

EQUITY CONFERENCE 2025 REPORT

Equity's presence in Northern Ireland has been on the rise in recent years, with the introduction of a dedicated Northern Ireland Official, Alice Adams Lemon, in 2021; a slew of new house agreements with theatre companies and venues; and growing membership, leading to the creation of the two branches: Lagan & East and Foyle & West.

With the union's activity in Northern Ireland riding high, it was fitting then that Derry should be the site of this year's Equity conference – the union's flagship democratic event. Taking place in Derry's historic Guildhall from Saturday 10 to Monday 12 May, over a hundred Equity members came together to decide the union's agenda and rules.

Motions passed include campaigning to defend soaps; ensuring theatre agreements contain suitable wig, hair and makeup stipulations; joining with other groups to challenge the threat of the far right; calling on the TUC federation of UK trade unions to lobby the government on artificial intelligence protections; and more.

Surrounding the debate of the floor were various fringe panel and discussion events held by Equity activists, a reception where guests could enjoy 'Equity beer' locally brewed for this year's conference and, of course, opportunities for members from across the UK to meet in person and build the relationships that help strengthen the trade union movement.

A rally at Northern Ireland government offices in Derry was an opportunity for Equity conference attendees to show their support for the union's Northern Ireland members.

Northern Ireland members have been campaigning long and hard to 'Save the arts, resist the cuts!' since 2023. This is against a backdrop of 50% of arts cuts since 2011/12 (when adjusted for inflation), with Northern Ireland receiving the least arts funding per person of all the UK's four nations (just £5.07, half that of its nearest comparator Wales at £10.51).

This time, Equity members called on the Northern Ireland government to increase arts funding, following the closure of Derry's Waterside Theatre & Arts Centre and the news that Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company, also based in the city, would not be provided their expected annual funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

This action was underscored by a motion passed at conference, for the union to campaign for an arts funding increase in Northern Ireland.

This is the highest honour Equity can bestow on a member – reserved for those who have made outstanding contributions to the union. It is a tradition to keep Honorary Life Memberships a secret until the moment they are awarded at conference, leading to surprise and some rather moving moments.

In her roles as Equity activist and Chair of Equity's Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent Members' Committee, **Natalie Amber** has been a force for change. This includes holding bosses to account over inauthentic portrayals of disabled characters, working on industry standard-setting guidance, and calling out the Government's cuts to social security for disabled people at the UN and beyond.

Stephen Beggs has been Chair of Equity's Northern Ireland Committee since 2017 and a voice for the union's Northern Ireland members: addressing local councils on the issue of arts funding, representing Equity at the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, and taking on an engager over the issue of holiday pay – and winning payment for many members.

Not only does the Greater Manchester Branch have the highest regular attendance of any Equity branch, but it also has the most followers on social media. This is testament to the tireless work of Branch Secretary **Chris Clarkson**. An exemplar of branch activism, Chris also attends other branch meetings to engage with union work across the country.

A leading figure in the successful community and union campaign to 'Save Oldham Coliseum' **Julie Hesmondhalgh** has also used her profile to speak out about improving industry access for working class creatives, the impact of social security cuts on artists, and arts funding. She has also served as an Equity Deputy – an integral role when it comes to organising in workplaces.

Having served as Equity's Northern Ireland Councillor, **Louis Rolston** has championed the union's Northern Ireland members over a number of years. This includes being integral to member activity in Derry, which helped lead to the formation of the Foyle & West Branch, and supporting the establishment of an Equity Official in Northern Ireland.

— EQUITY —

MINUTES

EQUITY CONFERENCE 2025

HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, DERRY,
10-12 MAY 2025

Present:

**Lynda Rooke (President – in the Chair)
Members of the Equity Council 2024-
2026**

**Paul W Fleming (General Secretary)
Equity representatives and observers**

**Maximum attendance: 198 including
109 representatives, four Officers and
17 Councillors.**

SATURDAY 10 MAY

Conference was formally convened on
Saturday 10 May at 14:00.

The President welcomed everyone. She
read out the Safe Space declaration,
introduced those sitting with her and
explained some points of protocol. She
introduced the fringe events, and thanked
the staff for all their hard work.

1. REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE BUSINESS COMMITTEE (CBC)

Julia Carson Sims introduced herself as
Chair of the CBC. She gave a few house-
keeping announcements and outlined
some points of procedure, including the
introduction of bloc seating this year, and
the change to allow photography during
session.

2. OBITUARIES

Nick Fletcher (Vice-President) and Marina
Hampton (Northern Ireland Councillor)
read out the obituaries. This was followed
by a minute's silence and a final ovation in
honour of those who had died in 2024.

3. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS, LYNDA ROOKE

The President extended a warm welcome
to all comrades and staff to the proud city
of Derry. She wanted this to be a great
experience for all and to build on the
success of Birmingham last year. This city
of Derry was one of the oldest continuous
populated places in Ireland. The furthest
west we could hold conference and the
home of the newest branch, Foyle and
West. A very productive time for our union
with 11 new house agreements since our
new office opened in Birmingham. Increase
in membership during this time. Many more
activists from across this region – Resist
the Cuts events, various Equity committee
meetings and at the excellent Wortley Hall
education training in Sheffield. Derry gave
us Cathy Harkin – a feminist and trade
unionist who wanted to make the world a
better place. First female president of Derry
trades council and founding member of
HELP. First female president of trades unions
in NI.

We continued to focus on industrial matters.
Challenging the employers, making our
workplaces safer, more accessible, free
from bullying and harassment, inclusive and
free from inequalities.

She spoke of the rise of the far right,
globally. This was why we were here as
trade unionists, to counter threats, not to
yield.

We continued to challenge politicians –
how dare they think they could take away
our hard fought for gains in diversity,
equality and inclusion. We were pushing
back against threats to arts funding. In

Scotland, we had rallied to stop the cuts to the arts. In Wales, we had challenged the cuts to the WNO, resulting in the union balloting members for strike and action short of strike. In Bristol, we had pushed back on significant cuts to culture budgets, which had now been put on hold. And the Oldham Coliseum had been saved due to activism.

We had moved from resilience to resistance – don't doubt it, it does work.

In campaigns, our work around Bethnal Green Working Men's Club highlighted the importance of saving venues, our North West staff and members were engaging with drag artists on Canal Street, and we were standing up to threats from the far right. Every day our staff fought to recoup unpaid fees for our members to help them pay bills and survive. Members were leading a significant campaign to save River City. Indigenous TV was under threat – cuts to episodes would mean the removal of a key entry point to the industry for working class members and a training ground for the industry as a whole.

We were also pushing back against AI. This was a tool for employers to cut production costs, it was controlled and used by corporate capitalism for sheer greed. We were in the era of feudal tech – the concentration of capital in the hands of so few and the workers were expected to live on the bare minimum – our message was that they would not get away with it. We would fight for control and consent for all workers.

Wherever we went, we challenged employers to action our demands. Wherever she went, Spotlight was raised. It was widely and deeply felt amongst members. She reminded members that "If you fight you might lose; if you don't fight you will always lose."

Committee elections were fast approaching. All committee elections were contested for the first time. When those ballot papers arrived in inboxes, please encourage other members to vote – and ask them to encourage five other members to vote.

She thanked her fellow Councillors, Officers, the staff and the General Secretary for their hard work over the past year, and she thanked all members who had spoken out in support of trans members, against cuts to disability and in solidarity with Palestine.

She thanked staff across regions and nations, working to make the union the best for members, and she thanked all the attendees at conference – without their dedication the union would not be as successful.

The words of Seamus Heaney first played here on 1 October 1990. She read from his poetry:

"History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme."

She implored members to go back to their branches and committees invigorated and ready to take on the employers wherever and whoever they were.

Finally, she announced the results of the General Secretary election:

Riky Ash 1,048 votes
Paul W Fleming 4,571 votes

She congratulated the General Secretary on his re-election – let’s move onwards and upwards.

4. GENERAL SECRETARY’S ADDRESS, PAUL W FLEMING

The General Secretary commended the 2024 annual report to conference, in particular the staff reports which outlined all the work we had been doing over the last year.

The north of Ireland was the only place where we had held two conferences since 2019. In 2019 we had closed a branch and left just one. We could not have done this conference without reopening our latest branch here. Our union had grown by 5% since 2019 – growth was three times this amount in NI.

This weekend we would gather in iconic places important to our movement. We would launch a new banner and even a new beer. We would hold four hours of fringe meetings tomorrow, including one from our growing Class Network. This room was more representative than ever. Council was the most diverse it had ever been. Today we would meet under the steady hand of our third woman president since WWII, midway through her second term.

Our ambition had grown since 2020 to marry the industrial aims with our union democracy. Last year we had visited over one new production a week. Across the UK we had increased our visits to over 50 per week. In NI and Scotland we had tripled our collective agreements. Under 40s were over half of our membership. TV commercials had been forced back to the table, we had a date for our high court hearing, and we had industrial action in the WNO.

In 2019 most of the afternoon had been spent debating the new logo, not pay. This Council and Officers were working together on the same page – they were progressive and against the far right, moving forward with comradely companionship and shared purpose. This showed the outward looking ambition to win a world our members deserved.

The motions said loud and clear that we would be taking our urgent industrial fight to the bosses, that we wanted to build a new world for the workers that made all that had value. We had submitted our most ambitious PACT claim in a generation on pay and AI. Our demands were the same – tariffs or no tariffs, inflation high or low.

It could not be right that while our independent theatre agreements were above inflation, our sub rep agreements had fallen behind. We wanted pay in sub rep to be as high as it had been in 2018.

Our message to the bosses was simple – we were not waiting any more. This drive had come from the Council and the President, and from the new activists who had grown the union’s power. Young

activists she had inspired through her profound endeavour.

We must all ask ourselves – if not us, then who?

Jackie Clune, our Vice-President, spoke truth to power and believed in power with a purpose, to stand with every member who had been abused side by side.

Nick Fletcher, our Vice-President, was committed to building a fighting modern union that looked out on the world.

David John, our Honorary Treasurer, had transformed the way the union saw its finances – showing that stability came from member confidence that we would push boundaries.

It was an overwhelming honour to have been re-elected as General Secretary. This result was an endorsement of the direction members had taken the union in. He could not be prouder to have been re-elected. He would continue to speak the truth and to challenge the far right. All people deserved Equity.

The speech was followed by the debates on motions 1-7 (Equality and Inclusion).

5. ADRIAN KANE, SIPTU

Adrian Kane welcomed conference to Derry and described the environment we were working in at the moment.

Trump, like Thatcher, was a revolutionary, he led by entropy, taking the energy that could

be used to do orderly work and releasing it in a chaos of noise and heat. He spoke of the race to rearm the old imperial nations and described how the world sat idly by while Zionism ground on with the goal of the displacement and annihilation of the Palestinian people, the continuing genocide which would never be erased.

The old imperial powers would continue to play out their wars, the Netanyahu regime would continue to obliterate the hope of a Palestinian future. The job of trade unions was to map out a future for all people. When people campaigned for Palestine it was not against Jewish people but it was for themselves, their hopes, and to be resolute. The artistic community could do a lot in this space. He commended Equity UK and all artists to unite in resistance.

In Ireland we took pride in the arts but the reality of anyone trying to make a living in the arts was by no means romantic. In Republic they were in the middle of difficult discussions and wanted to put on record thanks for Equity UK's staff for their support with these negotiations around minimum wage and collective bargaining.

He read a motion from during the transport union's dispute in Dublin in 1894 – the right to collective bargaining had been a just and reasonable demand then and it was a just and reasonable demand now, 131 years later.

In these bleak days it could be hard to keep going. To paraphrase the late Samuel Beckett – "I can't go on but of course we must go on." He didn't generally believe that the arc of history bent towards justice. Unless

you put your shoulder to the wheel, rolled up your sleeves and fought like hell for what was right, it could just as easily bend toward fascism.

Ours was a time that demanded that working people stand together. You were the leaders of our movement. God bless the work and speed the plough!

6. ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY (RECORDED MEDIA), JOHN BARCLAY

John Barclay thanked his colleagues in the Recorded Media department and distribution team, and commended the collections of residuals which recently totalled £100million due to our collective bargaining.

The theme remained the same as last year – we worked on the basis that impossibility never stopped anything from happening. We silenced the naysayers who said the union had no power. You had power, there is power in the union. He quoted James Connolly: “for our demands most moderate are, we only want the earth.”

We had delivered a big win at the BBC – a 10% increase on the weekly minimum, 30% on episodic fees, rewording of the grievance procedure, increase for supporting artists: this was a modern agreement to deal with the future.

Negotiations were still taking place on the ITV agreement and the PACT TV and Film agreement. The union had tabled significant claims to revise agreements – so far there had been 20 meetings with PACT and their

law firms. They underestimated us at their peril.

We had tabled a groundbreaking, radical claim to deal with AI – both input and output. A claim that had shaken the industry and caught the engagers off-guard – we would not roll over and accept the SAG-AFTRA deal. We were still waiting for a response, nine months later.

PACT had dropped the baton of industrial relations. American entities had picked this up via a law firm in London – the entities were members of the American ATPT – HBO, WB, Netflix, Apple, Amazon, Disney, Sony, Paramount CBS. We relished that challenge and we would win.

Your union was leading a broad strategy with our members who had been affected by AI. AI was not evil – it was the same old monsters, engagers and bosses, who would use it as a tool to take away your working rights. We were working through legally and legislatively to submit a hard hitting response to the consultation. We were doing everything we could to combat this: breach of GDPR, breach of contract, in order to protect members image, likeness and performance. Some areas of work would be more affected than others. We would be strong. He implored members to be cautious, be diligent and encourage members to get involved.

We now finally had an Equity Continuing Drama Deputies Committee, with the first meeting held in April with reps from soaps right across the sector. We were seeing indigenous TV being taken off the map – the Scottish office were leading the fight

against this. We had to tackle and support our indigenous soaps and TV productions being made at home. Engagers and producers should have more faith in their productions like we did. Why didn't they ask their stakeholders to take a holiday and plough that back into productions?

He now turned to games and commercials. Last year we had nothing to lose – we had gone all out and released a campaign that would cause chaos and make engagers feel the heat under their feet. We were not afraid of ruins because we would rebuild.

We had threatened the advertisers with referral to the Competition and Markets Authority for cartelism. We had now entered into negotiations with the IPA to restore the agreement we had lost 27 years ago. There was a chance we wouldn't get there but we were prepared. It had taken two years to get there – the union had power and exercised power and we would win.

In the games industry, we had nothing to lose so we were causing chaos. We had attended the AGM of the games trade body and we had demonstrated at the BAFTA games awards and got a lot of response and press. He had spoken to the CEO of games body UKIE – a meeting would be held this month. Things were moving in the right direction.

He commended the work of his colleagues in all these areas. We were going to win. Our new political education programme was creating members to fight the union cause – fighting to make the industry better.

Give us bread and give us roses;
encourage workers to join; we will win.

The speech was followed by the debates on motions 9-13 (Recorded Media), as well as Emergency Motion 1.

Conference was adjourned at 17:45.

SUNDAY 11 MAY

Conference was formally re-convened at 09:30.

Julia Carson Sims (Chair of CBC) gave an update on changes to the agenda.

This was followed by the debate on motion 8 (Equity motion to TUC).

7. ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY (LIVE PERFORMANCE), ADAM ADNYANA

Adam Adnyana gave an update on activities over the past year. He thanked all the staff in the Live Performance department for their work over the last year.

We were in a challenging environment of reduced volume of theatre production and output, seeing cuts to production by almost a third. This had had an impact on panto whereby local venues had become unavailable. Areas like Falkirk were not able to put on school productions and were therefore outsourcing, which was having a negative impact on the quality of contracts for that work.

We had focussed campaigning on arts councils and devolved administrations, the WNO and campaigns from the Class Network on primary school touring programme cuts.

Where there was insecurity in funding, we needed to support and drive actions to change that. We needed to push for improved terms and conditions for our members, better funding and long-term investment.

We would hold employers accountable. These issues impacting the sector should not prevent us pushing for better for our members.

Moving on to our collective agreements – we had won percentage increases in rates of pay across agreements in theatre, ballet and opera. We had trialled a five-day working week in rehearsals and our aim was to introduce it as standard practice. Feedback from our members from the trials showed a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Our Digs Code of Conduct established best practice expectations, and we had worked with UK Theatre to change the sectoral arrangement for accommodation on tour. We had developed digest documents and resources which served as valuable tools for members and depts. We had conducted member consultation via surveys in advance of our negotiations and members were involved in formulating, negotiating and campaigning for those claims. We wanted to build a well-informed member-centred claim for each of our agreements.

Regarding claims and organising, we had taken successful legal claims on issues, including a landmark tribunal against a theatre in education employer. Through claims we established that the status of our members was that of a worker in law. Members brought these claims to us and we could use our resources – whether that was through our industrial work or legal support – to have a positive impact on work conditions offered in the sector. We were giving the message that we would take strong and decisive action on behalf of our members. We would use social media channels to ask for members' evidence, experience and feedback to identify claims we could take forward on their behalf. This had resulted in payments being made to our members.

In addition to establishing new agreements and charters, we had held contract negotiation workshops with the aim of building members' knowledge and confidence, especially in the absence of agents for stage management workers in the West End.

In variety, we continued with our work to protect venues under threat. We had campaigned to save Bethnal Green Working Men's Club which was at risk of closure, a venue that offered consistent work opportunities for our members. We had reached new union agreements for venues, setting the industry standard. We had launched our Fit to Fly Checklist which gave aerial performers the tools they needed to assess their safety at work. We had demanded justice for drag artist Heklina and protested the failure of the metropolitan police to investigate their death during their run at Soho Theatre.

We had a new dedicated student team – students@equity.org.uk. Members could email the team if they would like to attend a student visit with staff. If you had contacts with course leads or institutions, please pass their info on to the student team. He asked members to sign and share our 'Breakdown Barriers' campaign petition to put an end to audition fees.

Our 2025 live performance objectives included conducting analysis of the dance sector, promoting and expanding the use of the Independent Theatre Agreement and dance appendix, building the density amongst directors and designers and overhauling the resources for creative team. We aimed to increase student membership and increase Equity representation across all relevant institutions so that students could aspire to be part of our community. We would continue to develop an Equity presence for drag in the North West.

8. OLDHAM COLISEUM UPDATE AND HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The President introduced a video on the long-running campaign to Save Oldham Coliseum. The video was presented by Julie Hesmondhalgh – she said that when the budget had been axed, Equity had launched into action to defend a venue which accounted for 20% of paid actor weeks in the North West. The power of the campaign was clear from the video. Despite efforts in March 2023 it had faced certain closure. Since then she was delighted to say she had good news to share with you all – the decision had been reversed and the venue saved.

At the end of the video, Julie Hesmondhalgh was awarded Honorary Life Membership for her activism leading the Save the Oldham Coliseum campaign and as an Equity dep on Coronation Street over many years.

This was followed by the debates on motions 14-21 (Live Performance).

9. PAT CULLEN MP

The President introduced Pat Cullen MP. Elected as a Sinn Féin MP in 2024, she had been General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing from 2021 to 2024. She had been a community nurse in Belfast during the troubles and had gone on to hold roles at the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board, before joining the Royal College of Nursing in 2016. In late 2022, she had led the National Health Service strikes in which English and Welsh nurses had gone on strike for the first time in the nursing union's 106-year history. In 2023, she had been described by the New Statesman as "one of the UKs most prominent Trade Union leaders", placed at No.15 in their list of the most powerful left-wing figures of the year. In July 2024 she had been elected as Sinn Féin MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and we were delighted to welcome her to our conference.

Pat Cullen MP said it was a pleasure to join everyone today in Derry. Thanks for the opportunity to speak to trade unionists, protecting workers' rights. She felt at home amongst trade union friends and colleagues. Conference was an important date in the calendar for trade unionists and

activists. Derry and the wider region held great historic significance for social justice on this Island.

There had been massive change in the past six decades, including struggles for fair investment in the North West. Caoimhe Archibald, Minister for the Economy, had championed the 'Good Jobs' employment rights bill – the most significant workers' rights legislation ever to be introduced in the North of Ireland. It addressed four key areas: terms of employment; pay and benefits; worker representation and work/life balance. This legislation would empower trade unions. As we were moving closer to constitutional change, we wanted to standardise workers' rights legislation on an all-Ireland basis. The cross-border economy was thriving. It made sense for workers, wherever they lived, that they had the same rights in their workplaces.

As the famous quote from Nelson Mandela said, 'our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians'. Here in Ireland, as we strived towards Irish unity, we absolutely shared that belief. The ongoing barbaric and inhuman actions of the Israeli government were an indictment of western governments to act decisively. Many had lost their lives in the line of duty in Gaza. Netanyahu and the far right regime were totally out of control – Israel continued to block humanitarian aid from entering the strip. Hunger and famine were openly used as weapons of war. With strong, unified, international pressure, this genocide could be brought to an end. The regime must be held accountable through the international criminal court. We stood firmly with the Palestinian people and demanded a permanent ceasefire and a

future of freedom and justice for the children of Palestine.

There was a shared attitude of unity in Ireland. In the North, our link to Britain came at detrimental and increasing costs to workers and families. The British government's policy of cuts and austerity had eroded our public services to the bone and left workers stretched and in total desperation. She knew first-hand, from her time as General Secretary of the RCN, the impact of these pressures and the disregard British ministers had for our public sector workers. They were the backbone of our economy, not the politicians, bankers or big corporations. Sinn Féin funded public services which uplifted those struggling and the vulnerable, supported families and uplifted communities. Trade unions had their own role to play – by working together we could be a positive force for good – for a better, fairer, stronger united and new Ireland.

Just as the Irish Proclamation of 1916 set out, we believed in equal rights and opportunities to all citizens and happiness and prosperity for all. The Irish government must start preparations for constitutional change. A border poll was coming. The coalition in Dublin must establish a citizens' assembly without delay. We currently faced a difficult time in world politics, but these could be moments of real opportunity. We could have confidence there was no bigger idea on these islands than Irish unity. A united Ireland needed to be about workers' rights, better healthcare, social protections, fair pay and good jobs. It was about providing a home for everyone and a safety net for those who needed it. Let's all work together to shape our new Ireland

and for generations to come. Enjoy the rest of your conference.

10. HONORARY TREASURER'S SUBMISSION OF 2024 ACCOUNTS

David John, Honorary Treasurer, said it was wonderful to be here in Derry. He congratulated the activists here in Northern Ireland and the official, Alice Adams Lemon.

The union was in a stable and secure financial position. Ongoing financial stability would ensure we retained our status as an independent trade union as we approached our 100 year anniversary in five years' time.

The statement of comprehensive income gave total income and total expenditure, and those figures led to an operating surplus this year. In 2024 our total income had been £10,590,558 and our total expenditure had been £10,404,555 leaving us with an operating surplus of £186,003. We were happy with this and it was close to budget. Membership subscriptions were our most important income stream and totalled £7,417,214. Recruitment and retention of members was incredibly important for us.

Investment income was up substantially from 2023 from £661,891 in 2023 to £1,044,456 in 2024. This significant rise was mainly due to a big rise in bank interest in 2024 and dividends from our investments. This had already changed, interest rates were coming down and would come down further in 2025. The financial markets and our investment portfolio performance had been affected

negatively due to the instability caused by the US administration. We had seen some short-term losses but we had a long-term strategy with a good spread of investments, so we would recover our losses over the long term. The expected return from our investments was still at a good level.

There were current concerns over trading tariffs – these would be bad for our business and for future public investment in it. We were pushing for government investment in our industries at 0.5% of GDP– this would be difficult if the economy failed to grow.

Staff costs were our biggest area of expenditure, £5,706,516 in 2024. He gave a huge vote of thanks to the staff.

Looking to the Statement of Financial Position, the first figure to look at was fixed assets which were £24,599,461 in 2024. The net assets of £22,501,899 excluded the staff pension liabilities. We were not currently reporting a pension liability so that figure was what our union was worth at the end of 2024, and the figure was very good. We had to look after our assets with great care. Huge thanks to the finance department for doing just that.

Thanks to the membership department for helping administrate the benevolent fund. It continued to be very busy; our members were facing financial challenges and still not being supported by universal credit. We could offer subs grants and small welfare grants. We would continue our campaign for universal credit reform and for the abolition of the minimum income floor.

It was great news that Paul W Fleming had committed to another five years as our General Secretary. He was looking forward to making even more progress as a fighting and campaigning trade union. With our Vice-Presidents Nick Fletcher and Jackie Clune, our President Lynda Rooke, the Council and activists working alongside Paul, we had made a lot of progress in the last five years. We were becoming stronger as a trade union and we looked forward to taking it further. He commended the 2024 Annual Accounts to conference.

11. ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY (FINANCE AND OPERATIONS), BECCY REESE

Beccy Reese thanked the Honorary Treasurer, David John, for overseeing our finances and ensuring our financial stability, and for supporting individual members through ensuring subscription grants and welfare grants were made available to those members struggling financially.

Unlike her colleagues whose reports you would hear this weekend, she had no big wins for better pay, terms and conditions, or of fights against arts funding and venue closures to report, but the staff working across membership administration, internal operations and supporting the union's governance structure worked hard to ensure that everything behind the scenes functioned effectively and if they were doing their job well, like a good back stage crew, they were not seen. So this was her annual chance to showcase what may otherwise go unnoticed.

In 2024 the review of our membership structure was realised. She had spoken

last year at conference about the complex structure that had evolved over the years – giving rise to 21 membership categories, 22 different subscription rates and in reality over 100 different amounts paid for Equity membership!

From February 2024 we now had three membership categories – full, subsidised who paid 50% and those in education or training who paid 25%. Much clearer for members to understand and much more efficient for the membership team to administer. All paying members, for the first time including students, now received the same rights and benefits and from October 2024 the same insurance cover as part of our comprehensive new package.

We were able to secure insurance for all our members through our collective power using our combined muscle to secure better benefits. Our insurance package cost a fraction of what it would cost for members to buy individually. This collective procurement meant we can provide vital public liability insurance and cover for workplace accidents. Through our new insurance providers, Aviva and our broker, Verlingue we had been able to provide an improved offer for all members.

We had removed the requirements to evidence a contract and meet certain definitions of an artist, meaning that claims could now be made for all members when working in connection with their Equity profession – whether they currently had a contract or not. And not just whilst working – but also whilst commuting, auditioning, practicing, training, and rehearsing.

The weekly payout for when you couldn't work due to an accident had been doubled from £150 to £300 and, since the start of the new offer in October 2024, Aviva had paid out £200,000 on 75 claims.

With our new providers we were receiving regular reports on all the claims and meeting with the underwriters and brokers on a quarterly basis to review claims, interrogating and sometimes reversing declined claims. We had received positive feedback from members of the professional, reassuring and empathetic communications from both Aviva and Verlingue.

Our members' power had also been demonstrated through their ability to take collective action on climate change through the Equity Pension Scheme. Over £130 million was held in the scheme and through many years of negotiations the default fund for these investments was now in a new fund, which had extensive fossil fuel exclusions. This meant members' savings would be invested in companies considered to align positively with the UN's sustainable development goals, which included aims on climate action, gender equality, and affordable clean energy. This had far more impact than individual members could make on their own.

Our governance team had worked over the last five years to make real the Officers' vision of bringing the industrial and democratic lives of the union into better alignment.

The President had mentioned the fact that for the first time, all 16 committee elections would be contested this year. And this reflected the work of every conversation,

every connection fostered by staff and activists to encourage engagement in the union's democracy.

Being part of the democratic life of the union was no longer divorced from its industrial activism. In the union's democratic structures we saw more members who had participated in shaping our industrial claims in TV, film and theatre and who had participated in political education events – like the recent event at Wortley Hall and training run through our industrial teams.

We also saw more members involved in the growing number of deputies committees fighting for better terms and conditions and – so evident at this conference – an increase in diversity and inclusion in attendees and speakers. To those of you speaking here for the first time and sharing your experiences, she applauded your courage in speaking your truths. This was crucial to our ability to organise effectively.

To quote Muire McCallion in St Columb's Hall last night, "we need all of us, we need to be visible, we need to be loud."

Every challenge we made collectively:

- for fair pay
- for better terms and conditions
- for necessary adjustments for equitable access
- for every cast member to have access to appropriate costumes, hair and make-up provision.

In all these challenges, the lie was that "there is no more money". Every industrial challenge you made was a challenge to the power of money held in the hands of a few. It was a challenge to the structure in which

oppression of all forms was embodied. That was why it mattered that your union was bringing the democratic and industrial parts of itself back together.

In addition to reporting on the membership administration and governance sections, she could also report our internal operations Equity were in a good place.

The Honorary Treasurer had reported on the financial position at the end of 2024 which showed our assets were in a strong position to provide financial stability to underpin our ongoing work. The finance team worked continually to improve the efficiency of processing day to day transactions and ensuring our financial operations were secure.

We had also rolled out internal IT systems to improve communication between different areas of work within a cohesive framework and ensure that all staff had the technology resources they needed to do their jobs effectively.

We continued to face cyber attacks on a regular basis and our team was constantly vigilant in updating our protection and highlighting risks to staff. One place in the union where we valued resilience and resistance.

Following the successful refurbishment of Guild House we had embarked on a programme of improving our offices outside of London. At the beginning of 2024 we had launched our first office in Birmingham, providing a space for the now two members of staff serving the Midlands region with capacity for meetings both in the office and virtually. We had moved

into our new office in Manchester at the end of 2024 and celebrated in January 2025 inviting members from across the North West and North East, Yorkshire and Humberside to our new space. In 2025 we were looking to refresh the space in our Cardiff office and with our new, first official working solely with the South West region, develop a suitable space in Bristol.

Looking forward, we were continuing the work to improve our internal union democracy, bringing it further into alignment with our industrial agenda. We were now collecting data on the diversity within our Council and committees and had a good base line with the current Council and committees so would be able to fully compare with the new committees, once elected and also the next Council when it took office in summer 2026. The next step would be to share how we organised within Equity's branches – there would be a fringe meeting this afternoon to explore how to bring sparkle and glitter and festival vibe to branch activity.

Our work to review our internal processes continued. Over the next couple of years we would be focusing on deepening our understanding of the data we held and how we used them. Our goal was to gain a clearer insight into the data that was useful to the union's industrial strategies and ensure our systems were capable of delivering what was needed in an efficient and reliable manner.

Our work aimed to support all across this union – to inform, to educate and most importantly, to organise.

12. APPEAL ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Chipo Chung, Chair, and Fiona Whitelaw, Vice-Chair, said that this committee, previously known as ICAF, was building on 50 years of solidarity work. Its remit was to support artists outside of the UK who lived in places where freedom of expression was suppressed, or where they were facing humanitarian crisis.

50 years ago, ICAF's founders had helped artists fleeing the persecution of Pinochet in Chile. We had given support to artists forced to leave Turkey, Belarus, and Ukraine. We gave direct assistance, lobbied MPs, raised public awareness and, on occasion, committee members had even taken fleeing artists into their own homes. We had given solidarity to Russian artists fleeing their country because of speaking about the war – a subject banned in Putin's Russia.

The committee could also ask the General Secretary to make interventions on its behalf to support artists, as he had done for Hamdan Ballal, the director of BAFTA and Oscar winning documentary "No Other Land". Hamdan had been abducted by Israeli authorities after being beaten in his village and released after international outcry. "No Other Land" was made by a Palestine/Israeli collective and showed the destruction of West Bank's Masafer Yatta by Israeli soldiers and the alliance between Palestinian activist Basel and Israeli journalist Yuval. The film could be watched on streaming and was distressing but essential viewing.

Palestine was at the top of the committee's agenda. All cultural institutes in Gaza had been bombed, including trade union offices. In January we had given direct financial assistance to six artists who had lost their homes, who were desperate for food, not just for themselves but their families, some of them elderly artists who had built the theatre community in Gaza and now saw their life's work destroyed. Most recently we had supported Ahmet, a 21-year-old drama teacher in Jenin who had recently been released from three months' imprisonment by the Palestinian authority, a boy with no interest in militia groups but who had been arrested for his social media posts and for rapping in the community about resistance. His mentor had reported to us that he had returned from prison distressed: our financial support was enabling them to arrange psychological counselling for him to help build up his mental health so that he could go back to teaching local kids, themselves distressed by four months of siege, in the lively and uplifting way that he did. We hoped that our message of solidarity to him would encourage him that, like all artists around the world, his right to express himself through his art was his human right.

The financial assistance the committee was able to give directly impacted the lives of individual artists.

The committee would be presenting its first motion to conference tomorrow and as a committee we hoped to be proactive and broaden the scope of our work and to coordinate our allies to support trade union movements in countries in conflict and crisis. The work started today with our fringe event today where our special guests

would be conveying a message to us from the Dramatists' Union who were currently underground in Sudan.

Alongside donations, please engage to let the committee know of any cases of censorship or oppression around the world. Please contact us. Please consider leaving a legacy to the committee. They thanked conference for their contributions and support.

The President extended thanks to the BSL signers, and the captioners. She reminded members about the rally on Monday morning outside Department of Community offices in Derry in response to the government's decision to impose real terms cuts to the arts.

Julia Carson Sims, Chair of CBC, said that conference would reconvene at 10:00 tomorrow, slightly later to accommodate the rally. She gave information on the fringe events in the afternoon.

Conference was adjourned at 13:15.

MONDAY 12 MAY

Conference was formally re-convened at 10:00.

Ian Barritt, Vice-Chair of CBC, announced that Motion 27 would not be moved because no proposer was present and that the motion would therefore be remitted to Council. He gave a reminder to conference that audio descriptions should be brief, did not need to be repeated, and most importantly should be serious.

The day began with the debate on Emergency Motion 2 (Council), followed by the debate on motions 22 and 23 (Policy).

Conference was shown a video message from Julio Correal, Vice-President of the Colombian Actors Union (ACA). Julio spoke warmly about his visit to Equity's Conference in Birmingham in 2024, which he said had been a space for learning and strengthening the friendship between Equity and ACA. He thanked Equity for its support and expressed his best wishes for this year's conference.

After this, conference was shown a video from Claire Hanna, MP for Belfast South and Mid Down and the Leader of the SDLP. She spoke about her work with Equity and other unions as Chair of the Performers All-Party Parliamentary Group in Westminster and about the rich history and importance of arts and culture in Derry and across Northern Ireland. She said there was a funding crisis in the arts. She spoke about the economic value of art and its importance to humanity, how it expanded our knowledge and understanding, and how creative industries were undervalued. She said it was madness not to allow such great human potential for creativity to flourish. She said the arts were underfunded and it was time for that to be changed. She said she would do everything she could to work across the sector and with Equity to allow the arts to thrive and survive. She ended by sending her warm wishes to Equity Conference.

13. ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY (POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS), SIAN JONES

Sian Jones said she had joined Equity in August 2024 and it was a pleasure to be here. She said Equity was a unique union: No others had the protected name, the pension to members, or the insurance package Equity did. It was not a servicing union but a fighting, campaigning and organising union. The communications and policy work had to reflect the uniqueness of Equity, and we had to take members' voices into the corridors of power.

She turned to recent notable policy achievements. James Frith MP had hosted a policy debate on performers' rights in the last month, and over half the MPs who had spoken in that debate had met with Equity or had been briefed by Equity, and many cited Equity in their speeches. This would not have been possible before. She said the policy team had expanded to four, led by Tom Peters. The team had submitted a 9,000 word submission to the government's consultation on copyright and AI, briefed scores of members on making their own submissions, and amplified this through comms and media work. As a result, the government was rethinking its proposals. Also, Equity had secured an amendment to the Employment Rights Bill in relation to the Spotlight carve-out.

Finally on policy, Equity would chair the Federation of Entertainment Unions in 2025. The parliamentary group was being re-established and a summer reception was planned to be held in parliament. Equity's visibility and influence was growing.

She thanked the comms team for their brilliant work day-in and day-out. She thanked the photographer in Derry, Neil Harrison. She said our comms work looked beautiful thanks to the work of the in-house designer. We had secured more than 800 separate media hits for Equity in 2024 and we were on track to equal or succeed that in 2025 – but it was about quality as much as quantity. She said the comms team was working closely with trade media and Equity had a strong social media presence, and was upskilling across the team. Equity was foregrounding members and their professions and workplaces in its comms, as demonstrated by recent videos. She encouraged members to approach comms to work on content together.

She ended by saying that communications could never supersede real-life interactions and she encouraged members to recruit in their workplaces.

The speech was followed by the debates on motions 24 and 25 (Policy).

14. DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, LOUISE McMULLAN

Louise McMullan said she hoped conference had enjoyed Derry. She said she was from Derry and was delighted members had embraced the city. She encouraged conference to learn more about Derry while they were here, it was precious to her and to the other activists in Northern Ireland.

She said she would outline the work of the nations and regions team and campaigns and member education programmes, through highlights shared by members of those teams.

The campaigns and education work was led by Gareth Forest. Gareth was proud of the work members had done on River City, including the 12,000 signature petition to BBC. It sent a message to the TV bosses that we would resist every cut and fight for every job.

She said that Gareth had worked with other staff to run a very successful political education programme at Wortley Hall. The results of this could be seen in the hall today and in the speeches, with many new activists standing for committees and signing up to deputies training.

On Scotland, she spoke about the work of Marlene Curran, whose proudest moment was the £34 million increase in Creative Scotland's budget. Equity's influence was growing in the Scottish Parliament thanks to rallies, lobbying and petitions that had the ear of the Scottish Culture Secretary, Angus Robertson. He had acknowledged the union's campaigning work following the funding increase and had attended Equity's Scotland National Meeting.

She turned to the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside region and the work of Dominic Bascombe and Fiona Tobin, who had helped implement the Memorandum of Understanding for the City of Culture in Bradford. Equity had used this as a springboard to build activism in the city in a way it never had before. We had also increased the number of house agreements in 2024 and expanded our presence at Durham Miners Gala.

In the Midlands, Ian Manborde and Vijay Shah had celebrated their new office in Birmingham. The new office and expanded

team had allowed Equity to do new and different work at Leicester Comedy Festival and to get new comedians involved. With an office in the region, Equity had greatly increased the fees won for members to £52,000 from just over £17,000 in 2023.

In the North West, Karen Lockney and Kirsten Muat had made Equity's presence felt in the region, grounding relationships with venues and recorded media productions and establishing a new Drag Network. All their work had been supported by the branches and connecting with members was the cornerstone of how they wanted to work.

In the East and South East, Iain Croker and Matt Kite had strengthened branches, raised Equity's profile at the Brighton Fringe, and taken on exploitation at the Cambridge Shakespeare Festival. Their biggest win to date had been Suffolk Council's U-turn on the £500,000 cut to its arts budget. Iain thanked members and allies for their demonstrations and hard work achieving 3,500 petition signatures.

In the South West, Equity had a new official, Kye Dudd, and was soon to open an office in Bristol. She said it was past time the 4,000 members in the region had their own resources to build on the work that had been done to date standing up to the Council's ill-conceived arts budget cuts and the short-sighted decision to sell the Bottleyard Studios. She said we looked forward to seeing things happen on a much bigger scale going forward.

In Wales, Simon Curtis and Elin Meredydd could now focus entirely on their work there, having previously also covered the South West. They had refocused the organising

and negotiating strategy, hoping to deliver improvements on pension, pay and royalties in the TAC deal. They were proud of the activism and tenacity of members in the WNO dispute, where a 93% mandate for strike action had been achieved. They were close to winning a new agreement, better pay and a sustainable future for the chorus.

Finally, she turned to Northern Ireland. Alice Adams Lemon's highlight had been members coming together to support the Resist the Cuts campaign. She said that, despite the setbacks, we would win on this if we stuck with it. Alice was proud of the Foyle and West Branch using their motions and meetings to put forward crucial issues for the union, including supporting the Irish language and trades councils, as well as creating the new banner.

She ended by paying tribute to the staff team and the Councillors across the nations and regions for their hard work.

15. FORMAL MOTION TO ADOPT THE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The formal motion to adopt the Annual Report 2024 was **proposed** by Amanda Doherty, seconded by Mimi Tizzano and **CARRIED** unanimously.

The formal motion to adopt the Annual Accounts 2024 was **proposed** by Stephanie Greer, seconded by Marina Hampton and **CARRIED** unanimously.

This was followed by the debates on motions 26, 28, 29 and 30 (Policy), motion 27 having been remitted to Council.

The President said this had been the first ever national union conference to be held in the city of Derry and we should be proud of that. She thanked the signers, captioners, sound team, Guildhall staff, and all attendees. She brought conference to a close at 12:40.

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

MOTION 1: LGBT+ Committee

Conference notes that Equity has a strong tradition of supporting members' health and wellbeing by working with engagers and employers, as well as exploring beneficial partnerships with service providers.

Physical and psychological help is available via the British Association For Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) and members can further access support through Equity for menopause and childcare advice, legal advice, and the pension scheme. Conference believes that these established support avenues set a precedent regarding the provision of health and wellbeing services for members.

Conference further believes that, in the current political climate, transgender and queer union members are being disadvantaged by a lack of access to fundamental resources and advice. Those members are increasingly targets of a populist, authoritarian right-wing political movement that seeks to undermine and discredit trans voices, and use any avenue to make our healthcare harder to access.

Therefore, Conference calls on Council to -

1. develop guidelines for engagers on working with and supporting members accessing gender-affirming care;
2. work with BAPAM to explore how it could help members access gender-affirming care; and
3. explore new partners who may help members access gender-affirming care.

The motion was **proposed** by Mais Robinson and **seconded** by Emma Jayne Park.

There was one further speaker **for** the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** overwhelmingly, with one against and one abstaining.

MOTION 2: Merseyside and Cheshire Branch

(selected at the North West Regional Meeting)

Conference notes Disabled artists are disproportionately affected by poor health and safety in venues and on sets. Poor health and safety in these settings creates further barriers for Disabled artists to access and thrive in our industry.

A 2022 report by the Creative Diversity Network found that, despite 18% of the population having a disability, only 8.3% of on-screen contributions were made by Disabled people.

Conference further notes that venues and production companies are legally required to make reasonable adjustments and take reasonable measures to protect performers and creatives from disability discrimination. Reports from members working in our sector suggests this is not happening and often Disabled workers are scared to enforce these rights for fear of victimisation.

Furthermore, these barriers are often strongly felt before Disabled artists have arrived at a venue or started working on a contract, with one in four Disabled workers stating that inaccessible public transport limits their employment opportunities.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. strive to ensure that venues work with Disabled artists to carry out person-centred risk assessments as default when a performer discloses a health condition or impairment;
- 2.. call on venues to cover additional travel and accommodation costs faced by Disabled artists;
3. carry out regular health and safety inspections of venues and sets; and
4. promote the access passports/riders and support Disabled workers in acquiring these.

The motion was **proposed** by Misha Mond and **seconded** by Ms Sunny Sarah.

There was one further speaker for the motion and one against.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 3: Deaf and Disabled Members Committee

Conference calls on Council to campaign for arts councils across the UK to fund, create, roll out and support a nationally recognised mandatory Disability and Deaf Awareness Training within the theatre sector for key staff members of theatre productions and companies in receipt of funding from arts councils, while ensuring input from Equity, Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) members and disabled people's organisations are a part of its creation.

This is in response to a lack of understanding and meeting of minimum legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010, alongside lack of knowledge around wider best practice models for companies to support, reach and employ artists and creatives who are Deaf, Disabled and/or neurodivergent.

There are successes and adoption of similar ideas in film and TV via ScreenSkills in giving an easy, free access to a base line of knowledge for all.

We believe a theatre-based equivalence is desperately needed to help fill gaps in the theatre industry.

This training, if freely available, would benefit artists and organisations alike, encouraging best practice even for those who are not in receipt of such funding, as it shows future preparedness should they ever apply.

A lack of awareness and understanding about disability and deafness, and the legal requirements around them, can result in

unintended barriers to our members. We need to remove barriers to getting work, whilst in work and even after work.

We request that Council supports such an initiative and a campaign for the creation of this training across all UK arts councils.

The motion was **proposed** by Sarah J Warren and **seconded** by Mary O'Loan.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 4: North East England Branch (selected at the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Meeting)

Conference calls on Council to take a leadership role in addressing fatphobia in the entertainment industry and to strive to ensure that fat performers and creatives are given equal opportunities and fair treatment.

65% of the UK population are overweight and obese. If stage and screen were to be representative, 6.5 actors in a cast of 10 would be fat. This is never seen.

Fatphobia seems to be the last characteristic that is open to ridicule and discussion in our industry.

Conference asks Council to challenge fat bias and break down the barriers for fat people to be represented and working on stage and on screen. It is time for meaningful action to challenge the systemic

biases that have long marginalised talent and to create an industry that celebrates all bodies, including adequate provision for costume and hair (understudy roles especially) providing safety and dignity in all work.

The motion was **proposed** by Rachel Stockdale and **seconded** by Liz Carruthers.

There were two further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** none against, with one abstaining.

MOTION 5: Race Equality Committee

Conference notes that incremental improvements have been made in the representation of Black and Asian people across screen and stage industries in the last 10 years.

As a result, the resurgent far right movement is pressuring our cultural industries to be less diverse, agitating with baseless propaganda to restrict the presence of Black and Asian people on our stages and screens, calling for boycotts of Boots over the presence of an all-Black family in their Christmas advert, shouting loudly on social media about the (historically accurate) presence of Black characters in the World War II film Blitz, and issuing death threats to theatres programming powerful race-conscious work.

As a result, Equity should attempt to ensure that all efforts to challenge this pressure are co-ordinated as part of wider, national

efforts during a period of a resurgence of the far right in the UK and internationally.

As a result of this situation, Conference calls on Council to -

1. resource the affiliation to organisations actively challenging the far right (for example Stand up to Racism) to allow for a co-ordinated movement-wide response to the presence of the far right in the industry;
2. support the co-ordination of joint responses from all relevant equalities committees where organised far right groups mobilise against diverse artists working across the industry; and
3. endeavour to develop the co-ordination of joint trade union efforts via the TUC to respond to the far right including joint campaigns, support for marches, etc.

The motion was **proposed** by Daniel York Loh and **seconded** by Nicholas Barnes.

There were three further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** none against, with one abstaining.

MOTION 6: Stage Actors Committee

Conference notes that Global Majority workers do not always have access to the same standard or suitability of wigs, hair and make-up (WHAM) provision as white counterparts when working in theatre.

Conference further notes that it is discriminatory for Global Majority workers to be asked or expected to provide their own products/materials where their white counterparts have been provided with what they need. Specifically, we also note that people of Global Majority heritage sometimes require additional resources to keep their hair protected from the demands of theatre. At the point of costume and WHAM design, measures should be taken to ensure the resources required of the full company are accounted for.

Conference affirms that equity in access to WHAM provision, skin tone appropriate physio tape, plasters, and other related products is a key industrial priority for our union. Therefore, Conference calls on Council to strive to ensure that clauses in Equity's industry standard agreements for theatre reflect Equity's expectation of equitable WHAM and other provision for all workers and to oversee the creation of guidance for members about their right to equal treatment at work.

The motion was **proposed** by Matthew Forbes and **seconded** by Tonia Daley-Campbell.

There were three further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 7: Women's Committee

The unrestricted use of AI technology poses threats to a fair and equal representation of protected characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, race, age, all hard won over many years.

UCL (University College London) research, 2024, showed: 'People interacting with biased AI become more likely to underestimate women's performance and overestimate white men's likelihood of holding high-status jobs... AI algorithms learn the human biases embedded in the data... and AI then tends to exploit and amplify these biases.' Algorithms also dull critical thinking. These biases historically have favoured cisgender wealthy white men.

We risk reducing women and non-binary people to becoming stereotypical products seen only through a sexist, ableist and reductive lens.

AI casting tools trained on unauthorised past trends will continue to sideline women of colour, plus-size women, those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, Disabled people and those who are older, reinforcing exclusionary beauty standards and erasing diverse storytelling. Deepfake technology threatens to exploit our members by altering their bodies, voices and appearance without consent, risking unwarranted behaviours, promotion of unrealistic ideals over authenticity, alongside removing paid future in-person work for women, Global Majority and Disabled artists.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. seek to negotiate collective agreements to include measures such as equalities monitoring, to counteract inherent AI bias;
2. raise awareness of the disproportionate loss of paid future

work for those with protected characteristics; and

3. identify and work with ethical AI providers, who work to counteract bias and give fair remuneration on AI licensing deals.

The motion was **proposed** by Elaine Stirrat and **seconded** by Lucy Turner.

There were three further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

EQUITY MOTION TO TUC

MOTION 8: Council

Conference supports Council in sending the following motion to TUC 2025 on behalf of Equity:

Generative AI and creative workers' rights
Congress notes that:

- i. creative workers are the backbone of the UK's world-leading performing arts and entertainment industry, yet often find themselves in precarious working conditions;
- ii. generative AI continues to transform work in the industry, as engagers turn to AI to create, for example, synthesised voice content, a digital replica of a performer or to train foundational AI models;
- iii. artists frequently find that their image, likeness or voice has been used in

generative AI without consent or remuneration, for uses beyond those originally agreed, and for which engagers rely on broad transfers of intellectual property rights;

- iv. meanwhile, the government intends to weaken the protection provided by the copyright regime, by introducing an exception to copyright where content is used for the purpose of training AI.

Therefore, Congress calls on the TUC to:

1. campaign for the implementation in full of 'AI for Creative Workers: a TUC Manifesto';
2. lobby government to introduce a regime of personality rights, under which artists could better protect and license their voice, likeness and other aspects of their personal image;
3. work with the government and its newly-created Information Commissioner to push for improved enforcement of data protection rights in respect of generative AI;
4. campaign against the government's intended introduction of a 'text and data mining exception' to copyright protection.

The motion was **proposed** by Feyesa Wakjira and **seconded** by Fiona Whitelaw.

There two further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

RECORDED MEDIA

MOTION 9: Screen and New Media Actors Committee

With improved technology and the global power of the streamers making far more non-English content available to UK audiences, dubbing is increasing in importance as a sector within the UK entertainment industry. This should be good news for Equity members, promising new prospects for work. However, since there is no Equity dubbing agreement in place with the major dubbing providers, terms, conditions, and pay in this area remain unregulated, leaving members open to exploitation. At the same time, and more ominously, this traditionally overlooked sector of the UK industry is now in the crosshairs of AI tech companies, which are keen to capitalise on dubbing's growing opportunities and its lack of regulation. Thus, what could be a promising area of ongoing work for members is in imminent danger of being choked off by AI.

In the absence of a collectively bargained agreement with dubbing providers, Conference calls on Council to consider promulgating Equity guideline minimum rates. Alongside this, Conference also asks Council to seek to establish a Dubbing Code of Conduct that, while not binding as a collective agreement would be, would at least clarify best practices around terms, working conditions, and the ethical use of AI.

The motion was **proposed** by Laurence Bouvard and **seconded** by David John (Honorary Treasurer).

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 10: Continuing Drama Deputies Committee

Continuing drama in the UK is under threat. In the past 18 months, the BBC has cancelled *Doctors*, citing rising costs in drama production; Channel 4 has made significant cuts to *Hollyoaks'* cast, budget, and number of episodes due to budget cuts; and ITV has announced cuts to episodes on *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* from 2026.

The government has identified the creative industries as one of eight key sectors that will be prioritised to drive economic growth in the UK. We want to see targeted funding and policy support to facilitate this promised growth and believe domestic TV production must be the focus.

Additionally, Conference believes that broadcasters need to increase investment in their continuing drama series which are so integral to the UK production landscape in providing a training ground for cast and crew, which in turn supports the wider production ecosystem and makes the UK such a successful centre for global production. In redirecting their spending away from continuing dramas in order to compete with streamers and their high production levels, the UK broadcasters are in danger of destroying the very productions that sustain them.

Conference calls on Council to resolve to -

1. support the committee's campaign to defend continuing drama;
2. identify and work with our allies, including our sister trades unions;
3. call for the broadcasters to support the campaign's aims; and
4. lobby government for measures that protect and enhance domestic and public service broadcast television production in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The motion was **proposed** by Dawn Hope and **seconded** by Julia Carson Sims.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 11: Birmingham and West Midlands Branch / East Midlands Branch (selected at the Midlands Regional Meeting)

Whilst 25% of the BBC licence fee comes from the Midlands region, in 2023, the BBC allocated a paltry 2.7% share of its network television expenditure to the region – the lowest share of anywhere in the UK, as it had been for nine of the last 10 years!

Allied to this is the loss of BBC Doctors, a devastating blow to the freelance creative workers of the Midlands region, as well as the wider screen industries freelance workers ecology. Equity has an opportunity to support the growth of BBC production

in the region as the existing BBC Charter is due to expire on 31 December 2027, and the government will be reviewing the BBC Charter and public broadcasting from 2025.

Conference requests that Council strives to ensure that -

1. the historical underfunding of the region is centred in its contribution to the Charter review consultation; and
2. work for Equity members in scripted production is made equally available in all regions and nations and commissioned and managed from those regions and nations.

The motion was **proposed** by Tracey Briggs and **seconded** by Rachel Flynn.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 12: Audio Committee

In a time when audio drama is having an upsurge in popularity, continued cuts to its BBC funding significantly decrease the work opportunities for our members and remove vital opportunities for the trainee actors who win the Carlton Hobbs or Norman Beaton Awards.

Conference calls on Council to investigate why the BBC's Radio Drama Company (RDC) is mothballed and currently employs zero actors and to campaign for its protection.

Additionally, we urge Council to join the Audio Committee in asking the BBC to give an undertaking that -

1. there will be no further cuts to audio drama output for the duration of its current charter;
2. it will actively explore opportunities to expand audio drama on both its radio and BBC Sounds platforms; and
3. it will actively support the continuation of the RDC and of the Carlton Hobbs and Norman Beaton prizes of a five-month long contract with the BBC Radio Drama Company.

The motion was **proposed** by Louise Barrett and **seconded** by Marcus Hutton.

There were no further speakers.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 13: Edinburgh and East of Scotland Branch (selected at the Scotland National Meeting)

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) includes information relating to creatives across films, television programmes, and a range of digital content. As of September 2024, the site holds over 620 million records, including over 13.8 million records relating to individuals.

Many Equity members have a page on IMDb, which will list their acting credits and other personal information. GDPR legislation requires information to be accurate and kept up to date.

Numerous members of Equity have reported inaccuracies in their data. In one case, this disqualified a member from eligibility for a BAFTA award, based on inaccurate credits which overstated acting roles. In a further case, one member's former marriage was recorded as still existing, erasing a later relationship with a partner they had been with for several decades. For trans members, old credits are recorded under names they no longer wish to be associated with, and the records cross-referenced. Members have reported that they cannot either approve information before it is added to their profiles or correct existing inaccuracies.

Conference calls upon Council to meet with the Information Commissioner and relevant representatives of IMDb to strive to ensure that -

1. members do not have to pay for an IMDb Pro subscription to have control of the data recorded against their profile;
2. all information added to individuals' profiles is approved by the individual, or their authorised representative, before it is viewable by subscribers or the public; and
3. all inaccuracies are corrected when reported by members.

Anne-Louise Fortune agreed to **REMIT** the motion to Council.

LIVE PERFORMANCE

MOTION 14: Northern Ireland Committee (selected at the Northern Ireland National Meeting)

Equity staff and activists in Northern Ireland have been campaigning to ensure that our members are fairly treated when taking part in productions where they form part of ensembles.

The use of community casts, students and unpaid casual performers in shows has often led to blurred lines as to what constitutes a worker and who is genuinely a volunteer. This can, in turn, result in casts combining paid and unpaid performers who are often being asked to do the same job – all vital to the realisation of the productions. Conference calls on Council to create a set of guidelines for members, along the same lines as previous booklets on subsidised and commercial theatre, laying out the rules of what can and can't take place when it comes to ensemble work – when is someone a volunteer and when are they a worker – and how this affects rehearsal, performance and payment arrangements.

For too long our members, especially those in the early stages of their careers, have been exploited through bad practice in this area, and we call on the union to act now to protect all of us.

The motion was **proposed** by Stephen Beggs and **seconded** by Muire McCallion.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 15: Brighton and Sussex Branch (selected at the East and South East Regional Meeting)

Conference notes that when it comes to subsistence and relocation allowances it has long been recognised that London is a special case. However, there are some regional theatres in tourist hotspots where accommodation for industry professionals is both limited and expensive.

Currently, many industry professionals working in these theatres are having to use a substantial part of their basic wage to help pay for expensive accommodation which is not covered sufficiently by the extra allowances.

We believe regional theatres and touring producers in these areas need to recognise this, take responsibility and either -

- a) pay allowances that realistically take into account local conditions or
- b) provide subsidised affordable accommodation for all industry professionals.

Conference calls on Council to strive to ensure that negotiations with regional theatres and touring producers around

relocation/subsistence take these factors into account, so that members working in these locations do not find these extra costs eating into their weekly pay.

The motion was **proposed** by Chris Orr and **seconded** by Nicholas K Brand.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 16: Stage Management Committee

MOTION 16: Stage Management Committee

Conference acknowledges that most of Equity's industry standard collective agreements include provisions ensuring higher minimum weekly pay rates for senior members of the stage management team. These provisions guarantee pay differentials that reflect the greater responsibilities of senior roles, especially when producers offer only the minimum rates.

Conference further notes that where specific collectively bargained clauses enshrining these differentials are absent in our collective agreements, differentials have either been eroded over time or do not exist at all.

Conference believes that this presents a barrier for members of the stage management team seeking to negotiate rates of pay commensurate with the responsibilities and workload for their grade.

Conference therefore calls on Council to seek to negotiate that stage management team differentials are codified and protected within all of Equity's industry standard agreements.

The motion was **proposed** by Harriet Saffin and **seconded** by Robert Coupe.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 17: Directors and Designers Committee

Conference notes that theatrical productions requiring fight sequences/fight movements require the engagement of a suitably qualified, skilled and experienced fight director to ensure these are safely choreographed and that the performers engaged in fight sequences/fight movements feel confident in the performance they are required to give.

Conference also notes that, as a member of the creative team, the fight director will not be engaged on the production for its duration but will instead be hired for a limited period in rehearsals. It is therefore common practice for the fight director to appoint a 'fight captain' whose role is to maintain the standards of fight sequences/movement as risk assessed and signed off by the fight director.

Conference further notes that Equity's industry standard collective agreements contain no defined fight captain responsibility fee or definition and no guidance for either Equity members or producers as to what the role should involve. Just as importantly, the agreements are also silent on the limits of a fight

captain's responsibility and when the fight director must be brought back in.

Conference therefore calls on Council to seek to negotiate that, in conjunction with the Equity Register of Fight Directors, the fight captain role is formally defined within the union's collective agreements for theatre and that guidance is created for performers who are appointed as fight captains in theatrical productions. This guidance should include stipulation that responsibility for appointing a fight captain sits with the fight director, and that a fight captain should have appropriate training.

The motion was **proposed** by Jack Stockdale and **seconded** by Bill Blackwood.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 18: Singers Committee

Conference notes the vital importance of collective agreements in protecting and furthering the rights of Equity's members across the industry. However, Conference notes that the terms of the SOLT/UK Theatre Agreements in opera have not been substantively renegotiated in recent years and that rates associated with those agreements have fallen dramatically in real terms. Furthermore, many opera companies – both established and emerging – do not offer work on Equity-negotiated agreements, leaving members more vulnerable at work.

Conference calls on Council to support -

1. recruitment efforts to bring more 'freelance' opera singers into union

membership, to build the necessary power required to negotiate for change;

2. the encouragement of existing members to become active in the union, and in campaigning for improved terms and conditions;
3. the re-negotiation of SOLT/UK Theatre Opera Agreements to seek improvements to rates, terms and conditions, including the development of an appendix to the agreement covering summer festival work;
4. the development and negotiation of an opera appendix/opera singers contract for the Equity/ITC Agreement; and
5. the development of a template Opera
6. Singers Equity Fringe Agreement.

The motion was **proposed** by Martyn Harrison and **seconded** by Peggy-Ann Fraser.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** none against, with one abstaining.

MOTION 19: Opera Deputies Committee

Conference notes that cuts to arts funding have been made by successive governments. Managements have, in many instances, chosen to pass these cuts on to the artistic and creative workforce. In opera and elsewhere in the subsidised sector, this has

had devastating impacts – permanently employed members have seen their terms and conditions threatened and cut, and job opportunities for ‘freelancers’ have been significantly reduced.

Conference also notes that, despite the election of a new Westminster government in summer 2024, there has been an absence of significant additional funding or other substantial policy announcements which would improve the working lives of Equity members, including those working in opera.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. campaign for increased public funding of the arts at local, regional and national level, including funding for opera specifically;
2. campaign for a proper industrial strategy for the arts – including opera – to be developed with input from the artistic workforce via their trade unions. This should include a plan for arts spending to reach the European average of 0.5% of GDP, and should include planning beyond the three-year funding cycles which currently limit scope for growth, artistic and workforce development;
3. continue to lobby government and major funding bodies to make it a condition of funding that work is produced on an appropriate Equity-negotiated agreement and adheres to employment law; and
4. continue to negotiate and campaign to improve workers’ terms and conditions and to resist management attempts to

pass cuts on to Equity members.

The motion was **proposed** by Robert Coupe and **seconded** by Matthew Minter.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 20: Dance Committee

Equity rates and agreements are regularly incorrectly adapted and applied to engagements that differ significantly from the contexts in which they were originally negotiated. Consequently, many dancers, choreographers, and movement directors do not feel the direct benefit of working on an Equity agreement, despite many engagements claiming to adhere to ‘Equity rates.’

Low budget, short-term, and one-off projects form a significant portion of the working lives of dancers, choreographers, and movement directors. However, the agreements in place in these areas of work do not specifically reference dance artists/dance work.

To encourage dance artists to engage with the union, Equity must have a greater presence in these everyday projects. This involvement would demonstrate to dance artists and engagers that no gig is too small for Equity to advocate for fairer pay, terms, and conditions.

Therefore, Conference calls on Council to -

1. develop draft agreements for low budget, short-term, and one-off dance engagements, such as scratch nights,

private events, and music videos;

18. review and adapt existing resources that educate engagers on how to meaningfully connect with Equity (e.g. materials from variety and fringe theatre) to ensure their relevance to the dance sector; and
- 19.
20. establish a strategy for connecting with dance artists and engagers to ensure these resources are widely accessible, understood and effectively implemented.

The motion was **proposed** by Sam Burkett and **seconded** by Sumi Xiaomei Cheng.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 21: West End Deputies Committee

Conference notes that, in recent years, there has been a huge increase in the amount of publicity that West End theatre workers have been asked to undertake to promote their shows, especially on social media. This expansion has left workers unsure of what can be asked of them and feeling exploited by increasingly onerous demands.

Conference believes that promoting a show is work and that all work to publicise a show should be conducted within the bounds of the relevant collective agreement and remunerated appropriately.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. determine the severity of the problem in the West End through surveying the membership;
2. educate theatre workers about the parameters of the agreements, how work should be logged, what constitutes a reasonable request and what is exploitative via a new code of practice; and
3. confront producers directly where bad practice is exposed.

The motion was **proposed** by Lizzie Cooper and **seconded** by Matthew Forbes.

The motion was **CARRIED** none against, with one abstaining.

VARIETY

MOTION 22: Variety, Circus and Entertainers Committee

Conference notes a number of initiatives by local authorities around the UK which affect the work of Variety members but for which there has been no meaningful consultation with either performers or trade unions.

Notable examples of this are Manchester City Council's action plan which seeks to preserve and protect the character of Manchester's Gay Village but has not engaged with drag performers working in Canal Street. These performers are the heart of Canal Street and their cultural contribution to the Gay Village and the City of Manchester is immeasurable.

Similarly in London, there is the London Nightlife Taskforce instigated by the Greater London Authority and Mayor of London, whose goal is to protect, retain and grow London's nightlife. The taskforce does not have any representation from relevant trade unions and workers in what is an absolutely vital initiative for our Variety members.

Council is urged to engage with both of these bodies to strive to ensure that the views of nighttime entertainment workers are taken into account.

The motion was **proposed** by Smashlyn Monroe and **seconded** by Rachel Darq.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

POLICY

MOTION 21: West End Deputies Committee

Whether because of the rise of the far right across the Americas, conflict in the Global South – including genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine – or the demonisation of migrants in fortress Europe and the UK, this conference takes place at a pivotal time for artists and workers everywhere.

As trade unionists, it is our duty to support our international comrades facing conflict, persecution or climate disasters which make free collective action by workers difficult or impossible. Equity has engaged in international solidarity work since it was founded. We believe that all artists deserve good work, all workers deserve good art

and all people deserve equity. As Fannie Lou Hamer said during the civil rights movement: 'Nobody is free until everybody is free.'

We urge Council to -

1. work with the International Federation of Actors (FIA) to build on their Ukraine Emergency Fund, by establishing a general fund to support post-war reconstruction, material wellbeing, and trade union development in other areas of conflict or oppression, such as Palestine, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo;
2. through FIA, support other affiliated unions to establish new committees with a similar remit to the International Solidarity Committee, to campaign together on international solidarity issues;
3. support or affiliate to other solidarity organisations across the continent of Africa and the Global South and ensure those creative workers are represented in the solidarity work of both Equity and FIA; and
4. support the establishment of an International Solidarity Network within Equity, to shape and amplify the campaigning work of our committee.

AMENDMENT: Council

Amend the third ask to include 'across the continent of Africa and the Global South'.

The motion was **proposed** by Chipo Chung and **seconded** by Giovanni Bienne.

The proposer **accepted** the amendment.

There were two further speakers for the motion.

The substantive motion was **CARRIED** overwhelmingly.

MOTION 24: Young Members Committee

Conference notes that in February 2024, an Equity investigation drew clear links between political interference with Arts Council England and the censorship of artists, specifically in relation to the genocide in Gaza and Palestine solidarity. There have since been further examples highlighting the threat to arts workers' freedom of expression, including the abrupt cancellation of a high-profile theatre production following the alleged censorship of phrases including 'Free Palestine' and 'Trans Rights'.

With the ongoing ethnic cleansing and apartheid against Palestinians, and an increasingly violent climate for trans people in the UK, Conference believes Equity must escalate its work to protect members' ability to stand in solidarity with marginalised communities without fear of censorship, loss of work or withdrawal of funding. We hold that this is an industrial issue in that it impinges on our members' ability to work freely and confidently, and that it places particular pressure on young and marginalised arts workers.

Building on the Race Equality Committee's 2024 motion, and the work of the International Solidarity and LGBT+ Committees, Conference calls on Council to -

1. work with the TUC towards a clear roadmap for the implementation of the TUC's 2024 Motion 24, protecting arts workers' freedom of expression;
2. launch a national, public campaign to clearly communicate and further Equity's work to lobby government, the Charity Commission funders and organisations to safeguard freedom of expression and prevent political interference; and
3. devise an intersectional political programme which educates members on their rights to freedom of expression regarding censorship and activism in solidarity with marginalised people.

This motion was **proposed** by Benjamin Finch and **seconded** by

Taghrid Choucair-Vizoso.

There were two further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 25: Student Deputies Committee

Conference notes that -

- Equity's Break Down Barriers campaign has ignited a national discussion on audition fees, with national media coverage, and thousands of supporters signing a petition;
- 'A Class Act,' a Sutton Trust Report, has recommended that the government bans publicly funded training

institutions from charging audition fees; and

- the current crisis in higher education funding has put performing arts courses at risk, with undergraduate courses at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School recently cut.

Conference believes that -

- with 69% of creative workers holding a degree, compared to 26% of the entire workforce, performing arts education is crucial for access to the sector; and
- the current higher education funding model fails to adequately support students or institutions to deliver the courses they need.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. support local campaigns to save performing arts education and reduce barriers to access;
2. call on the government and education institutions to accept and implement all the recommendations of the Sutton Trust's report, especially to have 'a specific review of access to conservatoires and other specialist arts institutions'; and
3. work with stakeholders, such as the National Union of Students and Sutton Trust, to lobby government for a public funding model for performing arts education, which expands access to students from working class and marginalised backgrounds.

The motion was **proposed** by Anna Repina and **seconded** by Bitota Mpolo.

There were two further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 26: London North Branch (selected at the London Regional Meeting)

Drama and other arts students are the future of our creative life and industry. We should remove obstacles to their development. We welcome the new Labour government's stated commitment to 'grow the industry' and 'raise the next generation of creatives.' Unfortunately, their overall plans appear hollow and inadequate after 14 years of Tory arts devastation and a 15% contraction in the creative arts since they took office in July 2024.

We ask for arts funding at the European level of 0.5% of GDP. Labour offers 'a private finance model' to boost funding. We want renewal of arts education in schools after a decline of 47% in GCSE arts entries since 2010. Labour suggests one mandatory arts or vocational subject within the EBacc-led curriculum and says nothing about a 22% decline in drama teachers.

Conference calls on Council to urge the Westminster and devolved governments to accept our Performance For All and Conference policies, and to -

1. rescind the Tory 2021 cut of 50% to funding of higher education (HE) arts students;

2. offer free HE tuition fees (as in Scotland), stop audition fees, and restore maintenance funding to assist with training and industry costs;
3. promote radically reduced theatre ticket prices for drama students and professionals;
4. offer seed money for arts graduate training and projects;
5. encourage careers advice in the arts in all secondary schools; and
6. abolish EBacc and Progress 8, restore a rich, varied curriculum including all arts, and promote funded visits to and by performing companies.

The motion was **proposed** by Joshua Bendall and **seconded** by Ayvianna Snow.

There was one further speaker for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 27: Bristol and West of England Branch (selected at the South West Regional Meeting)

Conference notes that Equity recently published new analysis of the trends in national arts councils funding by parliamentary constituency in an 'arts tracker tool'.

It shows, for instance, that across all Bristol parliamentary constituencies, average annual Arts Council England funding has

been cut by £14.4m over the last five years, in real terms.

Conference believes that this is an amazing piece of work but that we need to go further.

Many people know that local government funding is a totally separate budget to national arts councils funding. What people do not realise is that the amount of money given out by local government authorities per year to arts funding is more than the arts councils give.

Yet in terms of local government funding, Bristol City Council has also cut arts funding from £1,015,960 in 2018 to £635,960 to 2024 – a 40% cut.

We have recently won a reprieve to a 100% cut to culture funding, but this decision hangs by a thread.

We must combat the narrative that arts councils funding could possibly fill the gap left when local authorities cut culture funding.

Conference calls on Council to -

1. create a similar tool to show what is happening to local government authority funding;
2. create a campaign which can be adopted nationally for a cohesive approach; and
3. communicate the campaign to members.

The motion was **REMITTED** to Council.

MOTION 28: London South Branch (selected at the London Regional Meeting)

Conference welcomes our union's campaign to improve the new government's Employment Rights Bill by ending the distinction between 'employee' and 'worker'. However, we note that most of the bill's existing improvements are to individual rights and leave out the collective rights that give trade unions their strength.

The current bill leaves most of the Tory anti-union laws intact. There is also insufficient strengthening of collective bargaining, key to improving workers' rights after decades of erosion under successive governments.

Conference believes the bill leaves loopholes that employers and engagers will exploit to undermine union organising. We also believe the delay in implementing the bill and its measures, especially the limited repeal of anti-union legislation, is unacceptable.

Conference calls on Council to also campaign for -

1. the bill's amendments to include collective bargaining for all workers;
2. the bill's amendments to include repeal of all anti-union legislation;
3. as a minimum, the promised repeal of the industrial action ballot thresholds in the Trade Union Act 2016, as well as the Minimum Service Levels Act 2023, to be separated from the bill and immediately voted through parliament as fast-tracked legislation;

4. fellow unions and the TUC to launch a national campaign to demand these changes, including ending the employee/worker distinction, with protest action and potential industrial action as appropriate; and
5. the TUC to implement its 2024 congress policy to call a special congress to review the bill and demand its strengthening as part of that campaign.

The motion was **proposed** by Jay Lafayette Valentine and **seconded** by Maria Tyminski.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 29: Kent Branch (selected at the East and South East Regional Meeting)

Conference urges Council to collaborate with the Arts & Mind campaign led by the National Education Union. Conference urges Council to lobby the government to make creative arts a core component of the national curriculum and avoid cutting funding or sidelining these crucial subjects. This motion emphasises the significance of creative arts – such as theatre, drama, variety, music, dance, and circus – in the school curriculum. The multifaceted benefits of the arts for young people, especially non-academic students who struggle with traditional studies, cannot be underestimated. The creative arts provide alternative paths to success and build confidence, essential for all students' holistic education.

Creative arts nurture well-rounded individuals who can think critically and creatively – skills necessary in today’s rapidly changing world. Many emerging industries, like digital media and entertainment, heavily rely on these creative skills, which contribute significantly to the UK’s economy.

Furthermore, the creative arts foster teamwork and communication. Theatre and drama workshops, in particular, enhance listening and speaking skills and allow young people to express their emotions and identities in a safe environment, positively impacting their mental health and development.

In summary, the creative arts are essential. Investing in them is investing in the future. We believe every child should have the opportunity to experience the transformative power of the creative arts, and we ask Council to urge the government to reconsider their proposed budget cuts.

The motion was **proposed** by Theresa Burns and **seconded** by Nicholas K Brand.

There was one further speaker for the motion and one against.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 30: Wales National Committee (selected at the Wales National Meeting)

Our campaign against Spotlight has highlighted other significant and unjust practices that hinder our members in the creative industries from securing fair

employment. Entertainment agencies are, under current law, permitted to charge our members fees for securing work by taking a commission from their earnings. In some sectors, such as film/TV and theatre, this commission – sometimes with VAT added – can push our members’ earnings below the National Living Wage. This occurs even though the agreed Equity minimum rates are above the legal minimum.

Conference firmly believes that our members are entitled to a fair and living wage, and it is time for change.

Therefore, Conference calls on Council to take action by -

1. investigating ways to permanently remove the legal exemption for entertainment and modelling agencies that allows our members to earn less than the National Living Wage after commissions are deducted;
2. launching a public awareness campaign, with materials for members, to shed light on this issue and garner widespread support; and
3. collaborating with the union’s industrial committees to develop a strategic plan that addresses this problem with employers and works towards negotiating Equity minimum rates that, even after accounting for the 15-20% agency fees, ensure our members receive a legal and fair living wage.

It’s time to ensure that our members are paid fairly for the work they do. Let’s make this change together.

The motion was **proposed** by Jenni Barbieri and **seconded** by Huw Davies.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

EMERGENCY MOTIONS

MOTION 1: Scotland National Committee

Conference notes with regret the decision by BBC Scotland bosses to cancel River City, Scotland's only homegrown continuing drama series.

Cancelling River City will have a disproportionately negative impact on performers in Scotland, many of whom get their first TV job on River City. The £9 million annual budget for the show is excellent value for money, given the hours of programming produced throughout the year. River City is well-loved by Scottish audiences, enjoys strong ratings, and is critically lauded, having won Best Drama at the Royal Television Society Scotland 2023 awards for its 20th anniversary episode.

This is a particular blow to working-class performers, as River City is one of a vanishingly small number of continuing drama programmes which reflects communities around the UK. As a public service broadcaster, the BBC should invest in and nurture its in-house productions which employ homegrown talent and sustain thriving television production hubs outside of London.

Conference calls on Council to support Equity's 'Save River City' campaign and to –

lobby for BBC Scotland to revisit its decision to end River City and close its Dumbarton studios;

call for BBC Scotland to explain how its proposals to replace River City will provide the same number of jobs, training opportunities, and apprenticeships to performers in Scotland; and

call on BBC Scotland to ringfence the £9 million it costs to produce River City to ensure that money is used in Scotland, utilising Scottish talent for drama/scripted productions.

The motion was **proposed** by Kirsty Miller and **seconded** by Rachel Flynn.

There were two further speakers for the motion.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

MOTION 2: Council

Conference notes –

the vital role that the arts play in enriching society, promoting mental well-being, supporting education, and sustaining thousands of creative jobs across the UK;

Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI) provides essential funding to arts organisations, many of which operate on very limited budgets but deliver significant benefits to communities; and

recent cuts and funding pressures threaten the survival of many such organisations in Northern Ireland.

The motion was **proposed** by Marina Hampton and **seconded** by Stephen Beggs.

Conference further notes –

There were two further speakers for the motion.

- Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company in Derry has been informed that they will not be provided any of their expected annual funding from ACNI;
- in 2024 Derry's Waterside Theatre & Arts Centre shut due to issues having lost its expected annual funding from ACNI; and
- the loss of ACNI funding in Derry city reflects the wider problem of ACNI provision in Northern Ireland.

The motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

Conference believes –

- that arts organisations must be protected to ensure cultural equity across all nations and regions of the UK; and
- that supporting organisations which engage performing artists on fair terms and conditions aligns with trade union values of fairness, equality, and community empowerment.

Conference asks Council to –

- campaign for a real-terms increase in funding to ACNI; and
- engage with other unions, local communities and cultural organisations to fight against arts cuts.

