



improving employment relations

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**COLLECTIVE CONCILIATION BETWEEN EA AND NJC TRADE UNIONS
Held on 17 April 2026 at the Labour Relations Agency Headquarters Belfast**

Following discussions at the conciliation meetings at the Labour Relations Agency, the following was agreed:

1. Introduction

This document sets out the current agreed position between EA and Joint Trade Union Side following recent discussions in relation to the following issues of dispute for EA employees covered by Green Book Terms & Conditions:

- Essential Car User Allowance and Mileage Rates
- Job Evaluation
- Extended Schools
- Temporary to Permanent – Non Term-Time Agreement Staff
- Temporary to Permanent - Term-Time Agreement
- Transport
- Disability Redeployment

It outlines the areas of agreement, the actions that will be progressed at this time and the matters requiring continued engagement.

2. Outline of Agreed Actions

2.1 Mileage Rates and New Mileage Scheme

EA will pause the implementation of a reduction in mileage rates. EA recognises the impact of the current fuel crisis, particularly on lower-paid staff. The current mileage rates as outlined in Appendix 1 will continue to apply during this period.

EA will continue to assess developments in the current fuel crisis and will write to Trade Union Side and request that they re-engage on this matter at the appropriate time and TUS will re-engage.

TUS agrees to enter negotiations at this time to work to an agreed single mileage rate for both casual and essential business miles. These negotiations will be timebound and constructive.

2.2 Essential Car User Allowance Scheme

EA will apply the ECU Allowance eligibility criteria as previously set out. i.e. an annual review process will be carried out to determine eligibility against the following criteria:

1. Travel an average of 3,500 business miles per year; or
2. Travel an average of at least 1,250 miles per year and necessarily use their car an average of three days per week

EA will maintain protection arrangements for employees who were awarded the Essential Car User Allowance prior to 1 January 2016 and remain in post, in line with the agreed process outlined in Appendix 2.

2.3 Historical Grievances and Review Process Review

EA will implement the agreed process to address grievances pertaining to the implementation of the Essential Car User Allowance criteria in December 2025/ January 2026. A copy of the agreed process is attached to this document at Appendix 3.

It is noted that this review relates specifically to past matters and will not constitute the process to be used going forward. A process going forward will be agreed as part of the new mileage scheme. The impact of the 2025/26 eligibility assessment will be considered as part of this process.

2.4 Progression of Other Outstanding Issues

EA confirms that it will continue to progress the remaining issues (Job Evaluation, Extended Schools, Temp to Perm – Non Term-Time Agreement/Term-Time Agreement, Transport and Disability Redeployment) previously identified and discussed with TUS, in line with Appendix 4.

2.5 Suspension of ballot for industrial action

Trade Union Side commits to re-engage on a new mileage scheme and agrees not to proceed with their ballot for industrial action at this time.

Parties of which the document can be shared:

- EA CLT
- TUS negotiating structures

Signed: 
MATTHEW MCDERMOTT - ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HR SERVICES AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS,
EA

Dated: 17/4/26

Signed: 
NIPSA REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17-4-26

Signed: 
UNITE REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17-4-26

Signed: 
UNISON REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17/04/26

Signed: 
GMB REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17/4/26

Signed: 
AEP REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17-4-26

Signed: 
PROSPECT REPRESENTATIVE

Dated: 17-4-26

2026 Transition Arrangements

Outlined below are the proposed arrangements for staff to transition to the new EA mileage rates.

- Staff in post on 1 January 2026 will remain on the current mileage rates during the transition period (rates as detailed below).

Essential Users	451 - 999cc	1000 - 1199cc	1200 - 1450cc
Per mile first 8,500	36.9p	40.9p	50.5p
Per mile after 8,500	13.7p	14.4p	16.4p
Petrol element	09.406p	10.366p	11.288p
Amount of VAT per mile in petrol element	<u>01.567</u>	<u>01.727p</u>	<u>01.881p</u>
Casual Users			
Per mile first 8,500	46.9p	52.2p	65.0p
Per mile after 8,500	13.7p	14.4p	16.4p
Petrol element	09.406p	10.366p	11.288p
Amount of VAT per mile in petrol element	<u>01.567p</u>	<u>01.727p</u>	<u>01.881p</u>

- All staff, with the exception of those pre-2016 protected staff, will be subject to the annual essential car user allowance eligibility assessment. All staff members who are deemed not to have met the criteria through the annual review will move to pre 2026 casual mileage rate at the rate/s outlined above.
- The transition period will arrive at a cut-off point where all staff move on to the new mileage scheme. This will be in line with the implementation of the new HR & Payroll system. It is anticipated that this will be by 2030. If it is later, the transition date will be delayed or if it is earlier, EA will discuss with Trade Unions a potential earlier implementation date.

Protection Arrangements for Pre-2016 Essential Car User Allowance Holders

1. Purpose of This Document

This document sets out the protection arrangements for employees who were awarded the **Essential Car User Allowance (ECUA) prior to 1 January 2016**.

2. Background

Before 2016, the organisation operated a legacy Essential Car User Allowance scheme under which eligible employees received:

- A fixed annual ECUA payment
- A corresponding essential user mileage rate

In 2016, the organisation introduced **new eligibility criteria** for ECUA.

However, a number of employees had already been in receipt of ECUA under the pre-2016 scheme and the criteria were not applicable to them.

3. Scope of Protection

The following employees fall within the scope of protection:

- Employees who were **formally awarded ECUA prior to 1 January 2016, and**
- Who have continuously held the allowance from that date to the present and
- Who have not changed roles since 1 January 2016.

Employees who joined the organisation after 1 January 2016, or have since changed roles, and, or who were not in receipt of ECUA at that time, are not eligible for protection.

4. Elements of Protection

- **Essential Car User Allowance (Fixed Annual Payment)**

Employees will continue to receive the ECUA annual allowance and will not be subject to the annual eligibility assessment.

To note, the protection only applies to the ECU allowance element. Staff in this group will be subject to the pre-2026 transition arrangements to the new mileage rates.

5. Continuity of Protection

Protection will remain in place as long as the employee continues in the same role. Protection will end when the employee changes role or leaves employment.

6. Conditions of Ongoing Protection

To maintain protection, employees must:

- Hold a valid driving licence
- Maintain appropriate business-use insurance
- Ensure their vehicle is roadworthy and compliant with organisational standards

Failure to meet these conditions may result in removal of protection.

7. Effective Date

These protection arrangements apply from the date of implementation of the revised ECUA scheme.

1.0 Essential Car User Allowance (ECU) Review Process

1.1 The Essential Car User (ECU) Allowance forms part of the terms and conditions of employment for EA employees covered by the Green Book Terms and Conditions where the use of a car is deemed an essential requirement of the post.

1.2 This one-off review / appeal process will be applied to staff who have been deemed not to have met the ECU allowance criteria.

1.3 The purpose and overarching principles of the ECU Allowance Review Panel is to:

- Ensure ECU status is applied fairly and consistently across all departments
- Consider both mileage travelled and days per week travelled
- Ensure equality and fairness where mileage may be affected by for example maternity leave, sick leave, disability or temporary changes in role
- Provide transparency in decision making
- Reduce the number of disputes relating to ECU status.

2.0 Stage 1

Employee Review Request

2.1 All staff who have raised an issue to date with EA that remains unresolved will be subject to this process. Additionally EA will consider any further requests received within a 4-week window (date tbc).

2.2 To be considered, staff must provide evidence of:

- how they believe the mileage criteria has not been applied correctly
And/or
- any extenuating circumstances based on e.g. sickness / maternity / disability that would have impacted the assessment against the criteria

2.3 Staff who have travelled no miles are ineligible for the review.

3.0 Stage 2

Management Review

3.1 Management Side will review applications and determine eligibility for panel consideration. *This will include an exercise to group where appropriate. This will result in some reviews being considered collectively, whilst there may be others that may require individual consideration.* The groups will then be shared with the MS Secretary and the Lead TUS Secretary for quality assurance.

4.0 Stage 3

Joint ECU Allowance Review Panel

4.1 Joint ECU Allowance Review Panels will be established to review cases that have been submitted by staff and deemed eligible for consideration under Stage 2. Where a group issue is being considered, this will be presented by the nominated TU Rep. Where there is an individual issue, the employee may be accompanied by their TU Rep.

4.2 Panel Membership:

- HR Representative
- One Trade Union Representative

4.3 The Panel will:

- Review mileage information
- Apply the ECU allowance criteria
- Consider any extenuating circumstances
- Consider equality issues where mileage has reduced due to e.g. approved absence or temporary change in duties
- Decide whether ECU allowance should be reinstated for the 2025-2026 business year.

4.4 Any points of disagreement will be referred anonymously to the MS Secretary and Lead TUS Secretary for consideration.

5.0 Stage 4

Notification of Outcome

5.1 Employees will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review, including:

- Appeal upheld - ECU allowance reinstated
- Appeal not upheld - ECU allowance not reinstated

5.2 Where ECU allowance is to be reinstated, a calculation will be undertaken to deduct the difference from any higher mileage rate claimed.

5.3 The outcome of this process will be final.

Job Evaluation

A business case has been submitted to DE and is with DoF.

- EA will progress response to queries by 20 March, with DE, and submit these back to DoF.
- DE will seek information from DoF on how far on the process is, and what a likely timeframe, subject to satisfactory responses, is likely to be. They will stress the link to potential Industrial Relations issues with DoF.
- EA will write to DE Workforce Director stressing the importance of this Business Case moving at pace and informing them formally of the link to its success and potential Industrial Action.
- An agreed statement of assurance for staff from EA (and DE*) will be developed and issued by 30 April 2026.

Extended Schools

- DE to engage with DoF and inform them of the Business Case being imminent and stress link to its successful approval to potential Industrial Action.
- EA to include in letter to the Workforce Director in DE; highlighting this issue as urgent due to industrial action.

Temporary to Permanent – non term time agreement staff

- EA will share breakdown of occupations and numbers of staff against each occupation
- EA will share template letters and outline of process
- EA will provide fortnightly updates on progress to TUS

Temporary to Permanent Exercise – Term Time Agreement

- EA and TUS will discuss and agree a reasonable and achievable timeframe for implementation starting with Classroom Assistants and others that are covered by the Term Time Agreement.
- Classroom Assistants will be progressed first. All efforts will be made to complete this by end of September.
- Management to check files of the individuals and where there is no evidence of confirmation of option, EA will offer options to the staff member.
- Where there is evidence of option in the employee file, the employee will transfer to permanent status based on the information held on their file.

Transport

- Management to put a calendar in place for retainer paid staff to be effective from September 2026
- Management to put in place a training calendar for all the other contracts to be effective from September 2026
- Training will be notified in a timely manner, ideally with the calendar or as soon as possible thereafter
- Staff will request leave and have annual leave granted in line with the calendar.
- A process for requesting and approving leave will be put in place. This will include issue of leave cards and operational principles.

Disability Redeployment

- Additional support will be available to administer the disability redeployment process
- Interim Policy to be amended and shared with TUS to reflect the agreed changes
- Acknowledgement that primary responsibility for disability redeployment lies with the EA, not the individual employee, however staff who are keen to search for roles are eligible to do so as part of the process.