

unionsouthwest

e-newsletter of the South West TUC

October 2013

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Universities out

Thursday 31st October

This Thursday will see the first UK-wide joint strike between higher education unions.

Universities will be brought to a standstill by strike action in a row over pay.

UCU, UNISON and Unite members working in higher education have been offered a pay rise of just 1% this year, which means they have suffered a pay cut of 13% in real terms since October 2008.

Sign the [Fair Pay in Higher Education](#) petition
[Read more](#)

Follow the hashtag [#fairpayinHE](#) on Twitter for updates.

Living Wage Week

Monday 4th November at 5pm
College Green, Bristol

The week commencing 4th November is Living Wage Week - when activists will be working to raise the profile of the Living Wage, and when the new hourly rate will be announced.

The South West TUC is calling for a gathering on College Green to get the Living Wage Week in the press and raise a bit of noise. Living Wage supporters from Labour, the Greens, the business community, community and voluntary groups will be welcome. It will call on George Ferguson, the Mayor and Bristol City Council to take a lead in making Bristol a Living Wage city.

For more information contact Kit Leary at South West TUC kleary@tuc.org.uk 0117 947 0521

West employers and unions sign living wage support

The South West TUC and Business West, the voice of employers in the region, are to sign a joint statement in support of the Living Wage. Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary and Nigel Costley, South West TUC Regional Secretary will join with Phil Smith, Chief Executive of Business West in signing the accord that says: "Business West and the South West TUC want to encourage a more positive approach to fair pay. We want the West of England to be known for its good employers, decent work and the place to build strong careers. To that end we support the following:

- Economic development to support sustainable growth based on promoting higher paid jobs
- Promotion of skills development and ways to break down barriers to learning for all
- Rigorous enforcement of the National Minimum Wage
- The Living Wage and as part of this support we agree:
- to use our joint efforts to engage members and partners in the debate over the Living Wage and its implementation
- to advise and support those who wish to adopt the Living Wage
- to encourage members to become Living Wage employers
- Business West signs up to become a Living Wage employer"

An agreement worth fighting for

CWU strike in Royal Mail

Monday 4th November

The union wants an agreement regardless of who owns Royal Mail. The CWU is fighting so that jobs and terms and conditions are protected. It wants an agreement that has legally binding protections for current terms and conditions.

For more: ['The Offer v The Truth'](#).

Post Office staff to strike with Royal Mail

Monday 4th November

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CWU staff in the country's network of 372 Crown post offices will take coordinated strike action with Royal Mail and Parcelforce staff on Monday 4 November. Staff working in admin and supply chain functions (such as Post Office cash vans) will also take a first day of strike action in a dispute over pay.

The long-running Crown office dispute affects up to 4,000 staff and is over a pay freeze, plans to close and/or franchise 75 offices and cut up to 1,500 jobs. The admin and supply chain dispute involves up to 1,500 people and is in reaction to a pay freeze.

Probation strike

5th-6th November

Napo is calling on members in the Probation Service to strike from 12 noon Tuesday 5th November to 12 noon Wednesday 6th November.

84 per cent of those polled showed their willingness to take part in opposition to the Government's privatisation agenda.

Napo General Secretary, Ian Lawrence said: "Napo members have spoken and the union will do everything it can through the media, Parliament and direct action to highlight the grave threat to public safety as well as the chaos that will follow if the Government's plans are implemented.

Austerity Uncovered

The film of the bus tour. A short and power summary of life in austerity Britain
Watch it [here](#)

Action against austerity

Tuesday 5th November

12.30pm Stroud Jobcentre

4pm Neil Carmichael MP office

5pm The fountains, opposite Hippodrome, Bristol City Centre

Come along with some austerity policies to burn.

[Peoples Assembly](#)

Action for Rail

The 5th November marks the 20th anniversary of rail privatisation.

The TUC and combined rail unions in Action for Rail will be holding a day of action, with leafleting at stations. [More . . .](#)

Action for rail cleaners

First Great Western Mitie cleaners have been striking in a fight for a Living Wage and an end to zero hours contracts.

The latest phase of RMT action follows a rock-solid 24 hour strike which kicked off on the morning of the 11th October and which saw pickets out in force at key locations across the franchise.

First has been awarded a massive, multi-million pound two-year extension of their contract and Mitie are trying to keep a low profile while swallowing up public contracts that make them a fortune from thousands of low-paid, casual workers.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said: "Justice says that now is the time for the cleaners out there day and night on First Great Western to get their fair share through a Living Wage, decent sick pay and benefits and an end to the evil of zero hours contracts."

Close the agency loopholes

Despite laws to give equal treatment to agency workers, employers are finding loopholes. The CWU have been campaigning on Closing the Loopholes for agency staff working in BT.

TFS Agency Team workers are distributing a petition against the use of such contracts within BT, to highlight the ever widening and unacceptable differential in rates of pay. A petition is being circulated to win wider support. Sign it [here](#)

Public servants are £2k down

The Office for National Statistics have published figures that show pay growth in the public sector has fallen to 0.1 per cent, a 3.8 per cent real terms pay cut since last year. This means that Public sector workers are £2,000 a year worse off since government took office.

TUC General Secretary, Frances O'Grady said: "Millions of public sector workers who did nothing to cause the recession are still being made to suffer through job losses and reduced pay packets.

"Britain needs a pay rise to end the longest wage squeeze in over a century - and public sector workers should get their fair share too."

Equality South West comes to an end

Equality South West will cease trading as at 31 October 2013. Despite every effort on the part of trustees, staff, volunteers and supporters, it has been unable to secure resources sufficient to allow Equality South West to continue. The Board noted with sadness that in the current economic and political climate, grant funding and contractual work are very difficult to obtain either for the promotion of equality and diversity or for challenging discrimination.

In a statement the ESW Board said: "We are determined to celebrate everything we have achieved and to leave a lasting legacy to enable individuals, organisations and communities in the South West to continue championing equality and working towards a fairer and more inclusive society for everyone."

The staff team at Equality South West, that has worked closely with unions and the South West TUC said: "We would like to take this opportunity to thank our colleagues, friends and partner organisations for supporting our work. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for the many kind messages we have received in recent weeks. ESW has been an inspirational organisation to work for and will always hold a special place in our hearts. We will continue to stand up for the values and beliefs we have fought for during our time here and are sure you will too. Thank-you."

Equality in the UK

Watch and get angry but organize to get even too. [Equality in the UK](#)

Older workers care too

The TUC survey of older workers - conducted as part of its Age Immaterial campaign found that almost three in five (59.4 per cent) have to combine caring responsibilities with their jobs.

Half of those over the age of 50 with caring responsibilities (48.6 per cent) are looking after elderly parents and two in five women (36.6 per cent) are mothers of school-age

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children. A fifth of the respondents (20 per cent) are looking after their grandchildren and working.

The TUC is urging employers to be more sympathetic to requests for flexible working and annual leave from older members of staff - especially during the school holidays.

Rather than assume that it is only be staff in their twenties and thirties who need to work flexibly around their childcare needs, employers must also understand that many of their older employees are also juggling work and family commitments.

EDL threaten to march again

Despite the resignation of their two leading national members it is likely that the EDL will attempt to march in order to divide our communities with their racist message.

Exeter

16th November

Unions and anti-racists have combined to form Exeter Together to organize against the English Defence League that is threatening to march through the city on 16th November. In a joint statement Exeter Together says: "We are proud of the diversity of our city which is most visibly seen at the anti racist Respect festival. There is no place for the EDL's hateful bigotry here in Exeter's multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-faith community.

"The EDL are not welcome in Exeter. We call on all to take a firm, peaceful stand against the EDL by coming together to celebrate our diversity on the day."

[Exeter Together](#)

Bristol

7th December

The English Defence League have announced plans to demonstrate and march for a second time in Bristol on 7th December. The supposed reason for their march is a planning inquiry to convert the old cinema in Stokes Croft (formerly Jesters Comedy Club and before that a Christadelphian church) to a Muslim Community Centre.

Bournemouth

The march planned for 5th October in Bournemouth was called off.

Losing race on green growth

Britain is losing the global race on green growth, a failure that could cost hundreds of thousands of jobs, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady has warned.

"We are losing the global race for green growth. While competitors such as France and Germany press ahead with active support from their governments, in the UK ministers have shown little appetite for supporting low-carbon business.

"Politicians' timidity on green investment is costing us all dear. Cutting carbon emissions should be a great opportunity for the UK to create new apprenticeships and jobs, and rejuvenate our manufacturing sector.

Remembering the Dublin Lockout 1913

Thursday 14th November 7pm-9pm

Tony Benn House, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AY

Bristol Radical History Group event with John Newsinger [more](#)

World of Work 1913-14

Friday 15th November 11am-2pm

PCS Office, Exeter

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Unions in Exeter are planning ways to remember working lives before the first World War. A planning meeting has been called to bring interested people together and to share ideas on how to mark the centenary next year. For more information contact Jack Davies jack@pcs.org.uk

In Letters of Blood and Fire

Tuesday 19th November 7pm-9pm

The Hydra Bookshop, 34 Old Market St, Bristol, BS2 0EZ

Work, machines and the crisis of capitalism

Bristol Radical History Group event with with George Caffentzis [more](#)

Mobile guide to Tolpuddle

The South West TUC has been awarded a grant of £38,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to bring to life the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The grant will go towards designing an audio visual trail in Tolpuddle, giving visitors the chance to witness key moments in the lives of the six farm workers transported to Australia in 1834 after forming a trade union.

Visitors will be able to walk round the Dorset village, stopping off at various points where scenes from the story will be recreated on mobile phones or tablets by actors playing the Martyrs and their wives.

Visitors will be able to stand in front of the famous Martyrs' Tree and view a re-enactment of 19th century farm workers discussing how to resist further pay cuts. Instead of seeing just a plaque marking where the secret oath was taken, people will be able to see a short film of the ceremonies.

Nigel Costley, Regional Secretary of the South West TUC, said: "This is terrific news. We're thrilled that, with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, a new generation has the chance to learn of the inspiring story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs' - six men who sacrificed their freedom to remain strong to their principles.

"Their courage enshrined in law the right to join a trade union - something that is as important for working people today as it was then. This project will bring the village of Tolpuddle of 1834 alive."

Nerys Watts, Head of South West Heritage Lottery Fund said: "The story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs continues to inspire us today, and marks a key milestone in the history of human rights.

"We were delighted to able to support this project which will ensure that future generations can continue to understand and appreciate the importance of what happened in Tolpuddle nearly 200 years ago."

Health, work and well-being

Wednesday 20th November 10.30am-3.30pm

Tony Benn House, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AY

South West TUC and Unionlearn Conference

Unions have a big part to play in protecting members at work and to help make the workplace healthy for people. But we don't just want stress-busting activities at lunchtime if work is causing the stress and workers don't have the time to stop for lunch! Unions can tackle the causes of stress and improve the health and well-being of people at work and this conference will hear from a range of interesting case studies. Local councils now have the key public health role including well-being at work. The Charter Bristol City Council is about to launch is taking a lead but how can it link with the work

unions are doing? Union learning activities often include health and well-being and the conference will consider ways to do even more.

[Register now](#)

Health & Safety reps training in Dorset

Thursday 23rd January 2014, running for 10 Thursdays

UNISON's centre in Wareham, Dorset

There's a change of start date for the next Health and Safety Stage 1 training course in Dorset. This TUC course will give newly appointed H&S reps the essential skills and knowledge for this important workplace role.

[Click here for more details and to apply.](#)

Visit www.unionlearn.org.uk for more details of this and other TUC union reps courses starting in the new year.

Skills: Britain needs to do better

In a new blog on the Stronger Unions web site Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary said: "Our current laissez faire approach to skills - leaving employers to their own devices - simply isn't fit for purpose. If this country is to thrive in tomorrow's global economy and if we are to build a fairer and more equal society, then we have to change."

According to the 2011 National Employer Skills Survey, nearly half of the UK workforce received no training from their employer. This is a big jump from the 37 per cent figure seen before the slump.

[More . . .](#)

Bristol Festival of Economics

21-23 November

Bristol

In Bristol's Festival of Economics, economists and other experts from around the UK will debate some of the key economic questions of our times. The sessions include the ageing of British society, the shift in global economic power from the West to Asia and China, reforming public services, inequality and why it matters, regulating the banks in the wake of the financial crisis, and the yawning regional divide in the UK economy.

Click [Festival of Economics](#) for more

Alternatives to austerity?

Schumacher's economics in the great recession

21st November 9am-5pm

Room 1.8, Queen's Building, University of Bristol

What is the connection between debt, growth and the price of oil and other commodities? Are we subsidising the next recession by focusing on a return to growth? Join us at this one-day conference to explore whether we can update E.F. Schumacher's philosophy to respond to our current economic crisis. How can we create an economic system where people and the planet matter?

To register for the event, please visit: [alternatives to austerity](#)

Edinburgh Woollen Mills rejects safety accord

Saturday 23rd November

Edinburgh Woollen Mills has decided NOT to sign up to the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord because their bank is worried about them pledging to fund decent working conditions in Bangladesh.

At least 110 people died on 24 November 2012 in a fire at the Tazreen factory, on the outskirts of the capital, Dhaka. Over six months ago more than 1,000 people lost their lives in the deadliest garment factory accident in Bangladeshi history.

Earlier this month, at least seven people were killed and dozens injured in yet another fire in a knitwear factor in Dhaka.

The TUC is calling on Edinburgh Woollen Mills to follow River Island's recent decision to sign up to the Bangladesh Accord. The union-backed accord has now been backed by most of the big names on the UK high street including Zara, Next, Primark, New Look and Debenhams. Around 90 brands and retailers have agreed to fund inspection and safety training in over 1,700 factories across Bangladesh. Workers will have the right to refuse to work in unsafe conditions and be entitled to full lay-off pay whilst any repairs recommended as a result of safety inspections are completed.

On Saturday 23rd November, the TUC plans to target Edinburgh Woollen Mills with a few high profile stunts, protests and letters of appeal to stores.

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill has many stores in the South West: [Store Finder](#)

Tell them and other high street stores holding out to fix their dangerous factories [here](#)

If you want to help contact Kit Leary on kleary@tuc.org.uk

Theorising 'gifting' in care work

Friday 8th November 2.30-4.30pm

Room 2B054, UWE, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY

The next Centre for Employment Studies Research seminar will be with [Dr Gail Hebson](#) on the comparison of public and private sector care workers.

Gail, a Lecturer in Employment Studies at Manchester Business School, studies gender relations and equality in the workplace. She has a wider interest in research that focuses on the changing experience of work for those in low skilled occupations and exploring this through in-depth qualitative work.

To book a place: Stella.Warren@uwe.ac.uk 0117 32 83435

Let's Work Together

Co-operatives, credit unions and trade unions

8-9th November

Dartington Hall, Dartington, Totnes

What do co-operatives, credit unions and trade unions have in common? How well can we work together on areas of common interest? How can we forge an alternative to the current economic consensus that is green, democratic, and that is more interested in people than in profits? "Let's Work Together" - a conference hosted by Co-operatives South West - aims to answer some of these questions. Sessions cover a variety of topics, including ethical banking, workplace democracy, Living Wage, procurement, renewable energy, and encouraging the growth of Credit Unions as an alternative to predatory banks and payday lenders.

Union movement speakers include Kit Leary of South West TUC and Julie Grant of UNISON, alongside speakers from Move Your Money, Ethical Consumer, Heart of the South West LEP, Co-operative College and the Association of British Credit Unions Ltd.

For a booking form, visit [here](#)

To find out more, email John at moveyourbusiness@gmail.com

South West Census Profile

The Migration Observatory, based at Oxford University, has published their South West 2011 census profile. 8% of the South West's population in 2011 was born outside of the UK, ranking the region 8th out of the 10 English regions on both number and proportion of non-UK born population.

Bristol has the highest number of non-UK born nationals, but Bournemouth has the highest proportion of its population born outside of the UK (15%) a 109% increase since 2001.

Individuals from Poland are the largest non-UK born group in the South West, followed by individuals born in Germany, India, Ireland and the US.

3.3% of the South West's population recorded a language other than English as their main language. Polish is the most common non-English first language in the South West, followed by the group of Chinese Languages.

To see migration observatory briefings [click here](#)

Bristol Palestine Film Festival

29 November-15 December

The Bristol Palestine Film Festival features some of the most remarkable works from Palestine in recent years. Including *'When I saw you'*, Annemarie's Jacir's latest feature and this year's entry to the Oscars; *'Infiltrators'* described as a visceral 'road movie' chronicles the daily travails of Palestinians as they seek routes through, under, around, and over the wall; and *'Apples of Golan'* a atmospheric documentary about story of a village turned prison set to the background of the revolution raging across the border in their homeland Syria as it creeps through the orchards towards them in Israel.

In addition to animations, documentaries, and a wide range of short films the Festival will welcome well-loved travel writer Dervla Murphy for a discussion about her recent visit to Gaza and the West Bank portrayed in *'A month by the sea'*. Dr. Ghada Karmi will discuss *'Married to another man'* a revealing and insightful look at the difficulties Israel's existence created for the Arab world and why the search for a solution to conflict with Palestine has been so elusive.

The festival opens with the engaging Dasa Raimanova, film director who will be preparing mouth-watering recipes inspired by what she learned in Palestine, followed by a screening of her film *Resistance Recipes* which is an insightful look at cuisine and agriculture in the West Bank. This event is presented in partnership with the coexist community kitchen.

Tickets will range from £4 to £10 depending on the event.

A full breakdown of events is available online here: www.bristolpff.org.uk

United they stand

Bishop's Cleeve youth football teams have celebrated securing a new kit sponsor - Unite the Union.

The Bishop's Cleeve boys under 11s and girls under 16s celebrated after receiving a new strip courtesy of Unite union members at GE Aviation. The smart green and yellow shirts are emblazoned with the union's name and logo. [More . . .](#)

National Dignity Action Day

1st February 2014

The scandal of 15-minute slots for domiciliary care workers (often on zero-hours contracts) to give support to frail elderly and disabled people is being challenged by the

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National Pensioners Convention. Thousands of frail elderly and disabled people continue to suffer abuse, neglect and a breach of their human rights, and low-paid care workers are experiencing great stress

The National Pensioners Convention's policy is for a National Care Service linked to the National Health Service, free at the point of delivery and paid for through general taxation. The NPC plans to work with TUC Regions to mark National Dignity Action Day on 1st February 2014 with local and regional events to publicise and win support for the NPC Dignity Code.

NPC South West contacts: Don Harper - donharper@talktalk.net Sheila Curzon - sheila@hcurzon.plus.com Bernard O'Neil - bernardt.oneil@mypostoffice.co.uk Bob Jones - bobjones@waitrose.com

Phil fights back

Brixham cricket club secretary Phil Gregory and former South West TUC Regional Secretary, bravely fought off hooded muggers who punched him to the ground. The retired 66-year-old from Brixham fought back wildly and hung on to his bag which contained the town's cricket club members' annual subs.

[more . . .](#)