



CONVENOR'S COLUMN

To date after eleven months as Convenor we have seen difficult times for all members during Coronavirus and austerity cuts to the MOD Civil Service (CS). Cost of living for our day to day essentials are going up well above inflation. We have committed ourselves to every member that has reached out and asked for help. Sometimes outcomes may not have been fruitful or fully successful.

However, I cannot win them all, but the majority have been positive outcomes. While most of the day-to-day activities consist of representation for serious or gross misconducts, 'Fitness for Task', ill health retirement representation and small things that internally get ironed out. Long gone are the days of knocking on an Office door in West Battery to get answers or resolve an issue for a member, the majority of staff work from home or have relocated to Leach Building on various floors, sometimes the only means of contact is Skype or email and responses can be slow and frustrating. It seems nothing moves quickly. A considerable chunk of time is spent chasing up an ever-decreasing amount of RFA administrative staff.

Under the partnership agreement 50% of my work time is union issues (it was 100% until 2015). The other 50% is made up of facility time working at the other end of the RFA in PERSOPS, Cadets and Apprentices Development.

The Union has made progress with results in areas as follows:

- 1) Re-instating Trainee Accommodation allowance
- 2) The use of TWO Concession vouchers over the Festive Period
- 3) Updating Members on DBS Pension information
- 4) Working with the RFA BPs to mutually agree on payment for cancelled Festive leave claims
- 5) Getting a grant to update accommodation at HMS Sultan
- 6) Improve and reach out to members who are ill health retiring
- 7) Work on Magellan leave issues on case-by case basis
- 8) Work with RFA BPs to agree on using two concessions all year round
- 9) Improvement on Pers Ops communication and reach out
- 10) Improved mileage allowance
- 11) Agreement to pay for hotels cost upfront for courses etc.
- 12) Stand-up to losing our cooperate identity under the one Navy ethos
- 13) More Family Friendly policies
- 14) Equality in the workplace, being part of Herald Committee
- 15) Working on the RFA Committee policy and direct involvement in FSS new builds
- 16) Working with DACOS and BPs updating the RFA Promotion and Advancement Policy

Regards,
Jan Parkin
RFA/RMT Convenor

PAY UPDATE

On the issue of pay, the UK Government/Treasury has decided to provide no public sector pay increases for any public servants 2021/22 except for those below the £24,000 pay threshold, they will receive £250. I have looked at our T&Cs of employment and proposed changes to reflect this as -

Hours of Work - a review to consider where days may be classed as "essential duties only" will be undertaken by the Management Board as to where time off can be taken on a rota basis. This will be on the understanding that it will be on a trial basis in the first instance across the flotilla.

An agreement to allow a period of half day working each week during the core working day or spread it across the week knocking off earlier to undertake physical training activity.

Also for personnel that mutually agree to extend their appointment length for operational reasons an additional 1 days rest per 14 days may be taken while onboard,

Regarding the 'Shorthand Hand' claims, concerns appear to be with the process itself rather than the policy. PDR Process making this simpler, COMRFA has agreed to commit to a review of the process to see if this could be streamlined or improved in some way and to ensure the application of the process and policy is being correctly handled, when things have been confirmed and finalised I will update all members.

We will now work towards 22/23 pay offer: I know that the RFA needs to match the rest of the Maritime industry and if they don't people will vote with their feet and chase higher or equivalent money elsewhere.

BONUS UPDATE

I am pleased to let the members know that a figure has been released for the shared bonus scheme for this year, it is hoped that this will be in the March pay roll, the figures are as below.

£1100 – General
£1350 COC Class1 ME
£400 Trainees
RFA Part award £734

As you can imagine a lot of MTU input has taken place to come up with the final figures, criteria of the bonus had to be looked at carefully so members would qualify, we also had to look at the small increase to reflect the hardship the CV19 impact has had on us all. It is worth noting that the original intentions of the Shared Bonus Scheme (SBS) are to primarily benefit CoC class 1 certification as there was a retention problem in these positions. The Assistant National Secretary Mark Carden and I have fought hard during the pandemic to get the RFA to recognise the input from ALL RFA personnel during terrifically difficult times by dividing the SBS pot as evenly as possible. We are delighted our representations have been listened to and we have achieved this financial improvement for members over the past two years.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

Previous Quarterly meeting minutes can be accessed via the RMT/RFA members forum, these are also available on the RMT At RFA Face Book Group, to join this you must be a current member, please answer the questions fully on joining, you will need info like Membership number and Union Branch.

Next quarterly dates are

25th March 22
11th July 22
12th Sept 22
12th Dec 22

All members are welcome to attend via Skype or in person, if you have any questions you wish to be brought up at the quarterly which can not be answered by your onboard rep or Convenor please email me at r4@rmt.org.uk or Ian.parkin779@mod.gov.uk

TEMPORARY ACTING

Although the RMT is against any TA billet and are only fully committed to the correct substantive grade in position, we understand that not everyone will decline a Temporary Promotion that is up to the individual to accept or not, however remember you are approached because there is a business need at the time of billet becoming available. This maybe because a substantive person has gone sick or does not want to come back until the end of their EVL. You may be down Graded at any given time during the appointment. Departments have a set number of CPO/PO/LH etc and only when the Dept has room for movement or an individual retires or resigns etc then a space becomes available further down, having the correct PDR markings, ADQUALS and experience on platforms does not make you entitled to promotion to the next Grade or band automatically. If we all declined TA then the business would have no other choice then to make it a permanent fixture.

An amendment is in progress being worked on for Promotions and Advancements which will help the Members who are possibly ready for promotion as a business need with Caveats.

BANDING

We all know it is not working properly and the RMT never did agree to this system. This was put in place to help the RFA out, unfortunately it has not and the RFA are still trying to make it work, tweaking and amending as they go along. The DEV Team is at a critical all time low with one Civil Servant in place working in a Dept that normally had four members at one time, once again a Seafarer has been brought in to assist, this not the RFAs fault but the only current solution due to the recruitment freeze on Civil Servants being recruited. This has been mirrored throughout the RFA Business as you will no doubt have noticed that most appointers are now Seafarers.

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MARKED TIME

The RFA's adoption of the competence-based pay system was outlined in The Future Development Programme in 2015. The document stipulated that those employees still remaining 'offscale' (i.e. not aligned with the pay scale for their Grade and Band) at the end of the seven year transition period, they would be transferred to 'marked time'.

RFA employees should therefore note that 'marked time' will be applied to those remaining 'offscale' from June 2022. This means that those affected will remain at their current pay scale until such time as their pay aligns with their current competence banding pay point as a result of a subsequent pay increase, they achieve Advancement or Promotion, or certain pay-related allowances are introduced. Those included in this process will be notified in writing April 2022.

The RFA pay scales are published on the RFA HR Business Partner folder in the RFA section within the Defence Gateway.

APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE - MATT ROWBERRY

CPO Rowberry said that there were a approximately 148 apprentices at the moment and 56 appointed and on ships in the next month. There are issues with class sizes at the moment and that the next ME class is going to be 14 and there is no way we can take 14 in one hit on a ship even with a mentor so they class needs to be split but the issue is finding the mentors too as we are losing two so need to find another two.

RFA apprentices are the best trained in the merchant navy but that other companies now are finding it harder to recruit as they aren't able to bring in other world labour or European labour so rates are going up. The young ones are struggling with the isolation of being at sea without wifi etc and connectivity.

If we don't allow a young person to connect to the outside world in the way they are used to then we wont be able to retain them and the crux point is 2026 where the competition will be at its highest If we fail to view wifi as a basic need then we will continue to lose

MENTAL HEALTH

The contract with Freedom Training has been extended for a further period of 5 years. This course provides paid time off for employees to attend this training which receives regular positive feedback. Furthermore, "Herald" will also provide a safe space for those struggling with any mental health issues on board and there are future planned discussions taking place for Mental Health First Aid trained individuals on board all ships and increase the number of TRIM trained personnel across the RFA. The RFA will continue to support opportunities for employees to participate in activities that are part of their training and development, and which benefit members. widely on the issue of Diversity and Inclusion, I would make the point that the relevant training is available. The RFA will be seeking to take steps in the future to encourage all staff to complete the D&I mandatory training. Furthermore, I sit on the Herald Committee who will also have a responsibility for improving D&I awareness as well as a "safe space" and point of escalation for anyone who is experiencing any issues. The Civil Service provides a large number of resources available on DEFNET for all personnel to access and specific line manager resources for line managers.

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

You are not alone... there is help at hand.



RMT is working closely with employers and health charities to better understand, improve support and promote mental wellbeing in your workplace

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