



*The new year has started with industrial strife, newspaper job cuts and attacks on the unions, but the NUJ is in good shape to fight for our members and we're looking forward to Delegate Meeting in April*

**T**he news that Reach, publisher of the Mirror, the Daily and Sunday Express and the UK's largest regional newspaper group, is making 200 people redundant with more than 100 in editorial departments made a grim start to 2023.

We are now working hard and negotiating with its management to try to mitigate the damage and save as many jobs as possible.

The year began as 2022 ended, with industrial issues to the fore. Transport workers, health workers, postal workers, teachers, driving instructors, civil servants and others have been forced to go on strike. Years of austerity imposed by Conservative governments meant that, when inflation started to rise and the cost of living spiralled, wages dropped far behind. We stand in solidarity with all those fighting for the rights of their members to a decent and fair wage.

This government's response has not been to get around the table to seek solutions, instead it has published draconian legislation to curb trade union rights. The very same nurses everyone was cheering during the pandemic are now being told they could face the sack for going on strike.

With the TUC, we have vowed to fight it at every step of the way. We support the TUC's "protect the right to strike" day on Wednesday 1 February when events across the country will be held to protest against the anti-strike legislation and we'll keep you up to date with the plans.

We'll also be working with our Parliamentary Group to resist a whole raft of legislation restricting civil liberties and threatening journalists' rights. MPs have

given us lots of support for our stance against BBC budget cuts in local radio and we hope to salvage what we can from their plans which fly in the face of what a good public service broadcaster should be all about.

People feel passionately about their local radio and TV. This was made evident at a meeting in Derry where hundreds, including the Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown, gathered to protest against



and the inexorable move to digital will gather apace. Developments in Artificial Intelligence are moving rapidly to a science-fiction media world and chatbots that can "write" stories and presenters with avatars so they can be in more than one place at a time are already with us. Those who find the news depressing can now press a button to read about happier things. It all sounds rather scary.

Here at Headland House, the NUJ's London headquarters, we are preparing for Delegate Meeting (DM), the union's policy-making body. Delegates will meet at The TUC's base, Congress House in London, in April to debate a range of issues and subjects covering everything from the way the union organises itself to our plans of action and the campaigns we want to prioritise for the next two years. This is the first in-person DM to be held for a while, but online events and virtual sectoral get-togethers are planned to which all members are invited. I'll look forward to seeing the stalwarts again and meeting some new faces.



## Protect the right to strike!

The TUC is asking you to sign [the anti-strike law petition](#), addressed to Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister, telling him his legislation is wrong, unworkable, and almost certainly illegal. If passed, the new law will directly attack working people's fundamental right to strike to defend their pay, terms and conditions.

cuts at Radio Foyle as part of a cross-community campaign to save the station which has united the city.

The job cuts at Reach and the closure of the 155-year-old Newry Reporter are set to be the first of many this year, predicts the Reuters Institute (see page two)

In Solidarity

**Michelle Stanistreet**

# BRANCH

02

## Dates for the diary

Use 2023's special anniversaries, landmark days and industry events to organise branch meetings and campaigns and spread the NUJ's message

### February

Start of **LGBT History Month**. Other key LGBT+ **dates in 2023**: **#HeartUnions Week**, 13-19 February, is about telling the story of why unions are vital for everyone at work and encouraging people not in a union to join;

**World Radio Day** on Wednesday 13 February is when UNESCO celebrates the unique value of radio which remains the medium to reach the widest audience in the world.

### March

**The Publishing Show**: the premier event for B2C publishers, newspapers, content providers and suppliers, March 1-2. NUJ members can visit **free**.

The **TUC Pensions Conference** takes place in London on Wednesday 1 March.

**International Women's Day** is Wednesday 8 March and the themes are #EmbraceEquity and creating a fair and equal world.

**TUC Women's Conference** will be held in London from 9 to 11 March.

**Liberal Democrat Spring Conference** in York is scheduled for 17-19 March.

The Media Reform Coalition's **Media Democracy Festival** at Birkbeck, University of London, on Saturday 25 March brings together academics, activists and decision-makers to argue for a transformed media.

**International Transgender Day of Visibility** takes place on Friday 31 March when the Human Rights Campaign celebrates transgender and non-binary people around the globe and raises awareness around discrimination and violence that trans people face.

### April

**World Book and Copyright Day** on Sunday 23 April is a celebration of books and reading and an opportunity to recognise the rights of authors and creators. Invite a local writer or publisher, or run a workshop on protecting copyright.

**TUC Black Workers' Conference** Friday, 21-Sunday, 23 April.

**Workers' Memorial Day** is on 28 April. More people are killed at work than in wars. Join the NUJ's Health and Safety Council and the TUC in promoting the union's health and safety campaigns.



**NUJ Delegate Conference**, Friday 28 and Saturday 29 April at TUC Congress House, London.

### May

**May Day/Labour Day** is celebrated on 1 May with a march in London supporting workers' rights.

**World Press Freedom Day** on Wednesday 3 May is commemorated by the United Nations and highlights the fundamental principles of press freedom around the world. This day also honours the journalists who have been killed in the name of their profession.

**UK local elections** will be held on 4 May 2023. These will include district councils, unitary authorities, and directly-elected mayors in England, and all local councils in Northern Ireland.

**The coronation of King Charles III** takes place on Saturday 6 May.

**The Eurovision Song Contest** will be held in Liverpool from 9-13 May.

The theme for **Mental Health Awareness Week** from 15-21 May is anxiety. Invite a mental health first-aider to talk to your branch. See **NUJ resources**.

**International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia** is on Wednesday 17 May and is celebrated in more than 130 countries.



## What's on in Parliament

Top of the agenda is the **Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill** to curb union rights. It was cobbled together in response to the latest strikes and sets out minimum service requirements during strikes, with workers being sued or dismissed if they do not comply. The NUJ is working with the TUC to resist it, saying it is "undemocratic, unworkable and illegal".

The union is lobbying for a public interest defence in the **National Security Bill**, which introduces lengthy prison sentences for obtaining or disclosing protected information/trade secrets and prevents access to "prohibited places". The beleaguered **Online Safety Bill** is struggling through Parliament, and the union supports an amendment to exempt journalists from new rules on encryption to protect their sources.

A new **Bill of Rights**, which would weaken the rights of journalists and undermines freedom of expression, has had its first reading, but a second has not been scheduled. The **Public Order Bill** leaves journalists uncertain about their right to cover demonstrations, as evidenced by reporters' arrests at **Just Stop Oil protests**. While the sell-off of Channel 4 is no longer going ahead, there is still no date for the publication of a promised **broadcasting bill**.

**The Hay Festival** on Thursday 25 May to Sunday 4 June includes talks by author, journalist and broadcaster, Gary Younge, novelist Alexander McCall Smith and lawyer-turned-cookery expert, Rumini Iyer.

**The TUC's Black Workers' Conference** will be held in from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 May.

## June/July

The theme for the UN's **World Environment Day** on Monday 5 June is Beat Plastic Pollution.

**TUC LGBT+ Conference**, 29-30 June. **London Pride** takes place on Saturday 1 July.

## August

**The Notting Hill Carnival**, held in West London on August 27 this year, has become one of the biggest street festivals in Europe.

## September

**TUC Congress**, the union body's annual conference, is in Liverpool, 10-13 September.

## October

Start of **Black History Month**. The NUJ's flagship **Claudia Jones lecture** takes place this month.

Details tbc.

The **Labour Party** has chosen Liverpool for its 2023 four-day conference, from the 8th.

The **Conservative Party Conference** will be in Manchester from Sunday 1 to Wednesday 4.

**World Mental Health Day** is on October 10.

## November

**TUC's Young Workers' Month. Irish Delegate Conference**, 11 November.

**International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**, falls on **November 25**.

## December

Start of **Disability History Month. World Aids Day** is on December 1.

**International Day for Disabled People** is held on December 3.

**Human Rights Day** is observed on 10 December, the day the UN the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

# DM 2023

The meeting of the union's policy making body takes place in London at **Congress Centre on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 April**. Motions to conference determine the union's programme of action and policies for the next two years. It is an opportunity to make changes

to the union's rule book. Delegates will be asked to pass a motion calling for a rise in union subs to meet increased costs. For more information and documents, such as the **preliminary agenda**, go to the NUJ website. The deadline for amendments to motions is Friday 3 March. In the run-up to conference there will a series of online events and sectoral get-togethers online, open to all members.



2023

04

# Buckle up for a rough ride

*The Reuters Institute predicts a tough year for the industry, jostling among the tech giants and extraordinary advances in artificial intelligence*



**T**he Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's annual survey and crystal ball gazing looks already to be on track with Reach's announcement of 200 redundancies and closure of the Newry Reporter.

Interviews with senior editorial staff across the globe by survey author, the institute's senior research associate Nic Newman, showed a less confident industry, reflecting a backdrop of rampant inflation and a deep squeeze on household spending.

Jim Mullen, Reach chief executive, blamed inflation, the 60 per cent increase in newsprint costs and consumer downturn for the job cuts, around 100 of them editorial. For the full year, print revenue declined 3.5 per cent, while circulation revenue was down by 1.7 per cent and advertising fell 15.9 per cent.

The publishers surveyed said they intended to boost subscriptions and increase spending on podcasts, other digital audio, email newsletters and video. Nic Newman says: "News

**Reach**

organisations that have not yet fully embraced digital will be at a severe disadvantage. The next few years will not be defined by how fast we adopt digital, but by how we transform our digital content to meet rapidly changing audience expectations."

## Tech giants troubled

Circumstances are changing among the digital titans. Facebook (while remaining a trillion-dollar empire) appears to be losing its way, with CEO Mark Zuckerberg distracted by the metaverse, older people growing bored with it and younger users migrating to TikTok. Elon Musk's car-crash ownership of Twitter has put the journalists' favourite platform in jeopardy (and with nowhere else satisfactory to go). Meanwhile, Amazon, Apple,

Microsoft, and TikTok are all rapidly competing directly with news media and encroaching on the Google/Facebook duopoly hold

on digital advertising while also laying off staff. Payments from the

tech platforms to news organisations for content or innovation have been recent earners, with a third of the survey's respondents having benefited. But deals struck with Facebook's parent company, Meta, are about to expire and may not be renewed. Few would be surprised to see Facebook's news tab disappear soon, says the report.

Meanwhile, Netflix's decision to take advertisements will add further pressure on outlets scrambling

for advertising revenue while public broadcasters face funding cuts amid intensifying attacks by politicians and rival publishers, says the report.

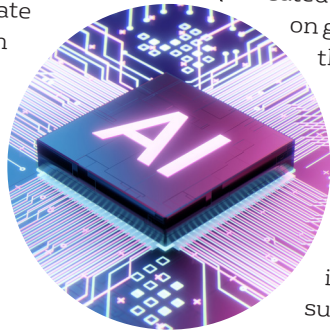
TikTok has gone from strength to strength, with publishers now making

more effort to use it to get access to its young followers. A recent Reuters Institute report showed that about half of top publishers across dozens of countries are active there despite concerns about Chinese ownership, the security of its user data and its reputation for misinformation and disinformation.



### AI, virtual presenters & ethical considerations

Chatbot ChatGPT's speed and capabilities are awe-inspiring and frightening at the same time, says Newman. OpenAI's bot can write news stories, plots for films and book and computer codes from a few text prompts. Likewise, its DALL-E can generate digital images from a few prompted descriptions. All this has huge implications for the creation of deep fakes and creates a nightmare for the copyright industry.



The report says that while AI can make non-journalistic tasks more efficient, cheaply produced synthetic content could be used to replace journalists, commoditise news and undermine trust. It could also keep the NUJ's Ethics Council very busy.

Deep Brain AI, a technology company based in South Korea, creates digital twins of popular TV news anchors and these now make regular appearances on mainstream channels in Asia. Despite the concerns, many hope AI can be used to provide a more personalised service for their readers.

### Bad news

The report notes that relentlessly depressing news has become a turn-off for many people. Pink News has a "mood control" button as part



of its personalisation options. A survey by the LGBTQ+ publisher found around a quarter of its readers said they preferred to read uplifting news stories. However, about half of the publishers questioned said they had increased their coverage of issues such as the climate crisis and created specialist teams to report on global warming. Around two-thirds of the news executives surveyed now rate their coverage as good, even if the often-depressing outlook for the planet can be a tough sell. A third said they had taken steps in the past year to improve sustainability.

### Global markets

With home markets drying up, more companies hope to expand their subscriber bases abroad. Reach is preparing to launch websites in the United States for the Mirror and Express, following the American success of Rupert Murdoch's The Sun.

The research was drawn from interviews with 303 news executives from 53 countries and territories. **Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2023**

### What the news execs say

- Less than half (44%) are confident about the year ahead, with even the most optimistic predicting layoffs and cost-cutting measures.
- More than half say online traffic has been flat or declining, with almost two-thirds (72%) worrying about readers being turned off by depressing topics such as the Ukraine and climate change.
- The majority (80%) see raising subscriptions more important for revenue than display and native advertising.
- A third expect to get significant revenue from tech platforms for content licencing or innovation.
- Around a half have created a specialist climate team, with a third hiring more staff.
- Most will do more podcasts, digital audio, video and email newsletters; only 4 per cent see the metaverse as part of the future.
- Most will turn to TikTok and away from Facebook and Twitter.

## Top trends

Economic gloom: print titles fold and more media mergers.

News moves from Facebook to TikTok.

Bots boom in editorial.

# CAMPAIGN



06

## Fighting for a fair share of the pie

*The NUJ will call on news organisations to raise their rates, says Tim Dawson, chair of the Freelance Industrial Council*

S ometime around the millennium, The Times started paying its causal sub-editors £156 a day. Nearly quarter of a century later, the rate is exactly the same. Some at the company, News UK, who were on higher rates, actually had their pay cut some months ago.

Murdoch's parsimony is not unique. Freelances across the industry report much the same. In two decades of low inflation, rates

have hardly moved. With price rises now in double digits, the situation is stark.

The situation prompted Jon Harris, chair of the National Association of Press Agencies, to publish an extraordinary letter addressed to Reach's editor-in-chief.

He told Lloyd Embley: "Freelance fees for words and pictures are now so paltry and outdated, our members have been fighting their own cost-of-living crisis for years - long before the current one engulfing this country."

A reporter, who asked me not to give his name, reflected what many felt when he posted his remittance advice from The Daily Telegraph on social media. For a page three news story he brought to them, he was paid 20 pence a word. "When rates as low as that are being offered, we need the issue to be out in the open and discussed," he said. "Rates like that are killing news. What is the point of pitching news stories anymore?"

The NUJ's London Freelance Branch has collected data on rates paid for actual work since the mid-1990s which is published by the branch as Rate for the Job (<http://www.londonfreelance.org/rates/>

[index.php](#)). It makes depressing reading. Direct comparisons are not always easy, but it is a cinch to find static, or falling rates. A fee of £100 in 2001 would have needed to have risen to £151 by 2021 to keep pace with inflation, according to the Bank of England.

The moral imperative to increase them is clear but what can be done? The NUJ has written to News UK seeking a meeting. They may not jump to attention, but it will be impossible for them to claim that the case has not been made. We can embarrass the fat cats, if nothing else. Doubtless we will hear that there is no money, but this is simply not true.

Last year the Mail's owner, DMGT, saw profits rise by seven per cent to £50m. Times Newspapers Limited reported pre-tax profits more than tripling from £10m to £34m year-on-year; revenues jumped from £310m to £327m. Reach recently reported profits of £47m. We must always make the case when we are commissioned. Everyone is feeling the pinch - staff, freelances, well-paid and not-so-well-paid - so we hardly have to explain why this matters. Chapels must include freelance members in negotiations with management. Make no mistake, unless we become a great deal more vocal about being given a fair share of the pie, shareholders and senior managers will swallow the lot.

**#FairDealForFreelances**

## Action

• Appoint a branch freelance officer

• Publicise the NUJ's Rate for the Job so we can gather more data

• Promote the NUJ's Freelance Charter to local news organisations:  
[www.nuj.org.uk/resource/fair-deal-for-freelances.html](http://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/fair-deal-for-freelances.html)



# Get Active

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

## For Dom, Bruno & the Amazon

The NUJ is holding an **evening event** on Thursday 19 January to commemorate the lives and work of British journalist, Dom Phillips, and his friend and indigenous expert, Bruno Pereira, who were murdered during their investigations into illegal mining, logging and climate change on the Amazon. You can also book for **an exhibition** at Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB.



1-2 in London for publishers, newspapers, content providers and suppliers, free with a discount code.

It's a great opportunity to network, learn about the latest trends and attend a range of workshops, presentations and expert panel discussions. Find out more **on the NUJ website**.

## Campaigns

### #KeepBBCLocalRadio

#### Local

The NUJ is campaigning to persuade the BBC to change plans the union believes will "kill off" local radio. Most output in the afternoons and evenings will now be shared across the network and about 48 posts will go. Find out more **on the campaign page**. Sign the **petition** to save BBC Radio Foyle and **find out more**.

**Support the NHS and health workers:** the **Keep Our NHS Public** campaign is supporting the **striking health workers**, fighting to reverse the privatisation and commercialisation of social care and calling for health and social care services to be publicly funded, publicly provided and accountable. Get involved.

## Fair Deal for Freelances

The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the plight of self-employed media workers, many who have been given unsuitable employment terms. They pay their taxes, but have no right to holidays, sick, parental or pregnancy leave. That's why we are fighting for better pay rates and conditions. **Find out more**. The NUJ's **Freelance Fact Pack** is full of useful information.

## Useful stuff

**Journalists' safety:** branches and chapels can show a **series of videos** of NUJ members explaining the abuse and threats they have received while doing their jobs. They can also spread the word about the union's **mobile safety toolkit** which can help members find information while they are on the move.

**Pay campaign:** get practical support to help negotiate fair, equal and equitable pay and conditions **on the NUJ website**.

**Protect Your Sources:** a journalist never reveals their source - know your rights and how to secure your communications. Read about **the NUJ's campaign**.

**Student recruitment:** branches and chapels can promote the union to new students and ensure student members remain in the NUJ. You can find materials and tips to support your campaign **on the website**.

**Equal pay and the gender pay gap:** lots of information and advice on introducing fairer pay policies.

## Mental health workshops

The news industry is a fast-paced, hard-working environment where journalists' mental health can slip under the radar. Headlines, the media mental health organisation, is **holding a series of free workshops** for newsroom managers. There is a special NUJ session on Friday 27 January, but members can attend on other dates up to March 3.

## Publishing show

NUJ members can attend this premier exhibition, from March

# REASONS TO JOIN



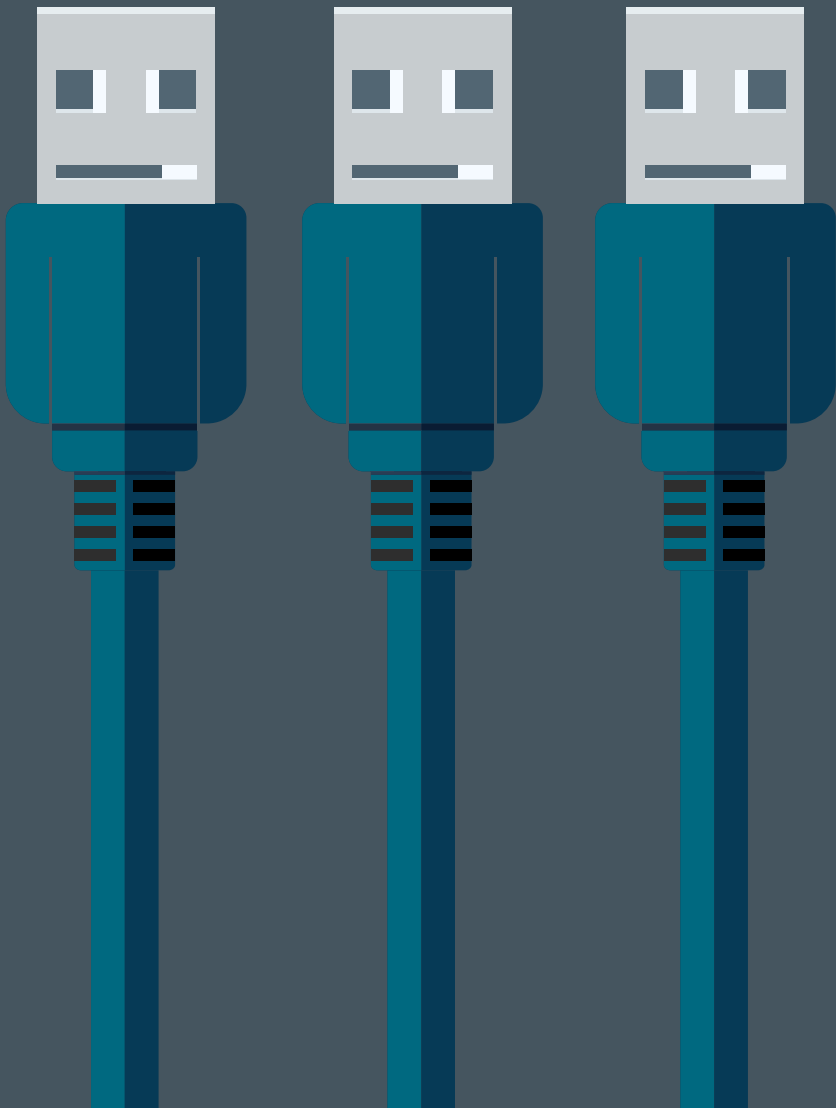
## Networking

The union puts on events for media workers to come together to share their knowledge and expertise. These can be by sector, such as the freelance forums and photographers' summits, or cross-sector on issues that unite all media workers. Students and newcomers can benefit from meeting experienced members in the industry.

**Are you keeping good company?**

Join the NUJ today at

[nuj.org.uk/join](http://nuj.org.uk/join)



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