



UNISON wins money for its members!!

During harmonisation talks for TEC Services in 2004/05, Lochaber cleansing staff expressed concerns that their bonus had not been increased as per their contracts. Investigation agreed that the calculation had not been revised since April 1998. So Branch Convener Munro Ross filed a claim with management based on the amounts that should have been paid from the anniversaries of each pay award. TEC Services management agreed to investigate and came back confirming that the bonus had not been uprated as per contracts. As the bonus included an attendance element, agreement was reached on those who should suffer deductions for sickness absences which were higher than the norm. When negotiations were finalised 36 (UNISON) members of staff shared approximately £80,000.

A Nursery Assistant had been covering for a full term for the absence of a Nursery Cluster Teacher who was on long term sickness. This required the Nursery Assistant to prepare all the reports for pupils moving up to primary school from the nursery which required extra hours to be worked in addition to extra responsibility.

The problem is that NCT's are not covered by the same conditions of services as Nursery Staff so the issue was taken to Highland Council's Education Culture and Sport Head of Education Services. He agreed that the extra hours should be paid and that a proportion of the difference between Assistant and Cluster Teacher rate should be paid for the duration of the absence backdated to when the Nursery Cluster Teacher first went off sick.

The percentage agreed was 25% and as a consequence a payment of over £1200 has been agreed for the year.

If there are any other members who are or have been in a similar position then they should provide details in writing to the UNISON office. UNISON believes this is a ground breaking victory and therefore would want it extended to other members in a similar position.

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Highland Branch Women's Self Organised Group Calling all ladies!!

Our Self Organised Group is now established and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you all of it's existence. If you have any issues that you wish the SOG to bring up on your behalf please do not hesitate to contact us.

We are also always keen to hear from women who would like to become involved in the group in any capacity and we currently have a place on the Highland Branch Committee for a representative from the SOG - if anybody is interested in the post please get in touch!

Contact Details:- Mo Nicolson, Women's SOG Convenor, Unison Office, 53 Shore, Inverness - tel:01463 715891

~~~~~ and there's more ~~~~~

A Bucket Appeal was launched at this year's Annual General Meeting (quite a new concept for Highland!). The idea came from the Women's SOG who are anxious to support the Dignity Period Campaign in providing help to women in Zimbabwe. £125.92 was placed in the bucket but thanks to generous donations from kind hearted winners in the prize draw, this was boosted by a further £260. Read more about this campaign at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms/dignityperiod.html](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms/dignityperiod.html) If you would like to contribute or have any ideas for raising funds please contact the WSOG



### MOVING ON TO PASTURES

**NEW....**

*Mike Smith long time Welfare Officer retired after this year's AGM and enjoying life in his motorhome!*



*Laura-Beth Scally has given up her seat as the Young Members Officer and she is now our new Recruitment Officer - look out for an article from her in the next issue*



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## VIRTUAL INTERVIEW WITH NEW YOUNG MEMBERS OFFICER

*Hi there, what can you tell me about yourself?* My name is Donnie Mackenzie. I am Inverness born and bred (for my sins) *And which service do you work for?* Inverness Leisure, I perform various roles such as Lifeguard, Sports Coach and Relief Supervisor *How long have you been with UNISON?* Oooooo, a couple of years I think. I would need to check *How long have you been an officer?* A couple of months *Was there a particular incident that made you decide to take up your post?* It wasn't one particular incident. I'm interested in standing up for people and more specifically, the drive to ensure equality is implemented properly in the workplace *Is there any aspect of the job you find hard?* Ha ha. There are always new challenges! The hard work is learning the background knowledge to any situation or circumstance. For me, I'm quite a confident person, so putting in the planning is 90% of the battle *Are there any really good times?* I enjoy dealing with people generally. It's a lazy answer... but I guess dealing with people with whom I identify, who have problems I identify with, and helping them find a satisfactory conclusion is the best. But of course you always have to be analysing yourself to ensure you are treating people equally in all ways. I digress *Do you feel you are making a difference?* Yes, not much at the moment but I'm still at a very early stage *What about yourself, any special hobbies?* Special? Depends what you consider special I guess. Probably not what I do. Generally as regards keep fit: running, hitting the gym, mma... badminton and football from time to time. Love music. Reading to develop myself, understand others and for humour value. Innovative or comedic television, ER, Peep Show, South Park, Have I got news for you.. Hate generic TV soaps *What about holidays?* I love a bit of sunshine like most people, but I prefer avoiding tourist traps. Anywhere I can wander freely that has some interesting scenery *Favourite food?* I'm a sucker for anything loaded with monosodium glutamate (flavour enhancer). But I'm trying to wean myself off such quick fix food (eg macaroni, lasagne, pizza, sweets). I like all the bad stuff! Fajitas are great 'cos you can squeeze some salad in there and there isn't the same sense of guilt! *Favourite book or film?* I go through phases but I'm trying to make a concerted effort to make reading an ongoing habit. After seeing all the hype I eventually got round to reading *The Alchemist* by Paul Coelho. I think the words "inspirational" and "classic" are appropriate. Last good film I saw was *The Prestige* with Christian Bale and Michael Caine. I rate Christopher Nolan highly as a director, *Memento* was a great thinking mans(or womans!!) film. This isn't quite as good but it doesn't disappoint. Bale puts in a great performance akin to a magical Frank Lampard! *What would be your ideal job?* If I was being 100% honest then I fear the answer may be construed as a conflict of interest if someone at work read this *And what would you wish for?* The usual stuff, world peace and harmony, an end to poverty *Finally - anything to add?* Yes. I think that both Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, and Head Automatica are vastly underrated, and that you should check out their music. (If you are already a fan, "hiiiiiiigh fiiiiiiive!")



Judith Wallace

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# Report on Glasgow Pensions Seminar

## 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007

Negotiations are currently taking place on a revised Local Government Pension Scheme for Scotland which will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 – a year later than the revised England and Wales Scheme which is the subject of a special Local Government Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

The background to the talks is the current Scottish Executive's Finance Minister giving SLOGPAG (Scottish Local Government Pensions Advisory Group) the following remit.

1. All savings from changes to the scheme e.g. the revised Rule of 85 can be used to improve benefits (England and Wales are only being allowed 50%)
2. The revised timetable shown at the end of the report is accepted
3. Actuarial assumptions have been agreed
4. Revised scheme must demonstrate affordability.
5. Consistent with other Scottish schemes e.g. teachers, NHS etc
6. Defined benefit final salary scheme (which is what we have just now)
7. Costs will be shared between employers and employees
8. Effective targeting of ill health provisions.

COSLA who along with the local government trade unions and civil servants make up SLOGPAG have commissioned an actuarial report which has had very limited circulation. The report highlights that there are currently 203,000 members of the scheme, average age is 44, average pay £16,000. These assumptions have been included - pay and price increases, demographics ie age/sex etc profiles, benefits, accrual rate of benefits, commutation ie how much lump sum.

UNISON engaged a different firm of actuaries to review the assumptions and it was only received on 12<sup>th</sup> February. The key issues (see Scottish bulletin 4) are

1. What accrual rate do we want 1/60, 1/62.5 or 1/64.
2. contribution ration – employers 2 to our 1
3. ill health retirement rules – is there a DDA impact
4. Death in service/partners pensions (this has almost been agreed)
5. Flexible retirement/retirement factors – model for the future? What issues arise?
6. Governance – do we want a bigger say if we are going to be paying more?

Glyn Jenkins gave a brief summary of some of the English proposals to give us and idea of what we may wish to consider. As happened when he spoke at or AGM his PowerPoint presentation failed to work.

We then broke into groups to look at some of the issues which may be faced by negotiators when they go back into talks in May, although there may be informal discussions before then

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A summary of the answers after notes were compared is-

1. Increased contributions would be acceptable if matched by increased benefits.
2. We want a cap on employees contributions and are not keen on a 2 to 1 split because of the implications of regular variations in rates
3. Banding or contribution rates would be acceptable with a preference for using the tax bands and worked examples should be made available.
4. Some legal issues over being a trustee could arise so a large degree of clarity would be required. The trustees' fiduciary duty and exposure to being sued is a major issue here.

The afternoon session considered possible benefits and the following was highlighted-

1. England and Wales use 1/60 in new scheme so this will be what we want.
2. Issues on surviving spouse benefits will need resolved.
3. Rules of ill health in given situations.
4. Flexible retirement – draw pension early and continue to work- link with reduced hours?
5. Cohabitees, unmarried partners etc to get same pension rights as married couples.
6. Children's pensions
7. Additional Voluntary Contributions – changes or ended?

The afternoon workshop requested a clear appeals procedure and that the other issues should be discussed. The future is that a further seminar will be held in the second half of May and a consultative ballot will held, probably in the second half of August/early September. A three week period will be allowed. Written Scottish pensions bulletins will be issued regularly.

A summary of the timetable is-

|                                                             |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| SLOGPAG agreed draft proposal                               | May 2007       |
| Political finalisation/agreement COSLA/unions               | June 2007      |
| Present policy paper to new Scottish Executive for approval | June 2007      |
| Consultation begins                                         | July 2007      |
| Consultation ends                                           | September 2007 |
| Consider responses and report back to ministers and SLOGPAG | Sept/Oct 2007  |
| Consultation on regulations of new scheme begins            | December 2007  |
| Consultation on regulations of new scheme ends              | February 2008  |
| Regulations finalised and laid                              | March 2008     |
| Preparation begins by pensions organisations                | April 2008     |
| Scheme operational                                          | April 2009     |

**Munro Ross**  
**20<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

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**Wednesday**

After a long flight from Inverness (via Leeds in an elastic-band job plane!) and a train journey from Southampton Liz McKay and I arrived to a balmy evening in Bournemouth. The Hotel Marriott (we overlook nothing but the sea) provided us with our first hurdle as they appeared to have not received my room booking. After some discussions however I was safely ensconced in a room large enough for the whole Scottish contingent. A walk to the pier and back to meet other members of the Executive and a meal with them in the hotel bar – again an eventful time - tuna salad without tuna? And so to bed.

**Thursday**

In the afternoon I attended a seminar on Women's Labour and Trade Union History. Professor Mary Davis of the London Metropolitan University spoke eloquently on the history of women in industry, harking back to the early days of home workers and spinners and the excellent provision in maintaining industrial output made by women during both wars. And indeed the efforts of women in instigating trade union support to ensure better conditions for their workers. A selection of slides demonstrated the powers of such women, a lot of whom followed the lead of Sylvia Pankhurst who was crucial in the fight against prejudice toward women workers. Unlike her more famous family members Sylvia worked amongst the labour force to improve their lot. The seminar proved informative and entertaining and the discussion which followed demonstrated that even now the struggle of women to seek equality in their workplace continues.

Later that evening a reception for Scottish delegates proved to be a noisy time. Owing to the prospect of emergency motion making a vote of no confidence in the Standing Orders Committee there was much heated discussion in how this would be presented and the possible consequences to Conference as a whole. We went to bed with bated breath...

**Friday**

The gauntlet was thrown but the challenge was averted as the SOC ordered the emergency motion ruled out of order. The response from SOC was, to say the least, uninformative and as one of those on the conference floor it was apparent the general feeling amongst the delegates was that there was a need for the situation to more fully explained, however it became obvious that this would not happen immediately and it was noted the details of the emergency motion would be included in papers for the following day.

The day progressed, speakers included UNISON president Malcolm Cantello, who urged us all to continue the work being done on equality for women in the workplace especially given the high percentage of female members with our union, and as always to encourage recruitment to UNISON.

Lucia Matibenga of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions aroused a standing ovation with her talk on the union movement for women in her

home land. How far we have progressed in comparison and how much we must honour and support these brave people who work under the most appalling conditions and regimes and face imprisonment and torture and worse for their efforts. Lucia was also there to thank UNISON for its support and participation in the Dignity Period Campaign. The financial aid provided was enabling women to continue to in their struggle to achieve female dignity, to avoid infection and worse still the beatings which often resulted from their inability to obtain standard sanitary protection and maintain their personal health. Lucia noted that this was also providing a tool to encourage membership of the trade union movement.

On this first day we progressed through a variety of motions including such topics as women's participation within self organised groups, pensions, gender equality, term time working, violence against women and domestic abuse – this last motion ably amended by Liz on behalf of the National Women's Committee. The day proved to be enlightening for me a first time conference attendee and served to reassure me of the needs faced by women in particular and the reason why we must continue to 'battle on'.

### **Saturday**

How on earth were we going to get through all the remaining motions? A question on the lips of many of the delegates early this morning. So we got into the stride of things. A lot of today's business revolved around women's health issues, the female cancers continue to cause concern for all; discussion around possible treatments and even immunisation which could significantly reduce the incidence of these diseases was strongly supported by us all. One down side was evidence with regard to profits made by some retailers from the sale of Pink products. Many of us buy these items assuming that money is given to support the campaign for Breast Cancer Awareness; Conference supported a move to ensure customers are made aware of just how much goes to the charitable cause as well as continuing to inform on all aspects of this campaign. Other items discussed included the White Ribbon campaign, skinny models, globalisation and sex tourism.

One unrelenting aspect of conference was the number of motions relating to violence and abuse of one sort or another against women. Although we are all well aware of these issues to hear so many aspects discussed in a short space of time only goes to emphasise the problems that could be and often are faced by all of us at some time in our lives.

Despite the heavy workload faced at the beginning of the morning Conference closed on time. The whole experience more than lived up to my expectations and, thanks to my weekend's training in Glasgow, was not at all as frightening as it might have appeared at first. Can I take this opportunity to thank Branch for supporting my attendance and I look forward to the next time!

**Judith Wallace - Communications**

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Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was the first woman to qualify as a doctor in the United Kingdom who is a prestigious personality as a champion of women at work. The hospital where she established herself opened in Marylebone in 1890 is to be refurbished as the new headquarters for UNISON.

## **MOVED HOUSE? NEW NAME? NEW WORKPLACE?**

Keep up to date with everything that is happening—don't forget to let the UNISON Resource Centre know so your membership record can be updated.

Tel 01463 715891 Fax 01463 715270 or e-mail [inverness.office@unison.co.uk](mailto:inverness.office@unison.co.uk).