

**RM NEWS EXCLUSIVE**

## I confess - I 'm a "Grumpy Old Man"

After 23 weeks of COVID I've become a grumpy (old) man. An early retiree (voluntary on grounds of redundancy), I struggle with 'old!' but believe it or not from my photo, 'I am GRUMPY'.



**Grumpy** that this epidemic was predicted years ago. Not COVID19 precisely but something of the sort which would jump species and drop us in a world of shit.

**Grumpy** because there's been practically no serious preparation done.

**Grumpy** about being told to wear a mask when W.H.O. said I didn't need to and when W.H.O. changed its opinion ...

**Grumpy** about other buggers who fail to grasp the concept of protecting me by wearing the damn thing properly! Not to mention social distancing. I could go on and on and on but I am sure you get the drift!

Gray Allan (Falkirk)

# Our Elderly are facing "Digital Exclusion" - Gray Allan

Work doesn't stop when you become a UNISON Retired Member. Not 'work' in the paid sense- in the sense that you HAVE to be there, but responsibilities, commitments and interests we volunteer for, all come with their 'to do' lists. For me these include UNISON Scotland Retired Members Committee

All my voluntary commitments continue to function but with activity strictly limited pretty much to chat and discussion. None is face-to-face. All our activity now happens on-line in the digital world.

Some readers may remember the Tory-LibDem Coalition slogan "Digital By Default" - an austerity measure intended to drive all dealings with Government and its agencies on-line and cutting face to face contact.

UNISON and the rest of Labour and Trade Union movement opposed it as it would throw up barriers for those most in need of help from the public services. COVID restrictions have confirmed our fears totally.

As a former librarian, I'm well used to "new" technology. Even so, I didn't use on-line meeting software until COVID. Now, I've 4 separate 'web-meeting platforms' on my computers - all slightly different, **Webex, GoTo, Microsoft Teams and Zoom**. I've 4 separate devices, **Smartphone, Android tablet, a Windows 10 laptop and a Windows 10 desktop computer** - all of which I could use to join on-line meetings. They all have advantages and disadvantages. How on earth can a computer novice - particularly an older person, master all this without help is beyond me!

We must find ways of giving this help or members will be excluded. Before I "retired" we provided training courses

in Falkirk Libraries but not in web meetings! It's sorely needed when you see folk at web meetings clearly struggling with it.

What happens to the who folk don't have computer hardware in the first place? Must they be forced to buy expensive equipment simply to take part in our democratic structures? Smart phones can be used, but they're not good for using to join an on-line meeting. Screen is too small to begin with!

**The vaccine may restore some normality. Some form of on-line contact may continue, but 'digital exclusion' is a democratic deficit. It cant be allowed to continue. UNISON must work to end it.**

**BE PATIENT! Your time will come - and when you're offered the vaccine, make sure you take it.**

**It is not being done only for your good. This is for everyone's good - yours and everyone with whom you come into contact. It will only work if we all cooperate.**

**Meanwhile .... STAY ALERT, stick to the rules and make your family to does also**

## Mike Kirby urges "Tell your MSP .... "No going back to the normal"

The UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced more cuts to public services. In response, UNISON has made clear to the Westminster Government that a decade of spending cuts left public services exposed when Covid came calling.

Unison's Scottish Regional Secretary, Mike Kirby, is now calling on all members to write to their MSPs to tell them "we cannot make the same mistake again".

Addressing the STUC virtual Conference, Mike said "Rishi Sunak's proposed public sector freeze is a kick in the teeth to key workers, a blow to struggling local economies and is divisive. The Scottish government must take a different approach. They can and should do things differently" said Mike.



Mike Kirby

"We must invest in our public services to rebuild our communities, support the Scottish economy and support a fair recovery.

I know some of wrote to you local MP calling on them to support public services. Thank you for doing that. We now need you to write to your MSP to demand that the Scottish government take a different approach.

They have tax raising powers. They can prioritise spending and they have considerable accumulated reserves."

**UNISON will continue to campaign to protect public services and those that deliver them.**

## Silver Voices members stay cautious

With 'vaccine euphoria' dominating the media, caution about the course of the pandemic is being drowned out. The Pensioners campaigning organisation, Silver Voices, balloted its members on the handling of the Pandemic so far. The main message from the survey is that most members fear a third wave is inevitable. They consider the restrictions too lax and that most of us will act with more caution than the Government is permitting.

Some of the findings were ....

**65% of members judged the performance of the UK Government in suppressing Coronavirus as either "disastrous" (32%) or "poor" (33%)** The devolved Governments rated a little better, with 39% judging performance "as effective as could have been expected in the circumstances"

**A massive 84%** have no confidence that current restrictions will prevent "a major resurgence of the virus in the New Year, necessitating further lockdowns". **72% consider the measures for the 5-day Xmas break "too lax"**

**61% will not mix indoors** with other households over Christmas despite being permitted to do so.

**60% judged social distancing as being widely ignored in their areas. By contrast 66% judged that the wearing of face masks is being widely observed in their areas**

**15% said they wouldn't take an anti-virus vaccine** - the main reason being "worried about personal safety at this stage".

## COVID Vaccination Be ready for it

The vaccination programme has now started in the main Scottish Hospitals and in special 'hubs' in the Highlands & Islands.

Staff who will be giving the vaccination to others will be first to get the injection.

**Everyone vaccinated will need two shots, between 21 and 28 days apart.**

● The Vaccine programme will follow the advice of the Independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

● Those with the greatest clinical need - including the over 80s, health and social care workers

● After that we'll all be called in the different age tiers - over 75s, over 70s, 60s in descending order.

**Officials forecast that most of these vulnerable groups will be inoculated by the end of February.**



## COP26

### UN 2021 Climate Change Conference

- Glasgow : Nov 2021

COP 26 was originally scheduled for 2020 - but the host nations, Italy and the UK were heavily affected by the pandemic.

The Conference will be held in SEC Centre in Glasgow

# Taking Climate Change seriously ..... the next major Global Crisis

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, is the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference. It is scheduled to be held in the SEC Centre in Glasgow, United Kingdom from 1st to 12th November 2021 under the presidency of the UK Government.

This is the first meeting since the 2016 Paris Agreement which set to substantially reduce the global impact of climate change. Participating nations agreed long-term temperature aims to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C (3.6 °F) above pre-industrial levels - and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C (2.7 °F). Parties are required to do every five years, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.

## Good Environmental Practice

We can all contribute to good environmental practice to help combat Global Warming. It's fairly straightforward ... and it will make a difference. Among the 'easy' things you can do are ...



### Don't waste water or paper

Take 'shorter' showers

Turn off the sink water when brushing your teeth

Water the garden in the morning or evening

Switch off anything that uses electricity (lights, televisions, computers, printers, etc.) when not in use

Save paper - print receipts and paper copies only when you need them. If possible print on both sides of the paper

### Save electricity and gas

Switch off lights, radios and TVs - especially when rooms are not in use

Unplug devices when possible. Even if an appliance is turned off it may still use power.

Turn your heating down a notch or two - put on a sweater rather than turn up the thermostat

Sign up for a renewable energy producer that uses 100% renewable energy to power homes

### Recycle your waste properly

Adopt good recycling habits to reduce landfill waste, conserve natural resources, save habitats, reduce pollution, cut down on energy consumption and slow down global warming.

Use the correct separation containers for your home and local recycling centres

Make sure your rubbish bags are recycled or biodegradable.

Know what to recycle as not all plastic and cardboard is acceptable (e.g. pizza boxes, due to the grease)

Identify and dispose of hazardous waste properly

Cut up the plastic rings from packs of beer or soft drinks to prevent wildlife from getting caught

We're facing the most critical environmental threat in history. Our climate, planet, lives and future are all at risk. It's an overwhelming thought, but we are not helpless.

It's a global problem - but one where we can make a difference if we act together. Small steps and changes in our daily routines will give a sense of success and the urge to do more.

## Have yourself a very, very 'Environmentally-friendly Christmas'

It's not too late ... start by doing your bit for the environment with an "Environmentally-friendly Xmas

- Use fabric to wrap gifts - tie with ribbon. Both are reusable and prettier than paper and Sellotape
- Stop using paper towels and napkins and incorporate washable cloths
- Yes, Xmas decorations are lovely - but do you really need all those lights burning right through the night when you are in bed?
- Read the labels to make sure you only use Forestry Stewardship Council certified wood and paper products
- Cut out cosmetics and products with palm oil in them. Companies that use are contributing to deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia.



## Support local projects

It makes good sense to support local projects by "buying local" where possible ... it can ...

Reduce plastic and paper waste

Boost cost efficiency

Enable bulk purchasing

Help support your neighbours and local businesses

Retain farmland and open spaces within the community

Build up the local economy

Reduce transport - cutting harmful carbon emissions

## Use REUSABLE not disposable items

Anything you use and throw away can potentially spend centuries in a landfill.

You can make these simple adjustments to decrease the amount of disposable items in your daily life.

- Carry your own reusable cup or water bottle
- Use airtight, reusable food containers - not sandwich bags and plastic wrap
- Pack a waste-free lunch. Carry your utensils, cloth napkin, and containers in a reusable lunch bag
- Take your own bags when you go shopping
- Buy bulk containers of your preferred drinks and refill a reusable bottle instead of buying individually-packaged drinks
- Use rechargeable batteries and recycle the old ones responsibly.

## Good on you Greta hen! That's him telt!



When Greta Thunberg the Swedish teenage environmental activist, was named "2019 Time Magazine's Person of the year" she was mocked

by Donald Trump who branded her award as "so ridiculous. He told her "Chill Greta, chill!" - to work on her "anger management problem" and to "go to an old-fashioned movie with a friend".

She waited 11 months before delivering the perfect riposte.

Recently, when Trump 'Twitter-raging', ranting in capital letters and throwing

out baseless allegations of voter fraud as his election-day lead over Joe Biden eroded, the teenager threw his words straight back at him ...

"So ridiculous" Greta tweeted in reply to Trump's "STOP THE COUNT!" rants. "Donald must work on his Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend!

Chill Donald, Chill!"

## Scottish Retired Members Committee

**Emergency motion** -The Committee has prepared a motion for the next UNISON's Scottish Council in February, calling for support for the reinstatement of Free TV Licence for over 75's Campaign.

**The next Scottish Retired Members Committee** will be held on Wed.13th January - then thereafter on the last Wednesday of each month. If you wish to join the meeting (on line) , contact the Scottish Secretary Barbara Fulton on [babsunison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:babsunison@yahoo.co.uk) for the required link.

## Retired Members News

is produced and edited by

Liam Chalmers 50 Brooms Rd Dumfries DG1 2LA  
[liam.chalmers@sky.com](mailto:liam.chalmers@sky.com) - 01387267647