


NUJ GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION 2024

APPLICATION FORM

Confidential

HIRST, Natasha		 <p>Photo credit: Jess Hurd</p>
Current NUJ Branch:		South Wales Branch
1	Employment history:	<p>2003-04 President, National Union of Students, Wales 2004-06 Data analyst/researcher/performance auditor, Wales Audit Office 2006-10 Equality Officer (Policy & Campaigns team) secretariat to Equality Councils, TUC Cymru 2010-2012 Accredited Trade Union Education tutor, Bridgend College 2011-2013 Constituency researcher/caseworker/photographer, Carwyn Jones AM 2016-2017 Policy and Programmes Manager (maternity cover), Disability Wales 2017-2022 Freelance researcher, Cardiff Business School and others 2020-2022 Freelance photography project manager, All Wales People First 2010-present Freelance photojournalist</p> <p>2008 PhD Physical Chemistry, Cardiff University</p> <p>Current non-NUJ voluntary roles: Chair of Disability Arts Cymru Independent member of the Welsh Government Disability Rights Taskforce Equal Power, Equal Voice programme mentor</p>
2	Date of commencement and period of continuous membership of the NUJ:	I joined the NUJ in February 2010 and have remained in continuous full membership since.
3	What NUJ offices have you held? <i>(Please provide details):</i>	<p>Elected roles: President (2023 to present) Vice President (2021 to 2023) NEC Disabled Members' seat (2015 to present) Photographers' Council (2015 to present and current chair) Freelance Industrial Council (2018 to present) Welsh Executive Council (attending as NEC since 2016, elected from 2023) Vice Chair and Welfare Officer, Cardiff and South-East Wales (now South Wales) Branch</p>

		<p>As Vice-President/President, I actively participate in the three subcommittees of the NEC (Development, Policy and Finance), the Budget Committee, Emergency Committee, Hardship Fund meetings and the Copyright Committee.</p> <p>As an NEC member, I actively attend and support the work of the Equality Council, Disabled Members' Council, Ethics Council, Health and Safety Committee and Public Relations and Communications Industrial Council and branch meetings. As a WEC member I'm involved with the Wales Public Interest Journalism Working Group, NUJ Training Wales Steering Group and TUC Cymru Equalities Forum.</p> <p>I am a trained Union Learning Representative and Health and Safety Representative.</p> <p>Previous: Chair Development Committee Chair Equality Council (as NEC Equality rep) Rule 24 panel member</p> <p>Delegate to: TUC Congress (2022, 2023) TUC Disabled Workers' Conferences (since 2017) TUC Women's Conferences (2019-present) TUC LGBT+ Conferences (2022, 2023, 2024)</p> <p>Attendee at the IFJ Gender Equality Council, Morocco 2019</p> <p>External speaker/panellist at conferences including Trade Union Coordinating Group events and TUC Disabled Workers' Leadership Programme. Regular guest speaker to journalism and photography students and the Guardian Foundation Newswise media literacy programme.</p>
4	<p>Have you been a member of any other trade union? (Please provide details):</p>	<p>Prospect, 2004-06 (workplace Equality Rep) GMB 2006-2010</p>
5	<p>What experience have you had as a full-time official and/or lay officer?</p>	<p>I was a full-time official for TUC Cymru (then Wales TUC) from 2006-2010. I served as the Equality Officer, embedded in the policy and campaigns team and performed secretariat functions for multiple equality committees. I organised and delivered campaigns and events, policy briefings and resources for representatives and members. I formed partnerships and lobbied decision-makers. I am an accredited Trade Union education tutor and developed and delivered equality reps' training in Wales.</p> <p>Through my professional development, I obtained Institute of Learning and Management (ILM) qualifications in people and project management. I have since done accredited training in coaching and mentoring, alongside gaining senior management and executive experience from other roles.</p>

As a lay officer for the NUJ, I have represented members in numerous seats on councils throughout the union. I've served over three years as a National Officer, first as vice-president and now as president. I've chaired the Development Committee, Equality Council and the Photographers' Council. As well as attending council and NEC meetings, I've actively supported or led on delivering DM resolutions, including organising and chairing conferences and webinars, writing website statements and producing resources for members.

I'm a strong advocate for ethics and professional standards in journalism and work closely with the ethics council to support our members, lobby the regulators and challenge poor editorial practices. As president and chair of the Photographers' Council, I've engaged with a range of members and external stakeholders on the threats and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence.

I represented the NUJ as a panellist or keynote speaker at conferences on topics including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Freedom of Information (FOI) and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPS).

As a branch activist and committee member since 2015, I have completed training as a Health and Safety rep and Union Learning Rep. I contribute to the Health and Safety/Equality reps' briefings, including advising and supporting reps.

Through my multiple roles in the union, I've built a solid understanding of the democratic structures of the NUJ and industrial issues affecting our members across different sectors and different areas of the UK, Ireland and continental Europe.

I regularly participate in branch meetings across the union as a guest speaker to discuss NUJ and journalism-related topics. I take feedback and questions from members and represent their concerns through our democratic structures. I have been involved with revitalising branches and advocated for branch mergers at the request of branch officers, to support more effective structures that meet our members' needs.

Working in Wales gives me a strong insight into devolution and different approaches for securing political buy-in. We can learn from the work done in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to shape our lobbying strategies. This sits alongside the work of our colleagues in Continental Europe and the IFJ, where we can use our wider knowledge to put pressure on the UK Government to protect our members' rights and working conditions.

Through my long-standing involvement with the wider trade union movement, I have consistently sought solidarity and raised the profile of the NUJ and the challenges that our members face, especially freelancers, members from minoritised groups and early career members who frequently experience precarious working conditions and very low pay. I have been proactive as an ally

		supporting the work of the Equality Council, Disabled Members' Council, Black Members' Council, 60+ Council and LGBT+ network.
6	Please state what experience you have in:	
	(a) Trade union organisation and negotiation:	<p>I've stood in solidarity with our members on picket lines, spoken at online organising meetings and rallies and supported reps to negotiate successful outcomes on discrimination cases. As a freelance, I challenged the exploitative terms and conditions of another union's publication, raising their awareness of the need to ensure fair freelance contracts. The positive changes were subsequently applied to all contracts for the publication, not just my own.</p> <p>I led negotiations with London Pride in 2019 to ensure access for visual journalists following concerns of obstruction to cover the parade. I lead on our work with the security industry, resulting in joint guidelines with the International Professional Security Association (IPSA) to improve awareness of the role of journalists and photographers. This work included organising a roundtable with industry leaders to identify issues and resolutions.</p> <p>As former Chair of the NEC Development Committee and as President, I mapped out our union structures. I've supported some dormant branches to start up again and have advocated for branch mergers that enable reps to better meet the needs of members and increase engagement. Spending time with different branches and speaking to members has given me a better sense of their needs and expectations of the union.</p> <p>I've dedicated much time to student engagement, including developing branded recruitment materials and presentations, engaging with universities and organising and delivering talks, panels and networking events. Presentations have been shared with other branches to adapt for their own recruitment activities.</p> <p>Over the past year, I've developed these materials further with input from the Freelance Industrial Council and Photographers' Council to improve our engagement with freelancers and visual journalists. I promote the NUJ in a variety of online freelance networks and raise awareness of our services to encourage new joiners as well as seeking to retain members.</p> <p>Succession is important for the future of our union and for that we need to support the development of younger activists. As an active branch and NEC rep, I've encouraged new activists through informal mentoring and providing opportunities to build skills and confidence to get more involved with the union, including standing for councils and the NEC.</p> <p>Alongside other reps, I've run a series of meetings for early career members, revived the LGBT+ network, organised 'meet the Disabled Members' Council' meetings, and contributed to the Health and Safety/Equality Reps briefings. These informal spaces have been important for advising and signposting members,</p>

	<p>providing inclusive opportunities to network and shaping DM motions and Council work priorities.</p> <p>I led on organising the NUJ Equality Summit and the NUJ's first Mental Health conference and produced the accompanying mental health toolkit. With support from staff, this work resulted in a PTSD roundtable leading to partnership work with the Rory Peck Trust and access to support for NUJ members dealing with trauma. I organised and chaired a webinar on neurodiversity and contributed to university research studies on journalists' wellbeing as well as mental health resources developed by the Headlines Network.</p> <p>As a Union Learning Rep, I've worked closely with NUJ Training Wales to shape and promote the skills training programme. I've used it as a recruitment opportunity to engage students, freelancers and PR and Communications workers and gathered information on skills gaps and training needs. Our reps' training is a vital tool for organising in workplaces and I have consistently supported our Trade Union education programme and reps' briefings.</p> <p>Alongside colleagues on the Welsh Executive and through the Wales Public Interest Journalism Working Group, we've lobbied and negotiated with other stakeholders and Welsh Government to increase support and achieving wins for journalism in Wales.</p> <p>On behalf of the NUJ, I've been interviewed on TV and radio including BBC News at Ten, ITV News and BBC Radio Wales, helping to raise our external profile.</p> <p>TUC: Through the TUC Cymru I trained up new equality reps, including sessions on equality as an organising opportunity. I mapped workplaces and sectors, identified issues of concern via surveys and focus groups, galvanised members, supported recruitment events and developed and ran campaigns.</p> <p>Prospect: As a workplace equality rep I secured buy-in from my branch officers and the regional office to put equalities on the agenda in the workplace (pre-Equality Act). I led on negotiations with management to secure agreement to develop an equality strategy for the organisation, despite resistance to the idea.</p> <p>National Union of Students, Wales: As president, led on our political lobbying work in Wales, including formal and informal meetings and negotiations with Welsh and UK Ministers on education policy. Led campaigns on student safety, housing and funding.</p>
(b) Administration:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freelance photojournalist: managing workload, clients and accounts. This includes project management roles with regular

		<p>reporting and evaluation requirements for partners and funders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TUC Cymru (Wales) Equality Officer and secretariat to the equality committees: including quarterly reporting to the General Council. Researching and writing policy briefings and organising meetings, events and training. • Chair of Disability Arts Cymru (Wales), a national arts charity: leading the board, collaborating with staff to ensure good governance and meeting our obligations to funders and the Charity Commission. Setting Board meeting and finance committee agendas, organising and chairing awaydays, authorising payments and scrutinising finances and policies. Designing job descriptions, running recruitment processes and supporting the transition to a new director and restructured staffing arrangements. • Policy and programmes manager for the charity Disability Wales: managing a team of four staff; two core-funded and two project-funded. Ensuring staff support and professional development opportunities, knowledge transfer, regular exchange of ideas and joint working. Overseeing policy development and implementation, membership engagement and regular reporting to the Board and funders, continual monitoring and evaluation of progress against the business plan and funding agreements. • Researcher: co-researcher and author of the groundbreaking 'Legally Disabled' project with Cardiff Business School, which involved the design and delivery of the research, including interviewing, transcribing, analysing data, writing reports, securing buy-in from stakeholders and disseminating the research. • NUS Wales: as President, I led our team of sabbatical and non-sabbatical officers. With staff and officers, organised and led on political lobbying of the (then) Welsh Assembly and key public bodies, colleges and universities in the education sector. Ran training and engagement events, implemented policy in Wales, and represented Wales on the National Executive in a highly factional and tense political environment. As a member-led organisation I worked within the policy remit set by members. • NUJ: responsible for leading the organisation and delivery of numerous webinars, guest speakers, drafting of motions, website statements, conference speeches, reports and papers to the NEC and Councils. Producing workplans for Disabled Members' Council and the Equality Council, leading on working groups to action resolutions and draft materials. Writing and delivering effective presentations and speeches at both internal and external events and organising student recruitment talks and networking events. Supporting delegations at TUC conferences and building on the strengths of other activists.
7	<p>Why are you interested in this post? <i>Section 7 is the candidate's opportunity to prepare an election address that will be</i></p>	<p>I passionately care about the NUJ and the positive impact that we create for our members and the industries we represent. I bring the professional, trade union and personal experience that is</p>

<p><i>circulated to members with ballot forms, together with a photograph and details of union membership. The election address should not exceed 400 words.</i></p>	<p>necessary for us to meet the urgent need to adapt to an ever-changing industry and secure our future as an independent professional union.</p> <p>My leadership is marked by strong collaboration, networking and building teams across the union that work to people’s strengths. This has been actioned throughout my time as a lay rep and president by providing opportunities and building the confidence of activists. I’ve ensured that a range of members’ voices can influence our policies and work. I have delivered networks, events and spaces to engage members and will continue to develop that to ensure our democratic structures work for our members.</p> <p>I continue to be a strong voice for members, raising our profile and promoting our professional and trade union values, challenging obstructions to media freedom and campaigning against precarious working conditions to protect jobs, pay, and freelance rights.</p> <p>The current General Secretary has worked hard to achieve financial stability and create a union with political clout and a strong industrial approach. My priorities are to strategically build on this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a union-wide organising strategy to improve recruitment and retention, that promotes the value of the NUJ as a specialist union, whilst recognising the challenges experienced by our members during the cost-of-living crisis. • Strengthening capacity to boost our internal and external communications, brand awareness and visibility, especially through the use of multimedia content. • Working with the Parliamentary Group, wider union movement and others to protect media freedom, journalists’ safety and to bring pressure on employers who are hostile to the power of the collective. • Continuing our international and solidarity work with the IFJ to protect journalists and journalism worldwide. • Providing opportunities for student and early career members to feel supported and able to influence our policies and campaigns to reflect contemporary challenges in our industry. <p>As a freelance photojournalist, the NUJ has been here for me when I’ve needed support. I continue to communicate the relevance of the NUJ to freelancers, workers in small workplaces and newer forms of journalism, alongside our traditional membership base and those well-established in their careers. I advocate for increasing diversity across our industries and protecting our members’ welfare and mental health.</p>						
<p>Please provide your preferred contact details so that members are able to contact you during the election period.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="547 1854 683 1890">Email:</td> <td data-bbox="683 1854 1524 1890">natasha.hirst@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="547 1890 683 1926">Phone:</td> <td data-bbox="683 1890 1524 1926">07825 211775</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="547 1926 683 2031">Address:</td> <td data-bbox="683 1926 1524 2031"> www.hirstnuj.com C/O National Union of Journalists </td> </tr> </table>	Email:	natasha.hirst@gmail.com	Phone:	07825 211775	Address:	www.hirstnuj.com C/O National Union of Journalists
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Please note that these contact details will be published.	Headland House 72 Acton Street London WC1X 9NB
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