National Employers for local government services

Jason Poulter
Trade Union Side Secretary
JNC for Craft & Associated Employees
Unite House
128 Theobald's Road
London WC1X 8TN

19 October 2026

Dear Jason,

CRAFTWORKER PAY 2025/26 and 2026/27

As you know, the National Employers convened for their Annual General Meeting on 15 October. Members received a detailed report setting out the full timeline of events since they made their original full and final offer on 22 April 2025.

Members expressed genuine concern that JNC Craft employees are continuing to wait to receive their pay increase that was due to take effect on 1 April 2025: over eighteen months ago.

The National Employers considered the document sent by the Trade Union Side on 2 October 2026 but were unable to reconcile it with the stated positions of the different parties as a solution to ending the dispute. As a result, members agreed unanimously to update the full and final one-year offer they made on 22 April 2025, to a full and final two-year offer (covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2027) in respect of those employees whose pay is determined by contractual reference to the Craft JNC National Agreement ('*Red Book*').

For all Craft JNC employees (regardless of job title and designation) whose rate of pay differs from the salaries set out in the Craft JNC 2024 pay agreement circular (dated 1 November 2024), but is still contractually linked to the annual settlement reached by the Craft JNC, the Employers' updated full and final offer is as follows:

With effect from 1 April 2025 (covering the period to 31 March 2026):

- **an increase of 3.20 per cent on basic salary**
- **an increase of 3.20 per cent on all allowances** *(as listed in the 2024 JNC pay agreement circular dated 1 November 2024)*

All other elements of the employers' original offer, made on 22 April 2025, remain unchanged.

In addition, with effect from 1 April 2026 (covering the period to 31 March 2027):

- **an increase of 3.30 per cent on basic salary**
- **an increase of 3.30 per cent on all allowances**

The National Employers believe that an updated offer constructed in this way is the best method of ensuring that Craft employees who are paid in accordance with local pay rates, which are nevertheless contractually linked to Craft JNC settlements, would receive a pay award.

To the very best of our knowledge, there are no Craft employees employed by a council who are paid the **specific** annual salaries as set out in the Craft JNC 2024 pay agreement. However, in order to allow for the possibility there are, the Employers' updated full and final offer is as follows:

With effect from 1 April 2025 (covering the period to 31 March 2026):

- **3.20 per cent on Building Labourer grade (equivalent to SCP2[1] on the NJC spine)**
- **3.20 per cent on Heating & Ventilation Mate grade (equivalent to SCP3 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.20 per cent on Building Operative grade (equivalent to SCP3 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.20 per cent on Plumber grade (equivalent to SCP4 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.20 per cent on Engineer & Electrician grade (equivalent to SCP5 on the NJC spine), and**
- **3.20 per cent on all allowances**

These increases would continue the principle agreed by the JNC in the 2016-18 agreement to align the five Craft Grades to pay points 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively on the NJC '*Green Book*' pay spine, albeit subject to the issue set out in the footnote below.

In addition, with effect from 1 April 2026 (covering the period to 31 March 2027):

- **3.30 per cent on Building Labourer grade (equivalent to SCP3[2] on the NJC spine)**
- **3.30 per cent on Heating & Ventilation Mate grade (equivalent to SCP3 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.30 per cent on Building Operative grade (equivalent to SCP3 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.30 per cent on Plumber grade (equivalent to SCP4 on the NJC spine)**
- **3.30 per cent on Engineer & Electrician grade (equivalent to SCP5 on the NJC spine), and**
- **3.30 per cent on all allowances**

JNC Building Labourer grade

The realignment of the JNC specific Building Labourer pay rate to NJC pay point 3 (because since 1 April 2026 NJC pay point 2 no longer exists), is unavoidable. However, to the very best of our knowledge, no council is paying the JNC specific rate for this grade. As such, there is nothing in the employers' offer that will unpick existing local arrangements on this issue. Any Building Labourer employed in a council on a local rate of pay will remain on that rate of pay (subject to the proposed 3.20 per cent and 3.30 per cent increases) and the differential between that unskilled employee's role – and pay rate - and other skilled Craft roles - and their pay rates - will remain, as now, entirely a matter for local determination.

JNC Craft apprentices

The National Employers reaffirm their proposal that the JNC should no longer issue specific rates of pay for Craft apprentices and instead leave such matters to local determination.

The apprentice minimum wage (AMW) during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 was £7.55 per hour. On 1 April 2026, it increased to £8.00 per hour. The AMW applies to apprentices aged under 19, and to those aged 19 or over during their first year of the apprenticeship. After the first year, apprentices aged 19 or over, and who have completed the first year of their apprenticeship, are entitled to the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage for their age group.

[1] NJC Spinal Column Point (SCP) 2 for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 was £24,413 per annum (£468.19 per week)

[2] NJC SCP 2 was permanently deleted from the NJC spine on 1 April 2026. Since then, NJC SCP3 is now the bottom pay point at £25,614 per annum (£491.23 per week).

Employers would be able to apply discretion locally, if they wish, to pay above the statutory minimum rates.

The National Employers' proposal that the JNC should cease issuing specific pay rates for apprentices, which to the very best of our knowledge are not being applied by any council, categorically does not equate to apprentices being removed from the National Agreement.

The National Employers wish to encourage high standards of employment practice in relation to the way in which Craft apprentices are employed. Further, we endorse the provision in the National Agreement Part 2 Para 3.6, which recommends that for entrant trainees and apprentices, the best interests of local authorities and the individuals will be served if the relevant industry's training schemes are adopted by local authorities rather than independent schemes being established.

The National Employers also agree that employing apprentices is a highly effective investment in the future workforce. Apprentices bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn, while developing the skills and knowledge needed to meet organisational needs. Apprenticeships help create a diverse talent pipeline, improve staff retention, and enable employers to shape competent, motivated, skilled professionals who can contribute to long-term success.

The National Employers sincerely hope this updated full and final offer can now bring this long dispute to an end and form the basis of an agreement between the two Sides so that Craft employees, who continue to provide such critical support to their communities, can receive these pay awards (which cumulatively equates to 6.61 per cent over the two-year period), and which will include substantial backpay for many of them, as soon as is practicable.

Yours sincerely,

Naomi Cooke

Naomi Cooke
Employers' Secretary

cc George Georgiou, GMB
Neil Tasker, Unite