

Speaking out

Kay Hender reports on the key speeches from the 2016 Annual Delegate Conference.



Left: Members voting at this year's Annual Delegate Conference
Above: Keystone delegate Aidan Armitage

This year's annual conference was attended by nearly 200 senior public service delegates, who heard keynote speeches from the Deputy Director of the Institute for Government Julian McCrae, STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith and FDA General Secretary Dave Penman.

For the first time, following last year's decision to fully open up membership to HEOs and SEOs, conference was attended by delegates from Keystone, the union's newest section representing those grades. National Officer Wynne Parry also provided an update on its first year (for more, visit p.18)

Chaired for the first time by FDA President Gareth Hills, the conference included some lively debates on motions, including the issues of pay,

Land Registry privatisation, further cuts to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme and compensation for excess hours worked. A full report of all speeches and motions debated can be found in the conference transcript at www.fda.org.uk/MembersArea/Annual-Delegate-Conference

FDA General Secretary:

“We want every civil service employer to compensate every civil servant for every hour worked”

Penman told delegates that over the previous 12 months the FDA had “taken two historic decisions to secure the future of our union”; purchasing a property for the first time in the history of the FDA, and fully opening up membership to HEOs and SEOs through Keystone.

He blasted the Government's

“ideological attacks on public servants” following the “dogwhistle politics” of capping redundancy payments, Compensation Scheme changes meaning “better engagement hope is down in flames” and the “unnecessary, undemocratic and unjust” Trade Union Act.

In these difficult times, and with a consistently decreasing civil service, Penman made clear that “everyone in the FDA needs to understand the scale of the challenge we face and the culture change that's required to ensure that every opportunity, and I mean every opportunity, is used to demonstrate the value of FDA membership to the tens of thousands of potential members who are out there.”

Sharing results from the union's working hours survey, which revealed that “an astonishing one in ten members are working the equivalent of a seven day week every week”, Penman



Keystone delegate Lynda Priestley



IfG's Julian McCrae



Zoeta Manning is presented with her equality award by STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith

launched the FDA's call for "every civil service employer to compensate every civil servant for every hour worked. If Government will not match the resources it provides to the commitments it makes, then it should be Government, not FDA members, who have to pay the price for that failure". Read more about the FDA's work in this area on p22.

Penman concluded that union is "unafraid to challenge but also unafraid to reach agreements - that is what makes us strong. Whether you are ARC, the Diplomatic Services Association, Procurator Fiscal Society, Northern Ireland Section, Managers in Partnership or Keystone, we are all FDA".

Institute for Government Deputy Director:

"The Government has to invest in the capabilities it needs"

Julian McCrae told delegates that "there has never been a more important time

for authoritative voices setting out the values and challenges that we face... Internally and externally, there is a real need for professional assessments of when change is, in itself, becoming self-defeating."

"The Institute has agreed for a long time that the Government itself has to invest in the capabilities it needs... it's very clear that a major political debate in public funding is coming about the funding and sustainability of some of the services that we offer".

Refuting the "argument that Whitehall is almost unchanged", he said. "Whitehall is quite capable of changing the skills base, if we're clear about the demand and that skilled people are needed to do skilled jobs".

McCrae also raised the necessity of managing expectations: "Government needs to invest in systems that accepts things aren't necessarily going to go right first time".

He ended by raising concerns over

the cuts narrative becoming all about "protecting the things that we really like that tell good stories and getting rid of faceless bureaucrats, but that is not how Government really works. Both of these are vital parts".

STUC General Secretary:

"We'd be doing our members a disservice if we didn't engage with all political parties"

Grahame Smith shared his experience of developing a social partnership in Scotland through "the accommodation of conflicting interests" and finding "sufficient common ground between unions and employers that they can come together with Government in order to identify solutions to problems by building consensus".

He outlined details of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the STUC and Scottish Government, which "formalised the relationship". Smith explained that some had seen this as "jumping into bed with the SNP" but insisted that "we'd be doing our members a disservice if we didn't engage with all political parties".

Smith explained that the Working Together review, looking into the role that unions play concluding that "challenges and opportunities facing Scotland are more likely to be addressed successfully in an environment where unions play their full part". Following this, a role of Minister for Fair Work was also created within Scottish Government.

The STUC head concluded that there's a "need to build capability and capacity, not just of unions, but of employers... Government has a role to invest".

Equality award and disability inclusion fringe meeting

The 2016 Wendy Jones Equality and Diversity Award, named after the union's former Equality Officer who sadly died in 2012, was presented to Zoeta Manning.

Manning - a member of Managers in Partnership, the FDA's joint venture with Unison that represents healthcare professionals, said she felt "truly honoured" to be recognised for her work. She added that while "some progress" has been made, everyone needs to "lead by example"

in the pursuit of increased leadership roles for black and minority ethnic people, telling delegates "I am going to give you some homework... I want you to think about how you can truly improve the diversity at senior management level".

At lunchtime, Programme Director of the Civil Service Disability Inclusion Team Janet Hill ran a session on the work of her team and how members of the FDA can get involved. Read more from Hill about this issue on p14.