

UCATT

Union of
Construction
Allied Trades
& Technicians

Building Worker



Summer 2011




DANGER
TORY SAFETY POLICY
PROFIT BEFORE WORKERS LIVES
WWW.UCATT.ORG
info@ucatt.org


DANGER
TORY SAFETY POLICY
PROFIT BEFORE WORKERS LIVES

UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES & TECHNICIANS
FREEPOST, 177 Abbeville Road, Clapham, London SW4 9BR



Join your union

the union for all workers in the construction and building trades

Application for membership of Britain's specialist construction union



Personal details	Employment details (Leave blank if not applicable)
Name: <input type="text"/>	Your trade: <input type="text"/>
Sub title: <input type="text"/>	Employer: <input type="text"/>
Address: <input type="text"/>	Address: <input type="text"/>
Postcode: <input type="text"/>	Postcode: <input type="text"/>
Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Former union details
Tel: Home: <input type="text"/>	Which former union(s) did you belong to (if any other than UCATT)? <input type="text"/>
Tel: Mobile: <input type="text"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <input type="text"/>	From: (month/year) <input type="text"/>
Family: UCATT and your local area: <input type="text"/>	Exp: (month/year) <input type="text"/>

I, the undersigned, agree to abide by UCATT rules and affirm that I am not debarred by UCATT rules.

Signature: Date:

NO SIGNATURE REQUIRED FROM MEMBERS OF UCATT

For UCATT office use only

Status: <input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer: <input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer Out: <input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer Out: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/>
----------------------------------	------------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------

 **UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES & TECHNICIANS**
FREEPOST, 177 Abbeville Road, Clapham, London SW4 9BR

 **DIRECT Debit**

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Name of the building society or your bank:

To: The Manager, Bank or Building Society Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Name of Account (optional):

Direct Debit Code:

Bank/Building Society account number:

Direct Debit Number:

Signature:

Date:

The Direct Debit Guarantee

This Guarantee is backed by all banks & building societies that accept direct debits to pay Direct Debits.

If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit UCATT will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request UCATT to cancel a payment, confirmation of this is given and the bank will be notified by you at the time of the request.

Any error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by UCATT or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society - if you receive a notice you are not entitled to you must pay it back until UCATT advise you to.

We can cancel a Direct Debit if any bank or building society, without confirmation, may be required. Please also notify us.

Weekly contribution rates

Craft £2.66 General £2.41 Apprentice £1.68

Applicants in Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland should contact the Dublin office (see right) for contribution details

Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians

Website
www.ucatt.org.uk

Freephone advice line
0800-262 467

Building Worker
buildingworker@ucatt.org.uk

General Office
177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL
Tel: 020-7622 2442
Fax: 020-7720 4081
Email: info@ucatt.org.uk

Scotland
53 Morrison Street, Glasgow G5 8LB
Tel: 0141-420 2880
Fax: 0141-420 2881

Northern
Seymour House, 10 Brenkley Way,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6DT
Tel: 0191-236 2636
Fax: 0191-236 2653

Yorkshire
64/66 Cross Gates Road,
Leeds LS15 7NN
Tel: 0113-264 0211
Fax: 0113-260 2908

North West
56 Derwent Road East,
Liverpool L13 6QR
Tel: 0151-228 8455
Fax: 0151-228 7735

Midlands
2 Wentworth House, Vernon Gate,
Derby DE1 1UR
Tel: 01332-203 656
Fax: 01332-203 858

Eastern
Goodwin House, Willie Snaith Road,
Newmarket CB8 7SQ
Tel: 01638-565 830
Fax: 01638-565 836

London & South East
177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL
Tel: 020-7622 2362
Fax: 020-7498 5272

Wales & South West
199 Newport Road, Cardiff CF2 1AJ
Tel: 029-2049 8664
Fax: 029-2048 1166

Ireland
56 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1
Tel: (+353) (0)1-873 1599
Fax: (+353) (0)1-873 1403



Cover story
Workers' Memorial Day
pages 10-11

Asbestos

Fears over DIY repairs scheme for tenants
page 9

Training



Confidence building in Cannock Chase
pages 14-15

Plus

- 3-9 News
- 6 UCATT adviceline
- 12-13 Legal brief
- 16 Your money
- 16-17 International
- 18 Presentations, Obituaries

Building Worker is published by the Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians (UCATT), 177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL; email: [buildingworker@ucatt.org.uk]. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the union. Every effort is made to ensure that information is correct at the time of going to press but this cannot be guaranteed. We reserve the right to edit any articles or letters submitted for publication. The inclusion of an advertisement does not imply recommendation. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent by UCATT. © UCATT 2011. All rights reserved.

To advertise in *Building Worker* contact Steve Smith at Redactive Media – telephone 020-7880 6218 or email [steve.smith@redactive.co.uk].

Philip Wolmuth/reportdigital.co.uk



RISES: Contractors wanted to postpone increases until next year, but unions insisted on progress this year.

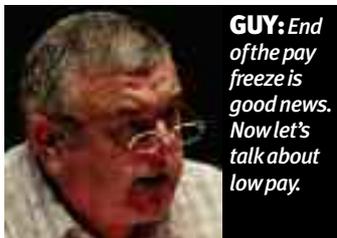
1½ per cent rise is first for three years

UCATT and other unions have accepted a pay offer of 1.5 per cent increases on all pay rates for 500,000 workers covered by the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC).

The unions agreed the improved package early in June following several rounds of negotiations. They had earlier rejected an offer of 1.25 per cent pay rises that would not have been paid until 2012 and would not have covered all grades.

The 1.5 per cent increase will be paid from Monday 5 September 2011.

The unions have also won agreement that fare and subsistence



GUY: End of the pay freeze is good news. Now let's talk about low pay.

allowances will increase by 5.3 per cent and will be payable from Monday 27 June 2011.

Led by UCATT Acting General Secretary George Guy, the union negotiating team also put forward proposals – which were accepted – for talks to begin early in 2012 on a new deal which would properly address the low basic rates of pay for construction workers.

Guy said after the talks concluded: "This is an improved offer and ends the pay freeze for construction workers. It has been made

Unions clinch 2011 pay deal for 500,000 workers

clear to employers that future increases must properly reflect rising costs and the difficult, demanding and skilled work undertaken by construction workers."

He added: "Construction workers have borne the brunt of the downturn in the industry. It would have been completely unacceptable for employers to have

postponed a pay rise until 2012."

The CIJC agreement covers most private sector construction workers and is the largest agreement in the industry. The unions who are signatories to it are UCATT, the GMB and Unite. Workers covered by the CIJC's Working Rule Agreement have not had a pay increase since 2008.

£250 for lower-paid NHS and prison staff

Pay increases of £250 for workers earning less than £21,000 have been negotiated by UCATT for building and maintenance workers employed by the NHS and the Prison Service. For NHS members, the increase applies from 1 April. Prison Service staff receive it from the end of July, following a ballot that approved the offer worth between 1½-2 per cent for these workers. A maximum £250 increase for public sector employees on less than £21,000 and a pay freeze for all others is being enforced by the Government.

Union dismay as HSE information line to be closed from September

Accidents will go unreported, warns UCATT

Planned cuts in how dangerous incidents are officially reported will greatly increase dangers in the workplace, UCATT is warning.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) announced in May that from September 2011 it was closing its information line and that in future the reporting of accidents and dangerous incidents could only be undertaken online.

While accepting that it might be appropriate for most accidents to be recorded online, UCATT is insisting that this should not be the case for dangerous incidents. This is because workers and the general public need to be encouraged to report dangerous working practices – something that employers would obviously be reluctant to do.

In order for workers to be able to report dangerous working practices without fear of reprisal or victimisation, there needs to be an easily accessible method of doing so, says UCATT. This would ensure that concerns about a potential danger at work can be raised in the knowledge that a worker cannot be identified.

New role for HSE?

What HSE Chair Judith Hackitt wrote in the HSE Delivery Plan for 2011/12:

“Our role is to enable innovation that brings economic growth while ensuring that risks are managed properly and proportionately.”

UCATT's reaction:

“It is not the HSE's role to be promoting economic growth. The Government has an entire department to undertake that task. The HSE's sole task should be to protect workers.”

Mobile phone

While the vast majority of workers have access to a mobile phone, far fewer have access to email and internet, UCATT adds. Also, workers are far more likely to report an incident shortly after witnessing it rather than waiting until later, especially if they are concerned that an email could be traced back to them.

George Guy, Acting General Sec-



MESSAGE: A Health and Safety Executive employee made her thoughts clear on the TUC's anti-cuts demo on 29 March this year.

retary of UCATT, commented: “Workers hardly ever see an HSE inspector, unless an accident has occurred. If there are dangerous working practices or if a dangerous incident occurs it is essential that workers know how to contact the

HSE and know that the information they have supplied will be treated with complete confidence.”

Concerns about how dangerous incidents are reported are made more pressing due to the Conservative-led Government's decision in March to end unannounced safety inspections in many industries. Although inspections will remain in dangerous industries such as construction, it is expected that their frequency will decline dramatically in the future.

UCATT believes that the HSE should make greater efforts to publicise its infoline number – rather than scrapping it.

The union has written to Judith Hackitt, chair of the HSE, expressing the concerns of building workers.

These developments come after the HSE has been told that its budget will be cut by at least 35 per cent by 2015. The number of unannounced inspections it will be able to perform has been slashed, with many sectors no longer receiving inspections in future.

Pay freeze by town halls

Local authority bosses have made it clear to UCATT and other unions that the public sector pay freeze imposed by the ConDem Government will be enforced in 2011. Councils are also refusing to apply the £250 a year increase which the Chancellor is allowing for workers earning less than £21,000 a year. Further talks on this issue were planned for late in June as this issue of *Building Worker* went to press. UCATT negotiators met local authority chiefs earlier this year to present a claim for a “significant” increase in pay rates, but were rebuffed and told that the pay freeze also applied to all non-pay elements of the union's claim. These included demands for action on agency labour, guaranteed recognition of union learning reps and measures to address the shortfall in apprenticeships.

Minimum wage to rise in October

The Government has accepted the Low Pay Commission's recommendations for this year's national minimum wage (NMW) rates. The following rates will come into effect on 1 October 2011:

- For adults: £6.08 an hour (15p increase).
- For 18-20 year olds: £4.98 an hour (6p increase).
- For 16-17 year olds: £3.68 an hour (4p increase).
- For apprentices: £2.60 an hour (10p increase).

The TUC welcomed the increases. “These rises are relatively modest, but they will provide a welcome pay boost for around 840,000 low-paid workers in the UK,” said General Secretary Brendan Barber.

Chancellor George Osborne announced in the Budget that the Government was considering reviewing the NMW every two years, rather than annually, in order to “provide greater certainty for businesses”.

Your UCATT membership **KEEP IT UP-TO-DATE**



Make sure you always stay less than 26 weeks in arrears. If in doubt, check with your UCATT branch. If your union dues are paid direct from your wages, contact your employer to make sure these have been passed on to UCATT. Don't forget also to give the union your new address if you have moved recently.



Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians
www.ucatt.org.uk



Construction workers and the end of compulsory retirement

As of April 2011 the Government abolished the default retirement age (DRA), with the last date employers can compulsorily retire their staff being 30 September 2011.

The abolition of the DRA raises many areas of concern for UCATT members and construction workers. The average age of retirement for construction workers is 62. This is due to many members being forced out of the industry due to injury or ill health because of the onerous nature of construction work. In some ways the DRA was actually of use in the past in ensuring construction workers were not forced to continue working for longer periods.

However, alongside the abolition of the DRA, the Government has announced that it is increasing the retirement age beyond 65. It is likely therefore that construction workers will be forced to continue working long past the limits of their health in order to achieve their full state pension entitlement.

In future, employers will still be able to dismiss staff of 65 or older, but they will need to prove "capability grounds" for doing so, proving that a worker is no longer capable of undertaking work they are contracted to do. In all likelihood this will lead to an increase in employment tribunals as employers seek to sack workers. The Government has admitted it expects tribunal claims to increase in this area.

Positively, workers being made redundant over the age of 65 will of course now gain redundancy pay, whereas previously they would have been compulsorily retired without such a payment, and working and management practices should improve as managers can no longer use the DRA as an excuse to dismiss under-performing staff.

In some industries, enforced retirement may still continue, but with the agreed approval of workers by collective agreement. Some flexibility is being retained in the Government guidance on the status quo post DRA, to allow for workers to come to agreement with employers if a retirement age is deemed necessary. Currently there is no clear guidance on this; developments will occur and legal

precedent will emerge in the coming months and years. This issue is being termed "employer justified retirement age", or EJRA, by the conciliation service ACAS. The Government has said: "In the limited cases where retirements are an essential part of succession planning or necessary for health and safety reasons, it will remain open to the employer to retain a retirement age if this can be objectively justified."

Members should be aware of the potential for a retirement age to be negotiated in their workplace. If this issue does develop, advice should be sought from your UCATT regional office.

Regarding voluntary retirement, until the Government raises the state pension age, workers will still be able to retire at 65 if they wish. It is just that their employers can now no longer make them retire at 65. Workers can still retire at 65, but they need to give six months' notice to their employers of their intention to do so.

The situation regarding the DRA, and how it will ultimately affect those working in construction, is still unclear. In Germany a case successfully went to the European Court of Justice, which argued that a collectively agreed retirement age is justified.

In the UK, however, different working practices and conventions mean the situation is less clear cut. The Government has sent out a clear signal in abolishing the DRA, that someone's age does not impede their ability to do a job. Lessons have been learnt economically which also show that older workers do not necessarily need to retire and make room in the job market for younger workers.

If you are due to retire shortly and/or have any questions regarding the abolition of the DRA, do not hesitate to contact your regional UCATT office.

This article is for information. Always seek the advice of an accredited UCATT official or legal advice before pursuing any course of action to ensure that your rights are fully enforced. See page 2 for contact details of your nearest regional office.

“Employers will still be able to dismiss staff of 65 or older, but they will need to prove ‘capability grounds’ for doing so, proving that a worker is no longer capable of undertaking work they are contracted to do.”

Tribunal victory

UCATT has hailed an employment tribunal victory for 192 Merseyside workers who were sacked when housing maintenance firm Connaught went bust last September.

Many of the workers were told that they were being dismissed by conference call – and without any notice or consultation.

They now each stand to receive substantial compensation payouts.

The workers had been employed by Connaught on an outsourced maintenance and repairs contract on behalf of One Vision, the principal housing association in Sefton. Many have since been re-employed by One Vision, after the company decided to bring its housing maintenance work back in-house.

Acting UCATT North West Regional Secretary Jimmy Woods said: "This is an important victory. Companies cannot ignore their legal responsibilities to their workforce and hope to get away with it."

The Sefton employment tribunal is the first case to reach the courts following the high-profile collapse of Connaught. UCATT has a series of other employment tribunal cases pending, which will be heard later this year.

Blow to jobs and skills in south-west Scotland

The announcement that 205 workers at R&D Construction are to be made redundant with immediate effect was a "body blow" for south-west Scotland, said UCATT. The Dumfries-based company went into administration in April, with administrators Ernst & Young sacking all but 22 of the workforce as a buyer could not be found.

Much of the firm's work was for Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership, where it was involved in a major demolition and new build social housing scheme.

UCATT Scottish Regional Secretary Harry Frew said: "This is a body blow for the local community, where R&D Construction was one of the major employers." He added: "The social housing work needs to be completed. Any company who takes on this project should be strongly encouraged to rehire the former R&D workforce."

UCATT said it would be lodging employment tribunal claims on behalf of its members.

HMRC homes in on agencies dodging NI

HM Revenue & Customs will be tackling false self-employment as part of a crackdown on malpractices by employment agencies.

The HMRC has announced that it will be doubling its staffing levels and hiring an additional 100 inspectors to concentrate on tax abuses being committed by employment agencies. Agencies found guilty of tax evasion could face jail, said the HMRC in its announcement in May.

A senior HMRC official was quoted in the *Daily Mirror* as saying that the employment status scam now stretched well beyond the construction industry. "We're finding bogus self-employment among airline cabin crew, security guards and hotel cleaners who are paid by the room."

Welcoming the HMRC's move, Acting UCATT General Secretary George Guy said: "False self-employment is endemic in agencies operating in construction and is costing the taxpayer millions of pounds every year in lost revenue. Labour agencies must realise that they can no longer get away with falsely self-employing workers and denying them the most basic employment rights."

Falsely

By making workers self-employed, companies avoid paying employer's National Insurance of 13.8 per cent. Falsely self-employed workers do not receive holiday pay, sick pay, pensions or other benefits and are often sacked without notice.

Meanwhile, contractors face increased penalties for late or non-filing of monthly Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) returns from November this year. Under CIS, they are obliged to file a monthly return.

The new penalties range from a fixed penalty of £100 for each sub-contractor's return that is late up to a £300 or 5 per cent of deductions on the return, whichever is greater, after six and 12 months. Greater penalties may apply if information has been deliberately withheld. Interest is always charged on any penalty amount paid late. However, the penalties will not exceed a maximum of £3,000 for new contractors who are up to two months late.

For more information, see [www.hmrc.gov.uk/cis/cis-whatsnew.htm].



UP ON THE ROOF: Finishing touches on the Olympic Stadium in Stratford, east London.

Blitz on bogus 'self-employed' on Olympics sites wins union's approval

Notice of intent has been given by HM Revenue & Customs to root out false self-employment on all 2012 Olympic Games sites.

UCATT applauded HMRC's announcement in May that it would be investigating false tax status declarations, other abuses relating to the Construction Industry Scheme tax scheme and wages below the national minimum wage across all Olympic sites.

The union believes that there is likely to be a greater level of false "self-employment" on the Olympic Village sites compared with those at the Olympic Park. In 2007 construction unions, led by UCATT, and the Olympic Delivery Authority signed an agreement stating: "In order that the best employment practice is achieved the parties to the agreement commit to the ethos

of a directly employed workforce.

Despite lobbying from UCATT, the agreement was not extended to the Olympic Village, resulting in a more casualised approach to employment.

There are currently in the region of 10,000 construction workers operating on the Olympic Park and Olympic Village sites.

Back pay sought as contractor goes bust

UCATT is seeking assurances that 250 workers who were working for P Elliott on the Olympic Village will be fully paid. The contractor was forced into administration in May following long-standing financial problems. This resulted in the company's plot on the Olympic Village being locked on 19 May and the workers sent home.

The principal contractor, Lend Lease, has taken on the re-employed the men, but it is not clear that they will receive the back pay owed to them.

The union has contacted the Olympic Delivery Authority and CLM (the delivery partner) in a bid to resolve the issue.

UCATT London & South East Region Secretary Jerry Swain said: "It is important that the parties involved move swiftly to guarantee that the workers will be fully paid and are able to quickly return to work. The workers should not suffer a financial penalty as a result of problems which are not of their own making."



WINNER: Glyn Delmar (right) receives the UCATT Northern Region George Brumwell Health and Safety Rep of the Year award for 2011 from Regional Secretary John Scott.

Glyn is a plasterer at Tristar Homes, where he has been a highly effective UCATT safety rep for the past three years.



PARADE: Marchers on this year's May Day demo in London.

Mayday for May Day

The TUC is leading a "Don't mess with May Day" campaign following threats from the Government to scrap the public holiday on the first Monday of May and replace it with a new holiday in October. Union leaders support the idea of a new bank holiday as the UK has the fewest public holidays in Europe. But this should not be at the expense of May Day, traditionally International Workers' Day. Tourism and Heritage Minister John Penrose is running a consultation on whether to move the May Day bank holiday and, if so, where. Objecting to the proposal, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "From trade unionists and holidaymakers to Morris dancers and horticulturists, British people have been celebrating May Day for centuries."

Have your say on the Government's consultation here: [www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/8068.aspx].

Recognition deal at Elliott Modular

UCATT has signed a voluntary recognition deal with Elliott Modular, a company specialising in supplying construction cabins. Based in Bridlington, East Yorkshire, it employs around 50 workers, all of whom will be covered by the new agreement on pay, conditions, procedures and pensions. The breakthrough has been welcomed by John McIntyre, Development Officer for UCATT's Yorkshire Region, who concluded the agreement following months of organising.

Threat to rights of 3 million workers

Government plans to extend the qualifying period for protection against unfair dismissal from one year to two will affect nearly 3 million workers, the TUC is warning. While agreeing that more needs to be done to speed up tribunal claims, the TUC accuses the Government of seeking to do this by restricting access to justice and pricing low-paid vulnerable workers out of the system. Nearly 70 per cent of tribunal claimants have average or below average earnings and half of these earn less than £15,000 a

year, according to the latest official survey of employment tribunal applicants.

Medics back union dust campaign

The Institute of Occupational Medicine has backed a union push for a dramatic reduction in the amount of dust allowed in workplace air. Unions have for over two years been pressing an intransigent Health and Safety Executive to reduce the occupational exposure limit for general workplace dust to a quarter of the current level and to run a campaign to raise awareness of dust dangers. The HSE's own advisory committee also called for such a campaign as "a priority". Unions last year agreed, as an interim measure, to introduce their own "precautionary standard" of 1mg/m³ for respirable dust, a quarter of the current official standard. The unions noted that health effects had not only been seen at the official limit of 4mg/m³ for "a range of so-called low toxicity dusts", but for some dusts even a 1mg/m³ limit was not protective.

Families could lose over £2,700

Low and middle income families will suffer annual benefit cuts of over £2,700 a year by 2013 despite the Government's pledge that there are to be "no losers" in the setting-up of the new universal credit system, the TUC is warning. Ministers have said that no worker will be financially worse off when universal credit replaces the current system of tax credits and benefits in April 2013. But in order to fulfil the pledge the Government will have to reduce the welfare bill, and so is making swingeing cuts to tax credits and benefits that will leave families thousands of pounds worse off in the run-up to April 2013, says the TUC. Between April 2011 and April 2013, a series of welfare cuts is being introduced that include reducing the amount of childcare costs that can be met by tax credits, freezing elements of working tax credit and child benefit, ending Government payments to the child trust fund and ending child benefit for higher rate taxpayers.



SITE: Work taking place at Tottenham Court Road on London's new Crossrail project.

Crossrail pledge on direct employment

UCATT has welcomed Crossrail's commitment to a directly employed workforce for the prestige rail project currently under construction in London, along with key pledges on training and health and safety. The £16 billion project to link Paddington in west London to Abbey Wood in the south-east of the capital is scheduled for completion in 2018.



THANKS DAVE: UCATT's national lay representative in the Prison Service, Dave Baker (third from right), of HMP Feltham, retired at the end of April after 25 years of service to the union. As a token of appreciation, he was invited to attend the 24 March meeting of the Executive Council in London, where he was presented with a certificate of honour.

Union President John Thompson (third from left) paid tribute to Baker's work in assisting young offenders as well as his skill as a UCATT rep in helping to diffuse conflicts and avert tensions in the workplace – "especially when prison management have attempted to impose ill-thought out policies".

Other EC members pictured here are (back row, from left) Wilf Flynn, Mick Farrell, Jim Gamble, Neil Vernon and Chris Murphy.

Baker's successor is Anton James, who is based at HMP Wandsworth.

£46,000 for unfairly dismissed Kosovans

UCATT has won a two-and-a-half year legal battle on behalf of six Kosovan workers who were unfairly dismissed by civil engineering company FM Conway.

The workers originally won their case for unfair dismissal at an employment tribunal in July 2009 after they were sacked on trumped-up charges in September 2008. However, the company appealed against the decision. The Employment Appeal Tribunal has now dismissed the appeal.

The six Kosovans will share a total of £46,210 plus interest.

The workers were originally employed by Crowleys on an Islington Borough Council contract. In 2007 the contract was transferred to FM Conway. The men were dismissed in September 2008 after raising concerns about attacks on their terms and conditions and being pressured to work on a "self-employed" and "price work" basis.

George Guy, Acting UCATT General Secretary, commented: "This case demonstrates that wherever possible UCATT will always seek justice for our members."

Steve Cottingham, a partner at solicitors OH Parsons, who represented the workers at the tribunal hearing and at the appeal, said: "I am very pleased that once again the tribunal system has found in favour of UCATT members, which brings this long-running case to an end. Companies must learn that it is simply unacceptable to mistreat their workforce."



DANGER: DIY and cowboy builders will be more costly in the long run.

Risk of asbestos exposure and shoddy maintenance work for social housing

‘Deadly’ DIY scheme for tenants

Government plans to give social housing tenants responsibility for repairs to their homes could put people at risk of being exposed to asbestos. It would also be a recipe for spiralling costs and poorer maintenance work, says UCATT.

The ConDem Government is proposing that tenants should undertake routine maintenance on their homes. This would be conducted through a “tenant’s cashback” scheme, where the tenants would be paid for carrying out the work themselves or hiring a local builder and keeping the savings.

But union officials fear that the DIY proposals could prove to be deadly. In the 2009 UCATT-commissioned report “As Safe as Houses?” by Linda Waldman and Heather Williams, major defects were revealed in the way that asbestos is managed in the social housing sector. Social landlords do not have a legal duty to manage asbestos within the internal part of properties, although they do in communal areas such as stairwells.

The report recommended that social landlords should by law be required to maintain an asbestos register for all properties, including

information on whether asbestos has been found, whether it has been damaged and whether it had been professionally removed.

Without access to such information, tenants could easily disturb asbestos, without even being aware that they were endangering their health.

“Local builders often do not have the same skills and abilities as dedicated social housing maintenance workers.”

UCATT is also concerned that the proposals to encourage local builders to undertake work currently done by highly skilled directly employed social housing maintenance workers could be a boon for cowboy practices.

Unscrupulous builders could use cover-pricing practices to artificially boost the cost of work. This would actually increase the cost of maintenance and repairs.

Alternatively, tenants might opt for the lowest price, regardless of the quality of the work, in order to gain a cash windfall.

If workers lacking the appropriate training undertook poor quality repairs, homes could fall into long-term decay, resulting in much higher future maintenance costs.

George Guy, UCATT’s Acting General Secretary, commented: “Local builders often do not have the same skills and abilities as dedicated social housing maintenance workers. Too often in the past construction companies have viewed local government contracts as an easy way to make a quick profit; this scheme would reinforce those bad attitudes.”

Insurers fail in latest bid to quash Scottish pleural plaques law

A bid by the insurance industry to overturn a new law in Scotland on pleural plaques compensation has failed, bringing relief to UCATT and other asbestos campaign groups.

However, the insurers have now appealed to the UK Supreme Court in London. The appeal was heard in June. A decision is not expected until the middle of August at the earliest in a case which raises questions not just about the principle of compensation but also about the power of devolved legislatures such as the Scottish Parliament to enact laws on “human rights” issues.

In April, the union welcomed the ruling by the Court of Session

in Scotland to reject an application by the insurance companies that would have denied compensation to individuals diagnosed with scarring of the lungs as a result of exposure to asbestos.

UCATT also renewed its call for a similar law in Westminster to restore the right to claim compensation in England and Wales.

In 2009 the Scottish Parliament passed the Damages Act, which restored the compensation taken away from plural plaque sufferers following a decision by the Law Lords in 2007.

While the Scottish Parliament has voted to restore compensation and the Northern Ireland Assembly is taking similar action, the

British Government has refused to introduce legislation to cover England and Wales. As a result, only a small number of pleural plaques victims – those who had already begun the legal process to claim compensation before the Law Lords took their decision – will receive any form of compensation.

Dangers

George Guy, Acting General Secretary of UCATT, said: “Employers who knew the dangers needlessly exposed workers to asbestos. All victims deserve compensation regardless of where they live.”

Scotland Regional Secretary Harry Frew also strongly welcomed the Edinburgh court’s ruling.

“When it comes to compensation for asbestos illnesses, the insurers were happy to receive the premiums but will try anything to avoid paying compensation,” he said.

It is estimated that the insurance industry – which has lobbied strongly for the ban on compensation to remain in place south of the border – will pocket some £1.4 billion as a result.

The Government itself currently stands to save about £35 million a year by not having to pay compensation to its employees and former employees – for example at Ministry of Defence establishments, where asbestos was commonly used.



Stefano Cagnoni/reportdigital.co.uk



PENNANT: UCATT members in Birmingham.

Tens of thousands of workers up and down the country observed a minute's silence on 28 April, Workers' Memorial Day, to remember their colleagues killed and injured at work.

Most took part in events at their workplaces, though others attended ceremonies held in major towns and cities.

This year's memorial day was especially important, said UCATT, as it came at a time when safety laws and the protection of workers were being weakened by ConDem Government's policies of deregulation and cuts.

The Health and Safety Executive is facing budget cuts of at least 35 per cent. The number of unannounced workplace safety inspections has been slashed.

Meanwhile, ministers are also consulting on proposals to water down the regulations on the reporting of workplace injuries.

In **London**, construction workers gathered at UCATT's Building Worker Memorial at Tower Hill. Following speeches and a minute's silence, they crossed the river to the mayor's office and then



Andrew Ward



ABOVE: Speakers at the UCATT memorial in Liverpool were, from left, Acting General Secretary George Guy, President John Thompson, Rob Vondy of the Health and Safety Executive, PCS National Officer Steve Farley, UCATT North West Regional Chair Bill Parry, Louise Ellman MP and Lord Mayor of Liverpool Cllr Hazel Williams. More than 100 people attended the event, including children from Faith Primary School, who laid a wreath on behalf of UCATT.

TOP LEFT & LEFT: Construction workers at the Building Worker Memorial, Tower Hill, London.



FACE TO FACE: UCATT convenor Tony O'Brien (left) confronts Employment Minister Chris Grayling outside the Department for Work and Pensions headquarters in London over cuts to Health and Safety Executive funding. Grayling is the architect of the HSE cuts, which will result in 11,000 fewer workplace inspections each year. Speaking before he challenged the minister, O'Brien – who is National Secretary of the Construction Safety Campaign – said: "Why are they [the Coalition Government] set on this path? They are not mad, they are criminal. They know the consequences but they just don't care."



Workers' Memorial Day

Remembering the dead, fighting for the living

marched to the Department for Work and Pensions in Westminster for a protest about cuts in health and safety regulation and enforcement.

Building workers on **Merseyside** met at the UCATT memorial in Hunter Street, Liverpool, where speakers included UCATT's Acting General Secretary George Guy and local Labour MP Louise Ellman. Flags stood at half-mast on all public buildings, the Mersey ferries sounded their horns at 12 noon and many building sites observed one minute's silence.

UCATT was represented at a joint union meeting of safety reps at **Manchester's** Mechanics' Institute. Afterwards participants marched to the Peace Gardens for a rally.

In **Glasgow**, UCATT members and other trade unionists gathered in George Square to remember their dead and injured workmates.

On the initiative of UCATT convenor David McGurk, workers on the **Forth Rail Bridge** downed tools to hold a minute's silence at 11am. The bridge site was marked by tragedy in January 2010 when a worker undertaking painting and blasting duties fell to his death.

In the Midlands, UCATT Regional Secretary unveiled a plaque at the King's Mill Hospital site in **Mansfield**. Jointly funded by the union and Skanska, it reads: "This plaque is to commemorate International Workers' Memorial Day, April 28, Remember the Dead, Fight for the Living".

There were also events in **Birmingham** and **Nottingham**.

The focus in **Sunderland** for this year's Workers' Memorial Day was asbestos. Over 70 people were welcomed to Sunderland Civic Centre by Gill Hale, Chair of the Northern TUC. The meeting heard from Maggie Fitzsimons and Pat McKeown, of the local Asbestos Support Group, that 10 per cent of all asbestos-related deaths are in the North-East.



PLAQUE: Karl Stephenson (right) with Karl Turner MP next to the memorial bench.

Members make sure Raymond is not forgotten

UCATT members across Yorkshire have raised funds for a bench as a memorial for a colleague from Hull who was killed at work.

Raymond Jessop, 53, died in December 2009 when the ladder he was working from slipped while he was painting the outside of a house in Cranwick Grove, Hull. He was employed by Kier Building Maintenance and was undertaking repairs and maintenance on some of the city's council housing.

Local UCATT activist Karl Stephenson, who is the union's shop steward at Kier, organised the collection among members in the region and raised suffi-

cient funds for a permanent bench in Jessop's memory.

The bench has been sited in Queens Gardens in Hull. It was formally unveiled in May, with local Labour MP Karl Turner in attendance.

Turner said: "This tragic accident underlines just how dangerous the construction industry remains. It is essential that all parties at both local and national level begin to take the safety of construction workers seriously in order to ensure that in the future other workers do not needlessly lose their lives."

UCATT Yorkshire Regional Secretary Steve Murphy praised the organisers of the memorial.

"Local members and activists were determined that our former member should not be forgotten," he said.

Room for campaigner Ian

A well known safety campaigner in the Merseyside area has had a room named after him at the Health and Safety Executive's offices in Bootle. Ian Whittingham – who was considered an honorary UCATT member – died in April 2009 following a stroke. From 1993 he was in a wheelchair after suffering a 25ft fall while working as a roofer. He dedicated the rest of his life to tireless campaigning for construction safety and in 2003 received an MBE.

Summary of financial information for the year ended 31 December 2010

As required by Section 32A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992

Income and expenditure

The total income of the union for the period was £6,546,000. This amount included payments of £6,090,000 in respect of membership of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £6,664,000. The union does maintain a political fund. In respect of the union's political fund, its total income was £252,000 and total expenditure was £221,000.

Salaries and benefits – A Ritchie

- Salary: £72,259;
- Pension contributions: £13,617;
- Benefits: £2,204;
- Total: £88,080;
- Employer's National Insurance contributions: £8,518.

The President and each other member of the Executive Council received no remuneration.

Independent auditor's report to members of UCATT

We have audited the financial statements of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians for the year ended 31 December 2010 which comprise the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account, Consolidated Balance Sheet and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of certain properties and quoted investments, and the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the union's members, as a body, in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union's members as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Executive Council and auditors

The Executive Council's responsibilities for preparing the Annual Report and the Financial

Statements in accordance with applicable law and relevant United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) are set out in the Statement of the Executive Council's Responsibilities.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the information given in the Annual Report – 2010 is not consistent with the financial statements and if the union has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the Annual Report – 2010 and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent mis-statements within it

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Accounting Practices Board. An audit includes an examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Executive Council in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the union's circumstances consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by

fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards of the state of the union's affairs as at 31 December 2010 and of its consolidated surplus for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the information given in the Annual Report – 2010 is consistent with the financial statements.

Hard Dowdy
(a trading style of
Chantrey Vellacott DFK LLP
Chartered Accountants
Registered Auditors
23/28 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3NG
26 May 2011

Irregularity statement

A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring, or have occurred, in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

The right to strike has come under attack recently, culminating in Business Secretary Vince Cable's stark warning to the union movement – either the unions curtail industrial action or the Government will restrict their members' ability to strike.

Despite being considered a fundamental freedom, the right to strike is already significantly restricted in the UK.

Strike action is a tort, in other words, a civil wrong – leaving unions open to legal action and confiscation of their assets, and employees vulnerable to dismissal. However, if strike action is taken following a proper ballot of employees in the bargaining unit – and a simple majority of those who vote, vote in favour of the action – then the striking employees and their union are immune from legal action.

Despite unions campaigning for many years for the repeal of Thatcher's anti-trade union laws, the rules in relation to the balloting requirements remain extremely complex and difficult to navigate. Any procedural irregularity, no matter how trivial, may lead to an otherwise successful ballot being declared invalid. This is the case even if the procedural defect would

New rights for agency workers

GORDON BELL
of UCATT's Scottish solicitors Dallas McMillan examines the Agency Workers Regulations 2010 – designed to give additional employment rights to agency workers – that will come into effect on 1 October 2011.

Dallas McMillan's freephone number for members in Scotland is 0303-303 1606.

Right to strike under attack

by **ELLIE REEVES** of OH Parsons, UCATT's London-based solicitors

make no difference to the overall result.

Contrast this to the law on unfair dismissal. Here, where an employer does not follow the proper procedure before dismissing an employee, if they can persuade a tribunal that following the correct procedure would not have made any difference to the final outcome, then it is unlikely that any compensation will be awarded.

Last Autumn Labour MP John McDonnell presented a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons saying that procedural defects in strike ballots, which would make no difference to the overall result, should be disregarded. Sadly the Bill did not get enough support in the House to proceed to a second reading.

And now it seems that the right to strike is once again under attack. Earlier this year, Conservative MP Dominic Raab presented a Bill in the Commons which would make it even harder for employees to strike.

Under his proposals, the balloting

requirements for transport and essential services would be much more onerous. In order for a ballot to be valid, half of those eligible to vote would have to support the industrial action. So if 1,000 are balloted and only 499 vote, the strike cannot go ahead even if all 499 voted in favour of industrial action. Or if 700 cast a vote (and a 70 per cent turnout would

“No other ballot or election in this country requires a majority of those eligible to vote to be valid.”

be considered high for any election) with 450 in favour and 250 against, despite the overwhelming majority any strike action still would not be legal.

No other ballot or election in this country requires a majority of those eligible to vote to be valid. In fact, if Mr Raab's rules were applied to his own parliamentary election he would not be the MP for Esher and Walton as he only polled 32,134 votes in a constituency of 76,962 electors.

Whilst Raab's Bill was not successful, Cable's recent comments show that the issue has not gone away.

At a time when employers are increasingly trying to slash terms and conditions it is more important than ever that the power of the unions to put industrial pressure on businesses is not weakened. Any restrictions on balloting requirements for strike action would certainly do that.

See advertisement on back cover; visit website at [www.ohparsons.co.uk].

The Agency Workers Regulations 2010 apply to the triangular work relationship between (1) businesses (public or private sector), known as TWAs, who supply temporary agency workers; (2) temporary agency workers; (3) employers (public or private sector) – the “hirers”. To be an agency worker under the regulations, a worker must have a contract with the TWA but work temporarily for and under the control of a hirer. He/she must not be genuinely self-employed.

From day one of an assignment with a hirer, an agency worker is entitled (a) to be treated no less favourably by the hirer than a comparable directly-employed worker of the hirer concerning access to collective facilities and amenities provided by the hirer and (b) to be provided with information about relevant job vacancies that would be available to comparable workers of the hirer.

Qualifying work

In addition, after completing 12 weeks of qualifying work carrying out the same (or substantially the same) role, the agency worker is entitled to have the same basic terms and conditions of employment as if they had been directly-employed by the hirer. These include the right to equal basic pay, overtime payments, shift/unsocial hours allowances, annual leave pay and bonuses/commission directly related to the amount or quality of work completed by the worker. But there is no equal entitlement to occupational sick pay, pension, redundancy or notice pay.

The agency worker after 12 weeks of work is also entitled not to be treated differently by the hirer (compared with directly-employed workers) with working time, night work, rest periods, rest breaks and amount of paid annual leave entitlement.

A period of weeks accrued with a hirer towards the 12 weeks required restarts at zero (a) if the agency worker starts a new assignment with a new hirer, (b) if he/she stays with the same hirer but changes to a substantially different role or (c) if there is a break of at least six weeks between assignments with the same hirer. The number of accrued weeks pause if there is (a) a break between assignments of less than six weeks or (b) if there is a break between assignments of more than six weeks but is for sickness, injury or jury duty (all up to a maximum of 28 weeks), holiday entitlement, strikes or normal hirer shutdown periods (or a combination of these). Pregnancy/childbirth, adoption or paternity leave do not pause the weeks counting towards the qualifying period.

There is an important exception. An agency worker working for 12 weeks with a hirer in the same role does not acquire rights to the same basic terms and conditions as a directly-employed worker if the TWA gives the agency worker a permanent contract of employment and agrees to pay him/her between assignments with any hirer.

Day-one entitlements

Ensuring day-one entitlements are given (access to collective services/amenities/job vacancies) is the sole responsibility of the hirer. But either the agency or the hirer or both may be liable to provide equal treatment rights for basic work and employment conditions to the extent of their own fault.

The agency worker can pursue a complaint to an employment tribunal for breach of rights in the regulations, with the usual three-month time limit for bringing proceedings. Dismissals may be held to be automatically unfair in certain circumstances.



CHEQUE: Cardiff Branch's Gerwyn Owen (centre) receives a cheque from Branch Secretary Terry Palfrey (right) for his UCATT accident claim against Balfour Beatty. With them is UCATT Wales & South West Regional Secretary Nick Blundell. Owen suffered an accident at work in March 2009, which damaged his lower back and left leg and left him unable to work for several months.

Some recent cases settled...

● An Oldham member was injured while breaking glass by hand from a window. One of the pieces was harder to move and, as he tugged, it suddenly came off. His hand knocked against the mullion, which still had a sharp piece of glass embedded in it, resulting in a severed median nerve in his wrist. He was off work for several months, but was eventually able to return to work. Court proceedings were commenced and liability was agreed at 80 per cent in his favour. After negotiations, settlement was agreed at £22,000.

● An Ayrshire joiner who used vibrating power tools throughout a long council career recovered compensation of £40,000 for hand-arm vibration syndrome.

● A tunneller from Swansea suffered a serious compound fracture of the tibia and fibula when a colleague inexplicably reversed a mini-digger into him. He was unable to go back to his pre-accident job and, though he found other work, it was at lower pay. Liability was admitted by the colleague's employer and the matter settled for £115,000.

● A member from Stoke suffered severe laceration to the lower leg from broken glass in a bag that had not been properly disposed of. His employer accepted full liability. He was left with permanent difficulties in the leg, affecting his social life and his worth in the labour market. Court proceedings were necessary after the defendant failed to make any reasonable offers, and the matter eventually settled for £36,250.

● An Ayrshire member fractured a pelvis when he lost his balance and fell off an excavator machine while trying to manoeuvre and secure vandal guards in position around the cab. There were no guardrails to prevent him from falling. Settlement was agreed at over £100,000.



CASE STUDIES: The union has produced a series of case studies about union learning projects. Copies can be ordered from UCATT National Project Worker Steve Craig (contact details below).

New funding will enable UCATT to carry on work of promoting skills and learning

Funding of £170,000 has been secured by UCATT for its new Union Learning Fund (ULF) project. This will see the union increasing learning opportunities for construction workers and local communities, helping them to gain skills and qualifications and increase their individual job prospects while the recession is still on.

The project, titled Reaching Out in the Workplace and Community – Expanding Skills and Qualifications in the Building and Construction-Related Sectors, will run from April 2011 to March 2012 and will build on the union's previous and existing ULF activities – such as the initiative in Cannock Chase reported on the right.

Among the new project's aims are to:

- Increase the number of UCATT union learning representatives and learning centres on construction sites and in other workplaces;
- Respond to the recession by delivering training and support to workers at risk of or being made redundant, including help with CV writing and interview skills, careers advice and access to recognised qualifications;
- Negotiate learning agreements in order to work in partnership with employers and set up a range of innovative learning initiatives, including qualifications in leadership and management, systems thinking and coaching and mentoring;
- Deliver "skills for life" training in numeracy and literacy, including the use of hand-held personal digital accessories, as well as helping to address the initial fear of engaging with computers and help to overcome the "digital divide";
- Increase opportunities for informal adult and community learning – particularly learners from disadvantaged groups;
- Increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities in construction and tackle the barriers to progression;
- Increase the proportion of construction workers who are female or from black and minority ethnic communities by ensuring diversity

and equal access to these learning opportunities.

Meanwhile, UCATT's parallel Union Learning Fund project in Wales is well underway. Running over three years, from April 2010 to March 2013, it aims to ensure that construction workers have access to good quality training and learning opportunities to increase their skills and employability. Among other things, it will:

- Establish new and improve existing workplace-based learning centres;
- Increase the number of UCATT learning reps to support members to take up training opportunities and gain skills and qualifications;
- Promote take-up of the Employer Skills Pledge – developed as part of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy, "Words Talk, Numbers Count", to reduce the number of adults in Wales with poor literacy and numeracy skills;
- Provide learning opportunities for "hard-to-reach" workers through compliance initiatives on publicly-funded building projects and by working with local authorities;
- Promote and support apprenticeships;
- Develop sustainability and "green jobs".

The project sets out to break down the barriers to learning that construction workers face and set up workplace-based learning opportunities through joint employer-union learning centres. It will focus particularly on workers at risk of redundancy, those made redundant and people who want new skills to improve their employability.

And it will develop a unique NVQ Level 2/3 Waste Management Operations (Construction Logistics) and Removal of Non-Hazardous Waste (Construction) Materials course. This will capture interest in sustainable construction and help employers and workers meet the opportunities provided by the low carbon/green jobs agenda.

If you are interested in becoming a UCATT learning rep or finding out more about how you can get involved in these projects, contact: Steve Craig, UCATT National Project Worker; tel: 07784-254 449; email: [scraig@castor20.fsnet.co.uk]. For Wales, contact: Marie Qazzaz, Project Worker, tel: 07882-446 481; email: [mqucatt@live.com].



UCATT training

UCATT's Vulnerable Workers Unit used a "celebration of learning" event at Cannock Chase to combine an introduction to information and communication technology skills, advice on CV writing and job seeking with education on financial management. Ten construction DLO workers at risk of redundancy at Cannock Chase District Council took part in the presentation, helping them to update their skills and improve their employability during these uncertain economic times.

UCATT Project Workers Neil Rayner and Nicola Doughty provided the workers with an introduction to the work of the Vulnerable Workers Unit (VWU). The unit was established with support from the Government's Union Modernisation Fund to provide information, advice and guidance to and about vulnerable workers. Due to the current economic climate, it is increasingly supporting a particularly vulnerable group – those being transferred to another employer and those at risk of or facing redundancy.

In addition, the £83 billion of public spending cuts announced by the Government last October included major capital spending cuts to social housing. The budget for England will be cut by more than 50 per cent from £8.4 billion in the past three years to £4.4 billion over the next four years. In addition, all local authorities are facing cuts of 28 per cent over the next four years.

UCATT senior shop steward Andy Thurstance said: "There is a lot of uncertainty at the moment, but this event was absolutely fantastic and has helped to restore morale."

Online basics

Derby College trade union education tutor Sue Long ran the ICT (information and communication technology) workshop using the UK Online website (www.ukonlinecentres.com). It covered: **Starting with a keyboard** – learning the functions of different keys and practicing typing; **Starting with a mouse** – step-by-step instructions to learn how to use a computer mouse;





PARTICIPANTS: UCATT members and tutors at the Cannock Chase teach-in.

Confidence building for Cannock Chase DLO members in a time of uncertainty

Using email – learning how to send and receive emails, use an address book and store emails;

Using the internet safely – learning practical techniques to help stay safe online;

Using online searches – learning how to search the internet, find websites and bookmark them;

Health and safety and computers – covering the organisation of workstations, taking breaks, and guidance on comfortable and safe working positions.

The workshop combined an introduction to using ICT with advice on CV writing and searching for and applying for jobs.

“Your CV is the single most important weapon in your armoury,” said Sue. “You only have about five seconds to grab an employer’s attention so yours has to stand out.”

The workshop examined why CVs are rejected and looked at first impressions, visual layouts, and the ideal length of a CV. It also included general CV tips and where to find more information – including online sources of help. Everyone created a CV and saved it on their UCATT memory stick.

“It was a really useful workshop,” said Sue Long. “There are many people who have no IT skills at all and workshops like this give them the confidence to have a go. They really enjoyed getting their hands on the computers.”

Money made clear

Susan Cassar, of the Consumer Finance Education Body (CFEB), provided advice on managing money, keeping track of finances, making informed decisions about financial products and staying up-to-date on financial matters. She looked at budgeting, saving and investing, borrowing, dealing with problem debt, insurance

and planning for retirement. The CFEB is an independent body set up by the Financial Services Authority to provide information, education and advice to help consumers understand financial matters and manage their finances better.

“In the workshop, people were particularly interested in how credit ratings work and affordable borrowing,” said Cassar, who is the CFEB’s Midlands Regional Manager. “We looked at what APRs are and the importance of keeping well away from doorstep lenders and loan sharks.”

She explained that APR stands for the annual percentage rate of charge and can be used to compare credit and loan offers. It includes the interest



rate, the length of the loan agreement (or term), the frequency and timing of installment payments, the amount of each payment and the fees associated with the loan. Generally, the lower the APR, the better for the borrower.

However, she also advised that the APR does not include all the costs associated with a credit agreement, such as charges for late or missed payments or balance transfer fees on a credit card.

She advised the UCATT members to look at the total amount payable to check they can afford the repayments.

“The aims of UCATT and its Vulnerable Workers Unit team fit in very neatly with what we are trying to achieve,” she added. “If you are financially less confident about asking questions and getting answers and managing money you will be in a more vulnerable position.”

Working with the VWU has helped the CFEB to increase access to financial awareness, she added. During 2011, the organisation is also offering a financial health check and face-to-face money guidance. For more information see the CFEB website at: [www.cfebuk.org.uk].

A great training opportunity

Managers and UCATT representatives welcomed the celebration of learning event.

“UCATT’s Vulnerable Workers Unit provided a great training opportunity to the staff here at Cannock Chase District Council,” said Training and Human Resources Officer Janice Turner. “Through teaching online basics and financial capacity all attendees were able to learn a set of skills which not only improve efficiency in the workplace, but also improve essential life skills.”

And Andy Thurstance added: “The Vulnerable Workers Unit came in and did a fantastic job. The feedback was all positive and we’ve already got the next 10 workers signed up for the next session.”

“I think it is a brilliant project and a very dynamic team,” said Sue Long. “I don’t know of any other union doing anything like it.”

For more information contact Melinda Roberts, UCATT Vulnerable Workers Unit Project Coordinator (Midlands Region): [mroberts.uvuw@ucatt.org.uk]; tel: 01332-294189.

Duncan Phillips/reportdigital.co.uk



GAME: Tax matters are not for fun: that's why expert advice is needed.

For tax refunds, Rift are winners

Tax refund experts Rift are continuing to develop their partnership with UCATT on construction sites across the UK.

At one such site, Westfield in Stratford, east London, which will be the largest inner city shopping centre in Europe, Rift representatives Shaun Keown and Jane Dickson are working closely with UCATT to ensure that the union's members on site are made aware of Rift's services.

To date, over £63,000 has already been reclaimed by workers from the Westfield site, averaging over £1,600 per person. Rift are confident that many more people on site are eligible to claim and urge those workers to come forward and ensure they do not miss out.

Rift's Shaun Keown says: "Working with UCATT has been really good. It has allowed us to explain our services face-to-face with the workers and answer any questions they may have. As a result, we have now put together a

very useful Westfield-specific leaflet and a question-and-answer booklet."

His colleague Jane Dickson added: "Our other sales representatives, Robert Parker and Stephen Smith, are also working hard with UCATT in other regions to develop the partnership further and are making full use of the site opportunities arranged through them."

UCATT has had good feedback from union members on site about how Rift have helped them. Construction workers have been through tough times, but many have had substantial refunds making this a great benefit for UCATT members and their families.

If you fit the criteria below, it is highly likely that you too will be able to claim a tax refund from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC):

- You are employed on PAYE.
- You use your own vehicle or public transport to travel from home to your temporary work sites (i.e. you do not have a fixed place of work). Take note: even if your employer pays some of your expenses (petrol, for example), you could still make a claim if the money you receive falls below the HMRC's mileage allowance.

On behalf of construction workers across the UK, Rift reclaimed a total of £7 million last year. Look out for Rift on your site soon, or contact Rift now.

What are you waiting for? Visit [www.riftuk.com], call 01233-653 973 or text RIFT to 80010 today to find out how much you could claim.

Unions press FIFA on abuses of workers' rights in Qatar

Global trade unions are calling on FIFA to guarantee fair play for workers involved in preparing for the World Cup in Qatar in 2022.

The call comes amid concerns about the treatment of migrant construction workers in the Gulf state, an absolute monarchy where there are few democratic rights.

Examples of gross violations of workers' rights are detailed in a new report published by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in May.

With 12 new football stadiums to be built for the 2022 Qatar World Cup, the Brussels-based ITUC will use the report to press FIFA and Qatar to improve the working and living conditions of the mainly Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese workers.

Including interviews with workers and human rights activists, the report describes the appalling living conditions of the workers in huge segregated, mostly male, townships.

The Building Workers International (BWI) is part of the new campaign and has written to FIFA President Sepp Blatter and Qatar's FIFA delegate, construction magnate Mohamed Bin Hammam, calling for the organisations to explain

how they will protect the hundreds of thousands of workers who will be subject to unsafe and unregulated working conditions on construction sites – in a country where there are no independent unions or effective safety inspection.

"Just 6 per cent of the working population of Qatar is Qatari – their economy and their ability to deliver the World Cup is totally dependent on severe exploitation of migrant labour, which we believe to be barely above forced labour conditions," says BWI General Secretary Ambet Yuson.

FIFA requires football manufacturers to respect workers' rights in its licensing programme, but has no such standards for companies building World Cup venues.

Backing the campaign, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers with very few employment rights, no access to unions, no health and safety protection, and forced to live in inhumane conditions, will be literally putting their lives on the line to deliver the 2022 World Cup. It's time FIFA cleaned up its act and took action now to protect these workers."

● An international conference organised by Play Fair and the Build-



QATAR: Migrant construction workers live in inhumane conditions and suffer from lack of employment and union rights.



SITE VISIT: Danny Wright (centre) with workers at the Miramar Theatre renovation site. He also attended the famous May Day rally in Havana (left).

Danny takes practical assistance and solidarity to Cuba

Twenty-eight young activists from across the British trade union movement visited Cuba to enjoy the 2011 May Day celebrations and offer their support and solidarity to the Cuban people. Delegates from five unions – including Danny Wright from UCATT – joined a “brigade” of trade unionists and political activists from around the world in a programme of cultural and political activities and entertainment.

Danny made a point of visiting the Miramar Theatre in Havana to present some personal protective equipment donated by the union. The restoration of the Miramar Theatre is the Music Fund for Cuba’s biggest and most ambitious project yet and will cost an estimated £200,000.

Hurricanes

The renovation of the building – which has been battered by hurricanes and degraded by humidity – will reinstate the theatre as a cultural hub, educational resource and community centre.

UCATT’s donation will help ensure that the

project is completed by the end of this year. Danny, who is an apprentice plumber with Wakefield District Housing, also took part in the famous May Day rally in Havana’s Revolution Square. Nearly one million people paraded past portraits of revolutionary heroes Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos.

“The May Day parade was amazing. It was great to see so many people proud of their country. The brigade was definitely the best experience of my life,” he said afterwards.

The British activists met young contemporaries in Cuba to learn about their struggle living under the effects of an illegal US blockade, visited workplaces and heard about Cuba’s economic reforms.

As guests of the Cuban equivalent of the TUC – the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) – the brigade gained valuable insight into the Cuban trade union movement and its crucial role in the government and economic management of the country.

For over 50 years Cuba has been the target of a US economic blockade. But the British

unions – with 24 of them affiliated to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and with regular solidarity brigades to the island – are part of the fight-back against this isolation. For the people of Cuba, this ongoing support and solidarity is invaluable, says the CSC.

Relaxation

Although there was plenty of time for fun and relaxation – with music and entertainment provided by local artists – the purpose of the brigade was to learn about Cuba’s experience and show solidarity with the Cuban people and its revolution.

Brigadistas braved the scorching heat to undertake agricultural work with their Cuban comrades and experienced life under the US trade embargo that denies ordinary people access to basic resources.

To register interest in next year’s Young Trade Unionists’ May Day Brigade to Cuba or to find out how to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, email CSC Campaigns Officer Dan Smith: [campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk].

ing Workers’ International was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 31 March to launch a campaign around the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil. The BWI – to which UCATT is affiliated – and other unions want FIFA and the International Olympic Committee, together with the local organising committees, to accept their responsibility to make sure all production and construction is done under decent working conditions.

To read the ITUC report on Qatar, see: [www.ituc-csi.org/hidden-faces-of-the-gulf-miracle,9144.html].

Finnish unions track asbestos exposure

Unions in Finland are keeping track of workplace asbestos exposures, using a purpose-designed “follow-up” card for members.

The initiative was launched in April by the country’s Breathing Association along with the union confederations SAK and STTK and the trade unions representing metal, electrical, paper and construction

workers. The card will record information on an individual worker’s exposures and on possible occupational diseases that could be related to those exposures.

Under the system, details of subsequent health checks, their results and any treatment is also to be recorded. Experts expect these cards to be especially helpful in following up workers after they have retired.

Union officials estimate that about 200,000 Finns have been exposed to asbestos.

Most exposures took place in the 1960s and 1970s at construction sites, shipyards and power plants and in vehicle installation, repair and service jobs. Asbestos was banned in Finland in 1994.

Global concern over IKEA’s US subsidiary

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has voiced alarm at the behaviour of furniture giant IKEA regarding the anti-union practices of Swedwood, its US subsidiary company in Danville, Virginia.

Workers at the production plant

have been trying to unionise the 335-strong workforce.

Last year the IAM machinists’ union announced that a majority of eligible employees had signed cards authorising the union to be their exclusive representative.

In response, factory management hired a law firm that has made a reputation for keeping unions out of companies and helping employers interfere with and obstruct workers’ freedom of association.

Commenting on these developments, ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said that “clearly all is not well at this factory”.

She added: “IKEA is taking advantage of the lax US workers’ protection. It is not too much to ask of IKEA, which has reported around \$3 billion in profit, and \$31 billion in sales, to allow the workers in one factory the opportunity to hear and decide for themselves.

“We’re simply asking the company to open its doors and allow the union the opportunity to educate these workers about their rights guaranteed by the International Labour Organisation.

The ITUC represents 175 million

workers in 151 countries and has 305 national affiliates, including the TUC in Britain.

Iraq installs unelected union

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber has written to Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Maliki calling on him to repeal the sudden withdrawal of union recognition rights from the country’s General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW).

A government decree issued in April withdrew recognition of the GFIW and replaced it with a new unelected body, mostly made up of officials.

The new body is now overseeing union elections.

The TUC says that the move has effectively ended free and independent unions in Iraq, and is a dangerous recipe for breaking apart the GFIW – the Iraqi equivalent of the TUC.

The GFIW is said to be one of the few institutions left which unites people across tribal, ethnic and religious boundaries. It is also committed to women’s rights.

Presentations

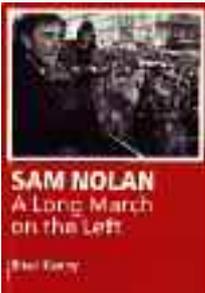
● **Gilly Grey (centre) of Manchester No.1 Branch** received a presentation at the historic Mechanics' Institute building in Manchester to mark his 40 years of union membership. Pictured with him in front of the UCATT stained glass window are **Michael Lynskey (left)** and **Branch Secretary Ged Cooney (right)**.



● **Jim Eskriet (second from right)** has retired as **Barnsley Branch Secretary** after 31 years of service. He is pictured here with a presentation box and fellow branch members (from left) **Graham Owen, Michael Eeles (the new Branch Secretary)** and (right) **Kenneth Fox**.



In print: Sam's lifetime of struggle in Ireland



"**Sam Nolan: A Long March on the Left**" by **Brian Kenny**, published by **Brian Kenny** in association with **Personal History Publishing**, Dublin 2010

Sam Nolan has been a leading figure on the left and in the Irish trade union movement over the past 60 years. Now in his 80s, he is the worthy subject of this biography by Brian Kenny. Nolan was a long-standing union activist in the

Dublin building trade and worked as a full-time organiser with UCATT from 1982 to 1995.

He was involved in many of the key struggles of the unemployed and tenants' movements in the 1950s and the fight for the 40-hour week in the following decade. The 1970s and 80s saw him as one of the leaders of the great tax marches in Ireland. For the past 30 years he has been secretary of Dublin Council of Trade Unions and an activist in the Labour Party. Before that, he spent 20 years as a leading figure in the Irish Communist Party.

Kenny's 108-page biography features a chapter titled "The UCATT Years". Nolan's area of responsibility as a union official spread beyond Dublin to include Wexford, Waterford, Wicklow and Kilkenny. When he retired, aged 65, the *Irish Times* described him as "one of the most colourful figures in the Irish trade union movement".

The book can be purchased from the author. Email [ken-nybj@eircom.net]; tel: (+353) (0)86-077 3839.

● Among the well-known UCATT activists of the 1960s and 70s was **Vic Heath**, pictured here (in light jacket, third from left) during a strike at a site in **Leadenhall Street, City of London, in 1973**.



Researching sites of the postwar years

Researchers at the University of Westminster are investigating building sites of the 1950s and 60s and want to interview people who worked on them at the time.

The study is part of a project titled "Constructing post-war Britain: building workers' stories 1950-70". Funded by the Leverhulme Trust, it aims to collect the stories and memories of building workers who were involved in the construction of important examples of postwar architecture and civil engineering.

The case studies chosen include iconic projects of the early welfare state (such as Stevenage new town and South Bank arts complex), large industrial sites associated

Obituaries



It is with great sadness that I report the death of **Reginald Bailey** (left) on 20 May at the age of 80, writes **Cannock Branch Secretary Tom Dawson**. Reg was a dedicated member of UCATT, joining in 1947 at the age of 16, a painter and decorator by trade. He worked for Cannock Chase Council for many years, becoming a shop steward and afterwards **Rugely Branch Secretary**, a position he held until 10 years ago.

Joe Byrne, a UCATT Ireland Organiser, died on 11 March following a long illness. The Executive Council stood in silence for a minute at its meeting on 24 March as a mark of respect for him. Byrne was born on 19 April 1954 and joined the union in 1978. He was a member of **Bray Branch** and worked full-time for the union from the beginning of 1996.



Jeff Douglas (left) passed away on 1 February at the age of 68 after fighting cancer since 2008, writes **Flint Branch Terry Renshaw**. Jeff was one of the founder members of the **North Wales Defence Committee**, set up in 1973 after the police laid charges against 24 **North Wales pickets** involved in the 1972 national building workers' strike. He was also the **Flint Branch Secretary** until 1982 and, even when he was diagnosed with cancer, he still kept up his

support for the campaign to have the cases of the **Shrewsbury 24** heard by the **Criminal Cases Review Commission**.

Tommy Dykes, long-standing **Sligo Branch Secretary**, died on 15 January, aged 78. He joined the union on 4 March 1950.



**Union of
Construction, Allied
Trades & Technicians**

www.ucatt.org.uk
020-7622 2442

**Britain's only specialist
construction union**

FREE representation on accident claims for you and your family

If you or any member of your family has had an accident, we can deal with the claim through UCATT's Legal Aid scheme. We also offer the following services:

- Advice and representation on clinical negligence claims
- Reduced rates for buying or selling your house
- Reduced rates for Probate
- Wills for each member

Call FREE for advice on 0800 526368