

# 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference

## UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

**Brighton Centre**

**18 Jun 2017**

---

### **Organising and Recruitment**

---

Recruitment & Organisation

---

#### **1. The Importance of Branch Magazines in Water, Environment & Transport Branches**

This WET Conference, 2017 notes that the United Utilities branch produces a regular magazine entitled U3 which assists the visibility of UNISON in the many geographically spread workplaces and in turn, the retention of existing and recruitment of current non-members.

Other branches in the WET Service Group could benefit from producing their own versions specific to their own employers either in a satirical fashion such as U3 or in a format that suits their own circumstances.

Conference therefore urges all branches to consider producing branch magazines and calls on the Service Group Executive to consider inviting the joint editors of U3 to the 2017 WET Seminar to outline a presentation on best practice which will benefit the wider Service Group in respect of recruitment, retention and workforce visibility of UNISON.

*United Utilities*

---

#### **2. Pension Trustee Training in Water, Environment & Transport Service Group**

2017 Water, Environment and Transport Conference notes the lack of UNISON Pension Trustees within the WET Service Group membership.

Pensions is the one area UNISON can use influence probably more than any other in the current hostile political climate by using trained Trustees to ensure branches covered by our Service Group retain the best possible pension schemes.

One area that could be improved to encourage more WET UNISON members and activists to get more involved in pensions at Trustee level is basic training to cut through some of the myths that pensions belongs in the too hard to do box many believe is the case.

We therefore call on the WET Executive in conjunction with UNISON's pensions section to consider organising basic pensions training for those aspiring to become Trustees which may in turn assist recruitment of existing non-members with appropriate publicity around the training.

*United Utilities*

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

---

### **3. Contracting out of services in the Water Industry**

Much of the water industry does not directly deliver key services, but instead contract them out to private sector organisations. The kinds of services contracted out include meter reading, water pipe maintenance, water testing and facilities services. For those employees who are transferred to a new employer this can mean huge uncertainty over their jobs and almost inevitable moves to degrade their terms and conditions of employment. For those people who are directly employed by the contractor after the point of transfer it can mean working alongside people doing the same job, but on worse terms and conditions – the two-tier workforce.

UNISON has consistently opposed the practice of fragmenting service delivery both because of the impact it has on workers and the long-term impact on service quality. Performance league tables on issues such as leakages consistently show that those in the water industry who directly deliver services outperforming those that contract out.

Conference believes that UNISON branches organising in the Water Industry should take a two-pronged approach to this issue: both encouraging the water industry to insource their services and recruiting and organising more effectively with private contractors operating within the industry.

Conference calls on the WET Service Group Executive to:

1. Issue a briefing to all WET branches on the topic of outsourcing in the water industry, referencing the relevant UNISON guidance and training to support branches dealing with fragmentation.
2. Raise the issue of outsourcing with the water industry via the consultative forums which OFWAT organise with Water UK and to which the trade unions are invited.
3. Include how to organise within private sector contractors as a topic within the recruitment and organising training provided to branches.
4. Highlight this crucial issue in UNISON's 'Network' Magazine, the dedicated UNISON magazine for WET members.

***Southern Counties Water***

---

### **4. Environment Agency UNISON Members transferring to Defra**

This Conference recognises that on 2 February 2017, an announcement was made by Sir James Bevan, (Chief Executive, Environment Agency) that the Environment Agency's Corporate Services teams will transfer to Defra and that this transfer is expected to be completed by the end of September 2017.

Many of the employees involved in this transfer are currently UNISON members, across a range of Environment Agency branches. At the time of writing, UNISON has no formal trade union recognition within Defra. We have members who have expressed their wish to retain their UNISON membership and UNISON representation beyond this transfer.

## 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

We therefore call upon the Service Group Executive to take the appropriate steps to seek that UNISON members are supported by UNISON into this transfer and that all options available are explored in order to seek that UNISON is formally recognised by Defra for the purposes of bargaining, negotiation and representation.

*Environment Agency Nw Unison*

---

### 5. Under-Representation of Bus Sector

This Conference notes:

- A. The decline in UNISON membership in the Bus Sector.
- B. The difficulty in recruiting activists and forming viable Bus Sector branches.
- C. That to address the above, UNISON has increasingly moved members who work for bus operators into larger employer-led branches.
- D. That these decisions are determined locally based on the best solution for serving the interests of the members involved.
- E. That the organising arrangements that members have in the Bus Sector vary and can include
  - i. Single Bus Sector employer branches;
  - ii. Bus Sector members within a larger W.E.T. branch; and
  - iii. Bus Sector members within larger branch including none W.E.T. employers e.g. Local Government.

This conference believes:

- a. That Bus Operators are likely to have the smaller membership within a multi-employer branch, which can present a barrier to members in the sector becoming a delegate.
- b. That it is important for the integrity of the service group that all sectors represented are able to participate in policy making decisions for the service group and that representatives for the sector are available to speak and inform debate at decision making forums.
- c. That a review is necessary to ensure that new ways of organising strengthen the voice of the sector, rather than remove its voice from national decision making.

This conference resolves:

- 1) To mandate the service group executive to undertake analysis of UNISON membership in the sector to determine the number of members, number employers, and branch set up.

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- 2) To use this information to come up with proposals to 2018 WET and/or National delegate conference, in consultation with affected branches, to ensure there is sufficient participation from the bus industry in the service group national conference.

### *Transport for Greater Manchester*

---

#### **Negotiating and Bargaining**

---

##### **Bargaining**

---

#### **6. Protecting National Collective Bargaining through the PTF**

Conference notes that in recent months the employers at Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) have made clear their intention to serve notice to withdraw from the Passenger Transport Forum (PTF). This is a consultative body for the Combined Authorities and PTE's and also the venue for our national pay negotiations, involving TfGM, WMCA, and WYCA – recognising both UNISON and Unite.

In 2015 the TfGM employers attempted to leave the negotiating element of the PTF. This was resisted with a well organised and vigorous campaign led by the local Branch with the help of the National Organiser. It convinced the employers to stay within the PTF.

Now all three employers are going to attempt to move to local bargaining and it is obvious that the employers are determined to divide and conquer. This will inevitably lead to member's Terms and Conditions being degraded.

Conference calls on the WET Service Group Executive to:

Give all the assistance it can to local and national campaigns to preserve national bargaining through the PTF by

- a) Working with Labour Link to preserve and promote the PTF and national bargaining amongst the local Labour councillors who hold power and influence within the CA's to stop the employers withdrawing from the PTF.
- b) To communicate directly with those local Labour Councillors, who directly manage and oversee the Combined Authorities, and ask them to preserve the rights of the hardworking staff in the CA branches affected and ensure the continuation of collective bargaining at a national level through the PTF.

### *West Yorkshire Transport*

---

#### **7. Equality in WET Companies - National Equality Standard**

Trade unions and employers are dealing with an increasingly diverse workforce. There are higher proportions of women and people from black and minority ethnic communities in the workforce than ever before. The population is aging, with many

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

people intending to stay in work for longer and many trying to juggle work with caring responsibilities. There is greater recognition that the barriers that disabled people have faced in accessing work should be broken down and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and the issues they face at work have become more visible

Conference believes as well as WET employers abiding by employment law they can do more to promote equality in the workplace.

Yorkshire water is the first water company to commit to the National Equality standard, which sets clear equality, diversity and inclusion criteria against which companies are independently assessed and it has set up work streams on equality issues for example - gender, ethnicity and ability and has invited TU reps to be active members of each stream. This enables the branch reps to challenge and encourage good equality practice in the workplace.

Conference calls on the SGE to make WET branches aware of the National Equality Standard (or similar schemes which are supported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission) and provide branches with basic information on these schemes which can be used to promote equality with their employers during formal discussion.

*Yorkshire Water*

---

### **8. Race Inequality in the Workplace**

Conference notes that despite efforts to bring further equality into society, evidence shows that Black workers are still being held back in the job market. The amount of Black members holding senior posts in the Water, Environment and Transport (WET) employers still remains low, unemployment amongst Black people remains high - particularly amongst young Black people - and Black workers are also more likely to be in less secure forms of employment than White workers.

In a recent report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission titled, 'Healing a divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy', it is stated that a failure to tackle deep-rooted race inequality will exacerbate division in our society unless urgent action is taken. Hailed as the biggest ever review into race equality, the 73 page report looks at a number of aspects of everyday life including education, employment, housing, pay and living standards, health, criminal justice, and participation.

For our union, clearly it is important that we support our members both in and outside of the workplace, and how we respond to tackling widespread inequality must remain a priority.

In workplaces that inequality is still prevalent, Black workers with degrees earn 23.1% less on average than White workers, and a significantly lower percentage of Black members (8.8%) work as managers, directors and senior officers. Black workers are also in insecure forms of employment such as temporary contracts or working for an agency – this increased in the last 5 years by nearly 40% compared with a 16% rise for White workers.

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Unemployment is also a huge challenge. The unemployment rate amongst Black people is at 12.9%, and for young Black people in particular there has been a significant increase of unemployment. Apprenticeship opportunities are significantly lower for Black people, and Black men and women experienced some of the largest falls in full-time employment since the recession began and as the austerity programme continues.

It is sometimes difficult in workplaces for Black members to feel able to challenge this ongoing inequality. Some members have advised that they will not challenge or seek recourse if they feel they have been passed over for promotion. In addition, as there is now no legal requirement to carry out an Equality Impact Needs Assessment when reorganising services, being able to challenge where and why changes are made and the impact these have on Black workers can often feel overwhelming.

Conference notes that Branches and Regions continue to challenge employers when reorganisations are proposed; however, it is clear that inequality exists in many walks of life, particularly in employment. As a union we have a proud tradition of supporting Black members, this is particularly seen in our Black members Self Organised Group.

Conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to work with the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

- 1) Produce material for Branches and Regions to use to highlight the continued gap between Black workers who hold senior positions compared to White workers, with keys points on how to tackle this in the workplace;
- 2) Encourage Regions to work with Branches to ensure that all employers complete Equality Impact Needs Assessments when carrying out reorganisations and to ensure Black members take a lead role in scrutinising these assessments together with representatives from other SOGs; and
- 3) Encourage Branches to work with Employers to seek to ensure more apprenticeship opportunities are open to Black people

***National Black Members' Committee***

---

### **Campaigning**

---

#### Campaigns

---

### **9. Water, Environment & Transport Conference Health & Safety Event 2018**

This Water, Environment & Transport Conference notes the success of the WET H&S event of 2016 and past events and calls on the WET Executive in conjunction with UNISON's H&S unit to organise a similar event in 2018, noting that our Service Group has some of the riskiest occupations within our membership of the whole of our union.

***United Utilities***

---

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

---

### **10. The Water Framework Directive and UNISON members**

This Conference notes that the EU Water Framework Directive was adopted by the EU on 23 October 2000 and came into force in December 2000. The Directive established a framework for the protection of inland surface waters (rivers and lakes), transitional waters (estuaries), coastal waters and groundwater. It sought to ensure that all aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands met 'good status' by 2015.

This Conference also notes that the responsibilities conferred on water companies by the Directive are directly linked to jobs in various departments.

This Conference further notes that decision to exit the EU could impact on the commitment of the UK to abide by the Directive, and it could even be abolished and/or replaced as a result.

This Conference believes that it is vital that workers in the water industry are heard in any discussions on this matter during the exiting the EU negotiations, especially any implications for our members jobs, pay, and terms and conditions.

This Conference calls on the Water, Environment, and Transport service group executive to

- (i) monitor developments as regards any proposed changes to, or abolition of, the Water Framework Directive, and implications for our members jobs, pay, and terms and conditions;
- (ii) report as appropriate to members in the water industry, and in particular those whose jobs might be directly affected;
- (iii) call for UNISON members in the water industry to be consulted on any proposed changes, and respond to any Government consultations on this matter, or to be proactive if necessary in making our members views known via the relevant channels.

***National Young Members' Forum***

---

### **11. Canal and River Trust - Sink or Swim**

Conference welcomes and commends the work done by the Service Group Executive and UNISON members over recent years to support the transition of the organisation formally known as British Waterways into the Canal and River Trust.

Conference notes that the Canal and River Trust is now a charity trust and in order to support the organisational transition it is now heavily reliant on a grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). DEFRA have guaranteed this grant until the financial year 2026/27, with no guarantee of continued DEFRA grant funding after this period or if the period of the grant is extended there may be a substantial grant reduction.

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Conference, under this backdrop of uncertainty with Canal and River Trust's future funding it is our members that have taken the hit, with cuts to their pension scheme and terms and conditions in order to guarantee the stability of the Trust going forward. A 2017 UNISON survey highlighted that these changes have all contributed to the morale of staff at the Canal and River Trust being at an all time low and identified high levels of stress amongst the workforce. Management at the Trust have already signalled further reviews to terms and conditions and have embarked on a review of our 'on-call allowances' as well as a review of the nationally negotiated 'people policies', which may mean our members have to make difficult decisions once again.

Conference recognises that where members have campaigned they have been successful and Conference welcomes the Trust's commitment to pay the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage rates to in-house staff, but the campaign continues to ensure that outsourced staff are also paid the Living Wage in the future.

Conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to:

- 1) work with the Community Service Group Executive to launch a campaign to defend and protect member's terms and conditions;
- 2) work with the Strategic Organising Unit to run a recruitment campaign at the Canal and River's Trust, targeting specific workplaces supported by branch resources. This campaign will include a comprehensive mapping exercise of the Canal and River Trust members and workplaces;
- 3) work with Learning and Organising Services to develop new and existing reps within the Trust;
- 4) work with Labour Link and other sections of the union to petition ministers to secure stable funding for the Canal and River Trust going forward;
- 5) work with the Living Wage Foundation and the Trust to achieve Living Wage accreditation;
- 6) work with the Trust to determine some of the causes of the high levels of stress at the Trust and look at ways stress in the workplace can be reduced.

***Canals and River Trust***

---

### **12. Bus services in crisis**

Conference is concerned at the continued depletion of our bus services and welcomes UNISON's support for the Campaign for Better Transport and applauds the support from the General Political Fund for research into defending and improving our bus services.

Conference notes that although buses are the most flexible form of public transport, they receive far lower subsidies than rail services do; are being cut at an alarming rate and are not afforded the importance that they should be.



## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

The impact on our members is twofold.

Clearly there is a significant impact on our members who work to provide the bus service, who find themselves under increased pressure to deliver a decent service with ever decreasing funding, job losses and insecurity.

But there is also an impact on our members – not least those who work in the transport sector – who are service users as well as service providers, and who rely on the bus service for their transport to work. Statistically women are more likely to be bus users, and to have fewer alternative means of travel, particularly older women and those with young children.

Conference is disappointed that the Buses Bill, due to be passed February 2017 does nothing definite to halt these service cuts.

Conference believes that transport should be under public control to provide a sustainable, green, integrated affordable service for all, and that bus services should not be the Cinderella service of transport at the mercy of local authority spending decisions.

Further, Job security, decent pay, terms and conditions and adequate staffing levels are essential to meet the demands of the service.

Conference calls on the service group executive to work with all appropriate bodies within and outside UNISON to campaign for decent bus services, and for adequate government funding (to the equivalent spent on rail travel) to protect our members jobs and the services they provide.

***National Women's Committee***

---

### **13. Maintaining environmental protections following the UK's departure from the European Union**

This conference notes that a great deal of current UK environmental law has been derived from EU legislation over several decades, which in turn has ensured that the WET sector is good for the environment.

Yorkshire Water branch would like the WET sector to support the adoption of 'the Norwegian model' by our government, so that the UK would have to retain or re-enact most EU environmental legislation, to both protect the environment and ensure the safety of our members. This would include areas such as integrated environmental permitting, water and air quality, waste management and the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals Regulations 2006.

This conference calls upon the service group executive to;

1. Work with UNISON Labour Link to lobby government to adopt the Norwegian Model
2. Draw up a charter based on the principles determined above

## 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

3. Launch an action plan for branches to follow in promoting and embedding these principles in the work place.

*Yorkshire Water*

---

### **14. Tackling Health and Safety from the Inside**

This conference notes the ever increasing need for safety improvements in the WET sector and especially in the light of the ever decreasing enforcement from HSE and government cuts.

Yorkshire Water Branch would like the sector to adopt the approach being taking at Kelda where we have two Health and safety reps seconded into the company health and safety team ie tackling safety issues from the inside.

This conference calls upon the service group executive to:

- 1 Consult with YW branch to determine best practice
- 2 Draw up a charter based on the principles in 1
- 3 Launch an action plan to assist branches in adopting similar principles

*Yorkshire Water*

---

### **15. Competition in the Water Industry**

Over the last thirty years, the regulated market in water supply has enabled steady investment, predictable price increases enabling water customers to budget, steady improvements in water quality and low levels of customer complaint and dissatisfaction. Now, though, Ministers have expressed a wish to introduce competition for households, following the introduction of competition for commercial users in April 2017. OFWAT has published an analytical paper showing that in only two of four scenarios, would the average customer see any price benefit, and that this benefit would be very small. The introduction of competition for large users is already leading to chaotic reorganisation within the industry as companies separate themselves into retailing and operational arms, as required by the regulator.

Terms and conditions are already coming under attack as a result, as the new entities that are being created for large-user competition seek to deny union recognition, employ new starters on worse terms than existing employees and deny access to company pension schemes. These trends would be accentuated by the greater market and customer volatility that household competition would entail, as new entrant retailers, whose “innovation” consists of paying employees less and paring pension provision to the minimum, would arise.

We fear that Ministers intend that water should follow the same failed model of the electricity and gas markets, where competition has led to:

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- a) Recurrent mis-selling scandals in energy markets, resulting in fines and penalties of over £200m paid by energy firms since 2010
- b) 5 million complaints by customers to energy firms in 2015, and over 6 million in 2014
- c) An increase of customers on pre-payment meters since 1992 of more than 100% for electricity, and more than 300% for gas. These mean that poorer customers “self-disconnect” and prevent reliable figures for households without energy
- d) So many households in fuel poverty that the Coalition Government changed the definition of fuel poverty rather than dealing with the poverty itself

Conference calls upon the WET Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Meet with OFWAT and the Consumer Council for Water, to press the arguments for understanding the impact of competition for commercial users fully before any consideration is given to the case for extending this to the household sector;
- 2) Through Labour Link, work with shadow ministers to make the political case for maintaining the existing market arrangements for households;
- 3) Use all available campaigning methods to promote the effectiveness of existing arrangements and raise awareness of the risks to service quality represented by household competition, to Government, in Parliament, and through the media;
- 4) Work with branches to protect the terms and conditions of our members and meet the challenges created by increased competition.

### ***Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive***

---

#### **16. Ensuring strong environmental protections for the UK following exit from the European Union (Brexit)**

Regulations deriving from European Union (EU) legislation underpin the statutory environmental regulatory regime which safeguards the public and workers in all sectors in which UNISON organises. This particularly affects the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group - especially the water sector, where it drives activity and investment. The stability of the regulatory regime is clearly threatened by the UK's exit from the European Union. UK Government Ministers have said that existing regulations deriving from EU law will all be incorporated into UK law in the future. However, they have also signalled that all such legislation will be reviewed which may have adverse consequence for our members.

In January 2017, the Chair of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee expressed concerns that protections currently guaranteed under European Law have the potential to become ‘zombie legislation’ if the UK doesn't meet or exceed the minimum standards applied across the EU after leaving the EU, irrespective of the aims to enshrine current environmental protection as part of the planned Great Repeal Bill.

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Members in the WET Service Group are particularly affected by any uncertainty. Water companies unsure of the future requirements for regulatory compliance will slow investment until they have clarity - threatening the jobs of members.

Within the Environment Agency, the inspection regime is based around legislation deriving from EU directives and regulations. Uncertainty caused by the impending EU exit is likely to have two impacts. Firstly, it will increase job stress and work levels as more businesses and individuals are likely to flout existing law (believing that it will be weakened in the near future). Secondly, it will impede effective long-term planning by the Agency (which provides members with security as to the location and nature of their work).

Recognising the need for clarity, conference accordingly calls upon the WET Service Group Executive to:

1. Through Labour Link, work with shadow ministers to make the political case for preserving existing environmental regulatory requirements, safeguarding those protections into the medium term and seeking to ensure that future UK legislation maintains a position in line with EU environmental regulatory standards into the future;
2. Through Labour Link, work with shadow ministers to make the political case that a vibrant and thriving environment, protected by meaningful legislation delivers significant societal, economic and health benefits;
3. Work with environmental and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of positive environmental regulation, and to make a united case for Ministers announcing that there will be no changes made to regulations which would lead to deterioration of environmental conditions or prevent much needed enhancements;
4. Work with branches to secure our members' jobs and improve their work-life balance.

### ***Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive***

---

#### **17. Call Centre Charter – how far have we come?**

Conference notes the increasing numbers of our water, environment and transport members working in call centres. Call centres can leave workers chained to their workstations under extreme pressure to provide faster responses to more and more callers.

Conference welcomes UNISON's Call Centre Charter, launched in 2012, to seek to establish a decency agenda for these members, allowing them to work effectively and efficiently in safe work environments. This followed research for UNISON into call centre work which found high levels of workplace stress, bullying and harassment, leading to higher than average levels of sickness absence.

## 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Conference notes that while any worker can be subject to bullying and harassment, it disproportionately affects certain groups of workers including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers. UNISON's first annual equality survey, conducted over the summer of 2016, found that LGBT members faced particularly high levels of discrimination even amongst these survey respondents, most of whom were from disadvantaged groups. Two thirds of trans workers and a third of LGB members had experienced or witnessed workplace discrimination in the past year. This compares to a quarter of all members responding.

Our water, environment and transport members working in call centres report a range of issues including anti-LGBT abuse from callers. This is made worse by not being taken seriously by managers. Our LGBT members have little confidence in their managers' willingness or ability to address such abuse.

Conference believes it is time to review and refresh our work on the Call Centre Charter. Conference calls on the water, environment and transport service group executive, working with the business and environment equal opportunities working group, to:

- 1) Survey water, environment and transport branches on whether their employer has signed up to the charter;
- 2) If so, investigate:
  - a) how it is being implemented and
  - b) Whether it makes specific reference to tackling anti-LGBT abuse;
3. Urge training for managers and staff on LGBT equality issues and combating harassment and bullying;
4. Work with branches where the employer has not adopted the charter to negotiate its implementation.

### ***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee***

---

#### **18. Wheelchair Access on Buses**

Conference notes the Supreme Court ruling in January 2017 on the FirstGroup V Pauley case, and the issue raised under the Equality Act 2010 for "reasonable adjustment" and whether a bus companies policy or "provision criterion or practice" (PCP) was been met in relation to wheelchair users. In particular, whether a bus driver should compel other passengers, disabled or non-disabled, to vacate the area dedicated for wheelchairs if it is required by a wheelchair user.

Whilst the judgement does not state that it is an absolute rule or that drivers must enforce the vacating of a wheelchair space by a non- wheelchair user, the judges felt it would not be unreasonable for the driver to be expected to ask it to be more than a "favour", one even going as far to state that to coerce passengers it may not be unreasonable to refuse to move the vehicle for a short period of time.

UNISON is a proud and active supporter of disability rights, however, we feel that the Supreme Court ruling places too much pressure on drivers and other staff

## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

associated with passenger transport to deal with the issue with no actual legal support. This in its self is likely to increase the likelihood of conflict. Furthermore there is concern that the ruling may be used by employers to discipline staff for not been robust enough should they receive a complaint, in this regard.

Conference calls on the WET SGE to

1. Initiate a consultation with members from the areas of concern within the Bus and Passenger Transport Executive/Combined Authority branches, on the impact of this ruling.
2. Share the findings of the consultation with management of the bus companies, Combined Authorities and the Department of Transport with the aim to finding a workable solution to the issues raised.
3. To work with the bus companies, Campaign for Better Transport, disabled groups and sister trade unions via the TUC to draft a Code of Practice to protect frontline staff.

### ***West Yorkshire Transport***

---

#### **19. Defending the safety of our members in Transport**

This Conference believes that the failure to develop a safe, affordable and reliable integrated transport system means that not only is the UK adversely affected economically, but it also leads to unsafe working conditions for our members.

This Conference believes that as well as commercial pressures to cut costs, the customer experience is often extremely poor as services are either over-crowded, delayed, or cancelled. Frustration at poor service levels can be manifested in violent language or behaviour being directed at staff. Transport staff may be especially susceptible to experiencing such anti-social and criminal behaviour, particularly where they are in a lone-working situation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young workers are also disproportionately likely to be subject to such behaviours.

This Conference believes that negotiating for and winning a safe workplace is an essential demand and that our members in the transport industry deserve the protection of the union.

This Conference calls on the service group executive to conduct a health and safety survey of all transport members to identify key issues for a campaign to support this issue as a priority through the relevant bargaining arrangements.

### ***National Young Members' Forum***

---

#### **20. UNISON Activists on the boards of Water Companies**

This 2017 WET Conference notes that the Tories as usual have backtracked on a pledge which may have assisted ordinary workers via a seat on the Boards of Companies.

## 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

We believe that through our engagement with the Water Industry regulator OFWAT however that this initiative may not necessarily be dead in the water to excuse the pun as they are calling for wider engagement between employers and employee representatives to increase accountability amongst other things.

Conference asks the WET Executive to raise this issue with OFWAT as part of our shopping list agenda through periodic meetings with their Chief Executive or her direct reports which if it becomes reality will have a beneficial effect for members.

*United Utilities*

---

### Motions Ruled Out of Order

---

Action not specific to the Conference

#### **Motion Recruiting and organising Black members in the fragmented workforce**

It is important that Black workers and members are equipped for the challenges within the changing and evolving landscape of the UK today, especially in the Water, Environment and Transport (WET) sector. Conference recognises that the Black workers left behind after reorganisations are now more likely to be working in more isolated workplaces, under increased pressure and with fewer resources making them even more susceptible to unfair and unequal treatment. A high proportion of these Black workers work in the “fragmented workforce” where they experience low pay and poor working conditions are eligible to join UNISON.

Conference believes that recruitment is more than just handing out leaflets. Branches need assistance to reach out to Black workers and members in the fragmented workforce. These workers need a revised strategy to engage them as the traditional approach is weak at best and not effective at worst.

Our existing members in this niche sectors need to be organised and encouraged to become activists. They will then need continual support, bespoke training and mentoring.

UNISON should explore effective and clear pathways which will assist Black members in not only developing as activists, but becoming leaders for the future.

It is therefore important that financial reasons do not become a barrier to Black members in the fragmented workforce becoming active. If an employer does not recognise trade unions (UNISON), it does not have a legal duty to give members paid time off to attend training to become workplace reps or health and safety reps etc.

Conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to work with the NBMC to work with the NEC to:

1. Develop information and resources targeted at Black members and workers in the fragmented workforce.

## 2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

2. Consider ways to support members who wish to become workplace representatives but are unable to access paid time from their employer.
3. Develop further specific training targeted towards potential Black leaders

### *National Black Members' Committee*

---

Beyond remit of the Conference

#### **Motion Transport safety**

Conference notes that cuts in funding and profit driven provision of public transport services has had a critical impact on the safety of travellers and transport workers, with assaults, including sexual assaults, commonplace.

Further, since the EU referendum the number of xenophobic incidents has also risen, with Black and migrant workers and passengers facing the brunt of such attacks.

Little consideration is given to the safety of workers or service users when decisions are made on staffing levels; while accessible transport and workplaces are not prioritised when cost decisions are paramount.

Conference believes that public transport should be priority for national and local government and transport companies, and that staffing levels should reflect the needs of all users. Cutting staff who provide assistance to disabled passengers and reassure lone and vulnerable travellers is unacceptable, both to the passengers and to the staff who are placed under intolerable pressure in trying to maintain services whilst facing job insecurity and cuts.

Conference calls upon the service group executive to work with all relevant bodies in UNISON to:

1. campaign against cuts in transport services and for adequate funding for decent services;
2. provide information for branches on the impact of cuts on safety and accessibility for staff and passengers;
3. encourage branches to negotiate with employers for measures to improve safety and accessibility.

### *National Women's Committee*

#### **Motion e-balloting for Unions**

With increasing attacks from the current Tory Government along with changes to law with regard to ballots for trade union action we need to fight the restrictions placed on the use of technology for workplace ballots.



## **2017 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

The use of technology has enabled greater engagement with members, however we are only able to use electronic survey tools for consultative ballots.

It is the view of this conference that enabling unions to use technology to ballot members on workplace issue would increase the response levels and thus exceed the draconian restriction imposed by the Government.

This conference calls upon the service group executive to:

1. Investigate the possibilities of new technology to enable an increased response from members.
2. Campaign for changes to the restrictions placed on workplace ballots to allow electronic balloting of members.
3. Promote use of technology in the engagement with members.

***Yorkshire Water***

### **Motion Protection of the vulnerable from the opening of the water market**

With the opening of the water market for non-household competition it is only a matter of time to when the household market follows suit. The effects of an open market in the energy sector has impacted adversely on the vulnerable, as they are unable to access preferential rates due to circumstances outside their control.

It is the view of conference that we should not wait until the inevitable happened to campaign to ensure the vulnerable groups are protect against the impact of the looming shadow of water competition.

This conference calls upon the service group executive to:

1. Open dialogue with Ofwat to raise concerns of the impact of potential competition in the household water sector.
2. Work with consumer groups to support vulnerable groups.

***Yorkshire Water***