

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

8 June 2026

Dear Jason,

CRAFTWORKER PAY 2025/26

Thank you for your email of 22 May that sets out Unite's position. We have been surprised by Unite lodging notices of industrial action in councils before the National Employers have responded.

As promised, I shared your email (and attachment) with all members of the National Employers' Side. Members have now replied to say that their position remains unchanged; the offer they made on 22 April 2025 is full and final and they wished me to convey this to you.

Given the length of time since the offer was made, I think it would be helpful to set out in this letter the employers' position on all the issues at the centre of Unite's discontent.

Pay

The employers' full and final offer is for an increase of 3.20 per cent on all Craft pay rates (both JNC rates and locally determined rates), and on all relevant JNC allowances. The offer covers the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Building Labourer grade

The 2016-18 JNC agreement aligned the five Craft Grades to pay points 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively on the NJC '*Green Book*' pay spine. On 1 April 2026, NJC pay point 2 was permanently deleted, meaning from that date NJC pay point 3 is the bottom pay point. As a result, the Building Labourer grade JNC-specific rate of pay must by necessity align with NJC pay point 3 from 1 April 2026.

However, we have been unable to find a single Craftworker employed as a Building Labourer on the JNC-specific rate as shown in the table below¹. Therefore, to the best of

¹

Designation	1 April 2024 per week	1 April 2024 per annum
1. Building Labourer	£453.68	£23,656
2. Heating & Ventilation Mate	£460.79	£24,027
3. Building Craft Operative	£460.79	£24,027
4. Plumber	£468.02	£24,404
5. Engineer & Electrician	£475.42	£24,790

our knowledge, the deletion of pay point 2 from the NJC spine on 1 April 2026 has had no impact whatsoever on any individual Craft employee.

In my letter to you of 4 February 2026, I proposed that if Unite was able to provide an example of a Building Labourer currently employed directly by a council on the specific JNC Craft 2024 pay rate of £23,656 per annum (£453.68 per week), the National Employers would be willing to discuss with the employer[s] the appropriate action it needed to take.

Unite has not responded to that proposal, which I am pleased to repeat today.

It is important for us to be clear that 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 increase) and the differential between that employee's role – and pay rate - and other Craft roles / pay will remain, as now, entirely a matter for local determination.

JNC Craft Apprentices

As advised previously, councils are committed to high quality services delivered by a well-trained, motivated workforce with security of employment. With this principle in mind, the National Employers wish to encourage high standards of employment practice in relation to the way in which Craft apprentices are employed.

In councils in which Craft Apprentices are employed we have been unable to find any who are being paid on the specific rates of pay set out in the most recent JNC pay circular (dated 1 November 2024). The employers therefore see no purpose in the JNC continuing to update and publish pay rates that are not being used.

However, as with the Building Labourer grade issue, if Unite is able to identify any council employer that is paying an apprentice on the JNC rates, we will be pleased to advise that employer.

Finally, if it would assist Unite's internal deliberations, I would be pleased to share with you and George Georgiou at GMB – **in confidence and without prejudice** – a draft of the JNC 2025/26 pay circular so you can see how we propose to set out the details of the employers' offer, that we very much hope can now form the basis of an Agreement between the two Sides.

Yours sincerely,

Naomi Cooke

Naomi Cooke
Employers' Secretary

cc George Georgiou, GMB
Neil Tasker, Unite
Clare Keogh, Unite