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The Heritage Herald



Newsletter for NML Prospect members

No. 2, Aug 2026.

Welcome message from the Branch Chair



Following this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM), we have now set our priorities for the next 12 months. The AGM was members opportunity to help shape the direction of the branch, hear about the work being carried out on your behalf, and get involved in the campaigns and activities that matter most to you.

Looking ahead, we want 2026/27 to be a year where we turn our collective strength into clear, measurable

improvements. We will continue campaigning on the issues that matter to members, working to improve communication, strengthen workplace support, and ensure that your voices are heard across National Museums Liverpool.

Through this newsletter and regular updates throughout the year, we will keep you informed about negotiations, campaigns, workplace developments and opportunities to get involved. We are committed to ensuring that members remain at the heart of everything we do

Priority campaigns for 2026 – 2027.

The AGM is always a good opportunity to step back, take stock of where we are as a branch, and decide where we want to focus our efforts over the coming year. This year, members agreed two motions that reflect issues many of us have been talking about for some time: ensuring all staff have access to union representation and tackling growing concerns around workloads and wellbeing.

AGM Backs Campaign for Union Recognition in NML Trading

One of the key motions passed at this year's AGM was a commitment to campaign for formal union recognition within NML Trading. Prospect has long been recognised within National Museums Liverpool's charity arm, giving staff a collective voice on issues such as pay, policies and workplace concerns. However, colleagues employed by NML Trading do not currently have the same arrangements in place. (Continued on page 2)

Prospect's National Conference saw delegates come together to support campaigns that will make a real difference to members across our sectors, including heritage, culture and equality at work.

It was fantastic to see so many delegates showing their support for Prospect's new heritage campaign. Members from across the union stood alongside the campaign banner, sending a clear message that heritage workers have the backing of the wider union. Conference overwhelmingly supported Motion 37, which calls on Prospect to continue lobbying Government for increased Grant in Aid funding for heritage and cultural organisations. For members working in museums and the wider heritage sector, sustainable funding is essential to protect jobs, support services and ensure organisations can plan effectively for the future.

Conference also backed a motion calling for improved paternity and partner leave rights. The motion recognises that better leave arrangements can help tackle workplace inequality by supporting shared caring responsibilities and reducing barriers that contribute to the gender pay and pension gaps.

Keep up to date with our campaigns via the Prospect heritage sector website - [Heritage Sector Trade Union | Prospect](#)

Members agreed that all staff, regardless of which part of the organisation they work in, should have access to fair representation and the ability to be collectively represented by their union. The work carried out by staff in the trading arm is an important part of NML's overall success, and they deserve the same opportunities to have their voices heard. Over the next 12 months, the branch will be working with Prospect and PCS colleagues to build support for recognition, engage with staff across NML Trading, and raise the issue formally with senior management. We will also explore all available routes to secure The AGM is always a good opportunity to step back, take stock of where we are as a branch, and decide where we want to focus our efforts over the coming year. This year, members agreed two motions that reflect issues many of us have been talking about for some time: ensuring all staff have access to union representation and tackling growing concerns around workloads and wellbeing.

Workloads and Wellbeing Survey to Launch in 2026

The AGM also agreed a motion focused on workloads, staffing pressures and staff wellbeing.

Across the organisation, members have raised concerns about increasing workloads, stretched teams and the impact this can have on morale and wellbeing. While we regularly hear these concerns through conversations with members, there is currently no comprehensive picture of how widespread these issues are across NML. To address this, the branch will launch a union-led survey open to staff across National Museums Liverpool. The survey will gather evidence on workload pressures, staffing levels, stress and wellbeing, and other issues affecting working life.

Having robust evidence is essential if we are to effectively challenge problems and negotiate improvements. Too often we hear similar concerns from different departments, but without organisation-wide data it can be difficult to demonstrate the full scale of the issue. Once the survey closes, we will analyse the results and produce a report highlighting the key themes and concerns raised by staff. The findings will then form the basis of discussions with management and help shape future campaigning priorities for the branch.

Most importantly, this will give staff a structured and confidential opportunity to tell us about their experiences and help identify where change is most needed. As a branch, we are committed to making sure members' voices drive our priorities. These two motions give us a clear programme of work for the year ahead, and we look forward to updating members on progress as these campaigns develop.

This is about fairness, equality of representation, and ensuring every worker has access to a strong collective voice in the workplace.

Rep spotlight

We asked Wendy Simkiss to share her experience as a rep with us. Please see below the questions and answers.

What made you decide to become a Prospect representative?

It was a long time ago, but I think it was probably to do with a dislike of unfairness and injustice and that I wanted to do something in a positive way.

What has been the most rewarding part of being a union rep?

When we co-operate and problem solve, for example, it could be anything as big as suggesting a solution resulting in saving jobs, or as small as spotting something in a policy which could make a difference in the workplace.

What issue facing staff do you think the union can make the biggest difference on?

Workloads and stress levels. There is great optimism over the use of technology, but I think how it affects the workforce is sometimes overlooked. As the way of working changes, the risk of overwork and isolation is more likely. I think this makes union support even more important for the future.

What's the biggest misconception people have about unions?

That unions cannot change things. Many of the positive aspects of work have been because of union input before roll-out, it may be gradual and we don't make a fuss about it. Generally, organisations which have union recognition are better places to work than those that don't.

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Casework Corner

Being in a union is one of the best ways to protect yourself, and your colleagues at work. We have asked members past and present from NML to feedback on how the union has helped them in work. If you would like to get in touch to share your story, please do. However, if anyone asks why being in a union is important you can share this story below.

"I had been with NML for 20 years in all and during that time held various roles under the Finance Department umbrella.

During those years there had been a succession of departmental managers and of course changes had taken place, but the problems began when one manager decided they would restructure the department. The plan involved bringing in more senior accountants and cutting the number of lower pay grade roles. During meetings affirmations were given that changes would be made to system processes and work task and staffing level requirements properly assessed. None of these things took place despite continual assurances that they would be implemented. The outcome being after voluntary redundancies that the remaining three staff were then left to sustain the existing workload of six.

The manager then later decided to leave NML and while a replacement was sought, the team were left to fend for themselves with no senior managers changing anything. The sad outcome was that the workload was unsustainable. My line manager and other close colleagues suffering with their mental health and stress and ultimately succumbing to burnout, me included. Three of the four colleagues I had worked closely with for many years choosing to leave NML.

I remained and did my best to continue but then began to experience a change in behaviour from the new manager. It was at this point that my mental health collapsed, and I was signed off on extended sick leave. With hindsight I can see that I should have contacted Prospect sooner about the conditions and my treatment in the workplace and would urge anyone else to do the same but when under such pressure you literally 'can't see the wood for the trees' and for me it was only at this point that I contacted Prospect Union.

From my first call to Prospect and the advice given to me by a wonderful lady on the helpdesk who offered the highest level of support was there and as difficult as things were at that time it made a world of difference. This then led on to my meeting with Prospect Negotiations Officers Robbie and Steve and my NML Union Reps John and Claire. It is not an understatement to say that their great support and guidance on my employment rights made me feel like a person again and helped to pull me from a dark place.

Rep spotlight continued

How has becoming a rep helped you develop personally or professionally?

The reps' training has been incredibly useful and given me much greater understanding of how organisations work.

What would you say to a colleague who is thinking about getting more involved in the union?

Go for it! It would be an opportunity to help other people, and the colleague may benefit from the experience too

If you could persuade every member to do one thing this year, what would it be?

Consider becoming a rep. You learn a lot, have an opportunity to help members and get to experience the workplace from a new perspective.

While on sick leave I heard that of the two managers had left within the first month of my being absent. The second later signing themselves off and then resigning a few months later without ever returning to NML. Prior to the incidents related above I had always enjoyed working at NML and maintained good working relationships with all my previous managers, it just shows how quickly and unexpectedly things can change.

Although the managers had now left and a new team in their place, I ultimately decided that I could not return to NML. However, I am still very grateful to all the Prospect officers and NML reps who stood by me and helped me to stand up for myself at a very vulnerable time. I would urge anyone to become a member of Prospect, it is literally like having someone there who is willing to fight your corner, be the adversary big or small. Just knowing that you have them there, can confidentially contact them with any concerns is worth the membership as even after many years of service you can still find yourself in need of their support."

NML Branch Committee 2026/2027



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