

## LUCU Members Update February 2024

Dear LUCU members,

Most of you have heard the University is in financial trouble. Senior management is cleverly pushing out this narrative to enforce saving measures of all kinds. Don't buy into it. Our VC certainly doesn't. **The combined costs of two sets of curtains for his residence at The Croft was £3,391.31 + VAT.** Yes, you read it right: his curtains cost more than our brutto monthly salary. But the icing on the cake are the VC's air-fares for the year ending in 31st July 2023. **He spent £19,791.20 travelling business class.** Ah, wouldn't it be nice travelling on business class for our research!? So much for saving ... We really wish Andy Schofield was one of those leaders who leads by example, who understands employees quickly notice inconsistencies and contradictions between his words and his actions, and who is committed to build trust and respect as a fundamental way to make Lancaster University better and better for all.

- **Staff demoralisation**
- **Bus pass small victory**
- **Future of HEIF funding**
- **GM passed motion Lancaster University, Palestine and the Arms Trade**
- **Lancaster UCU Migrant Working Group**
- **Upcoming Events**

### Staff demoralisation

Although there is no need to create panic, as Lancaster University still has a surplus of 36M, and around £52M in cash (unrestricted reserves), budget holders - at least in FASS - have been asked to look for savings in non-payroll. This happened just as budgets had been set for 2023/24. In other departments saving-measures include cutting programmes and modules. It seems senior management loves cascading panic and unnecessary doubling of work, from faculties to departments.

As a result thereof we have been inundated with emails and conversations from distressed staff. And let us tell you that it has been heart-breaking to hear how much stress, anxiety, and plain fear this has caused you, LUCU members. We will continue to fight the good fight for you all, and we are so very grateful for every minute of voluntary work you donate to the branch. You may have heard this a million times, but we are stronger when we resist together. Thank you.

Even though Lancaster University committed over five years ago to a policy that could reduce the level of casualisation and precarity among staff, associate lecturers have been disproportionately impacted by this ruthless and speedily implemented round of cuts. Cutting AL budgets means less contracts for ALs, livelihood insecurity, inability to do income-planning, career progression from the poorest paid, most insecure academic jobs. But the trickle effect doesn't end there, on the contrary, permanent staff are being asked to pick up the flak when they are already overstretched.

Unfortunately, there are other implications of the recently imposed cuts in FASS and elsewhere. For instance, some departments are being asked to reinvent themselves overnight, and managers expect this work to be done in addition to already excessive workloads. While other departments must now cut programmes and modules, thereby jeopardising the quality of teaching Lancaster University is known for. At the same time, all research allowance in many departments in FASS has been wiped out in a fortnight. Gone. This is disastrous for probation agreements, PDRs of EC academics. How are we supposed to create an international university in these conditions? Does Andy Schofield expect us to pay travel, accommodation and subsistence out of our own pockets to attend international conferences, meetings of research networks, engagement events? Given the rise on the VC's salary - 6.7%, so double the 3% we were given - that amount to extra from £19K a year, **we are tempted to ask him to cover this very real deficit.**

This lack of vision for the long-term future doesn't make sense, as taking away work now won't make any difference to finances in the short term, but it will impact our excellent teaching and research reputation for years to come.

### **Bus pass small victory**

Under the terms of the [University's new policy for bus travel for casual/PGR teaching staff](#), casual staff working 189 hours or less will be able to order either one or two Flexi10 bus tickets at a reduced rate of £12, depending on their FTE. This is a small victory as it marks movement from management, having previously suggested that subsidised transport for casual teaching staff would be impossible for administrative reasons. After over a year of Lancaster UCU campaigning on this issue, we are starting to see positive steps forward. **However, this policy does not go far enough and does not properly address the issue of casual staff struggling to pay to get into work.** Much is still to be done to expand this policy and Lancaster UCU will continue campaigning on this issue to secure a fairer offer on subsidised bus travel for casual/PGR teaching staff.

### **GM passed motion Lancaster University, Palestine and the Arms Trade**

The motion Lancaster University, Palestine and the Arms Trade was passed with 93% yes, 5% no, and 3% abstain. This motion is about what us, workers at Lancaster University, are able to do about the ongoing situation in Gaza given the ties that the University has with BAE systems and the Arms Trade. It means LUCU has taken a stand against the University's role in the arms trade and the complicity of the University in the ongoing situation.

The Palestine Working Group is preparing an event called The University in the Time of Genocide. The aim of this is to bring a more speculative and visionary dimension to the current situation - and to make it clear that this is part of the remit of UCU. The intention is that the event is open to staff, students and members of the public, as well as to invite university management to attend and if they choose, to respond. At the same time heightened attention and care is placed to ensure that none of the discussants/participants would feel that their prospects are at all threatened by the involvement of university management in the event.

### **Future of HEIF funding**

At a meeting with senior management and unions well before the winter break, UCU asked about the prospects of future HEIF or other funding to avoid further shortage of work in the area as ERDF funding is disappearing. Colleagues at POE finally confirmed we could quote the response of Dion Williams, Director of Research, Enterprise & Innovation in our correspondence to members. Read below what he had to say and note the emphasis on consultancy and IP commercialisation.

"There remains no alternative to ERDF at this moment in time at anywhere near the scale we were able to bid for previously though we continue to try and diversify our related income streams in as much as we are able and in line with the University's strategic objectives and priorities. [...] [T]he formula looks back over three previous years of income so we will still benefit for a further 3 years from the end of the ERDF projects and funding. [...] Also, there is a policy that the maximum decrease an institution can suffer in any given year is a 10% max of the previous year's total HEIF income to protect from any sudden shocks. [W]e remain optimistic and are seeking every opportunity to diversify as I've said - for instance seeing continued and positive growth in areas such as consultancy and IP commercialisation that also contribute to the HEIF formulas and in related funding from Research England and DSIT.", Dion Williams, Director of Research, Enterprise & Innovation.

### **Lancaster UCU Migrant Working Group**

Given that the Tories' hostile environment has gotten even more expensive and unwelcoming for our migrant colleagues, a local UCU working group has formed. For more information, please email Shakthi Nataraj, [s.nataraj@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.nataraj@lancaster.ac.uk).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Lancaster March for Palestine - Sat. 10th Feb.

Lancaster March for Palestine will take place Saturday the 10th of February 2024 at 1pm in Market Square. This is being organised by Lancaster and Morecambe NEU, Lancaster and Morecambe TUC, South Lakeland and Lancaster CND, North Lancashire Green Party, and Lancaster UCU. See attached flyer.

### **UCU North West Region General Secretary election Hustings events**

Members are invited to join a live on-line husting on Wednesday 21st of February 6.30-7.30pm hosted by the UCU North West Regional Committee and chaired by Maxine Looby, UCU President-elect. **Please register by Monday the 19th of February using this link:**

<https://bit.ly/NWhustings2024>

All four candidates standing for election to General Secretary have confirmed attendance. The candidates are: Saira Weiner, Vicky Blake, Jo Grady, and Ewan McGaughey. UCU North West Regional Committee aims to make a recording of the event available on You Tube for those who cannot attend. If you have any queries in relation to this event, please contact Michael Mackrell - Secretary, UCU North West Regional Committee - at [mfmckrell@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:mfmckrell@uclan.ac.uk).

### **Academic related professional staff conference, 14 March**

Calling notice for the academic related professional staff (ARPS) annual conference. The circular includes information on registration, submission of motions and committee nominations. Access it [here](#).

### **Staff on casualised contracts annual conference, Saturday 24 February**

Calling notice for the staff on casualised contracts annual conference. The circular includes information on registration, submission of motions and committee nominations. Access it [here](#).

### **Updates and events via Lancaster and Morecambe Trade Union Council**

#### **Public Meeting - Not in Our Name**

Join this film screening about the successful Raytheon arms factory occupation in Derry. It will be followed by speakers and discussion. Wednesday, 7th of February, Quaker Meeting House. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign, South Lakeland CND, and the Lancaster and Morecambe Trades Union Council (TUC). For more info about the occupation and the trial visit <https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2008/raytheon-9-not-guilty> You can view the film here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3125054501109548>. See flyer attached.

**The Working Class Movement Library in Salford** have an event to mark LGBT+ History Month on Saturday 17th February, when they welcome Peter Purton, who was the first LGBT officer for the TUC for, "Trade Unions and LGBT+ Rights: Past Victories, Future Challenges." Register via link below. Please spread the word and share the link below with your networks.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/794265819447?aff=oddtcreator>