

NUJ London Magazines Branch meeting and AGM Monday 17 March 2025 (online only)

Attendees: Caroline P (meeting chair), Lewis E (LEm), Liz E (LE), Sarah M, Mike S, Max W, Alan G, Laura D, Huda E (NUJ National Organiser Books, Magazines and Wales)

Apologies: Cristina L, Niall M

1. Guest talk: Blood, Sweat and Tears – legacy of the Miners’ strike 40 years on

Author and Magazine Branch member Mike Simons discussed the re-release of his book "Blood, Sweat and Tears," commemorating the 1984-85 miners' strike. First published 40 years ago to commemorate the end of the strike, the book was initially funded by the NUJ. The reprinted version features better printing and more images.

Mike emphasized the strike's significance in understanding Thatcher's neoliberal policies and the media's biased coverage, with only left-leaning papers and Channel 4 providing fair coverage. It also helps us comprehend the state of Britain now, and honours both the miners themselves and photographers who chose to document the miners' side of the story - capturing the reality of the strike and the actions of the police.

Noting that Mike invested personally in reprinting the book, the branch discussed ways in which it might be publicised (such as through *The Journalist*, the Photographers' Council, a fringe meeting at the forthcoming Delegate Meeting, and the branch donating or buying copies for distribution to chapels). The book can be ordered from www.minersstrike.com

Action: It was agreed to bring a motion to April meeting regarding a donation to support towards the costs of the book and photographers whose work is featured.

2. Branch AGM 2025

Treasurer's report – Alan G

AG explained the branch account balance is currently around £5,700, and therefore is quite solvent, given low expenditure.

What expenditure there is covers costs associated with the website, the occasional donations to disputes and campaigns, affiliations to trades councils and Nika T's payments for managing the website and social media.

Regarding the latter, CL had proposed cutting her role from a monthly to a quarterly basis, which NT had advised was acceptable to her. This however would require one or two members of the committee to be much more involved in both running and inputting material onto the website.

The branch makes a monthly donation of £50 by standing order to NUJ Extra and sent a £100 donation to the George Viner Fund.

The account is due to be audited, ideally by two members who are not on the branch committee. This will also mean the Branch can receive the next management allowance (a proportion of members' subs fees).

Action: LE (having stood down from the Committee as health and safety rep) and SM volunteered and were elected to audit the branch accounts.

Membership officer report – Mike S

MS advised no longer receiving lists from membership office now; while the membership stats report from NEC was useful the detailed Mag branch membership information is key.

While the Branch welcomes the process of adoption of new members being streamlined, and acknowledges pressures on the Membership department centrally, it would still be useful for membership officers to receive the new members list and membership information regularly in order to send a welcome email and to communicate effectively with branch members / other work, something that would be discussed and hopefully agreed on at DM.

HE advised this had been discussed at MABIC and agreed that information on membership is important for wider work and that this was under review.

Organisers report

Huda Elmi, NUJ national organiser for Magazines, Books and Wales.

HE described some of the plans and progress being made to support improved organisation and growth in the sector. A key initiative is cleaning up the membership data and mapping where members, activists and chapels are in the magazines sector. There have been many redundancies and restructures in organisations in recent years and issues with retentions, and some NUJ organisation has frozen or been lost as a consequence, so a useful first step will be to find out where we have active and non-active members/chapels and why – for example, changes in that workplace, or active members moving on – and what we can learn from that to create more sustainable structures in each workplace for the future.

Some chapels are taking interesting steps such as at Pluto where next year's reps are elected at the same time as this year's – so they can be shadowing/work together and get trained up before handover the following year and support continuity.

The regularity of meetings is an issue, with so many members overworked and finding that doing union work on top of this can feel very gruelling. So, it will be important to look at ways to make meetings less burdensome / ensure meetings are spaced to allow people to dip in and out as they need.

Another area is to support more members to get actively involved in wider NUJ work, so if someone is active in their workplace/chapel or at branch level ensuring they are delegates

to committees, councils and events. Simply helping to provide space for connection, enabling reporting and feedback and keeping people informed so all can get involved depending on their level of activity and encouraged to participate.

This will benefit from championing the great work that's going on in terms of winning pay claims and strike wins as at Springer Nature last year – for example there is now talk of expanding the bargaining unit there, which will help to cement that activity.

And learning from different workplaces about good working practices in terms of collective bargaining – some chapels have good relations with managers, others more difficult despite having recognition.

Pay has been a key issue in the sector, particular for those at the beginning of their career. So, making more of where the union has won really good pay claims can encourage others to join and get organised, but also show more widely how the union is what's influencing the sector.

Another big area of work is getting data on how many members have had union training in Magazines and Books, including what kind of training that they're interested in.

One area that had come up recently was on flexible working, particularly affecting women who've taken maternity leave and wanting more flexible working arrangements on return, in response to more strict arrangements being imposed by some employers on hybrid working – expecting more days in the office despite previous contract changes to allow more flexible working. This had led to people joining the union as members had been organising a pushback – some this required training, to understand what statutory flexible working means. Also it has been instructive on how members can recruit, build and organize, to get the kind of collective bargaining / relationship that can effectively get management to rethink.

In terms of organising in workplaces, a number that had been 'in waiting' were now being agreed, including at New Statesman/PMI, LexisNexis re-recognition, Wall Street Journal and in a particularly inspiring one - the Lancet and Cell Press where mass recruitment had happened in response to the strike win at Springer Nature – from barely any members this time last year, to over 50% density and applying for recognition now.

So there is a lot of really exciting work going on which will be useful to disseminate amongst the branches and chapels – HE keen to support the Magazine branch in whatever ways to do this!

Election of branch committee

Niall M had indicated willing to stay on as chair. Cristina L had unfortunately advised standing down from Comms officer role.

The following members were elected to the Committee:

Chair – Niall M re-elected

Secretary – vacant

Comms officer - vacant

Treasurer – Alan G re-elected

Membership officer – Mike S re-elected

Welfare officer – Caroline P

Ordinary member – Lewis E

SM raised the possibility of payment for Secretary/Committee role given Branch solvency. MS and LD advised this is inworkable. CP noted that the Branch had previously discussed a similar proposal, and ruled against paying branch members for Branch committee work; it had however been agreed to pay an NUJ member external to the branch for comms work to help keep on top of the website/social media accounts (Nika T).

CP reminded that vacancies can be filled later in year, and members should be encouraged to put themselves forward.

3. Branch business

Feb branch meeting minutes

These were not yet available but consisted of agreed amends to DM motions which had been submitted via Niall M – to be written up for April branch meeting.

Late notice motions for DM

- i. Motion on Ukraine journalists solidarity was passed as amended (see below).
- ii. It was agreed that SM would discuss and amend second LNM on imprisonment/deaths of journalists to make in order for Late notice motion. To bring to April branch meeting. Action SM to circulate by
- iii. It was also agreed members could bring a separate LNM regarding Government cuts to welfare/austerity and increased military spending to the April branch meeting ahead of DM.
 - iv. Members are reminded to bring any other LNMs for discussion to the April branch meeting.

Attitudes to DM motions / instructions to Delegation.

It was agreed this would need to be done at April branch meeting.

LD advised that LD and LE (as NEC reps) had a meeting with GS regarding Motion 42 from Mag Branch, on reviewing lay rep work and the '45% rule'; the motion would go ahead although will be subject to discussion at SOC – MABIC had also discussed this and wanted to keep it on the agenda.

Renewal of affiliation to Woodcraft Folk and donation towards trip

LEm noted the branch had previously affiliated to WF so this would be a renewal, albeit after a gap. WF is a youth organization which is in its centenary year; it promotes trade unions values, with plans to make it even more union friendly in future.

In addition, some London districts (in particular Hounslow & Twickenham) are raising funds to bring young people and volunteers from Peru to the UK this year. This is a 'good news' story about international friendship - as demonstrated by the video on the JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/woodcraft-folk-fundraising-7>

The branch agreed to pay £50 to renew affiliation to Woodcraft Folk and to donate £50 towards supporting the Peruvian group to join the camp.

Renewal of Hounslow TC affiliation / representation

Branch reiterated support for LEm to be branch delegate on Hounslow TC, and agreed to support him doing this alongside also representing his Unite retired members branch. Due to an admin issue at the trades council the delegate fee of £15 had already been paid the year before.

LEm reported he had been on picket line with OCS cleaning staff in Hounslow who are on strike, underscoring the importance of TC affiliation and solidarity.

AOB

- SM asked branch members to submit any questions/issues for raising at next Ethic Council meeting due on 11 April.
- CP reminded members of upcoming online Recruitment meeting on 22 Mar; it would be good if link could be shared with branch chapel reps and any other contacts if possible.