

NEC meeting of 11 June 2026 – Factual Account

Members will likely have seen the various versions of the message from the General Secretary (Fran Heathcote) regarding the NEC meeting of 11 June 2026. The General Secretary makes the serious allegation that the PCS rules were broken by the NEC majority that includes the Broad Left Network. This is a factual account of what has happened in the lead up to the meeting of 11 June 2026 and what transpired at the meeting itself.

Summary

The NEC majority has sought to change the Standing Orders to reintroduce lay rep oversight of our union. This is to bring back democracy and accountability to PCS.

An emergency NEC was called for 29 May 2026. No Standing Orders were put to this meeting.

At this meeting, the National President (Bev Laidlaw) made a ruling under her powers as National President that the previous Standing Orders agreed by an outgoing NEC don't roll forward to bind an incoming NEC. This ruling was not challenged. The meeting took place without standing orders being adopted.

At the next NEC meeting of 11 June 2026, the National President reiterated her ruling that the previous Standing Orders agreed by an outgoing NEC don't roll forward to bind an incoming NEC.

At this meeting, the ruling was challenged by an NEC member and a majority of NEC members voted to uphold the ruling. Therefore the two thirds majority required under Supplementary Rule 7.12 to overturn a ruling by the National President was not met.

The National President invited the General Secretary to move her paper on the standing orders, which was the first item of business. The General Secretary did so. A member of the NEC had submitted an amendment to the General Secretary's paper to change it to agree the National President's proposed standing orders, rather than the General Secretary's, and so the National President invited him to move his amendment.

The General Secretary then accused the National President of breaking the rules of the union. The General Secretary left the meeting, encouraging NEC members who "value democracy" to do the same, and the Zoom call was ended.

The National President circulated a different Zoom link by email to all NEC members, to the General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and all Full-Time Officers usually present.

The National President reconvened the NEC meeting at 14:30. 20 out of 35 voting members of the NEC and the Assistant General Secretary attended, so the meeting was quorate.

The reconvened NEC meeting dealt with all of the business notified in the Agenda.

Background

The way the NEC functions is primarily set out in the PCS Rule Book. However these rules are basic, setting out the powers of the NEC but not the details of how meetings will be conducted. Supplementary Rule 7.21 makes the only reference to the NEC having Standing Orders. Standing Orders are the agreed way in which a committee will conduct its business. Supplementary Rule 7.11(b) says that the NEC has the power to "Make, vary, suspend or rescind regulations governing the conduct of the Union's business". This means the NEC has the power to make regulations – the Standing Orders – for how it conducts itself.

Two years ago when the Coalition for Change first won a majority on the NEC, the Standing Orders were used by the then National President Martin Cavanagh to stifle the NEC majority and our attempts to implement a fighting programme for members.

Moreover the Standing Orders put unfettered power over our union into the hands of the unelected Full Time Officers. As an example, our union resources and communications have been used by the General Secretary to give her view of events without any oversight from or recourse to the NEC.

The NEC majority therefore has sought to change the Standing Orders to reintroduce lay rep oversight of our union. For example:

- Records of Decisions of the NEC are issued to all branches by default (currently branches must request them);
- The report of the NEC's decision is produced by the President and General Secretary and consulted with the Senior Officers (currently it's produced by the General Secretary only);
- Remove a restriction on the ability of NEC members to amend recommendations of the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary.

It is this attempt to bring democracy and accountability to PCS that the General Secretary and Left Unity are so strongly opposed to, as they believe the General Secretary's power in PCS should be absolute.

Emergency NEC of 29 May 2026

The General Secretary may convene a meeting of the NEC after consulting the National President. This was done and a hybrid emergency meeting of the NEC was called for 29 May 2026 to discuss the PCS response to the pay remit that was published earlier in May. Ordinarily the first item of business for the NEC is to decide its Standing Orders. However, the General Secretary decided that the emergency meeting would be restricted to a single item of the pay remit only. She informed the National President that her office would not agree to send out any agenda with more than this item on it. As a result, the meeting proceeded without adopting Standing Orders – these actions therefore clearly contradict the position taken by the General Secretary in the 11th June meeting.

As already explained above, the rules of PCS are silent as to how a meeting of the NEC should be conducted. Supplementary Rule 11.6 says "The President shall determine any question as to the interpretation of the Union's Rules, including any question as to whether or not the Rules are silent." Supplementary Rule 7.23 says "Issues shall be decided by a majority of the total votes cast, except those which by the Union's Rules or by any agreement or contract are to be decided in a special manner."

The National President began the emergency NEC meeting with a welcome and a roll call for attendance. Once this was done, the National President made a ruling under her powers that the previous Standing Orders agreed by an outgoing NEC don't roll forward to bind an incoming NEC. As no Standing Orders were taken to the emergency NEC meeting for agreement, the National President ruled that the meeting would be conducted by way of voting by the NEC on the basis of a simple majority. This ruling wasn't challenged and the business of the emergency NEC meeting was conducted.

Build up to the NEC meeting of 11 June 2026

A further hybrid meeting of the NEC was scheduled for 11 June 2026. The General Secretary set the agenda for this meeting, putting adoption of standing orders as the first business.

On the day of the meeting, approximately 30 minutes before the meeting was due to begin, a paper in the General Secretary's name was circulated to the NEC. This paper set out the text of two of the

Standing Orders agreed by the previous NEC, a description of the General Secretary's discussions with the National President prior to the meeting, and recommended that the Standing Orders agreed by the previous NEC be adopted by the incoming NEC.

An appendix to the paper was legal advice from Thompsons solicitors dated 8 June 2026, addressed to Paul O'Connor for PCS. This advice referred to two of the Standing Orders agreed by the previous NEC as the basis for saying those Standing Orders would bind an incoming NEC.

NEC meeting of 11 June 2026

The hybrid meeting of the NEC on 11 June 2026 was opened by the National President with a roll call for attendance. The first item of business was the adoption of Standing Orders as per the General Secretary's paper. Historically the paper on Standing Orders has always been tabled by the National President (including when the role was held by Martin Cavanagh last year), and it is the National President who proposes what the Standing Orders should be. Instead, the General Secretary's tabled a paper, recommending the 2025/26 Standing Orders should be adopted, and only enclosed the National President's proposed version as an Annex.

Before the General Secretary moved this paper, the National President reiterated her ruling from 29 May 2026 that the previous Standing Orders don't roll forward to bind an incoming NEC. Even though this ruling was made at the 29th May meeting and not challenged, the same ruling was challenged at the meeting that took place on the 11th June.

In accordance with Supplementary Rule 7.12, Dave Semple as Vice President took over the chair and without further debate, he put to a vote of the NEC a motion that the National President's ruling be upheld. This motion would require 2/3rds of votes to be cast against it to be defeated. As it was, a majority of votes cast were in favour of the motion and the ruling stood.

The General Secretary then moved her paper on the Standing Orders, to recommend the previous Standing Orders be adopted. After this the National President invited an amendment to the previous Standing Orders which had been submitted by an NEC member, which would amend the General Secretary's paper to recommend the National President's proposed Standing Orders rather than the 2025/26 version.

The General Secretary interrupted the National President and expressed that this wasn't possible as the Standing Orders first had to be adopted before they could be amended. The National President reminded the General Secretary of her ruling. The General Secretary and a couple of NEC members argued that this wasn't in accordance with the rules. The General Secretary then said she wouldn't continue in the meeting, encouraged any NEC members who "value democracy" to join her, and left. Shortly afterwards the Zoom meeting was ended either by the General Secretary or her staff.

The powers of the President include that they preside at all NEC meetings. It is therefore only the President who can decide when an NEC meeting has ended – not the General Secretary. The National President therefore reconvened the NEC meeting using a new Zoom link, which was circulated by email to all of the NEC, the General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and all FTOs usually present. Under rule, an NEC meeting requires a majority of the voting members to be quorate. The meeting recommenced at 14:30 with 20 out of 35 voting members of the NEC including the President, so the meeting was quorate, and the Assistant General Secretary attended.

The meeting then proceeded to deal with three business that had been put on the agenda. The bulk of this was through papers in the General Secretary's name. The General Secretary didn't attend the meeting to move her papers. The PCS rules are silent on what happens with a paper where the author isn't in attendance to move the paper. The National President made a ruling that any other

member of the NEC could formally move the paper to allow it to be discussed. This ruling wasn't challenged and the full business of the agenda was able to be debated.

The business conducted by the NEC at the reconvened meeting was:

- Adoption of new Standing Orders;
- Agreeing the Record of Decisions of the emergency NEC of 29 May 2026;
- Agreeing a schedule of dates for the NEC meetings up to May 2027;
- Agreeing the allocation of NEC members to subcommittees, forums and liaison;
- Agreeing the allocation of conference motions;
- Agreeing the timetable for Group by-elections in 2026;
- Remitting the General Secretary's National Campaign paper and a National Campaign motion from an NEC member to the National Disputes Committee for decision and action;
- Agreeing a motion on the PCS response to the publication of the EHRC Code of Practice in response to For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers;
- Agreeing a motion regarding granting the National President access to legal advice on behalf of the NEC.

Members will be able to see that despite the obstructions put up by the General Secretary, the NEC met as was planned, held a quorate meeting and decided on all of the business that was scheduled for the meeting.