



***Our newsletter is free to all members.***

*If you're not a member, we want you to join us. Either follow the links on-line from our blog on Staff Central or ask us for a paper membership form..*

## **University of Brighton Branch Newsletter**

# **November 2021**

Many people will have been shocked and saddened by the announcement that the University is to consult on its proposal to pull out of Eastbourne. For those of us who have been here a while, the idea of leaving Eastbourne is nothing new, and after the University closed its Hastings campus, rumours started again about what would happen with Eastbourne. This is particularly pertinent to those working at Eastbourne campus who were relocated from Hastings just a few years ago.

With the experience of the pandemic and some other major readjustments (re-configuration of Academic Registry, consolidation of schools,



Information Services changes and closure of both Nurseries), the proposed closure of one major site doesn't feel that unlikely, given the pressures the University is under as a result of the way universities are expected to survive.

That said, the fact that closure of Eastbourne will result in the destruction of jobs means that we have to do what we can to defend those jobs and the future of higher education in the town. We don't accept that the government policy of running down universities such as ours means that we should just go along with it. A decision to consolidate the University at Brighton only is a logical consequence of accepting the logic of the market and that financially, the University's current and future students are best placed by abandoning anything risky or adventurous.

*Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary*

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# Pay Latest

## 2020 - threat to strike if we don't get a bonus

In August 2020, the pay freeze imposed on us meant that we balloted for industrial action and members in this branch voted 71% in favour of taking industrial action if we don't receive a better offer.

Since only a handful of branches managed the 50%+ turnout required, we're effectively on our own, but our localised ballot means we have a legal mandate for strike action over pay.

We've submitted a claim for a £1,000 one-off bonus, for each member of support staff on grades 1 to 9, but we're prepared to negotiate this with the University.

We don't want to waste the fact that our members followed our lead and are prepared to take action if necessary and so if we don't get any meaningful offer from the University then we will plan to take strike action in December, potentially alongside UCU.

(UCU are currently balloting over their long-standing four fights claim, which links pay, workloads, casualisation and gender/ethnic/disability pay gaps. Their ballot closes on 4th November, so they could take action at the end of this month.)

As usual, we have to say that we don't want to strike any more than the Vice Chancellor would like us to, but we do want to see some significant progress in what the University is prepared to offer us to make up for a pay freeze and recognise the efforts many people put into keeping the University functioning as much as possible in a pandemic. Other universities have paid one-off bonuses for this, and we would like the same.

Additional annual leave days are nice, and it's good that the longer Christmas break was announced just after we made our claim, but many of our members are struggling with rising living costs and we need to put our strike mandate to good use.

We wrote to the Vice Chancellor requesting a meeting and will keep all members informed of our progress, but we are clear that if we don't receive an offer we can put to members then we will plan to take action in December.



# ***Pay Latest***

## ***2021 - ballot for action opens on 6th December***

Meanwhile, we are preparing to ballot all University-employed members in December over the August 2021 pay rise, which is almost certainly going to be a real-terms pay cut when inflation rises, even for those grades 1 to 4, with slightly more than 1.5%.

We can't allow yet another year of below-inflation pay offers and this was only imposed in September after all unions rejected it. Coming to the end of the "disputes process" doesn't mean we just accept that the employers are not going to budge or that the dispute is over. We are still determined to use the power of a united workforce to gain a pay award which reflects the efforts our members have made and doesn't mean another drop in our standard of living.

Obviously it depends how you calculate it, but since 2009, taking inflation at each August, pay for most grades has gone up around 15%, but inflation has rocketed by something like 48%! A full time member of staff at the top of grade 4 is currently paid around £26,000, but with inflationary rises since 2009, this would be nearer £34,000. We've lost thousands of pounds in lost wages and can't allow this to continue.

So, the postal ballot opens next month and we'll be once again asking every single member to make sure they return their vote.

Since it's a postal ballot, forms will go to home addresses and so it's important that we have your current address on our membership system now and that you keep an eye out for it dropping through your letterbox, particularly if you live in shared accommodation or flats where post can go astray.

If you need to check your address with us, please get in touch.



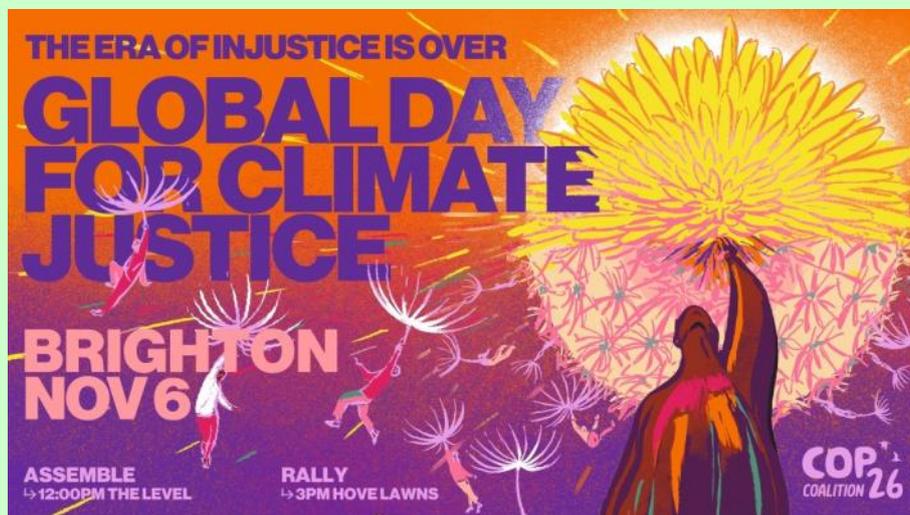
University of Dundee UNISON members taking strike action over changes to their pension scheme.

Our branch has sent a message of support and made a donation to their strike hardship fund.

## ***COP 26 - A trade union approach to Climate Change***

Our planet is burning. Wild fires, floods, melting ice caps, critical tipping points – we are running out of time. In November, the leaders of the world's rich and powerful meet in Glasgow at the COP26 climate summit. From these leaders we can expect lots of grand words and few grand plans.

That's because the vested interests of the huge monopolies which dominate global capitalism, and therefore billions of lives, will be all too well represented inside Glasgow's SEC centre. Outside those walls, we have an opportunity to raise our voices for the fundamental change that's needed.



It's very convenient for businesses to make climate change an individual issue, and we're fully in favour of more recycling, sustainable food and transport decisions etc. but fundamentally, climate change requires much more than individuals changing their behaviour, if they can. What's necessary is a fundamental change in the way society operates and trade unions can play a huge part in campaigning and fighting for an alternative vision, where working people democratically decide how society operates. We want a genuine transition away from fossil fuels and a socialist solution to the problems caused by the profit system.

We'll be saying that working-class and young people will not accept a system that prioritises profit over planet every time. Instead, we will build a huge movement for system change.

Socialist change means taking the big polluters out of private hands, with no shareholder compensation except for those with proven need. It means democratically planning the economy across borders. This would lay the basis for a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels. It would secure a bright future for our world.

It's good that the University is looking to reduce its carbon footprint, but there's no suggestion that any of us should try to make our voices heard through protests and demonstrations.

Trade unions are not about quietly promoting small changes.

We need significant and substantial change now.

**On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, we'll be meeting at the Level at 12pm to march to Hove Lawns.**

Come and join us and march with our banner.

[Five ways to take part in COP26](#) | [Article, News](#) | [News](#) | [UNISON National](#)