

# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Informed

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## Honk! We're on strike



Newsquest staff in Cumbria on strike

**If Dame Frances Cairncross needed any more evidence of the state of the UK's regional newspapers as she put the last touches to her report on the sustainability of the press, the strike by Newsquest journalists couldn't have made it clearer.**

Picket line placards at the Carlisle News and Star, the Cumberland News, the Workington Times and Star and the Whitehaven News before Christmas cried: "Local News Matters", "Stop the Cuts", "We Need a Pay Rise", while the journalists reported on the high levels of stress among staff and the loss of experienced reporters at their newspapers.

The striking journalists earned huge support across the union movement, plus praise from local Tory MP, Rory Stewart, Lib Dem, Tim Farron, the

Labour leaders of Cumbria and Carlisle councils, the Carlisle Green Party chair and a host of local councillors.

Newsquest made more than a 100 people redundant since it took over Cumbria Newspapers in March 2018. The strike highlighted poverty wages, with trainees earning £16,500 and seniors starting on £20,500. News that notorious "culture capitalist" MNG Enterprises had offered Gannett, Newsquest's US parent company, a buy-out was chilling news for staff at the UK-based titles.

Plans by the new owner of Johnston Press, JPIMedia, to close, merge or move offices in Belfast, Peterborough, Sunderland, Harrogate and London's Cavendish Square, boded ill for those working there since the newspaper group announced a prepack administration

deal which could cancel JPIMedia's responsibility for JP's pensions and dump its scheme on the government's Pension Protection Fund. At Reach, the third of the big three provincial publishers, cuts continue. In Ireland, the union expressed grave concern about further cuts at Independent News & Media and is helping editorial workers faced with the threat of redundancy.

Meanwhile lay-offs and cuts at the so-called new media outfits such as BuzzFeed, Huffington Post and Vice have shown the problems of revenue raising in the digital sector.

As NUJ Informed went to press, the Cairncross report was imminent and, as Ian Burrell reports (page 9), all the signs suggest that the government will consider moving towards some sort of regulation and a "tech tax" on the likes of Facebook and Google to offset their free ride in scooping up media advertising and taking content from the press.

During a meeting with Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, impressed upon him that handing over any tech-tax bounty to the existing news groups would not help encourage quality, public interest journalism and that any further funding mechanisms would need strict criteria to help deliver quality content and boost plurality.

Michelle discussed with Jeremy Wright how diversity in broadcasting and the wider media industry could be improved and updated him on the union's equal pay claims at the BBC. He sought the union's views on improving media literacy among young people and how to combat the online abuse of journalists. It was a very positive meeting and the department has shown it is keen to maintain a constructive relationship with the union.

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**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

# Michelle's Message

**Following a meeting with Jeremy Wright, the Culture Secretary, Michelle Stanistreet joined a DCMS round table of news organisations and academics to discuss how the NUJ can play a role in improving media literacy, so young people can learn to read news they can trust.**

**When I was at school, information about news and current affairs came from books, TV news, bulletins on the local radio station and, in my house, the contents of the Liverpool Echo. Today, despite delivering newspapers every morning my 15-year-old son's starting point for what's happening in the world hails from channels on Youtube, clips shared around via Snapchat or closed groupchats on WhatsApp.**

We regularly have exchanges about something that sounds so outlandish and to my mind obviously daft, yet the answer to my dismissive assertion of it being rubbish is met with – it's true, it's on the internet! Look, let me show you!

And so it is. There's brilliant content to be had online, but there's a lot of dross as well. The problem is that without context it can be hard to work out what's true and what's not, what's exaggerated or just made up, whether an image is manipulated or real, and whether the



*Michelle with culture secretary Jeremy Wright*

individual or entity behind these stories and images have a vested interest or malicious motivation in dressing them up as fact or circulating them on social media in the first place.

So small wonder that political and industry attention is now focussed on media literacy in schoolchildren and teenagers as never before.

In a recent meeting with Jeremy Wright, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the issue of fake news and misinformation led us on to discuss media literacy and what more can be done to hone those critical faculties and to tackle misinformation from an early age. We talked about my desire to get NUJ members engaged in this work, building on our links with journalism students in colleges and universities, and developing the ad-hoc initiatives that many of our members and officials have engaged with in schools. Raising awareness of the vital role that journalism plays in our communities would have other benefits too – focusing attention on journalism as a career option at an early age for young people from diverse backgrounds who currently would never dream of it as an

option for them.

At a roundtable meeting convened this week by Margot James, minister for the digital and creative industries, there were wide-ranging discussions about how to tackle these issues, and enthusiasm for how the members of an organisation like the NUJ could make a real difference to the range of great work already happening in some schools. Initiatives including the Media Literacy Trust's Newswise campaign, Charlotte's Project which carries out sessions on fake news with sixth-formers, Shout Out UK, and Doc Academy which provides lesson plans and documentary clips for teachers.

ITV, Channel 4, the BBC, Google and Twitter all spoke about the work they're engaged in. Ofcom outlined its significant research on these issues – most recently on the surveys on children's media use and attitudes, life on the small screen, exploring the relationship children have with their devices, with more research planned on issues including the nature of advertising online. Academics from the LSE and Goldsmiths are engaged in work to research the challenges, point to

sustainable solutions, and map the work taking place and evaluate its success.

How to make worthy and much-needed initiatives sustainable and able to scale up to match the need – in an environment where digital change is fast and constantly evolving – is a challenge that has yet to be met.

Trust in journalism underpins all of this work. Whatever the platform, however we access our news and information, how we build relationships of trust in information that has integrity and a provenance is key – not just soaking up content and treating something as fact that merely bolsters our instinctive beliefs or prejudices. There's nothing new in this, but the reality is that people are bombarded with more information from a wider range of sources than ever before – boosting our critical capacity to weed out what's been fact-checked, from what has not, is the challenge we all face and a skill we need to help our children acquire from the earliest possible age.

In an age where distrust is rife it is therefore heartening to see that the BBC leads the way – Ofcom's recent research found 79 per cent of people rate the BBC's news highly, with 73 per cent rating the BBC as trustworthy. There's no room for complacency there – and definitely scope for improvement – but it's just one of the reasons why the NUJ's work to sustain our public service broadcaster is so vital. The latest battle is to ensure the BBC is not lumbered with the cost of funding what is a welfare benefit – the provision of free licences for the over-75s. Our view is clear – the government must pay. The BBC's public consultation will soon come to an end – it is time for the BBC leadership to be bold and brave. It must refuse to fund the free licences and put this issue back in the Government's court. If the Conservatives want to preserve free licences they should deliver on their manifesto commitment and fork out the money to ensure the over-75s retain their free licences.

## Sian Jones, NUJ president, says come out fighting this February and boost the union's membership

**With the start of a new year, there are so many ways to support your union, and some too-good-to-miss opportunities for us all to get into recruitment mode.**

Heart Unions Week is coming up very soon from February 11 to 17, so why don't you start the year as you mean to go on and make a resolution to recruit colleagues and contacts?

It's the perfect opportunity to promote the NUJ and bring people into membership. The TUC and our sister unions across the movement will all be out recruiting and promoting the good work of unions. We'll be joining the party and letting media workers know we're the home for them.

The NUJ's theme is getting a pay rise – a sure reason why you should be in a union.

Drink with us! Yes, dry January is now over, so come and visit the new café bar at NUJ HQ. Claim your union discount at Bread and Roses @ The Chapel, the new union-owned Workers Beer Company venture and a must-visit ethical venue. Great beer, wine, coffee and street food in comfy laid-back surroundings just a five-minute walk from King's Cross.

Putting on speakers and special events is always a good way to attract new members. The NUJ has quality meeting spaces in London and there are opportunities during the day in our Glasgow office.

Whether it's for branch meetings, events, work, or leisure, at Headland House, London, we have a variety of reasonably priced spaces and catering options to suit. You'll be in good



NUJ president Sian Jones

hands and supporting your union too. Contact [lauraf@nuj.org.uk](mailto:lauraf@nuj.org.uk) for more information.

Be active in your union. Attend a chapel or branch meeting, become a rep or get involved in a campaign. We thrive on the involvement and expertise of our members.

A full range of training is available for reps so you'll be supported. Through your skills and dedication we can stand up for and give a voice to our members in media workplaces across the UK, Ireland and beyond. A list of meetings is available on the NUJ website [www.nuj.org.uk/events/](http://www.nuj.org.uk/events/)

Promote the NUJ in your email signature. It's a simple but effective way to spread awareness of the NUJ among media contacts and direct non-members to our quick and easy online joining portal, as well as news and campaigns work. Simply link to [www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk)

And don't forget our new range of recruitment materials which you can download as posters or jpgs for your events and campaigns. They're on the website at <https://www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-resources/recruitment-materials-for-every-member/>

With challenges in our industry we need our union more than ever. It's an important and exciting time to be an NUJ member so spread the word and get involved.

# News Update

## We ♥ a pay rise

**It's time the newspaper and media industries showed journalists some love.**

That will be the message of an NUJ campaign during the TUC's HeartsUnions Week from February 11 to 17. And the best way they can show their love is to pay proper wages and freelance rates.

Journalists have had enough of putting up with poverty pay and deals which bear no relation to the cost of living. The Retail Price Index rose 31 per cent between 2008-17 – an average of 2.9 per cent annually – while most members' pay flat-lined over that decade. At the same time, jobs have been relentlessly cut, new technology introduced and

additional tasks added to already busy workloads so that editorial productivity has soared.



It isn't just in Cumbria and the rest of the regional press where pay is a problem. Starting salaries and the rate for some digital jobs on the nationals are so pitiful that it is virtually impossible to live in London or Dublin where rents and house prices are out of reach. Freelance rates and photographers' fees have barely budged in the past decade on newspapers and magazines.

The week is also an opportunity for unions and reps to showcase their good work. Let us know about your successes by contacting us at [campaigns@nuj.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nuj.org.uk)

We are also nearing the next deadline for companies with more than 250 employees to report their gender pay gaps. Last year the statistics revealed that 91 per cent of UK-based media companies paid men more than women on average. Women, particularly in the books and magazine sectors, were deeply shocked to see how much more the men in their office were getting. NUJ Training is putting on a one-day course in London on Thursday 21 March to improve equality in the workplace, including a session with Natasha Morris, the NUJ's legal & equality officer, on how to put an equal pay claim together. Contact [nujtraining@nuj.org.uk](mailto:nujtraining@nuj.org.uk) to book your place.

### Death threat

The NUJ strongly condemned a death threat to a journalist working in Belfast. A motion from the NEC noted the member had received a "threat to life notice" from the Police Service Northern Ireland which said there was immediate risk of an attack by criminal elements. It said: "This NEC stands shoulder to shoulder with the member concerned and demands that those behind this threat lift it immediately and do so in a manner that is unequivocal and unconditional," it said. *The most dangerous decade for journalists, page 11*

### Cardiff screening

NUJ members Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey, out on bail after being arrested for their part in the making of the film No Stone Unturned about the murder of six football fans in a village pub in Northern Ireland in 1994, will be speaking at a screening at JOMEK 2 on Thursday 7 February. More details and tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/nuj-amp-jomec-18506670168>

### Dutch auction

The NEC sent a message of solidarity to members of the Dutch union Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten

for its campaign for better rates of pay for photojournalists. The union organised a strike on January 25 to put pressure on media organisations for a 14 per cent increase to keep up with inflation since 2010. A survey of freelance rates showed they fell from €80 (about £70) a photo in 2014 to an average rate today of €42 with some prices falling as low as €15 to €20.

### NUJ structures

The development committee, overseen by assistant general secretary Séamus Dooley, has set up a working group to carry out a root and branch review of the union's structures.

## LGBT champion

**Ben Hunte will take up a new role next month at the BBC as its first LGBT correspondent. His job will be to break and provide LGBT stories across the BBC's output, including digital and podcasts.**

The NUJ's charity, the George Viner Memorial Fund, awarded Ben a bursary to help pay for his master's degree in TV studies at City University. While there he interned at the BBC News and worked on the BBC's Gay Britannia season; his programme with Paul O'Grady was the most listened to on BBC 4 Extra.

While at university he interned at BBC News and earned more commissions at BBC London and Channel 5 News. He is now working at BBC Africa on What's New, a round-up of positive stories about young people on the continent.

# #FEUdignity: make workplaces safe

**After all the powerful and passionate #MeToo statements it was time for the industry to think about the practical ways to support employees and to consider ways to change the culture, said Cassie Chadderton, UK Theatre's head of theatre and membership development.**

She was speaking on an employers' panel at a conference organised under the Federation of Entertainment Union's (FEU) rubric Creating without Conflict (CwC), a campaign against bullying, harassment and discrimination in the media and creative industries.

Next to her on the panel was Natasha Moore, Directors UK's lead campaigner on bullying and harassment issues. Her organisation had had to admit that the bullies and the harassers were among its ranks, she said. There was a job of educating and training to do and an expectation that bad behaviour was called out. The process of hiring needed to be more transparent and formalised.

The #MeToo movement had galvanised unions and arts organisations to bring forward new ideas to tackle the problem: joint codes of conduct, helplines, safe spaces, focus groups, training and guidance. The FEU

launched a new equalities e-course and updated its bullying and harassment guidance.

Were these measures making a difference or was something more radical needed? That was the subject of the day.

Sarah Ward, Bectu's national secretary, said unions had long been aware of the problem – a TUC report said more than half of women (52 per cent) had experienced sexual harassment – and that the creative industries had been identified as a hotspot.

Comedian and actress Sameena Zehra kicked off the union's panel. Her show at the Edinburgh Festival tackled the issue of sexual harassment and she invited women members to share their stories, from the rape of a woman by a comic and watched by another in his Edinburgh flat, to the day-in-day-out groping, leering, smacks on the arse and sexual innuendo women comics and actors faced from promoters, colleagues and the audience.

"Unions have to be there to provide the safe space for people to be able to talk about what has happened, so they can get help and feel supported, even if they prefer their case to be anonymous," she said.

The NUJ's Natasha Hirst said as a freelance photographer in a male-dominated world she felt "lucky" to have only experienced sexual harassment a few times.

She added: "A key message for employers is that trade unions are your allies. Workplace reps have training and resources to support employers to improve workplace culture and meet their duty of care towards staff and freelancers who work for them."

Sexual harassment is a health and safety issue; reps had the power to assess the risk to mental health where bullying

and harassment is prevalent, she said.

Isabelle Gutierrez, the MU's head of communications & government relations, related how she had reported someone for sexual harassment and despite being in a secure job and having the support of her boss it had been a harrowing experience. The perpetrator had appealed and accused her of lying. "Even having support, I ended up on medication and had many sleepless nights. But if it had happened to me, it had probably happened to others and would have gone on happening unless he was stopped," she said.

The conference discussed the main reasons for people being too afraid to speak out. A large proportion of the people working in the media and arts are freelance. The work is precarious. The harassment usually takes place within a power relation: who will be believed you



Sameena Zehra

or the popular presenter, Nobel-prize winning author, or Hollywood director? According to a BECTU survey, 42 per cent said they feared it would have a negative effect on their career if they complained. Many members who spoke to the union helplines or sought help did so on the condition of anonymity.

Is the power dynamic underlying predatory behaviour the reason why most of the perpetrators are men? Do men also need to be educated to call out bad behaviour?

Cassie Chadderton said: "The cult of personality and the power imbalance it creates becomes a problem in theatres where at least 45 per cent of the workforce is freelance. There needs to be practical action to break this generational cycle of abuse."



Isabelle Gutierrez (left) and Natasha Hirst

Mark Thomas

# News Update

## BBC T&Cs roll-out

**BBC reps frustrated by the pace and nature of the newly-agreed terms and conditions package, including new rotas, voted to demand the BBC management accelerates the delivery of its promises to change the corporation's culture and new ways of working.**

The NUJ is also in talks with management about the roll-out of £40m cuts in its news budget and the union has pressed for no compulsory redundancies and an effective redeployment process.

The ACAS-chaired independent working group assessing weekend working is to wind up later this month. If there is no agreement, the issue will move to binding arbitration. The working party on night working has also begun, again chaired by ACAS.

Michelle Stanistreet said: "The NUJ made it clear to the BBC that the T&C changes hinged on getting the implementation right and a demonstration that cultural change was happening – and they are failing to get this right."

There are still many outstanding equal-pay cases and while settlements continue to be made, some are now moving into the tribunal process. The union responded favourably to a report by the DCMS select committee which



BBC News faces £40m more cuts

chastised the BBC for not admitting its failure to comply with equal pay law and for not setting up greater transparency in pay.

A review of the role of the NUJ's BBC secondees has started, and an information session is planned for reps keen to find out more about what's involved in the roles. The NEC gave thanks to Tory Blair and Keith Murray, who will remain in new roles at the BBC, and Paul Siegert for all their work on behalf of the union.

The BBC is highly rated for providing high-quality, trustworthy and accurate news, said a report by the broadcasting watchdog Ofcom. But, the regulator said, it needed to do more to represent all the UK population, improve its reach to young people and take more risks with original programming.

## Government 'must pay'

**The NUJ believes maintaining free TV licences for the over-75s, paid from the BBC licence-fee pot, would be catastrophic for the public service broadcaster.**

The union told a BBC consultation about the future of the benefit that the government must pick up the cost of what is a welfare benefit.

The corporation agreed to take on the payment during the last charter renewal process. It has now launched a consultation and announced the cost of taking on the fees will be more than £1 billion by the end of the next decade.

The union's Welsh Executive Council has put in a separate submission pointing out the possible consequences for S4C. The Welsh-language channel will lose its grant from the Westminster government in 2023 and funding will come almost fully from licence fees. A cash-strapped BBC will inevitably have consequences for the future funding of S4C.

Michelle Stanistreet said the BBC would be seen as "an axe-wielding bogeyman" if the benefit was cut.

### Broadcasting News

**ITV & ITN:** Members at ITV agreed a pay offer of 2.5 per cent and an increase in the redundancy cap from £45,000 to £50,000. However, discussions continue on unpopular changes to bank holiday working arrangements,

including moving to full news programmes on bank holidays, rather than shortened bulletins. After interventions from the joint unions, the proposed changes to annual leave at ITN – a move from a day to an hours system for staff – was withdrawn by the company. **Sky:** FEU union general secretaries who met

Comcast executives in late October reported the mood was less positive than some previous meetings. However the unions are continuing to push for an access agreement and the leafleting at the Osterley site continues, despite opposition from some Sky executives.

**Iran International:** Recruitment and organisation at the channel is going well, with a well-attended second social held in November. The general secretary has sought a meeting with the company to discuss recognition and the union's work on safety issues affecting Iranian journalists working in the UK.

# News Update

## Encore for Irish recruitment week

**The Irish Executive Council is set to run a recruitment week again this year after a successful inaugural event last November.**

At the January meeting of the IEC's general purposes committee, cathaoirleach (chair) Gerry Carson and Dublin freelance branch treasurer Kieran Fagan enthusiastically supported the idea of putting a designated recruitment week on the NUJ calendar.

Reviewing the 2018 programme, Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley said the major achievement of the week had been the opportunity to showcase the diverse work of the union. Membership applications were one measure of success, but the profile generated by key national events would have a long-term benefit.

In planning for 2019 there would be a sharper focus on measuring tangible outcomes, but he praised the efforts of individual branches in taking up the last-minute challenge set by the IEC for a November recruitment week. With proper planning there was an opportunity for a more comprehensive programme.

Among the highlights of the week was a round table on the role of women in the



Chief Justice of Ireland, Frank Clarke, launches a new code for social media in courts.

union hosted by Bernie Mullen, joint-cathaoirleach, and addressed by Sian Jones, president. Dr Laura Bambrick, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' social affairs officer, provided an overview of the role of women in the trade union movement, recalling the role of NUJ members in the Irish women's liberation movement and campaigns such as the end of the marriage bar and equal pay.

Sian Jones also delivered a keynote address at a seminar hosted by the Courts Service of Ireland in association with Dublin P&PR branch. Chief Justice of Ireland Frank Clarke launched new rules governing use of social media in court

which provide explicit recognition of NUJ membership and confirm rights of access to court records; a move welcomed by the president.

In her address Sian stressed that employers had a duty of care to workers required to maintain a social media presence. Cyberhate was not an acceptable occupational hazard and there was no obligation on a worker to put their mental health on the line, no more that they would be required to take physical risks in pursuit of the best photograph or the most up-to-date quote, she said.

In Dublin's Club na Múinteoirí FOI expert Ken Foxe gave a master class in the effective use of the Freedom of Information Act for freelance journalists and highlighted the opportunities for generating stories.

The challenges posed to press freedom by the arrest of journalists Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey were highlighted by broadcaster Cathal MacCoille during an interview with Trevor and Barry following an oversubscribed public screening of No Stone Unturned.

Among other highlights of the week was the establishment of a new chapel at Journal.ie following a recruitment week attended by NEC member, Gerry Curran, Ian McGuinness, Irish organiser, and Irish Times chapel officer, Éanna Ó Caollaí.

There was also a variety of branch events throughout the country aimed at recruiting students.

## NUJ wins for its members

**Guney Yildiz is back at the BBC doing a job he loves after what became for him a nightmare at the corporation.**

After long-term problems with his line manager and dissatisfaction with the BBC's internal procedures, Guney handed in his resignation. The NUJ took up his case and represented him at an employment tribunal for discrimination and constructive dismissal. Not only did

the union win the case for constructive dismissal, a difficult claim to make, it was able, most unusually, to get him re-engaged with the broadcaster.

He is now working in a different department and thriving.

He said: "I am now happy at the BBC, thanks to the NUJ. It was all very stressful for me, but I felt so much better when we got to the tribunal and I was

able to make my case and be heard."

Guney's is just one of the many successful cases the NUJ's busy legal team has solved. The legal department reported to the NEC that a whistleblowing case had netted more than £100,000 for a member and a similar sum was won for an equal pay claim. The union is still dealing with more than 200 equal pay claims at the BBC.

The union has recently put out briefings for reps on tribunals, EU media workers and Brexit.

# News Update

## Give women a sporting chance

**Women have made great strides in breaking into sports journalism, but more needs to be done and broadcasters must start to take women's sports seriously.**

Anna Kesse, a sports writer for The Guardian newspaper, told a conference organised by NUJ Wales Training and held with Cardiff Metropolitan University and women's charity, Chwarae Teg, that women gaining prominent roles had helped to make 2018 "a year of change".

During the past 12 months, footballer Alex Scott became one of the leading soccer pundits working for BBC and Sky Sports; Vicki Sparks became the first women to commentate on a live match at a World Cup for the BBC; and cricketer Isa Guha was the first woman to commentate on a men's cricket test match for Sky.

"I have a lot of praise for the likes of Alex Scott who has now become a role model for many women in the sports media industry, but there is still a

lot more that needs to be done. Only three women journalists from the UK went to the 2018 football World Cup as reporters; that needs to change," said Anna, who also emphasised the importance of joining a union such as the NUJ.

Hockey player, Beth Fisher, a freelance for BBC Wales Sport, said access to information on women's sport needed to be improved: "It is easier to get hold of Wales and Arsenal footballer Aaron Ramsey than it is to find out about some women's sport results or fixtures," she said.

Sue Butler, S4C sport commissioner, said: "Why put Women's Six Nations matches at 11.30 in the morning? It is important that broadcasters and sport governing bodies work together to give women's sport as much publicity as possible."

Cardiff Met student Alexandra Richards said she would like to see more men covering female sports.

FAW



### Changing Times

Cuts at The Times and The Sunday Times are expected as Rupert Murdoch's request for the papers to be able to pool editorial roles was sent to the government. The NUJ is now taking part in a consultation about News UK's attempt to override legal undertakings established in 1981, when he acquired the papers, to prevent the company from sharing resources across

the two publications. The Department of Culture, Media & Sport said the changes requested by News UK "would permit a greater sharing of resources ...including journalists between the two papers".

### Alamy rates

Intervention by the NUJ led to photographic agency Alamy to drop plans to reduce commission on pictures from 60 to 50 per

cent. Natasha Hirst, chair of the NUJ photographers' council, said: "Alamy is still ripping off photographers but the NUJ welcomes the partial company climb-down on commission rate cuts. The person who does the work should receive the majority of the income that is generated from their efforts."

### Press freedom

A Labour amendment

seeking extra protections for journalists in the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Bill was voted down during the report stage of the Bill in the House of Commons. The Bill would permit the government to allow foreign governments to apply for access to information stored in the UK and allow the authorities to access the content of journalists' electronic communications.



# Spotlight

## Could 2019 be a breakthrough year for news?



### Media expert Ian Burrell looks at the year ahead

**This may be the year when Google and Facebook finally pay their way: when they bow to pressure from parliamentary committees and government inquiries and submit to regulation and pay “tech tax” to the news industry from which it has sucked its life blood.**

It could be the time when the British press redefines its public image and enters a new era, now those three defining and divisive figures of old Fleet Street – Rupert Murdoch, Paul Dacre and Richard Desmond – have departed centre stage.

Will it be the moment when the drama of post-Brexit Britain fuels a new hunger for trusted news that delivers unprecedented revenues to publishers, in the form of subscriptions, membership fees, reader donations and philanthropic

pledges? It is certainly the year when the fifth-generation of mobile networks (5G) arrives in the West Midlands for testing – a platform for fresh technological innovation that could excite news audiences and allow a type of journalism that is more ambitious but inexpensive.

Those are my hopes. But the dark reality of 2019 is that it will be a year of struggle for journalists, particularly in a regional press that increasingly relies on free websites and digital advertising income that fail to pick up revenue.

Editors and publishers will arrive in Glasgow for the 71st World News Media Congress in June to find one of the world’s most-established news cultures in a parlous condition. Delegates are committed to “taking action to ensure a sustainable news industry”. They could take a look at the Aberdeen Press & Journal which, with sales of 45,935, is Britain’s best-selling local daily. Its staff of 65 demonstrate the enduring value of comprehensive local reporting in keeping

a community engaged with the news.

However, the government-initiated review into the future of high-quality journalism, led by Dame Frances Cairncross, has found that a quarter of regional and local newspapers (300 titles) have closed in a decade, and the number of frontline journalists has fallen accordingly, from 23,000 to 17,000. Dame Frances will be under pressure to find new ways to fund public interest journalism, but there is no quick fix when only 13 per cent of people read a local paper, in print and online.

The tech tax, which Jeremy Corbyn favours, is beginning to win fans. MPs from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport select committee are expected to castigate Facebook for its role in the dissemination of falsehood and propaganda and demand it does better than its £4.5m fund for 80 local journalists that it unveiled last November. Google will be told to do more than its present tech training programme of 30,000 journalists at Google News Lab and funding of the UK-wide Bureau Local network of 450 regional data journalists.

Even with such subsidies, more titles will close.

In the national press, prospects for 2019 depend on a title’s ability to charge for online content and for quality titles the outlook is less bleak. The Times and The Sunday Times, which introduced a digital paywall in 2010, has built a subscriber base of 500,000, generating profits of £9.6m last year. Its challenge this year will be to attract new young readers when its web traffic is the lowest in its sector.

The Financial Times and Economist are also thriving behind a paywall. Both The Telegraph and the Independent are operating metered paywalls and pushing subscription offers.

The Guardian's readers are willing to pay (1 million have contributed although its website is free) but it will narrowly miss its target to break even this year. The paper is suffering from its premature retreat from print (still a major component of its income) and must persuade supporters that one-off donations may not sustain its journalism in perpetuity. Nonetheless, the paper's financial Houdini act, after previous annual losses of £69m, shows it is on the right side of a divide between titles that generate reader revenue online and those that can't.

Digital ad revenues will grow as publishers pool resources and exploit technology to offer better-targeted programmatic advertising in trusted contexts. But it won't be enough to stave off job losses at organisations that are over-reliant on advertising.

Daily Mail publisher, DMGT, saw shares fall 10 per cent in November when its annual results showed a 16 per cent drop in profits. The paper – which suffered a 5 per cent fall in circulation revenue – risks a reader backlash in 2019 after new editor, Geordie Greig, (who replaced Dacre in 2018) diluted its editorial position to champion Theresa May's soft Brexit plan.

News Group Newspapers, publisher of The Sun titles, lost £91.2m in the year to July and its ambitions are being hampered by huge legal costs related to the long-running phone hacking scandal.

Not for 50 years has Rupert Murdoch had such little influence over UK media as he will have in 2019 following his departure from Sky after its acquisition by Comcast.

For the BBC, 2019 could be especially bruising. No matter how Brexit plays out, I cannot see how its reputation for impartiality can escape further damage from such a polarising issue. On top of that, it needs to make major budget cuts this year while under attack from every sector in which it used to dominate. It also needs to extricate itself from paying out many millions from its budget to pay for the TV licences of over-75s

BBC radio faces increased competition

from wealthy commercial rivals which have poached the star BBC presenters Chris Evans and Eddie Mair.

In video, it is braced for the streaming wars that will proliferate during 2019 and drive up the price of production talent. Netflix, having overtaken Sky in subscriptions, is planning a major UK push, but rival services from Disney, Apple and Warner will launch this year. British public broadcasters should heed Ofcom's advice and create a joint streaming service but, given the lack of progress since this was mooted in 2007, there's little hope of seeing it this year.

On the global news front, the BBC faces increasing state-sponsored competition, notably from China's government-funded China Global Television Network, which begins an ambitious European service this year from studios in London.

There is even a challenge from the former BBC Director of News, James Harding, who will in April launch Tortoise, a platform for "slow news". Tortoise, which aims for 40,000 members and has raised £500,000 in crowdfunding, promises to ignore breaking news and to cover about four stories in depth each day, choosing topics at open news conferences called "Thinkins".

If it works, it could be the first British digital native news outlet of genuine scale, but it will serve informed audiences that already pay for periodicals or news subscriptions, and won't answer the crisis at the base of journalism's pyramid.

Another new platform that will roll out in 2019 is News Over Audio (Noa), an audio journalism service founded by two young Irishmen, Gareth Hickey and Shane Ennis. It uses professional narrators to voice articles from a range of titles, including The Economist, The Independent and the Financial Times. It arrived on Amazon's voice-activated Alexa platform at Christmas and is being extended to Google Assistant and in-car entertainment systems.

So 2019 will be a time of fresh ideas and innovation. Like the original renaissance it will also be brutal and bloody.

## BuzzFlop?

**The year started with dire tidings for the digital sector as BuzzFeed said it was cutting global headcount by 15 per cent – with 17 editorial jobs to go in London. This followed on the heels of news that 800 jobs will be lost at HuffPost, Yahoo and AOL, all owned by telecoms giant Verizon.**

These purely digital players had planned to engage young readers in news and to see off the legacy publishers of the dead-trees era. Investors believed the hype and rushed to fund what they thought was the future. Vice dropped its snarky tone to embrace serious journalism. BuzzFeed, previously known for irreverent 'listicles' aimed at millennials, began spending on investigative reporting and hired former Guardian deputy editor Janine Gibson to run its ambitious UK newsroom; she left the company last month.

The latest cuts come after pre-tax losses of £1.9m on turnover of £33.4m in 2017. The company's problems seem to run deep; it laid off 100 employees last year and there is talk of damage-limiting mergers with other digital outlets.

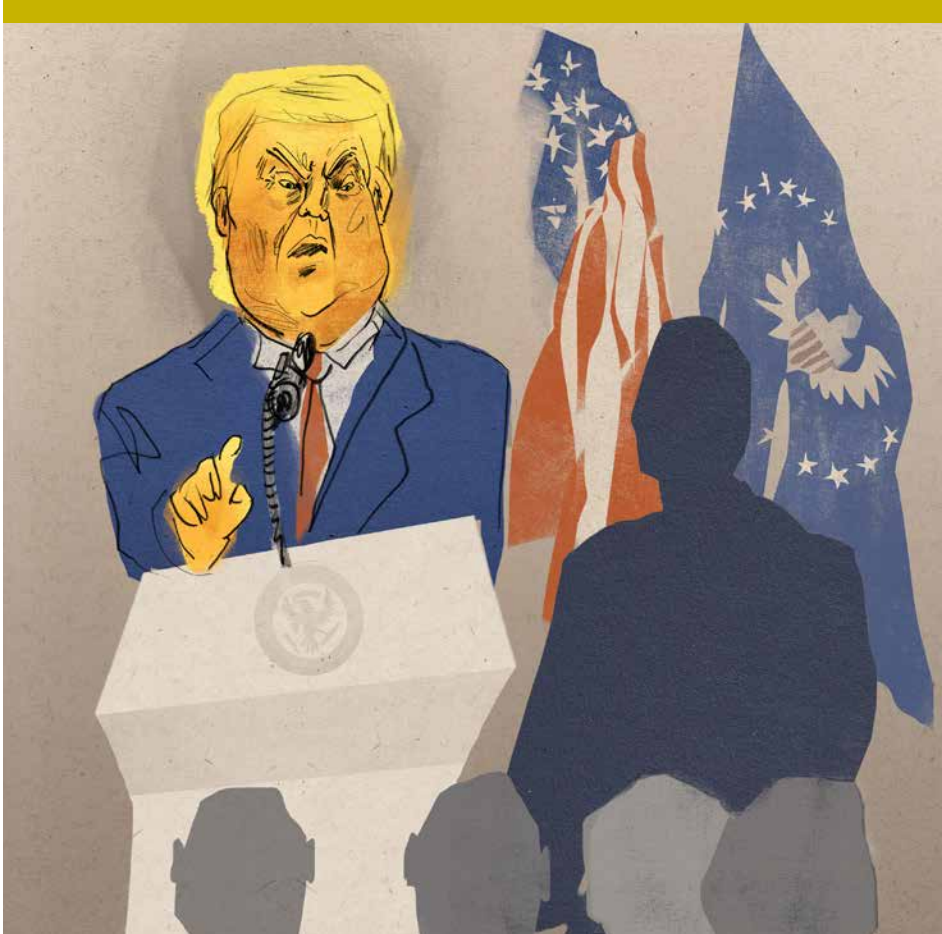
BuzzFeed's downfall was its over-reliance on Facebook for traffic and revenue. After being fingered as the source of fake news, Mark Zuckerberg diverted his platform's all-powerful algorithm away from news, making it far harder for publishers to distribute content. According to eMarketer, the already vast digital advertising revenues made by Facebook and Google will grow by 75 per cent between 2017 and 2020. The rest will get crumbs.

# BuzzFeed

# International

## Time to make a stand

Mark Henson



### 2018 proved a bloody year for journalism, says Frances Rafferty

**“This year we are recognising four journalists and one news organisation who have paid a terrible price to seize the challenge of this moment,” said Time editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal as he announced his magazine’s choice of Person of the Year for 2018.**

Time ran four covers: of Jamal Khashoggi, the Washington Post writer tortured and murdered in the Saudi Arabian embassy in Istanbul, reportedly at the behest of Saudi crown prince

Mohammed bin Salman; Maria Ressa, editor of Rappler, the Philippine news website known for its critical coverage of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte; Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, the Reuters reporters jailed in Myanmar for their reporting on the massacre of Rohingya Muslims; and journalists of The Capital Gazette, the Maryland newspaper killed by a gunman, Jarrod Ramos.

Journalists prefer not to be part of the story, but Time wanted to mark a year in which, according to human rights group Article 19, journalism had become more dangerous than at any point in the past decade. Its report said hostility towards the media had become normalised, fuelled by an increase in “strongman”

populist leaders echoing the language of Donald Trump who called journalists the enemy of the people and praised Greg Gianforte, the Montana congress member when he body slammed a Guardian reporter.

Trump’s removal of Jim Acosta’s White House press pass prompted the NUJ’s Brighton branch to make the CNN correspondent an honorary member. Branch secretary, Brian Williams, said: “What sort of president thinks it’s okay to call a correspondent a ‘rude, terrible person’ simply because he’s been asked a difficult question?”

The other “strongmen” mentioned were Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Hungary’s Viktor Orbán who have served up more chilling and deadly responses to journalists who cross them. The NUJ has “adopted” Ayşe Düzkan, of Disk-Is, a Turkish sister union, who with four other journalists were sent to Bakırköy prison this week.

The other great threats to journalists have been the proliferation of legislation on surveillance, security and data rights that have undermined the rights of those gathering news. The NUJ is supporting Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney, whose film investigated the UVF massacre in Loughinisland, Co Down, in 1994. They are on bail until March after being arrested and having materials confiscated at raids on their homes.

The International Federation of Journalists’ (IFJ) “killing list” for 2018 recorded 94 deaths among media workers. The NUJ works with the IFJ to publicise and lobby against threats to and violations of press freedom. Branches, such as Nottingham, called on their local MP to raise the issue of the deaths of four journalists: Viktoria Marinova in Bulgaria, Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta, Kim Wall in Denmark and Ján Kuciak in Slovakia. The Derry North West Ireland branch has long campaigned for the jailed Saudi blogger, Raif Badawi.

# News Update

## Bob Norris: one of the NUJ's legends

**It was at the last NEC meeting that Michelle Stanistreet broke the sad news of the death of Bob Norris, the union's former assistant general secretary and member of honour who had died the previous evening, aged 78.**

She then led the tributes to Bob, who she described as "one of our NUJ legends who, throughout his life-long membership, played an enormous role both as an activist and as an official during his service as assistant general secretary of the NUJ".

Bob served the NUJ at all levels of the union. In 1965, aged 25, he became the union's youngest NEC member and later went on to work as a full-time industrial official in a range of sectors, particularly books. The union's book branch was quick to pass a motion reading: "All book branch activists liked him immensely and found him great company at meetings and conferences, as well as down the pub afterwards."

The pub. It was a word that cropped up in many of the hundreds of tributes that flooded into the union – perhaps no surprise given Bob was also a committed activist in the Campaign for Real Ale. He was praised as a "journalist of rare



NUJ marriage: Pauline and Bob Norris

passion and vision", for his "wise advice on difficult matters involving NUJ rules and disciplinary complaints" and for the many personal cases he resolved, but it was his sense of humour and fun that shone through all the reminiscences, particularly at the pub or the bar at DM.

"A lovely man who always made delegate meetings less boring and made a massive contribution to the union," said former deputy general secretary of the NUJ, Charlie Harkness

At a celebration of his life at the Calthorpe Arms in Gray's Inn Road, where jugs of real ale were shared, there was an open mic and the order: "No long

speeches; one anecdote per person please". It was notable how many of these anecdotes referred to his love of beer, banter and good company.

Bob was passionate about education and training and believed education was vital for the promotion of journalistic diversity.

He served on the board of the National Council for the Training of Journalists for 39 years, stepping down in November 2006. He supported the Writers in Prison initiative and was a relentless campaigner for media freedom.

Bob's wife, Pauline, also an NUJ member of honour, is well-known for her pivotal role as chair of the standing orders committee, but as a couple they were the leading lights at the cabaret during DM. "Theirs was an NUJ marriage and so many of us enjoyed their friendship as part of a wide and colourful extended clan," said NUJ assistant secretary Séamus Dooley.

Michelle told the NEC of Bob's final contribution to the union he was so committed to – in an act of wonderful generosity he had left a legacy of £10,000 to the George Viner Memorial Fund which provides bursaries to black and Asian journalism students to help finance their studies, and marks Bob's commitment to both training and diversity in journalism.

Bob's legacy will be marked at the next annual celebration of the George Viner Fund.

### Bread and Roses chapel bar

The NUJ has a new partnership with the Workers Beer Company, one of the main operators of festival bars in the UK and Ireland, owned by Battersea and Wandsworth Trade Union Council. The bar is on



the ground floor of the NUJ's London HQ and will have a range of pop-up kitchens providing food. The Chapel

Playhouse, in the basement, will be London's newest fringe theatre. A full programme of events includes comedy, cabaret and quiz nights. There is a discount for NUJ members on drink, food and tickets. Find out more and how to book your tickets at <https://www.thechapelkingscross.co.uk/>