

unionsouthwest

e-newsletter of the South West TUC

April 2013

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South West TUC Annual Conference

Richard and Rosie elected

Richard Capps has been re-elected chair of the South West TUC. The PCS member from Weston-super-Mare, elected unopposed at the South TUC's AGM in Croyde Bay on Saturday, will be joined on the top table by Rosie McGregor, a UNISON member of the White Horse Trades Union Council in West Wiltshire.

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More than 100 delegates and guests attended the event, where they heard about the impact of the government's austerity agenda on jobs in the region, how welfare reforms would affect benefit claimants (most of whom were in work), and about the scandal of low-pay in the domiciliary care sector.

TUC president Lesley Mercer launched a stinging attack on the “demolition” government, saying: “We're up against arguably the most right-wing government Britain has ever had, cutting and privatising the services we all rely on.

“It is attacking our jobs, our rights, and our living standards, and it is unleashing a tide of economic destruction unseen in this country since the 1930s.”

The solution, she said, is to build social housing and properly invest in business.

She said: “We must make the case for a new economy. Our task isn't just to show there is an alternative to austerity, but to set out a vision of a fairer, stronger, more sustainable economy for the long term.

“We want an economy driven not by spiralling debt, but by decent wages, shaped not by the interests of banks and big business, but by ordinary people, and an economy based not on financial and property speculation, but on investment, exports and world-class manufacturing.”

Sian Moore from the University of the West of England told the conference 80% of care workers employed by private providers were on zero-hours contracts, meaning they were paid only when there was work available.

She said this meant they were not paid between visits – a particular problem in the rural South West, where journeys between clients could last longer than the visit itself – and their hours varied from week to week, with no guaranteed work.

Delegates also debated motions on facility time, the future of the Crown Post Office network and public transport.

Farewell to Helen Cole

Helen Cole, South West unionlearn Regional Manager informed the South West TUC Annual Conference that the Government has made last-minute cuts to the unionlearn budget. As a consequence the TUC has been forced to cut a layer of management and she has taken redundancy. Tributes to Helen's work for union learning were paid and Nigel Costley, South West TUC Regional Secretary, presented her with a bouquet.

Average earnings down

The average worker in the South West has suffered a 6% drop in their weekly earnings, since the coalition came to power, according to new figures from the South West TUC.

The research shows the real-time pay cut is due partly to wages failing to keep up with inflation, and partly because well-paid jobs are being replaced by lower-wage ones, many of which are part-time.

Time to change course

Speaking in Bournemouth TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said that despite recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) criticism of the government's austerity economics, the Chancellor is showing no sign of changing course.

But government economic policies are making the UK's problems worse and allowing the government to use austerity as an excuse to implement policies that no-one has voted for.

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Speaking to the CWU conference, Frances O'Grady she said: "Spending cuts, unemployment and austerity look more and more like hard right politics, rather than necessary economics.

"Even the IMF now says that the UK should ease up. This comes after IMF research showing that spending cuts make deficits worse when an economy is depressed. They may reduce spending, but if they suck the life out of an economy then the tax take falls even more.

"Remember – this government originally said they would have reduced borrowing to £37 billion a year by 2014. Now they say it will be more than £100 billion.

"Of course big national debts are a problem. It is right to want to reduce the deficit. It has always been the case that this government was trying to move too quickly.

"Slash away at support for some of the most vulnerable in society, rather than create the jobs that will get the unemployed back to work.

"We should be building a new economy that can provide the jobs, security and living standards that can give us a decent future.

"Instead we are simply getting an increased dose of the policies that caused the damage in the first place. That is why we must change course – and change course fast."

China clay strike centenary launch

Thursday 25th April exhibition opens at 4pm, launch at 5pm

Wheal Martyn Museum, Cathew, St Austell PL26 8XG

Imerys Mid-Cornwall Choir, music from Richard Trethewey, Cornish clog dance, speakers and launch of new book will start a range of activities to mark Cornwall's most significant dispute.

Order a copy of the new book from the Tolpuddle store for just £4.95 [China Clay Strike](#)

Ivan Lean

Ivan Lean, the TGWU senior officer in Cornwall in the 1980s, has died. He was a former clay worker and lived in the clay hills all or most of his life.

He supported more than 3,000 workers employed in the china clay industry at that time.

He was calm and unassuming but very assured and thorough. Ivan was respected by all who knew him, members and employers alike.

His funeral is at Roach Methodist Chapel on Friday 26th April at 2pm.

Remember the dead, fight for the living

Workers' Memorial Day

BRISTOL

Sunday 28th April 12.30-2.30pm

Fill Bristol Cathedral with trade union banners

Builders and electricians who were members of trade unions were banned from taking part in the building of Cabot Circus in the centre of Bristol, it has emerged.

The director of construction giant McAlpine has admitted that before employing workers on the site, the firm ran all job applications past the Consulting Association, owners of the illegal "blacklist". The blacklist contains the names of at least 3,000 trade union members, health and safety reps and others, including one charitable person who was collecting signatures for a homelessness petition.

Employers would use the list to root out "trouble-makers", devastating workers' lives as they were unable to find employment in the industry ever again.

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Callum McAlpine made the admission earlier this year when he appeared before the House of Commons Scottish Select Affairs Committee.

The negative effect blacklisting has on health and safety in the workplace will feature in the South West TUC's historic event to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day in Bristol on Sunday.

The event, held in Bristol Cathedral from 1 to 2pm, will serve to remember those who have been killed or injured during the course of their work, and to campaign for better health and safety laws in the workplace.

Speakers at the event include Dave Smith from the Blacklist Support Group, NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet, Julia Verne from the South West Public Health Observatory, Farzana Saker from Bristol Multi-Faith Forum and Canon Tim Higgins.

The BBC's Sally Challoner will interview the families of people who have died as a result of their work, and hear from a trade union official about how the government's loosening of health and safety laws is imperilling workers.

Nigel Costley said: "We'll probably never know how many Bristol workers – and their families – have suffered as a result of the blacklist.

"It is astonishing to think that honest workers in this city have been refused work simply because they blew the whistle on health and safety concerns.

"The government takes a dim view of health and safety, taking every opportunity to cut red tape, allowing employers to cut corners and take risks with their employee's safety."

Latest figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show sixteen people in the South West died because of their work between 2011 and 2012, with 4,230 workers being injured during the same period.

PLYMOUTH

Sunday 28th April 11am

Peace Garden, Plymouth Hoe

Plymouth Trades Union Council host a wreath laying, speeches and music by Kevin Robins.

YEOVIL

Sunday 28th April time tbc

Yeovil Trades Union Council and Yeovil Labour Institute Society will unveil a plaque on the front of the Unity Hall/Labour Club. www.yeovituc.org.uk Viv Willis vivianvjw@aol.com

International Workers' Day March in Stroud

Saturday 27th April 11.15am

Subscription Rooms, Stroud

The fight against blacklisting

Monday 29th April 7.30pm

Tony Benn House, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AY

Public meeting with Di Parkin speaking about the actions of the Economic League who ran blacklisting information to employers in the 1970s. An electrician will talk about his experience of victimisation.

Organised by Bristol and District Hazards Group and Bristol Radical History Group

International Workers' Day in Plymouth

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Monday 4th May 11am to 5pm

Plymouth Guildhall

Plymouth Trades Union Council free festival, themed

Trades Unions for a Sustainable Future

There will be stalls, live music and DJs (with two stages, one inside and one outside the Guildhall), meetings, food, national and local speakers, local theatre group, a children's room (including entertainments) and a cheap bar - ALL ABSOLUTELY FREE!

March around the city centre leaving the Guildhall at 1pm

Plus - an evening gig, with Chumbawamba and Farrah

Click [here](#) for more information

EDF scales back Hinkley preparations

Energy firm EDF is to scale back on preparatory work for the Hinkley Point new nuclear plant and reduce the number of people working on it in a bid to control costs.

Prospect National Secretary Alan Leighton said: "Our members fear that any delay in the preparation work could impede or delay EDF's ability to bring the project to fruition once agreement has been reached. The union has called on all parties involved in negotiations on setting a strike price for electricity generated by the planned new nuclear power plant to redouble their efforts and secure an agreement.

The Stop Hinkley Campaign believes that the lay-offs are a sign that the project could be on the verge of collapse. Theo Simon of the Stop Hinkley campaign said, "There is a growing tide of challenges now being raised against the new nuclear plant - including doubts over its radioactive waste plan, EU competition laws, lack of adequate investment and the continued failure to reach agreement over fixing our future electricity prices in advance - so it's not surprising that EDF are ready to cut their losses and run. But it will of course be a blow to the people in West Somerset who have pinned their hopes on EDFs promises of jobs and prosperity for all".

MoD workers campaign to save Ashchurch jobs

Last month Armed Forces Minister Andrew Robathan put 350 jobs under threat at MOD Ashchurch, near Twkesbury, when he announced the army will be withdrawing from the defence base and the site would be sold off as location for 2,000 new homes.

Martin Hird, GMB Senior Organiser, said "The closure of MOD Ashchurch will result in a loss of over 350 highly skilled jobs and have a wider impact on the local economy.

"It is the largest employer in north Gloucestershire and the local council has agreed to join the fight to save it. GMB welcome this support of Tewkesbury Borough Council in the fight to keep MOD Ashchurch open and thank all the councillors who voted in support."

[Local press story](#)

The Happy Lands

12th May 1pm

Watershed, Bristol (Festival of Ideas)

It's the General Strike 1926 - only seven years after the slaughter of the trenches. Miners' unions lead the country against savage austerity cuts handed to the nation by a Liberal-Conservative government.

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Inspired by true stories from local families in Fife, *The Happy Lands* follows the journey of law-abiding citizens who become law-breakers in a heroic battle against the state. It's never a good time to stand up for your rights - but it's always the right time. [Happy Lands](#)

South West TUC Reps Awards

Wednesday May 15th

Exeter City Football Club

Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary, will help present awards to union reps from across the region. Nearly 100 nominations were received for the South West TUC Awards and the event will showcase what volunteers reps do for those they represent and support.

Unions are asked to contribute £32 a head for the awards dinner.

For more information and to book your place contact Andy Moss on 0117 947 0521
amosstuc.org.uk

Bristol May Day Rally

Saturday 4th May

Assembly College Green at 11am to march at 11.30am to Castle Park for 12.30pm

Defend the right to a decent life from cradle to grave. Organised by Bristol Trades Council

Dorset May Day

Monday 6th May

Dorchester Corn Exchange with doors opening at 7pm

Dorchester, Weymouth and Portland TUC are showing Ken Loach's new film "Spirit of '45". The film is an impassioned documentary about how the spirit of unity which buoyed Britain during the war years carried through to create a vision of a fairer, united society.

Entrance by donation.

For more contact Tim Nicolls timtucouncil@talktalk.net

Yeovil TUC May Day event

Friday 26th April 7pm for 8pm start

Labour Club, Central Road, Yeovil BA20 1JL

Yeovil Trades Union Council presents for International workers day, from Birmingham, the Banner Theatre Company '1st of May band presents - fighting the cuts'

Performance finishes around 10 pm followed by discussion. Free tickets available from vivianvjw@aol.com 07855 320041 or will be issued on the night - first come first served.

Bringing human rights into the workplace

2nd May

Plymouth University

Plymouth Business School's HR and Leadership group will welcome Visiting Professor Eleanor Williams to Plymouth University.

Home Secretary Theresa May is mooting the idea of repealing the Human Rights Act and withdrawing from the European Court of Human Rights. Eleanor Williams examines how, in the polarised atmosphere of workplace relations, basic human rights approaches could provide

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effective, inexpensive solutions for some of the ills of modern working. This is a lecture for leaders, trade unions, the HR community and scholars from all disciplines.

To book visit: www.tinyurl.com/ofthepeople2013

Race Equality survey

Equality South West is asking for views on how to protect race equality work in the region at a time when many support bodies are facing cuts or closure. The latest casualty was Somerset Racial Equality Council. Anyone interested or involved is invited to complete a short by 21st May.

Link to survey <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NWVY8HQ>

Dorset ULR Network Meeting

22nd May 9.30am-1pm

Learning Centre at HMP Dorchester

Agenda will include Health and Well Being. For more contact Keith Hatch on khatch@tuc.org.uk

Learning at Work events

Unionlearn has been able to find a small amount of money to offer to unions for Learning at Work activities for the period 1st May to 21st July.

The themes for activities are Work, Health and Well-being and Digital Inclusion

Please contact your local unionlearn officer to discuss any ideas or contact Emily Westacott on ewestacott@tuc.org.uk. You will need to know what activity is being planned, the funding required, where the activity will take place and an approximate number of people you hope to reach.

The funding cannot be used for vouchers or prizes.

Cutting fuel bills through Energy Best Deal

Unionlearn has linked up with the Citizens Advice to deliver Energy Best Deal sessions into workplaces across the South West. So far we have worked with Babcock Marine in Appledore, Yeovil Colleges Fresh Start Job Club in Bridport and Unison Healthcare in Dorchester, with more workshops in the pipeline.

At a time of rocketing energy costs the sessions can help save money and cut energy usage. Though aimed mainly at low income consumers and front-line staff who work with people at risk of fuel poverty they are very useful for ULRs and reps who support colleagues at work. The sessions look at sign-posting people to a range of further help with issues such as fuel debt, benefits entitlement and energy efficiency. Sessions are based around a one hour presentation, with an information leaflet to hand out. The campaign aims to:

make people aware of the savings that can be made by switching fuel providers or negotiating with existing providers provide information about help available from energy suppliers and government for people struggling to pay their gas and electricity bills inform consumers about how they might save money by using less energy and sources of advice and help around energy efficiency.

If you want to find out more and possibly run sessions in your workplace contact Keith Hatch khatch@tuc.org.uk

Forthcoming union education courses

TUC Education in the South West region offers high quality, accredited training through a network of local colleges of further and higher education. There is no cost to reps and reps have the right to reasonable time off with pay to attend courses approved by the TUC or their union.

The new course booklet is just out and can be viewed [here](#)

Mental Health Awareness course

Starting on Thursday 23rd May in [Gloucester](#) and [Swindon](#)

e-notes on line

TUC Education continues to develop more e-notes on-line training and two new ones that are now live cover Bargaining for Skills and Tackling Vulnerable Employment.

Facility time for union representatives

The Facility Time for Union Representatives eNote examines why facility time was introduced and why it is now under threat explains the benefits of facility time for both employees and employers describes how union reps can negotiate an effective facility time agreement.

The Supporting Learners eNote will explain how to successfully interview learners to find out their learning needs suggest sources of further information on learning opportunities detail different methods of recording an action plan

To find out more about e-notes log onto the TUC learning website: www.tuclearning.net anyone with questions can contact Marie on mhughes@tuc.org.uk or Andy on amos@tuc.org.uk

South West Unionlearn *Equality Works* launched

At the recent South West unionlearn conference in Exeter a new regional publication was launched. ***Equality Works*** focuses on six case studies that show why equality is such an important part of the workplace environment.

If you would like a copy either call the South West TUC office on 0117 947 0521 or email unionlearnsouthwest@tuc.org.uk

Learning Works

The latest news from unionlearn in the South West is on-line: [Learning Works](#)

Living Wage Dorset Campaign launches in May

The Living Wage Dorset campaign is a county wide initiative. It's a broad coalition of organisations and individuals united in values of justice, dignity, respect and empowerment against low pay in Dorset. Some 30% of the Dorset's workforce work in low pay sectors. The campaign seeks to establish the Living Wage rate of pay as a minimum for all workers.

In May the campaign will be officially launched in a number of speaker events across the county finishing up in Bournemouth.

28th May - Bridport Town Hall

30th May - Dorchester Corn Exchange

5th June - Barns Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University, Wallisdown

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The speakers in Bournemouth include Natalie Bennett (Leader of the Green Party), Dr Graham Kings (Bishop of Sherborne), Paul Nowak (Assistant General Secretary TUC).

Register for free at www.eventbrite.co.uk under Living Wage - what is it and what it does

For more information on the campaign and other events contact Neil Duncan Jordan - nduncanjordan@ntlworld.com

South West young MPs

South West TUC Regional Secretary, Nigel Costley spoke to the South West Youth Parliament in support of their Heritage Heroes history project. The young MPs are elected in a vote that last year involved more than a million 11-18 year-olds. They are researching and learning about those who have campaigned for change throughout our history, such as the suffragettes and Tolpuddle Martyrs. The South West TUC are supporting the project and Regional Secretary Nigel Costley came to speak about Tolpuddle and the China Clay strike and explore how young people might try and resolve issues in the workplace today.

Matt Currie, MYP for Plymouth said "It is a very interesting project and by looking at how others have stood out and made their voice heard, it has inspired many of us to take more of an active role within our communities and to act as an advocate for the young people that we represent, ensuring that their voice is made ever stronger."

That evening MYPs were invited to dress up as their chosen heritage hero and Nigel was amongst the panel who had the unenviable task of choosing the winner. Natasha Glendening, MYP for Dorset, won for coming as her hero, Indira Gandhi.

"I really love Indian Culture and History and it seemed to be fitting to choose a Hero from where some of my family come from. Indira Gandhi was a female Prime Minister of India, that in itself anywhere in the world is an accomplishment and I really admire her determination for success. In the western world we pride ourselves in having come so far with women's suffrage and civil rights, however Indira Gandhi is a prime example of how much we underestimate other parts of the world."

[Dorset Echo story](#)

South West Migrant Workers Forum

Thursday 27th June

Taunton

Chaired by Nigel Costley, the Forum is meeting again to share information on the current issues on the migrant workers agenda. Contact Nigel on ncostley@tuc.org.uk if you are interested in attending or want items raised.

Taunton Vegan Fair

Saturday 3 August. 11am-3pm

North Street Church Hall, Taunton TA1 1LW

Free food tasters, cafe, stalls, local producers, ethical fashion and more. Free goody bag for first 50 people. Free entry. Everyone welcome. More info at www.tauntonveg.moonfruit.com

Historic court and cells will make Dorchester proud

Dorchester's Shire Hall and the old court where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were tried looks set to become an internationally important heritage centre after winning lottery support.

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given its initial support towards a project which should see the Grade I listed building transformed into a major visitor centre with high quality exhibitions and educational resources.

Author Thomas Hardy sat there as a magistrate and time has stood still at the court, which appears today almost as it did in Georgian times.

Robert Gould, Leader of West Dorset District Council, said: "I am thrilled that we have succeeded in winning this money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This is on top of the £1million that the district council has pledged to make this exciting project a reality.

"The Shire Hall is a fascinating building with a unique and special history. Visitors will be able to tread in the footsteps of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and see the very same sights that would have greeted them.

Under the plans, the new heritage centre could be run by the Dorset County Museum. Local people will be asked for their views. Consultations are also ongoing with other interested groups including the TUC who once owned the court. If you would like to find out more about the project visit www.dorsetforyou.com/shirehallproject

Bristol banners

Nigel Costley has started a collection of photographs of West Country trade union banners starting with Bristol banners online. See <http://pinterest.com/swtuc/bristol-banners/>

If you have pictures of old banners that you want to add to the collection contact Nigel on ncostley@tuc.org.uk

A selection of newsletters...

- Welfare reform: The Department of Work and Pensions April Edition of Touchbase (For advisers, intermediaries and other professionals) is available online [here...](#) South West Skills [Newsletter](#)
- BIS FE and Skills [Newsletter](#)
- Job Centre Plus Southern England Group – [News](#)
- Equality South West [Newsletter](#)
- Local intelligence Team Update – Office for Civil Society. Includes: Network for Public Service Transformation, New Community Budgets website, New commitment to tax incentives for Social Investment announced, Further social action funding, Funding for Neighbourhood Plans, What Works: Evidence Centres, Government response to Heseltine Review Read it [here...](#)