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revitalising our public services

scottish council activists bulletin

# Scotland in UNISON

Feb/March 2007 No. 65

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## UNISON gears up for council and parliament elections Campaign for public services, environment and anti-racism

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

The forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections will see a UNISON campaign which will concentrate on the work our members do in delivering public services.

The campaign that will be funded through the General Political Fund will use the *Revitalise our Public Services* manifesto and principles already launched to produce materials that will ensure UNISON, its activists and members can challenge candidates in both levels of elections.

Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Convenor, said "The Scottish Council wants to highlight the value of the jobs that our members do in the run up to the elections. We also want to make sure that candidates are very well aware of the key concerns that members have and find out their policies on these."

The *Revitalise* section of the campaign will concentrate on:

- promoting the value of in-house service provision
- the need for democratic accountability, and
- the value of public services to the economy.



**UNISON wants to highlight the value of the jobs that our members do.**

Mike Kirby

A4 poster leaflets are being developed that reflect these themes and give some arguments and questions for members (and others) to use with candidates and in the press. A further manifesto for the local government elections and a health hustings are also planned.

Dave Watson, UNISON's Scottish Organiser, said "We will be letting branches know the details of Election law and guidance on election expenditure, shortly.

"We are moving away from big billboard adverts, and are planning to utilise internal publicity, direct mail and the use of press releases and supplements to



**Ensure that candidates in your area are left in no doubt about the views of staff delivering our public services!**

get the message across at Scottish levels. We want members and activists locally to ensure that local candidates are clear what UNISON policy is."

In addition to the public services theme, UNISON will also be opposing the far-right in the elections. We are aware that the BNP are planning to stand in all of the regional Parliamentary seats in Scotland, and will no doubt stand in the local elections.

UNISON is producing material for branches to use with their

own members where these candidates of hate are standing, and public leaflets where we need to get the message out to a wider audience.

A new development in this campaign is to focus on the environment. UNISON members play a major role in protecting the environment across a wide range of services, from waste management and environmental health in local government, through water and sewerage workers in Scottish Water to rangers in Scotland's

National park and the staff of Scotland's environmental protection agency - SEPA. Fiona Montgomery (UNISON Information Development Officer) is looking for examples of these members to be part of an 'environment manifesto'. See page 2.

Keep an eye out for UNISON's election material and ensure that candidates in your area are left in no doubt about the views of staff delivering our public services!

### Sharing public services may threaten public accountability

UNISON's Scottish Council has warned that the Scottish Executive's 'shared services agenda' may take services away from local control.

Last week, branches from across Scotland backed a City of Edinburgh Branch motion critical of the potential impact of shared services on democracy, jobs and services.

Shared services are where two or more statutory authorities agree to jointly run some of their services. Currently there are a number of different initiatives involving councils, health

boards, police authorities and other bodies at different stages of development in different parts of Scotland. These larger functions are then often more at risk of privatisation.

Edinburgh's John Ross said, "We believe this will lead to a deficiency in democratic accountability, will place jobs at risk and will have the potential to damage the link between public services and the communities which they serve."

Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary said "Whilst UNISON members are committed to the efficient provision of

services, we don't believe that this is likely to happen if services are removed from the influence of the communities they serve.

"The threatened move of all Glasgow's Cultural and Leisure function from elected control to a private Trust shows how easily authorities can move services away from the control of the people in the City.

The different ways that similar initiatives are being planned across Scotland and across serv-

**This will place jobs at risk and will have the potential to damage the link between public services and the communities they serve.**

John Ross



ices is leading to considerable confusion."

The union will set up a survey to establish the different initiatives going on across Scotland and use the results to draw up a framework to defend services from centralisation.

For more details see [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/sharedservices.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/sharedservices.html)

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## Help UNISON put the environment on the election agenda

By Fiona Montgomery  
Information Development Officer

**Calling all UNISON members whose work directly helps to tackle climate change and boost sustainable development!**

Can you help UNISON Scotland to promote environmental policies during the Scottish election campaign by

having your efforts featured in a mini manifesto highlighting the excellent work our members do?

The Policy and Information Team would like to speak to you if you or your colleagues work directly on projects such as recycling, reducing energy consumption, promoting public sector use of local, organic

food suppliers or in any other relevant area.

Maybe you work in environmental health, as a park ranger or you help raise awareness of ways in which the public can help, such as composting, shared car schemes, improved public transport or other ways of reducing our environmental 'footprint'.

Whatever you do that is 'green', we are keen to speak to you to help us in compiling the manifesto. We may also want to arrange a photograph. If you can help, please send a short paragraph with some details to Fiona Montgomery at f.montgomery@unison.co.uk or contact her on 0141 342 2819. (Mon, Tues, Wed am).

## Dundee UNISON crosses the border to Show Racism the Red Card

by Hamid Rasheed  
Communications Committee

**Busloads of UNISON members from Tayside will soon be heading for England to play a friendly football match against UNISON Carlisle in a bid to Show Racism the Red Card in May.**

This Scotland vs England game is scheduled to take place at Brunton Park (Carlisle United FC) on 20 May.

Rory Malone, Secretary of Dundee City branch said: "The ambitions of Dundee City and Carlisle branches of UNISON are to promote UNISON's anti-racist policy in our communities and to root out any forms of racism.

"We will use monies raised from the game in our schools to educate

and promote UNISON's anti-racist work."

Children from local schools will be at the game and, as it is an England vs Scotland game, it should attract a sizeable crowd and media coverage.

"However, we do need funds to cover the initial costs including staffing. We hope assistance can be provided from UNISON Scotland. Dundee City branch is trying to persuade other sponsors to raise as much as possible to promote UNISON anti-racist policy in our communities," Rory added.

Earlier in September, Carlisle and Dundee City UNISON kicked off the season of Show Racism the Red Card with an advert in the match programme between Carlisle v Blackpool.



Chris Fox, Rory Malone (with the globe presented to the branch), Brandon Fox (Mascot), and Tom Ferguson

At the game, Rory Malone received a warm welcome to Brunton Park and was presented with a globe at half time to mark his visit and to promote UNISON's work with Show Racism the Red Card.

It all started in June 2006 at the Bournemouth National Conference whilst watching the England v

Sweden world cup clash with comrades from Sefton and Carlisle branches of UNISON.

Mark Clifford (Carlisle Branch of UNISON) challenged Dundee to a game of footie to publicise and promote the Show Racism the Red Card campaign.

On the challenge being accepted, Mark

moved to quickly secure Brunton Park as a venue for the friendly.

Dundee City branch wants to play a return fixture in Dundee, inviting Wales, England and Northern Ireland in 2008 for a Home International tournament promoting UNISON's anti-racist work within our communities.

## Asylum review

Following the successful launch of "child's welfare paramount?", a guide for members working with asylum seeker children, UNISON Scotland will give evidence to the Independent Asylum Commission review of asylum in the UK.



Kate Ramsden

"We will tell the Commission of our serious concerns about the impact on children of dawn raids and locking them up in detention centres," said Kate Ramsden, co-author of the guide.

"We believe this breaches their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as domestic law which says that the child's welfare is paramount. We hoped that in Scotland at least we would see an end to such practices and measures put in place to ensure that these children's needs are assessed and taken into account in decisions about removal. So far this hasn't happened."

The Commission is investigating the asylum system on behalf of a wide range of citizens - from those like UNISON, who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated with humanity, to those who think the asylum system is too generous.

As well as gathering written evidence, the Commission will conduct public hearings across the UK to hear direct testimony from all those concerned with the asylum system, including asylum seekers and refugees. It will report in April 2008.

The hearing in Scotland is on Tues 5 June in Glasgow and will focus on the issue of removals.

For further information go to [www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk](http://www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk)

## Recruitment success prompts targeting initiative

**Consistently good overall recruitment figures for the last year have prompted UNISON Scotland to target areas of concern in particular workplaces in the spring of 2007.**

Scotland's recruitment continues to lead UNISON's recruitment with figures month on month above the national target of 3%. We have a lot to be proud of, and we are in a good position to build from. However, the density of membership in our large employers is showing some signs of concern. We have a large variance from area to area and from branch to branch. Over the coming months we are looking to have further dialogue with branches and activists, so we can provide support wherever possible in recruiting new members into UNISON.

March, April, and May will be important as we increase our support to branches, and target areas for recruitment. This will be in addition to the branch development activity already planned in a number of branches. We have a great opportunity to pool our resources and expertise, so we can work together on our agreed objective of

building a strong and vibrant union for the future.

During March, Branch Development Officers will be contacting branches to discuss the opportunities that exist for recruitment throughout the remainder of the year. We are also keen to establish a local recruitment officer in every branch so we can continue to develop our recruitment strategy. We presently have 161,000 members in UNISON Scotland. There is no reason why, by working together, we can't take that figure towards 200,000 by the end of the year. We recognise the heavy workload and competing priorities that are affecting everyone, and that is why the support and assistance we provide to branches is being reviewed.

Working together we can deal with the challenges we face and improve our recruitment rate at the same time. Many potential members in our work places that are not in the union deserve to be protected through membership of UNISON.



by John Keggie  
Scottish Organiser

## Health Boards still not addressing need for nurses' flexible working

UNISON comments on the Audit Scotland Report on Ward Nursing

**While Audit Scotland's reported increase in the use of bank nurses instead of agency nurses was a step in the right direction, UNISON says it did not answer the question of why nurses chose to work through either of these arrangements rather than in mainstream healthcare.**

The union also said that it was appalling that most Health Boards had still not achieved the recommended PAA (Predictable Absence Allowance) level of 21% even when this recommendation was sent out to every HB as long ago as Oct 2005.

Bridget Hunter, UNISON Scotland Lead Officer for Nursing said "This report acknowledges that there has been progress in dealing with nursing workforce planning, but

UNISON thinks that progress has been painfully slow, and the report doesn't look beyond the figures to begin to analyse the way forward.

"It is long past time that Health Boards provided the recommended Predictable Absence Allowance (PAA) level of 21%.

### Deadline

"We need to give Boards a deadline to comply with the staffing levels to cover predicted vacancies, and provide proper time off to nurses to continue their professional development.

"How can we retain trained nurses if we continually ask them to catch up in their own time?"

"Whilst using bank nurses to cover vacancies, is preferable to expensive private agencies, it begs the question why nurses want this method

of work?

"UNISON thinks we still have not addressed the need for a more flexible way for staff to work.

"If the Health Boards get the PAA levels right and devise the right tools to measure staffing ratios then maybe then the use will diminish."

The union welcomed the report as progress and indicated that it was willing to continue its work with the Executive and Health Boards to develop further recruitment and retention initiatives.

Bridget Hunter said "It is not acknowledged in the report, but the trade unions have been working closely with the NHS to improve recruitment and retention.

"Continued partnership working of this nature is the only way forward to deliver the staffing levels we need."

## Water - Why 'Mutualisation' = Privatisation by any other name

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

**The recent 'conversion' of Environment Minister, Ross Finnie to the CBI and Tory policy of so-called 'mutualisation' of Scottish Water is a worrying trend.**

Following the appointment of Sir Ian Byatt as Chair of Water Industry Commission Scotland from his previous experience in

the privatised industry down south, it now appears that his public interference in political decisions has been adopted by the Minister.

Ross Finnie, and his Liberal Democrat colleagues try to assuage their consciences with continual repeating of the mantra 'Mutualisation isn't Privatisation'.

However, UNISON has

always pointed to the truth, and research commissioned by UNISON and other water unions from the Public Research Network (PIRN) at Strathclyde University shows that in the water industry, mutualisation is just privatisation by the back door.

However attractive 'mutualisation' sounds, it requires water and sewerage services to be con-

tracted out to private companies to satisfy the financial institutions.

**Privatisation by any other name!**

The report also sets out in detail why privatisation would be a costly mistake in Scotland.

There are alternatives. A revitalised public sector using models from countries like Ireland and Sweden could keep water in pub-

lic hands and have the added advantage of costing customers significantly less.

This ties in with international campaigns against water privatisation.

Our first priority is to ensure that Scottish Water remains public. And we will be working at the forthcoming Scottish Liberal Democrat conference to explain the realities of this policy.

## 'Pseudo-charity' threat to Glasgow's culture and leisure services

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

**Outsourcing Glasgow's Cultural and Leisure is likely to prove an election issue.**

Glasgow City Council is proposing to transfer nearly 2,500 staff working in Glasgow's libraries, museums, leisure centres, swimming pools and other sports facilities, and arts development to a private charitable trust, in order to avoid paying tax and business rates.

Council 'assets' - ie the physical artefacts owned by the council will be safeguarded in the event of the need to bring them back in-house - there are no such guarantees for staff.

The proposals are being rushed through the council with little or no consultation, in order to set up the huge charity on 1 April before the elections.

UNISON has strongly objected to the proposals and it looks likely that the hiving off will be a major issue in the upcoming local elections.

Kate Riordan, Glasgow Branch Convener of Culture and Leisure said, "These proposals will mean all of Glasgow's culture and leisure

services moving out of the control of the people of Glasgow, and into the grasp of unelected bankers.

"The only reasons being given by the council are financial, and there are major concerns from staff (and the public) about the joined up services we currently provide and the long-term viability of any trust - given the track record of other examples down south."

The Branch has put a list of the major objections on its website [www.glasgowcityunison.org.uk/id3.html](http://www.glasgowcityunison.org.uk/id3.html).

This also lists three questions to ask candidates in the forthcoming elections.

Whilst many other authorities have set up trusts to run sports and leisure service, and some have also included museums, this appears to be the first time that all these services plus libraries are to be hived off.

The introduction of a huge 'pseudo-charity' of this sort is unlikely to be welcomed in the voluntary sector.

In addition to a political campaign, UNISON is also investigating legal challenges and negotiating with the Council to protect staff caught up in the transfer.

## Napier signs Framework Agreement for equal pay



**The Framework Agreement Partnership Team at Napier University, Edinburgh (above) has signed up to a landmark deal to bring equal pay.**

The Partnership included UNISON and the EIS working with management representatives. Regional Officer Bill McAllister and

Branch Chair Marilyn Philip represented UNISON.

"This agreement brought equal pay for a significant number of lower paid workers in groups predominantly represented by female workers.

"We are delighted by the outcome of this agreement", commented Marilyn Philip.

## Back the Simclar workers appeal

A "justice" fund account has been opened to receive donations to the Simclar Ayrshire workers. These workers have been the victims of a multinational company and its directors who have virtually stolen monies due to them under existing employment rights/legislation.

This is the ONLY union organised fund/account for donations. Cheques should be made out to:-

North Ayrshire Community Justice Fund and sent to - Community - 102 Hamilton Road, Motherwell ML1 3DG

## McGahey video

A video celebrating trade union legend Michael McGahey and the unveiling of his statue at Midlothian Workers Memorial Day will be available at UNISON's Scottish Council in April.



## Welcome for UNISON's largest health branch

**Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary, has welcomed the election of Branch Officers in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde branch and the return of the administration of the branch to officials elected by the membership.**

At around 13,000 members the branch is the largest UNISON health branch in Scotland, and has had a turbulent baptism. For the last two years the branch has been managed by a combination of full-time officials working with lay representatives.

The Branch AGM in February will see the confirmation of elected officials as in other UNISON branches.

Matt said, "It is good news that due to the work by both my full-time colleagues and the branch activists in Glasgow we have managed to get to this stage.

"We will continue to give the newly elected branch officials the support they need to run this branch.

"We have been working towards the election of branch officials from the membership for some time, and congratulations are due to all those - both full-time and activists - who have worked to deliver this."

The branch AGM was due to be held after this newsletter went to press, but full news of the branch officers elected will be available shortly.

## It's time to 'Get Equal!' at the parliament

by Nicola Morris  
Organising Assistant

**Arrangements are now under way for UNISON Scotland's activists to spell out their message on equal pay and mark International Women's Day by holding a "Time to Get Equal" event/lobby at the Scottish Parliament on Thursday 8 March.**

Leaflets, badges and postcards for members to lobby their MSPs are all planned.

Details are still being finalised and branches will be provided with them very shortly. So keep an eye out for more information and get behind



the campaign!!

UNISON is working hard to ensure all our members get fair treatment and equal pay at work.

Major overhauls of pay and conditions packages across our public services have brought the issues of pay inequality to the fore.

UNISON wants to deliver equal pay and fair compensation for those who have suffered discrimination. We also want equal pay to be intro-

duced without pay cuts, job losses or service cuts. Local authorities have been trying to do this with little or no cost. UNISON says that this is not possible - we are being proved right!

We have campaigned for the Scottish Executive to fund the creation of pay systems in Local Government that are transparent and free from sex bias.

UNISON members deserve fair pay scales and deserve

compensation for past discrimination. Other members' pay, jobs and conditions should not have to pay for this. Nor should the public through cuts in services.

In December 2006, the Local Government Service Group Conference agreed a motion recognising many of these issues and calling for the mounting of a public campaign around them, culminating in the lobby of the Scottish Parliament referred to above.

# Young members' training and AGM

by Daniel Robertson  
Communications Committee

**The Scottish Young Members' Committee (SYMC) will be holding its AGM & training weekend from Friday 23 March to Sunday 25 March in Glasgow.**

As well as the opportunity to go over all the



“usual” training about “stringing” your way round the UNISON maze, the training will include a look at grievance and disciplinary, assertiveness and public speaking. Sunday will be the

AGM where representatives to all the relevant committees will be elected.

Paperwork has already been sent out to your branch secretary so if you would like to attend the please contact your branch secretary or our Young Members' staff support,

Janet Stewart on  
j.stewart@unison.co.uk  
or 0141 342 2857.

# Culture Bill consultation

**UNISON is seeking comments from members working in the Culture sector on the Executive's new Culture Bill, and the accompanying guidance document.**

The Bill follows on from the Executive's policy statement Scotland's Culture, and contains three main sectors.

Central is the concept of cultural entitlements and the lead role of local authorities in cultural planning - thrown into sharp focus by Glasgow City's proposals, but the bill also

deals with the setting up of the new agency Creative Scotland and the running of the National Collections.

Any member or activist working in the cultural sector (libraries, museums, arts development, community arts, theatres, halls and galleries) who wants to input to the UNISON response should contact c.bartter@unison.co.uk as soon as possible.

The Consultation document is on the Executive website [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/14095224/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/14095224/0)

# Public service workers are service users too

**UNISON Secretary Matt Smith has called for politicians and the media to stop creating a false division between public service workers and service users.**

Speaking at the Holyrood public service conference 'Who Delivers?' in Glasgow, Matt said, "Public sector workers are central to the delivery of better public services."

"They are tax-payers and service-users too, and have a vested interest in well-run, well-funded public services. The sooner some politicians and some in the media realise this, then the sooner our members can start to deliver the

Revitalised services we all want."

People, not structures, deliver excellence, and that the debate on efficiency and effectiveness must avoid being restricted to cost.

Matt said "Gordon Brown said the 'best public services are founded on values greater than material,' and Revitalising public services requires those services to be based on ethical principles. The principles of democracy, fairness, partnership, investment and excellence that we advocate in our campaign."

The union has put forward many positive ideas to improve Scotland's public services, including public



**Public sector workers are central to the delivery of better public services**  
Matt Smith

service networks, increasing democracy into the quango state, and creating a level playing field between public and private investment.

It opposes expensive and wasteful PPP/PFI financed facilities and reject the notion of the false 'choice' agenda and the introduction of markets in the public services.

Above all, public service workers and users need to be involved at an early stage in the debate on increasing efficiency in the public services.

# £60,000 award at troubled college

**A kitchen assistant who fell after being distracted by a faulty hot drinks machine has been awarded more than £60,000 in compensation.**

UNISON member Helen Given said she heard hissing and saw a flashing light from a

vending machine causing her to fall at James Watt College in Greenock in May 2003.

She broke her hip and right wrist in the fall, spent 10 weeks in hospital and was bed-ridden for six months.

An Edinburgh court found that the college had been at

fault for breaching health and safety operations by operating faulty machinery.

James Watt College agreed that the drinks machine was prone to malfunctioning but said they could not take responsibility for the fall.

Seconds before she

fell, Helen moved a student with special needs away from the machine after it started to hiss.

This is yet another blow to the troubled college which has seen adverse press coverage in recent weeks and an industrial action ballot last October.

## SUMMARY JUSTICE REFORM - SCOTTISH COURT UNIFICATION

Are you a UNISON member working within the District Court Structure? Is there possibility you will be involved in the staff transfer to SCS? If this is YOU we need to hear from you urgently!

As you will be aware the staff transfer to SCS, following the 2006 legislation, could mean significant changes for our members currently working within the District Court structure.

We urgently need to assess exactly how many of the staff affected are members of UNISON. If you work within this area we're looking for your assistance. Below is a pro forma which we'd like you to fill in and return at your earliest convenience to Janet Stewart, Branch Development Officer at UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX.

BRANCH .....

MEMBER	OCCUPATION	F/T or P/T	WORKPLACE

# Seminar gets down to business on new-look Local Government Pension Scheme

by John Stevenson  
SIU Editor

**Discussions are well under way on the new-look Local Government Pension Scheme and branches were briefed at a seminar in Glasgow on 13 February.**

It will be a distinctly Scottish scheme with timescales and issues which are separate from the England and Wales talks.

Savings from the loss of the 'Rule of 85' will be ploughed back into the scheme. New regulations also give full transitional protection to 2020 for existing members who would have reached age 60 and satisfied the Rule.

A new timetable has been agreed with decision time coming somewhere around the summer

with UNISON putting the package out to ballot before the autumn.

Draft regulations will be out by December and the new scheme would go to the Scottish Parliament by April 2008, coming into force in April 2009.

Up for discussion in the new scheme are contributions, percentage of qualifying pay in benefits, ill-health retirement, flexible retirement and lump sums along with payments to partners.

Underpinning the scheme is the need for it to be affordable but it presents opportunities for real benefits for members.

Among the issues branches heard about at the seminar were:

### What you put in...

A key issue for the new scheme will be changes to the contribution rates of both employees and employers.

Currently employees pay 6%

of their salary (with some manual workers paying 5%) while the employers contribution varies to ensure that the fund remains in balance.

The employers want to move to some form of cost sharing future liabilities based on a 2:1 ratio. Current employer contributions in most funds are planned to rise to around 3:1 - but this includes funding for past deficits.

There is a possibility of graduated contributions with the lower paid paying less and the higher paid paying more (which would be offset by tax).

### What you get out...

The drive is still towards a final salary scheme. Currently benefits are paid on the basis of 1/80 of final salary for each qualifying year of service. The possibility is there to move to 1/60. This would mean higher benefits.

In line with the Finance Act,

there would be no automatic lump sum on retirement. However, you could transfer some of your pension to get a lump sum.

The seminar also backed moves to get more flexible retirement.

Members could take a more gradual approach to retirement, adjusting their work/life balance by reducing their hours or stepping-down to a less onerous job but, at the same time, able to draw some of their pension and accruing further pension rights.

Partners' pensions and an improved death in service grant has been built into the initial costing for the new scheme.

A multi-tier approach to ill-

health retirement is also a possibility. Currently you only get this if you are permanently unable to work.

A multi-tier scheme would cover those who are incapable of continuing in their current job, but who are capable of undertaking other employment.

The main issue for delegates was a concern about how the current scheme was being applied and the need to have transparent criteria and some form of appeal or dispute resolution.

This is just a brief breakdown of the issues discussed by delegates. See more details at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions).

## We want to hear your news

SIU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact: John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 220 5655, Chris Bartter 0870 7777 006, FAX PRESS RELEASES to 0141 331 1203  
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