

12. UNISON ACTIVITY REPORT - UNISON STEWARDS

October 2018

Purpose of the report

To update this committee on the work of Unison within the PDNPA

1. Recommendations

That the report be noted.

2. How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

Unison is the Trade Union that is recognised by the Peak District National Park Authority.

3.

1. Vehicle use and Travel and Subsistence Scheme at the Authority

At the last Local Joint Committee (8th June 2018), Unison raised concern on how proposed changes to the use of vehicles and the Travel and Subsistence scheme had been considered and communicated by Senior Leadership Team. Also, how employees who previously had the ability to use fleet vehicles assigned to them (for commuting purposes) had that ability removed, without compensation or option to continue the use and paying any personal taxation due.

For the committee's information and in the interests of clarity we attach as **Appendix 1** Unison's full and unadulterated response to the consultation dated 21st February 2018 which was sent to the Director of Corporate Strategy, all Unison Members and representatives of Staff Committee. Whilst we would urge that our response is read in entirety (for a full flavour of the issues), please in particular note the very first question Unison ask, which posed a simple yes or no question:-

1. *"One option would be for all concerned to pay the appropriate tax due. Will PDNPA give the option of the individual paying the tax liability for the personal use of the vehicle should the individual employee wish to continue using it for personal use ?"*

Attached as **Appendix 2** is the full response to Unison's questions which we received direct from the Director of Corporate Strategy (note that the document has inexplicably been edited to say 'NOT FOR PUBLICATION'). We are not aware of the rationale for that response from the Director of Corporate Strategy to be caveated as being 'not for publication', though the practical effect of that caveat may have led to employees not getting the same information.

Rather than a yes or no response to the first question Unison posed we had the following response:-

"If an individual employee would like an indication of the potential tax liability of continuing to use an assigned vehicle for solely commuting to work purposes please could they contact Philip Naylor (01629 816366 (Ext. 366) or Philip.Naylor@peakdistrict.gov.uk)."

NB. Finding out what the tax liability may cost is clearly not the same as ‘YES you can continue to use the vehicle but you will have to pay any personal tax liability due’.

Also at this time in the consultation process, (in an attempt to convey the impact on them personally that withdrawing the use of the commuting use of the fleet vehicle would have on them) some of our members met directly with the Senior Leadership Team. The feedback from our members in this regard after meeting directly with members of the Senior Leadership Team was as follows:-

“It was absolutely clear that there was no option for individuals to pay the tax and retain the use of the vehicle.” (Extract from Unison member email).

Finally and attached as ‘**Appendix 3**’ is the business case report considered at RMM for ‘Changes to the use of vehicles & adoption of a new Travel and Subsistence Scheme’, and the agreed minutes of Resource Management 6th March 2018. It can be seen that there is **no** evidence of discussion on the first question Unison posed, indeed, both the minutes and the business case are entirely silent on that matter.

Where are we now ?

Given the time that has elapsed, employees affected by the changes to the scheme have been left without the ability to use previously assigned vehicles for commuting use. Alternate means of travel have had to be found without any compensation for the loss. This has been disruptive and financially disadvantageous to all those affected and stems directly from what Unison considers is an unnecessarily tough and uncompromising approach to the issue. We hope that this matter could be revisited with a more sympathetic approach that may benefit both employees and the Authority. Members are asked to note this report and the attached appendices.

2. Unison and Health and Safety at Work

Unison has a dedicated trained Health and Safety Representative for the National Park Authority. As well as attending internal health and safety meetings, Unison is proactive in undertaking health and safety inspections across the National Park work places. Site inspections have already been undertaken, and there is now a schedule of inspections planned across all Authority workplaces. Health and safety is a serious matter which requires employees, management and workplace representatives to work together. The Authority also has a dedicated health and safety officer who performs a very important role. An open climate where employees are encouraged to report near misses or potential dangers is essential, and it is hoped this will continue to be instilled in the culture of the organisation.

3. Derbyshire County Unison Branch

Following the PDNPA Convenor position being created to give the PDNPA Unison Stewards a greater presence in the management and decision making of the Derbyshire County Branch of Unison, Unison representatives continue to build relationships and ensure the National Park Authority benefits from the full resources

of the Derbyshire Unison branch.

4. **Routine Duties**

Unison representatives continue to provide support and representation to all of its members whether through routinely responding to consultations, inputting into Authority meetings and committees, and directly representing face to face both formally and informally its valued members.

4. **Proposals**

That the above be noted by members.

5. **Background papers**

Appendices –

1. Unison consultation response:- proposed changes to vehicle use and travel and subsistence scheme dated 21/02/2018.
2. PDNPA management response to consultation questions raised by Unison 01/03/2018.
3. Printed Extract of Minutes from 06/03/2018 Resource Management Meeting and Vehicle use and travel and subsistence scheme business case.

Report Author: Unison Stewards, 3 October 2018.