



Introduction

Since the last issue of the NOC newsletter, the RMT signaller & Operations conference has taken place in Eastbourne, hosted by Three Bridges branch. All of the NOC reps were in attendance alongside many delegates from across England, Wales & Scotland. We were also joined at the conference by AGS, Daren Ireland and the GS, Eddie Dempsey.



In this issue we will provide lots of information some may already have heard at the conference plus some other updates that haven't already been shared.

Signallers NRP

We met with the company in March to discuss the ongoing issue of the NRPs which were agreed as part of the 2025 pay deal. Prior to this meeting the company provided some data regarding instances of relief staff working nights into FDs, but after reviewing this data and meeting with route resourcing managers, it was clear to us that the data wasn't accurate, and the company also acknowledged this.

Our position was and still is that what was agreed as part of the pay deal, must be honoured. The company then requested a further meeting to discuss next steps after stating that they could not honour the agreed wording or make a counteroffer.

The issue was then escalated with the GS advising him that more meetings would not achieve anything further and this issue needs to move to the next stage of dispute resolution.

At this month's NOC meeting, dates were discussed for the next stage and we should be meeting with the company within the next few weeks.

Bank Holiday Preferences

This still has not been implemented, after NOC Raised concern that if Relief staff were forced to agree Higher Rate or Lower Rate + Comp Day by November and could be disadvantaged due to them not being aware of their Roster until the Thursday before. Talks are continuing.

PTR&R Toolkit

We reported at the 2025 conference that we were still having issues and we still are!

We have a difference of opinion with the company about wanting to move you back closer to the point of displacement to reduce your PDTA payments, we don't accept this and it's not currently catered for in the PTR&R process.

We've always accepted that employees should try to get back to a role within their grade, but shouldn't be forced into a move just to reduce travel costs for the company. We continue to raise the point that moving back to get closer to your original grade is contained in sectional council C & isn't replicated in the red book, so considering the company always tell us they don't recognise sec council C anymore, we want this removed & that's the last remaining stumbling block. It was raised at this month's NOC meeting and a meeting date is being arranged where we hope to resolve this issue. Once this is done, the document will be shared with you all.

PDTA Lump Sum Payments

Following the 2025 pay agreement, members were advised that the agreement included the extension of the one-off lump sum payment for Personal Daily Travelling Allowance (PDTA) to eligible existing claimants within the Operations grades. Following representations made by the RMT, the window for existing PDTA claimants to request a lump sum payment calculation was agreed as below.

A 4-month window which is an increase from the 1-month window originally proposed by Network Rail. The window opened on **Saturday 28th February 2026** and will remain open until **Sunday 28th June 2026**.

Please ensure you contact your local HR team within this window to request your lump sum calculation. If there is any doubt over the accuracy of your quote please get in contact with your Route Reps or us and we will be happy to double-check it or assist with any issues.

Network Rail have advised that the calculation will be based on a members' existing PDTA entitlements, whether this is claimed using a personal vehicle or public transport. All calculations are based on a standard 5-day working week and 44 working weeks per year. Therefore, the calculation will be made using:

- Your current salary / hourly rate
- Current mileage or public transport rates claimed
- Your remaining PDTA entitlement - evidence of PDTA entitlement may be required, such as a previous PDTA/RTA confirmation letter.

Putting it simply and as an example, if your claim is purely for mileage of **20** miles per day and your time element has elapsed, then the calculation would be Miles x Pence Per Mile x Days x Weeks x Years, which is $20 \times 0.78 \times 5 \times 44 \times 5 = \text{£}17,160^*$

This amount payable is subject to normal tax and NI deductions, but should you leave before the 5 years, you are not required to pay any monies back.

National Policy Council Updates

Social Media Policy Dispute

After several meetings, an agreement was reached that the company will redraft the sections of the policy that were of concern to the NOC & NMC. Once these amendments have been made, a further meeting will be held to review the revised wording.

Disciplinary Policy

The Company have proposed an updated policy. NOC have reviewed this and have many concerns with the draft. This has been fed back to the company and the GS. A follow-up meeting has been scheduled for this month in Milton Keynes.

Probation Policy

This has been updated and reissued with the latest version now being Jan 2026. The key changes are:

- The Right to appeal dismissal
- Extension details now stated - Probation periods may only be extended once.
- A typical extension should be for one month (three months for Signallers and ECOs).

Preventing of Sexual Harassment in Network Rail.

This is a new workstream that the NOC support. With the changes in law, the company has extra responsibilities to prevent sexual harassment within the workplace, not just deal with it when it occurs. It is currently proposed that a small, selected group of NR management and designated RMT reps will receive enhanced training to support these cases. We have been meeting bi-weekly, but the meetings are currently on hold whilst the management training begins, and we will be resuming our meetings and agreeing to the next steps soon.

Please be aware that the new policy is active and should anyone experience or witness this, they can report it via the new 24/7 confidential reporting site 'Protect' or by calling **0808 196 8184**.



Sundays as part of the working week

We know that some are interested in this, but currently the company is not prepared to discuss Sundays as part of the working week due to the cost implications, but we are keeping the discussion going.

As a result of the 2024 pay talks, a working group was set up to look at Work Life balance, this is one of the areas where this is being discussed.

Uplift of grade ceiling

Locations with over 1100 trains at the date of their last evaluation has been collated and some of those are listed below. Grade 9 Signallers typically have a minimum of 1000 trains in a 24-hr period, but the stats are only true to the latest evaluation date, so it's fair to assume the longer ago the evaluation, the more chance there is that it now has a higher count.

Edinburgh Waverley workstation 3 – February 2019
 Manchester Piccadilly Station panel – July 2002
 Three Bridges panel 1A – February 2009
 Three Bridges ROC Clapham workstation – July 2024
 Lewisham workstation – September 2019 Streatham
 workstation – September 2019
 Thames Valley Signalling Centre Acton workstation – October 2020
 Hayes workstation – July 2021
 Paddington workstation – October 2020
 Wimbledon panel 1 – December 2002
 York ROC Kings Cross & Wood Green workstations – May 2018

The above locations, with many of them not having been evaluated for many years, shows there is a case for there to be more grades added as we know that many of them have had a massive increase in their workload and the number of trains dealt with. Talks are continuing via recruitment and progression working group.

Best of 3 payments

This is a long-standing issue and the company believe they are correctly paying TU Reps & honouring the wording of the collective bargaining agreement. Therefore, TU reps continue to get paid to their base rostered shift; However, the issue is when TU reps are requested to do TU duties on their day off.

The company state the clause does not consider overtime; we disagree. This doesn't just affect Operations as it's also an issue for our colleagues within Maintenance. Network Rail have written to the RMT in February as a result of our January NOC meeting, where they have asked to work together and draft a clarification document over the interpretation of the best of three.

The company have said once they have received our draft, they will review against their understanding with a view to ratifying the document at National Operations Council.

This is still being worked on, and we will provide a further update as soon as we can. It's worth noting that for any representative being refused a shift equal to their base shift length when fulfilling TU duties on their FD, it was agreed at NOC that they can choose to take a Lieu day instead.

ERTMS

What's happening now by way of progress with in cab Signalling – it's all centered on the East coast main line. In May last year we saw signals being removed from the Moorgate to Finsbury Park section of the northern city line.

Also, In August Last Year The first long-distance train ran under European Train Control System (ETCS) Signalling between Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City, marking the latest stage in the East Coast Digital Programme.

A Class 180 Grand Central unit was used to test its Alstom onboard equipment and compatibility with the Siemens lineside kit at speeds of up to 125mph. Network Rail says the testing went well and this paves the way for trains to run on the southern section of the East Coast main line under ETCS.

We are aware of issues regarding who inputs the speed restrictions into the system and without looking at the workload of the task, somehow it was decided that the SSM would do it, but this has now been stopped by NOC intervening. We have attended meetings accompanied by both local and route reps from York ROC, had a demonstration of the process and are hopeful that an agreement on how this will happen is close.

Pool Signallers

NOC have raised that the role of Pool signallers are no longer needed; the idea was to make up the vacancy gap left over from Covid and now with the new Level 3 Apprentice scheme is live, the role is no longer required.

Please remember, Pool Signallers cannot be slid into a gap on a roster and how they are introduced and used on each route, is to be agreed at route council. Without any other agreement, all other options must be exhausted before they are used.

Apprentices

Changing the apprenticeship from Level 2 to Level 3

In 2025 the company consulted with the RMT, a change for Level 2 to 3 Apprentices.

The reason for the changes:

- The increasing complexity of operational roles
- The need for a broader, more inclusive entry route into operations
- A training model that fairly supports apprentice success and progression

What has changed:

There is a rescheduling of the Signaller training course to later in the programme to ensure

apprentices are better prepared before undertaking safety critical training. Training before placements to reduce pressure on workplaces and allow apprentices to arrive more confident and competent.

- The programme consists of training, placements and familiarisation visits.
- End point assessment takes place at some point between 12 – 15 months.
- Apprentices are employed as Grade 2 signallers on signalling terms and conditions
- The apprenticeship does not include a requirement to become a fully competent Signaller as its focus is on providing an all-round operator. It's a requirement of the NR programme to include signaller training on the basis that it's a great programme for providing a foundation in operations and operating the railway.
- Typically, apprentices will apply for vacancies in the final quarter of their apprenticeship, like other apprentices within Network Rail already do.
- The apprentice remains in their apprentice UPN until they secure a new role.
- Should the apprentice fail to pass their gateway assessment by the end of month 18, their performance will be managed in accordance with Network Rail's HR policies on a case-by-case basis.
- Network Rail will recruit apprentices no greater than 15% of the number of signaller vacancies anticipated for that year.
- Initial signaller training is spaced: there are 3 modules of 4 weeks. During the 4 week blocks the apprentices are expected to start on the job training in a Signalling location to embed their learning.

SSM Update

Over the last year the SSMs and LOMs were sent to a survey to gain a more in-depth knowledge about the role of the SSM and how things are done differently in different locations.

This was a great opportunity for SSMs to have their say, but only 20% of the 583 it was sent to responded, with 97 of them being SSMs.

The data collected is being used to produce an SSM role-based manual and detail their key accountabilities, much like what the MOMs already have.

The company presented their draft document of the SSM role-based manual on the 19th January 2026. During that meeting the working group went through it identifying any concerns and the changes required to make it acceptable. The company took that on board and confirmed they would amend it and present it again at a follow-up meeting.

Following on from that, on the 21st of January 2026 the first SSM Conference took place. It was a well-attended conference in Puddle Dock, with over 50 SSMs from all over the country in attendance. Some of the topics covered on the day were, A Day in the life of an SSM, Challenges of the SSM role, Best Practice from Wales & Wessex, Importance of confidentiality and the sharing of the updated SSM learning journey.

Since then, we have received the revised draft role-based manual from the company and have formally sent our feedback on it back to them. We are currently waiting to meet on this again as the last 2 dates had to be cancelled, due to representative availability. Once the next meeting has taken place, we are hoping that a revised document can be agreed and we will share this or any updates with you asap.

Volunteers/Carers Leave

We know that there has been lots of confusion across the business with regards to volunteer/carers leave due to the differing of opinions and the contradictions within the policy/FAQs, plus the letter that was sent to the TUs. We've contacted the company via National IR and the manager responsible for National Policies and can now provide the below update/answer.

The companies' current position

"Volunteer has always been five days. (It was wrongly interpreted as up to five days by the charitable giving team in 2024 and we corrected which is where the letter came from).

Carers leave has always been 'up to five days'

So, we are in the confusing position of them not matching – but to give shift workers the ability to swap all volunteer leave for carers leave is over and above what other carers get"

In Summary

- Volunteer leave is 5 days for all staff
- Carers leave is pro-rated to 1 week (For shift workers on 12hrs, you can currently only swap 3 of your 5 volunteer days, for carers leave. However, in this scenario, you will still be entitled to take the remaining 2 volunteer days, for volunteering purposes).

We raised our concerns with the company at the last Policy council meeting about the discrepancy between the two policies and put across the desired outcome of being able to swap all 5 days, regardless of shift lengths. The company took our points away to discuss it and said they will get back to us with a decision, which we are still waiting for.

Fixed term contracts / Secondments

Following the 2023 pay deal FTC/Secondments were removed between Sig/Sup grades. However, we are aware that some routes are using "unique learning development opportunity" among a lot of other varying terminology to get around it, this is not acceptable to your NOC. Equally we see examples of maternity / people stepped up to cover banded roles such as LOM which leaves issues with cover. The company has been made aware of our issues surrounding this and they have agreed to discuss this matter with the aim of reaching a resolution.

ECRO Update

We are aware of the grading issues in multiple ECR across the country and due to this it will be being escalated to NOC rather than being dealt with via their specific routes. We are also aware of a recent incident and concerns of the suitability of the system being used, which the RMT has sent correspondence out to members about. This has been reported and being dealt with via the National lead Health & Safety reps.

Job Evaluation Panels

Alex and Matt are now fully trained evaluators and have already carried out several panels/appeals. The Company has agreed that NOC Needs one more person trained up now that Mark B has retired and Dave has been selected so will begin his training as soon as a course becomes available.

Location Visits

Since the last newsletter issue and whilst completing our NOC duties, we have also visited locations and spoken to members. Some of the locations visited between us are:

- East Kent Signaling Centre & MOMs
- York Roc
- Ashford IECC (NRHS)
- St Pancras station & control room
- Ebbsfleet station

- Singlewell depot offices
- Machlynlleth

We hope to visit as many locations as possible and if you would like us to visit your place of work, please let us know using the contact details at the bottom of this newsletter.

Signaller & Operations NIOC Presentation Q&A 2026

Q: Pay deal agreed on 7th January but new rate and back pay not paid till 27th March what can we do to get it paid in January?

A: This will always be a difficult one due to the current RPI figure release date in December.

Q: Leeds East workstation wasn't on the list of locations you read out for potential Grade 10?

A: The list read out were just a selection of examples not the full list.

Q: Apprentices will we see the report / results of apprentices AST

A: This will be part of the process if you are instructing an Apprentice, this will be done in line with GDPR, when more details are known this will be shared with all.

Q: Occupational Health delays people kept off too long?

A: The NOC are already in talks with NR and are awaiting a further meeting with them, they are as keen as us to get people back into the workplace.

Q: Paternity Leave we should have better?

A: Agree we should, the discussion continue via Policy Council.

Q: Now at impasse with NRP where we going to go with it?

A: we have a meeting booked in with the GS on Monday to discuss, the company contacted NOC today wanting to talk about options, NOC urge Reps to rally the troops even if the NRP doesn't affect a member the fact a pay item that this was offered by the company, voted on by the member and now hasn't been honoured, cannot be a position we accept and set a precedent.

Q: Carers Leave and Volunteer leave 3 days doesn't work 36hrs but were on 35hrs it should 5 days not 3

A: NOC agrees it doesn't make sense and will be it will be discussed at the council policy.

Q: Carers feel discriminated against!

A: We fully agree, we will try and expand on it the company does need to get better. Draft Flexible working document has been sent back to the company.

Q: Poor Comms /Circulars from head office

A: We agree and are going to raise with GS and see if circulars can be run past NOC, NSC etc. before being sent out to members. Newsletters will be sent more regularly and maybe a feature could be included in the RMT News.

Q: In the NOC report you said first pay deal since 2020 that is RPI no stings are, we celebrating standing still?

A: No, it wasn't a victory, what we said is that it is a step in the right direction: (Page 2) This is a big step in the right direction by taking the company by surprise, demanding a satisfactory response that had to be received by Monday the 13th October, so the negotiations could conclude and agreed deal be paid by our anniversary date of 1st January 2026, not many months afterwards as had been the case in previous years.

Whilst we didn't achieve the January deadline, we do believe the tactic worked well. Equally whilst we didn't achieve an above RPI Pay rise to claw back the years of below inflation pay rises, this is the first time since 2020 we have achieved an RPI rise with No changes to T&Cs and as already mentioned, this is certainly step in the right direction.

Q: Although FTC & Secndments were removed following the 2023 pay deal it is not working, the company are just using other ways and terms to get around it?

A: We are aware of the issues. The company has been made aware of our concerns about this and they have agreed to discuss this matter with the aim of reaching a resolution.

Q: PTRR Tool Kit, is there any update when this will be available?

A: We do have a draft document with just one sticking point that is holding it up, the company wants it resolved as much as us, talks are continuing.

Q: Will the GS be tasked to look into disciplinary's taking too long?

A: This is already an Item at NOC and should now be a permanent Route Council Agenda Item, this helps us to see Problem areas. We'd encourage all routes to add it to their agenda as a standing item.

Q: Can NR ask for locations to be evaluated via the national evaluation panel.

A: Yes, both staff side and management side can request a role to be evaluated.

Q: During the GS speech he stated a former NOC Rep Still sits on the Evaluation Panels, is this correct?

A: Currently yes, but that is changing.



NOC reps pictured at the 2026 Signalling & Operations NIOC, from left to right **Alex Dalgettie, Matt Bentley, Eddie Dempsey, Steve Blinkhorn & Dave Conroy.**

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