

## MEET THE ACTIVISTS



**Karen Irwin**

### Position in Unison:

Welfare Officer and Departmental Steward for Legal and Admin.

### Job title:

Paralegal

### Reason for becoming active:

Seeing bad things happen to good people and wanting to stop such situations happening again.

### Post involves:

Helping members access Unison Welfare for assistance with financial problems, holidays or convalescent breaks.

### Hopes for the future:

That common sense will prevail over single status and the Council realises that robbing Peter to pay Paul is no way to motivate staff or encourage staff retention.

### Hobbies and interests:

Travel, gardening, chocolate and dreaming about winning the Lottery.

## Who's Who and where- Local Officers and Stewards

Chair	Brian Smith	01595 744354
Vice Chair	John Leach	01595 744858
Branch Development Officer / Secretary / Co-ordinator	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
	Kaila Tarrant	01595 692019
Branch Meetings Secretary	Val Turner	01595 694688
Equalities Officer	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Health & Safety Officer	Jim Grant	01595 744871
Membership Records Officer	Michelle Goudie	01595 744859
Membership Services Secretary	Barry Edwards	01595 744202
Newsletter Editor	Karen Fraser	01595 743868
Retired Members Officer	Donald Silk	01595 692451
Stewards Co-ordinators	Elaina Leach	01595 744816
	Graham Stiles	01595 692718
Treasurer	Stefanie Pottinger	01595 744994
Union Learning Rep.	Mary Anderson	01595 744992
Welfare Officer	Karen Irwin	01595 744095
Young Members Officer	Daniel Robertson	01595 744995

### DEPARTMENTAL STEWARDS

Assessors Office	Kaila Tarrant	01595 692019
Capital Programmes	Suzanne Roberts	01595 743861
Charitable Trust	Daniel Robertson	01595 744995
Drugs & Alcohol Services	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Economic Development	Marvin Smith	01595 744921
	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
Education Services	Susan Jamieson	01595 809217
Environmental Services	John Leach	01595 744858
Housing	Ewan Balfour	01595 744336
ICT	Heather Jones	01595 744701
Legal Services (Market Street)	Karen Irwin	01595 744095
Organisational Development	Peter Peterson	01595 744538
Planning	Gwenan Hughes	01595 744834
Ports and Harbours	Barry Edwards	01595 744202
Social Work (St Olaf Street)	Fiona Morton	01595 744442
	Shirley Mackay	01595 744450
Social Work (Viewforth)	Heather Butler	01595 692760
Social Work (ILP)	June Henry	01595 859255
Shetland Amenity Trust	Mick Clifton	01595 694688
Wastview Care Centre	Margaret Forrest	01595 809483

### WORKPLACE CONTACTS

Finance	Andrew Hall	01595 744649
Shetland Recreational Trust	Jo Andrews	01806 522891
Social Work (St Olaf Street)	Francis Prittie	01595 744447
	Eleanor Robertson	01595 744495

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The Newsletter of  
**Unison Shetland**  
Local  
Government  
Branch  
February 2007



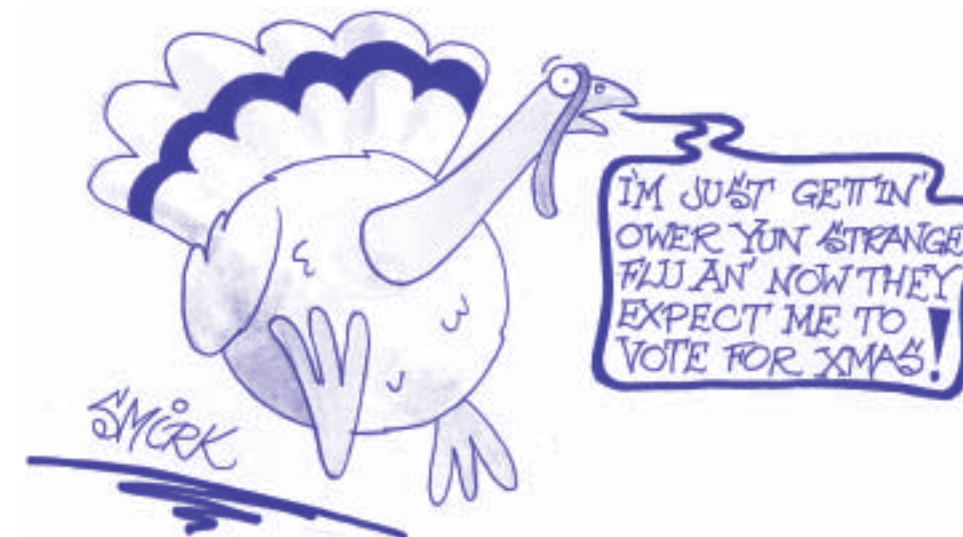
# Yarns

# Single Status: 50% losers. Vote NO to this shoddy deal

Some details of the new single status pay figures were released to the unions on the 7th of February, but as we go to press SIC have refused to give us all the information we require. UNISON officials in Glasgow, London and Aberdeen are examining what we have and indications are that, as UNISON locally feared, this is one of the worst deals offered by any local authority.

The council have spun that 25% of council employees will suffer pay cuts, but will not give us the detailed information to examine this. Our members will also be hit hard by the move to a 37 hour week which will compound pay cuts. **Taking this into account we believe that over 50% of staff will be getting a pay cut in their hourly rate, especially for part time and job share employees.** UNISON is concerned that the council is trying to cover up the true scale of people losing pay.

By now SIC employees will have received notification of their proposed new pay scale. While there are some positives to the pay deal - a higher minimum rate and



wage rises for some - UNISON urges members to look carefully at what is offered and to vote NO to this deal which will only raise some workers' pay by cutting that of many others. UNISON will be balloting members from the 7th of March. Remember, the union can only fight these cuts with the support of members, so you MUST return your ballot form and we urge you to vote NO. Ask your reps for more information, look out for local bulletins, and come to the AGM on 7th March.

### Inside:

- Get the Whole Picture
- The long view: lifelong losers?
- Childcare for 37 hours
- What can we do?
- Equal pay?
- The bigger picture: Single Status nationally
- History of Single Status
- Workplace reps needed
- AGM
- New branch office
- Daniel for the NEC
- Who's who

# Get the Whole Picture

## Your salary could go up but your income could go down

Though some people's pay will go up with the proposed deal, modest increases could be eaten away by changes in allowances, extra expenses and extra hours worked. Study the new terms and conditions carefully: if it's not in there, you no longer get the allowance. Consider the extra transport and childcare expenses if you are forced to work more hours.

## Pay preservation: a yearly pay cut

Pay preservation, even if it lasts for five years—and it may well be deemed illegal and reduced to three years anyway!—will stop the basic pay of 'losers' from plummeting right away, but it will only protect basic pay, not shift allowances etc, and it will stop all yearly increments until (and if) your pay equalizes with your reduced rate. Pay preservation is still a yearly pay cut because your pay will not rise to keep pace with the cost of living.

## Alright for some...

There's no truth in the rumour that chief officials will be unaffected by single status: they won't get the pay cuts, but they will get the £1000 and the extra holiday—though they already get two extra days holiday! It would be mean spirited to complain about this, but unfortunately mean spirits and envy could be a result of a process where so many lose—and many of the losers are by no means high earners.

## Roll up: work three weeks, get one day free!

Working three extra hours a week adds up to over three weeks a year: an extra day's holiday is scant compensation for three weeks of your time. The 34-37 hour agreement is apparently being ditched on the grounds that it is discriminatory, but manual workers have had their bonus preserved as part of their hourly rate through pay preservation. This is the bonus, remember, that obliged the Council to pay out a small fortune to female manual workers before Christmas in an equal pay settlement, because it was discriminatory!

**"The stark fact is, you could work more hours for less pay."** Emma Phillips, Regional Officer

**Pensions: a drop in your salary** will impact on your pension. You can apply for a 'certificate of protection of pension benefits' - but this is only valid for 10 years so you could suffer an accumulation of losses both in expected pay and pension that can add up to many thousands of pounds over a lifetime—see graphs on page three. *Losers will be losers for the rest of their lives.*

# £1000:

## When is a Grand not so grand?

The £1000 pay off is pro rata depending on your contracted hours, and will have tax and national insurance deducted, so isn't as great an incentive as it might first appear: don't be swayed by this offer - do the sums and consider what the deal really means for you in the longer term.

## 34/37 and the new class of part-timers

Just now most of our members work a 34 hour week, but by local agreement are paid for 37. All new pay rates will be based on a 37-hour week, and workers will have to work 37 hours to get a full salary. If you choose to continue working 34 hours, you will be considered a part-time employee which could have further implications than just losing three hours pay—Islands Allowance, for example, will be paid pro rata. The loss of three hours is equivalent to almost 9% loss in salary, so any "winner" will require a pay rise in excess of 9% just to stand still in terms of hourly rate.

Part time employees currently have their pay calculated pro rata in relation to a 34 hour week: this hourly rate will be protected by pay preservation since part-time contracts are based on 34 hours. But apparently no such protection is to be offered to full-time workers who opt to stay on 34 hours—they become part-time but their hourly rate will be based pro-rata on a 37 hour week. It seems there will be two different classes of part-time employees, and unfairness to full-time employees. UNISON is concerned about just how carefully some of this has been thought through.

**We cannot answer all your questions because we have not got all the information: it is up to SIC management to provide this. Don't vote for a deal you're not convinced by. We need your support to negotiate a better deal**

# VOTE NO

## Local Rising Star goes for National Post



Our Young Members Officer Daniel Robertson, aged just 18, has, over the past year since he joined UNISON, been elected to the Scottish Young Members Committee and the National Young Members Forum, attended the STUC Youth Conference and spoken at the UNISON National Conference. Now he is to stand for the Young Members seat on the UNISON National Executive. If elected, he will be the youngest ever NEC member, and the only member ever to come from a Scottish island.

Daniel said: "It would be a positive experience for NEC to have someone from Shetland, a place where the Chief Executive of the Council is Santa at the UNISON Christmas Party. I have had support from young members all over the UK and hope that this shows the commitment I have to them. I will be making a leaflet in the next month and hopefully attending rallies and demos all around the country."

Remember you can read Daniel's blog at <http://danielunison.blogspot.com>

## NEWSLETTER PRIZE

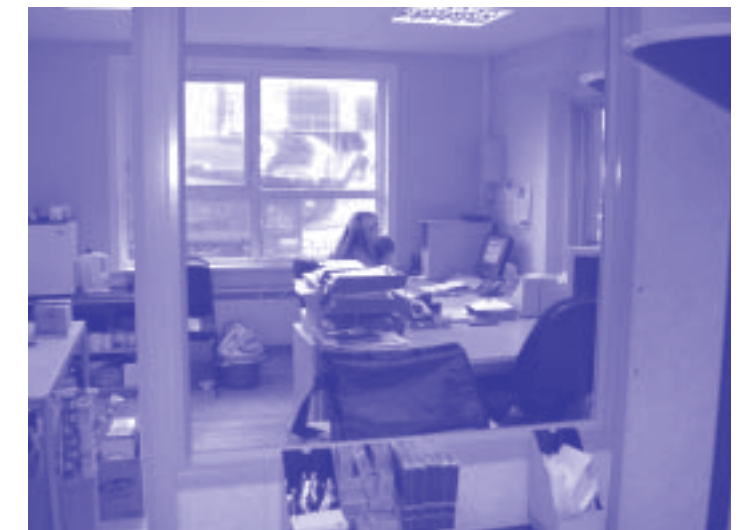
*UNISON Yarns* recently came third in the UNISON Scottish Communications Awards for Best Publication. The judges praised the pictorial coverage of last year's strike and one said: "the vox pop from members was the best coverage I've seen in making the issue personal to members". Other comments included "Nice bold headings, good sized typeface and a really newsy feel. Good use of graphics and an attractive masthead. Cleanly laid out and lively presentation."

Judges concluded "Good coverage of UNISON's main objectives and a nice balance of stories. This is an excellent publication which shows that size is not everything! If a branch of 850 can produce something as good as this, then there is no excuse surely for every branch not to have a great magazine."

Thanks to all the contributors, and to Michael at Turriff Printing Services and the staff of UNISON's Aberdeen Resource Centre for all their work in getting the newsletter out. Remember that any stories or pictures of interest of members, on local or national issues, are always welcome.

## New Branch Office

Last October, volunteers from the union committee gave up their time to help in the move to the new branch office. The office is now situated on the first floor of Alexandra Buildings on the esplanade, and offers improved facilities and better disabled access.



Top: new town centre location. Middle: volunteers get busy sticking our new address on piles of application forms. Bottom: the new office, which leads through to a meeting room.

# VOTE NO

## How Did We Get There...

- **1970** – Equal Pay Act passed. “An Act to prevent discrimination, as regards terms and conditions of employment, between men and women”. Initially aimed at ending such discrimination by 29 December 1975.
- **1999** – Local Government employers, UNISON, the GMB and the T&G sign an agreement to be known as the Single Status Agreement. It applies to all manual workers and APT&C grades, but not teachers or Chief Officials who both have different terms and conditions. Employers asked that local agreements be allowed, rather than a nationally negotiated scheme to give them the chance to be more flexible.
- **2001** – McCrone agreement for teachers negotiated and **funded by Scottish Executive**.
- **2003** – Change in employment legislation to allow equal pay claims to be backdated for five years. Employers concerned at extra possible costs this may cause. “Cost neutral” or attempting to achieve equal pay without increasing the pay budget becomes the method preferred by employers.
- **2006** – Moray, Aberdeen City and Glasgow Councils are given details about their local negotiations. Strikes in Moray and Aberdeen, strike in Glasgow averted at the last minute.
- Chief Officials awarded 2.5% pay increase.
- Scottish Executive hints money may be available if COSLA can show sufficient savings will be achieved.

## ...and where do we go next?

- 7 March – UNISON AGM at Clickimin.
- 7-21 March – UNISON and the other unions will hold ballots. Members will be asked whether they think the agreement is acceptable.
- 23 March – Result of ballot will be announced.
- Remember – a “No” vote by any one of the unions will result in further negotiations having to be held.



## 7th March AGM

The 2007 Annual  
General Meeting  
Clickimin Centre  
Wednesday  
7th March  
12 noon

All members are  
invited to attend

Find out about the single  
status deal and show support  
for your union.

Managers should allow time  
off for members to attend, as  
long as service needs allow.

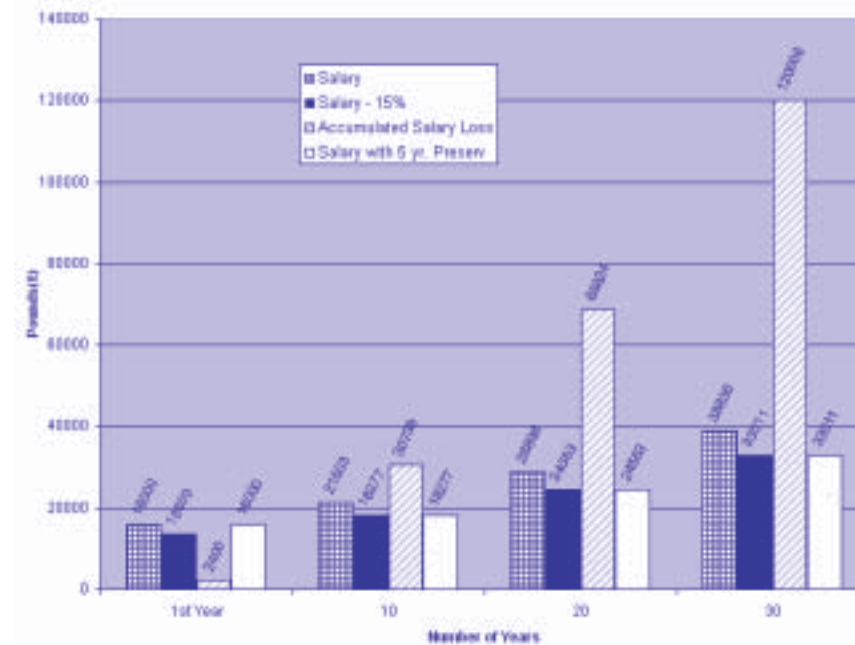
There will be a buffet lunch  
after the meeting

## Out of touch?

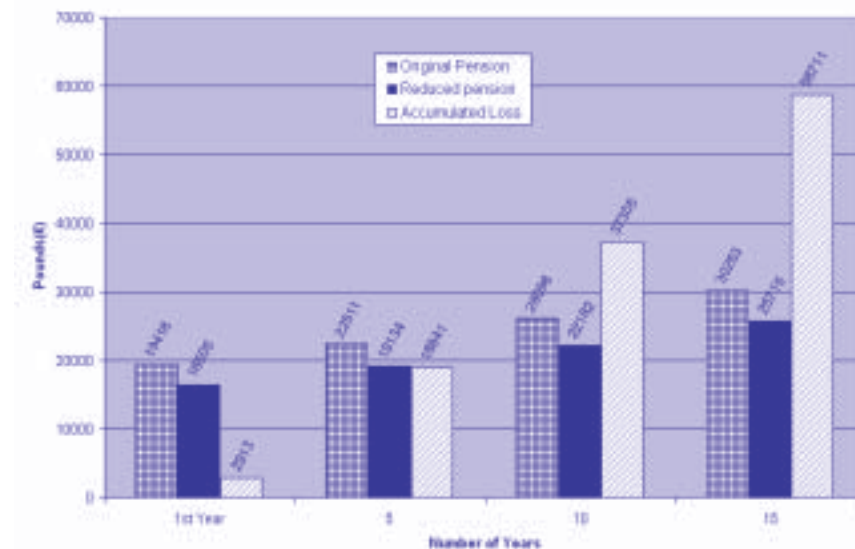
We communicate with members through newsletters, bulletins, e-mails, the AGM and other mass meetings: but there is no substitute for having a workplace rep to pass on information and keep members involved. If you don't have a rep or workplace contact, you need to get one... or maybe you need to be one? Attending branch meetings (photo, left) keeps reps in touch. There have been robust discussions throughout the Single Status process!

# VOTE NO

Salary £16000 with 15% Loss



Salary £16000 with 15% Loss: Effect on Pension



## Terms and Conditions: Approach With Caution

The proposed terms and conditions will be listed on the intranet, and you will receive a copy with your salary notification. These new T & C are very much slimmed down, so you need to study these carefully to see what is NOT in them as well as what is.

As we go to press there does not seem to be an annotated version available to describe exactly what has changed, and this could make it quite difficult to calculate how the changes will affect your take-home pay. Some basic points which may represent changes for many of our members are: the standard working week is now 37 hours; overtime will be paid at time and a half both Saturday and Sunday; Saturday and Sunday working allowance will be paid at time and a third. There will be an additional days annual leave and flexitime is to be introduced “where service provision allows”.

**Make sure you find out how the changes would hit you.**

## Taking the long view

A drop in pay isn't just for this year, it's for life. That's why we say the losers are lifelong losers.

The first graph shows the accumulative effect of a 15% reduction on a salary of £16000 at intervals of 10 years.

The second shows the effect this cut in salary could have on a pension.

Pensions may well be one of the biggest worries for our members: the pensions section is likely to be swamped with people seeking advice. Workers need to be sure about their position in the long term before they can make any decisions.

## Appeals

You can appeal if you think the evaluation for your particular job is too low. You may or may not win a rise in pay. **But you cannot appeal against any of the new terms and conditions such as the scrapping of the long-established 34/37 hours agreement.** The ballot is your only chance to say no to the new package and get it sent back for a re-think.

# VOTE NO

## Childcare: can you afford three more hours?



Some people may easily adapt to working 37 hours, indeed many workers already exceed their 34 hours, to cope with heavy workloads. But for working parents managing work and family is a fine balancing act. *'I pay £4.50 an hour for childcare'* says Kaila Tarrant (above, with son Max) *"and it takes a lot of juggling to manage my job and family. Three extra hours childcare a week would cost me over £600 a year but more to the point I'm not sure how I'd fit everything in. When I took this job my agreed hours were 34 and now the goalposts are shifting."* Flexitime, being vaguely offered by management, won't be practical in a large number of services.

### What Can We Do?

- Call or write to your councillor and explain exactly what this means to you.
- Talk to fellow members: make sure they understand the whole picture.
- Talk to members of other unions: have they got as much information as you? A NO vote from UNISON will be enough to stop this deal going ahead, but a NO vote from the other unions too will send out an even more powerful message.
- Talk to non-members and persuade them to join UNISON. It is unions that have won the right to consultation and negotiation, and we draw our power from our numbers and our solidarity.
- Come to the AGM on the 7th of March.
- Vote NO in the ballot: if there is a NO vote the deal must be re-negotiated. Graham Spall has assured the unions that the deal will not be imposed. The threat to reduce the 5-year preservation period if the deal is rejected is a red herring: five years preservation may not be sustainable in any case.
- A NO vote gives us the chance of a better deal for everyone.

## Equal pay or just plain low pay?



By Emma Phillips, UNISON Regional Officer

There is a problem with the way that Local Government Pay works at the moment. It does not deliver Equal Pay. Single Status is supposed to address this. However, SIC proposals still have some Equality issues. The move from a 34 to 37 hour week will have the biggest impact on people who are carers. Some will have to fork out lots of money on childcare and other costs and other will simply not be able to do it and be on the reduced 34 hour week pay and associated pension. The people who are unable or unwilling to move from 34 hours to 37 will not be entitled to the same level of protection as their colleagues.

SIC are investing a lot in protection, for the basic reason that they are cutting so many employees wages. We would prefer the protection money to be invested in the wage bill to limit the number of people who need protected pay in the first place. We are concerned that their protection offer may not meet Equal Pay law.

The way that SIC are applying market forces and their planned job redesign may also be discriminatory. SIC commissioned an independent advisor to do an Equality Impact Assessment. UNISON was not given the opportunity to meet this advisor and put across our concerns. The advisor also did not look at the full offer including terms and conditions. We therefore have major concerns about her report. Single Status and Equal Pay is overdue. However, this offer is more about low pay than Equal Pay.

# VOTE NO

## Imposition?

By Brian Smith

To date, Shetland Islands Council has been trying to introduce Single Status – fair pay and conditions for its employees – on the cheap. The idea has been that one group of staff should pay to remunerate other staff



that the Council has been paying low wages for far too long! (Needless to say, the chief officials that have been in charge of negotiations from the Council side aren't part of Single Status. No-one has been scrutinising their wages ...)

Unison is now encouraging the Council to take a hard look at the terrible results their scheme would have for a large number of local people and their families, and go back to the negotiating table.

Some Councils have tried to 'impose' Single Status on their workforces, by tearing up contracts. The result has been fury. In the most recent case, the threat of strike action made the Council go back to the drawing board, and put an extra two and a half million pounds into the pay-pot.

Some people (who should know better) have been telling a story that Shetland islands Council will impose Single Status here if there is a 'no' vote in the ballot. **That isn't what the Council decided at all.** Councillors and their representatives have repeatedly said that they want to be responsible, and reach a result through negotiation.

**In any case, imposing Single Status is a route fraught with difficulties for an employer. Quite apart from the ill-will such an act would create among the workforce – and no councillor or official wants a disgruntled staff - there is legal and industrial action that trade unions can take to thwart it.**

### Keep up to date

Help us to keep you fully informed: tell us about changes to your contact details or employment. If you know any members who don't get this newsletter, tell them to get in touch so we can update our database.

## The Bigger Picture



Strikers in Aberdeen won re-think

Single Status has been in the news as other local authorities go through the process. In Moray and Aberdeen councils faced furious reactions when workers got notification of their pay cuts: cuts that in some cases amounted to thousands of pounds a year. Widespread protests, a strike by T & G dinner ladies in Aberdeen and a work to rule by UNISON bin men in Moray pushed both councils into having a re-think. Both deals were re-negotiated and more money put in to drastically reduce the number of 'losers'.

The cost to local authorities of implementing Single Status is huge, but this reform is long overdue and UNISON is committed to it. When authorities try to rectify unequal pay without putting more money in however, they must take from some workers to give to others: this is what is happening in Shetland, and the number of losers are unacceptable. The new deal in Moray leaves 10% losing money, compared to the 25% proposed in Shetland (and the 50% we believe is the true figure).

UNISON believes that lack of government funding is a serious barrier to the progress of Single Status deals. Carol Judge (UNISON's Scottish Organiser) said last November "Whilst local authorities are responsible for the detailed pay and grading proposals of their staff, government is responsible for delivering equal pay in the public sector and has accepted those responsibilities in health, education and other public services. We need a local government financial settlement that recognises these costs and for local authorities to recognise their responsibilities. It is time to deliver this long standing obligation and to ensure justice for low paid women."

# VOTE NO