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To: **Secretaries of Water, Environment  
and Transport Branches**

30 April 2013

Ref: BC&EC 12/13

Dear Colleague

**2013 Water, Environment and Transport Conference - Final Agenda**

I attach the final agenda for the 2013 Water, Environment and Transport conference, to be held in Liverpool on Sunday 16 June 2013.

- **The closing date for receipt of emergency motions is 12.00 noon on pm on Tuesday 11 June 2013**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Jackson".

Alan Jackson  
Secretary  
**Business and Environment Standing Orders Committee**





**2013 Business and Environment Standing Orders Committee**

**Water, Environment and Transport Conference  
FINAL AGENDA**

**Section 1: SERVICE GROUP STRUCTURE and ORGANISATION**

- Motion 1**     **Health and Safety Event for Safety Representatives of Branches in the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

**Section 2: CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

- Motion 2**     **Ensuring Appropriate Site Signage Whilst Work is Being Undertaken**  
*Submitted by the United utilities branch*
- Motion 3**     **Ensuring Adequate Maintenance of Manhole Covers**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- Motion 4**     **Presenteeism**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- 4.1     Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch
- Motion 5**     **Direct Site Working**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- Motion 6**     **Lone Working Incident**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- Motion 7**     **Near Fatality Following Confined Space Entry**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- Motion 8**     **Personal Protective Equipment Checklist for Safety Representatives**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*
- Motion 9**     **Safety of Dig Teams**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*
- 9.1     Amendment submitted by the WET Executive
- Motion 10**    **Hidden Killers**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*
- Motion 11**    **Cost Saving Versus Risk**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*
- Motion 12**    **Cabinet Office Review of Facility Time**  
*Submitted by the Environment Agency Anglian branch*
- Motion 13**    **Facility Time in the Environment Agency**  
*Submitted by WET Executive*

- Motion 14    **The Impact of the Regulator on Pay and Conditions of Members in the Water Industry**  
*Submitted by WET Executive*

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| <b>Section 3: POLICY AND CAMPAIGNS</b> |
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- Motion 15    **Concessionary Fares**  
*Submitted by WET Executive*

- Motion 16    **Where's Your Bus Gone?**  
*Submitted by WET Executive*

16.1    Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch

- Motion 17    **UNISON Calling**  
*Submitted by the National Women's Committee*

17.1    Amendment submitted by the WET Executive

17.2    Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch

- Motion 18    **Service Versus Targets**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

18.1    Amendment submitted by the WET Executive

- Motion 19    **Overseas Suppliers**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

19.1    Amendment submitted by the WET Executive

- Motion 20    **Water and the Future**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

- Motion 21    **OFWAT Price Review**  
*Submitted by WET Executive*

- Motion 22    **Tackling Transphobia in WET Workplaces**  
*Submitted by the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee*

- Motion 23    **Tackling Biphobia in WET Workplaces**  
*Submitted by the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee*

- Motion 24    **Raising the Profile of Black Activists**  
*Submitted by the National Black Members' Committee*

- Motion 25    **Effect of Government's Austerity Measures on Black People**  
*Submitted by the National Black Members' Committee*

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| <b>MOTIONS NOT ADMITTED ONTO THE AGENDA</b> |
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General Political Fund: Failed WET Bid  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

Solidarity with Water Only Companies  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

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| <b>AMENDMENTS NOT ADMITTED ONTO THE AGENDA</b> |
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Amendment to motion 9 submitted by the United utilities branch

## **Section 1: SERVICE GROUP STRUCTURE and ORGANISATION**

### **Motion 1    Health and Safety Event for Safety Representatives of Branches in the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group** *Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Following on from the success of the 2012 WET health and safety event, this Conference calls on a similar event to be staged in the spring of 2014 as health and safety remains one of the key areas for our members.

Positive feedback was received from all attendees last time and experience gained from others is invaluable.

## **Section 2: CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

### **Motion 2    Ensuring Appropriate Site Signage Whilst Work is Being Undertaken** *Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Whilst this Conference welcomes improvements to sites including making welfare facilities of an acceptable standard basic site health and safety issues shouldn't be forgotten about during the duration of such work.

It came to light on some but not all sites that were being improved in United Utilities that lighting and signage on emergency routes and exits were not being provided for the duration of the works.

This Conference asks the WET Executive to devise a checklist for branches in this regard which should include reference to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which will assist UNISON members remaining safe during such improvement works.

### **Motion 3    Ensuring Adequate Maintenance of Manhole Covers** *Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

This 2013 WET Conference is aware of a serious safety incident in Severn Trent Water which resulted in a sewerage operator losing the tips of his fingers on one hand.

The individual concerned was gaining access to a confined space but suffered the injury as the stay on the manhole cover collapsed.

Such assets particularly on sewage works are routinely poorly maintained and we call on the WET Executive to devise a checklist for branches to use with employers pointing out the basic requirements of necessary maintenance.

#### **Motion 4    Presenteeism**

*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Recent statistics prove that workers are taking less time off sick than ever before but this can well be a false economy situation particularly for members we represent in the WET service group.

Workplaces now face a bigger problem of presenteeism not absenteeism whereby workers are struggling into workplaces with ill health symptoms and end up spreading germs etc. as a result.

The main reason is that a climate of fear has been engendered by the unelected coalition Government that if "you can't make it into work we'll find somebody that can" probably on lesser terms and conditions of service.

Conference calls on the WET Executive to offer guidance to branches in this regard in the form of a circular if appropriate.

##### **4.1    Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch**

Add the following sentence to the end of paragraph 2:

"As the 'presentees' are not picking up their full workloads this also impacts on other team members who may not initially be aware of this.

#### **Motion 5    Direct Site Working**

*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Issues are being experienced in some branches including Scottish Water whereby the Working Time Regulations appear to be being misinterpreted in particular when working time begins.

Instances that have come to the fore include employees being required to do basic vehicle checks in their own time before commencing work.

In addition, employees are being told to log on and receive all their work on their hand held devices in their own time.

Of even more concern is that employees are being expected to drive their vehicles to their first job in their own time which is clearly unacceptable.

This Conference calls on the WET Executive to devise an easy to understand checklist in regards to what falls within the Working Time Regulations to allow branches to challenge such inappropriate instances as those listed.

#### **Motion 6    Lone Working Incident**

*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Conference is aware of an incident that occurred in Scottish Water in 2012 which could have had very serious consequences.

A worker was lone working and left his mobile phone in his van while accessing a building which subsequently trapped him through a faulty door.

It was several hours before this worker could be rescued due to being un-contactable and brought into question procedures in place.

This Conference calls on WET Executive to devise a checklist for branches to use with their employers to try to minimise the risk of similar occurrences happening again.

**Motion 7    Near Fatality Following Confined Space Entry**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

This Conference is aware of an incident that took place on a water meter chamber in Slovakia which ultimately resulted in 1 of 2 water meter readers suffering brain damage which will likely prevent him from working ever again.

Whilst most of the water industry in Great Britain follows the correct procedures in regards to confined space entry, this needs to be fully briefed to subcontractors who now usually undertake this type of work.

Furthermore, the appropriate health and safety guidance needs to be produced in languages in addition to English in the event that those entering confined spaces are migrant workers.

This conference calls on the WET Executive to devise a best practice guide regarding confined spaces for branches to use in conjunction with their employers to try to minimise the risk of similar occurrences as outlined happening in this country.

**Motion 8    Personal Protective Equipment Checklist for Safety Representatives**  
*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

This Water, Environment and Transport Conference 2013 calls upon the WET Executive to devise a checklist to ensure that any personal protective equipment (PPE) is compliant with the law.

As a minimum, the checklist should include:

- i) Check with employers that PPE was purchased from reputable suppliers i.e. from Companies displaying the logo of the Registered Safety Suppliers (RSS) scheme.
- ii) Check that all safety equipment carries the required CE mark on the product labelling and marking and is in the correct font and at least 5mm high.
- iii) For high risk products including respirators and chemical protective clothing check that the CE mark is accompanied by a 4 digit number.
- iv) Check that written instructions for use were provided in plain language of English and other appropriate languages where necessary.
- v) Check that the name and address of the manufacturer is detailed on the user instructions.

Following these basic simple guidelines with employers will assist ensuring the safety of the members we represent.

**Motion 9    Safety of Dig Teams**  
*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

With ever more private companies laying electric cables and gas pipes on new build sites and companies being bought out or going bankrupt, the health and safety of dig teams on water contracts are being jeopardised because there is no central database. Buried services may belong to utilities, commercial sites, industrial sites or the military. There may be more than one owner/operator in an area. The most up to date source of company information is the Energy Supply Handbook 2012 selling at £144 a copy. The workers at risk belong to companies like Morrisons and United Utilities and these workers are UNISON members who are in our water branches.



For these members to be safe and avoid danger from underground services the following are required:

- i) Plans or other suitable information about all buried services in the area should be obtained at the planning stage before any excavation work starts. These plans should be up-to-date, easily understandable and show the recorded line and depth of all known services buried. A universal symbol key could be adopted for simplicity.
- ii) The use of 'one-call' systems is recommended with information available at short notice. As a number of applications are likely to be routine this should be possible. Arrangements should be put in place to deal with emergencies out of office hours. Where owners/operators are reluctant to supply copies of their underground plans for reasons of security an alternative system such as a representative being sent to the site may be possible.

We request that the WET Executive liaise with their contacts in the energy sector and other unions to push for the setting up of a central body to administer the holding and dissemination of safe dig drawings to other utility services so that the health and safety of this often forgotten group of members in the water industry is improved.

#### 9.1 Amendment submitted by the WET Executive

In final sentence of first paragraph delete "United Utilities" as this is factually incorrect.

#### **Motion 10 Hidden Killers**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

Having had a tanker driver repeatedly exposed to high levels of hydrogen sulphide whilst tankering sludge off at sewage treatment works, this has served to remind us of the risks posed to our members from dangerous gases. This member had his HGV and all other driving licences taken away by the DVLA as a result of the effects of the medication prescribed to control the headaches he suffered following the exposures. To date he still has not got any of his licences back. However it could have been much worse.

Because gases cannot be seen there may be an over reliance on gas monitors to keep our members safe. High levels on works may be treated as 'one-offs'. These 'one-offs' may not have been reported nor the information shared with those who need to know.

Representatives should ensure all workers who may be at risk from any gas exposure not only be supplied with calibrated gas monitors and taught how to use them but that robust procedures are in place to prevent/minimise exposure and clear health instructions given if exposed. If the monitor is out of date no one should be entering any area where there is a potential risk.

Representatives who deal with members working with gases should be encouraged to research and find out more as this is an area that until recently has been under researched. Often the representatives know much more than the company health and safety departments. Members should be encouraged to keep a diary of times when they may have been close to limits as well as above the limits and note any health effects. These must be reported to management and representatives so a fuller picture can be built up and high risk areas identified. This will also provide evidence if future legal claims are to be lodged.

We would like the WET Executive and Water Industry Sector Committee to publicise the risks of gases to our members and that this be considered as an agenda item at the WET training weekend 2013 or 2014 WET health and safety event with an expert in this field invited to attend.

Remember - just because you can't see it doesn't mean it can't kill you.

**Motion 11 Cost Saving Versus Risk**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

In these times of high energy costs water companies are embarking on initiatives to save money. This includes turning off sections of plant at times of the day when energy costs are highest. Because this at present tends to be for short periods after normal working hours the focus may be concentrated on how much operators will be paid rather than the health and safety impacts.

Presently the switch-off periods are short and dangers of gas build-ups and other risks unlikely. However these periods will become longer and more frequent in future as energy costs continue to rise and recycling initiatives level off because of pay back periods. A process that may be safe following an hour's turn-off may not be safe after two hours.

Although many water companies have done this for years there is much more optimisation than ever before. Control rooms can now remotely turn off entire plants and not necessarily be aware electricians or maintenance may be working on site. Each process on every plant should be individually risk assessed. We need to work with our companies and risk assess each affected process at every affected plant and not settle for a generic risk assessment. No two assets are the same. We need a foolproof system so workers cannot be put at risk.

We would ask that the WET Executive and Water Industry Sector Committee highlight these issues so representatives are forewarned and start looking at worst case scenarios now and work with our employers to put risk assessments in place whilst this is a minor health and safety issue and not be playing catch-up a few years from now when risks are greater.

**Motion 12 Cabinet Office Review of Facility Time**

*Submitted by the Environment Agency Anglian branch*

Under the Coalition Government workers in the public sector have faced attacks on their pay, pensions and working conditions on a scale unseen since the "Thatcher" years. Now the Cabinet Office is reviewing the amount of union facility time available in the Civil Service and Non-Government Agencies such as the Environment Agency.

The review is seen as an excuse for the Government to mount an attack on facility time in these bodies to seriously restrict the ability of our union to negotiate with our employer and properly represent our members. If they succeed in this aim the Government will undoubtedly take their attack on facility time to all other areas of the public sector. They cannot be allowed to succeed.

This Conference calls on our SGE to mount a full campaign to oppose any measures to reduce union facility time.

**Motion 13 Facility Time in the Environment Agency**

*Submitted by the WET Executive*

This conference is greatly concerned to learn of the Cabinet Office's decision to extend its guidance on trade union facility time beyond government departments to non-departmental public bodies (NDPB's) including the Environment Agency.

UNISON is the biggest trade union in the Agency and has had a key role in securing employment policies, terms and conditions which benefit both the workforce and the Agency. Furthermore, it has been instrumental in helping the Agency to implement change programmes to help it adapt to increased workload and decreasing funding, whilst at the same time minimising job losses and impacts on members.

As the vision of austerity Britain rolls depressingly on, it is clear that the Agency will find itself under further pressure to restructure and reduce employee numbers. It is therefore vital that UNISON's ability to engage with and protect its members is not compromised by politically driven attacks on facility time. The guidance also contains worrying restrictions on how unions may utilise employer e-mail systems and office notice boards, which would make effective communication with members much more difficult.



The Agency itself has no issue with current facility time arrangements, and has tried to get this message through to the Government. However, it has no direct interface with Cabinet Office and can only take issue with Defra, the Agency's parent government department.

This conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to continue to engage with the Government at any and all levels to:

- i) Strongly reinforce the message that both management and trade unions within the Agency regard the existing arrangements as both reasonable and very productive.
- ii) Protect facility time and the existing trade union recognition agreement.
- iii) Make it clear that it is a matter for the trade unions and the Environment Agency to decide what Agency facilities are made available for trade union communications.

**Motion 14 The Impact of the Regulator on Pay and Conditions of Members in the Water Industry**

*Submitted by the WET Executive*

Conference notes the critical role that Ofwat plays in regulating the privatised water industry. It also notes that despite the role of the regulator, profits within the utility businesses have increased to record levels making the owners and key executives very wealthy.

Despite the increased profits, members have seen their pay and conditions attacked over a number of years. This is most evident in the pensions that members in the industry receive. Most members in the industry will have in the past received a defined benefit (DB) scheme as standard giving a degree of certainty for them when they retire. Today very few DB schemes in the industry remain open for new starters and some are now closed altogether. This is a deplorable situation which will lead to considerable insecurity for members when they approach retirement.

The difference between a defined benefit scheme and defined contribution (DC) scheme is immense. Companies make huge savings when they switch from a DB scheme to a DC scheme. This saving is actual money not paid to members and in reality reflects a huge wage cuts for thousands.

This situation we note is being encouraged by the regulators who see attacking pension provision and wider pay and conditions as quick wins to make savings and drive down costs to consumers. This is clearly the preferred approach rather than tackling the profiteering by the owners. This green light to the water industry has not delivered any real gain to consumers as costs to them have continued to increase.

This conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- i) Formally raise these concerns with Ofwat in a robust manner. It should be made clear to them that UNISON members are not the reason why water prices have risen.
- ii) Raise this issue with the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure our concerns about the regulators actions are registered.
- iii) Work with Labour Link and other appropriate channels within UNISON to raise this issue with opposition representatives to ensure our concerns about the regulators actions are registered.
- iv) Co-ordinate our concerns with other trade unions in the water sector to ensure that any response is as effective as it can be.

### **Section 3: POLICY and CAMPAIGNS**

#### **Motion 15 Concessionary Fares**

*Submitted by the WET Executive*

Conference welcomes UNISON's policy calling for free travel at all times on buses and trains across Britain as a whole and that this should be funded by the Government as per the policy document 'Moving Forward'.

However, inconsistencies in provision across authorities and cuts in funding for this provision are having an effect on the job security of our transport members in bus companies and local authorities.

Conference calls on the WET Executive to actively campaign on this issue, working with the NEC, Labour Link and any other relevant UNISON body.

#### **Motion 16 Where's Your Bus Gone?**

*Submitted by the WET Executive*

Conference condemns the ever increasing amount of disappearing bus services from Britain's roads and the consequent impact on UNISON members employed in the public transport industry.

This is due to the Government's cuts agenda.

Services are disappearing and fares are increasing, leaving the most vulnerable and those on low incomes more isolated and disadvantaged. There seems to be no end to this downward spiral.

The WET Service Group has been working with the Campaign for Better Transport to track these cuts in supporting their 'Save our Buses' campaign. Rural communities, and increasingly now cities are experiencing service cuts to evening and weekend services as bus companies look to end non profitable journeys and authorities look to save money on subsidised services.

We can see the effect on ever shrinking bus company branches and local authority transport departments – a trend we must seek to reverse.

This Conference:

- i) Pledges to continue to support Campaign for Better Transport in the 'Save our Buses' campaign.
- ii) Asks branches and regions to lobby councillors and MPs to protect bus services.
- iii) Asks the WET Executive to work with other UNISON bodies to highlight these problems and ensure that public transport is promoted through the 'Million Voices' campaign.

##### 16.1 Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch

Insert the following as a new (iii):

"Asks those branches whose employers have Green Transport Policies to request their employers add their voices to protecting bus services."

Renumber existing (iii) to (iv).

**Motion 17 UNISON Calling**

*Submitted by the National Women's Committee*

Conference notes that in 2012, UNISON launched the call centre charter, which calls on all employers who have UNISON members working in a call centre or in call handling operations to commit to improving the standards which those staff operate under.

Conference notes that the charter was primarily aimed at branches in the energy service group, however, the concerns raised also apply to staff working in any call centre - including those in the water, environment and transport sectors.

Included in the charter is the requirement that staff are able to take sufficient breaks away from the workstation and are not monitored to an unreasonable extent.

Conference notes, however, that at a time when employers are cutting back on costs and resources, including staffing, there is increased pressure on employees to respond and deal with calls quickly.

The introduction of systems such as Totalview Telephony gives employers even greater access to monitoring of employees, with promises that the system gives "a complete overview of the status of the employees" and that "employees always know where their colleagues are."

Whilst such systems promise better service and cost savings for employers, there is also the potential for management abuse, in micro-managing staff and monitoring their activity to an excessive degree. This can lead to increased stress, bullying and harassment, particularly when managers are themselves under pressure to meet unrealistic targets.

Conference therefore calls upon the service group executive to:

- i) Promote the call centre charter to branches in the water, environment and transport sector, and encourage them to negotiate with employers to sign up to the charter;
- ii) Ensure that branches have the necessary advice and guidance to support them in negotiating reasonable working standards in line with the charter.

**17.1 Amendment submitted by the WET Executive**

In i) delete "sector" and replace with "Service Group".

**17.2 Amendment submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch**

Remove full stop from (ii) after the word charter and add:

"especially with regard to the Equalities Act and have reasonable adjustments in place for staff with disabilities."

**Motion 18 Service Versus Targets**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

For call centre staff in our water companies it is becoming increasingly difficult to deliver a quality service to the public due to internal pressures to 'get rid of' callers as quickly as possible. If a caller rings up to say they have cellar flooding or sewage coming into their property they are in a distressed stage and need reassurance and comfort. They may be elderly with no family to help them or on their own with young children. Yet our call-centre staff are supposed to deal with this call - in the case of Yorkshire Water's call-centre staff within three and a half minutes. There is no reason to believe the other call-centres in the WET sector operate much differently.

If calls are not answered within this time our call-centre staff will fail to meet targets and likely to underachieve for that period and therefore lose bonuses.

You cannot deliver a first-class service with one eye on the clock and following a strict script. Constantly our call centre staff feel guilty as they seek to cut a call short whilst knowing they would not like to be treated in that manner if they were the caller.

None of this is driven by the regulator. It's simply a desire by our companies to earn the maximum profit for the minimum outlay, the outlay being minimum number of staff they get can get away with employing.

We ask the WET Executive and Water Industry Sector Committees to keep highlighting this whether it be at relevant meetings with the government, the regulators, other stakeholders or in press releases as this current way of working is in the interests of no-one.

18.1 Amendment submitted by the WET Executive

In second sentence of first paragraph replace "stage" with "state".

**Motion 19 Overseas Suppliers**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

The larger water companies import much of their sewage and water pipes from Asia especially large diameter pipes used in capital schemes, in the case of Yorkshire Water from Kolkata in India via a UK subsidiary. This contract has been running for ten years. Our company has someone who monitors the contract and makes visits to the supplier. There is no reason to think other companies in our sector do differently.

As trade unionists we have a duty to try and help other workers in all parts of the world access good terms and working conditions. We should ask for our companies to provide information on these suppliers and highlight any concerns we have. We could ask the person who visits the supplier to provide a report and photographs. If not happy we should challenge in the same way as we do when we have issues with UK contractors working for our companies who aren't treating their staff as well as we would expect or do not comply with our companies values.

This would raise awareness of international issues in our branches and at the same time be of relevance to members in our sector.

We would ask that the WET Executive make branches aware their companies may be insourcing products and kit from other parts of the world, not just back office call centre tasks and encourage branch international officers to investigate with a view to forging links with trade union members in these companies.

**19.1 Amendment submitted by the WET Executive**

In last sentence of first paragraph replace "sector" with "the water industry".  
In third paragraph replace "our sector" with "the water industry".

**Motion 20 Water and the Future**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

With more of our companies imposing pay rises on our members, United Utilities introducing spot rates and Scottish Water trying to get rises that are 100% performance based, it is obvious we are in for a rough ride in the not so distant future. Because we are higher paid than other groups in UNISON and the public doesn't see us as saving lives or providing services there is not the level of sympathy for us from either the public or even from some other UNISON groups. Most people think we still work for the mystical 'water board'. Changes to our final salary pension schemes in the privately owned companies have not been treated as seriously as other groups in UNISON because what they are being changed to is still better than the public sector is being offered.

Despite our employers being 'hell-bent' on racing each other to take us to the bottom, our rock bottom may always be higher than the other groups in UNISON.

Providing clean water and treating sewage and the ancillary operations that support these functions is an important and sometimes dangerous job. Without clean water very little is possible in the way of provision of public services, food and drink processing, agriculture and recreational facilities. It's time we sold ourselves a bit better. It's time the public knew we don't work for the 'water board' but for foreign multinationals and private equity companies who can run rings round the regulators and despite huge profits take advantage of every tax loophole.

We ask that the Water Industry Sector Committee look at ways of positively campaigning to educate the general public about our industry and how important it is that good terms and conditions remain for present and future generations, so when the media reports on our pay demands we are not perceived as being greedy with our snouts in the trough.

**Motion 21 OFWAT Price Review**  
*Submitted by the WET Executive*

This conference notes that Ofwat has launched its price review policy for the period 2015-2020. The Service Group Executive responded to the consultation raising major concerns on a number of fronts:

- a) The failure to propose a national scheme for the introduction of social tariffs to protect the most vulnerable households from ever increasing water and sewerage bills.
- b) A pricing policy that allows companies to continue to increase bills year on year when household incomes have been under intense pressure and the Government have been telling local authorities for the past few years to freeze council taxes.
- c) The suggestion that retail separation would increase competition within the industry, an area in which UNISON has many members performing important roles dealing with customers in a highly professional and responsible manner.

This service group conference is deeply concerned that Ofwat has been ineffective in regulating the industry and this latest pricing review is yet another failure. Instead of targeting the vast amounts of money being made within the privatised industry, Ofwat has instead done nothing to protect the most vulnerable households and given a possible green light to large scale outsourcing of members' jobs who work in the retail part of the business. This in turn will lead to cuts in pay and reward for members.

We call on the Service Group Executive to:

- i) Seek an urgent meeting with Ofwat to raise its concerns about the 2015-2020 pricing review.
- ii) Seek support from the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) and others to oppose retail separation on the grounds it will lead to a worsening of customer satisfaction rates, more complaints and less sensitive handling of complex cases including matters of debt management.
- iii) Organise locally based campaigns against retail separation when it is threatened and to challenge the business case proposed.
- iv) Monitor the impact of the review on employees in the industry, and seek to counter any adverse effects.

**Motion 22 Tackling Transphobia in WET Workplaces**  
*Submitted by the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee*

Conference welcomes progress made by UNISON over many years in negotiating for equality in our water, Environment Agency and transport (WET) workplaces. However, conference is concerned that equality considerations fall down the agenda in the face of cuts, reorganisations and redundancies.

Conference is further concerned that transgender workers face particularly extreme discrimination when seeking work and once in work. To seek to avoid this discrimination, many people delay their gender reassignment for many years. However they pay a high price for this in terms of their health and well-being.

Conference notes that many WET managers are unaware of their responsibility to trans staff and prospective staff. Further, many of our WET workplaces do not have equality or anti-harassment policies that refer specifically to gender identity or gender reassignment. Nor do policies or practices address the particular issues that may arise for trans workers in relation to sickness absence policies, dress codes, criminal records checks and other pre-employment checks.



Conference calls on the WET service group executive, working with the business and environment equal opportunities working party and the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender committee, to urge all WET branches to:

- i) Brief workplace representatives and stewards, using the 'UNISON introductory guide for union reps supporting trans members', which provides background information and detailed advice
- ii) Check their employers' policies and practices against the good practice set out in the UNISON bargaining factsheet 'transgender workers rights'
- iii) Identify where policy and practice falls short, support individual members and seek to negotiate improvements
- iv) Report back on bargaining gains and successful cases to build our database of good practice.

**Motion 23 Tackling Biphobia in WET Workplaces**

*Submitted by the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee*

Conference welcomes the first ever UK-wide report on bisexuality, which was published by the Open University last year. Conference notes that even casual biphobia, too often pervasive and unchallenged, can make our workplaces hostile environments, where bisexual people are unable to work to their potential. The Open University report showed that:

- Bisexual people's experiences differ in important ways from those of heterosexual people, and from those of lesbian and gay people.
- Biphobia is distinct from homophobia.
- Bisexual people often face discrimination and prejudice from within heterosexual, and lesbian and gay, communities.
- Bisexual populations have significantly higher levels of distress and mental health difficulties than equivalent heterosexual or lesbian/gay populations.

Recommendations of the report include:

- a) Inform yourself about bisexuality and avoid stereotypes about bisexual people.
- b) Include bisexuality within all policy and explicitly within the diversity implications section of every document and policy.
- c) Don't assume one unified bisexual experience. The experiences and needs of bisexual people are also affected by their race, culture, gender, relationship status, age, disability, religion, social class, geographical location, etc.
- d) Separate biphobia out from homophobia, recognising that there are specific issues facing bisexual people such as lack of acknowledgement of their existence, stereotypes of greediness or promiscuity, and pressure to be either gay or straight.
- e) Recognise the role that biphobia and bisexual invisibility play in creating negative outcomes for bisexual people.

Conference notes the relevance of these findings and recommendations for UNISON and our equality bargaining in water, Environment Agency and transport (WET) workplaces.

Conference calls on the WET service group executive, working with the business and environment equal opportunities working party and the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender committee, to urge all WET branches to:

- i) Take up the recommendations of the report where appropriate;
- ii) Check policies and practice for specific recognition of the need to tackle bisexual discrimination and promote bisexual equality
- iii) Renegotiate policies as necessary and call for them to be widely publicised and promoted in our workplaces.

#### **Motion 24 Raising the Profile of Black Activists**

*Submitted by the National Black Members' Committee*

Raising the profile of Black activists within water, environment and transport employers and increasing the number of Black members involved at branch, regional and national levels within the WET service group and wider union is critical in meeting the UNISON's recruitment and organising objectives.

Conference also notes the Leadership School where activists can take steps to develop their leadership skills and take up positions of increased responsibility. Members who have attended this school have gone on to become branch secretaries and employed staff.

Black members play a valuable role in ensuring the union and branches identify and take up equality issues and actively challenge discrimination in the workplace. This is key in meeting the unions current challenges as no workplace where discrimination exists can be truly organised.

Conference calls on the WET service group executive to work with the NBMC to:

- i) Remind branches and members of the support and guidance available to Black members to become activists.
- ii) Work with the NEC to identify funding for joint initiatives that will encourage Black workers to join UNISON and become active within its structures.

#### **Motion 25 Effect of Government's Austerity Measures on Black People**

*Submitted by the National Black Members' Committee*

Conference deplores the devastating impact the Government's austerity measures are having on Black communities and the most vulnerable groups in the society. Conference notes with concern the severity of the impact on people from the Black community. Research from the Institute for Public Policy and Research shows that the unemployment level for young Black people (age 16-24) is almost 48 per cent - among the highest rate of unemployment in living memory in the Britain.

Black communities and young Black people are being pushed deeper into poverty, with fewer employment opportunities - with access to higher education and universities out of the reach for many.

Conference is concerned that in the current climate of redundancies and re-organisation, rising workloads, attacks on employee's conditions of service, job insecurity, workplace stress and high costs of living, workers who are more likely to face discrimination and prejudice in the workplace will become even more vulnerable.

UNISON's Black members working in the water, environment and transport (WET) service group and across the public sector employers continue to report racist discrimination in the workplace, ranging from low levels of pay, bullying and harassment, lack of progression and overrepresentation in disciplinary and grievances. Conference believes that at a time when workplaces are under acute pressure, the danger of equality slipping off the agenda is at its highest.

Conference notes that racism is still in existence in our society and workplaces. The pervasive nature of racism continues to blight the employment and promotion prospects of Black people. This exacerbates the cycle of discrimination, disadvantage and deprivation which is compounded by the impact of government cuts and austerity measures.

Conference calls on WET Service group executive to work with the NBMC to:

- i) Seek to ensure that branches use and promote the UNISON Guidance on Challenging Racism in the Workplace
- ii) Seek to ensure that branches utilise the resources produced on fighting cuts for example the UNISON guidance for branches on Public Sector Equality Duties to negotiate improvements in equality at work.

## **Motions not admitted onto the agenda**

### **SOC Decision**

**The Business and Environment SOC ruled that this motion proposed action beyond the remit of the Conference.**

*Matters affecting the General Political Fund (GPF) are properly dealt with by the GPF Committee through its own structures, not service group conferences. The GPF Committee is the only body that can make decisions affecting any aspect of the internal running of the GPF. However, the Business and Environment SOC recognised that legitimate questions were raised by the motion therefore agreed to refer the matter to the GPF Committee.*

### **General Political Fund: Failed WET Bid**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

It is regrettable that the bid for funding for a study into the water companies and how they operate was turned down by the General Political Fund (GPF) and that they failed to grasp why it was asked for (as confirmed by the reason for rejecting it). If other bids had been accepted and ours rejected then it would have been because the bid didn't meet the criteria.

This year we were told no bid from any sector was approved by the GPF. This suggests either no bid fitted the criteria despite being put together by experienced parties or that the GPF didn't want to spend any money.

This sector may be the smallest in UNISON but on average it pays the highest subscriptions. At Yorkshire Water approximately 55% pay the GPF levy. Yet no-one has ever shown any interest in the GPF at our branch and we've never heard anyone from any other branch ask about it either. It is difficult to find anyone who has been to a meeting, knows when the group sits and who's on it. Are people voted onto it or co-opted from other groups? How much is its budget? Perhaps because of our apathy we got what we deserved in having our bid turned down.

It's time we took a bit more interest and ensure the WET sector is being treated fairly. We would like the WET Executive to find out more about how the GPF operates so we get an active representative from this sector onto it to help us be smarter and access funds in future.

### **SOC Decision**

**The Business and Environment SOC ruled that this motion proposed action beyond the remit of the Conference.**

*Motions cannot appeal directly to Conference delegates to undertake a proposed course of action. The proposed action could also have been undertaken via other means.*

### **Solidarity with Water Only Companies**

*Submitted by the Yorkshire Water branch*

The Water Industry Sector Committee is a success story when it comes to sharing information and supporting each other. We travel to meet representatives who can't get paid time off. However we can do better. Whilst most of the water and sewage companies send a representative and a report, with the exception of Portsmouth Water we have no other water only companies that attend. Cambridge Water was also a regular until its representative left the industry.

These other water only companies are Wessex Water, Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water, Bristol Water, Cholderton Water, Dee Valley, Folkestone and Dover, South East Water, South Staffordshire Water, Sutton and East Surrey Water, Tendring Hundred and Three Valleys.

Why don't they get involved? Are our contact details out of date, doesn't the contact bother to let the others in the branch know because he or she thinks it's a waste of time, is it because of lack of facility time? Perhaps there's one person doing it all in the branch and it seems another onerous chore on a heavy workload.

If the Water Industry Sector Committee is to develop we need to know what is happening in these branches and for the larger branches to help provide support. This week is in our favour. Delegates from some of these branches should be in this room or at National Conference. Some of the WET Executive and delegates here at the WET Conference will also be attending National Conference.

We propose a concerted effort be made this week for Water Industry Sector Committee members in this room who will be at National Conference to try and find these delegates or at least get up to date contact details so they can explain what Water Industry Sector Committee is and how it can help them.

**Amendments not admitted onto the agenda**

**SOC Decision**

**The Business and Environment SOC ruled that this was a negative amendment.**

*The amendment seeks to reduce the motion to a statement by effectively deleting the action called for in the motion. As such it seeks to fundamentally change the purpose of the motion.*

**Amendment to Motion 9: Safety of Dig Teams**

*Submitted by the United Utilities branch*

Delete all after United Utilities