



April 2023 Branch

Next week the NUJ will be coming together in a series of online events and for the union's biennial Delegate Meeting in London under the slogan NUJ: always in your corner.

So, there are just three sleeps to DM Week which starts on Monday with a series of online sector events, early evening Talk-ins and a special screening of Channel 4's film, *Lyra*, about NUJ member and freelance journalist, Lyra McKee, who was murdered by the New IRA as she observed a riot in Derry.

The debates and business of Delegate Meeting (DM) in London starts on Friday 28 April and finishes Saturday 29 April. This is when delegates from across the union's nations and regions will be debating policy and shaping our future campaigning priorities, setting the new subscription rate, remembering members who died in the past two years, announcing our new Members of Honour and catching up with each other over cups of tea and possibly something stronger. The last DM was held "virtually" against the backdrop of restrictions imposed in response to the Covid pandemic, so it will be good to be back meeting in person.

Writing up the **report** covering 2021-2023 brought home to me just how much work the union has done and how we so often punch above our weight when taking on governments, employers and rogue nations on members' behalf.

It's been a challenging time on the international front in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Hong Kong. Indeed, I have just unpacked my suitcase from a trip to the International Federation of Journalists' general assembly in Greece and after DM will be flying to New York to help highlight the safety of journalists during the UN's World Press Freedom Day 30th anniversary conference.

In reviewing our activities since the

last DM, it is frustrating that despite the pressure we've kept up on the UK government, there is still barely any hope in sight for journalists still trying to flee Afghanistan, particularly the many women who are now unable to work.

One notable highlight on the home front was standing outside the Old Bailey with Chris Mullin after our successful challenge of West Midlands Police's ridiculous attempt to seize his notebooks relating to his Birmingham Six investigations. We knew right was on our side, but the judicial stakes were high not only in costs but in vouchsafing journalists' rights and it proved a very welcome victory.

It has been heartening to make progress with the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists' action plan and together with the Society of Editors we have produced a **mobile safety toolkit** for our members. This has been an important initiative and further work is in train to ensure all our members can work in safety and without fear. Together with our cross-party Parliamentary Group we have been fighting on very many fronts to challenge new laws and proposed legislation which undermine journalists' and trade union rights.

It's also been hugely busy on the industrial front. We held a Reach-wide strike last year and are gearing up for a second day's strike by members working in BBC local radio prompted by the corporation's plans to cut its truly local content and news by more than half. Andy Comfort of BBC Humberside explains why this matters on page three.

The NUJ's News Recovery Plan was published during the pandemic in response to the failure of the market to



protect and sustain public interest news and a diverse and plural media. It has provided a blueprint for our members on working parties in Scotland and Wales during the past two years which are trying to find a solution to the crisis in local news. On page five, Seamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, reports on two new publicly funded schemes to promote public interest journalism in Ireland.

On page four, Natasha Morris, NUJ's legal and equality officer, explains why the closure of gal-dem is a huge loss, and on page seven Natasha Hirst, Equality Council chair, shows chapels how to use the latest gender gap figures to open discussions with employers.

DM Week online events, open to all members, will discuss how to take much of this work forward - with a focus on supporting local news, combatting online abuse and physical threats against journalists, showing solidarity to journalists under attack worldwide, as well as a range of fringe events - see page two for the full programme.

In Solidarity

Michelle Stanistreet

#DM WEEK

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DM Week

From 24-27 April, members can join 5pm Talk-ins and lunchtime fringes with expert speakers on topics including neurodiversity, journalists' safety and local news. These online events are free to all members. [BOOK HERE](#)

Monday 24 April

- **Combating online abuse and physical threats against journalists**, 5-6pm. Jeremy Dear, former IFJ deputy general secretary, together with Jennifer Moreau and Randy Kitt from Canada's largest private sector union Unifor, will share their ground-breaking work fighting back against the harassment of journalists.

Tuesday 25 April

- **NUJ Disabled Members' Council: introduction to neurodiversity**, 12-1pm. Join the discussion on supporting staff and freelance colleagues by creating more inclusive and accessible working environments and share some resources.

- **Keep it local: how to support your local news** 5-6pm. Join speakers BBC Humberside's Andy Comfort, LDR Charlotte Green, NUJ Irish Secretary, Séamus Dooley, NEC member for Wales, David Nicholson, and member of the former Scottish public interest journalism group, Joyce McMillan.

Wednesday 26 April

- **The menopause is a workplace issue: launch of guidance and policy for NUJ chapels and**

branches 1.30 - 2.30pm

- **Free Assange!** Join his wife Stella Moris and others to hear the latest legal news and discuss how to intensify the campaign to safeguard investigative journalism and free Assange, 12-1pm.

- **Global solidarity: supporting journalists under attack worldwide**, 5-6pm. Speakers

include: Zuliana Lainez, IFJ senior vice-president and general secretary of the National Association of Journalists of Peru, Sergiy Tomilenko, president of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, Ronson Chan, chair of the Hong Kong Journalists' Association, and human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson.

Thursday 27 April

- **Sector conference for newspapers and news agencies**, 1pm-2pm.

- **Magazines and Books Industrial Council sector conference**, 3-5pm.

- **Sector conference for freelances and visual journalists**, 4-5.30pm

- **Lyra film screening and director interview** 5-7pm. The documentary includes moving interviews with her family and partner Sara Canning, friends and work colleagues. Séamus Dooley will interview director Alison Millar before the online screening.

ALWAYS
IN YOUR
CORNER
DM 2023

CAMPAIGN



#KeepBBCLocalRadioLocal

BBC members in local radio are going on strike for a second day. Andy Comfort of BBC Humberside explains why

The time NUJ members in BBC England (now referred to as BBC Local) walked out on strike was more than 12 years ago over changes to their pension plan. Despite pay freezes and, most recently, a pay rise well below the rate of inflation, there has been no industrial action in the BBC English regions for more than a decade.

What caused about 1,000 members to walk out for 24 hours at 11am on March 30 was the corporation's plan to impose sweeping cuts on BBC Local Radio. Under the scheme, which the BBC says will fund improvements to its digital services in England's regions, local radio programming will be reduced from about 100 hours a week per radio station to 48 and, in some cases, just 40 hours a week. Only programmes from 6am to 2pm will remain local. After 2pm on weekdays the afternoon/ drivetime programmes will be shared between stations, reducing their ability to cover local stories and features and to broadcast travel updates from their areas. These

2-6pm programmes will be shared between two or three stations, but the situation at weekends will be far worse. Here the BBC is stretching the definition of the word "local" to beyond breaking point. My radio station, BBC Radio Humberside, covers an area stretching from Bridlington in East Yorkshire to Hull and over the Humber Estuary to take in towns such as Grimsby and Scunthorpe in northern Lincolnshire. The changes would mean us sharing our popular Saturday and Sunday breakfast programmes with BBC Radios Leeds, Lincolnshire, Sheffield, and York. This huge area has a population of around 5 million people - roughly equivalent to the population of the Republic of Ireland. That's not local radio.

Local radio is a lifeline to many. It's the front door of the BBC, serving those who may be digitally excluded - elderly or disabled people living on their own who aren't picking up a smartphone to access news apps - the very people the BBC has been told to serve better. It's companionship you can't get

from a phone; it's a friend who will keep you in touch and who will be there for you.

The BBC says 48 jobs are going - but with around 300 volunteering for redundancy and all staff presenters forced to reapply for fewer roles - that number is likely to be considerably higher. The NUJ agrees with the desire to improve local digital services but ripping the heart out of local radio is not the answer. The BBC rejected union counter proposals and now members in BBC England have staged one strike and will walk out again on 5 May with a work to rule causing disruption to some regional tv and local radio services.

Action

Contribute to the [hardship fund](#)

Lobby your MP, use this [template letter](#)

Keep up to date at [#KeepBBCLocalRadioLocal](#)

Gal-dem bows out

goodbye from
gal—dem

The closure of the website and magazine is a loss to marginalised communities and the wider media landscape, says Natasha Morris, NUJ's legal and equality officer

The demise of gal-dem, announced **earlier this month**, leaves a gaping hole in an industry which has seen local news stripped of its community feel. Gal-dem championed marginalised groups in a profession where white, privately educated men still dominate in positions of power. **Gal-dem** was committed to “telling the stories of people of colour from marginalised genders”, highlighting unheard voices from under-represented communities and showing the importance of producing news and features reflective of society while challenging

stereotypes. Its closure is yet another example of an independent publication unable to survive in the present media environment which has lost all plurality and is diminished in diversity.

Gal-dem's story is reflective of the challenges faced by the whole news industry, which has experienced large-scale redundancies, titles closing and many websites staffed by journalists many miles away. It couldn't make its subscription model work.

The NUJ launched its **News Recovery Plan** to help fix this broken model and reboot a sustainable media industry which champions plurality and diversity. Gal-dem's closure is felt that much harder because of the paucity of voices of black journalists and black journalism in the UK and Ireland. It was the launchpad of many successful careers.

Oxford's Reuters Institute's **research** found in a sample of 81 top editors across 100 brands in five countries that 23 per cent were of colour, despite the average across the general population of the countries surveyed being 44 per cent. In the UK, 6 per cent in top editorial positions are people of colour. Research by the National Council for the Training of Journalists found that

92 per cent of UK journalists come from white ethnic groups.

A new **report** from the Ethical Journalism Network and Joseph Rowntree Foundation said that, although the proportion of black African and Caribbean journalists in Britain had increased, black journalists interviewed said that “newsroom processes continued to be exclusionary and racism was commonplace”.

The NUJ's Black Members' Council exists to represent black and minority ethnic journalists. Its annual Claudia Jones lecture, in memory of the activist, campaigner and one of the founders of The West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian Caribbean News, has been a platform for journalists such as Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, formerly of gal-dem and now writer at the New York Times, to discuss why “black journalists must hold truth to power, especially when it comes to issues of racism and prejudice against people of marginalised backgrounds”.

The NUJ's George Viner charity provides bursaries and mentors for black and minority ethnic student journalists, but the media industry and governments must recognise that public interest journalism reflecting the whole of society must be supported.

Action

• **Donate** to the George Viner Memorial Fund.

• Read **Structural racism in UK newsrooms**

• Read **Race and leadership in the news media 2023: evidence from five markets**

CAMPAIGN



Journalism First

Chronic underfunding is at the heart of the crisis in the Irish press, so will two new schemes make a difference? asks the NUJ's Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley

Two publicly-funded schemes to promote public interest journalism will be rolled out by the end of this year in Ireland, indicating the Report of The Future of Media Commission is finally being taken seriously by the government. That at least is the intention, and we live in hope that this is one deadline which will be met. The delay in publishing the report, commissioned in 2020, and the lack of urgency in implementing key recommendations has been a source of union frustration. The under-resourced and overstretched Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is struggling to keep up with the pace of change and the pressure to implement the 49 recommendations accepted by government. Details of the two schemes, one for court reporting, the second for local democracy reporters, are still being worked out and the NUJ is represented on a high-level consultative forum to oversee implementation of the report. My priority is that the schemes will

provide new opportunities and will not fill gaps left by redundancies or non-filling of vacancies. The scheme will be implemented by a new body, Coimisiún na Meán, which replaces the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI). The Media Development Commissioner, Rónán Ó Domhnaill, is a former RTÉ Irish-language journalist and has a clear understanding of journalism. The concern is that the BAI's replacement is a new statutory agency with a wide array of responsibilities, including online safety, broadcast regulation, monitoring and enforcement of standards, training, development and the promotion of diversity. Irish journalism is in crisis and at the heart of that crisis is chronic underinvestment in journalism. The NUJ has long warned of the danger for local democracy of understaffed newsrooms without the means of covering local government and the administration of justice, especially at district and circuit court level. In this context the NUJ supports the principles of the pilot schemes in Ireland, which

will differ significantly from the BBC Local Democracy scheme. Meanwhile, as in the UK, publishers are invoking the "digital first" mantra as the magic key to the future.

This focus on platform rather than on the function of journalism is to miss the point. It is hard to feel sympathy for publishers who want more tax breaks and incentives while simultaneously planning the demise of local print titles.

"Journalism First" seems a more fitting mantra but poses a challenge to those whose priority is generating profits, even if that means editorial values are sacrificed on the altar of algorithms. For the NUJ, the fight to defend journalism continues.

Action

Join the discussion at the [Keep it Local](#) online event on Tuesday 25 April.

Read the NUJ's [News Recovery Plan](#) for Ireland.

Read the Future of Media Commission [report](#)

CAMPAIGN



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Stop the gap

The latest gender gap figures may be depressing, but unions can use them to argue for change, says Natasha Hirst, Equality Council chair

For the past six years, employers with 250 or more staff have been required to publish their gender pay gap data. Yet, it has not brought about a shift towards pay equality, with the 2022/23 figures showing the median pay for women remains at 9.4 per cent less than that for men – unchanged from the date the information was first published.

The median pay gap figure reflects the average difference in pay between middle-ranking men and

women. It is not the same as paying women less for the same work – which is illegal.

These pay gaps indicate that companies are not doing enough to support the career progression of women into senior and better-paid roles. TUC analysis shows the pay gap widens once a woman becomes a mother, with older women taking a further financial hit when trying to balance work and caring responsibilities.

Even so, the pay gap is often embedded in starting salaries, with a 2021 [bookcareers.com survey](#) demonstrating that women in entry level publishing jobs earned on average 4.4 per cent less than their male counterparts.

There is no requirement for employers to detail plans showing how they will tackle their pay gaps. Lack of government enforcement leaves unions as the main lever on employers to create change. Reps can work with employers to

scrutinise inequalities and identify improvements to policy and practice using the NUJ [pay resources](#).

You can check the pay gap report for your employer on the [government website](#). Use the data to initiate a discussion with the employer. You can use this [template letter](#).

Easier access to flexible working is an obvious first step towards tackling the pay gap but structural inequalities exist in every direction and we must call them out. At this year's TUC Women's conference, Cristina Lago moved the NUJ's motion on pay transparency in recruitment, arguing that "we shouldn't have to wrestle during a job interview to get a fair salary that is the same as our male counterparts".

Unions can play a role by holding equality audits, which can flush out pay discrepancies and unequal pay. The NUJ also calls for mandatory reporting of ethnicity and disability pay gaps. Intersectional discrimination further compounds pay gaps, yet this remains hidden from view. A lack of pay gap data for freelances also limits our ability to know just how prevalent the issue is. Encourage freelances to anonymously share the rates they have received on the NUJ's [Rate for the Job](#).



Action

Check out the NUJ's [campaign page](#)

Organise an equality/pay rate audit.

Join the lobby for extending pay gap data.

INFO

Get Active

Catch up on the NUJ's events, campaigns and resources and get involved

DM

All the documents you need for DM are available on [the website](#). Lots of events for all members during DM week - find out the full list and more details.

Mental health

There is a new page on where to find help for **post-traumatic stress disorder**. NUJ freelance members can apply for funding via the **Rory Peck Trust** for urgent financial assistance or the cost of treatment for professional psychological support.

Campaigns

Local radio: our members in BBC radio in England and Northern Ireland are on strike for the second time on Friday 5 May over cuts which mean the loss of posts and the sharing of programmes across the network. We need to keep up pressure on the BBC to change its plans. Go to the [#KeepBBCLocalRadioLocal page](#).

The **NUJ's Pay Campaign** calls for fair pay and flexible working and

provides practical support to chapels when dealing with employers and on the rights of freelancers. The TUC's latest jobs and recovery monitor is assessing **gender and pay**.

Recruiting students: there's

lots of info, FAQs and materials for branches and chapels to encourage local journalism, publishing and photography students to join the union [on the NUJ website](#).

Useful stuff

Protect your sources: your rights as a journalist and how to protect your sources. **The NUJ's safety toolkit** has advice

on keeping your communications safe and secret and more - see below.

Legal assistance: one of the many benefits of NUJ membership is its free legal service.

Health and safety: advice, guidance and news.

Freelance resources: help and useful information for freelance members.

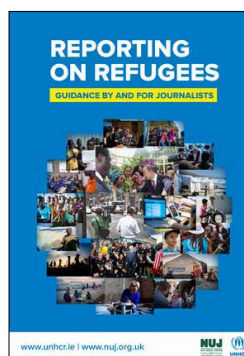
The **safety toolkit** is a mobile-friendly resource to help media workers protect themselves and their journalism from harm.

Photographers: the toolkit has tips and a number for legal assistance when covering protests, and guidelines on taking photographs in public places.

Storysmart is a set of online training modules to help journalists prepare to work in hostile environments and keep their data safe.

Reporting on refugees: inaccurate terminology and commentary can cause confusion and breed prejudice.

The **NUJ code of conduct** has set out the main principles of UK and Irish journalism since 1936.



Donate

Ukraine: please make a donation to the IFJ/EFJ fund created to help journalists reporting on the war in Ukraine. Funds are used to provide emergency assistance.

Afghanistan: since the Taliban took control of the country Afghan journalists have faced attacks, harassment, censorship, and harsh restrictions on the media. They need your support. Please **donate** to the IFJ's fund.

NUJ training

The union provides a free programme of **training for reps**.

Members outside Scotland and Wales also have access to a wide range of subsidised professional skills courses provided by **NUJ Scotland Training** and **NUJ Training Wales**.

**REASONS
TO JOIN**

SOS



We Offer Support and Help

The NUJ is your lifeline if you get arrested or the authorities try to confiscate your data or images. We chase non-payers, represent and support you during disciplinary or redundancy procedures or if you are being bullied or have other work-related problems. We offer professional help with reporting guides and advice on ethics, networking opportunities and training to help you develop your skills throughout your career.

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