

Isle of Pride

Adam Hodgson and John McSwiggan

Situated in the Irish sea, between Ireland and Great Britain, the Isle of Man is a self-governing British Crown Dependency with its own legal system which for geographical convenience is covered in UNISON by the North West.

It had been over a decade since the UNISON North West LGBT+ Group first started talking about organising on the Isle of Man with an activist from their national branch who had attended LGBT+ Conference, so their first Pride event in 2020 sounded like a perfect opportunity to take our organising agenda over to the island. Unfortunately, like many events, COVID put a stop to their first event, however they bounced back with a smaller event in 2021 which we were unable to get to, so their 2022 Pride date



was cast in stone in our diaries and we prioritised it over what ended up being six pride events on the same day in the North West.

Getting four people and two cars to an island on a ferry was surprisingly more challenging than we anticipated, however we eventually arrived Friday evening and the promenade lit up in rainbow colours was a sign of what was to come.

We met up with the local branch secretary on Saturday and set up our stall. They dashed off to buy us a notebook so we could capture contact details for any actual or potential members on the island and assist them with mapping and

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having attended this event to make them more inclusive and we look forward to building on the event next year. We've encouraged our colleagues in the other regional self-organised groups and the regional young members forum to consider incorporating the Isle of Man into their activity programmes going forward as well, and our reports about the event even spurred the Regional Convenor to ask for contact details for the Branch Secretary.

With most boroughs in the North West having their own Prides, it can be easy to forget the impact those events have on their local communities, but with this being the only Pride event on the island, it felt like everyone had gone all in to make the day a success. It felt like a community event, but with the organisation of some of the largest Prides in the North West. It was a genuine delight to be there and we cannot wait to revisit the island.

organising their members whilst we made our way to the march location. Our new sail banners (one of the reasons why we needed two cars) really stood out and in a march of a few hundred people clearly underlined that UNISON were there. Although their second Pride, this was the first time a march had been organised so we felt very privileged and recalled the last time we knew about UNISON marching for LGBT+ equality in the Isle of Man, back in 1983 where NALGO – one of the unions that merged to form UNISON, marched.

We captured pages of contact details and identified groups of people who needed UNISON, from two people involved in the local LGBT+ youth organisation who were pushing to improve opportunities for their young folk, to a number of school support staff who had been downgraded in a restructuring exercise and felt like they had no voice. Our workplace priority voting boxes greatly assisted in engagement, and the Isle of Man continued the trend of voting for a fair pay rise more than any other topic.

The event was a reminder that the Isle of Man have their own legal system, meaning they have more progressive LGBT+ rights in

some areas (such as a full ban on conversion therapy) but are still behind the UK in other areas (such as still having a ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood). We will be reviewing our approach to communications and engagement



UNISON North West LGBT+ Group
about 3 months ago



In 1983, NALGO (one of UNISON's predecessor unions) had a Conference in the Isle of Man. Over 200 union delegates marched for gay rights through Douglas and vowed not to return to the island until the law criminalising homosexuality was repealed. Many other unions followed suit. Today, we proudly joined the [Isle of Pride](#) march demonstrating how far LGBT+ equality has come, and how many people care about taking it further. We're delighted to be part of that journey.



It's not as simple as Black and White

Dettie Gould

Even when language changes, people often do not.

People have memories of struggle of bullying of discrimination of fear of protest of bravery. Words are only afraid of autocorrect.

Shakespeare spoke of a rose by any other name so maybe words don't matter.

Toni Morrison said definitions belong to the definers, not the defined. So maybe it's time to redefine and own the freed self just like activist have over the years and taken words that have harmed us and changed them in to rallying cries were here were queer and we're not going shopping. I remember a time Queer was a term of sheer hatred and now there's a mainstream makeover tv programme with the word in the title alluding to the fact only gay men can improve your sartorial outlook.

The organising definition Black that we currently use in UNISON is Black with a very large B political Blackness the collective struggle of everyone that does not share a skin privilege. As Black activists around since the invention of the Southall Black sisters based in a now South Asian identified part of London; we used that term to describe all women who had experienced racism and sexism simply because of skin colour.

Now with European migration we accept there are those who experience prejudice because of where they come from but have the same skin colour as they're oppressors. Note I said prejudice

not racism. We have to touch the honesty and say that those who are not Black or Brown or any other skin colour that isn't White experience skin discrimination differently hence the problem with terms like BME or BAME these groupings can contain people who do not change a view of a room before they've even opened their mouth. Because on first sight, they are perceived to be the majority.

Hence our safe caucus space where we can be free to engage with each other and share our common experiences to make foundations for change.

The acronym BAME and the initialism BME. 'BAME' stands for 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic' and 'BME' stands for 'Black and Minority Ethnic'. The terms are widely used by government departments, public bodies, the media and others when referring to ethnic minority groups. Note again I say others. This term was not invented by us, it was invented for us as a convenient way of describing us without humanising us.

We all have an ethnicity so as an extension we need to talk about ethnicity appropriately. I am pleased that organisations are beginning to listen and ditch the unhelpful acronyms.

However, the question remains on how we want to organise. It may be time to discuss what's changed for us. A few things have not changed: structural and institutional racism that's still with us. The move to the right across the UK and Europe keeping racism alive.

With that as a backdrop we need to be stronger together and



perhaps a new badge reflecting our collective strength and diversity in activism is needed.

As a Black Lesbian. I'm comfortable with strength.

The capital B should stay to mark out colours that speak about ethnicity not colours you find in a crayon box. Black and Brown. The words chosen by people to describe themselves. A new generation of activists have become definers as Morrison said and you know what, I'm good with that.

I have heard and used BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour)

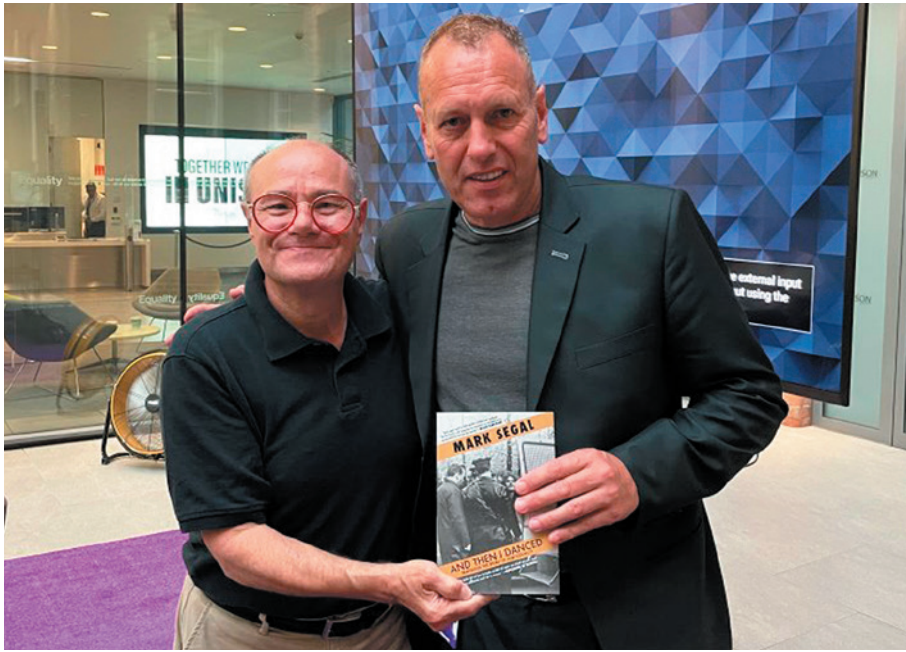
I feel the shivers. Yep the colour word.

I remember I time when we were called coloured it's still reprehensible when stood alone when used because a white person thinks it's more polite than Black.

However, in this context it feels reclaimed powerful and even audacious.

I've seen and heard POC which I'm less fond of.

However, this isn't about me this us about us. We are still Black but we are so much more.



Legendary LGBT+ campaigner visits UNISON

Patrick Young • Photos by Dan Baber and Ben Archell

This may sound like a hyperbolic statement but it happens to be true; Mark Segal is a man who helped to make the world a better place.

With over fifty years of activism on behalf of the LGBT+ community, Mark has made a decisive impact on equal rights, with the UK's leading LGBT+ organisation even taking it's name from the most famous event associated with him. In 1969 The Stonewall Inn was one of the few places in the United States where gay people could socialise, drink, have fun and, most importantly

for Mark at the time – dance with friends. However, Stonewall patrons were constantly subjected to appalling intimidation and threats by the police – until that famous night they were pushed too far. 'The riot was about the police doing what they constantly did; indiscriminately harassing us. The police represented every institution of America that night: religion, media, medical, legal, and even our families, most of whom had been keeping us in our place. We were tired of it'. Mark's high profile brand of direct action – which famously included storming live television studios to protest gay rights – did not always win him friends within the community, some of whom still feared the attention he brought

them. However, it led to remarkable successes, including some of the first ever legislation protecting LGBT+ people from discrimination.

Mark's introduction to activism came through his grandmother, a suffragette who took him to his first civil rights demonstration at the age of 16. Though inspiring, he remained acutely aware that there were at the time no national movements on behalf of gay people. Visibility is a key issue for Mark, and a fundamental motivation for the original series of Pride Marches. The fact that gay people have been marginalised and hidden from view has made them easy targets for the right – and Mark believes that the most effective way of countering that is to be unashamedly visible and proud. 'Just by being out at work you are on the forefront of LGBT+ struggle, showing exactly who we are; proof positive of a positive community. Strong individuals who are making a difference'.

Many of today's activists fear that the Pride movement has drifted too far from its origins as a political protest, and Mark agrees. He encourages us to 'reclaim Pride' by asking the older generation what it was intended for – a 'fight for social justice, founded on ideas of inclusion and diversity. A demand for acceptance.' The creeping commercialisation and corporatisation of many of today's Prides does not reflect its original values. Mark encourages the gay community to be mindful of its history, something he thinks we 'do not celebrate enough'. He enjoys searching for the LGBT+ people of the past, including our own Alan Turing, who's appalling treatment parallels that of many American's in that era: 'gay people then were facing forced 'treatment' through drugs, incarceration, even lobotomies.' Another of his favourite figures is Baron Fredrick von Steuben a pivotal figure in the American revolution 'who never dated a woman, only dated men'. No less



than George Washington remarked that 'without [him] there would be no United States of America!'

Mark has long worked in partnership with trade unions, who he credits with helping to build the gay community; quite literally - constructing offices and other establishments for LGBT+ organisations! From the 1980's onwards unions were happy to insist that work contracts included protections for their gay members. Many of our readers may have faced a lack of understanding within the labour movement, with members sometimes questioning why we dedicate resources to LGBT+ equality, and not understanding why gay rights should be a trade union issue. Mark recalls a speech he gave to the Stagehand Union when he came across this same objection. He asked how many people in the room were of Irish heritage, Italian heritage, Jewish, or from another minority group? Members raised their hands. 'Your rights were fought for' he said - 'you were the oppressed people who were barred from working in the trade. Now it's your turn to give something back and help others who have faced discrimination'.

These and other experiences were the basis for a fascinating,

funny, and sometimes shocking talk at UNISON Centre this summer, as Mark spoke at special event in association with our friends at Medway Pride Radio. Our General Secretary Christina McAnea welcomed Mark to London and reaffirmed UNISON's commitment to the LGBT+ community. Christina spoke passionately about UNISON's role in defending the rights of transgender people, telling the audience that 'I have never felt, as a woman, that my rights were threatened by giving rights to transgender women'. She was then joined on stage by Shea Coffey, of Medway Pride Radio, and artist Jonathan Ash, as they

presented Mark with a special gift; a portrait of his hero Alan Turing.

When interviewed for this article UNISON asked Mark if he had any final words for our members. 'Visibility destroys stereotypes.' he said, '...you were working right throughout the pandemic risking your lives. You were not afraid to continue to work in the worst of circumstances, whether in hospitals, care homes, or other public services. There's a myth that gay people are weak. You're proving that they're anything but weak.'

Mark's autobiography 'And Then I Danced: Travelling the Road to LGBT Equality' is available to buy from all good bookshops.

Gender neutral language is important

Sophie Robinson

Gender neutral language or gender-inclusive language allows for the use of communication which avoids any bias toward a particular sex or gender. This includes the avoidance of using male and female terms.

It's history in English language stems back to the feminist movement in the 1970's. Concerns were raised about the 'sexist' nature of the English language, and this brought about a gradual change over a number of years. An example of this would be policeman which was changed to police officer.

It has been suggested by some, that in countries who use languages such as Spanish, where objects are classified as masculine or feminine, there is less gender equality.

In more recent times there has been an increase in emphasis placed on the use of gender-neutral language and in particular pronouns. For many LGBT+ people, pronouns are an extremely important way of communicating an individual's

identity. This is particularly important for those who identify as non-binary. Many languages don't have gendered pronouns but in English we clearly do. By making small tweaks to our language usage, we can go a long way to respect non-binary individuals and may have the additional benefit of increasing overall gender equality. Terms such as 'he/she' can easily be replaced with 'they', making sure everyone is included.

Other examples of gender-neutral language include titles, using Mx in place of Mr, Mrs, Miss etc. Family terms such as partner and sibling can also be used to replace gendered terms for relationships. It can take a bit of time to get used to, but its not difficult.

UNISON's National LGBT+ Committee is committed to ensuring all UNISON materials, including the Rule Book, have gender neutral language and this is an ongoing aspect of our work programme.

If you would like to learn more, contact Out@unison.co.uk

Supporting our young LGBT+ members

Jack Anderson-Player

UNISON's young members are the future of our union. It's important that the whole union takes young member issues and the development of young activists proactively. According to the TUC, young people are more likely to experience unemployment, underemployment, low wages, casual and temporary work, zero-hours contracts and workplace exploitation. Young workers are also least likely to be in a trade union, know their rights or have the skills or the knowledge to demand more from their employers. The additional pressures of being LGBT+ and young however can make the experience even more of a challenge as we navigate further inequalities.

UNISON has passionate young members across the UK. To help support young LGBT+ activism, the LGBT+ Committee have established a network of young LGBT+ workers enthused to tackle LGBT+ issues that continue to affect them and their colleagues. We already have 60 activists who are involved and will benefit from buddying with National LGBT+ Committee members to develop their knowledge and skills. Young people are the future of what we are going to achieve in UNISON for LGBT+ people and it's never been more important to keep doing what we're doing and more. No one has it easy, but everybody deserves work security with a living-wage income and freedom to be who they are without discrimination or harassment by anyone.

If you a young LGBT+ member and are interested in joining the network, please email: out@unison.co.uk

Factsheets! What are they and, more importantly, where are they?

Eileen Best

These little gems are one of the most important items in your armoury as trade union representatives in this ever-changing world.

We can't all be experts in all fields and the factsheets help us walk the often tricky road to negotiating better terms and conditions for our members.

From engaging with Employer Forums to Transgender rights at work there's a factsheet to help you. We can't possibly be all things to all people and so we task groups of people within UNISON who have specific knowledge about the issues our members are faced with daily to compile these factsheets.

- Do you want to start a SOG in your workplace? There is a factsheet to help you.
- Do you want to find out about the Menopause and Work? There is a factsheet to help you.
- Do you want to promote the use of the correct pronouns? There is a factsheet to help you.
- Do you want help on Sickness policy? There is a factsheet to help you.

There are also factsheets to help you get to UNISON LGBT+ conference and celebrating our history and



the massive steps towards equality that we have won.

There are factsheets on most aspects of work life, and they are updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in the law and workplace conditions. In these times when our rights as trade unionists are under constant attack, we need to be using the most up to date information that we have.

The factsheets are updated when things change so that we can ensure that you have the very best information at your fingertips to work with employers in seeking the best conditions for our members.

You can find these amazing resources at www.unison.org.uk/search/factsheets

A journey towards union recognition – Proudly Stonewall

Phillippa Scrafton

This year, UNISON launched its trans equality campaign after a unanimous motion passed at our National Delegates Conference recognised the importance of the union being loud and visible in support of our trans members. I am one of those members, and I continue to be proud our everything our union has done for LGBT+ people, especially trans members.

I've been a UNISON member since 1993 when our union was formed. Back then, I worked for the local council in Darlington and, like many new members, I didn't really know a lot about the role of trade unions but I was keen to learn and there was a real need for stewards in my workplace. My first real involvement was as a young members officer, then as I got more involved in the work of the branch, I took on other roles within the committee, but it was only when I became the LGBT+ officer shortly before I transitioned did, I really understand just how important UNISON was to become to me, or how important our work is.

For the last twenty years, I have campaigned for equality and fairness, continued to challenge discrimination and, I hope to live up to the values of our trade union. Along the way I've been privileged to be part of UNISON's incredible journey towards trans inclusion. I've stood shoulder to shoulder with LGBT+ colleagues and allies to achieve our aims, and I continue to fight for our members wherever they are. Some of you may know my UNISON journey, indeed my route to trans activism began in our LGBT self-organised group as it was back then. Now, nearly twenty years later we are proudly an LGBT+ SOG, and



we are reaching more members, supporting more workplaces, and amplifying even more voices.

In the same way I feel proud of my UNISON work, I was equally proud in 2017 when I started working for the LGBT+ charity Stonewall. The charity, as most of you will know was founded in 1989 by a small group of people who had been active in the struggle against Section 28 of the Local Government Act. Now in 2022 Stonewall is renowned for campaigning and lobbying for LGBTQ+ equality throughout the UK and internationally, and for the last five years I have proudly been part of that work.

Something else I have been working towards at Stonewall for the last five years is union recognition. Alongside a handful of likeminded UNISON Community and Voluntary sector (CVO) members, we have been determined to see our workplace unionised and our employer sign a recognition agreement. Of course, for us, it had to be UNISON! It's been a long, and

challenging task, we have seen several key staff leave at crucial stages, so we've had to start again, building those relationships. We've faced challenges, like many in the community and voluntary sector due to Covid and the pandemic restrictions and on several occasions, it's felt like an uphill battle! But we kept going. All the while the UNISON membership kept growing, steadily, slowly. This year though, we achieved our goal and in August our Chief Executive signed a UNISON recognition agreement between our trade union and Stonewall! In a charity with a little over 100 staff we have more than 50% density, and our numbers are growing! We did it! To be part of these two incredibly organisations fighting for LGBT+ people is for me a privilege, I truly believe "...we stand on the shoulders of giants..." both in our union and in our movement. By signing the recognition with UNISON, our union added to Stonewall's history, and vice versa... now that's something to be proud of.

Increasing Bi+ visibility at BiCon and Bi Pride!



Lucy Power

BiCon is one of the highlights of the bisexual year and was run over three days over a weekend in mid-August at Leeds Beckett University. This is the first BiCon that was run as both a physical and online event.

Sophie Robinson and Lucy Power were the National LGBT+ Committee members who attended this year. Usually, UNISON have a stall at the event, as well as doing an input as part of the programme.

BiCon prides itself on insisting that all attendees complete anti-racism training. This can be done prior to BiCon, or on the day they attend. The programme examines white fragility, societal, cultural, and institutional racism, and our responsibility to be vocal active allies.

Other sessions attended included Psychological Self-care for BiCon, Rope Bondage

101, Sci-Fi Bi – Bis in science fiction, Poly 101, as well as the decision making plenaries, and let's not forget the Ball!

Psychological Self-care for BiCon was run by a retired psychologist and focussed on winding down after BiCon. BiCon can be a very intense experience, and re-entry into the outside world can trigger feelings of depression and disengagement from society. The session was a good opportunity to examine your own expectations of re-entry, thoughts on how you will deal with any negative thoughts and feelings, as well as providing techniques for coping. It's a session that would work in any arena where re-entry from a safe space may cause anxiety.

Sophie attended this session and what she found most intriguing

about the session was the detail of the health and safety requirements that were provided by the presenter. What became evident very quickly was that this activity is extremely organised and requires significant concentration and planning. Time was spent learning several knots that can be used to engage in safe rope bondage.

The very popular Sci-Fi Bi – Bis in science fiction explored the depiction of bi and queer characters in science fiction, both written and film. There was an interesting examination of good and bad portrayals, and the history of queer representation. There was a group discussion of how bi characters are often portrayed as stereotypes – flighty, greedy, unpredictable, and unreliable.

There was also discussion of how the portrayal of bi characters is developing into more positive portrayals. An enlightening session demonstrating again that if you can't see it, you can't be it. Poly 101 was an eye-opening session with discussions on dos and don'ts, practicalities, myth busting, and how to make polyamory workable.

Sophie and Lucy ran the session 'Out and Proud in the Workplace'. The session was very well received with a lot of engagement from the audience, and a few problems in the workplace raised. Interestingly some of the biggest challenges were from non-binary individuals where employers refuse to acknowledge non-binary identities, or take steps to make the workplace more inclusive. It was refreshing to sign post people to help and assistance, resources on the UNISON website, and encourage union membership. Although many attendees were already union members, it became clear that they weren't making use

of their unions for support, largely because they didn't see sexuality and gender identity as a workplace issue. Sophie and Lucy made it very clear that they are workplace issues, and unions are there to support members, demonstrating once again that UNISON is the union of choice when it comes to equalities.

Bi Pride

Held in London on the 3rd September 2022 it was the first online and in person BiPride.

Bi Pride UK's mission is to create spaces where people who experience attraction beyond gender can be freely visible and celebrate themselves and their identities. It's not enough to be 'welcome' at a Pride. We make up a very large proportion of the GRSD (Gender, Romantic and Sexual Diversity) community – many stats actually say we're over half the community – and we deserve to be visible and celebrated in our own right.

Penny Smith and Lucy Power attended on behalf of the National LGBT+ Committee, with a range of resources for our stall.

One of the events was a panel discussion about being out in the workplace, and included Lucy, and the co-founder of Medway Pride Radio, Shea Coffey. Shea is a long-time collaborator and supporter of UNISON's South East Region LGBT+ Self-Organised Group. The discussion was well received, and brought a number of people to the UNISON stall. The UNISON resources went down a treat, including our Trans Equality campaign materials.

There were also a number of stalls from organisations supporting Bi+ people, including Stonewall, AKT, and Switchboard – LGBT.

No small number of people coming to the stall were surprised that a union was a sponsor of a Pride event. This gave us the opportunity to discuss why

sexuality and gender identity are workplace issues, and the importance of unions in making equalities a front and centre issue. It also got people thinking about their workplace policies, if they exist, and where they don't to question why not.

Although Bi Pride was an amazing and eye-opening event, the visibility of bi issues continues to be contentious. It is necessary for UNISON, other LGBT+ organisations, and society as a whole, to continue projecting the bi identity as a positive and complete identity in its own right.

We are looking forward to an even bigger and better Bi Pride next year.

Trans healthcare in the UK is not fit for purpose

Alexander Kollikho

It has been almost 60 years since the oldest and largest gender identity clinic opened its doors to gender diverse individuals throughout the UK.

As of May 2022, the service in London reports having over 11000 gender questioning persons waiting for a first appointment, in the hope of accessing the appropriate healthcare and treatment they need. Yet from information available, they are only seeing 50 new patients for first time appointments per month. The question must be asked, why the wait?

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care Version 8 recently released in September 2022 clearly states

pathways for medical and surgical and other interventions for the gender diverse patient. Yet the NHS is currently facing well-documented legal challenges in relation to failures in adhering to guidelines on waiting times, with service users describing their experiences as torturous, derogatory, and humiliating. Four claimants, who alongside Gendered Intelligence and the Good Law Project, state they have been "tortured" and "let down by the healthcare system" that is supposedly there to help them and are taking the NHS to court for compensation due to the lack of adequate treatment.

The NHS faces other complaints regarding discriminatory behaviour towards transgender individuals on a national and regional level stating that some professionals, such as GP's are not adhering to guidelines and recommendations set by the NHS as well as the GMC (general medical council – regulators of medical practitioners in the UK) on supporting patients who exhibit symptoms of gender dysphoria (a marked and frequent disturbance in one's own gender identity). These cases could lead to social isolation, job loss, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and more.

Gender diverse individuals can have complex needs which can often require a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to support in their care. This can include dieticians, psychologists, surgeons, psychiatrists, counsellors, endocrinologists, as part of clinical teams, not to mention the admin staff who are hardworking sifting through referrals and contacting patients in order to ensure they receive not only the care they need, but the care they deserve.

Simply put, the current system is failing transgender people and needs a significant overhaul in order to prevent failing more gender diverse persons and potentially putting lives at risk.

Palestine – No to Apartheid

Jackie Lewis

In February, Amnesty International released a lengthy report detailing “Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity” for which “Israeli authorities must be held accountable.”

The comprehensive report sets out how massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians are all components of a system which amounts to apartheid under international law.

Its publication means that Amnesty has now joined Human Rights Watch and Israel’s own leading human rights organisation B’Tselem in recognising what Palestinian civil society has

been asserting for decades

Recognising Israel as an apartheid state is also what drives the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions - BDS. UNISON was one of the first trade unions to respond to the call from Palestinian civil society for BDS

As some of you will remember, in 2017 the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) took the UK Government to court over regulations that would have stopped Local Government Pension Schemes from divesting from companies complicit in Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people. PSC won a landmark case in the Supreme Court in 2020, forcing the government to scrap its unlawful regulations

Since that victory, members of the local government pension scheme have been demanding that their money isn’t invested in companies complicit in Israeli apartheid. UNISON published

its updated guide for branches ‘Palestine: Is your pension invested in the occupation’ and there have been an increasing number of local campaigns

PSC launched an LGPS Divest campaign website, in coordination with UNISON, GMB and UNITE. The website includes a database of LGPS funds with investments in companies that aid Israel’s breaches of international law. These funds hold at least £4.6 billion in a range of complicit companies, from banks and weapons companies to consumer brands.

However, the Tories included a promise to “ban public bodies from imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestment or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries” in their 2019 general election manifesto. The Tory government has been planning to introduce new laws to restrict the ability of public bodies, including

The screenshot shows the PSC website layout. At the top left is the PSC logo. A navigation menu includes: HOME, HOW YOUR FUND IS COMPLICIT, LGPS INVESTMENTS, RESOURCES, GET INVOLVED. On the left is a green sidebar with the heading 'LGPS DIVEST' and text: 'Local Government Pension Scheme funds collectively invest billions in companies complicit in Israel's grave violations of Palestinian human rights. Led by scheme members and their representative trade unions, LGPS Divest is campaigning to ensure administering authorities implement adequate investment screening and due diligence procedures to guarantee that scheme members' money is not used to support Israel's violations of international law.' Below this are two buttons: 'GET INVOLVED' and 'FUND INVESTMENTS'. The main content area features a photograph of a person at a protest, seen from behind, holding up a large black banner with the text 'PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN' and the Palestinian flag colors.

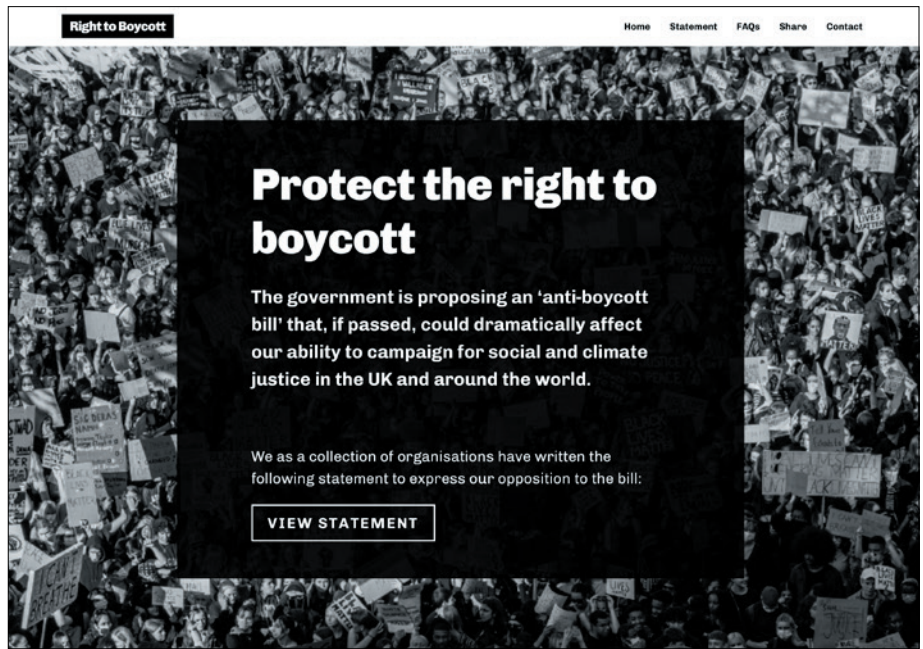
local government, to purchase, procure and invest ethically, in the interest of workers and the communities they represent. It is now expected that legislation to 'ban BDS' will be tabled in the autumn.

The text of the bill has not yet been published, but there are indications of its contents in the government's 2016 regulations that were declared unlawful by the Supreme Court. In February this year, there was another hint of what's to come, when Robert Jenrick MP introduced a successful amendment to a pensions bill intending to prohibit local government from making investment decisions out of line with 'UK foreign and defence policy'. Jenrick made clear that he is determined to 'outlaw Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' in relation to Israel, though the wording of his amendment leaves room for a much broader application.

The government's planned anti-boycott bill is yet another crackdown on our right to protest – and while it currently targets solidarity with Palestine, its ramifications apply to every social justice campaign

PSC is leading a broad coalition that is gearing up to defend our right to boycott. In April, PSC, along with other civil society organisations, released a statement opposing the government's plans to introduce an 'anti-boycott bill' and committing to defend our collective right to use boycott and divestment tactics.

Signatories include nine national trade unions (including UNISON); faith-based institutions; CND, Friends of the Earth, climate justice organisations; human rights groups; and more. They share concerns about the impact any such legislation would have on their ability to campaign for action on breaches of international law, for divestment from fossil fuel companies, arms manufacturers, companies that seek to evade human rights or environmental



standards, and many more.

The statement affirms that not only is it the right of local authorities to cut ties with abusive companies, it's a responsibility. It's obvious why BDS tactics are such an annoyance to this government: they are effective and time-honoured tools used to campaign for justice. The government has already started its propaganda campaign to portray boycotts as divisive or discriminatory, so it's important to remember that such campaigns have been integral to winning social change for decades.

There have been significant successful campaigns focused on getting public bodies to boycott and divest, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, focused on local council ties with Barclays bank, Shell, and other companies with operations in Apartheid South Africa and Namibia. The Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee is one of the signatories to the statement.

The government's stated rationale for its impending bill is to ensure a 'coherent approach to foreign relations'. But there are blatant contradictions in its approach. Guidelines for public bodies enable them to stop procuring from or investing in companies over 'grave professional

misconduct' or 'social and environmental factors'. This means that if a company is found to be involved in illegal activity, whether it's racial discrimination, modern slavery, environmental degradation, or human rights violations, no current UK policy or law could reasonably force a public body to continue to do business with them.

And the government has been promoting this kind of action to public bodies in relation to the Russian war on Ukraine. In March, the government issued a policy note encouraging public contracting authorities to go beyond government sanctions and 'consider how they can further cut ties with companies backed by the states of Russia and Belarus'. The note gives step-by-step instructions about how to screen for companies to cut ties with, based on location. It will be interesting to see how the government tries to make its anti-boycott bill coherent with existing policy.

Apartheid is a profound injustice, and our union will continue to work to end it - and for freedom, justice and equality for Palestine.

The LGPS Divest website is here: <https://lgpsdivest.org>

The coalition statement is here: <https://righttoboycott.org.uk>

Save the dates! 2023 network days



07 July – Bi+ and Trans

07 September – Disabled LGBT+ members

09 September – Black LGBT+ members

Contact out@unison.co.uk to add your name to our confidential mailing list to be the first to get all the information and registration details for these meetings.

Want to get more involved in your regional LGBT+ SOG?

Here is who to contact

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Keep in touch with us

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