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Meet your new national officer for energy

Ed Bratt was recently appointed UNISON's new national energy officer. He joined the national executive at an exciting and challenging time, as the union negotiates with the government and employers to ensure a just transition for energy workers moving from the gas and oil industries to green energy and low carbon jobs.

"There are so many changes taking place in the energy sector as we move toward net zero," said Bratt. "Many new companies are joining the sector and our role is to ensure these companies are unionised, so that whatever the future brings, workers' rights will be protected."

Prior to his appointment as national officer, Bratt was a regional officer for many years with some of the

big energy companies in the east Midlands, where he led negotiations on pay and conditions and worker representation in disputes.

"Bratt brings a wealth of negotiating experience to the table," said Donna Rowe-Merriman, national secretary for business, community and environment.

"He has a proven track record in negotiating the best deals with energy companies for workers and brings a wealth of bargaining experience as the energy sector transitions to a new era."



And the winner is...

OVO SSE Scotland branch was delighted to be presented with the Mike Jeram trophy recently for recruiting more new members than any other energy branch over the last year.

Pictured are two of the winning OVO team: Leanne Glen (L) and Nicola Masterson (R).

"We were so thrilled to be presented with the Mike Jeram trophy. It's a great honour," said Leanne Glen. "This is the first time our branch has won the trophy, and we're delighted to have our work recognised like this."



Energy

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A time of change for energy



Welcome to the latest edition of your **UNISON energy magazine**, where we report on key developments across your union, your energy service group, and the wider industry itself that affects our energy members.

UNISON reps have worked hard to deliver improved conditions for members. In this issue, we showcase how British Gas reps have secured an agreement from parent company Centrica to sign up to both the UNISON Anti-Racism Charter and the Disability Employment Charter. A breakthrough on this set of employer agreements (see page 7) represents the first of its kind across the big energy retail companies. It is a testament to the work of our reps and their commitment to equality that is at the heart of what we do as a union.

Energy members have also been active in representing UNISON internationally, with energy NEC rep

Tracey Wainwright attending the COP 30 in Brazil as part of the *International Trade Union Confederation* delegation (see page 10). The delegation made the case that a fair clean energy transition for workers must include training, decent employment and workplace standards, trade union bargaining rights and more in the emerging clean energy sectors. These gains are crucial to any plans for industry-wide shifts around clean energy.

Related to this in the UK context, UNISON has helped to secure a landmark agreement between the UK Government, trade unions and industry around a Fair Work Charter in energy. This charter will commit employers bidding for government clean energy contracts to standards on trade union access, bargaining rights, health and safety standards and more (see page 4). In a major win for unions including UNISON, this means workers and unions in the energy industry will be the first

to benefit from several of the major enhancements to workers' and trade union rights contained in the Employment Rights Act (see page 10).

The energy service group is also preparing for UNISON's *Year of Green Activity* campaign throughout 2026 (see page 6). Public services represent vital public infrastructure in the UK's response to climate change and UNISON intends to showcase how embracing the clean energy transformation makes this particularly the case in energy. Watch this space for details of events and key announcements around this over the coming months.

As with the wider clean energy transition, we must always be vigilant to how widespread changes in workplaces, such as AI, may have negative implications for our members (see page 8). This piece explores the true extent of what this means for workers, why it is becoming an important trade union issue that we cannot ignore, and why we must urgently increase our engagement with it.

Last, but definitely not least, we formally welcome Ed Bratt to his new role as the UNISON national officer for energy (see opposite and page 11). Ed has decades of experience working in UNISON. His most recent post was as a regional organiser in the East Midlands. He has already hit the ground running after starting last year.

Finally, a huge thanks to you, our energy members, for the work you do and the support you provide. Together we will continue to prepare for any challenges that may face us going forward, at the same time as showcasing and celebrating our recent achievements.

Donna Rowe-Merriman
National secretary
UNISON business, community and environment



Good secure jobs for green workers

Hard negotiations mean a new charter for offshore wind contracts and increased trade union recognition in renewables.

At the beginning of February 2026, the government launched a new *Fair Work Charter*, which paves the way towards trade union recognition in offshore wind companies.

Most importantly, companies must sign up to the *Fair Work Charter* if they are to be eligible for the government's Clean Industry Bonus in the next round of windfarm auctions – AR8.

"This announcement follows a year of hard negotiations. This is great news for workers. What the government is basically saying to offshore wind companies is, don't even think about applying for new contracts if you don't want to engage with trade unions," said Donna Rowe-Merriman, national secretary for business, community and the environment.

"It sets a precedent that new energy jobs are not going to be treated any differently to old energy jobs. This charter provides workers with job security and longevity in a growing industry."

Until now, there has been a stark difference between the quality of jobs in the emerging renewables sector when compared with those in the oil and gas industries. The *Fair Work Charter* will help bridge this gap.

"The gas and oil industries have had decades of collective bargaining, which have given workers safety assurances, the right to bargain over pay and many other terms and conditions. This Fair Work Charter is a welcome step in addressing the discrepancy," said Rowe-Merriman.

"The charter will help aid a just transition, ensuring any worker wanting to move from the oil and gas industry to renewables – whether that's solar, wind power, carbon capture and storage or any of the other emerging industries – will find their new industry is a safe

"The big picture is that the Secretary of State has stated loud and clear that the energy workforce is a unionised workforce."

industry where their worker rights are protected and upheld.

"It is a time of significant transformation in the energy sector," continued Rowe-Merriman. "We don't know yet what advances there will be in offshore wind in the next ten years, but we know there will be further innovations. There'll be jobs I can't even begin to imagine."

New opportunities

- ▶ The UK is striving to decarbonise the country's energy system by 2030, followed by all sectors of the economy in 2050.
- ▶ Oil and gas production is declining in the UK by about 12% per year.
- ▶ The clean energy industries offer the biggest opportunity for job creation in decades. In the wind industry alone, the number of jobs is expected to grow from 55,000 today to as many as 112,500 by 2030.
- ▶ Research commissioned by Offshore Energies UK showed that 90% of oil and gas sector workers have skills transferable to new offshore jobs in renewable energy.
- ▶ The government's most recent offshore wind auction, raised £3.4 billion of private investment to build factories, ports and supply chains, supporting well-paid jobs.

The bigger picture

"Clean energy offers the biggest opportunity for job creation for decades and we must seize it," said Ed Miliband, the Energy Secretary, speaking recently.

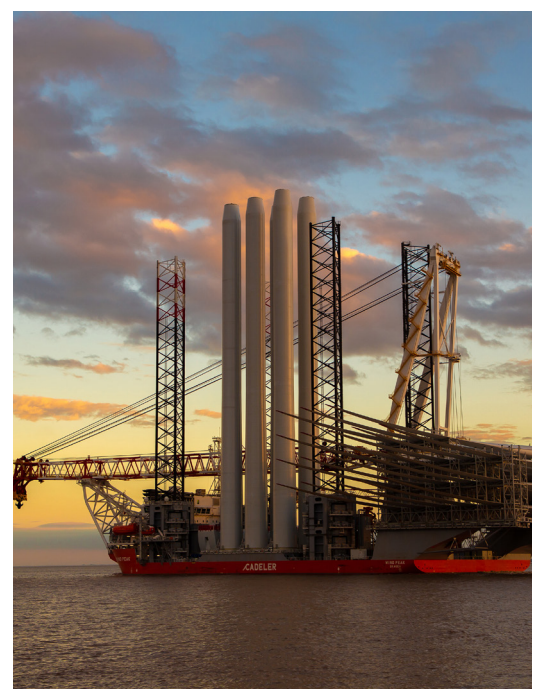
"There are going to be tens of thousands more jobs for engineers, welders, electricians and construction workers. From offshore wind in the east of England to carbon capture and storage in the north east and north west too...as well as hydrogen in Yorkshire...and new nuclear in Wales."

Scott Young, director of renewable energy delivery, Renewable UK, added: "The energy secretary is right to focus on the economic benefits

that clean energy industries bring to the UK.

"The UK is now only second to China in terms of the amount of energy we're generating from offshore wind producing enough energy to power 26 million homes. In 2024, a record 50.4% of our energy came from renewables – mostly offshore wind.

"The energy secretary made clear his commitment to workers' rights and fair pay, and the renewable energy industry is equally determined to ensure we maintain the highest standards throughout the sector, maximising opportunities for British workers."



Trade union recognition at EDF Renewables UK

In 2024, four trade unions (UNISON, Unite, GMB and Prospect) entered into a forward-thinking recognition agreement with leading renewables energy developer EDF Renewables UK and Ireland. It covers the company's 633 people who work across five offices, eight service centres and 44 renewable energy sites across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The new agreement is designed to commit the company and the trade unions to work collaboratively to develop and grow the business, and

to provide high-quality jobs. Part of the recognition agreement includes a People Skills Forum, which gives existing employees the opportunity to retrain for new jobs in renewables.

"The skills and qualifications required for offshore wind and other renewable industries are changing all the time," said Tracey Wainwright, EDF, UNISON Northern branch.

"We do have offshore oil rig workers who have retrained to work on off-shore wind farm platforms," said Wainwright. It's about getting workers on board. However there is

still a long way to go. Many renewable companies do not yet recognise trade unions, and despite initiatives like the People Skills Forum, many workers in oil and gas are worried about their futures.

"Renewable energy is a fast-paced industry and the skills required are changing all the time. It's important to stay ahead of the game and for us to be at the table, so that we can represent workers and ensure a just transition."

UNISON formally launched its **Year of Green Activity** in January introducing members to the union's busy green schedule for the months ahead.



"It's really exciting to be launching UNISON's *Year of Green Activity*. There's an opportunity to make a real impact, and to make sure that not only are we tackling climate change, but that workers have their say in the changes this brings. It is about building momentum – creating spaces where members can connect, share ideas, and push for greener, fairer workplaces and communities," said UNISON senior vice-president James Anthony, who chaired the *Year of Green Activity* launch event.

"This is particularly vital for the energy sector where you, our members, are key to engaging public support and in delivering net zero commitments."

UNISON's *Year of Green Activity* complements the TUC's *Year of Trade Union Climate Action*. Mika Minio-Paluello, the TUC's head of industry, energy and climate, said: "We're very excited about all the possibilities ahead, and how we can step up as a movement," she said, before adding a warning about the current political climate.

"But the tough reality that we face today is also that the far right and Reform are changing the conversation. Where people used to go, 'Yes, obviously climate change is happening', that's being eroded. We need to address how we shift that back."

She also spoke of the need to ensure "that climate action doesn't leave workers behind. It's essential that we're winning climate policy that delivers good quality jobs, but also future proofs those existing jobs."

Broadcaster and environmental activist Chris Packham sent a **special video message** to all UNISON members, urging members to "never forget that your voice is important" in the fight to save the planet.

"But hey, there's power in a union. You may think that you're just a drop in the ocean, but an ocean is a multitude of drops. When those drops unite, they become a force for change."

WE NEED YOU

Are you passionate about the environment? Would you like to take a lead in your workplace on environmental issues? If so, then why not become an environmental officer?

Environmental officers can raise awareness and ensure that green issues are included in the negotiating or bargaining agenda at work.

As with all branch trade union roles, environmental officers are a volunteer role. Whether you have a wealth of relevant experience that can help you in the role or want to find out more about what you can do to help, UNISON will help you. All you need is a keen interest and a willingness to support the work. Training is available and there are support networks within the union where you can ask questions.

For more information, visit:

[https://bit.ly/](https://bit.ly/unisonenvironment)

unisonenvironment or
click on the QR code



What's happening

Every month the *Year of Green Activity* will feature new events, opportunities to get politically engaged on winnable issues – such as workplace temperatures and greater investment in public transport, and a mini-film festival devoted to green-themed films.

For a full list of events, go to:

<https://bit.ly/unisongreen>

Or click on the QR code



Check the **Green UNISON campaign page** regularly at:
www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/green-unison/ for details of all green resources.

Or click on the QR code



Centrica signs anti-racism and disability charters

Centrica has strengthened its commitment to tackling racism and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by signing the Disability Employment charter and UNISON's Anti-Racism charter.

The Government's Disability Employment charter has nine key demands to improve the working lives of disabled people. UNISON's Anti-Racism charter sets out actions for companies to proactively challenge all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism.

"More than 290 organisations have now signed up to the Disability Employment charter, which was launched in 2021," said national equality officer, Katrina Gilman. "Centrica employs around 20,000 people in the UK. We strongly support Centrica's commitment to the Disability Employment and Anti-Racism charters and look forward to working more closely together in the future."

Chris O'Shea, CEO of Centrica, added: "Diversity and inclusion (D&I) are not just desirable, but vital for business success. Diversity offers the business competitive advantage. By reflecting the full diversity of communities, we can understand and serve customers better. D&I is therefore vital, because if you exclude chunks of the population, you cannot have the best performing team."

"If you don't have diversity, you are definitely not the best"

Chris O'Shea, CEO, Centrica



The Anti-Racism charter

The 2021 census revealed that unemployment is twice as high amongst people who identify as Black, compared to the whole population.

UNISON's Anti-Racism charter is more than a guide with ideas on how to challenge workplace racism. It is a blueprint that requires constant commitment from employers, if they are to be transformed into explicitly anti-racist institutions.

The charter also promotes the development of a diverse workforce, prioritises staff wellbeing by addressing the impact of racism, and requires regular reviews of strategies to improve racial equity and inclusion – ensuring the organisation better reflects the communities it serves.

Within a year of signing the charter, employers commit to:

- challenge racism internally and externally whenever it arises in relation to the organisation.
- set and regularly review the company's strategy to improve equality, diversity and inclusion, so that the organisation reflects the communities it serves.
- undertake ethnic pay gap recording and publicly publish the results.
- undertake workforce ethnicity recording and publicly publish the results.
- provide unconscious bias and anti-racism training for all staff members.

In addition, UNISON'S equalities team will review:

- recruitment processes to identify and address race disparities in equality of opportunity
- exit interview results to identify and address race disparities in retention of staff members.

The Disability Employment Charter

Some five million disabled people are currently in work, while the employment rate of disabled people is 53% compared to 82% of non-disabled people.

The charter was launched in 2021 and was put together by a group of nine organisations, including Disability Rights UK, Scope and the Business Disability Forum. UNISON is the only trade union involved.

The charter has nine key demands to improve the working lives of disabled people. These include:

- mandatory disability pay gap reporting and time off for trade union equality reps.
- a two-week deadline for employers to respond to requests for reasonable adjustments. (In a UNISON survey of disabled members in 2019, nearly a quarter of respondents waited a year or more for reasonable adjustments to be put in place, while many never even had the courtesy of a response from their employer.)
- employers with at least 250 employees to publish annual data on how many disabled people they employ and the gap in pay between their disabled and non-disabled employees.



Keeping safe with AI

AI is everywhere and its reach is extending daily. It's promising great efficiencies for employers and workers, but what are its risks?

“Everything you ask it (AI) to do is making it smarter and smarter. Its ultimately role is to get rid of workers. AI might make us do things quicker, but we’re training these systems to do our jobs for us.”

Over the last few years, AI has been consistently presented by governments, big tech and employers as a huge step forward. It promises greater worker efficiency; the elimination of mundane tasks; and short cut solutions to long or complex tasks.

Tens of billions of dollars are being invested in research to deliver ever quicker, ever smarter results. Yet alongside this, there is a darker world

of data collection, which gathers, stores and analyses all the information we input every time we click or press a button.

Dr Christine Colclough is the founder of *The Why Not Lab*, a consultancy to equip workers and trade unions across the world with the necessary skills to ensure collective rights in the digital age. Speaking from Denmark at the energy seminar's first ever online presentation, she spoke about the risks of AI and what we all need to do to keep safe and minimise its impact on future jobs.

“It is so important that we get our heads around the way digitalisation is being rolled out in our workplaces and across society. We have to realise that this is not for the benefit of workers and citizens. Information is being collected from every aspect of our lives, so that big tech companies can profile individuals, workplaces, trends and outputs.

“Microsoft Sentinel and Microsoft Purview are some of the greatest cyber security risks to workers. When installed on your phone or computer, they can track any programme, whether you're at work, reading the news or taking a break,” continued Dr Colclough.

“Trade unions need to be asking employers the right questions, so that collective agreements protecting worker rights are put in place.”

Profiling workers

Workers are being increasingly monitored: how long you spent on a call; if the customer sounded happy or frustrated; how much time spent in between calls; the content of their messages; and the customer rating of each call.

Sensors are being fitted under desks to monitor how often staff are spending away from their workstations. Delivery vans can be fitted with up to 32 sensors to measure everything from how fast the vehicle travels to its exact location and how much time it is inactive.

“When customers are told that their call is being recorded for training purposes, who do you think is being trained? It's the AI systems in place,” explained Dr Colclough.

What's the problem?

This data is being collected and analysed in ways that benefit employers and the big tech companies, but not the workers. For example, data collection is being used to create a profile of the ‘ideal’ employee for your job.

“If your employer offers you a work app that can be downloaded onto your personal smart phone, do not do so,” warned Dr Colclough. “You are handing your employer a huge amount of additional data about yourself.”

As well as profiling, employers are also using this data as evidence to bring disciplinary action against employees. It could be on the basis that they did not complete the required number of calls in a day, or haven't completed notes satisfactorily etc.

“These systems and the data collected from them is crude and makes no allowances for personal circumstances, human error or outside factors. Data excludes the context and complexity of colleagues' lives,” continued Colclough. “Systems can be very narrow at the info they're analysing, so they can be inaccurate and pretty stupid.”



Dr Christine Colclough addressing energy seminar delegates



Call to action

“Let’s not over rely on systems. Let’s hold management accountable.”

Dr Christine Colclough

“In California, citizens and workers have the right to demand their data is not sold or reused in any form.

“We don’t have that right here. However workers do have a legal right to know what data is being collected on them,” said Dr Colclough. “Trade unions are starting to put some in some guard rails, but we need to safeguard our rights and dignity.”

To find out more about how management is using your data, you first need to know:

- 1. what data employers have.**
- 2. how the data is being collected.**
- 3. How the data collected being used.**

By law, management must provide you with two articles *before* they start using a digital tool that processes your (the workers’) personal data, or personally identifiable information. These are:

- **Article 13 of the UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)** which applies when management collects data directly from the workers. It lists the type of information that management should tell workers. This includes: the reason for collecting the data; what data is being collected; and where it is being collected from.
- **Article 14 of the UK GDPR** applies if the data is being collected by a third party – data brokers, business partners or other controllers. Importantly, this article requires your employer to inform you about the source of such data. This source could be another company, but it also includes sensors, CCTV or online tracking tools.

If you haven’t been provided with this information, then you (or your trade union rep) can advise management of their non-compliance with the legal requirements. They should then agree on where and how this information should be shared so all employees are correctly informed.

For more information, speak to your UNISON REP or visit *The Why Not Lab*, visit: www.thewhynotlab.com

“Everything we do and don’t do now can have consequences for future people who might not even be born yet”

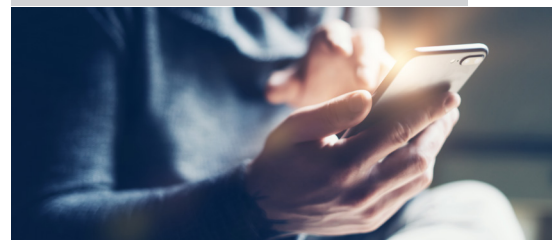
Case study

“At EDF, we use Kraken. We log into the system at the start of the day and we log out when we finish work. It’s the same system used by most energy specialists. It logs our calls and our ACW (after call work). Our employers can see at all times, what task we’re working on, how long it’s taking, our appointments, our productivity and our plan for the week.

“The benefits for workers are that we can see our productivity, and if there have been any improvements or we have any training needs. The risks are that the system is not accurate. It can lead to disciplinaries and personal work performance plans, if not used in the right context.

“For example, if workers are on a break or taking lunch, they have to physically input this into another system called Slack. But if the manager doesn’t check this, then it just looks to them as though the employee isn’t working.”

Dawn Wainwright, northern energy branch



Major gains to worker rights made law

Working life in Britain is getting better... much better...with the government's new Employment Rights Act.

An end to exploitative zero-hour contracts...statutory sick pay for 1.3 million of the lowest paid workers... and simplifying the trade union recognition process. These are some of the far-reaching and many changes that are improving workers' lives as the Employment Rights Act is rolled-out in stages across Britain.

Once introduced, the act will make game-changing improvements to working life in Britain through a raft of new individual and collective rights.

It means the banning of unscrupulous fire and rehire practices, the strengthening of trade unions'



right of access and employment tribunal time limits. These will take effect in October 2026.

The undertakings for employers to develop gender pay gap action plans, the banning exploitative zero hours contracts, and changes to unfair dismissal will happen in 2027.

What's in the bill?

New individual rights include:

- strengthening flexible worker rights
- ending exploitative zero hours culture
- sick pay from the first day you're ill
- bereavement leave widened to close family members
- improved pregnancy and maternity rights
- new 'day one' rights to parental and paternity leave.

Collective rights to help UNISON support members include:

- new access and recognition rights
- improvements to facility time so that reps can better represent members
- protections against detriment and dismissal when taking industrial action
- improved collective redundancy provision
- a new Fair Work Agency to help enforce rights and resolve disputes.

For full details visit: www.bit.ly/unisonerb

UNISON's campaigning

UNISON has been a key player in getting this major act passed. Four specific topics were also subject to formal consultations:

- statutory sick pay
- zero hours contracts
- trade union modernisation
- collective redundancy and fire and rehire.

UNISON also submitted detailed responses to the consultations, which informed government amendments. **Over 13,000 UNISON members** emailed their MPs asking them to back the bill at second reading.

Victory for workers and community groups at COP30

BAM (Belém Action Mechanism), which is part of the *International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)*, secured an important victory for workers at last November's COP30.

For the first time, workers, unions, women and gender groups, youth, communities and indigenous people will get a dedicated place at COP, the UN's annual climate conference to work on issues and rights.

"This is a massive achievement that looked like an impossible demand due to bigger political discussions," explained Tracey Wainwright, energy rep on the national executive council, who was one of only two UK trade unionists to be invited to the conference.



"It is great to hear that governments have agreed that BAM must be developed by COP31 next year. BAM calls on governments to deliver climate protections and

prosperity and to ensure that local communities are included in the process – effectively putting workers and communities at the heart of the negotiations.

"These fall perfectly in line with UNISON's objectives as we move to net zero," continued Tracey. "The intervention of trade unions, action groups and communities all helped to make this possible."

Read Tracey Wainwright's blog about COP30 at:





Protecting the future

Ed Bratt was appointed UNISON's National Officer for energy last April. Here he shares more about his role and what he does when he's not in a committee room negotiating for UNISON members.



Q. When did you first get involved with trade unionism?

A: It was back in the 1980s, when I worked for the NHS. There was a vacancy to be a local branch representative for NUPE (the-then National Union for Public Employees). Through this role, I became more interested in worker rights and being an activist.

The union then sponsored me to go to Ruskin College*, where I studied Labour Studies. I learnt about labour history and industrial relations. It opened my eyes to the importance of becoming an activist, if there are going to be improvements to society. These changes don't just happen, they have to be fought for.

I then went on to become a regional organiser in the East Midlands.

Q: What does a regional organiser do?

A: There's a large concentration of energy companies in the east Midlands region and I was an organiser there responsible for organising four main UNISON branches: Cadent Gas, E:On, Morrisons Data Services and British Gas. These were the main employers where we had trade union recognition. I also worked with Siemens and some other smaller companies. I was responsible for pay bargaining.

Q: Tell us more about your new role as national officer.

A: I still work closely with the big energy companies, but on a national level. We have sector committees within the union for all the major energy employers to address issues such as pay, terms and conditions, and working conditions. I am also now responsible for developing longer term plans to benefit workers in future generations as we move toward net zero (see pages 4 and 5, Fair work for the future). At UNISON, we are at the table with Ed Miliband, the minister for Climate Change and Net Zero, and the TUC, the federation for around 5.5 million workers. This is a much broader, policy-led aspect to my new role.

Changes don't just happen. They have to be fought for."

The green energy sector works with lots of different companies and partners. Many of these companies are new to the energy sector, reflecting the rapid development of green energy as we move away from fossil fuels. UNISON's role is to work with the government and other trade unions to ensure these new companies have trade union recognition, so that the rights of energy workers in the future will be better protected.

Q: Why is it important to belong to a trade union?

A: When you are part of a trade union, you have influence. Individual workers in large organisations have no ability to influence their employer in the absence of belonging to a collective group. That is the reality. UNISON can influence the employer's decisions in relation to pay, conditions of service, and we can modify the behaviour of the employer in, for example, redundancy consultations and reorganisations. That's why trade unions matter. We improve the lot for the worker.

Q: How do you like to relax when you're not working?

A: I play the guitar and I do long distance walking. Over the years, I've walked the South West coastal path from Bristol to Poole. At the moment I'm just about to start my seventh National Trail, The Ridgeway, which is 87 miles from Wiltshire to Buckinghamshire over the Chilterns.

Also I like to read. I read all sorts. I've recently finished a book by Irish writer Claire Keegan and I also like to read non-fiction too.

**Ruskin College was founded in 1899 to provide educational opportunities for adults with few or no qualifications. It has a long history in providing education focused on activism and the labour movement. Its alumni include Labour PMs and MPs, writers, historians and trade union activists.*

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£2,001 – £5,000	£3.50
£5,001 – £8,000	£5.30
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£11,001 – £14,000	£7.85
£14,001 – £17,000	£9.70
£17,001 – £20,000	£11.50
£20,001 – £25,000	£14.00
£25,001 – £30,000	£17.25
£30,001 – £35,000	£20.30
over £35,000	£22.50

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