

Livewire

April 2007

Welcome to Livewire

It is an old adage, but the strength of the union lies in an active and well-informed membership. Despite a number of difficulties in certain locations, the union has taken steps to try and make sure members are kept informed of key developments and given advice and support in the course of your working lives.

The re-launch of Livewire, which for many years was a regular branch bulletin reflects our determination to ensure that members are kept in contact with events and activities which affect you all. To avoid distribution problems at a number of offices we have taken the decision to circulate this to the home addresses of all members. We will be able to give advice and guidance on issues which affect you in the workplace and speak out where we come across injustice. We welcome letters from members where you can have your say and we will try and publish as many as possible in future editions.

*Don't forget, this is your union so **LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!***

UNISON ANNUAL MEETING

In February over 50 members attended a series of rolling annual meetings of the Manweb Branch in Chester and ScottishPower/Manweb offices. Branch Officers reported on a challenging 12 months in which Energy Retail representatives had faced an uphill struggle to try and protect the terms and conditions of members in call centres. Despite strenuous efforts and the significant personal stress to senior negotiators, the final outcome has meant a number of members are now having to engage in detailed discussions with local reps and management in an effort to try and secure satisfactory shift patterns.

In other parts of the business pay

negotiations in Energy Networks have seen a positive three year pay deal continue with above inflation pay settlements a welcome outcome of previous year's negotiations. Likewise in SAIC the second year of a two year deal saw an inflation-proof settlement for all members covered by collective bargaining.

Over 20 stewards were elected from across all areas of the branch representing the 850 members employed by ScottishPower/Manweb and SAIC. In particular we welcome the election of a number of new stewards in the Warrington and Rhos call centres where the bulk of the Manweb members are based. The results of the elections for stewards and officers to February 2008 are detailed below.

[Stewards & Officers for the next 12 months →](#)

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Stewards & Officers

The following stewards and branch officers have been elected for the next 12 months to March 2008

NAME	LOCATION/Business Area	POSITION IN BRANCH
Shirley Vickery	Warrington CS&S	President & Steward
Joe Morgan	Hoylake	Vice-President & Steward
David Read	SAIC	Secretary & Steward
Tom Gibbons	SAIC	Treasurer & Steward
Howell Watson	SAIC	Steward
Julie Parmenter	SAIC	APF Officer
Hilary Shaw	Prenton Energy Networks	Welfare & Steward
Geoff Littler	Prenton Energy Networks	Steward
Matthew Bell	Warrington Dataserve	Steward
Terri Braithwaite	Warrington CS&S	Steward
Michelle Duncan	Warrington CS&S	Steward
Angela Foster	Warrington CS&S	Youth Officer & Steward
Anita Guy	Warrington CS&S	Equal Opps Officer & Steward
Michelle Kay	Warrington CS&S	Steward
Dean Slaven	Warrington CS&S	Membership Services & Steward
David Walsh	Warrington CS&S	Sports & Social & Steward
Andy McEwan	Rhostyllen CS&S	Steward
Stephen O'Connor	Rhostyllen CS&S	Steward
Julie Lockley	Rhostyllen CS&S	Steward
Kelly Ann Booth	Rhostyllen CS&S	Steward
Kathleen Hughes	Caernarfon CS&S	Steward

Iberdrola

The merger between ScottishPower/Manweb and Iberdrola is due to complete in the next few weeks. A recent visit by union representatives to meet our counterparts in Spain and senior Iberdrola executives has brought some initial reassurance for members. Union representatives were told that Iberdrola is one of Europe's largest Energy companies and has had experience of friendly mergers with other Energy companies in South America.

We were advised that their general approach is to leave their subsidiaries to operate relatively autonomously within an agreed financial framework. Assurances have been given that there are no plans to change terms and conditions of employees and that Iberdrola are comfortable with ScottishPower's pension schemes arrangements, in fact they have very similar schemes themselves.

Further discussions are likely to be scheduled in the

coming months including a return visit by the Spanish trade unions to meet union representatives in the UK. With 18 million customers worldwide and Iberdrola's reputation in Spain as a popular national employer the merger will open up a major new chapter in industrial relations within ScottishPower/Manweb. Unison will be at the forefront of discussions over the next few months to ensure that the position of members jobs and terms remain secure.

UNISON membership services

Do you need legal advice? Is your home or car insurance costing a fortune? Could you do with reducing your mortgage? Do you need financial advice? Fancy a day out with the family with big discounts?

These are just some areas where your Unison membership may pay dividends. With 1.4 million members in the UK, Unison has negotiated discounts on a range of products with a number of large providers. Here are just a few examples:

■ As an approved supplier of financial services to UNISON members, Frizzell offers discounted motor insurance and a range of financial services that we hope helps to make members lives a little bit easier.

■ With the new UNISON Local service you will be able to get discounts at hundreds of local shops and businesses around the UK using your UNISON membership card.

■ UIA Insurance has

provided low cost insurance for UNISON members and their families for over 100 years. As a mutual insurer, UIA reinvests any surplus in order to keep premiums low.

■ As a UNISON member, Britannia Building Society offers you an exclusive range of savings accounts and insurance offers. Britannia also offer great mortgage deals with a lifetime discount off the standard variable rate and £150 cashback on completion of your Britannia mortgage.

■ Big discounts on Madame Tussauds and theme parks Also includes Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures and Warwick Castle.

To find out more contact our helpline, UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845. Lines are open 6am-midnight Mon to Fri and 9am-4pm Sat. Or go to the UNISON website on the following link and find out how you can start making the most of your membership subscriptions. →

www.unison.co.uk/benefits/special.asp

Pensions update

The concerted actions last year by the joint trade unions in ScottishPower resulted in a massive cash injection into the Scottish and Manweb pension schemes to eliminate the deficit and put to rest for the time being the immediate concerns which had arisen over the future of the schemes. This funding to the tune of over £150 million

was a welcome break with the direction the company had been going until that point

Notwithstanding the Iberdrola announcement however, we are aware that plans are under consideration to merge the Scottish and Manweb scheme funds which raise crucial questions about the trustee structure and control of the schemes in any such

arrangement. The trade unions will be careful to scrutinise any proposals the company have on such matters and will expect intensive and detailed consultation with a view to reaching agreement on any changes which may be proposed.

Meanwhile in SAIC the Final Salary Pension Scheme which was created in 2000 for those members who TUPE

transferred to the outsourced company dropped from being 95% funded in 2002 to being 66% funded in 2005. This drop, due in part to poor market performance and part to revised actuarial calculations means that an extra £2 million per year is now being added to the fund by SAIC to meet the legal obligations for a fully funded scheme within 13 years.

Working together

As a Branch Development Officer for UNISON North West Region, one of my responsibilities is to work with UNISON Branches in improving communication with members. I am pleased to see that the Manweb Branch is re-launching its "Livewire" newsletter which will keep you, the member, up to date on what's happening within your Branch. I've worked with the Manweb UNISON Branch in putting this newsletter together and I do hope

you enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed writing it.

I can only reiterate the point made within the newsletter that the more workplace stewards we have, the better it is for you the members. Our aim is to have a least one steward in each of our workplaces. Stewards are in the best position to let us know what's happening and of course help and support are only a phone call away.

Manweb members work for a number of

employers. However, you all share one common issue and that is that change and reorganisation occur on a regular basis. And of course we all know that change leads to uncertainty.

The Manweb Branch is the sum total of all our members voices when we negotiate with management. It stands to reason therefore that the more members we have, the louder that voice will be. If you know of anyone in your workplace who is not

a member, show them this newsletter and ask them to complete the application form on the back. Remember, the more members we have, the more the employer will be forced to listen to what we say.

If you are not already a member and would like to join UNISON, please call the Branch Office on 01352 759953 for an application form.

Neal Linsky
Branch Development Officer UNISON, North West Regional Office.

Elections

Elections are taking place over the next few weeks for representatives to Unison's National Executive Committee. In the North West a number of seats are up for election and the election addresses will be issued to all members along with the ballot papers in the next few weeks. We would encourage all members to read the literature when it arrives and take part in the ballot process.

The branch nominated Roger Bannister (North West Male Seat) and Raph Parkinson (Additional Members Seat) during the nomination period given their experience and record of fighting for the interests of members across all sectors of the union.

Why get active in UNISON?



The Manweb branch of UNISON has always placed the interests of our members at the very heart of our activity. This applies whether it is negotiating pay deals with the company, seeking protection for pensions in a world where final salary schemes are increasingly under threat or representing members in capability, disciplinary or grievance hearings. We attach especial importance to training stewards to be able to carry out these activities to the very best of their ability and constantly look for new ways to encourage members to play an active part in the union.

If you want to become more active in UNISON then contact one of the representatives above and let us know. Whether it is just helping distribute union literature, getting involved in Health & Safety or Union Learning or whether you want to fill one of the steward vacancies which exist in a number of locations your input would be welcome.

Our strength lies in our unity in action - help us to help you.

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