

24 May 2023

Historic vote supports PCS policy autonomy for devolved nations

Delegates voted to address a longstanding “democratic deficit” affecting PCS members in the UK’s devolved nations.

Delegates at PCS annual delegate conference voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday afternoon to change the union’s rules so that members in Scotland and Wales have the right to decide on union policies that arise from decisions made by the devolved nation parliaments.

As the nation committees of Scotland and Wales will have executive powers over devolved policy, they will be directly elected by all members in their nation constituency.

Moving the NEC motion A11, John Jamieson, said this was an “important and historical constitutional change for a union that is enhancing the democracy and representation for members in the devolved nations”.

The devolved nations now have “very different governance in different parliaments with different economic priorities” that impact on members who don’t have adequate opportunities to address them within the union’s existing national policymaking structures, he said.

“When policy is developing that has a real social and economic impact on our members, it’s in our members’ interests that PCS can influence the way in which this happens.”

He added that the NEC has been “acutely aware” that PCS structures in Northern Ireland are less straightforward than those in Scotland and Wales. This, combined with the ongoing position of the Northern Ireland Assembly, means the way forward needs further consideration.

Seconding the motion, Louise from Scottish Government Edinburgh Leith branch said that members in the devolved sectors are in the “odd and unenviable position” of bargaining with 2 separate employers.

“Currently, for example, we are not in dispute over pay and job security. But we are still in dispute, together with [UK colleagues] over the Civil Service Compensation Scheme and civil service pensions, with the Westminster government.”

She said despite the common issues, members often find PCS communications and campaign materials are not relevant to the Scottish sector and are confusing to new members. This motion addresses that democratic deficit, she said.

The decision came about after ADC 2022 instructed the NEC to consult on the detail of implementing policy autonomy in devolved nations and direct elections to nation committees. In November and December, branches in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were consulted.

Conference agreed that founding conferences would be held this autumn, chaired by the PCS national president, to establish the constitutions of the conferences and executive committees and elections processes.

[Read more news from PCS conference.](#)

#PCSADC23