**What kind of Scotland do we want to see?**

Based on the views received, we made a submission to both the UK and Scottish governments’ consultations on the referendum process. All of these documents are on our website.

In April, Scottish Council considered what a UNISON vision for Scotland should look like. Workshops also looked at what independence might mean for UNISON members as well as what further powers we might want devolved to Scotland.

These views have contributed to a draft UNISON ‘Vision for a Fairer Scotland’ that we will publish in August.

The next stage of the process is to encourage a wider engagement with members across Scotland, in conjunction with an STUC initiative to engage communities in the constitutional debate.

There will be a series of UNISON meetings across Scotland the week before the STUC events. Full details and registration will be sent to branches.

Announcing the meetings,

**UNISON Scotland Convener Lilian Macer** said: “Constitutional change will have huge implications for our members. It is vital that UNISON Scotland is at the forefront of the debate and our members get every opportunity to contribute their views.

“I would therefore urge members to come along to these events.”

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**NHS on-call final offer - time to use your vote**

**The final offer includes:**
- From 1 October 2012 availability payment of £16.50 per session.
- From 1 April 2013 availability payment of £16 per session.
- From 1 April 2014 availability payment of £18 per session.

Payment for work done, including travel, will be at time and a half, except on public holidays which will be paid at double time.

There will also be “mark time” protection for staff that need it.

For full details of the offer, a briefing and a series of frequently asked questions see www.unison-scotland.org.uk/healthcare/oncallballot

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**PENSIONS**

**Financially illiterate drivel from ‘tax dodgers alliance’**

UNISON Scotland has called on the so-called Taxpayers’ Alliance (TPA), to get its facts straight after the shady right-wing, low-tax pressure group attacked local government pensions again.

The truth is that payments into the Local Government Pension Scheme in Scotland last year were £299.944 million MORE than being paid out to pensioners.

This inconvenient fact was ignored by the self styled think tank - who likewise seem not to have noticed a connection between the cuts in council workforce that they have been urging and decline in local government workers paying in to the pension schemes.

The tax dodgers’ alliance report points out the LGPS is maturing with an increasing number of pensioners. What they fail to mention is that this is the case with almost all pension funds in the UK.

Similarly unmentioned are:
- That the LGPS is one of the few schemes which enjoy an enormous income from investment – and so aren’t entirely reliant on contributions from members and employers.
Tax dodgers need to get facts right on pensions

From Page 1

- That a recent (2011) actuarial valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme Scotland was very positive.
- The LGPS Scotland is currently taking in almost £300 million per year more than it is paying out.
- Even in the event that the scheme was felt to be under pressure - a cost sharing agreement is in place.
- Just 5p in every £1 paid in council tax goes towards pensions. Councils get only 25% of their revenue from council tax, 75% comes from other sources, including business rates and local government grants.
- The numbers in the tax Dodgers Alliance report would only begin to make sense if everyone in local government decided to retire on the same day - a social, political and actuarial absurdity.

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish Secretary, said: "This right-wing pressure group never lets facts get in the way of attacking public services and the people that deliver them. This is financially illiterate drivel. The TPA are simply out of touch with reality.

Pensions for local government are an affordable way of people saving for their retirement - and the results of that are modest enough. The average pensions for council workers in Scotland is just £4,000 a year, dropping to just £2,800 for women.

"We need to bring private sector pensions up to a decent level, not pull public sector pension down - two thirds of employees do not get a single penny in contributions from their employers towards their pensions. The government's plans for auto-enrolment will not go far enough to keep people off means tested benefits."

Police and Fire centralisation will not deliver

The centralisation of Scotland's Police and Fire services is being driven entirely by cost savings that will not deliver for Scotland, says UNISON.

George McIrvine, chair of UNISON's police staff committee, said: "The Government's plan to centralise will result in the loss of up to 3,000 staff and a loss of local expertise.

Responding to Scottish Government plans to create a new body for food safety, food standards, nutrition, food labelling and meat inspection, UNISON stressed it is not opposed in principle to devolution, but urged that any changes to the Scottish Meat Inspection Service are aimed at enhancing consumer protection and animal welfare in Scotland.

New food standards body risks back door privatisation

UNISON has raised concerns that a new food standards body for Scotland could mean watered down standards with a risk of back door privatisation.

UNISON, GMB and Unite members launched a petition and urged politicians and members of the public to sign up to fair pay for local government workers on Fair Pay Day on 27 June.

Branches around the country set up events to mark the day, calling on their local councils to implement the living wage of £7.20 for all staff - a commitment made by both Labour and the SNP prior to the election - and to put an end to the ongoing pay freeze.

"Local government workers are among the lowest paid in the public sector, with more than 18,000 paid less than the living wage," said Stephanie Herd, chair of UNISON Scotland’s local government committee.

"Teaching assistants, care workers, librarians, school catering staff, refuse collectors, street cleaners - they are all struggling to make ends meet and can no longer afford this continued pay cut."

Regional organiser Dougie Black added: “It's not just a matter of fairness, it also makes economic sense as increased wages would boost local economies.”

Fair Pay Day: Local Govt pay freeze must end say unions

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Dave Watson, UNISON’s Scottish Organiser, said: “Our members are rightly concerned about any move that may weaken public protection and damage the Scottish meat industry.

“We need to move away from the ‘boom and bust’ approach to regulation that has, in the past, resulted in serious outbreaks of food poisoning, such as the Wishaw E.Coli outbreak.

“Any change to the delivery module of meat inspection should ensure it is protecting the public, not serving industry, and we must ensure this is not used as a backdoor to privatisation.”

More resources for bargaining and devolution debate

Devolution took centre stage at National Conference, as delegates agreed a call from Scotland to review the devolution protocols and recognised the need to support devolved bargaining with additional resources and appropriate procedures.

Crucially, it also agreed support for UNISON in Scotland to engage members in constitutional debate to ensure the union reflects the views of Scottish members.

Scotland's Stephen Snellie told Conference: “We are clear about the kind of Scotland we want - more equal, fairer, full employment, properly funded public services, no nuclear weapons - the same as the rest of you. The question for us is will independence or the status quo or more devolution short of independence make it more likely we will achieve our vision?”

It was not about where the political power is held -Edinburgh or London - but what the politicians will do with that power, and how it will make a difference to our security of employment or our children’s future.

We are determined that this debate needs to be brought to our people and must address the issues of our members and how we look after our people, and not just about a tax or powers for politicians," said Stephen, calling for resources to ensure the full engagement of members.

Gordon McKay, for the National Executive warned that devolution has moved on and the union needed to move with it.

“The principle of devolution is about being closer to the people we represent, but the practice of devolution should be about ensuring that the powers that go with it are used for the benefit of our members.”

It was important that campaigning, bargaining and decision making were made at the appropriate place and where our members relate to - sometimes that will be the UK and sometimes the devolved nations. Falkirk’s Gray Allan welcomed the motion but warned that the constitutional debate was a complex issue, “loaded down with history and laced with sentiment” and we needed to be ice cold in considering the only question that mattered, “Where do the interests of our members and of all working people lie?”

He told conference that the interests of our members across all the nations in the UK are the same - that what unites us is the common history of our movement.

“Putting football and rugby aside, between public service workers across the UK there can be no barriers, no boundaries and no divides,” said Gray.

Campbell Peden and South Ayrshire cleaners mark Fair Pay Day at Scotland’s oldest secondary school

In Scotland, says UNISON.

Fair Pay Day at Scotland's oldest secondary school

From Page 1

Sign the petition and follow the campaign on the website, facebook, the blog and twitter.
Organising for a future that works

We have a cunning plan.... Why don’t we invest in public services to ensure that basic needs like health and education are met? Build new social housing. Not just creating jobs but tackling inequality.'

Jane Carolan

Scotland NEC member Jane Carolan outlined UNISON’s alternative to these failed policies.

“We have already agreed it wasn’t the nurses, janitors, social workers or any other public sector worker who broke the bank. “Let’s not ask the government for a plan B - we already have one. A strategy that will create demand in the economy, will create employment through investment in skills and infrastructure, and that sees investment in public services as a boost to the economy.

“We don’t invest in public services to ensure that basic needs like health and education are met? Build new social housing. Not just creating jobs but tackling inequality.

“We have a cunning plan. It needs to be at the centre of our campaigning,” she said.

And Scottish Convener Lilian Macer promised: “We will continue to expose the coalition for what they are - ideologues pursuing an agenda to benefit themselves and their super wealthy funders.”

Raise our sights

Depute Convener Stephen Smellie called on members to ‘raise our sights’ in opposing cuts to public services, which vice-president Chris Tansley described as “devastating” and a return to “Victorian values”.

Lilian Macer

Fighting child poverty

Victorian ‘values’ like child poverty, on the rise and hitting families in work as well as the unemployed. Aberdeenshire’s Kate Ramsden told Conference: “Child poverty could be ended tomorrow if the political will was there to do it.”

Inequality

Almost every speech highlighted the growing inequality in this country.

Delegates railed at the social injustices perpetrated by this government on our poorest and our most vulnerable, whilst giving tax cuts to their wealthy chums. They railed at the thrust towards more and more privatisation, when keeping money in public services instead of paying it as profits to private companies would save over £100 billion a year.

They railed at the impact of welfare reforms on the poor, the disabled and the elderly and the demonisation of these people by this uncaring government.

Pensions

And they called for fair pensions for all, including a state pension not lower than the official poverty line figure - currently £178.

A two hour debate about the England and Wales pensions proposals at Local Government Conference ended in a plan to consult and inform widely before a ballot.

The debate challenged the confusion many have between the two threats needed in the pensions campaign. The bargaining strategy in individual pension schemes to ensure fairness and sustainability, alongside the broad political campaign for fair state pensions for all and against the rise in retirement age.

Devolution

Conference backed measures to support devolved bargaining with additional resources. (See page 2 for full report).

Health and safety

Making health and safety the conference prioritised was a key sign of the union’s concern about laws that protect workers’ basic right to come home safe from work being watered down to satisfy the greed of big business.

On the health aspects, Bill Scottish NEC member Jane Carolan outlined UNISON’s alternative to these failed policies.

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Warnings about integrated social care services

No-one is against integrated services but joining at the top with no new resources will only make things worse. Local Government Conference was warned.

Mary McCrea of Edinburgh city council highlighted the cost of the reorganisation required to create integrated services, when “surveys reveal most people are satisfied with the service they receive.”

The issue was resources not to bed-blocking.

While backing calls for better and more responsive social care, Mary urged delegates not be seduced by integration plans that were only there to save money rather than improve services.

Delegates were also concerned about the social model of disability being swallowed up by the medical model.

Another concern was bringing privatisation back into the NHS in Scotland through outsourced local government services.

Liz MacKay from Highland branch highlighted the huge problems in the integration experiment in the Highlands.

“We’ve got a long, long fight to go.”

Liz MacKay

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“We’ve got a long, long fight to go.”

Liz MacKay
Building strength as over 100 attend new officers training

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

If ever the union needed committed activists organising at grass roots level, it is now when we face so many ideological attacks on our services, jobs and conditions.

The signs were good when over 100 members attended new branch officer training in April, the biggest cohort in recent years.

Run by the Scottish Learning and Organising Committee, the training concentrated on organisation and broader trade union education as well as the nuts and bolts needed to do the job.

That’s why the weekend kicked off with an inspiring contribution from Vincent Dlamini, the general secretary of the Swaziland National Public Services and Allied Workers’ Union (Napu). We face struggles but they are put into context by the challenges faced by trade unionists in Swaziland.

He laid out a calm and reasoned critique of what needs to change in Swaziland to bring a peaceful transition to democracy with new policies to fight poverty.

Things were so bad now that people who had been afraid to speak out because they might lose their job or not get their salary, now feel they have nothing to lose by speaking out for change.

Then it was down to work for the participants, learning how to administer branches, look after the funds, run training programmes, turn out magazines, leaflets and websites and many other skills.

“As a new branch officer I was keen to get the skills to do the job and this course gave me that”, said Edinburgh’s Andy Barnett.

“But just as important, I got to meet people from other branches and services - all facing common issues and learning from each other”.

A Tale of Two Barnets comes to Edinburgh

Barne't, site of the famous workhouse from the story Oliver Twist. Two hundred years after the birth of Charles Dickens, has how the area changed and how has it stayed the same?

In 2012, Barnet is faced with the biggest economic crisis since the second world war. The council, faced with budget pressures has embarked on a massive outsourcing program under the title of “One Barnet”, which removes all democratic accountability, but keeps all the financial risk.

The film of “A Tale of Two Barnets” visited every part of the borough and allowed the people of Barnet to talk about their lives and their concerns in 2012. The film is stark and enlightening.

Earlier this year, Edinburgh rejected mass privatisation of council services after a successful trade union and community campaign. The people of Barnet face an even bigger threat. One that will put almost all of their services outwith their control for years to come.

Edinburgh UNISON is hosting this screening to support Barnet’s campaign during the Edinburgh Festival on 20 August. Go to www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk to reserve a ticket or phone 0131 558 7488.

Tony Benn and Woodie Guthrie at festival

Also worth seeing during the festival, promoted by FairPlay, is Tony Benn’s ‘Will and Testament’. Tony is himself coming to Edinburgh on 21 and 22 August at noon to speak at two exclusive screenings of a 30 minute edit of the film, and a Q&A chaired by comedian and broadcaster Mark Thomas, ‘Songs of Struggle’ - marking Woody Guthrie’s 100th anniversary - featuring Alastair McDonald, Arthur Johnstone, Sheena Wellington and Dave Anderson is on 10 and 11 August at 9pm.

UNISON Navy Conference 2012

Scotland’s Nursing Conference will be held this year on Thursday 27 September at the Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow.

This one day conference is open to all our members across the whole nursing family, including: nurses, midwives, health visitors and healthcare assistants.

Together we will consider the key issues currently affecting members and offer an opportunity to debate the future of nursing in Scotland.

Conference speakers: Nicola Sturgeon, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Wellbeing

Ros Moore, Chief Nurse for Scotland

Diane Anderson, Head of Nursing for UNISON

Movies, maternal and making tax dodgers pay!

UNISON Scotland is again delighted to be partnering with Take One Action Film Festival to deliver events during its festival later this year.

The festival celebrates the people and movies that are changing the world and will host over 50 screenings and events in Edinburgh and Glasgow between 21 September and 6 October 2012.

As part of this year’s programme, UNISON Scotland is supporting two films; SISTER is a moving and intimate portrait of a global crisis in maternal health and infant mortality.

We’ll be hearing from the Director, Brenda Davis, who travelled to Ethiopia, Haiti and Cambodia to gather the stories of dedicated health professionals working in difficult circumstances.

Through moving and beautiful moments this film reveals maternal and newborn death as a human rights issue, and champions the frontline staff dedicated to making a difference.

The Falkirk Wheel

UNISON Welfare: Sponsored Walk and Family Fun Day

Sunday 9 September

In the setting of the world’s only rotating boat lift – the Falkirk Wheel - walk along the canals, pathways, trails and activity zones – see the Antonine Wall – or for those more energetically inclined, break the trade to jog!

FAMILY FUN DAY – BRING ALL THE FAMILY: Boat rides on the Wheel, Bouncy Castle, Face Painting, Station Modelling, Stalls, Raffle, Refreshments.

More details at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/welfare or from Diane Anderson at diane.anderson@unison.co.uk. Tel: 0141 342 2842

New Lanark Fun Day

The fourth annual UNISON Members Fun Day at New Lanark is on Sunday 26 August this year.

The event includes activities for kids, live music, free guided walks to the world famous Falls of Clyde, discounted access to the New Lanark Visitor Centre, UNISON Scotland and a chance to have a great day out with friends and family. All Welcome!

For details of free transport from East Kilbride and Hamilton contact UNISON South Lanarkshire on 01698 454690.

Age assessment guidance for social workers

Age assessment guidance aimed at helping vulnerable young asylum seekers get the right support, has been launched by Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council.

Young people often arrive seeking asylum without any documentation showing their age, may not know their age or their appearance makes it hard to judge.

Correct age assessment is vital to ensure they get the protection and support they need, said the Scottish Refugee Council.

The task is extremely difficult because research has consistently shown that there is no medical way of accurately assessing the age of young people.


We want to hear your news
SiU is your paper and we want to hear your stories. Contact: John Stevenson (Editor) 0151 588 7488, webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk or Trisha hamilton lhamilton@unison.co.uk

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