

UNISON Labour Link Forum

Annual Report 2022

8 July 2022
York

Introduction

After three long years, it is great to be welcoming delegates back to an in-person UNISON National Labour Link Forum. When we last met in York in 2019, we were only two years on from a General Election where Labour had performed beyond anyone's expectations. Less than six months after that Forum, we fell to our worst defeat since 1935. Before Labour had even elected a new Leader and Deputy Leader, the world was plunged into a global pandemic, with UNISON members in all service groups on the front line of the response.

Meanwhile in Downing Street, our "leaders" partied, whilst those of us working round the clock to keep our public services going were unable to see our families. Countless people lost loved ones without being able to say goodbye. And a decade of austerity meant that our public services didn't have the resources we needed at the most crucial time. Instead of being ready for the pandemic, UNISON members had one arm tied behind our back.

Now we face a cost of living crisis, but for many UNISON members, the cost of living crisis has been going on for years. The struggle to pay for school uniforms and the reliance on food banks already existed before energy prices - and the prices at the pump - went through the roof. More than a decade of attacks on our pay mean we're all worse off, and now with inflation running wild,

Never have we needed a Labour government more - and never have we needed the Labour Party, once in power, to be bold and tackle the challenges that we face after more than a decade of Conservative attacks on public services. I'm proud that over the past year, Labour Link has continued to focus on taking UNISON's priorities into the Labour Party, supporting UNISON candidates to be selected to stand in elections at all levels of the party, and supporting Labour candidates in elections who aim to win power and use it to support our agenda.

I'm also proud that in Labour Link we've focussed on ensuring that our structures reflect our union, with more than two-thirds of the seats on our national committee now fully reserved for women, as outlined in our operational rules. There is much more to be done to make Labour Link reflect the diversity of our union, and to be visible to all UNISON members. But together we can achieve those goals, whilst fighting for that Labour government that all of us as UNISON members need now more than ever.

Linda Hobson – Chair, National Labour Link Committee

National Labour Link Committee

The past year in UK politics has continued to be dominated by the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic – both in terms of the restrictions introduced by the government to mitigate the worst effects of the virus, and the numerous scandals that have come to light during and since the pandemic. Most of all, the pandemic shone a light on what we in UNISON already knew to be true – that austerity and more than a decade of underinvestment in public services means that UNISON members and the communities we serve were already at breaking point before the pandemic came. This Conservative government are ideologically opposed to investing in and protecting public services, leaving us all at greater risk when crises strike.

The other political realities which we face are pre-pandemic, but no less impactful. Since the last Labour Link Forum, the Labour Party lost a 4th successive general election, leaving the party with fewer seats than at any election since 1935. The challenge Labour faces to win the next election is an uphill struggle, needing to win more than 100 seats in order to form a majority government for the first time since 2005. Results from the May 2022 local elections (see below) show that whilst some progress is being made, much more work must be done to win an election that must come within the next two years, and could come at any moment – especially with Boris Johnson's position under ongoing scrutiny.

Meanwhile, the impact of Brexit continues to have an impact on the day to day lives of working people, inflation is running at a level unheard of for a generation, and the past year has seen food and fuel shortages whilst energy bills have gone through the roof. We are now in a full blown cost of living crisis, but for many UNISON members, the cost of living crisis has been going on for many years.

UNISON members, public services and our communities needs a Labour government in Westminster – and a party that fights for the issues that matter to UNISON members. As UNISON Labour Link continues to fulfil our mission of taking UNISON's priorities into the Labour Party, we have kept both of those needs in mind at all times.

Policy Making in the Labour Party

We followed through the policy motions from last year's Forum by supporting wider UNISON campaigns on the issues raised; working with Labour in Parliament on the relevant legislation or by promoting debates and questions; and promoting the issues within the Party in policy discussions and with the shadow teams.

Following debate and discussion within the National Labour Link committee, the committee determined that particular prioritisation was to be given to work on Social Care, Pay, Equalities and the impact of Brexit and Covid.

Social care: Meetings have been held with relevant Labour ministers and policy advisors to advance UNISON's position on a National Care Service (now Labour Party policy post-conference 2021). Labour Link has also ensured that Social Care is a key priority area (and separate workstream) in the Labour Party's "Stronger Together" policy review, and secured UNISON input into that workstream

Pay: We continued to liaise with UNISON service groups and support their campaigns on pay, as well as briefing the Labour Party on UNISON's pay demands across all sectors.

Equalities: Labour Link ensured that UNISON's voice was heard at the Labour Women's Conference (see below), including a motion focussed on UNISON priorities. Labour Link has also engaged with the Labour party with the aim of securing widespread support from the party for the year of disabled workers, and secured Shadow Minister Taiwo Owatemi as a keynote speaker at UNISON's LGBT+ Conference.

Impact of Brexit and Covid: We assisted UNISON's International Unit on a meeting with the Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade, whilst ensuring that COVID was a focus of Labour Women's Conference with UNISON's motion on "Women's Equality after Covid".

The Party's National Policy Forum (NPF) policy process is at an early stage with the Policy Commissions working on specific areas, hearing from the shadow ministerial teams, taking evidence from experts including unions and developing consultation papers and questions for CLPs and members to engage with. Although after years of (relative) inactivity – due in part to Covid and two snap general elections - the Labour Party NPF commissions are now meeting more regularly as we head towards the next election.

Meanwhile, Labour Link has fed into the party's "Stronger Together" policy review, ensuring that UNISON priorities are included within its major workstreams.

Promoting and growing Labour Link

The 2016 Trade Union Act presents considerable challenges to all unions in many ways. For UNISON Labour Link, the challenge is particularly acute, as the legislation was specifically designed to target UNISON. Whilst existing members of political funds (members pre Trade Union Act) are unaffected, new members have to "opt-in" to a fund, rather than the previous system of "opting-out". In reality, that means as pre Trade Union Act Labour Link members leave/retire, they are replaced at a much lower rate by incoming members who are harder to recruit to the fund.

The Trade Union Act presents a serious and ongoing risk to Labour Link – and all trade union political funds. Ultimately, the only feasible long-term solution is the election of a Labour government and the repeal of the Trade Union Act. However, in the meantime, considerable work has gone into mitigating the effects of the Act.

UNISON's online joining system was rebuilt to make joining online easier, and to make the process of "opting in" to either political fund as straightforward as possible. Considerable effort was taken to deploy the most effective and persuasive language to encourage new members to join the funds. At the same time, UNISON's paper membership form was also reworked, again with the aim of making it as use friendly as possible.

A project which includes reviewing and improving join online (including the political fund component) and switching between/joining political funds for new members is already underway.

Labour Link have worked with UNISON's Communications team to establish a workplan that will update and refresh the Labour Link section of the UNISON website. This will include removing or updating any legacy pages and introducing more relevant and recent content relating to the work of Labour Link and the positive impact Labour Link delivers for UNISON members by taking our priorities into the Labour Party.

Work is also ongoing to engage retiring UNISON members who pay into the Labour Link, and encourage them to remain as Labour Link levy payers on retirement.

Whilst all trade unions have faced similar challenges relating to the Trade Union Act's attack on political funds, there are clearly lessons that we can learn from each other. Several unions have benefitted from adopting online join/membership form changes based on UNISON's work, and dialogue is ongoing through Labour Unions on best practice that can be adopted more widely.

May 2022 elections

Elections were held on Thursday 5 May across the whole of Scotland and Wales and large parts of England. The Conservatives lost 485 councillors and 11 councils. Labour made significant gains in England taking control of Barnet, Wandsworth and Westminster for the first time as well as Southampton, Worthing and the new Cumberland council. Other significant wins included Crawley, Kirklees and Rossendale.

In Cymru/Wales, considerable progress was made seeing Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend captured from No Overall Control. Monmouthshire, the last Tory stronghold, witnessed Labour become the largest party.

In Scotland, where the Single Transferable Vote makes it nearly impossible for one party to win a working majority, Labour managed to win West Dunbartonshire council. Scottish Labour also had the objective of becoming the second party in the popular vote and achieved this by winning 22% of first preferences. Labour's vote rose by nearly 2% and Tory support slipped by nearly 6%.

It should be remembered though that local elections are not just about national politics and not everything went Labour's way.

Croydon, Harrow and Tower Hamlets councils were lost. Kingston upon Hull was lost to the Liberal Democrats and Hastings to No Overall Control. In Wales, Neath Port Talbot was also lost to No Overall Control.

However, many UNISON members were either returned or elected for the first time. This should act as a further incentive to train and support more activists to become councillors and extend UNISON values into council chambers across the country.

Whilst it is difficult to draw cast iron conclusions from local election results Professor John Curtice suggested the following projected share of the vote: Labour 35%, Conservatives 30%, Liberal Democrats 19%, Others 16%. This would be Labour's largest lead over the government in an election since 2012. Meanwhile, the current Nowcast on projecting seats for Westminster suggests that Labour would gain around 100 seats, leaving the Party as the largest in Parliament but shy of an overall majority.

Advancing UNISON policy at Westminster

Labour Link works to promote UNISON's interests in Westminster both in terms of legislation and working with MPs and Lords to raise issues and challenge the Government. Working across the union, Labour Link supports UNISON campaigns, circulates briefings and organises events (in person and virtually) on behalf of the union – all in the service of increasing our influence within the Labour Party in Westminster.

Meanwhile, Labour Link in UNISON regions and nations maintain strong links with Labour MPs, which we seek to utilise both nationally and regionally in a co-ordinated way, working both with those MPs who are UNISON members and more widely across the Party on issues of mutual concern.

The UNISON group of Labour MPs was re-established this year following the 2019 election. The COVID-19 pandemic presented considerable challenges in terms of organising the group in Parliament, but in person meetings are now taking place. UNISON's group of 40 MPs (all members of UNISON) makes up more than 20% of the Parliamentary Labour Party and is continuing to grow. Chaired by MPs Liz Twist and Bambos Charalambous, the group will continue to expand its work in the year ahead.

Labour Unions

Labour Unions (also known as TULO) brings together the 11 affiliated trade unions at national and regional level to take up our policy and organisational concerns within party structures and to co-ordinate our campaigning work with the Party at elections and on legislation.

During the year Labour Unions ran a number of campaigns including on opposing the government's Elections Bill (in particular clauses which would have had a direct impact on the ability of affiliated unions to campaign in elections) and voter registration. Labour Unions also helped to co-ordinate with affiliated unions and the Labour Party on the drafting of Labour's New Deal for Working People - a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of working people by strengthening individual and collective rights. Keir Starmer has promised that a Labour Government will write this plan into law within 100 days of taking office.

Labour Unions is developing further training courses for union members looking to stand for Labour. We will continue to work with Labour Unions to develop its work in supporting union members in the party selection processes at all levels.

Labour Party Conference Report 2021

Labour Conference 2021 was held in Brighton in September – a return to a physical Labour conference after the previous year's online "Labour Connected" event. The UNISON Labour Link delegation was led by Linda Hobson. The delegation met on the morning Conference opened and was briefed to ensure the most effective ways of taking UNISON policies forward during Conference. A second delegation meeting was held on the second day of conference, at which the delegation debated the Labour NEC's package of rule changes and decided to support them.

Key issues pursued by UNISON

UNISON submitted two motions to Labour Party Conference 2021, one on establishing a national care service, and another on a post pandemic plan for public services. The text of the motions submitted by UNISON (prior to being composited for debate at conference), were as follows:

Establishing a national care service

Conference notes the ongoing crisis in Social Care – a chronically underfunded service, with too many care workers paid less than the living wage, despite their vital work.

Conference believes that reforming and fixing our broken social care system should be a priority for a future Labour government. Just as Labour had the vision and foresight to create the NHS, we must now be the party of a transformed, world class social care sector, delivered by a National Care Service.

Conference further believes that this pioneering service must have at its heart a workforce strategy which gives social care workers an equivalent status to those working in healthcare, and a decent wage for all care workers.

Conference therefore resolves to establish a National Care Service, that will:

- A) end the postcode lottery on standards in both service delivery and treatment of the workforce;
- B) guarantee the necessary public funding, delivers a world class system of care and support so that as with the NHS, receiving high-quality care does not come down to the financial means of the recipients of the service;
- C) remove profit from our social care system, and bring social care back into public ownership and delivered by the public sector unless certain conditions and exemptions are met. Provision of social care must never again treat the demands of shareholders as more important than the needs of care users;
- D) implement national standards on terms and conditions, negotiated with social care trade unions;
- E) remain under local government control

A post pandemic plan for public services

Conference notes Labour's proud record as the party of public services. From the NHS to Sure Start – it is the Labour Party and the Labour movement that delivers for our communities in government.

Conference further notes that public services have been battered by a decade of Tory austerity and privatisation, with local government under particular attack. Health and economic outcomes have suffered before and during the Covid-19 pandemic as a result.

Conference believes that the pandemic has shown that our public services need a transformative and radical Labour government now more than ever.

Conference resolves that the Labour Party will:

- Fight for public services free from profit, funded through general taxation - with any increase falling on those with the broadest shoulders - and brought back "in house".
- Build a campaign with trade unions, community and tenant organisations, service users and Labour councillors to fight for the funding necessary to not only stop, but reverse local government cuts.
- Place renewed pressure on the government to honour its commitment to fully fund councils and the NHS for the costs of dealing with the pandemic and lost revenue resulting from lockdowns.
- Ensure that in government, Labour delivers for public service workers, ensuring decent pay for those who keep our communities going. Until then, Labour will campaign for real pay rises for all public service workers, including calling on the LGA to increase its current pay offer and encourage Labour councillors to support an increase.

The following issues were prioritised by UNISON for debate at conference, in agreement with other trade union affiliates:

Social Care, Public Services, A new industrial strategy for a post-Covid economy, End fire and rehire and protect workers' rights, Green New Deal, Mental Health in the workplace, Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, Public Ownership, Community Wealth Building, High Street and business recovery.

UNISON delegates contributed to a range of conference debates, with General Secretary Christina McAnea leading the debate on Social Care, securing a unanimous conference position in favour of a National Care Service. Other speakers included Linda Hobson on public services, Andrea Egan on Housing, Katrina Gilman on Police and Justice and Graeme Ellis in the DWP debate.

Labour Women's Conference

Labour Women's Conference 2022 was held online as a result of Coronavirus. Whilst there is a clear desire to return to a physical conference next year, on the whole the conference was a success.

UNISON's delegation was led by Linda Hobson, and the delegation made up of representatives from nations and regions (in addition to national committee members) was well represented in the debates across the weekend, speaking on most composites. UNISON's motion was placed in the composite "Women's Equality after Covid".

Meanwhile, Anu Prashar, delegate from Greater London, was on the From Local to Global: Women's Rights and History panel. Sam Hemraj, our Deputy Delegation Leader from the Labour Link Committee, spoke on the panel of the Transforming Women's Health and Social Care session.

UNISON Labour Link Regional Reports

Eastern

In 2021 Eastern region Labour Link did more online campaigning, with candidate interviews recorded on Zoom and put onto Regional social media channels and the regional website.

Newsletters were sent out to all affiliated members about standing for council and the support available, and a webinar was held on “How to become a Labour Councillor”.

Online committee meetings were held in March and July and delegates attended UNISONs online National Labour link Forum. (All of the four UNISON Eastern region delegates were women). The committee also sent two women to attend Labour party conference as part of UNISONs delegation in September 2021.

Members of the committee met with the other Labour affiliated trade unions through TULO to mainly discuss key issues including health and safety and the pandemic.

The committee met again in September to discuss the report from the national Labour party conference. The committee also agreed the delegation to attend Labour East regional conference (which was held in Stevenage in November) and submitted a motion on social care. There was also support for another member standing in a by election.

In December the committee ensured that UNISON affiliated to all 58 CLPs in the region.

The committee also sent a delegate to Labours Women’s conference and discussed the timeline for nominations for the 2022 committee and AGM date and time.

East Midlands

UNISON East Midlands Labour Link have been putting considerable work into building long term capacity and capability. At the end of last year, the Regional Labour Link Committee set up two working groups: one to look at the issue of Branch Labour Link Officer training and organising and another to look at the issue of candidate development. These member-led working groups have generated ideas which the committee hopes to implement over the coming year. A regular UNISON East Midlands Labour Link Bulletin has also been set up by committee chair Rob Parkinson, to inform and organise activists throughout the region.

This year we did not have as many key local elections taking place as in other years. It was the final year of voting by a system of thirds in Derby City Council, before the council moves to all out elections from 2023 onwards. Labour made some significant gains, reducing the Conservative lead from 8 seats to just 2, with UNISON members winning seats and standing as candidates for the first time. The Regional Labour

Link committee held a well-attended campaign day on May Day to support candidates.

Greater London

The work London Labour link committee over the last year was dominated by the local government elections in May. A number of campaign events were held both virtually and physically, to support campaign efforts across target boroughs.

As part of an ongoing piece of work to support the work of branch Labour Link officers, a virtual training event was held last summer. It is anticipated similar training will be delivered the year.

The 2022 Greater London Labour Link Forum was the first event for some time to have been held in person. As well as discussing the workplan for the year ahead the forum heard from Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

Currently work is being undertaken around increasing engagement with UNISON councillors in the region, as well as engaging with Labour controlled authorities around the adoption and implementation of UNISON'S Ethical Care Charter.

Northern

Labour Link in the Northern Region has continued to build effective political organising and relationships with key politicians across the region, in support of our industrial objectives and delivering for our members.

National Labour Link Forum, held virtually in July 2021, saw our regional motions on Social Care and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) passed with unanimous support. Social Care was subsequently agreed as one of UNISON's motions to Labour Party Conference 2021, at which our own Linda Hobson led the UNISON delegation.

Labour North Regional Conference took place in February 2022. UNISON sponsored the main plenary session on 'Levelling Up Public Services', which included platform speeches from Angela Rayner MP and Bridget Phillipson MP. UNISON Labour Link had a high profile at the Conference, both from our own delegation and several other delegates and speakers identifying as UNISON members. The Conference elected the newly constituted Regional Labour Party Executive Committee, with Clare Williams, Linda Hobson and Paul Foy elected by the affiliated trade unions. Clare was then elected as chair of the Regional Labour Party.

A very successful, in-person, Northern Regional Labour Link Forum took place on 12 March 2022 and was very well attended. Kim McGuinness, Northumbria PCC and UNISON member, was the first political speaker. The afternoon also saw an all-women panel of MPs with Liz Twist, Chi Onwurah, Catherine McKinnell and Emma Lewell-Buck, chaired by Tracey Wainwright. UNISON Northern's Public Services Manifesto

2022 was debated and agreed to inform our political strategy in the up-coming May elections.

The May 2022 elections were positive for Labour Link. Forty-five UNISON members stood for Labour across the region, with thirty-five being elected. UNISON Labour Link ran campaigning sessions and assisted in target areas identified by Labour North and the Regional Labour Link Committee. These elections demonstrated that UNISON's political organising can make a real difference.

Plans are now in place to build on the successes of the last year and take Labour Link in the Northern Region from strength to strength.

North West

Under our five-year strategy we have:

Increasing Membership Participation

- surveyed Labour Link members, taking forward themes identified
- worked to increase sign up to Labour Link
- identified 170 UNISON Labour Councillors, growing our councillor network.

Influencing Policy and Lobbying

- lobbied Labour Leaders in Lancashire to take control of devolution
- lobbied councillors on our social care campaign
- spoken at CLPs on disputes and campaigns
- briefed and met Labour MPs
- strongly intervened at Regional Labour Conference, with a motion and captivating stall.

Improving Communications

- circulated political briefings to our Labour Link Officers, CLP delegates, LGC reps and UNISON Councillors
- regular articles in regional activists' magazine
- speakers to AGMs
- contacted Labour Link members in election targets
- resumed meetings of Labour Link members of the Regional Council.

Working with TULO

- secured good UNISON representation on Local Government Committees
- co-operated on input to new candidates training and on the Regional Board
- circulated national TULO campaigns.

Selections and Elections

- avoided trigger ballots for sitting Labour MPs
- co-operated via TULO on elections and selections

- amidst working everywhere, extra targeting in Cumbria and Burnley in local elections. Achieved goals in targets.

Scotland

- Eleanor Haggett was the Chair throughout, and Billy Stewart was the Vice Chair until March 2022;
- Worked with Scottish Labour Unions to encourage more trade unionists especially women to stand as councillors;
- Held open online meetings on local government and disability history month;
- Successfully moved motions at Scottish Labour Party Conference, which was held 4th to 6th March 2022, on Cost of Living Crisis/Public Sector Pay and National Care Service (not for profit);
- Supported two fringe meetings at SLP conference, one on health inequalities with Socialist Health Association Scotland and one on UNISON's Year of Disabled Worker;
- Held successful Scottish LL Forum on 19th March which was addressed by Anas Sarwar, Leader SLP and Tracey Dalling the new UNISON Scottish Secretary.
- Significant support to Scottish local government election campaign in May 2022. Secured party's backing for our Recognise, Respect & Reward local government campaign;
- The committee continued to meet regularly and held its first hybrid meeting since the pandemic in May 2022.
- We have regularly met with and briefed Labour MSPs on a range of issues important to UNISON members. We had our first face to face meeting with the expanded group of UNISON Labour Link MSPs in May 2022.

South East

The South East Labour Link Committee has remained highly active during 2021/22 despite navigating restrictions on campaigning activities during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In November 2021 we had a very successful Regional Labour Party Conference, pushing forward UNISON policy at the Conference on housing, the NHS and National Social Care Service. At least 8 UNISON members were elected to the new Regional Executive including the election of Maureen Cleator as Vice Chair.

The Regional Labour Link Forum was held virtually in March 2022 with a great turnout (over 18 branches and all SOGs were represented), the Forum was joined by Shadow Secretary for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting MP. The Forum also debated a wide range of motions from branches including topics on Covid-19, Misogyny in Politics and PR. The Labour Link Committee prioritised campaigning resources for the local elections in Southampton, Milton Keynes, Crawley, and Worthing.

We took our plan for the local elections and turned our resources into winning, we took back Southampton City Council with UNISON member Satvir Kaur becoming Council Leader, we regain majority control of Crawley, we held our position in Milton Keynes and won a historic victory in Worthing taking the council from the Tories. We were also delighted to see the election of new UNISON members as councillors across the region. Attention has now turned to the next general election and the Committee has already begun its planning (whenever the next general election is).

South West

We held our regional forum in March, the number of delegates exceeded the attendance of previous years considerably. A new committee was successfully elected, delegations to the LP Conference and the National LL Forum were agreed, as well as our nomination for National LL SOC (22-23).

The committee are keen to ensure Branch Labour Link Officers have access to training and support. Training will be delivered in September. Our National Labour Link Representative has set up a WhatsApp group to help Branch Labour Link Officers to network.

We supported the campaigns of several UNISON members standing as councillors in the May 2022 elections.

The South West faces a considerable challenge in the next General Election – and we need to double our current number of MPs. The key seats are Stroud, Truro and Falmouth, Filton and Bradley Stoke along with a potential a new Bristol seat depending on the outcome of the boundary review. Labour Link organisation is one of our key priorities for 2022/23. Our aim is to increase the number of Branch Officers, activity in target CLPs and map Labour Link members and party membership where possible to help direct our resources and activities to affect our influence for UNISON members. The committee are currently considering PPC nominations across the South West.

Cymru/Wales

During this most difficult of periods UNISON Labour Link worked closely with the Welsh Labour controlled Senedd to ensure our members on the front line were able to work in a safer environment.

- The Track & Trace operation was delivered by public sector workers and not the private sector ensuring our members were treated fairly.
- Working in partnership with Welsh Government the correct PPE was procured and distributed to where it was most needed.
- Bonuses were agreed for social care workers
- Our H&S concerns were raised at the highest level of Government.

Welsh Labour, under the Leadership of Mark Drakeford (a UNISON member) secured an unprecedented sixth consecutive term of office in 2021. UNISON Labour Link played a significant role not just in the election campaign but also in agreeing a radical Labour Manifesto that included a commitment to introduce The Social

Partnership Bill which will compel employers to work in partnership with the Trade Unions.

There is also now a commitment to agree an implementation plan to create a National Care Service for Wales. Something that UNISON Cymru/Wales Labour Link have campaigned to achieve for many years.

There are now 30 Welsh Labour Members of The Senedd. 18 of them are UNISON Members making us the largest Trade Union block. Regular meetings take place between UNISON Labour Link representatives and the UNISON Senedd Group.

The recent Local Council elections in Cymru/Wales resulted in the Conservative vote practically flatlining. UNISON Labour Link were able to support local campaigns and ensure many of our members are now elected Councillors. With the exception of two areas where we did not make gains the Labour vote was significantly increased throughout Wales.

It should be noted that 2022 marks the 100th anniversary of Labour becoming the dominant political party in Wales. This has remained the case in each and every election during that 100 year period.

West Midlands

Firstly, we have to report that 2022 kicked off on a poignant note for us, as our long-time regional Labour Link Officer, Charlie Sarell, retired at the start of January. He will be much missed by us all.

January also saw tragic news with the untimely passing of Jack Dromey, the Labour MP for Birmingham Erdington. There followed a fiercely-fought Parliamentary by-election, with UNISON playing its full part in ensuring the election of Paulette Hamilton as the new Labour MP, with an increased share of the vote – the first Black MP to be elected in Birmingham.

We held a successful Regional Labour Link Forum in January, which saw the election of a new Chair (Alison Sims) and Vice-Chair (Rob Birch), with Steve Jones stepping down as Chair, with everyone's thanks for all of his efforts.

Our Regional Labour Link has continued to meet, albeit virtually, throughout the pandemic, and has enjoyed talks from Labour officials such as Simon Foster (West Midlands PCC) and Charlotte Walker (Labour Party Regional Director). We look forward to continuing to fight for UNISON's values within the Labour Party, and more successes for Labour.

Yorkshire and Humberside

Over the last twelve months Labour Link activities/resources have mainly been focused around local and sub-regional elections

In June 21 the Batley and Spen by-election saw the election of Kim Leadbetter, against all the odds - given the parlous state of national polling at the time, a narrow

majority and the candidacy of George Galloway who managed to take a significant proportion of Labour's core vote. Victory was achieved in no small part due to UNISON Labour Link actions which included financial support, a specific UNISON campaign day and Labour Link support for two other days of action arranged under the TULO banner.

Regional Labour Link committee arranged a special presentation by Judith Cummins (Bradford South) around the "Northern Soul" report which tracked Labour's demise in large 'red wall' towns over a twenty-year period. The committee resolved that the document be used to inform our campaign strategies over the coming years

The May elections saw some improvements in terms of local elections, with financial and activist support being successfully afforded to Councils such as Kirklees and Wakefield who made gains. However, our interventions were less successful in Hull where control was lost to the Lib Dems and Sheffield where although the overall picture remained largely the same, a couple of marginal seats were lost - most notably that of Josie Pascek (former UNISON branch officer) - in spite of Unison support.

Whilst the locals were something of a mixed bag, UNISON successfully supported the election of UNISON member and nominee Oliver Coppard as South Yorkshire Mayor.

At the time of writing, resources have been earmarked to support Labours campaign in the Wakefield by-election, the candidate being UNISON nominee and member Simon Lightwood. In addition to financial support, we have encouraged members to attend the three planned TULO campaign days.

Labour Link activists have in the main taken up seats on Trade Union sections of Labour Party LGCs, as the region transitions to these committees from the former LCF model.

UNISON Self Organised Group reports

National Black Members' Committee

Representation and Structures - We commend the contribution of Carol Sewell, Labour Party Black members NEC Representative and Gloria Mills, National Secretary Equalities on steering the Rule changes on Black members representation carried at the Labour Party Annual Conference in 2021. This milestone achievement is necessary to achieve a fairer, equal, and inclusive Party. Black members welcome the Labour Link support for Carol Sewell, to be re-elected Black NEC Labour Party position. Internal barriers to participation issues in the Labour Party needs to be sorted, for example, the annual Black members conference and the publication of the Forde Report.

Working with the Government in Wales - The Cymru/Wales Black members have been working with the Welsh Labour Government leading a progressive agenda culminating in the publication of the Anti-Racist Action Plan for Wales on 7 June 2022, establishing the Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) and the new Curriculum for Wales incorporating the teaching for Black History. This was launched at the 2021 Black History Month and the new Curriculum will be introduced in September 2021.

Black members were pleased to participate in the Stronger Together Labour Inequalities Questionnaire setting out its priorities and Labour's commitment to introduce the new Race Equality Act pledge by Labour Leader, Kier Starmer; calling for the repeal of provisions in the Nationality and Borders Act - including deprivation of citizenship and for restoration of full access to justice and judicial oversight in such cases. We continue to press for action to ensure full compensation for the Windrush Generation and to right these egregious wrongs.

Parliamentary Lobbying - Black members organised a series of events on Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG) Reporting participating in the Westminster Hall debate in September 2021 and producing briefings of MPs. A UNISON Parliamentary event titled "I support Mandatory Ethnicity Pay Reporting" attracted cross-party support from the MPs and Lords. Lord Boateng, former Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Anneliese Dodds MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities gave insightful and inspirational speeches at the UNISON Black Members Webinar on the EPG on 12 January 2022 to launch the UNISON report and campaign with Dianne Greyson, founder of Ethnicity Pay Gap Day. A fringe meeting on Levelling Up? Tackling Racial Disparities with David Lammy, MP Shadow Foreign Secretary will be at National Delegate Conference on 16 June 2022.

National Disabled Members' Committee

The National Disabled Members' Committee (NDMC) continue to have a very strong Labour Link group which meets regularly at our National Committee meetings. We

elect two Labour Link liaison reps annually and this year's reps are Graeme Ellis and Elizabeth Cameron.

We have worked closely with the shadow minister for Disabled People, Vicky Foxcroft MP. A number of our members were speakers at her regional roadshows, and we have met with her on a number of occasions. We provided briefings to her when the government released its now discredited national disability strategy in the autumn.

We have had regular reports from Katrina Murray, the disabled members rep on the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) and are hoping to hear from Ellen Morrison, NEC disabled members rep at our August meeting.

We fed into party consultations on equality, employment and welfare benefits. We will also be responding to the latest round of NPF consultations.

In June we held a very successful parliamentary event as part of our year of Disabled Workers. The event focused on the Disability Employment Charter of which UNISON is a founding member. There was great support from Labour MPs with the shadow minister Vicky Foxcroft speaking and others such as shadow employment minister Alison McGovern and Deputy Leader Angela Rayner also in attendance. We hope to work with the party to try to bring forward some aspects of the charter as amendments to government legislation in the coming year.

We continue to work with the Labour Link in order to increase the voice of disabled members in our structures.

National LGBT+ Committee

At the 2021 conference, National LGBT+ committee reaffirmed that more needs to be done for trans equality. There is disappointment among the committee, particularly among trans caucus members, that Labour's position on trans issues has not always been on point. Our committee has raised this with the Labour Party on multiple occasions and will continue our push over the coming months with our national trans equality campaign.

We welcomed Taiwo Owatemi at the 2021 LGBT+ conference, who spoke about the importance of UNISON in creating inclusive and welcoming workplaces for everyone and was warmly received by delegates.

We look forward to working with Labour Link more closely on issues such as reforming the Gender Recognition Act and banning conversion therapy.

National Women's Committee

National Women's Committee (NWC) won support from Labour Link in 2021 to campaign for the Labour Party to take a policy position in favour of implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in UK law and to pressurise the government to do so. CEDAW outlines rights for

women including political, economic, social and cultural rights. Also, importantly, in light of recent attacks on abortion rights, it affirms reproductive rights.

NWC commented on the Labour Party's Green Paper on *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* in March 2022. We focused on the role the workplace can play in relation to violence against women and argued that preventing violence in the first place is as important as dealing with the consequences of it.

Also in March, UNISON women contributed to a successful online Labour Party National Women's Conference participating in debates on violence against women and girls, women and the economy, healthcare, social care, refugees, food poverty and baby loss. UNISON's motion was on women's equality after Covid.

National Young Members' Forum report

UNISON's young members were delighted to welcome Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Angela Rayner, to our first ever Young Members conference in December 2021. She made a powerful speech, harking back to her own time as a UNISON young member, and emphasising the importance of young workers speaking up in their unions and playing an active role.

UNISON's young members also contributed to Labour's survey on equality policy, stressing the importance of secure, well-paid jobs, quality training, well-funded youth services, and improved funding for mental health within the NHS. We also supported the commitment in the New Deal for Working People to extend flexible working rights and give workers a "right to switch off", as a way of improving workplace wellbeing and addressing stress and anxiety as well as workplace fairness.

The National Young Members Forum sent young delegates as part of UNISON's delegation to both the Labour Party Conference in September 2021 and the Labour Party Women's Conference in March 2022 (held online). Over the next year we hope to do more to encourage young members to take an active part in UNISON's Labour Link.

Finally, National Young Members Forum Chair, Jess McGuire, stood for election as a district councillor in Nettleham, Lincolnshire. Although she wasn't successful this time, we hope this will only be the start of her political career – and that we will see more UNISON young members standing for political office in the future.

Appendix: UNISON AFFILIATED POLITICAL FUND – ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 December 2021

| Statement of Comprehensive Income | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| | 2021 | 2020 |
| | £'000s | £'000s |
| Income | | |
| Contributions receivable | 2,542 | 2,702 |
| Bank interest | 1 | 8 |
| Total Income | 2,543 | 2,710 |
| Expenditure | | |
| National Expenditure | (2,148) | (1,495) |
| National Administration | (1) | (28) |
| Contribution to General Fund expenses | (65) | (65) |
| Regional Expenditure | (268) | (118) |
| Total Expenditure | (2,482) | (1,706) |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | 61 | 1,004 |
| Statement of financial position | | |
| Reserves at 1 January | 5,944 | 4,940 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | 61 | 1,004 |
| Balance 31 December | 6,005 | 5,944 |