

WEST COUNTRY WORKERS

NEWS FROM THE
SOUTH WEST TUC
ISSUE 6 2018



TUC | 150
YEARS
1868-2018
Changing the world of work for good

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Apprenticeships across
the West of England

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“A real opportunity”

Aliza on being an
apprentice at Bristol
City Council

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West Country union champions

We continue our look at the
people who shaped our
political history

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Making a difference

Looking at Women
in Leadership

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Don't let your pay slip

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The South West TUC has launched a campaign to inform apprentices of their rights

With government figures showing nearly one in five apprentices are not receiving the minimum wage to which they're entitled, the South West TUC has produced an online apprentice pay calculator as part of its 'Don't Let Your Pay Slip' initiative.

"A good apprenticeship is a route to a rewarding career but some apprentices are not paid even the legal minimum wage," says South West TUC Regional Secretary Nigel Costley.

"We want to help apprentices get good training, be paid right and treated well. We will support and promote good employers, but we will also call out those employers and training providers who allow apprentices to be underpaid."

The South West TUC campaign will:

- Inform apprentices of their rights
- Share an easy-to-use apprentice pay calculator
- Share 'Happy Birthday - time for a pay rise' cards
- Train young trade unionists to be able to meet and advise apprentices on their pay rates
- Work with training providers to make sure employers meet minimum pay levels
- Help UCU college lecturers get the message across to students
- Spread Facebook and other social media ads.
- Encourage apprentices to join their union



Top: Dr Hilary Drew.
Bottom: Professor
Felix Ritchie

A large part of the campaign is the website that asks apprentices to input their pay and how many hours they have worked, then it calculates whether the sum reaches the minimum wage for their age and stage in their training.

Many employers do not even pay this amount.

"There is a real problem with underpayment in apprentice pay," confirms Professor Felix Ritchie, Head of Research at the University of the West of England's accounting, economics and finance department.

"Apprentices are more likely to be paid less than the minimum wage than other groups in the country, which is a concern because apprentice pay is already the lowest of the minimum wages."

Dr Hilary Drew, associate head of department for partnerships and lecturer in HR management at UWE, praised the new website, saying: "It's fantastic. The challenge, though, is getting it to the right audience."

"We did research in 2013 and 2015 and when we asked young workers how much they were paid, how many hours they worked, most of them didn't know."

"For most of the kids, out of school, out of college, this will probably be their first job," agrees Professor Ritchie. "They probably haven't seen a payslip before, so asking questions – how many hours do you work? what's your gross pay? – is quite difficult for them. Sorting that out is going to be key."



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Lee Probert and Anna Keen



“We should all get behind any campaign that promotes the value and power of apprenticeships”

“The people we spoke to had no idea they might be paid the wrong wage,” adds Dr Drew. “They never thought about how much they might be paid, never thought their boss might be underpaying them.”

“Paying apprentices the proper wage is the right thing to do, it’s fair. Particularly in the sectors we looked at, there was an idea that there was a low-pay culture and you work in this profession therefore you will be paid less. It’s setting people up to be exploited and that’s wrong.”

Research suggests most instances of underpayment are mistakes by the employer rather than a calculated effort to exploit young workers, but the South West TUC is taking no chances.

“We believe it’s unfair to put the burden on young apprentices to fight bad bosses when they’re just starting out, and at the bottom rung of the organisation,” says Nigel Costley.

“We want employers, colleges and training providers to take a

more active part in protecting the apprentices they employ and teach.

“But we also want apprentices to know their rights from day one.”

To help apprentices learn more about their rights at work, the South West TUC will be training up trade union activists, members and workplace reps to go into colleges and host training sessions on the calculator.

“We want to ensure as many apprentices are safeguarded against exploitation or error by knowing how to read their payslips, check their contracts and work out their hours,” said campaigns officer Ines Lage.

The TUC’s campaign has the support of Anna Keen, chair of learning partnership and Bristol City cabinet member for skills. “Apprenticeships are excellent for many people,” she says.

“They allow you to earn money, they give you a different route through to higher education and they strengthen our workforce because we’re able

to train people into the job they’re doing.

“By paying people correctly, it underlines how valuable people are who do those jobs and strengthens our workforce by having good quality jobs that people are paid for.”

Lee Probert, head of City of Bristol College, agrees: “Apprentices make up a significant part of the workforce in Bristol so we should all get behind any campaign that promotes the value and power of apprenticeships as a route to securing high level skills and training and properly reflects what they deserve in terms of their pay and conditions.”

You can find the website here www.tuc.org.uk/apprenticepay ■

Apprentice pay check 2018-19

Apprentice		Legal minimum pay
First year	all ages	£3.70 an hour
	18 and under	£3.70 an hour
Second year	19-20	£5.90 an hour
	21-24	£7.38 an hour
	25 and over	£7.83 an hour

*National Minimum Wage from 1 April 2018-2019



Yellow buses Bournemouth apprentices and Unite members being given their apprentice tool boxes courtesy King Dick Tools

Apprenticeship-shape and Bristol fashion behind the scenes at city firms

Tim Lezard visits three workplaces that invest in apprentices, and benefit as a result



If you'd asked me, six months ago, whether I would have been sitting in a meeting with directors and managers, I'd never have believed you."

So begins 18-year-old Aliza Ibraim, who is working as an apprentice at Bristol City Council. Her enthusiasm and ability to learn and absorb information in the finance department has already been noted by colleagues.

"She's brought a spark to the office," beams her manager Jonathan Jacobs. "When she arrived she was shy. She didn't want to answer the phone, talk to anybody, but in the last six months she's come out of her shell, and with training and guidance she is now a regular participator in meetings. I can see her going a long way."

"I'd been in education for so long and it was just exams, exams, exams," Aliza sighs. "It's mostly been what you learn off a book and that doesn't really work for me. I didn't want to go to university, so I took a gap year after my

A-levels and did some work in the retail sector.

"This is much better, though, because it's a real opportunity for me. It's really good for my self-confidence. I'm learning and getting paid at the same time!"

There are more than 100 apprentices at Bristol City Council working as business administrators, electricians, plumbers, accountants, supporting teaching and learning in schools and in human resources.

"As a council we want to model what we say," says Mayor Marvin Rees. "We've been talking about apprenticeships and different pathways into work. Using apprenticeships is a more effective way of recruiting from a more diverse group of race and class backgrounds. We want the city to do it, so we do it ourselves."

"We're actively promoting apprenticeships, not just to the council, but to the city as a whole," says Tiffany Jenkins, the council's apprentices team leader. "We teach them a certain way so they're multi-skilled and can address our shortage of skills. At the same time they make the council a more diverse place to work and, hopefully, we can help get them into more senior positions." ■

L-R: Nigel Costley, Aliza Ibraim and Marvin Rees.



"It's really good for my self-confidence. I'm learning and getting paid at the same time!"

Jonathan Jacobs and Aliza Ibraim.



David Brown says an apprenticeship at Bristol Port can lead to a job for life.

The company's chief executive sees the scheme as a route to the top, saying: "Providing you show the commitment, the tenacity and the integrity to work here, there is no bar no where you can reach in the company. Like everything in life, the more you put in at the beginning, the more you will reap at the end."

As an example, he cites his general manager, who started as an apprentice, became a supervisor, a junior manager and is now the most senior stevedore on the dock.

That's good news for the latest influx of young apprentices, all eager to learn their trade.

"When I finished Sixth Form I didn't know what to do," says Ben Harvey (19). "I have an interest in electrics, so I applied to work here and I got the job. It's good down here. I enjoy it, everyone's welcoming."

Lewis Hannam, 18, has been working here for just over a month. "It's better than I thought it was going to be," he says. "The people are so friendly and helpful. You're never left on your own."

"I've been here a year and a half," says Jake Watkins. "I thought it was better for me than going to university because it exposes me to real work, sets me up for a career."

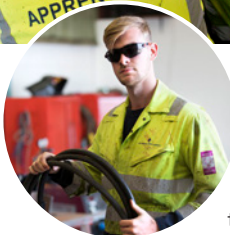
Apprentices at Bristol Port



His colleague Ben Mogg used to work in retail before joining the Port. "I was becoming bored with day-to-day life," he says. "It's different here. It's going really well, I'm learning a lot and life's more exciting than it used to be."

"I've been here a year," says Connor Murphy. "I live in Weston and there aren't many job opportunities there. I didn't have the best grades in school, so decided to go for something where I was still learning, could build up my CV. It seemed ideal. The money's good and I'm loving it so far."

Bailey Harrington adds: "It was a brilliant opportunity to further myself as a person, as well as getting a career. It's a challenge as well. It's helped my confidence too."



Anton Parker

All music to David Brown's ear, no doubt. "The benefit to us is enormous because if you invest in people at an early stage in their career, that will be paid back in spades," he says. "Our apprentice programme ensures

they get a broad base initially so they get the chance to look at all the individual departments, then they get to specialise.

"If you arrive here as an 18-year-old, there is no reason why you can't remain here in employment until you are 60+." ■



Bristol Waste MD Tony Lawless is a big fan of apprentices – he was one himself.

"We don't do enough apprenticeships in this country," he says. "There's a massive skills shortage in the UK. It's diabolical we've got into this state where decent training for apprenticeships isn't even considered any more."

"Some of the excuses – it's so expensive to run – don't add up. My apprenticeship at Dowty Aerospace in Gloucestershire was five years long and after the first couple of years I was producing exactly the same stuff as the fully-skilled people were, so I had three years' apprentice wage while they were training us. That must have paid for itself."

Ben Chinnock is a man who's benefitted from Tony's vision. Since beginning his apprenticeship 18 months ago as a chargehand, he's been promoted twice and seen his salary jump by £8,000 as he assumed a supervisor role.

Tony Lawless



"It was an opportunity to better myself, to progress within the company," he says. "Beforehand I hated speaking in front of crowds, which you need to do as a supervisor. I can do it now."

It's also helped him outside of work, at Whitehall Rugby Club, where he is now vice captain of the second team. "Doing my apprenticeship gave me confidence, it encouraged me to step up," he says.

And if a rival firm comes in to tempt him away, he'll go with his boss's blessing. "I'd slap him on the back and wish him well," says Tony. ■

Ben Chinnock



WEST COUNTRY UNION CHAMPIONS

PART TWO 1890-1926

Nigel Costley continues his look at some inspirational characters from the South West's trade union past



Women at Nestlé's condensed milk factory in Chippenham went on strike for better pay and conditions and joined the Workers' Union rally shown here in 1917.



Julie Varley

Julia Varley (above) started work in her local mill aged 12. Inspired by her Chartist grandfather and the memory of the Peterloo Massacre, she took part in the unsuccessful strike at Manningham Mills in 1890 and later played wider roles in the growing ideas of a Labour Party and women's rights. She was arrested and imprisoned for joining a suffragette protest at the House of Commons.

She moved to Birmingham as secretary of the Birmingham Women Worker's Organisation Committee, which aimed to assist women workers, especially in Cadbury's Bourneville factory, and threw herself into helping the 1910 women chainmakers' strike in the Black Country, becoming an organiser for the rapidly growing Workers' Union.

When the strike of china clay workers broke out in 1913, the union called on Varley to marshal support amongst the families and communities around east Cornwall. After her Cornwall experience she helped the Blists Mill strikers in the Cotwolds and her

talents led her to being elected to the TUC General Council. She worked closely with Margaret Bondfield and the pair became the leading women in the trade union movement.

Born in Bristol of Irish parents, **James O'Grady** (bottom left) left school aged 10 to train as a cabinet-maker. A member of the Amalgamated Union of Cabinetmakers, he became TUC president in 1898. He was elected MP for Leeds East in 1906, taking a keen interest in international affairs, negotiating an exchange of prisoners with the Soviet Union in 1919 and becoming involved in union-led efforts to relieve the Russian famine in 1921. On leaving Parliament he was made Governor of Tasmania until 1930 and then Governor of the Falkland Islands until his retirement in 1934.

The West Country was a centre for producing leather products, and unions have a long history of organising the workers. In 1916 **Ruby Part** was an organiser for the Workers'

Union in Somerset, successfully opening a chain of new branches for women glove-makers, even in isolated rural areas.

The National Union of Glovers and Leather Workers was formed in 1920 and primarily based around Yeovil. It was not until 1931 that it opened its ranks to women and then only on restricted terms.

Women who joined risked the reaction of the employers. Twelve women at Ensors in Chard joined the union and were threatened with the sack. The union stood by the new recruits and the boss backed down. By 1938 there were three women on the union's executive and equal membership terms were agreed. It took a lot longer to get equal pay.

In 1921 Devon-born **Charles Bowerman** (above) became the TUC's first general secretary. He



James O'Grady

Ernest Bevin was a tough, formidable organiser and one of most inspirational trade unionists of the 20th Century



Ruby Part was an organiser for the Workers' Union in Somerset, successfully opening a chain of new branches for women glove-makers

moved from Honiton to London in 1873 to work as a compositor and joined the London Society of Compositors, becoming its general secretary in 1892. Five years later he was elected to the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC and in 1901 was elected as a Progressive Party alderman on London County Council. He was also Labour MP for Deptford from 1906 until 1931.

Ernest Bevin, (left) one of the most influential trade unionists of the twentieth century, was born into a large, poor family in Winsford in Somerset. He became a farm labourer but after a heated row with the farmer he headed to Bristol where he did odd jobs before becoming a carter delivering mineral water and pop. He became involved in local politics, joining the Bristol Socialist Society.

Ernest Bevin

After he led a silent demonstration of unemployed men in Bristol Cathedral, the city council agreed to a series of public works including the construction of the lake in Eastville Park – known for many years as 'Bevin's Lake'.

In 1910 Bevin supported striking dockers and formed a carters' union branch. In 1911 he became a full-time officer and went on to win national acclaim when he presented the case for a pay rise to a court of enquiry. With no legal training and little time to prepare, he forcefully and imaginatively put the arguments to the court, closely watched by the media. He used plates of food to show how poor the offer was. News photos of the derisory quantities of food shocked the nation and helped him to win a national minimum wage for dockers of 16s a day for a 44-hour week. The press dubbed him the 'Dockers' KC'.



Bevin was a tough, formidable organiser and he worked his way through the union to become General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union. He led the union during the General Strike in 1926, the depression of the 30s and the start of the war.

In 1940, the day after Winston Churchill became Prime Minister at the head of the National Government, Bevin was asked to become Minister of Labour. He agreed and a month later he was elected unopposed as MP for Wandsworth. He mobilised millions of people to the war effort and re-directed conscripts to work down the mines. Those chosen became known as 'Bevin Boys'.

In 1945, with the war over, Labour won a landslide victory and Bevin became Foreign Secretary. He led Britain's negotiations with the Soviet Union and America. It was the start of the Cold War and a period of recognition that Britain was no longer the powerful force it once was in the world. Bevin's sudden death in 1951 ended a remarkable career from Somerset farm worker to the top of world politics.

Arthur James Cook (above) was the son of a Somerset soldier who became one of the country's best-known miners' leaders. He left his native county in the early 1900s to



James Thomas

become a miner in South Wales, and by 1919 was a union official in the Rhondda. He was a brilliant, erratic and emotional speaker and in 1924 was elected general secretary of the Miners' Federation at the age of 39. He led the miners' strike up to and during the General Strike and played a key role in the 1926 miners' strike. He died in 1931, aged just 47.

He became an officer of the union and helped lead the rail strike of 1911. He was elected general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen in 1917 and led the national strike of

1919. The government backed down after one of the most successful strikes organised by the rail unions.

He was elected an MP in 1924 and became Secretary of State for the Colonies. He had little faith in the 1926 General Strike and the mine workers' union accused him of betrayal for failing to show them enough support. The charge of treachery grew when he joined Ramsey MacDonald's National Government that imposed cuts in unemployment pay. The Labour Party expelled him.

Jimmy Thomas was forced to resign in 1936 when his son was accused of leaking Budget secrets to a man who had paid Thomas £15,000. He claimed the cash was an advance for a proposed autobiography but the story seemed implausible and his political career was over.

Throughout his turbulent career he enjoyed the loyalty of the Swindon rail workers, who honoured him in 1948 when his body was brought back to the town to be laid to rest. ■

In part three we look at some more West Country heroes, including the man who helped found the British Communist Party, the Bristolian barred from standing as an MP and women who fought for equal rights.



A strike of women in 1912 at Gundrey's in Bridport led them to be dubbed 'Wildcat Women'

Watch this space – women leading change

Policy and campaigns officer **Ines Lage** looks back at the first TUC South West Women in Leadership programme



It's been 150 years since the TUC was formed and 100 years since some women first got the vote.

Women have made huge strides for equality; from the London match women who fought for better working conditions to the Ford Dagenham women whose strikes led to the Equal Pay Act. And for the first time ever, UK organisations employing more than 250 workers have to account for this through a gender pay gap audit.

So where are we today with women's equality?

Unfortunately, not far enough.

Yes, the Ford strikers secured legislative change but it took a further sixteen years and more strikes before they eventually earned 100% of their skilled male counterparts' pay. Indeed, fifty years on, over 8,000 women in Glasgow took action for the exact same demands - parity of pay with their male counterparts.

"I sat right next to the senior manager and because of that, he kept looking to me for answers, involving me. I spoke up so much more"

"I have learnt a lot. I have gained more confidence on my way to becoming a leader in one way or another. Sisters united come what may"

We continue to see too few women in positions of power and leadership; women make up the majority of the UK electorate fewer than a third of our MPs and only 16% of top CEOs are women.

On top of this, the gender pay gap audit only told us what we already knew – it has barely shifted. And for unions in particular, it brought home the urgent need for us to promote, encourage, and develop more women into positions of leadership within our movement.

So we developed the TUC South West Women in Leadership Programme to bring on a new cohort of future women leaders - women already working hard to push for change but not yet visible in senior union positions.

All with different perspectives, ideas and aspirations the group of 24 women represented 11 trade unions – from branch secretaries and women's officers, to union organisers and convenors from all sectors and walks of life. From the outset their enthusiasm and

willingness to learn, do and be more was clear.

The course developed leadership skills – communication, networking, presenting and debating, understanding and using different leadership techniques, as well as providing them with practical experience in research and campaigning and influencing key stakeholders.

They produced films discussing: men and feminism, the need to ask more women to stand in political roles, a campaign video on the importance of using gender neutral language, and one with Lego on creating new activists (yes, they produced an entire Lego movie!). On top of this, they are currently working on individual research projects. And as an example of the leadership capabilities, many have already begun using it to negotiate better working practices with employers.

Our aim was to encourage the women to learn from each other and form a long-lasting network of contacts that will help them achieve and progress once completed.

Women in Leadership group in Parliament



“Taking is a key word. You have to take every opportunity available to you. Always be open to them”

Women in Power was a very popular discussion at this year's Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival. West County Workers asked some of the panel what their advice was for women ambitious to get to the top.

Doina Cornell, leader of Stroud District Council: “Even if you always do the right thing, it is par for the course as a woman leader you'll get challenged and criticised, so be sure to have a few people around that you absolutely trust. Their support and advice will help get you through the tough days.”

Thangam Debbonaire, MP for Bristol West: “Find mentors, mentor others, contribute to networks, treasure people who will give you critical feedback you trust as well. Cultivate health – emotional, mental, physical and financial. Judge yourself against your values.”

Dr Wanda Wyporska, executive director of The Equality Trust: “Be proud of who you are and where you come from. Our experience is our expertise and our insight is immensely valuable in shaping change. Our voices need to speak to power.”

Baroness Dawn Primarolo, former Paymaster General and MP for Bristol South: “Do not let anyone suggest that leadership is a male quality. Leadership is about assertiveness and team building, not bluster. Be confident. Be yourself. All your experience is relevant and valuable. Never under estimate your potential. Encourage and support other women. Their voices need to be heard.”

The Women in Politics fringe panel
the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival



“Meeting women from lots of other unions has raised my awareness of a shared goal of promoting women in the workplace”

We sought to inspire and learn about the different pathways to leadership.

Joanne Kaye, UNISON South West Regional Secretary and TUC South West Vice-Chair spoke to the group of her experiences and encouraged the women to be unafraid of being different – advice that really struck with the group.

Many also found their political voices as we helped them to understand and navigate those political vehicles to lobby for change. During a visit to the Houses of Parliament the group met Thangam Debbonaire MP for Bristol West who encouraged them to consider political leadership.

The course involved international dimensions, and in the context of Brexit, exposed them to external forces key to improving workers' and women's rights in the UK, particularly from the EU. And during a visit to the EU Parliament in Brussels, the delegation met Clare Moody Labour MEP in



Women in Leadership group
in the EU Parliament

the South West who, not only leads on aerospace and defence but is heavily involved in equality and women's rights in the EU.

“‘Taking’ is a key word,” she advised. “Because you have to take every opportunity available to you. Always be open to them.

“And build a good team. The best way to look and be good is by having good people around you.

As a former trade union organiser, Clare was an inspiration to just how far the women can go.”

From getting more involved in senior meetings to improving work practices, the group have also seen four promotions after just six months. We've also had more debates about equality, workers' rights, politics, women leaders and trade unions than you can wave a banner at.

Indeed, following a session on how women must both figuratively and literally sit at the meeting table, one woman shared her recent

experience after meeting with senior managers:

“It was brilliant!” said Anthea. “I normally would have sat somewhere else in the room. But I remembered the ‘sitting at the table’ discussion, so I arrived early, sat right next to the senior manager and because of that, he kept looking to me for answers, involving me. I spoke up so much more.”

Each woman brought their own experiences, knowledge and voices. Friendships have been made and the course has sparked in them a desire to nevertheless persist.

“Meeting women from lots of other unions has raised my awareness of a shared goal of promoting women in the workplace,” said Fiona. “My confidence has been rebooted and installed an even better version that has given me new challenges and aspirations”

“I have learnt a lot,” said Torkwase. “I have gained more confidence on my way to becoming a leader in one way or another. Sisters united come what may.”

History has shown us women have led changes that brought more fairness, justice and equality. Developing more women leaders can only be a good thing. So watch this space as history continues to be made. ■

Councils in Crisis

10

Nigel Costley looks at what's happening in the West Country where even Tories are feeling the pain of austerity



The Conservative leader of Somerset County Council feels "abandoned" by his party in government and his local Tory MPs after presenting a crisis budget to stave off financial collapse.

Bath & North East Somerset Council may have to find savings of some £50m in the next five years on top of £74m cuts since 2013.

The latest round of cuts will hit services for children with special needs and other services.

Redundancies have been declared and staff are expected to work during two days of their annual leave.

Unions in Somerset are mobilising to defend jobs, holiday rights and services. Somerset Council is being dubbed as the next 'Northamptonshire' after its fellow Conservative council was forced into a form of insolvency. A decade of austerity has left all councils struggling to even meet their legal requirements and with more cuts to come Somerset will not be the last authority to seek desperate measures to survive.

The *Independent* recently ran a story under the headline: "English councils brace for biggest government cuts since 2010 despite 'unprecedented' budget pressures." The revenue support grant – the main source of government funding for local services – will be cut by 36% next year, marking the largest annual deduction in almost a decade. But after years of austerity the latest squeeze will push some councils over the edge.

Like Northamptonshire, Somerset is now talking about merging its local councils into one big unitary authority. This would see the abolition of Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council, South Somerset District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Mendip District Council. Dorset, along with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, is currently in the process of forming a single-tier structure.

Cornwall merged all its councils ten years ago and is now reducing the number of councillors. It has also proposed a 3.9% rise in council tax to maintain vital services. Cornwall has seen core funding slashed from £150m four years ago to just £14m next year. It needs to find savings of £31m next financial year and further savings totalling £67 million by 2022/23.

Torbay Council's chief executive Steve Parrock said his authority could go the same way as Northamptonshire and Somerset as it struggles to make more than £12m in savings over the next three years. Torbay featured in a BBC list of eleven of the UK's most cash strapped councils.

Parrock tried to reassure the local community by saying: "We are a going concern but we do have serious concerns about future funding". Torbay needs to make £5.5m savings and recover a forecast

overspend of £3m in this year's spending pot. And it will have to make a further cut of £6m in the 2020/2021 budget.

Over the past eight years, 400 jobs have been lost across Torbay's council departments and more redundancies may be declared. Torbay residents will see a reduction in street cleaning, building maintenance and funding for community groups in the years ahead. And next year's Torbay Air Show might be cancelled.

When Labour's Marvin Rees was elected Mayor of Bristol he discovered an unreported black hole

in the city's finances. The failure to declare the true scale of the crisis cost the chief executive and senior finance officer their jobs but it has been the most vulnerable who have really paid the price. In its efforts to slash spending Bristol Council cut £5m from the budget for children with special needs. Parents in Bristol won a legal challenge over the cuts after the authority failed to consult them properly.

Swindon Council has cut its budget for tackling substance abuse and public health services for children. In Wiltshire the library service has already suffered one round of cuts

The main source of government funding will be cut by 36% next year



Council cuts have taken their toll on staff through job cuts, below inflation pay rises and increased pressure of work

which resulted in some smaller libraries being staffed almost totally by volunteers.

Councils have eaten into what reserves they have to meet costs. Devon Council transferred £12m from its reserves in the face of central government cuts and a £2.9m overspend in children's services. Conservative Devon's deputy leader and Cabinet member for finance, John Clatworthy, said: "I think the man on the Clapham omnibus would say 'well done' to all concerned in these difficult financial times."

The Local Government Association believes councils will have lost

77% of their budget by 2020, and Conservative Chair of the LGA, Gary Porter, says that will leave an £5.8bn funding gap for local government: "We won't be cleaning the streets, we won't be cutting the grass, we won't be putting streetlights on at all, your libraries will go, your potholes won't get filled up."

Stroud District Council leader Doina Cornell joined 23 other Labour council leaders in an open letter to the Chancellor demanding a release from the financial crisis facing local services. The leaders feared the destruction of the "social contract between citizen and state" and blamed the cuts for rising crime, falling life expectancy, the increase in foodbank usage, homelessness and rough sleeping.

Council cuts have taken their toll on staff through job cuts, below inflation pay rises and increased pressure of work. This in turn has weakened economic growth as consumer spending lags behind.

The TUC has called on the government to invest in public services and turn around local councils so they can be engines for growth and help rescue people from poverty. Councils are the heart of local communities and the root of democracy. It is time to unleash their potential rather than squeeze them to death. ■

UNISON South West lobby in Taunton
September 2018



Charting a way forward to improving working conditions

Trade unions have been keen to press local councils into signing charters that commit them to various campaigns.

Plymouth council leaders joined UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis to sign the 'Ethical Care Charter'. The Charter commits the council to work with the city's care organisations to end zero-hour contracts and pay workers for travel time between home care visits.

Councillors pledged to work with care firms to ensure workers are paid at least the Living Wage – currently £9 an hour.

Cornwall Council has also signed the Ethical Care Charter.

Plymouth Council has signed the GMB's 'Making It' Charter, the first council in the country to do so. The city has a concentration of manufacturing jobs in the South of England, with around 13,000 people employed in the sector.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Tudor Evans, pledged to support the campaign, which calls for investment in manufacturing and strong UK-based supply chains to support local communities.

Bristol City Council has given its backing to Unite's Construction Charter that seeks to ensure

that conditions for workers on construction projects under local authority control in Bristol meet the highest standards.

Marvin Rees, mayor of Bristol signed the Unite charter that commits to achieving the highest standards in respect of direct employment status, health and safety, standards of work and apprenticeship training. The city council has become the first local authority in the South West to become an accredited living wage employer, building in the £9 an hour minimum into its procurement for service contracts. The South West TUC and the Mayor are calling on all Bristol employers to follow suit.

Matt Roberts, GMB Organiser, Tudor Evans, Plymouth leader and Rowena Hayward GMB Senior Organiser



Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary; Tudor Evans, Plymouth leader and Kevin Treweek, UNISON Plymouth launch the Ethical Care Charter



Chair cycles Cuba



South West TUC chair **Kevin Terry** is cycling 355km around Cuba to raise funds for essential educational equipment for young disabled Cuban school children and supporting the vital work of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. You can sponsor him here

<https://shop.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/departments/cycle-cuba-challenge/656/sponsor-kevin-terry-on-the-cycle-cuba-challenge-2018>

Salisbury mayor welcomes unions

Salisbury mayor Mike Osment recently welcomed union safety reps to a South West TUC conference in the city. He spoke of the harm done to the local economy from the nerve agent incidents. Delegates went on to hear from the FBU about emergency response to chemical hazards and from Prospect about the work of Porton Down, the nearby science centre.

TUC Senior Policy Officer Hugh Robertson gave his assessment of the impact of Brexit on safety regulations, saying the government had promised to uphold existing laws but reminding the meeting of what ministers had said in the past about the need to cut such protections.

L-R: TUC Senior Policy Officer Hugh Robertson, Mayor Osment, UNISON Regional Secretary Joanne Kaye and South West TUC Regional Secretary Nigel Costley

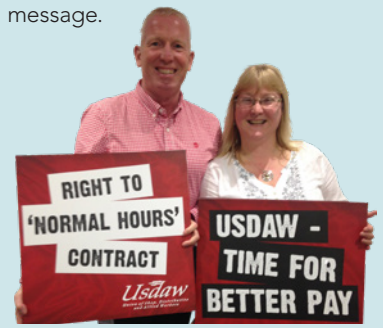


Tolpuddle tees raise funds for Bus Shelter Dorset



Tolpuddle Festival goes this summer raised £300 to buy sanitary products for homeless people. Organisers sold 100 limited edition t-shirts in Suffragette colours during the event, with proceeds going to Bus Shelter Dorset, a charity that helps people with lack of access to sanitary products, perhaps due to financial constraints but also because of insecure living circumstances.

Time for Better Pay
After a massive survey of retail workers, USDAW has launched a campaign for £10 an hour, rights to a 'normal hours' contract and an end to zero-hour contract misuse. Nick Ireland, South West Divisional Secretary and Kay Timbrell USDAW rep on the South West TUC shown here to promote the message.



Steve Preddy (below) is Unite's new regional secretary for the South West. Born and bred in Bristol, he joined the TGWU in 1980, was appointed regional officer in 2001 and promoted to regional co-ordinating officer in 2011. He takes over from Peter Hughes, who has moved across the Severn to become regional secretary for Wales.



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