UNISON Inverclyde at the Port Glasgow Comet Festival

Unison Inverclyde were delighted to support the Comet Festival in Port Glasgow again this year and returned to the Coronation Park with their Annual stall.

Our stall was very busy with Unison Officials Billy Matthews, Carol Ann Connolly and Dougie Maclean on hand to answer the many questions from the public and promote the work that UNISON does both locally and nationally. Billy also took the opportunity to promote the Retired Members group.
After the successful launch of UNISON Inverclyde’s Home Care Staff Survey last month at Craigend Resource Centre UNISON is inviting all Inverclyde Home Care Staff to take part an online survey.

Branch Secretary Robin Taggart says “The survey which is aimed at Homecare, Reablement and Alarm Teams is aimed at evidencing everyday work problems in Homecare such as time pressures, travel pay issues, or even lack of uniforms. Over 50 Homecare Staff have already filled in the online form and the evidence of problems will allow us to challenge the employer and resolve these issues. The more staff that take part the stronger our argument for change so members and non-members alike should fill in the form.”

Joe Pearce, Local Organiser for UNISON Inverclyde says “The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous. The more honest you are with your answers the more honest a discussion we can have with management.”

The survey can be downloaded via www.unisoninverclyde.org.uk and clicking the Homecare Survey Link.

UNISON Tribunal Fee Victory

UNISON had a landmark court victory in July against the government, which means that employment tribunal fees will now be scrapped.

The Supreme Court – the UK’s highest court – has unanimously ruled that the government was acting unlawfully and unconstitutionally when it introduced the fees four years ago.

From today, anyone who has been treated illegally or unfairly at work will no longer have to pay to take their employers to court – as a direct result of UNISON’s legal challenge.

The government will also have to refund more than £27m to the thousands of people charged for taking claims to tribunals. This is since July 2013, when fees were introduced by Chris Grayling, the then Lord Chancellor.

Anyone in England, Scotland and Wales wanting to pursue a case against their employer has had to find as much as £1,200. This has been a huge expense for many low-paid employees, says UNISON.

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: “The government is not above the law. But when ministers introduced fees they were disregarding laws many centuries old, and showing little concern for employees seeking justice following illegal treatment at work.

“The government has been acting unlawfully, and has been proved wrong – not just on simple economics, but on constitutional law and basic fairness too.

“It’s a major victory for employees everywhere. UNISON took the case on behalf of anyone who's ever been wronged at work, or who might be in future. Unscrupulous employers no longer have the upper hand.

“These unfair fees have let law-breaking bosses off the hook these past four years, and left badly treated staff with no choice but to put up or shut up.

“We'll never know how many people missed out because they couldn’t afford the expense of fees. But at last this tax on justice has been lifted.”

UNISON assistant general secretary Bronwyn McKenna said: “The Supreme Court correctly criticised the government’s failure when it set the fees to consider the public benefits flowing from the enforcement of legal rights enacted by Parliament.

“The effective enforcement of these rights is fundamental to Parliamentary democracy and integral to the development of UK law. UNISON's case has helped clarify the law and gives certainty to citizens and businesses in their everyday lives.”

The decision marks the end of a four-year fight by UNISON to overturn the government’s introduction of fees.
Despite UNISON members voting by 62.7% for strike action on council pay, the action could not go ahead because the turnout did not reach the 50% required by new law.

The union has therefore now written to the employers seeking implementation of the pay offer which was:- A flat rate increase of £350 for all staff up to £35,000 (based on a 37 hour week). For those above £35,000 a 1% uplift will apply. Councils will commit to using the Scottish Local Government Living Wage as the minimum pay level for all pay and allowances including additional hours worked, contractual overtime and other allowances/premia (where applicable) and it will be pensionable.

COSLA Employers agree to participate in a joint working group with the trade unions tasked with developing a future pay strategy that both sides can sign up to. The offer is for one year from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Staff side secretary Dougie Black said: “In intimating our acceptance we have urged the employers to recognise that the outcome of our ballot was to take industrial action, however it was the thresholds in the new Trade Union Act 2016 that prevented this from happening and that pay remains a high priority for our members.”

The union has agreed with the Scottish employers that there should be early talks to develop a joint approach or campaign to influence the outcome of the Scottish Government’s Spending Review to seek additional funding for local government - part or all of which can be targeted towards improving pay.

UNISON also wants an early meeting of the Pay Strategy Group to agree terms of reference and a planned programme of work with a joint commitment to conclude the work of the group by December 2017.

Soft Trawl Clarification

Following the recent article in the Council’s Insider magazine for employees we would like to clarify our position.

UNISON Inverclyde is opposed to ALL forms of public sector cuts including jobs being released through voluntary severance.

However the branch accepts that for practical reasons ONLY, a trawl of this nature may be a helpful tool in the avoidance of compulsory redundancies.

The branch WOULD certainly be opposing this trawl were it not for the fact that there is a risk of compulsory redundancies during the next budget process.”

We expect the position regarding which posts will be affected to be clarified by September this year.

As always please contact your workplace Steward or the Branch Office on 715900 for any clarification.
In April this year The STUC backed a campaign against Government pension cuts that have left millions of women’s retirement plans in chaos.

This demands the government provides a full package of transitional arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951 who have ‘unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age.’

UNISON Scotland’s Kate Ramsden (above) moved the UNISON motion, Kate praised the work of the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign.

Kate said: “The 1995 Tory Government’s Pension Act included plans to increase women’s SPA (State Pension Age) to 65, the same as men’s. The WASPI campaign agrees with equalisation, but does not agree with the unfair way the changes were implemented – with little or no personal notice and no time to make alternative plans. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences.

“There are 2.6 million affected by the lack of notice of the 1995 and 2011 Pensions Acts.

“And here’s the best bit. Not all of them even know it’s happened. There are women who still have that shock to come. How many women in this hall have had any notice or have checked their entitlement.

“Successive governments have bungled the fundamental duty to tell women of these major changes to when they can expect their state pension.”

Kate reported that in Parliament it was stated by the Work and Pensions committee that thousands of women born in the 1950s are effectively victims of government “mis-selling” over controversial changes to the state pension age.

She said: “If the banks have to pay for PPI then surely the government has to recompense the women they have misled

“As 1950s women retire hundreds of thousands are suffering financial hardship. These are women with no other source of income because remember, until the 1990s many women weren’t allowed to join company or industry pension schemes, and many are carers or in poor health.

“Older women are having to sell their homes, go without essentials and rely on their own elderly parents because of the unfair way changes to the state pension age have been made.”

“The aim of the WASPI campaign and this motion is to achieve fair transitional arrangements for all women born in the 1950’s affected by the changes to the state pension law. We do not ask for the pension age to revert back to age 60.

“We are looking for a ‘bridging’ pension to provide an income until State Pension Age – not means-tested – and with compensation for losses for those women who have already reached their SPA.”

Kate called on unions to support the WASPI campaign: “If there ever was a time when women needed to help other women, waiting up to six extra years for a pension, it is now. If there were ever a time when the trade union movement had to step up to the plate it is now. WASPI have achieved much with trade union support they can achieve much more. We can achieve justice.”

The WASPI Inverclyde Supporter Group can be contacted on Facebook or by email at:

Email: waspiinverclyde@yahoo.com
Union negotiators have won a flat rate pay rise of £425 for Further Education members in Scotland from 1 April 2017 plus five days’ additional annual leave. UNISON will be recommending the deal to its members. John Gallacher, (pictured below), UNISON Scotland head of bargaining, said: “This exceeds the pay cap for those who earn under £22k. “The deal represents 2.6% at the bottom end (Living Wage level) and more than 1% for all those who earn less than £42k - the vast majority of support staff. “This is the third year in a row that UNISON has led negotiations to achieve better than pay policy for some 5,500 workers in 20 Scottish colleges.”

The 2015 pay talks saw industrial action by EIS, and 2016 saw national strikes by UNISON, GMB and EIS. Up to 2015 pay and conditions were determined at individual college level. UNISON FE Committee chair Chris Greenshields said: “This proposal breaks the government’s 1% pay cap in the public sector but it is still not overly generous given inflation is at 2.8%. “The Scottish Government needs to seriously review its position across the board of pay bargaining with fair pay re-introduced across the public sector for 2018.”

Committee vice chair Shirley Sephton, added: “If there is to be a generational shift on how college staff are deployed and remunerated, any money spent should be seen as a transformational investment in Scotland’s future, not a source of further efficiency and austere approaches to negotiations. “Scotland’s FE students deserve the best support services available and our members are committed and motivated to deliver quality in the sector.

This is a reasonable first step but there is a long way to go.” UNISON has been particularly pleased with the flat rate settlement, bringing the same cash deal for all. John Gallacher added: “We have also achieved, through three years of national bargaining, a national working week of 35 hours and a minimum leave entitlement of 44 days - the best in the public sector.”
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to get the Branch news as it happens!
Facebook : unisoninverclydebranch
Twitter : @unisoninver

And we’re also on our website :
unisoninverclyde.org.uk