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Focus on Fiona

Fiona Swarbrick has been the NUJ's National Organiser for Magazines, Books, PR and Communications since 2010, and was Assistant Organiser for the same sectors for seven years prior to that. Before her full time union career Fiona worked in academic publishing, was an NUJ MoC and a member of the NEC.

Fiona reflects on how the role of Organiser has altered in that time, not least of which is the increase in volume of job losses in 'traditional' areas of journalism. As Fiona observes: "This has seen a change in the way people are employed. Many people now work freelance rather than in permanent employment. There has also been a significant trend towards working in PR as this is an area where the job market has remained fairly buoyant when other parts of the media industry have seen recruitment frozen. The challenge for the NUJ is to ensure our members know that, if they take jobs in PR, they are able to take their NUJ membership with them."

Work together

"Where we have recognised chapels there is always a healthier management culture around engagement with staff and understanding that it is important that they are suitably rewarded and treated with dignity. We can rely on the law for only the most basic standards in the workplace. If we want a decent quality of working life we need to work together to achieve that and a trade union provides the support and structure to do that. Anyone reading this who is interested in finding out more about gaining union recognition at their work place should get in touch."

Delegate meeting

The union's conference, the delegate meeting (DM), will be held at Southport Theatre and Convention Centre from 15 to 17 April. All members are entitled to attend branch meetings and branches can submit motions and amendments to conference. If a motion is passed, it becomes union policy. Among the topics to be debated this year include recruitment, health and safety, trade union rights and media freedom. The motions which the PR and Communications branch put forward will be discussed at the next branch meeting. Further detail about DM 2016, including all of the motions put forward by this and other NUJ sectors, can be found by logging onto the NUJ website.



Branch meetings are on second Tuesday of the month.

Branch committee 2016

At the AGM in January your new branch committee was elected. The post holders for 2016 are as follows:

Chair: Debbie Cavaldoro

Vice-Chair. Monica Foot / Mick Holder (job share)

Branch Secretary: Mark Whitehead

Assistant Secretary: Sian Jones

Equality Officer
Carmel McHenry

Treasurer
Carmel McHenry

Welfare Officer:
Debbie Cavaldoro

Newsletter Editor: Lisa Browne

*DM convener.*Debbie Cavaldoro

Recruitment and Retention: Mark Whitehead

Web: Mick Holder

F-Mail

Please help build branch database by sending your e-mail address to: nujppr@googlemail.com

Auditors: Anita Halpin, Charles Harkness and/or Eddie Barret (tbc)

Thanks were given to the outgoing committee members for their work during 2015

Don't forget!

Let the NUJ have your e-mail address so we can save on postage by e-mailing you the branch newsletter.

@NUJ_PRmembers on Twitter

We are on Twitter!, Follow us on @NUJ_PRmembers for updates on all things NUJ and PR.

Policy and recruitment

The PR Communications Industrial Council (PRCC) develops policy for the sector which it then recommends to the NEC. As well as responding on behalf of the union to issues that arise in the industry (e.g. legislative changes around lobbying) the PRCC also works

to recruit new members and retain existing ones. It is an integral part of the union's process and profile, as Fiona explains: "The Council works as a team with me and the sector's Assistant Organiser David Ayrton to carry out this 'bigger picture' work. We are always delighted to see new members join the

Council as it's fantastic to get as many ideas as possible in the mix. If members wish to have input into the Council's work they are also very welcome either to write to us or to ask to come along to a meeting to contribute in person. We welcome insight from across this very diverse industry."

Importance of unions



As National Organiser for key creative sectors, Fiona is in no doubt about the importance and relevance of the NUJ and of the union movement in 2016: "I think that with the concerted attack by a Government in thrall to big business on the rights of workers generally and trade union rights specifically, it has never been more relevant to be a member of a trade union. As an individual it is invaluable to have someone on your side, a source of expert advice and a way of enforcing your rights.

against any evictions is ongoing and there will be further demos in April.

"As to the relevance of the NUJ to members working in PR and communications, no other union has the insight we do in this industry. So many members I deal with just find it helpful to have someone to turn to with questions about 'how things should be done'. It is invaluable to have someone with a wider view of the industry, and of employment practices in the media more generally. Many members in PR are the only journalists in their workplace and I think that can be pretty lonely at times.

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