



Public and Commercial
Services Union

DWP Group Fylde Central Benefits & Services Branch

Room A208R, Warbreck House, Warbreck Hill,
Blackpool
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Tel: 01253 337400

Chair: Grant McClure
Secretary: Duncan Griffiths

8th April 2015

Dear xxxxxx

GENERAL ELECTION 2015 – YOUR VIEWS

I am writing on behalf of the Public and Commercial Services Union, Department for Work and Pensions Group, Fylde Central Benefits and Services Branch concerning your views as a candidate in the forthcoming General Election.

PCS is not affiliated to any Political Party however we are interested in the views of candidates in elections; particularly in relation to the issues that impact the members.

Below are a series of questions relating to key issues that impact PCS members on the Fylde. I would be grateful if you could consider responding to the questions with your views and to return them to me, prior to 1st May 2015. Your responses will be posted on the Branch Website, <http://pcs-fylde.blogspot.co.uk/>, in order that the members can view the responses from the candidates. The Branch has circa 2,500 members living on the Fylde. The details may also appear on the PCS North West Region Website.

Section A - Jobs/ Site Closures

Background: Over the last 10 years more than 3,000 jobs have been lost from the Department for Work and Pensions on the Fylde. This is part of the wider picture reported in the local media of a study showing that over 10,000 jobs have been lost from the Fylde in a similar period.

During the last Parliament the majority of the DWP Norcross site closed, which resulted in over 25 private sector employees being made redundant and a number of DWP employees were also made redundant as a direct result of the closure.

1. Do you agree that we should be investing in jobs in the Fylde?
2. If you agree with 1 above what are you prepared to do to achieve this?
3. Do you believe that the loss of public sector jobs on the Fylde Coast is a price worth paying to “balance the economy”?

Section B – Pay

Background: It is a myth that civil servants are paid more than those in the private sector. Comparisons are difficult because many of the traditionally lower paid jobs in the civil service like security officers, messengers and cleaners have been outsourced from the public to the private sector.

However, when pay for civil service jobs is compared with jobs with similar skills and responsibilities in the private sector, the pay of civil servants is significantly lower.

A 2009 analysis by Incomes Data Services showed pay gaps for AO's, EO's and HEO's at almost every pay rate in a range from 7% to 24%.

More recently a report by consultancy firm Croner shows that pay for direct comparators in the private sector is higher than in the civil service and the gap is growing. In 2012 their study showed that median pay in the civil service is 4.4% lower than the median pay in direct private sector comparators. In their 2013-14 annual survey, they found civil service pay was 6.4% behind. At lower grades, the gaps were larger. At Executive Officer level pay was 10% below private sector comparators. At Administrative Officer level it was 8%.

1. Do you agree that as we are now eventually starting to come out of the longest recession in living memory, a recession created by speculation in the banking sector, the workers in Britain need a pay rise?

2. Do you agree that public sector wages increases should be capped at 1%?

Section C – Tax Justice

Background: In 2010 PCS was responsible for commissioning and publishing the most comprehensive calculation of the UK tax gap ever undertaken at the time. The report by Tax Research UK estimated the tax gap at £120 billion. This was made up of £70 billion in evaded tax, £25 billion in avoided tax and £25 billion in tax paid late.

A new study by Tax Research UK for PCS published in 2014 makes a new estimate of the tax gap, which continues to be significantly higher than the HMRC estimate. This estimate, which is £119.4 billion for financial year 2013/14 includes reductions in the estimates of tax avoidance and tax debt, but a significant increase in the estimated tax loss from tax evasion. The main area considered by the new report is tax evasion. The report looks at data which the HMRC estimate of the tax gap does not address and shows that tax evasion is where the most money is lost to the HMRC.

Tax evasion covers a wide range of activities, including economic activities that are not recorded or declared in the shadow economy, other criminal or fraudulent behaviour, misrepresentation or negligence on a tax return, undeclared capital gains or inheritance tax and offshore tax evasion. According to the latest report, tax evasion cost the UK £73.4 billion in 2011/12 rising to £82.1 billion in 2013/14 and could cost over £100.8 billion to the Exchequer by 2018 (See: Tax Evasion in 2014, Richard Murphy, Tax Research UK)

1. Do you agree with the policy of Tax Justice or the present policy of Austerity?

Could you please e-mail your responses to me (Arial 12 point please) at the following e-mail address:

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I hope that this is useful and look forward to your reply

Yours sincerely

DUNCAN GRIFFITHS
Branch Secretary