

## Unite the Union – July Update

Welcome to our July end-of-month newsletter.

In this month's edition we:

- [redacted] [redacted]
- [redacted] [redacted]
- confirm Unite's solidarity with Ukraine,
- [redacted] [redacted]
- [redacted] [redacted]

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### UKRAINE SOLIDARITY EXCERPT

For external consumption in relation to and in support of Ukraine Solidarity, the full text of the July end-of-month newsletter has been redacted to exclude other content of interest only to branch members.

#### **Ukraine Solidarity – Follow-up on Early Day Motion #1000: Ensuring stability for Ukrainian refugees in the UK**

In the June Ukraine-special newsletter we drew attention to the EDM 1000, tabled in the 2024-2025 session of Parliament on March 24<sup>th</sup>, titled "[Ensuring stability for Ukrainian refugees in the UK](#)" ([link](#)).

Unite workplace rep Seb Matthews followed up on that newsletter article, asking at least 10 MPs sponsoring the EDM if they could provide us with a few words explaining their support for it. One of these busy parliamentarians, Ellie Chowns, MP for North Herefordshire, has kindly managed to find time in her full schedule to provide a response:

"In the year I've been an MP, I've heard directly from Ukrainian families in my constituency who have painstakingly built new lives in Britain, only to be plunged into anxiety as their visa nears expiry. The uncertainty this creates casts a shadow with real consequences - people risk losing tenancies, work opportunities, study places.

That's why I supported this Early Day Motion to grant our Ukrainian guests the stability they need and deserve: the chance to complete their education, contribute fully to our economy, and make long term plans for their future alongside the rest of us. The EDM echoes the Green Party's values of compassion, human rights, and international solidarity.

In the recent Commons debate I called on the Government to end the uncertainty faced by Ukrainian refugees, and I am pleased that the Minister indicated that the government has listened and will change and extend the visa scheme."

MP Ellie Chowns spoke about Ukrainians and UK visas in a debate titled "Government Support for Ukrainians" in the House of Commons. This debate took place on Monday, July 21, 2025, and a full

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account including the contributions of MPs including Labour and Liberal Democrats is a matter of record in Hansard, the edited, verbatim report of what is said in the UK Parliament:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-07-21/debates/FF31E852-908D-4CBF-BBA1-3EEB5E1DEF7C/GovernmentSupportForUkrainians>

During this debate, amongst other MPs from other parties, Ellie Chowns intervened to ask the Labour government's Minister for the Home Department, Seema Malhotra, if she recognized that *"uncertainty over visa conditions adds to the anguish faced by those families here in the UK, and indeed to that of their very generous hosts?"* and if the Minister would *"commit to reviewing the situation and giving them hope for the future?"*.

<https://members.parliament.uk/member/5249/contributions>

Unite at CUP&A expresses its sincere thanks to Ellie Chowns for replying.

Our thanks also to Jesi Bailey, Media officer, Office of Ellie Chowns MP.

**Unite Committee**

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### Unite the Union overwhelmingly endorses firm solidarity with Ukraine

Unite has a Policy Conference every two years and in this year's conference in Brighton, Monday 7 July – Friday 11 July, a motion was passed unopposed committing to more robust and participatory solidarity with Ukraine in association with Ukrainian trade unions. This motion passed was composed (consolidated) from three motions submitted by branches, including our sibling branch Oxford University Press, all of those three proposed by members of the Unite Ukraine Solidarity group formed in 2024, and with the involvement of Ukrainian comrades in putting the motion in a couple of branches.

There was a lot of behind-the scenes energetic scrambling to find eligible conference delegates to attend the Compositing meeting the day before conference itself started, and to speak to and second the motion – delegate Tyrone Falls made an impactful seconding speech which helped carry the day. At times members supporting the effort in the background were on tenterhooks until delegates were identified and it felt like a period of high drama.

A couple of days in advance, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign developed a compelling leaflet to distribute to the 700 delegates, and members, including at least one CUP&A branch member, chipped in to print off 1000 copies.

In the event, the composite passed with only a handful of abstentions and no speeches made nor votes cast against it.

The successful composite motion follows:

#### **Composite #14: Solidarity with Ukraine**

Incorporating Motions 79, 80, 81

*Standing in the names of:*

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*CYW-NP Sector Glasgow/Lanarkshire (SC/164/403)*

*GPM Oxford University Press (SE/6277)*

*Unite – Architectural Workers (LE/801)*

“Conference notes that the mass destruction and bombing of the indiscriminate Russian attacks have left millions of Ukrainians displaced, many without homes to return to and that Unite members may be asked to work on reconstruction projects within their workplace. Many prominent international organisations are salivating at the chance to rebuild Ukraine in their own image, with myopic and technocratic ideas for redevelopment.

Conference notes that the [Executive Council Statement](#) on Ukraine adopted by Policy Conference 2023 – alongside condemning Russia’s invasion and war and calling for immediate Russian withdrawal – called on the UK government to “seek to strengthen links with Ukrainian trade unions and support their rights to organise freely and especially recognise their role in building a more just and democratic post-war reconstruction.”

This Conference believes that Unite should step up pressure on the Labour government to do so; and that Unite should use its affiliation to the Labour Party, and its representation in Labour Party structures, for that purpose.

Conference also believes that Unite itself should strengthen its own links with Ukrainian trade unions and provide support to the latter in their campaigning activities as the collective voice of labour in Ukraine – including against the Russian invasion and war, and against the Ukrainian government’s neoliberal / anti-worker policies.

Conference therefore calls for:

- Speakers from the two Ukrainian trade union federations (FPU, Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, and KVPU, Confederation of Free Trades Unions of Ukraine) to be invited to speak and take questions/have discussion at a Unite EC meeting (in person or online).
- Unite at national and regional levels to organise delegations to Ukraine to meet Ukrainian trade unions; and to organise speaking tours in Britain for Ukrainian trade union representatives.
- Unite at national and regional levels to publicise financial appeals launched/promoted by Ukrainian trade unions.
- Unite branches to twin with Ukrainian counterparts, with assistance in twinning being provided by their Unite Regional offices where required.
- Unite to raise the issues facing workers and trade unions in Ukraine in the Labour Party.”

### **Seb Matthews, workplace rep, Unite branch committee CUP&A**

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Here at CUP&A, the branch last week also voted to donate £750 each to Ukraine Solidarity campaign, as well as the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

### **Unite Committee**

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### Proceedings of renewal Campaign launch – ‘*Another Ukraine is Possible - Free from Occupation*’ (London, July 28th)

Members are probably aware of our SharePoint [news article \(link\)](#) of July 21<sup>st</sup>, advertising this campaign launch by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) (USC) held in the [NEU](#)’s HQ, at Hamilton House, London WC1H 9BD.

This campaign launch is for renewed solidarity with Ukraine [particularly in light of challenges arising in 2025 and the prolonged, and increased, Russian aggression & occupation].

I and another workplace rep, Dario Delelis, were both in attendance at this meeting chaired by Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF (*train drivers’ union, which has been at the forefront of Ukraine solidarity in the TU movement*) and facilitated by Sacha Ismail (*trade union liaison officer for USC*) and supported by Christopher Ford (*Secretary & organiser for USC*).

This was a hybrid onsite and remote event, with some speakers joining from Ukraine and the US by Zoom call.

The panel consisted of -

#### Onstage:

Sacha Ismail (USC)

Zoe Gardner ([Stop Trump coalition](#))

Mick Whelan (GS, [ASLEF](#))

Daryna Korostii ([Goldsmiths College Ukrainian Society](#))

Christopher Ford (USC)

#### Remote/Zoom:

Vitaliy Dudin (*cofounder, democratic socialist [Social Movement](#), & labour rights organiser*)

Yuliya Yurchenko (*Senior Lecturer in [Political Economy, University of Greenwich](#), London*)

Sen. Tanya Vykhovsky ([State Senator for Vermont](#), USA, Progressive Democrat)

Other contributors also joined remotely e.g. Julie Ward, Peter Cooper

***What follows is a redacted summary of salient contributions, rather than a full transcription, and later remarks also reflect questions from the floor -***

**Mick Whelan** made opening remarks and contributed throughout holding the meeting narrative together

**Sen. Tanya Vykhovsky** made opening statements including that the only lasting peace is for Russian troops to leave Ukraine, that Trump’s intervention and betrayal is dangerous to Ukraine and, by extension, to the US, Europe and elsewhere, she added that it is important to centre the voices of Ukraine’s people.

**Vitaliy Dudin** gave examples indicating that there is no safe place from Russian drones in Ukraine. He emphasised that Ukrainian people in their millions are willing to resist Russia but are hampered in that Ukraine is governed by capitalists\* and oligarchs (\**for balance, some other speakers later, while recognising the threat of oligarchy and exploitation, did not identify as anti-capitalist as such, nor leftist*). He pointed out that we’ve all witnessed recently in the news the popular mobilisation against legislative changes to weaken anti-corruption bodies, which mobilisation represents a

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moment of huge empowerment for Ukrainian people, who also don't believe Trump sincerely wants to end the war, it could go on for years. He concluded with thanks, saying our support lends strength to an independent Ukrainian left.



Figure 1: Meeting Start - from L-R, Sacha Ismail, Zoe Gardner, Mick Whelan, Daryna Korostii; Onscreen: Vitaliy Dudin

**Yuliya Yurchenko**, whose academic focus is postwar reconstruction, promoted the KVP as an independent federation of trade unions in Ukraine (which has faced repressive hostility from the government) and she emphasised that it is important to understand the perils as regards reconstruction planning such that in Rome recently ([Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025 \(URC2025\), 10-11 July](#)). She reports being very depressed at the level of discussion going on in these meetings, getting the marked impression that these meetings are vulture summits to establish who could grab what, essentially platforms for predatory investment opportunities. All this reconstruction planning is a feast of stealing the future of Ukrainian people by investors, especially from the US, stealing rights. She cited discussed exemptions from the Labour Code, and exemptions from military service for investors. Her impression is that the rights of Ukrainians are not being protected, while 'imperialist vultures' from Russia, China and the US must be resisted – meaningful sovereignty can only exist when the people are in charge rather than investors, and that there is a struggle for the nation's reconstruction between Ukrainian labour and Ukrainian oligarchs.

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**Zoe Gardner** of the Stop Trump Coalition noted that where humanitarian law is undermined in one country it is undermined elsewhere. Every struggle for justice and human rights is related, and the struggle must be against not just Trump but Trumpist politics. Trump is revealing his complete disregard for law and human rights both in the US and globally. His regard for Putin is as a strongman whose model is to be followed. She regards Farage as similar, the symptom of Trumpist politics emerging in the UK. She brought our attention to the planned demonstrations against Trump's state visit to the UK 17-19 September, and noted that a strong pro-Ukraine presence is expected as has been evident elsewhere and previously.

**Daryna Korostii**, representing Ukrainian students & refugees at Goldsmiths observed that Trump's peace plan is an ultimatum, following on from his suspension - for months - of military aid to Ukraine that gave Russia its present advantage and opportunity; furthermore Trump is trying to turn this situation into a business opportunity. Ukrainians at present are fighting both for justice and for real democracy.

**Sen. Tanya Vykhoversky**, in response, told the meeting that she was aware of US investors buying up Ukrainian land at incredibly low prices. She furthermore cautioned about the instrumentalisation by the far right (now in positions of power) of the rhetoric of anti-asylum-seekers and anti-immigration, mirrored in the US and Europe.

**Zoe Gardner** warned that the underlying infrastructure of deportation in the US that Trump is using was built by Democrats when in government, and that Labour in the UK is now mirroring this by building such infrastructure that could be used by Reform if they came to power. Zoe also thought that there was value in trying to talk round members of the old left who couldn't yet appreciate or recognise Russian imperialism as such but adhered to 20<sup>th</sup> century anti-NATO positions that don't match the present reality.

**Yuliya Yurchenko** argued with that latter view, advising we don't waste time on 'Red fascists' [aka 'tankies'], but focus instead on what gets results. She noted that it is very difficult to work with Russian dissidents because they risk exposure, and it will only really be feasible to work with them once the Putin regime falls. She cautioned we should start with the material reality – only then can we build a winning strategy.

**Sen. Tanya Vykhoversky**, continuing with the theme of ignorance of Ukraine's and the global reality in the popular mind, noted that [parallel to challenges in the UK] there is a deep American exceptionalism that stops truth penetrating.

**Peter Cooper**, contributor on Zoom, offered the prospect that we can and should still push on the issue of sanctions on Russian fuels and drew the meeting's attention to UK parliamentary Early Day Motion (EDM) [651 "British companies and the transportation of Russian liquefied natural gas"](#), tabled in the 2024-25 session\* and currently standing at just 42 signatures.

[\*EDMs lapse at the end of each session of Parliament (a session starts with the King's Speech and usually lasts about 12 months)]

**Julie Ward**, contributor on Zoom, observed that Denmark with which she is very familiar, spends more per capita on military and other aid for Ukraine than any – it's the number one issue for them.

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She found cause for optimism in the fact that [Denmark is holding the Presidency](#) of the Council of the European Union from 1 July to 31 December 2025.

**Sen. Tanya Vykhover** concluded her remarks in the meeting with the observation that we need to build something resistant to future fascism.

**Sacha Ismail** (USC, Trade union liaison) drew the meeting's attention to a new USC appeal for a unit in the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Sumy – funds for a pickup truck to serve as a UAV interception platform, i.e. to shoot down drones and missiles, and that the request for this vehicle comes from Ukrainian trade unions.

[\[Crowdfunder: Help defend Sumy oblast from Russian attacks\]](#)

**Christopher Ford** (USC, Secretary) reiterated the gravity of the strategic and tactical situation and the urgent need to empower Ukraine to resist the heightened air and land assaults by Russian forces. He also thanked ASLEF General Secretary, Mick Wheelan, both for chairing the meeting and for ASLEF's steadfast support of Ukraine's freedom, territorial integrity and right to self-determination.

***Other points raised during the meeting included:***

- Trump has now pressured European allies of Ukraine to buy American armaments - while only the US produces Patriot anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, the wider manipulation of trade for profit is a grave concern

- there is circa \$30 billion in Russian assets in [British] banks that should be confiscated and appropriated for the provision of aid to Ukraine

The meeting concluded at 8pm, and delegates repaired to a pub in the locality where productive networking (e.g. with OUP's Unite branch, and a member of NEU) ensued, and lively discussion included recounting of USC members' many solidarity visits for delivery of aid to Ukraine, and also mentioned aid delivery efforts of groups such as Casus Pax (represented by delegate Dan Bromley, who had put a question from the floor in meeting) and Pickups for Peace (P4P, not represented).



Figure 2: Meeting End - Zoe Gardner, Mick Wheelan, Daryna Korostii, Christopher Ford

**Seb Matthews, workplace rep, Unite branch committee CUP&A**