

UNISON

South Western Ambulance Branch Update

# THE GRAPEVINE



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## SOMETHING ELSE TO SIT AND STARE AT

**...A newsletter, staring back at you as you sit and sip that precious cup of tea on a much - needed break.**

Our notice boards are full, aren't they?

Wherever you work — in an office, in control, in a workshop, or at an ambulance station; from Penzance to Christchurch - the story is the same these days: Bits of paper after bits of paper.

Orders on this, instructions on that, newsletters on this, updates on that. And it's only set to continue, if not get worse, now that our four counties have joined to become one seemingly gargantuan NHS trust.

No doubt there will soon be orders which over-ride orders, and instructions on how to read the instructions (or if not, perhaps there should be).

Yet you never know - some of it may be really worth reading. And this little publication could well turn out to be one of those things.

It's brought to you by UNISON - Britain's biggest trade union. It's put together by your colleagues here in your workplace - people working hard to reflect and protect your rights and your interests at work.

You might be one of many who pay your union fees and wonder where it all goes and what, if anything, happens in return.

Or you might be thinking of joining a union, and you'd like to know exactly what UNISON is doing for its members locally within the ambulance service.

This newsletter aims to keep you informed. The focus of this first issue is on the structure and arrangements of the new branch.

In the future, we hope to keep you updated on the topical issues that affect you and your workplace, and hopefully we can re-assure you that a lot of work really is going on behind the scenes on your behalf.

Welcome to *THE GRAPEVINE*. Glad you could spare time to take a look. I hope you find it of some interest.



## INAUGURAL A.G.M. KICKS THINGS OFF IN TAUNTON

### A Meeting of UNISON members in Taunton on the 20th July saw the launch of your new South West Ambulance branch.

All were welcomed to attend the meeting, and branch members from Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset came to see the launch of the new branch and vote for the new branch executive officers.

The structure of the branch has been finalised. The new UNISON branch is designed to reflect the new ambulance trust, in line with national UNISON policy.

The branch comprises of various "sectors", each with a Sector Secretary feeding back to the

branch. See the chart on the next page for details. Ian Hopkins was voted in as Branch Secretary, with David Hunt as Assistant Branch Secretary.

Some roles—such as that of Health and Safety officer and Women's Officer—will now be shared by two people, so that officers remain accessible across the large geographical area.

It is a time of change, which, for most ambulance staff, is nothing new.

However, for some of our members and colleagues, it is a time of uncertainty. The branch will continue working hard to represent its members from across all four counties.

YOUR UNISON PEOPLE	
Designation	Name
Chair	Ian Knight
Vice Chair	Alan Lofthouse
Branch Secretary	Ian Hopkins
Assistant Branch Sec.	David Hunt
Treasurer	Graham Rowland
Comms Officer	Russell Fox
Cornwall Sector Sec.	Bob Angear
Plymouth Sector Sec.	Mike Berridge
SW Devon Sector Sec.	Vacant
NE Devon Sector Sec.	Richard Pound
Somerset Sector Sec.	Dave Phillips
Dorset Sector Sec.	Dave Hunt
Health & Safety Officers	Paul Short Gordon Bailey
Education Officer	Rob Angear
Womens Officers	Christine Bott Sally Field
Welfare Officer	Tim Partlow
Minutes Secretary	Nikki Chapman
Retired member's Secretaries (Joint)	Steve Gazard Gordon Bailey
Control/Admin Sec	Richard Woodyatt
Assoc. Employers sec	Vacant

### DORSET GETS A GOOD GRILLING

#### Good food and great conversation was on the menu at Dorset's Summer get together.

On Tuesday August 15th, the UNISON branch invited staff in the East to attend a summer barbeque outside the pub at The Courtyard Centre, in Lytchett Matravers, near Poole, Dorset.

The evening combined a meeting of retired members with a sector branch meeting, followed by the lighting

of the barbeque and a raffle.

Whilst turnout among serving members was poor, there was a very good turnout of retired members.

A fantastic selection of food, drink and good company ensured that a good time was had by all.

Issues discussed with Sector Secretary Dave Hunt included the much-needed recruitment of stewards, the branch accounts, the ongoing issues surrounding meal breaks, and hours owed to the trust being deducted from leave.

**VISIT THE NEW  
BRANCH WEBSITE  
AND  
THE GRAPEVINE  
ONLINE  
AT:  
[www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)**

#### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The next meeting in Dorset is scheduled at the Courtyard centre, Lytchett Matravers, at 8pm on **Tuesday 14th November**. All are welcome.

Watch this space for details of the next branch meeting.

# NEW TRUST, NEW BRANCH, NEW STRENGTH

**It's a big place. From The Isles of Scilly to Bournemouth and beyond - The new trust and the ambulance branch reflecting it, both face some challenges.**

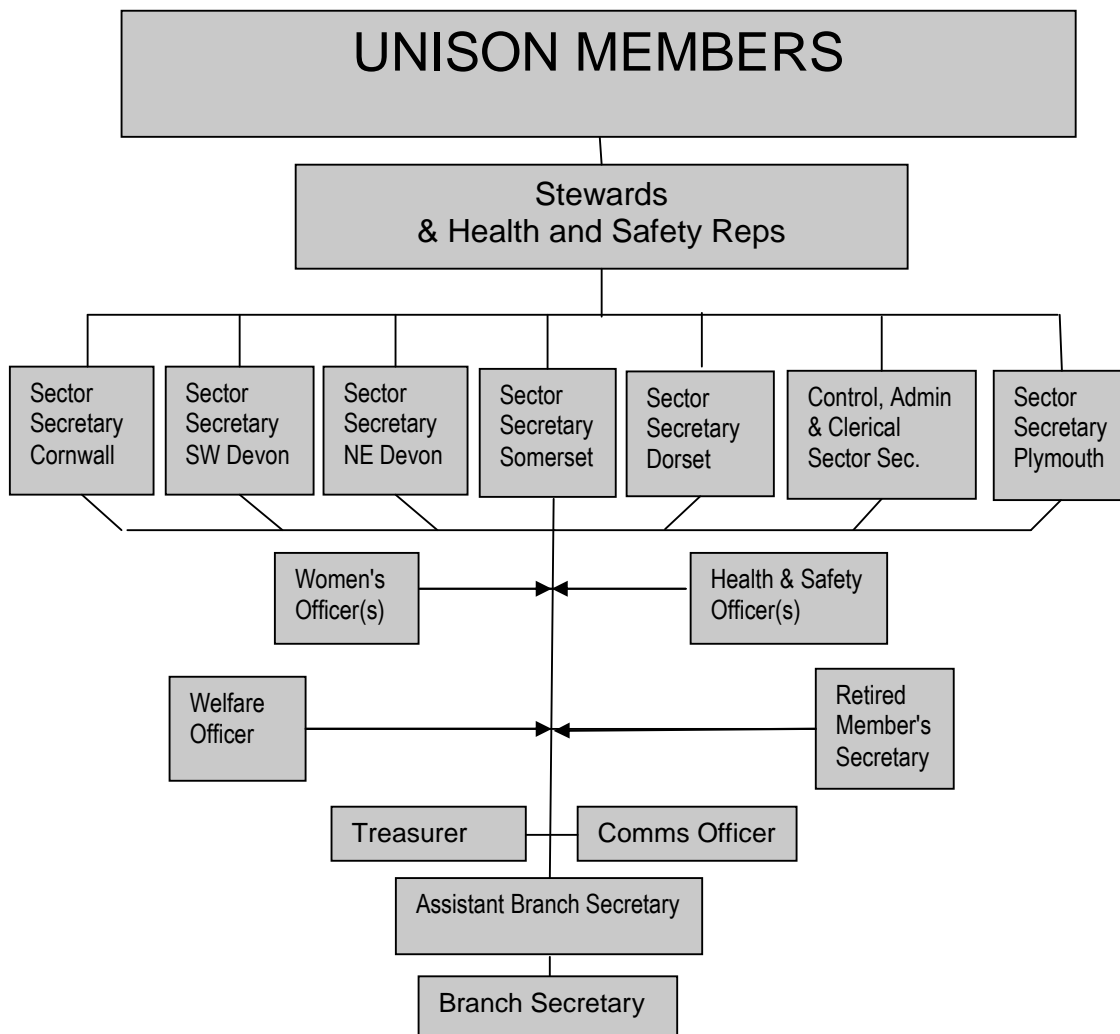
But with the increase in size comes a renewed strength. The membership of South West Ambulance Branch of UNISON now stands at over 1500, and is increasing all the time.

As a UNISON member you can rest assured that you have the support of colleagues not far away, working to support you at work right here in the ambulance service, whilst also having the power of Britain's largest trade union. But all this needs a bit of organising, and at the recent inaugural meeting, the structure of The South West Ambulance Branch was finalised, and people voted into position.

In coming months, THE GRAPEVINE plans to introduce the people working on your behalf, as well as presenting articles about the different people and places that make up our membership. But for now, here is a diagram showing how things are being structured.

You may notice it is not presented like a traditional organisational chart— with one senior person on top, spreading downwards to the masses at the bottom.

Instead, this chart reflects the way UNISON works and thinks, with its members at the top. As a member, it is your union, run by you and for you, and this is reflected here.



# UNISON LAUNCHES “CHALLENGE X”

“Challenge X” is UNISON's campaign to achieve a target of 1.5 million members by the end of 2007.

UNISON says this recruitment success will strengthen the union in both the workplace and the wider world. This is because more membership means more influence, more strength and a more secure future for our union and its members.

The challenge asks activists to help by recruiting a target figure of ten new members over the next twelve months. Those interested are asked to register their details at Unison's website ([www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)). A recruiter's pack will then be sent out.



## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

For all union members to be fairly and adequately represented it is important that all workplaces have a Union representative. Currently, there are ambulance stations and other sections of the service without people representing them.

The formation of our new branch presents a great opportunity for members to become more actively involved, shaping the future and helping colleagues.

If you are a UNISON member, why not consider becoming a steward and representing your colleagues? You will be given full training and support, and you can enhance your personal development through new skills and qualifications, whilst knowing that you can help support others.

We currently need people from all backgrounds and of all ages right now, so if think you might be interested, then please get in touch with your nearest steward, sector or branch secretary. You could make a real difference.

## YOUR HELP IS REQUIRED

### A big trust and a big UNISON branch face a big challenge - that of getting information across to everyone.

Hopefully that's where I can help. Firstly I'd like to introduce myself: My name is Russell Fox. I am a Paramedic, and the Communications Officer for the South Western Ambulance branch of UNISON. I am also the writer/editor of this little publication.

My aim is to ensure that fellow UNISON members (and potential members) know what they need to know, and that any burning questions you have on issues that affect us are answered in an accessible and interesting way.

The issues surrounding your rights and your work are many and sometimes complex, but they should never seem boring, because your interest in such matters is important.

A union relies on people's interest in their own situation, and on a passion amongst colleagues to help and support each other. UNISON is led by its members, and run for its members.

My focus at this stage is on the development and maintenance of the Branch Website (at [www.swamb.com](http://www.swamb.com)) and on bringing you this, *The Grapevine*.

But I can't do it alone. So I am appealing for any articles, issues

or announcements that you'd like to share and you feel may be suitable for publication.

Similarly, if you have an questions or issues you'd like addressed, I'd like to hear about those, too. I'll see if I can get a good answer for you.

Also, I'd be very grateful for any criticism and comments, so that I can strive to ensure that I'm doing it right.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch. You can reach me at:

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Thank you.



Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the editor. Nor do they necessarily reflect official UNISON policy or opinion.