**Brighton Centre**

**14 Jun 2020**

**Organising and Recruitment**

**1. Young Members in the WET Service Group and the Young Workers Charter**

Conference notes that according to UNISON data, only 4.6% of UNISON members in Water, Environment and Transport service group are young members under 27 years of age.

Conference believes that to recruit, retain, engage and develop young members, it is important that their priorities are promoted and reflected in local bargaining across the Water, Environment and Transport service group.

UNISON’s Young Workers Charter, launched in November 2019, sets out the priorities for young workers in UNISON, as identified by young members themselves. These are: real Living Wage, fair employment, equality, training and development, and quality apprenticeships.

Conference asks the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

1. Promote the Young Workers’ Charter to branches across the Water, Environment and Transport service group;

2. Support and encourage employers in the WET service group to sign up to the UNISON Young Workers Charter;

3. Support branches to promote the individual priorities as set out in the Young Workers Charter, when bargaining with employers;

4. Work with the National Young Members Forum to promote UNISON membership among young workers in the WET service group.

***National Young Members' Forum***

**Bargaining, Negotiations and Equalities**

**2. Canal and River Trust - Health and Safety**

Conference notes that as part of recent re-organisation within the Canal and River Trust, Health and Safety Advisers were made redundant and accident numbers have increased.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

1. Raise concerns about the lack of Health and Safety expertise within the Canal and River Trust

2. Request Canal and River Trust management ensure a robust system of National and Regional Health and Safety Committees with full union representation is put in place

3. Work with the employers to ensure all Health and Safety Representatives have adequate facility time allocated to enable them to carry out these duties.

***West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Transport***

**3. The 1%**

Diversity and Inclusion is high on the agenda of all water companies. However, in a recent Diversity Workplace report by Yorkshire Water, it showed the percentage of disabled workers was only 1%, when the regional average of adult working age was 19%.

Businesses say they are keen to reflect the communities they work in - but does the data support this?

Yorkshire Water is to be applauded for its ‘open data sharing policy’ and the desire to be an inclusive employer.

The 1% also raises another important question, is there truly such a small number as per the results of the Yorkshire Water report?

Perhaps the workforce, especially our members, do not feel it safe to disclose they have a disability?

Are the systems not recording accurately or is there an environment which doesn't encourage reporting?

We call on the SGE to survey all water companies (expand to our colleagues in transport & Environment Agency if the SGE feels this appropriate) to find out.

1. What the reported percentage of disabled workers in each company is.

2. Publish a table detailing all water companies in the WET annual report for 2021.

3. Consult with UNISON Disabled Members Section and the National Executive, on the feasibility to develop a survey to find out why members fail to declare their disability in the workplace.

***Yorkshire Water***

**4. Supporting our members through regional Bus Franchising and its impact on regional bus services**

More passengers use buses than any other form of public transport to get to work, education, appointments and leisure interests.

The Bus Services Act 2017 provides Mayoral Combined Authorities with the powers to implement bus franchising in their area. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) closed a public consultation in January 2020 on proposals for a franchised bus network across the city region that could potentially lead to the first franchised bus network outside of London. The basis for this consultation is to seek to meet the GMCA aspiration in their ‘Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040’ of making travel easier across the area, with a recognition that a sustainable and accessible network will support economic growth.

Whilst the combined authority views the key challenge as to whether the proposal reflects the needs and priorities of both existing and potential passengers, Trade Unions are concerned that it’s the employees who also need to be considered in any proposals.

Regional devolution in England in areas such as Greater Manchester could potentially impact on UNISON members terms and conditions and their job security.

It is extremely important that UNISON continues to engage at all levels to influence appropriate stakeholders to protect members jobs, terms and conditions of service.

Therefore, conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to work with all relevant bodies to ensure our members' jobs and conditions of service are protected.

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

**5. Equipping our WET stewards to represent disabled members**

Conference notes that UNISON provides a high standard of training and support for stewards which includes a strong equalities dimension. However in WET service group branch stewards are often isolated from the union’s regional education structures and may struggle to get facility time for training and other learning events. Disability discrimination law is also complex and when it comes to supporting disabled members, WET service group stewards can sometimes feel a lack of confidence.

TUC research has found that disability issues are by far the most common equality questions workplace reps deal with. However the same research found that only 36% of trade union stewards felt they had enough guidance to do this work.

Conference therefore welcomes two new guides for stewards recently produced by UNISON’s disabled members self organised group that should be of benefit to WET service group stewards.

The new Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled Members aims to make it easier for stewards to identify whether a member is disabled and whether they might be entitled to additional protections. It should also help branches in the WET service group to identify potential cases of disability discrimination and failure to make reasonable adjustments at an earlier stage. The guide includes advice on representing disabled members at formal meetings such as grievances and disciplinaries, as well as how to negotiate reasonable adjustments.

For stewards in WET service group branches with limited facility time and a busy caseload, this guide should prove invaluable in offering them clear advice on representing their disabled members.

Conference also welcomes UNISON’s new Stewards Guide to Representing Deaf (native British Sign Language (BSL) users) members. This includes advice on organising BSL interpreters and on identifying some of the key barriers faced by our Deaf members that are relevant to WET workplaces.

Conference believes that it is also important to find ways of updating busy WET service group stewards – who cannot always attend formal training events - on changes to disability case law where this can assist in local representation and bargaining in WET workplaces.

Conference therefore calls upon the service group executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Publicise the new Stewards Guides to Representing Disabled Members and the new guide to representing Deaf (native BSL) members to WET service group branches
2. Seek ways of providing relevant updates to stewards in the WET service group on new disability discrimination case law and when it may apply.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

**6. Accessibility Passports and Access to Work in WET workplaces**

Conference notes that although disabled workers are legally entitled to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, some WET employers continue to delay or seek to avoid implementing reasonable adjustments. In particular, adjustments agreed with one manager may disappear when staff move teams or change managers. Staff with non-apparent impairments often find it even more difficult to get the adjustments they are entitled to.

UNISON’s disabled members self organised group surveyed almost 3,000 members last autumn (including members in the WET service group) and found that 67% of those who needed them had been turned down for reasonable adjustments. In many cases there was no reason given for the refusal and in other cases disabled staff simply received no response at all to their request – they were just ignored. Where adjustments were agreed workers often waited months or even years to have them implemented, with 23% waiting a year or more. Disability leave was virtually unheard of and most survey respondents did not know they could ask for it. As a result, many reported facing disciplinary and capability proceedings due to their sickness records.

Many of our members are also unaware that Access to Work funding may be available for the adjustments they need. Access to Work is often called “the government’s best kept secret” and there are low levels of awareness from both staff and employers in the WET service group.

Some employers have implemented workplace adjustment passports. This is an agreement between the staff member and their manager which outlines the barriers faced and the adjustments the employer has agreed to put in place, including but not necessarily limited to the legal requirement for “reasonable” adjustments. This passport approach allows the adjustments to follow the worker when they move teams or line management changes and minimises the need to renegotiate adjustments.

Conference notes that UNISON has recently produced a Reasonable Adjustment bargaining guide with a model policy and a template Accessibility Passport. This can be used to negotiate with local government employers and to agree a policy and a passport system. Key to UNISON’s bargaining guide is that the employer should respond to requests for adjustments within a specified timescale and should also agree a timetable for implementing adjustments, overcoming the twin issues of our members receiving no response to their request or waiting years for agreed adjustments to be put in place.

Conference further notes that UNISON has also published a Quick Guide to Access to Work which can be shared with WET service group members.

Conference therefore calls on the service group executive to:

1. Encourage branches in the WET service group to negotiate for workplace adjustment agreements and accessibility passports with their employers

2. Publicise UNISON’s new Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining Guide and Accessibility Passport to branches and regions

3. Publicise UNISON’s Quick Guide to Access to work to branches, regions and members

4. Encourage branches in the WET service group to share successfully negotiated passport agreements with UNISON’s bargaining support unit so that other branches can learn from them.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

**7. Ofwat Price Review (PR19) and its impact on pay, jobs, terms and conditions in the Water Industry**

This conference notes that the outcome of the PR19 price review process is that water industry will be required to cut customer bills over the five year period to 2025. Though the water industry in England and Wales were required to consult with local stakeholders in developing their plans, it is clear from the outcome that in practice they simply needed to comply with Ofwat’s view of the world, in which the overriding priority was bill reductions. This will impact directly on members, as we have seen all too often in the past – because the water industry in England and Wales will look to achieve these reductions through reducing job numbers, and the value of members’ terms and conditions including pensions. Employees will subsequently be expected to do the same, or often more, work with smaller teams.

This Service Group is therefore deeply concerned that Ofwat have been so ineffective in regulating the industry, and that this latest pricing review is yet another failure, from the point of view of employees – because it is bound to have a major impact on workers terms and conditions. This is starting to bite through restructuring and job losses in the industry deemed necessary to achieve the targets set by the regulator. We have raised this issue on several occasions at our engagement meetings with the Chief Executive of Ofwat, stating that the pricing review needed to achieve a balanced outcome for the long-term health of the sector, but there is no sign of any such thinking in the eventual outcomes. Indeed, the signal given is that water industry in England and Wales will now be “freed to get on with” slashing costs to continue making big profits at lower prices. Whilst failing to effectively target the vast amounts of money being made within the privatised industry, Ofwat has done little to protect the most vulnerable households in society - and our members jobs are already at risk as a result.

This conference calls upon the WET Service Group Executive, working with the Water Industry Sector Committee, to:

1. Monitor the impact of the PR19 outcomes on employees in the industry, and seek to counter any adverse effects;

2. Continue its engagement with Ofwat in order to promote the need for the regulator to take an active and interposing regulatory approach that takes into account the needs of workers, and the value of employee engagement;

3. Support branches in resisting any local proposals to attack terms and conditions.

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

**8. LGBT+ Self Organisation in Water, Environment and Transport branches**

Conference welcomes that many Water, Environment and Transport employers have set up employer LGBT+ networks. Allowing employers to reach out to LGBT+ employees and giving them the opportunity to meet to discuss issues.

Conference further welcomes that many Water, Environment and Transport branches have LGBT+ branch officers, which allows for LGBT+ issues to be raised at branch meetings, and for the branch to bargain with employers to make the workplace more inclusive. Many branches have also used LGBT History month, Bi visibility day, Transgender memorial day and many other LGBT+ days of visibility to recruit more members.

Conference recognises that some Water, Environment and Transport branches find it difficult to sustain their own LGBT+ self organised group, often because members do not want to attend two separate meetings. However, some branches have found ways to work with Employer networks, to promote the work that UNISON does for LGBT+ equality and work collaboratively. Some other branches have found that by holding their own self organised group meeting immediately before or after an employee network meeting helps increase attendance.

Conference recognises that equality is at the heart of UNISON, and self organisation is an essential tool to promote and carry forward the equality issues within UNISON.

The national LGBT+ committee call upon the Water, Environment and Transport service group to:

a) Encourage branches to use UNISON LGBT+ bargaining advice to make Water, Environment and Transport workplaces more inclusive for LGBT+ members;

b) Promote UNISON’s Trans Ally and Bi Ally leaflets to all members, and run the UNISON LGBT+ Ally training course

c) Promote the Bi+, Trans, Black LGBT+ and Disabled LGBT+ network meetings in order to encourage participation of underrepresented groups within the LGBT+ umbrella.

d) Encourage all Water, Environment and Transport branches to send delegates to UNISON’s national LGBT+ conference;

e) Promote regional and national LGBT+ self-organised groups to all Water, Environment and Transport branches.

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

**9. Unnecessary gendering in the Water, Environment and Transport sector**

Conference notes that following National Delegate Conference in June 2019, the LGBT group became a LGBT+ group, showing that we promote inclusivity within our group and that UNISON is inclusive of all LGBT+ members.

Conference further notes that an increasing number of people, including those working in the Water, Environment and Transport sector, identify as gender fluid or non-binary, not feeling comfortable in thinking of themselves as simply male or female. Their gender identity is more complicated than that, with some people not identifying as solely male or female, but rather identifying as both, neither or something entirely different. Non-binary workers can face particular ignorance and prejudice at work, experience harassment and face policies, systems and procedures, from dress codes to personnel databases, which do not acknowledge or accommodate their identity.

Conference is clear that gender matters when it comes to tackling workplace sex discrimination, unequal pay and the host of other inequalities faced by women. However, conference believes that there are many gendered policies and practices across the Water, Environment and Transport sector that have no place in furthering women’s equality and which exclude and ignore the existence of non-binary workers.

Conference further notes that despite the recommendations of the 2016 parliamentary enquiry on trans equality recommending that the Government look into legal recognition of non-binary people, this has not yet happened.

Despite non-binary gender identity not currently being recognised in UK law, many organisations including the HMRC, DVLA and indeed UNISON’s membership records system acknowledge it. This shows UNISON as a contemporary and forward-looking union which boosts our ability to recruit the next generation of Water, Environment and Transport members and activists.

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

1. Encourage branches to review national and company agreements and local policies for unnecessary gendering;

2. Work with the women’s and LGBT+ self-organised groups on guidance on inclusive language in agreements which raises awareness of non-binary identities;

3. Encourage the negotiation of inclusive language in Water, Environment and Transport agreements and policies, and of inclusive practices and procedures across our Water, Environment and Transport workplaces;

4. Encourage branches to request training for staff working in call centres on the importance of using non gendered language;

5. Publicise UNISON’s work for LGBT+ equality and non-binary inclusion in Water, Environment and Transport recruitment initiatives, particularly those aimed at younger workers.

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

**10. Recruitment and Retention – a targeted plan for Black workers**

Recruitment and retention have rightly been the key priority for UNISON over the last 18 months and initiatives such as Grovember and the activity in May have ensured that our membership has grown and has increased UNISON's visibility in workplaces however further work is still be done particularly amongst engaging with Black workers. This should include working with relevant bodies in UNISON to develop a recruitment strategy that involves Black community groups. We know that:

1. Current strategy focuses on recruitment and retention through workplaces and utilises the stewards to achieve it.

2. Historically Black members are spread across multiple cities/workplaces, and at times they can be the only Black person in a workplace.

3. Current UNISON membership benefits, e.g. insurance plan, car insurance, home insurance, funeral, lottery, Thompsons etc. but could these be adapted to meet Black member needs i.e. extended insurance policy for parent and immediate family abroad.

Benefits to UNISON

A. Increase in income from all the new subscriptions.

B. Specific targeted recruitment will bring about diversity and opportunities to those that would be otherwise marginalised in our community.

3) UNISON influences the political arena through Labour Link. Recruitment of migrant workers strengthens UNISON’s position within the migrant population and Black members.

Targeted recruitment will bring about diversity and fresh ideas and multiculturalism, which can help in organising and recruitment and community cohesion.

Although UNISON’s current strategy is to use stewards in recruitment within high-density unionised workplaces, a lot more needs to be done around Black members’ recruitment.

We call upon Water, Environment and Transport Service Group to:

I. Work with the National Black Members Committee to explore and develop a targeted recruitment strategy for Black members.

II. Reach out to Black members groups within the service, where Black members meet and where Black members are likely to work in the public sector and also be in low paid jobs and engage with Young Black members as a critical priority for the service over the next 12 months

***National Black Members' Committee***

**Campaigning**

**11. Fatigue in the Water Industry**

Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Conference 2020 is increasingly concerned at the levels of fatigue experienced by UNISON members employed in the Water Industry and potentially in other Sectors covered by the Service Group.

Staffing levels being butchered to the bone by employers in the Water Industry is the major cause of fatigue with members covering more than their contractual work and hours.

With renationalisation of the Water Industry unlikely to occur now for at least 5 years this issue is likely to only get worse as Water Companies remain profit driven in preference to delivering a fully staffed quality service to the public.

This Conference calls on the Executive to work with UNISON’s National Health and Safety unit to explore developing a best practice guide to assist members in dealing with fatigue which will undoubtedly continue for the foreseeable future.

***United Utilities***

**12. ‘Stop Work' Methods- should there be a National Standard for water companies?**

This conference notes the ever-increasing need for safety improvements as fatalities and serious accidents, incidents and near misses continue to occur year on year in the Water Industry.

On 6 November 2019 at Thames Water, a senior technician trapped and entangled his right arm in a conveyor he was working on at the time. This incident could have very easily been a fatality, and it was only through the efforts of 11 ambulance staff that the technician was stabilised enough so that he could be taken to hospital for further treatment. He received lacerations and multiple fractures so severe in nature, his arm later had to be surgically amputated.

This service group has continued to highlight the dangerous working environment of our members by sharing good practice and holding UNISON health and safety seminars for our reps.

We know there are varying methods and levels of commitment to the ‘stop and think’ principles for the safety of our members. But conference, is it time there was a golden rule to run through every water company? This would ensure the same high standard for all who work in the water industry.

Therefore, this conference calls upon the Service Group Executive (SGE) to:

Work with UNISON’s National Health & Safety Unit, HSE, and any other relevant bodies to see if a national standard of ‘Stop Work’ method is possible, to be made up from the best of all current water schemes.

***Yorkshire Water***

**13. Environment Agency commitment to go ‘Zero Carbon’**

 The Environment Agency in October 2019 announced its very stretching ambition for tackling climate change; to become a net zero carbon organisation by 2030, and, if possible, an absolute zero carbon organisation by 2050. Whilst recognising the good work done so far in achieving a 48% reduction in operational carbon emissions, compared to what was achieved in 2006/7, something much more radical needs to be done to really make a difference. This means tackling more difficult elements of its business. A huge proportion of the Agency’s carbon footprint comes from the large quantities of concrete and steel used in building flood defences, and pumping enormous quantities of water also plays a very significant role. Neither of these is easy to remedy, but if successful, the Agency will be an exemplar to other organisations and businesses, in the UK and beyond. Other changes will need to be made, and some of these are already underway, such as the transition to electric vehicles, more resource efficient offices, etc.

Conference welcomes this huge commitment by the Agency in setting its target, as we recognise that tackling the climate emergency is the biggest challenge facing humankind. However, in meeting this goal conference urges the Agency to not lose sight of its responsibility in protecting the population against the effects of extreme weather conditions such as intense floods and droughts. It must also remember the needs of its workforce.

To achieve this target there is no doubt that the Environment Agency will need to find new monies from the Treasury as its existing levels of revenue are inadequate for it to confront the scale of the challenge the organisation has set itself. The huge floods resulting from the winter storms of 2020 immediately provoked widespread calls for more funding for better flood defences. Government policy must also align to allow these targets to be met. Conference is also under no illusion regarding the potential impact it may have on those that work in the Agency, whose pay, terms and conditions should not be undermined to subsidise the costs.

Conference therefore calls on the WET Service Group Executive to:

1. Map and continuously monitor the net impact this may have on members work to ensure pay, terms and conditions are not compromised by the implementation of this ambition;

2. Engage with the EA through the EA Sector Committee and National Negotiating Group to understand and shape the EA’s approach to achieve net zero carbon emission by 2030, bearing in mind the need for no adverse impact on homes, communities and employees;

3. Work with the relevant bodies to lobby the government and opposition to

a) Invest more resources in the Environment Agency to allow it to properly tackle the climate emergency;

b) Develop appropriate supporting policies that facilitate the work of the Agency

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

**14. Gender pay gap – we need more women engineers**

Conference notes that the gender pay gap in the UK is one of the highest in Europe at 17.3% and is concerned that in the Water, Environment and Transport sector, although some employers have been working hard to reduce their gap, notably Thames Water, others have gaps which are significantly higher than the industry’s mean average of 11.7% and higher even than the UK average – Affinity Water at 22.5%, Bristol Water at 20.2% and South East Water at 23%.

Women tend to work in customer facing and support roles rather than engineering which is heavily dominated by men. The fact that engineering roles attract higher salaries is a factor in the gender pay gap.

Conference believes that gender barriers need to be addressed and that as a predominantly female trade union UNISON should lead the way in calling for action from the industry. We believe we need more visible female role models and we need louder, clearer leadership and targets. We also need a range of internal policies and programmes – for example, on flexible working and changes to recruitment practice. We need to see the industry taking positive steps to encourage women to apply for traditionally male roles and to support their career development.

Conference congratulates the National Women’s Committee on the #bridgethegap campaign and gender pay gap bargaining tools launched in April 2019. We welcome UNISON’s trailblazer project branches (and employers) who will work with UNISON using our bargaining guidance to develop action plans to close the gap and share their learning to improve UNISON’s overall approach.

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

1) Ensure that closing the gender pay gap is included as a priority in bargaining with WET employers

2) Work with the sector to develop visible female role models, encourage flexible working, change recruitment practices and attract women to work in traditionally male roles such as engineering

3) Work with the National Women’s Committee to encourage WET branches to participate in UNISON's national gender pay gap trailblazer project

***National Women's Committee***

**15. Dealing with noise on operational sites**

2020 Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Conference notes that UNISON members employed in some Sectors of our Service Group experience hearing difficulties during and post-employment caused through noise on operational sites particularly in Water.

Pumping stations are particularly noisy but all areas of plant where noise exceeds permissible limits should (but often don’t) have warning signs instructing of the necessary mandatory use of ear protection.

Often, ear defenders don’t constitute part of PPE and where this occurs, disposable ear plug dispenses should be routinely provided and used.

Regular reviews of such sites are necessary to ensure noise levels haven’t changed and that appropriate signage is maintained as well as registers created and updated.

This Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to work with UNISON’s National Health and Safety unit to develop a “best practice” toolkit in this regard to benefit the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of UNISON members both whilst working and in later life.

***United Utilities***

**16. Safety whilst driving**

This Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Conference notes that some UNISON members employed in Sectors within our Service Group continue to use phones albeit hands free whilst driving causing potential harm to themselves and others.

Of particular concern are those who deal with customers whilst driving who may become irate and distract our members causing potential road hazards.

Conference calls on the Executive to work with UNISON’s National Health and Safety unit to develop a policy for branch usage in negotiating with employers to ensure members stop the call, stop driving or better still keep their phones switched off whilst driving which will benefit the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our members in the Service Group as well as other road users.

***United Utilities***

**17. Shift working health issues**

This Conference is concerned about the health risks of UNISON members employed as shift workers in the Water industry and possibly other Sectors covered by the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group.

Regular shift working causes disturbed sleep patterns which in turn can affect concentration levels which can then cause potential Health and Safety issues whilst undertaking tasks.

The Executive in conjunction with UNISON’s Health and Safety unit are asked to undertake a survey of branches in the Service Group to evaluate the scale of the problem and develop a guide for branches to use to evaluate the potential of recompense for members affected as well as reducing the necessity of shift working.

***United Utilities***

**18. Climate Crisis – Doing our bit**

The world is facing a terrible threat, not only affecting our way of life and those of the billions across the globe, but also animal and plant life – as witnessed by the destruction of coral reefs due to ocean warming and drought and bush fires destroying hundreds of hectares of woodland.

The water industry, transport, and the Environment Agency branches all have a vested interest in reducing our reliance on carbon based energy. This conference recognises that the WET service group needs to do its bit in reducing our carbon footprint. Therefore this conference asks that the Service Group Executive:

1. Explore ways in which WET branches can encourage their employers to work together to share facilities – such as EV charging points – to minimise their carbon footprint.

2. Explore ways in which WET branches, both regionally and nationally, can work together to minimise their carbon foot prints.

3. Produce a guide to branches on possible ideas, case studies, methods on best practice in minimising branches’ and their employers’ carbon footprint.

***Yorkshire - Humberside Region***

**Motions Ruled Out of Order**

Beyond remit of the Conference

**Motion Amendment to Standing Orders of Water, Environment and Transport conference**

Conference resolves to create a new standing order in the Water, Environment and Transport Standing Orders (Section 3 Motions & amendments).

add new point

3.4 Each motion shall contain no more than 500 words (except composites) and each amendment shall contain no more than 250 words.

***West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Transport***