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# Housing - Don't freeze out democracy

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

Let local councils spend the money to maintain and improve Scotland's council housing - that's the message from UNISONScotland in its response to *An Agenda for Scotland's Housing*, the Scottish Executive's Green Paper on Modernisation. Rather than tying the £300m planned to be invested to one specific policy, UNISON wants to see a flexible approach that obviates the need for the wholesale transfer stock to private companies and housing associations", said Jane Carolan, Chair of UNISON's Scottish Housing Sector Working Party.

UNISON is calling for local authorities to be allowed to use capital receipts to invest in new housing, for authorities' capital debt to be written



Jane Carolan  
Loss of accountability

- Call to avoid wholesale housing transfers
- Let councils use capital receipts and borrow to invest. Write off capital debt
- Value the Housing public sector team
- UNISON commissions research.

off and for the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR) to be replaced by a new accounting measure - the General Government Financial Deficit (GGFD) - to allow borrowing by local authorities for housing investment. Another point made in



Mike Kirby  
Effect on conditions

UNISON's response is that government should place a proper value on the 'Housing Team'. UNISON's *Serving Scotland* campaign makes the point that public services are best provide by an integrated team.

Turn to page 2

It would be ironic and regrettable if the newly elected Scottish Parliament... reduced democratic accountability over the nation's housing stock



DLO surpluses prompt warning on housing transfer - page 2

Full response on our website at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk)

UNISON activist to MSP... What's it like Janis? - p2



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Prentis backed for general secretary - p3



Branch Focus: Stirling University - p3

Millions won for members - p3

John McFadden's Presidential banners - p4

## Local government 3.3% pay deal

Local government members have accepted a 3.3% pay rise, backdated to April 99, after a Scotland-wide consultation exercise.

Most members will see the rise towards the end of October.

The deal, the first ever in the new Scottish bargaining machinery since it broke away from the national structure, is 0.3% higher than the England and Wales settlement.

FULL DETAILS - Page 2.

## Scottish leadership sets priorities

UNISON's Scottish Committee has set out a range of innovative plans to improve the way the union campaigns for members and promotes public services in the Scottish Parliament.

The final draft of campaigning priorities, set at a two day seminar in August, will be put to a special meeting of the committee on 5 October.

The seminar also laid out more effective ways of responding to the flood of Scottish Parliament consultation documents within the tight timex-

cales often set. Two - Housing and Student Finance - are covered in this *SiU*.

Consistent themes to be highlighted across everything the union does were also laid out. These will build on the *Serving Scotland* campaign aims of:

- giving people a say in their services.
- services must be the best that can be delivered - *choosing quality*.
- Our services must be provided by a public services team, a workforce trained and qualified, treated fairly

and equally, with the resources to deliver - *choosing teamwork*.

The seminar workshops helped members share information about what was already happening, build ideas from these and plan new ways of making the union more effective and more relevant.

One project that had made a significant impact in involving members and activists was the health group's highly effective campaign against 'needlestick' injuries caused by hypodermic needles.

## Community Leadership - Local councils get new advisor

As part of its response to the McIntosh Commission, the Government has set up a panel to look at the recommendations on leadership and advise the Scottish Executive on ways councils can improve their operation.

Our own Anne Middleton, UNISONScotland Depute

by Chris Bartter  
Communications Officer

Secretary, has been appointed to this body which is to be chaired by Alastair MacNish, Retiring Chief Executive of South Lanarkshire Council.

Anne says, "I am looking forward to putting my views forward on this important subject. Vibrant local democracy is crucial to the success of public services in

Scotland and along with councils and service users I hope we can convince the Executive of this."

Other members of this Leadership Advisory Panel are Oonagh Aitken, Chief Executive of CoSLA; Charlotte Stenhouse, Chair, Fife Health Board; Margaret Ford, Chair, Lothian Health Board; Councillor Pat Watters - Spokesperson for Personnel,

CoSLA; Prof Ian Percy, Chair of the Accounts Commission in Scotland; Maggie Symonds, Managing partner of Calico UK, and Duncan McGhie of Price Waterhouse Coopers.

Anne fully expects different recommendations for community leadership to come out for different parts of the country.

"No-one expects Shetland Council should operate in the

**Vibrant local democracy is crucial to the success of public services in Scotland**

Anne Middleton

same way as Edinburgh City," She says "But one thing all council's could do, is to promote their services more."



# It's great to be helping shape Scotland's future

On Friday May 7th 1999, my life changed completely. I became one of the first women elected to the first Scottish Parliament for over 300 years, representing Glasgow Rutherglen Constituency.

And, boy, was I in for a shock as to just how different life would be!

Notwithstanding the shock factor, I have to say it is definitely the most exciting thing I have ever done for many reasons.

To be part of history is great. To be involved in the Parliament from the beginning when everything is shiny and new is great.

And to be able to help shape the future of Scotland is great.

But for me, one of the most exciting things of all has been setting up my constituency office, meeting local people and helping them with their problems.

Because my background is in health, I was hoping to be part of the Parliament's Health Committee. Unfortunately, politics doesn't work that way and my brief is in my second



In May 1999, JANIS HUGHES went from union lay activist in the Health Service to member of the first democratically elected Scottish Parliament.

Here she talks of the excitement, the shock, the work and the way her UNISON experience shaped her future.

choice of committee - Transport and the Environment.

### Learning fast

However, this is very exciting for various reasons. For example, I am learning (fast!) about a new area of interest; Transport is in the current legislative programme for the Parliament and is one of the most important areas of debate; both issues have a high profile locally for me with situations like the proposed M74 extension and the various toxic waste sites throughout Rutherglen.

But this doesn't mean that I have abandoned my interests in other areas. 20 years in the Health Service, always as a UNISON activist, help to focus the mind somewhat and I have

become involved in health debates and local health issues; for example,

*I am a member of an all-party group of MSP's looking at the future of the Victoria Infirmary, which is my local hospital.*

### China cups!

My health service background has proved invaluable in such discussions and one of the best bits is when I meet with people like the Health Board Chief Executive, I notice a distinct change in his attitude from when I was a mere UNISON official - I even get coffee in china cups now!

Every job has downsides, though, and the travelling to Edinburgh is one disadvantage. Normally, I am there three days per week, two for Parliament



sessions and one for committee meetings.

However, I often have to be there more often and this gives me less time in my constituency office and less time to meet local people and groups. Modern technology is useful, though, and allows me to keep in touch no matter where I am - a case of "have laptop, will travel", I fear.

Would I change my life now? Definitely not. Although I do admit to seeking a hospital "fix" every now and again and I'm always keen to visit any local health establishment (health people, take note)!

I have no doubt that my experience in UNISON helped shape my future and played a big part in my new "career" - for that I will always be grateful.

## Housing transfer threat from page 1...

Transfer of stock would not only break up the team who provide vital services to the community alongside housing staff - home helps, social workers etc. But in some cases break up the housing team as well.

"The primary concern has to be the loss of democratic accountability," said Jane Carolan. "Currently tenants can take problems direct to their councillor, and vote them out if they do a bad job."

As the response makes clear 'It would be ironic and regrettable if the newly elected Scottish Parliament...reduced democratic accountability over the nations housing stock.'

The second concern is for homeless provision. Currently councils are the sole providers of housing for the homeless. Where are they to be housed if the council has no stock?

Regulations must be introduced to require other housing agencies to provide accommodation for the homeless.

### Tenants rights

Tenants rights could also be threatened. A study commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Council makes it clear that council 'secure' tenancies would become only 'assured' tenancies after transfer.

Right to buy would be abolished for new tenants. There is no statutory obligation to 'assured' tenants to be provided information or consulted - unlike 'secure' tenants.

"These points put in ques-

tion the government's assurances of 'community ownership'," says Jane Carolan.

*"Whole stock transfer - being considered in Glasgow and Dumfries & Galloway - is a tenants equivalent of buying a pig in a poke."*

In other areas too - Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh for example - large chunks of the housing stock are being considered for transfer.

### Research

UNISONScotland, Glasgow and the UK Local Government Committee have commissioned research from Paisley University into the Glasgow housing stock transfer.

"It will look at the economic basis, the financial plan, the history of housing management and why there is an apparent crisis now", said Mike Kirby, UNISONScotland convenor.

"It will also examine the effect of housing stock transfers on jobs and conditions".

The research will have implications for all other planned transfers throughout the country.

### Campaigns

UNISON is in the forefront of campaigns on the issues. Newspaper advertising is planned for Aberdeen; and in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dumfries direct contact with tenants groups is allowing UNISON to put our arguments across before and during any tenants ballots.

## Local government 3.3% pay settlement

### From Page 1

The local government 3.3% pay increase will apply to all manual and white collar staff in Scotland's 32 local authorities and the voluntary and related sectors where they are conditioned to the national bargaining.

The increase over the English settlement is due to the differences in timescale of implementing the "Single Status" agreement on creating one set of conditions for local authority staff

Dougie Black, UNISON's Scottish Chair of Local Government, said:

"Whilst we are disappointed that we were unsuccessful in getting specific help for the low paid in this pay round, it is clear that members were not prepared to strike to get a better offer. We will now be concentrating on making sure that Single Status is implemented fairly across Scotland."



Dougie Black

## DLO surpluses warning on housing transfer

Good Direct Labour Organisation results could be put at risk by insistence on the transfer of council housing out of local democratic control, says UNISONScotland.

Commenting on the Review of the Performance of DLO's and DSO's in Scotland, by the Accounts Commission for Scotland, Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Senior Regional

DLO's create £38m for services, £5m in housing

Officer for Local Government, said, "We are delighted that in three short years since the unwanted reorganisation of local government, local authority staff have created nearly £38 million to support services across Scotland."

However he went on to warn that local authority plans to transfer large numbers of council

houses to housing associations and private companies could put DLO's at risk.

"Over £5million of that surplus was created in Building Maintenance work," said Joe, "The majority of that in maintaining council housing stock. If Councils don't have those houses the DLO's can't maintain them."

"That will put tenants at risk from private contractors and other services at risk of cuts and closures."



# Scotland backs Prentis for general secretary

by John Stevenson  
SiU Editor

**UNISON's Scottish Committee has backed Dave Prentis' (left) nomination for general secretary as Rodney Bickerstaffe signalled his intention to stand down next year.**

Dave has been a good friend of Scotland in his years as depute general secretary since UNISON's inception.

He was at the centre of the talks between the partner unions that created UNISON in the first

place and has been at the core of policy development for the last six years.

"Following a Conference decision to reorganise the union, Dave has had oversight of the 'Strategic Review' which plans to devolve more resources and control to Regions and branches", said Mike Kirby, Scottish Convener.

Campaigning on the slogan "Pride in our Public Services - Proud of our union", with a



**Rodney Bickerstaffe decides to stand down from December 2000**

Above: Rodney pictured campaigning in the Scottish Parliament referendum

commitment to lay control, Dave has also had leading roles in the Campaign for a Living Wage and the fight against PFI.

● Rodney Bickerstaffe, about

to be Britain's longest serving union general secretary, led NUPE from 1982 before taking over the UNISON role in 1996.

Everyone who knows Rodney never fails to marvel at his eye for detail, his compassion and his amazing memory for people. He is widely known and respected internationally.

Rodney was also backed by Scotland in his election in 1996 when he took over from Alan Jinkinson.

Newly elected President, (and Scot) Anne Picking said:

"Rodney has been an excellent general secretary. He has

been a tireless campaigner for the low paid, for pensioners and other disadvantaged groups.

"His twin aims over the last 20 years have been to help establish our new public sector union and to help achieve for the first time ever in this country a statutory national minimum wage. In both cases Rodney has played a major part and we are grateful to him and wish him well for the future".

● **Nominations for general secretary opened on 1 October, with voting two months later and the result announced on 28 February 2000.**

## Call for fully funded lifelong education

by John Stevenson  
SiU Editor

**UNISONScotland has called for fully funded lifelong education and equal treatment of all students in its response to the Scottish Executive's Student Finance - What do you think? consultation paper.**

With members working in higher and further education, as well as thousands of others undertaking courses of education, the union is well placed to comment on the "crisis in funding in higher and further education".

"Opportunities need to be made available to the many not the few" says the response as it calls for measures to redress the balance between higher and further education and to end student poverty. It calls for:

- living maintenance grant for all over 16
- restoring income support and housing benefit, especially during vacations

### Tuition fees

"UNISON believes that education should be free at the point of use", says the response as it calls for an end to tuition fees, with education being funded from a progressive tax system.

If fees are not abolished, UNISON wants the threshold at which fees are liable "substantially raised".

### Lifelong learning

Student support should be geared towards widening access to higher and further education, especially for low income households, mature students, manual workers, disabled people, black people and women returning to the workforce.

The biggest barrier to education is lack of financial support, says the response and it calls on the Scottish Executive to address this in its review.

See the full response at:  
[www.unison-scotland.org.uk](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk).

## Gas climbers raise £1500 for elderly energy project

UNISON and Scottish Gas came together earlier this year to support practical energy initiatives in the homes of older people.

Jim Jamieson, Judith McMaster, and Pat Meldrum from Scottish Gas' Service Centre in Uddingston climbed Britain's three highest peaks in 24 hours to raise £1500 for the project.

UNISON sponsored them at £100 each, and the picture shows (l to r) John Fitzsimmons (their driver), Kenny Epps (UNISON Steward), Judith McMaster, Pat Meldrum and Jim Jamieson after they returned from the trip.



## Eating the elephant, mouthful at a time

**Stirling has had several victories over the last year or so which should not be taken to infer that we have won every time - we certainly have not.**

We have recently convinced our employer that the level of morale amongst the staff is not all it should be. I am pleased to say that this has been accepted and is now being addressed.

Nobody expects an overnight change but you will recall the old 'joke' - Question: 'How do you eat an elephant?' Answer: 'A mouthful at a time'.

### Millennium pay

Enhanced rates of pay for those working at the millennium are high on the agenda but sad to say that we are current-

ly being stone-walled by our employer but we live in hope.

We are still waiting for details from some Scottish Branches that we wrote to for information.

### Tribunal

One of our Members was recently dismissed following a conviction for an offence that took place outwith the University. She insisted (successfully) throughout all proceedings that the name of the University must not be introduced. She was not suspended from work, indeed she returned to work for some hours following the disciplinary hearing and was asked to remain at the end of the shift; she was then informed that she had been dismissed. Her



University of Stirling Branch

**Branch FOCUS**

An occasional look at what's happening in UNISON branches.

appeal was not upheld and the case is now set to proceed to Employment Tribunal.

### Monthly pay

Our employer wants to introduce 'monthly pay for all'. We are negotiating the terms of this at present and it

would not be appropriate yet to anticipate the outcome. Readers will understand the reservations of some of our members who are used to being paid weekly.

That said and with the incentives that were originally presented by the employer, the members voted in favour of the change on (almost) a two-to-one majority.

### Recruitment

And of course, recruitment and retention, proceeds apace!

**NOTE: You can get details of millennium deals at: [www.unison.org.uk/polres/y2k.htm](http://www.unison.org.uk/polres/y2k.htm)**



## Lecture series

Glasgow's Morning Star Lecture Series is fast becoming an essential diary date for aspiring activists. The series, held 4/6 times per year in the STUC Centre in Woodlands Road, Glasgow, at 7.30pm.

has already dealt with Privatisation, Monetary Union and The Scottish Parliament.

Coming up are lectures on

- The trade union movement and the laws against it (25 November),
  - Work Intensification, Health and Safety and trade union power (27 January 2000)
  - Perspectives for an Anti-racist agenda in Scotland (23 March 2000).
- You can't say we don't give you enough warning!



## WestNet

The West Network (WestNet) is a cross sector/ cross branch lesbian and gay self organised group for UNISON members in the West of Scotland.

It meets every three months in Glasgow and has a mailing list of over 60 UNISON members from various branches and service groups.

Members are available to attend branch meetings to give presentations on lesbian and gay self organisation and how it feeds into the work of the branch, the region and the union nationally. Training courses are now part of UNISON's annual education and training calendar.

Similar groups have been established in the East and North East of Scotland and there have been informal talks with Northern Region about a joint initiative for the Borders area.

Contact Neil MacInnes (See contact address under Lesbian & Gay Conference)

# Championship prize for UNISON Kinneil Band

by John Stevenson  
SiU Editor

**O**ne point and one place was all that stopped the UNISON Kinneil Band from being first in Britain at the recent Boosey & Hawkes National Brass Band Championships.

The band, who went into the finals as reigning Scottish Champions are delighted with the second place but some observers feel they were good enough on the day to win.

Band secretary Robert Doherty said "We are now looking forward to a long run in the Championship section".

The competition came after seven months of area competitions the length and breadth of the country with 16 bands (two from each area) qualifying for the finals held last month in Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall.



Kinneil, drawn to play in 13th position, were pipped by the much hyped Ashton-under-Lyne band.

This band was formed by a group of musicians from a range of championship bands and were widely tipped as winners in the Brass Band press.

Kinneil's achievement is all the more rewarding since it was the band's first attempt after returning to the Championship Section.

They had moved in the last few years between that and the First section since the Championship Section was cut from 15 to 10 bands.

The 28 band members come from a variety of backgrounds including industry, the health service and students.

Originally the Kinneil Colliery band, the future looked grim for them when the pit closed in 1983.

But a conversation that

year between the NUM pit delegate and NUPE's Ron Curran at the STUC led to NUPE taking over the sponsorship.

UNISON carried this on when NUPE, NALGO and COHSE merged in 1995.

● *The band is available for concerts and events and branches should contact Diane Anderson at UNISON House (0141 332 0006) in the first instance.*

## Highland jobs back in house

Highland Grounds maintenance workers will transfer back to the council on 29 October after a private company pulled out of the contract.

"It was a bad day for the Highlands when the four contracts were privatised in 1997. Since then, there have been repeated problems in all four



Donald Shiach  
"Quality cut"

areas - Lochaber, Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh, and Ross and Cromarty - all arising from the council decision to take the lowest tender", said UNISON Regional Officer Donald Shiach.

### Learning the hard way

"The council has had to learn the hard way that you cut quality when you cut costs. It is a tragedy that workers had to lose their jobs when Mitchell and Struthers made 29 men redundant.

"Every time the council looks at the service, I hope they'll remember those 29 workers and their families, and that cutting costs has a human price too", added Donald.

"The story of privatisation in the Highlands is one of poor quality service, compulsory redundancy and casualisation.

"We will be pushing the council to keep services in-house.

Quality is as important as price and the council's own staff provides high quality, flexible services at a competitive cost."

"We hope the council will now have a period of stability for Grounds Maintenance staff throughout the Highlands", said Donald.

# Self organised group conference dates

**V**arious Self Organised Groups are currently planning their AGM's Annual Forums. Here are some key dates:

 **Black Members Group**  
AGM Saturday 23 October 1999, STUC Offices, Woodlands Road Glasgow, 10.30am - 2.30pm.

Meeting open to all Black UNISON members in Scotland. Please check with: Ravi Nathan, Secretary BMC, c/o UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX Tel 0141-332 0006.

**STUC Black Workers Conference**  
Sat/Sun 27/28 November 1999. STUC Offices Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Nominations for

delegation from Branches (7 Places) by 28 September to Matt Smith. Forms available from Scottish Regional Office. Nominees must be UNISON Members and Black.

**STUC Conference on Mainstreaming Race Equality into the Scottish Industrial Agenda**  
29 October 1999. STUC Offices, Woodlands Road Glasgow, 10.00am - 4.00pm

 **Disabled Members Group Annual Forum Saturday 13 November 1999, St Johnstone Football Club, McDiarmid Park, Crieff Road, Perth, PH1 2SJ. 10.30am**

Delegates by 25 October 1999, and amend-

ments to motions by the same date to Carol Judge, SRO Secretary to the SDMC, UNISON House. Details also available in alternative formats and available on the Scottish Website <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk>

 **Lesbian and Gay Men's Conference**  
Saturday 30 October 1999. Glasgow

"Social Inclusion - In or out?" Guest speakers; MSP's etc. Elections and motions plus a social event. Details from Neil MacInnes, Sec SLGC, UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX. Tel 0141-332 0006 or 0958 754 315, e-mail [neil.macinnis@cls.glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:neil.macinnis@cls.glasgow.gov.uk)

## We want to hear your news

Won any deals or cases for members? Any 'people' stories we could use? SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.

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