

# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Informed

issue 51 Dec 2025

## STV members vote to strike

**As we near the end of the year, this edition of NUJ Informed reflects the issues highlighted during our recent National Executive Council (NEC) meeting. The NEC agreed the union's 2025-26 budget following lengthy but collegial debate.**

The Budget Working Group recommended ways to address the deficit after the delegate meeting did not secure the required two-thirds majority to increase subs and a prospective tenant withdrew from Headland House. A clear NEC majority agreed to consider reductions to the cost of the 2027 delegate meeting, including an afternoon-only Friday session so most delegates won't need hotel accommodation the night before. The NEC also agreed to reduce the collective budget for The Journalist, with practical implications to be determined through discussion between the Editor and General Secretary. It was noted that further significant savings will be required in coming years unless union revenue increases through improved recruitment and retention.

The NEC discussed the impressive response of branches across the UK, Ireland and Europe in organising summer vigils showing solidarity with journalists killed in Gaza. On 3 November the union held a public event marking International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, mourning colleagues and demanding accountability (read more on page 12). There was also a summary of NUJ activity at the TUC Congress (see page 5) and a report led by general secretary Laura Davison, whose column on page 2 updates members on the union's response to the BBC leadership resignations. For a look at the future of

public service broadcasting, read Tara Conlan's feature on page 8.

Members at Scottish broadcaster STV have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action in response to plans to scrap the STV North edition of News at 6 and related job losses. STV announced companywide cutbacks in September, including 60 planned job losses, about half affecting the newsroom. The union has condemned the cuts as an "act of cultural vandalism" and called on Ofcom to review how STV is meeting regional licence obligations. Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ Scotland organiser, raised concerns while giving evidence in Holyrood and Westminster about the impact on viewers and workers.

At Reach we remain deeply concerned about cuts, with reps and officials working tenaciously in recent months to ensure due process and better outcomes for members. The Mirror is among those hit hardest, losing around 40 writers and editors. NUJ members there voted for strike action over compulsory redundancies, rotas and concerns about artificial intelligence's impact on

editorial quality. Talks are ongoing, with progress on saved roles and continued engagement on AI and new rota patterns. The strike mandate remains for four months. In September Grahame Morris MP from the NUJ parliamentary group raised Reach redundancies and the "erosion of the media landscape" in Parliament. Culture secretary Lisa Nandy responded by committing to meeting us and we are due to meet early in the new year.

The NUJ has also been active in government consultations, including on alcohol licensing notices, the BBC Operating Licence, and policing and security in Northern Ireland. Following our 'Stop the freelance rip-off' campaign, led by organiser Tim Dawson, we submitted evidence on late payments and poor practices, emphasising the vital role of freelance journalists. Members can find all submissions on the NUJ website. This edition also looks at other pressing issues, including cuts to journalism education (page 6), the Online Safety Act (page 7), and the surveillance and safety of journalists in Northern Ireland (page 11).

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**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS

# Live from Laura



## We must defend our members at the BBC and the principle of public service broadcasting.

**Although there are big issues facing journalists at the traditional broadcasters and publishers - from AI to safety to governance - it is heartening to report successes, big and small, that show the power of our union and the strength solidarity can bring.**

In November I was delighted to join a social to celebrate recognition at Elsevier. Members secured this collective bargaining agreement in the wake of RELX, Elsevier's parent company, derecognising the NUJ at LexisNexis and LexisNexis Risk Solutions, demonstrating the remarkable resilience and determination of our reps and activists.

Inspired by the 2024 Springer Nature pay dispute, NUJ members at Elsevier have since built two thriving chapels - Cell Press and The Lancet - within a year, culminating in both chapels now achieving statutory recognition through

the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). This success marks a powerful affirmation of collective strength, offering renewed momentum for workers across the sector in journals, magazines and books.

In early September I attended my first TUC Congress as general secretary as part of an excellent delegation of Fran McNulty, Natasha Hirst, Pennie Quinton, and Steve Bird. We worked well together as a team and I want to thank colleagues for their diligent and committed approach.

We were able to intervene in a number of debates and the delegation made some powerful speeches. Our joint president Fran McNulty moved our motion on AI and the creative industries, which was composited with sister unions, with Congress unanimously supporting transparent labelling, protections for rightsholders, and new laws to stop AI copyright breaches. I moved our motion on international solidarity with journalists highlighting that the professionalism and commitment of our colleagues around the world should never mean paying with their lives.

Whilst we were at Congress, the scale of Reach cuts was announced and we were able to raise this on the conference

floor and speak to journalists, trade unionists and MPs who were present.

Other highlights for me recently have included interviewing potential candidates for the George Viner bursaries. It was excellent that we were able to agree two awards for two clearly very able students starting courses this autumn. Another fascinating event was the Claudia Jones Memorial Lecture, which is covered in detail on page 10. I was really pleased that this was able to be co-hosted with the Guardian chapel during Black History Month in October and thank everyone for their work in making this happen, particularly Roger McKenzie and Saadeya Shamsuddin from the Black Members' Council (BMC). We will be engaging further with our speaker Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP to seek to involve her in our parliamentary work.

We were extremely proud to sponsor the Write to End Violence Against Women Awards, which were announced at a ceremony in London on 27 November. These annual awards celebrate the work of journalists and writers who report on violence against women responsibly, sensitively and accurately and I congratulate the winners.

As our national organiser Nick McGowan-Lowe said at the ceremony,

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## Backing the BBC

**In August we welcomed John Sailing as our new national broadcasting organiser. John has hit the ground running, supporting members and deftly responding to concerns. He has been instrumental in formulating the union's response to the resignations of director general Tim Davie and head of news Deborah Turness, as well as to Donald Trump's \$5 billion mega-SLAPP.**

Many of our members are worried about the ramifications for the BBC's reputation and, by extension, their roles as BBC journalists. We have publicly backed the professional integrity of our members and have written to Davie and BBC chair Samir Shah to seek a meeting to discuss concerns.

During a meeting of our parliamentary group on 12 November, we briefed MPs on the need for sustainable funding free from political interference, and governance reform with worker representation and independent appointments to the BBC board. The group subsequently submitted an Early Day Motion highlighting our calls.

On 16 December we welcomed the launch of the BBC Charter Review, calling for meaningful public consultation plus engagement with trade unions and NUJ members throughout the process. We look forward to obtaining members' views on the government green paper. We also joined sister unions in writing to culture secretary Lisa Nandy to reiterate BBC workers' priorities.

In addition, we continue to work on the threat of compulsory redundancies at the corporation and supported the World Service's call for the UN to condemn the escalating persecution of journalists at BBC News Persian by the Iranian state. Journalists must be allowed to work without fear of reprisals to them or their families.

**REASONS TO JOIN**

**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.

**Are you keeping good company?**

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

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the awards showcase “the talent and dedication of journalists throughout the UK who shine a light into the darkest corners of our society.” Page 1 covered some of the items raised during our recent NEC, during which I also wished well those reps who are departing and thanked them for their service.

I want to end the year by thanking all our national officers for their time and service to the union. It was great to be with them and with delegates at the Biennial Delegate Meeting in Dublin earlier this month. A lot of work goes into organising these events by our hard-working staff.

# Update

## Ireland delegate conference

**With a strong focus on recruitment and rejuvenation there was an air of urgency about the Biennial Delegate Conference 2025 held in Dublin on Saturday 8 November.**

Under the theme 'Organising Together: Better in a Trade Union', delegates debated a range of issues ranging from health and safety, collective bargaining and remote working to the need for targeted recruitment and the protection of public service broadcasting.

In welcoming joint presidents Gerry Curran and Fran McNulty, outgoing Cathaoirleach (chair) Cearbhall Ó Síocháin recalled the contribution of previous Irish presidents, including the most recent office holders Barry McCall and Christy Loftus.

Also present on her first visit to Dublin as general secretary was Laura Davison while vice-president Georgina Morris was keynote speaker at the afternoon seminar on branch re-organisation.

Delegates were united in expressing concern at low levels of branch activity, with particular concern expressed at the decline in attendance at branch meetings.

While this is a concern across the union - and in other unions - Séamus Dooley, Irish secretary, warned that low levels of branch participation impede the ability of the union to serve members and to organise at chapel level.

Among the issues discussed was the



Carolyn Farrar and Stephen Corrigan

possibility of merging branches, closer co-operation between branches and the need to co-ordinate chapels across the union with a common employer.

Galway journalist Stephen Corrigan was elected as Cathaoirleach and will lead discussions at a follow up seminar in Spring 2026. Carolyn Farrar was re-elected as Leas Cathaoirleach.

The issue of collective bargaining dominated discussions on industrial matters. There was strong support for Dublin branch motion calling on the Irish Executive Council (IEC) to continue to accelerate work with its sister unions, via the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), in campaigning for the statutory right to collective bargaining. The motion was proposed by Kitty Holland and seconded by Ian McGuinness, Irish organiser.

Judy Murphy, West of Ireland, moved a motion expressing dissatisfaction at

the failure of the Irish government to implement EU legislation on collective bargaining.

Joint president Fran McNulty, himself an RTÉ presenter, successfully proposed a late notice motion expressing grave concern at the RTÉ decision to close its TV documentary unit in 2026. RTÉ is to outsource to the commercial sector all television documentaries currently produced in-house.

It was also agreed to launch a new €3,000 bursary to encourage the next generation of Irish language student journalists into the industry. Sparánacht Bhraínse Átha Cliath, Ceardchumann Náisiúnta na nIriseoirí, is open to student members in third-level education in Ireland.

"This bursary is an important investment in Irish language journalism," said Éanna Ó Caollaí, NUJ Dublin branch member. "It recognises the obstacles faced by young journalists today and we hope that it will be an incentive to those who wish to explore the possibilities of a career in Irish language journalism. It is important that all voices are reflected in the media."

To apply for the bursary, please email [NUJDublinbranch@gmail.com](mailto:NUJDublinbranch@gmail.com) before 5pm on 23 January 2026. Applicants must submit a previously unpublished 500-word article in Gaeilge outlining their vision for Irish language journalism.

## Anti-SLAPP provisions

**In July the Irish Dáil passed the Defamation (Amendment) Bill.**

However its anti-SLAPP provisions are disappointing as they apply only to defamation proceedings, even though SLAPPs frequently exploit other causes of action including privacy, copyright, and data protection. As the bill went

before the upper house, the Seanad, the NUJ joined 29 other organisations in calling for further anti-SLAPP provisions within the legislation.

Meanwhile in November the NUJ welcomed the Scottish government's finding that legislation needs to be introduced to combat SLAPPs. "For

too long those with thin skins and thick wallets have tried to silence the media with vexatious legal claims which have little chance of actual success, but which are prohibitively expensive to defend," said Nick McGowan-Lowe, national organiser for Scotland. "We urge the Scottish government to follow this up urgently to ensure reform of the law happens quickly."

# Update

## Conferences roundup

**NUJ delegates highlighted issues of press freedom, welfare reform, and ethical LGBT+ reporting at recent conferences in the UK and Ireland.**

In September the TUC Congress unanimously passed an NUJ motion calling on delegates to continue standing in solidarity with journalists globally and condemn attacks against media workers. The NUJ's specific demands were laid out by general secretary Laura Davison, including: an investigation by the International Criminal Court into the targeting of journalists by Israeli forces; access for foreign journalists to report alongside Palestinian colleagues; and the adoption of a binding UN Convention on the safety of journalists.

At the ICTU biennial conference in Belfast, the NUJ called for a full public inquiry into the surveillance of journalists by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Durham Constabulary.

In December 2024 the Investigatory Powers Tribunal found that police had unlawfully targeted journalists Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney over their investigation into alleged collusion between security forces and the perpetrators of the 1994 Loughinisland murders. The PSNI were ordered to compensate the journalists for unlawful intrusion, establishing a judicial precedent.

The union supported McCaffrey and

Birney from the beginning of the ordeal and Séamus Dooley, assistant general secretary, thanked conference for their solidarity: "The scandalous treatment of Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney, the outrageous breach of process and fair procedure, the deliberate targeting of investigative journalists and the flagrant use and abuse of investigatory powers by the PSNI is a matter of grave concern to all who care about human rights."

At the TUC Disabled Workers' Conference in London, the NUJ delegation joined workers across the UK in strongly opposing government cuts to disability and benefits payments. "This is a full-on attack on our rights," said Natasha Hirst of the Disabled Members' Council. NUJ

motions on protecting Access to Work and bolstering the right to reasonable adjustments passed as unions agreed to campaign in solidarity with deaf and disabled people's organisations on welfare cuts.

At the TUC LGBT+ Conference, the NUJ's delegation submitted an emergency motion on inclusive and accurate LGBT+ reporting. James Doherty condemned "blatant attacks on our trans and non-binary communities who have been stripped of their rights, vilified and marginalised in a campaign of fear, disinformation and slander." The NUJ delegation also proposed a motion highlighting the potential for AI to exacerbate disinformation and regressive representations of LGBT+ people, urging protection for human-made ethical journalism.

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## Government freelance champion

**A little-noticed summer announcement revealed that culture secretary Lisa Nandy plans to appoint a Freelance Champion to advocate for freelancers and improve their lot.**

The role's remit is still to be determined, but the NUJ's Tim Dawson suggests in an article on our website that key concerns

cited by freelance journalists could be covered, including: byline theft, copyright abuse, and poor professional conduct. One of the biggest challenges remains freelance fees, which have barely risen in 25 years, amounting to a shocking cut of around 30-40% in real terms. A recent Sheffield Hallam University survey found

50% of freelance journalists have been offered less than £100 per 1000 words. Finding someone to be the Freelance Champion will not be easy. But Dawson points out that the government could save on search agents' fees and look at the NUJ's Freelance Directory, which offers many qualified candidates!

# Update

## Save journalism education

**Journalism funding is the subject of government cuts. This is despite Keir Starmer writing in *The Guardian* last October that: “Journalism is the lifeblood of democracy. Journalists are guardians of democratic values. These simple facts are so woven into the fabric of our society that we often take them for granted.”**

In May Bridget Phillipson, education secretary, directed the Office for Students (OfS) to withdraw Strategic Priorities Grant funding from journalism courses for the 2025-26 financial year. Instead Phillipson said universities should put the money into other subjects such as agriculture, nursing and IT.

Then the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) said in November that the government is also holding up employers hiring journalists due to a delay in approving funding for degree apprenticeships.

Although Skills England signed it off in May, it has emerged that government has not yet approved a proposed £14,000 funding band for level 6 apprenticeships.

Lyn Jones, head of qualifications at the NCTJ, told *HoldtheFrontPage*:

“The six-month delay in approving the level 6 funding band is preventing employers from investing in the next generation of journalists. Journalism apprenticeships break down barriers and ensure newsrooms better reflect the communities they serve.”

In addition, *HoldtheFrontPage* said Toby Granville, Newsquest’s editorial chief and NCTJ Journalism Trailblazer group chair, has written to Jacqui Smith, UK skills minister, about the issue.

The NUJ is backing the NCTJ’s campaign calling for the government’s cuts to be called off and condemning the move for threatening diversity and sustainability of journalism education.

The *Journalists at Work 2024* report found that 81% of journalists hold a journalism qualification, 83% of whom have an NCTJ qualification, with 84% saying it helped secure their first job.

As part of its support for a live campaign, the NUJ wrote with its concerns to the education minister.

The government states that it is “committed to supporting the invaluable role which journalism plays in the fabric of our society” yet it appears not to be reconsidering the planned cuts.



Although the NUJ welcomes the government’s recent announcement that primary school children will be taught skills in how to identify fake news and disinformation, credible, trusted and trained journalists are needed more than ever.

Thanks to all members who have raised concerns with MPs. If you haven’t yet taken action, write to your MP using our simple tool and template letter to raise the NCTJ and NUJ’s concerns about the impact of proposals. Help us highlight the threats to the future health of journalism in the UK, for the good of the profession and the future of democracy.

### Bullivant recognition

Members have won recognition at Bullivant Media Group with an agreement now signed. The deal was finalised after months of negotiations and despite the company’s initial hostility. All staff journalists employed by the Redditch-based newspapers group - which has 15 Observer & Standard newspaper titles and associated news websites serving towns and cities in Warwickshire, Worcestershire

and the West Midlands - are covered by the agreement. Ash Osborne, Bullivant Media Group NUJ Chapel rep, said: “I’m pleased that we stuck together throughout this entire process.” Chris Morley, NUJ Northern & Midlands senior organiser, said: “This shows that it is possible for even a small chapel to navigate the current complicated statutory Trade Union recognition law to achieve what members are seeking.”

### National World takeover

In May Irish media mogul Malcolm Denmark was finally granted clearance to take control of National World following months of uncertainty and delayed pay talks. When the takeover was first announced last December, Denmark’s company Media Concierge promised not to cut editorial job cuts and instead invest in local news. However, the block put on conducting local pay

negotiations - which should have been underway months ago - has not been lifted. Instead Denmark sent a letter to staff saying that pay would be reviewed on an individual basis. The group chapel continues to seek dialogue with the company and general secretary Laura Davison has written to Denmark to request a substantive response to members’ pay claims and a return to negotiations with the NUJ.

# Update

## Safety or censorship?

Matt Keynon

**Since the Online Safety Act (OSA) came into force on 25 July it has prompted a debate over free speech and how it can protect both citizens and journalists from online harm.**

Under the OSA, Ofcom makes online services safer for the people who use them and ensures companies have effective systems in place to protect users using digital platforms.

Among other things, the act is designed to stop under-18s accessing pornography and harmful content and on 20 November Ofcom issued a £50,000 fine against the provider of a nudification site for failing to use age-checks to protect children from online pornography. It also said 20 more porn services are targeted for enforcement.

In July the act took a battering over the age verification tools being put up by some companies online in order to comply with the act after security consultant Paul Moore claimed on Elon Musk's social media platform X that one age verification system can be got around using an image of technology secretary Peter Kyle's face.

Kyle also enraged some right-wing politicians, including Reform leader Nigel Farage, after suggesting critics of the act



are "on the side" of predators such as Jimmy Savile. X (formerly Twitter) itself became involved in the debate, claiming the OSA is "seriously infringing" free speech.

Outside these issues, the NUJ is highlighting how the act protects journalists from online harm and ensures proper fact checking. In January Meta moved to scrap its U.S. partnerships with established fact-checking outlets - ending contracts with respected newsrooms, reporters, and nonprofits - and shifted instead to an X-style "community notes" system.

At the delegate meeting in April, NUJ members rejected Meta's claims that

fact-checkers were politically biased and censorship. Such decisions were deplored with delegates arguing that the move to user-powered 'community notes' will degrade the quality of online information and fuel a greater spread of false, offensive and extreme material. Conference also instructed the NEC to oppose any moves to scrap fact-checking programmes outside the US and to urge the UK government to support the EU's Code of Practice on Disinformation.

This includes the requirements for platforms to work with factcheckers to reduce the risks of online disinformation and to provide 'fair financial contributions' for the work of fact-checkers.

Members also asked the NEC to call upon the UK government and Ofcom to make effective use of the provisions of the Online Safety Act to ensure that journalistic standards are maintained through application of a News Quality Obligation and ensure that journalists are better protected from online abuse and threats.

Another technology-related issue on the NUJ's radar is facial recognition. Recently the Home Office launched a ten-week public consultation on whether it should be used more often, which we are exploring in relation to how it affects journalists.

### Journalist Safety Liaison Officers

The NUJ welcomed the introduction of a Journalist Safety Liaison Officer (JSLO) in every UK police force, giving journalists access to support when facing abuse or threats. The government says JSLOs are a recognition of the dangers journalists face and will ensure crimes are properly recorded and addressed. JSLOs can also give safety guidance before high-risk events. The NUJ has

played a significant role in the initiative's instigator, the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, and will continue to meet police and government to ensure the scheme assists journalists as it should. The JSLO list is held by the union and can be found on the NUJ website behind the membership login. We also urge journalists to report abuse, harassment and intimidation using our **Journalists' Safety Tracker**.

### Anonymity for firearms officers

The NUJ has joined JUSTICE, the News Media Association, Society of Editors, and others in signing a letter to Shabana Mahmood, UK home secretary, calling for the government to abandon plans to grant a presumption of anonymity to police firearms officers facing criminal proceedings. The letter notes that courts already possess powers to grant defendants anonymity

where necessary and that the ability of media to report on criminal proceedings involving firearms officers "would be severely impeded, leaving a vacuum which would be filled by misinformation and rumour." General secretary Laura Davison added that proposals "pose grave harm to public interest journalism" and thus undermine the principles of transparency, public understanding and accountability.

# Spotlight



## The future of public service broadcasting

**Tara Conlan on the outlook for public service broadcasting across the UK and Ireland.**

**With President Trump suing the BBC, the corporation having to find a new director general plus a new head of news, and Comcast bidding for ITV, UK public service broadcasting is entering an unnerving time.**

The ecology of the public service broadcasters (PSBs) will be most profoundly hit if Trump succeeds in his \$5 billion lawsuit over the mis-editing of a Panorama documentary featuring a speech he made on 6 January 2021. The BBC Group's revenue for 2024/25 was £5.9 billion.

The knock-on effect on journalism and UK independent production companies who rely on the BBC could be extremely chilling.

The Local News Partnership is

supporting the journalism of more than 220 media organisations across the UK and 74% of UK adults use BBC News once per week – making it the UK's most widely used and trusted outlet.

The BBC's corporate focus and resources are being diverted at a time when it should be focusing on Charter Renewal, following the government's publication of a green paper about the future of the BBC – alongside finding a successor for Tim Davie and Deborah Turness following their resignations.

With the whole affair putting the issue of impartiality and the BBC board in the spotlight – in particular BBC England member and former director of communications for Theresa May and ex-adviser to GB News, Robbie Gibb – the NUJ has called for worker representation and independent appointments to the board.

The union has also said there should be sustainable funding for the BBC to safeguard public service journalism and quality news provision across the nations, locally and globally – and defended the professional integrity of its members at the corporation.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said: "The BBC has acknowledged that the Panorama edit of President Trump's speech was an error of judgment and has apologised. Where errors of judgment or mistakes are acknowledged there should be a proportionate response and we are concerned at the tone and tenor of much of the public discourse [...] The focus now must be the future of the BBC.

"Mistakes are more likely where journalists are overstretched and journalism is underfunded. Successive government budget cuts have undermined the BBC's core news output – across its regions, national news and World Service."

Davison said that the Charter Renewal process, which was launched on 16 December, "offers an opportunity to give the BBC the resources it needs to deliver high quality public service journalism, free from political interference."



The NUJ has already formulated a suggestion in its News Recovery Plan for how the BBC's governance could be reformed. "The BBC board and its chair should be chosen by an arms-length body, and there must be proper worker representation with at least 25% of board seats filled by BBC employees from non-management roles to champion public interest journalism without political interference," Davison explained.

"The BBC does not belong to the government or its board. It belongs to the people and to its workers. It should be accountable to - and shaped by - us."

The issue of public broadcasting sustainability was highlighted by Ofcom in its Public Service Media Review, which was published on 21 July. At least every five years Ofcom is required to review the extent to which the PSB channels, taken together, have fulfilled the purposes of public service television broadcasting.

The regulator found that news on "endangered" public service media needs "stable and adequate funding" and recommended "public service content should be findable on YouTube" particularly news and children's content.

Ofcom has a six-point plan designed to help public service media battle the tech platforms such as YouTube and also said PSBs "must forge ambitious strategic partnerships at scale". It added: "Scale is critical for the public service broadcasters and other domestic broadcasters to connect with audiences and compete with global streaming platforms - who, in some cases, they depend on to reach viewers."

Netflix and Paramount Skydance's bids to buy Warner Bros Discovery focused government minds as the BBC competes on a global stage. How UK broadcasters will fare against the deep pockets of new tech titans such as YouTube has been exercising the minds of policy-makers and culture secretary Lisa Nandy in the run up to the green paper on the BBC's Charter Review.

Since the advent of streaming, British

PSBs now have global rivals who have created UK bases and fostered local relationships.

The BBC has an advantage over other broadcasters as it's a worldwide brand with a following built up over the years through the power of its news brand - BBC News reaches 418 million viewers on average every week - and popular formats such as Top Gear and presenters such as David Attenborough. It can operate on a commercial footing outside the UK and its soft power is well-documented.

But the macro global media economy is not without its difficulties for the BBC and it requires resources. BBC World Service may help the foreign office combat disinformation and state propaganda, but its future funding is still uncertain.

The government provides around one-third of the money for BBC World Service with the rest coming from the BBC licence fee. But the Guardian revealed this summer that due to a cut in the government's aid budget, World Service may have to make tens of millions of pounds worth of savings - potentially totalling £70m a year.

How will that affect its ability to operate in the face of threats? Recently lawyers for the World Service lodged a document with the UN asking its experts to condemn Iran's conduct towards the BBC, particularly BBC News Persian, after the country tried to frame independent journalism as a form of terrorism and warfare. The NUJ has urged the UN to condemn the Iranian state's use of extreme language regarding the BBC's reporting and the country's justification of its unlawful actions towards the corporation's staff and their families, some of whom have faced persecution and harassment.

There is also the issue of BBC local radio. The NUJ is concerned about plans by Ofcom to approve changes to the BBC's operating licence covering its local radio commitments. In October, Ofcom opened a consultation on the BBC's proposal

that, according to the regulator, "shared programming should not count towards its [BBC's] local radio quota if broadcast between 6am and 2pm on weekdays - when more audiences are listening - while allowing shared programming outside this window to contribute to the quota."

The BBC said it made the request due to financial pressures as it seeks to reach its savings target of £700 million by March 2028. Ofcom says it is minded to approve the change, but the NUJ has questioned if the local radio proposals will lead to further cuts and the erosion of truly local radio.

Significant changes have already been made over recent years with more shared programmes and some presenters axed.

What's clear from all this is that the BBC and its Irish public service counterpart, RTÉ, face declining TV licence numbers and funds, with both organisations consistently the subject of comments about their 'broken' funding model and both governments yet to find an alternative system to keep their coffers lined. Last year the Irish government agreed a new hybrid funding model that will provide a level of certainty for RTÉ, giving the broadcaster a guaranteed €225m from both the licence fee and the exchequer this year, rising to €240m in 2026 and €260m in 2027.

Meanwhile in Wales, the Wales Executive Council (WEC) has been successful in securing funding from Creative Wales to host a conference on the state of the media and public interest journalism. The event is scheduled for February and further details will be announced soon.

With the spotlight on the BBC for adverse reasons, Charter Review will be crucial in establishing the lynchpin of the British Isles' public service media landscape. In recent weeks NUJ members at the BBC have laid out their vision for an impartial, universally available and funded public broadcaster to ensure quality news provision, plus worker representation on the BBC board to protect against political interference.

# Equality

## Channelling Claudia Jones' fire

**The radical spirit of pioneering journalist Claudia Jones was celebrated at the annual memorial lecture organised by the Black Members' Council (BMC).**

"Jones organised communities of resistance," said Roger McKenzie, BMC co-chair, introducing the lecture and emphasising Jones' journalistic achievements as the founder of the UK's first Black newspaper *The West Indian Gazette* and *Afro-Asian Caribbean News*.

Held at the Guardian's office in London on 22 October, speakers focused on learning from Claudia Jones in fighting the pervasive rise of racism and fascism following some of the largest far-right mobilisations in recent UK history.

"We've been here before," said Michelle Codrington-Rogers, Trades Union Congress (TUC) anti-racism lead, describing the cyclical return of white supremacy in different guises – from the National Front to the British National Party and Combat 18.

Codrington-Rogers noted familiar dogwhistles against migrants, asylum seekers, disabled people, trans people, and Black people. She challenged the far-right's faux concern over women and girls given that Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (A.K.A. Tommy Robinson) was convicted of harassing a female journalist and that his close acolytes had committed violence against women. "These people do not care about

women," said Codrington-Rogers.

Codrington-Rogers acknowledged the toll of fighting the far-right with politicians playing on people's desperation, disillusionment, fear and exhaustion. This is compounded by government attempts to pander to Reform UK, which only serve to normalise and embolden the far-right - as demonstrated by the fact that thousands of people thought it acceptable to attend marches organised by fascists dressing racism as patriotism. Codrington-Rogers emphasised the trade union movement's crucial role in challenging racism on the streets and in the workplaces where we organise.

Guest speaker Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP for Clapham and Brixton Hill, started her lecture by challenging activists to channel Jones' fire. "Claudia Jones looked the empire in the eye and said, 'I can see through you'," said Ribeiro-Addy.

Born in Trinidad, Jones was a feminist, communist and Black nationalist who insisted that anti-racism and anti-

imperialism were inseparable. Jones understood that while the British empire has formally ended, its logic and legacy persists.

So what does Jones demand of us now? Firstly that we must stop sidelining the experiences of Black people and Black women in particular. "Diversity is the beginning, not the destination," said Ribeiro-Addy calling for representation beyond "symbolic inclusion."

Ribeiro-Addy argued that education is key to challenging deeply ingrained social attitudes: instead of concentrating on kings and queens, we should also learn about working class, trade union and anti-racist struggles.

As chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afrikan Reparations, Ribeiro-Addy said that we must address the legacy of empire as the root of racism and made the case for economic, educational and environmental reparations: "If we can find resources to bail out banks, I don't understand why we can't pay for justice."

Fighting racism must entail a union-wide effort. After a Q&A, McKenzie concluded by encouraging the audience to get involved in the BMC, the NUJ and the trade union movement to fight racism. Above all we should learn from Jones, who also co-founded the Notting Hill carnival, that struggle doesn't have to mean despair and that joy can be revolutionary.



### Disabled Members' Council updates

On 3 December the NUJ marked International Day of Disabled People. The Disabled Members' Council (DMC) called on journalists to challenge harmful portrayals of disabled people and shift the narrative from blame to

one centred on rights, access and inclusion. Disabled journalists have reported greater levels of harassment and abuse, and remain underrepresented throughout the industry - especially at senior levels. The DMC expressed deep concern at the UK government's plan to

introduce VAT on Motability vehicles that require an advance payment, which could limit disabled journalists' ability to travel for work - particularly those who work cross-border or on assignment. The DMC has encouraged members affected by the changes to the Motability

scheme and/or cuts to the Access to Work scheme to share their experience with the union. Member testimonies will be used as anonymised evidence in a briefing for MPs, the Work and Pensions Committee and the public. Please contact [campaigns@nuj.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nuj.org.uk) to share your views.

# Update

## Journalist safety in Northern Ireland

**An alarming pattern of police and security authorities' surveillance of journalists in Northern Ireland has come to light in recent years - notably with the vindication of NUJ members Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey before the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) following unlawful surveillance by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).**

The judgment in December 2024 described the decision by Sir George Hamilton, former PSNI chief constable, to authorise a surveillance operation as a breach of Article 8 and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as well as a breach of the Human Rights Act 1998.

This is not an isolated case. Around the time of the verdict, PSNI admitted to spying on at least 300 journalists and 500 lawyers in Northern Ireland.

Our campaign in support of Birney and McCaffrey reflects our broad concern at the attitude of the PSNI to journalists and journalism.

Following the IPT revelations, the 200-page McCullough Review into covert measures against journalists by PSNI was published in September 2025.

The Review showed that the recommendation in the 1999 Patten Commission Report into the future of the policing in Northern Ireland that a Commissioner for Covert Law Enforcement should be established



remains prescient. The NUJ believes this would address many of the fundamental issues arising from the McCullough Review and IPT hearings.

This Patten Review recommended that the Commissioner would not only cover the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) but also MI5 and other law enforcement agencies. In September MI5 admitted to illegally obtaining data from the phone of former BBC journalist Vincent Kearney during a separate IPT case.

In addition, next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the murder of journalist Martin O'Hagan, who was shot dead by the Loyalist Volunteer Force in September 2001

Covert surveillance and lack of accountability have severely harmed confidence in policing in Northern Ireland among journalists and the wider civilian community.

The PSNI leadership's acceptance of the report findings and recommendations marks a welcome change in approach. However, the scale of the challenge to improve public perceptions of policing in Northern Ireland cannot be underestimated and the restoration of trust remains a major challenge.

Since 2019 - the year freelance journalist Lyra McKee was shot dead while observing a riot in Derry - over 70 incidents of threats or attacks on journalists in Northern Ireland have been documented. Most have gone unpunished: there have been only two successful prosecutions for threats against journalists since June 2022.

Having been to the fore in defending media freedom, the NUJ has responded to a call for evidence by The Northern Ireland Select Committee on policing and security. The submission notes the union's recent positive engagement with the PSNI and reiterates our longstanding calls to safeguard journalists' rights and defend media freedom. This includes calling on the UK government to appoint an independent body to fully investigate the extent of covert surveillance in Northern Ireland, and to establish an independent public inquiry into the murder of Martin O'Hagan.

## Reporting Gaza: Work, Life and Death

**On 10 November the NUJ South Wales branch held a conference on working as a reporter in Gaza at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff.**

Hala Hanina, a researcher from Gaza, highlighted the need to listen to Palestinian journalists, who have been silenced and dehumanised by Israeli

forces' campaign of targeted killing. Hanina read an article by Palestinian journalist Shaimaa Eid, which stated: "We write while suppressing our own pain and hunger, struggling to keep the words from collapsing before they reach the world - to show just how deep our oppression runs." Journalist Jonathan

Cook also spoke on the panel and there were screenings of documentaries by Claudio Laurini and Mike Joseph. South Wales branch member Andrew Draper closed the event by stressing the courage of journalists reporting from Gaza and calling for continued education and solidarity. The conference also raised almost £300 for the IFJ Safety Fund.

# International

## No to impunity

*Awil Mohamoud, NUJ campaigns & communications officer, reports on the NUJ's public event on 3 November.*

**On 3 November, the NUJ marked International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists with an online speaker event featuring trade unionists and international law experts. The public event provided an opportunity to collectively mourn our fallen colleagues and demand accountability for their deaths**

Rebecca Long-Bailey, MP and co-chair of the NUJ parliamentary group, condemned the "shocking regularity" with which journalists around the world continue to be targeted and murdered for doing their jobs.

Records from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) show at least 111 journalists and media professionals were killed in 2025, the deadliest since records began.

Long-Bailey said: "Despite the gravely serious nature of these crimes, those responsible are often left unpunished. The time to act is now."

The UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists, adopted in 2012, represents a "step in the right direction" but "implementation has been patchy at best," she added. "It's clear to me that we need a new binding framework."

The IFJ has drafted and spearheaded calls for the implementation of a specific UN Convention on the safety and protection of journalists - a move backed by many, including delegates at the TUC Congress this year.

Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, said that a UN Convention would be groundbreaking in that it would be a "binding instrument, not another declaration of intent." It would place a requirement on states to protect journalists in all circumstances, investigate every crime, and prosecute



Anthony Bellanger

### Aid for Gaza

Journalists in Gaza 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 funds from their management allowances.

**DONATE NOW**

the perpetrators. While bringing this into fruition is not a simple process, Bellanger vowed to "continue this fight until no crime against a journalist goes unpunished because without truth, there is no freedom and without freedom, there is no democracy."

Jennifer Robinson, human rights barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, discussed some of the failings of the international law system in holding accountable those who continue to target journalists around the world.

The number of Palestinian journalists

and media workers killed over the last two years - at least 226 according to IFJ figures - is "shocking" and "indicative of the impunity with which Israel is operating," Robinson said.

She called the failure to add these killings to the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants for Israel's prime minister and former defence minister "a real oversight." Efforts are underway to submit additional evidence to the ICC and apply pressure on the prosecutor to take action, she added.

Robinson also addressed threats to journalists in the UK as a result of Iranian transnational oppression. She has represented many of those impacted since 2017, when the Iranian government launched a mass criminal investigation into 152 BBC Persian staff for their reporting. Robinson ended by calling for greater action and accountability from the UN and UK government.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, apportioned the extensive hate and misogyny journalists face online to the negligence of the tech giants, which refuse to accept that it is their responsibility to take action.

Focusing on lessons in Northern Ireland, he also raised the "scandalous treatment" of Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney. Dooley also condemned the abuse of journalists by state actors, citing the case of Sami Hamdi, who was recently arrested in the US under anti-terrorism legislation for expressing uncomfortable opinions on Gaza.

Before closing with a minute of silence, Dooley said: "The war on journalism is a war on truth. What we stand for is not some sort of selfish interest because we are special, but because we are a bulwark in the war against truth, against tyranny."

He invoked the powerful words of the great Welsh commentator Raymond Williams, "The media must be the arrow, not the target."

The NUJ continues to campaign on and raise the issue of journalist safety with the union's cross-party parliamentary group.