

Scotland refuse workers vote to strike



Rubbish will pile up in Scottish streets, backcourts and gardens should an improved pay offer not be proposed

GMB Scotland's members in waste services in 13 councils have achieved a mandate for strike action in their dispute over pay, including in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Fife, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Orkney Islands, Perth and Kinross, and Stirling.

The union says that a repeat of strike action during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is likely again this year. In 2022, city centre bins overflowed with litter strewn across streets when tourists flocked to the Scottish capital.



The offer proposed by COSLA falls short of that offered by the Conservative UK Government to local authority workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The majority of workers in Scotland would have received less in cash over 12 months and a smaller rise over 18 months than their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

The union says this year's pay talks have been a repeat of previous years where they have been needlessly protracted due to a lack of action from COSLA to provide a pay offer including blocking Scottish Government intervention in talks.

Trade unions submitted their pay claims in January with an offer only provided in May which was promptly rejected. Since then, no meaningful talks have taken place between Council Leaders and trade unions.

GMB Scotland is calling on COSLA to get round the table with unions to outline their best offer which goes beyond the rest of the UK and if unable, for Council Leaders to call for the Scottish Government's intervention.

The union has warned that if an improved offer is not forthcoming, dates for strike action will be served.

GMB Scotland Senior Organiser for Public Services, Keir Greenaway said:

"Year after year, these talks have been needlessly drawn out. That leaves our members – typically the lowest paid working on the frontline of our services – without the pay rise they need. Inflation may be stabilising, but can anyone say they feel the difference?

"Council Leaders refuse to have meaningful talks – all while blocking the Scottish Government's intervention to deliver a pay offer that matches our members' value. They are counting down the clock while our members go without.

"We hear time and time again that Scotland does public services better, but that's not the case when the Conservatives down south have already beaten COSLA's offer. If COSLA can't do better, it's time for them to bring the Scottish Government to the table to fund an improved offer.

"If not, then it's likely that the same disruption during 2022's Edinburgh Fringe Festival will happen again this year. Hundreds of millions are poured into the city during the Fringe, but political leaders claim they can't find enough money to value frontline service workers.

"Council Leaders have wasted months and they've wasted opportunities. Our members have no time for waste which is why rubbish will pile up in councils across Scotland if a suitable offer isn't received. We have no interest in political games when so many are struggling."



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