

Happy festive season to all our members ...especially to those delivering services over the holiday



PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

December 2013 No.105

Scotland in UNISON

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

Taking action 'cos we're WORTH it

We're WORTH it

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

As the evidence builds that what we are seeing is not austerity but planned poverty, members in at least four disputes have signalled that enough is enough.

As UNISON prepares to launch its 'Worth it!' campaign this month, research is showing just how much public service workers are being fleeced while the rich get richer.

Figures in the last month have shown poorer areas are being hit much harder than affluent areas.

They show the richest getting obscenely richer while the average family will be £1,800 a year worse off by 2015.

The money is there, it is just in the wrong place. The government's so-called 'hard-working families' are paying the price while the people who caused the problem are getting richer. Top directors' pay is up 40% and UK bankers' pay tops the European league.

Nowhere is the divide more stark than in **Higher Education** where members came out on the second day of their pay strike on 3 December.

They see Vice-chancellors sitting on £242,000 while 4,000 staff are below the living wage and they can only offer 1%.



Glasgow pupil support assistants on strike and pickets at Robert Gordon University

UNISON's joint Scottish HE chair Ellen Gibson told *SiU* last month: "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", she said.

As we go to press, action by **Stirling** members against 'savage cuts' has brought talks and members are being consulted.

They would never have got this far without standing together.

Following tough talks between the council and the unions, UNISON's Abigail Robertson, who is the joint union chair, said

a revised set of proposals had been arrived at "that allows for the continued suspension of industrial action whilst the unions consult their members on the new proposals."

In Glasgow, a rolling programme of four strikes by 1,000 pupil support assistants forced talks after the council imposed child healthcare tasks without agreement.

UNISON education convener Carol Ball said: "Our members want to do the best for our pupils, however we are being asked to administer medicine with little or no training.

"Pupil support assistants chose

their job to be educators not health care workers – you wouldn't risk asking a painter to be an electrician for a day."

And in **Edinburgh** a resounding home care ballot result brought talks in an electronic monitoring dispute.

As in all industrial action, it may be that members will not win all that they wanted.

But without the action in Stirling, Glasgow and Edinburgh there would have been no movement at all from the employers.

Now it is time for the higher education employers to sit up and take notice.

DOG EXPOSES BENEFITS



A new TUC animation tackles some of the media and political myths about the benefits system, with the aid of a talking dog.

It outlines how, for every £100 spent in benefits, the breakdown is...

- £42 on old age pensions.
- £14 for people *in* work, subsidising employers paying low wages
- £13.50 on housing and council tax benefits
- £11.50 on disability and sickness benefit
- £10.50 maternity, carers etc
- £6 on child benefit
- £2.50 - yes just £2.50 on jobseekers allowance!

Oh, and 70p on fraud. According to some analysts that is 260 times less than is lost through tax evasion.

See the video at www.tuc.org.uk

The Clutha: The price of humanity and public service

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

When the helicopter came down in Glasgow I was about 800 yards away. I heard nothing. I saw nothing. But a few minutes later on the train the tweets started coming through.

Such as is life these days, the conventional media were playing catch up with people on the

ground who were already tweeting. It didn't take a genius to realise that, at the very least, hopes for those in the police helicopter must be dim.

What must their families have been going through? What about the friends and relatives that knew their folk would be in that pub? The people celebrating a well-earned Friday. The locals in their usual seats.

If an experienced politician like Jim Murphy, who was there as it

Our thoughts are with all those affected and thanks to all of the public service staff working above and beyond in Glasgow at this time.



The UNISON Scotland website ran a tribute banner

happened, could not hide the shock when interviewed, you knew there was worse news to come. And come it did with nine lives lost.

We see the firefighters, rescuers and ambulance crews.

The police. Facing up to horrific scenes. Just a job? Taking responsibility for others' lives. Just a job? Backed up by a close knit well-oiled machine but alone in their thoughts. Alone in

the pictures they will take home with them.

UNISON President Maureen le Marinel, herself a police worker, sent a heartfelt message to Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby.

"All public service workers many of our members will be working on and involved in this terrible incident", she said.

And as the day goes on, we hear just a little of the building control workers, the housing staff, the social workers, all the council staff pulled in to support the city and its people. **More p2**

Safety reps more crucial than ever

by Scott Donohoe
Health and Safety Chair

This year's Health and Safety conference was held at Stirling University and attracted over 80 delegates including branch activists and officers to a well-attended and informative event.

Key issues were Asbestos in Schools, Personal Injury Claims, Blacklisting and the UNISON Scotland Violence at Work Survey which is covered in more detail on page 3.

Asbestos in schools

Paul Beaumont presented the increasing issues of asbestos in schools. Around 75% of UK schools contain asbestos, yet despite intensive campaigning and evidence being presented there is no national asbestos register in place.

The UK all party parliamentary group has made recommendations on phased removal of asbestos from all schools, proper asbestos training, pro-active



Scott Donohoe

inspections, proper guidance and a policy of openness and transparency, however the advice has been ignored by UK

government.

Personal injury

Susan McGraw from Thompsons Solicitors covered the topic of personal injury claims.

The Westminster government launched a vicious attack on our members rights, by amending Section 47 of the Health & Safety at Work Act, thereby removing 'strict liability', which basically means it will be even harder to gain

compensation and justice for our members in workplace incidents.

It also means union safety reps and workplace organisation are more crucial than ever.

Blacklisting

Dave Smith spoke about the disgraceful tactics of blacklisting in the construction industry.

Dave was personally subject to a 36 page report by the Consulting Association which listed his

'activities' including raising issues as a union safety rep.

Dave and many other union reps were blocked from gaining employment because of these illegal reports.

The Scottish Select Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into the issues and a report is due imminently.

A national day of action on blacklisting was held on 20 November.

Violence survey

See page 3 for a full report on UNISON Scotland's annual violence survey.

Clutha tragedy

From Page 1

Glasgow Council's Emergency Planning Team swung into action. An information point was set up for families.

And on 5 December as the gales arrived, Glasgow City put secure netting over the floral tributes with a staff member staying overnight. Another touch of humanity.

Watching it all at the time, you want there to be a link. "I've had a drink in the Clutha loads of times." As if it associated you with the tragedy. The disassociated horrors on the TV come home when you know the place, the people.

Why doesn't that happen with Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Bangladesh? The same people as you dragging each other out of the fallen buildings. Are they so different from the Glaswegians that Friday?

“The people who stood by each other are priceless. The public service workers ... are priceless too.”

The Burdzyevyev blog wrote a moving account of the people who responded, relating it to qualities in a nation. They are qualities we'd all want to see in a nation and we certainly saw them from Glasgow folk on Friday night. But they are not national qualities. They are universal qualities displayed by people who have remembered how to relate to people. It is the human condition uncorrupted.

The people who stood by each other are priceless. The public service workers still facing the harsh reality on the ground, grieving for colleagues and treating the traumatised in hospitals and in the community, are priceless too.

Politicians rightly heap praise on the workers. But, to be harshly political at what might be seen as an inappropriate time, the attacks on jobs, pay, pensions and the very ethos of public service says a lot more about the real value put on them.

We need hard political choices not just powers

The Scottish government has published its White Paper on Independence. In essence this is their proposal to promote a 'Yes' vote in the referendum to be held on 18 September 2014.

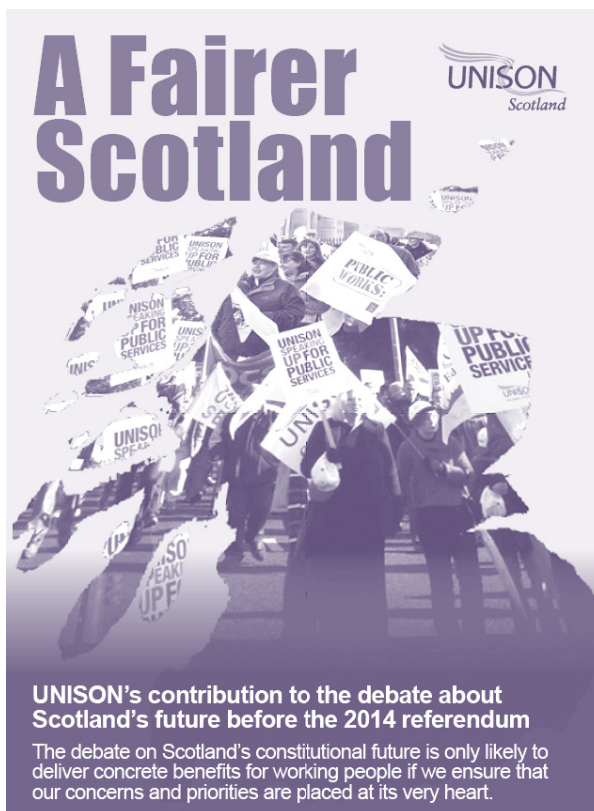
The document covers matters that are consequential from becoming an independent country like currency and international relations.

In addition, it sets out a policy prospectus if the SNP are the first government of an independent Scotland.

UNISON would wish to compare and contrast the positions of the various campaigns and parties with regard to a range of issues affecting our members at work and in the community.

However, at this stage the unionist/Enhanced devolution campaigns have produced no specific proposals other than the status quo.

Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby said: "For those



committed to either the 'Yes' or 'Better Together' campaigns, the White Paper is either a bold vision of a different future for Scotland, or alternatively, a long list of assertions and uncoded options.

"The truth is as always somewhere in between.

"Members will want to consider the White Paper in detail over the coming months, together with any proposals from the Unionist/pro-devolution parties for improving the current constitutional settlement."

UNISON Scotland will continue to press the issues

of concern to members at work in the public services."

The White Paper argues that the key argument for independence is that those who live in Scotland are best placed to decide its future.

Devolution has been positive, but independence gives Scotland all the policy levers.

It is argued that policies like the Bedroom Tax; privatisation of Royal Mail and Trident replacement would never have been introduced in a Scottish Parliament. A fairer and more prosperous Scotland is possible with full powers and favourable comparisons are drawn with other small European countries.

As we point out in UNISON's 'Fairer Scotland', this vision requires hard political choices as well as constitutional powers.

The paper also sets out the arrangements for a transition to independence that is planned for 24 March 2016.

As we went to press, UNISON's Scottish Council of branches was starting the process of how the union will engage members in the debate over the coming months.

Key to that process will be placing the priorities for UNISON's members at the forefront.

As Mike Kirby pointed out last month:

"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 examine the likelihood of differing constitutional arrangements on offer to deliver on that vision."

Follow the debate on UNISON Scotland website www.unison-scotland.org.uk/scotlandsfuture

Huge ballot vote brings talks at Mungo Foundation

Hundreds of Glasgow's charity care workers have rejected cuts in terms and conditions in a massive 84% ballot vote.

They faced having their terms and conditions savaged as a result of spending cuts by the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council.

But as we went to press, the ballot vote has brought new talks and a new offer.

Bosses at The Mungo Foundation had threatened staff with massive cuts to their holidays and sick pay, claiming



Deborah and Alice

they have been backed into a corner by funding cuts.

Staff were told in October that they would lose eight days holiday a year, while sick pay will be cut by almost half. Staff would also see their pension contributions escalate.

Alice Lyness, a care worker and UNISON steward at The Mungo Foundation, said: "My colleagues and I work with some of the city's most vulnerable people and we're committed to providing the first-class service they deserve.

"These cuts are not only having a detrimental impact on jobs and the living standards of voluntary sector staff, but on the people we care for each and every day. This race to the bottom is the wrong approach when we are delivering services to the most vulnerable in our

community."

Deborah Dyer, UNISON's Regional Organiser, said: "Many of these workers are low-paid and already struggling to make ends meet and are now are faced with paying the price of these damaging cuts.

"We need voluntary organisations to act in a responsible manner, but this must start at the top and it's time for the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council to put an end to these cuts and to properly fund the care of the city's most vulnerable people."

Our commitment will stay for freedom and justice

Nelson Mandela rightly received many honours and awards in the course of a long life which exemplified courage and struggle against the odds.

One was from UNISON's predecessor NALGO, who in 1984 gave him Honorary Life Membership of the union.

While we were giving Nelson Mandela life membership, the Tory Government of the time were opposing sanctions against South Africa and refusing to talk to the ANC.

Their backbenchers described the ANC as terrorists and demanded that

their offices in London be closed. Our view was different and our members showed their commitment to ending apartheid with their time, money and political support over decades.

So whilst we are sad at the passing of one of the great men of our time, we celebrate his life of achievement and we take pride in the fact that this union has never wavered in our support for freedom and justice in South Africa.

"This is a commitment that continues today through our links with Action for Southern Africa and Community Heart." *Mike Kirby*



We apologise for the short piece. The news of Madiba's death came through just as we were going to print.

2014 UNISON learning programme launched

by Nancy Kelly
Regional Organiser



Delegates from Scottish branches just completing their training at a packed learning centre event on 28 November.

Margaret Cook, vice-chair, Learning and Organising Committee welcomed all to the day to launch the 2014 activists training programme and hear about all the opportunities for learning UNISON can offer members.

In the morning Mike Kirby, Scottish Secretary, gave the keynote speech outlining the value UNISON places on training, supporting and developing our activists.

He also spoke with pride of UNISON's award winning Return to Learn programme benefiting our lowest-paid non-traditional learners.

He stressed the many ways training and learning opportunities can be used as tools for recruitment and organising.

Delegates looked at the contents of the 2014 programme and heard from Emma Lipscombe (LAOS in London) about the new short Learn and Do workshops available for Branches to run at local level.

In the afternoon, everyone enjoyed a speed networking session with Scottish Union Learning, the Open University, Donald Cameron (Return to Learn) and Emma Lipscombe (Member Learning Offer).

Many delegates spoke of how their eyes were opened to the vast array of learning opportunities available.

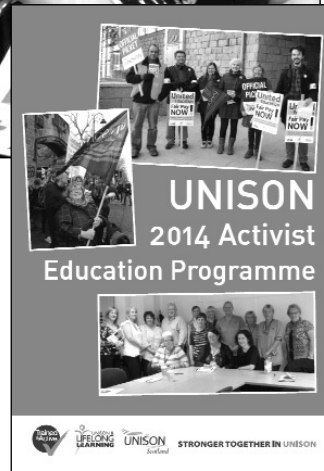
One of the new stewards said that she had joined UNISON specifically for our training programme which she said was "second to none".

Dorothy McLaughlin



from Police Scotland Branch spoke for everyone when she said "I am going away from this event invigorated and inspired".

Details of the 2014 Activists Training programme can be found on the UNISON Scotland website, click on 'learning'.



Police taken off beat to cover job cuts

Scotland police chief Stephen House has admitted to MSPs that police are being taken off the beat to cover for civilian jobs "on a daily ongoing basis".

UNISON police staff members had been warning about this for years and, only two weeks before, UNISON exposed plans to take police off the beat to do the work of 67 police staff jobs.

George McIrvine, Secretary of UNISON Police Staff Scotland added: "We were promised blue sky thinking when it came to meeting the budget cuts imposed by the Scottish government.

"Instead we have policing being taken back to the 1970s, reversing the progress we have made towards a modern police service by sacrificing police staffs to maintain an artificial target of uniformed officers.

"This is not best value and will not produce the most effective police service for the people of Scotland."

COSLA's pay delay claim 'utter nonsense'

Local Government branches were meeting as we went to press to respond to COSLA imposing a two year 1% pay rise - completely outwith the bargaining framework - instead of honouring their agreement of 1% for 2013/14.

Dougie Black, UNISON's regional organiser, said: "COSLA's claim that UNISON is dragging its heels is utter nonsense.

"Our members were balloted and had accepted COSLA's one year offer. It's completely unacceptable for COSLA to renege on the deal and it's a real kick in the teeth for Scotland's council staff who work hard to deliver Scotland's council services.

"Imposing a deal is no way to conduct bargaining and our members deserve more than these underhand tactics.

"COSLA needs to get back around the negotiating table and conduct their business in a fair, open and transparent manner and show our members the respect they deserve."

A 'toxic cocktail' of cuts and violence

A 'toxic cocktail' of staffing cuts and violence against public service workers has resulted in another increase in violent incidents across Scottish councils and NHS Scotland, Dave Watson told UNISON's Health and Safety Conference in Stirling.

33,689 incidents were reported to public service employers last year - almost 14,000 more than when the first survey was first conducted in 2006.

In probably the only employment group protected from cuts, police officers, the number of incidents fell by around one-third (by 3074 to 6187). However, council and NHS workers, who face big staffing reductions, have seen an increase in violent incidents. Incidents in councils have increased by 730 to 14,879. NHS incidents are up by 1744 to 12618.



Dave Watson presents the report to the conference

Dave said: "The biggest increase in violent incidents is happening in those services that have suffered staffing cuts.

"Workers are stretched too thinly, dealing with the public who are coping with cuts in the services they rely on. This is a toxic cocktail that is putting hard pressed workers at greater risk of violent assault."

There has been some

improvement in recording, particularly in the NHS, but some councils couldn't even produce statistics. There are also indications that a number of public bodies are preparing for further problems when the full impact of welfare reform happens.

Scott Donohoe, chair of UNISON Scotland's Health and Safety Committee, said: "These numbers only cover recorded

incidents - the tip of the iceberg of misery for many staff.

"While we are pleased that employers are improving their systems, others have obviously got some way to go. If they can't produce decent statistics they cannot be tackling the problem".

Convictions under the Emergency Workers Act have increased again last year by 32 to 355. Due to the limited scope of the Act few violent incidents result in criminal action.

"Sadly, efforts to address this were blocked by the Scottish Government when they opposed Hugh Henry MSP's Protection of Worker's Bill", said Dave Watson.

"The UK Government has also undermined protection for workers with cuts to the Criminal Injury Compensation scheme.

More on the Health and Safety Conference from Scott Donohoe on page 2

See more at unisondave.blogspot.com

More misery in Autumn Statement

UNISON general Secretary Dave Prentis slammed the UK chancellor's Autumn Statement:

"The chancellor can produce this mirage of an economic recovery and massage the figures as much as he wants, but it doesn't mask what is being felt in the real world.

"Prices have risen faster than wages for 40 out of the 41 months in the past years. Average earnings are £1600 lower in real terms than when they came to power. There has been a massive explosion in the number of people forced to work part-time, on zero hours' contracts and stuck on low pay."

The STUC warned that the chancellor "continues to ignore the glaring disconnect between growth and living standards".

'Speak-out' survey reveals children and disabled services hanging by a thread

A 'speak-out' survey of community, voluntary and housing workers exposed services to the most vulnerable people in society as "hanging by a thread".

The UNISON survey, which polled more than 400 workers in Scotland, uncovers dangerously underfunded services leading to hardship and exposing

Call for Fair Funding Charter

children and the disabled to risk.

UNISON is calling on the Scottish Government to have a major rethink in its attitude to the third sector and to put an end to the 'sink or swim' philosophy which is leading to a struggle for survival.

Almost unnoticed by the public, many charities have become increasingly financially dependent on

winning contracts from the public sector.

The survey was done in the run up to a UNISON Scotland, STUC, UNITE and SCVO conference on 8 November in Glasgow that saw the major players from the third sector including commissioners, employers and umbrella organisations, come together to agree on a Fair Funding Charter.

That clearly states what the third sector needs from central government in order to maintain standards in these times of cuts and budget squeezes.

UNISON says procurement is the key to change and says the Procurement Reform Bill gives MSPs the opportunity to ensure the private and voluntary sectors are not left in the cold.

Health branch wins award for 'model campaign'

NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS branch scooped first prize for a 'model' campaign in this year's UNISON Scotland communications awards.

"The competition this year has again highlighted the sheer amount of work activists put into communicating with members", said Jane Aitchison, Communications and Campaigns vice chair.

"Some of this is teamwork but a great deal is also individuals learning skills and using their own time to get the message across. For that, every entry deserves congratulations."

Thompsons Best Campaign

NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS branch discovered on a site walkabout that members were not being paid 'as if at work' when on sick leave.

"We discovered that it was not just in one ward in one hospital but across the branch", said branch secretary Cathie Miller.

The branch then went about consulting members across the organisation using walkabouts, letters, briefings, website and facebook, eventually winning back money for thousands of members.

The judges said it was a 'model campaign' with clear planning, objectives, targets, timeline, outcomes and recruitment as well as following up on implementation after the deal was won.

Second was Police Branch Scotland with its 'frontline' campaign focussing on members' jobs and building the new branch.

Forth Valley Health took the Lighthouse Financial third prize with a stress campaign using UNISON



6 The competition this year has again highlighted the sheer amount of work activists put into communicating with members" Jane Aitchison

stress balls and mugs in an innovative and fun way to address a serious issue and engage members and activists in it.

UIA Best publication

Aberdeenshire's UNISON Matters, edited by Morag Lawrence topped this section.

It was well written and had lots of local reports with a good mix of national issues (making them local) like austerity mythbusting and trade union history.

It has a really attractive, original and professional looking layout.

Second was NHS Glasgow Clyde & CVS and Highland Healthcare came third with Upfront edited by Lyn Wormald. The branch was commended for a lifelong learning story with a good intros, quotes and personal stories. There was also a good use of graphics with attractive front pages.

UIA Best online

This award also went to Aberdeenshire with its website, blog and twitter, managed by Kate Ramsden.

The website covers all the important local issues and it excels in making wider issues relevant through a local angle. The website makes good use of graphics to illustrate points and keep pages lively.

The contacts page helps people put a face to a name and that helps to give a strong 'people' feel.

Runner up was University of the West of Scotland's Wordpress site maintained by Ewan O'Brien.

It has a crisp, clean layout with graphics and videos on the home page.

Members being able to sign up for updates was a good idea, especially at a time of industrial action.

Third was Police Staff Scotland with a highly topical website, twitter and facebook presence.

LV Recruitment award

This went to Glasgow City for a campaign that used an impressive collection of newsheets and leaflets which were very people focussed.

The work done engaging Cordia members at early morning starts was particularly

important for this hard to reach group. Retention is also kept in mind with regular updates to members. The test of course is that it brought in a host of new members.

A fraction behind were initiatives by Police Staff Scotland and Forth Valley Health with a special mention for Fife Health who showed a net increase in members this year due to a planned six month campaign.

Hints for the future

Amidst all the great work, there were, as always, lessons according to John Stevenson, chair of the Communications and Campaigns Committee.

"One of the key issues judges looked for was translating national campaigning into reality on the ground and one of the most important of those was challenging austerity.

"While most entries were great on local news, not many were taking those broader messages to members and making them relevant at local level and the committee will be trying to support branches in that in the coming year", he said.

UNISON signs learning agreement with capital city

UNISON has negotiated a learning agreement with the City of Edinburgh Council which will allow staff to access lifelong learning and career development in their working time.

"It's a great, positive step which has already seen us deliver four Dyslexia Awareness courses through funding from Scottish Union Learning /European Social Fund attracting 60 learners", said Kevin Duguid, learning and development officer.

"We also have plans to run IT, Care Worker Skills and Dementia Awareness courses in February and March we are developing a really positive image around trade union membership and its many and varied benefits."

"Delivering learning to our members is not only a great recruitment and retention tool but it empowers people and can make real changes to their lives at home and in the workplace by opening the door to greater opportunities."

To find out more about lifelong learning and how the region can help you or your branch develop a strategy for it contact Kevin Duguid (Lowlands & Uplands) k.duguid@unison.co.uk, Philippa Clark (Highlands & Islands) p.clark@unison.co.uk or Marta Chaba (Highlands & Islands) m.chaba@unison.co.uk

A class act!



UNISON celebrated Classroom Assistants Day on 29 November to highlight the work done by the range of staff who provide this service and to campaign for better terms and conditions and a proper career structure.

New Local Government Pension Scheme accepted

Members have voted overwhelmingly in a ballot by 94% to 6% to accept the new Local Government Pension Scheme.

Lead negotiator Dave Watson said: "In these negotiations we have worked to preserve the value of your pension. We believe the proposals will achieve a better pension for the vast majority of members".

It is a career average scheme that will be fairer for most members and contributions will be unchanged. In other words, most members will get a bigger pension at no extra cost.

Dave thanked all those who had worked on the ballot. "After signing the Heads of Agreement we will move onto the detailed work on the regulations and the outstanding issues. Further details will be in the next Scottish Pensions Bulletin."

Look out for the bulletin on the website.

We want to hear your news

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

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