



# April 2026 Branch

*From influencing government decisions on local media, AI, and Charter Renewal to fighting job cuts and securing better pay for members in various workplaces, the NUJ has been exceptionally busy over the last few months.*

I'm pleased to highlight a period of real momentum for our union. The launch of the government's new Local Media Strategy is an important moment for the industry, and we welcome the implementation of some of the NUJ's suggestions from our **News Recovery Plan**. The government's strategy recognises what our members have long argued: that the future of journalism should be rooted in local reporting. The £12 million Local News Fund aims to 'support digital innovation' and tackle news deserts, alongside increased funding for community radio and initiatives that promote media literacy and careers in journalism. This is a positive start but we seek more detail on plans and further investment and reform.

We also welcomed the news that the government no longer supports an opt-out copyright exception for AI. Last week we joined sister unions in Westminster to brief parliamentarians on the need for a simple, revocable opt-in mechanism as well as enforcement of existing copyright law and strengthened legislation.

Another key focus for the union is Charter Renewal, with the NUJ's **Back The BBC** campaign outlining members' vision for the broadcaster's future. The BBC belongs to the public and its workers, and I was pleased to see the culture secretary signal support for a permanent charter, oppose political appointees, and call for the BBC to be more accountable to its staff - just a week after meeting our reps.

However, the deeply alarming announcement that the BBC plans to cut one in ten jobs shows that potentially positive changes won't come soon

enough. These cuts follow decades of real-terms budget reductions and relentless cost-saving measures that have resulted in higher workloads, lower morale and reduced programming. The union's parliamentary group has tabled a **motion** calling on the government to urgently intervene and guarantee the BBC's long-term financial sustainability through Charter Renewal. We're also urging members to contact their reps and encourage non-members to join the union and stand with us as we fight to protect jobs, terms and conditions.

## IFJ Safety Fund

Journalists in Lebanon, Palestine, and Ukraine need your help to do their job in desperate circumstances. The IFJ is supplying vital equipment and aid. Please donate to its safety fund. Branches can email [jackiec@nuj.org](mailto:jackiec@nuj.org) to transfer from their management allowances.

**DONATE NOW**

The union has delivered wins for members across different workplaces in recent months. In March members at ITV secured an above-inflation pay rise plus a £750 non-consolidated payment alongside the reinstatement of a redundancy policy (see page 5). This followed members at Wyvex Media achieving a 7.3% pay rise and recognition in January.

I also want to pay tribute to the diligent,



determined work of the assistant general secretary and members at Raidió na Gaeltachta, who have reached an agreement with RTÉ that ends the decades-long two-tier pay system within Irish public service broadcasting.

Alongside these hard-fought wins, there has been vibrant activism across the union, including the revival of the Northants branch (see page 3) and the launch of a new series of branch workshops (see page 4). We also saw a strong turnout of NUJ members at the Together alliance demonstration on 28 March (see page 6). I was proud to march alongside colleagues and members, with some travelling large distances to demonstrate the union's long-standing commitment to equality and anti-racism.

The union will continue to build on these achievements in the coming months and I hope chapels and branches will join me in sending support to members at STV, who will strike over pay on 8 May (see page 2). At times like this, collective organisation really matters. By building solidarity, recruiting colleagues, and organising action, we will continue to strengthen the union and improve members' working lives.

**Laura Davison**

STV

# Strike while the iron is hot

*Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ Scotland organiser, explains why STV members will go on strike again – this time on the day of the Scottish election results.*

The NUJ, in conjunction with Bectu, has announced a further day of strike action at STV, the Scottish-based broadcaster that owns the two channel 3 licences outside of the ITV network.

The latest day of strike action, taking place on Friday 8 May, is over a 0% pay award in 2026 for staff who argue, for years, they have received pay rises which don't meet inflation, and that they are underpaid compared to their counterparts at BBC Scotland. STV management say they will prioritise an increase in salaries when the company has recovered financially but are not prepared to make any commitment in writing.

The one-day strike is timed to affect coverage of the vote count for the Scottish elections. Unlike in previous years there is no overnight counting on the day of the election, meaning results will only be known on the Friday.

This strike is also notable as it is the first coordinated strike action with Bectu, which represents technical staff at the broadcaster, and the strike ballot was one of the first held under

the new Employment Rights Act. The new legislation gives greater powers to unions, doubling the window for industrial action to 12 months, and reducing the amount of notice to be given to the employer to 10 days.

This latest move takes place against a wider backdrop of a long-running industrial dispute which began when STV issued a profits warning in July 2025, causing an immediate collapse in its share price which has halved the value of the company, showing no signs of recovery. It then announced plans to make 60 redundancies across the business, half of which would be in the newsroom, while seeking permission from the regulator Ofcom to cut its news

output by producing a single evening news programme across both licences.

While Ofcom has delayed the decision on whether to allow the reduction in news output, STV has already made cuts in the newsroom in anticipation of Ofcom's approval. Through industrial pressure, lobbying on individual cases, and redeployment, we have managed to avoid any compulsory redundancies in the newsroom, with ten staff taking voluntary redundancy and four staff leaving for other roles.

That reduction in journalists alongside increased workload has led to incredible pressure in the newsroom, with fewer reporters available, reports of staff crying at their desks, and reporters having to take time off work due to stress.

The last pay dispute at STV was in 2024 when the company agreed to an improved deal following two days of strike action which took all STV's news programming off air. So far this year, NUJ members held a strike in January over the cuts to the newsroom and workload issues, forcing the company to reschedule the launch of its new radio station, STV Radio.



## Back in action

*Micky Payne and Sarah Ward reflect on the relaunch of the Northamptonshire branch.*

It started just before Christmas at the Kino Lounge - one of the few bright spots in the market town of Kettering in the East Midlands. Like many places across Britain, it has felt a little left behind as the big shops have departed while charity and coffee shops remain.

But on a chill winter's night a hardcore group of local journalists sipped on their flat whites and plotted the revival of a long-gone NUJ branch for the county that claims the title 'The Rose of the Shires'. Northamptonshire media stalwarts Alison Bagley, Kate Cronin and Sarah Ward were the key drivers, gently marshalled and motivated by NUJ regional organiser Chris Morley - and before the second round of drinks were finished we'd agreed to meet formally in the New Year.

One online Zoom in January to confirm arrangements, and the inaugural meeting of the NUJ Northamptonshire Branch was held at the Woolpack pub in Islip - one of the many pretty villages that put the Rose into the County's boastful claim. The shared sense of solidarity and support among those present, and a feeling of unity when so much of our work is done in isolation, motivated us all to give the re-formed Branch our

best shot. Gary the Schnauzer was also present to become our mascot.

Officials were elected despite claims of busy-ness, non-stop deadlines, squeezed family lives, and the branch was re-born after an absence of far-too-many-years to remember.

Pens and pints were generously supplied by the much-travelled Chris Morley, and the support of Birmingham & Coventry and Nottingham Branches was valued and much appreciated.

It felt fitting for this to happen in the middle of HeartUnions Week. We want the Branch to provide practical support for members in their working lives, and our first motion was

to help secure our safety in the face of personal threats, intimidation and abuse - on social media and in-person.

This is an ongoing aim of course, and this month we had the head of media for Northants Police as our guest speaker, in which the crucial role of the JSLO (Journalist Safety Liaison Officer) was highlighted and discussed.

So it's a start. We're still going and growing. It's a big county to cover, but we have monthly meetings scheduled, including another in-person meeting over the summer, and Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, is also pencilled as a guest speaker. We have a diverse bunch of active members, including a life member and younger journalists starting their careers. And we are also able to honour the memory of NUJ activist and local journalist Johnny Lovett, who died in a swimming accident on New Year's Day. So power to the growth of the NUJ Rose here in Northamptonshire, where we hope to continue the sense of empowerment and support found in our collective discussions and action.



## New branch workshops

*A new programme of branch training aims to help with organising and holding more valuable and accessible meetings.*

Creating a vibrant branch that engages members, inspires activism and builds solidarity among journalists doesn't happen overnight.

It requires a team effort that draws on the knowledge, creativity and skills of everyone on the committee as well as the wider branch.

None of us has all the answers and some might have never run a branch before – that's where our new programme for branch committee members comes in.

Combined with a series of branch guides that are being produced on a range of topics, we hope the regular online sessions will be a way to build confidence, swap ideas and help forge links between branches.

The programme began in January with two sessions on running inclusive branch meetings, led by the NUJ's trade union training programme co-ordinator and tutor Caroline Holmes.

She said: "The branch training workshops are a mixture of theory and practice that we hope will provide the practical tools to help you run branches more effectively and encourage your members to get involved in branch activities.

"The first two sessions were well attended, with some lively discussions. Branch officers shared their experiences, ideas and good practice."

The next session in February was led by Georgina Morris, Development Committee chair and co-chair of Leeds & West Yorkshire branch. It focused on tips for using WhatsApp in branches, drawing on best practice **guidance from the TUC**.

"It was great to have people from such a wide mix of branches joining us for the session and to be able to hear how they're using different platforms to keep in touch with their members," Morris said.

"The group discussion we had after talking through the guidance was really useful. It's not often we have that chance to get together as branch activists, ask those practical questions and swap tips."

While certain sessions might feel more relevant to committee members holding a particular role, they're all open to anyone volunteering on a branch committee

who wants to learn more.

Those who come along are encouraged to take what they have learned and share it with others in their branch committee, including any useful materials that might be signposted during the sessions.

Following the session on managing branch finances on 29 April, the programme continues with a look at the role of **branches in the membership process**. This

90-minute session takes place on Wednesday 20 May, 1pm-2.30pm.

Topics covered will include who can join, the application process, approving memberships, welcoming new members and retaining members.

Holmes said: "Please come along and get involved in discussions about how you can make your branches work more effectively for you and your members."

"We welcome ideas on topics you would like covered in future, so we can build a comprehensive branch training programme that focuses on the skills and knowledge you will find most useful."

Download the new **NUJ branches handbook** and contact **tuttraining@nuj.org.uk** to share your ideas on the topics you would like to see covered.



## A United Front

*Martin Fisher, ITV chapel rep, reflects on members' determination to achieve an acceptable pay agreement.*

In March members at ITV won an above-inflation pay rise plus a non-consolidated £750 alongside the reinstatement of a redundancy policy. This was achieved following months of negotiations, several rejected offers, and solidarity with workers at Bectu and Unite.

It was decided to get our pay claim in early in September. It was a simple inflation plus 2% claim to make up for many years of under inflation rises. So a claim of 5.8%.

I think this was a good way to kick off the negotiations. We were clear from the outset that a low offer from ITV would not be acceptable. And when one was made it was rejected quickly. A second improved offer followed but again this was rejected.

What was different for me this year was that the unions (NUJ, Unite and Bectu) were really acting together. There were no chinks in our collective position for the company to exploit by division. They were dealing with a large and committed block of their workforce.

This, I think, trickled down to members. No-one complained when non-unionised areas in the company got a pay rise in January while we were still fighting for an improved offer. Keeping them informed was key

and they came along with us.

Also a somewhat archaic but very important document came into play. The Joint Unions Protocol. This, it has to be said, had been mocked in some quarters when I tried to use it in previous negotiations. But this year with a largely fresh negotiating team we took it very seriously. It basically says all three unions must be in agreement and won't act unilaterally if one union approved the offer.

This proved hugely important not just in keeping the unions together but showing a united front to the company. Our protocol was explained to them and they accepted it.

From then on it was a matter of pushing as hard as we could to get somewhere near our claim. I firmly believe that

things we had asked for – and were initially rejected – were ultimately agreed by the company because we were so united.

As John Sailing, NUJ broadcasting organiser, said: "Our members showed unity and determination throughout the months of negotiations since September, standing together to secure a fairer deal at a time when the cost-of-living crisis continues to put pressure on journalists across the industry."

This meant we achieved a much-improved offer from the one we started with after six months of hard work. We didn't get our full claim but achieved 4% with additional cash and conditions improvements. I described this as not a victory but an honourable draw to my chapel.

Finally I'd like to thank the team of officers and reps who battled through the negotiations. Without the experience, persistence and wisdom of either, we wouldn't have achieved what we did.

# ORGANISING

# DEFENDING

# WINNING

## The fight doesn't stop here

*Alexandria Slater, NUJ campaigns & communications officer, reports from the Together Alliance demonstration on 28 March.*

**N**UJ members joined the Together Alliance's historic display of resistance to the far right on 28 March.

The scale of the attendance was heartening, with the NUJ bloc completing the route before many people had even set off from the starting point on Park Lane. The Metropolitan Police reported an estimate of 50,000 attendees, though the march organisers put this figure at half a million.

Regardless of the total, the march brought together people of all ages and backgrounds, and was marked by a sense of optimism and solidarity with thousands of trade unionists filling the streets.

"It was great to see so many NUJ members turn out on Saturday to demonstrate our commitment to unity and solidarity," said Roger McKenzie, NUJ Black Members' Council co-chair. "I know that there were many more NUJ members present than marched with our national banner. I heard later from many more who either couldn't get through to us with such huge numbers present or who, for whatever reason, chose to march under another banner."

NUJ members marched alongside

colleagues from Equity, the Musicians' Union and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, uniting behind banners declaring 'Creative Workers Together Against The Far Right'. Georgina Morris, NUJ vice-president, and Gerry Curran, NUJ joint president, both attended the march and emphasised the importance of trade unionists making a collective stance against division and discrimination.

"For the trade union movement, this moment is a reminder of what we can achieve when we organise," said Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary. "The scale and spirit of Saturday's march sends a clear message: the politics of hate and division will not go unchallenged."

The event was undeniably vibrant and positive. Speakers - including songwriter and activist Billy Bragg and Paul Nowak, TUC general secretary - addressed crowds with impassioned speeches at Whitehall, while high-profile artists performed in a 'House Against Hate' rave in Trafalgar Square.

But moments like this must galvanise further action. "The important thing now is how we build on this presence in the NUJ and what we can do to support the efforts of the organisers to bring half a million people together through the streets of

London is not wasted," said McKenzie.

Too often the responsibility for confronting racism, discrimination and the politics of division is left to those directly affected by it. At a webinar organised by the NUJ Black Members' Council (BMC) in January, Kudsia Batool, TUC equalities director, stressed that Black workers should not have to shoulder the burden of combatting the far right.

The Together march offers an opportunity to turn a display of hope and unity into sustained and organised action. For trade unionists, this means challenging racism in the workplace; campaigning on issues such as unequal and unfair pay; and addressing issues around AI, which is being exploited by the far right online.

"Our allyship does not end here," Davison continued. "The NUJ will build on this momentum by continuing to organise within the union, backing colleagues facing hostility in the workplace, challenging mis- and disinformation, and standing with the wider trade union movement to defeat the far right."



## Get Active

The NUJ's website has a wealth of information, advice, guidance and useful materials

### AI

Artificial Intelligence is a fast-moving technology which will affect all of us at work. Go to the **Journalism before Algorithms** website page for more information.

### Campaigns

The **NUJ's Pay Campaign** calls for fair pay and flexible working and provides practical support to chapels when dealing with employers and on the rights of freelancers.

#### Save Quality Journalism

**Education: write to your MP** to oppose harmful cuts proposed by the UK government to journalism courses.

**Recruiting students:** there's lots of info, FAQs and materials for branches and chapels to encourage local journalism, publishing and photography students to join the union **on the NUJ website**.

### Useful stuff

Freelance members can access help and useful information in the union's **freelance resources**, including **Protect your sources** and your rights as a journalist.

**Legal assistance:** one of the many benefits of NUJ membership is its legal advice.

**Health and safety:** advice, guidance and news.

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



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

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

**TUC Organising at Work:** guide on building and maintaining strong workplace unions.

#### NUJ recruitment materials.

**Mental health:** find help for **post-traumatic stress disorder**.

The NUJ's guidance **Menopause is a workplace issue** provides advice to reps and members on how to influence workplace policies



and support women during the menopause.

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

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

### Donate

The **IEJ's safety fund** helps journalists across the globe, including in Ukraine, Afghanistan and those covering the Israel-Gaza war.

The NUJ's **George Viner Memorial Award** provides bursaries for Black and minority ethnic students.

**NUJ extra** helps members and their dependents who have fallen on hard times.

### NUJ training

The union provides a free programme of **training for reps**. **NUJ Scotland Training** and **NUJ Training Wales** provide a huge range of professional skills courses.

**Social media:** Keep up with the latest breaking news, offers, campaigns, solidarity events and more on **X**, **Instagram**, **Bluesky** and **Facebook**.

# REASONS TO JOIN



## The National Union of Journalists

Is the voice of journalism in the UK and Ireland for all media, communications and PR workers. It represents staff and freelances working in newspapers, news agencies, broadcasting, magazines, online, book publishing, social media, copy writing and as photographers and illustrators.

The NUJ supports members throughout their professional careers, provides a collective voice for industrial issues and freelance rights and defends press freedom.



## Ending the Gender Pay Gap

A Press Gazette analysis showed that 91 per cent of UK media companies paid men more than women and 85 per cent of men got better bonuses and it's a similar picture in Ireland. One magazine group's gap was almost 37 per cent. Opaque, unfair pay structures and unlawful sex discrimination are contributing factors. The NUJ negotiates on transparent pay structures, progressive work-life balance policies, better maternity and paternity deals and fair recruitment procedures.



## Be Part of a Collective Voice

As a member of the NUJ you are part of a united force championing the rights of media workers and defending attacks on press freedom. Successful workplaces are those where the management and workers share the same aims and talk to each other. Being a member of the NUJ means giving yourself and colleagues a real voice at work.



## Respect at Work

The NUJ challenges work cultures which lead to bullying and harassment. It will represent you if you experience this behaviour. It uses its collective voice industry-wide to argue that media workers are treated with respect. We promote workplaces where workers and managers are constructive with their criticism during the creative process, and the union publishes codes of conduct and dignity at work policies.

Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at  
[nuj.org.uk/join](http://nuj.org.uk/join)

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