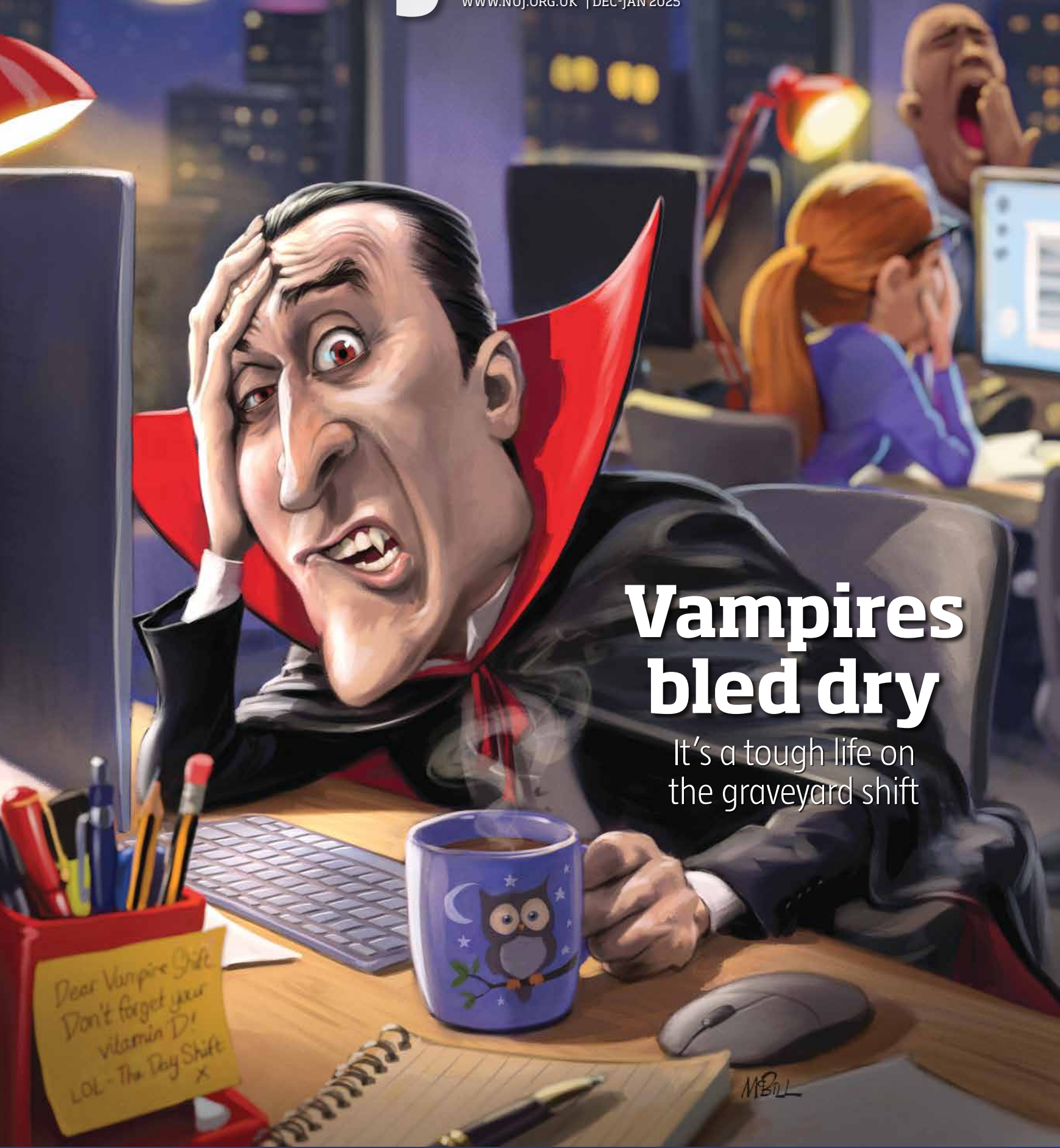


# theJournalist

WWW.NUJ.ORG.UK | DEC-JAN 2025



## Vampires bled dry

It's a tough life on the graveyard shift

MBL

# Contents



**N**ow the days are much shorter, it's fitting to spare a thought for night workers. They work when other people are relaxing to ensure that our 24-hour news cycle keeps rolling. Our cover feature by Sean Meleady looks at the toll that takes on many aspects of health.

Mind you, working the day shift isn't always the most attractive option especially if your newsdesk or contacts call you at all times meaning that you never switch off. Alan Jones, PA's redoubtable industrial correspondent, asks if there is any hope on the horizon with the Government's commitment to look at the right to switch off from work.

Switching off can also be difficult if a major story breaks in your patch. In our new series on working in regional media, Ruth Addicott talks to the people on the ground when a national story hits. We start with the Salisbury poisonings.

We also look at how public speaking can boost your career and celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Freedom of Information Act. Brought in by Tony Blair, who later described himself as a nincompoop for doing so, it's enabled some great stories to be unearthed.

I hope you find some time this holiday season to switch off and have a Happy Christmas and New Year.

*Christie*

**Christine Buckley**  
Editor  
[@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)



**Editor**  
journalist@nuj.org.uk  
**Design**  
Surgerycreations.com  
info@surgerycreations.com

**Advertising**  
Square7media  
Tel: 020 3832 2879  
hello@square7media.co.uk

**Print**  
Warners  
www.warners.co.uk

**Distribution**  
GB Mail  
www.gb-mail.co.uk

**NUJ**  
72 Acton Street  
London WC1X 9NB  
info@nuj.org.uk  
www.nuj.org.uk  
Tel: 020 7843 3700

**Manchester office**  
nujmanchester@nuj.org.uk

**Glasgow office**  
nujscotland@nuj.org.uk

**Dublin office**  
info@nuj.ie

ISSN: 0022-5541



**Cover**  
Howard McWilliam

## Main feature

**18 Graveyard shift takes its toll**  
Health risks of incessant nightwork

## News

**3 Staff strike over Observer sale**

Tortoise talks spark protests

**4 Keeping AI under control**

Ideas shared at NUJ summit

**5 Yet more job cuts at the BBC**

130 roles to go in news department

**6 'Bloodiest period in journalism'**

138 colleagues die in Middle East

## Features

**7 Get your hands off my pictures!**  
Stolen photos used for fake images

**10 Ministers urged to strengthen FOI**  
Act still vital for in-depth reporting

**12 How values can affect journalism**  
And how they impact society

**18 Get up on your hind legs!**  
Public speaking raises your profile

## Regulars

**24 Obituaries**

**27 And finally...**

## On media

The best way forward for The Observer

Page 09



## On our patch

Covering the Salisbury poisonings

Page 20

## Arts

Paul Foot held power to account

Page 22



Access all the latest NUJ news and views by scanning the QR code here or by visiting

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





# Strike over plans to sell The Observer

**JOURNALISTS** at The Guardian and The Observer went on strike for the first time in 53 years to try to halt the sale of The Observer, the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, to the loss-making online news operation Tortoise.

As The Journalist went to press, journalists were staging the first two-day walkout with a second one planned in mid-December. The action followed a 93 per cent vote in favour of strike action at the Guardian Media Group.

The proposed sale has generated huge protests from journalists and prominent figures in the arts who fear for the future of The Observer under Tortoise's ownership. Tortoise, founded by former Times editor and former head of BBC news



MARK THOMAS

James Harding, has amassed mounting losses since it started in 2018. Its last published accounts showed a cumulative loss of £16.3 million to the end of 2022. The losses in 2022 alone were £4.6 million, a 45 per cent increase on the previous year. Tortoise began

producing long form journalism online but two years ago switched to focus on podcasts and audio.

Just before the strike a series of former editors added their weight to the protests over plans by the Scott Trust which owns the Guardian Media Group.

Paul Webster, Observer editor until November when he left, wrote to the Scott Trust with fellow former Observer editors Roger Alton, John Mulholland, Will Hutton, Jonathan Fenby and former Guardian and Observer editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger.

In October more than 70 leading cultural figures including actors Ralph Fiennes, Toby Young, playwright Tom Stoppard, musician Jarvis Cocker and broadcaster and campaigner Carole Voderman wrote an open letter to the Scott Trust warning that The Observer would be put in jeopardy.

NUJ branches and chapels sent messages of solidarity to the striking journalists and picket lines were supported by union officials and high-profile figures including the author Michael Rosen and the artist Grayson Perry. Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary-elect, said: "Many are here showing solidarity and saying it's too important for a deal to be done behind closed doors and too important for wider public life.

## Laura is new general secretary

**LAURA DAVISON**, a seasoned NUJ official, is to be the union's new general secretary after members elected her to the role in a ballot that closed in October.

Laura won 1976 votes and the other candidate Natasha Hirst, the union's president

polled 644. The turnout among the 21,410 eligible NUJ members was 12.3 per cent.

Laura, who was previously a journalist at the BBC, has been a full-time official of the union since 2007. She was NUJ national organiser for

newspapers and news agencies for 10 years - during which time she led and was part of negotiations at The Financial Times, The Guardian, Reach, National World, Newsquest, Thomson Reuters and many others - until this summer when she took over

the broadcasting brief.

She said: "At a critical time for the organised voice of working journalists to be heard, I want us to grow and strengthen our union, maximising new opportunities created by legislative change and our legal, policy and industrial work. Every one of us has the

power to encourage and support others to get involved and be part of something bigger than themselves.

"I'm looking forward to getting stuck in, working with everyone who contributes to the success of the NUJ and meeting more of our brilliant reps, members and activists over the coming months."

## Members branch out in North Yorkshire

**A NEW** branch of the union has been formed to represent members in York and North Yorkshire.

The branch will hold regular online meetings so journalists in every part of the county can participate. It also plans a series of socials to bring everyone together in person.

Members in North Yorkshire had been kept connected to the union via the neighbouring Leeds and West Yorkshire branch after the old York and Scarborough branches fell dormant.

Following a launch meeting held at the Minster Inn in York in October, they now have their own dedicated branch again.

Richard Edwards and Gemma Dillon, branch co-chairs of the resurrected branch, said: "There was real energy and a cracking mix of members at that historic first meeting - held,

fittingly, in the same venue used by the old York branch.

"This is an exciting time - we're growing trade unionism - please spread the word, recruit and build this new branch into an NUJ powerhouse."

Those present for the launch meeting included journalists working for local broadcasters, national and local press and in PR, as well as journalism students.

They were joined by regional national executive member Georgina Morris, who said:

"It's been fantastic to see such an enthusiastic response to the idea of reviving the branch and to have had such a range of journalists - including from the PR and comms sector - join us for the first meeting."

### Missing your magazine?

A technical problem has led to some people not receiving the magazine in print or digitally, despite having opted to do so. This has now been fixed. If you or someone you know has been affected, please email [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk) and we can restore your preferences.

# Reps look at AI and share ideas and strategies at national summit

**ARTIFICIAL** intelligence and its use in journalism were among the key issues discussed at a national summit held by NUJ representatives in newspapers and agencies last month.

The meeting in Birmingham also examined the possible opportunities and threats posed by technologies. The NUJ wants strengthened regulatory frameworks to ensure AI developers are held to account for copyright breaches when training models. The union has also stressed the need for transparency by publishers regarding content generated by AI so audiences are informed and public confidence and trust in journalism do not diminish.

GMB reps also spoke at the summit to give an update on the unionisation campaign at the Amazon fulfilment centre in Coventry.

NUJ successes on recognition and pay were noted.

Steve Bird, chair of the NUJ chapel at the Financial Times and chair of the summit, said: "The successful union recognition campaign at PA and industrial action at Springer formed the backdrop to an inspiring and enlightening meeting of NUJ reps in Birmingham last week.

"Activists from around the UK shared their knowledge of chapel building and pay campaigns and there was a really engaged discussion around how members can win a decent pay award and on the challenges, worries (and some opportunities) posed by the increased use of AI in the media industry.



"Speakers from Reach, Newsquest PA, the FT and The Guardian (among other companies) joined LDRs in four sessions, including a very inspiring lunchtime meeting with rank-and-file activists from the GMB unionisation campaign at the huge Amazon fulfilment centre in Coventry and two full-time officials from the GMB.

"The meeting sent its solidarity and support to reps braving the hostility at Amazon and to NUJ members at The Guardian who are balloting for action over the planned takeover of The Observer.

"I left the event feeling proud of the quality and commitment of our union reps and I hope that we can increase attendance from across the UK and Ireland in future."



**There was a really engaged discussion around how members can win a decent pay award**

**Steve Bird**  
Chapel chair,  
Financial Times

## Online safety tracker ready to use

**THE UNION** is encouraging journalists to use an online reporting tool capturing incidents of harassment, abuse and lawfare targeted at journalists.

The Journalists' Safety Tracker enables both freelance and staff journalists in the UK and Ireland to share experiences confidentially. It was launched

against a backdrop of growing online and in-person threats against journalists.

The NUJ has, through its seat on the National Committee for the

Safety of Journalists, engaged with ministers and other key stakeholders on action necessary to improve journalists' safety.

It welcomed funding contributed by the Department for Culture Media and Sport to support the tracker's creation.

## Intimidation of reporters condemned in N Ireland

**THE NORTHERN IRELAND** conference of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions unanimously passed an NUJ motion condemning the intimidation of journalists.

Anton McCabe, a member of the NUJ's national executive, proposed the motion, which was seconded by Alice Lemon from Equity. He stressed that no worker should be intimidated for doing their job.

He told delegates: "This is not about journalists being special – this is because there is an organised campaign against journalists that is about depriving you of the right to know.

"It is part of the rise of the far right. During the summer, two of our members were attacked while covering the far right."

Amanda Ferguson was attacked in August, on the day the far right rampaged through South Belfast. Kevin Scott was attacked in the Woodvale when covering attacks on immigrants' homes.

He continued: "In the south, our members are also suffering and there is a particularly nasty concentration on women journalists.

"There are not just physical attacks – there is trolling that is particularly targeted at women journalists and it has a serious effect on mental health."

"Threats here are part of an international trend, with the rise of the far right – they are creating a climate where journalists are being fingered. We have Donald Trump calling us

'fake news' and making so-called jokes about shooting journalists.

"Journalism is important for society; it exposes the far right and counters racist lies with facts. Skilled and well-resourced journalism is needed to do that – it is a public service."



KEVIN COOPER PHOTOLINE

# BBC news and current affairs hit by yet another wave of job cuts

**THE BBC** is cutting more jobs, with a net reduction of 130 roles in its news and current affairs department. The latest moves include the end of interview programme Hardtalk, tech show Click and the Asian Network's bespoke news service.

The closures are part of a broader BBC plan to cut 500 jobs across the corporation by March 2026 in order to save £700 million annually relative to 2022.

The latest plans involve the loss of 185 positions in BBC news and current affairs teams, with 55 roles created.

The NUJ has warned of long-term harm to the BBC without urgent investment, following its announcement of fresh cuts to news and current affairs programming.

In addition, millions of UK radio listeners will now get their overnight news from the BBC World Service, including those listening to 5 Live, Radio 2 and the BBC's 39 local radio stations.

The NUJ is concerned that important domestic stories will be lost in a much wider, global agenda. These UK-based bulletins have been part of the BBC's radio service for well over 40 years and are now being scrapped for a minimal saving of only 2.5 posts.

Further changes include the adoption of a Follow the Sun strategy for some online news roles, where posts in Sydney will be opened to boost output for UK mornings – but most night



JESS HURD

shifts in the London newsroom will be closed as a result.

No details on plans for the World Service have been shared by the BBC as it awaits information from the government on what funding it will receive as part of next year's budget.

The NUJ has repeated its call to Lisa Nandy, secretary of state for culture, media and sport, to commit to urgent and suitable funding of the BBC that allows it to thrive in its role as a public service broadcaster without the frequent downscaling the corporation has to embark on, which directly impacts trusted journalism.



**The UK bulletins have been part of the BBC's radio service for well over 40 years and are being scrapped**

## Orwell/NUJ awards for young journalists

**YOUNG** journalists who are studying or starting their careers are invited to enter The Orwell Society/NUJ Young Journalists Award 2025.

There are cash prizes for winners and runners-up in

two categories of columns and reviews.

They will also get membership of the NUJ and The Orwell Society.

Entering the competition involves completing two written tasks.

The awards mark the work of George Orwell who was a journalist (and an NUJ member) as well as a leading novelist.

You are eligible to enter if you are a student journalist or employed or self-

employed as a journalist.

Your date of birth must fall in or after 1995 and you must be a full-time UK resident. Entries are open until midnight March 24.

To enter go to [orwellsociety.com](http://orwellsociety.com)



## Pay deal and a full recognition agreed at PA Media

**THE UNION** has finalised the detail of its recognition agreement with PA Media. This follows a decision by the central arbitration committee to grant automatic recognition earlier this year.

The historic achievement followed years of extensive campaigning by journalists committed to achieving collective bargaining rights at the company.

A pay deal has also been accepted by PA journalists

following a period of consultation. The agreement will also mean an active approach will be taken to tackling entrenched members' concerns on terms and conditions.

Emily Pennink and Jonathan Brady, NUJ PA chapel co-chairs, said: "We are delighted to have secured a pay deal and finalised a house agreement with the PA management in the same week.



**pa media**

"Going into collective bargaining negotiations hot on the heels of securing union recognition at PA in the

summer, we knew we had our work cut out.

"But we had a clear mandate from members to address their top priorities – low pay, lack of transparency and pay stagnation.

"Many of them told us of the profound effect the cost-of-living crisis was having on their everyday lives, and we wanted to convey to management the real-world consequences of rising inflation and the urgent need for action.

"We were pleased that talks were positive, and the PA management listened to the concerns of members and worked with us to find an affordable package that had a chance of success when put to a vote.

"The result, which was overwhelmingly approved by members of the chapel, is a win for us but also a win for the company which we believe will be strengthened as a result."



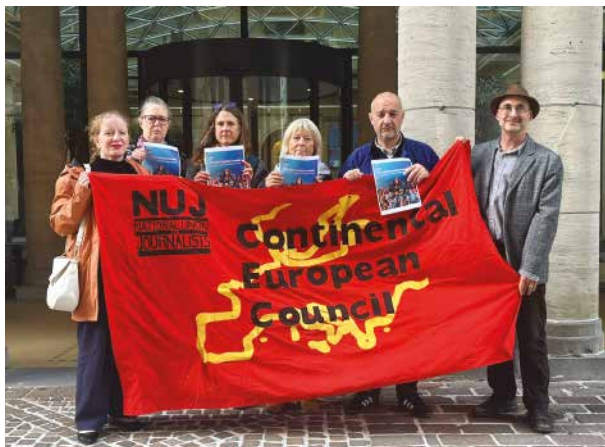
# Standing with Gaza journalists

**MEMBERS** of the Brussels NUJ branch joined the general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Anthony Bellanger, to support the IFJ’s day of action and Stand Up for Palestinian Journalists on October 7 – one year since the war started in Gaza.

In a statement, the IFJ described the past 12 months as “the bloodiest period in the history of journalism – at least 138 journalists dead in Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Syria during 12 months of conflict.” It highlighted “the extraordinary solidarity delivered by its affiliates and individuals across the world to the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate”.

According to the syndicate, Israel has wrecked 21 local radio stations, 15 local and international news agencies, 15 TV stations, six local newspapers and three broadcasting towers.

It said: “For a year, only local journalists have been able to report the devastation of Gaza, because of the Israeli government’s policies of terrorising and killing journalists and its ban on foreign media. For months, the IFJ has had evidence that the Israeli army has deliberately targeted journalists, and some of these cases are currently the subject of a complaint file before the International Criminal Court (ICC). On May 20 2024, the ICC prosecutor, Karim Khan, called for arrest warrants for Israeli and



Anthony Bellanger (International Federation of Journalists general secretary (second from right) with Brussels NUJ members Ruth Ivory, Cailin Mackenzie (branch vice-chair), Philippa Nuttall, Kate Holman and Arthur Neslen

Hamas leaders – including the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his then defence minister, Yoav Gallant – on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes.”

IFJ



**Only local journalists can report on Gaza because of the Israeli policies of terrorising journalists and the ban on foreign media**

**Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate**

## Nottingham welcomes press win

**THE NUJ’S** Nottingham branch has welcomed the Independent Press Standards Organisation’s (IPSO’s) decision not to uphold a complaint against the Nottingham Post, filed by the police. In an open letter to

Natalie Fahy, editor of the Nottingham Post, it said: “We were disturbed to learn in February of Nottinghamshire Police’s attempt to use a non-disclosure briefing to prevent reporting of information vital

to the public’s understanding both of the case itself and, crucially, the many interactions between Valdo Calocane, the police and local mental health services in the months and years prior to the attacks.

“Unequivocally, a fact backed up by IPSO’s ruling, it was in the interest of the people of Nottingham and the grief-stricken families of the victims of the Nottingham attacks to make that information known. It is

to your credit that you stuck to this public interest duty. “The ruling is also a victory for freedom of the press, a principle at the very core of the NUJ. Journalists serve vital functions, not least in holding public servants, politicians and powerful people to account.”

## Steve Bell



# Hands off my pictures

**Andrew Wiard** on a move to stop photos being stolen to create realistic fake images



**M**ore frequently than ever before, authentic news photographs are being used to create fake news pictures. They are stolen – mainly by online scraping – and ingested into generative AI machines that churn out ever more credible photorealistic fakes.

This picture of a distressed little girl and her dog, ostensibly fleeing Hurricane Helene, is a total fake, widely distributed across social media.

There has been little we photographers could do to stop this – until now. The International Press Telecommunications Council (IPTC), which sets the standards for photographic metadata, has introduced a ‘data mining’ field, which we can use to prohibit theft of data (pictures to you and me).

This has already been incorporated by Camerabits into their PhotoMechanic (PM) software, and others will surely follow suit.

PM is the go-to software so many professionals use for editing and captioning. It applies my essential IPTC data to all my photographs as they enter my computer and before I even see them on the screen.

These include my copyright and contact details and now the data mining field you see here, directly under the field I use to assert the authenticity of my work. This can be set to allowed (no way!) or to one of a range of prohibitions; mine declares ‘Prohibited except for search engine indexing’.

It can be read by all IPTC-compliant software: No picture will leave my hands without it. It means I don’t need one of those registries for excluding my work from generative AI and I don’t

need the tiresome opt-out procedures of corporate data thieves.

I’m not opting out and I’m not opting in. I don’t need collective licensing schemes here because I’m not licensing – I’m prohibiting.

Now I’ve told the world all it needs to know, it’s all right there in the pictures themselves – hands off! This is simple, effective, effortless and automatic and I will never have to think about it again.

But I – we – will still have to deal with those who steal our work regardless.

The mere act of scraping involves copying which is in breach of copyright law, so some might say “Why not just take them to court?” This is because there are exceptions to copyright and, while most are fairly innocuous, that’s not the case with the text and data mining (TDM). This was inserted a decade ago into the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. While it permits TDM ‘for the sole purpose of research for a non-commercial purpose’, it leaves the door wide open to coach-and-horses amendments, which the last government tried to introduce, extending TDM to just about all and every purpose. After vociferous protest, this was blocked in 2023 – for now.

Today, Google is having another go, urging the UK to allow TDM “to catch up with other markets such as the US, Singapore and EU by adopting the right

**//**  
**Just how creating fake news increases UK GDP is beyond me and, besides, what price public trust in press photography?**



legal framework for TDM. To ensure the UK can be a competitive place to develop and train AI models in the future, they should enable TDM for both commercial and research purposes”.

In other words, anything goes. It’s open season on all we create. Sacrificed on the alter of the great god ‘Innovation’.

Just how creating fake news increases UK GDP is beyond me and, besides, what price public trust in press photography?

We must not allow our work to be abused in this way. We must not be complicit in any way, such as accepting derisory offers of payment.

The NUJ, alongside other representative organisations, will lobby hard to protect our intellectual property.

So, does our Labour government respect the rights of creators? Will Labour see Google off? Let’s see. If all else fails, we will need an exception to an exception.

A recent EU directive permits TDM provided the use of the works “has not been expressly reserved by their rightholders in an appropriate manner, such as machine-readable means in the case of content made publicly available online”. That’s exactly what the new IPTC field does. It’s machine readable, so no thieving corporation can plead ignorance. If they’ve got a machine to scrape our pictures, they’ve got a machine to read this too.

We are no longer powerless. Every news photograph could and should now carry the data mining prohibited warning. This is how every individual photographer can join the collective fight. Whatever can now be achieved will ultimately depend on each and every one of us saying, ‘No!’

**Response, page 25**





# Goodbye 24/7?

A right to switch off from work would have little effect on journalists, says **Alan Jones**



**H**ow will government consideration for the right to disconnect from work affect journalists?

Will it stop news editors contacting staff at all hours, such as when the nationals start dropping late in the evening?

Will it halt the endless emails from PRs checking a press release has arrived and will be written up?

Will the government's own press officers send out information or call journalists only during office hours?

The answer to all those questions is almost certainly no.

Mobile phones, emails, WhatsApp and X have made it almost impossible to switch off or not be contacted.

Nonetheless, a new right, which was referred to in the Employment Bill, might make journalists and PRs start to think more about working hours and is definitely a good idea.

As reporters, we are programmed to write stories at any time of the day, especially if it's breaking news.

For more than two years, I've covered the wave of strikes involving workers ranging from nurses and doctors to barristers – and journalists. With so few national journalists covering unions (fairly), I've been passionate about trying to explain why workers have been taking industrial action to counter some of the many negative articles and comments that appear in sections of our press.

That has meant speaking to union officials and press officers at all times of the day and at weekends. I'm not

going to ignore a call from the RMT's Mick Lynch explaining why more rail strikes have been called.

"Sorry Mick, I clocked off at 5pm so I'll get back to you tomorrow," is something I wouldn't dream of saying.

So, while I've been keen to report on the strikes and other union stories, I am now owed scores of days off.

A colleague said we live for breaking news and the thrill of hearing our stories read out on the radio or TV – and that doesn't work around a 9-5 pattern.

"The best we can hope for is a flexible employer who recognises the work we often do outside work hours and rewards us with understanding and flexibility on the days when that isn't necessary," she said.

But what if extra work isn't recognised and we're just expected to write and follow up stories in the crazy 24-hour news world we work in?

The right not to be contacted outside office hours is in place in some European countries. The Autonomy think tank has called for the government to copy legislation from France and Portugal that includes financial penalties for employers that choose to ignore the policy. In France, the highest court has fined employers for ignoring the legislation.

The government would also have to change the way it manages news. Whitehall departments routinely send out press releases after normal work hours and at weekends.

WhatsApp, text, email, socials and voicemails are among the multiple ways in which journalists are contacted, quite apart from listening to

**//**  
**The newsdesk doesn't have any concept of the hours we work so will just contact us as and when they need to**

the news or checking news websites.

In the autumn, I had a gruelling couple of weeks covering the TUC and Labour conferences, working 18-hour days but loving the thrill of being at the centre of the day's top news stories.

I asked several national newspaper journalists about how a new right to switch off would affect them and the replies were the same – it won't.

"The newsdesk doesn't have any concept of the hours we work so will just contact us as and when they need to," was one response.

Working for a 24/7 agency makes it especially difficult to switch off. I'm often asked by PRs what my deadline is, and my usual response is: "Every minute is a deadline – oops, I've just missed one."

My colleague told me she's become strict at organising her time as well as logging days off because, if you don't, it's easy to slip into working endlessly.

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health published a report recently warning the UK was witnessing an 'epidemic' of long working hours, with many workers putting in two or more additional hours without pay every week and checking work emails and messages at evenings, weekends and, sometimes, when on holiday.

Journalism is a hugely popular profession, with large numbers of youngsters taking up training. Hopefully, this will now include the importance of switching off.

**Alan Jones is PA Media's industrial correspondent**



# Reasons for Observer sale fail to convince



Disposal plan seen as shameful on many levels, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**T**he curious tale of the proposed sale of The Observer – the world’s oldest Sunday newspaper, founded in 1791 – to Tortoise Media, a loss-making online outlet now largely devoted to podcasts, gets curiously and curiously.

At the outset and at a superficial glance, the announcement by the Guardian Media Group (GMG) that it was in exclusive talks for a disposal to the slow news group created by James Harding, former editor of The Times and head of news at the BBC, seemed plausible, including to me.

The Observer, an apparently ill-loved stepchild of the Guardian, was, the daily claimed, heading for losses in the next few years and a new life as the mainstream, print arm of the supposedly trendy Tortoise would make a strategic sort of sense.

With Harding claiming to have £25 million to invest in the new venture over the next five years, it looked as if The Guardian would be able to rid itself of what management saw as a potential ‘problem’ and the title would find a better home. A much needed, forward-looking new hub of liberal journalism in the UK would be created and everybody would be happy.

Such a theory was probably the high point for the project as GMG and the Scott Trust, which control both titles, were bounced into a premature announcement by an impending leak. It has been downhill all the way since.

The disputatious journalists of The Observer and The Guardian are strongly against a deal and went on strike for 48 hours on December 4 - the 233rd anniversary of The Observer - as The Journalist went to press.

They have been picking away at the

justification for a sale and, in particular, whether such a disposal is even necessary in the first place.

While the profitable Observer might go into loss in the rather vague next few years, there is a lack of clarity given the entangled fortunes of the two papers.

Then there is the not so small matter of the group’s reserves of £1.3 billion, a treasure chest that could sustain modest losses for a very long time.

The most devastating attack came from Paul Webster following his retirement as Observer editor after six years, who said there had been a ‘shameful’ attempt to bundle the paper out of the door as quickly as possible.

The newly liberated Webster said the sale would ‘severely damage’ the reputation of the Scott Trust, threaten the future of the newspaper and be a ‘discreditable’ episode in the company’s history. The plan, Webster argued, was based on two false premises. One is the ‘preposterous’ claim that The Observer represented a serious threat to the future of The Guardian – when it contributed several million a year even after ‘added expenses’ were included.

The second is that Tortoise Media “a small, historically loss-making start-up is able to sustain The Observer as a serious competitor on Sunday news stands” with comprehensive news, foreign, sports, business and cultural coverage. Since its launch in 2018, Tortoise has lost more than £16 million and changed editorial direction several times.

The plot thickened when distinguished Observer journalist Carole Cadwalladr, who has a freelance contract with the paper, appeared on a Prospect magazine Media Confidential podcast with former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger, former FT editor

Lionel Barber and Harding. She said the proposed deal had come “like a bolt out of the blue” and there should be “a proper process” and all options for the paper’s future should be considered.

Rather shamefully for an organisation that prides itself on the importance of free speech, management told Cadwalladr to ‘desist’ from making public statements about the Tortoise deal, a call she ignored when denouncing plans to sell at an international conference on press freedom.

There is another matter worthy of consideration. As Harding conceded on Media Confidential, he is a long-standing friend of GMG chief executive Anna Batson, as reported by Private Eye.

Food critic Jay Rayner, who is leaving the Observer after 25 years to join the FT, is believed to have described the potential sale as “absurd and deranged”.

Another voice worth listening to in this fraught debate is that of Will Hutton, former editor of The Observer and still a columnist on the paper.

Hutton believes the best outcome would be for GMG and the Scott Trust to get behind the Sunday “and not let it wither on the vine as they have done”. If they are still determined to sell, then it should be in the form of a partnership, with GMG retaining a 20–30 per cent stake with perhaps an additional 5 per cent stake for Observer readers, he said.

There is little doubt the deal is now mired in controversy. Also, Sunday Times reports from inside Tortoise suggest it has a sometimes ‘chaotic’ atmosphere and may need The Observer more than vice versa.

Hutton is right. Get fully behind The Observer or, at the very least, don’t give such an historic publishing asset away for next to nothing – but, if you must, hold on to a chunky minority stake.



**One false premise is that a small, historically loss-making start-up is able to sustain The Observer as a serious competitor**

Despite numerous efforts to weaken it, the Freedom of Information Act remains invaluable to investigative journalism. **Ian Weinfass** reports

# A right to to know

**T**wenty-one years ago, if a journalist wanted a breakdown of which roads were the worst for parking fines or to find out the date which then prime minister Tony Blair ordered officials to exempt Formula One from the tobacco advertising ban, it was extremely difficult to find out.

After 1 January 2005, when the Freedom of Information Act came into force in the UK, getting such answers became as easy as sending an email. At least in theory.

The law gives the public a right of access to information held by public authorities and journalists have been among its biggest users.

"I think it can be a really great tool for those who are just starting out," says Jenna Corderoy, investigative reporter at openDemocracy. "I found it extremely helpful as a young journalist who wanted to get exclusive information without necessarily having the contacts in place and, as I've got older, I've used it more and more."

Corderoy says she was inspired by freelance journalist Heather Brooke, whose attempts to obtain information on MPs' expenses via the new act were knocked back. Similar requests from Sunday Times reporter Jon Ungeod-Thomas and the Sunday Telegraph's Ben Leapman were also refused, leading to legal action and the high court ruling that the information should be released.

//  
**Some people think it's about stats, but you can ask for documents and they can reveal extraordinary things**

|||||

Data on redactions that were due to be made was then leaked to the Daily Telegraph and became the MPs' expenses scandal of 2009.

George Greenwood, who carries out investigations for The Times, also points to the scandal as an example of public interest reporting that followed the introduction of what he calls a 'crucial tool'.

"I'd encourage more journalists to make use of the act... because of its unique ability to force the release of cast-iron documentation to support public interest reporting that even well placed human sources can't always provide," he says.

Tony Blair, whose government introduced the FOI Act, would later describe himself as a 'nincompoop' for having done so.

"Political parties love freedom of information in opposition but quickly lose enthusiasm in government," says Maurice Frankel, who has been director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information since 1987.

The group worked alongside opposition and backbench MPs after being founded in 1984, helping produce several private members' bills and critiques of draft legislation before the act came into force.

"I was always pessimistic about our chances of getting a freedom of information act in the UK or, if we got one, of it being any good. You can find countries with FOI acts that barely function: they are so slow or expensive that campaigners, journalists and the ordinary public don't make much use of them," he says.

"I was always prepared for us to have a pyrrhic victory, but I think the act itself is a lot better than it might have been.

"Luckily, we've avoided that and fought off several attempts to introduce charges that would be a serious problem."

The campaign has argued against numerous attempts to limit the scope and operation of the act, the first coming as early as October 2006.

Most recently, an FOI Commission was set up under David Cameron's Conservative administration in 2015 to consider charging fees for access to information and new exemptions for the government. It received universal condemnation across Fleet Street and, ultimately, little was changed.

Nonetheless, public bodies' compliance with the act has

## 'The more practice, the juicier the result'

**BEING** clear and specific about the information being sought is the most important thing when drafting an FOI.

"Some people can go in with really wide, vague requests. You have to play the game by

narrowing it down," says home affairs and security journalist Lizzie Dearden.

Some 23 exemptions can be used to decline requests, including those around national security, personal information and cost.

"Once you know all the loopholes, you can pre-empt them. For the use of force request, I said 'I'm not seeking any personal information', I accept redactions relating to operational procedures' etc."

OpenDemocracy's Jenna Corderoy notes: "The more practice you have with requests and challenging refusals, the juicier the information you can get."





declined, official statistics show. A recent report from openDemocracy highlights that in 2020 just 41 per cent of requests to government departments and agencies were answered in full, described at the time as “the lowest figure since recording began”. By 2023, this had dropped to 34 per cent.

In 2019, 93% of requests were responded to within the legal time limit of 20 days (which includes cases where the body gives itself a 20-day extension to consider the request in more detail) but, by 2023, this had fallen to just 81%.

“Delays have become really baked in,” says freelance home affairs and security journalist Lizzie Dearden. “I no longer expect anything to come back in 20 days. I can’t even remember the last time something came back within the deadline.”

Nevertheless, she remains a fan of the process. “Some people think it’s about stats, but you can ask for documents too, and they can reveal extraordinary things.”

While home affairs editor for The Independent, she worked alongside Liberty Investigates to obtain details from the Home Office of force used against asylum seekers who were put on the first attempted deportation flight to Rwanda in 2022.

“Requesting details about staff use of force yielded this horrific disclosure on how desperate people were – cutting their wrists and trying to kill themselves – things that we never would have known otherwise,” she says.

In 2020, openDemocracy’s Corderoy exposed the existence of the Cabinet Office’s Clearing House – an ‘Orwellian’ unit that vetted FOI requests, particularly those from journalists. It routinely blocked the release of information, and its interference added delays to the process of requests being answered.

Corderoy forced more information about the secretive unit into the public domain after taking the issue to a tribunal.

A government review of the Clearing House in 2022 recommended it be transformed into a centre of excellence giving advice on complying with the law, rather than deciding whether departments should approve requests.

**Tony Blair described himself as a ‘nincompoop’ after his government brought in the Freedom of Information Act**

In a submission to a parliamentary inquiry that preceded the review, Corderoy wrote: “The right to information is essential to a properly functioning democracy. However, the current system is not working, particularly within central government departments, and above all, the Cabinet Office.”

She tells The Journalist that not much has changed since. “We are still coming across central government departments not sticking to the legal deadlines and pushing them back. That can take out the sting of the newsworthiness of what you’re pursuing.”

The Times’s Greenwood revealed in October 2024 that Suella Braverman had forwarded government documents to her private email accounts at least 127 times in her role as attorney general from 2021-2022.

The potential breach of the ministerial code was released some 18 months after it was first requested via an FOI, after a tribunal judge ordered the Attorney General’s Office to release it. When he submitted his request, Braverman was home secretary; by the time he received the information she was an opposition MP.

Greenwood calls for the Information Commissioner to be given more powers to ensure government departments comply with their responsibilities.

So, what does the future look like for FOI?

In opposition, Sir Keir Starmer’s Labour Party published a policy paper saying they would extend the FOI Act to private businesses working on public contracts and publicly funded employers’ associations. But the measures did not appear in Labour’s election manifesto.

Does Frankel see them being in favour of transparency or, like so many other governments, of changing their view and looking to introduce new limits?

“It’s too early to say,” he says. “They haven’t shown any sign of wishing to restrict the act, and I hope that will remain their position, but we would really like to see it strengthened both by extending it to contractors and by taking measures to restrict the opportunities for delay by public authorities.”

Time will tell which direction they choose.



# Putting a value on values

**Neil Merrick** reports on a project to make journalists aware of stories' cultural impact

**M**ost journalists do not set out to change the world – but is there any harm in giving it a nudge in the right direction?

Consciously or not, journalism is laden with values, covering everything from wealth and power to friendship and social justice. These affect the ways in which stories are presented and, at times, audience reactions.

“You can have two articles containing exactly the same facts but there will be different values peppered throughout,” says Elsie Roderiques, leader of a project looking into media values with the help of magazine editors and others.

Run by the Common Cause Foundation, a non-profit organisation, the Values in the Media project aims to help journalists and other media professionals recognise the importance of values, including their cultural influence.

It seeks to champion intrinsic values, which highlight the importance of community and equality, as opposed to extrinsic values, such as image or celebrity status.

“There is no such thing as a good or a bad value,” says Roderiques. “To live well-rounded lives, we need to be able to draw on a wide range of values – but it is also important they are kept in balance.”

In 2021, The Independent reported on a study by anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate showing areas with immigrant populations enjoy greater economic success.

While Hope Not Hate was seeking to promote diversity as well as challenge negative perceptions of immigration with its study, the story in effect highlighted the importance of money, an extrinsic value, suggesting immigration equated to economic prosperity.

At other times, intrinsic values come to the fore. Earlier this year, the BBC and other media outlets reported how Newcastle United was introducing ‘sound shirts’, allowing deaf fans to feel the atmosphere of a match at St James’ Park.

Seán Wood, chief executive of Positive News magazine, says it is important that journalists appreciate how values shape editorial judgments. This affects not only the stories they report but also the angle taken and the prominence they achieve.

“Maybe we’re not reporting enough on things that matter to people,” says Wood, a member of the project’s advisory board. “A focus on values can create a more responsible type of journalism that works in the public interest.”

Responsible journalism does not ignore bad news, but

reports it in a compassionate way rather than seeking to generate fear or anger.

“Too much attention is given to extrinsic values,” Wood adds. “The problem is that it’s self-perpetuating and serves to reinforce extrinsic values.”

For example, each year, journalists eagerly report on movers and shakers in The Sunday Times Rich List or the Forbes list of the world’s most powerful people. Consumerism plays a large part in local and national media, including in travel writing.

However, occasionally, consumer stories also serve up intrinsic values. The Guardian reported in September how a restaurant in north London was offering jobs to people who

## Ethics, values and a course

**HOW** does ethics affect the way journalists operate in the UK and would more ethics training make a difference to media values?

These are questions being considered by media regulator Impress, leading to the launch this autumn of an accredited training programme in ethics.

Run with the University of Huddersfield, the programme will be open to all media. It will be targeted at smaller independent and hyperlocal outlets in particular, where ethics training tends to be basic or non-existent.

There is a lack of trust and confidence in parts of the media among the UK public, acknowledges Impress

chief executive Lexie Kirkconnell-Kawana.

“It’s our responsibility to do the best we can to improve the journalism that’s out there and build an alternative media so the public has another option to turn to,” she says.

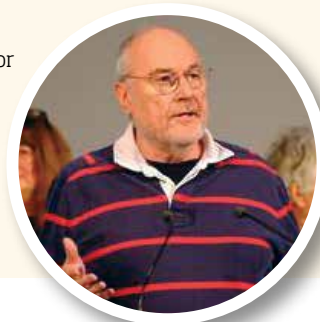
Ethics training gained prominence about a decade ago following the phone-tapping scandal and the Leveson Inquiry. While the NCTJ has incorporated ethics units into its training

programmes, some universities have taught ethics as part of journalism training as far back as the 1990s.

Chris Frost (pictured), chair of the NUJ’s ethics council, points out that ethics and media values are not necessarily the same thing. Parts of the media lean heavily towards extrinsic values but are still ethically professional, he explains.

“Some reporters have a preference for covering stories with intrinsic values, about parenting or health for instance, whilst others prefer more extrinsic stories about wealth and power,” he says.

“This shouldn’t affect their ethics in reporting, which should always adhere to the codes of conduct.”





are homeless, including former asylum seekers.

Elsie Roderiques argues that the tendency of journalists to focus on extrinsic values means issues such as the environment and society struggle to make the news agenda.

The project is considering questions such as:

- Is the aim of journalism to move society forward or to mirror society as it is?
- How can journalists incorporate intrinsic values into reports when deadlines demand instant news and perhaps clickbait?
- Does journalism funded through advertising and backed by media moguls and tech giants inevitably lead to stories based on extrinsic values?

A first step, she argues, is for the media to recognise how different values can feed into stories. Journalists might, for example, reflect intrinsic values when reporting on charitable activities.

“A journalist writing about food banks might speak to volunteers and ask them why they give their time,” she explains.

Last year’s annual Reuters survey on media trends concluded that publishers were focusing more on values, partly in response to the war in Ukraine and the climate emergency. A study by the International News Media Association found that 72 per cent of news brands were emphasising their journalistic credentials and guiding principles.

Nonetheless, a study two years ago by media regulator Impress found that much UK news was out of tune with people’s priorities. While members of the public generally want the media to inform, explain and hold those in power to account, most saw the news as revolving around political opinion, celebrity gossip and sensationalism.

A follow-up study by Impress is now looking at the part that ethics training plays in the values adopted by journalists (see box). Chief executive Lexie Kirkconnell-Kawana says its members, who tend to be smaller, independent publishers, want to be seen as responsible and accountable.

“They perceive themselves to be ethical and operating in their communities,” she notes.

Hardeep Matharu, editor of Byline Times and a member of the media values project advisory board, argues the impact of values is not as widely recognised or well understood as it might be.

This has led to a cosy relationship between some journalists and political parties, allowing parts of the media to wield huge power.

“There’s been a merger between the press and politicians,” she says.

While the public is encouraged to believe the media is values neutral, journalists can be reluctant to acknowledge how media values shape society, including UK culture.

“There is no recognition that it can have that sort of impact,” she says.

Knowingly or otherwise, many journalists tend to adopt the values of their employer. There are only so many times a less experienced reporter can argue that alternative stories or angles should receive greater prominence.

“Most journalists are going to do what the newsroom expects of them,” says Chris Frost, a professor in journalism and chair of the NUJ’s ethics council. “However, you don’t need to take an instruction as the be-all and end-all. Talk to the



**72%**  
of news brands  
are emphasising  
their journalistic  
credentials  
and guiding  
principles



news editor or whoever about ways to approach a story.”

Other supporters of the Values in the Media project include the Poverty Alliance, the United Nations’ department of global communications and the Responsible Media Forum, which was set up 20 years ago to encourage the media in Europe and north America to consider the effect journalism has on social and environmental issues. Participants in the forum from the UK include the BBC, ITV, Sky and News UK.

Coordinator Daniel Witte says it aims to bring together ‘sustainability professionals’ from media bodies and discuss ways in which messages over issues such as global warming can find their way into newsrooms.

“The way the BBC talks about climate change is going to have a greater impact than its own carbon emissions,” he explains. “The stories we watch or read change how we see the world. We have to manage that impact.”

Ultimately, it may be down to audiences to ensure that journalism adopts a wider range of values. Byline Times is encouraging readers to help fund its Byline Media Watch project, set up to monitor disinformation and bias. Along with some nationals and many magazines, Byline Times largely depends on subscriptions or membership fees.

“People fund the work of our journalists because they deliver on the values promised,” says Matharu. “We want to be an informed citizenry together.”

# On the **vampire**

## Sean Meleady discusses the difficulties and demands of night shifts

**I** uploaded an article, logged out, switched off my laptop and then went to bed hoping to get some sleep. This trivial set of events in August 2022 might seem very ordinary especially as it was just after midnight – but I was taking part in a rare national newspaper strike.

Of course, cosying up in my bed and forming my own one-man virtual picket line was not heroic. Still, I participated in industrial action that won salary increases from 14 per cent to 44 per cent. I started striking at this unusual hour because, as a remote casual reporter for The Daily Express website, I worked the night shift from 11 pm to 7 am.

For 14 months, I worked nights full time for five and occasionally six times a week – a bruising schedule that was maintained through excessive caffeine consumption while battling the nocturnal slowdown of the internet and the urge to fall asleep in front of my laptop. My sleeping patterns were irregular, my social life was difficult and, even when not working, I felt constantly tired.

### On the graveyard shift

According to the NUJ, journalists who work overnight fall under the protection of the 1998 Working Time Regulations which class night work as being at least three hours of work between 11pm and 6am. The regulations stipulate that employers cannot force employees to work more than eight hours at night in a 24-hour period, with workers entitled to a 20-minute rest period during any shift that is six hours or longer and at least two days' rest every fortnight.

The challenges of working overnight were highlighted by a motion sent to the 2023 delegate meeting (DM) by the BBC World Service branch. It argued that night work should be voluntary or that journalists should be able to opt out of night shifts upon reaching a certain age or after a certain number of years of working at night.

There were also suggestions that hours worked at night should count for more than those worked during the day, and that pay for any part of a night shift after 6am should be at triple time; in addition, night workers should have the same facilities as those working during the day (such as access to canteens, IT assistance and HR) and be able to take officially sanctioned naps in 'dedicated sleeping areas'.

Former NUJ president and NUJ official at the BBC World Service Pierre Vicary accepts that, given the worldwide remit of the flagship radio broadcaster, some night work is almost inevitable. Nonetheless, he suggests that some programmes could be produced live in different time zones to negate the impact of night shifts for UK-based journalists.

World Service journalists typically work in blocks of four shifts with early shifts followed by four days off then four night shifts usually lasting from 9pm to 6am. According to Vicary, these night shifts result in logistic and editorial issues as foreign correspondents around the world often are not available; this means that World Service journalists sometimes pretend to be the correspondents themselves while listeners are usually none the wiser.

Reflecting on the arguments made in the motion to DM, Vicary laments that the 'BBC want to be 24/7' but the broadcaster does not provide the same facilities that journalists working during the day enjoy at Broadcasting House in London. For example, canteen facilities are limited, and the cleaners tend to make a lot of noise at night, which is disruptive.

However, he does admit that, despite the difficulties of producing top-quality broadcasting in the early hours of the morning, particularly towards the end of a shift, there is one benefit – no managers are around.

Colin O'Carroll, senior broadcast journalist at U105 Radio, constantly worked nights when covering The Troubles in Northern Ireland in the 1990s. Covering the Drumcree standoff was particularly challenging. The Orange Order insisted on marching through nationalist areas in Portadown County Armagh during successive July marching seasons from 1995 to 2000, leading to clashes with local nationalists.

"In the 1990s, I was a radio reporter covering murders and shootings, especially around the time of Drumcree. I slept in the field for a couple of weeks – there were me, the cops and the army together.

"The first-year loyalist paramilitaries were there making threats and, in fact, a Catholic taxi driver was murdered and shots fired at police and the army during one night when I was sleeping in the field.

//  
**Nights were busy as that's when most of the trouble broke out with police and army firing plastic bullets and doing baton charges**





# re team

“I sometimes managed to sleep in the backseat of my car during a lull in action during the day. Nights were busy as that’s when most of the trouble broke out with police and army firing plastic bullets and doing baton charges.”

Brian McGleenon, now a financial journalist, worked overnight for The Daily Express website from 2018 to 2019 and reflects on the fact that the night team were known as ‘vampires’ and were ‘second-class citizens’ compared to those who worked more social hours.

“When I joined the day team, day people would say ‘Were you a vampire?’ because the day team would comment on a headline: ‘The overnight team – that’s exactly what they’d do’. There was a bit of animosity between days and nights.”

## Hits to health

Night-shift workers face increased health risks especially if they work at night regularly which, according to the TUC, raises the risk of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression. Scientific research has also shown that night-shift workers are more likely to experience sleep problems, gastrointestinal issues, cancer, vitamin D deficiency and high blood sugar.

O’Carroll found working nights difficult not just because of the irregular hours which made sleep difficult but because of the horrific things he saw as a frontline reporter in Northern Ireland, including covering the 1998 Omagh bombing.

“You ended up suffering from bad sleeping patterns. You’d end up with insomnia. We tended to self-medicate – we’d go to the pub. We saw some horrific stuff. I was the first reporter at the scene of the Omagh bomb. I didn’t get back for a week. I did 17 of the funerals.”

O’Carroll also admits that, on one occasion, he fell asleep during a long night shift when he was covering a stand-off in Bellaghy, County Derry, in the mid-1990s before being woken by a publican and being given somewhere to sleep.

Vicary points out that at the World Service, a previous NUJ father of chapel had managed to negotiate an agreement with the BBC that when journalists reached 55, they were allowed to opt out of nights if they wished.

However, despite there being substantial evidence that night shifts are more challenging for older workers, several years ago the corporation ripped up this agreement, claiming that the opt-out was ‘discriminatory’ against younger employees. As a result, some World Service journalists have been using their annual leave to avoid having to work a fourth consecutive night shift.

Although McGleenon describes himself as a ‘lightweight when it comes to nights’, having worked only two nights a week for six months, he argues that night shifts are not healthy and the experience negatively affected his sleep.

“You’re out of sync. People in your life want to have dinner at a certain time and you’re lying in bed. I think people should not be allowed to do it for long periods of time. There was one guy on The Daily Star, I remember hearing, was on his fifth or sixth year of doing nights.

“There would always be one night a week when I wouldn’t get any sleep because my body was trying to recalibrate. I think nights should have paid more.”

## Not a rite of passage

Night shifts in journalism – particularly in broadcasting with the 24/7 social media-focused, globalised world we live in with constant breaking news – are unlikely to end completely any time soon. However, they should be used only when necessary to cover significant events where it is essential to have journalists on the ground or reporting to an international audience. Night shifts should not be used to boost online page viewing figures or be a rite of passage for inexperienced early-career journalists.

I believe that the NUJ should take a stronger stance on journalists working overnight and fully embrace the spirit of the arguments put forward last year by the World Service branch. Not only do night workers need the same facilities that those who work during the day but also they deserve extra money, particularly if they are doing nights full time.

Chapels and NUJ organisers need to ask employers tough questions about nights. Why are you employing staff to work overnight when pre-written articles can be automatically uploaded overnight before the morning uptick in online traffic? Could your overnight radio or TV programme be produced with fewer staff or even recorded? I’m sure every union member who has struggled to stay awake at work as dawn breaks and the birds start singing would appreciate it.



# Do you need cover?

**Samantha Downes** looks at the benefits of professional indemnity insurance

**P**rofessional indemnity (PI) cover is standard among some professions. According to the Association of British Insurers, solicitors, accountants, architects, surveyors and financial advisers cannot conduct business without this type of cover.

Among the creative industries, PI is not essential, although large advertising, design and public relations agencies will have PI cover in place.

Journalists are not legally required to have professional indemnity, nor its sister, public liability cover.

Most staff journalists will fall under the legal umbrella of their employer should their work be subject to legal action. But freelancers won't be, which is where PI cover may prove useful, particularly if they combine their journalism with corporate or commercial work.

## 'Broad and meaty'

Ashley Baxter, a photographer and founder of freelance insurance provider With Jack, says PI was for when a client threatens legal action or tries to recover monetary damages as a result of their professional services.

"This could be advice the freelance has given or the work they've provided. Maybe they've delivered work late, maybe they haven't met the client's expectations."

Baxter says PI is 'incredibly broad and meaty', and gives the example of a filmmaker who was sued by a

company when faulty equipment wiped out their work.

The insurer paid out full costs which would otherwise have amounted to £9,000 coming out of the freelancers' own pocket.

Baxter says these cases are rare and most claims tend to arise from project management issues.

Clients may insist their freelancers have PI cover, so if the freelancer makes a mistake, they can recover any money lost.

"For example – and this is a true story – a graphic designer can be hired for a job for £2,000, but if packaging they've designed has gone to print with a mistake that needs to be rectified, this can cost £20,000 to fix."

## What does professional indemnity cover?

Baxter says PI covers defamation, libel and slander. "We have one such claim ongoing where a writer published something online and they are now being accused of defamation.

"So far, there have been no monetary damages accompanied with the defamation claim, but the fact the third party has resorted to involving their legal team in a bid to have the writer remove what they've written means the freelancer's insurance has been triggered."

## Buy professional indemnity cover through the NUJ

The NUJ has an arrangement with Jensten which offers a specialist professional indemnity insurance for freelance writers and covers areas such as defamation, breach of copyright, breach of confidence and privacy. It also contains public liability insurance.

It offers a 12.5 per cent discount to NUJ members: <https://tinyurl.com/mr49fusz>

## What about public liability cover?

Often confused with PI cover, public liability pays out for legal claims around physical accidents and injuries to third parties,

Baxter says: "We've been operating for eight years and have yet to have a public liability claim made against any of our customers but that's because we work with freelance creatives.

"They're low risk when it comes to accidents and injuries because they're not operating heavy machinery.

"The good news is that journalists may not necessarily need public liability – but lots of clients require freelancers to have public liability and it's super cheap."

The cost of PI and public liability is in a range of £10–£30 a month.

"This depends on the level of cover, and can increase if you need to cover US work."

## Professional indemnity versus public liability

PI is offered on a claims-made basis so the insurer will cover you only for claims made while you hold the policy.

So if a claim is made against you after your policy has expired – even if the incident occurred while your policy was in place – you will not be covered. New claims can be brought against you for up to six years after an alleged negligent act.

Public liability covers claims made by members of the public and covers personal injuries, loss of or damage to property and death.

It also covers incidents on your business premises. Therefore, if you work from home and receive visitors in the course of this, you may need public liability insurance.

If you have employees you will also need employers' liability insurance.

## Where to buy cover

Along with the NUJ's offer, you can buy public liability insurance directly from an insurer or from a specialist broker through the British Insurers' Brokers Association.



ALL IMAGES: BAJ

# On the RUN

**Mike Jempson** remembers persecuted colleagues from Belarus in dire need of support



**O**ver the course of some 10 years, I worked with the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) to help strengthen organisational and journalistic skills as part of an International Federation of Journalists project. Today, most of the people I worked with are either in jail or in exile.

After years of persecution under President Lukashenko, the multi-award-winning BAJ was 'liquidated' under a supreme court order in 2021. The homes of BAJ leaders were raided, and its office broken into and sealed by the security forces. Then, in 2023, the Belarusian KGB declared BAJ an extremist organisation.

The KGB make no secret of their presence. When opposition candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin was briefly released from jail in 2008 to attend his wife's funeral, the church and streets outside were so full of agents that I found taking photos very risky.

They operate from a massive yellow headquarters that fills a whole block in the centre of Minsk, complete with cells and interrogation suites.

I heard many hair-raising tales from BAJ members who get calls from agents keeping tabs on them. One young blogger was detained and interrogated merely for posting pictures sent by his girlfriend of 'press freedom teddy bears' that had landed in her garden. The authorities were riled because Swedish activist Tomas Mazetti had dropped them from a plane.

My own brushes with the ubiquitous agents have been many and varied,

from the theft and recovery of my wallet, to what happened when I went on an unscheduled trip to towns and villages where independent journalism was being kept alive. They seemed to know where I was at all time.

In one industrial backwater, they called to say the editor of the local paper wanted to interview me. When we turned up at her empty offices late on a Saturday afternoon, she said a trainee reporter wanted to sit in on the interview. The gaff was blown with her first question: I was asked to "describe media regulation in your home country of Ireland". As an Irish citizen, I travel on an Irish passport, but I was born and live in England. The only way she could have known about my Irish connection was through official sources.

And the 'trainee' revealed his true colours by asking for my views on the removal of Russian statues from public parks in Latvia and the West's recognition of Kosovo. I respectfully pointed out that these were political matters on which I would not comment, but I was happy to answer questions on journalism issues. He had none. His editor continued with a carefully prepared script she appeared to read from a Filofax.

We left soon after, but not before I had snapped a picture of the hapless pair. He turned out to be a local KGB agent. Whatever she wrote in a two-page spread was sufficient to get me banned from Belarus for a decade.

The ban did not stop our training programme. We held sessions in neighbouring countries instead. At one

**Clockwise: Maryna Zolatava and Ludmila Chekhina of Tut.By at their trial; Denis Ivashin is led away to serve a nine-year sentence for investigating the recruitment of former members of the Ukrainian riot squad; Andrei Aliaksandrau and Iryna Ziobina were married in Minsk Jail in 2022**

of them, several young BAJ members came out as gay, and I was proud to have been part of the creation of an LGBTQ+ journalists' network across the region.

So many of these brave people were taking risks with their freedom. The entire BAJ executive is now in exile, and 38 BAJ members are in jail serving sentences from two to 14 years.

Andrei Aliaksandrau, part of a BAJ delegation to Britain, who had spent several years here working with Index on Censorship and Amnesty, is serving 14 years for 'high treason'. He and his partner Iryna Ziobina were arrested in January 2021, charged with rioting and accused of paying protesters' fines and detention fees. Ziobina got nine years. The couple married in Minsk jail in 2022.

By declaring publications and broadcasting outlets 'extremist formations', the authorities are able to arrest and charge photographers, camera operators and other freelancers just for supplying content.

Editor-in-chief of 'liquidated' Tut.By Maryna Zolatava and her CEO Ludmila Chekhina each got 12 years on charges ranging from tax evasion to associating with terrorists. Three staff members went on the run and are listed as fugitives by the Lukashenko regime.

Amnesty international, Index on Censorship and the exiled Belarus Free Theatre are leading support for BAJ members in the UK. Funds are needed to keep spirits up and look after the families of those in jail.

**Donations can be sent via [https://www.patreon.com/baj\\_media](https://www.patreon.com/baj_media)**

**“**  
**The 'trainee' reporter revealed his true colours by asking for my views on the removal of Russian statues from public parks**

**D**oes the idea of giving a talk to many people turn you into a sweaty mess? I've been pushing myself to do a bit of public speaking. But my heart pounds, my hands shake and I race through whatever I'm going to say at breakneck speed. I feel so nervous that I just want to get out of there as quickly as possible.

Yet I understand how important the skill of public speaking is to raising your profile as a journalist, especially when you're running your own freelance business and want to provide training sessions or run workshops and webinars. Speaking at events can attract new clients – and boost your income.

Caroline Goyder is an expert speaker, voice trainer and author whose clients range from government ministers and journalists to businesses such as Netflix.

Goyder says: "As a journalist, you have a position of authority. But when you're in front of an audience, you're in a place of vulnerability. The audience has a lot of power to judge you, and this power shift can be frightening. Public speaking is scary for so many people but it doesn't have to be. You can learn to make your public moments feel positive rather than rabbit in the headlights.

"Everyone gets nervous sometimes. Even Helen Mirren gets shaky hands when she has to make a speech. It's strangely calming to know that these feelings are ubiquitous; they are human. And when you normalise your nerves, you can use them to power you, not panic you.

"If you can have a relaxed conversation with two people, then, with the right skills in place, you can have a relaxed conversation with 200.

"For journalists, the mind is a powerful instrument. But it's likely to sabotage your talk if you don't calm it down.

"About 15 minutes before your talk, find a quiet place so you can calm your nervous system. Turn off devices, tune

into body and breath. Come back to your senses – the air on your face, the clothes on your skin. Straighten up, ears over shoulders, and focus on what you can see, hear and feel in your senses to calm you, and quieten the brain. If you get butterflies, welcome them – it's OK to feel nervous."

**In a different league**

Janey Lee Grace has worked in radio and TV for about 30 years and as a professional speaker for the past 15. She now offers media training and runs a Step into the Spotlight online course.

She explains: "It's critical for journalists to learn this skill. It helps with pitching and with sharing your expertise, and it puts you in a different league if you can communicate your ideas effectively.

"With strong communication skills, journalists can tap into new revenue streams such as workshops, training and paid speaking gigs. It also helps to build authority and credibility – confident communication establishes you as an expert in your field, making your message more impactful and memorable."

Preparation is key, including researching your topic thoroughly and knowing your material inside out.

"The more prepared you are, the more confident you'll feel," says Lee Grace, author of *From Wham! to Woo: a Life on the Mic*. "Define your message and the outcome you want. Rehearse in front of a mirror, record yourself or practise with a friend. This helps identify areas for improvement and builds familiarity; it's muscle memory. You'd never go straight out and run a marathon – you'd get used to the movement and terrain first.

"And visualise success – picture yourself delivering a successful speech. Visualisation can mentally prepare you for a positive outcome."

**Confidence is still mistaken for competence, so being able to talk well is a benefit**

# Speak up

Public speaking raises your profile and can open up new work opportunities.  
**Linda Harrison** reports





## How to transform nerves into confidence



**Caroline Goyder teaches a variety of techniques to help people speak with confidence. Here are a few she recommends.**

- When rehearsing, before you face an audience, say something three times aloud. Then, if the butterflies come, you have a backup drive in your brain. Voice notes on your phone can be a pain-free way to do this,

and you can graduate to saying it in front of someone you trust on the phone or in person.

- Practise taking pauses: every pause is a moment to come back to yourself.
- If you gabble, find your brakes. The rush when you walk out in front of an audience can feel so overwhelming that your brain screams 'get out of there'. The flight part of fight or flight

takes over – and you start speaking at hyperspeed. The secret is to breathe out before you start to speak. Close your mouth, and nose breathe as if a lovely smell is silently hitting your nostrils. That's when you start.

- If you feel yourself blushing, focus your senses out onto something in the room. When we blush, it's usually because we're worrying about what someone else is thinking. So,

take your mind away from it, ask the audience a question and get the focus on them. While they're talking, lengthen your outbreath to calm your system.

**For more speaking tips, see Caroline's new free Gravitas mini-course at <https://courses.carolinegoyder.com/GravitasCourse>**

LUCY J TOMS PHOTOGRAPHY

### Put on your armour

Jamie Klingler is chief communications officer for the Tomorrow Group. She explains how she prepared for a recent TEDx talk.

Klingler says: "Before a big speech, I put on armour. I get my hair and make-up done (never ever cut – hair is everything). I wear good underwear. For my TEDx, I wore the dregs of my late mother's lipstick. It was the very last bits of it, but it gave me the final boost to go out there and kill it.

"The more prep you do on the script, the more you are able to add little interjections and enjoy the actual experience. Be present for it."

### Comedy goldmine

Dhruti Shah is an award-winning creative storyteller and journalist who has written for The Guardian and worked for the BBC.

She says the training and live performance of improv made a huge difference to her confidence, making her realise that she was funnier than she thought.

"That's a skill," she explains. "So, I can make a joke if I make a mistake, and know that people will understand I'm as human as they are."

Dhruti's top tips for combatting nerves? Embrace it.

"Volunteer for opportunities," she says. "And understand that it's usually only a short space of time in the grand scheme of things – this helps to give perspective."

### Use your stage fright

Hari Patience-Davies is a storytelling coach and teacher. She has coached chief executives for keynote speeches and teaches people how to project confidence.

She says almost everyone experiences stage fright around public speaking. But the more you do something that gives you anxiety, the less anxiety you will feel – eventually.

"I used to be terrified about speaking on stage or at conferences. But I wanted to do it, so I made myself take every opportunity I could to speak, and now my stage fright has been reduced to a shadow of its former self," she says.

"As a storytelling coach, I can't get rid of your stage fright – I don't have a magic wand. But a small amount of anxiety ensures that you will work on your speech, and practise and perfect it. If you didn't care or worry, you'd have less motivation to do the necessary work to excel."

Patience-Davies recommends building a pre-performance ritual. Her own includes two minutes of power posing, five by five breathing and a couple of 'you' statements.

"For power posing, you stand, feet hip width apart, chin up, shoulders back, hands on hips – the Wonder Woman stance," explains Hari. "Standing like that for two minutes reduces your anxiety and improves your performance."

"I twin that with five by five breathing – breathe in for the count of five, hold your breath for the count of five, then breathe out for the count of five. Repeat that for the whole two minutes of your power pose and your heart rate will even out."

"End with a few 'you' statements – something like 'you've got this' or 'you're going to give a great speech'. It may feel odd to address yourself in the second person, but studies show that complimenting and reassuring ourselves by saying 'you' works better than saying 'I'. Check out the recent clip of Simone Biles at the Olympics taking a moment to say 'you've got this' before stepping out for another medal-winning performance."

"Being able to explain and express yourself creates opportunities for keynote speeches or broadcast work. You might want to pitch a book idea to a publisher or present a TED talk."

"Confidence is still mistaken for competence, so being able to talk well is a benefit and bonus in your career."

She also advises recreating the environment where you're going to give the talk as much as possible.

"If you can't practise in the actual location, ask the team at the local movie theatre if they would mind you doing to run throughs while the theatre is cleaned," she says. "Go and stand in a pulpit if need be. But stand up, enunciate. Replicate the energy you plan to give the room - in what you will be wearing. Practise the walk up to the stage. And don't wear new shoes."

# Salisbury

# poisonings



In a new series, **Ruth Addicott** talks to local journalists about their work when a national story breaks on their doorstep

**T**he sight of fire crews in hazmat suits searching in the undergrowth in Salisbury is an image that will stay with many people, not least Rebecca Hudson, former reporter on the Salisbury Journal.

It was a wet Sunday afternoon in March 2018 when Hudson received the tip-off. “I was at a 50th birthday drinks with a family friend and someone said they’d seen the air ambulance land in the city centre,” she recalls. “My editor had emailed, so I said, ‘I’ll head down there and see what’s going on.’”

Two people had been taken to hospital after collapsing on a bench. They were former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, and the event triggered the biggest, most surreal and extraordinary spy story of recent times.

Hudson, then still a trainee, was the first reporter on scene.

“There was a very small police cordon and no one there apart from the police,” she recalls. “The police kept saying, ‘We’ll be lifting it in a minute, you can go’. I kept saying, ‘No, it’s fine, I’ll wait until you head off’. It didn’t make sense to me if it was a drug overdose why was the scene being cordoned off?”

Hudson called journal photographer Tom Gregory. Next thing, fire crews in green hazmat suits were decontaminating the area.

“I thought, ‘This doesn’t look like any drug overdose I’ve ever seen,’” says Hudson.

The pictures made the front pages of the papers the following day. On the Monday evening, the BBC revealed a Russian spy had been poisoned. Then the world’s media descended.

“I remember that first Monday night, there was a press conference at the hospital – I went back to the office and got home just before midnight,” recalls Hudson. “I was just about to go to bed when I got a call saying they’d cordoned off Zizzi’s restaurant in town, so I got back up and went down there.”

Three days later, police revealed a nerve agent had been used and the case was being treated as attempted murder. Wiltshire police officer Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey was seriously ill in hospital; Theresa May told the House of Commons it was ‘highly likely’ Russia was responsible.

With the phones ringing off the hook and calls from as far as Australia, the problem for the Journal was resources. The team was working flat out.

“I remember speaking to someone from The Times and they’d brought four or five journalists – that was more than we had at the paper full time,” says Hudson.

## Tips on securing that big story

### Trust your instincts

Rebecca Hudson says always follow a tip-off and don’t always believe what the emergency services say: “Wiltshire Police denied they told us it was a fentanyl

incident, but they did. Don’t be too trusting of police press officers.”

### Local contacts

The Salisbury Journal received a tip-off every time

there was an incident, so we were often the first to arrive. “People trusted us,” says former editor Joe Riddle

### Get it right

Luke Harding, senior

international correspondent at The Guardian, says the main difficulty was verification. “How does one verify the real identity of the killers?” he says. “All the normal things you’d

do – such as call up or ask a press officer – it doesn’t work in a totalitarian state that lies all the time. There’s no point asking the Kremlin for a comment. You want to get it right, you don’t want to be slow but also you have to be careful not to be inaccurate or sensationalise.”





Former Journal editor Joe Riddle says they coped 'extremely well' under the circumstances.

"It's not every day a story of that magnitude happens on your patch," he says. "We didn't have any extra staff so we had to make it work with the resources we had."

Public Health England was advising people to wipe their phones, handwash spectacles and double-bag dry-clean-only items and arrange for them to be collected by the council.

It was only then that Hudson started thinking about how close she had been to the bench.

"I'd been using my phone and wearing the same coat for well over a week by that point," she says.

The feeling at The Guardian, like everywhere else, was incredulity. Senior international correspondent Luke Harding was at home when he first heard about the poisoning.

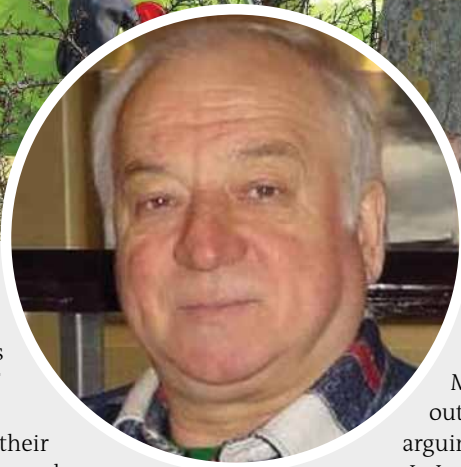
"I had two reactions," he says. "The first was, 'Oh my god, not again'. The other was that I hadn't heard of Skripal, so I was frantically googling and calling my contacts trying to find out who this guy was ... for most of us who follow Russia, lived in Russia, speak Russian, this guy was unknown. Clearly, it was an enormous story."

Harding has written a book on Litvinenko (A Very Expensive Poison). He was The Guardian's Moscow bureau chief between 2007 and 2011 and the first Western reporter to be expelled from Russia since the Cold War. (He was told the flat he had shared with his wife and two small children had been bugged by secret agents; this included a camera in the bedroom.)

His focus in Salisbury was trying to explain what it all meant aside from 'a V-sign to the British state'. He retraced the steps of the poisoners and met Stan Sturgess, the father of Dawn, who had died from a contaminated perfume bottle.

"The only thing I haven't been able to do and no one has been able to do is talk to Skripal," he says. "I had pretty much every single defector in my notebook apart from him."

For Harding, the stand-out moment was when Bellingcat revealed the identities of the poisoners. "It's one of the most spectacular pieces of digital investigative journalism that I can think of over the last decade," he says. "It showed how the power had shifted away from traditional media to digital



"It had everything - a spy, all sorts of subterfuge and this extraordinary horror show inside Salisbury with men in ginormous protective chemical suits in the city centre searching in the undergrowth."

**Luke Harding, senior international correspondent, The Guardian**

"The main thing I learned was the power of the local press and its importance. When your city becomes the story, it really comes into its own. This needs protecting."

**Joe Riddle, former editor, Salisbury Journal**

"I had no idea there were double agents living in suburbia."

**Robert Murphy, ITV news correspondent**

sleuths. So, in terms of media history, it was an interesting moment as well."

In Bristol, ITV News crime correspondent Robert Murphy was watching events unfold. His patch stops just outside Salisbury so he was not allowed to cover it. "I kept arguing, saying, 'I've got to do this - this is a big deal,'" he says.

In June 2018, when Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley fell ill in Amesbury, just a few miles away, he was straight there.

"I saw this guy walking past a church that was sealed off and started chatting to him and it turned out he was Charlie's best friend [Sam Hobson]," he says.

Murphy got the TV exclusive - the interview that said for the first time it was novichok again.

Aside from getting information out of the authorities, the biggest challenge was getting it all ready for the early deadlines.

"Logistically, we needed to be in a 4G area because we're sending big video files and we edit remotely in our cars," he says. "That was tricky. It was scorching hot and my old banger's air con wasn't working, so it was tough going."

James Fielding, global reporter for MailOnline, says the key was building good relationships with local people, which led to them obtaining CCTV footage of Rowley at a supermarket hours after leaving hospital. "It showed him looking quite healthy," says Fielding. "These were the first pictures of him since he was brought back from the brink of death."

Looking back, Hudson is proud of what she did at the Journal, which she attributes largely to her former editor. The only thing she wishes she had done differently was to keep a diary. Although Hudson now works as chief of staff for MP Danny Kruger, she says she's not 'done' with journalism.

"I love local journalism," she says. "If it was more sustainable to do that job and be paid well, I would still be doing it now."

Harding also regards it as one of the most memorable stories of his career.

"In terms of sheer drama and crazy surreal plotting, it's hard to beat, not least because the killers go on Russian TV and say the reason they were in Salisbury was because they were beguiled by its ancient medieval clock and really tall spire."



by **Mark Fisher**

# arts

## Books >

### Time Bomb

*Grant McKee and Ros Franey*  
Muswell Press

NUJ member Franey and the late McKee published this study of 'Irish bombs, English justice and the Guildford Four' in 1988. Now their exposure of this miscarriage of justice has been revised and updated with new material.  
<https://tinyurl.com/pmy62xmz>

### Dispatches from the Diaspora

*Gary Younge*  
Faber

The Orwell Prize for Journalism winner and NUJ member of honour takes us

'from Nelson Mandela to Black Lives Matter' in this anthology on race, racism and black life and death that covers three decades of journalism.  
<https://tinyurl.com/26afkpg>

### A Liveable Future is Possible

*Noam Chomsky and CJ Polychroniou*  
Haymarket Books

Political economist Polychroniou conducts a series of interviews with Chomsky about 'confronting the threats to our survival'. Subjects they cover include AI, the climate crisis, neo-fascism and US foreign policy.  
<https://tinyurl.com/26b82j24>

### Believe Nothing Until it Is Officially Denied

*Patrick Cockburn*  
Verso

Graham Greene called Claud Cockburn the greatest journalist of the 20th century. A foreign correspondent on The Times, he was also a communist, contrarian and soldier – he wrote dispatches while fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Now his son Patrick Cockburn, also a journalist, praises the 'invention of guerrilla journalism' and asks whether it can still change the world.  
<https://tinyurl.com/28recdaw>

## Comedy >

### Andy Zaltzman: The Zaltgeist

*On tour*  
Until April 25

Best known as host of BBC Radio 4's The News Quiz – as well as a Taskmaster contestant and Test Match Special commentator – Zaltzman does a lap of the country on his biggest-ever tour with his patent mix of silliness, outrage and political bite.  
<https://tinyurl.com/28bsvsmk>

### Stewart Lee vs the Man-Wulf

*On tour*  
Until October 18

Taking up a series of mini-residencies in UK towns, the scathingly funny stand-up and Observer columnist aims to unleash his inner Man-Wulf in an effort to stop being 'culturally irrelevant and physically enfeebled'.  
<https://tinyurl.com/y9ybmgiw>



## Exhibitions >

### Skin/Deep: Perspectives on the Body

*Photo Museum Ireland, Dublin*  
Until February 8

Nine photographers based in Ireland consider gender, sexuality and selfhood as they focus on the body from different perspectives.  
<https://tinyurl.com/23htkbqa>

### Linder: Danger Came Smiling

*Southbank Centre, London*  
February 11–May 5

Emerging from the punk scene of 1970s Manchester, Linder has played with montage, photography, performance and sculpture as she explores the body from a feminist perspective. The retrospective tours to Edinburgh, Swansea and Blackpool.  
<https://tinyurl.com/24vpgzrr>

### The 80s: Photographing Britain

*Until May 5*  
Tate Britain, London

Images of protest and change in this radical view of a turbulent decade. The exhibition looks at the work of photography collectives and magazines in making visible the riots, strikes and political struggles of the day.  
<https://tinyurl.com/2amt33qn>



## In depth

# Far more than a Foot note

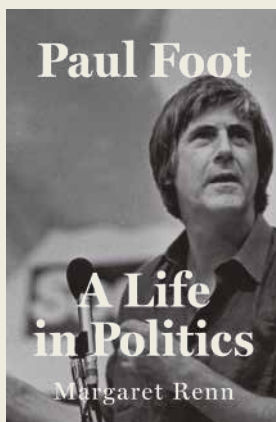
If you want a measure of how principled the late Paul Foot was, just consider the final piece he wrote for the Mirror.

This was in 1993, some time after Robert Maxwell had been found dead in the sea and been replaced by David Montgomery. Rather than ignore the new proprietor's dismissal of NUJ activists, Foot made it the subject of his column. He also mentioned the 1,475,409 share options Montgomery had coming to him.

Editor David Banks refused to publish it. Foot got the page made up anyway and distributed it to his colleagues by hand. It was also reproduced here in The Journalist. Unsurprisingly, it marked the end of Foot's award-

winning tenure at the Mirror. Other members lost their jobs at the same time, triggering a two-year battle led by the NUJ's general secretary, John Foster, resulting in a substantial payout.

In its fearlessness, the tale is typical of Foot, although his focus was rarely so close to home. He



was better known for championing causes on behalf of society's voiceless.

Paul Foot: a Life in Politics, a gripping biography by his colleague and fellow NUJ member Margaret Renn, catalogues the journalist's exposure of cover-ups and injustices. These range from the sinking of the Belgrano to the murder of Carl Bridgewater, the state's attacks on the striking miners and the prosecution of the Guildford Four.

It is a story of the radicalisation of a privileged man whose career took him from Glasgow's Daily Record to Private Eye and Socialist Worker.

As well as turning out books and pamphlets, he

was a tireless campaigner who honed his oratorical gifts to become a big draw as a speaker. For Foot, writing and political engagement were one and the same.

He was also an expert on Orwell and Shelley, whose radical agenda he applauded and whose poetry he could quote at length.

Such was Foot's involvement in the key events of his day that Renn's book reads like a 20th-century primer, a history not only of a gifted journalist prepared to hold power to account but also of the political flashpoints that defined his age.

*Paul Foot: A Life in Politics, Verso, out now*  
<https://tinyurl.com/25phe7k>

## Festivals >

### Celtic Connections

Glasgow

January 16–February 2

The annual roots festival is a broad church that embraces everything from traditional, folk and world to Americana, jazz and indie. The line-up includes Oysterband, KT Tunstall and Field Music.

<https://tinyurl.com/yse64g8f>



## Television >

### Toxic Town

Netflix

Winter

The town in question is Corby where, for the decade or more from 1985,

poor disposal of waste from a former steelworks resulted in birth defects. Jack Thorne's four-parter stars Jodie Whittaker, Robert Carlyle and Rory Kinnear.

<https://tinyurl.com/pao8n7l>

## Film >

### La Cocina

December 26

General release

In the 1960s, Arnold Wesker was the angry young playwright whose Centre 42 took theatre to the workers. In La Cocina, Wesker's The Kitchen is relocated to a Times Square restaurant where workers are ground down by exploitation.

<https://tinyurl.com/2xwjlnab>

## Theatre >

### The Autobiography of a Cad

Watermill Theatre, Newbury

February 7–March 22

Ian Hislop collaborates with Nick Newman to adapt the satirical novel by AG Macdonell.

<https://tinyurl.com/26h9jnvb>

## Spotlight

# Fair means or foul

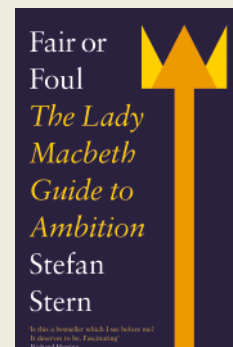
If you are ever stuck for a question in an interview, try asking your subject if they are ambitious. Their answers can be illuminating.

After the pandemic, priorities shifted and so have answers. People now wonder what they were playing at as they elbowed their way up.

Whether this is good or bad is considered by Stefan Stern in Fair or Foul: the Lady Macbeth Guide to Ambition. It is not a literary study, but something between a self-help manual, management

handbook and psychological investigation.

Stern, who has contributed to the BBC, the Financial Times and The Guardian, uses Shakespeare's play as a framework to help distinguish types of behaviour. Where is the



line between the sociopathic ambition we see in Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, and the less destructive drive that produces, say, Paul McCartney? Lady Macbeth urging her husband to plan ahead is a good thing – suggesting he bump off the king, less so.

Stern takes an ambivalent position in a thought-provoking book that draws on a spectrum of sources to raise questions about achievement, fulfilment and happiness – and, in the end, mortality itself.

**Fair or Foul: the Lady Macbeth Guide to Ambition, Unbound, out now**  
<https://tinyurl.com/2d87ntgk>

# theJournalist

To advertise your products or services in **The Journalist** and reach over 25,000 journalists. Please contact us to find out about the opportunities that are available.

**020 3283 4055**

**hello@square7media.co.uk**

★ Financial advice for hacks from a hack and qualified financial adviser. Contact Nigel Bolitho of BV Services, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Email: [ncfb007@gmail.com](mailto:ncfb007@gmail.com)  
Phone 01954 251521

# Southwell, Tyrrell & Co.

## Tax Consultants

We are an established firm based in the City, specialising in handling the taxation and accountancy affairs of freelance journalists. We have clients throughout the UK.

We can help and advise on the new changes under Making Tax Digital including helping to set up the MTD compatible software and bookkeeping.

Our services include accounts preparation, tax reporting, business start-ups and advice on possible incorporation, payroll services, management accounts, bookkeeping and more.

**For further details, contact us on**  
**T 020 7606 9787**  
**E [info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk](mailto:info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk)**





## Pat Mantle

You can't imagine a daily paper without pictures and, for decades, you couldn't imagine the Morning Star without Pat Mantle, who died in August.

There were other photographers of course – Alex Apperley, Sheila Gray, Ernie Greenwood and more. But Pat was the mainstay and also doubled up as picture editor. Day in, day out, week in, week

out, Pat put the pictures on the page.

The Star is a national daily so he covered the big national stories, such as the Iranian Embassy siege, as well as those when the labour movement hit the front pages. from the Grunwick dispute in the 1970s to the miners' strike in the 1980s.

But I was more likely to see him when he was covering a small picket line, a minor dispute or a protest that the rest of the world ignored.

Pat would be using minimal, old-school kit as befitted an old-school photographer. I'd see him with a Leica and – you'd have to be an older photographer to remember this one – the much cheaper and smaller Minolta CL, complete with a set of tiny lenses. Those rangefinder cameras took real skill when working fast.

This was in the days of film and knocking out prints on deadline in the darkroom, which is ancient history to most working today.

In later years, though, Pat relented and finally gave in to modern and more expensive autofocus technology – a Nikon SLR.

Nonetheless, he always trod his own path. While the world was focused on some major news story, Pat would be drawn to what he believed were the most important issues of the day – the struggles of working people for a better life and a better world.

To that end, he'd be in some remote corner of London for the Morning Star, with perhaps photographers from News Line, the Workers Revolutionary Party paper, and myself from Report, but no one else. Except maybe someone from Socialist Worker or Militant. For Pat, this world was no backwater – this was his world.

For he was a life-long communist, a vocation every bit as important to him as his press photography. You don't earn much at the Star. Like so many at the newspaper, he was there for the cause. He was never drawn to the

higher pay, travel and hotels of the mainstream press to which his undoubted talents could have taken him. He stayed true to his principles from leaving school to near retirement in the 1990s, when he left for Ireland.

Retirement was not for Pat. A second life beckoned, supplying a wide range of trade union and labour movement publications as well as the local Southern Star newspaper from his new home in County Cork.

That was not all. With his second wife, the late Phil O'Flynn, he ran two local antique shops, The Overmantle and Hobbits.

And, as if those were not enough, he gave his time to public service, acting as chairman of the parish council.

Pat, an NUJ life member, died on August 22 2024. He is remembered by his daughter Kate, her husband Adrian and their children James and Donnacha.

**Andrew Wiard**

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of the National Union of Journalists are expected to abide by the following professional principles

## A JOURNALIST

- 1** At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
- 2** Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
- 3** Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
- 4** Differentiates between fact and opinion.
- 5** Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
- 6** Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
- 7** Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
- 8** Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information, and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.
- 9** Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- 10** Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.
- 11** A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.
- 12** Avoids plagiarism.



The NUJ believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial that would break the letter or spirit of the code. The NUJ will fully support any journalist disciplined for asserting her/his right to act according to the code.



# Your Response...

Neil McAllister, Stockport

**I** read Helen Nugent's article, Shocks from the Past (September/October) with interest, as I have considerable personal experience of library images being used without payment. She is shocked to be presented with a considerable fee, presumably by Alamy, for an unpaid use. As Simon Chapman suggests, unpaid usage is a considerable problem for photographers and certainly is for me.

In recent months, I was alerted to two such uses, one by a county councillor who 'borrowed' an image of his constituency as a background for a TV interview. Despite being a member of the finance committee, he forgot to pay for the image, which was displayed to regional television viewers complete with copyright watermark. In another case, like Helen Nugent, someone handling regional publicity was presented with a substantial bill for using an image of a pretty canal side pub. She had been passed the image by the current pub owner, who had been given it by the previous owner.

Part of the problem lies with previous library practice of allowing full resolution, unwatermarked images to be downloaded and relying on users to be honest and accurately report and pay for uses. Less than scrupulous or absent-minded users forgetting to do this, or people like the former pub owner retaining pictures, results in either 'orphaned' images or unpaid use.

During an idle moment (I seem to have more of those these days), I spent a few hours searching the internet for such infringements, discovering more than 10 credited with my name or pseudonyms, some going back a number of years. One was so blatant it retained the Alamy watermark but was on a personal website in India so unlikely to yield payment. The most blatant was on the website of a

national tourist board online magazine. All were referred to Alamy and passed on to their outsourced attack dogs to recover payment.

The article raises two vital points. First, is the recovery 'heavy handed'? In some cases, a light touch can be applied when a publication is a known library customer – some may use hundreds of images a month – when non-payment is a reporting fault. When the usage is out of the blue and no attempt has been made to determine the source, then some sort of penalty should apply. I know the large fees demanded can be seen as a fine. They are not – they represent payment to the agency chasing the debt, the library and, at the bottom of the pile, the creator – which leads to the second point.

The £800 demanded, which 'put the fear of God', into the author is not outrageous. Indeed, unlicensed publication can lead to a far larger loss to the photographer. Last month, a library licensed an image of mine exclusively for a book cover for a four-figure sum. Had that image been used elsewhere, that sale would have been impossible.

I am approaching life membership time and have seen my photographic income dwindle from allowing me to live comfortably to the current situation where making a living is almost impossible. In 2008, my picture library sales averaged \$129 each; in 2023, the average was \$28.65 because of less commission.

Lest any reader thinks that four-figure sales are the norm, my first seven days of October sales (from 60,000+ pictures on sale) total \$1.77 – less Alamy's 60 per cent commission, leaving me with 71 cents or 54 of your fine British pence. I would be off to the pub to celebrate, but it has closed – unprofitable apparently. I know the feeling.

Images by Neil McAllister

Top: Bhutan, Paro Festival (Tsechu), Dance of the three kinds of Ging (Gynging), monastic dancers

Middle: Ethiopia, Amhara Region, Highlands, Simien Mountains National Park, dramatic landscape near Chennek Camp on trek

Bottom: Madagascar, Betsileo famadihana ceremony, 'turning of the bones', bodies carried from tomb



We welcome comments on issues raised by the magazine and anything else you want to comment on. Email at [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)



**Moved house or  
changed your  
email address?**



**Please let us know.**

You can update your membership record on the website [nuj.org.uk](http://nuj.org.uk) or email [membership@nuj.org.uk](mailto:membership@nuj.org.uk)

**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

**Do you want to  
unplug and read your  
magazine in print  
rather than online?**



**Please let us know.**

You can change your member preferences on the website [nuj.org.uk](http://nuj.org.uk) or email [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)

**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

## **'Let's Talk Books'** By **York Publishing Services**

**Producing industry standard books for new and established publishers.**

If you are considering self-publishing, our staff, with decades of experience, will be on hand every step of the way. Our one-stop shop allows new publishers to benefit from our extensive knowledge, taking your manuscript through to release and beyond.

### **Our services:**

Typist - ghostwriter - copyedit - proofreading  
page-by-page layout - cover design - illustration - graphic design  
print - eBook conversion - book distribution - eBook distribution



**York Publishing Services Ltd.**

64 Hallfield Road, Layerthorpe, York, North Yorkshire, YO31 7ZQ

T: 01904 431213 M: 07423 629 477 E: [pcharles@yps-publishing.co.uk](mailto:pcharles@yps-publishing.co.uk)

# Starmmer's plan to stop leaks is a real stinker



PM's declaration reminds us of leaves on the line, says **Chris Proctor**

**J**oy swept the land last month when the prime minister announced: "Its my job to sort out leaks." From Dorset to Wales via Coventry and Shropshire, streets filled with dancing and celebration as wellington boots were tossed into recycling bins and pegs for the nose were discarded with abandon.

Regulars in Coventry's Unicorn pub raised more glasses than usual. The cathedral city has been inundated with sewage leaks and Severn Trent Water's latest solution had put the wind up local toppers. They'd pinpointed the Unicorn's car park for a storage system. Over to you, Sir Keir!

Over in Blackberry Lane, Elsie Beaumont laughed and sang as her abode had been visited by a drain leak which created what she called a 'river of sewage'. Beaumont said: "The smell was absolutely awful." And, while Severn Trent Water said it had sent an engineer to examine the leakage, she anticipated immediate action now that the prime minister was looking into it.

Away from Lady Godiva's old haunt, two leaks had put Ashburton swimming pool in Devon under threat of closure until locals raised £60,000 to keep it in the swim. They think they need another £40,000 in the long term but the future looks brighter since the announcement. Even the canine community wagged tails in pleasure as this year they were allowed a dip beside their owners on the final day of the season.

Alison Biddulph, a West Midlands water campaigner, has said for years that she wants her water provider to do more to reduce leaks, especially as the responsible company wants to increase bills by an average of 33 per cent by

2030. Perhaps 'responsible' isn't entirely the correct adjective as they've recently been fined for discharging 260 million litres of sewage into the River Trent.

The Surfers Against Sewage lobby group was elated by the government proclamation, not least its adherents in Exmouth in Devon. Following a burst pipe and subsequent sewage leakage, the water company sparked a 'don't swim' alert during the peak holiday season. Backstroker Keith Thompson suggested this was 'not looking after' a community that relies heavily on tourism – a point also taken up by Kevin Wood, the chairman of Caister-on-Sea Parish Council. The Norfolk town recorded 106 sewage spills, which Wood said was 'disappointing'. He added, perceptively: "It cannot be good for people waiting to bathe in the sea."

Further jubilation at the announcement was evidenced by champion leek grower Alan Warnaby who, once again, has lifted the best in show trophy at the Olde Ship Inn Leek Club in Seahouses, Northumberland. He was also successful in the 'stand of three leeks' competition: but all is not well – or wasn't until the PM made his announcement. Flower judge Jimmy Johnson said it had been a poor year for leeks and the show may need to be moved forward in coming years. Naturally, there were concerns at this reshaping of Northumberland's social calendar, which hopefully will be the subject of the premier's attention.

While Sir K didn't mention if he would be feeling any duty over the leek moth, which is apparently spreading north, there is confidence he will have his eye on the little blighter.

And Andrew Bode is optimistic that the scope will include his home in the

town of Leek. Bode says his house is too close to a road and is seeking double yellow lines, bollards and/or a fence. Surely the PM can arrange this?

Then, suddenly, cold water was thrown over the news. Hope turned to despair; wellies were retrieved from bins; bunting was recycled to be used for sewage protection devices; surfers resumed swimming against sewage.

As with leaves on the railway line, Sir Keir was talking about the wrong kind of leak. He sees his duty not to the soggy sewers of Shropshire, the horticulturists of Haltwhistle nor the traffic-beleaguered burghers of Leek. No, he sees his job as doing something to eliminate information leaks from a single house in Downing Street.

As a journalist, I joined the general distress, for two reasons. One is that I like news leaks. Without them, all our information comes from one source, an organisation's comms department, not always the font of objective truth.

We need insiders to tell us different views and angles, as long as they are based on facts rather than personal grudges: that's how we can build a rounded picture. I know it's often inconvenient for bosses but that's part of our business – making life bothersome for the powerful.

On top of this was the specific story that irritated Sir Keir: someone had revealed the salary of an employee. I'm all for this. I'd like to see total transparency of all salaries. If you're embarrassed at how much you earn, there is an easy solution, isn't there? And it would save NUJ freelance activists from having to spend time producing its vital Rate for the Job information for us.

My plea is to carry on leaking. Unless you're a sewage pipe.

**//**  
The Norfolk town recorded 106 sewage spills, which the parish council chair said was 'disappointing'

**//**



# Scientifically Shown to Lower Cholesterol\*



“They do actually work. My blood test from the GP says so! **My Cholesterol DROPPED significantly** within the first month of taking them.”

Mrs Hales, December 2022

90 tablets **RRP £19.49**

**Now £14.49** with code **PA1224J**

feefo<sup>co</sup> ★★★★★ 4.6/5

Based on 5265 verified reviews



“High levels of LDL cholesterol can increase the risk of heart problems.”

**Dr Hilary Jones,**  
GP & Medical Advisor  
to Healthspan



Reduces cholesterol absorption



High cholesterol is a risk factor in coronary heart disease



Shown to lower cholesterol with 2-3 tablets a day\*

## GET £5 OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER

When you spend £15\*\* | Use code **PA1224J**

**HURRY! OFFER ENDS 24.01.25**

 [healthspan.co.uk](https://healthspan.co.uk)

**FREEPHONE 0800 73 123 77**

\*80 Omg plant sterols a day (1 tablet) helps to maintain normal cholesterol levels [see <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2010.1813>]. Cholesterol-lowering benefit obtained with an intake of 1500-3000 mg plant sterols (2-3 tablets a day) [see <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2009.1177>].\*\*Terms and Conditions: £5 off when you spend £15. Enter code PA1224J at checkout at [healthspan.co.uk](https://healthspan.co.uk) or quote on Freephone 0800 73 123 77. Single use only. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or subscription, nor redeemed instore or at any other retailer. Offer valid until 24.01.25.