

MANDATE TRADE UNION

DECEMBER 2022

# SHOPFLOOR

MANDATE MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO SHOPPERS

WE'RE HERE  
TO WORK  
**NOT**  
TO BE  
ABUSED



END OF YEAR MESSAGE **P2** BE KIND TO RETAIL  
WORKERS **P3** GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION **P11**

Picture: Eduardo Soare at Unsplash



# The power to deliver change is in your hands...

WITHOUT fear of contradiction, it is true to say that since the arrival of Covid-19 nearly three years ago we have all experienced a fundamental change to the world in which we live. Nearly every aspect of our very existence has been turned on its head whether it is our personal or working lives.

As we attempt to chart the way forward, we must never forget the loss and suffering experienced by so many and the fact that they were touched in this way because of merely turning up to do an honest day's work.

Throw into the mix the ever-evolving uncertainties created by Brexit and the war in Ukraine, we are certainly living in and through rapid and deep change both globally and here at home.

The answer to the question, 'When are we going back to normality?' is that we are not – because what has emerged in a relatively short period of time is a new normal unfolding before our very eyes.

The challenge for us here in Mandate, and indeed the entire trade union movement, is whether the emergence of this new order affords us the opportunity to reshape things in favour of the workers we represent and – in broader terms – society as a whole in delivering our basic traditional demands of social justice and equality for all.

As a result of the selfless attitude displayed throughout the Covid pandemic, retail workers are now rightfully recognised as essential workers. Many platitudes were directed at them from across society and the political divide along with an acceptance that their collective ef-

fort should never be forgotten and justly rewarded going forward.

As we emerge from the ravages of Covid-19, sadly it is clear that many of these expressions of support and gratitude have been conveniently and quickly forgotten.

The Covid-19 crisis shone a light on the unacceptable working conditions of many retail workers. We must keep that light shining brightly to ensure that inadequate weekly earnings, sick and annual leave entitlements, and precarious contracts are truly a thing of the past.

However, we must be clear and wake up to the reality that these essential and justifiable improvements are not simply going to be handed over on a plate by either the employer or political classes.

## Recognition

We must resolve to ensure that no longer will we let the market decide the fate of working people and their dependants. The time has now come to assert the recognition and respect that was afforded to retail workers during the dark days of Covid and use it now to our advantage.

It is a fact, and one which is worth repeating, we can only make sufficient gains if we act collectively and the best way of bringing this collective strength to bear is through being a member of a trade union.

It has been clearly proven that collective agreements and the decent working conditions that flow from them are highly effective in distributing wealth within our economy and achieving a greater sense of fairness in society.

Of course, one of the greatest barriers to workers collectively bargaining is the lack of a statutory right to

do so. Hence the reason why Mandate has made the introduction of adequate legislation in this area one of its key campaigning demands during the lifetime of this government and up to the next general election, whenever that might fall.

Failure by any political party or representative to deliver this long-awaited fundamental right must be shown the disdain it deserves and the best way of doing this is in the ballot box.

During Covid, many retail employers experienced significant increases in sales and profit margins. It is plain to see at this remove they still need some convincing that the corporate wealth generated must be distributed more fairly among those who were principally responsible for creating it in the first place – their workers.

Again, do not fool yourself this will not happen of its own accord and that is why your union will continue to fight tirelessly at the negotiating table to deliver the best achievable deal for our members. It's a simple reality the greater the number of union members in an employment the greater strength can be brought to bear and the better outcomes achieved from the negotiating process.

It is clear that private sector trade unionism is at a crossroads and moreover, one of the best ways of securing its future is through young workers' active participation. Therefore, issues such as global warming, de-carbonisation, housing, education, the gender pay gap and health to name but a few, are recognised as critically important and must remain centre stage for the movement going

forward. As a proud member of the wider trade union family, Mandate will continue to do everything within its means to support campaigns that highlight and attempt to achieve a socially just transition in these vitally important areas.

We will also continue to campaign on other important issues such as greater protection for workers in insolvent businesses, a properly-worded constitutional referendum on the ownership of our water and appropriate changes to our current licensing laws which reflect the needs of our members working in the bar trade.

## Respect

At this time of the year in particular it is important and appropriate that we demand the upmost respect from customers and employers alike for our members who will once again find themselves on the frontline during the frenzied Christmas and New Year shopping period.

In April of this year, we held our first Biennial Delegate Conference in Castlebar in nearly four years. There was a sense of genuine awareness and determination among our delegates in attendance. More than 40 motions relating to critical matters of concern to our members were passed and these will form the core of union policy for the next two years.

A new and enthusiastic National Executive Council of 20 members was also elected and I have no doubt that they will oversee and drive the delivery of this piece of work up to the next conference in 2024.

Even with all the uncertainties that surround us, there is an opportunity of forging meaningful and lasting

change. In fact, some would suggest there has never been a more appropriate time to act. Never before have retail workers been offered such a platform to state their case and seek to be treated as a workforce that is properly respected and rewarded for their efforts.

The extent to which we can make such change happen will ultimately be determined by the collective desire to act and bring it about. Being an active member of your union presents the best chance to drive and deliver this change towards a better future for all.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish all our members and their dependants a very happy, peaceful, and restful Christmas and New Year.

## Gerry Light

Mandate General Secretary



TRAVELLING home on the Dublin/Sligo train after the recent Raise the Roof march, I was moved to think, 'Are we making a difference?' A difference that is real and meaningful for those of us that make these social justicetype demands.

There's no doubt many would tell you that these social campaigns are pointless and lead to nothing. Unfortunately, they would also make their point 'armed' to the back teeth with their arguments to reason their non-



# Making a difference that matters...

participation positions. But what is their alternative?

Very often... and too often, it's easy to take the simple comfort-zone option of excusing ourselves from exercising our support or even better, our voice(s) for change. It could simply be preferring to stay at home or go to the 'local' to watch the football match, watching the soaps, a bit of retail therapy, rather than attending a meeting that discusses and plans how we can make real-life changes for the better.

Getting involved in change is not a difficult choice. But it is important and imperative. Doing nothing, accepting the status quo, arguing it's pointless and/or we'd be wasting our time in the face of all that has been achieved by those that decided otherwise. Where would we be if R2W, Right to Choose and R2Change campaigns hadn't happened?

Change campaigns are vitally important in our societies where the norms of the past are no longer acceptable. Where for example the social inequalities of

racism, sectarianism, homophobia, gender, to name a few aren't tolerated anymore.

These changes for the good weren't given by the ruling elite and their political classes, but were hard fought for and won by grassroots community groups, people's organisations, socially aware and the more radical political parties, trade unions and more. They sought to make a difference and they did.

They campaigned by developing strong organisational structures that developed and maintained an agreed vision, the strategy to deliver desired outcome(s) and a communicable message that stimulated mobilisation. While not a simple task, the same campaign formula provides the means for more localised and organisational potential...not least in our union!

Where so do we sit in Mandate as members, shop stewards, activists, NEC members, etc in the change of our respective workplaces/employments, and can we make a difference... a real difference that gives meaning to our membership?

It starts with us... the members, the owners of our union. If we agree the

position that the union is what we want it to be, then it is the members that will shape and drive what we want within and across our respective workplaces/employments. To effect that shape and drive we must be structurally organised to allow regular and active engagement in and across our workplaces, and, if necessary, across employments.

The very basic foundations of this structure, i.e. workplace shop steward, assistant shop steward(s), house committees, health and safety reps., workplace mappings, etc is very much achievable and well within our means to manage.

Having these simple structures in place affords us the means to meaningfully engage, to share our ideas, concerns and visions; to motivate and protect our activism and the members we represent; to recover our position and voice in our employments; to effect change, real change and therefore exercise from a position of power at all our workplace and employment based negotiations.

Genuinely caring about our union obligates us to make sure we are as organisationally strong as we can be. If

we have our organisational structures properly in place then we have the means to be Mandate, the union that matters!

I can recall hearing a Mandate official telling a union meeting, 'There are three things guaranteed in life... tax and death'. When we had got ourselves together regards dealing with the hardness of this statement, we reminded him he hadn't told us what the third guarantee in life was. He looked straight at us and said, 'Doing nothing, nothing changes. It's up to you!'

Likewise, I believe there's no point asking or wanting change unless we ourselves are prepared to change and, most importantly, put ourselves forward to make it happen. If we live in a world where workers' rights are regularly under attack with little or no defences, other than our own collective strength and power, we must be so organised that we can mobilise our available strength and power, as and when we need to.

Now is not the time to wait for someone and/or something else to do it, it's all our responsibility. Making change happen is about making the difference.

## Denise Curran

Mandate President



# Be kind to hard-pressed retail workers this Christmas

MANDATE has called on members of the public to respect retail workers during the busy and intense Christmas shopping season.

The call came on UNI Global Union's international day of action, held each year on 17th November, which seeks to raise awareness about combatting violence and harassment across the retail sector.

Mandate General Secretary Gerry Light underlined the vital importance of the issue for those working in the sector. He told *Shopfloor*: "The last two years have been extremely difficult for everybody but particularly for frontline retail staff, who continuously served their communities throughout the pandemic and before the vaccine rollout.

"The recognition of this fact alone should be a key motivating factor for customers to ensure that retail workers and the environment within which they work is free from violence

and harassment.

"Dignity and respect must transcend across all workplaces, across all people and sections of society.

"Unfortunately, evidence from around the world seems to indicate that this type of unacceptable behaviour towards retail workers is on the rise resulting in some cases with workers tragically losing their lives. Evidence also supports the reality that women are more likely to be subjected to unacceptable behaviour."

## Zero tolerance

Gerry Light called on all employers to implement a zero-tolerance approach to safeguarding the safety, health and welfare of all workers.

He said: "Employers cannot remain silent on this issue and Mandate is calling on employers to generate greater customer awareness around this critically-important matter and in this regard our members would welcome in-store point-of-sale sig-



Picture: Eduardo Soane at Unsplash

nage that sends out this clear message.

"As part of our ongoing 'Respect for Retail Workers' campaign Mandate is further calling on the Government to review and introduce – as necessary – stronger legislation which outlaws the abuse of workers and prohibits violence in the workplace.

"Examples of such robust legislation have already been introduced in Scotland, Sweden and Australia."

Light pointed out that respect for retail workers was not just for Christmas – but should be maintained throughout the year – but that the festive season was an opportunity to urge customers to show retail staff the same level of support, solidarity, and respect that they unselfishly displayed during the Covid crisis.

"One case of abuse is one too many," he added.

● See CAMPAIGN NEWS on p11

'Dignity and respect must transcend across all workplaces, across all people and sections of society...'

## REPORTING BACK COLLECTIVE BARGAINING STRATEGIES

# Where we're at and where we hope to go...

**Jonathan Hogan**

Mandate Assistant General Secretary



FOLLOWING our very successful BDC 2020-2022 earlier this year under the theme 'Essential Work, Decent Wages', no time was wasted in communicating to members the motions that were endorsed by the BDC, all of which would shape and guide our collective bargaining agenda into the future.

In addition to grassroots consultations that we must do in advance of formulating our various pay and benefit strategies, it has become Mandate policy to pursue progressive policies in line with Motions 9, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 29 and 4 through our collective bargaining portfolio.

The achievement of these changes will only be realised through an advocacy for change across all employers, supported by public representatives and driven by the solidarity of our members across all Divisions.

Driving these collective bargaining objectives that strives for the implementation of the living wage, effective climate action and ethical trading standards by employers must become normal demands.

The union movement has a responsibility to promote the sustainability and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the promotion of ethical employment practices, all of which can be supported through successful collective bargaining strategies.



United, focused and determined: Flashback to the BDC in Castlebar in April

To this end and subsequently following our 2022 BDC, these motions have been incorporated into our collective bargaining discussions.

In addition, work-life balance, family-friendly policies, gender-proofed policies, disability and mental health supports, contractual access to available hours and the general enhancement of contracts, must be pursued.

Otherwise retail work will fast become a fundamentally transient option only for workers, resulting in no core sustainable workforce remaining within the sector.

## REPORT

### Mandate research published in January

A NEW report outlining the current conditions of employment experienced by Mandate members is to be released in the New Year.

Queen's University Belfast academic Dr Conor McCabe was commissioned by the union in late 2021 to carry out the research.

Though the full report is to be published next month, initial findings from a survey carried out earlier this year show respondents reported a wide variance in hourly rates ranging from €10.50 an hour to €18.70 an hour.

Shockingly, some 64% of members who replied to the survey earned less than €451 a week.

Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan told *Shopfloor*: "Dr McCabe's research – which will also include a number of recommendations – will help guide us in making strategic decisions in the months ahead."

CWU, FSU and Mandate have come together to develop **Unionlink**, providing members and representatives with an innovative way of accessing a variety of courses, so that they can create their own pathway to learning while at the same time contributing to union aims. If you want to explore the online learning world, then **Unionlink** is for you!



[www.unionlink.org](http://www.unionlink.org)



# Don't forget the rights of bar workers

IRELAND is set to see the biggest shakeup in its licensing system in 200 years if the General Scheme of Sale of Alcohol Bill becomes law.

Introducing the legislation in October, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee told the Dáil she hoped it would, if enacted, “support the night-time economy” and “create jobs” as well as lead to an “enriching [of] our culture”.

Mandate, which has a long and proud tradition of representing bar workers and with thousands of members earning their living in the trade, is a key stakeholder in that sector. The union is using the opportunity given by the process of legislative scrutiny to underline and amplify the concerns and demands of its members – and on 2nd December put forward a submission to the Joint Committee on Justice.

General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: “We believe we are an important representative voice and should have a role in shaping this legislation. The Committee should recognise that there are serious workers’ rights issues – including health and safety considerations – at stake in any potential reforms of the licensing laws.”

It’s estimated that 50,000 people currently work in the licensed trade sector, but Covid has had a severe impact – and, according to Mandate, there has been a “significant exodus” of workers from the industry, which is now experiencing high labour shortages.

Light continued: “The introduction of new legislation governing the operation of the sector must allow for constrictive and positive realignment of the sector and the jobs within.

“If the opposite transpires,” he warned, “it would be counterproductive from the perspective of workers.”

In the past, bar work was a career of choice for many people in Ireland. The trade enjoyed good and secure conditions of employment and had an established apprenticeship structure.

Light insists that this aspect of the work and the “legitimate aspirations” in the sector must be “restored and sustained” into the future. Added to that, bar workers are often exposed



Pictures: Maria Elkind (CC BY-SA 2.0); Kopretinka (CC BY-SA 2.0)

**‘In many instances workers do not receive their legal entitlement to breaks and are often expected to perform unpaid duties’**

both to long working hours and unnecessary levels of aggression, violence, and intimidation from customers under the influence of drink. In the past, the Workplace Relations Commission highlighted issues around compliance. In its 2020 annual report, the WRC noted that 27% of inspections of premises/employments in the ‘Beverage Services Activities’ sector had revealed breaches of regulations leading to the recovery of €43,000 in unpaid wages.

Similarly of 1,536 inspections carried out in ‘Food Service Activities’, 32% were found to be in breach and €327,00 in unpaid wages recovered.

Light pointed out: “In many instances workers do not receive their legal entitlement to breaks and are often expected to perform duties unpaid – such as cleaning up after closing, for instance – hence our focus is understandably targeted on compliance with workers’ rights and the copper-fastening of those rights to the licence of the employer.”

Mandate wants legislators to take serious account of the rights of workers in their deliberations over the next few months and is calling for:

- The setting up of an industry-specific forum, similar to retail forum.
- Finding a solution to the placing of any legal obstacles that deny bar

workers the right to have their T&Cs negotiated through “sectoral collective bargaining mechanisms”.

- Provision to be made for revoking licences if breaches to employment law occurs, and that workers and/or their representatives should be involved in objecting to the issuing or renewal of licences if there has been a “proven disregard” for workers’ rights.

- The adoption of an Australian and New Zealand model of enforcement where health & safety inspections are carried out by trained trade union staff.

- Involvement by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in delivering apprenticeships, traineeships and third level degree programmes within the sector.

- Payment of premium rates for hours worked beyond 11.30pm.

- Stronger penalties for employers breaching Organisation of Working Time Act legislation.

- Provision of transport for workers expected to work unsocial hours; and/or financial compensation for transport outside of social hours.

- Legislation to make it a statutory offence to assault, threaten, abuse, obstruct, or hinder bar workers going about their duties.

- Employers should provide access to counseling for staff “where and when required”.

- Significantly increasing tax relief – currently €93 – on the maintenance of uniforms.

- Five days paid release for elected trade union and health & safety reps.

- Mandate also backed reform of the ‘Extinguishment Requirement’ – that all new licences are granted based on “respect for the international human right for workers to be represented by a trade union of their choice for individual and collective issues”.

## Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace

This one-day workshop is aimed at all Workplace Representatives who wish to improve their knowledge of bullying and harassment.

### Course Content:

- Health and Safety in the workplace
- Bullying defined
  - Types of bullying
- Bullying and the law
  - Relevant legislation pertaining to bullying and harassment
  - Codes of Practice
- Prevention of bullying and harassment in the workplace
- Harassment defined
- Dignity at work
- Vicarious liability
- Anti-bullying policy
- Inappropriate behaviours and keeping a diary
- Resolution procedures
- The rights and duties of employees pertaining to bullying and harassment
- Sexual harassment and stress
- Constructive dismissal as a result of bullying and harassment
- Disciplinary procedures



For more info, contact your Mandate Official or Mandate Training & Learning Centre on 01-8369699 or email [amanda.blake@mandate.ie](mailto:amanda.blake@mandate.ie)



# Dunnes workers: our claim is just

MANDATE has called on Dunnes Stores to simplify and harmonise its current complex system of pay scales, improve its rostering to provide for fairer scheduling at work, and to boost the range of benefits for its workers.

Pay scales form a key plank of the union's 2022-2023 pay and benefits claim lodged during the summer on behalf of its members working for the national retailer.

Mandate is also seeking a minimum 7.7% pay rise, an increase in the number of annual leave days, improvements to sick pay and the staff discount scheme, as well as the creation of more full-time jobs.

National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien told Shopfloor: "There are multiple pay scales in Dunnes Stores where some workers are on higher wages than others for doing the exact same job.

"We want to harmonise the pay and benefits for all Dunnes workers but we want to ensure pay equality is done in a way that brings the lowest earners up to the top."

Mandate's Dunnes National Committee submitted its pay and benefits claim to the directors of Dunnes Stores on 20th July. Unfortunately, Dunnes has yet to respond.

Lorraine O'Brien emphasises the need for Dunnes workers to send a strong message to management at the retailer and called on them to sign the online petition at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MG8CLGP>.

As Shopfloor goes to press, some 1,700 have already signed.

She continued: "It's vitally important that everyone working in Dunnes signs this petition. We're asking all shop stewards and activists to speak to workers in their stores about the pay claim and ask them to support it.

"It is imperative that Dunnes workers understand that this claim cannot be progressed and delivered without their full backing and active involvement. My message for them would be: if you think that this claim has merit – which, in my view, it undoubtedly has – it needs to be openly supported and promoted among your colleagues at shop floor level."

The pay and benefits claim was put together following extensive consultation with workers across the firm's network of stores earlier this year – a process that included a survey of more than 1,600 staff.

Some of the survey's key findings include:

- 92% of respondents said any available working hours should be offered to existing staff first.
- Nine out of 10 workers agreed additional annual leave should be given.
- 87% highlighted understaffing as an issue in their store.
- 79% said all workers should have access to the same incremental pay scale.
- 51% of post-2007 staff said they wanted to work additional hours.

And in a barometer reading of the



## Pulling power!

'All we want for Christmas... is decent pay and conditions' is what it says on this Xmas cracker. Mandate members are pictured outside the Dunnes head office on South Great George's Street, Dublin, on Monday 5th December, having lodged 2,100 signed petitions from Dunnes colleagues backing the pay and benefits claim.

## Dunnes pay and benefits claim...

1. Remove monthly spending limit of €1,000 on staff discount cards
2. 8 weeks paid sick leave and all staff to have access to sick pay after their 6 month probation.
3. The opportunity for Dunnes workers to obtain full time jobs. Additional hours should be offered on a fair and equitable basis to existing staff before hiring new workers.
4. Fairer scheduling for a better work/life balance. All Dunnes workers to receive a four week roster with changes only through mutual agreement. One weekend off in every four. More flexibility from Management with day off requests. A workplace with safe and adequate staffing levels.
5. All workers to receive full pay when on Maternity and Paternity Leave. More flexibility when taking Parental Leave to enable workers to take it as separate days or weeks. More flexibility when taking Parent's Leave, taken as separate weeks.
6. Dunnes Stores management must recognise and respect their workers' right to individual and collective representation by their trade union.

general feeling within the workforce – when respondents were asked if they felt they were being treated with the dignity and respect they deserved, 65% replied 'no'. Only one in five answered 'yes'.

Patrick Killeen, a member of Mandate's Dunnes National Committee, insisted his employer was more than capable of paying higher wages and improving terms and conditions.

"Those [employers] that can pay, should pay," he said. "What we want is a brand new pay scale for all Dunnes Stores workers which provides a decent standard of living and rewards us for our loyalty and experience."

Mandate activist Alex Homits, who also works for the retailer, flagged up allocation of hours and understaffing as serious concerns that needed to be

addressed. He said: "Many of us want to work longer hours because we can't pay our bills, but the company won't allow us, choosing to either under-staff stores, which leads to huge pressure on staff, which in turn leads to health and safety concerns, or else they hire more workers on lower rates of pay."

Cathy McLoughlin, a cashier at the company's outlet in Marshes Shop-

ping Centre, Dundalk, fully agrees.

As a Dunnes worker who is guaranteed 39 hours a week, Cathy is one of only around 10 members of staff on full-time contracts at her store: "In this day and age unfortunately that is rare. We're currently working in what is basically a gig economy."

And Cathy flags up another problem that comes with claims that the company has an over-reliance on part-time staff with little prospect of moving to a full-time contract or climbing a pay scale.

"We've got a very, very high turnover of staff, and that's part of the reason we're fighting for a proper pay scale because there's no incentive for people to stay", she said.

Workers at Dunnes are also seeking changes to the company's sick pay scheme.

Alex Homits explained: "Dunnes workers and tens of thousands of other shop workers risked their lives and health over the last two years and the least we should get is a decent sick pay scheme.

"Right now thousands of workers are forced to come to work with illnesses because of financial necessity. That's not good for the worker, their families or our customers who often pick up the illnesses we have."

He added: "We want an eight-week



National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien

paid sick pay scheme and all staff should have access to this after their six-month probation."

Another key item in the pay and benefits claim is fully paid maternity and paternity leave. At the moment Dunnes employees are forced to rely on the €250-a-week benefit from the state.

Dunnes worker Liz Loftus, a Mandate activist from Dublin, said: "With the cost of energy, rents, house prices and everything else going up so much in recent months, it is impossible to survive without fully paid maternity leave.

"If workers don't have enough income when on maternity or paternity leave, not only do they suffer, but their children suffer too."

And Cathy McLoughlin added: "When you're already earning at the lower end of the spectrum, and in the current climate where everything costs so much, and then you're relying on state benefits with no financial help from your employer, it's not feasible."

'This claim cannot be progressed and delivered without Dunnes workers' full backing and active involvement'



OIREACHTAS EVIDENCE

# Govt ‘too slow’ in bringing in Living Wage

THE Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment has been told Mandate members are being “squeezed” between low wages and the high cost of living and that pay hikes will not cause an inflationary spike or cost jobs.

General Secretary Gerry Light and Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan made the comments during evidence given before the Committee on 29th September.

It follows the announcement earlier in September by Tánaiste Leo Varadkar of an increase in the national minimum wage by 80 cent to €11.30 an hour from 1st January 2023.

In an opening statement, Jonathan Hogan reminded committee members that a commitment had already been given in the programme for government to move the minimum wage to the living wage by the end of the current sitting of the Dáil.

“We trust that the Government does not mean to renege on this commitment,” he said, noting that the only “viable solution” was to increase wages and reduce the cost of essential public services relied on by workers.

He explained to TDs and senators that Mandate calculated that €14 an hour was a “starting point” in moving the national minimum wage to a living wage to protect vulnerable workers.

“Mandate based this calculation on last year’s Living Wage Technical Group estimate of a living wage hourly rate of €12.90, which is based upon a 39-hour working week and then add 8.5% to reflect the cost of inflation in 2022.”

Hogan pointed out that the Low Pay Commission’s recommendation of €11.30 per hour – a rise of 7.6% – failed to keep pace with the 2022 inflation rate and was just 80.7% of a €14 minimum wage.

He said: “Matching inflation is the bare minimum expectation of



Mandate GS Gerry Light and AGS Jonathan Hogan giving evidence to the Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment on 29th September

workers – anything less is a pay cut.”

The Committee was told that the Low Pay Commission (LPC) was “failing in its mandate to protect workers” because those on the minimum wage had seen their position relative to those earning a median wage “deteriorate” over the last five years.

“By any measure we can see that minimum wage workers have been falling further behind,” Hogan added.

He countered claims that boosting wages would increase inflation by

linking rising costs instead to “supply chain problems, commodity market shocks, and... the energy crisis”.

“In this context, increasing the minimum wage to the living wage will have a minimal impact on price growth.”

In fact, he said low paid workers had a “particularly high propensity” to spend their money locally which meant that money flowed “back to businesses and across the domestic economy”.

In his concluding remarks, Hogan suggested to the Committee that increasing hourly rates of pay becomes “irrelevant” if an employer cuts the number of working hours available to the worker.

He insisted that collective bargaining was “the only way” to protect workers from “unscrupulous” employers and to ensure they received an acceptable weekly living wage.

“The Government should enable workers to improve their own wages

directly with their employer and the best way to do this is through enhanced collective bargaining and union access through effective legislative rights,” Hogan added.

Mandate General Secretary Gerry Light told the Committee increases in social welfare and state supports were not a replacement for decent wages and hit out at suggestions a rise in the minimum wage to €14 would cost jobs.

Pointing out that he brought “considerable inside knowledge” to the subject being a founding member of the Low Pay Commission and having served on it for six years, Light told the Committee: “Our research [commissioned while on the LPC] has clearly shown that all of the sabre-rattling and the scaremongering about the impact of a rate [rise] will in some way cost jobs or will reduce earnings – that hasn’t proven to be the case. It’s not supported by any credible research out there.”

He claimed the Government was moving “far too slow” towards introducing a living wage, and urged that this be “urgently” addressed.

Dismissing employers’ calls for a phased introduction as an “absolutely nonsensical suggestion”, he warned that some were already suggesting they could “substitute” social welfare increases for wage rises.

Light told the Committee: “I don’t subscribe to the concept ‘any job is better than no job’. I think if we get into that particular view, you’re very quickly having to deal with potential exploitation and indeed compulsion with people being forced to take up work.”

He told TDs and senators that he believed that work “should always in itself be attractive enough to invite people to participate in the labour market”.

‘The Govt should enable workers to improve their own wages ... and the best way to do this is enhanced collective bargaining’

## RECAP ARGOS PAY DEAL

### Argos workers vote for one-year 3.28% pay deal

IN MARCH, Mandate members at Argos voted in favour of a one-year pay deal (2022/23) that saw their base rate rise by 3.28%. The move followed a series of meetings between Argos management and Mandate’s National Negotiating Committee to discuss the annual pay round in January and February 2022.

Included in the agreement was that those employed on Year 1 and Year 2 pay rates (€10.50 per hour and €10.54 per hour respectively) would have their hourly rates increase to Year 3 rates (€11.02 per hour).

It was also agreed that Argos would pay 100% of the normal Christmas bonus and that all premiums and allowances would remain

unchanged. Mandate Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan told *Shopfloor*: “This agreement was brokered against the backdrop of a challenging trading environment for Argos – and so far this year, the retailer has announced a number of store closures.”

He added: “However, it should also be noted that the new starter rate in Argos will also have to comply with scheduled improvements to the minimum wage, which will increase to €11.30 in early 2023.

“This will no doubt force many retailers to review their pay models, many of which are based upon pay differentials between the rates of pay.”

## RECAP COMANS BEVERAGES

### Once-off €500 voucher & pay talks brought forward in response to cost-of-living crisis

COMANS Beverages has agreed to give a once-off €500 voucher to every worker to help them with the cost-of-living crisis and skyrocketing inflation.

There is a pay agreement in place that doesn’t expire until the end of 2023 but the firm has agreed to bring forward consultations on pay to the end of November 2022 instead of October 2023 as originally stated.

The welcome move follows a meeting between Mandate and management at the Dublin-based wholesale drinks supplier.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Michael Meegan told *Shopfloor*: “Management has also agreed to pay members the last phrase of the current agreement set for January 2023 and we are hopeful that early progress will be made on a new pay proposal that will be acceptable to members in 2023.”







## WORKPLACE RELATIONS COMMISSION

# Ex-Debenhams workers' test case hearing at WRC

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) heard a test case on 26th October over complaints made by some 750 ex-Debenhams workers relating to the manner in which they were sacked two-and-a-half years ago.

In early April 2020, Debenhams announced it was ceasing its retail operations in the Irish Republic. Hundreds of shop workers – with a combined total service of 10,000 years to the company – lost their jobs, sparking a dispute lasting 406 days with the UK-based company.

In so doing, it is claimed Debenhams Retail (Ireland) failed in its duty to consult with or to provide information to the workers' union Mandate in advance of the move.

Meanwhile, ahead of the hearing, a group of former Debenhams workers staged a protest outside the WRC's Lansdowne House offices in Dublin.

The test case is being taken on behalf of Jane Crowe, a former shop steward at the Debenhams outlet on Henry Street, and a leading figure in the resulting long-running dispute.

In its opening statement, Mandate claimed the decision to sack the workers was made before 9th April 2020 and was ratified a week later on 16th April – yet the first consultation with Mandate only took place the following day.

Mandate General Secretary Gerry Light explained to the hearing that an



Debenhams action lasted 406 days

initial letter from company director John Bebbington to the workers on 9th April made it “really evident that we’ve gone beyond the point of no return”.

He told the hearing Mandate had expressed “displeasure and disquiet” at the move but that it had taken a further eight days for the liquidators and management to meet with staff

representatives. Under employment law, there must be meaningful consultations with trade unions while proposed redundancies are still at an early stage.

The hearing heard from the union that senior management at Debenhams had opted to go down the collective redundancy route before any consultation with the union.

Mandate also claimed communications from KPMG, appointed by the High Court to the Debenhams business as the liquidator, were nothing more than a box-ticking exercise.

The union argued that the information it subsequently received fell far short of what was required as a minimum.

### Maximum comp

For its part, KPMG's legal representative claimed at the hearing that the liquidators believed they did comply with the requirements relating to consultation and the providing of information. Mandate is seeking maximum compensation of four weeks' pay per claim and has submitted four claims.

The meeting concluded with an agreement that the respondents (Debenhams Ireland) would provide a further legal submission within two weeks with the complainants given a further two weeks to respond.

The adjudicator in the case will deliver his ruling once he has considered the submissions.



Former Debenhams shop steward Jane Crowe (above) and (top) Ex-Debenhams workers protest outside WRC





RECAP MURRAYS OF CHARLEVILLE

# 10% deal over 2 years

MANDATE members working for Murrays of Charleville have voted unanimously for a deal that will see them receive a 10% pay increase over two years, along with the putting in place of a number of family-friendly policies.

This breaks down to a 6% wage rise from 1st March 2022 to 31st December 2023 (including a four-month backdate) and a 4% pay rise from 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

Over the last decade the retailer, a drapery store situated in the heart of the Co Cork town, has faced challenging trading conditions – but has always enjoyed the benefit of having an extremely loyal workforce.

Over that time, Mandate members have remained committed to doing what they can to see Murrays return to a much-improved trading position.

Southern Division Industrial Officer John O'Donnell opened talks with management in June of this year and an agreement was subsequently brokered.

John O'Donnell told *Shopfloor*: “In our negotiations, we wanted to underline not just the obvious spiralling rate of inflation but also the dedication and unwavering commitment shown by our members to the business through some very difficult times. And we said this had to be recognised now more than ever.”

He added: “Mandate will continue to work with Murrays in the future to deliver the best terms and conditions for our members.”



RECAP BOOTS

# Vote for 2-yr pay deal

MANDATE members in Boots have voted in favour of a two-year pay deal as well as a mechanism that will harmonise pre-2009 and post-2009 pay scales at the retailer. It follows a number of meetings between Boots and Mandate negotiations teams earlier this year that led to the 2022/24 pay agreement.

The agreement, running from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2024, means customer assistants and advisors employed under the post-2009 pay scale will receive two 55 cents hikes in their hourly rates over that period. The first 55 cent increase was backdated to 1st April 2022 and the second will apply from 1st April 2023.

A number of discretionary and non-guaranteed benefits, such as a non-contractual performance-linked bonus scheme and a half-day Christmas shopping day, were discontinued under the agreement and the monies re-invested in the hourly rates package. Separate arrangements were also agreed for employees earning pre-2009 scales. The next pay review is slated for April 2024.

Mandate National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien told *Shopfloor*: “The move from a traditional percentage increase to a flat rate payment on the hourly rate represents a significant change and is one which yields far greater increases for our members, particularly those on the lower points of the scales.”

Picture: Boots

RECAP M&S PAY DEAL

# Combined 7.9% rise on lower points of the pay scale

MEMBERS of Mandate and SIPTU at Marks and Spencer have voted for a union-negotiated agreement covering February 1st 2022 to February 1st 2024 that will see increases in hourly rates of pay for both sales advisors and team managers.

There was also a commitment given by M&S and set out in some detail in the agreement to reduce the number of temporary contracts and to move towards advertising permanent contracts only in the first instance and fixed term contracts for future vacancies thereafter.

In setting out the background to the proposals, unions and management agreed that trading conditions had been “difficult” and continued to be “challenging and unpredictable” and that putting in place a “stable industrial relations environment” was important in dealing with this reality.

All parties concurred that the Irish end of the high street retailer had invested significantly in overcoming logistical challenges brought about by Brexit. The pay aspect of the deal saw



Picture: Peter (CC BY 2.0)

sales advisors and team managers receive a 60 cent rise on all points of their pay scale, backdated to 1st February 2022. A further rise of 30 cent is to be applied on 1st August 2023.

The combined increases would yield pay rises of between 7.9% at the lower points of the scale to 5.5% at the top for sales advisors, while team managers received increases of between 4.8% and 4.1%.

M&S also gave a commitment to advertise temporary contracts as permanent for those who had been working at the retailer for 18 months (at the time the agreement was signed in June 2022).

And they said that “further contracts will be advertised as permanent by the end of September 2022”.

All of this would be coupled with a “resourcing review” in all stores to ensure “operational requirements” were met.

From September 2022, M&S said it would move to introduce four-month fixed-term contracts (excluding those

recruited for peak/summer work).

After this, and a successful completion of a probationary period, the contracts could then be extended to 12 months. Following this, they would expire or be advertised as permanent contracts.

Both unions and management gave an undertaking to resolve any disagreements about how the workings of the deal were interpreted or applied “in a speedy manner”.

Mandate National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien told *Shopfloor*: “In following the model for flat-rate increases, those on the lower points of the pay scales received the highest increases which is something this union has advocated for some time and is in keeping with the union's policy.”

“The elimination of temporary contracts has been a long-held objective for the union and now more than ever our members need certainty of tenure and earnings to meet the growing economic demands.”

NEW COURSE COMING IN 2023!

## Presentation Skills Getting Your Message Across Effectively...

**Course Content:** This one-day training course is designed to give you the tools and techniques that you need to prepare and deliver presentations effectively. Beyond focusing on what you should do, you will also learn about the most common presentation pitfalls and how you can avoid them. In advance, you will be asked to prepare and deliver a very short presentation on any topic of your choice. Thereafter, your presentation will be reviewed for the purpose of giving you supportive and constructive feedback on your

style of presentation. This will enable you to develop and improve both the content and delivery of your presentation(s), whilst increasing your confidence and surmounting the fears commonly associated with presentations.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this training course participants will be able to:

- Appreciate and apply the art or skill-set associated with effective presentations, enabling them to become better presenters/communicators.

- Understand the necessity of taking **CONTROL** of the (i) material, (ii) the nerves and (iii) the audience, to ensure maximum impact for their presentations.
- Improve their presentation content, structure, delivery and use of visual aids.



For more info, contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)





# Campaign ramps up over new Liffey Valley parking charges

THE RECENT introduction of car parking charges at the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre, Clondalkin, in the mouth of a cost-of-living crisis and skyrocketing food and fuel prices have angered retail workers and local shoppers alike.

In response, Mandate and SIPTU members at the shopping complex have staged a number of protests at the move.

Approximately 1,000 members of Mandate work at the site in west Dublin, which had until 17th October offered free parking, having done so for the last 24 years.

There are currently more than 3,000 spaces available in the customers' zone with shoppers charged €2.50 for the first three hours and €2.50 for every hour after that. The daily maximum is €12.50.

A designated staff car park with 550 spaces – which the general public can also use – charges employees a flat rate of €2.50 a day.

Liffey Valley management have



flagged up the “substantially discounted rate” for staff, but, according to Mandate Industrial Officer Ken Reilly, this is cold comfort for members of his union, most of whom

are low paid with some on or near the minimum wage.

He told *Shopfloor*: “This amounts to an additional €600 a year coming out of their pockets – that is if they are lucky enough to actually find a parking space every day in a €2.50 zone – which is a big if...

“Some of our members think that they’ll be forced to park in the customers’ area because the staff car park is full, with a potential cost to them of something in the region of €3,600 a year.”

He added: “It is unacceptable that the centre management team ignore the workers and their representatives. We are seeking immediate engagement by centre management with union officials with an aim to resolving this situation to our members’ satisfaction.”

Meanwhile, Mandate has launched both physical and online petitions in protest at the move and the story has received a lot of attention in the press, TV and online media.



The Christmas Grinch (below right) made an appearance at one of the Liffey Valley protests (above and top)



**NEW COURSE COMING IN 2023!**

## Effective Teamwork

Where And How You Fit In

**Course Content:** This one-day training course is designed to help course participants to acquire the necessary knowledge and to apply the appropriate skills and behaviours considered essential to the development of a harmonious and successful team. That is, it will enable the building of stronger relationships with the team, as team members get to know each other better and create the foundations for a high performing group or team. Having established one's preferred team roles – and its strengths and

development needs – the course addresses the five main dysfunctions of a team and how they can be successfully overcome.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this training course participants will know:

- What role(s) they are best equipped to perform in a team.
- How to overcome a lack of trust among team members.
- How to engage in constructive conflict.

- How to follow a clear, concise and practical guide to using the five dysfunctions of a team as the basis for improving team relationships and effectiveness.
- What is required to realise the potential of teamwork.

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# Legislation that brings clarity on tips welcomed by unions

MANDATE has joined the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in welcoming the timely amendment – in advance of Christmas – to legislation that seeks to bring some clarity over tips for workers in the hospitality sector.

The Payment of Wages (Amendment) (Tips and Gratuities) Act 2022, which became law in the summer but came into effect on 1st December, gives employees clearer rights about tips, provides more clarity for customers, in particular those who pay electronically, and will require employers to display their policies.

It introduces new rules about how employers share tips, gratuities and service charges among their employees. It also makes it illegal for employers to use tips or gratuities to make up basic wages.

Under the legislation employers are banned from describing a mandatory service charge applied to a customer's bill as a 'service charge' unless the payment is treated by the employer in the same way as electronic tips or gratuities.

It means that mandatory service charges can only be added to a bill if



Picture: Lea Latumahina (CC BY-SA 2.0)

the money goes to employees.

In addition there is an onus on employers to clearly display their policy on how cash and card tips, gratuities and service charges are distributed.

Congress General Secretary Owen Reidy said: "This has been an important campaign waged by workers in the sector and unions. It is particu-

larly important the legislation comes into effect in anticipation of a busy Christmas season."

He added: "However, the most significant benefit to workers in the hospitality sector – and indeed all sectors of the economy – is the right to collective bargaining."

The legislation will be reviewed

after one year to assess its effectiveness.

Mandate, which represents members in the licensed trade and hospitality sector, while welcoming the amended legislation underlined the importance of "compliance" and the "effective and robust application of this law".

Mandate Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan told *Shopfloor*: "We're calling on all workers within the industry to make themselves aware of this important legislation, and to become part of an organised workforce working in solidarity with other union members to improve pay, terms and conditions beyond the basic legislative requirements."

"This can really only be done through effective collective bargaining agreements," he added.

# Penneys supervisors accept restructuring proposals



MANDATE representatives met with senior management at Penneys following the announcement in June of a restructuring process of the supervisor grade – potentially involving redundancies – within the company.

Reacting to the 29th June announcement, the union, which represents more than 5,000 workers at Penneys' 36 outlets across the Republic, said it had caused "enormous stress and anxiety" for members and vowed that the voices of those impacted by the move would be "heard by the company".

In July, Mandate National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien said: "We will engage fully with the company and with the intention of introducing a range of options for those impacted by the restructuring, including no compulsory redundancies, redeployment where possible and a negotiated redundancy package if necessary."

After extensive negotiations with Mandate officials, Penneys set out a range of options involving both voluntary redundancies and redeployments.

Penneys offered an enhanced redundancy package of four weeks' pay per year based on earnings averaged over a 52-week period and including overtime and Christmas bonus. No cap would be applied to the redundancy payment and tapers removed for those over 60 years of age.

In terms of redeployments, there were a number of choices open to those impacted by the move but who chose to remain with the company. These included team manager and retail assistant roles as well as Head Office positions.

Michelle Whelan, Penneys' Head of People and Culture Retail, said: "We believe this is the right thing for our evolving business to help set us and our teams up for success in the future."

"We recognise that this change is difficult for all who are involved, we will be doing all we can to support all the colleagues who are affected by the proposed restructure."

## Real choices

Lorraine O'Brien told *Shopfloor*: "Many of those affected by the company's decision to restructure its business were long-serving members of staff and it was important for this fact to be recognised throughout the negotiating process."

"Our objective was to ensure that any proposal that came out of the talks provided real choices for those impacted by the move and that a measure of certainty would be given to those who wished to remain with the company, and that they would be given the choice to do so."

"Ultimately the final proposal mirrored these objectives resulting in the proposals being overwhelmingly accepted by the supervisor grade."

NEW COURSE COMING IN 2023!

## Effective Meetings

**Course Content:** This one-day training course is designed to give participants an understanding of the essentials associated with effective meetings. It will cover a range of pertinent issues, including the committee members' roles, planning/preparing for meetings (including agenda preparation), 'best

practice' minute-taking, the management of challenging behaviours and scenarios at meetings and post-meeting assessment tools that are designed to enhance meetings for the future.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this training course participants will understand:

- The roles and responsibilities of the 'model' Chairperson/Facilitator, Secretary/Recorder and the other meeting participants.
- How best to prepare tailored agendas efficiently and effectively.

- How to facilitate productive discussion via tactful questioning, active listening, appropriate acknowledgements, considered clarifications and succinct summaries.
- The importance and the art associated with the assignment of follow-up tasks or responsibilities and agreement on and the application of deadlines.
- The process for effective participation and decision-making, as customised to and agreed upon by the meeting group for the attainment of consensus.
- How to effectively manage and resolve challenging behaviours, situations and meeting attendees.



For more info, contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)



# Mandate backs global day of action against violence & harasssment directed at workers in retail sector

MANDATE has given its full backing to UNI Global Commerce’s second annual global day of action on 17th November against violence and harasssment directed at shop workers.

Mandate Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan said: “There must be a zero-tolerance attitude towards such behaviour both in the retail sector and throughout society. Our members cannot – and will not – accept that being harassed, threatened, or assaulted while at work is just part of the job. It’s not acceptable.

**Action**

“We back UNI Global’s call on retailers to take immediate action to put in place measures to protect their staff and on governments across the world to ratify ILO Convention 190 (C190).”

C190 is the first international treaty to recognise that everyone at their work should be free from violence and harasssment, including that which is gender-based.

Since the pandemic and increasingly because of the cost-of-living crisis, there has been an explosion of third-party violence by some customers towards shop workers.

A UNI Global study, titled *The Inconvenient Truth*, which brought together data from its affiliates across



Picture: UNI Global Commerce

the world, found that while violence towards shop workers was not unheard of before the pandemic – Mandate launched its own Respect Retail Workers campaign way back in 2008 – it had surged in the last few years.

According to a Mandate survey



SDA National Secretary Gerard Dwyer: a problem of ‘epidemic’ proportions. UNI Global report *The Inconvenient Truth* employed in retail.

In a 2021 survey by UK shop workers union Usdaw, nine out of 10 respondents said that they have been verbally abused and another 64% threatened by a customer.

In Australia, a late 2020 study by the Shop, Distributive, and Allied Employees Association (SDA) found one in five retail workers had reported being coughed on or spat at during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commenting on the survey, SDA National Secretary Gerard Dwyer said: “When you have 85% of retail

staff reporting they have been subjected to verbal abuse from a customer and 14% reporting they have been subject to physical violence, you know we’ve got an epidemic on our hands.”

Austrian union GPA found that half of its members who responded to a survey reported dealings with “aggressive, unruly customers”.

In Finland, a survey of retail workers conducted by Commerce Federation and Service Union (PAM) found that half of respondents had been called names or threatened in the past year.

In Belgium, an ACV Puls Union survey found that 80% of retail workers have been the victims of aggression.

Meanwhile, the UK trade body, the Institute of Customer Services reported in June 2022, that 44% of retail staff had experienced hostility from customers in the previous six months – an increase of 35% since February 2022.

The shop workers blamed “increased anxiety” among shoppers, while 25% linked the behaviour specifically to price increases.

## Udaw calls for legislation to protect North’s shop workers

USDRAW, Mandate’s sister union in the UK, has called for shop workers in the North to be offered specific legal protections from violence, threats and abuse.

The union made the call at the NIC-ICTU biennial conference in Enniskillen on 22nd and 23rd November, amid claims that retail staff north of the border have been left behind while protections have been introduced in England, Scotland and Wales.

Udaw has published shocking interim statistics from their annual survey of more than 4,600 retail staff, which show that in the last 12 months (pre-pandemic levels in brackets, from the 2019 survey):

- 71% (67%) have experienced verbal abuse.
- 48% (42%) were threatened by a customer.
- 5% (5%) were assaulted.
- 45% said they were not confident that reporting abuse, threats and violence will make a difference.
- 20% of those who had been as-



Picture: Usdaw

Comparison	2019	2020	2021	2022
Abuse	67%	88%	89%	71%
Threats	42%	61%	63%	48%
Violence	5%	9%	12%	5%

saulted did not report the incident.

And Usdaw also revealed some of the comments Northern Irish shopworkers shared when responding to Usdaw’s survey:

- “I asked a customer for ID and he spat on me and told me to f\*\*\* off - another incident in which i asked for ID and a customer told me I should die.”

- “Sexual assault, grabbed by customer tried to kiss and getting in personal space.”
- “Customer threw a bar of chocolate in my face; another was verbally abusive to me.”
- “Teenager shouting abuse at me and other staff at tills. Said he would be back.”
- “Usual abuse is because of price changes, lack of stock or not enough staff on the floor.”
- “Customer swearing at me as they didn’t like my answer to their questions ‘you’re a f\*\*\*ing idiot.’”

Udaw General Secretary Paddy Lillis said: “It is heart-breaking to hear these testimonies from Northern Irish shopworkers who deserve far more respect than they receive. Our latest survey results show the scale of the appalling violence, threats and abuse faced by them.

“Udaw, with the support of many retailers, has won new legislation to protect shop workers from violence, threats and abuse in Scotland, Wales and England. Although this is a positive development, it is extremely disappointing that retail workers in Northern Ireland are not covered.

“All retail workers deserve legal protection from abuse, threats and violence. Effective legislation must be passed in Northern Ireland to protect retail workers and make it clear abuse is not part of the job. Usdaw is calling on the ICTU to campaign for a Northern Ireland Government to take action and implement effective legislation which protects retail workers against abuse, threats and violence.”



## RECAP BROWN THOMAS ARNOTTS

## Members vote for 6% pay rise over two years

MANDATE members at Brown Thomas Arnotts (BTA) have voted in favour of a management pay offer that will see a 6% rise in wages at the retailer over two years.

The set of proposals contained a number of family-friendly and work-life balance features as well as a commitment to a yearly review on working hours.

National Coordinator Lorraine O'Brien told *Shopfloor*: "We welcome the fact that BTA has recognised the need to develop inclusive employee policies to enhance the overall pay and benefits reward package."

Management and Mandate representatives met in April and May after the union lodged a pay and benefits claim at the beginning of the year.

Setting out its proposals, BTA acknowledged the contribution made by staff during what it claimed was a "difficult and challenging economic climate" but underlined its view that there was an "ongoing necessity to



Brown Thomas store in St Patrick's Street, Cork

Picture: William Murphy (CC BY-SA 2.0)

control costs".

The firm also reiterated its commitment to continue working with Mandate "to protect the long-term interests and sustainability of business for the benefit of all our

colleagues going forward".

The details of the agreement included:

- 3% pay increase covering this year, which was applied retrospectively from 1st May, 2022.

- 3% pay increase for next year, from 1st May, 2023.

- A commitment to align pay scales at Brown Thomas Cork with other Brown Thomas stores.

There were a number of valuable and important work-life enhancements for employees included in the deal that came into effect from 1st June 2022:

- A new fertility treatment policy that allowed for three days paid leave per treatment cycle (limited to once every 12 months and for a maximum of three cycles).

- A pregnancy loss policy of 10 days paid leave for either parent or persons engaged with a surrogate.

- Five days menopause leave that would not be recorded as sick absence.

- A maternity pay policy allowing for 50% pay for 10 weeks for employees with one-year service.

- An enhanced sick pay policy – three days pay for those with 13 weeks service.

BTA also gave a commitment to



Lorraine O'Brien: 'Inclusive employee policies'

engage with employees "on an individual basis" each September to review their contracted hours against actual hours worked. This would allow for updated contracts of employment to be issued, if appropriate, to reflect the new reality of hours worked.

Under changes to T&Cs, gift card commissions and Sunday lunches for new starters would no longer apply, and pay frequency for Arnotts workers was harmonised with the rest of BTA.

Mandate has a collective agreement to negotiate on behalf of clerical and sales staff at the retailer, which is part of the international Selfridges Group of department stores with outlets in the UK and the Netherlands.

## Negotiation Skills

This one-day workshop in Negotiation Skills is for Workplace Representatives who wish to improve their knowledge of conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

### Course Content:

- The 'unwritten rules' or 'conventions' associated with the bargaining / negotiating process.
- The key criteria for successful negotiations.
- Getting the stages of negotiation right: preparing, opening, bargaining and closing.
- Effective preparation and planning for successful negotiations.
- The skillset or attributes of an effective negotiator.

- The key roles in the negotiation Team.
- Identifying and deploying the right bargaining strategies and tactics.
- Negotiating styles and strategies.
- Adopting a collaborative approach to ensure trust, rapport and long-term gains for both parties.
- How to distinguish win: win from win: lose and lose: lose negotiation outcomes.



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## AMAZON

## Global wave of Black Friday actions

MANDATE has given its full backing to this year's 'Make Amazon Pay' global day of action – a wave of strikes, protests and industrial action that spread across 35 countries on 25th November, Black Friday.

It was the third year that the Make Amazon Pay coalition, a joint initiative by UNI Global and Progressive International, staged the event to coincide with the annual online shopping binge.

The coalition is united behind a set of common demands – that Amazon pays its workers fairly and respects their right to join unions, pays its fair share of taxes and commits to real environmental sustainability.

Speaking on Black Friday, UNI Global General Secretary Christy Hoff-



man said: "Today, unions, civil society and progressive elected officials will stand shoulder to shoulder in a massive global day of action to denounce Amazon's despicable multimillion dollar campaigns to kill worker-led union efforts."

She said it was time for the tech giant to "respect the law and negotiate with the workers who want to make their jobs better."

In the US, walkouts by warehouse staff were supported by 10 rallies nationwide – including one outside Jeff Bezos' plush Manhattan apartment –

while in France and Germany, the CGT and Ver.di unions spearheaded strikes in 18 warehouses.

Stuart Appelbaum, who heads up the American retail workers union RWDSU, said: "Amazon must recognize the health and safety needs of its employees. It needs to reduce the unbearable pace of work which has resulted in thousands of documented physical and mental injuries – a pace of work that is only exacerbated this holiday shopping season."

"Most importantly, Amazon must stop union-busting. The company has continued to repress workers' voices and prevent their ability to make effective change at work – which can only happen when workers are able to join together through a union."

### NEW COURSE COMING IN 2023!

## Assertiveness At Work

**Course Content:** This one-day training course is designed to aid attendees in standing up for their rights, without being inappropriately aggressive. It is designed to help participants to express their thoughts, feelings, wishes and needs in a courteous, tactful and appropriate manner. 'Assertiveness' is encouraged as the most appropriate route to take in most situations, as it far exceeds passive or aggressive behaviour in terms of enhancing the prospects of attaining one's goals and the maintenance of ongoing cordial and productive relationships. In one's capacity as a Mandate

representative or employee, it is a basic requirement that you express relevant needs and desires in an appropriate manner. So, this course is designed to enable attendees to interact with others in an open, transparent, and appropriate manner, without doing damage to or infringing on the rights of others.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this training course participants will know how to:

- Make an appropriate and positive impact when communicating with others.
- Use the right style of behaviour to help (rather than hinder) you in the attainment of your goals and

aspirations, thus achieving your outcomes in a positive manner.

- Distinguish between passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour.
- How to manage your emotions, remain calm and reduce stress during potentially conflictual situations,
- How to think and conduct yourself assertively.



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TESCO

# Pay & benefits drive launched



Mandate AGS Jonathan Hogan

MANDATE has launched a pay and benefits campaign seeking radical changes to workers' terms and conditions across all Tesco stores in the Republic.

This bold initiative, spearheaded by the union's Tesco National Team, features a number of key demands.

These include the introduction of a €14-an-hour starter living wage rate; the putting in place of an incremental scale that reflects experience; the enhanced harmonising of pension contributions – at a employer/employee ratio of 2:1; as well as access to a guaranteed 5% bonus for all staff.

The union is also seeking more than €2 million in retrospective payments to Pre-96 staff, the longest-serving group of workers at the retailer.

Importantly, workers are demanding Tesco Ireland negotiates meaningfully through effective collective bargaining with Mandate – which is completely in line with a procedural agreement signed up to by both the union and management.

As Mandate Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan explained: "We're asking all

workers to pledge their support to take this first step action in pursuit of this important claim. Should senior management refuse to engage in good faith negotiations within the collective bargaining process or dismiss the claim, the campaign will continue!"

Lengthy pay and benefit negotiations were held at the Workplace Relations Commission and there was a subsequent Labour Court hearing on 17th May 2022.

## Stepped away

However, just over a week later on 30th May, Tesco Ireland stepped away from the long-standing procedural agreement with Mandate and unilaterally awarded staff a 10% pay rise over three years, inclusive of a 2.5% of which was backdated to April 2021.

This followed a number of years in which both parties were in dispute over wage increases withheld from Pre-96 employees.

Mandate's Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan described this development as "another watershed moment" in the relationship between management and

the union.

"By doing this, Tesco Ireland – one of the largest private sector retailers in Ireland – has abandoned [that relationship] and effectively announced its decision to derecognise the union for the purposes of collective bargaining."

He continued: "Collective bargaining isn't where one party chooses an *à la carte* approach to deciding when good faith negotiations begin and end.

"Our members want stability and the ability to negotiate changes to their terms and conditions of employment, without changes being enforced through authoritarian dictates."

Hogan added: "Our campaign for change will encompass a broad range of transformational enhancements for our members in Tesco that reflect the needs of members."

● See VIEWPOINT on p14

## Mandate's backing for Pay Transparency Bill

MANDATE has joined other unions in giving full backing to the Pay Transparency Bill which is currently before Dáil Éireann.

The Bill, introduced by Kerry TD Pa Daly and his party colleague Rose Conway-Walsh earlier this year, seeks to amend the Employment Equality Act 1998 and would require job adverts to include salary details of the positions advertised.

On 4th October, a coalition of unions, led by FSU, met with Sinn Féin to discuss the legislation. Unions also met with Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, on 17th November, to highlight the issue and to call for change.

Mandate Assistant General Secretary Jonathan Hogan told *Shopfloor*: "At its core, pay transparency allows for an open debate to take place about employee salaries within any firm. We think the dismantling of pay secrecy is a critical step toward securing pay equity within any employment – and hope this legislation, if enacted, will go some towards that goal."



## Members at Shaws vote for 3.5% pay rise

MANDATE members at Shaws have voted overwhelmingly in favour of a 3.5% pay rise over 17 months with an option to receive the increase in the form of a gift voucher or card.

Some 90.6% voted for the deal with 9.4% against on a turnout of 78%. Also included in the proposal was incremental progression for a number of members.

## Political/Economics and Influencing Social Change Workshop

This Political/Economics course is for trade union activists who have a keen interest in the political & social economy and who have questions regarding the wider social agenda in Ireland and globally.

### Course Content:

- The Politics of Economics
- Understanding the Irish economy
- The Global Financial Crash and what it means

- The Great Recession and permanent austerity
- Democratising economics
- Connecting with communities
- Reflecting community diversity
- The impact of climate change and the power of trade unions



MANDATE  
TRAINING & LEARNING CENTRE

For more info, contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training & Learning Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)

## Health & Safety

This course for Health & Safety Reps will help the participant to promote and maintain Safety and Health in the workplace. The course outlines the roles and functions of a Health & Safety Rep.

### Course Content:

- Safety and health legal system
- Role of the safety representative and safety committee members in the safety consultation
- Communication skills for the safety representative and safety committee
- Hazard identification & carrying out risk assessments
- Interpreting & implementing the safety statement
- Carrying out safety and health inspections
- Sources of safety and health information
- Risk control and safety and health management at work

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the concept of workplace Health and Safety.
- To be familiar with core legislation in the area of Safety, Health and Welfare
- Understand and gain basic competence in hazard identification and risk assessment
- Recognise the factors influencing workplace health, safety and welfare
- Apply Health & Safety principles and procedures in the workplace
- Promote a safety culture in the workplace.



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# Renewed hope in Colombia – world's most dangerous place for trade unionists – after poll win for progressives

By **ETHEL BUCKLEY**

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary

WHILE trade unionists across the world have long stood with the Colombian people in their struggle for peace and social justice, foreign governments have largely turned a blind eye to the appalling human rights abuses in Colombia.

Multinationals have reaped the benefits of violence directed against trade unionists and social activists, as well as the forced displacement of millions of people that opened mineral-rich territories to resource extraction.

From the late-1990s, the Colombian military received massive US funding as it committed atrocities against civilians. When communities exercised democratic rights to demand social improvements, they were massacred. The result was a Colombia which was lucrative for global capital while consigning large swathes of the population to perpetual hardship and violence.

Yet in June this year, something changed. For the first time in the Colombian history, a progressive government was elected. The new president is Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla and mayor of Bogota. The vice-president is Francia Márquez, a black, single mother from one of Colombia's poorest and most conflict-affected regions with decades of involvement in environmental, feminist and social activism.

Their Historic Pact coalition triumphed thanks to a political agenda that prioritised peace, human rights, workers' rights, equality and the environment. In short, they offered the national transformation urgently needed by so many people.

Three weeks earlier, a Justice for Colombia delegation of trade unionists and politicians from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Spain visited Colombia to witness the election's first round and to learn about the situation for workers and their unions as well as the current state of the peace process.

I was honoured that SIPTU sent me, as Deputy General Secretary with responsibility for global solidarity, to Colombia as a member of the international delegation.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has declared Colombia to be the world's deadliest country for trade unionists. As a union, we wanted to see first-hand what that meant for our comrades on the ground and to demonstrate our solidarity with them. Despite the enthusiasm generated among grassroots communities and social organisations by the Historic Pact's energising campaign, things were – and still are – extremely difficult. The scale of the challenge facing the new government cannot be overestimated.

The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has faced right-wing attacks since it was signed.



Colombian paramilitary police in riot gear (above). The new government plans a restructuring of the country's security forces. The sash of office is placed around the shoulders of Historic Pact leader and new president Gustavo Petro (below) in August

Picture: Marcha Patriótica (CC BY-ND 2.0)



Justice for Colombia international delegation – including Mandate President Denise Curran (first left) – with Gloria Ramirez (fourth from left) and SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley (second right) in Bogota on the first day of the Presidential Election. Ramirez is now Minister for Labour

## Mandate's JFC link-up

MANDATE has officially affiliated with human rights pressure group Justice for Colombia (JFC). Set up in 2002 by the trade union movement, the London-based body promotes solidarity between British and Irish trade unions and Colombian organisations. It also seeks to give a political voice internationally to Colombian civil society through its work in the British, Irish and EU Parliaments. Mandate General Secretary Gerry Light said: "Our union has a long history of supporting human rights across the world and we're proud to forge links with JFC and build upon what was an already established relationship. With victory of the Historic Pact coalition earlier this year, we're all hoping for better times ahead in Colombia."

during campaigning in the election.

Now in office, the Historic Pact coalition has immediately sought to make a difference. Peace is the priority. Petro has moved to fully implement the 2016 agreement, open negotiations with the country's largest remaining guerrilla movement, the ELN, and invited other paramilitary and armed groups to meet round the table. The new president has also addressed state violence by removing 15 generals implicated in human rights violations, while he plans to restructure the ESMAD riot police unit responsible for killing several young protesters last year.

The strengthening of human rights will develop alongside a 'green new deal'-type project to move the economy away from dependence on fossil fuels and to ban fracking.

Anti-union violence and regressive legislation has generated some of the world's weakest workers' rights. In response, Petro has named two trade unionists to head the Labour Ministry: longstanding women's rights and teachers union activist and former congress member Gloria Ramírez as Minister for Labour, and the former president of the USO oil workers' union, Edwin Palma, as Vice-Minister.

Both have worked closely with Justice for Colombia, as has the new Peace Commissioner, Danilo Rueda. Appointments like these demonstrate the government's intent to meet its promises to the Colombian people.

I was among the Justice for Colombia delegates who met with Ramírez and Rueda – before they assumed their new roles – in May.

Like other unions in Ireland and Britain, SIPTU has been a strong supporter of JFC's campaign work. The international trade union movement's support will be crucial to strengthening the new government's transformative agenda, which is sure to generate hostility among powerful groups both at home and abroad.

This article first appeared in October issue of Liberty. It is reproduced with kind permission of SIPTU.

'Public figures are frequently targeted... progressive politicians having received credible death threats many times, which intensified during election campaign'





# Gaeltacht College Grant 2023

Each year Mandate Trade Union awards **50 Gaeltacht college grants** of up to €500 to cover course fees and accommodation in Irish colleges during the summer of 2023.

The grants will be awarded on a lottery basis – i.e. all applications will entered into the draw and the first 50 names drawn will be awarded the grants. The grants will be awarded under the following conditions:

1. If your nominee is successful in the draw, but is unable to attend the scholarship course available and if notice of cancellation is not received in time to pass the vacant spot on to another child, the original winner will be obliged to pay for the course in full.
2. Grants are for children, sisters and brothers of members of Mandate who are benefit members as at 1st January 2023. Benefit members are those who are not more than eight (8) weeks in arrears with contributions at that date.
3. Children must be between the ages of 10 and 18 years.
4. Applications must be made on the official form provided, each form to cover one child only.
5. Only one application per child is allowed.
6. Grants will be awarded by means of a draw which will take place at a date and time to be decided by the National Executive Council.
7. Closing date for applications will be Friday 17th February 2023. Applications received after that date will not be eligible for the draw.
8. The decision of the Executive Council on all matters relating to this scheme shall be final.
9. Grants will not be transferable.

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK LETTERS  
**NOTE: CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES FRIDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**  
**ONE APPLICATION PER CHILD ONLY**

SURNAME OF CHILD .....

FORENAME .....

DATE OF BIRTH .....

ADDRESS.....

NAME OF UNION MEMBER .....

ADDRESS.....

CONTACT TELEPHONE NO.....

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD .....

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT .....

ADDRESS.....

UNION DIVISION ..... UNION NO .....

**I agree to be bound by all conditions and decisions of the Executive Council.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

Application Number	Division	Last Payment	Checked by



# We all must play our part in growing this union

PLACING a renewed focus on organising and stepping up recruitment, along with campaigning on issues that impact on our members' lives, are key drivers to the future success of this union.

Back in 2018, we made organising a central theme of our biennial delegate conference and later developed and implemented a strategy across a range of employments, including Paddy Powers, Lloyds Pharmacy and Dunnes Stores.

Our aim then was to develop grassroots talent and build structures within those employments, forming organising committees as well as identifying leaders and activists. That aim remains unchanged.

But then, at the turn of the decade, the global pandemic struck and we found ourselves in a grim new reality.

There was, of course, the incalculable human cost of lives lost and livelihoods shattered – but also the acceleration of the shift to online shopping – and its lasting effects on bricks and mortar retail, the places where we organise and our members work.

Though retail workers were rightly praised throughout the pandemic and finally recognised for the essential work they do, the shift online and changed customer spending habits has meant that we are now more than ever under a cloud of uncertainty.

If we want to dispel that uncertainty, we must grow our membership to strengthen our union.

It's a simple calculation and it's not rocket science – growth will increase our power in the workplace in order to enhance our members' pay and conditions, increase their living standards and protect their jobs.

The National Executive Council along with the leadership team and staff have put together a strategic plan that zeroes in on the key areas of activity to ensure we can meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Organising workers remains our primary objective – though from now on, any organising initiative must be underpinned by the absolute necessity

**Lorraine O'Brien**

National Coordinator

ity to recruit new members.

And it's everybody's job to do this. And to make that job easier, we need our network of workplace activists to increase the visibility of the union on the shop floor and to make our presence felt there.

If we want to deliver for our members and provide them with a rate of pay as well as terms and conditions that match the massive contribution they have made – and are making – to our communities and the economy, then EVERY interaction with a fellow retail worker should be seen as an opportunity to recruit and organise.

Every time one of our members interacts with a colleague who isn't in the union, they should ideally use it as an opportunity to pitch the value of being in Mandate and persuade

them to join with us. Organising and recruiting must work hand in hand, one cannot be exclusive of the other.

In Tesco, for example, we are putting in place a pay and benefits campaign that is being spearheaded by our Tesco National Team. Tesco has doubled its pre-tax profits in recent years to more than €2bn in 2021 – in fact, we know that for every €5 spent on groceries in Ireland, just over €1 is spent in Tesco.

So given the workers' – and our members' – contributions to these massive profits, we want Tesco Ireland to mark its near-quarter century of trading here by rewarding employees fairly and equitably.

To ensure Mandate delivers the best possible outcome from this campaign, we must make every effort to expand our membership across the Tesco network.

This task largely depends on our current crop of activists assisting and working closely with Mandate officials



and organisers – but if every Tesco activist recruited one additional member in every store each week, think about what that could help us to accomplish as the months roll on...

Enhanced pay and benefits are within Tesco workers' own gift if they

**Mandate organising to win (main pic) and (above) new leaflet to encourage Tesco workers to join the union...**



## Workplace Union Representative Training

This 2-day blended learning Workplace Representative Training Course is for Workplace Reps. The course aims to provide information, skills & knowledge to assist them in their role.

### Course Content:

- The role of the Workplace Representative
- Terms and Conditions of employment
- Employment Law
- Dealing with workplace Issues
- Workplace organising
- Communication - critical thinking and decision making
- Organising and chairing meetings
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Political and Social Studies
- Supporting union campaigns & collective action
- Agreeing actions to build a stronger union in the workplace
- Recruiting members and building a strong union in the workplace



For more info, contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training & Learning Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)

## Training & Development

This Training & Development course is designed to enable learners attain the skills, knowledge and confidence to organise and deliver training and development in a range of organisational contexts.

### Course Content:

- Learners should be able to recognise best practice in adult learning and development.
- Appraise different learning styles
- Conduct training needs analysis
- Design training to meet identified needs
- Prepare training programmes
- Develop lesson plans
- Identify learning outcomes and put in place relevant methods to access learning
- Develop and use a range of teaching materials
- Evaluate training and development interventions.



For more info, contact your Mandate Official or Mandate Training & Learning Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)



# YOUTH COMMITTEE

## WINTER SCHOOL

# Raising awareness and addressing issues

By John O'Donnell

Mandate Industrial Officer

FOLLOWING on from Mandate's very successful series of youth events held over the course of 2022, the union concluded the year with a winter school for youth activists on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd November at the Mandate Training Centre in Dublin.

Mandate welcomed and hosted a number of guest speakers, including Palestinian Ambassador Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, who spoke about her people's struggle, which proved to be a humbling and encouraging experience for our youth members.

Anti-Apartheid Dunnes striker Karen Gearon and Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) Education Officer Aisling Hedderman also addressed the event.

Valuable discussions took place raising awareness as well as a desire among those present to pursue and address current issues facing the trade union movement.

The Cuban Ambassador was also supposed to speak at the winter school but due to unforeseen circumstances could not be present on the day.

However, both ambassadors have stated that they would love to continue to engage with Mandate and attend future events.

Mandate Youth expressed thanks to all guests by presenting each with a small token of their appreciation.

An excellent training plan – with core and to-the-point presentations – has been devised for our series of youth schools. These cover a range of topics, including employment law, contracts, organising and mobilising members.

Mandate Youth continued to build upon its link with the ISSU and USI and maintain its presence on the UNI Europa Youth Steering throughout 2022. This will continue into next year.

Following the success of the summer and winter school events



Winter school participants (left to right) Joseph Johnston, Patrick Kelly, Dunnes anti-Apartheid striker Karen Gearon, Andrew Manion, Youth Committee chairperson Alex Homits Chairperson, Palestinian Ambassador Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, Vice Chair/ICTU Youth Rep Siuirtan O'Priongaloid, James Rabbittie, and NEC/ICTU Youth Rep Alex Bracau. Mandate glass plate (below) presented to the speakers at the event as a token of appreciation



and taking into account feedback we have received from those participating about how we can grow our activist base of young members, there will be further summer and winter school included in the 2023 Training Schedule.

Youth Committee Chair of Alex Homits told *Shopfloor*: "The first step any young member should take in this union is to join the Youth Committee and attend one of the many events we host. We will do our best to inform you about the union and how

it works. So, as we say, the best time to join the union and become active was ages ago, the second best time is today!"

Overall, those attending the events have engaged diligently and honestly expressing their views and ideas very positively and in so doing building on their relationship with Mandate.

● If you're interested in joining the Youth Committee or learning more about our youth activity, contact us at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)

## ADVICE

### SAMARITANS

# What do you do when the *sparkle* goes out of Christmas?

By Sarah Stack

Policy & Communications Manager, Samaritans

CHRISTMAS on TV and in the movies is usually shown as the happiest time of the year. A time where families gather together happily, everyone is happy and there is an abundance of food, drink and presents.

However, for many people, Christmas can be a very difficult time where feelings of loneliness and de-

pression are heightened against a backdrop of relentless cheer.

There are many reasons why people find Christmas difficult. Issues like loneliness and isolation, family and relationship problems, financial pressures, depression and illness can become more pronounced as the rest of the world enjoy their Christmas dinner and after-dinner naps.

For those who have lost a loved one or ended a

relationship, Christmas can be a painful reminder – an empty space at the table, one less person to put presents under the tree for, constant memories of someone who is no longer there.

Financial worries are another reason why people struggle to cope at Christmas, especially this year as people are facing the cost of living crisis and energy price hikes.

### Out of sync

It's easy to feel out of sync with the rest of the world if you're not enjoying the holidays.

The pressure to have a good time added to whatever problems you are facing can create a sense of isolation from the rest of the world. That's why we believe that it is important to provide a space for people to talk about how they are feeling honestly and what they are going through.

The Christmas period is always a busy time for Samaritans. Last year, we answered almost 35,000 calls during the month of December, including 1,120 of those calls on Christmas Day alone.

People can talk to Samaritans any time of the year, in their own way, about whatever is getting to them. Some people think that you have to be suicidal to talk to Samaritans but that is not the case. In fact, less than a fifth of the people who call us are not sui-



cidal, but they do have something they need to talk about.

This Christmas, just like every other day of the year, Samaritans volunteers in our 13 branches across the country, will be there for anyone who needs to talk about how they are feeling. We are there for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them. It doesn't matter what kind of problem our callers have, however big or small it may seem compared to the problems other people have.

What matters to us is how their life is making them feel. Sharing how you are really feeling without fear of judgement can be help you feel less isolated.

When people are in crisis, talking can help them to feel calmer and get through that moment. Through human contact with someone who really listens, people can begin to feel hope.

Talking can help people to see their situation in a different light and find their way forward. If you are finding Christmas tough, why not talk to us and see if we can support you?

Samaritans is available round the clock every single day of the year. You can call us on freephone 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie).

You can learn more about Samaritans, or get information on becoming a volunteer in your local branch, on [www.samaritans.ie](http://www.samaritans.ie).

Picture: Samaritans

Picture: Mike van der Bos at Unsplash



# Thousands march in 'homes for all' rally

A STRONG delegation from Mandate joined thousands of other trade unionists, rights activists and ordinary citizens in taking to the streets of Dublin for the Raise the Roof rally to highlight the crisis in housing on Saturday 26th November.

Marchers assembled at Parnell Square at 1pm before making their way to Merrion Square South where there were a number of speeches and musical performances.

Maynooth University academic Dr Rory Hearne told the crowd gathered close to Government Buildings: "This crisis is not caused by those who are homeless. It is not caused by millennials eating too much avocado on toast. It is not caused by the refugees. It is not caused by inflation.

"This housing crisis was caused by government policy which year after year after year refused to freeze rents, refused to build social housing, refused to tackle dereliction and vacancy, refused to put the money that was needed into it. It's time for change and that is starting today."

In his speech, Community worker James O'Toole – one of the residents at Tathony House under threat of eviction – said: "My neighbour Gurpreet is an Indian woman who works in St James' Hospital. She could be made homeless in the new year. Vasily, who lives downstairs in my block, is a construction worker. He has an injured back. He's given his body to making the apartments that we can't afford all over this city. The people that work in this city can't afford to live in this city.

"That is a criminal abdication of responsibility by the landlord government. Micheál Martin says it's about striking a balance. Well, what balance can you strike between landlords who are making millions in rent and making a community worker like me, a nurse like Gurpreet, a construction worker like Vasily homeless in the new year? You should not make money from making people homeless."

According to the latest Government



Dr Rory Hearne: 'Crisis caused by Govt policy'

figures, some 11,397 people are listed as homeless, including 3,480 children and 1,601 families.

And housing charity Focus Ireland claims this represents a rise of 29% in the number of homeless people in the state in just 12 months.

In a statement issued before the rally, Unite Regional Coordinating Officer Tom Fitzgerald said: "The housing emergency did not arise



Contingent from Mandate (above) who marched on 26th November in Dublin and (left) massive banner advertising event that hung from Mandate's HQ



James O'Toole: 'Can't afford to live in this city'

overnight. Home building by local authorities collapsed as a direct result of public policy, with new housing builds by local authorities across the country amounting to just under 2,300 units in 2019 – a derisory figure given the level of housing need.

"Instead of building homes, fund-



Pictures: Derek Spiers/ICTU; Mandate

ing has been channelled into tax breaks for large investors, lucrative leasing deals for developers and large subsidies for private landlords. It's clear that we need a new deal for

housing." He added: "The housing emergency is not a simple matter of policy failure: it is a consequence of the policy choices pursued by successive governments."







Some of the thousands of people who took part in the Raise the Roof rally in Dublin on 26th November. They were demanding a radical shift in Government policy to confront the crisis in housing

Pictures: Derek Spiers/ICTU

# Mandate sets out case for radical action on housing

MANDATE has called for immediate action on housing – including the holding of a referendum to insert a new ‘right to housing’ clause in the constitution – and claimed any prospect many of its members have of living in their own home has now become “unrealistic and unachievable”.

And, according to a special submission it put together on the issue in the run-up to the Budget on 27th September, Mandate insisted current government proposals “provided no certainty” for its members.

Flagging up the reality of earning a living in the retail sector, the submission underlined the “great uncertainty” over earnings and working patterns because of the “precarious nature” of shop and bar work.

Added to that, some 36% of young retail workers (those aged under 40) are in part-time or temporary contracts with little hope of making firm plans for the future.

## Planning ahead

The submission stated: “The inability to plan ahead results in workers... being prevented from progressing beyond certain roles, transitioning through sectors or returning to education or simply enjoying recreation, due to the lack of state supports e.g. free childcare, lack of state regulation around flexible working.”

It also highlighted the prevalence of low pay throughout the sector drawing on the latest CSO statistics which revealed that the average gross weekly wage of a retail worker was just €492.

When gauged against the average cost of rent in Dublin – €2,000 a month – it’s clear, according to the submission, that “housing affordability and availability” was “crucial” for workers in the sector “particularly given the exorbitant cost of housing here relative to other EU member states.”

It pointed out that this was not just a problem for the workers themselves but for the wider economy “given the crucial roles played by these workers throughout the pandemic” and its knock-on impact on



staff shortages and recruitment issues. Mandate, which is an active member of the Raise the Roof network, called for:

- An immediate ban on rent increases, a comprehensive review of the private rental sector, and a putting in place of “robust new [rent] controls”.
- Re-balancing the housing market in Ireland. Currently there is need for about 35,000 units each year and it’s clear the private sector can’t deliver that supply of new dwellings at a reasonable price. The union called for greater investment in the supply of “large volumes of social affordable homes” to address the housing deficit.
- A referendum to enshrine the right to housing should be called “to ensure access to affordable and secure housing for all citizens”.



## RECAP MOPI SUPERVALU

# 'Well-deserved' pay increase after complex negotiations

MANDATE and SIPTU met with SuperValu MOPI, to discuss pay and terms of conditions following the end of the previous agreement on 31st January, 2022.

In the weeks following and after several meetings – involving what were described as “complex” negotiations – the parties were able to agree a set of proposals covering the two-year period to 31st January 2024, and which was subject to a ballot of members.

While flagging up “challenges” facing the business, MOPI’s negotiating team also acknowledged the commitment shown by staff during the pandemic.

On pay, it was agreed that:

- From 1st February 2022, there

would be a 40 cent per hour increase to all hourly rates of pay. It was further agreed in circumstances where that 40 cent increase worked out at less than 2%, a standard 2% rate increase would be applied. All salaried members would receive a 2% pay increase.

- From 1st February 2023, there would be a further 40 cent per hour increase to all hourly rates of pay and the same provisions as set out above would apply with a 2% pay rise for all salaried staff and a minimum of 2% increase for hourly paid members if the 40 cent per hour was less than 2%.

There was also an agreement on the restructuring of banded contracts within the group with the inclusion of



Mandate Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard

an additional band. It was envisaged that this would give members of staff greater certainty on their weekly working hours.

The proposed new bands were – Band 1: 15 - 20 hours; Band 2: 20 - 25 hours; Band 3: 25 - 30 hours; Band 4: 30 - 35 hours; Band 5: 35 - 39 hours.

Band 2 was to be seen as the “default band” with Band 1 being an option for students and those staff members needing fewer hours to suit their individual circumstances.

The “assimilation” process, which started in July, was based on the average hours worked by staff on A, B and C Flexi contracts, over a 52-week reference period.

The agreement set out how the band assimilation would become a twice-yearly process starting in March 2023. Staff would have the opportunity to apply for a change in their band twice in the year, but would be limited to move up a band once within a 12-month period.

Under their contract staff are entitled to a 10% discount when shopping at SuperValu. However, the agreement provided for an additional 2.5% saving (giving a total discount of 12.5%). Staff were encouraged to shop at their own SuperValu store “to

protect the long-term sustainability of jobs”.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard, who heads up the SuperValu MOPI national team, told *Shopfloor*: “This agreement provided a well-deserved and needed pay increase for our members in SuperValu MOPI. It is worth noting that the overall 80 cent per hour increase over the course of the agreement is a 7.3% increase on Point 1, a 6.8% increase on Point 2 and 6.1% increase on Point 3 of the pay scale.

“It also provided more opportunities for our members to secure higher banded contracts, thus providing our members with more certainty on income each week,” he added.



## Skills for Work 2023

Basic education for working and living

**Skills for Work courses starting mid-September 2022 so register now to reserve a place!**

The City of Dublin ETB and Mandate are offering you an opportunity to attend a workplace education course under the Skills for Work Programme. You must be in employment to avail of this opportunity, eligibility criteria will apply.

Courses will be delivered on-line starting mid-September depending on numbers.

### Course 1

#### Online Computer skills (Basic computers)

- Learn basics on how to use computer
- How to use Zoom (phone or laptop)
- Keyboard skills/Word processing
- Windows & File Management
- Word - Letter writing & form filling
- Using the internet/ Social Media
- Working with email
- Microsoft Office- Excel, PowerPoint

### Course 3

#### Supervisor course

- Leadership
- Teamwork fundamentals
- Effective Communication
- Listening Skills
- Performance
- Motivation
- Confidence
- Dealing with conflict
- Feedback giving/receiving
- Boundaries
- Decision making

### Course 2

#### Communications/Presentation Skills

- Active listening skills
- Conversation skills
- Body Language
- Working as a team
- Memory skills
- Non-verbal communication
- Questioning skills
- Presentation Skills using PowerPoint
- Control nerves & being calm
- How to engage and connect with audience

### Course 4

#### Workplace communications through English (Workplace English and Language)

Improve language ability in the areas of:

- Pronunciation
- Listening
- Speaking
- Writing
- Reading
- Vocabulary
- Grammatical rules of language

Places are limited so please call **Amanda Blake** in Mandate Training Centre on **0874406564** if you have any questions or email **ablake@mandate.ie**

Please note by registering you are agreeing for your details to be processed by the CDET.B.

*Closing date for applications is 9th January 2023*

### CORRIB OIL

## Industrial action ballot for petrol station staff

MANDATE members at Corrib Oil, Ballinasloe are to be balloted over industrial action, up to and including strike action, after approval was given by the union’s National Executive Committee on 30th November.

Management at Shuttington Holdings ULC, which trades as Corrib Oil, have been informed – but, as *Shopfloor* goes to press, have not as yet replied to the development.

It comes after an exchange of correspondence between the union and management in recent months, and follows a boost in the number of workers at Corrib Oil joining Mandate.

Management made it clear in a letter to the union that while recognising their workers’ “personal and legal right to join a recognised trade union,” the company’s “ethos and culture” was to deal with employee issues or disputes internally and without – “wherever possible” – the involvement of a third party.

At a well-attended general meeting of Corrib Oil workers on 2nd August, Divisional Organiser John Carty set out a range of options for members.

He told *Shopfloor*: “I put it to the members that Mandate could seek a meeting with management and provide them with a ‘shopping list’ of grievances – and that this list would include a union-company disputes procedure agreement.

“Alternatively I advised them that they could just seek a meeting to agree a procedural agreement and that once that is put in place, we could move to process all outstanding grievances.

“The advantages and disadvantages of each approach were discussed before members opted to go for securing a procedural agreement.”

At a subsequent meeting on 2nd November, members voted to inform Corrib Oil bosses the union was going to start the process of balloting for industrial action.

Discussion then turned to the efficacy of various types of rolling, escalating and ‘as-long-as-it-takes’ strike action.

Members are currently being balloted and a result is expected to be announced early to mid-December.





# ICTU Retail Sector Group sets goals for 2023

THE Congress Retail Sector Group is to prioritise work on pay and living standards, skills training, union rights and safety at work for all staff, over the course of 2023.

The all-island Group currently comprises a number of unions operating in the retail sector north and south – including Mandate, SIPTU and USDAW – and it is hoped to expand membership of the group over the coming months.

The Retail Group has now set out key priorities for its work in 2023 on a range of issues and concerns common to staff across the island and at all levels of the sector.

These include the urgent need to boost pay and living standards for all, while working to ensure there is full delivery on the commitment of the current government in the Republic on the introduction of the Living Wage. The current rate for the Living Wage is €13.85 per hour, while the Minimum Wage is set at €10.50 per



**Macdara Doyle**  
ICTU Campaigns Officer

hour. The Group will also push for the creation of a new forum for the Retail Sector in Northern Ireland, similar to the forum that operates in the Republic and which includes trade union and employer representatives.

## Progress

Mandate's Gerry Light represents the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Retail Group on the forum.

The Retail Group will also focus on the introduction of new collective bargaining and union rights legislation over the next two years, following a prolonged process of

engagement with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Progress on this issue will also impact on the development of union rights for workers in sector, in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Group will look at key issues around training and upskilling, given the twin challenges of digitalisation and the transition to a zero carbon economy.

A recent McKinsey report on the European retail sector found it accounted for some 13% of the EU's 26 million workforce and would need to train up some 13 million staff and hire an additional 1.5 million new workers every year until 2030, to meet these challenges. This will require investments of up to €35 billion, up to 2030.

The sector employs up to 500,000 workers across the island of Ireland and will face similar challenges in relation to skills training and investment.

## Employment Law

This two-day progression course in Employment Law is for Workplace Reps who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding of employment law. Participants will gain an understanding of the legislative environment within which the employment relationship operates.

### Course Content:

#### Contract of employment

- Contract for service and Contract of service
- The nature of employer's defenses
- Redress/remedies in Employment law
- Terms of employment and Information Act
- Organisation of Working Time
- Payment of Wages/Remuneration
- Equality and Discrimination
- Unfair Dismissal and Redundancy
- Redress for breaches of Employment Law

### Statute Law

- Primary legislation
- Secondary legislation
- Role of EU law. Directives

### Sources of Irish Law

- Common law, judicial precedent
- Equity
- Constitution

### The role of law in regulating working conditions

- The role of law in promoting equality, health and safety and best practice in the workplace
- The rights and duties of both employers and employees in the workplace



For more info, contact your Mandate Official or Mandate Training & Learning Centre on 01-8369699 or email Amanda Blake at [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie)

## CAMPAIGN NEWS PALESTINE

# Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine launched

MANDATE has warmly welcomed the launch of a new ICTU-backed initiative aimed at bringing added focus to the plight of the Palestinian people.

The Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine – a coalition made up of 16 civil society organisations, trade unions and academics committed to working collaboratively to end Israeli apartheid against Palestinians – was launched on 30th November in Dublin by Independent Senator Frances Black.

Through shared actions, campaigns and advocacy initiatives the group has pledged to engage members of the Irish public and political representatives on the issue, and to build political support for effective measures by Ireland and the international community to condemn Israel's actions and to end the crime of apartheid against Palestinians.

Senator Black, a long-time campaigner for Palestinian rights, said: "Apartheid is a crime against humanity, recognised in international law, including in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and in the United Nations Convention Against Apartheid.

"The nature of this institutionalised discrimination and oppression has been outlined in detail for years by Palestinian human rights organisations and has been more recently identified and described by Israeli and international human rights organisations, as well as by UN bodies and experts."

She continued: "Ireland has a proud history of challenging apartheid in South Africa and Namibia. The coalition will draw on the rich vein of individual activism, public advocacy, and political action in Ireland in the 1980s that was so successful in drawing international attention to the situation there that ultimately helped bring about an end to the



Campaign launch in Dublin on 30th November

### The three recognised tests for the crime of apartheid are:

- An institutionalised regime of systematic racial oppression and discrimination
- Set up with intent to maintain the domination of one racial group over another
- And which consists of inhumane acts as an integral part of the regime

South African apartheid regime.

"As a first step we are asking that Dáil Éireann and the Irish Government publicly recognise that the State of Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

"Secondly, we are calling on the Irish Government to support efforts at the United Nations to re-establish the Special Committee Against Apartheid to investigate all practices of systematic discrimination and oppression purportedly amounting to apartheid anywhere in the world, including the occupied Palestinian ter-

ritory." Mary Manning also voiced her support for the initiative. Mary, then a member of IDATU which later became Mandate, was the first Dunnes Stores worker to refuse to handle apartheid South Africa's fruit in July 1984. That action sparked the famous strike that lasted until April 1987. She said: "I fully support the launch of this Ireland-Palestine anti-apartheid campaign. I hoped, after South Africa, that the world was finished with apartheid. Unfortunately, and sadly, that is not the case. Apartheid was not acceptable to the Irish people in the 1980s when we made

our stand and it is not acceptable to them in 2022."

Mandate General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "For many years Mandate Trade Union and its predecessor unions have taken a very firm stance against the existence of apartheid in any shape or form.

## Broadest range

"Obviously, we would encourage support for this new worthwhile initiative from the broadest range of civil societies groups as possible. It is through this type of endorsement that political pressure can be brought to bear both home and abroad with a view to bringing this inhumane practice to an end once and for all."

The launch of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Coalition, which follows the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, has been warmly received by

Palestinian civil society.

The Palestinian Human Rights Organisations Council (PHROC) said: "Israel has created a regime of institutionalised racial discrimination against the Palestinian people between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. It is a regime of apartheid the purpose of which is to deny the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including millions of Palestinian refugees. Its aim is to fragment and isolate us, to imprison us in bantustan-like enclaves, to steal our wealth, to remove us from our homeland, and to deny our right to self-determination.

"A new world-wide movement is emerging to challenge these injustices. We congratulate Ireland for, once again, being at the forefront of the movement to end apartheid as it has done in the past."



# SHOP STEWARDS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2023

Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location	Closing date
First Quarter (Jan -Feb-Mar)				
Communications & Leadership Training	January Monday 30th, Tuesday 31st	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	N/A
Computer Training For Beginners - ETB Skills For Work	February 1st-22nd March	8 Weeks -1 Day (Wednesday) per week	Dublin	09/01/2023
Workplace Union Reps Training	February Monday 20th, Tuesday 21st	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	16/01/2023
Employment Law Workshop	February Monday 20th, Tuesday 21st	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	16/01/2023
Social & Political Workshop - Youth Committee/Members	February Monday 27th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	30/01/2023
Health & Safety Training for Mandate Elected H&S Reps	Date to be confirmed	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	TBC
Workplace Union Reps Training For DAA Members	March Monday 6th, Tuesday 7th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	03/02/2023
Social Economy Workshop	March Monday 13th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	13/02/2023
Second Quarter (Apr-May-Jun)				
Effective Meetings Workshop	April Monday 3rd	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	06/03/2023
Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace Workshop	April Monday 3rd	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	06/03/2023
Employment Law Workshop	April Tuesday 4th, Wednesday 5th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	07/03/2023
Presentation & Public Speaking Workshop	April Monday 17th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	20/03/2023
Workplace Union Reps Training	April Monday 17th, Tuesday 18th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	20/03/2023
Negotiation Skills Workshop	April Monday 24th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	27/03/2023
Social Economy Workshop	May Monday 8th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	07/04/2023
Health & Safety Training For Mandate Elected H&S Reps	Date to be confirmed	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	TBC
Negotiation Skills Workshop	May Monday 22nd	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	24/04/2023
Youth Committee Summer School	May Monday 29th, Tuesday 30th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	N/A
Third Quarter (Jul-Aug-Sep)				
Workplace Union Reps Training	September Monday 4th, Tuesday 5th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	04/08/2023
Digital Media Training - ETB Skills For Work	September 6th-25th October	8 Weeks -1 Day (Wednesday) per week	Dublin	09/08/2023
Social Economy Workshop	September Monday 11th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	14/08/2023
Employment Law Workshop	September Tuesday 12th, Wednesday 13th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	15/08/2023
Health & Safety Training For Mandate Elected H&S Reps	Date to be confirmed	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	TBC
Training Delivery & Evaluation	September Tues 26th, Wed 27th, Thur 28th	5 Days (1 of 2 Parts)	Dublin	29/08/2023
Fourth Quarter (Oct-Nov-Dec)				
Negotiation Skills Workshop	October Monday 2nd	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	04/09/2023
Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace Workshop	October Wednesday 4th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	06/09/2023
Social Economy Workshop	October Monday 9th	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	11/09/2023
Training Delivery & Evaluation	October Tuesday 10th, Wednesday 11th	5 Days (2 of 2 Parts)	Dublin	N/A
Employment Law Workshop	October Monday 16th, Tuesday 17th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	18/09/2023
Workplace Union Reps Training	October Monday 23rd, Tuesday 24th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	25/09/2023
Youth Committee Winter School	November Monday 13th, Tuesday 14th	2 Days 10am-5pm	Dublin	N/A
Health & Safety Training For Mandate Elected H&S Reps	Date to be confirmed	1 Day 10am-5pm	Dublin	TBC

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **ablake@mandate.ie**

● Dublin courses will take place in Mandate Training Centre ● Please note venue/dates may vary ● To secure your place book early to avoid disappointment