



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we need you to join now!

Join by 22nd October to get a pay ballot.

Fill in a paper form or join online. Just ask a steward or follow the link from Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

October 2019

**Stand up for
decent pay and
decent jobs**

HE pay ballot 9 Sept – 30 Oct



**Vote
yes
for
strike action**

This month's newsletter is out as we reach the mid-point of our postal pay ballot.

All our members who work directly for the University should have received a ballot form. This has gone to home addresses held on UNISON's membership system at mid-August.

If you've received yours, voted and posted it back, thanks - please let us know so that we don't need to chase you up.

If you haven't received it or just not posted it back yet, please act now.

You can request a new ballot paper by calling 0800 0857 857.

Please make sure you do everything you can to use your vote.

The turnout is important because a low number of ballots returned could mean that the vote doesn't count. Anything less than a 50% turnout would mean that we can't legally take action, even if the majority of our members who vote, do so to reject the offer.

There are more details on pages 2, 3 and 4.

Follow us...

Online: blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison

Facebook: [UNISON at University of Brighton](#)

Twitter: [@UniBtonUnison](#)

Here's our (updated) guide to voting in the Pay Ballot:

We know many of our members have done this already, but we want to make sure that everyone does. Please use this handy (and slightly patronising) guide to get your ballot posted back by the 30th October deadline.

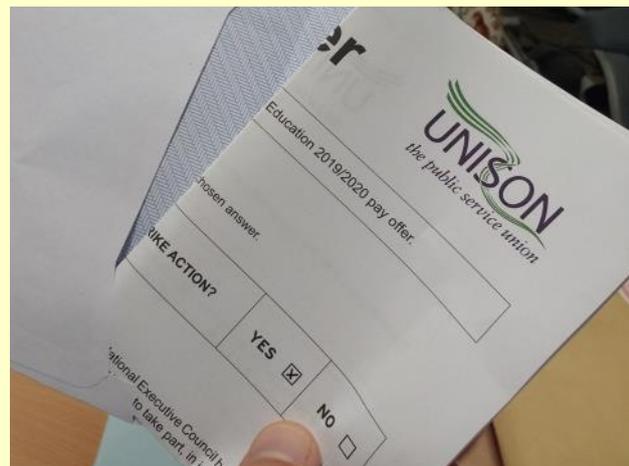
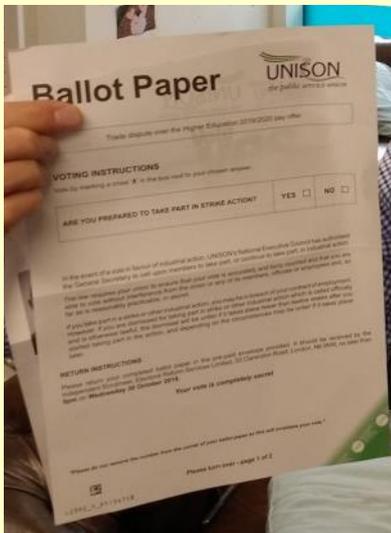
1. Receive your ballot

It should be addressed to you and look something like this. They were posted in early September so it's either in a pile of post or it's gone missing. If you can't find it, please see the next page.*



2. Open the letter and you should find a ballot form.

Please make sure you vote either YES or NO with a cross (it's up to you, but we recommend a YES) and then put it in the envelope.



3. Make sure you post it!

This is the difficult bit. It has to be posted back to be received by 30th October, so **Monday 28th October** is probably the last day to do it.



Here's one we did earlier.

****If you haven't received a ballot paper...?***

There's clearly a problem. Either

- (a) It's been received but thrown away by accident,
- (b) UNISON do not have your current address and it's gone somewhere else,
- (c) You've joined UNISON recently (since mid-August) and you've missed the cut-off point for the ballot.

Either way, you can still vote, but you need to call UNISON Direct on

0800 0857 857

We can't do this for you, sorry, but the call is free.

They should be able to fix the problem, check and update your current address and send you a new ballot paper to wherever you live.

Please don't do this and then forget to vote anyway!

Please let us know if you have any problems.

Thanks for voting!

Let us know when you've voted.

We're trying to make sure every member votes, so it's really helpful if you let us know when you have done.

Email: iadb@brighton.ac.uk

UnisonHelp@brighton.ac.uk

Phone: 01273 642450



Results?

We expect to find out the results of the ballot in the first week of November.

The good news is that we're hoping to have the results broken down by branch, so we'll see how we did as well as how the national ballot looks. We do need a national turnout of over 50% to be able to take action.

Here's why we want you to vote YES for Strike Action

This year, we have been offered 1.8% as a final offer with better increases for people on grades one, two and three. This is detailed in the table below.

Grade	Spinal Point	Current Annual Salary £	Proposed Annual Salary £	Increase £	
1	5	17,079	17,361	282	1.7%*
	6	17,079	17,682	603	3.5%
	7	17,408	18,009	601	3.5%
2	8	17,751	18,342	591	3.3%
	9	18,189	18,709	520	2.9%
	10	18,688	19,133	445	2.4%
	11	19,202	19,612	410	2.1%
3	12	19,730	20,130	400	2.0%
	13	20,275	20,675	400	2.0%
	14	20,836	21,236	400	1.9%
	15	21,414	21,814	400	1.9%
	16	22,017	22,417	400	1.8%

* The current spinal point 5 is matched to spinal point 6 so that the University fulfils its commitment to pay its own employees at least the National Living Wage.

We don't think that this is enough.

Higher education workers have consistently seen their pay fall in real terms over the last decade or so. It's time that we made a stand and did something about it.

Nobody wants to go on strike and disrupt the students' education, but a pay claim (from the unions) and a pay offer (from the employers) is not neutral. It has to be seen in the context of what our members need to buy (rent, mortgage, travel, food, bills) and the rate of inflation.

It's notable that the pay offer is apparently "within the limits of affordability for the University of Brighton". We're not going to get very far debating what the University can and can't afford, but if we limit ourselves to what UEB think we should have then we're never going to keep up with inflation because shiny new buildings and paying large salaries at the top to "attract the right people" is always going to come higher up the list of priorities.

Our argument is not with the Vice Chancellor. We want all universities to be properly funded by the government and that includes paying the staff who work here properly.

Please make sure you have your say and vote!



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HE pay ballot 9 Sept – 30 Oct

unison.org.uk/payupnowforHE

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Global Climate Emergency

I posted this on our blog (unison.brighton.ac.uk) ahead of the 20th September day of action, but in case you missed it, here's an edited version. All views are my own.

I don't need to start this by outlining the latest predictions from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). All reasonable people recognise that without serious and significant intervention on a global scale, the planet is heading towards a drastic increase in extreme weather conditions which will have a disastrous effect on the world's ecosystem and future generations.

Given the scale and seriousness of the issue, it's hardly surprising that a movement to fight climate change has taken off, the significant feature being that it is led by school and college students, determined that their future will not be characterised by a political and economic leadership that fails to act.

As an antidote to the idiocy and short-sightedness of Trump and Bolsonaro, Greta Thunberg's call to action has been a welcome change. Her example of striking from school as a protest against the inaction of the Swedish government has found an echo, and become an inspiration for thousands of young people across the planet. In February, the Youth Strike 4 Climate Change began organising demonstrations in Britain.

The movement of school and college students has shown an inspiring militancy, determination and seriousness. An estimated 1.5 million participated in the global student strike on 15th March, adopting the method of strike action from the trade union movement. It is enormously significant that walking out of school to effect change is seen as the best tactic.



20th September 2019 is the next significant date for this movement. The "Earth Strike" announced for that day has the support of lecturers' union UCU and BFAWU, which organises workers in the catering industry. The active involvement of working people and trade unions would prove decisive in moving the campaign to the next level.

Trade unions such as UNISON have put forward the idea of Green Week, 16-20 September, giving "members the chance to show support for the school climate strikers ahead of their campaign to raise awareness and the school climate strike on 20 September."

This proposes individual branches campaigning to “green” their workplaces and show verbal support for those participating on 20th September. Whilst raising awareness of the issue and taking up some of the arguments, what’s missing here is a willingness to do what the students want (getting involved on the day) and proposing what measures are necessary for reversing climate change.

The anti-trade union laws not only impose very restrictive measures on how industrial action ballots can be run (postal ballots to home addresses and a 50% turnout threshold), they also outlaw all “political” strikes i.e. those that do not relate directly to a dispute with the employer over pay, pensions, terms and conditions etc.

(For this branch to legally strike, we’d need to formulate a trade dispute relating to climate change, negotiate with the University and then declare a dispute. Then once negotiations are exhausted, we’d need to formulate some demands, win a ballot on the back of that with a 50% turnout and fend off any attempts at court action along the way. The entire system is rigged in favour of the employer where business as usual e.g. imposing real terms pay cuts, is seen as perfectly legal and non-controversial behaviour.)

So, given where we are, this branch can and does give full material and practical support to those students taking strike action.



As we’ve mentioned elsewhere, we have asked the University to declare a climate emergency and commit itself to reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2030. Other Universities have already done this and we think a declaration from such a large and influential employer and higher education institution is long overdue.

Demonstrating a serious commitment to tackle the problem also sends out a message to students and potential students that this university has not totally lost its reputation for being prepared to take risks and being audacious in its ambition. Brighton has been at the forefront of campaigning for LGBTQ+ rights, which all trade unionists have supported. We’d like to see a similar commitment to the fight against climate change.

However, the campaign cannot be limited to putting pressure on institutions or individuals to reduce their carbon footprint. Greta Thunberg told the UN “if solutions within this system are so hard to find then maybe we need a new system”. The slogan of “system change, not climate change” has been taken up by many striking school students, but with many differing ideas of what system change might look like.



For socialists like me, the old saying “you can’t control what you don’t own” is particularly relevant. As long as a small group of people prioritise their need to make short term profits over the longer term needs of the planet then the battle is lost. Governments can attempt to legislate against the worst excesses, but as we’re witnessing in Brazil, the US and China, since those in power rest on the profit-based system, climate change will continue.

This is not limited to the most extreme, unhinged right-wing leaders such as Bolsonaro and Trump. Successive governments East and West, from Clinton to Obama, Blair to Johnson, have either opposed measures to deal with the problem or, to loud fanfares, agreed minor changes which are either unenforceable or ineffective.

In my opinion (not necessarily UNISON’s!), it is absolutely necessary to establish democratic control over the agri-business, fossil fuels and large-scale manufacturing sectors so that they can be planned on an environmentally sustainable basis. Even now, giant corporations like BP and Shell use their power and influence to block binding measures on climate policy whilst promoting themselves as institutions which care about the planet.

Taking the large corporations into public ownership, linked to democratic workers’ control and planning would allow these companies to be run on an accountable basis and transitioned away from destroying the planet, to providing climate change solutions.

Left to its own devices, capitalism will destroy the planet. Where profit and private ownership of the world’s resources comes first, the longer term future of humanity will lose out.

The trade union movement should support immediate measures which will make a difference. Calling for massive state controlled and funded investment in green energy and a thorough insulation programme, combined with free and integrated public transport, would be a start. It could also create thousands of decent jobs.

Fundamentally, transforming society to one based on human need, rather than profit, provides the solution. A democratic socialist society which plans how to sustainably use the resources to meet the needs of everyone should be our ultimate aim.

Ivan Bonsell, in a personal capacity

Staff Car Park Charges

It's difficult for a trade union to take a firm position on car parking issues because for every member who is outraged at having to pay, or more likely not being entitled to a parking permit, there's another who already shells out for the privilege of taking their chances on public transport.

We submitted a contribution to the consultation, alongside UCU and are not that impressed with the results.



The fact that 945 responses to the consultation were submitted shows how important this is to many people. Our contribution recognised that for many members of staff, introducing some sort of charging scheme is reasonable provided the charges are proportionate, progressive and don't penalise those with few options other than to use their car to get to and from work.

We suggested that the charges could mirror the income tax limits, with an initial tax free allowance of £12,500, rather than the arbitrary £8,000 and an upper rate threshold of £50,000 at which a higher rate could be introduced. This would have given a much more progressive charging regime, and so we're disappointed that the £8,000 limit remains and that a maximum annual charge of £450 is in place.

We welcome the reduction in the daily rate to £2.00, but we're disappointed that this could not have been based on ability to pay. It is likely that higher earners will opt to pay by the day, and so the progressive aspirations of the scheme will be lost with staff at grade 8/senior lecturer and above pretty much paying the same amount to park.

We don't think that the amended policy recognises the number of people who regularly use their car during working hours as part of their job, either to travel between sites faster than public transport could manage or to move equipment around the campuses. Despite 70-80 responses suggesting that "essential car users" should be exempt from charging, making it the second highest category, the outcome does not allow those members of staff to continue to use their cars for work, unless they can obtain a permit and are willing to cover the cost of parking. This comes after many years of staff providing their own transport for work and in many cases, waiving expense claims.

The only way around this is to be organised enough to make yourself a visitor, or use public transport, making some jobs significantly less productive and having an effect on the ability to provide some essential services.

We pointed out that imposing this at Eastbourne campus, (which is significantly harder to get to from Eastbourne town centre and the train station), would not make much practical sense, so we're unhappy that the charges also apply there, forcing people onto street parking in many cases.

How this all develops remains to be seen. We're concerned that the staff who's job it is to deal with all this are bearing the brunt of some frustration, and clearly it is not their fault for just doing their jobs.

We're hoping that individuals who need to use their cars are dealt with sensibly rather than being the victim of a system that's just designed to make money for the University.