

28 June 2023

PCS announces new strike dates at the British Museum after it refuses to pay cost of living lump sum

As part of its ongoing targeted strike action PCS members working at the British Museum to strike on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 July.

The action is part of its national campaign over pay, pensions, job security and redundancy terms which began in November. And despite the UK government's recommendation for all employers to pay staff a non-consolidated £1,500 lump sum in recognition of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the British Museum is currently refusing to do so.

PCS General Secretary, Mark Serwotka, said:

"It's an outrage that even after the government recognised the need for our members to be given more financial support during the crippling cost of living crisis, the British Museum is refusing to pay it.

"Our members' sacrifices during the national campaign of strike action is what forced the government to recommend the payment and the British Museum's rebuff is deeply insulting. Our members have made it loud and clear that failing to commit to agreeing to the payment will be swiftly met with further disruption."

UPDATE:

This press release was updated on 29 June in response to claims by the British Museum that they have not refused to pay a non-consolidated £1,500 lump sum to staff.

Yet we have received written confirmation from the museum's head of HR, Chris Lazenby (on 14 June), that states "BM are not in a position to be able to make the one-off payment of £1,500 as requested." He added that now the "Museum Freedoms have now been reinstated, the Civil Service Pay Guidance for 23/24 does not apply to the museum and we are not covered by the addendum to that

guidance, nor mandated to pay the £1500 and that pay review process for 2022/23 is closed."

Because museums and libraries - known as freedom bodies - make their own money they are given special pay freedoms which means they aren't bound by the public sector pay remit guidance. But they do have to give it some weight and their pay offers are subject to their sponsor bodies, in this case DCMS' approval.

Other so-called freedoms bodies **have** paid the £1,500. The museum has scheduled a meeting for 6 July to update us on pay for 2023/24. We will attend to understand what they propose to offer.

Mark Serwotka, PCS General Secretary, said in response:

"Despite what it claims, the British Museum has informed PCS that it will not be paying the £1,500 cost-of-living payment to our members. Following our national dispute, civil service and related bodies have joined Freedom Bodies like the museum in agreeing to the payment, which recognises that members desperately need financial help to cover their basic needs.

"As well as refusing to agree to this payment, the museum continues to pay many of its dedicated front-of-house staff wages that are well below the London Living Wage. Hardworking members like this cannot afford to wait for the lengthy and uncertain pay negotiations to conclude. Members have told us directly that they are struggling to pay their bills, that they cannot afford medication for chronic health conditions, that they have used or will use food banks, that they are racking up credit card debts.

"As always, we are happy to meet with and speak to the museum. But until the £1,500 or an offer in excess of this is made, we will not be suspending our action in July."