

CENTRAL OFFICE

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JP/son  
12<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Ms Naomi Cooke  
Employers' Secretary  
Local Government Association  
18 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3HZ  
**SENT ELECTRONICALLY**  
[Naomi.Cooke@local.gov.uk](mailto:Naomi.Cooke@local.gov.uk)

Dear Naomi,

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION FOR EMPLOYEES COVERED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE  
JNC LOCAL AUTHORITY CRAFT & ASSOCIATED EMPLOYEES AGREEMENT (RED BOOK)  
PAY 2025/2026**

Thank you for your letter dated 8 June 2026.

I am struggling to understand why a dispute escalation arising from a failure to agree, first communicated clearly in July 2025, has surprised the Employers.

For the avoidance of doubt, Unite has written to you on numerous occasions over the last eleven months regarding this matter (11 August 2025, 8 September 2025, 2 December 2025, 14 January 2026, 28 January 2026, 14 April 2026). These communications included specific requests to invoke the disputes machinery, which were declined, together with correspondence emailed on Friday 22 May that received no response. Against that background, it should be evident that the current position has not arisen suddenly and that every opportunity has been afforded to resolve the matter through established negotiating procedures.

Industrial Action is always a last resort and, in this case, the chronology outlined above clearly demonstrates that every reasonable opportunity to resolve the matter through negotiation has been exhausted.

Your letter is misrepresenting the position of the Union side. We are agreed on the Building Labourer Grade moving to Pay Point 3. The JNC Union side has been clear on concerns; that if all grades are not moved up, we will have, for the purposes of a standard set nationally, a new entrant on the same banding as a qualified, competent Craft Worker. We cannot accept this and your suggestion to resolve this through job evaluation going forward is equally unacceptable.

You have asked me to identify building labourers paid the exact rate in question. The Agreement sets a national standard and it is not for the Union side to conduct an exercise across individual authorities to demonstrate its validity.

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The Agreement establishes the benchmark upon which regional and local bargaining can build. That includes apprentices within the bargaining unit and supports progression through industry. I remain unconvinced by any argument that apprentices should be excluded from those arrangements. Indeed, the fact that some may benefit from higher locally negotiated rates only reinforces the value of retaining them within the nationally agreed structure.

The suggestion that apprentices should be removed from the bargaining unit simply because some may receive higher rates through local agreements is neither logical nor consistent with the purpose of the Agreement.

I am unsure why this commonsense position, that has been in place since the Agreement came into practice, cannot be agreed going forward. This appears to be part of a wider attempt to introduce job evaluation as the preferred mechanism for determining rates. That position was clearly communicated by the National Employers in August and, despite the concerns raised by the Union side, there has, to date, been no indication that this position has changed.

I remain willing to meet and discuss a resolution to this dispute. Both I and my GMB counterpart are committed to ensuring discussions can take place in a constructive environment, with appropriate confidentiality, allowing all parties the opportunity to explore potential solutions openly.

Given that the JNC Union side comprises the two largest and only construction trade unions represented in the UK within the Agreement, I would suggest that consideration be given to the appointment of an independent facilitator with industrial relations experience to support discussions. This may assist in moving matters forward and rebuilding confidence in the process.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Poulter".

**JASON POULTER**  
**NATIONAL OFFICER**  
**CONSTRUCTION SECTOR**

cc: Harry Honnor, Senior Adviser (Workforce & Negotiations), Local Government Association  
George Georgiou GMB National Officer  
Clare Keogh, Unite National Officer for Local Authorities sector  
Neil Tasker, Southwark Unite Branch Secretary