## Stars in our schools



**S**chools across Scotland celebrated the hard work of their school support staff by holding ‘Stars in our Schools’ events last month.

UNISON organised the day to celebrate the wonderful work they do every day and to make sure the world knows just how vital they are to children's education.

It takes a whole team to make a school a safe and happy place for children to learn.

But often, school support staff are tucked behind the scenes - the unsung heroes of our children's education.

Schools held awards ceremonies and special assemblies to show their appreciation to this dedicated team of workers.

# Can you afford to be homeless?

**UNISON's Scottish Housing Issues Group's (SHIG) recent meeting heard a moving account from a steward of the human cost of Con Dem austerity which now means people are asked, ‘Can you afford to be Homeless?’**

The steward, who works in the homeless unit of a Scottish council followed up the report with the following harrowing account of homelessness in Scotland today.

“You do not need to be living on the street and sleeping rough to be homeless. Long gone is the image of a person looking poor and unkempt who sleeps in a damp alleyway. Sadly of course, this still exists.

“You can however be homeless for a number of reasons such as;

“Staying temporarily between family and friends, risk from abuse in your tenancy, your house is a danger to your health, you are about to leave prison, armed forces or hospital and have nowhere to go, or

simply suffering from addiction or mental health issues or even both.

“Such a situation can be very distressing for any individual. Homelessness is a traumatic experience on its own right.

“Local authorities have a legal responsibility to offer free advice and assistance and to offer temporary accommodation if required after assessment.

“So thankfully then, there is the opportunity to get yourself back on track and secure your own accommodation and resettle successfully after a traumatic period in your life. Sometimes it's not as simple as that.

“Should you fall on hard times for whatever reason, the current system set up by local authorities is now the same system that can make it seem financially impossible to secure even a basic shelter or simply survive.

“Should I try and heat my house this winter or buy food to take with my medication, as advised, is a

**‘The outgoings in relation to income would result in having only £36.05 to live on per week’**

stark question many homeless people are faced with.

“The repeated number of deliberate penalties placed upon vulnerable people on benefits who are homeless can turn people into despair and leave them with no hope.

“Severe conditions such as the bedroom tax and benefit cap, can all contribute to a life of sheer misery and devastation, specifically at your time of greatest need.

“An example of this is as follows:

“Single male service user who is homeless and living in a homeless person's unit (furnished flat)

- Income - Employment Support

Allowance - £72.40 per week

- Payment 1 - Bedroom Tax - £9.39 per week

- Payment 2 - Benefit cap (Housing benefit deduction) - £20.46 per week

- Payment 3 - Council Tax - £6.50 per week

“The above illustration can be reality for many homeless individuals.

“The outgoings in relation to income would result in having only £36.05 to live on per week.

“There may be the additional support of Discretionary Housing Payment to cover the bedroom tax outgoing but it would not make a great difference to your standard of living.

“Any money left has to cover gas

and electricity, food and general living costs. Not to mention trying to battle against the daily struggles with addiction and mental health. The uphill

## Welcome and concerns for Sturgeon programme

**UNISON has welcomed much in the first minister's programme for government but has also outlined concerns.**

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish secretary, said: “We welcome Nicola Sturgeon's commitment to protect public services and to increase NHS funding; her commitment to the living wage and to mitigate the problems of welfare reform; and her commitment to put gender equality and women's rights at the heart of her government; and to increase childcare.”

Nevertheless, the union still had concerns about key parts of the programme.

**Review of local government finance:** The review is welcome but the council tax freeze staying until 2016 is disappointing. The freeze hits the most vulnerable who need public services the most.

**Living wage:** UNISON has sound legal advice that there is more the first minister can do and can stipulate a living wage condition for each and every contract.

**Childcare:** The union welcomes the commitment to increase childcare but warns that high visions for childcare cannot continue to be achieved on the back of a poorly paid workforce.

**Islands Areas Working Group and Islands Bill:** UNISON supports the whole principle of devolution of powers to lowest possible level of government.

**Police Scotland:** Cuts will decimate police staff jobs and take policing, and crime levels, back to the 1970s (see page2).

See a full briefing on the website.

battle is endless.”

The SHIG will now be raising awareness of this issue and will make contact with organisations such as Shelter as we continue to campaign against the worst excesses of austerity.

UNISON's Scottish Housing Issues Group is for branches in Scotland who have members involved in the housing sector and feeds back into the national housing forum.

If you want your branch represented at the next SHIG meeting, please contact Tracy Hill in the Glasgow Housing branch - Email: Tracy.Hill@wheatley-group.com Tel: 0141 274 5776

### We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.

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