



Make sure you vote on 5 May



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PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

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Scotland in UNISON

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May 5: Vote for Public Services

by Mike Kirby
Scottish Secretary

Our public services, the jobs, wages and pensions of our members are facing unprecedented assault from the "fiscal consolidation" and "austerity measures" imposed by the Conservative led Government at Westminster.

The October and March massive public protests in Edinburgh and London, together with the growing anger in the communities, the campaigning around trade union councils and local groups, are testing the mandate for these measures.

Ideological measures, which attack the very welfare state and welfare systems which the social consensus since the second world war has built over generations.

While Conservatives and LibDems will attack public services for ideological reasons, and other parties will debate the pace and extent of cuts in services, and the choices to be made within the Scottish Budget, the UNISON view is clear.

The choices should be for public services - publicly



26 March: Together we can achieve anything

Half a million people thronged London on 26 March to say, 'there is an alternative' to cuts.

Many thousands of them were UNISON

members from Scotland who came by bus, train and plane from as far as Orkney and Shetland. **Scottish Council takes the fight forward - page 3**

6 The choices should be for public services - publicly delivered. Public services which are for us all and enhance the quality of life of everyone' Mike Kirby.



delivered.

Public services which are for us all and enhance the quality of life of everyone.

The elections to the Scottish Parliament on 5 May provide the chance to send

governments and politicians a clear message that there is an alternative, There is a Better Way and that Public Works.

The previous elections to the Scottish Parliament have broken a mould of the style

and colour of government in Scotland. Politicians will feel most vulnerable at the ballot box.

While we face an election which could determine the purpose and shape of public services for decades to come, there may appear to be little to choose between the two main parties who would expect to form a government of some kind, outright, minority or coalition.

In areas of social policy, prescriptions, a national care *continued page 2*

WANTED: Pensions champions and contacts

UNISON members face a number of attacks on our pensions and it's important we get organised at all levels. Among the key issues facing members are:

- Change to the way pension increases are calculated - Retail Price Index to Consumer Prices Index that will cut average pensions by at least 15%.
- Retirement age increases that don't reflect the demands on many public service workers.
- Abolishing pension protection for workers who are forced to transfer to another employer outside the public sector.
- A complete overhaul of the state pension that will impact on public service schemes.

Changes to fund governance and cost sharing provisions with employers.

Important though these issues are, the key issue is the proposed 3.2% increase in member contributions - that's a 50% increase. This is simply a tax to pay back government debts that were raised to bail out the banks. None of the money will go into the schemes and it threatens the whole system if members opt-out. Overall, the pension changes mean: Pay more, Work longer, Get less.

For this campaign to have maximum impact we need to get organised at branch level and we need at least one pensions champion who will take a lead role in the branch on this issue. We also need pension contacts at workplace level who can talk to members about the attack on our pensions. Briefings and training will be provided to all pensions champions and contacts.

If you are interested in getting involved, speak to a member of your branch. Branches can register their champions and contacts online at: www.unison.org.uk/pensions/pop_involved.asp

UNISON launches safety guide for social work

UNISON Scotland has launched a guide to help social work staff stay safe in the workplace.

The new guide - Keeping Safe in the Workplace - aims to help workers recognise when they are becoming stressed or overloaded at work and to seek support from their employers, trade union or professional association when needed.

The guide has been written by social workers for social work and social care staff and examines some of the key issues faced by staff in their day-to-day working lives.

Kate Ramsden, a member of UNISON's Social Work Issues Group, said: "There is no doubt that social work staff work in an increasingly difficult climate with rising demands not always matched with an increase in available resources. This group of staff are constantly overstretched and this can lead to stress, ill-health and burnout.

"This guide aims to help social work practitioners to keep themselves safe in the workplace; to recognise when they are becoming stressed or overloaded, and how

to seek the necessary help from their employer or trade union."

Stephen Smellie, chair of UNISON's Social Work Issues Group, said: "People are essential to the quality of service provided and it is vital that we support the staff who deliver services. We need to ensure they are trained, supported and properly resourced in order to undertake the often difficult tasks required by our service users."

See the guide at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork



UNISON's Kate Ramsden launches the guide with Ruth Stark from SASW.

STUC: Speaking up for our members and our services

STUC The Living Wage campaign in the NHS has been a major victory at a time when many of our campaigns have been about holding on to the terms and conditions we have, UNISON's Gordon McKay told the STUC.

The £7.15 was not won at the expense of other members. "No deals, no quid pro quo. There will be no negotiation with UNISON on reducing conditions in the NHS, not one compulsory redundancy, not one penny of sick pay, not one freeze on

increments", said Gordon.

Gordon's speech was one of over 20 contributions by UNISON delegates to the Congress in Ayr.

In a special session that heard testimony from a host of campaigners and community groups, **Katrina Murray** focussed on the sham of 'personalisation' which masquerades as giving people a say in their care but in reality is used to see how support packages can be cut.

Sam McCartney warned against further upheaval for the

Full reports on all the UNISON speeches at www.unison-scotland.org.uk

Careers Service urging the STUC to ensure it wasn't brought back into Scottish Enterprise.

Lossiemouth was 'deeply let down by the ConDem government', said **Kieron Green** slamming the effect on the community of cuts in RAF bases. He also spoke on the benefits of higher education.

Willie Docherty backed a balanced energy policy in the UK, aiming to reduce energy

consumption and investing in renewable energy generation.

Pat Rowland condemned the massive bonuses for senior executives in the finance sector, while workers face the stress of redundancy.

Sandra Kennie backed comprehensive education reminding delegates of the whole education team, not just teachers.

John Stevenson urged caution on the call for a national fire and rescue service. UNISON had to listen first to its members in that service and avoid the plan being a template for taking other services out of local control.

John Nisbet backed a call for

more accessibility for the disabled on public transport and cuts in public services and benefits that affect disabled workers.

"Fighting to protect disability benefits is not just about protecting a vulnerable group. It's about protecting the services we all need", he said.

Stephen Brown moved an amendment to a motion on residential homes to ensure it reflected that many care staff work in the voluntary and private sectors as well as the public sector. "We must point our sights on the guilty" he said in call to weed out bad employers who exploit staff.

May 5: Vote for public services

from page 1

service, tuition fees, concessionary transport, they are all in favour of good things and against bad things.

“We give you our consent to govern, don't pocket it and ride away”

UNISON Scotland has published our manifesto, For Public Services. What needs to be done to secure affordable, sustainable services, publicly funded and under democratic control.

This manifesto contains the principles we are urging on political parties standing in the Scottish Parliament elections. We will engage with all political parties, with the exception of the odious BNP.

The manifesto translates into a dozen or so key questions which you should use to challenge candidates. (www.unison-scotland.org.uk/publicworks).

How fair is a council tax? Why do we bail out the banks? The 50% levy on public service pensions going to the Treasury to pay for the bail-out? When is a pay freeze a pay cut? Police on the beat or doing "back office jobs"? Personal care or a National Care Service? Fairly funded FE and HE?

Who should control Scottish Water? Support for the "postage stamp principle" for power? How many new houses will you build?

And as we approach elections in May, we should say to those seeking election, "Don't pass the buck!"

We should remember the words of poet Edwin Morgan at the opening of the reconvened Scottish Parliament, "We give you our consent to govern, don't pocket it and ride away. We give you our deepest dearest wish to govern well, don't say we have no mandate to be so bold."

Mike tells STUC 'Be bold in defence of our public services'

STUC Stories by John Stevenson and Kate Ramsden in Ayr

The STUC will build the widest possible alliance to popularise an alternative economic strategy and to fight the cuts.

Building on the witness of civic society in a special session of Congress, and calling for the next step for the 'Better Way' campaign, UNISON Scottish Secretary **Mike Kirby** urged delegates to "be bold in the defence of our public services".

The cuts we are facing across the UK were "not about money but about politics", said Mike.

"A politics that hates public services and loves to profit from privatisation. A politics that sees a workforce engaged in caring and educating not as an achievement to be celebrated but as a problem to be tackled", he added.

"Why should the jobs and services go if the need still exists?" he asked.

The October and March massive public protests in Edinburgh and London showed the growing anger against attacks on jobs services and welfare state.

These were "ideological measures which attack the very welfare state and welfare systems which the social consensus since the second world war has built over generations", said Mike.

The government does not have massive support for what they are doing, Mike pointed out, and there was an opportunity and a need to build the widest campaign against these cuts.

"We have to be a campaign not of this or that group of members against cuts, or



Rory Malone



Mike Kirby

PHOTOS: LOUIS FLOOD

trade unions versus the government - but a campaign that shows that these cuts are an attack not on unions, or workers, but on society - big or otherwise.

The debt was much higher in 1948 but we could still set up the NHS then. "As for the size of the deficit", added Mike, "It amounts to only half the wealth of the 1,000 richest people in Britain".

UNISON's **Stephen Smellie** called for union to ensure public authorities met their responsibility to carry out full equality, social and economic impact assessments to show the real effect of their decisions.

"Cuts will fall disproportionately on black workers, women and disabled people both in the workplace and the community", he warned.

Black Worker's rep **Ismail Donmez** underlined the point and slammed David Cameron's claim that 'multiculturalism has failed'. It would be easy at a time when "workers across Scotland are feeling insecure about their own jobs for racism to grow", he warned. "It is very important that as trade unionists we do not allow this to happen".

'Irresponsible and ideological'

Earlier, the STUC reiterated its support for public services, calling on the Tory led UK Government to rethink its 'irresponsible and ideological' approach to economic policy.

Instead it should adopt measures which promote growth and create jobs, based on fair taxation.

UNISON's **Rory Malone** told delegates that high quality public services are essential to the quality of life for Scotland's people, especially in tough times.

He called for social investment in roads, hospitals and housing; investment in the green economy and the provision of well paid and secure jobs, apprenticeships, training and a living wage.

"We know we can afford this", said Rory. "We need a fair tax system and a crackdown on tax avoidance, decent pay for workers and improved social provision to reduce individual debt. We need to re-regulate the finance sector and re-direct our pensions to useful and sustainable investments."

Green workplace: Green champions in South Lanarkshire

South Lanarkshire branch has successfully completed its pioneering green workplace project and has appointed green champions to continue the work.

Members **Lorraine Barkley** and **Paul Nicoll**, who were seconded to the Climate Challenge Fund funded project, won praise for their contribution at an awards ceremony in April (see pic).

Their work contacting 6,000 members across more than 200 sites helped raise awareness of workers' carbon footprints at home and encouraged them to

reduce their carbon footprint at work.

Members were able to borrow monitors to find out how much energy various appliances in their home used and 34 standby savers were given out in a prize draw.

A total of 244 members completed an online carbon footprint calculator survey, committing to reduce their footprints by 226 tonnes.

The project also aimed to encourage members to car share or use public transport or cycle/walk to work.



Paul and Lorraine will now job share the branch's Green Officer post and help co-ordinate a network of green champions to ensure the momentum continues.

South Lanarkshire Council has invited the Green Officer to

attend the council's carbon management and sustainability groups.

Lorraine said that the financial climate, with fears of budget cuts and job losses, meant the take-up from members was not as high

as had been hoped.

But, as well as various meetings, visits and open days, the project sent two mailshots to all members, with one specially for retired members.

And more than 300 members received regular emails.

She added: "Sixty members indicated that they were interested in finding out more about being a Green Champion so three events were organised and a job description was agreed as well as a structure of quarterly meetings and a Green Officer role to feed back information and ideas to our Branch Committee."

Action on government pensions robbery

"This Congress and this government should be under no illusion that if this tawdry coalition of a government does not end their attacks on our pensions, then UNISON will ballot for industrial action and we will win", Gordon McKay told the STUC to loud applause.

"What we are seeing is a spiteful, mean spirited attack on public sector workers, simply because they are public sector workers who have

saved for their old age", said Gordon.

In a speech punctuated by applause from delegates, Gordon listed the attacks.

The change from the Retail to Consumer Price Index that will cut average pensions by over 15%.

Increases in pension age and abolition of protection for workers transferred to the private sector.

"But the biggest issue our members face is the robbery this government is planning on

our pensions contributions", said Gordon.

Of the 3.2% extra taken out of public sector workers' wages, "not one penny of that £2.8 billion will go towards workers' pensions. It goes straight to Osborne's treasury to pay for the bankers' bail out".

The STUC will continue to campaign to defend public sector pensions from 'ill-informed attacks.

As Gordon pointed out, the average 'gold plated'



STUC Gordon McKay

pension is just £3,800 a year and even less for women workers.

'Low mean dishonest trick' of health and care cuts disguised as reform

An injury to one is an injury to all is a timeless principle of the trade union movement.

"It's the principle that lies behind our Health and Social Care Services", UNISON Scottish Convener Lilian Macer told the STUC.

"It's the principle that underlines our determination to defend those services, those that rely on them, and those that provide them."

Moving a motion calling for vital services to be protected, Lilian said, "We can see south of the border an attempt to break up the NHS.

"The NHS in England is looking down the barrel at the most serious attack it has experienced in its 62-year history.

"Profit-hungry vultures no longer lurk in the wings - they have come out into open view. Salivating at the prospect of taking chunks out of NHS England.

"But NHS Scotland isn't run on the basis of competition or market mechanisms. Our NHS is run on the basis of partnership working and we're going to keep it that way.

Lilian turned to the 'less obvious attacks'. "The tricks of those who are planning to slice into social provision and then try to cover up the wound with sticking plasters labelled 'personalisation' or 'reform'".

"Let's be clear. We have

nothing to fear from reform. Ensuring the effective use of public money should be the concern of everyone, unions, managements and citizens alike.

"But when the first question isn't 'how do we make a better service?' but 'how do we make a 20% cheaper service?' It's not about reform, it's about attacking services - and it's a low, mean, dishonest trick to try to implement cuts to the services of the most vulnerable people in our society by trying to pass it off as reform."

Personalisation

But 'reform' is not the only con. "The other is personalisation", said Lilian.

"We believe that everyone should have as much independence, choice and control over their care and support arrangements as they need."

But this has to be real choice. "Not the only option because other facilities and arrangements have been closed or made unavailable.

"Personalisation should be an option. But not a cheap option.

"There are those that see personalisation as a wonderful way of magicking millions out of social care budgets.

"They think that by passing money to people directly - that they won't notice it's less than they used to rely on. It's a sleight of hand that hopes, by atomising service users, there



STUC Lilian Macer

won't be any comeback. Well

Personalisation should be an option. But not a cheap option'

congress I don't think it's magic - I think it's another low, mean, dishonest trick.

"We need to make it clear that we will stand up for ourselves and in doing so for those who need us most", Lilian concluded.

"And we should say absolutely clearly to the politicians and decision makers in Holyrood and council chambers.

"They need to accept responsibility for the decisions they take about peoples lives,

they can't blame anyone else. And that we expect more from our parliament and councillors, than a rubber stamp on David Cameron's cuts agenda."

In a separate debate, UNISON's **Catriona Beveridge** said the Health Service and social action were both needed to improve the nation's health.

"We need better housing, an end to fuel poverty and an end to poverty and inequality .

"That's why the NHS was not set up on its own. It was part of a welfare state focused on tackling all the great wants.

"We cannot let that great vision be washed away by another Tory Government. We must fight to protect the NHS and all our services".

Our young people have a right to a future

Slamming cuts in benefits, education allowances and employment opportunities, UNISON NEC Policy Chair Jane Carolan told the STUC, "there has never been a worse time in this country to be young.

"Just when you are reaching the age when you are on the verge of adulthood... this government has decided to dump on you from a great height.

The curse of youth unemployment is not only a tragedy now, "But it is a fact that unemployment experienced at that stage of your life continues to affect your employment prospects thereafter.

"We know what the after effects of the Thatcher years were. The Tory attitude to youth unemployment was summed up the cynical cuts to the Future Jobs Fund. And every cut they have made since

then to public sector employment is another cut to the prospect of well paid good quality secure employment.

"The Tory mantra is that the private sector will grow to create employment. There were also little pink pigs flying over the Grandstand this morning. UNISON research suggests instead that for every job lost in the public sector another is also lost in the private sector."

The STUC will call on the



STUC Jane Carolan

Government to increase Modern Apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

New Conference Delegate?

Going to National Delegate Conference for the first time? Mystified by it all? Went before and didn't understand a thing?

Here is an opportunity to attend a one-day briefing on what happens at Conference, from the Standing Orders Committee to Rostrum Control.

The one day briefing will be held in the Glasgow office on Friday 13th May - to book your place please complete the course application form available on the UNISON Scotland website or get in touch with Nancy Kelly at n.kelly@unison.co.uk

New Course Guide

The new Learning and Organising Course Guide for April to December 2011 has gone out to branches and is on the website. Click 'Learning' on the home page.

26 March: Taking the fight forward

Some travelled over 15 hours. They scamed by bus, train and plane. Thousands from Scotland joined the 500,000 who marched through London to say 'there is an alternative' to cuts in services, jobs and conditions.

The March started 15 minutes early because of the numbers. four and a half hours later the end of the March was just reaching Hyde Park.

The Scottish Council meeting of branches last week congratulated those who took part - and those who organised it.

But it also stressed the need to build on the event and move to the next step of the campaign.

"We need to celebrate 26 March but not dwell on it", said Edinburgh's John Stevenson. Taking the campaign forward would 'inevitably' mean taking action.

Earlier NEC member Gordon McKay outlined the major fight ahead on pensions. It was a fight that could change the government if we won - but would be catastrophic for our jobs and services if we could not deliver.

"We have no choice but to fight to defend our pensions for now and for the future", said Gordon.

Delegates agreed to take forward co-ordinated action with other unions and more days of action.

There is a better May

In direct contrast to Government proposals to scrap the MayDay holiday, a new group of trade unionists and artists - the Glasgow Friends of MayDay, has been set up to organise support for the Glasgow MayDay celebrations.

Chair of the group, Chris Bartter said, "A number of union activists and artists want to rejuvenate the International Workers' Day celebration. Working with the Glasgow Trade Union Council and the STUC, we'll be challenging the false image of unions put out by the Tories. If this year's events in and around the STUC Centre are successful, hopefully next year we will encourage events in areas surrounding Glasgow as well."

The events include a one-person drama by David Hayman, a reunion of the musicians from Wildcat Stage productions under Dave Anderson, a folk-night headlined by Arthur Johnson and a rare chance to see the film made of the UCS work-in, along with a lecture on the historic event in its 40th Anniversary year.

Tom Leonard, the poet provides an alternative entertainment to the delights of the royal wedding, as does an early evening stand-up comedy bash and a Northern Soul night.

The March and Rally will be addressed by Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite. It will set off from George Square on Sunday at 11.00 am and rally in the Fruitmarket. <http://may1st.org.uk>

Scotland activists in key role at UK Health Conference

by John Gallacher
Regional Organiser

The UK Health Conference in Liverpool had an important 'tartan' flavour, despite a central issue being the Health Reform Bill in England, which is dismantling the NHS as we know it in England.

Conference was chaired with good humour by Angela Lynes (Scottish Region), although with every motion passed without dissent, it was not, as Angela said, perhaps an ideal warm-up match for the Delegate Conference to come in Manchester in June.

The service group was chaired by Lilian Macer for the last time. Having seen through the business of 2011 Health Conference, Lilian announced her intention to stand down as Chair after five years - to a standing ovation - to concentrate

on her new role as Scottish Convener.

As Chair of the SGE Lilian has championed the devolution cause and also sought to engage the UK lay structures in the business of the Health Group.

Regional delegate Gordon McKay paid a humorous and emotional tribute to Lilian, stating that he was "proud to be a part of a union which could name Lilian Macer amongst its members".

Scottish delegate Sandra Dee Masson seconded the key emergency motion on Pensions.

She called on UNISON to prepare to do battle on NHS Pensions in the face of attacks on four fronts. Firstly, a £4 billion tax on public sector workers by increasing employee contributions by on average 3% (50% increase) with no return on pension benefits.



Ross Finnie, Nicola Sturgeon, Jackie Baillie and Patrick Harvey fielded delegates questions at the Health election hustings chaired by Tam Waterson. See the website for a full report.

This threatens to destabilise public sector schemes by pricing members out of the scheme and reducing its overall viability.

Secondly, index linking benefits (including accrued benefits) to CPI.

This will reduce the value of pensions by 8.5% by 2017. From 1 April 2011, for example, there will be a 3.1% increase (instead of 4.6%) which will see a woman on

a pension of £3,500 (the average) be £52 worse off.

Thirdly, the Hutton Review proposes a possible move away from final salary scheme.

Fourthly, plans to increase the normal retirement age of schemes to be in line with the state pension age (65 for men and women from November 2018, rising eventually to 68)

Sandra Dee also moved a motion seeking a review of the UK Health Conference duration and format, to ensure it affords opportunity for Health to engage with the Local Government and CVS sectors and to take account of health policy and activity

across the UK.

Gordon McKay's contribution on pay and conditions of service was well received by Conference.

He congratulated the Service Group on its tough line against a proposed two year incremental freeze and stated that "jobs would not be bought out of our members conditions of service".

He paid tribute to retiring Senior National Officer Mike Jackson for his leadership in Agenda for Change negotiations and pay campaigning.

The spirit of the 26 March TUC March reached the streets of Liverpool with a major city centre rally in support of the NHS. To a windswept audience, Lilian Macer declared that 'class war' had been declared on working people by "rich Old Etonians" and that UNISON would resist the ConDem attacks at every turn.

'No funding, no future' says UNISON as colleges protest against cuts

No funding - no future, that was the message from UNISON Scotland on 30 March as college staff across the country took to the streets to protest against the cuts.

Colleges throughout Scotland took part in a day of action today to raise public awareness of the extent of government's cuts to further education.

Scotland's colleges face a 10.4% cut in their funding from the Scottish Funding Council, which will have a devastating impact on staff, students and entire communities.

Karen Dawson, chair of UNISON's further education committee, said:

"These cuts will have a devastating impact on both colleges and communities and the worst of it is that these are just the tip of the iceberg.

"They will not only destroy

our colleges, they will steal the future of an entire generation of students."

Emma Phillips, regional organiser with UNISON, said:

"The Government must rethink its savage cuts or thousands of Scotland's students will be left facing a bleak future.

"It is vital that Scotland has an educated and skilled workforce and to achieve this we need to invest in education, not cut it."

'Dark future' for students if university cuts go ahead

UNISON Scotland has condemned planned cuts by Glasgow Caledonian University, claiming students will face a dark future if cuts go ahead.

Last month, management announced plans to cut 95 jobs at the university - a move which will hit the most vulnerable students hardest.



Figures show that the number of support staff at the university has dropped by more than 25 per cent in the last five years.

This is in stark contrast to the rise in higher paid staff at the university which has trebled in the same period.

Davena Rankin, branch secretary at Glasgow Caledonian University, said:

"These cuts spell a dark future for our students. Last year alone, more than 16,000 students sought support from our staff - vital support which can make the difference between a student staying on at university or dropping out.

"We believe our students deserve better and we will fight these cuts every step of the way."

New law a step forward in tackling domestic abuse

by Fiona Montgomery
Information Devt. Officer

A Bill giving more support to women experiencing domestic violence was passed unanimously by MSPs in March.

Rhoda Grant's Member's Bill was backed by UNISON and will offer improved access to justice and protection for those subjected to violence by a partner/ex-partner.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 will remove the need to show a course of conduct before a non-harassment order can be granted by the civil or

criminal court, meaning only one incident of harassing behaviour is required.

It also makes it a criminal offence to breach an interdict with power of arrest.

Unfortunately MSPs had earlier rejected the section that would have given Legal Aid to anyone applying to a civil court for an interdict with power of arrest or a non-harassment order, where domestic abuse is involved.

However, significant work has been done with the Scottish Legal Aid Board and it is setting up an access to legal services reference group, with Scottish Women's Aid as

a core member.

Concluding the Stage 3 Debate, Rhoda Grant included UNISON's Norma Black and the Scottish Women's Committee in her thanks to various supporters.

She said: "The Bill is not the last word on domestic abuse. It is merely another step along the way. I hope that a day will come when, as a society, we will not tolerate such abuse and victims will no longer live in fear."



Marie Garrity

STUC backs STOP The STUC in Ayr backed the Women's Aid STOP campaign and heard a powerful and courageous speech from UNISON's Marie Garrity.

"One in five Scottish Women experience domestic abuse. I was one of those women", she told delegates.

"Let's not just pay lip service to this motion.

"We have a critical role in campaigning for protection, prevention, provision and workplace policies."

'Scandalous failure' to extend Freedom of Information

by Fiona Montgomery
Information Devt. Officer

The Scottish Government's "scandalous" failure to extend Freedom of Information legislation has been roundly condemned.

Kevin Dunion, the Scottish Information Commissioner complained in his annual report in March that the law had not been extended to cover PFI/PPP companies, leisure trusts, housing associations and other providers of public services not already subject to FOI.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser, who is featured on the SIC's website explaining UNISON's use of FOI, said Mr Dunion was right to highlight the fact that information rights should "follow the public pound".

Both the Scotsman and Herald backed extending the legislation, with the Herald leader arguing it is necessary to "provide the accountability which is the cornerstone of democracy and for which there is increasing demand."

The Scotsman editorial said of PFI projects such as Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Kilmarnock Prison "it is hard to see why such projects are excluded, even if there might - only might - be a case for "redacting", to use the legalistic word, sensitive commercial information from released documents."

Dave said: "It is a scandal that the Scottish Government has pulled back from extending the legislation, particularly as this goes against the intentions and assurances given at the time it was passed."

UNISON's use of FOI to conduct surveys such as the annual Violence at Work one is a case study online at: www.itspublicknowledge.info/inyourhands/in-their-hands.html#protectinginterests

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