

Regional Council - 1 February 2025

Unions and Trades Councils Reports

Trade unions

GMB

We have equal pay campaigns going on across the region in various different local authorities, ongoing restructures and discussions with Devon County Council, Unions have requested all consultations on cuts to T&C's are stopped until the outcome of what devolution looks like.

Harland & Wolff Appledore is now safe, with the yard and members jobs secured, Navantia UK Ltd, which is a subsidiary of Navantia is now the owner of the yard, with all members tupied across. We are pushing government to fully implement the national shipbuilding strategy which will end the boom-and-bust cycle yards like Appledore face regularly, we are also calling for the re industrialisation of apprenticeships in shipbuilding which is a campaign being led by the Devonport branch.

We are visiting schools on a regular basis across the region and building campaigns around Term Time Only contracts and SEND.

PCS

Since the general election, talks have been underway with the Cabinet Office on pay and reward, terms and conditions and workplaces.

The Cabinet Office says it has no plans to introduce sectoral collective bargaining for the civil service. Currently workers do broadly the same job at broadly the same grade but are paid wildly different rates depending on which department they work in.

The Cabinet Office has said they are open to reviewing guidance on facility time and there will be further meetings to seek agreement to revise the limitations imposed under the last government.

We continue to work with the other civil service unions to find a common position on facility time, national collective bargaining, and future industrial relations machinery for the civil service.

Reports on disputes

There are currently several disputes and industrial action ongoing within the union, including members in facilities management working on ISS, OCS and G4S contracts. Members at HMRC Benton Park View are currently taking action over the sacking of reps. In December, members there voted for action – with 96% in favour on a 68% turnout. Discontinuous action began on 23 December, running until 14 February. Following strike action and action short of strike, members at the Disclosure and Barring Service have entered negotiations with the employer over the imposition of a new customer contact model.

Members at the Metropolitan Police and Land Registry are currently in dispute over mandatory office attendance.

Both PCS and Prospect members at the Civilian Aviation Authority have successfully won ballots for industrial action over a below-inflation pay offer for 2024-25. Action is being planned and management has asked for a meeting to discuss.

PCS members at Fujitsu Services are also in dispute over pay and have voted for strike action by 87% on a turnout of 80%.

Members at the Marine Management Organisation have given notice of ballot over a range of disputes over terms and conditions.

Home Office members at Heathrow, who took action last year, have also been given approval to re-ballot in their dispute over roster issues and in defence of jobs. The union is providing financial support to members in many of these disputes from our fighting fund.

Donations are always welcome to support the strikers through the following account:

Account Name: PCS Fighting Fund Levy

Account Number: 20331490

Sort code: 60-83-01

Chris Dando, PCS NEC Member

UNISON

On Wednesday 22 January, our Migrant Worker campaign took another big leap forward, as Neil Duncan-Jordan led a Westminster Hall debate on the introduction of a 'Certificate of Common Sponsorship'. Kerry Baigent Regional Secretary went with a group of our lead migrant worker reps to London to watch the debate.

On Friday 24 January UNISON South West invited fellow trade unions to attend a Cuba Solidarity fringe fundraiser ahead of our Regional Council meeting in Exeter. It was great to see so many people from other unions and Trades Councils there.

Serco workers in Swindon who have been on strike for their campaign for the lump-sum payment they're owed from 2023 have paused their action to enable negotiations to progress.

Phlebotomists at Gloucester and Cheltenham hospitals are being balloted on strike action over unfair pay and grading from Tuesday. The staff are paid Band 2 but UNISON says their skills and responsibilities mean they should be paid at the higher Band 3.

Healthcare workers, who currently work for currently work for Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, including Occupational therapists, nurses, care co-ordinators and physiotherapists are demanding Wiltshire County Council delays the controversial transfer of community health services to a venture capital-owned private company.

UNITE

Recent Wins:

Local Government – 49 reablement carers impacted by a shortfall in shifts have now settled their dispute. A ballot of members received a 94% turnout with 100% success! The wording of the COT3 is outstanding, but the deal sees £160K split between 61 staff members, with each member's settlement figure based on length of service.

Live Unite South West Disputes:

Stagecoach West – members have now voted in favour of industrial action in all four Gloucestershire depots. No backpay has been offered on a pay deal despite negotiations having passed the pay anniversary date. The offer made is based on members foregoing enhanced rates of pay Saturdays, Sundays, and Bank Holidays. Cheltenham saw a 96% turnout with 69% in favour, Coalway had a 100% turnout with 81% in favour, Gloucester achieved an 84% turnout with 76% in favour, whilst Stroud saw 90% of members turnout, with 73% in favour. The members are already being paid at the new, lower rates, that see them worse off than drivers at other Gloucestershire bus operators.

Trades Councils

South West Trades Councils' Report from TUCSW JCC rep, Dave Chapple

* Ines and I are still finalising the agenda for the Regional Trades Councils' AGM in Bridgwater on Saturday 22nd February.

* Pleased to announce that all 19 South West Trades Councils have registered for the TUC for 2025

* Some trades councils will be out on the streets in February supporting "Heart Unions Week." Be great if trade union branch officers, organisers, full-time officers and workplace reps can join us, even for just half an hour.

* Most trades councils are having their AGMs this month or next: please spend some time trying to get as many of your activists as possible to consider becoming trades council delegates: we don't want to be trade union support groups, we want to be councils of workplace reps and Branch Officers, but we can't function properly without them!

* Bridgwater & District TUCs AGM hosted Steve Preddy, Unite the Union Regional Secretary, speaking about his own personal "Journey to trades unionism" the first time any organisation, including his own unions, has asked him!

* Mendip TUC AGM on Thursday heard from Dave Roberts, FBU Regional Secretary

* Jersey TUC has held two successful meetings recently, and have registered with the TUC. I hope they can be represented at SW TUC meetings this year!

* My priority this year must be to try and re-establish Torbay/South Devon and Swindon TUCs. Ines and I hoped that this might happen last year, but with the right support I think we can end up 2025 with 21 local TUCs!

Dave Chapple, TUCSW JCC rep

BRISTOL

Bristol Trades Council has continued to have a range of monthly meetings discussing issues from international solidarity with Palestine and arrested workers and activists in Nigeria to local SEND cuts report from UNITE and a public meeting with speakers

from BTUC, Equity and Acorn as well as 50 delegates and visitors to discuss Bristol City Council's proposed budget of £51mil cuts.

Highlights from our social media posts below:

Bristol City Council Votes to Divest for Palestine!

'Workers of the world unite' has definitely been the theme in refusing to allow elected councillors not to stand with workers in Palestine and Bristol to put the pressure on Avon Pension Fund to divest their £22mil it currently holds in companies complicit in Israel's massacre of Palestinians.

Bristol Trades Council Secretary and National Executive Member for the NEU, Sheila Caffrey, and South Glos UNISON's Secretary, Dan Smart, spoke at the rally outside before joining activists in the council chamber.

Bristol City Council then passed a motion calling for divestment of council-managed funds from arms companies, and from companies facilitating illegal colonies in the occupied West Bank- a fantastic support for workers in Palestine.

St Brendan's Sixth Form College- 7 days of national strike action

Why should local authority sixth form teachers be paid less than their colleagues in schools and academy sixth forms?! The government has already shifted from 0% to 3.5% backdated to September and an uplift to 6.5% from Easter- striking works! Solidarity also to the 22/29 support staff NEU members, who also refused to cross the picket line today, despite continuing harassment and lies from HR. A fantastic show of strength and solidarity

TUC Workplace Day of Action for Palestine

Workers across Bristol and Britain standing in solidarity today with the Palestinian people as part of the TUC Workplace Day of Action.

Bristol action has included workers at the BRI, Southmead Hospital, St Brendan's Sixth Form College picket line, City of Bristol College, workers and students from the University of Bristol and Bath, community action at Elbit, and included Bristol Trades Council delegates as well as members of Bristol NEU, Unison University of Bristol, UWE UNISON, UNISON South West, PCS South West, and UCU - University and College Union.

SGS Pegasus – NEU members on strike

After extensive negotiations at SGS Pegasus around pay, failure to follow job descriptions and pay progression for support staff; ratios that mean staff worry about student safety; staff reporting a culture of fear and a refusal to allow a proper trade union agreement- support staff and teachers have been on strike 3 days this week.

ASLEF Bristol Branch's 140 years anniversary

Great to be invited to join ASLEF Bristol Branch for their 140 years anniversary celebrations tonight.

Fantastic speeches from Mick Whelan, General Secretary; Andy Hudd, Executive Member and John Dunn from the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign; as well as moving memories for members lost this year, all well-chaired by BTUC's President Sebastian Michnowicz.

Sheila Caffrey, Secretary

White Horse (Wiltshire)

White Horse Trades Council have shown solidarity attending picket lines and rallies during recent and current industrial action.

We have been concerned about recent actions by Wiltshire Council to make financial savings, its lack of transparency and the impact this will have on staff and services. We have raised our concerns with Councillors. The Wiltshire Local Government UNISON Branch, UNISON Wiltshire and Avon Health Branch and the UNISON SW Region are actively campaigning against the Integrated Care Board's decision to transfer community healthcare to HCRG (formerly Virgin) with associated major changes to terms and conditions and union recognition. This is a private company owned by venture capitalists. So far it has failed to inform the recognised trade unions and has stated that it will not recognise them. It will lead to serious disruption of the service. We remain totally opposed to the award of the contract to HCRG and will continue to fight privatization in the NHS.

It was resolved that we did not have the ability to run an event during Heart Unions week. Delegates are busy running events in their own unions and Rosie and Vanessa are away for most of that week in Edinburgh at UNISON's National Women's Conference.

We are currently organizing the Wreath Laying to commemorate Trowbridge Martyr Thomas Helliker which will take place at noon on 22 March 2025 at Thomas Helliker's tomb in St James Churchyard, Trowbridge. Thomas Helliker known as the Trowbridge Martyr who was hanged on his 19th birthday 22 March 1803. Local workers in Trowbridge feared the introduction of mechanical shearing frames to finish the cloth. The Shearmen's Union whose motto was 'Industry, Freedom and Friendship' stood to lose the most from the introduction of machinery. They were well organised in the North of England and the West-Country in fighting mechanisation. When shearing

frames were introduced at Littleton Mill it was burned to the ground on 22 July 1802.

White Horse Trades Council holds a bi-annual event to commemorate his life and untimely death. This year we have sponsored The Innocent a professional performance in words and songs about the life and death of Thomas Helliker written by Mick Ryan, who previously co-wrote with Graham Moore A Tolpuddle Man, and has written various folk operas including A Day's Work, Tanks for the Memory, The Navvies and The Voyage. The music has been written by Mick and Steven Faux who is an award-winning composer of music for film, television and radio. This will be performed on the evening of Saturday 22 March at The Cause, Chippenham. Vanessa McCaffrey will be attending the Regional Council AGM in March. Rosie who is a member of the national TUC Pensioners Committee will attend the TUC Pensions Conference at Congress House later this year. Our AGM will take place early in April this year.

Rosie MacGregor, Secretary

NORTH DEVON & TORRIDGE

By putting this report together, the most important thing to recognise is to thank our affiliated organisations and participating members for keeping this Trades Council alive. We are the only surviving T.U.C organised body in North Devon & Torridge and without the support of our affiliates we would not have a significant presence in putting Trade Unionism, on the agenda locally.

Solidarity & support

We have supported, picket lines and demonstrations with our presence (& Banner,) with welcoming support from workers. We supported the Palestinian solidarity rally in Exeter and continued our support at the Annual festival at Tolpuddle, providing subsidised transport again.

National Pensioners Convention: Following an invitation from Glen Burrows, (NPC Gloucester, Avon & Somerset) we attended, with the hope of creating a Devon & Cornwall regional organisation.

North Devon Right to Travel Campaign: We actively support community actions particularly access to public services. As part of our community focus, we have identified the need for a Bus service in a local rural area. Supported by Southwest

Unite Retired members and RMT Bus Division, who have been generous in their financial support.

Promotional initiatives:

Facebook: Our North Devon & Torridge TUC Facebook platform has been a tremendous success story in twelve months of existence, with 156 followers, 593 reactions (90 days) and 149 engagements.

Video (Hybrid) meetings: We are extending our reach and accessibility by exploring the use this format!

New Banner & Roller Banner. I am pleased to report that the new lightweight banner and the roller display works well in its compactness, and durability.

Business Cards: Are yet another initiative we have undertaken in promoting ourselves easy at hand and a ready reminder as to who we are with contact detail.

Absence of localised Union Branches We consider ND&T TUC can and does play an important role in providing a forum for trade unionist to attend and seek advise from our council in the absence of localised Trade Union Branches.

International, National and Local events:

We shall continue our involvement in supporting and attending events that are in line with the TUC and respective unions', policy and affiliated organisations.

Particularly, supporting the Palestinian and Gaza catastrophe. The unwarranted withdrawal of the Winter Fuel allowance, championed by Unite. We are keeping a close eye on the proposed closure of Crown Post Offices in our catchment area which will have a direct effect on local communities access to Banking.

Investment in promoting our movement.

Growth: We shall review our performance and the parameters that need improvement by considering our methods of wider involvement, communication, and accessibility.

Speakers: Our aim is to invite a variety of speakers to make our meeting more interesting towards local and national events.

Trade Union recruitment: We shall continue to promote Trade Union recruitment and festivals.

Affiliations and continued support

Affiliates and members should recognise that your support is the clay that builds the bricks to our foundations by keeping a Trade Union foot hold in North Devon & Torridge, we therefore thank you once again for your continued support.

Abridged Report compiled by: Geoff Allen, Assistant Secretary ND&T.TUC
February 2025