

**Winning together in UNISON**

**Energy**  
**Annual Report 2024**





# 2024 Energy Service Group Annual Report

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## **Service Group Executive Chair's Foreword**

We are delighted to present you with the Energy Service Group Executive's annual report for 2023/24. The past 12 months has seen another period of excellent work carried out by our stewards, reps, officers, and members nationwide. UNISON has continued to deliver benefits for our members.

It has proved an interesting and challenging year and my privilege to continue in the role as Service Group Chair. I would like to thank everyone involved with the Energy Service Group Executive, especially my Vice Chair Kristopher Reid and staff who support the work we do throughout the year.

As we reflect on the past year, it's imperative to acknowledge the resilience and dedication of our union members within the energy sector. Despite facing unprecedented challenges, they have remained steadfast in their commitment to powering communities and driving progress forward.

Over the last 12 months, our members have grappled with a myriad of issues that have significantly impacted their work and livelihoods. From the ongoing transition to renewable energy sources to the ever-present threat of job insecurity, the landscape of the energy sector continues to rapidly evolve.

Climate change, environmental impacts and the push to more renewable energy sources means the energy sector, energy companies or its customers are always high on the news agenda. One of the key issues that has dominated discussions is the transition to clean energy, the progress to Net Zero and its implications for our members. While we wholeheartedly support the shift towards renewable energy, it's essential that this transition is managed in a way that prioritises the well-being of workers.

The affordability of energy bills and discussions around social tariffs continues. Overall, bills have reduced but they are still significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. These same cost pressures are felt by energy workers who also must deal with the negative pushback from customers whilst they are working in our call centres and on our streets when record profits are announced.

Furthermore, the issue of fair wages and working conditions remains a top priority for our union. As the energy sector evolves, we must ensure that our members are fairly compensated for their contributions and that their rights are protected in the face of changing industry dynamics.

Over the last 12 months, despite UNISON membership being reduced as a result of headcount reductions, recruitment in our branches continues, with the much contested and aptly named Mike Jeram Trophy won last year by 'National Grid Branch'. This was presented at the annual Energy Seminar, in November. We are planning the 2024 seminar and I hope to see many of you there!

Thank you for the contributions of all the representatives on the Service Group Executive who helped put this report together. I want to thank Luke Ruby Assistant National Officer, Donna Rowe-Merriman National Secretary and Sandra Jean-Baptiste and other UNISON staff for their hard work and support.

I also want to thank Matthew Lay our former National Officer who has moved on to another role in energy and acknowledge his outstanding contribution as UNISON National Officer to the sector.

**Lindsay McNaught,**  
**UNISON Energy Service Group Executive Chair.**

## **Objective 1: Recruiting, organising, representing, and retaining members**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The past 12 months have seen the Service Group face challenges in the sector, however the recruitment statistics for Energy have seen a steady increase in the first half of 2024.

The Covid-19 crisis led to a mass transition to home working for many of our members, and today this remains the normal state of work. This in turn has made recruitment and organising more challenging. Recruitment activity is continuing, with branches seeing growth and recruitment of new activists. Office working is gradually increasing in some employers – and encouraged in some environments. The processes around recruitment and engagement with members and non-members have had to adapt but this is not without challenges. This is a challenge to UNISON and the wider trade union movement.

The hard work and dedication of UNISON branches, activists and members in the Energy Service Group has meant organising activity, and plans for recruitment continue to be prioritised. Challenges in this area are still present but our branches can access support from regions in this regard.

In some areas we have seen net membership growth, which in the present climate is a significant achievement. The Mike Jeram Trophy award for the most improved net branch membership figures during the year between Energy Branch Seminars was presented to 'National Grid Branch'. This branch has worked hard to ensure it covers all new induction sessions for new starters and has a high conversion rate of new starters to full membership.

At the Energy Service Group Executive (ESGE) level we continue to focus on the need to have an effective organising strategy within all the key energy employers, and we have looked to support this activity through our various engagements with reps and branches.

### **1.2 Sector Committees and Branch Organisation**

To ESGE retains as its key priority the need to take forward a requirement for National Sector Committees to operate with all key national energy employers, as per the SGE constitution. The landscape has changed in the last few years – that requires a review of the current structures.

The ESGE agreed that National Sector Committees should exist with the clear purpose of bringing together representatives within national employers where the following exists:

- A common bargaining machinery with direct or indirect powers; or
- Shared bargaining characteristics and general approaches to pay bargaining.
- Geographical spread over more than two UNISON regions.

Where National Sector Committees should exist within the Energy Service Group, they should also have the following functions:

- The right to determine policy on pay and conditions of service and industrial relations issues.
- Autonomy over arrangements for negotiations, including bargaining machinery.
- The settlement of disputes and conduct of consultation exercises as determined by any NEC/SG guidelines.
- Autonomy over arrangements for elections if these conform to UNISON Aims and Values overall rulebook framework including NEC guidance. All sector representatives must be employed within that sector.
- Consultation with members on appropriate intermediate structures outside of the national committee which will promote effective participation and accountability.
- The establishment of Occupational Groups linked to the sector, where budgets and access allow and are appropriate.

They also provide a good opportunity to develop a pan-employer organising strategy that brings together branches, regions, and the union nationally to work towards shared common objectives which would work in tandem to deliver improved recruitment and retention of members. This is particularly important in smaller service groups like Energy where additional national focus can be required.

A great deal of work is undertaken to deliver this priority. British Gas, National Grid, Cadent Gas, E.ON, SSE, OVO and EDF energy all now have/had compliant and functioning National Sector arrangements and have sought to meet on an agreed regular cycle. For budgetary reasons we have also committed to holding at least two of each set of meetings to be held entirely online. With respective changes to corporate structures, we will be looking at how we respond to ensure we have functioning committees.

The Sector Committees are key in the development of employer-based organising strategies and bargaining priorities. Bringing senior lay reps, regional staff, and national staff together when they are all involved in the same bargaining agenda is essential if we are to address the many challenges faced.

The success of the National Grid Energy branch, the new Cadent Gas branch and the Utility Services branch, all of which operate with a clear organising focus, gives us cause for optimism. Branch development has taken place and substantial resources have been allocated to support recruitment through building profile, increasing organising activity and developing new reps. In turn this has delivered real and substantial growth in membership in an often-difficult environment.

### **1.3 Regional development and support**

Most regions continue to operate a regional forum/committee for energy branches and the continuation of such bodies is essential to ensure linkage between energy branches and regional structures.

UNISON is committed to supporting regional engagements whenever appropriate and invited to do so. We continue to see strong support in Wales, which is a positive development.

The Welsh Energy Service Group has begun a process of more engagement with the devolved Welsh administration for energy matters which is a particularly welcome development and links with similar developments in Scotland. The Welsh regions has also been very proactive in exploring how it can be more engaged with not just its energy membership but also the wider UNISON membership and lay structures. A visit to the Port of Milford Haven – including a visit to the RWE Gas Powered Station took place and this provided a valuable insight into future developments.

The continuing development of National Sector Committees has ensured that all UNISON staff engaged with a single national employer can get round the table and plan strategically. This has increased engagement between UNISON staff and should ensure this continues.

#### **1.4 Learning and development**

The annual negotiating skills course for utility workers is a key feature of the planned development of lay activists in the energy service group. The course remains very popular with activists and many of its participants over the years have gone on to become senior lay leader within the Service Group and the wider union.

The national UNISON Pensions Seminar held on 11 March 2024 was well attended and well received by participants, updates covered a range of pension issues including practical information on the differences between Defined Benefit (DB) and Defined Contribution (DC) schemes, as many employers operating businesses in the utilities space are moving to close DB schemes in favour of DC schemes instead.

The UNISON Negotiating Skills Course (Stage1) took place over 12-14 March 2024 in Birmingham. The course looked at the development of new reps' practical negotiating skills and understanding of different styles of negotiating, the processes of employer negotiations themselves, as well as understanding how to present on and work with the aspects of a new recognition agreement, pay claim, or policy proposal. It also looked at how reps can and should navigate joint union working arrangements, intransigent or hostile management negotiating styles, and post-agreement follow up and implementation work.

Energy members made up most attendees at the Negotiating Skills course, which received positive feedback overall and discussions are taking place on running more advanced-level training in this area soon, as well as running the introductory Stage 1 course again in 2025.

We continue to look at what national courses we can bring forward to addressing pressing needs to develop activists' knowledge'. The Equalities Seminar and the Energy Seminar events have been held in 2023 and are a form part of the learning and organising training provided nationally. Branches are encouraged to send delegates to both events especially new activists.

## 1.5 Communications

We continue to produce the UNISON Energy Magazine and have the funding in place to continue this. This magazine remains designed to showcase the work of our members in the sector alongside key developments and engagements in the world in which our members work.

The magazine will remain an essential part of our national communication strategy for energy members. We will continue to engage with members on its content and how we can maximise its use.

The UNISON Energy members' Facebook page continues to be another way in which energy members can be updated on topical developments.

The UNISON Activist magazine is another widely distributed outlet that has covered energy related stories during the past year. We provide the material for possible stories which are converted into articles by our in-house journalists.

We issued a series of energy related press releases which received prominent coverage in the national media among all outlets including TV, Radio, and Press.

We will continue to work with the national press office to pursue opportunities when they present themselves.





## **Objective 2: Negotiating & bargaining on behalf of members & promoting equality**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The past year has remained very challenging across the energy sector – despite the relative decline in energy prices over the last 12 months. Energy prices are still around 60% above pre-Covid levels.

In the retail and customer service sector there has been a stabilisation in the market. This has seen some multi-year pay awards being made such as in the case of E.ON, and some in roads in pay progression in some employers such as national Gas Transmission. There appears to be some recruitment and retention challenges. These challenges have enabled UNISON to make a strong case for increased remuneration to reflect the cost-of-living crisis that has dominated the past year.

In the regulated sector, which is largely distribution and transmission operations, the impacts of the new regulatory period are well underway. As in the retail sector the challenges presented by recruitment and retention problems has worked to support employment levels and increased remuneration for staff. We are currently balloting members National Gas Transmission business and are waiting for pay negotiations to conclude in National Grid at the time of writing.

### **2.2 Retail and Customer Operations**

The past year has seen some stabilisation of the retail supply industry. The biggest ever crisis to befall the sector engulfed employers, consumers, and members in a significant way – but prices have started to recede from the highs seen at the end of 2022/early 2023.

Record profits have been announced by some of the larger energy companies due to the surge in prices for fossil fuels. We have seen a significant rise in the use of artificial intelligence to carry out some transactional tasks and now also in the form of automated chat bots in some businesses. This means that queries that are received by customer service agents are now more complex in nature and often require escalation. Dealing with irate customers is also a health and safety issue for our members in this area.

UNISON has used its regular engagement with Ofgem to promote much stronger regulation in the sector.

### **2.3 Distribution and Transmission**

The focus on the distribution and transmission employers has largely been to ensure the new regulatory pricing regimes are functioning and the outputs achieved. Additional investment in decarbonising the energy system is still needed, and the frameworks encourage this but not at the rate of change required or in terms of delivering the levels of employment growth we need.

It is becoming more apparent that workforce issues will become the greatest challenge to delivering Net Zero by 2050 and this is certainly apparent in the energy distribution and

transmission sectors. It is acutely obvious that to manage the transition from fossil fuels to renewables will need clear government policies – and above all deliver fair outcomes.

UNISON continues to flag concerns with both government and the regulator on the skills shortages – and the need to act quickly to ensure energy security. Competition is amongst energy companies chasing highly skilled workers – and there is a need to ensure that the workforce of tomorrow can see the benefits of being part in the transformation of the sector.

The Energy Act received Royal Assent 26 October 2023. The Act covers energy production and security and the regulation of the energy market, including provision about the licensing of carbon dioxide transport and storage. It also deals with commercial arrangements for carbon capture and storage and for hydrogen production and transportation. In addition, the act considers new technologies, including low-carbon heat schemes and hydrogen grid trials.

The Act passed legislation for a Future System Operator (FSO) to be created. In Jan 2024, the National Grid ESO announced the new name for this entity as the National Energy System Operator, or NESO. The vesting date for the new body is 1 July 2024.

Other key areas covered in the Act include gas and electricity industry codes, financial support for persons carrying on energy-intensive activities, heat networks, smart energy appliances and load control as well as the energy performance of premises. New areas of the energy market such as renewables are also considered including energy savings opportunity schemes, the resilience of the core fuel sector and offshore energy production, including environmental protection, licensing, and decommissioning.

In the larger distribution and transmission business UNISON has retained strong industrial relationships and staff terms, pensions, and overall remuneration have seen a series of outcomes that reflect the positive activity of the unions and its representatives, not least the additional remuneration support that has been secured for members in several key employers.

## **2.4 Pay and Reward**

The continued cost of living pressures has led to a renewed focus on ensuring the wages of UNISON members do not fall behind these cost pressures, not least of course energy bills. Across the sector we have seen pay negotiations that have concluded prior to the end of May 2024 reflecting outcomes close to – or in some cases above – the rate of inflation for core salaries – and some pay progression and individual and company performance payments.

We also consistently received strong membership mandates for the settlements achieved. A summary of these can be found in the next section.

## 2.4.1 Summary of Pay Awards in 2023/24

### British Gas

Across the two collectives where UNISON is part of the bargaining group, the following was agreed:

- Customer Experience and Sales Collective (CESC)
  - A 3.5% base pay increase PLUS a move to the midway point of Upper Quartile.
  - A one-off unconsolidated amount of £425 (which will be pro rata and subject to Tax and NI) for all colleagues.
  - 2% Spirit and Nuclear Shares.
  - £500 increase in car allowance for eligible colleagues.
  
- Support and Functions Collective (S&F)
  - A consolidated increase to the base pay rates of 5%.
  - 2% Spirit and Nuclear Shares
  - £500 increase in car allowance for eligible colleagues.

### National Grid

National Grid – pay negotiations are ongoing and have not yet been concluded; these are expected to conclude with an offer in May 2024.

National Gas Transmission - A pay offer for 2024/25 centred around a 4.5% uplift to base salaries was made at the beginning of May and put to a ballot shortly thereafter, with a closing date of 20 May 2024.

### E.ON

A two-year pay deal was agreed for 2024 with the following principal aspects:

- 5.75% increase to the current salary rates and associated allowances effective from 1st January 2024 (this involves a bringing forward of the deal from 1st April 2024). This is a two-year deal, with a further 3.25% to base salary and associated allowances in April 2025.
- A one-off unconsolidated cash lump sum of £1,350 to all E.ON UK and npower collective colleagues.

### EDF

A pay offer of 5.75% was agreed, which will apply from April 2024. In addition, a separate and now increased £1,500 non-consolidated payment will be paid in October every year.

## Cadent Gas

Pay talks for 2024 are still ongoing and a pay claim has been submitted to the employer.

## OVO

OVO colleagues are now in the second of a two-year pay deal, which consisted of a 3% uplift in year one (2022-23) with an unconsolidated cost of living payment from the business of £1,200; and a 5% uplift for 2023-24. Pay talks for 2024-25 are set to begin in April.

## Siemens Utility Services

Following recent pay talks, an offer was made on pay for 2024, based on the current pay bands, which was balloted and accepted by members:

- £22 – 23K – 10.63%
- £23- 24K – 6%
- £25-27K – 5.5%
- £28 -31K – 5.25%
- £32k and over – 5%

## Morrisons Data Services (MDS)

In 2023, UNISON secured a pay award centred around a 7% consolidated uplift for 2023/24, which took effect in April 2023.

## Scottish Power

Both Energy Networks and Customer Business (formerly Energy Retail) are at the early stages of pay talks for 2024-25.

## SGN

SGNC business agreed 3-year SGNC pay deal (2022-2025) and 5-year SGND pay deal (2021-2026), eligible employees will receive the following pay awards with effect from 1 April 2024:

- SGNC – 6.29% (in accordance with the agreed formula, based on average CPI inflation over the 12-month period March 2023 to February 2024).
- SGND – 3.99% (in accordance with the agreed formula, based on average CPI inflation over the 12-month period January 2023 to December 2023, but capped at 3.99%).
- These increases will flow through in full to appropriate allowances.
- Also in April, eligible SGND employees will receive a lump-sum of 0.72% of basic salary.

## Fulcrum

A pay offer was made based around a 5% consolidated uplift, which took effect from 1 July 2023, after a ballot of UNISON members which was accepted.

## Northern Gas Networks

NGN colleagues are currently in the second year of a two-year pay deal, which comprised of a 9% uplift in 2023 and an uplift of CPIH +2% for 2024.

Initial discussions on commencing pay talks for 2025 are taking place with the branch now.

## UK Power Networks (UKPN)

A three-year pay deal has been negotiated with the employer, made formally to members, and which has now been balloted on and accepted. This comprises:

- From 1st April '24 – Increase equal to February 2024 CPIH + 2%, with an underpin - 6%
- From 1st April '25 – Increase equal to February 2025 CPIH + 2%. With an underpin – 2%
- From 1st April '26 – Increase equal to February 2026 CPIH + 1.25%, with underpin - 2%
- A commitment has also been given to discuss several in-direct pay items that were part of the Trade Unions claims.
- For Years 2 and 3 there will be an underpin of 2% as a total pay award applied.

## **2.5 Pensions**

UNISON remains very much focused on the area of pensions and sees this element as a key priority and one which we should continue to organise effectively around.

Fundamentally, the performance of defined benefit (DB) schemes remains problematic in the energy sector largely due to increasing life expectancy and falling gilt yields on which returns are planned. The increasing challenge of funding future liabilities under the supervision of the pension regulator has undoubtedly forced some employers' hands and we continue to see challenges as employers seek to balance off cost of paying for this form of pension provision.

The reduced coverage of DB pension schemes in energy workplaces has added yet greater focus on the need to push for good defined contribution (DC) pensions schemes and working to improve those already in place.

We continue to work with the pensions section in UNISON to ensure advice is available and we work in tandem on key issues impacting energy worker pensions.

We remain committed to helping branches and regions navigate this difficult area. The national officer is supported by the national pensions section so expert advice can be sought for a range of issues. External complex advice can be sought in exceptional circumstances.

## 2.6 Sector and Company Reports

UNISON continues to organise effectively in employers across the energy sector, and reports from reps are regularly produced for the benefit of members in branches, regions and nationally.

### 2.6.1 British Gas/Centrica

#### Pay

In September 2023 UNISON submitted a joint pay claim to the business after carrying out a pay survey with our members. This was followed by a series of meetings with senior management throughout Q4. UNISON concluded pay negotiations with the business for L8 Employees within the Customer Experience & Sales (CESC) and the Support & Function Collectives (S&F) in December 2023. These were the first negotiated pay talks held with the business since the Terms & Condition (TAC) agreement back in 2021.

The initial offer from the business was incredibly disheartening, despite UNISON's best endeavours during the negotiations- which did result in further improvements being made to their pay deal- the full and final offer made by the business fell well short of our expectations and we were unable to endorse Centrica's pay offer. As a result, UNISON adopted a neutral stance and let our members make up their own mind on whether to accept the offer or not. We also made it clear to our membership that this was the best offer that could be achieved by negotiation, and a vote to reject would potentially end up with members requiring to take industrial action.

This year, the offers for both collectives were different and the details of the company's pay offer for each collective were as follows:

#### ➤ Customer Experience and Sales Collective (CESC)

As part of the TAC agreement, members previously voted to accept a multi-year offer that delivers a movement for staff to the Upper Quartile (UQ) pay rate in 2025. The 2024 Centrica offer for Level 8 members in the Customer Experience & Sales collective included:

- A 3.5% base pay increase PLUS a move to the midway point of Upper Quartile.
- A one-off unconsolidated amount of £425 (which will be pro rata and subject to Tax and NI) for all colleagues.
- 2% Spirit and Nuclear Shares.
- £500 increase in car allowance for eligible colleagues.

Employees paid above the pay rate for their job profile would receive a payment of 50% of the salary increase (or base pay increase to the new rate and a top up unconsolidated payment).

#### ➤ Support and Functions Collective (S&F)

- A consolidated increase to the base pay rates of 5%.
- 2% Spirit and Nuclear Shares

- £500 increase in car allowance for eligible colleagues.

Employees paid above the current pay rate for their job profile would receive an unconsolidated payment of 100% of the salary increase.

Following the final offer from the business UNISON commenced consultations and a ballot with our members on the company's pay offer, which concluded on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. This resulted in a significant majority of our members choosing to accept the offer, which will be implemented from 1 April 2024. We recognise that a considerable number of members rejected the offer, and we will continue to engage with the business to tackle the ongoing issues of pay and for next year's pay discussions we will be pressing the business to address the ongoing inflation and cost of living challenges faced by our members.

### L7 Team Leaders

We have a major concern surrounding this population of employee. These employees are unhappy in how they are paid and rewarded. They are currently in the merit pot (performance related pay) which sadly is not managed in the way it should be. These members are being unfairly rewarded and feel they are undervalued for the role they carry out. We would like to see these employees brought back into the collective where the unions can negotiate a fair reward and pay for what they do.

### Cost of living

The cost of living crisis continues to rumble on, significantly affecting our members living standards as they have to deal with rising prices, high inflation & interest rates and a worsening financial situation.

British Gas profits leapt from £72 million to over £750 million in a year thanks to surging fuel prices, increased profit margins and higher energy bill prices. The enormous amount of profit that Centrica posted for 2023 was simply staggering.

Centrica has surprised everyone by making a remarkable comeback over the last two years. Despite coming under increasing fire from fuel poverty campaigners, energy protesters, politicians and the media they've had another incredibly successful year in 2023 posting profits of around £2.8 billion. British Gas Energy profits shot up ten-fold and even BG Services managed to make some money. Eye watering sums of money have been made across the whole of the business and the company remains Britain's leading supplier of energy. Centrica has been ranked amongst the top three FTSE performers in 2023 and its share price has soared. Dividends have been restored, with shareholders delighted at the strong position the company now finds itself in.

### Policy Forum

We are still in the process of reviewing the company's main policies including the Performance Improvement Procedure (PIP), Attendance Management Procedure (AMP), Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures and Probation Policy. UNISON has raised several concerns about the existing policies with the Employment Relations team (ER). We've fed back inconsistencies and discrepancies that we have experienced when dealing with members entering and being progressed through these procedures, as well as suggesting a number of adjustments to help improve them.

Although we are currently still working through the procedures, some progress has been made with ER. Amendments include the introduction on an appeals stage into the Probation Policy and extended timelines in which to submit appeals, which we believe is a fairer and more reasonable approach. In the AMP policy we have now included the right to re-enter stage 3 of the process rather than be dismissed or alternatively be exited from the process completely which we all know would not happen.

We will continue to work with the business to highlight any concerns we have with the policies.

### System migration

Working in partnership with ENSEK and Salesforce, Centrica is currently building a new British Gas business named the New Energy Platform (NEP). The objective is for British Gas to become a digital-first energy supplier so that it can compete against other smaller, more agile competitors, improve its customer service experience and to retain its position as the market leader in the domestic energy market.

Replacing the previous legacy SAP software (which although costly and outdated, worked) with an all new digital and cloud-based platform, and then transferring over seven and a half million customers onto a system never designed for that scale and complexity of migration has been difficult, to say the least.

The intention for NEP is to create a new working model which offered a wider variety of job role for front-line agents and encouraged team empowerment and agents taking ownership of enquiries. Moving front-line agents over from Classic (SAP) Energy to NEP(ENSEK) and training them up on the new operating model without impacting on customer service has been a challenge, and the company's ability to deal with the sheer scale of customers and the number of contacts has been severely tested.

As a result, the off-shore operations in South Africa and India have been expanded to support the business with both two main customer channels -webchat in India and voice in SA. The TU had previously been assured that Centrica's intentions were to repatriate the offshore operations. However, due to increased customer demand British Gas don't have the capacity to manage this in-house and are relying on third-party contractors to provide this. Following ongoing issues about poor service from outsourcing company Capita, Centrica has now terminated its contract with them leaving WNS as the main third-party provider for the business. We have been assured that the increase in the level of third-party support is only a temporary measure until the migration is completed and customer contact and complaint numbers reduce to more manageable levels.

### Services and SMART Planning and Dispatch

British Gas Services and SMART P&D are going through significant changes to the ways of working with the introduction of a new system, SIPD and the introduction of MAAS within SMART. In Smart, unfortunately, with the delays in the transition to the new energy platform this process has been placed on a hold and a temporary platform Metering as a Standalone service (MAAS) is being rolled out.



We addressed understaffing in SMART which resulted in agency staff brought in to address the concerns, UNISON managed to secure agency to permanent contract moves for a several employees with more to be secured moving forward in 2024.

### Shift Review

We are currently reviewing our opening hours within Energy. After a review from Ofgem these are the commitments that the company has made to offer more flexibility for our customers, the review is still ongoing, and the business hopes to be able to advise our members of this soon.

2023-24 has been very busy, we have also been dealing with the following.

- HAS – reward review
- Rotherham complete site closure
- Seasonal hours in services
- Lead Rep implementation for DE&I, H&S and Learning
- Flexible First approach within Energy

## **2.6.2 EDF**

### Pay and reward

Last year staff were given a cost-of-living payment of £1,250.00 and wanted this to be an ongoing payment. The TU's declined this an ongoing payment until this had been discussed (so that it wasn't part of ongoing pay talks) The ongoing payment was agreed towards the end of last year and it was agreed that the payment is a separate payment. However, as the payment has been delayed until Oct the company has also offered a bridging payment of £625 and increased the October payment to £1,500 which will be paid every year. This was agreed alongside pay talks, members were balloted and agreed to the offer of 5.75% from April 2024.

### Recruitment

Due to the implementation of Kraken, EDF have been recruiting staff to offset the ramp down of offshore employees. UNISON Reps have been attending recruitment sessions and signing up approx. 98% of new starters.

### EDF Energy Customers

2023 and 2024 have been challenging years for customer services due to the implementation of the new IT system Kraken. Consultation has been gone quite smoothly and has been running alongside the migration of accounts and employees. Full migration was expected to be completed by April this year but due to issues with the migration of PAYG and SME this has been pushed back to June/July 24. Employees have been and still are working closely with Kraken Tech to upgrade the system with suggested changes to ensure is fit for purpose and meets both the needs of the employee and the customer.

## Policies

There has been a lot of work carried out on our policies to reflect the change in culture within EDF. Policies are focusing more on the individual rather than process. Once major change was to create a parenting policy which brought policies such as parental leave, flexible working, maternity and paternity rights together. At the same time, we were able to improve some of the provisions as well as implementing new provisions such as paid fertility treatment leave and 2 weeks paid leave for miscarriage or still birth regardless of gestation period.

## Equalities

UNISON Northern Energy has been working with Wearside Women in Need for a number of years now and in the past have facilitated joint training with stewards and manager's around domestic abuse. Wearside Women in Need has recently created the Red Flag Aware campaign to highlight domestic abuse in the workplace. After discussions with management, EDF has agreed to sign the pledge raise awareness and signpost local services, free joint training with the branch and management on understanding domestic abuse and how to respond helpfully.

Men's Mental Health – EDF and UNISON are working in conjunction to try and combat the stigma around men's mental health and have started a support club which is well attended.

We are working with EDF to raise awareness of Neurodiversity and the impacts it has on staff, one of our reps is involved to help create surveys, comms etc. A network has been created and is a standing agenda item on the national H&S committee for EDF.

### **2.6.3 E.ON**

#### Pay and reward

The details of the 2024 pay deal are as follows:

- 5.75% increase to the current salary rates and associated allowances effective from 1st January 2024 (this involves a bringing forward of the deal from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024) . This is a two-year deal, so there'll be a further 3.25% to base salary and associated allowances in April 2025.
- The company has also agreed to pay a one-off unconsolidated cash lump sum of £1,350 to all E.ON UK and npower collective colleagues. The payment will be made in December pay-roll in time for Christmas.
- The deal applies a braking mechanism to the top of the bands. This means that should the 5.75% increase take you above the current top of the band, then anything over this will be paid as a separate cash payment in January 2024.

This offer was accepted in a ballot by 98% of participating members.

## 2.6.4 National Grid

### Recruitment and membership

The branch has introduced a number of recruitment initiatives such as matched gift vouchers. Regular recruitment stands on the street in National Grid house twice every 3 months due to National Gas business in the building and also in the National Grid Energy branch. Branch continues participated in the recruitment drive in National Grid training facility for apprentices and recruit young members.

With the current pay negotiation on going, we are seeing a steady increase in recruitment. Several new reps have come on board, and a contributory factor towards good recruitment has been incentives for existing and new member and regular communication from the branch to members. We recently had our branch AGM and several reps have taken branch officers positions which is positive as it means reps are engaging with branches and taking up UNISON training.

We have continued to recruit strongly and in 2023 the branch won the Mike Jerome award again, the last time we won this award was 2021. We are seeing a steady increase in staff levels returning to the office but in order to plug the office footfall gap we hold an online recruitment session once a quarter, which has been very successful.

### Organising

The key priorities for UNISON in National Grid have always been the recruitment and retention of membership, communication, the development and organisation of reps and Young Members.

### Pay and reward

National Grid – pay negotiations are ongoing and have not yet been concluded; these are expected to conclude with an offer in May.

A pay offer for 2024/25 centred around a 4.5% uplift to base salaries was made at the beginning of May and put to a ballot shortly thereafter, with a closing date of 20 May.

### Pensions

Negotiations on the current pensions deal are currently ongoing.

### Changes to T&Cs

Family Provisions Policy has been reviewed and the business have removed the qualifying service requirement for colleagues to be eligible to receive maternity, shared parental leave, and paternity-enhanced company pay. This policy has been updated recently to include carers leave.

### Equality and diversity

The branch continues to work closely with the Employee resource groups on a range of events and activities. This collaboration will also enable the branch to reach out to diverse members

within the business. We hope to continue our collaboration occasionally. A concerted effort has been to recruit more black members, and develop them into activists too, to reflect our workforce population and continue the work of the UNISON year of the black worker.

#### Health and safety

The business continues to campaign about mental health by carrying out mental health surveys and promote the Employee Assistant Program.

Post pandemic and regular H&S meeting are held with the business.

### **2.6.5 Cadent Gas**

#### Pay and reward

A joint pay claim with the GMB for 2024 has been submitted, and at the present moment two meetings have taken place. Once a full and final offer is presented UNISON will consider its position in respect of a recommendation and ballot the members.

#### Pensions

In 2023 Cadent announced its intention to close the final salary defined contribution (DC) pension scheme to future accrual. UNISON fully participated in the statutory consultation on the company's proposals. This resulted in an improved set of proposals, notably in the provision of two transition payments for members and the retention of enhanced redundancy rights until March 2028, the augmentation of members' benefits in CGPS so that these members receive the full year benefit of an increase in pensionable salary as of 1 July 2023, the ability to take flexible retirement in such a way that members can draw their pension from CGPS but remain employed by Cadent.

Throughout the process UNISON hosted webinars and sent out bulletins to members to keep them abreast of developments in the consultation process. The union also took legal advice of the method through which the company sought to implement the changes and assured the members of the benefits secured through negotiation.

### **2.6.6 Scottish Power**

#### Pay and reward

Currently, both Energy Networks and Customer Business (formerly Energy Retail) are at the early stages of pay talks.

As reported last year, one of the clauses of the Retail Pay Deal in 2023 was the payment of a £500 non-consolidated sum in the first quarter of 2024, depending on the business being successful in 3 out of six pre-arranged targets. It is good to report that these targets were met, and the payment was made in the March salary.

Both current pay claims have made the point that the profitability of the employer in the past year should be taken into account when deciding pay for this year. Both claims also seek to deal with the issue of experienced employees taking longer to reach the market rate of pay while new entrants start on the market rate or above.

There has been a lot of talk for the past few years regarding recognition in the Renewables business. The employer has consistently refused to consider this despite the arguments put forward by the joint unions and the four unions are now in the process of formally requesting this via the proper legal channels.

### Pensions

Last year we were made aware of a data breach by Capita, who previously administered the Scottish Power and Manweb pension schemes. All affected members were informed and offered support in this. The unions continue to monitor the situation.

At the beginning of 2024 the Manweb Branch merged with the North West Gas Branch. As the Manweb Branch still has Scottish Power as the main employer, arrangements will continue whereby we negotiate and work jointly for members in Scotland and Manweb.

## **2.6.7 OVO**

### Recruitment and membership

Rounds of VER initiated by the business – including two rounds in six months – have continued to negatively impact member recruitment over the last year. More positively, the introduction of a full-time-officer in Scotland has meant additional resources to devote to recruitment, and regular recruitment days taking place on sites once a month have proven to be successful, and this is starting to be reflected in overall recruitment, which has seen a positive impact.

On organising, a new Communications Officer for the branch has been appointed for the forthcoming year, to help with comms such as newsletters, social media updates and other aspects. The impact of this has been very positive and has been well received.

### Pay and reward

The previous, two-year pay deal which covered 2022 to 2024 will conclude in June and talks for 2024/25 will begin in late April.

Pay progression has been rolled out to account management with agents being mapped to level 1 or level 2, with most receiving a pay increase. Agents are now working towards level 3 which in turn brings more responsibility but a further pay increase. This hasn't been rolled out to the wider business, but the Complaints department are currently undergoing a separate pay negotiation.

### Corporate issues

A new corporate office has been opened in Glasgow in October 2023. It has been confirmed that this will not affect current business expectations around levels of office-based working by staff, however office working is still being promoted by the business.

### Other developments

On recent rounds of VER, this took place in October 2023, where this was offered to 97 members of staff in a specific set of areas of the business. The numbers met here in this round were sufficient for no statutory redundancies to be taken forward.

A further round of VER was announced in April 2024 – on this occasion 308 members staff were affected. All were offered redeployment in other roles and departments in the business if VER was not an option. As with the previous round in late 2023, the numbers met here were again sufficient for no statutory redundancies to be taken forward.

## **2.6.8 Siemens Managed Applications and Services**

### Pay and reward

Following recent pay talks, an offer was made on pay for 2024, based on the current bands and with the following proposed uplifts:

- £22 – 23K – 10.63%
- £23- 24K – 6%
- £25-27K – 5.5%
- £28 -31K – 5.25%
- £32k and over – 5%

Overall, the offer had a value of 5.4% - it was put to a ballot of members and was accepted; following this outcome, the award will run from 1 January 2024.

## **2.6.9 Fulcrum**

### Pay and reward

A pay offer was made based around a 5% consolidated uplift, which took effect from 1 July 2023, after a ballot of UNISON members which was accepted.

## **2.6.10 Morrisons Data Services (MDS)**

### Pay and reward

In 2023, UNISON secured a pay award centred around a 7% consolidated uplift for 2023/24, which took effect in April 2023.

A pay claim was submitted to the employer as part of pay negotiations in 2024, and talks took place for both Meter Reader members and separately for our Manager members and in both cases, these resulted in a compound pay offer of a 5.1% uplift. This is comprised of a 3% increase which would take effect on 1 April 2024, and then a further 2% increase which would take effect on 1 October 2024. (The additional 0.1% is achieved owing to the October 2024 increase being applied to the new rate from 1 April 2024.)

The ballots for Meter Reader members and Managers members were conducted separately and concluded with votes to accept of 83.3% and 89% respectively.

## **2.6.11 Northern Gas Networks**

### Pay and reward

NGN members are currently in the second year of a two-year pay deal, which comprised of a 9% uplift in 2023 and an uplift of CPIH +2% for 2024. Initial discussions on commencing pay talks for 2025 are taking place with the branch now.

### Recruitment, membership and organising

A project to comprehensively map workplaces and identify members to seek to build and recruit in this area in line with organising to win principles has been designed.

### Employer relations

Scheduled employer meetings have been set for the year where regular updates on plans will be discussed and negotiated through the formal structures. GMB (the majority union) are balloting at present the new interim HRD is questioning the status of recognitions agreements.

## **2.6.12 UK Power Networks (UKPN)**

### Pay and reward

Pay talks in UKPN commenced in January 2024 and have now been completed across the three bargaining groups – PMSNF, SGNF and Power Care. Power Care continues to be an outlier, as historically many of the employees/ members were TUPE transferred from numerous private contractor employers E.g. Murphy's, Clancy Docwra, Clancy.

UKPN historically used to RPI (the Retail Prices Index measure of inflation) figures from February figure as a starting point for Pay negotiations, but in 2023 due to way that they are funded it was requested that CPIH be used as the recognised measure of inflation. This was reluctantly accepted as part of the 2023 settlement. As such UNISON, alongside Unite, GMB and Prospect, submitted individual claims for 2024 at CPIH+.

A three-year pay deal has been negotiated with the employer, made formally to members, and which has now been balloted on and accepted. (Power Care are yet to start the ballot process, but these members will be offered the pay settlement.) The three-year settlement comprises of:

- From 1st April '24 – Increase equal to February 2024 CPIH + 2%, with an underpin - 6%
- From 1st April '25 – Increase equal to February 2025 CPIH + 2%. With an underpin – 2%
- From 1st April '26 – Increase equal to February 2026 CPIH + 1.25%, with underpin - 2%
- A commitment has also been given to discuss several in-direct pay items that were part of the Trade Unions claims.
- For Years 2 and 3 there will be an underpin of 2% as a total pay award applied.

### **2.6.13 Northern Powergrid**

#### Recruitment and membership

Members in NPG sit within the Northern Energy Branch. NPG had 5 joiners and 28 leavers between April 2023 and April 2024.

Northern Energy Branch as a whole has 565 members with over 23 active reps, and over the same 12-month period had 120 joiners and 100 leavers.

#### Pay and reward

The consultative ballot on an improved uplift to the pay award (for members on P&A terms only) concluded just prior to Christmas, with a high turnout and equally high (71%) acceptance rate.

The Major Incident Support registration process concluded in March 2024. The Professional and Administrative collective agreement will be updated with the new elements agreed through the pay settlement.

#### Industrial relations

The company held a meeting of the board with trade union regional officials back in December 2023, to facilitate positive joint working through a framework for engagement.



## 2.6.14 SGN

### Pay and reward

SGNC business agreed 3-year SGNC pay deal (2022-2025) and 5-year SGND pay deal (2021-2026), eligible employees will receive the following pay awards with effect from 1 April 2024.

- **SGNC – 6.29%** (in accordance with the agreed formula, based on average CPI inflation over the 12-month period March 2023 to February 2024).
- **SGND – 3.99%** (in accordance with the agreed formula, based on average CPI inflation over the 12-month period January 2023 to December 2023, but capped at 3.99%).
- These increases will flow through in full to appropriate allowances.
- Also in April, eligible SGND employees will receive a lump-sum of 0.72% of basic salary.

This is in accordance with the agreed run-down formula and is based on the difference between average RPI inflation over the period January 2023 to December 2023, LESS average CPI inflation over the same period, and then multiplied by this year's reduction factor of 0.3.

The company are aiming to pay Operational Allowance to eligible SGNC employees, and Pension Salary Sacrifice Lump sums to all eligible employees, in May, and pay talks are set to commence for 2024.

## 2.7 Promoting equality and diversity in the workplace

UNISON continues to make promoting equality and diversity a priority in its organising, bargaining, campaigning, and engagements with employers, and this continued across the Energy Service Group over the last 12 months, with some notable achievements made.

Equality work featured prominently in the workplan for the Energy Service Group Executive, and this was reflected in the priorities in key activist engagement events throughout the year. Exec members organised the dedicated Business & Environment (B&E) Equalities Seminar, which took place in July 2023 (summarised in the report in the next section). It emphasised the YoBW campaign with a double-length workshop session, with the other workshops focusing on LGBT+ workers, young workers, women workers, and other equalities areas.

As well as this, the Energy Service Group Branch Seminar, which took place in November, included a workshop which looked at young worker equality and the priorities of Young Members in the union's work. The Exec has continued to facilitate the sharing of best practice around equality work, as well as UNISON extensive bargaining and negotiating guidance, and showcased specific examples of key equality work and support in the Winter 2023 edition of the Energy magazine.

## 2.7.1 2023 Business & Environment (B&E) Energy and WET Equalities Seminar Report

In 2023 the UNISON Joint WET & Energy Equalities Seminar took place over 14-16 July, at the Leeds Hilton City Centre Hotel.

### Seminar opening and keynote addresses (Friday)

The 2023 Joint WET and Energy Equalities Seminar began on the first evening of the event by Rachel Wright and Pam Sian, respectively the Chair and Vice-Chair of the B&E Equal Opportunities Working Group. The chairing team introduced themselves along with the other attending members of this committee, welcomed the delegates from across WET and Energy branches to the seminar, and wished everyone a productive, useful, and enjoyable weekend, before formally opening the seminar.

The first evening of the event included keynote addresses and presentations from Karen Loughlin, UNISON Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Secretary, who welcomed delegates to Leeds and gave an overview of the equalities work undertaken in the region by UNISON, reiterated the fundamental importance of this kind of work to everything the union does, and wished seminar delegates well for the weekend in sharing their experience in these areas and taking this new knowledge back into branches and workplaces.

Mary Onafalujo, UNISON National Officer and BCE Unit Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Lead, then gave a detailed presentation on recent work undertaken in regions and branches to influence (or initiate) EDI strategies within employers and ensuring that trade unions in the form of UNISON reps have a seat at the table when the key decisions on these strategies are made. The point was made that this and other work would be aided by establishing Self organised Groups (SOGs) in branches, connecting these via regional networks, and increasing the representation of women and non-white ethnic groups amongst branch reps and officers more generally, to better reflect the workplace membership itself and to have increase this representation and participation in UNISON's own democratic structures.

Josie Irwin, UNISON Head of Equality, gave the final presentation of the first evening of the seminar in the form of a keynote address to delegates. Josie gave an overview of the organising, campaigning, and bargaining work that the union is engaged in.

Josie expanded on this to note how this includes work to increase the establishment and growth of SOGs in branches; campaigning around ending lower minimum wage rates for workers aged under 25, a day-one right to flexible working, improved leave for carers, the Disability Employment Charter, and other campaigning objectives.



The production of bargaining guides to support branches in their negotiations with employers around equality policies and workplace practices was also mentioned, with copies available.

## Seminar workshop sessions (Saturday)

Josie Irwin led the first workshop session of the Saturday of the seminar, which looked to address aspects of women's equality issues in both the UK workforce and wider society, and how UNISON members can engage with the democratic and organisational structures of the union to organise and campaign for change. The workshop began with a broad overview of the current legal and regulatory context in the UK in relation to maternity leave provision and protections, aspects of workplace regulations around menstrual health and the menopause, and aspects of equal pay.

The advantages of negotiating workplace policies around these aspects were also explored, along with how UNISON members can turn conference motions into tangible change in workplaces and wider society. Seminar delegates then took part in a group activity around discussing and feeding back on how UNISON can improve how members and branches organise, bargain, and campaign for improvements around workplace provisions for pregnant workers and new mothers, followed by an idea sharing exercise around what a good approach to menopause campaigning and negotiating would look like.

The central part of the Saturday of the seminar was taken up by an extended session on anti-racism, and specifically in relation to UNISON's 2023 'Year of Black Workers' campaign. Margaret Greer, UNISON National Race Equality Officer, led this extended workshop, which began with an overview of the key aspects of racial inequality in workplaces, including an emphasis on the ethnicity pay gap but also including other elements of workplace discrimination and harassment, alongside an exploration of how these and other aspects structure the objectives of the YoBW campaign.

As well as this was an overview of the need to increase representation and participation of Black Members in UNISON branches and wider national structures, including asking members to update their member records with their ethnicity information, and connecting with regional networks to enhance participation further.



The recently launched Year of Black Workers Toolkit was presented to seminar delegates and over the seminar lunch break, delegates were invited to review the document and discuss in groups how the bargaining and negotiating strategies around racial equality that it outlines may be implemented in delegates' workplaces. The final part of the racial equality workshop focused on exploring what WET and Energy branches have done so far in taking the aims, objectives, and strategies of the YoBW campaign into workplaces, discussing what more can be done in this

regard, and developing an action plan from this discussion that delegates can take back into their branches.

The final workshop session of the Saturday of the seminar taken by Penny Smith, a member of the UNISON LGBT+ National Committee, which explored the meaning of the '+' (plus) in defining identities, how this is reflected and recognised within UNISON, and how bargaining and campaigning for workplace inclusion in this regard can be undertaken. The workshop began with a short history of the '+' in UNISON since its inclusion in the union's rule book as an amendment to the LGBT Members section in 2019, and the inclusion in the Bi+ Caucus of the LGBT+ National Committee shortly after. A seminar quiz then took place to explore knowledge and awareness of identities and definitions of the related terms, followed by a group activity around what it means to be a good ally in supporting the pursuit of the inclusion and recognition of people who identify under the plus, what the struggles are in the workplace and in wider society.

The Saturday of the seminar concluded with an evening seminar dinner for all delegates. At the dinner a fundraising raffle was held, with delegates invited to contribute prizes, to raise money for a chosen cause, chosen by the Equal Opportunities Working Group. The cause chosen this year was 'Feed Leeds Homelessness Project', a local, non-profit organisation staffed by volunteers who distribute food parcels directly to the homeless in Leeds. Delegates contributed a significant number of raffle prizes and the raffle itself raised a total of £640 for Feed Leeds, all of which was donated to the organisation with a letter from UNISON expressing support for the work they do.

#### Seminar workshop sessions and close (Sunday)

The final half-day of the Equalities Seminar began with a workshop on younger workers and UNISON Young Members, beginning with a broad profiling of UNISON Young Members and young workers more broadly, the roles they often work in, their priorities in workplace policies and practices and other key aspects. The session also covered the challenges to UNISON and the wider union movement in recruiting and organising young workers, such as the lack of stability in the early stages of a typical UK young worker's working life, the costs of union dues, and the lack of young worker representation in trade union structures itself.

A special emphasis was placed on the significant development of the UNISON role change, passed at NDC 2023, for Young Members to be defined as members aged 30 and under, rather than 27 and under. The implications of this for organising and developing Young Members was discussed as a separate issue as part of a seminar group practical activity, alongside a broader discussion and feedback on overcoming the challenges to recruiting, organising, and developing Young Members and increasing their participation in all of UNISON's decision-making structures.

The final session of the seminar served as a signposting presentation by UNISON Learning Officer Suzanne Tipping, who introduced the wide range of equalities education and training options available to members via UNISON Learning and the UNISON College. An overview was given of the range courses and learning opportunities on offer, and how these relate to the equality areas delegates had engaged with.



## **Objective 3: Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Major issues have continued to dominate the energy landscape, and these directly feed into the work of our members and the engagements with our employers in this sector. The critical need to decarbonise the economy and growing protests to deliver cleaner, greener renewable energy has contributed to a renewed interest in what UNISON is campaigning for and our programme of work to influence key stakeholders to adapt or adopt UNISON's, priorities.

Our primary engagement throughout the past year has been with key employers: Ofgem, BEIS, HM Government, and the Official Opposition. We have also continued to engage within Europe post Brexit via our work with EPSU and internationally with TUED and PSI.

### **3.2 Net Zero and Just Transition**

In conjunction with our work in support of the COP 28 we have continued to work to support the statutory objective of Net Zero by 2050. We have engaged with a wide range of bodies in the past year on matters concerning Net Zero and the Just Transition. They are both standing items in our regular meetings with Ofgem.

We also attend regular meetings with the TUC's sustainable development action committee to input into the broader trade union debate on these issues. We continue to argue for the development of a UK wide green employment strategy to ensure a skilled workforce is available to be deployed to deliver decarbonised energy to UK homes (whatever choice is made on what that form is). We have had regular engagement with key employers on this subject and have also met with those who can manufacture both hydrogen and heat pumps and understood the concerns and frustrations they have.

We continue to support the work of Just Transition bodies in Scotland and Wales as these develop. It continues to be disappointing that such bodies still do not exist in England.

In her role as the lead EPSU member on the EU sectoral social dialogue committee for Electricity and Gas, our National Secretary has liaised with colleagues from Norway to discuss mutual issues relating to energy infrastructure projects and investment including the North Sea Link (NSL). As President of the EPSU Utilities Committee it is helpful to identify best practice from other countries across Europe on managing a Just Transition for workers.

It is also important to engage with UNISON's other service groups in relation to Net Zero targets.

### **3.3 Hydrogen Gas**

As the largest staff union in the gas industry including the largest union in the new Gas Transmission business, we have been playing a key role in looking at how we are decarbonising

gas so that it can continue to be used without carbon emissions, keeping homes warm at an affordable price.

We need to have clear government policies on this area – and have been liaising with businesses and politicians to be at the heart of the debate around renewable energy.

The ESGB continues to support the conversion of methane gas into hydrogen gas (carbon free when used) and further its eventual replacement with hydrogen gas produced via renewable generation (green hydrogen) as a major gas source for use in homes and businesses. This is made possible using the existing gas transmission and distribution pipe network which is currently being upgraded as part of the national mains replacement programme.

UNISON continue to support the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hydrogen. We continue to see this APPG (which we helped to establish) as an important tool to develop further knowledge and understanding in this key area.

### **3.4 Political Engagement**

We continue to seek influence with political groupings both to understand current thinking and to influence that thinking to support UNISON energy members. Key stakeholder engagements are supported by Connect Public Affairs, and we have secured meetings with BEIS Ministers and officials, Shadow BEIS ministers, MPs and Select Committee chairs. We also engage with appropriate APPG's and retain a close link with the APPG on Hydrogen.

This year has seen added activity with the General Election taking place before January 2025. UNISON has a well-developed policy response to the crisis and the challenge of Net Zero, which has enabled us to promote specific responses.

We have had ongoing discussions with the Labour Party on developing policy for the next manifesto, policy that again is in tune with the needs of UNISON energy members.

We continue with ongoing dialogue with the TUC and other trade unions within the sector on a wide range of policy issues and we have worked together within the TUSDAC grouping (Trade Unions Sustainable Development Action Committee) to develop a set of broad-based policy positions. UNISON, Unite, GMB and Prospect work on some issues energy issues jointly as they represent the bulk of all trade union members in the industry.

We have continued to support the work of TUED (Trade Unions for Energy Democracy) in developing an international political dimension with the work we are doing within EPSU.

### **3.5 European Engagement**

UNISON has continued to be very active in Europe, working closely with EPSU and other European unions to progress agreed responses on matters concerning Energy. UNISON continues to hold a seat on the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for

electricity, and separately for gas. These are tripartite bodies bringing together the European Commission, employers, and trade unions.

We continue to recognise that many of the UK's largest unionised energy employers operate across and are based in Europe such as EDF, E.ON, and Iberdrola. Decisions taken in European centres has a significant impact on what happens in the UK and to UK workers. Alongside the work we do in support of European Works Councils, the sectoral social dialogue committees represent one of the few opportunities still available to UK workers to influence pan European regulations and laws.

Over the past 12 months we have led on key issues, including the need to promote future skills for workers and developing common standards for training and apprenticeships in the gas electricity sectors.

UNISON's national secretary for energy, Donna Rowe-Merriman was elected the president of the EPSU European Standing Committee for Utilities, which drives the trade union agenda for the two SSDC and liaises with the European Commission to progress the agreed work plan. We also use this committee to link in with the work of the ETUC. The Standing Committee meet twice a year and has progressed its own workplan and produced a key report on the impacts of liberalisation in the energy sector. We have also recently completed a detailed assessment and response to the EU Commission on Electricity Market Reform.

### **3.6 Health and Safety**

UNISON is represented on electricity industry health and safety body HESAC by the national officer and Willie Docherty (Scottish Power). This is an important industry-wide forum supported by the HSE. Most eligible companies attend, along with the key trade unions. UNISON continues to press for a greater retail focus in the work of HESAC.

UNISON is also represented on HSE/TU Gas Liaison Committee which meets twice yearly to discuss health and safety developments in the gas industry. This covers all the IDN's and National Grid, although these meetings are not convened by the employers, and they (unlike electricity) do not lead collectively in this area.

As a result of our engagement with the HSE we are also participants in the gas operators' strategic group which is an employer led body.

## **Objective 4: Developing an efficient and effective union**

### **4.1 Introduction**

At a national level, the Energy Service Group Executive continues to hold hybrid meetings with a face-to-face option. The Exec met for a total of four regular, scheduled meetings with a handful of online-only single-item meetings to discuss urgent business in between these.

The Executive is made up of lay members elected to serve for a period of two years, of which the current term of 2022-24, with elections held this year.

The Energy Service Group is represented on UNISON's National Executive Council (NEC) by Tracey Wainwright. Tracey reports in writing to the Executive and Energy branches on the activities of the NEC.

### **4.2 Membership of the 2022-24 Energy Executive and sub-committees are as follows:**

#### Regional representatives on the Energy Service Group Executive

<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Seat</b>
Eastern	[Vacant]	General seat
East Midlands	Theognosia Soulla Psomas Vakas Bhatti	Female seat General seat
Greater London	[Vacant]	General seat
Northern	Dawn Wainwright	General seat
North West	Stephen Dickson [Vacant]	General seat Female seat
Scotland	Ann Forsyth (until March 2023) Kristopher Reid	Female seat General seat
South East	[Vacant]	General seat
South West	[Vacant]	General seat
Cymru/Wales	Cara Middle	General seat
West Midlands	[Vacant]	General seat
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gavin Flower	General seat

#### Sector Committee representatives on the Energy Service Group Executive

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sector Committee</b>
Lindsay McNaught	British Gas/Centrica
Muserat Shaheen	E.ON
Ann Forsyth (until March 2023)	Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)
Katrina Robertson (from March 2023)	Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)
Melissa English	Cadent Gas
Allison Chisnall	EDF
Miriam Latona	National Grid
William Docherty (by SGE invitation)	Scottish Power
Leanne Glen	OVO



### 4.3 Energy Service Group Executive Sub-Committee Memberships

B&E Equal Ops Working Group	Lindsay McNaught, Allison Chisnall, Willie Docherty, Vakas Bhatti, Ann Forsyth (until March 2023), Dawn Wainwright (from March 2023).
NEC Appeals Panel	Lindsay McNaught, Kristopher Reid.
UNISON National Health and Safety Committee	Tracey Wainwright.
Service Groups Liaison Committee	Lindsay McNaught, Kristopher Reid (substitute).
Disciplinary Actions Panel	Lindsay McNaught, Kristopher Reid.
UNISON Women in Energy Project Sub-Group	Lindsay McNaught, Allison Chisnall.

### 4.4 Energy Branch Seminar 2023 Report, Leeds Hilton City Centre Hotel, 3-5 November 2023

In 2023 the UNISON Energy Branch Seminar took place in Leeds, at the Leeds Hilton City Centre Hotel, over the weekend of 3-5 November.

#### Seminar opening and keynote addresses (Friday)

The seminar was formally opened by Kristopher Reid, Vice-Chair of the UNISON Energy Service Group Executive. Kris welcomed delegates to the seminar, thanked them for making the journey to attend the event in person and wished everyone well for the weekend. Kris then assumed the role of seminar chair for the duration of the event.

The seminar guest address was made by Leonie Sharpe, UNISON Regional Manager for the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Leonie welcomes delegates to the region and to Leeds, gave a broad overview of the important organising and bargaining work that has taken place and continues to take place in the region across her years in the role overseeing the UNISON Energy brief. She also took the seminar delegates through a Yorkshire-themed prize quiz, by way of welcoming members to the region. Imran Hussain, Labour MP for Bradford East and at the time of the seminar the Shadow Minister for the New Deal for Working People, unfortunately gave his apologies for the introductory guest speaker slot just prior to the date of the seminar, and so Leonie was gratefully thanked for standing in.

Donna Rowe-Merriman, UNISON National Secretary for the Business & Environment Unit, gave the 'State of UNISON' address to delegates, introducing herself to members as the officer lead for UNISON Energy, reviewing her experience in the sector in UNISON and looking to the future. Some of the major union-wide issues and initiatives were also mentioned, including the national 'Organising to Win' recruitment and organising campaign, the ongoing 'UNISON Cost-of-Living Campaign' and the associated 'Driven Out of Work' report on inadequate mileage rates for public services workers, and the major industrial action around pay in the Environment Agency that is still ongoing. Donna also wished to thank Matthew Lay, former UNISON Energy National Officer

and absent from the seminar for the first time in many years, for his considerable commitment and work with Energy members, and led the seminar in wishing him well for the future.

### Seminar workshop sessions (Saturday morning)

The Saturday seminar workshops began with a session taken by Dan Meredith, Policy and Public Affairs Director of E.ON Energy. The main part of the session consisted of a broad overview of the disruption and transformation of the energy industry, covering recent geopolitical events, the Covid-19 pandemic, and legislated targets around Net Zero – and what the future implications are for all aspects of the industry, from generation to transmission and supply to retail.

The session also covered the current state of the UK energy industry, its preparedness for the market shocks of recent international conflicts and what this meant for bill-payers, as well as the support being offered by government currently and some ideas for changes in energy policy that are being considered.



The areas of support considered included the retrofitting of homes with heat insulation and electric heat generation solutions, the development of a 'social tariff' for consumers, and the wider need for enhancements to the UK energy system that will be needed as the transition away from fossil fuels towards electrification progresses.

Josephine Grahl, UNISON Equality Officer, then lead a workshop on work/life balance, hybrid and flexible working and the associated 'right to disconnect'. The session sought the experiences of members in their employers in relation to home and hybrid working, and presented some of the bargaining guidance, model policies and advice produced by UNISON, in particular the 'Working From Home and Hybrid Working Bargaining Guide' – copies of which were distributed to delegates to take back to their branches. An aspect given special consideration, following a motion passed at the Energy Service Group Conference, was the gendered and wider equality impacts of flexible and hybrid working and how this can negatively affect gender (and other) pay gaps amongst other issues, and how comprehensive flexible and hybrid working policies, developed and implemented in partnership with trade unions, are the best solution to this major issue in new, post-pandemic working environments.

The third workshop session of the Saturday of the seminar was led by Hilda Palmer, a representative of the Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) organisation, which campaigns in partnership with trade unions to prevent workplace health and safety incidents and works to ensure corporate accountability and responsibility in this area.

The organisation, its recent activities, successes, organising achievements and worker testimonies on recent tragic workplace incidents were explored as part of the workshop.

### Seminar workshop sessions (Saturday afternoon)

In the afternoon of the Saturday of the seminar, UNISON Labour Link National Officer Julian Cooke took the first workshop session, which covered the UNISON Labour Link, it's political fund, main activities, interrelationship with the UK Labour Party, governance arrangements and activist structure across branches, regions, and the union nationally.

The ways in which member engagement with the Labour Link has proved beneficial in the past for taking forward the objectives of UNISON specifically the wider trade union movement was explored, along with ways in which members can channel their activism in this direction.

Tracey Wainwright, the Energy Service Group representative on UNISON's NEC and member of the National Labour Link Committee, gave an account of her experience of engaging with the Labour Link and representing UNISON in Labour Party structures.



Most of the afternoon part of the Saturday of the seminar was devoted to an extended, practical workshop on the writing and submission of motions to UNISON conferences – including the Energy Service Group Conference and the National Delegate Conference. UNISON Learning Coordinator Jim Lewis led the session. Delegates were asked to bring an area of importance to them, their union branch and/or their workplace, and to work in groups to set out the main aspects of the issue, consider how UNISON and its constituted bodies can be called upon to address these aspects, and so synthesise this into an example of a draft competent motion. Delegates were reminded of the technical aspects which under UNISON rules make for a competent motion and were encouraged to take this back into branches ahead to aid with the submission of branch motions to UNISON national conferences in 2024.

#### Seminar evening dinner, disco, raffle, and Mike Jeram Trophy award

On the Saturday evening of the seminar weekend, the Energy Seminar dinner and disco was held, along with a fundraising raffle. Prior to the seminar, Energy Service Group Executive agreed to nominate the local Leeds charity St. George's Crypt as the chosen recipient for funds raised at the raffle – the charity supports the homeless in Leeds and other vulnerable people with food parcels and other initiatives. Delegates generously donated a decent number of raffle prizes, and across raffle ticket sales, online donations from delegates, and a top-up contribution from the UNISON Business and Community Unit, a total of £500 was raised for St. George's Crypt, all of which was donated to the charity, which was acknowledged by the charity, which sent a note of grateful appreciation to UNISON in response.

Towards the end of the evening, the Mike Jeram Trophy was awarded. The award is presented at the Energy Seminar each year to the UNISON Energy branch that has, in the 12 months since the last seminar, recruited the most new members. Donna Rowe-Merriman introduced the award, highlighted the importance of acknowledging the hard work of branches in recruiting and retaining members in what is a challenging environment for trade union recruitment, and presented the award to the 2023 winners – National Grid Branch.

The Mike Jeram Trophy was awarded in 2023 to National Grid Branch. (Pictured from left-to-right) the award was



presented by Donna Rowe-Merriman (National Secretary) to Peter Read, Miriam Latona, and Phebion Mudoti, the delegates representing National Grid Branch at the seminar.

#### Seminar workshop sessions (Sunday morning)

The final morning of the seminar began with a wide-ranging session covering matters relating to the decarbonisation of energy generation and usage in the UK, and was led by Juliet Philips, Senior Policy Advisor at the E3G policy think tank.

The session was structured in two parts, covering consumer aspects around the decarbonisation of domestic heat generation and how UK energy policy should be further focused towards facilitating consumers to make the modifications that will allow them to reduce carbon emissions, and the second part explored on the changes and upheavals in the energy sector that workers, trade unions and the industry itself will need to navigate as progress towards Net Zero targets is made. The workshop presented the major issues around these matters and following this the seminar delegates divided into groups to discuss, consider and feedback their ideas and perspectives as energy consumers on how UK energy policy can better assist them to take forward the home decarbonisation choices they wish to make; and also as energy sector workers, on how the changes to the industry can be managed effectively to ensure a just transition for energy workers across the sector.

Following a feedback session, an open forum for the seminar delegates, Kris Reid formally closed the seminar. In his closing remarks the delegates were thanked for their attendance at the seminar, for the time they have given and for the experience and expertise they had shared over the weekend.

## Action on motions from the 2023 Energy Service Group Conference

### 1. Managing Difficult Customers/members of the Public

#### Summary of motion

Our energy members are working in energy companies in roles that require them to engage on a very regular basis with difficult customers and at the same time behave professionally at all times. They are taking calls or interacting with customers/members of the public which can lead to shouting down the phone, they can threaten to commit suicide, they can be deeply distressed and also vulnerable to harm.

The effect of trying to manage difficult or distressed customers is inevitably having its own negative impact on our members. This is increasing the levels of stress and anxiety faced by members but also increasing the levels of sickness and mental health issues they are vulnerable to. Further our members may well be facing cost of living issues themselves and struggling to pay energy bills.

#### **ACTIONS**

##### The SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Create a survey that can be used by energy branches to understand the scale of these problems and use the data to support engagement on these concerns.
- 2) Engage with key employers to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by members and seek to ensure these concerns are the subject of full discussion and action plans drawn up to mitigate our concerns.
- 3) Seek to ensure that more specialist training is provided to deal with the complex nature of issues raised by customers especially when harm is threatened to themselves or others.
- 4) Seek to ensure that staff faced with distressing calls/face to face contact with customers are given adequate support in the workplace or at home.
- 5) Raise these issues more broadly with energy stakeholders such as Ofgem, the Government and the Labour Party so they are aware of the wider pressures.

#### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- A survey usable by Energy branches to better understand the scale and the details of this issue has been drafted and finalised.
- The drafted survey is being deployed for use in a pilot branch, and the results will be analysed and used to create an evidence base which will then be taken into discussions with relevant employers to strengthen the case for changes in workplace policies, procedures, and specialist training.
- UNISON reps and officers have reestablished regular joint meetings with Ofgem, and this specific point on the issue of harassment from customers has been raised multiple times and will continue to be raised in future meetings.

## 2. Securing the Legacy of the Year of Black Workers in the Energy Service Group

### Summary of motion

Black Workers up and down our society often find themselves in low-paid, insecure work, with poor terms and conditions. Despite the Westminster Government denying that Institutional Racism exists in our society, we know that it does.

With UNISON having an estimated 185,000 Black members, it is imperative that we build upon our long history of achievements in tackling inequities in our society by taking concrete action to enable Black members to take the next step in our journey towards justice.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Work with the NBMC and other Self-Organised Groups to understand the number of Black members in the Service Group, and work to encourage those that do not have their ethnicity recorded in their membership data to update this.
- 2) Work with the NBMC and other Self-Organised Groups to analyse and interpret the data captured from (point 1), to create and implement a strategic plan to work towards ensuring Black members are represented proportionately within the structures of the Service Group from Branch to Executive levels.
- 3) Work with the NBMC to develop an action plan for supporting Black members to become active within the union and their workplaces.
- 4) Work with the NBMC and Branches to capture Ethnicity Pay Gap data from employers, and support Branches to work with those employers to develop a strategy to reduce the pay gap, with the long-term aim of eradicating it.
- 5) Work with the NBMC and UNISON's Learning and Organising Service to develop a training and development plan to ensure that all activists within the Service Group receive training in 'Defining Black' and the 'Race Discrimination Protocol'.
- 6) Work with Branches and the NBMC to collect the data around the number of Race/Equality cases within the Service Group, analyse the data to identify any commonalities between the cases and work to develop toolkits to tackle these issues.
- 7) Support Branches within the Service Group to negotiate with employers to get them to sign UNISON's Race at Work Charter.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- Work was undertaken with the Equality Unit to confirm that the UNISON Equalities Survey included questions on Service Groups and member ethnicities so that this data could be used to gauge the accuracy of the make-up of SG membership against that reflected in member records.
- Discussions have taken place with the Equality Unit to interpret this data and to work on an action plan.
- The 2023 Equalities Seminar included a special extended workshop session on all aspects of the priorities of the Year of Black Workers campaign, including:
  - Supporting Black members to become active in branches and in the union's democratic structures.
  - Bargaining with employers to introduce UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter, which includes commitments on ethnicity pay gap reporting and strategies to close gaps.
  - UNISON's 'Defining Black' and 'Race Discrimination Protocol'.
- Work on this motion will be carried over into 2024/25.

### 3. Effects of Long Covid in Energy workplaces

#### Summary of motion

Conference notes that Long Covid is a condition characterised by long term consequences persisting or appearing following a typical convalescence period after having Covid and has affected too many of our members in the Energy service group.

Disabled, Black and women workers who bore the brunt of caring roles during the main pandemic are now living with lifelong illness and life changing conditions and in need of support from Energy employers and workplaces through reasonable adjustments and Access to Work, which has never been needed as much as it is today.

Conference believes that it is vital we highlight to Energy employers the provisions of the Equality Act and how they apply to our members with Long Covid and covid-related mental health conditions, and that we seek to agree policies on disability equality with the employers so that our members with Long Covid and covid related mental health conditions are treated fairly within the workplace. We must also support members at risk of being put on capability or disciplinary processes due to disability related absences or because they have been denied reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

#### **ACTIONS**

##### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Circulate UNISON's guide to supporting members with Long Covid to branches and regions, making clear that many of our members will already be entitled to protections under the Equality Act 2010 as a result of their experience of Long Covid.
- 2) Seek and share good practice where UNISON's Long Covid guide has been successful in Energy workplaces.
- 3) Publicise UNISON's two bargaining guides – on Reasonable Adjustments Policies and Passports and Disability Leave – to branches and regions and encourage branches to open negotiations on these with their employer where appropriate.
- 4) Promote UNISON's Members Guide to Access to Work to branches, regions and members in the Energy service group.

#### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- The relevant guides were circulated to branches, equality officers/contacts in 2023/24, including around National Disabled Members Conference in 2023.
- A call for examples of best practice went out in a special bulletin to coincide with National Disabled Members Conference and UK Disability History Month. These were also sought for the 2023/24 edition of Network magazine.
- The relevant bargaining guides were circulated to branches, equality officers/contacts and others on several occasions in 2023/24.
- The UNISON Members Guide to Access to Work was showcased in a Service Group-wide bulletin to mark National Disabled Members Conference and UK Disability History Month, alongside related resources, and guides.

#### 4. LGBT+ workers in field-based roles (National LGBT+ Committee)

##### Summary of motion

Conference notes that there is a lack of diversity among field-based operational roles within the Energy industries. This is a real cause for concern as it hinders the creation of an inclusive and welcoming work environment in Energy industries.

Field-based operational roles within Energy are mostly roles that involve lone working, for example monitoring and checking of equipment in the field and visiting customer's homes. The Health and Safety Executive advises that employers "must manage any health and safety risks before people can work alone" and that "there will always be greater risks for lone workers without direct supervision or anyone to help them if things go wrong". Worryingly, a recent study has found that around 66% of lone workers have reported that they had experienced violence and aggression from the public in the course of their duties.

This is exacerbated for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) workers, who sometimes encounter homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia from the public. Conference knows that this is a real problem for LGBT+ workers in customer facing roles.

Conference recognises the importance of working to ensure that employers in the service group have effective lone working policies that incorporate appropriate provision on violence and abuse.

##### **ACTIONS**

##### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Urge branches to review the lone working policies of their employer and seek to negotiate improvements where necessary.
- 2) Promote UNISON's lone working guidance and guide on gender, safety, and health widely within the service group.
- 3) Explore and publicise best practice examples of lone working policies from within the service group.
- 4) Encourage branches to work with employers and engage with LGBT+ UNISON members to identify and address barriers to reporting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse from customers or accessing support if they are subject to such abuse.

##### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- Engagements with the UNISON H&S Unit have taken place on direct and useful ways to promote this.
- UNISON's lone-working guidance and guidance on gender and health & safety have been promoted across branches already and were again in a specific email campaign to coincide with the National H&S Seminar (April/May).
- The email campaign called for the sharing of best practice examples of lone-working policies.
- The April/May H&S email campaign referenced and promoted engagements on identifying and addressing barriers to reporting homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic abuse.



## 5. Hybrid and remote working for LGBT+ workers in Energy

### Summary of motion

Conference notes that there is a lack of diversity among field-based operational roles within the Energy industries. This is a real cause for concern as it hinders the creation of an inclusive and welcoming work environment in Energy industries.

Field-based operational roles within Energy are mostly roles that involve lone working, for example monitoring and checking of equipment in the field and visiting customer's homes. The Health and Safety Executive advises that employers "must manage any health and safety risks before people can work alone" and that "there will always be greater risks for lone workers without direct supervision or anyone to help them if things go wrong". Worryingly, a recent study has found that around 66% of lone workers have reported that they had experienced violence and aggression from the public in the course of their duties.

This is exacerbated for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) workers, who sometimes encounter homophobia, biphobia and transphobia from the public. Conference knows that this is a real problem for LGBT+ workers in customer facing roles.

Conference recognises the importance of working to ensure that employers in the service group have effective lone working policies that incorporate appropriate provision on violence and abuse.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Promote the UNISON bargaining guide on working from home and hybrid working widely within the service group.
- 2) Encourage branches in the service group to use the bargaining guide to review employer policies and seek to negotiate improvements where necessary in line with the model policy.
- 3) Publicise ways in which LGBT+ members in the service group, including those undertaking hybrid and remote working, can participate in UNISON's LGBT+ self-organised structures.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- The relevant bargaining guides on home and hybrid working have been circulated to branches via email.
- A separate webinar event is being planned that will adapt the Branch Seminar workshop to an online setting and be made available to members across the Service Group.
- New advice and guidance produced by the LGBT+ National Committee and the wider Equality Unit on how LGBT+ members can become more involved in activism and participate in UNISON's governance structures has been produced and has been circulated to all activists including those in the Service Group.

## 6. Work-life balance, mental health, and the Right to Disconnect (National Women’s Committee)

### Summary of motion

Conference notes the significant changes to working patterns and practices that have happened since the pandemic, including a large rise in remote and hybrid working, including in Energy sector employers.

Conference believes that flexible, hybrid and remote working policies for Energy staff need to be actively negotiated and agreed by trade unions, who can meaningfully consult Energy staff, and can negotiate fair and positive arrangements that work best for the Energy workforce as a whole.

Conference believes all workers in the Energy service group should have the Right to Disconnect and that UNISON has a key role to play in improving work/life balance for workers in the Energy service group.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Highlight the gendered impact of flexible, hybrid and remote working policies for workers in the Energy service group.
- 2) Promote UNISON’s bargaining guidance on work/life balance and hybrid, remote and flexible working to women members in the Energy service group and branch and regional women’s groups.
- 3) Work with the National Women’s Committee (NWC) and the National Executive Council (NEC) to support a campaign for legislation on the Right to Disconnect.
- 4) Seek to promote the voices of women members in UNISON campaigning and bargaining on work/life balance.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- A workshop session devoted to exploring hybrid and remote working policies and the value of UNISON’s bargaining guidance in these areas, as well as the gendered impact of these policies, was held at the Energy Branch Seminar in 2023.
- The Branch Seminar session also included a section on work/life balance issues in relation to hybrid and remote working, and how the Right to Disconnect campaign interacts with this and why changes in the law are needed.
- The bargaining guidance itself was also circulated to Energy branches, Equalities Officers and Contacts across the Service Group and regional Women’s Committee reps as part of the post-Seminar communications.
- A separate webinar, planned for spring 2024, will adapt the Branch Seminar workshop to an online setting and be made available to members across the Service Group. The panel will include women members and reps with experience of engaging with these workplace policies.

## 7. The Importance of Women Health and Safety Representatives (National Women's Committee)

### Summary of motion

UNISON has approximately 5,000 Health and Safety representatives across the union working hard to defend members' health and safety at work. Over the past few years health and safety has emerged again as critical for protecting members' rights at work, especially in the Energy service group. However, the gender balance of Health and Safety representatives in UNISON does not reflect the gender balance of our union.

Women's health and safety is never more important – whether it is advising on maternity rights, menopause, women's safety equipment, or areas where there is a traditional bias towards female working – we need women representing women.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Work with the National Health and Safety Forum and the National Women's Committee to emphasise the key issues for women in the Energy service group workplaces.
- 2) Work with the National Health and Safety Forum, and any other relevant body, to encourage women working in the Energy service group to become health and safety representatives.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- The UNISON Health & Safety Unit is developing a video which branches can use to encourage more women to take on safety role, which will be rolled out to Energy branches as part of wider work in this area.
- A plan is in place to organise a health & safety recruitment and organising webinar towards the end of the year, which among other aspects will look closely at women health and safety reps and H&S organising more generally. Once the date and other details are confirmed it will be circulated to Energy branches.

## 8. Nuclear's contribution to the security of UK Energy Supply and Net Zero

### Summary of motion

In 2006 a motion was carried at energy conference to promote a non-nuclear energy policy for the UK. Recognising the initiatives taken by energy companies to invest in renewable energy facilities in difficult market conditions. However, stating that much more needed to be done to encourage the commissioning of green renewable sources of energy including the use of low carbon technology.

The motion also highlighted the UK's coal reserves at the time that could prove to be economically viable. As well as calling on the SGE to carry out an independent assessment of potentially re-opening suitable UK coal mines combined with greater use of clean coal technologies and to support the development of a pan European network of gas and electricity supply infrastructure that was publicly owned.

Conference we now believe that the energy service group needs to take a lead on this important source of electricity generation that is carbon free. We have for too long lost out on the huge recruitment opportunities that are available in the sector to rebuild our energy membership in nuclear and with it a credible position at the bargaining table.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Draft a pro nuclear energy policy position as part of a balanced zero carbon electricity generation system fit for the future.
- 2) Such a policy must place at its heart the economic and environmental sustainability of nuclear power, the creation of new employment opportunities in the energy sector which we can recruit into, the development of new academic, research and apprentice opportunities, and clean economic growth in regional economies.
- 3) Engage with key stakeholders within the lay side in UNISON to consider a wider policy change recognising the very different landscape we face into compared to when this matter was last appraised.
- 4) Seek recognition with key employers in the nuclear industry that we previously had a relationship with or still do such as in EDF.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- Detailed discussions have taken place with the UNISON Policy Unit around the best approach to undertaking the drafting of a policy position in this area that would have standing across UNISON.
- Further work on this will take place in the next term.

## 9. Fuel Poverty and the need for a social tariff

### Summary of motion

Over the last couple of years, we have seen how the continued impacts of the energy crisis have affected ourselves, our members, and the customers we serve. Low wages, below inflation pay rises, substandard housing, to name a few, have seen us all struggling to make ends meet.

While we have seen individual companies implement social tariffs in the past, the mechanism for determining who were entitled to receive these tariffs was not robust enough and those really needed these tariffs were often excluded.

While we as a branch continue to support the Energy Service Group's policy to re-nationalise the energy retail market, a UK wide Social Tariff is needed to support our most vulnerable in society and eradicate fuel poverty.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Continue to campaign for a re-nationalised Energy Retail Market
- 2) Work with Labour Link to lobby government for a social tariff.
- 3) Work with the NEC to create a national social tariff campaign, linking this in with the cost-of-living crisis.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- UNISON has continued work on campaigning for a re-nationalised energy retail sector (as a minimum). In the last year this has included:
  - Utilising the union's Labour Party affiliation to table amendments to the Labour Party National Policy Forum (NPF) policy commission processes, which will form the basis of a future election manifesto. UNISON put forward amendments on the public ownership of energy retail.
  - Taking a seat on the Labour Party Energy Working Group alongside other energy sector unions to develop Labour's energy policy ahead of the general election.
  - Continuing to promote UNISON's *Power to the People* and *Gridlocked* reports to policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Plans are being developed to hold a fringe event at UNISON's June 2024 national conferences specifically to promote the idea of a social energy tariff.

## 10. Public Ownership of Retail

### Summary of motion

This Energy Service Group Conference welcomes the TUC report published in the summer of 2022. It builds on the pioneering work of UNISON in pushing the case for public ownership of energy retail. This is the part of the energy system that procures energy for householders up and down the country and is also the part in which the majority of UNISON's energy members work.

We have been through a historic energy crisis in the UK with energy bills going through the roof and genuine concerns that security of supply was threatened. Householders have been left with higher bills that would have been crippling without massive state intervention that was unfunded, despite the huge profits of energy producers.

If UK homes had been more energy efficient at the outset of the crisis, some of the worst aspects would have been avoided and yet progress on this measure has been painfully slow.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Continues to promote to all the stakeholders it works with at every opportunity the need to take into public ownership the energy retail sector of the UK energy landscape and the affordability of such a measure.
- 2) Promotes the important benefits of such a policy including the provision of decent energy jobs, decarbonisation of UK homes and affordable supply.
- 3) Specifically engages with Labour Link to ensure this policy is promoted as a key UNISON ask of any future Labour Government.
- 4) Produces a pamphlet highlighting the key benefits of public ownership of energy retail in a way that can be disseminated widely and used to promote this policy wide and far.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- UNISON has continued work on campaigning for a re-nationalised energy retail sector (as a minimum). In the last year this has included:
  - Utilising the union's Labour Party affiliation to table amendments to the Labour Party National Policy Forum (NPF) policy commission processes, which will form the basis of a future election manifesto. UNISON put forward amendments on the public ownership of energy retail.
  - Taking a seat on the Labour Party Energy Working Group alongside other energy sector unions to develop Labour's energy policy ahead of the general election.
  - Continuing to promote UNISON's *Power to the People* and *Gridlocked* reports to policy makers and other stakeholders.

## 11. Invest Today in Energy and Skills to Decarbonise UK Homes

### Summary of motion

Conference notes that most of the UNISON membership in the energy sector plays a part in supplying energy to UK homes. This is either in retail supply, or as part of the energy distribution and transmission systems.

Conference further notes, and is disappointed, by the total lack of progress on ensuring we have a workforce that is in place to deliver net zero, and as each year passes, we are falling further behind. UNISON, in its engagement with the Government, has sought to press home the fact that on every measure around employment the genuine lack of planning is troubling, and the assumptions made are simply wrong.

Underlying all of this is a lack of investment in the energy system to ensure it can hit required targets into the future. While some easy wins have been celebrated, the hard task of decarbonising homes and the energy system suffers from short-term thinking and an absence of long-term planning. Without a change in direction the UK will not make progress towards a net zero future, and one of its biggest challenges will be the lack of a skilled workforce.

### **ACTIONS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Work with other energy trade unions to build an effective trade union lobby to call for a significant increase in investment into the energy system.
- 2) Develops a plan for a stakeholder conference with a focus on what resources are needed, how these will be secured, and the need to have a proper workforce strategy underpinning this.
- 3) Work with Labour Link to promote a policy of widening Ofgem's remit to include decarbonisation and future workforce investment as a key objective of its mandate.
- 4) Use its engagement with Ofgem to promote longer term thinking and a recognition that current workforce plans are inadequate to meet the challenges ahead.
- 5) Continue to work with our European colleagues within EPSU (European Public Services Union) to promote the same approach and the need for investment both now and in longer-term workforce planning, building on the skills work already undertaken.
- 6) Work with energy employers to develop robust workforce plans that are fit for the needs of the future.

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

- UNISON continues to take seats on numerous joint-union bodies including the TUC-organised TUSDAC group, the Labour Party's Energy Working Group, the EPSU Utilities Committee and its associated sub-committees and others, with a key message of lobbying government for greater investment.
- Initial plans for a conference of key stakeholders around this issue were made but have been suspended due to staff capacity issues and will be resumed in the next term.
- UNISON's regular meetings with Ofgem, suspended during the Covid pandemic, have now resumed and recent meetings have included discussions on workforce planning to support the UK's decarbonisation transition.
- UNISON has taken up its previous positions on the European Public Services Union (EPSU) Utilities committees and continues to make the case for these same issues there.

## 12. Women in Energy – Next Steps

### Summary of motion

This Conference celebrates the work of the energy service group in developing its 'Women in Energy' campaign, which included a successful parliamentary event in Westminster at which MPs, business leaders and UNISON members participated.

Conference recognises that we can work together with employers in the energy industry to achieve that positive transformation, and that by working jointly we can improve the gender balance within parts of the energy industry that are less diverse.

### **ACTIONS**

### **STATUS/PROGRESS**

#### The Energy SGE is called upon to:

- 1) Campaigns through engagement with key employers and stakeholders to actively ensure women have access to opportunities and career paths in areas of the business that they may not have contemplated before, including but not limited to roles in generation, construction, renewables, or field-based energy services.
- 2) Promotes the 'Women in Energy' charter as one point of campaign engagement and encourages UNISON activists to seek to get agreement with employers, when possible.
- 3) Develop joint work with employers and any relevant employee women's networks, to put in place appropriate plans and policies to support career transitions for women, which may include a range of supportive measures such as:
  - a) Career fairs and other engagement opportunities
  - b) Training and Development programmes
  - c) Taster sessions or short trials in available operational roles without detriment
  - d) Longer term operational work placements and secondments
  - e) Provision of mentoring and ongoing support
  - f) Flexible work patterns and locations
- 4) Seeks to monitor the success of our measures, to adopt best practice from other sectors with similar skills and diversity challenges, and to continuously learn from the feedback of our members.

- The 'Women in Energy' charter, developed by UNISON, continues its implementation process with key employers however specific oversight has been limited due to staffing capacity limitations. Further work on this, including on and around campaigning objectives, will continue into the next term.





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