

# THE IRISH JOURNALIST

Newsletter of the National Union of Journalists in Ireland

February 2026

## Editorial Note

Welcome to the first *Irish Journalist* of 2026, marking the festival of Imbolc and the traditional beginning of Spring.

There's an old Yiddish proverb, *der mentsh trakht un Got lakht*, men make plans and God laughs. With that in mind, I hope to publish the Irish Journalist four times this year, at the beginning of February, May, August and November.

So get in touch, and let me know what your branch (or chapel) is up to. What events or activities are planned for the new year?

Are there issues you'd like to see debated more? Are LLM AI models a financial bubble or a threat, or both? If a branch becomes moribund, should it just be given a decent burial and replaced, or can it be revived? Get in touch with your views.

Gerard Cunningham, Editor

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## Celebrating a Lifetime in the NUJ

Celebrating life membership underlines the importance of trade union membership.

That was the message of Stephen Corrigan in his first function as Cathaoirleach of the IEC at a recent life membership presentation ceremony in the Teachers' club, Dublin.

Flanked by joint presidents Gerry Curran and Fran McNulty Stephen welcomed a galaxy of NUJ members honoured for more than 40 years service to the union.

Stephen stressed the value attached to receiving the NUJ card, and said that for every member, their first card was a professional milestone.

"That small piece of plastic is a key to a profession that — despite what some may say — is a noble one.

"It marks us as a collective of professionals who stand

together, representing the best of journalism.

"It is a remarkable achievement to have been part of the NUJ for 40 years or more, and it is right that we come together to celebrate — and to recognise your career long commitment to our union.

"One of the NUJ's slogans is 'In good company'. Our Life Members are people whose names we know — people we have trusted to bring us valuable and reliable information. And people we, as NUJ members, are proud to call colleagues."

The new Life Members are Brian Blake, Bryan Dobson, Ronan Dodd, Liam Gorman, Declan Lyons, Linda McAuley, Justine McCarthy, Brendan McCourt, Sean McGoldrick, Fionnuala Mulcahy, Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Stephen O'Brien, John O'Callaghan, Fionnuala O'Connor, Tony O'Shea, Bairbre Power, and Mary Wilson.



## Celebrating a Lifetime of NUJ Membership



Linda McAuley with Fran McNulty. Image: Maxwell Photography



Mary Wilson, Bernie Ni Fhlatharta, and Justine McCarthy Image: Maxwell Photography



New Life members gathered together at the ceremony in December. Image: Maxwell Photography



NUJ joint president Gerry Curran, Bryan Dobson, Mary Wilson, and NUJ joint president Fran McNulty. Image: Maxwell Photography

## NUJ concern over media dominance

The National Union of Journalists has expressed grave concern at the ongoing failure of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) to take seriously the issue of concentration of ownership in the regional media sector.

This follows the decision of the CCPC to approve the takeover of the Connacht Tribune, Galway by the Malcolm Denmark owned Iconic Media Group and to give its approval to the bid by the same UK company to acquire the Alpha Group in Northern Ireland.

Under the Competition Act such approval is required in cross-border media mergers. The union has also written to the UK competition authority opposing the acquisition of the Lord Kilclooney owned titles.

Iconic Media Group Limited is part of the corporate group of Media Concierge Holdings Group Limited. Media Concierge Holdings Group Limited owns titles in the state through its subsidiary, FormPress Publishing Limited.

FormPress Publishing (Iconic) does not recognise trade unions, has consistently refused to respond to correspondence from unions and has acted in an extremely hostile manner towards trade unions and union members.

Séamus Dooley, Assistant General Secretary has argued that refusal to engage with trade unions or to allow workers to be represented has a deleterious

impact on the market and is damaging to competition.

“The hostile approach to trade unions and the consequent impact on terms and conditions of employment has a direct impact on the labour markets and places competitors with collective agreements at a competitive disadvantage,” he told the CCPC.

Media Concierge, the parent company, has acquired the National World titles in the UK and thus owns The Newsletter and the Mortons Group of regional newspapers in Northern Ireland.

Denmark's company currently own the Portadown Times, Banbridge Leader, Tyrone Times, Mid Ulster Mail, Coleraine and Ballymoney Times, Larne Times, Ulster Star, Newry Reporter, Banbridge Chronicle, Derry Journal, The Newsletter, and Farming Life.

It should be noted that FormPress has benefited from the State funded reporting schemes in the Republic and, in Northern Ireland ad across the UK, from the Democracy Reporter schemes.

While the NUJ supports the principle of such initiatives the union believes that fair employment practices and respect for workers rights should form part of public procurement rules.

Séamus Dooley has called for a wider examination of the approach of the CCPC to media mergers.

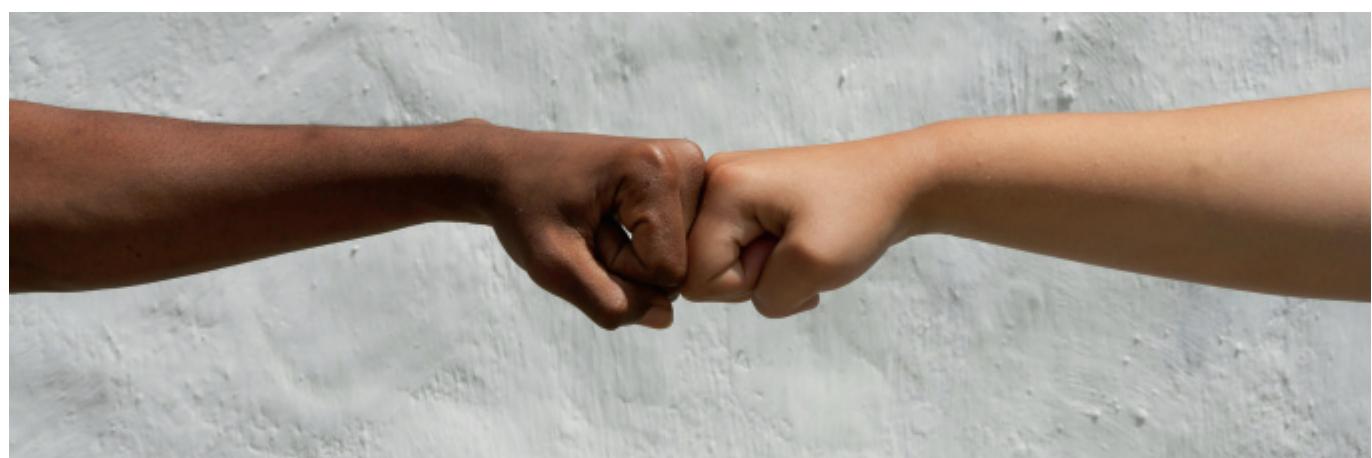
## Trade Union Week: Better in a Union

The annual ICTU Trade Union Week takes places from 27 April to 1 May.

The NUJ is encouraging chapels and branches to use

the campaign to highlight the union's work and recruit new members.

Promotional material may be ordered at [info@nuj.ie](mailto:info@nuj.ie).



## Are You Being Served?

Following the NUJ's Biennial Delegate Conference the IEC is anxious to hear the views of members on their relationship with the union and specifically with their branch.

Branches are the cornerstone of the union and central to the union's democracy. However we know that many branches meet infrequently and rely on a small number of activists for their survival. If we are to serve members we need effective branches. That means more volunteers to take part in the rewarding work of branch and indeed chapel activity.

The IEC is currently reviewing our branch structures

and would welcome the input of members, including those who do not attend meetings. If you have any observations please drop a note to [info@nuj.ie](mailto:info@nuj.ie) marked Branch Renewal.

We want to hear your views on whether we should be merging branches, having more joint branch meetings or special interest events such a training or guest speakers. If you are not currently attending union meetings we want to know why.

All ideas welcome and if you wish to keep your contribution anonymous you may do request to do so.

## Anois teacht an Earragh — Freelance Forum 2026

**By Gerard Cunningham**

Freelance Forum returns in 2026, with the first event planned for Saturday 21 March.

The Freelance Forum is organised by Dublin Freelance Branch with support from Coimisiún na Meán, the Irish broadcasting regulator.

The Spring 2026 event is jointly organised with the Courts Service, and will have a focus on legal reporting issues, from the operation of the courts system to laws of contempt, reporting on quasi-judicial hearings, and defamation. There will also be sessions on pitching overseas and dealing with vicarious trauma, and an update from press commissioner Susan McKay on the Lyra McKee bursary.

The Forum is open to both NUJ members and non-

members, and aims to provide something for freelance journalists at every stage of their careers, from students and new entrants to seasoned professionals.

“The Forum has always been about more than just info-dumping. It's a chance for freelancers to network and make new connections, renew old friendships, and for our branch, and a recruitment opportunity to show what the union can do and attract new members,” said Dublin Freelance chair Gerard Cunningham.

Full details of the Freelance Forum programme, and information on reserving your place, are available on the Dublin Freelance branch website at <https://dublinfreelance.org/freelance-forum-spring-2026/>

## Mediahuis Ireland pay & conditions talks continue

NUJ chapel reps at Mediahuis Ireland are continuing to engage with the company, after a pay offer was rejected by union members just before Christmas.

The ballot of all members covered the Irish Independent, Sunday Independent, Herald, Sunday World/Crime World, Belfast Telegraph, Sunday Life, and the regional titles in the Republic of Ireland. There was an overwhelming rejection of the two percent pay offer for 2026, together with the €500/£500 Christmas bonus; with 74 percent refusing the company's proposal.

Changes in workloads and work flows, together with

disenchantment at redundancies in recent years, meant there was a defiant mood among NUJ members when it came to balloting for the pay offer.

However, the company has taken on board the feedback that the chapel reps and the Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, gave them and Mediahuis has agreed to engage on a wide variety of issues, including improvements to various terms and conditions of employment.

Once these talks are completed, any new offer from the company will have to be put again to the Mediahuis Ireland Chapel members.

# Tributes paid to versatile veteran Paddy Clancy

Tributes have been paid to former NUJ activist Paddy Clancy, who died at the weekend following a short illness. He was 82 and his death followed an illness fought with characteristic determination and resilience.

One of the best known journalists in Ireland and the UK, Paddy crossed many barriers as a distinguished broadcaster and print journalist who carved a successful career spanning more than six decades. He served as Irish Bureau Chief of the Sun and co-founder of the Irish International News Agency.

In 2019, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the NewsBrands Ireland Journalism Awards for his extensive contribution to the industry. Best known as a tabloid journalist, he is also remembered for his succinct, authoritative and sometimes quirky morning newspaper reviews on RTÉ Radio 1's What It Says In the Papers.

In a social media post, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin said Mr Clancy was "an enormous presence in Irish journalism for over six decades.

"His distinctive take on RTÉ's morning paper round up was essential listening," Mr Martin said.

Paddy began his journalistic career in the Sligo Champion and Donegal's People Press, and worked for a time in England before returning to Ireland.

He revelled in recalling his Fleet Street days, and as a raconteur par excellence enlivened many gatherings with his stories from stories covered.

"Paddy Clancy was an old fashioned, hard nosed reporter who loved the cut and thrust of journalism," said Séamus Dooley, NUJ Assistant General Secretary. "Serious minded but never po-faced, he loved the world of tabloid journalism and abhorred professional snobbery.

"He loved the sociability of journalism and was never slow to share his opinions. Under a sometimes gruff manner, Paddy was a generous mentor and a source of encouragement to younger colleagues. He was passionate about journalists and journalism and that was the hallmark of his union activities."

Writing in the Irish Sun, Paddy's granddaughter Georgia Walsh, The Irish Sun's Deputy Showbiz



*Paddy Clancy. Image:*

Editor, recalled his influence on Irish journalism.

"Every person that I've met that knew my grandad told me how much of a true legend he was, she said. "If he liked you, he'd do everything for you and if he didn't think much of you – you'd know all about it. One of his friends told me just this week at the Travel Extra Travel Journalist of the Year Awards, 'He was an honest, kind, funny, loyal and dedicated man.'

"Before his surgery on Thursday night, which he sadly never woke up from, myself and his other grandkids got to say our goodbyes, and he was still cracking jokes until the end of the call."

"I will be forever grateful to my grandad for inspiring me to follow in his footsteps and become a reporter. As soon as I showed any interest in journalism, he immediately called up his contacts and helped me get a job in The Irish Sun – which I absolutely love and couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Former NUJ president and ex union

colleague Barry McCall recalls Paddy's contribution to journalism and the NUJ: "A true newshound, Paddy Clancy was one of the finest tabloid journalists of his generation. He was also the leader of Dublin's first and only freelance strike.

"He combined a glittering career with NUJ activism.

Despite differing political views, he formed an alliance with the late Mary Holland and Dr Carol Coulter to turn Dublin Freelance Branch into a force

to be reckoned with both within the wider NUJ and in the Irish media industry.

"As Chair of the Branch in the late 1980s, he galvanised support of a substantial pay claim for freelances working for national newspapers.

"Negotiations broke down and he led freelances on a strike which lasted several weeks before the newspaper owners returned to the bargaining table with a significantly improved offer which was subsequently accepted following further enhancements.

"He remained active in the union for several years after the strike through his membership of the Irish Executive Council where he brought his sharp intellect and wit to bear on issues facing freelances and the wider membership.

"Best of all, though, was his impish and mischievous sense of humour. Time spent with Paddy was never wasted."

# Different outcomes for regional newspapers

The closure of the Down Recorder and the Northern Standard in Monaghan last year, emphasised the continuing financial challenges faced by regional newspapers north and south of the border.

Advice was given to NUJ members in both papers regarding their statutory entitlements.

In the west of Ireland there was news of a different

kind, when it emerged that Celtic Media was moving to take over the Tuam Herald.

Celtic Media recognises and collectively negotiates with the NUJ on issues pertaining to our union's members. So members at the Tuam Herald — whose previous owners also recognised the NUJ — will continue to be collectively represented by the union.

## Training Update

**By Una Murphy, Professional Training Committee**

What do you think about NUJ training? I've just joined the union's Professional Training Committee, and volunteered as training officer for a few years, so it's a question I've been asking members of the Belfast & District branch.

Anne Hailes, branch chair, a print and broadcast journalist for many years, told me that "Having a proficient training facility, as we have in our branch, is both important and valued."

"I realise the importance of passing on knowledge to younger members of the National Union of Journalists," she added. "They are full of enthusiasm which is one of the most important requisites in our line of business, but it's also important to channel that enthusiasm along the right lines if they have any chance of progressing.

"Therefore, training is vitally important, using the skills of experienced tutors and the expertise of those who understand and have mastered AI is something of which the Belfast branch is keenly aware.

"Our training, arranged by Una Murphy, also covers video production, the complex world of digital production and how to tackle the best way of negotiating work conditions and payment.

"One thing that has impressed me about the Belfast and District branch training programme, is the high quality of trainers and the willingness to work with individual students on areas they are particularly interested in."

Another branch member, perhaps taking a sideways glance at some of the challenges faced reporting on location in Northern Ireland, answered: "hostile environment training".

Ulster University offers a MA in Journalism course which is the only university programme on the island of Ireland accredited by the National Council for the

Training of Journalists (NCTJ), and organises a two-day Physical and Psychological Safety Event for Journalists. Last year, six free places were made available for freelance journalists/photographers based on the island of Ireland, through funding from the Rory Peck Trust.

I was among media practitioners invited to take part in a pilot course in Creating Ethical Media and Journalism organised by one of the UK regulators IMPRESS, which mainly oversees the independent and community sector. It was held in Microsoft's grand, glass fronted office behind London's Paddington Station last summer. During the workshop, we also had a seminar on Microsoft's Copilot AI application.

I started out as a newspaper reporter on the Irish News in Belfast. Over the years I have had jobs in the print and broadcast media as a reporter and producer. Now my work includes getting to grips with Vibe coding and how it can assist to develop a MVP (Minimum Viable Product) for a new open-source video channel on the VIEWdigital <https://viewdigital.org/> WordPress website (watch this space).

The union through the Professional Training Committee will be seeking to map out training provision throughout Britain and the island of Ireland in coming months. The NUJ in Scotland and Wales have their own journalism training units, with the help of funding from their respective governments. There are many other organisations, including universities and other organisations, who are also offering interesting and important training for journalists, which need to be added to the map of training provision.

An action plan on training, that will aid recruitment to the union, seems very much on the NUJ agenda.

## Reach Ireland workloads raised

Workloads, rotas, rest breaks between shifts and the taking of annual leave and time off in lieu, were some of the issues raised recently with Reach management in the Republic of Ireland.

The FOC, Michael O'Toole, and Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, met with local management and HR before Christmas to express concerns on these matters. A further meeting, to assess whether there has been any improvement in workloads and rotas in particular, will take place next month. fl

Meanwhile, NUJ members in Ireland have been advised not to sign anything that voluntarily opts

them out of the 48 hour working week, which covers the members north and south of the border via the European Working Time Directive. There had been suggestions from areas of Reach in Britain, that this opt out might be pushed onto employees. Any members on the island of Ireland who are given such an opt out are advised not to sign it but to immediately contact the NUJ via [info@nuj.ie](mailto:info@nuj.ie). As yet, there have been no indications that this will be implemented in Ireland.

Meanwhile, pay talks covering Britain and Ireland Reach NUJ members, are due to begin next month.

## Short Story Collection



*Former IEC stalwart Bernie Mullen (left) and Felicity McCall (right) at the launch of 'What We Did On Our Holidays'. Image: Felicity McCall*

Alzheimer's, addiction, and the intergenerational legacy of the Conflict are among the themes of the short stories in writer and journalist Felicity McCall's latest publication, *What We Did on Our Holidays*.

Published by Colmcille Press, the collection is arguably the author's most personal work to date.

While McCall concedes that some, including the title story, draw directly on her own experience, all were inspired by actual events and are, she says, emotionally honest.

After twenty years as a news journalist and a further two decades in the creative arts as a writer, producer, facilitator and occasional actor, McCall has held a Royal Literary Fellowship for the past three years. It was this recognition, she says, plus encouragement

and support from fellow writers that inspired her latest work.

"I've found my sixties to be a time for reflection," she says, "of coming to terms with how life has worked out. Of experiencing bereavement first hand, and the effects of serious illness. Also, for my generation, for whom the Conflict defined our adolescence and early adulthood, a time of coming to terms with its legacy on our and more importantly, on subsequent generations."

"It's also a decade of unexpected inner contentment," she adds, "of a strengthened sense of self, of the overwhelming joy of seeing new life. It's a time when, as in the last story in the collection, we can revisit our younger self and say, 'It's going to be OK. Together, we did it'."

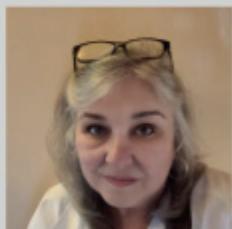
# IRISH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2025-27

## Regional Newspapers (1 vacancy)



Stephen Corrigan  
IEC Cathaoirleach

## Freelance



Carolyn Farrar  
IEC Leas Chathaoirleach



Gerard Cunningham

## Broadcasting



Cearbhail O Sioclain

## National Newspapers



Kitty Holland



Éanna Ó Caollaí



Edel Hughes

## Books & Magazine



Vacant (Observer)

## New Media



Phil MacGiollaBhain  
(Observer)



Trevor Keegan



Fran McNulty (NEC)

## NEC Northern Ireland



Amanda Ferguson

## PR & Information

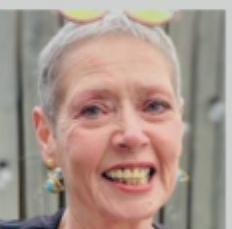


Neil Ward



Gerry Curran

## Reserved Seat for Northern of Ireland



Kathryn Johnston

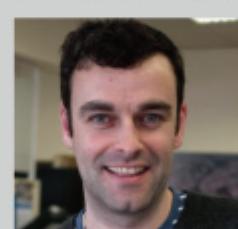
## Retired Members



Robert Baxter  
(Observer)



Bernie Ni Fhlatharta



Dara Bradley

## Black Members



Kais Aloui  
(Observer)

Fran McNulty and Gerry Curran jobsharing.

Bernie Ni Fhlatharta and Dara Bradley job-sharing.