



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

**24 June 2022**

Dear Grant Shapps MP, Minister for Transport

Cc. Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Cabinet Secretary for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

I am writing to you regarding the UK Government's plans to change legislation to allow companies to hire agency staff to work during strike action.

This week you informed the House of Commons that the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy will bring forward legislation "quickly" to allow agency workers to replace striking workers during industrial action.

We will not allow these underhand tactics to undermine the inalienable rights of workers and unions in Scotland to organise, withdraw their labour, and hold their employers - including Governments - to account.

Decent working conditions across the whole of the UK have been hard won by organised, unionised workers. Minimum wage, paid holidays, weekends, better pay and conditions have been fought for, and won, through industrial action.

Put simply, every worker in Britain today is better off thanks to strong unions.

Earlier this week, you dismissed the existing safeguards against using agency workers to break strikes as "antiquated union rules."

But fixing the rules so that agency staff can replace striking workers not only deeply undermines workers' rights, but it will also create serious safety risks for the public and the workforce.

Both the Trade Union Congress and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) have called the proposals unworkable, and potentially in breach of international law.

And even your own Government Ministers were quick to criticise P&O for breaching these exact safeguards earlier this year.

This is not the first time a Conservative Government in Westminster has tried to undermine workers' rights. Back in 2016, the Trade Union Act set the tone for an all-out assault on workers' ability to organise but stopped short of scrapping the ban on agency workers covering striking workforces that has been in place since 1973.

Alongside proposals from the UK Government to dispose of over two thousand pieces of retained EU law, many related to worker rights, workers across the UK are set to end up with the weakest rights and protections across Europe.

We are facing the worst cost of living crisis in decades. Inflation is at an all time high, and workers across the country are facing a real terms decrease in their wages. There is nothing unreasonable about workers seeking a fair pay settlement.

We will not improve industrial relations by slashing workers' rights.

Increasingly, it appears that the UK Government wants to rig the rules so that only they can win. Here in Scotland, we won't stand for it.

We will defend workers' rights in Scotland, both within the powers currently available to the Scottish Government and as part of our vision for independence. We will always stand in solidarity with workers when their rights are so brazenly threatened.

We urge you and your colleagues to think again, withdraw your plans to facilitate mass strike-breaking across the UK, and work alongside our trade unions to improve working conditions for all.

Yours,

Ariane Burgess MSP

Convenor of the Scottish Green MSP Group, on behalf of Scottish Green MSPs