



Feb 2023 Branch

HeartUnions week from February 13-19 celebrates unions, sends solidarity greetings to members taking industrial action and looks forward to April's NUJ's Delegate Meeting

While the UK was experiencing one of the largest-ever strikes among health workers, the Prime Minister was arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic - making his priority a shake-up of government departments.

The cost-of-living-crisis, fuelled by double-figure inflation, has led to a huge surge in industrial action from driving instructors, train drivers, nurses, posties, teachers, lecturers, ambulance workers and British Museum staff, to name a few. The NUJ's BBC Local members in England are balloting for strike action over cuts to local radio.

The government's only response has been to rush anti-strike legislation through Parliament, rather than negotiating with union reps and leaders. On page three the union's parliamentary consultant outlines

the perils in the draconian **Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill**.

This why this year's TUC-organised **#HeartUnions** week is a vital opportunity for branches and chapels to tell everyone about the work of the NUJ and the union movement and invite colleagues to join the union. There are lots of material and reminders of our campaigns on the **website** to help with activities.

Unions need to maintain the support of the public as well as show their strength. Do visit a local picket line and join the anti-strike bill lobby on social media at **#RightToStrike**.

As we read reports from Ukraine and the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, my thoughts are also with all those on the ground covering these tragic events. Read on page two, the report of a union roundtable with experts on trauma and news gathering and new funding for training and therapy.



The union's policy on the safety of journalists will be reinforced in motions put to April's Delegate Meeting. For those of you taking part, NUJ Branch has provided a handy guide to help delegates navigate the weekend's debates and procedures. There will also be a week of online events that all members can get involved with, so look out for the programme of events, workshops and training.

As part of the government reorganisation, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport loses a D - digital - and gains its eighth secretary of state in five years, with former prisons minister, Lucy Frazer, being handed one of the Titanic deckchairs. She is expected to be responsible for the Online Harms Bill.

The former culture secretary, Michelle Donelan, gets the D as part of a new science, innovation and technology department. According to the Institute of Government, the Whitehall reorganisation could cost well over £100m and take years to bed in.

What a way to run a country.

In Solidarity

Michelle Stanistreet



UNIONS
HEART UNIONS WEEK
13-19 FEBRUARY

Love the NUJ? Help us build a stronger union by telling a colleague to join.

www.nuj.org.uk/join




CAMPAIGN

02



Don't be a hero

Frances Rafferty, NUJ senior editorial and communications officer, reports on an experts' discussion about PTSD and a new partnership to provide funding for safety training and therapy for NUJ members

The reports on the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have been heart-breaking. The occasional picture of a child being carried alive from the rubble punctuates the coverage's almost unrelieved terror, horror and scenes of people shocked and grieving as they contemplate the scenes of mass destruction and the loss of their homes and loved ones.

As the war continues in Ukraine, the pictures of mass graves, shoppers dodging snipers and misery of the people are transmitted by the hour to our homes and

our phones. It is important that media workers are on the ground, recording what is happening and later providing evidence to hold those responsible to account. Are Putin's soldiers committing war crimes? Was President Erdoğan's government too slow to react?

But does this exposure to trauma and danger have long-term effects? One **American study** revealed the lifetime prevalence rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in war journalists was 28.6 per cent and the rate of depression was 21.4 per cent.

It isn't just war and disaster reporters who encounter trauma. Increasingly, journalists are exposed to gruesome sights at home on their computers when researching stories online, such as jihadi beheadings. Local newspaper reporters can find themselves at the scene of a horrific train crash or local fire. Investigative reporters become immersed in dangerous and dark worlds when covering paedophile rings or people traffickers. Magazine and feature writers are witnesses to deeply traumatised people's life stories.

The NUJ is working with expert organisations and the BBC to inform

journalists of the possible impact of the job on their mental health and to persuade newsrooms to provide appropriate support to staff and freelancers. The union is about to launch a partnership with the **Rory Peck Trust** which has new funding to help pay for safety training, trauma therapy, and hardship grants for NUJ members.

Anthony Feinstein, professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto, has studied journalists working on the frontline. He notes that they often spend more time on the frontline than soldiers do, and as a result "the rates of post-traumatic stress disorder were actually quite high".

The overriding message of our discussion with the experts was the need for prevention. News organisations must work with our reps on policies to support staff and freelancers undertaking assignments that might in the short or long term affect their health. Nobody should feel they have to be a hero or fear missing out on the next assignment if they say they need help: they must be confident that reporting symptoms of PTSD will be taken up sympathetically and practically.

Go the NUJ website's new page giving advice on PTSD.

Info

The **Headlines Network** provides a guide for journalists and newsrooms covering traumatic news stories.

The **Dart Centre Europe** is a hub for journalists reporting on violence, conflict and tragedy.

The **Rory Peck Trust** supports the safety and welfare of freelance newsgatherers around the world.

CAMPAIGN

Right to strike

Michael Calderbank, the NUJ's Parliamentary consultant, assesses the latest anti-union legislation

The first of February saw the biggest co-ordinated industrial action for more than a decade as an estimated 100,000

workers went on strike.

The civil service union, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), had picket lines outside government departments across Westminster and offices nationwide after receiving a shocking pay offer of just 2 per cent - with the option of an additional 1 per cent conditional on accepting "efficiency savings" - at a time when inflation is running well into double figures.

Workers closed down Whitehall as the civil servants were joined outside the entrance to Downing Street by an estimated 40,000 teachers and education staff from the National Educational Union (NEU), furious that their own pay review body offered just 5 per cent while University and College Union (UCU) lecturers picketed university and colleges. The demonstrations might have been bigger still, were it not for the many trains cancelled owing to the strike of Aslef train drivers. Further strike action by the NEU and PCS is planned to coincide with Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's Spring Budget statement on 15 March. NUJ members working for BBC Local in

England are balloting for action over cuts to local radio.

Rocked by the levels of strike action, the government has sought to rush through **legislation** to compel unions in some sectors, including transport, NHS, border control, education and nuclear power, to maintain minimum service levels during strikes. It awards new powers to an employer to issue a diktat requiring specific workers to cross their own union's picket lines - a measure likely to be targeted at shop stewards and union reps. It puts a responsibility on a union to compel some of its own members not to strike, otherwise the whole dispute becomes unlawful and raises the

prospect of all striking workers being vulnerable to dismissal.

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill gives extraordinary powers to the Secretary of State, and no details of specific measures in each sector have been published because they will be pushed through via secondary legislation. The legislation will come to the House of Lords on 21 February, and even Conservative peers are expressing misgivings about the draconian nature of the legislation and fear it will further inflame the industrial relations climate.

The NUJ is part of the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group, chaired this year by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which held its AGM on 6 February when Mick Lynch, RMT general secretary, and Jo Grady, UCU general secretary (pictured front), told opposition MPs of the vital importance of supporting solidarity and resistance in defending the right to strike, and demanding a fair pay settlement amidst the present cost of living crisis.



Everything you wanted to know about DM ... but were afraid to ask

Delegate Meeting (DM), the union's body which decides the union's policies, campaigns and priorities, meets every two years. DM 2023 is in London on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 April at the TUC's Congress Centre, Great Russell Street WC1B 3LS.

This guide is to help delegates, observers and visitors, DM stalwarts and newcomers.

DM

As well as creating policy, conference scrutinises the union's accounts and reviews the statements from each sector included in the full NUJ Report to Delegate Meeting. The newest Members of Honour - the NUJ's highest accolade - are announced and there will a drink reception and fundraiser for the union's charities. DM will be chaired by the NUJ president, Pierre Vicary, with help from a member of the elected standing orders committee, the body which advises on conference procedures.

DM is also great opportunity to meet colleagues from throughout the union.

Preparation

All the documents you will need before and during DM can be found on the [NUJ website](#), including the preliminary agenda. The deadline for amendments is 13.00 Friday 3 March and 13.00 Monday 24 April for Late Notice Motions (LNMs). LNMs are motions covering issues that have arisen since the deadline for the agenda. Branches and councils should discuss their views on the motions and generally, while their delegates are there to represent those collective views, they should also be able to make decisions based on the debate at DM. Each delegation will need a leader.

Make sure that all your electronic devices are fully charged when you arrive. You will find more information and a jargon buster at the back of your final agenda.

DM week

In the week running up to DM there will be a series of online fringe meetings and sectoral meetings open to all members.

How the business works

The agenda for motions and accompanying amendments are set out on order papers for each

session, divided by topic. These will be published on the [website](#).

Motions and speeches

Your motion may be covered by a selected motion on the same subject or composited together with other motions on the same subject. If your motion is covered, you can amend that motion.

Each motion will have a proposer and seconder. If you are proposing a motion, it is your job to find a branch willing to second it. Delegates then line up beside the for and against microphones to support or oppose a motion or amendment. All speeches have a time limit, and this is indicated on a traffic light system, so speakers can see when they must wind down and stop.



Chains of office

Former president Tim Dawson gives a view from the top table at DM

For years I imagined that the president had the plum job at our Delegate Meetings. There they are, sat at the centre of attention, wielding extraordinary powers and wearing a gold chain of sufficient heft to give a gangsta rapper blushes.

How wrong I was.

When my turn came to direct proceedings, I hated every minute. Not, I confess, because I shun limelight, flummery, or power, but because being president kept me from the things I love best at our biennial gatherings.

For me, first sight of the preliminary agenda is the opening of a narrative that unwinds over the coming months. I read every motion, careless of which do and do not lodge in my memory. Arguments for and against waft between my ears. In idle moments, I



weigh points in favour and against and imagine who are the likely enthusiasts and opponents of any given proposition. As I cycle about London, I rehearse declamations, refining their emphasis and order.

My time as president was no different. I arrived in Southport fully charged with months of pent-up rhetoric at the tip of my tongue. Then, I was forced to mute myself as each debate raged. Day after day, as the impartial arbiter of events, I found myself fully loaded but undischarged.

And that was by no means my only frustration.

Some motions, I know instinctively, will be well-framed by news of a dispute here, or an employment tribunal there. As we rattle though the order paper, I like to prowl the hall delivering a word

in an ear here and a nudge there, encouraging others to the rostrum. It quickly became clear to me that, as president, I might enjoy the best seat in the house but I had to occupy it at all times. Floorwalking, shoulder-tapping, mixing it up with the throng are quite impossible when you are trussed to your throne.

Not for me the joy of a few late-night pints and a get together with colleagues and comrades. The sheer time required to internalise order-paper briefings from the steering committee precluded my hopes of wrangling composites into the wee small hours. As Sunday's session ground to its conclusion, Rousseau's dictum played on my mind: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." I fingered my ceremonial medallion for the last time before happily handing it to my successor. Of course, it was a privilege to have held the top job but, on balance, it is one best enjoyed in hindsight. This year, I'll be back on the floor, scribbling down speeches on scraps of paper, making sure I dash to the right microphone and fully enjoying the cut and thrust of debate.

Do not just read out the motion – people will have it on the agenda. Do not be over-elaborate – make about three points explaining why the motion is important, why people should vote for it and maybe add some interesting statistics or a case study.

Motions can be proposed or seconded formally, going straight to a vote without speeches. Conference can ask to take a motion seriatim where parts of the motion are voted

on separately. Voting will be carried out electronically. If you cannot be present, you can give your voting pad to your lead delegate who can vote on your behalf.

Elections

Delegates will be expected to vote for candidates where necessary for national officers, members of councils, committees and TUC delegations.

What happens next?

At the end of DM, Natasha Hirst will take over as president and the new national executive council will meet. It will be the NEC's job to make any rule changes necessary based on the decisions of DM, then put in place a work programme to turn the motions into reality. A report compiling how the actions proposed have been carried out goes to the next DM.



For easy reading

Johny Cassidy, BBC journalist and former Reuters Institute fellow, reviews how visual data journalism can be made accessible to all people

There's been somewhat of a revolution over the past number of years in the use of visual data journalism across the majority if not all newsrooms. The use of graphs and charts, of maps and infographics to translate and illustrate complicated data has become the norm for many journalists, but there's a downside to this exponential growth and widespread adoption of visual data journalism – and that's the unequal experience it's creating for people who access information in a different way.

The Royal National Institute for Blind People estimates that more than two million people in the UK [according to the NCBI, 52,250 in Ireland] are living with some sort of sight loss. If you add people with cognitive issues or problems with fine motor skills who access the web in different ways, it's not hard to see that more effort needs to be given to how we make sure all audiences are being given equal access to news.

I've recently completed a fellowship at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University where I looked at the

need for newsrooms to do more for the accessibility of visual data and, while many newsrooms do recognise the need to be doing more, there has to be a lot more awareness, understanding and a community approach to fix the problem. We need all those involved in the production of visual data journalism to take responsibility for making the web an equitable experience for everyone.

The use of **alternative texts** or alt texts can be of real benefit to blind screen reader users for simple photos or images, but for more complicated data charts or graphs there is currently no solution in place. Newsrooms keen to develop their accessibility approach should offer additional training to journalists on the importance of using meaningful alt texts for their charts. It's surprising how many journalists do not consider this when creating their content.

There are guidelines available which set out accessibility requirements for websites and content creators, but the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**, (WCAG) are a baseline minimum and often come from a compliance perspective.

If newsrooms want to reach more audiences, they need to adopt a frontier mindset to address the issue.

What you can do

Read more about my research. **Be aware.** Using meaningful alt texts on your images ensures those using screen readers to access news understand what is in the photo or graphic in your piece. Many newsrooms will have some sort of guidance in place for alt texts but, if not, there are **many resources available online**. Make sure your branch or chapel has an **accessibility champion officer** or network to promote best practice. Invite accessibility experts to speak at an event. It's amazing how humanising the need for more considered thought around accessibility can really make a difference. **Keep learning.** The **hashtag #a11y** is all about digital accessibility where people share tips, ask advice and get the latest news.

Do three things to increase your content's accessibility – then you'll be off to a flying start.

INFO

Get Active

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

 UNIONS

#HeartUnions week

Celebrate the work of the union during **HeartUnions week** and tell a colleague to join the NUJ.

Campaigns

Protect the Right to strike: go to the NUJ's campaign page and find out how you can take part in the fight against the new draconian law which will curb people's right to strike.

Local radio: the union is voting whether to take industrial action against cuts to local radio which means the loss of posts and the sharing of programmes across the network. The NUJ says the plans are taking the local out of local radio. Find out more on the **#KeepBBCLocalRadio** **Local** page.

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.

Violence against women: the NUJ is working with the International

Federation of Journalists to persuade journalists' unions to urge governments to expedite ratification of **ILO Convention 190** on violence and harassment in the world of work. According to IFJ statistics, almost two-thirds of women media workers have experienced intimidation, threats or abuse in relation to their work either offline or online.

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

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.

Legal assistance: one of the many benefits of NUJ membership is its free legal service.

Health and safety: advice, guidance and news.

Freelance resources: help and

useful information for freelance members.

Donate

Ukraine: please make a donation to the IFJ/EFJ fund created to help journalists reporting on the war in Ukraine. Funds are used to provide emergency assistance. Ukraine became the **deadliest country** for journalists in 2022 with 12 colleagues killed in the course of their work.

Afghanistan: since the Taliban took control of the country Afghan journalists have faced attacks, harassment, censorship, and harsh restrictions on the media. They need your support. **Please donate** to the IFJ's fund.

NUJ training

The union provides a free programme of **training for reps**, including an Equality Workshop Stage 2 on Thursday 9 March. Members outside Scotland and Wales have access to a wide range of subsidised skills courses provided by **NUJ Scotland Training** and **NUJ Training Wales**.

Reports

The International Federation of Journalists has published its **2022 "killings list"** which revealed that 68 media workers were killed and 375 were in prison. It renewed calls for a UN International Convention dedicated to the protection of journalists and media professionals.



REASONS TO JOIN



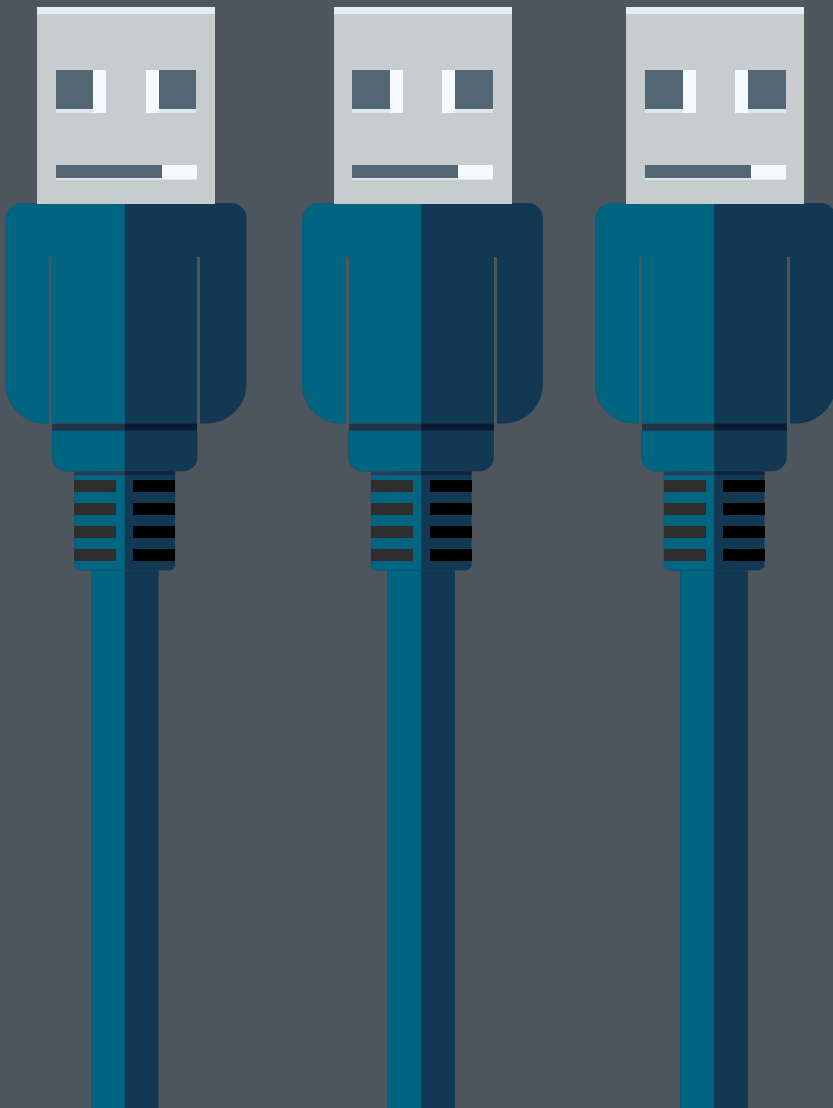
Networking

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

Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at

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