

29 August 2024

Group President's Column

I recognise and appreciate what a privilege it is to be elected president of PCS Revenue and Customs group, even if the role is a little more onerous than I thought.

I thank my predecessor Lorna Merry for her years of service to members. I hope in the coming year to be a champion for our members.

Solidarity with Benton Park View Branch

Since becoming group president I've been invited to several introductory meetings with senior HMRC officials. A common question asked at those meetings was "what are your top priorities?" There is only one answer I could give: it's Benton Park View branch. Three reps in that branch, Gordon Askew, Rachel Farmer and Joel Hamilton, have been sacked and other reps are currently under disciplinary investigation. The sacking of these three reps was a completely disproportionate decision and an attack on PCS. We are using all options open to us to get them reinstated.

The targeted industrial action by members in Benton Park View branch which led to reps Gordon and Rachal being sacked was on behalf of all PCS members. It's important that we show solidarity with Benton Park View branch.

Pay

At the end of July, the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance was issued, and it authorised departments to make pay awards of up to 5%. While it is comparable to offers elsewhere in the public sector and it is more than many members thought it would be, it does not come close to fixing the systemic problems with HMRC pay. A third of HMRC staff are on National Living Wage.

Pay talks are imminent with HMRC so you should hear more on this in September.

PCS requests meeting with Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (XST)

Within two days of his appointment we wrote to the new XST, James Murray MP, requesting a meeting. There are several issues we would like to discuss,

including:

- Labour's plan to invest £555 million into HMRC compliance activity. At a recent meeting with the director general of Customer Compliance Group, we were told that it was too early to discuss it.
- The criticism of HMRC's performance by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury Select Committee.
- The work of members in the Valuation Office Agency is of interest to many in the business community given the calls for reform of business rates.

For several years ministers in the Conservative government refused to meet with PCS. However we are confident that Mr Murray will agree to a meeting; he was a guest speaker at PCS Revenue & Customs group conference in May.

Recent violent disorder

I want to pay tribute to the many PCS reps across HMRC who supported members during the recent violent disorder. I fully recognise that it was a difficult time for many members. PCS is currently reviewing its Anti Racism and Anti Fascism (ARAF) Strategy and the national union is keen to engage with local branches on that.

Hector Wesley, HMRC group president