

THE SOURCE



Scottish Government Start Talks on Pensions

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, John Swinney MSP has initiated discussions with public service pension stakeholders in Scotland including trade unions and employer organisations. This follows the broad discussions at a UK level on the UK Government's response to the Hutton Commission recommendations and proposals to increase employee pension contributions by 50% (3.2% of salary).

The Scottish Government's approach is outlined in the Cabinet Secretary's statement to Parliament stating that **increased pension contributions will place an unnecessary burden on public service workers who are already suffering from pay restraint and rising living costs.**

While this support is welcome, public service pension regulation is a devolved issue and therefore Scottish Ministers have decisions to make on the way ahead in Scotland.



The discussions at present focus on the contribution increases in the context of the Scottish Spending Review that is due to be published later this month. The Hutton recommendations are primarily an issue for individual Scottish pension schemes.

Scottish Ministers have some constraints on what they can do. The main challenge is financial because the UK Government has in effect docked the NHS and Teachers contributions from the Scottish budget. This means the Scottish Government is facing a £240m shortfall by 2014. The LGPS, Police and Fire schemes are not scored against the budget. However, the Scottish Government could raise an additional £165m from members in these schemes, (Continued Overleaf)

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Dates For Your Diary

- 4th October 2011—Next Branch Meeting
- 19th October 2011 — SW Negotiating Forum Meeting

STOP PRESS

PENSIONS BALLOT

Dave Prentis, our General Secretary, announced recently that there would be a ballot of UNISON members in some 6000 employers across the UK. The intended date for Strike Action is Wednesday 30th November 2011.

Scottish Water as part of the Local Government Scheme will be balloted along with other Scottish public sector organisations. It is anticipated that the Ballots will commence round about the 10th/11th October.

Members consultation meetings will be arranged soon, commencing around Monday 3rd October 2011 and should be completed by no later than Friday 14th October 2011.

(Continued From Page 1) if they followed the UK Government's expectation that contributions should increase in these schemes as well. The Scottish Government describes this as an "opportunity cost". **We would describe it as a "Scottish pensions tax" because there is no requirement to "tax" Scottish local government staff.**

The other constraint is that the Scottish Government has only limited powers to make changes to the NHS scheme. It has much more flexibility in the local government scheme because any changes do not require the approval of the UK government.

At present discussions are simply looking at a range of options for dealing with the financial consequences. These range from the treatment of different schemes, through financial options to timescales. In what is already a difficult spending environment all stakeholders recognise the difficulties facing the Scottish Government. **However, UNISON's position remains that this is simply a tax on our members as not one penny of the cash raised will go into the pension schemes.**

Pension benefit increases - change from RPI to CPI

There is a petition on the UK Government's petition site attacking the decision to change the indexing of pension increases from the RPI to the CPI. This will result in a 15% cut in benefits. The petition has already gained over 30,000 signatures. The target is 100,000 so all members should sign up.

The petition can be accessed at:

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/1535>

SW Roll Out Diversity Courses

Note that SW are rolling out a series of 1/2 day diversity courses which will be available at various locations. These are fully supported by this Branch and they can be booked on **QUEST** for employees (**Respect & Dignity**) and for Team Leaders (**Managing Diversity**) commencing 06/10/11 until 31/03/12.

Update from Negotiating Forum

Pay Award 2011

The result of the UNISON Scottish Water Branch consultative ballot on SW's 2011 pay offer was as follows:-

Yes - 211 (65%)

No - 114 (35%)

936 ballots were issued with 325 returned, a response rate of 35%.

Given the above clear direction by the membership, the Branch accepted SW's pay offer at the Negotiating Forum meeting on 22nd August 2011. However, GMB and Unite had not initially gained a mandate to accept the offer and went back out to their members recommending acceptance. As this has now been agreed, any salary increases are to be paid in October salaries.

Bonus

Scottish Water has confirmed that the annual bonus of up to £900 will be payable in June 2012 subject to the usual conditions (meeting the Opex gateway and global / local targets). We note that SW has communicated the corporate targets on Wavelength. Be sure to ask your manager what your local targets are so that you can have some influence over these.

VR

The Negotiating Forum has started discussions on a replacement Voluntary Severance Scheme which will start in October 2011. Our expectation is that this scheme will not be radically different from the previous scheme but we will update you as details emerge.

Pay progression

A sub-group of the Negotiating Forum has been set up to look at future pay progression and, potentially, a new salary banding system. Clearly this is welcome and may help to deal with demotivation associated with the salary freeze and lack of movement up the bands. However, this is likely to be a very contentious area, resurrecting differentials arguments and the issue of red circling. Steve Scott will be our rep on this group and we will ensure that developments are communicated as soon as practicable.

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

JTUG

The Joint Trade Union H&S Group met on the 21st September and discussed a range of issues including :-

Advanced Scheduling—excess mileage still being travelled; Single man chokes; lack of consultation; lack of commitment by management to attend H&S meetings.

Most of these items are recurring and never seem to get resolved, which leads us to question whether SW take H&S consultation seriously. The JTUG is working closely with the HSE and it may be that some of these items need to be escalated to demonstrate that we are not prepared to wait for a serious accident before action is taken.

Safety Reps Needed

The Branch are still looking for new safety reps especially in water and wastewater in the West, Ayrshire and North of the country. You don't have to be an expert to consider taking this role as Unison provides comprehensive training.

Safety reps have important legal rights and can help other members in there area by: investigating complaints; carrying out health and safety inspections; investigating accidents. As Safety Reps you are entitled to paid time off to carry out duties, so please consider supporting the Branch in this way. Contact Paul Hyles or Andy Nisbet for further information.

Scottish Water IT Policy – Be Careful Out There!

Branch reps have had to deal with a number of disciplinaries for breaching SW's IT policy recently and we would therefore ask members to be very careful when communicating or browsing via SW IT equipment.

What seems harmless to you may be deemed offensive, racist or sectarian to someone else. Think about the content and if in doubt, err on the side of caution.

DEMONSTRATION—“PUT PEOPLE 1ST”

GLASGOW GREEN, 1ST OCTOBER 2011, 1130AM

As part of the ongoing STUC campaign this is the next demonstration in a series of events against the cuts that are taking place in the public and private sectors in Scotland.

It is our UNISON members whose jobs and terms and conditions are being cut and UNISON Branches are mobilising as many members and their families and friends as possible to attend this event. If you are interested in attending please get in touch with Branch Secretary, Andy Nisbet.

Are Your Membership Details Correct?

Much as we don't want to consider industrial action on any issue, we are duty bound to ensure that we are ready should we need to act. A key part of any advance planning is in making sure that our membership records are accurate and up to date.

We are constantly reviewing our records and contacting members however you can play your part by checking your details online and correcting any errors. Please go to:-

<http://www.unison.org.uk/membership/update.asp>

You will need you membership number to register. Please get in touch with your local steward if you don't have this to hand.

British Waterways Update—From Helen Rowbotham

“Following British Waterways Unison Branch merger with Scottish Water I have found the new Branch very welcoming, helpful and interested in our similar but different situation. It is surprising how many similarities there are with stand-by, weekend and rural, lone working with water.

British Waterways Scotland is to become a stand-alone organisation in Scotland in April 2012 while the organisation in England and Wales enter the Third Sector as a new Trust. Recent publicity has surrounded the publication of the annual report which highlighted the Bonuses being given to Directors. An email to all staff from our Chief Executive aggravated the situation by its inflammatory style and language. **Following correspondence from our National Officer we have withdrawn all contact with Management for the present.** We continue to support staff directly and advocate on all Health and Safety issues”

Scottish Water Ordered to Give UNISON PFI Info

Scotland's Information Commissioner Kevin Dunion has ordered Scottish Water to provide UNISON with full financial information on its PFI contracts.

Following a lengthy investigation, he also found that, incredibly, Scottish Water does not hold any Full Business Cases (FBCs) for the nine multi-million pound water and sewerage PFI contracts.

Scottish Organiser Dave Watson said it was “scandalous” that either the projects had been approved without any FBCs or that these key documents had been lost. The nine contracts, most of which run for 30 years, cost nearly £600 million in capital costs and around £130 million annually. The Commissioner's Report shows that Scottish Water has also admitted, in effect, to misleading a Scottish Parliament Committee, stating that “it was possible a document had been liberally referred to as an FBC when it was not actually an FBC.”

For the full story go to :-

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/siu/sept11/siusept11.pdf>

CURRENT BRANCH OFFICERS :-**Chair**

Elaine Noble
07875 872091

Treasurer

Fergus Allan
07875 872846

Health & Safety

Paul Hyles
07875 873373

Education

Steve Gordon
01463 228619

Secretary

Andy Nisbet
07875 873727

Depute Secretary

Steve Scott
07875 879388

Communications

David Wilkinson
07875 872819

Equalities

Penny Philipson
07765 124599

CURRENT WORKPLACE REPS :-

David Wilkinson	CID	Kingshill House, Aberdeen	07875 872819
Paul Hyles	Customer Service Operations	Marchmount House, Dumfries	01387 244806
Steve Scott	Strategic Liaison	Bullion House, Dundee	07875 879388
Kate Brown	Customer Service Centre	Fairmilehead, Edinburgh	0131 445 6659
Elaine Noble	Scientific Services	Fairmilehead, Edinburgh	0131 445 6475
Monique Fernandes	Financial Control	Fairmilehead, Edinburgh	0131 445 6346
Penny Philipson	SW Business Stream	South Gyle, Edinburgh	07765 124599
Ros Furnival	SW Business Stream	South Gyle, Edinburgh	07951 513823
Fergus Allan	SW Solutions	Balmore Road, Glasgow	07875 872846
Steve Gordon	CID	Torridon House, Inverness	01463 228619
Robin Gallacher	CID	Fairmilehead, Edinburgh	01506 469516
Richard Mould	Customer Service Operations	Forth House, Livingston	07875 873830
Willie Fortune	SW Horizons	Muir Road, Livingston	07875 879605
Helen Rowbotham	British Waterways	The Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk	07711 796308
Andy Nisbet	Customer Service Operations	Talla Reservoir	07875 873727

REMEMBER TO REGULARLY CHECK OUR
WEBSITE—
WWW.UNISONSCOTTISHWATER.ORG.UK

Contact the Branch at:-
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