On November 30th in one of the county’s biggest ever gatherings, over 3000 protesters converged at Ipswich Road in Norwich to march to the Speakers Rally at the City Hall in protest over the governments decision to down value Public Sector pensions to balance their books. This was a day when Ambulance stations across the region also staged their own methods of protest against the incompetence of people entrusted into positions of national public responsibility. The Norwich March was joined en-route by many different contributors to the Public Sector, it was a very well organised event, and in spite of the city being at a standstill for some considerable time while the marchers made their way along the Ipswich road down St Stephens to the City Hall they were no signs here to reinforce the Governments assertions that the Public are, and would be opposed to the actions of the Union’s, in fact quite the opposite, patiently applauded by many of the onlookers, themselves doubtless also irritated to find that their own wallets are now being prised open to fund the cavalier Bankers who were allowed to consider themselves above regulation when entrusted with the public’s money, in the sure knowledge that if and when it all went wrong the same public purse would get them out of a mess of this magnitude.

The Branch Committee meets on the 14th December to evaluate the Day of Action on a National and Regional basis, by which time there will be more timely information following UNISON’s evaluation of the talks and governments response. The Branch will follow this up with a full ‘Action Day Edition Newsletter’ of events on the 30th Nov around our Service. Please keep sending your pictures and reports in to me to include in this. For now, thanks go to all who took an active part and contributed on the day in organising their responses to the democratic ‘Yes’ Vote. Whatever the outcomes to follow, we should at this point also extend our thanks to the Officers of this Branch who have taken up the responsibility for both the members and the EOEAS, working tirelessly against very tight timescales to comply, compile, and circulate all the inevitable Questions and Answers documentation needed by yourselves related to the rules around the day of action as well as dealing with the Press and Media during a very difficult period, it has been a mammoth task.

EM Comms
**Comparison of monthly** figures show that applications to join UNISON, the UK’s largest Union have jumped a massive 126% since the result of the Union’s ballot for strike action was announced, An overwhelming 81% of these applications have come from women – reflecting exactly who women are turning to for support.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary, said;

Throughout the pensions dispute, public sector workers have been joining UNISON in there droves. The applications to join are coming overwhelmingly from women, a whopping 81%. Public Sector workers are turning to their union for support – not this government. The Government is trying to paint a picture of macho union leaders squaring up for a fight, but it will be mainly women public sector workers out in force on November 30th. Women are angry and feel let down by the pension changes. Their aggressive polices, policies that are hitting women hard are turning them off.

The Government is right to be worried about losing the women’s vote.

The applications to join spike every time Danny Alexander is on his feet in the house, talking about his plans for public sector pensions. The day he made his statement in the house, on the eve of our ballot result, saw the largest spike in UNISON membership ever recorded.

We have said from the start that we want to reach a negotiated settlement, and we are still willing to talk anywhere anytime. The fact is we still have no firm offer that we can put to our members, and we are bound by the Tories own anti-strike laws to take industrial action, or our ballot will be deemed invalid. Our members do not take strike action lightly, but the coalition is pushing them too far.

On Novembers 30th UNISON’s 1.1 million members in public sectors schemes working in the NHS, in local government – further education – higher education – school support – Police staff – PCSO’s and water – energy and transport, and in the community and voluntary sector, will join more than 20 unions in taking industrial action over government ministers plans to make detrimental changes to their pensions.

**Key Pension facts.** If closed today the LGPS could still pay all its liabilities for 20 years. The Treasury gets £2bn more in NHS pensions than it pays out in benefits every year. The average LG pension is £4000 pa, hardly gold plated ! The average NHS pension is £7000 per annum, again hardly gold plated. Half of the NHS women’s pensioners receive less than £3500 pa, the bosses of Britain’s largest companies have an average pension 34 times bigger than the average Public Sector Pension.
Red to Red Calls over the Meal Break point.

Concerns have been raised by staff about changes of Red Calls after the start of the meal break point has been crossed. If a crew are responding to a medical emergency, and BEFORE they reach the patient, and HAVE NOT yet reached their allocated meal break slot when they are given a change of red call, this is permitted. It goes with the turf.

However, if the crew are responding to a medical emergency and have not yet reached their patient, but HAVE passed the start time of their allocated meal break point, they CANNOT be detailed with a further call. This is because they are in their meal break window and if they are stood down from the first call, they must be sent to the nearest agreed facility for their rest break. This includes being diverted from one red call to another.

Vehicle Group Meeting

The next meeting for the Vehicle Group will be taking place at Barton Mills on Monday 12th December. This is the first meeting of the group for a considerable time and the current concerns / worries that members of staff have raised will be discussed on their behalf. Topics will include the RRV’s, Automatic A & E Ambulances and the new PTS Motors, as well as the MDT system.

Winter Weather

As we move into the winter and the cold spells start to settle, it is time to remind ourselves about the seasonal hazards which we may have put to the back of our minds, including the low sun….

Bearing in mind the very low temperatures we experienced last year, there are things we can do to help us through the coming months:
1. Check the fluid levels in our motors especially the antifreeze for sub-zero conditions.
2. Ensure that all the lights and wipers on the vehicles are in tip top conditions.
3. Clear all the ice and snow from all the windows at the start of the journey.
4. Allow ourselves additional time for journeys and be alert to varying road surface conditions.
5. Keep a blanket, extra coat/ fleece, snow shovel and “wellies” in the boot of the car.
7. Maintain a greater than normal distance between us and the vehicle in front….

We are all professional drivers and I am not trying to teach folk to suck eggs… just a reminder to keep one step ahead of the weather.

Safe driving and a Merry Christmas to all.

Jeff Pitman Health & Safety Lead for Suffolk. (Waveney based)

Happy Birthday Baz

From Camden (London) to Swaffham in Norfolk– to the AGM at the Bell Hotel in Thetford, elected as County Lead– to Branch Chairman at 2004– to County Lead at the 6 Counties Merger– and from Multi -tasking to Branch Convenor at 2011.

At the Health Service group meeting on the 6th November the following ‘Snippets were debated, it was interesting and educational. The Zero Hour mentality is growing in the public sector and it’s a dangerous threat to the livelihoods of Disabled members, it has to be a key disability issue on the Union’s agenda this coming year, and I stress this in relation to our Pensions campaign as well. My point is that the biggest thing for representing disabled people is to make sure their voice is heard, and to speak up on the issues that arise.

Draconian sickness and capability policies are in vogue at the moment are all ways which can wheedle out and get rid of individuals. The branch needs to keep an eye on the surge in Zero hours contracts being pushed in the Health and public sector. Some of these are already being offered– They work on an ad– hoc basis that “if there is ‘no work’, there is effectively ‘no pay’, but they can be called upon to work at anytime as I understand it.
UNISON Branch Officer Listing 2011

Please note where a Branch Officer has taken on other roles these are also listed.

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Communications
Please Note- Your items and input into the Newsletter is always appreciated, remember we are circulating & servicing an area of 7500 sq miles. Each Newsletter as it goes out, also goes straight onto the branch website and can easily be accessed by going into the branch site at www.eas-unison.com as well as a proportion of “back issues, so it is a two way street. The circulation is 750 copies, sent via County Leads for distribution, it is also sent out on PDF, if you wish to be included in this mailing please forward your e-mail address to myself. I.C.T. Officer & Website Administrator Tim.Ingall tim.ingall@eas-unison.com
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Equities Officer Anand Pillai

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H&S Lead Health & Safety Leads
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All other health & safety leads can be found on the website.

Young Members Officer VACANT
Regional Organiser UNISON
UNISON Direct 0845 355 0845 or visit
UNISON at www.unison.org.uk

Note- Please can you inform Communications if your details change in any way at all.

Zero Hours continued…
Sian a National Officer spoke about the issues confronting our National Health service as well as within our service group. We have never faced a crisis like it. The NHS is being attacked on every single front since created by Nye Bevan 63 years ago.
Its time for us to get up and campaign and organise and make sure we fight for the NHS we believe in. Nye Bevan said “ The NHS will only survive if there are people with the faith to fight for it”
The Bill was recently paused around the Incremental Pay Points, that’s a fundamental issue which will impact on disabled people. Sickness and absence and draconian management of sick leave.
Why haven’t they implemented what happened in the Borman Review ? It was meant and was supposed to demonstrate this so called ‘positive management’. Where is the positive management of well being in the NHS at the moment. ?

Dave Edwards Branch Disabled Members Officer recently attended the National Disabled Members Conference on behalf of the Service on Sunday 6th November 2011.

Diaries 2012
LOOK OUT for Your 2012 FREE-UNISON Diaries which are now available to all members over the coming weeks. Note –Available meaning to-MEMBERS ONLY.