**Campaigners win to save the Land Registry**

On 23 January 2014 government launched an 8 week consultation on plans which could lead to the break up and privatisation of HM Land Registry.

The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) organised a campaign to save our land registry from closure.

Government proposals suggested the break-up of the current service and the creation of a small ‘office of the Chief Land Registrar’. The remainder of the current service would then be transferred into one of three options:

1. A government owned company (GovCo)
2. A joint venture partnership
3. A government-owned but contractor-run company

Trade unions believe plans to turn the Land Registry into a government company (GovCo), or bring in other forms of private ownership, are unnecessary and reflect this government’s objective of the privatisation of all public services, rather than any coherent justification for change.

Any sell-off would have a major impact on the region, in particular in Durham and surrounding towns. The Land Registry has had a presence in Durham since 1965 and currently employs 400 staff, many of whom have worked there for 20-25 years. At it’s peak  Land Registry Durham employed 800 staff. The site has provided secure employment for hundreds of staff in an area which has not seen the benefits of any economic recovery and which cannot afford the loss of further quality public sector jobs.

In addition to potential privatisation, there is also the very real threat of office closures, including in Durham. There are obvious implications for the staff and families of those working at the site. These range from the almost inevitable reduction in terms and conditions to the potential closure of the site and job losses.

If the Durham Office were to close as a result of these proposals, PCS estimated a loss to the local economy of £10m per year.

PCS believes there are serious risks to both the public and to business, there is no evidence that privatisation of public services has been of any benefit, least of all to the tax payer. Generally previous privatisations have resulted in worsening provision of services to the public, and have had an impact on local economies in terms of job losses and job opportunities.

PCS members working for the Land Registry took part in a two-day strike action on the 14th and 15th May as they faced continued uncertainty as the result of plans to part-privatise Land Registry, close offices and make more than 1,000 of the workforce redundant.

The strike was part of a [massive campaign](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/pcs_comment/index.cfm/striking-against-land-registry-cuts) which had the support of industry professionals and MPs, against proposals to privatise the Land Registry.

PCS members were left with no choice but to take industrial action to try to force management to the negotiating table for meaningful discussions around their reasonable demands.

Coordinated collective action and campaigning has resulted in any proposals to privatise the land registry be postponed until after the general election, proving that campaigning for workers achieves results!

Beth Farhat – Northern TUC Regional Secretary