

Branch briefing BB-22-26

To: Branch chairs, secretaries and workplace representatives

05 March 2026

National campaign and fighting fund

INTRODUCTION

This branch briefing updates branches on talks in respect of the national campaign and discussions on the fighting fund.

PAY - OFFERS AND PROPOSALS

We have received a number of pay offers and proposals that have been considered by the National Disputes Committee (NDC). The NDC has authorised PCS Groups and branches to conduct ballots on pay offers from the following employers covering 2025/26 and subsequent years:

	Duration of award	Main points	Outcome
Scottish Prison Service (303 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	4.25% in year 1, 3.75% in year 2; no comp redundancy guarantee	Accepted
Scottish Government (6,259 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	4% in year 1, 3.5% in year 2; no comp redundancy guarantee	Accepted
Registers of Scotland (653 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal (966 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Forestry & Land Scotland/Scottish Forestry (355 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Risk Management Authority (15 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
NatureScot (101 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted

Sport Scotland (93 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Scottish Enterprise (361 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service (995 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
VisitScotland (59 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Skills Development Scotland (146 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission (11 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Creative Scotland (66 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Scottish Land Commission (8 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
South of Scotland Enterprise (51 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Historic Environment Scotland (268 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
National Museums Scotland (128 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Crown Estate Scotland (34 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd. (16 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	As Scottish Govt	Accepted
Natural England (224 members)	2025/26 – 2026/27	Average 7% increase in year 1, 5.1% in year 2, tied to significant contractual changes.	Accepted
Home Office (17,897 members)	2025/26 – 2027/28	Minimum increases of 6% in year 1, 5.5% in year 2, 4% in year 3, tied to removal/reduction of various allowances & harmonisation of pay scales.	Ongoing
MHCLG (1,155 members)	2025/26	Average 6% increase plus £300 non-consolidated.	Ongoing

NATIONAL TALKS

Talks with the Cabinet Office at national level are continuing. These are a mixture of private and confidential discussions with each of the unions separately, coupled with standard National Trade Union Committee (NTUC) meetings.

We are seeking an agreement on pay, job security and an expansion of more flexible ways of working, including hybrid working. However, with the Cabinet Office having made clear that the government intends to publish the public sector pay review body reports on 1 April 2026, and making it clear that the government intends to align publication of the civil service pay remit guidance to that date, the primary focus of the discussions is currently on pay. The remit guidance will be a key test of whether or not we are making any tangible progress at this point in time.

Given that we are attempting to unpick over three decades of delegation on pay, and noting that there have been false dawns before, we should continue not to raise expectations unduly. However, there is cause for optimism.

There is no doubt that we have won the argument with the Cabinet Office for greater coherence and the prioritisation of the three most junior grades. They have confirmed that this is now their primary focus for this years' pay round. The question now is whether or not we are able to convince the Treasury to fund improvements.

There are some signs that things are moving in the right direction. The Home Office pay deal has produced an offer containing some very significant pay rises for our members. The Treasury has placed some restrictions on the deal, including stating that EO maximum cannot exceed the projected EO maximum for DWP staff by the end of the deal. Given that the Home Office deal sets an EO spot rate at £36,000 by the end of the deal, there is some logic to concluding that there are plans for something similar in the DWP. Similar progress can also be found in the deal on offer for MHCLG staff.

Accordingly, we can be cautiously optimistic that the talks will produce tangible outcomes. As ever though, we must continue to prepare for an industrial response should such an outcome not be forthcoming. Branches should therefore continue to engage in organising work to ensure that the union is ready for such a confrontation should it be necessary.

FIGHTING FUND

At the NEC meeting on 4 March 2026, the General Secretary reported on discussions regarding the fighting fund, specifically how to take forward the terms of Motion A85 from the 2025 PCS Annual Delegate Conference (ADC).

The motion committed the union to a consultation on the fighting fund *“with a view to replacing the current flat rate 50p from members monthly subscriptions paid directly into the general Fighting Fund with an appropriate percentage figure that will generate a long term regular growth in income to the Fighting Fund.”* The current rule makes a clear that the 50p is in addition to members’ ordinary subscriptions.

Recognising that any rule change requires a two thirds majority on the conference floor; and that such a majority is difficult to deliver the best of times; and that the political situation within the union in recent years has been, and continues to be, fractious; the General Secretary opened discussions with various groupings within the union to try to secure a consensus around a rule change that would have a reasonable prospect of securing a two thirds majority.

While discussions with some groupings have progressed extremely well, discussions with other groupings have not been so productive.

There has been some suggestion in the discussions that the increase of contributions to the fighting fund can, at least in part, be found from within existing resources. The NEC considers that this would be a breach of Conference policy as set out in Motion A85. The motion makes clear that the rule change should replace the current 50p figure with a percentage figure; and the current rule makes clear that the 50p contribution is in addition to existing subscriptions.

It has also been suggested that the union’s staffing costs can be reduced in order to accommodate a diversion of money into the fighting fund. The NEC noted that, over the past 15 years or so, PCS has seen a dramatic reduction in its staffing costs and its overall running costs. Those reductions were considered necessary due to falling membership as government cuts bit within our sphere of influence; and most notably due to an attempt by the government to bankrupt us by removing the check-off facility.

During that period, PCS embarked on a number of strategic and staffing reviews. Careful analysis has been undertaken as to what resources are required to keep the union functioning while keeping costs at a minimum. As we have gone through this process, a

considerable degree of representations have been made from a significant degree of the activist base that more resources are required, not less. The NEC is therefore confident that there are no more savings to be made given the processes that have previously been undertaken to ensure the union's survival.

There has also been a suggestion that the Fighting Fund has been deliberately run down. This is not the case.

During the last period of national industrial action, we spent £6.5 million on strike pay in order to achieve the concessions won of a more than doubling of the pay remit, a £1500 lump sum, the withdrawal of the Tory's manifesto commitment to cut our members redundancy terms by one third and further talks on pay in the civil service with a view to fixing long standing problems.

At that stage, there was £1 million left in the Fighting Fund. The NEC put a proposal to members that the action be paused, the levy be paused, the concessions be banked and the further talks be entered into to try to make further progress. The ballot produced an overwhelming 90% majority in favour of the NEC's position.

It is worth noting that those concessions were rubbished in certain quarters of the PCS activist base, who advocated a position of fighting on, while not articulating what that meant. To put matters into perspective, were we to run a campaign of a similar nature, and take the required £6.5 million from existing running costs, the union would need to find 21.6% savings on its current running costs. Assuming that the concessions deliverable from such a campaign would once again not find favour with those activists, and assuming that double those concessions at double the cost would find favour, an outlay of £13 million on strike pay would be required, meaning that the union would need to find 43.2% of savings from its current running costs. This would almost certainly require cuts in resources elsewhere within PCS. The NEC did not consider this to be a serious proposal.

Further, there have also been suggestions in the discussions that the approach to the levy by the union's leadership has been in some ways cynical; and that the levy was introduced with little meaningful consultation, discussion or explanation. This is clearly untrue.

Members were balloted on the introduction of the levy with full information at their disposal as to how the levy would work and what it would be used for. With one exception, they were also balloted on any proposal to pause the levy when it was apparent that no further targeted industrial action would take place. That exception was when the then NEC continued to collect the levy despite knowing no action would take place.

With the previous NEC having been censured for that decision at the 2025 ADC, the current NEC has put right that wrong by affording members the opportunity to reclaim the levy contributions that were taken during that period.

There have also been suggestions during the discussions that agreement should be required by Conference before any levy is activated. The NEC considered this to be a superfluous proposal – we already have such a tried and tested mechanism, i.e. a ballot of members.

The suggestion that activation of the levy would require agreement by Conference would severely hamstring any national campaign that we might be required to launch in response to any development. It would require the union to wait until ADC or call a time-consuming and expensive Special Delegate Conference. Such an approach would be an overly bureaucratic fetter on our members' ability to fight campaigns in real time.

Taking the state of play in the discussions in the round, the view of the NEC is that any rule change on the fighting fund is unlikely to command a two thirds majority at this years ADC.

With consensus looking highly unlikely at this stage, the NEC considers that it would be reckless in the extreme to put a motion to this year's Conference in the knowledge that it is highly unlikely to attain a two thirds majority, leaving us unable to revisit the matter for three years in accordance with the National Standing Orders. However, the NEC is conscious that we have Conference policy instructing us to bring such a motion following a consultation with members.

A meeting has therefore taken place with the moving and seconding branches of Motion A85 to discuss the position. They agree that the NEC should not seek to bring the motion to this year's Conference; and instead allow further time for discussions and consultations in order to try to achieve a consensus position capable of attaining a two thirds majority. Both branches recognise that this approach would give us the best possible chance of achieving a consensus and leave us with the option of bringing the issue back to Conference next year. They agree that putting a motion in the knowledge that it will not attain two thirds will be tantamount to a wrecking operation.

In order to keep the matter alive, following Conference this year, the General Secretary will bringing forward proposals on a consultation process with a view to establishing a consensus capable of securing a two thirds majority at Conference 2027.

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