



# Prospect Union:

NML branch report, July 2026

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## Prospect NML Branch Report 2025- 2026

Over the past 12 months, the committee has focused heavily on pay and conditions. This work resulted in a negotiated pay deal agreed by both unions, delivering improvements to the salary structure, differentials, and minimum uplift protections. Alongside this, we've continued to support members through casework and organisational changes, including restructures, making sure your voices are heard in conversations with management.

We've also started to build our presence in key areas such as Trading, with early discussions around recognition and growing membership. Within the branch, we've strengthened our committee by bringing in a new rep and working to improve how we communicate with members, including plans for a regular newsletter and meetings.

While some areas of work, such as JCC meetings, have taken a back seat due to the intensity of pay negotiations, the committee remains committed to representing members, increasing engagement, and building a stronger, more representative branch going forward.

## Prospect reps 2025-2026



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## JCC Meetings

JCC meetings have not taken place over the past year. This has been due to pay and conditions taking priority, particularly over the last 8–9 months, where significant time and resources have been focused on negotiations and member engagement.

## Policy Forum

Committee to provide an oral update at the AGM

## Pay and Conditions

This year's pay deal has now been accepted by both unions following a period of negotiation.

The agreed pay claim includes:

- Maintaining our commitment to the Real Living Wage (RLW)
- A 5% differential between job levels (an increase from the previously offered 4%)
- A minimum 3% uplift for all colleagues
- An increase in the quartile floor from 40% to 55%
- A cap of 10% on year-on-year increases
- A change to the pension scheme for new starters, moving from the existing Alpha scheme to the Partnership scheme (existing colleagues are not affected)

Additionally, it has been agreed that the pay envelope for the 2027/28 pay award will be within 3%. However, none of the commitments outlined above are guaranteed for next year.

## Equality and Diversity

Following the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland Ltd v Scottish Ministers*, the Company has confirmed that it intends to review and update its policies in line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance.

At the time of writing, the Union has not yet been formally consulted on any proposed policy changes. However, we have requested an update from the Company regarding its plans and the anticipated consultation process.

We will continue to engage with the Company on this matter and will meet with management to discuss any proposed changes, their potential impact on employees, and the appropriate next steps. We will ensure that members' interests are represented throughout any consultation and implementation process.

## Recognition within Trading

We have begun conversations with the employer regarding trade union recognition within Trading. While the employer has been supportive so far, this is not something we can take for granted. This year, we ran a one-month incentive focused on offering three months' free membership to encourage engagement and growth. We are also planning further discussions with colleagues in Trading to highlight the benefits of trade union recognition and membership, and to strengthen our presence in this area.

## Casework

Over the past year, we have supported members with a range of casework, providing both advice and formal representation. We meet regularly with the HR team and ensure that member views and concerns are consistently fed back to the employer.

(Case handlers please can you add examples or themes of casework handled, where appropriate.)

## Grading and Restructures

During the Conservation restructure, we supported members throughout the process. This included meeting with both management and affected colleagues to explore options and work towards improved outcomes for the team.

(Clare to add any additional context, including outcomes or lessons learned.)

## Rep Recruitment

We are pleased to have successfully recruited a new representative onto the committee this year. However, we are keen to continue building our rep base.

Our aim is to:

- Have a point of contact in each building

- Ensure our representative base reflects both the current workforce and the workforce we aspire to be

If you are interested in becoming a rep, we would strongly encourage you to get in touch.

## Communications

We have been working to develop a regular newsletter for members, with the aim of distributing this every 3–4 months. However, due to time pressures and workloads, this has not always been achievable. We are keen to improve consistency and quality of communications. If you would be interested in supporting the creation of branch communications throughout the year, please reach out to the committee.

## Heritage Sector Committee

Every three months, branch representatives are invited to attend the Prospect Heritage Sector Committee meetings. These are held across the UK and provide a space for heritage reps from different branches to come together, share experiences, and discuss key issues affecting the sector.

While we aim to attend these meetings regularly, capacity and workload pressures have meant this has not always been possible over the past year. However, key discussions at these forums have focused on:

- Ongoing issues of low pay across the heritage sector, with many roles paid below comparable professions despite requiring high levels of skill and expertise
- Increasing workload pressures and staff shortages, with many institutions struggling to maintain core services
- The loss of specialist skills and experience from the sector
- The long-term impact of funding pressures, austerity, and the cost-of-living crisis on both staff and organisations
- Campaigning activity, including Prospect's "World class heritage, second class pay" campaign

The branch has also successfully influenced Prospect nationally to submit evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the funding of national museums and galleries. This ensured that the voice and experiences of our members were reflected at a national level.

The submission highlighted:

- The critical importance of museums and galleries to the UK's economy, contributing billions in economic value and supporting tourism, education, and wellbeing

- The ongoing funding crisis facing the sector, driven by real-terms cuts and insufficient post-pandemic support
- The impact of below-inflation pay awards, restructuring, and job insecurity on staff morale and retention
- Evidence of increasing workloads, with many staff working beyond contracted hours and reporting unsustainable pressures
- The risk of losing vital skills and expertise, undermining the long-term sustainability of cultural institutions

Alongside this, the Heritage sector committee is campaigning on wider sector pressures. Such as, UK immigration policy that is becoming an increasing concern for heritage employers and workers. The UK Skilled Worker visa salary threshold was significantly raised to £38,700 in April 2024 (up from £26,200), with applicants also required to meet occupation-specific “going rates,” often set at median salary levels.

Prospect has raised strong concerns that these thresholds risk excluding highly skilled workers whose roles are essential but comparatively low paid, an issue particularly relevant to the heritage sector, where early-career professionals, conservators, archaeologists, and technical specialists are often paid well below this level despite their expertise.

This creates additional barriers for recruitment and retention, especially for colleagues on visas, and risks further loss of skills in a sector already facing workforce shortages. Prospect is actively campaigning for a fairer system that better reflects public sector and national pay scales, ensuring that critical roles are not excluded by arbitrary salary requirements.

If you would be interested in attending these sector committee meetings and acting as a branch representative in the future, please get in touch.