Your Future In Your Hands
Get Active, Get Involved, Read Page 10 Now

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Time for a change in Health & Safety Representation
Foreword
Pat Rafferty, Regional Secretary, Unite Scotland

The Offshore Oil & Gas industry is part of this country’s critical infrastructure and the contribution the offshore workforce makes to the strength of our nation can never be understated.

However, since the downturn in 2015 offshore workers, be they employed by one of the operators, contractors, drillers or caterers, have been under continuous attack from the employers and their investors. Even though the price of oil has recovered and remained stable throughout 2018, there is no meaningful sign that the benefits of recovery are being shared with the offshore workforce.

In this edition Unite Offshore outlines the main structural problems for members and workers currently employed offshore. From insecure employment contracts, through to the damaging 3&3 rota, mental health and wellbeing and offshore health and safety, one major issue leads to yet another major issue.

Now is the time to state clearly what Unite Offshore stands for. We stand for:

- Fairer Pay and Better Ts&Cs across all companies operating offshore,
- More secure work and an end to precarious employment offshore,
- One industry, One Rota – The 2&3 is the future,
- Better Health & Safety: An independent trade union voice through the reintroduction of union H&S Reps offshore and,
- To raise awareness of and assist in tackling the causes of mental ill-health and serious problems with mental wellbeing that affect the offshore workforce.

Unite Offshore is calling upon all offshore workers to get active and get involved. Over the next 2-3 months we will be engaging in a large scale dialogue on how we fight for a better, fairer, safer and more sustainable industry that works for you, the offshore worker.

Your future is in your hands. You have the backing of the largest trade union offshore but only by standing together can we turn the vision for a better future into a reality.

Join in, Join Unite.

Yours in solidarity,
Pat Rafferty
Unite Regional Secretary - Scotland
Our Vision

A better future is possible if you choose to fight for it

As we, together, edge toward the third decade of the 21st Century, there is a growing acceptance of the impact of burning fossil fuels upon the Earth’s climate systems. There will be an incremental transition to an increasingly low carbon economy. The size and by consequence the influence of the Oil & Gas industry based on the UKCS will diminish, perhaps, eventually, to nothing.

Yet, as Norwegian Oil giant, Statoil (now Equinor) has put it: The generation that will see the lights go out in the North Sea is yet to be born.

The old oil fields are being decommissioned, but new exploration and drilling is taking place. As a new chapter opens, it would appear since the 2015 crash that a more aggressively exploitative, ethos toward the natural resources beneath the North Sea has taken hold. New companies are arriving on the scene, unashamedly declaring that they want to squeeze the assets for maximum profit (and by “assets” they also mean you, the worker).

The average offshore worker has no greater asset to sell than the skill of the hand and the practical/technical know-how of the mind. The average offshore worker does not have the wealth or assets of the corporations that dominate the North Sea Oil & Gas industry.

But, without the combined skill of thousands of men and women with nothing to sell other than the skills of hand and mind, the flames of the flare stacks in this multi-billion pound industry would be extinguished. Without the worker, the assets are moribund.

There will be an incremental transition away from fossil fuels. However, the way in which this transition unfolds can be significantly influenced by today’s offshore workforce.

Yet, without real power, there is no real influence.

The transition is coming, yet the pace and shape of how that transition will unfold is still to be determined.

To have meaningful influence on how the future will unfold, we need to fight for meaningful influence now.

Here, at the start of 2019, Unite is opening up a campaign to put a new, more solid floor under the feet of the offshore workforce. What we stand for is clear: A safer, healthier industry, supported by more balanced rotas and greater security of employment.

Throughout the course of the year we will also be examining the strengths and weaknesses of existing offshore agreements.

If we are to influence the shape of the future, we need to show that we have the power to effect meaningful change now.

Throughout the course of this year we will be asking for you to get active and get involved.

You can be a spectator to a future that is written for you or an author of what is written.

A better future is possible, if you choose to fight for it.
The 3&3 and Precarious Employment

There are many manufactured splits within the offshore workforce, and no split is more detrimental than between Core Crew and Ad Hoc workers.

Core Crew or Residents, depending upon the lingo, have a set job role on a set installation. It is these workers who have experienced the damaging grind of the 3&3 rota for years.

On the other hand, there is a large pool of Ad Hoc workers who cannot find any stability or certainty in their employment offshore. Trips vary in length and the frequency of offers of work swing from too much work to far too little work (depending on the time of year and employer). The experience of Ad Hoc workers is all too often a cycle of short term work, followed by redundancy and an inability to accrue employment rights.

Many Ad Hoc workers would grab the opportunity for a stable 3&3 rotation, just to have some certainty of income. Yet, those who have had stable work on the 3&3 rotation have found it destructive of health and wellbeing.

Unite says:

These problems are two sides of the same coin and the only beneficiaries of the status quo are the employers and operators.

The answer:

A new balance of rotas and employment offshore.

- **2&3 rotation – One rota for all offshore workers.**
  
  A 2&3 rotation should mean where there are currently only two back to backs on a 3&3 rotation, there will be three back to backs – Increasing the opportunities for a stable rotation by over 33%.

- **No wage cuts as part of the transition from 3&3 to 2&3.**
  
  Oil prices have now recovered and remained stable throughout 2018. The oil industry can afford this rebalancing of offshore working patterns.

- **Where there is a genuine need for an Ad Hoc or Flying Squad workforce this should be managed only through a continually improving Permanent Retained Contract (PRC) model of employment.**

Unite is aware that there is currently a 60/40 split between those on a set rotation offshore and those in a precarious Ad Hoc position:

60% have a fixed rotation, most of whom are on the grinding 3&3 and 40% have no certainty or employment stability. A move to a 2&3 rota should increase the opportunities for a regular rotation by 30%+

Get Active
Get Organised
Fight for a better deal
Offshore
Join Unite Today
In this Edition of Unite Offshore, *Your Future, In Your Hands*, we highlight our campaign for a return to one rota across the industry. During our discussions with Unite members and offshore workers in 2018, the overwhelming feedback is that workers want to return to a fairer work rotation. Unite is now launching our campaign for ‘One Rota’.

The evidence for ‘One Rota’ is clear. The study undertaken by the Robert Gordon University (RGU) shows first hand evidence of the issues that all offshore workers face when working 3&3.

It is Unite’s position that a return to 2&3 rota with no detriment in pay, terms and conditions is the preferred choice of the majority of workers.

We now launch our campaign amongst all offshore workers. In this Edition we outline what we are for and how campaigning for a 2&3 rota across the UK Oil & Gas Industry is a critical component in improving the quality of employment and work in the sector as a whole.

2019 will be a challenging year for all workers and Unite will firmly stand behind our offshore workforce and back you in fighting for better pay, terms and conditions.

Unite Offshore is asking that members and workers use the draft agenda on Page 10 of this Edition, discuss with colleagues and send us through a brief minute from the tea shack to:

offshore@unitetheunion.org

Follow us on FaceBook & Twitter at:

@UniteOffshore

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Uniteoffshore.net
The major issues offshore are all interconnected. No matter the starting point for analysis of the major problems, one issue inevitably leads to another, connected issue.

Here’s some examples:

Unstable employment, not knowing if and when the next trip will come, living with the threat of redundancy, leads to stress and may impact mental health and wellbeing.

Problems with health and safety offshore may go unreported, as workers on precarious employment contracts are afraid to speak up for fear of losing their job or, worse, being Not Required Back (NRB’d).

Over time the grind of the 3&3 rota impacts upon workers levels of resilience – going home stressed and exhausted, which has an impact upon family and friends, which in turn leads to friction at home. Friction at home and stress at work leaves workers vulnerable to mental health problems.

Lack of a powerful, independent, trade union voice on safety undermines workers confidence and therefore ability to raise legitimate H&S concerns.

Workers, tired and irritable in the last week of a 3 week trip are reported to be more prone to errors.

Employees feel under-valued and underappreciated due to terms and conditions not improving in line with the rise in the price of oil & gas. Being pressurised to: Work hard for scant reward; in an environment that feels unsafe; under the threat of redundancy; impacts mental health and wellbeing.

We can’t tackle one major issue without tackling all major issues. Throughout 2019 and beyond Unite Offshore will be campaigning hard for: Better Ts&Cs, More Stable and Secure Employment Contracts, Stable Rotas (One Industry, One Rota—the 2&3, A Return of Trade Union H&S Reps and to Raise Awareness of and Address Concerns about Mental Health and Wellbeing.
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The Major Issues Offshore are Connected

Better Ts&Cs
Stable Employment
Mental Health & Wellbeing
Balanced Rotas
Stronger Involvement in H&S

decent PAY
secure WORK
strong VOICE
Now is the time for a return of Independent Trade Union Health & Safety Reps Offshore

In the wake of the Piper Alpha disaster the Cullen Review recommended significant changes to employee engagement on all matters of health and safety. These recommendations led to a change in the law to exempt the Offshore Oil & Gas Industry from having to engage with the trade unions on matters of health and safety at work.

In most other onshore industries workers have the right to organise and, with trade union recognition, be represented by independent, trained, trade union H&S Representatives. These rights are outlined in the Health and Safety Representatives, Health and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.

The role of union Safety Rep is at once specific and powerful when exercised correctly.

30 years on from Piper Alpha, Unite believes that now is the time for a return of independent, trained trade union Health and Safety Reps.

We need to raise the profile of and state clearly the value of:

- An independent voice in Offshore safety,
- The value of workers being able to organise to look out for one another’s health, safety and wellbeing and,
- How to achieve a more powerful and influential voice via strong independent representation and through properly constituted offshore safety committees.

We want your views on offshore safety and the role trades unions can have in making a positive and meaningful difference.

Get active, Get Organised, follow the initial steps outlined on Page 10 today and let us know your views on Offshore Health and Safety and the positive role trades unions could play.
The RGU Study into the impacts of the 3&3 rota offshore clearly shows that continuous 3 week working has an impact upon mental health and wellbeing.

The reasons for why working 21 12 hour shifts in a row offshore impacts upon mental health are complicated and take in: High levels of fatigue, being away from family and friends for long periods, as well as the impact upon spouses, partners and children. Many workers report taking days to readjust to being at home, which, in turn, can cause friction within the home environment.

Friction at home can contribute to heightened stress levels and therefore impact upon levels of personal resilience to cope with challenging work environments when offshore.

Supplementary to the RGU study are other academic studies that, while not directly linked to the offshore workforce as such, indicate the impact of problems sleeping and precarious work on mental health and wellbeing.

For example, in relation to disrupted sleep:

In a very recent study by the University of Glasgow, found the following as a result of studying 91,105 individuals:

“Dr Laura Lyall, lead author [of the study], said: “In the largest such study ever conducted, we found a robust association between disruption of circadian rhythms and mood disorders. Previous studies have identified associations between disrupted circadian rhythms and poor mental health, but these were on relatively small samples.”

In addition to increased risk of depression and bipolar disorder, lower relative amplitude was also associated with lower subjective ratings of happiness and health satisfaction, with higher risk of reporting loneliness, and with slower reaction time (an indirect measure of cognitive ability).”

A further example, this time of the impact of precarious employment upon mental health and wellbeing carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research, found:

“Younger workers face a future employment landscape that could damage their mental health and wellbeing unless we take action. As a result of the evolution of the UK labour market over the past 25 years, today’s generation of younger workers - millennials and centennials (those born during or after 1982) – risk losing out on access to permanent, secure and fulfilling work. Compared to previous generations, they are more likely to be in work characterised by contractual flexibility (including part-time work, temporary work and self-employment)...

New analysis reveals younger workers in part-time and temporary work are more likely to experience poorer mental health and wellbeing, while there is more of a mixed picture among those who are self-employed.”

These two studies are just indications of a much larger body of evidence that shows the impact upon mental health of both problems with sleep and fatigue and in relation to insecure employment.

While not all problems with mental health and wellbeing can be resolved by offshore operators and employers, there are some significant structural changes that could be made, without huge costs to the UK Oil & Gas industry that would have real, lasting and beneficial outcomes for the workforce.

These are:

Ending precarious employment contacts offshore and agreeing a new model of employment that emphasises job and income security,

All operators moving to a 2&3 rota as standard and,

A return of independent trade union Health and Safety Representatives.

It is time for the operators and employers to take the mental health and wellbeing of the offshore workforce seriously. The only way to demonstrate a real commitment to addressing these concerns is to work with the trade unions to make structural changes to the way the industry manages production.
Unite Offshore is undertaking a large exercise of membership and offshore worker engagement. Throughout the first few months of 2019, in addition to ongoing member support and issue specific campaigning, we are seeking to support a wide ranging and far reaching debate about what needs to change for members and workers employed on the UKCS.

The outcomes of this debate will inform the development of a Unite Offshore campaigning agenda in the UK Offshore Oil & Gas Industry.

**Your Union, Your Voice.**

There will be multiple lines of communication to support this debate. However, a critical dimension to this will be report backs from Tea shack meetings held by members and workers while you are offshore.

**How-to Guide**

We are asking that members and workers on each rotation on each installation simply pull together with some of their colleagues and make some notes under the following Agenda items.

**Agenda**

**Item 1:** The Vision as presented by Unite Offshore  
**Item 2:** Your security of work and the impact of precarious work offshore  
**Item 3:** Your Rota  
**Item 4:** Your existing Collective Agreements (i.e. COTA Agreement, OCA, UKDCA etc)  
**Item 5:** Offshore Health & Safety and TU involvement  
**Item 6:** Mental Health Offshore and the impact of work on your mental health and wellbeing  
**Other/AOB**

Once you have met to discuss we ask that one or two people are nominated to write up a brief minute/outline of the meeting and email it back to Unite Offshore at: offshore@unitetheunion.org
Update

Westminster Government *again* rejects calls for Independent Inquiry into North Sea Helicopter Safety

On the 6th February 2019 a Westminster Hall debate was held, initiated by Alex Cunningham, Labour MP for Stockton North, on Offshore Helicopter Safety.

The central purpose of the debate was to call again for an Independent Inquiry into Offshore Helicopter safety.

The debate lasted for an hour and a half with contributions from across the political spectrum. You can read the full transcript of all contributions to the debate at:

[https://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?id=2019-02-06a.144.0](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?id=2019-02-06a.144.0)

The background report, published to support the debate, covered the tragic legacy of the Super Puma airframes and the political and regulatory interventions to date. In spite of the damning details the Minister of State, Jesse Norman (Department for Transport) said, in relation to the question of a public enquiry: “*We take these matters extremely seriously and we have given the question careful consideration, but we are not yet persuaded that that is the right thing to do [i.e. hold a Public Inquiry]*”.

Unite, along with sister trade unions in the OCG will continue to campaign for a full Public Inquiry into Offshore Helicopter Safety and to stand strong and resolute against the reintroduction of the Super Airframes into active service on the UKCS now and in the future.

For full details visit: [https://www.uniteoffshore.net/back-home-safe-2019.html](https://www.uniteoffshore.net/back-home-safe-2019.html)
WORK CAN AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Speak to someone before you unravel

Don’t suffer in silence

If you need someone to talk to and who is willing to listen, contact your Unite rep or official. Alternatively, contact:

Mind www.mind.org.uk
0300 123 3393 or text 86463

Samaritans www.samaritans.org
116 123 (free calls)

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)
www.thecalmzone.net/about-calm/whats-calm/
0300 585 858