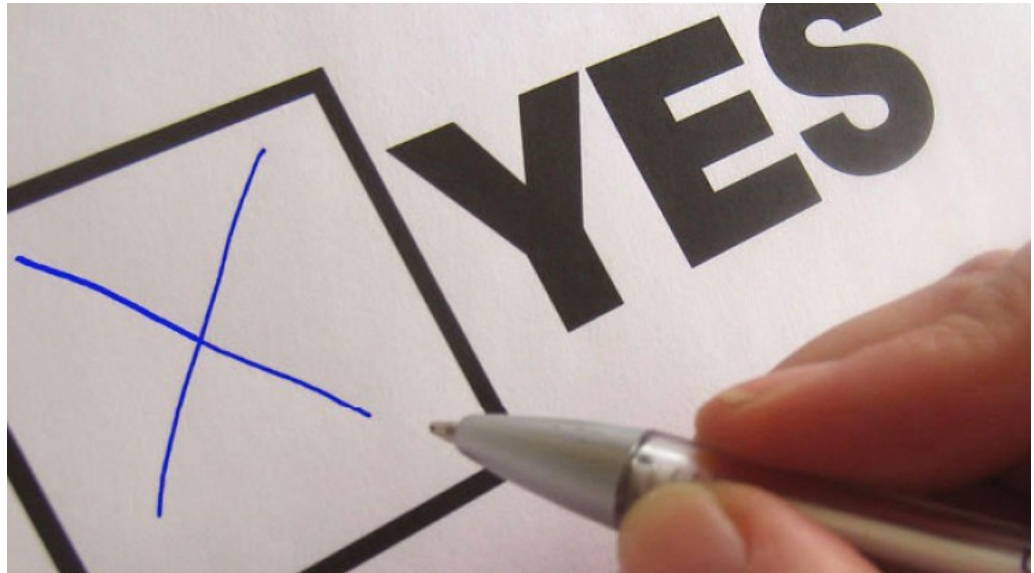


The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

Political fund ballot

UNISON's 10-year ballot is now underway - it opened on 15 July and closes on 16 August



Political fund ballot – saving UNISON's campaign voice

Ballot papers are now dropping through members' letter boxes asking them to vote on the continuation of the union's political fund.

It is vitally important that they vote yes - and that the Labour Link and campaign fund continue to provide a platform for political campaigns in support of our members.

It is a ballot we must win - by making the case once again to our members, showing them what the two distinct sections of UNISON's fund, Labour Link and the campaign fund, do - and what they have helped us to achieve. Each month, our members pay pennies into the political fund, but collectively that adds up to

millions each year. This money funds vital political campaign work on our members behalf. This is necessary to compliment the work we do in negotiations, in workplaces and through legal channels.

Labour Link

The key objective of the Labour Link is to take members' priorities and UNISON policy into the Labour Party. Labour Link also works with other unions who are affiliated to the Labour Party to deliver on our shared priorities.

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Through the Labour Link side, our political fund has helped shape the New Deal for Working People – a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of working people by strengthening individual and collective rights – the first fruits of which are expected in this week’s King’s Speech.

It also helped secure commitments to re-establishing the School Support Staff Negotiating Body and a Fair Pay Agreement in Social Care, with an aim to create a national care service.

Going further back, it enabled UNISON to influence policy the last time Labour was in power – from the first ever national minimum wage to the Equalities Act.

Labour Link works with UNISON activists to empower, develop and help them stand for elected office, through training and mentorship programmes, ensuring that those representing us better reflect the diversity of our communities.

In the last two years it has run training for trade unionists who are interested in becoming Parliamentary candidates, and some specifically for Black activists, with some of the graduates becoming MPs in this July’s general election.

During the general election, it provided support to Labour candidates in target seats in England, Scotland and Wales, helping create links between the union and future Parliamentarians.

Campaign fund

On the campaign fund side (previously called general political fund) all branches, nations, regions, self-organised groups, service groups and departments are able to bid for funds to support local and national campaign priorities.

The campaign fund committee, which oversees the fund, approved more than 60 bids over the last year. Bids from every UNISON region were successful, with total expenditure across the UK totalling £1.2m. This included funding for important strategic projects, such as the campaign for a national care service, the union’s work fighting racism

and targeting the far right via HOPE not hate, and support for the Year of LGBT+ Workers.

Political activity was supported in all nations of the UK. Funding was provided for the equalities coalition in Northern Ireland, for UNISON’s presence at Scottish political party conferences, and for a series of workshops supporting the implementation of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act in Wales/Cymru.

The committee also set aside funding for the general election campaign to pay for polling, political advertising and member communication in target constituencies.

The campaign fund also continued to support the full range of the union’s equalities work. This included funding for Black History Month, UN Anti Racism Day and local and regional pride events. Important trade union heritage events, the Durham Miners’ Gala and Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, also received funding.

Why we have political fund ballots

The requirement for trade unions to hold political fund ballots was introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s government in its 1984 Trade Union Act.

This legislation placed a duty on all trade unions to do two things if they wanted to undertake political campaign activity on behalf of their members.

Firstly, to hold and win a ballot of members to set up a separate fund to support our political campaign work.

Secondly, to hold further ballots – every 10 years thereafter – to renew the fund’s mandate.

Someone once said that trade union money is the cleanest money in politics, so it isn’t surprising that the Tories attacked unions through their political fund legislation.

They wanted to take away the campaign voice of working people and they wanted to defund the Labour Party to prevent them from being an effective political force.

Fortunately, the Tory party never achieved the aims set out in their 1984 act.

No political fund ballot has ever been lost.

Over the coming month we need to ensure that this one will not be the first. This is a ballot we need to win if we want UNISON to be able to continue to campaign on behalf of our members.

The ballot helpline opens on 24 July for members who haven't received their ballot paper: 0800 0 857 857.