

MEET THE ACTIVISTS

This edition:
Kaïla Tarrant



Position in UNISON
Steward

Job Title
Technician

Reason for Becoming Active
Learned the importance of being a Union member with bad experience in early Employment

Post Involves:
Listening to members wants/needs

Hopes for Future:
4 Day week!!!!

Hobbies and Interests:
The great outdoors & enjoying time with family & friends

Who's Who and where- Local Officers and Stewards

Chair	Brian Smith	01595 744354
Vice Chair	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
Branch Secretary	Gwenan Hughes	01595 744834
Communications Officer	Karen Fraser	01595 743868
Education and Training Officer	Kathy Downing	01595 694467
Equalities Officer	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Health and Safety Officer	John Leach	01595 744858
International Officer	Lorraine Gray	01595 744713
Lifelong Learning Advisor	Mary Anderson	01595 744992
Meetings Secretary	Val Turner	01595 694688
Membership Records Officer	Michelle Goudie	01595 744675
Membership Services Secretary	Iain McDiarmid	01595 744813
Retired Members Officer	Donald Silk	01595 692451
Social Events Co-ordinator	Melanie Chapman	01595 744852
Stewards Co-ordinator	Ewen Balfour	01595 744336
Stewards Co-ordinator	Elaina Leach	01595 744816
Stewards Co-ordinator	Graham Stiles	01806 522722
Treasurer	Stefanie Pottinger	01595 744994
Welfare Officer	Karen Irwin	01595 744095

DEPARTMENTAL STEWARDS

Assessors Office	Kaïla Tarrant	01595 692019
Drugs & Alcohol Services	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Economic Development	Marvin Smith	01595 744921
Education Services	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
Environmental Services	Jim Grant	01595 744871
Housing Services	Ewen Balfour	01595 744336
Legal Services	Karen Irwin	01595 744095
Library	Karen Fraser	01595 743868
Organisational Development	Peter Peterson	01595 744575
Ports and Harbours	Barry Edwards	01595 744202
Social Work (Quendale House)	Marilyn Hibbs	01595 744332
Social Work (St Olaf Street)	Fiona Morton	01595 744442
Social Work (Community)	Alice Summers	01595 744484
Social Work (Viewforth)	Heather Butler	01595 692760
Shetland Amenity Trust	Mick Clifton	01595 694688
Wastview Care Centre	Margaret Forrest	01595 809483

*This newsletter is published by
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*The views expressed in this newsletter
are not necessarily those of the
UNISON branch or the editor*

The Newsletter of
Unison Shetland
Local
Government
Branch
February 2006



Yarns

PENSIONS STRUGGLE RESUMES

As you will have heard on the news, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is still under threat, despite an agreement which conveniently averted a planned strike last summer, just before the general election. A new strike ballot has been called by UNISON and another eight unions, representing 1.5 million workers.

The government plans to abolish the "85-year rule" which allows some members to retire at 60 without a cut in their pension, if their age and length of time in the scheme adds up to 85. The government claims the rule will not be lawful under new age-discrimination legislation, but UNISON disagrees.

Protection for those already in the scheme will only extend to those who turn 60 before 31st March 2013: anyone younger will not be able to retire under the 85-year rule and will be forced to work to 65 to get a full pension.

Negotiations over other reformed public service pension deals—NHS, teachers and civil servants—have agreed lifetime protection for existing members. The LGPS, already the least favourable public-sector scheme, is now also being offered the poorest protection.

Dave Prentis recently rubbished

claims about the high cost of the LGPS to council tax payers, as "lies, damned lies and statistics", and went on:

"The truth is that the average pension for a local government worker is less than £4,000 a year. If you are a woman – and 73 per cent of them are – it's less than £2,000 a year. That's only £31 a week after a lifetime delivering services to their local communities.

"We all pay for each other's pensions, whether it's for the fat cat executive of a bank through interest charges or for a billionaire entrepreneur through the price we pay in the shops for everything from toothpaste to toilet rolls. "If the pensions of local government workers are pushed down even further, the contributions they pay week in week out will be worthless and they will end up having to rely on state benefits to make ends meet in their retirement.."



Inside this newsletter is a letter to send to our MP, Alistair Carmichael, urging him to sign an Early Day Motion in support of the UNISON campaign. Please read it then sign and send it.

Find more information about the pensions campaign at www.unison.org.uk

Inside:

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- Nomination form
- Pensions campaign letter
- Return to Learning
- Equal Pay
- Membership numbers
- Meet the Activists
- Who's Who



Bairns Christmas Party

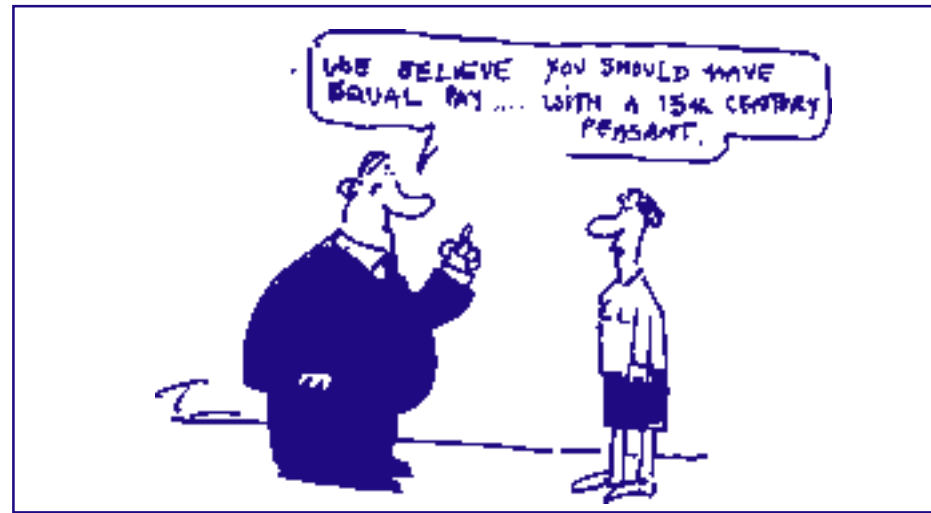
Another well attended bairns Christmas party was held in the main hall at the Clickimin Leisure Complex on Saturday 10 December 2005.

The younger bairns enjoyed the soft play area and the older ones had fun on the bouncy castles and played football.

After pass the parcel was finished and party food eaten, Santa, the special guest of the day, arrived and delivered gifts. The majority of the gifts this year were fair trade gifts.

As usual, left over gifts were donated to local deserving children and this year the Family Support Service of the Social Work Department distributed them.

Thanks are due to everyone who helped organise the party, particularly Lorraine Gray for sourcing the fair trade gifts and organising their wrapping. Thanks also to the staff at Clickimin for their hard work setting up for the party, for the food and for clearing up afterwards.



EQUAL PAY

by Emma Philips, Regional Officer

Public services in this country have been built on the backs of a skilled and dedicated, and predominantly female workforce - a workforce traditionally undervalued. The law on Equal Pay states that if people who have different jobs of the same value should be paid the same amount of money. UNISON does not believe the current pay system in Shetland Islands Council complies with the law. This is one of the main reasons we are talking about changing the pay systems in our Single Status talks.

The major example of pay unfairness is that Male Manual worker jobs get a bonus payment and traditionally Female Manual and APT&C jobs do not get access to a bonus payment. If you were successful with this claim in an Employment Tribunal you would get up to 5 years back-dated pay for the difference. UNISON would like the council to make compensatory payments to the staff that have been underpaid. We are currently speaking to the council about this.

The unfairness is continuing and we hope that Shetland Islands Council will pay up before any case reaches court. However, if your job changes or you leave the council, you have 5 months to raise a grievance and just under 6 months to put your claim into the courts. The courts now expect you to put in a grievance before you contact them. If you have changed job in or left the council within the last 6 months and you think you may have a claim, you should contact us now. If you are unwilling to wait to see if the council is going to make you an offer and you want UNISON to take forward your case at this time, again, please contact us. Your local contact is Tracey Leith (contact details at the back).

A Thriving Membership

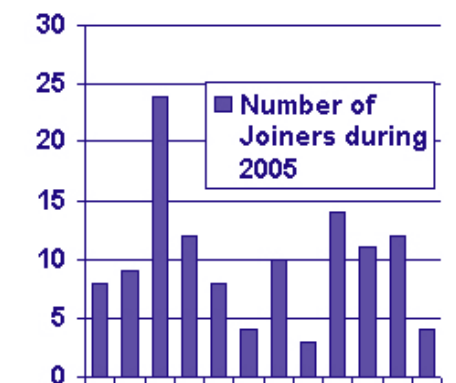
By Michelle Goudie,
Membership Records Officer

It's been another thriving year for the Branch. 2005 has seen the number of branch members swell by nearly 10%. A total of 119 joiners were recorded this year with March being the busiest month when a whopping 24 new members were recorded.

We are currently confirming details of the 800th member with Aberdeen, look out for details in the next newsletter.

We like to be able to keep in touch with our members so please let us know if your details changes.

Contact Michelle Goudie on 01595 744859 or email michelle.goudie@shetland.gov.uk for an amendment form.



Single Status

This newsletter unfortunately had to go to press before the members mass meeting on Thursday 9th February. It is hoped this meeting will give members a chance to air their views and get a clearer view of the issues.

The negotiations over the implementation of the Single Status agreement within the S.I.C continue to be difficult and complex. Your branch committee is increasingly uneasy about the amount of UNISON members who could end up worse off under the management proposals.

In a letter to Graham Spall on the 12th January, Regional Officer Emma Philips referred to one of the basic problems, that of the management side's belief in a 'cost-neutral' solution:

No, no, it's not complicated at all. You just have to work a little bit more time for a little bit less wages. Oh, and a little bit less pension...



"It is UNISON's aim to have no-one losing pay. However, we are aware that all the proposals discussed so far involve people ending up financially worse off. UNISON's acceptance of any offer will be dependent on a ballot. If there are too many people losing financially members will not accept it. The people who currently work 34 hours and will be asked to work 37 hours for similar money will also view themselves as losing out. It would appear to me that unless there is a change in the current proposals our members would not vote to accept the offer. As you have previously been advised, UNISON would like the payline raised to limit the people facing detriment."

She went on to stress the importance of the ballot of members before any deal can be accepted:

"We will not recommend a package unless we believe we will get a 'yes' vote. At the moment it is unlikely the branch would choose to recommend a 'yes' unless substantial changes to the current offer are made. This is because we believe our members will not vote for it. The package needs to address their concerns as individuals. Whilst there are many good reasons to be discussing a new package, for example, the current underpayment of female manual workers, what will matter to those losing money is the fact that they are losing money."

You will be kept informed as the negotiations progress.

PROTECT OUR PENSIONS

Public service workers are angry

- We will have to work longer in difficult and stressful jobs or retire in poverty.
- Women, the low-paid and today's young workers will suffer most.
- Our retirement has been put on hold, while MPs bump up their own pensions.
- We feel betrayed by government.

Broken promises mean broken lives

UNISON
the public service union

Amnesty International Shetland Group

Are you interested in Human rights?

Do you believe torture is wrong?

Do you want to do something to improve the lives of people around the world?

If you have answered yes to the these questions please contact Cathy Hubbard on 01950 477235 and find out what's happening locally. Membership is £5 per year.

Our current prisoner of conscience is a 75 year old man who has been imprisoned since 1989 for exercising his democratic right of free speech. You can help to raise awareness of his plight and hopefully we will be able to influence the military regime to release him.

A Return to Learning

Mary Anderson, Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator, reports on a successful Return to Learn course which has just been piloted in the North Isles. Funding for the course comes from the Workers Educational Association (WEA) through the Scottish Executive, and Mary got involved when she heard that there was funding available to run courses in all Social Work departments in Scotland. She organised a meeting and persuaded the WEA to run a course for Social Work, to be piloted in the North Isles, with a view to later running a joint Social Work and Health Board course in Lerwick.

I'm happy to report that the first group of learners started their Return to Learn course in Yell on the 13 January. There are eleven students—six from Unst, four from Brae and one from Yell.

It is hoped to start another course, in March/April, probably in Lerwick. I would be interested to hear from anyone in the Social Work service who would be interested in attending such a course. It runs for ten whole day sessions, one day per fortnight, and is designed for people who have not done any formal training for a while, especially those who are worried about having to do SVQ's.

I am confident that this course would never have got off the ground without the involvement of UNISON. My role in this has been to drive the thing along, and to help with the communication. I have acted as a link person to ensure that the funding was all in place and the venue was booked, and so on: UNISON has been the facilitator. I attended the first day's training and talked about the UNISON involvement. The majority or people on the course were UNISON members, and the others were encouraged to join.

Contact Mary if you are interested in the course: contact details are on the back page.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGM UNISON Shetland Local Government Branch AGM

12 Noon, Monday 20th March 2006—Islesburgh Community Centre

A buffet lunch will be provided.

All members are welcome and a good turnout would be appreciated.

Nominations

Nominations for branch officers and workplace representatives must be returned to Val Turner at Shetland Amenity Trust, Garthspool, Lerwick by **4pm on Friday 10th March 2006**. A nomination form is enclosed. Details of posts available—see next page. Remember, current officers and stewards must also submit a nomination form if they wish to continue in post.



Last year: a good turnout of members.

Not been to the AGM before? It's not scary - you can have your say or just sit and listen. Here's what happens: stewards and officers are elected, any motions put forward are discussed and voted on, other branch business is dealt with and the meeting will be addressed by the Chair and the Regional Officer on the events of the year and current big issues. With the SIC management's take on Single Status and the government plans for local government pensions both threatening the incomes of UNISON members, there is likely to be a lot to talk about.

By agreement with employers, members can have time off to attend the meeting if service needs allow: arrange this with your line manager in advance.

Motions

If you have any *motions* you wish to be presented to, and considered by, the AGM this must be supported by the signatures of 8 members and returned to Val Turner at Shetland Amenity Trust, Garthspool, Lerwick by **4pm on Friday 10th March 2006**. You should be prepared to attend the AGM and speak to your motion.

Be active in UNISON and get a lot more out of your union

- **Branch Development Officer**
- **Young Members' Officer**
- **Branch Office Co-ordinator**

These three important officer posts are currently vacant, so we're particularly keen to fill them. Nervous about activism, but can run an office and want to help your union? You could be our **Branch Office Co-ordinator**.

Too many workplaces are **out of touch**: you can become a **Workplace Steward** or **Workplace Contact**. Details next page, nomination form enclosed, or contact Elaina Leach (contact details on back page) for more information.

Be active in UNISON

Want to meet new people, learn new skills and go places?

Getting involved means: **helping to make a difference; getting together with friends and colleagues and meeting new people; doing things you usually couldn't or wouldn't do alone; new opportunities for education, training and personal development; helping yourself and improving your life at work, home and the wider world; having fun and doing something you enjoy.**

Posts available and some of the duties involved

Chair: Preside at all meetings of the branch and branch committee; ensure business is properly conducted, co-ordinate local negotiations.

Vice Chair: In the absence of the chair, preside at meetings and deputise for the chair as required.

Branch Secretary: Be responsible for communicating with members and with regional and head offices on behalf of the branch, arrange for branch records to be kept in a proper manner.

Treasurer: Conduct the branch's financial business and keep accounts in accordance with the Union rules.

Membership Service and Conditions Officer: Negotiate with employers on policy matters generally, provide support and advice to stewards and help arrange representation for members.

Meetings Secretary: Convene meetings of the branch and arrange for the minutes to be taken and kept in a proper manner.

Communications Officer: Edit the local newsletter and help to keep members informed.

Branch Office Co-ordinator: Ensure the smooth running of the branch office.

Social Events Co-ordinator: Arrange annual bairns Christmas party and other social events.

Branch Development Officer: plan branch development and promote union membership and activism.

Membership Records Officer: Co-operate with the Union's head office in keeping membership records.

Welfare Officer: Assist members in difficulty and promote local and national membership benefits e.g. discounts.

Education Co-ordinator: Ensure training of stewards, assess and arrange other training needs.

Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator: Promote learning within the membership and negotiate employer support for learning.

Equalities Officer(s) – up to 4: Negotiate with employers on equality-related policy matters relating to equal opportunities, assist stewards with equality issues, promote organisation for women, LGBT and black members within UNISON rules.

Health and Safety Officer: Negotiate with employers on health and safety matters, recruit workplace reps, assist stewards and represent the Union at the Central Safety Committee.

Retired Members' Officer: Promote opportunities for retired members, arrange meetings and events.

Young Members' Officer: Recruit and promote opportunities for young members.

International Officer: Develop links with trade unions and trade unionists in other countries, encourage ethical investment, encourage social responsibility from UNISON and its members in their investments and pensions.

Stewards Co-ordinator – 3 Posts (SIC; Trusts; Other): Provide support and assistance to less experienced workplace reps, represent members where there is no workplace rep, recruit stewards.

Workplace Steward (all workplaces): Represent the interests of members in their work group or workplace in any grievance, dispute or negotiation at the level of the work group or workplace; maintain workplace organisation; attend branch meetings; promote union membership.

Workplace Health and Safety Representative (all workplaces): Make representations to the employer on behalf of members on any health, safety and welfare matter; inspect designated workplace areas at least every three months; investigate any potential hazards, complaints by members, causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases.

Workplace Contact (all workplaces): Make sure members receive union and other important information, help groups to organise, maintain contact between members and the union where there is no elected steward, support other activists such as stewards and health and safety reps.