



# **COLLECTIVE POWER WINS**

**8th Irish Policy Conference**

**22nd & 23rd June 2026**

**Grand Hotel, Malahide, Co Dublin**

## **Irish Executive Committee Report**

**Susan Fitzgerald**  
Regional Secretary

**Francis Loughlin**  
Chair, IEC

**Sharon Graham**  
General Secretary



Dear Delegate,

We are pleased to submit the Irish Executive Committee's report to Unite's Eighth Irish Policy Conference.

This report covers the activities of Unite in the Ireland Region the 2024 IPC, as well as industrial reports from our Regional Industrial Sector Committees.

Since we last gathered in Malahide in April 2024, members have continued to face a cost-of-living crisis which has been exacerbated by the US-led war in the Middle East, driving a new inflation spiral.

Over the past two years Unite has fought for and won inflation-busting pay increases in a range of workplaces.

We have also been to the forefront of defending the right of workers to organise collectively in the trade union of their choice and take industrial action to defend and advance their terms and conditions.

Union-busting employers know that, with the full support of our General Secretary Sharon Graham, we will pursue them at home and abroad – on the picket line and in the courts.

Following their Supreme Court defeat in 2024, when the Court upheld the right to strike in a landmark decision for Irish unions, Jones Engineering was forced to drop their High Court case against Unite and three shop stewards. Then, last summer, the OECD found that our complaint against Jones merits further examination. As we go to press, our campaign against Jones' union-busting tactics continues.

In Northern Ireland, US multinational Seagate was determined to deny workers a union voice – in fact, they even brought in professional union-busters. Nonetheless, thanks to a determined organising effort driven by our reps, workers won collective bargaining rights and recognition.

As trade unionists, we know that rights must be fought for and repeatedly defended. But we also need fit-for-purpose workers' rights legislation.

In Northern Ireland, Unite and the wider trade union movement has been engaging with the Department for the Economy on the Good Jobs Bill since the summer of 2024. The proposed legislation goes further than Westminster's employment bill in some key areas – notably the rights of workers on zero hours contracts and protections for workers against fire and rehire.

Now, we need to see delivery by the Stormont Executive.

In the Republic, Ireland's lack of collective bargaining legislation continues to deny workers the fundamental right to bargain collectively through the union or unions of their choice.

At the beginning of February, the OECD found that a Unite complaint against ASML warrants further examination after the Dutch multinational refused to engage with our union; ASML has also refused the OECD's offer of mediation. This is just the latest case where a company has been able to use Ireland's so-called 'voluntarist' system of industrial relations to avoid recognising a union.

Unite is centrally involved in the Congress working group on implementation of the Government's *Action Plan to Promote Collective Bargaining*. The plan falls far short of what's needed and, crucially, does not provide for collective bargaining. However, unions need to engage to maximise any potential benefits while resisting employer demands for measures that could further circumscribe workers' ability to take action.

Workers' rights are not just about workers' voice. The trade union movement has its origins in workers' health and safety demands: the expectation that workers will return home safe and well after a day's work.

Unite has been demanding Extreme Weather protections for workers since the death of Unite member Matthew Campbell while working outdoors during Storm Ali in 2018. In January 2025, when Storm Éowyn saw the entire island placed under a Red Alert, the campaign took a seismic step forward.

Following Storm Éowyn we surveyed members north and south on their experiences during and in the immediate aftermath of the storm. The results of the survey informed our extreme weather policy documents, *In The Eye of the Storm*, presented to politicians in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

We are continuing to engage with politicians and public bodies on our policy demands, and we are in the process of establishing an expert panel to support our work in this area.

Extreme weather, driven by rapidly accelerating climate change, is a workplace issue. Our campaign for extreme weather protections is industrial as well as political, and we are encouraging H&S reps throughout Ireland to negotiate extreme weather workplace protocols.

Unite members and workers more generally have faced a series of unprecedented challenges.

The Covid 19 pandemic was followed swiftly by a cost-of-living crisis exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Earlier this year, war in the Middle East driven by the US and Israel caused a renewed spike in energy prices, and the long-term impacts of this conflict still remain to be seen.

While working people across Ireland are feeling the impact of distant wars on their living standards, many millions more are caught up in the immediate reality of conflict. The genocide in Gaza has claimed over 75,000 lives, including many after the ceasefire took effect last October. Workers in Iran and Lebanon have been subjected to bombardment, with widespread internal displacement in Lebanon. And working people are continuing to bear the brunt of ongoing conflicts from Sudan to Ukraine.

Workers are also the collateral damage in the trade war launched by Donald Trump. The medium and long-term impacts of potential US tariffs on Ireland, north and south, are not yet clear – but uncertainty itself poses economic threats as multinationals weigh up whether and where to invest.

Workers in Ireland and around the world are being asked to pay the price for crises not of their making – and as always, the crises are impacting hardest on those least able to withstand them.

A survey of Unite public sector members in the Republic earlier this year found that 80 per cent had to cut back on essential spending over the previous year, with a third being forced to borrow in order to make ends meet – and that was before the Middle East crisis.

In Northern Ireland, recent figures show that 60 per cent of adults living in poverty are in work.

These are the groups hardest hit by spiralling prices. Even before the spike in energy prices caused by the war on the Middle East, hundreds of thousands of households across our Region were living in energy poverty.

It is clear that long-term action is needed to reduce costs at source, rather than short-term supports which may simply end up subsidising high costs.

Governments cannot be blamed for decisions taken in Washington – but they do bear responsibility for a lack of long-term thinking which has seen underinvestment in our public services, from health and education to housing.

That chronic under-funding not only impacts on public service workers and users – it has also been used by elements on the far right to divide communities and shift the blame for scarce services and poor policymaking away from governments on to migrants.

From Translink workers in Northern Ireland to health care assistants in the Republic, Unite represents thousands of migrant workers across Ireland, and we stand in solidarity with them and with all workers targeted by the politics of hate.

Whether fighting for equal pay for women or fighting to ensure that no worker faces discrimination or harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, Unite and the trade union movement have always been at the forefront of the fight for equality.

But securing workplace equality is not enough. The global backlash against the equality gains of recent decades, and the growth of misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, pose real threats.

Toxic online narratives are feeding into a real-world epidemic of violence against women across Ireland. At the time of writing 65 women have been killed across the island of Ireland since 2020 – over thirty in Northern Ireland alone. Unite will continue mobilising with grassroots groups to send a clear message: Not one more.

Equality – in the workplace and in society – is at the heart of our union and our movement.

Economic shocks such as the cost-of-living crisis impact disproportionately on the most vulnerable groups of workers – young people, women, migrant workers and people with disabilities.

Other developments such as the rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence also have significant equality impacts, and there are real concerns that entry-level and lower-paid jobs may be displaced by the uncontrolled development of AI. Unite is developing workplace protocols and policies to protect our members' jobs, terms and conditions from the impacts of AI.

At the same time, there are growing concerns regarding the wider societal and political impact of AI and the potential for it to be used as a tool of disinformation, division and hate.

Whether combating a cost-of-living crisis, demanding extreme weather protections, organising against the politics of division, or resisting the excesses of AI – Unite members know that the best defence working people have is to be organised in a strong union.

Our strength is rooted in our lay-led structures. The Eighth Irish Policy Conference will again provide a forum for reps to debate, develop and decide the policies needed to defend our members against new challenges.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Francis Loughlin', with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

Francis Loughlin  
Chair, IEC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Fitzgerald', written above a horizontal line.

Susan Fitzgerald  
Regional Secretary, Ireland

## **Organising Overview**

Since the last Irish Policy Conference, the National Organising and Leverage Department in Ireland has delivered 6,318 new joiners (Jan 24 – May 26) as well as identifying and training new reps, giving assistance and support to representatives, committees, and various disputes. Our Union recognises that it is only by delivering at the workplace that we remain relevant to working people and the role of the Organising Department is to ensure we are strategically building power to deliver for our members at the bargaining table.

The Department continues to support key national disputes with organising resources as agreed with the General Secretary and reps. Organisers are being deployed into key targets for growth and supporting members in dispute. Cross Regional/National organising support has provided significant wins and supports our overall objectives of getting back to the workplace and building worker power in sectors.

As a Department, we have shifted our focus back to centralised organising. Currently the CAT sector and Amazon being the primary national strategic priority. The secondary strategic priority for the Department are the National Campaigns in **Construction, Energy and Finance**. Then from a regional perspective we are also involved in numerous regional campaigns as agreed with the Department, the Regional Secretary, Deputy Regional Secretary and RCO's in the strategic planning for the region.

### **2024 Summary**

2024 was a good year for the Department in Ireland with some significant wins, including across Northern Ireland's Education Authority and in other workplaces such as Seagate Technologies and Eirgrid to mention but a few. Overall, the region saw a 1% growth in Union members by the end of 2024. At the heart of this growth was the Organising Department's involvement in workplace organising campaigns.

In **Seagate Technologies** we saw Union membership grow by over 42% to over 400 members. This is a company that has a long history of being anti-union, engaged in significant union busting activities and yet two recognition agreements were won for our membership among the Manufacturing Specialists and the Engineering Specialists in 2024. The campaign added over 10 new reps and identified many workplace leaders with lots of potential for further growth.

In **Eirgrid PLC** we saw Union membership grow more than 100% to over 350 members. With the assistance of the Bargaining and Disputes Support Unit's (BDSU) Forensic Accounts, and higher union density, it enabled the negotiating team to deliver the best pay deal our members have seen in the company's 18-year history.

2024 was the start of a significant movement among Classroom Assistants in Northern Ireland, where we saw over 550 members join the union from **The Education Authority**. A significant win was delivered after a campaign of Industrial Action.

The **Construction Sector** again saw significant growth throughout 2024 with over 450 new members joining the **National Construction Branch** in the ROI. There was widespread Industrial Action across the Mechanical Sector over several months, led by Unite and supported by the Organising Dept. This was in pursuit of the reinstatement of the first hour of travel time, removed by the employers in the last recession. This led to 3 of our senior reps in **Jones Engineering** being targeted with High Court action and a wider blacklisting campaign by the company against Unite members employed with and seeking work from

them. We also had several access meetings throughout the year to craft apprentices in colleges to talk to, educate and recruit.

In **Belfast City Council** we saw over 100 workers join Unite in 2024 with a campaign in the Duncrue Complex among bin collection workers.

As well as **Eirgrid** in the **Energy Sector** we had ongoing campaigns in the **ESB** and **Gas Networks Ireland**, where we became the largest Union with 17% growth in our membership in 2024.

There is an ongoing campaign in **Bamford Bus**, formally Wrightbus which is the largest employer in the Ballymena area, where Trade Union density is low. We identified a group of members that formed an organising committee which saw an increase of 45 members. The campaign is ongoing with close to 1,800 workers engaged on site.

In the **Finance Sector** we had ongoing campaigns in **PTSB**, **Irish Life** and **Central Bank**. In **PTSB** off the back of phone-banking the entire membership to agitate around pay and a Labour Court process on pay, we saw significant increases in membership and the development of new reps.

In the **CAT sector** we focused on opportunities in **Swissport** and **Wilson James** in the Belfast Airports. This coincided with the National Organising & Leverage Department moving back into centralised organising in 2025 with the **CAT** sector as a priority.

Throughout 2024 the region developed a relationship with Migrant Nurses Ireland (MNI) which saw their **Health Care Assistants (HCA's)** hold their inaugural AGM in Unite's offices in Middle Abbey Street, Dublin. This meeting, held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024, was attended by almost 100 HCA's, predominantly from India, that work across the Irish region. It was a fantastic cultural event and a highlight from the year. Off the back of this the Organising Dept. initiated a campaign to work alongside the region to help this group of vulnerable workers get organised.

The Department had numerous other campaigns across the region in 2024 where we assisted in building density and pursuing recognition in many workplaces such as Knysna (NI) Limited., Lynas Foods & Butchery, Ann's Nursing Home, Fly 4 Airlines, Merchants Quay Ireland, MSC Ireland and O'Dwyer Steel to name but a few.

As mentioned above the Department was preparing to move back into centralised strategic organising in 2025. The central focus to be the CAT Sector and a new organising campaign in Amazon. The Irish region isn't directly involved in the day-to-day work of the Amazon campaign, however Organisers from this region have been and will continue to support the Campaign when resources are needed.

## **2025 Summary**

Throughout 2025 we had Organisers working in a total of 49 different campaigns bringing 2,735 new members into Unite in Ireland. As well as identifying and developing hundreds of leaders in campaign work, we have seen many of these elected into workplace reps and trained up through the Unite education system.

2025 brought us back into centralised organising through the **CAT Campaign** where we saw growth with 98 joiners in the Belfast Airports among ground handlers and security workers.

For the first time an organising committee has been established across both sites and we have Reps from both airports attending the National Combine for CAT workers.

There were many highlights throughout the year. The **Greenwich Leisure (GLL)** campaign in Belfast is one that stands out where we saw 118 young people joining across 13 different sites, engaging in Industrial Action to ultimately move their employer. Most of these workers had no exposure to Trade Unions before this dispute and I am confident we will see some lifelong Trade Unionist off the back of it with some excellent leaders identified, reps elected and trained.

In the **Health Care Assistance (HCA)** Campaign which saw 194, predominantly migrant workers, join Unite in 2025. This campaign has 2 fronts. Firstly, workplace organisation which the Organising Department is leading on and secondly, the family reunification campaign which the newly established HCA Branch and Regional Officer are pursuing with assistance from the Department.

In **Seagate Technology** the Union won its second recognition agreement for the Engineering Grades and through our ongoing campaign saw another 233 workers join Unite throughout 2025.

In 2025 we welcomed 4 new organisers to the team in Ireland, with 3 of these starting their training in September.

### **Strikes Plus Campaigns**

#### **Jones Engineering (IR)**

Unite's Strike + campaign against Jones Engineering has continued to demonstrate how industrial action, legal strategy, and international solidarity can combine effectively. Following Unite's High Court victory where Jones Engineering withdrew its case and agreed to cover all legal costs, focus has shifted to rebuilding member confidence and securing recognition for targeted reps. Coordinated demonstrations across Dublin, London, Edinburgh, Manchester, France, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and The Netherlands have applied sustained pressure to the company's client base, including Amgen, Pfizer, GSK, AWS, and Microsoft. With the OECD complaint still in progress, the campaign remains steady to deliver the remaining demands to ensure protection of reps and the defence against blacklisting.

#### **Veolia Sheffield (NEYH)**

Unite members at Veolia's Lumley Street waste and recycling depot continued sustained strike action over recognition and collective bargaining rights for well over a year. Members adapted tactics to maximise disruption with daily pickets and mobilisations across the city. Public and political support grew massively throughout the campaign which ultimately applied the necessary pressure for the company to concede and agree to recognition.

Following the successful resolution of the Lumley Street dispute, work has now begun with the national Veolia reps forum. The aim is to build on the organisation developed through the Sheffield campaign and strengthen Unite's membership, rep structures and collective organisation across Veolia nationally.

#### **Birmingham City Council Waste Dispute (WM)**

Hundreds of Birmingham bin workers have been on strike since January 2025 against pay cuts of up to £8,000. In July, the employer withdrew from negotiations and announced intention to proceed with fire and rehire of the workers. We have found strong support for

the workers from the Birmingham public. The poorest and worst-hit areas have seen the strongest support. We have been attending MPs and Councillors' surgeries speaking to them about the campaign and asking them to sign our pledge. With the majority of Councillors signing the pledge. Reps have spoken at meetings right across the country with many union branches making significant donations to the strike fund.

Bin workers and supporters have remained on the picket lines at Tom White Waste depot in Ryton, Coventry, and the Tyseley Energy Recovery Facility, where wagons tip their waste. A Bin Strike March and Rally took place from Birmingham Unite office to the council offices; this was led by General Secretary Sharon Graham.

### **Campaign Activity**

Birmingham residents displaying bin stickers, local businesses displaying posters of support, and highlighting the piles of rubbish across Birmingham. Birmingham bin strikers and agency members who are sick of being allegedly bullied and harassed by management have been out on the picket lines. Picket lines have remained strong. A march from Unite Birmingham Office to Birmingham Council House was held with hundreds of bin strikers, supporters, and their families in attendance. Further demonstrations were held outside Shabana Mahmood's constituency office and at Job & Talent agency who provide agency staff, with the delegation then marching to the nearby Council House to deliver thousands of postcards to council leader John Cotton. Further demonstrations have taken place at MPs' and Councillors' surgeries.

### **Conferences**

The campaign was highlighted and promoted at both TUC Conference and Labour Party Conference (LPC). At TUC Conference, Unite Organisers hosted a GFTU fringe meeting where striking bin workers shared their experiences and highlighted the injustices they had faced. Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham's speech to congress was a significant moment, as she passionately criticised the Birmingham Labour Council and the national Labour Party for their handling of the dispute, resulting in the suspension of Angela Rayner from Unite the Union. At LPC, Monica Taylor, a retired Unite member, spoke about the Birmingham bin strike campaign at the Labour Party Conference addressing Labour's failure to fix the Birmingham debt amid the bin strike. The campaign was highlighted further at the conference with Oscar the Grouch present. The campaign has been mentioned widely on television, radio, online news, and printed media, with General Secretary Sharon Graham giving several interviews and National Lead Officer Onay Kasab's interview featured on ITV News.

After 15 months of determined industrial action, Birmingham bin workers have made major progress and secured an improved offer. This breakthrough is a direct result of members standing strong on the picket lines, sustained political pressure, and a major community campaign that saw residents back workers through petitions, rallies and public support across the city.

### **Equalities Report**

The fight for equality in Ireland is needed now more than ever – and workers need a strong trade union on their side to ensure their rights are upheld and progressed. Our members have faced attack on multiple fronts – corrupt companies, immoral politicians and dangerous characters on the far right. The scourge of gender-based violence is an issue that can only be described as a societal epidemic and must be treated as the emergency it is. There have been 48 women murdered in ROI and 30 women murdered in NI since 2020. Gender based violence and femicide are workplace and trade union issues – 1 in 3 women suffer gender-

based violence during their working life. We are committed to fighting oppression in all forms for the betterment of workers and all society.

Unite remains firmly committed to equality for all, and diversity of members within our communities. In Ireland, we continue to oppose and challenge employers who refuse to deal with discrimination, and our reps have fought for and secured many significant wins in our workplaces relating to equalities policies and fair treatment. Challenges to achieving equal rights in our workplaces and communities remain, but we continue in our fight to eradicate these barriers through the hard work and determination of our reps and members.

The numerous campaigns that have been spearheaded and championed by our regional equalities committees have helped to solidify Unite's role in being an active and essential voice for all workers. This is reflected in our membership numbers. There has been an increased number of women, BAEM, LGBT+ and disabled people joining Unite over the two-year period since the last Irish Policy Conference. There has also been a pronounced increase in the numbers of young members and retired members.

|           | Joined Mar 24 to Feb 26 |      | Joined Mar 22 to Feb 24 |     | % change* |     | Total % change* |
|-----------|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------------|
|           | NI                      | ROI  | NI                      | ROI | NI        | ROI |                 |
| Women     | 2284                    | 1257 | 2158                    | 696 | 6         | 81  | 24              |
| BAEM      | 198                     | 148  | 182                     | 71  | 9         | 108 | 37              |
| LGBT      | 241                     | 88   | 208                     | 39  | 16        | 126 | 33              |
| Disabled  | 242                     | 31   | 147                     | 16  | 65        | 94  | 67              |
|           |                         |      |                         |     |           |     |                 |
| Retired** | 297                     | 67   | 206                     | 25  | 44        | 168 | 58              |
| Young     | 2424                    | 1020 | 1345                    | 416 | 80        | 145 | 96              |

*\*Results rounded to nearest whole number*

*\*\*Results include new joiners and membership scale change to RF, RMP and RMPX*

A 'Read & Review' group has recently been established to assess current and future equalities resources and publications provided by Unite to ensure that they are relevant to our members in Ireland. It is hoped that this will increase the number of resources available to our members and reps for use in workplaces north and south.

In September 2025 Taryn Trainor retired as Regional Women's & Equalities officer. I wish to thank Taryn for her years of hard work fighting for the equality protections of our members in Ireland and wish her a very happy and peaceful retirement.

#### Women members

Delegates from our Regional Women's Committee have attended various conferences over the last two years, including ICTU Women's Conferences and TUC Women's Conferences. At each, Unite delegates raised and spoke on many important motions relating to women's safety, ADHD and equality for women in the workplace.

Campaigning for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) has continued to be a focal point over the last few years, with our 16-day campaigns beginning annually on 25<sup>th</sup> November demanding an end to domestic violence and an end to silence on this issue. In 2025, the campaigns focal point in NI was the failure of Stormont to

implement the 'Safe Leave Act', which was passed by the Assembly in 2022. This critical legislation will secure 10 days paid leave for victims of domestic abuse to attend appointments and organise safety measures (amongst other actions). That ministers have failed to implement the Act is a shocking dereliction of duty. Unite also has a seat on the ICTU EVAWG working group and the Belfast Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership. Beginning April 2026, the Regional Women's Committee have held dedicated meetings on how Unite can take a leading role in the fight against gender-based violence. We sponsored a rally against gender-based violence and femicide in Belfast April 2026 and had a great number of members join the rally in support. Efforts continue and the fight to eliminate violence against women and girls will be a key campaign over the coming years.

Following from the motion passed at the last IPC, the Regional Women's and Equalities Officer sent correspondence to the Health Minister in both ROI and NI at year end 2024. Following this, a contingent met with MLA Peter McReynolds who was a representative of Stormont's All-Party Group (APG) on ADHD to ensure our members' voices were heard on this issue. Since then, the NI Department of Health has published the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Needs Assessment report, which outlines 19 recommendations. However, no funding has been made available to achieve these recommendations.

The Kabosh Theatre Company secured funding to take the story of our members fight to save dedicated women's hostel Regina Coeli ('Not on Our Watch') on Tour in GB. The play was held in Liverpool, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow and was so well received that further shows have been planned for 2026. Thank you to Davy Kettyles who has continued to coordinate and promote this incredibly impactful project.

#### BAEM members

Our BAEM members and community have continued to face attack from the far right. 2024 seen anti-immigration rallies taking place across the island and migrant workers and asylum seekers being directly attacked. In Coolock families were held under siege and security staff attacked at a site housing asylum seekers. Riots broke out in Belfast when an anti-immigration rally led to a rampage through the south of the city where individuals and migrant owned businesses were targeted and attacked. In June 2025 anti-immigration riots spread across NI and the number of race-hate incidents reported to the PSNI was the highest ever on record. What has been described as a pogrom was carried out in Ballymena over three nights where chilling shouts of "Where are the foreigners?" were heard. At least three Indian men were attacked and brutally beaten in various suburbs in Dublin throughout July and a 6-year-old girl physically assaulted in Waterford.

Unite continues to stand in solidarity with all people who are targeted and attacked by the far right. We have reached out to our BAEM members who have been directly impacted and/or live in the areas which have seen an increase in racist attacks and have attended various solidarity rallies and anti-fascist protests.

In May 2025 the UK government announced proposed changes to rules around 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' (ILR) for migrant workers. Most significant of the changes is increasing the qualifying period to apply for ILR from 5 years to 10 years, which would not only apply to new workers entering the country but also those who are already working here. If these proposals are to go ahead, many of our members in NI will be affected. Not only will this greatly impact and potentially change our members future plans, but it also exposes workers to increased risk of exploitation in the workplace. Unite has been campaigning centrally on

this issue and has meet with ministers regularly to push for this concerning change to be revoked.

In ROI, the Department of Justice introduced a new 'Family Reunification' policy in November 2025. Contrary to its title, this policy is more restrictive than before and has introduced new fees and criteria that must be met before workers can bring their children into the country. This policy is devastating for workers who are desperately fighting to be reunited with their families.

A new Healthcare Assistants branch was constituted in the south after fantastic efforts from regional officers and the organising team. The majority of members in this branch are migrant workers, and we are thrilled to represent these workers who are carrying out such essential jobs in society.

BAEM members were invited to attend an information and awareness session for the Ireland Regional BAEM Committee in July 2024 and a further introduction to equality committees session was run in January 2025. Although it remains a challenge to encourage members to sit on our Regional BAEM Committee, there has been an increase in BAEM membership of 37% over the last two years.

#### LGBT+ members

Our LGBT+ membership has grown since the last IPC by 33%, a significant number of which have come from the south.

Unite members have attended and represented our union at multiple events over the last couple of years, including at conferences and rallies. The number of local and independent Pride marches has been increasing throughout the island, and we have attempted to show our support at as many of these as possible.

Unite were the winners of the Belfast Pride Trade Union Ally Award in 2024 for our work fighting to ban conversion therapy, and we continue to campaign on this. The World Health Organisation and United Nations have condemned conversion therapies, and the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity has called for a global ban. Despite this, providing and conducting conversion therapy remains legal in NI and ROI. There have been some efforts to introduce changes to legislation. In NI a motion was passed in Stormont in 2024 calling for a ban on all forms of conversion therapy and a Private Members Bill calling for a ban is being proposed. In ROI, the Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill was introduced in 2018 and passed its second stage in the Seanad. However, progress in both jurisdictions has slowed and stalled.

The transgender community continues to face attack from the far right and other groups who seek to remove and reverse their human rights and protections. Following a ruling by the UK Supreme Court relating to the definition of 'sex' under GB equality legislation, there have been isolated cases of workplaces in NI attempting to introduce changes to their workplace policies regarding transgender women's rights to use female only facilities. To be clear, the legislation in NI has not changed and transgender individuals continue to be protected from discrimination in the workplace as they were prior to the ruling in GB. We have supported members who have been affected by such proposed changes in workplace policies on an individual basis and remain committed to upholding the rights and protections of all workers.

In ROI, thousands of people have been waiting 5+ years to access even the initial stages of public trans healthcare due to there being only one clinic providing this care (the National Gender Service (NGS)). Due to inadequate resources, the NGS closed its waiting list at the start of March. Unite activists are campaigning for a new and better trans healthcare system based on informed consent, and for this service to be implemented as soon as possible.

### Disabled members

We have seen a massive increase in the number of disabled people joining Unite in Ireland at 67%. The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant impact on all people across society, decreasing living standards and increasing the number of people who are now suffering through poverty. For disabled individuals, the impact of this crisis is even more acute due to numerous extra costs that a disabled household must cover to have the same standard of living as a non-disabled household – known as the 'Disability Price Tag'.

In NI, the Department of Communities released a Draft Disability Strategy outlining plans for 2025-2035. Despite extensive input from a co-design group made up of activists and trade unions (including Unite), the strategy fails to address fundamental structural and legal barriers that prevent disabled people from accessing, remaining in, and progressing in work. Unite continues to campaign and lobby to improve the lives of disabled people and their families, championing the social model of disability and demanding an end to income poverty and unemployment traps that many disabled people suffer.

### Retired members

Our retired members have added immense value to various campaigns over the years and continue to do so. In NI, our retired members spearheaded the campaign to end fuel poverty and reinstate the winter fuel payment. The campaign organised a protest at Stormont and presented the minister with a petition signed by thousands demanding the Stormont executive act to defend pensioners at risk of winter fuel poverty. Their action directly led to Stormont providing a mitigation payment of £100 to every affected pensioner and in the end the government changed their policy and reinstated the majority of the winter fuel payment.

The Regional Retired Members Committee continue to represent our members at conferences and events and hold prominent positions on various boards and committees. There has been a significant increase in our number of retired members of 58%, highlighting the benefits of Retired Members Plus membership.

### Young members

There has been a fantastic increase in the number of young people joining Unite in Ireland, and our membership has increased by 96% over the last two years.

Young members have attended various events and conferences as well as showing strength in solidarity with workers locally and globally. Members of the Regional Young Members Committee have attended pickets to stand alongside our members who are on strike, including at Diageo in Belfast and at the mega-picket held for the Birmingham bin strikers. Efforts are underway to develop events and courses specifically for our young members in Ireland to educate young workers on their rights and protections as well as developing their knowledge of the benefits of joining a trade union.

## **Education & Development**

### **Northern Ireland**

The period since our last conference has been very successful in terms of delivery which is due to the hard work and dedication of the team, Lisa Robinson, Claire Caulfield, Ciaran Brolley and our tutors Davy Kettyles and Greg Sachno.

They are supported by a number of other colleagues from the officer core, organising, Retention Member Unit (RMU), legal and affiliates and externally from the solicitors to ensure our reps are equipped to support and represent members in the workplace.

As well as the normal core education classes we regularly deliver bespoke training in Disciplinary and Grievance, Negotiation and Communication, Equality and Branch Officer training. The figures below are not inclusive of ULF training that Claire Caulfield and Ciaran Brolley would conduct.

As a direct match on the relevant ref periods v the last conference:

| Years       | Number of Courses | Participants | Number of Days | Equivalent in Years |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 2022 - 2024 | 23                | 249          | 1667           | 4.5                 |
| 2024 - 2026 | 50                | 529          | 2607           | 7                   |

To support the reps we have delivered courses online, in person and with hybrid options across all our courses as well as delivering on a geographical basis.

This report covers the delivery of education from March 2024 to March 2026.

The core programme consists of:

- Workplace Reps Stage 1 and 2
- Health and Safety Stage 1 and 2
- Negotiation and Communication
- Public Speaking
- Grievance and Disciplinary
- A just transition, building sustainable greener workplaces

The Irish region core programmes run over a 10-week period. We also run ad hoc 5-day block courses in our district offices, Derry/Londonderry, Ballymena and Portadown as well as an external venue in Enniskillen. The programmes delivered are via the South Eastern Regional College and are accredited at Level 2.

In the last 18 months, core training for reps in the Northwest has become a regular component of the programme however, due to lack of tutor availability it has not always been possible to deliver in the area.

In the last 2 years the number of classes available has increased due to improved administration, tutor numbers and management organisation of the overall programme.

The delivery of the programme has been assisted by the widening of outside speakers, the parliamentary outreach team, MLAs and senior civil servants at Stormont. As part of the ongoing development of the programme, the following participants are invited as part of the programme, Barry Faulkner of the National Education Team, Unite's organising department, the union solicitors, Lung Health campaign, the Labour Relations Agency and Friends of the

Earth. Senior shop stewards, full time officials, Health and Safety officers and the retention team also come and engage with new reps.

The course programmes have been adapted to reflect the devolved nature of Health and Safety and employment rights as far as possible, and whilst materials are still centrally produced, it is possible to ensure that legislation is based on Northern Ireland statute. The numbers applying for the courses means that our programmes are often oversubscribed; this benefits both the union and the college arrangements which has been in place with SERC for 10 years and prior to that, 15 years with NWRC. Given the current budget pressures on education budgets from Stormont, this may change in the future as was the case with NWRC previously.

In conclusion, the education programme in the last 2 years, and more broadly in the last 28 years with the Irish region (north), is able to deliver more for members but is also expanding in its remit regarding content administration, management and delivery, using blended learning and technology; the programmes structure will continue to develop and expand moving forward.

### **Republic of Ireland**

The Irish Policy Conference provides an optimum time to remind delegates of the glaring differences between Unite's education offering in the Republic of Ireland and that of the rest of the Union, and the reasons for those differences. As we have stated to previous Conferences these differences do not arise from any wrongdoing within Unite itself. They are the result of seismic external differences in legislation and the poor approach of the legislature and wider environment in this jurisdiction to trade unions and trade union education generally:

Difference 1 – Partnerships: While training is provided in partnership with external training institutions in the North and the other nine Regions this is not the case in the Republic of Ireland. This means that our training is not certified and, unlike those institutions, we do not 'employ' any Tutors. This has cost and organisation implications.

Difference 2 – Union Recognition: Unlike the rest of the Union there is no collective bargaining legislation in the Republic of Ireland which means it is much more difficult to get the sort of collective and facilities agreements necessary to get members released for training.

Difference 3 – Training Funding and Facilitation: Similarly, there is no legislation here allowing us to demand release of union members for training and there is close to no funding available externally either (for example there is no Union Learning Fund here). This means that, unlike the rest of the union, members in the Republic of Ireland can usually only attend in their own time and at their own expense (in terms of loss of time).

Despite these differences, which have pertained for decades, we have made some progress since Conference 2024. We are currently developing 4 new Tutors, a major development that can be transformative in course delivery. These committed and talented people have been 'shadowing' the excellent Bob Stacey and by the end of year 2026 all should be available to deliver courses in their own right.

Moreover, in addition to our core programme, we are now delivering exciting new training modules in accessibility and AI which can themselves be developed into full courses if there

is sufficient interest. We would like to see a GDPR/Data Protection course delivered and we have a Tutor qualified to do that too and it should be up and running in Q3 2026.

Furthermore, the arrival of Automatic Enrolment (AE) in pensions has seen us offer renewed pensions training.

We want to thank all our Tutors over the last 2 years, Bob Stacey, Greg Sachno and Davy Kettles and a particular thanks to our Admin staff Noelle Whelan, Lucille Conroy and Breda Ellis and everyone else who helped for all their work. Finally, we want to appeal to all members, delegates, Officers, Branches and Committees to renew their focus on ensuring that our Representatives are identified and brought forward for training as a priority.

### **Unite in the Community** **Northern Ireland**

Unite in the Community is involved in the ongoing support of food banks in the region. We currently maintain a community fridge in South Belfast which proves to be a vital service to local service users.

There is a continued engagement with the shop stewards' stage one courses to convey the role of Unite in the Community within the union in Northern Ireland, as well as the support we offer our membership and what we can do for the community.

Unite in the Community played a major role in the campaign to defend the Winter Fuel Payment and to reinstate the payments in Northern Ireland. This campaign succeeded at first in securing a partial mitigation for pensioners in Northern Ireland and then succeeded in forcing a U-turn by the Westminster government. Our efforts to defend benefits will continue, Stormont must protect our pensioners and others in need from any decisions to cut benefits in future.

We continue to expand engagement with new community groups and campaigns with the aim of bringing them into Unite in the Community, dealing with members' welfare, housing repairs, rehousing and so on.

Following on from the motion passed at the last policy conference, Unite in the Community has engaged with and negotiated an arrangement where members needing to access welfare rights advice are supported in doing so. This arrangement is through the Ardoyne Community Advice service (as a first point of contact but extends to other advice providers across Northern Ireland). Members who phone to use the service come through to the Community Co-Ordinator and an appointment is made with the advice provider closest to them (at a Unite office where this is most appropriate).

Unite in the Community continues to support our industrial brothers and sisters to the best of our ability when it comes to picket lanes. Where possible we mobilise as much support as possible. Community members attend rallies e.g. against the threat to reduce disability payments.

Community branch members have been to the fore in numerous mobilisations against the far-right. In particular, members of Unite in the community in Newry mobilised repeatedly in solidarity with minority communities against far-right elements despite death threats. Unite in the community continues to engage in processes to cut across the growth of the far-right and to challenge divisive narratives seeking to divide workers or to encourage blaming migrants for issues caused by politicians e.g. the lack of social housing or NHS waiting lists.

## **Republic of Ireland**

Community branches in the Republic of Ireland have been active during the last two years, meeting regularly and campaigning on issues in line with Unite policy including working towards a referendum on public ownership of water; supporting people struggling with the cost of living and homelessness; challenging the rise of racism in our communities and engaging with young workers through our *Unite in Schools* program. Members have also represented Unite in many public Demonstrations at national and local levels.

### Water

Unite in the Community has held public meetings on water in public ownership in Dublin, Cork and Waterford. Members organised a protest in Cork City where water quality has deteriorated because of outsourcing. Our members sent a sample to a HSE laboratory which found it unfit for human consumption. Other days of action took place in Lismore, Dungarvan, Clonmel and Dublin.

### Unity over Division

Unite Community has been to the forefront in building a trade union response to the rise of the far right through our Unity over Division training. This training is now a regular feature of our education courses. Community has distributed thousands of information leaflets and has participated in support networks at community level across the Republic of Ireland and took part in the 2025 Fredrick Douglass Civil Rights festival in Co. Wexford.

### Raise the Roof

Members have worked with (Community Action Tenants Union) CATU and ICTU as part of the Raise the Roof campaign to demand a public program of house building to end the housing crisis. They have participated in the organisation of demonstrations, distribution of materials and mobilisation for events throughout the country holding their own days of action in the Cork area. Members are also involved in the Caring is Sharing group providing street-based support for vulnerable people facing homelessness and food poverty, organising collections and fund-raising events to help.

### Unite in Schools

Unite in the Community is now running a *Unite in Schools* program in the Republic of Ireland. In conjunction with the Irish School Students Union (ISSU) we have delivered 15 *Unite in Schools: Know Your Rights at Work* presentations to the ISSU regional council meetings held across the country. Participants at these events represent over 200 secondary schools. In addition to the presentation a Unite pocket guide for young workers was distributed to the student reps to bring back to their schools. *Unite in Schools* events have also been held in secondary schools in Dundalk and with Youth Reach. More are planned for the coming school year. Through our work with community schools, we are also sponsoring a nations girls Futsal Championship, participating teams from Ireland, Scotland and Wales in April 2026.

## **International Overview**

The international context for Unite's work has deteriorated sharply since the last Irish Policy Conference, with developments that could have serious negative consequences for Unite members. It has been driven in large part by the aggressive and unpredictable actions of the current US Trump administration.

Since taking office at the start of 2025, Trump engaged in a series of campaigns of both military aggression and economic coercion. In addition to the attack on Venezuela and launching a war against Iran, he has threatened to annex Greenland as well as threatening

to impose regime change in Cuba, Colombia and Mexico. The war on Iran and closure of the Strait of Hormuz has resulted in steep energy price increases and may have knock-on impacts on other goods, with fertiliser being of particular concern.

The establishment of a fully unaccountable 'Board of Peace', outside all international structures including the UN, to oversee the administration of Gaza (and possibly other territories) creates an alarming precedent.

These developments reflect to a broader pattern of escalating military intervention, interventions in sovereign states, threats of regime change and widening global conflict, including the ongoing war in Ukraine and the continued genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

Territorial aggression has been accompanied by the imposition of, and threatened imposition of, tariffs; this is of particular concern to the region

As a small open economy the Republic is particularly exposed to tariffs and trade disruption. As it happens, most of Ireland's goods exports are not currently exposed to tariffs as they are dominated by the pharmaceutical sector. In addition, pharmaceutical tariffs would manifest as higher prices paid by US consumers rather than as losses absorbed by exporters from Ireland.

However, in April 2026 Trump threatened to impose 100 per cent tariffs on pharma companies exporting into the US if they reneged on a deal to reduce drug prices in the US. At the time of writing (early June 2026), there are some indications that US pharma companies are pausing investment projects in Ireland pending clarification of the situation.

Smaller sectors are also at risk, most notably the dairy and drinks sectors. Early evidence suggests there may already be negative impacts on exports from the beverages sector.

The scale and pace all the above developments pose serious risks to global stability, economic security, and the wellbeing of Unite members and their families.

Although it does not have anywhere near the same degree of dependence on US FDI as the Republic, Northern Ireland is also a relatively open economy with a significant dependence on export and financial service markets. It is also at the end of many supply chains e.g. for fuel and raw materials.

Thus, the Region as a whole is likely to be disproportionately impacted by any global downturns or trade disruption.

Northern Ireland is also exposed to potential post-Brexit complications as it is fully aligned to the EU market for goods, but for the services sector and the remainder of the economy it is integrated into the wider UK fiscal regime and policies. Should different retaliatory and reciprocal tariffs be imposed by the UK and EU, then this would raise the possibility of damaging economic dislocation.

Unite has continued to work actively at UK, European and international levels. In a world increasingly shaped by multinational corporations and global capital, effective international engagement is essential to protect and advance members' interests.

## **European Legislation and Policy Developments**

### European Commission Omnibus Proposal

The European Commission's Omnibus simplification package, being driven by Irish EU Commissioner Michael McGrath, is progressing through the legislative process. The proposal reflects a broader push to reduce regulatory burdens, particularly in relation to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD).

However, the proposals have generated significant concern among trade unions, NGOs, and legal experts due to the scale of the proposed rollback of sustainability and accountability measures. Key concerns include:

- A reduced scope of corporate due diligence obligations
- Weakened enforcement mechanisms
- Reduced requirements for stakeholder engagement
- Lower levels of liability and sanctions
- The removal of climate transition plan requirements

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has been particularly critical of these changes, warning of their potential impact on workers' rights and corporate accountability.

Unite participated in an ETUC/ICTU protest against the proposals – also dubbed 'EU Inc' – in Cork earlier this year and will continue working with the wider trade union movement to oppose these proposals.

### European Works Council Directive

The revised European Works Council Directive (Directive 2025/2450), published on 11 December 2025, represents a significant step forward for workers' rights across Europe. It strengthens information and consultation rights and provides greater legal certainty and resources for European Works Councils (EWCs).

Member States must transpose the Directive into national law by 1 January 2028, with full implementation expected by January 2029 following a transition period. A European Commission Expert Group will guide this process.

For Unite, a key priority remains ensuring that UK workers, including those from Northern Ireland, continue to have representation and rights within EWCs post-Brexit.

### Minimum Wage Directive

In November 2025, the European Court of Justice issued its ruling on the Minimum Wage Directive. While dismissing most legal challenges, the Court annulled two limited provisions relating to wage-setting criteria and indexation restrictions.

The Directive remains a significant development, requiring Member States with less than 80% collective bargaining coverage to produce action plans to increase coverage.

Unite has fed into public consultations at every stage of this process and continues to argue that nothing less than a statutory right to collective bargaining will increase the Directive's stated aim of substantially increasing collective bargaining coverage. Although the minimalist Action Plan published by the government in the context of implementing the directive falls far short of what is required, it is vital that we continue engaging in this process to maximise

any benefits for Unite members and workers more generally. Unite is centrally involved in the ICTU working group on the Action Plan.

#### EU Pay Transparency Directive

This directive has significant implications for reducing the gender pay gap and it is disappointing that Ireland is set to miss the 7 June transposition deadline.

#### EU Irish Presidency

Unite made a submission to the consultation on policy priorities for the Irish Presidency (July – December 2026), and we will continue highlighting the need to improve workers' rights at EU-level, including through public procurement conditionality.

#### Brexit

Unite continues to actively mitigate the negative impacts of Brexit on its members. This includes:

- Engagement with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement review
- Protecting UK representation in European Works Councils
- Supporting heavily impacted sectors such as manufacturing
- Maintaining strong relationships with European trade union federations

Brexit continues to present significant economic and industrial challenges, particularly in Ireland, and will remain a central focus of Unite's international work.

#### Multinational Companies

Unite remains highly active in building international trade union alliances to hold multinational companies accountable. The International Department continues to support representatives across a wide range of sectors and companies, including aerospace, manufacturing, and digital industries.

A central area of work has also been to support reps and officers in multinational companies, activities have ranged from support during company restructurings, working with sister unions to hold companies to account across their global operations. During the period under review, Unite has forged close links with European trade unions and union confederation in our ongoing campaign to expose union-busting in the Irish company Jones Engineering.

#### Global and European Trade Union Federations

European and Global Trade Union Federations are the organisations that bring unions across Europe and the world together in specific sectors and industries. They play an important role in coordinating actions across multinational companies, providing a voice for workers in European and Global political structures - such as the EU, ILO, and WTO, etc., and are vehicles for solidarity with unions in developing countries. As one of the largest trade unions in the world Unite is affiliated to six European and six global organisations and is often one of the major affiliates of those organisations. Since the last Irish Policy Conference Unite has continued to play its full role in all the European and Global trade union federations to which it is affiliated - IndustriALL Global/Industrial-Europe (manufacturing), ITF/ETF (transport), UNI/UNI-Europa (private services), PSI/EPUSU (public services), IUJ/EFFAT (food and agriculture), and BWI/EFBWW (construction). Unite has been at the forefront of pushing for the various organisations to be focused and effective in developing common actions around multinational companies and to develop organising strategies.

These federations are also increasingly having to address issues such as the rise of the far right and global conflicts.

#### OECD

In the Republic, Unite has filed complaints against two multinationals – Jones Engineering, owned by US holding company Cathexis, and Dutch multinational ASML. In both cases it was found that the complaints merited further investigation, and these processes are ongoing.

#### Solidarity Work

Unite's solidarity work has intensified significantly, reflecting growing global instability. There has been a marked increase in requests for support, particularly linked to shifting US foreign policy and escalating conflicts.

Unite's solidarity work continues in line with Unite policy as determined by our union's policy conferences, working with trade unionists and people facing the worst repression by brutal governments and regimes.

Since the last Irish Policy Conference, the situation has deteriorated dramatically in Palestine and elsewhere. Although the situation in Colombia has improved significantly following the election of the first ever progressive government, trade unionists and human rights activists remain under significant threat, and the country is still very far from peaceful and stable. At the time of writing, there are concerns that a far-right candidate may win the presidency.

Globally trade unionists and human rights activists continue to face serious threats, and the rise of the far right globally has put trade unions rights under even more pressure, underlining the ongoing importance of our solidarity work. Unite will continue to provide support through the campaigns to which we are affiliated, including through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Global Solidarity Committee.

## **Regional Industrial Sector Committees Aerospace & Shipbuilding**

During the period since our last conference and despite ongoing cost of living pressures and industrial upheaval we have seen our workplace stewards/activists in Aerospace and Shipbuilding engage in a tremendous effort to organise and grow our Unite membership within the sector.

Since the post Covid downturn within the Aerospace and Shipbuilding sector and impact on the labour market, the sector appears to be returning to some kind of normality with employers seeking to recruit skilled workers which has translated into membership growth. This growth can be attributed to members' militancy in demanding better from their employers and the diligence and hard work of our stewards who have then delivered for members during an ongoing cost of living crisis. It is this delivery within workplaces that has been reflected in membership growth and increased workplace density across many workplaces in the sector.

Since our last policy conference, we have had some significant industrial upheaval across the sector within our largest workplaces, Spirit and in H&W. In March 2024 it was announced that Boeing was engaged in discussions to acquire Spirit, the announcement caused members great concern and initiated a major campaign within the region to keep the NI facilities as one entity and protect jobs.

For 20 months Spirit Senior Reps/Reps/Members conducted an extensive "Back the Plan for Jobs" campaign of political engagement both regionally and nationally, with the aim of securing jobs at Spirit Aerosystems. We had weekly updates with our senior stewards, and a regional/national plan was developed to include billboards, engaging with Boeing, Airbus, Invest NI, FM&DFM, DfE, MPs, DBT, SoS and MLAs. As part of the campaign the Regional Secretary/RCO accompanied a delegation of Spirit reps to London, taking the fight directly to Westminster, meeting with NI Affairs Committee Chair and lobbying support for our demand from MP's, this extensive campaign was fully supported by the RS/GS who was directly involved throughout the campaign.

General Secretary Sharon Graham met with reps and committed the union's resources to a fully leveraged campaign bringing forward the workers' plan for a joint venture operating model to bring together Airbus and the likes of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party i.e. Bombardier to ensure that all production and jobs stayed under one roof. The General Secretary has played a pivotal role in supporting the workers campaign for jobs by organising and attending meetings with John Harrison, chairman of Airbus UK, communicating with Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg and meeting with Dr. Brendan Nelson, President Boeing Global.

Based on the potential implications and risk to thousands of highly skilled jobs within the Aerospace sector in Northern Ireland. The GS engaged politically at the highest level of government on workers behalf, including raising the workers campaign in meetings with Keir Starmer and Jonathn Reynolds. These direct interventions brought the Spirit workers campaign to the very heart of government, notifying that the GS would stand shoulder to shoulder with stewards and workers in their fight to safeguard jobs and the aerospace sector in Northern Ireland. At a meeting with Boeing on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025, we were informed that in line with the term sheet agreement it was their intention to abandon trying to secure a 3<sup>rd</sup> party (Bombardier) to take on areas of the business not transferring to Airbus and that subject to the required regulatory processes the default position would apply, meaning Boeing would retain the non-Airbus parts of the business, this was a major shift from the initial third party plan.

The announcement changed the direction of our campaign again, we held further meetings with senior Spirit management, Boeing UK President, SoS Hilary Benn, Senior Airbus representatives from the UK and France, Airbus EWC, international unions in Germany, Spain and France, DBT, DfE, Invest NI, MLA, MP's and FM & DFM

After 20 months campaigning, it was finally confirmed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025 that the Boeing acquisition of Spirit had been completed.

For workers this meant that approximately 1,500 transferred over to Airbus Belfast with the remaining 2500 transferring to Shorts Brothers (Boeing), a subsidiary of Boeing Global Services. Our senior Spirit stewards consulted with Airbus over many months and eventually agreed an Airbus specific recognition agreement, the agreement replicated and improved the historical trade union structures with 2 new full time senior stewards being elected as well as an additional 9 new workplace stewards, giving us a full complement of reps across the WPU and mid-fuse area within Airbus.

Whilst it was extremely disappointing that our single entity ambition was not delivered our stewards held both Boeings and Airbus feet to the fire throughout, their extensive campaigning with the aim of securing jobs, kept the profile of Shorts and our members at the very top of the political agenda in NI and Westminster

Although the company has now effectively been split into two separate entities the campaign does not stop, our attention has turned to real term commitments from both Boeing and Airbus to future proof the sites, we need commitments on jobs, commitments on investment/work packages and commitments for the future of the Aerospace sector in NI.

As we move into 2026, we will continue to canvas political support locally and in Westminster to deliver for the workforce and ensure that Shorts/Airbus remains a lynchpin employer for skills and innovation in the sector not only for today but for the future of the aerospace sector in Northern Ireland.

Despite the uncertainty over the last 20 months and due to the ongoing hard work of our steward's, trade union membership has increased, we are getting 99% of new starts joining a trade union and we also had approximately 100 new apprentices starting in September 2025, the majority of them joining Unite.

Following the rejection from UK treasury for the Export Development Guarantee application the future of historic H&W yard was once again plunged into doubt as the business was £200 million in debt. In July 2024 we were notified that there was no more money, but the company had secured an emergency loan of £20 million by creditors Riverstone had been put in place on the proviso that the current CEO John Woods stepped down with immediate effect.

With the company on the brink of administration, they appointed interim CEO Russell Downs to oversee the sale of the company with Rothschild being appointed to carry out the sale process. We had some important early interventions with the interim CEO to ensure that he was fully aware that our stewards/members would fight to save the yard and their livelihoods, invoking the spirit of 2019 to save the yard and members' jobs.

Our shop stewards engaged in bi-weekly meetings with the company over several months to scrutinize the sale process every step of the way and ensure any sale would only be accepted if it offered workers continuity of employment and the protections afforded under

TUPE. Since the announcement in July 2024, the company put the PLC into administration however the yards remained functioning as a separate entity. We were engaged in an extensive campaign to save the yard, meeting with all political parties, MLAs, MPs, FM &DFM, DfE, Invest NI, prime contractor Navantia and government officials via the DBT to ensure that any sale was based on our members jobs and continuity of employment being preserved at the historic Belfast shipyard which is critical to the continuation of shipbuilding and heavy industry in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for N.I commented publicly on more than one occasion that the UK government was committed to shipbuilding in N.I however it is our stewards that held the government to account to deliver on that promise, with the alternative being potential administration and closure.

After months campaigning to secure the yard, we met with Navantia in December 2024 who informed us that the terms of a sale had finally been agreed, the sale included the transfer of workers under TUPE which protected jobs, pay and conditions. It must be acknowledged that TUPE was a red line for our reps/members and was only on the table because our reps put it there and insured it stayed there. Navantia also detailed future investment plans for the yards including Defence, Ship Repair and Renewables. The announcement was welcome news and a relief to workers, but it should be noted that job security and the continuation of the Belfast yard was only delivered due to the tremendous efforts of our senior reps and senior H&W branch officers, ensuring TUPE was on the table and workers jobs and livelihoods were protected.

With the transfer to Navantia confirmed in January 2025 and the contract for the Royal Navy Fleet Solid Support ships (FSS) secured this means the return of shipbuilding to Belfast after decades of absence. Employment opportunities increased during 2025 with recruitment continuing into 2026, including over 100 apprentices being taken on over that period, majority joining Unite.

Now that the dust has settled and the FSS work commencing in 2026 the future of shipbuilding in NI appears to be more secure, Navantia UK are signalling that they are confident of attracting new bigger contracts for Belfast, especially once they have completed the ongoing modernisation of the yard. Our stewards and members remain vigilante and are keeping a watchful eye to ensure that the promises made to the trade union during negotiations with Navantia are fully delivered.

Following the announcement by Thales to invest in an additional facility in Belfast, increasing employment, our reps engaged in a full organising campaign in 2025 increasing our membership to over 455 members. Establishing improved trade union structures, new additional stewards and a new shop stewards committee. Whilst a lot of the negative management attitudes remain, our reps are well structured and committed to challenge the employer head on.

During the period since our last policy conference the A&S RISC was also extremely proactive in trying move the motion put forward at conference. The motion was to secure improvements to both the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) and the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) under the Pension Schemes bill (2025), the motion which sought support in engaging with members of the Public Bills Committee to help ensure the outcome included the following necessary amendments.

Retrospective indexation plus arrears (RIPA) – this would ensure that all DB pensions accrued prior to 1997 would be fully indexed to compensate for subsequent inflation (as they were frozen in nominal terms). This would end the current unfair two-tier system in place where pensions accrued prior to 1997 have never been inflation proofed. Increasing the indexation cap which is currently fixed at 2.5% to 5.0% and which applies to the indexation of pension contributions after 1997.

The RISC committee engaged nationally with Unite pensions department, TUC, Westminster and lobbied local MP'S and MLAs to galvanise support for the motion and how this can be delivered. The Aerospace and Shipbuilding sector is vitally important to Northern Ireland, our stewards within the sector have continued to deliver for members whether that has been via increased pay settlements or securing employment, despite the industrial upheaval.

The hard work of our reps during campaigns over the last 2 years have also saw our membership increase across the A&S sector, RISC delegates have attended multiple picket lines over the last period, supporting many members and reps who have had to take industrial action against their employer. As we move into 2026, the RISC will continue to drive the sector forward, grow and organise our membership, hold employers to account and support members in their fight for better jobs, pay and conditions.

## **Automotive Industries**

### Northern Ireland

#### Linamar

We had a ballot for industrial action earlier in the year over a pay offer but this was resolved without the need to take any action. The offer was a 2-year offer with 3.23% plus an extra 0.5% to be paid at end of 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year average rate of inflation in Feb but to be no less than 3%. Immediately after our pay offer there was a data breach affecting JLR which in turn affected the automotive industry. It also had a massive impact on Linamar with work not being produced, members going on to short working week etc., (Linamar supplies heads for JLR.) Thankfully this has been resolved with work picking up again.

#### Ryobi

We have had various difficulties with Ryobi mainly in connection with the constant shift changes. Work is not going great and concerns are being raised about the future of Ryobi. At the time of writing, a meeting is due to take place regarding their pay claim and these concerns will also be raised.

#### Trustford

We have had various issues with individual members as there is no recognition agreement; organisers have had a look at the potential and it would be quite difficult to organise given the number of sites across the country.

The automotive sector is still facing the same difficulties with automation, a diminishing diesel market etc.

### Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, Unite represents craft/mechanics/coach builders at Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann both of which fall under the CIE group. Apart from the normal group and individual issues, the CIE pension scheme has been changed from a DB to a DC scheme; also, at the time of writing, pay talks are underway and nearly completed for these companies.

As part of the organising model with mechanics in the Republic of Ireland, we conduct regular visits to colleges and Education Training Boards who allow access to speak to apprentices.

This includes visits to mechanics' workshops and dealerships which has led to positive engagement and an increase in membership.

Unite has also been invited to sit on the committee for updating the national apprenticeship programme and we have attended regular meetings with the committee and provided input.

The overarching goal of the Automotive/Vehicle Builder's branch remains an application for a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) and resources are concentrated on building our membership to achieve this.

### **Civil Air Transport**

Both Belfast International and Belfast City Airport have agreed pay settlements, the international is a two year deal, 3.6% for each year. Belfast City Airport is a one year deal 3.4%.

In the Republic of Ireland, Unite represents craft members in Aer Lingus and Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) and, at the time of writing, there are upcoming pay talks. Unfortunately, at the end of 2025, the Unite TUI Dublin hub for cabin crew members with an offer of redundancy or redeployment to other hubs; most of our members took redundancy.

### **Community, Youth Workers and Not 4 Profit**

Membership in this sector remains fragmented with a high ratio of number of workplaces to members, and there is no sector specific branch established in the South. Efforts are underway to improve recruitment and visibility of Unite in the CYWNFP sector and the National Officer has been invited to attend upcoming RISC meetings to help develop an effective strategy for the island. This sector has one of the fastest growing memberships for Unite and is one of the most vulnerable due to insecure funding and precarious employment.

In Northern Ireland, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (which was set up to replace EU funding streams) came to an end in March 2026 and was replaced by the Local Growth Fund (LGF) from April. Funding via the LGF stipulates a 70/30 split in favour of capital spending and this has resulted in a shocking 64% cut to funding for NI's economic inactivity support programmes with funding being slashed from £25 million to £9million a year. It is expected that there could be a loss of 400+ specialist frontline jobs within the sector and a collapse of community-based projects which support over 11,000 individuals a year. Unite has been working alongside other unions as part of the NI ICTU Community & Voluntary Committee to advocate for our members who work in and benefit from these crucial services and we continue to call for the reversal of these funding changes. *(Note - At the time of writing, implementation of the LGF had not yet occurred and so the full impact of this immense cut on funding was not fully apparent).*

The NI Community & Not-For-Profit Branch held an information session on the proposed Good Jobs Bill and extended the invite to all Unite members. The session was well attended and attendees discussed potential campaign ideas and future actions that could be taken to fight against the dilution of what trade unions hope to achieve through this bill. The Draft 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill is expected to be published by Easter 2026.

The Community, Youth and Play Workers' NI Branch continues to hold their fantastic annual Paul Boskett Summer School. This event is well attended, and participants gain a wealth of knowledge and political education, as well as building strong connections across the trade union and sector.

There are two significant changes to Youth Services being proposed by the EA in NI; Youth Services Management Restructuring and Youth Service JNC Review. Consultation on both is ongoing at the time of writing. Impacts range from the disbanding of a core team (Facilitating Life and Resilience Education which provides key support to young people on mental health and resilience) and potential redundancies/mass redeployment, to redefining job roles and associated duties. Unite continues to hold the chair position of the influential JNC group which has been pivotal in the fight against attacks on youth workers conditions by the EA.

The JNC for Youth and Community Workers (NI) reached an agreement on a pay award for 2025 for Youth and Community Workers at 3.2% (backdated to September 2025).

In the Republic of Ireland, the Community, Youth Work and Not for Profit (CYWNP) sector predominantly represents staff in charities and not for profits of different types, many in small workplaces, and other trades unions.

We also represent Section 10, 39, 40 and 56 Funded Workplaces within the Voluntary Sector. With the support of ICTU, Unite represented out members in the above grades in the context of a dispute concerning pay parity with equivalent public sector grades.

In early March 2025, the ongoing issue of pay parity again came before the WRC on behalf of these workers. The process involved Unite and other trade unions in the voluntary sector, all supported by ICTU.

Following three days of discussions at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), the proposals set out below emerged and were subsequently put to, and accepted by, the workers concerned. These proposals were aimed at addressing the long-standing pay disparities between workers employed in State-funded voluntary bodies and those directly employed in the public sector, and at ensuring alignment in pay progression with public sector counterparts. The proposals include:

- A 9.25% pay increase over two years (October 2024 to October 2026);
- Adjustment of funding to the relevant bodies to facilitate the application of equivalent general round pay increases.

A key task at workplace level will be to monitor the implementation of these measures and to use them, where possible, to build collective strength among workers. We will also need to be fully alive to further pay progression in the Public Sector when the current Public Sector Agreement ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and the prospect of pay gaps opening up again.

## **Construction**

Since the Irish Policy conference 2024, Unite has been involved in securing an updated Construction SEO for members employed in the wider construction sector in the Republic of Ireland.

### Mechanical sector

Following on from the Supreme Court victory in March 2024, Unite has been involved in strike action across the sector for the reinstatement of the 1st hour of travel time. Unite is also engaged in a Strike+ campaign against Jones Engineering for the treatment of our three elected reps. To date this campaign has secured High Court action against our reps being dropped with Jones Engineering paying all costs.

### Building materials

Unite has secured significant pay increases for members employed in the provision of Building materials including an 11% increase in Irish Cement.

### Archaeology

An application for the establishment of a SEO was submitted to the Labour Court at the end of 2025. The Court subsequently sought written submissions from interested parties on the matter. Unite provided comprehensive submissions in support of the application.

The purpose of seeking the establishment of an SEO is to create a legally enforceable floor of rights and a mechanism to allow for future improvements in the terms and conditions of employment for Archaeological Workers across the sector. It is expected that a Labour Court hearing on the matter will take place during the summer of 2026.

Department of Defence, State Agencies & Government Departments (Republic of Ireland) Enterprise Ireland, National Standards Authority of Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Teagasc, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Inland Fisheries Ireland are covered in this Sector. Despite our best efforts, this RISC was not constituted in 2025, due, in the main, to senior stewards either on long-term leave or retirement.

The Public Sector Agreement (PSA) 2024-2026 has provided for the following increases, 2.25% or €1125 whichever is greater in January 2024, 1% increase in June 2024, 1% increase or €500, whichever is greater in October 2024, 2% increase or €1000 in March 2025, 1% increase in August 2025, 1% increase or €500 whichever is greater in February 2026 and finally 1% increase in June 2026. The PSA agreement expires on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026. Workplace Representatives are now beginning to focus on a successor agreement and welcome the recent Unite Cost of Living Survey. There is overall concern at the lack of progress of Local Bargaining as provided for in the agreement.

Issues emerging in the sector included restructures in the state agencies, budget and funding cuts, an increased appetite by employers to increase attendance at the workplace as opposed to working from home arrangements, workload balance, low starting salaries which in turn is affecting recruitment and a more abrasive approach by employers to emerging industrial relations issues.

### **Docks, Rail, Ferries and Waterways**

The RISC has pushed for the introduction of defibrillators on trains in NI following an incident involving one of the drivers. These are now being rolled out across the network.

At the last conference, the RISC proposed policy in relation to a needs-based budget for Northern Ireland. This was delivered following discussion between the Westminster Government and the Stormont Executive although the figures do not go far enough in terms of what is required for NI to stabilise and improve on the current service's being offered to the public.

In the Republic of Ireland, Unite represents engineers/fitters at Irish Rail which falls under the CIE group. The CIE pension scheme has been changed from a DB to a DC scheme; also, at the time of writing, pay talks are underway and nearly completed for the companies within the CIE Group.

### **Education (Northern Ireland)**

#### JNCHES Pay Claim 2026-27 – Heads of Claim

At the time of writing, the JNCHES unions submitted the following Heads of Claim to UCEA by Wednesday 25th February 2025:

- An increase on all pay points of at least RPI + 3% or £3,000, whichever is higher, to be paid in full in August 2026;
- An increase to bring the minimum hourly rate of pay to £15/hour and for all HEIs to become Foundation Living Wage employers;
- A review of the New JNCHES pay spine, in line with the already agreed Terms of Reference for the working group, and for this review to proceed irrespective of any position taken by any of the New JNCHES trade unions on a pay offer made by UCEA;
- Joint working on the other three negotiating groups on Contract Types, Workload, and Equality pay gaps, in order to agree principles that can be developed into enforceable national agreements within a clearly defined timescale. This work should proceed irrespective of any position taken by any of the New JNCHES trade unions on a pay offer made by UCEA;
- UCEA to work with the joint trade unions to lobby the UK government on Higher Education funding reform;
- To establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES agreement;
- UCEA to work with the joint trade unions to avoid redundancies through the following:
  - Ensuring that all UCEA members adopt and adhere to agreed redundancy avoidance policies, based on the Trade Union Side (New JNCHES) Draft 1.4 Redundancy Avoidance Agreement and Code of Practice;
  - Agreeing joint work to implement policy on the non-renewal of fixed-term contracts during redundancy situations, to address the "hidden redundancy" crisis impacting casualised staff.

The JNCHES unions also agreed that we would seek to focus the negotiations in the three negotiating meetings (31st March, 9th April and 13th May 2025) on the headline pay claim and the 4 pay related issues with the review of the New JNCHES pay spine as a priority. The full pay claim was submitted by Wednesday 4th March 2026.

#### Ulster University

There are a number of Consultation Forums and Working Groups in Ulster University, these along with grievances and Disciplinarys take up a lot of time for the local Unite Reps.

Ongoing consultations continue on reviewing Policies within the University.

University Funding remains a serious issue throughout Higher Education. Ulster University's own analysis is:

#### UU Financial Issues & Risks

- Unsustainable funding model coupled with expectation to deliver expansion government policy in D/LD and City Deals;
- Revenue / Margin expected from investments/ Projects/ Partnerships are not achieved;
- Impact of visa requirement on international recruitment and white paper;
- High staff vacancy levels and impact on costs if all vacancies filled (if vacancy level 5% this would equate to additional £7m pa);
- Occupancy guarantees for Residences /Turkington Commitment;
- Inflation and cost pressures specially around staff costs, digital licences and estate
- Available Cash Reserves to fund expansion;
- Multi campus costs;
- Risk of Pension contribution change (change in January 2024 reduction £7m pa);
- Larger SUL financial support required;
- 1 year budget settlements from DfE and no inflationary increases;
- DoH funding model not sustainable;
- Business case and funding claim process.

University funding will continue to be an issue going forward.

#### **Education (Republic of Ireland)**

Apart from the normal group and individual issues, the main issue for the public sector at this time of writing is the lack of progress in regard to 3% due under the Public Service Agreement (PSA); local bargaining 1% due last September and our members feel that the Public Sector Committee of the ICTU needs to progress this matter on behalf of all the Unions as this issue is not just a Unite issue.

#### **Energy & Utilities (Northern Ireland)**

At the time of writing, pay talks have commenced with Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and the Union suspects the company will offer a multi-year deal but depending on the offer members would prefer a 1 year.

The Union now has an established reps committee which meets on a regular basis. They have various responsibilities and have had success in achieving a 'progression path' in certain departments within NIE – this is an ongoing project where we are trying to establish progression paths in all areas.

Due to the number of problems within the meter reading department, NIE has agreed to bring an independent outside body to review their ways of working. This will involve the meter reader reps and myself.

NI Water received 3% for 2024 and 4% for 2025 with 1 day's holiday and commitments to harmonise holidays and to look at consolidation of bonus which was accepted by members – we are currently in negotiations for 2026.

We had quite a few new members who had previously been in alternative unions. Due to the numbers, we have now established two separate bargaining units so we can address their issues. We have had a first couple of meetings, established what the main concerns are and have requested meetings with the company which, at the time of writing in March 2026, are due to take place later this month.

### **Energy and Utilities (Republic of Ireland)**

The Republic of Ireland Energy and Utilities RISC was re-established in May 2025 after a hiatus. All the semi state utilities where Unite are present, ESB, Eirgrid, Bord na Mona, Gas Networks Ireland and Uisce Éireann are represented on the RISC.

Among the standard items of the agenda of the RISC meetings are reports from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Energy and Natural Resources Committee on which Unite is represented and which itself was also reconstituted in 2025 after a period of not functioning.

The sector in an overall sense has been going through a period of expansion reflective of the significant investment, public and private, committed to renewable projects, expansion of the electricity grid and networks and an ever-growing demand for energy from data centers.

These developments have found their reflection in a growth in head count committed in both ESB and Eirgrid with the former projected to top 10,000. This in turn poses opportunities and challenges for Unite and the movement as a whole which has struggled to maintain density in a sector where recruitment at graduate level has been outstripping craft level recruitment.

Eirgrid, in particular, has shown that Unite can meet this challenge, where on the back of a tenacious organising campaign we doubled our density from 30% to 60% in the course of 2025.

#### ESB

The first phase of a three year pay agreement process concluded in 2025 resulting in yearly increases of between 3.25% and 3.5% on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025, between 3% and 3.25% on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026 and between 2.5% and 3% on 1st January 2027 the variations in each year relating to the different pay models and income level thresholds. An additional €1,500 voucher paid in two phases was also agreed.

Once the above proposition was approved in an aggregate ballot of the Group of Unions in July 2025 a second phase of negotiations opened up relating to claims for improvements in annual leave, allowances and shift payments. Allowances were increased typically between 8% to 9% the first increases in nine years. Premiums for working or being available to work on bank holidays were restored in line with legacy era (pre 2016) conditions. Annual leave for post 2016 employees was increased to 26 days.

The main other company wide engagement in ESB concerns the adoption of Revenue approved 'civil service' mileage and subsistence rates. Two propositions have been rejected in Group of Union aggregate votes in May 2025 and January 2026 in part because of partial vouching requirements being insisted on by the employer but not by the Revenue Commissioners.

Unite has been involved in a number of additional business unit and category specific claims and disputes including productivity claims for Engineering Officers, Engineers and technical

middle management in ESB Networks, out of hours storm repair work for Engineers and Technical middle management in ESB Networks, out of hours work for Commissioners in Engineering and Major Projects and upgrading of operations members in Aghada power station.

### Eirgrid

The current pay deal concludes in December 2026. The union has reviewed the current financial position of the company prior to engaging in negotiations. The union is now preparing for the next pay deal to commence in January 2027. Currently we are engaged in discussions with members on their expectations for their pay over the next three years. The previous agreement provided for a 9.5% pay increase over 3 years with a number of other financial rewards tax free.

We are engaged in a dispute with the company on two fronts. Our members in Market Operations have lodged a claim for an increase in on-call payments. The company having refused to negotiate meaningfully has resulted in a ballot for industrial action being passed and soon to commence. The claim would see the on-call payment increasing by 5% of salary.

Our members in Public Engagement have also lodged a claim for the company to pay the agreed civil service travel and subsistence rates. This claim is currently before the internal disputes procedure.

The Union has negotiated an enhanced performance matrix whereby members secure a 1% bonus for reaching expectations. We have also had an increase in maternity benefits for those returning to work. Working half time, members return on full pay and then 75% of time on full pay for the first month. Unite has also negotiated the introduction a menopause policy.

### Bord na Mona (BNM)

Following the cessation of peat production significant numbers of union membership opted to avail of the voluntary redundancy scheme. There has been no forced or compulsory redundancies and those workers remaining have been redeployed to work such as bog rehabilitation, tourism projects and work for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Bord na Mona is currently seeking work form external third parties where our members have expertise in bog-rehab. Terms and conditions protected upon redeployment; the Pay agreement in place at this point provides for 3% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, 3% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and 2.5% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027.

The GOU lodged a claim with the company in respect of the loss of a fuel allowance whereby staff had access to fuel a discounted rate. This claim arose out of the cessation of peat production. BNM declined the claim on the basis it was not a term and condition. The case was heard by the internal industrial council and they recommended there was merit to the GOU claim and it was a term and condition and that compensation should be based over a 3 year period and in line with a previous agreement on compensation formulas. The GOU engaged locally to agree a compensation formula which was accepted by the membership.

An individual case was brought on behalf of a member who had been redeployed twice in line with the Just Transition Agreement. The agreement provides that when two redeployments have been unsuccessful the employee is entitled to apply for Voluntary Redundancy Terms of 2018. The case was listed with the JIRC and the company conceded the claim two days before the hearing.

BNM has now closed the Derrinlough Briquette factory. The impact to Unite members is minimal due to the grades of workers involved with voluntary redundancy and redeployment opportunities having been exercised. The plant has been decommissioned with a potential to create a heritage site.

#### Uisce Eireann

Uisce Eireann members have voted to accept a 3 year pay deal with pay progression of 3% per annum, and performance management outcomes are to be de-coupled from pay progression for the mid to lower bands.

#### Gas Networks Ireland (GNI)

The Gas Networks Ireland's pay agreement for 2025 provided the following:

- Pay progression of 3.6%, payable through the agreed pay matrix, to be applied from 1st January 2025;
- A working group will be established to look at an alternative fit for purpose pay model. Group to be chaired by a mutually agreed independent (Kevin Foley);
- Where range refresh has been conducted – upward only increases will apply;
- Management agree to removing the disciplinary link from the performance management policy;
- This agreement will expire on 31st December 2025.

The above-mentioned working group on establishing an alternative pay model broke down without agreement in late 2025.

Also, no agreement has been reached on pay in GNI for 2026 and the matter was before the WRC, with a hearing scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Our members balloted for industrial action in 2025 arising from the company departing from agreed procedures in the disciplining of one of our members. A third-party facilitator has since been agreed to resolve this dispute, this remains ongoing.

#### KN Circet

The pay talks process reported at the last policy conference which by then had yielded 7% increase after a decade plus pay freeze went on to result in a further 6% increase in September 2024 and 5% in March 2025 as well as €1,000 vouchers in each of those two years. A new pay claim is being pursued as well as retention payments for Persons in Charge of Works.

#### Irving Oil

The union has been in dispute with Irving Oil on a number of counts, two of which are before WRC conciliation. One concerns the 2024 pay band review where we contested the methodology and outcome. While the company has not conceded to the union on this point they have announced a new career framework model with early indications that relevant comparators will be used for future pay reviews.

The second dispute concerns the company's unilateral curtailment of working from home arrangements. Some media coverage around this dispute led to a number of people from

Top Oil's head office, owned by the same parent company, who suffered an identical curtailment on their working from home arrangements to join the union. On the back of an organising campaign our membership has grown by 50% in this company.

#### Other workplaces covered by the Energy and Utilities ROI RISC

Unite the Union maintains a presence in SSE, including the Great Island power station in New Ross, Energia (Huntstown Power Station) and Hitachi Energy where in each case pay and conditions are significantly decided outside of the Republic of Ireland. Representation in individual cases has been provided.

#### **Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel (EMS)/Chemicals, Pharma, Process, Textiles & Steel (CPPTS)**

The EMS & CPPTS sectors within the Ireland region continue to operate at a steady level, with consistent workplace activity and stable workforce numbers across the sector.

Engagement with members remains positive, and representatives continue to support members across a range of workplace issues and negotiations.

#### RISC Engagement

Attendance at the Regional Industrial Sector Committee initially started at a low level but has recently shown an encouraging increase. While this improvement is welcome, further work will be required to continue building engagement and encouraging wider participation from workplace representatives. Increasing communication around meeting outcomes and ensuring meetings remain accessible and relevant will help strengthen attendance going forward.

#### Pay Negotiations and Industrial Activity

Several pay negotiations have taken place across companies within the EMS sector, delivering positive outcomes for members.

At Caterpillar, a 15.1% pay increase over a three-year period has recently been secured. This represents a strong deal for members and reflects the value of collective organisation and negotiation.

At Tata Steel, members undertook industrial action in response to concerns around pay and conditions. The dispute has now been successfully resolved following an improved offer from the company. As part of the agreement, the company has also committed to introducing a skills matrix, which will be developed in consultation with union representatives. Members have responded positively to the final outcome.

#### Workplace Developments

Glen Dimplex had previously announced plans to close the site at the end of 2026. That decision has now been withdrawn, which has brought some reassurance to the workforce. However, the company will continue operating with a reduced workforce and formal consultation processes have now commenced.

In Seagate officers and members successfully secured two recognition agreements, covering the majority of the workforce, with workplace representatives now in place. This represents a significant step forward in strengthening organisation within the workplace. Following these agreements, two positive pay deals have also been secured for members.

### Membership and Sector Growth

Membership levels within the sector remain steady, with gradual growth continuing as workplace organisation strengthens. Recognition agreements and successful negotiations have helped reinforce the value of union membership within a number of key workplaces.

### Workplace Issues

There has been a notable increase in disciplinary cases and workplace investigations across the EMS sector. Of particular concern are incidents involving challenges or attacks directed toward workplace representatives while carrying out their roles. Ensuring that representatives are properly supported and that employers respect established procedures remain an important priority moving forward.

### Tara Mines

Tara Mines in Co. Meath, went into Essential Care and Maintenance in June 2023, placing over 500 workers on temporary lay-off. The company explained this was due to a sudden drop in zinc prices, inflation-related cost increases and operational targets not being met at the mine. At the time Unite argued that while Tara Mines in Meath may be unprofitable on the face of it, the wider parent company (Boliden) is very profitable and well placed to absorb any difficulties arising from the circumstances in mid-2023. We specifically argued that the company was looking to use the situation to press for government concessions and push back workers' conditions. While our position got a strong response from workers at the time, many of whom had staged unofficial action in response to Care and Maintenance, the matter was advanced to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and resulted in a Sustainability Agreement in early 2024 which resulted in reductions in workers' pay and general terms and conditions. Our perspective on the company's intention in 2023 is the common view across the workforce.

The layoffs in Tara Mines have seen a 50% reduction in membership and reps and the non-functioning of the GOU. Much of this reduction on our membership system took place in early 2025. Work is under way to rebuild our reps and activist base within this company. We have had four new reps elected and have proposed a number of initiatives for the GOU to action and work together around, in particular, the review of the sustainability agreement that gave rise to the layoffs above. A review of the sustainability agreement took place in the WRC between October and December 2025. Unite members rejected the outcome of this process around the issue of Merit Awards due for 2022 (not supposed to be impacted by Care and Maintenance) and have sought that this issue and others be referred to the Labour Court, this has already resulted in an increase offer on the Merit Award.

At the time of writing, the Unions in Tara Mines have launched a pay claim for 2026.

### Cargotec

Following the dispute in Cargotec in March 2023, arising from the outsourcing of the paint function in the plant in Dundalk, Co Louth, paint was brought back in house in 2025. The company is now (at the time of writing in March 2026) looking to outsource the function again. This coupled with overall reduction in staff numbers at the parent company Hiab has led to voluntary redundancies at Cargotec (circa 30 amongst Unite membership). Despite these challenges local industrial relations have improved since the dispute. The recent pay agreement provides 3.35% increase in pay for 2026 and 2027.

### Haleon

In the Republic of Ireland, the pharmaceutical industry, Haleon, is also represented predominantly on the RISC.

Following the landmark 9.5% over two years' pay deal for 2024-2025 negotiated for our 700 plus members in Haleon in Dungarvan, Co Waterford talks for a pay agreement for 2026-2027 are ongoing. Vastly increased profits at the two sites in the two intervening years have set the bar high again for a similar result. Besides pay a number of contested and disputed matters have arisen over the last two years including resisting the company's attempt to expand its use of fixed terms contracts, preserving seniority in various aspects of the running of the plant and agreeing bonus objectives. A number of these issues have been the subject of WRC conciliations and one Labour Court session.

### Leo Pharma

Craft members in Leo Pharma, Crumlin, Dublin have rejected a 2.5% pay offer from the company for 2025 an offer well below the norms for the pharma sector. A referral to the Labour Court is pending.

### Conclusion

Increased attendance at RISC meetings is encouraging, and continued efforts will be made to build participation further. While challenges remain, both sectors continue to demonstrate the strength and importance of organised representation in delivering results for members.

### **Finance & Legal**

Since the last Irish Policy Conference in 2024, the Finance RISC is still holding most of their monthly meetings on zoom.

Annual pay agreements are still a struggle when it comes to securing percentage increases for long-term employees who are at top of grades / scales.

We have seen some employees in this sector been TUPE'd to outsourcing companies, with some providing a service back into their original employment.

Employees are still working a Hybrid model, but some companies are now tightening up to make sure employees are coming on site for their required days.

### **Food, Drink & Agriculture (FDA)**

In 2025, the ROI RISC merged with the NI following consultation with the NI RISC and approved by the Irish Executive Committee (IEC) and the Executive Council (EC).

Across the FDA sector there are many ongoing pressures within companies that continue to affect our members.

One of the major employers is Moy Park. This is now a subsidiary owned by Pilgrim Foods and they have taken over much of the Kerry Food sites - and all of the non-dairy food businesses.

Currently, within the bread sector, Hovis has been put on the market across the UK. A potential buyer (Allied Bakeries) has come forward who are currently in the process of purchasing the Hovis food group. This process is ongoing and it has the potential to affect our members' jobs and terms and conditions within both of these large groups of bakery companies. This sale process is currently being overseen by the CMA and could potentially be completed by the end of July.

Pay rises across most of the FDA companies have in the past been above inflation, with many of our members across the companies sometimes achieving double the level of

inflation. However, this has now become more difficult to achieve as inflation has been falling recently.

One of the largest soft drink companies in the world, Coca Cola, has a large site in Lisburn. They are currently looking to expand their capacity with a 24/7 shift pattern because of the pressures they are coming under from customers to supply more volume. In turn this has now put further pressure on our members working at this site who are being asked to change their contract of employment. Discussions are ongoing regarding this.

Overall, within this sector in NI there does seem to be a demand for workers, with the unemployment rate in NI still sitting below 2.5%. In turn this has driven up the wages within the FDA sector which is good news for our members. The FDA sector is buoyant and we have had growth within our membership in NI. This includes greater numbers of shop stewards, safety reps and equality reps which is enhanced by the education programme that our union delivers for and on behalf of our members.

The FDA sector has been able to grow since Brexit and has clearly benefited from NI's special dispensation. In turn demand has increased within the FDA sector which has also meant an increased workforce demand to service this going forward.

The FDA sector in the Republic of Ireland primarily covers private sector manufacturing workplaces such as Mondelez (Cadburys), Tirlán and Nutricia Infant (Danone).

#### Tirlán – Combined Union Group Pay Agreement

Following engagement between the Company and the Combined Union Group (Unite, SIPTU & Connect), a pay agreement has been reached and accepted by the membership following a ballot.

Key Terms of the Agreement:

- 5% increase in basic wage effective 1st May 2024 (12 months, backdated)
- 4% increase in basic wage effective 1st May 2025 (12 months)
- 3% increase in basic wage effective 1st May 2026 (16 months)
- The agreement will expire on 31st August 2027

The agreement is contingent on members continuing to cooperate with ongoing change programmes across all business sites. Both parties have committed to engage on a successor pay agreement prior to the expiry of this deal.

In Nutricia Infant/Danone in Wexford, at the time of writing, Unite is in the middle of pay talks.

Apart from the individual issues In Mondelez we had a group of unions issues heard in the Labour Court on the basis that covid should not be included in the company sick pay as normal but should be classed as part of the tropical exclusion.

Wyeth in Askeaton Co. Limerick closed the plant on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 with the loss of all jobs, approximately 542 (491 in manufacturing, 51 in Research & Development). Unite was on site in Askeaton during that week distributing retention packs and addressing any concerns that members may have at this difficult time.

## **Government, Defence, Prisons & Contractors (Northern Ireland)**

Our members would have seen on the news that the PSNI seemed to have a record-breaking year with data breaches. After the major breach, the Union lodged claims for all our members and we are pleased to report that these were paid out a few months ago.

Unite has also had one of our female members stand to be an Equalities Rep within PSNI who has started to attend and input on relevant meetings.

We are also pleased to report that after a successful JEGS process within PSNI Fleet/Mechanics, the members are due to receive an uplift of between 2.5k and 3k per year and a further £800+ going into their pensions.

Unite is also currently in the middle of a JEGS process for our Road and Rivers members working within the Department of Infrastructure as their wages are still not reflective of the skilled work they do – we are hopeful of being successful within this process and management are also supportive of the members receiving an increase. Unite met the members who were asked to fill in the JEGS forms and assisted them with this to ensure the forms were as strong as possible – we are awaiting the outcome.

More concerning within Roads is the temporary closure of a couple of their depots. Unfortunately, due to the age of the depots, the lack of employees in certain areas (unable to attract any new recruits due to low wage) and generally not being fit to use, management took the decision to redeploy members to their next nearest depot. Unite has doubts as to whether these depots will ever reopen but it is continually being raised.

Unite has also challenged NI Civil Service on their recruitment process and the length of time it takes from being successful at interview to actually being able to start the job is in some cases the guts of a year. They have accepted their processes are not ideal and are currently looking to address this

## MOD

Headline Offer 2025/2026 – The overall package presents an average award of 3.59%, consisting of a combination of consolidated and non-consolidated payments, tailored to individual salary bands. Most employees received a minimum of a 3.25% consolidated pay increase, with many receiving higher increments, particularly at the lower grades within both the industrial and non-industrial pay structures.

The Department has been instructed to reduce the overall costs by 10%. Consequently, a recruitment pause has been implemented from late 2025, and the Permanent Secretary has indicated that this pause is unlikely to be lifted in the immediate future. In alignment with this, the Department is also administering a Targeted Voluntary Release Scheme (TVRS), which is anticipated to facilitate the departure of approximately 1,200 staff members to contribute towards the required 10% reduction.

Since 1 December 2025, Capita has assumed responsibility for the administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme. However, there have been significant operational issues affecting members' access to certain services, including disruptions to payments for newly retired colleagues and a considerable backlog of 86,000 cases inherited from the previous administrator. Members have reported difficulties logging into the Capita portal, incomplete pension records, extended wait times for customer service calls, and delays in pension quotes and payments. In some instances, these issues have resulted in financial hardship.

Progress is slowly being made and we continue to engage with Capita and the Cabinet Office regarding these matters, which remain ongoing.

### **Graphical, Paper, Media & IT and Communications (GPM & IT and Comms)**

The last two years have been marked by continued restructuring, job losses and technological change across the Graphical, Paper, Media and Information Technology sectors. Workers have faced growing pressure from employers seeking to cut costs, increase productivity and shift the burden of economic uncertainty onto the workforce.

In print and media, consolidation has continued at pace. The closure of Associated Print in Portadown and the closure of the Mediahuis print operation in Newry resulted in the loss of members' jobs and further concentrated newspaper printing into fewer locations. These closures were presented as unavoidable business decisions, but workers rightly questioned why profitable media groups continue to reduce staffing and centralise operations rather than invest in skills, jobs and local communities. The loss of these workplaces is a reminder of the challenges facing the print industry and the need for a coordinated union response to ongoing job losses.

Packaging remains one of the strongest organised sections of the sector, although workers continue to face pressure arising from increased competition, changing customer demands and the after-effects of inflation and rising energy costs. Employers have frequently cited economic uncertainty and market pressures during negotiations while continuing to expect workers to deliver more with fewer resources.

Despite these pressures, Unite members have secured important gains through collective bargaining and workplace organisation. At Smurfit Westrock in Westport, members secured an improved two-year settlement worth 8% and no detrimental changes to shift premiums. The final agreement represented a significant improvement on the company's original position and demonstrated the value of a strike-ready workforce.

At Nelipak in Derry, workers rejected an inadequate pay offer and entered a dispute demanding fair pay. During the dispute a Unite workplace representative was dismissed, further inflaming industrial relations. Unite made clear that the dismissal would be challenged through every available avenue. The dispute ultimately secured a pay win through our members' willingness to organise and prepare for industrial action. Unite continues to fight for justice for the dismissed representative.

Across workplaces including Greiner Packaging, SAICA and others, members have continued to use collective bargaining to defend and improve pay and conditions. The experience of recent years has shown that while employers often point to economic pressures, workers are still able to secure gains where organisation is strong and members are prepared to stand together.

In IT, the sector has experienced significant restructuring, redundancies and uncertainty. Unite has represented members through workplace change and redundancy programmes, including at Fujitsu. At the same time, artificial intelligence is becoming a major issue across the sector. While new technology has the potential to improve productivity, employers are increasingly exploring its use to reduce staffing levels, intensify workloads and drive down labour costs. Unite will continue to argue that the benefits of technological change must be shared with workers, not used against them.

### **Health (Northern Ireland)**

Since our last report in 2024, Health remains at the forefront of media attention in relation to pay, safe staffing and structural reform. For the financial year 2025/2026, we had a period of intense negotiations with DOH NI and agreed on pay parity at 5.5% which was finally paid to our Healthcare staff in NI at the very end of that period.

In terms of pay for 2026/2027, the PRB recommended 3.3% for Health and DOH in NI have agreed to implement that at an early date subject to the agreement of budgets. We will ballot members on this offer once all this has been agreed.

2026/2027 is going to be a challenging year for JTUS as we are negotiating with DOH to mandate employers to become real living wage employers so that our lowest paid staff will no longer be sitting close to the minimum wage. Negotiations are progressing at pace and once implemented monies owed will, at the time of writing, be backdated to 01/04/2026. Alongside that we are also undertaking a full structural reform of Agenda for Change pay bands across the four nations.

Recruitment, retention of staff and the move away from the dependence on agency staff is ongoing and remains high on the agenda of our joint discussions. Safe staffing legislation is something that we hope will be in place before the end of the current mandate for the NI Assembly. The Good Jobs Bill is also moving at pace, and we are hopeful that it will be implemented too during the allotted time frame.

Acknowledging that the future is very challenging for all our members across the NHS, we are confident that with strong leadership from within the Union movement and good working relationships with DOH and employers in NI we will continue to work to improve pay terms and conditions going forward.

### **Health (Republic of Ireland)**

Since the 2024 Irish Policy Conference, Unite representatives across the Health Service Executive and Section 38 organisations have focused on enforcing national agreements on pay, staffing and workforce planning while supporting members facing sustained staffing shortages and service pressures. As part of the HSE Staff Panel of Trade Unions, Unite invoked the review clause of the March 2025 WRC Agreement due to serious concerns about the HSE's failure to deliver on key commitments.

Three conciliation conferences at the Workplace Relations Commission in October and November 2025 yielded limited progress, with ongoing failures to recruit into 6,858 funded posts, persistent non-replacement of maternity leave and long-term absences, lack of transparent workforce planning for 2025–2026, and the absence of verifiable data on agreed employment numbers. Following the WRC's inability to secure agreement, the dispute was referred to the Labour Court, which issued a Recommendation in February 2026 finding that the HSE had not met the consultation standards required under the Agreement, particularly in relation to workforce planning and the 2026 Estimates process.

The Court emphasised that consultation must involve informed engagement and genuine information exchange influencing decision-making and reaffirmed that accepted recommendations, including (LCR 21900) on Safe Staffing and Skill Mix, cannot be disregarded. It recommended the establishment of two independently chaired NJC subgroups to address workforce planning and provide national oversight of the Agreement's implementation, supported by quarterly reporting and a common national data suite

covering WTE limits, vacancies, recruitment timelines, agency conversions, maternity leave and absence data.

Unite workplace representatives have continued to escalate staffing shortages and safety concerns, monitor non-replacement of maternity leave and long-term absences, support members experiencing excessive workloads, and strengthen coordination with Staff Panel unions to ensure accountability. The Recommendation significantly strengthens the unions' position by securing independent oversight, transparency, and defined timelines, and Unite will continue to press for full implementation while supporting members and ensuring accurate data informs regional and national engagement.

### **Local Authorities (Northern Ireland)**

Due to restrictive Industrial Action Ballot rules in GB, we continue to find it impossible to organise Industrial Action on a UK wide basis, as such, since last conference, any trade disputes and industrial action has been local, i.e. employer by employer. It is hoped that when the amendments are made to the Regulations, UK wide organised campaigns will be more effective.

### NJC

#### Green Book

The pay claim for 2026 was submitted to the employers in October 2025. The headline claim is for £3000 or 10% (whichever is the greater).

Our claim is for:

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater) across all NJC spinal column points\*
- A minimum pay rate of £15 an hour for the NJC pay spine

In addition:

- A two-hour reduction in the working week;
- An increase of one day annual leave;
- The ability of all school support staff to take a day of paid leave during term time;
- The abolition of Level 1 Teaching Assistant role and instead all Level 1 role holders be moved onto Level 2.

The pay claim also allows for a potential multi-year deal, provided it includes a full review and renegotiation of the national pay spine. Work around the pay spine review has already commenced at the time of writing.

The employers held their regional consultation meetings throughout December 2025 and January 2026.

At the time of writing, the TUS have pay talks scheduled to take place with the national employers for the Green Book on 24th March 2026 and may receive a final offer at this stage.

### Red Book

Following the indicative workplace ballots, and the recent reps meeting, we are now in trade dispute over their undermining of the national agreement.

Industrial Action ballots have been held. However, this has minimal effect in Northern Ireland as we have very few members still on Red Book terms.

## Education Authority (EA)

### Disputes:

There are a number of disputes with the EA, the primary one, at the time of writing, which is now a Trade Dispute in respect of the Essential Car User allowance and the mileage rates. The TUS have requested Conciliations through the LRA.

However, there are a number of other matters that the TUS have issues on, these include:

- The moratorium on job evaluation
- Extended schools Programme – moving staff to NJC pay scales and T&C's
- Temporary to permanent posts
- 52-week options (term time agreement) for temporary to permanent posts;
- Transport leave for Drivers
- Disability redeployment

### SEND:

The Education Authority, in partnership with the Department of Education, is reforming the classroom support model for children and young people with statements of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They will commence consultation processes, however, due to current budget problems the fear is that this could end up a cost cutting exercise.

### School Support Bodies

School Support Bodies are being set up in England and Wales. Part of the remit of these Bodies will be to deal with Pay. The Unions are opposed to a School Support Body in Northern Ireland.

## **Local Authorities (Republic of Ireland)**

This RISC was, in the recent past, part of the all-island RISC, however, we subsequently established the composition of an ROI RISC in the 2025 electoral period and the RISC was eventually constituted in February 2026.

Unite represents members employed in local authorities across the country who are covered by the current National Pay Agreement, which is due to expire in June of this year. Negotiations are expected to commence shortly on a successor pay agreement.

The complex transfer of water services from Local Authorities to Uisce Eireann has continued during the reporting period. Unite has and continues to engage with Local Authorities on behalf of our members previously employed in water service delivery, with a particular focus on reassignment options and the protection of earnings. As a result of these engagements, the majority of the affected members have now been reassigned to alternative roles within their respective Local Authorities.

In addition, our water service members and workplace representatives continue to support the campaign for a constitutional referendum on the public ownership of water in Ireland, as a safeguard against the potential privatisation of water services. Unite members have taken part in a number of public meetings and campaign activities, including leaflet distribution and public engagement events in Waterford and Cork in support of this objective.

## **Passenger Transport**

Following on from our last conference in 2024 the committee met with several parties/politicians in relation to the motion that was passed in their name.

Following a number of positive meetings the Justice Minister announced that new legislation would be introduced that reflected that motion.

The big issues reported via the RISC was the introduction of night services within the bus network which whilst providing a longer weekend service supporting the nighttime economy it was possible to also reflect some of these services into late night services to help with members work life balance.

### **Road Transport Commercial, Warehouse & Logistics (RTCW/L)**

The Road Transport Commercial Warehouse & Logistics Sector covers driving and non-driving workers in some of the biggest companies in the industry, including Tesco, DHL, Musgrave N.I, Diageo and Henderson. The bulk of our membership is based in the NI.

Some of the recent pay awards within the Sector are Wincanton, 6.85% over two years, Hendersons was 4.1% with additional pension contributions and Diageo's was 15% over 3 years after industrial action. Musgrave marketplace was 4.75%.

There is an ongoing industrial dispute in relation to pay with Drink Inc and notice has been served at the time of writing.

### EVs and Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

The sector continues to face serious challenges around EVs and lithium-ion batteries. At the end of last year, Unite organised an all-sector meeting in London with Professor Paul Christensen, a globally recognised expert in lithium-ion battery safety from Newcastle University. Two sectors were represented —RTCW&L and Passenger Transport. Both sectors are dealing with risks from EV fleets and the carriage of e-bikes and scooters.

### DPO & Legal Director Presentation

Representatives from the NISC received an excellent presentation from the Unite DPO and the Legal Director.

### ETF – Logistics Facilities Campaign

Internationally, through the ETF, Unite is pushing hard on improving basic facilities for logistics workers across Europe.

This includes:

- Access to clean toilets
- Decent rest facilities
- Warm food and hot drinks
- Warming breaks in warehouses and sheds where temperatures regularly drop below zero

These are not luxuries—they are fundamental rights.

### Minimum Temperature for Working in a Warehouse

There is no legal minimum temperature in UK law for most workplaces, including warehouses. However, the HSE requires employers to maintain a temperature that is "reasonable" and to take action when conditions become unsafe or cause health risks.

For unheated warehouses, the HSE expects:

- Additional breaks
- Warm-up areas

- Suitable PPE
- Risk assessments for cold exposure

So, while there's no fixed number, employers cannot simply ignore freezing conditions.

#### European Driver Fatigue Day – 21 June

We will again be supporting the ETF's Driver Fatigue Day on 21 June to raise awareness of the dangers of fatigue across the transport sector. This remains a major safety issue for our members.

#### ITF – Warehouse Principles

Through the ITF, and with the leadership of Matt Draper, Chair of the Warehouse Steering Group, the 8 Warehouse Principles have now been launched. These will be central to our campaigning and bargaining work going forward.

### **Service Industries**

The Service Industries sector continues to be one of the most challenging areas in which to organise. Hospitality workers in particular face low pay, insecure hours, understaffing, last-minute rota changes, harassment at work and job insecurity. Many employers continue to complain about recruitment and retention problems while doing little to address the conditions that drive workers out of the industry.

Against this backdrop, Unite has focused on developing a new layer of activists and workplace leaders, especially in Northern Ireland, and creating opportunities for hospitality workers to become involved in the union. While there is still a long way to go, we are beginning to establish a stronger presence in an industry that has historically been difficult to organise and where many have never previously had access to union representation.

One of the most important developments has been the growth of the Work Safe, Home Safe campaign. The campaign was built directly from the experiences of hospitality workers who told us they faced harassment, intimidation and safety concerns travelling home after late-night shifts. Unite has campaigned for employers to take responsibility for workers' safety beyond the workplace door, including safe transport home and stronger protections against harassment and violence.

Work Safe, Home Safe has become much more than a hospitality campaign. It has shown how trade unions can provide a workplace response to gender-based violence and has highlighted the role unions can play in organising around issues that directly affect workers' lives. The campaign has received significant support from workers and activists and stands as one of the most important initiatives developed within the sector.

The closure of the Clements coffee shops within QUB has been a focus for our Hospitality reps in recent months. Unite members lost their jobs when the company ceased trading and refused to consult. The union has continued to support affected workers, pursuing protective award claims and challenging failures in the consultation process. Our fight does not end when a workplace closes. Unite continues to press for opportunities with QUB as the landlord and any new operators to ensure workers can secure new work and every penny owed to them.

More broadly, workers across the sector continue to face many of the same problems that existed before the pandemic. Hospitality workers are still dealing with low wages, insecure work, excessive workloads and a lack of respect at work. Yet there is also growing evidence

that workers are prepared to organise and fight back when given the opportunity and support to do so. The sector remains difficult, but the progress made over the last two years shows that hospitality workers want a union and are prepared to get involved in building one.





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