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November 2013 No.104

Scotland in UNISON

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

Scottish Committee lays out timetable for the constitution debate

The fairer Scotland we want to see

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

UNISON Scotland has laid out a timetable for putting the issues that matter to members at the front of the debate in the run up to the constitutional referendum in September 2014.

The Scottish Committee seminar in October mapped out how the union's policy forums fitted in with the countdown to the referendum.



UNISON's approach to constitutional questions is driven by the interests of our members, by the sort of Scotland we want and deserve to live in.

It agreed to draft a paper on process and comparisons of the various positions against the UNISON principles, including the:-

- Scottish Government White Paper due on 26 November,
- Better Together prospectus



Mark Thomas joins Stirling strike against 'savage' cuts

STIRLING STRIKE: Celebrated comedian and political activist Mark Thomas joined UNISON Stirling Council pickets on their first day of strikes against 'savage' cuts in pay and conditions. Mark also played a major role in the Mobilise13 campaigning weekend. See more on both stories on page 3.

and the various 'Devo' additions like:-

- Devo Max,
 - Devo Plus,
 - Common Weal
 - Scottish Labour Commission,
- for the following meeting of

the committee on 5 November, with a view to taking it forward to the Scottish Council of branches in December.

The December meeting is also the place where motions

to the Scottish Trades Union Congress are decided.

A decision on the paper, future consultation, process and principles, should be taken at the February Scottish Council.

The two major meetings after that are the Scottish Council in April and the union's UK national conference in June 2014.

Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby pledged to be: "available to discuss this process with branches at any time."

In an email to branches, Mike reminded activists that: "UNISON's approach to constitutional questions is driven by the interests of our members, by the sort of Scotland we want and deserve to live in."

"This means that for us, precise constitutional arrangements are the end point and not the starting point of the debate.

"We must first define the sort of Scotland we wish to see and then try and then examine the likelihood of differing constitutional arrangements on offer to deliver on that vision."

Mike said that the union's A Fairer Scotland report along with the follow up, A Fairer Scotland and Devolution, "...opened up a debate, which has so far focused on fiscal issues and argued that new devolved powers for the Scottish Parliament are essential to create a fairer Scotland and improve the lives of working people."

UNISON Scotland says a range of fresh powers should be devolved: public sector pensions, health and safety, labour market regulation and broadcasting - as well as stronger fiscal powers, including all of income tax revenue.

See the publications at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/scotlandsfuture.

Ballot on new local government pension scheme

As we went to print, the ballot closing date of 7 November for the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme was imminent.

Because of new UK Government Legislation, the current scheme had to be renegotiated for April 2015.

The new scheme would apply from then but all pension earned before that date would continue to be calculated using current scheme rules.

The main changes forced by legislation are that all public

service pension schemes must change from final salary to career average and that the normal retirement age must be the same as the state retirement age.

Lead negotiator Dave Watson said: "In these negotiations we have worked to preserve the value of your pension. We believe the proposals (being put out to ballot) will achieve a better pension for the vast majority of members with contributions unchanged.

"In other words, most

members will get a bigger pension at no extra cost."

There is more detail including the draft Heads of Agreement at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions/

The union's view was that the proposals outlined in the Heads of Agreement are the best that can be obtained by negotiation and therefore recommended that members accept them in the ballot.

The main headlines are:

- A Career Average defined benefit scheme (CARE) with

a new 1/49th accrual rate (better than the old 1/60th).

- The improved accrual rate means many members build up better pensions as the benefits are spread more evenly.
- The average member contribution will remain at 6.3% - as now, on a sliding scale depending on earnings.
- A 50/50 scheme for people to pay half contributions for half benefits rather than leaving the scheme.

See the website for full details.

Blacklisting, Zero Hours: Public contracts can fix them

by Fiona Montgomery
Information and Devt Officer

Blacklisting is being tackled by the Scottish Government in the Procurement Reform Bill but it severely disappoints in many other areas.

UNISON has welcomed the moves on blacklisting and issues like zero hours contracts but the Bill must do far more, including properly tackling tax dodging and getting public contractors to pay the Living Wage.

Scottish Organiser Dave Watson told a fringe meeting at

the SNP conference that government and public bodies should be using their near £11bn of spend each year on goods and services to help create a fairer Scotland.

Civil society coalitions (STUC, SCCS, SCVO and others) have ten priorities for the Bill, including a sustainable development focus, measures on ethical/fair trade, employment standards and positive social outcomes.

A new Bargaining Briefing on our website details the main provisions and the background - it

was originally supposed to be the Sustainable Procurement Bill before focusing instead on business friendly processes.

Dave said the procurement of social care is just one example of how the Bill could help improve standards as part of the more than £400m spend by councils on home care, mostly in the private and voluntary sector.

He said: "We should specify, through procurement, decent employment standards, including the Scottish Living Wage, with no zero-hours contracts and proper training programmes.

"The aim should be to develop a workforce that delivers continuity of care, not workers who are desperate to find another job.

"Person centred procurement recognises that procuring pens, pencils and paper should be an entirely different process to buying people services such as social care."

The Scottish Government has announced it will fund the Poverty Alliance to deliver a Living Wage Accreditation Scheme to "promote the living wage and increase the number of private companies that pay it."

This is good news, but

members are encouraged to join a Scottish Living Wage Campaign/STUC lobby at the Scottish Parliament during Living Wage Week in November.

Join the event on Thursday 7 November at 11am, bringing banners, and calling for the Living Wage for all those delivering services through public procurement.

UNISON's Briefing on our updated Food for Good Charter also highlights the importance of sustainable food procurement but warns cuts are threatening standards.

UNISON backs Sma Shot Day

by Mark Ferguson
Renfrewshire LA Branch

Renfrewshire Local Authority Branch of UNISON again took the lead in this year's Sma Shot Day celebrations in Paisley.



William Duffy

Sma Shot Day celebrates the historic victory of the weavers over their employers in 19th century Paisley and has developed into an annual celebration of arts and culture with a strong

trade union focus.

UNISON sponsored the local theatre group PACE with children re-enacting on stage the struggle of the weavers of Paisley. Free candy floss was provided at the UNISON candy floss stand.

A march involved local community organisations, trade unions and members of the public. The UNISON banner was prominent and hundreds of UNISON paper flags were handed out to highlight our involvement and support.

A UNISON stall provided free promotional items, publicity and information for the public on our work for both our members and the local community.

Speakers included UNISON Regional Organiser William Duffy who highlighted the challenges faced by low pay in the public sector, the hardship caused by the 'bedroom tax' and the cuts agenda driven by the government.

Another world is possible

Denis Goldberg opens Edinburgh World Justice Festival

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

The planet's only World Justice Festival was launched in Edinburgh by Denis Goldberg who spent 22 years in prison after being convicted with Nelson Mandela in 1964.

Partly funded by UNISON Scotland and local branches, the seventh festival was themed 'Another World is Possible', and kicked off with a session on World Justice and Austerity followed by a unique programme of 21 events.

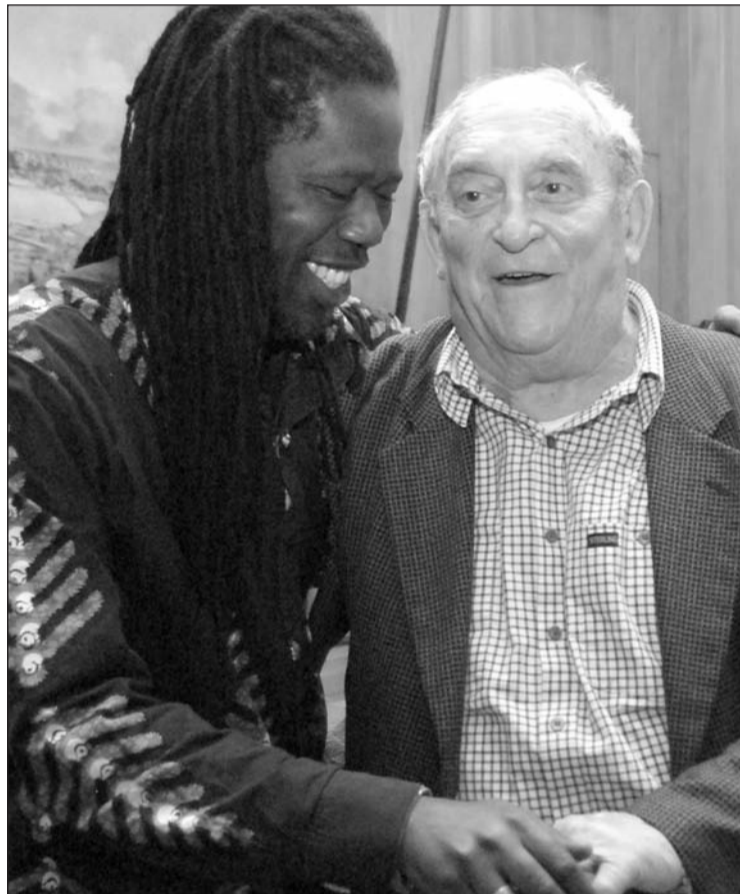
The festival from, 12 to 26 October, presented a window on to the world justice movement through a two week series of talks, films, concerts, workshops, a walking tour and many other events involving 29 different organisations. See www.ewjf.org.uk/ for details.

Denis was the keynote speaker at the opening event on World Justice and Austerity.

The night before, at a civic reception, Denis said: "I am sorry this is the only world justice festival on the planet", and he joked: "you will have to work harder to spread it".

Introduced as a 'campaigner', Denis preferred the term 'freedom fighter'.

He spoke of the South African



Denis Goldberg thanks Samba Sene from Senegal who sang about Nelson Mandela at the civic reception. Samba said that meeting Denis was like meeting Mandela himself.

constitution that gave "dignity, legal and political rights but sadly passing laws does not address racism and inequality. That will take a generation.

"Racism and class are inextricably linked. That will only be addressed by politics - class politics - and trade unions

need to be here as part of that struggle."

His speech was followed by sessions on topics such as food justice, debt, Latin America, trade union solidarity, environmental justice and working for peace.

Matthew Crighton, the

festival's chair, said: "It is a landmark event to have such a prominent figure as Denis Goldberg coming to Edinburgh to launch the Festival.

"Professor Goldberg, through his long imprisonment in South Africa, has first hand knowledge of injustice and his work in the peace and restorative justice movement, as well as his experience of rebuilding South Africa into a more just society was a fascinating and insightful start to the Festival.

"We are honoured that he accepted our invitation".

"Edinburgh has the only world justice festival on the planet and we're especially pleased that this year it has grown to cover two full weeks.

"It shows how vibrant is the city's commitment to a better world and it offers a brilliant shop-window on all this activity", added Matthew.

"While millions are unemployed, inequality is growing and our environment is in severe danger it's important that we highlight the creative thinking and the solutions coming from across the world.

"We don't just want to offer assistance to people at the sharp end, we want to learn from them and be part of the solution.

"It seems that too often in the media that the problems of the world are well-aired but the solutions aren't".

Careers website no sub for face-to-face guidance

Members of UNISON's Scottish careers branch have told MSPs that websites like My World of Work - which all Scottish school pupils are now expected to rely on for careers advice - are "no substitute for face-to-face guidance".

UNISON is calling for Skills Development Scotland to raise the profile of the face-to-face service

provided by careers advisers.

Independent research into the effect of careers websites commissioned from the University of Edinburgh found that My World of Work - known as MyWoW - was valued by pupils and teachers, but that it has "limited impact on pupils' careers management skills".

In fact, the researchers say, "it is clear from the focus groups and open-ended survey comments that pupils, irrespective of their level of

family support or attainment, would like face-to-face contact with careers advisers as well as access to websites."

James Corry, chair of the union's Non-Departmental Public Bodies sector committee, said:

"This research confirms what we as professionals in the careers service already know - that face-to-face sessions are vital for pupils and that the promotion of face-to-face advice needs to be properly resourced."

SCRA ballot brings new talks

Members at Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) are being consulted on plans to put a new three year pay claim to the Scottish Government.

This followed SCRA taking the current offer off the table which was rejected by 92% of members in a 70% ballot turnout.

The original offer of £345

flat rate would have seen some members get more than 1% and some less but incremental progression would have been scrapped.

"This was a huge issue for our members, some of whom have been 18 years in their post and still not at the top of the pay scale", said Diane Harvey of the SCRA UNISON branch.

Higher Education in first UK joint union strike

by John Stevenson
SIU editor

UNISON members in higher education went on strike on 31 October after rejecting the employer's 1% pay offer.

This is the first UK-wide joint strike of higher education unions and is the launching point in a



campaign that also involves the UCU and Unite unions, with the EIS in Scotland currently balloting.

The action was described

as a 'last resort' by UNISON national officer for HE Jon Richards, as all attempts to negotiate have failed.

UNISON's joint Scottish HE chair Ellen Gibson added: "HE staff are facing cuts in real earnings of 13% and our members have said this is not acceptable.

"That is why they have taken the difficult decision to take strike action".

The average pay settlement

in not-for-profit and private sector organisations is currently between 2-2.5% - significantly above the current offer from HE employers of 1%.

HE pay has been squeezed following five years of pay rises below the cost of living. The lowest paid members have lost between £663 and £1,173 a year with higher paid staff losing even more.

Stirling steps up strike action over 'savage cuts'

by John Stevenson
SIU editor

Parking attendants and waste and recycling workers were set to take selective strike action in Stirling Council as we went to print as the campaign against cuts in pay and conditions stepped up a gear in October.

The week-long action by parking attendants follows an all-out strike on 26 August then selective action by ICT workers. Waste and recycling workers were due to come out for 10 days on 28 October backing mass action by Unite members.

The escalated action came after the council's chief executive presented a 're-hash' of the original proposals for savage cuts.

David O'Connor, Regional Organiser for UNISON said: "We were asked to meet the Chief Executive with a view of considering how we resolve the ongoing dispute only to be presented with a re-hash of the original proposals for savage cuts. The trade unions tabled suggestions on how we could move forward only to have these suggestions ignored.

"With what can only be described as an unwillingness on the employer's part to enter into meaningful talks to resolve this dispute we have been left with no alternative to step up our action."



Lorraine Thompson, UNISON Stirling branch secretary, said: "The council's offer is insulting - the combination of a 1.5% pay cut and the requirement to work an extra 7.5 days a year, actually amounts to a 4.5% pay cut for the majority. This comes on top of a three year pay freeze which has meant a real terms pay cut of about 13%.

Lorraine added: "We regret any disruption or inconvenience our action may cause, but we feel we have no alternative than to take industrial action to protect our pay and conditions of service with Stirling Council.

"We hope that the strength of feeling

shown by its employees sends a clear message to both Stirling Council and its management team that enough is enough."

Unite Depute Chairperson Bob Miller, said: "We are not asking for more. We only want to maintain what we already have, a living wage."

Regional Organiser David O'Connor said: "The door remains open for further discussion with the employer on a way forward, but these discussions have to be meaningful."

Keep up to date at www.stirlingunison.co.uk/ and also see a short video about the strike.

Scotland joins huge NHS rally in Manchester

Scottish branches were among the tens of thousands marching through Manchester on 29 September to save our NHS. Police estimates put the marchers at 50,000 with more still arriving at the time.



Lilian Macer

Some reports say it was the biggest demo Manchester has seen in recent times.

UNISON Scotland convener Lilian Macer addressed demonstrators at the start of the march which included delegations from Glasgow Clyde and CVS, Clackmannanshire, Highland, and Edinburgh.

Shamefully, the BBC and some other media outlets all but ignored this massive demonstration. But those that were there know they were there - and they've learned a bit about the media!

Union support in good times as well as bad



Members from UNISON Scotland's branch at the State Hospital, Carstairs, enjoyed a day trip to Blackpool in the summer.

Lots of members' children took part in the fun day out which they said was roller coaster fantastic.

"The weather was unbelievably good, with bright sunshine all day. Our branch gave each child a £20 gift to help with the cost and I think all the children had a great time" said the branch.

"But the main thing about our day out is the fact that our union is not just about the bad times, dealing with problems at work, grievances and so on.

"It's about being united as a group of people who just want what is right, fair and equal for one another. This is a great union, not just in the bad times, but in the fun times too."

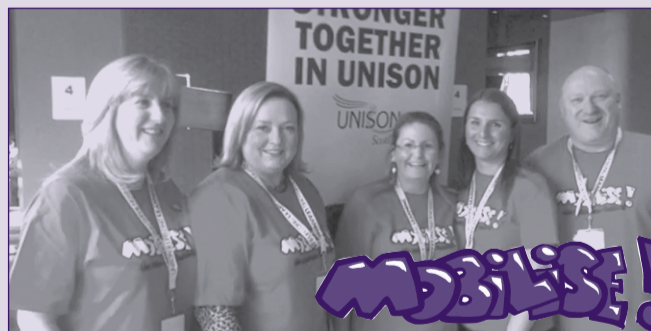
We are who we've been waiting for

by Kate Ramsden
Comms & Campaigns Cttee

Branch activists from around Scotland were inspired, re-invigorated, enthused and had lots of fun at the third Mobilise 13 event in Glasgow on 6-8 September

The anti-cuts festival, run by UNISON Scotland's Learning and Organising team and supported by UNISON staff in their own time, boasted an eclectic mix of music, film, history and campaigning skills workshops.

Comedian and activist, Mark Thomas kicked off the event on the Friday evening with "100 Acts of Minor Dissent", his hilarious and thought provoking stand up show. Describing it on Twitter as a "bloody marvellous night", Mark had



the audience in stitches, all the while making important political points and signposting innovative ways of challenging the system.

His workshops the next day followed up on this theme, as he urged activists to think imaginatively about how to get the messages across and urged us to build alliances within our communities.

"The ties that are made now will bind us together for the future," said Mark,

proving this true when he joined the UNISON Stirling strikers on the picket line to show his support for their fight against pay cuts.

The event was hosted by Scottish comedienne and Mobilise stalwart Susan Morrison, whose comedy workshop provided some of the entertainment for the Saturday night's frivolity, alongside political song from Arthur Johnstone and friends, as well as from our home grown UNISON musicians

such as Jane Aitchison and Malky Burns.

But it wasn't all play. Workshops in film making, political cartoons and political song, rubbed shoulders with some less esoteric, but equally important campaigning skills such as dealing with the press and media; writing skills and trade union history.

There was a real buzz about the place throughout the weekend, and activists and organising staff left energised and motivated to take the learning, the experiences, the networking and the organising messages back to branches, to workplaces, and to members. And to put it into practice.

As Mark Thomas said, 'We are who we are waiting for. If we don't defend our hard won rights nobody else will.'

CELEBRATE LEARNING DAY

Thurs 28 November
UNISON, 60 Belford Road, Edinburgh
(Learning Unit) EH4 3UQ

- * Launch of 2014 Activists Training programme
- * Launch of Learn and Do workshops
- * Speed Networking with Member Service Providers

Details from f.martin@unison.co.uk or n.kelly@unison.co.uk

UNISON backs Take One Action! film festival

Cops for Labor: We Are Wisconsin

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

UNISON once again supported the Take One Action! film festival last month.

The union was particularly involved in working on two films; We Are Wisconsin and A Thirsty World.

We Are Wisconsin focuses on the response of trade unions and community activists to the tearing up of public sector employment contracts by Republican Governor Walker of Wisconsin in 2011, culminating in the occupation of the State Capitol for 26 days.

After each screening, there was a question and answer session with Brian Austin, a serving police officer in Madison the capital of Wisconsin, a SWAT team member, a trade unionist and a leading figure in Cops for Labor.

We caught up with him in Edinburgh and found out just how much we have in common in the fight against corporate power.

Brian gave a stark warning from his experience of corporate power, that private companies "will bleed the NHS if they get a foothold."

With a quiet conviction he spoke of the challenges facing the people of Wisconsin and his own family as Fox News totally misrepresented the peaceful protesters.

The principles and freedoms he puts his life on the line for in his work are not the ones the Republicans in Wisconsin are prepared to respect.

He reflected that the principles and freedoms he puts his life on the line for in his work are not the ones the Republicans in Wisconsin are prepared to respect.

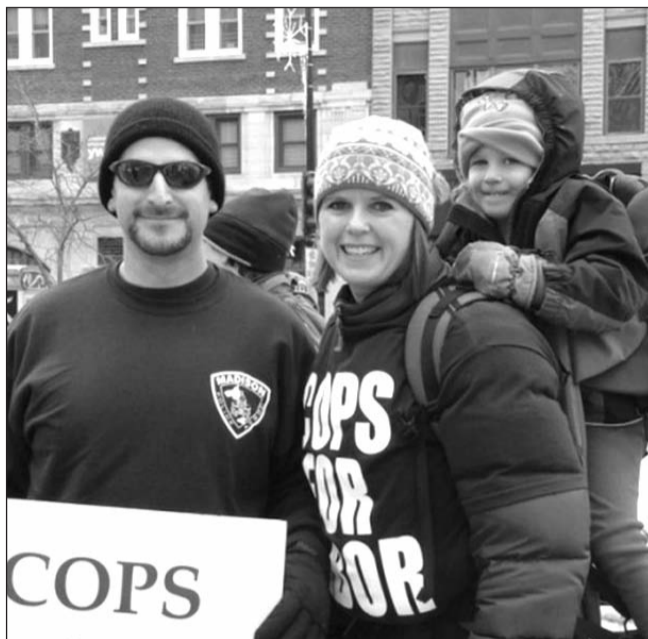
He slept overnight inside the Capitol when it appeared the Walker administration was going to forcibly clear the building and cut off access to the 'Peoples' House.'

Brian - and indeed the film - spoke of a political awakening when people are faced with the autocratic behaviour of the governor and his Republican and big business supporters.

They find that the values they thought were the foundation of a democratic society were only skin-deep as the corporate backed administration trampled over hard won rights such as collective bargaining and, latterly, freedom of assembly.

Thousands who had never protested before joined forces - teachers, police, deputies, firefighters, nurses and farmers to name just a few.

In the most recent disgrace the administration have been



Brian Austin of 'Cops for Labor'

arresting people 'from 14 to 84 years old' gathering to sing at the Capitol in protest.

And of course Brian has joined them, as he wrote on the Cap Times website:

"I really don't like to sing, and don't gravitate toward activities that require me to do so. Yet these days I care about singing so much that I am willing to be arrested for it."

The other film UNISON backed was A Thirsty World in which globally acclaimed master of aerial cinema, Yann Arthus Bertrand, revisited our fragile planet featuring the wonders of the world's fresh water sources and the ordinary heroes fighting to defend them.

A European family of four

consumes 140,000 litres of water every week. But it isn't ours. It comes from other, often developing countries, that produce our coffee, jeans and cheap meat.

There, water is often scarce and, in the face of climate change, increasingly a cause of conflict.

Coatbridge College pay deal

UNISON Stewards at Coatbridge College have won a 2% pay deal and an additional one day annual leave for this year.

Members voted overwhelmingly in a ballot to accept the deal in August.

New Fire and Rescue Branch

UNISON's new branch for Scottish Fire and Rescue Support Staff is up and running.

It launched officially on 1 October with 242 members and nine reps and contacts across Scotland, stretching from Dumfries & Galloway up to the Highlands and Islands.

This is the first time that Fire & Rescue members have had their own branch.

Interim Branch Secretary Derek Jackson, a hydrant technician at Fire & Rescue HQ in Fife, said it has been challenging since the April launch of the new service but a good partnership has been established with SFRS management.

Staff concerns have been raised and UNISON has commented on a range of change management policies which underpin the matching process.

Full details of all that is underway are in the branch summer newsletter, online at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/fireandrescue/

Derek said a joint staff survey will take place once the matching process is completed, with both management and UNISON recognising there are issues with morale.

He added: "We've been very frank, reporting back staff concern about the uncertainty members feel and the need for more effective communication from all levels of management. We have been involved in several individual cases. It is rewarding when we see members treated wrongly then we can reverse the issues."

More workplace reps are needed to ensure negotiations, conditions, policies and structures properly reflect members' concerns. There will be monthly branch meetings where reps will get updates from regional negotiators and can discuss workplace issues. Full training will be provided and time off will be given to attend meetings. Contact Derek if you are interested. Tel: 01592 774451 EXT 2069 or email: Derek.Jackson@firescotland.gov.uk



Derek Jackson

New blogs and mags as activists make good use of course

The eight activists who came along to the Website and Magazine Editing Course, held in Edinburgh over the weekend of 4-6 October, had a lot to show for their hard work, as four new blogs went live and three Branch mags were designed.

The participants were a mix of UNISON staff and lay activists who came from Branches as far apart as Orkney Health and Western Isles Local Government and all points in between.

All had their own ideas of what they wanted to achieve to support their branch communications. On what was a very hands-on course, tutors John Stevenson and Malky Burns gave able assistance as they coached, advised, encouraged and supported.

The course began with a reprise of basic writing skills, which, as John and Malky pointed out, "is the basis of all written communication, whether for press releases, Website, blog and magazine articles or member briefings."

I would recommend this course to anyone wanting to start up a branch magazine, newsletter or leaflets.'

Frances McCafferty

The activists then "logged on", to develop their own preferred communication medium, some opting for magazine editing and the rest developing Branch blogs.

Kate Ramsden, from Aberdeenshire Branch said, "I found the course was really worthwhile. I have been running the branch website for many years but I was able to design and launch a branch blog and a branch Twitter account linked by Twitterfeed. It has really developed our branch's online communications."

Yvonne Dickson from Stirling UNISON is experienced with websites but came on the course for tips on newsletters and magazines.

She said: "I found the course relaxing and the environment was well laid out with enough



Blog created and running on the course by Orkney Health at unison-orkneyhealth.blogspot.co.uk/

equipment to ensure we all had the tools for the job.

"The tutors, were informal and made me feel at ease and they delivered a very good weekend course. I thoroughly enjoyed the time and felt I came away equipped to deliver a newsletter back at my workplace."

Frances McCafferty, Local Organiser for UNISON added:

"I found the magazine editing course very helpful and timesaving. I learned how to make a good headline and how to tell my story in the first opening paragraph.

"The tutors were extremely helpful and full of great ideas. I would recommend this course to anyone wanting to start up a branch magazine, newsletter or leaflets."



Glasgow Housing branch is pleased to sponsor Pollok United Soccer Academy. Just one example of branches supporting community initiatives.

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk