



UNISON Scotland celebrates ten years on the web
See Page 4



Unprecedented Scottish Water strike wins talks - p3



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

scottish council activists bulletin

Scotland in UNISON

Dec 2008
No. 76

Copy sections of this bulletin or the online version to use in local branch or workplace newsletters

Campaign to save our pensions needed now

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

Following ominous signals from the Tories that they plan to attack public service pensions, UNISON's Jane Carolan has warned that we must start campaigning now.

Jane, Scotland National Executive member and UK Policy Chair, told a meeting of Scottish branches last week, "If anyone is going to save public sector pensions it is going to be us - we can't rely on anyone else."

"We can't wait for a general election, the union has to campaign now and campaign in a big way".

The call comes after Tory leaders have been queuing up to float cuts in public sector pensions, joined by an 'axis of misinformation' from large sections of the media.

A 'race to the bottom' to cut public sector pensions helps nobody and UNISON is urging private sector employers to do right by their workers and set up decent pension schemes.

"Countless private firms have closed their final-salary pension schemes, leaving workers facing poverty in their retirement, while they continue to make huge profits", said UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis.

TORIES SIGNAL ATTACK ON PENSIONS



Cameron wants no final salary pensions

Tory leader David Cameron: We have got to end the apartheid in pensions my vision over time is to move increasingly towards defined contribution rather than final salary schemes".

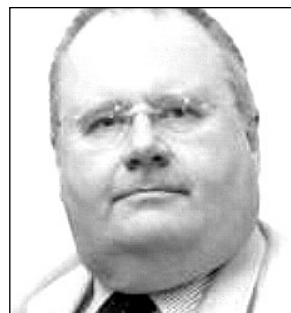
UNISON's Dave Prentis: "Mr Cameron should be calling for an end to the real cause of pension apartheid. He should be urging private sector firms to face up to their responsibilities to their staff by setting up decent pension schemes."



The need to fight

"If anyone is going to save public sector pensions it is going to be us - we can't rely on anyone else".

JANE CAROLAN sets out why we need to start the campaign now - Page 2



Gold-plated, claims Pickles.. more like tinfoil says Prentis

The Spin: Eric Pickles, Tory local government spokesperson, slammed 'gold-plated town hall pensions'. He claimed 20% of local government spending in England was spent on pensions.

The fact: Local government members pay for their pensions. Pensions account for less than 4% of spending and the average pension is just £3,800 a year.

"More tinfoil than gold plated", retorted UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis.

Midlothian set to strike over Single Status

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

Midlothian Council members were set to start selective strike action as SiU went to press after Single Status talks faltered.

IT support and inquiry and collection staff were due to walk out on 15 December in the long-running dispute.

Branch Secretary Lesley Greig said: "We have been forced into this action but we hope that continuing talks will deliver a deal we can put to our members."

Staff were balloted in September after months of talks. The council previously threatened to withdraw an offer if the union did not recommend it and then issued 90 day notices to impose the scheme.

"After the ballot 'yes' vote, talks started again and significant progress was made", explained Lesley.

"However the council failed to come up with a proposal before the deadline for action of 28 November.

A 'progress report' from the council on 8 December still failed to meet the union's aims.

The action now has to go ahead to meet legal timescales but the union is still hopeful that progress can be made.

Meat strike called off as employers agree to pay

Unison called off a planned Meat Hygiene strike last month after employers agreed to pay a long-overdue pay rise.

The 2.99% increase, backdated to August 2007, will be paid in the new year, in time to help with post-Christmas bills.

As well as putting money into members' pockets, the agreement also gives breathing space for further talks on changes to work patterns.

The strike would have seriously disrupted meat supplies across the country in the run-up to Christmas.

Simon Watson, the union's national officer for meat inspectors, said: "We still have some tough talking to do over the 'work anytime' proposals and members have a right to expect movement on their 2008 pay deal."

Credit Crunch: Public service investment key to recovery

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

Investment in public services will be essential to stabilising our economy, maintaining demand and employment and underpinning future growth, UNISON's Dave Watson told a conference at Glasgow University.

"The crisis in the financial system, caused by the greed and irresponsibility of a privileged minority, now threatens the living standards and future security of millions of ordinary working people. Jobs, homes, savings, pensions, and essential public

services are at risk", Dave said.

Dave set out a list of actions needed now to protect working people and rebuild the economy.

"Public services have a vital role in protecting individuals, families and communities", said Dave.

There needed to be...

- relief from rising fuel bills, financed by a windfall tax on the profits of the energy sector, with price controls if needed.
- action to minimise evictions and homelessness, including empowering councils to take on threatened homes.
- abandoning the public sector pay policy which "imposes real terms

"The crisis in the financial system, caused by the greed and irresponsibility of a privileged minority, now threatens the living standards and future security of millions of ordinary working people"

Dave Watson



pay cuts on millions of workers."

- action on pensions to prevent enforced closure of schemes.
- direct public ownership instead of the waste of PFI
- better regulation to stop the bank 'excesses' which contributed to the problems.

For the future, he demanded an

end to the "casino capitalism" which placed speculative gain before investment in industry and essential services.

And in the longer term, Dave called for: "a new economic programme for the UK that puts fairness and the needs of the majority first."

Waxing to 'wear it pink'



by Jane Aitchison
Communications & Campaigns

South Lanarkshire UNISON steward Robert Allison was so keen to raise funds for the Wear it Pink Appeal on October 31st that he allowed colleagues Vicky Bradley and Christine Miller to wax his legs.

The trio managed to raise over £320 for the beat

breast cancer campaign, with around fifty of their work colleagues gathering to witness the event and hear Robert's squeals of pain.

Robert did seem to be very pleased with the result, and you can't help wondering if there wasn't just a wee bit of enjoyment there!

March for Just Solutions



by Fiona Montgomery
Info Development Officer

Several hundred people marched through Glasgow last week to demand 'Just Solutions' on climate change.

Meanwhile the Scottish Government has published the Scottish Climate Change Bill, which aims to be world leading legislation.

It includes a target of an 80% reduction in net Scottish greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, along with annual targets and the inclusion of emissions from aviation and shipping.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, of which UNISON Scotland is a member, has welcomed the bill but will be campaigning for MSPs to make it even stronger.

Branches are invited to take part in the SCCS Rally and lobby of MSPs at the Scottish Parliament on Wed 22 April 2009, from 11am to 2pm.

Also, please email your MSP for a strong Scottish Climate Change Bill.

Full details of the rally will be available in future editions of *SiU* and on the UNISON Scotland and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland websites.

www.unison-scotland.org.uk/greenworkplace and www.stopclimatechaosscotland.org

Photo: Matthew Crighton (pictured with Duncan MacIntosh, International Officer Renfrewshire UNISON) and other UNISON officers and activists were involved in organising and stewarding the event, timed to coincide with the United Nations Climate Change talks in Poland.

'It's Democracy Stupid' to transform services

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

It's "Democracy Stupid" to transform Scotland's Public Services, Dave Watson, UNISON's Scottish Organiser, told a conference on transformation and the public sector earlier this month.

Dave told an audience of public authority managers, business leaders and politicians that we should strengthen local government,

democratise the quango state and change the culture to involve people in the running of their local services.

In a direct clash with right wing business sponsored spokesperson, Geoff Mawdsley, Director of Reform Scotland, he dismissed reliance on private sector solutions as introducing "shareholder values" into the public sector directly clashing with the public service ethos.

He also warned that - although

there was positive benefits from the use of the voluntary sector - there were challenges for this very disparate group - including democratic accountability and funding shortfalls leading to a race to the bottom in employment standards.

The Conference was organised by Holyrood magazine and also featured John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth in the Scottish Government, as a keynote speaker.

UNISON takes centre stage at Daily Record Health Awards

UNISON is a major sponsor of the prestigious Daily Record Health Awards and took centre stage again this year.

The awards' humble origin, planted by Jim Devine and Daily Record journalists, has blossomed into a showcase event.

UNISON Scotland Health Committee sponsor the Support Worker of the Year, won this year by Lorna Shearer (UNISON member from Lanarkshire), pictured right with UNISON's John Gallacher.

Lothian and the



Ayrshire and Arran Branches sponsor the Greater Glasgow & Clyde Branch sponsors this year by James Henderson. the Equality in Health

award, won by the Compass Group.

Vice President of UNISON Angela Lynes, who attended the ceremony, said: "Clearly UNISON members have the X factor in looking after the health and wellbeing of UNISON members and their families across Scotland.

"They fully deserve the recognition received"

Any branch wishing to get involved in 2009 please contact Mick Rice, m.rice@unison.co.uk or John Gallacher Regional Organiser Mobile: 07904 342 426 Direct Line: 0141 342 2824.

Pensions, it's down to us

Over the past few years, there has been nothing that has agitated UNISON members more that the fight to protect their pensions, a fight that has seen members prepared to take to the streets in strike action.

Just as negotiations on the Scottish Local Government pensions draw to a close, and after NHS colleagues have settled on their scheme, the threat to a decent standard of living in old age is again under threat.

Media hysteria and right wing frothing

It started when "the pensions crisis" in the public sector was at it's height in 2006 and it has never let up since then, but since the start of the current financial crisis in September of this year, the media critics of public sector pensions have been having a field day, demanding that "the pensions apartheid" is ended.

Headlines on a daily basis refer to "Pensions Haves and Have-Nots" or are issuing "Warnings over Public Sector Pensions".

We in the trade union movement have never known the Daily Express or Daily Mail to be our friends but the vitriol heaped on on public sector workers has rarely reached such heights and is

As the politicians and the press gang up on the attack, who will defend our public service pensions?

We will! says JANE CAROLAN



repeated on a regular daily basis. Millions of readers are drip fed continually that our pensions are "cushy", "gold plated" and "A luxury that the country can't afford".

Have they ever quoted the figure that the average local government pensioner receives?

Just for the record, that's £3800 per year or £74 per week. What is usually quoted is the figure for a high flying, highly paid civil servant, and while we would all like that level of pension, for our members such a pension is a dream.

Unfortunately, the media loves a stereotype and the gold plated pensioner is now accepted.

This isn't restricted to the tabloid press.

Recently the Independent has railed about the fact that there is "no class divide any more, just the difference between the fat cat, featherbedded public sector pensioners and the rest".

Politicians take up cause

Where the media in this country lead, there are always politicians willing to follow. First out of the stalls was Eric Pickles, the current Tory Shadow Secretary of State for communities and Local Government.

Eric has fallen for the hype and believes the myths and is quite clear that the time has come for "reform" in his words, destruction of public sector pensions to the rest of us.

Tory intentions were made clear by the intervention of their leader, David Cameron. Cameron has been very, very clear about his plans for the future.

Cameron wants an end to pensions "apartheid". Even his choice of language here is offensive.

But his intentions could not be clearer. Cameron goes for the jugular vowing to end the final salary schemes that we currently

have, replacing them with stock market linked plans.

The results of the plan will be simple - pension poverty for millions of public sector workers.

He's been backed by the Liberal Democrats, who also see our pensions as "unsustainable and unaffordable"

Who will defend us ?

As UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis has pointed out, if any political party wants to improve pensions they should start by urging the private sector in this country to face up to their responsibilities by setting up decent pensions schemes.

Any solution should be based on levelling up, not by cutting the public sector pensions that we are all going to rely on.

Highly profitable private sector companies are pulling out of the provision of pension schemes but their actions don't make the headlines in the same way.

We have been prepared to take strike action on our pensions in the past.

We need to scrutinise the plans of those who would seek to govern us, and be aware of they in which their programmes are likely to affect us.

At the end of the day, defending our pensions will come down to us.

Review set up as council staff accept pay award

by Kate Ramsden

Communications & Campaigns Ctee

The local government pay dispute finally reached an end in November as UNISON members in Scotland's councils voted by a narrow majority to accept a two year pay deal worth 3% for 2008 and 2.5% for 2009.

Members of the other two unions, GMB and Unite, rejected the offer, however, many councils have moved to pay out the rise in December pay packets.

"The strike action taken on 20 August and 24 September was successful in improving the offer, thanks to the strong support from our members and the tremendous



“We need to look at what we can learn from the whole process.”
Stephanie Herd

work done locally by branches. Our thanks go to all those who supported this campaign,” said Stephanie Herd, Chair of the Scottish Local Government Committee.

“However, the closeness of the result is a clear message that our members remain unhappy with the pay offer achieved, and we need to look at what we can learn from the

whole process.”

December's Scottish Local Government Conference has set up a working group to conduct a full review of the pay campaign and strategy and to identify any lessons to be learned.

The working group will include four members of the Local Government Committee and three branch delegates who were not directly involved in the negotiations.

The group will make an interim report in February and will present their findings to the April 2009 Conference.

The review will look at all aspects of the pay strategy including the pay claim itself, the

joint union campaign and an analysis of communication and leadership issues.

It will also look at the implications for collective bargaining of the “imposition” of the pay rise by many councils. Branches have already been invited to contribute their own experiences of the pay campaign to the review.

“The wide consultation and the range of participants on the review group will ensure the fullest possible consideration of what worked well and what we need to improve on and will help us determine how best to take forward the 2010 pay campaign,” said Marion Stewart, Vice-Chair.

The pulling power of UNISON

by Campbell Peden
South Ayrshire Branch

UNISON South Ayrshire member, Colin Duthie, was one of a team of 36 manual wheelchair users who successfully achieved a world record, by pulling a 57 tonne Boeing 757 110 metres along a runway at Lasham Airfield, on 6 September 2008.

The British Disabled Flying Association (BDFA), who provide opportunities in aviation for disabled people, invited Colin to take part in the world record attempt after hearing about him reaching the top of Ben Nevis earlier this year in a wheelchair.

Colin was the only person from Scotland to be invited to take part in the event.

The Branch presented Colin with a cheque as a donation to mark the event.

President praises Scotland

UNISON National President, Sue Highton, has praised UNISON Scotland for ‘punching above its weight’ at UK level in the union.

Speaking at the union's Scottish Council of branches, she pointed to past presidents John McFadden and Nancy Coull, past NEC member Ina Love, Vice-president Angela Lynes, Policy Chair Jane Carolan, Finance Vice-chair Fiona Smith, Health Chair Lilian Macer and Mike Kirby, “UNISON's convenor of convenors” - all playing a vital role in the national union.

Sue slammed the government's pay limits and commended UNISON's statement on the credit crunch, blaming the ‘greed’ that had created the problem.

“Public services available to all on the basis of need” were a the key to the future and to the recovery.

Sue also called for a concerted campaign against the BNP with their “message of hate masked by so-called concerns for communities.”

Sue's presidential charity is the African Heart Foundation project, a charity which funds heart operations for people across Africa. See www.africaheartfoundation.org for details.

Sue also praised UNISON Scotland's website. See page 4.

Scottish Water strike forces board back to negotiations

by Malcolm Burns
Info Development Officer

A day of all out strike action in November by UNISON along with Unite and GMB has forced the board of Scottish Water into negotiations over the current pay dispute.

Further planned strikes were put on hold while talks went ahead on Tuesday 9 December.

Union negotiators were looking for a new offer which could go out to members for consultation.

More than a thousand members across the country undertook a 24 hour strike from Thursday 27 to Friday 28 November.

They were joined by members of Unite and GMB in the unprecedented and successful strike.

Pickets were out at plants and premises throughout Scotland, including sites such as Balmore Road in Glasgow, Fairmilehead in Edinburgh, Dumfries, Dundee, Aberdeen and throughout the Highlands and Islands.



Early morning pickets in Aberdeen on 27 November

Members in all three unions had voted overwhelmingly to take joint industrial action after Scottish Water imposed a pay increase of 3% over 15 months, a deal worth only 2.4% over the year.

The board unilaterally imposed the below-inflation pay increase in September, effectively breaking a six-year partnership agreement in place with unions since Scottish Water was established in 2002.

UNISON's 1,100 members were infuriated by the board's move and the level of the award at a time when inflation had

reached more than 5%. Members voted for strike action by 65% on a very high turnout in a ballot last month.

Steve Scott, Branch Secretary of UNISON's Scottish Water Branch said: “Our members are not the cause of inflation, they are the victims of it. Scottish Water is a highly successful public corporation and can afford to pay more.”

UNISON has called on Scottish Water, and the Scottish Government to which the public corporation is answerable, to recognise the contribution of staff

and reward its members with a fair and proper pay increase.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser, said: “In recent years our members have helped to save Scottish Water over £1 billion through reduced operating costs and improved efficiencies.

“Customers and directors have benefited, while workers have faced real terms pay cuts due to inflation.

“Scottish Water has the money to make a reasonable pay deal - the problem is the Scottish Government is blocking them from doing so.”

Back the public and extend Freedom of Information to private contractors

UNISON Scotland has welcomed new research that shows the Scottish public backs extending Freedom of Information to cover private companies building schools and hospitals under PPP/PFI contracts and other non-public bodies delivering public services.

Research for the Scottish Information Commissioner shows 75%-79% support for making private companies subject to FOI legislation.

UNISON is pleased that there is also very strong public support for including other organisations such as private prisons, housing associations and trusts providing local authority health and leisure services.

UNISON's Scottish Communications Officer, Chris Bartter said: “The public rightly thinks that all bodies delivering



Chris Bartter

public services should be subject to the same accountability as the public sector.

“Such high levels of support will hopefully make the Scottish Government think again about its disappointing approach in the discussion paper, where, for example, Ministers have argued that hospital cleaning services may not be a public function!”

“It is unacceptable that information that is open to people where a service - such as social housing - is provided by a public

authority, could be hidden from them where private or other non-public bodies deliver it.

“In the case of PPP/PFI contracts, the scandalous waste of public funds on these could have been greatly reduced if full information about the projects had been open to scrutiny, letting the public see the credit card levels of charges being run up for the next generation to pay.”

• Chris Bartter has returned to work after a few weeks off sick. Great to have you back Chris.

Police staff pay

As SiU went to press, UNISON was about to meet police employers to hammer out a new pay deal.

UNISON Police Staff vice-chair Maureen Braid said, “There has been no formal offer yet but we know the employers want a 31 month deal, pulling the annual settlement date back from 1 September to 1 April.”

ST ANDREW'S DAY MARCH An Injury to One is An Injury to All!



UNISON Scotland's banner joined with other unions, political parties and community organisations on the streets of Glasgow for this year's St Andrews Day Anti Racism March and Rally on 29 November.

The demonstration against racism and fascism is an annual event organised by the STUC and GARA (Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance).

Prime Minister Gordon Brown MP and the First Minister Alex Salmond MSP both sent messages of support.

Youngsters back UNISON sponsored Show Racism the Red Card event

by Jane Aitchison

Communications & Campaigns Ctee

Over 180 youngsters enthusiastically showed racism the red card, by participating in the football, cricket and fitness suite activities in Rutherglen at the end of October.

The event was a huge success, sending a clear message from school children throughout the Cambuslang and Rutherglen areas that racism is totally unacceptable

in our schools and in the wider community.

The event was jointly organised by the Cambuslang and Rutherglen Sports Council, South Lanarkshire Leisure and South Lanarkshire Council's Active Schools. South Lanarkshire UNISON sponsored the event supplying the participants with t-shirts, water bottles and fair trade chocolate.

Catherine McClymont, South



Lanarkshire's Branch Treasurer, said "Show Racism the Red Card is a very important cause to us, and we were particularly keen to sponsor this event and help get the anti racism message to children at a young age."

Jim Sheerin, Outdoor Duty Officer and one of the main organisers of the event said: "Overall, the partnership worked well and hopefully the anti-racism message will spread across South Lanarkshire."

Cuba at 50

Marking the anniversary of the Cuban revolution next year, UNISON's Scottish Council congratulated the Cuban people on their achievements.

East Ayrshire's Arthur West said: "Despite a vicious US blockade which has lasted over 40 years, Cuba has achieved remarkable developments in public services such as health and education.

"It also has a splendid record in providing emergency and humanitarian aid around the world," with 37,000 health professionals working free in 79 countries.

UNISON will encourage branches to join Cuba Solidarity, lay on a Cuba event at the STUC and continue to publicise the US blockade.

Arthur called for the freeing of the 'Miami 5', Cuban trade unionists arrested by the FBI in 1998 while trying to expose a US-based group responsible for terrorist attacks in Cuba.

Arthur also urged members to holiday in Cuba. And while at home, remember **Havana Club** is genuinely Cuban. Bacardi in not.



End discrimination of Gypsy/Travellers



Convenor Mike Kirby with Gypsy/Traveller Shamus McPhee and Colin Turbett.

UNISON Scotland has backed a move by North Ayrshire's Colin Turbett to win formal ethnic minority status for Scotland's Gypsies/Travellers.

Such was the discrimination faced that "most try to hide their identity" to avoid systematic discrimination and "day to day prejudice".

He criticised press remarks made by Brian Donohoe MP and called for UNISON to campaign to have Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee recommendations on ethnic rights for Gypsy/Travellers implemented.

See **'The forgotten experiment' at google video - video.google.com/**

Breaking the Barriers Trade union solidarity with Palestinian workers

International speakers will address the issue of solidarity with Palestine in a UNISON Scotland sponsored conference to be held in Edinburgh next month.

A leading Palestinian trade unionist will speak behalf of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) giving an eye witness account of the harsh problems faced by Palestinians.

10 am, Saturday 17 January 2009, Augustine United Church Centre, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh

To register contact campaigns@scottishspsc.org.uk or call call 0131 620 0052

www.unison-scotland.org.uk/international

Scotland's ten years on the web

by Kate Ramsden

Communications & Campaigns

John Stevenson, Chair of the Communications and Campaigns Committee was uncharacteristically lost for words at December's Scottish Council as Convenor Mike Kirby announced the 10th anniversary of the UNISON Scotland website and thanked John for his work as "webmaster" over the past 10 years.

Describing the website as an essential communications tool for the union, Mike told Scottish Council that it was used not only by activists and members, but also by the "body politic" from outside UNISON, from MSPs to researchers, who see it as key point of reference.

This has resulted in over 13 million "hits" on the site in the past year.

Mike added, "The website is also an excellent example of a staff/lay member partnership and we are very proud to have that in Scotland."

The anniversary was also recognised by UNISON's General Secretary, Dave Prentis who wrote describing the UNISON Scotland site as a "flagship."

Sue Highton, the UNISON National President, presented John with a specially commissioned cartoon by Frank Boyle of the Edinburgh Evening News.

The cartoon reflected not only the 10th anniversary and

John's prowess as webmaster, but also his unwavering support, through thick, and often thin, of the Heart of Midlothian football team and his past career as a magician.

Thanking the Council, John paid tribute to David Andrews, from Orkney Branch, sadly deceased, who helped set up the website and to the excellent support from the Policy and Information team and especially from Chris Barter.

John said, "Chris is an inspiration and a great pal and proof of how the lay and full time partnership should work."

John was almost speechless but not quite as he went into campaigning mode.

"Through the changes to the website at UK level, we need to make sure we keep our own lay-controlled Scottish website," added John.

The presentation at Scottish Council follows on from a celebration at the last Communications and Campaign Committee in November, when the website's 10th birthday was marked in style with a drop of bubbly and a specially designed cake, courtesy of Jane Aitchison, Vice-Chair.



For more info, see www.unison-scotland.org.uk/10years

Scottish Council photos: Thanks to Malcolm Burns

Virtual Branch for Quarriers

by Stephen Brown
Quarriers Branch

On 1 December 2008, 10 years after UNISON Scotland went live, Quarriers Branch entered the world of the Internet with a brand new website.

It has been paid for as part of the UNISON virtual branches project, part-funded by the Government's Union Modernisation Fund (UMF).

The idea is to use the already proven concept of virtual branches and explore how this can assist with local organisation and provide members with a way to interact with their trade union.

After all branches in the project have gone live it will have provided twelve new Virtual Branch websites across the diverse range of the UNISON membership.

The Charity Quarriers is one of the largest Social Care providers in Scotland and is expanding into England as well. Members of the Quarriers Branch come from as far afield as Stirling and Bath which is



a large area to look after for a small branch.

Stephen Brown, Branch Secretary said "Our branch is extremely proud to have been chosen as part of this project and it is hoped that the Virtual Branch Website will enable us to communicate more effectively with our members."

The website allows members to ask questions and participate in online consultations. Each member has their own id and password allowing them into the members only section.

Edinburgh home help takes equal pay lawyer to court

Home Help Jacqueline Quinn is taking equal pay lawyer Stefan Cross to court after he charged her £500 for taking her case to another lawyer.

Newcastle based Cross shot to prominence by persuading thousands of local authority workers to let him pursue their equal pay claims, rather than rely on their trade unions.

Jacqueline, who works for Edinburgh City Council, said: "I thought Mr Cross would get me a quick settlement of my equal pay

claim, but I didn't realise there was a horrific penalty clause in the contract.

"The clause says that if I end the agreement or change lawyers before the case is settled I have to pay him £500 for every six months I was on his books...and if I go on to win the case I still have to pay him 100% of his costs on top of the £500. But that's not all. If I accept an offer to settle the case, he still gets 10% of my compensation.

UNISON's Scottish Organiser Glyn Hawker said: "Stefan Cross

portrays himself as the people's champion but we've been warning our members for years that it will cost them if they instruct him.

"If he persuades a couple of thousand council workers to sign up with him, he only has to win one case, and the local authority will end up paying all the outstanding claims and he gets 10% of all their compensation. That's a huge return."

Syd Smith, Senior Partner with Thompsons Solicitors in Scotland who represent UNISON said: "We believe Mr Cross is wrong on

three points of law. Solicitors in Scotland cannot charge flat rate contingency fees... they cannot take a percentage cut from a person's money no matter what work was done.

"If we wanted to make a charge in these circumstances we would have to submit a detailed bill for all the work we had done. He cannot put penalties into these contracts.

"Mr Cross

must also know perfectly well that he cannot go to an English County Court to try and enforce a contract he signed with a Scottish client in Scotland.

"That's why we are seeking an interdict to stop his threats of action against Mrs Quinn."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.
Contact:- John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 220 5655,
Chris Barter 0141 342 2877
FAX PRESS RELEASES to 0141 331 1203
E-mail: webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk