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Minutes of the Equity Devon & Cornwall General Branch meeting held on Zoom on Sunday 9th May 2021 4pm

Present: David Richey, Sarah McCourt, Wanda Blair, Tank Sherman, Tara Casey, Jill Lamede, David Whitfield, Michael Terry, Stefan Antoniuk, Nigel Howells, Anthony Blakesley, Vivien Jones, Barrie West, Joan Beveridge, Lynda Rooke, Katie Bottoms, Laura Jury, Anna Scutt, Derekk Ross, Alice Cadmore, Tony Smith.

Apologies: Simon Curtis

Minutes of the last Branch Meeting – No corrections.

Matters Arising and Updates on Actions:

ACTION: SMc to send off paperwork and payment to Torbay Trades Council. Completed. First meeting will be on 11th May 2021.

ACTION: Committee to consider contacting Charlotte Bence and look at how to take putting a motion together around Women's Safety forward. Committee has discussed and will be putting a motion to this meeting (see below).

Chair's Report (Dave Richey):

Introduced proposal to co-opt Alice Cadmore onto the Committee. Proposer: SMc, Seconder: NH. Carried unanimously.

Fundraising: TS organized an Online Variety Fundraising Show for Equity featuring 8 performers on 8th May. The show raised £1500. £400 of this has been given to D&C General branch. Tank is looking at doing further fundraising shows.

Working With Actors Event for South West filmmakers took place on 28th April. Speakers: Simon Curtis, Hannah Marie Williams (casting director) and Alix Taylor (BFI). Branch members who attended said it was very positive giving people a chance to see how they could do it, apply for funding, and follow best practice. Feedback from the panel was very positive and they would like to connect with us again as a branch in the future. The event was attended by 85 people.

Communications Working Party: Dave reported to the branch following meeting on 4th May. A copy of the report is at the bottom of this document.

Jill Lamede Award: following committee meeting DR spoke to JL and asked for her ideas about the competition. J proposed a competition for secondary schools for the best short story that would be suitable for a children's book. This would make them think about younger children, and the books they loved. Best stories could be

published online, even maybe turned into a book. Doesn't have to be an original story, they could adapt it into their own words and change it in some way. Title of Award: Tintagel Storyteller Award.

ACTION: Committee to finalise organisation of the competition.

Secretary's Report (Sarah McCourt):

Higher Education: government proposing 50% cut to funding for arts subjects. Please look out for information about this and how you can get involved in protesting against this on branch facebook and twitter accounts.

Treasurers Report (Mike Terry):

£558.00 in account, including £400 from TS fundraising show. £25 still to come back from Equity for the Torbay Trade Council.

South West Councillor's Report (Lynda Rooke):

Benevolent Fund: Total allocated in 2020 £1,249,503.72. Subs. Grants in 2021 £33,247.28. Nos. Helped in 2021 678. Total since 01.01.2020 £1,282,751.00 Last week allocated a total of £1,111.38 in subs.

Magazine is in the process of being published.

Recorded Media and Live – Recorded media: production up and running, doing well. Issues around self-taping/zoom still ongoing – any problems let LR or David Barclay know. Live performance looking to open up again. Still a tentativeness around this.

ARC plans progressing – details to follow once confirmed.

Jean Rogers' policy development report on Equality between Men and Women. Copies available from DR or SMC equitydevonandcornwallbranch@gmail.com Discussion around diversity and equity of opportunity in casting.

Future of branch meetings – looking for feedback about how branches want to move forward as things start to open up. Digital, hybrid or online possibilities. Will continue to be digital until September. Feedback provided from committee and branch to LR. Many wanted to continue with some form of online meetings whether alternating with in person or using hybrid approach. Feeling that zoom had transformed the branch and access to meetings.

SW Area all members meeting 23rd June at 4pm.

Equality – if you have an issue put through LR as well as equality so that equality committees and industrial committees can join up as appropriate to deal with the issue.

Equity Elections – papers are in for the elections (Equalities and Industrial Committees), please encourage members to vote.

Equity hosted Film Studio meeting. Attendees included Sophie Arnold and Stephanie Clark from Creative England, Course Leaders from PCAD and Plymouth University, Jules Hussey TV producer, Hannah Harris CEO Plymouth Culture and Nina Sarlaka (Inward Investment and Enterprise Manager, Economic Development Plymouth City Council). Very positive meeting and PCC keen to move forward, has to find a location. Next step is to invite Fiona Francome from Bristol.

Training:

Embodying Shakespeare workshop on 17th April led by Victoria Gartner. Branch members said it was a brilliant experience, great value. An amazing workshop, and Victoria was inspirational. She came at each monologue with new and surprising angles. Victoria is interested in doing another in the future.

Equality and Diversity/Health and Safety:

Following on from previous meeting's discussion around improving safety for women and all in industry, particularly when working at night. TS put together a motion to go to SRC:

Motion:

This South West All member Meeting strongly condemns the attacks and harassment suffered by its members whilst they are engaged in work at venues.

It is the principal duty of hirers and employers, under the HASWA (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), to secure the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at their workplace.

One of the main problems that artistes face is the lack of secure parking at venues. This can lead to parking in unlit side roads or in areas which are known to be anti-social.

This South West All member Meeting requests that the Council instigates a campaign to encourage hirers and employers to provide, wherever and whenever possible, a safe parking space at the venue. As close to the get-in as is viable. They should also provide a member of staff to meet and greet the artiste and accompany them whilst unloading and then loading up their vehicle at the end of the engagement. In the event of an artiste having to locate alternative parking, a representative of the venue should meet them where they have parked and safely accompany them to and from the venue.

Discussion around venues responsibilities and limits.

Proposer KB, Seconder: MT. Carried unanimously.

Variety:

See motion above

Walk On:

Nothing to report

AOB

DR asked for suggestions for speakers/topics that members would like to see.

MT is arranging speaker from East Devon Culture for June meeting.

Other suggestions: Tigger Blaize, who has just run a trans awareness workshop for Brighton and Sussex General Branch. Something about streaming performances online.

Restless Theatre is doing a restless thoughts on nature video to mark Mental Health Awareness week 13th may.

David Richey and Jean Rogers are working on a project to mark the centenary of the Royal British Legion. Link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNn8KI9dKU>

Date and Time of Next Branch Meeting: Sunday 13th June 4pm on Zoom.

Summary of ACTIONS:

ACTION: Committee to finalise organisation of the competition for the Tintagel Storyteller Award.

Communications Working Party

Branch Chair, David Richey is one of two who represent General Branches on the Communications Working Party.

This is his report from the Meeting of 4th May 2021

Much of the meeting involved meeting the new staff members in the Communications Section, Zoe Ellsmore and Tom Greenwood.

Zoe is working to update the website and working on the magazine. Focusing on content of website and making it more accessible and easy to use. Deciding whether to refresh the website or completely relaunch it.

She is taking stock of where it is now and very much listening to where it has to go. Her attitude and ideas received an enthusiastic response from all. There has always been an acknowledgment that something needs to be done, but Zoe seems to know how to go about it and it seems she will make it happen.

The financial issues around a complete relaunch were discussed and the feeling was agreed that we need to see what the financial state of the Union is and cut the cloth to suit.

Zoe is going to the relevant upcoming meetings regarding accessibility so as to ascertain exactly what is required.

She has also been reformatting the safe spaces page and updating the committee election pages.

A lot of stuff has got buried on the website and the idea is to make it all more visible especially things like contact info and info about rates of pay. She is very keen to make it easy to navigate which it's not at the moment.

It's all stuff we've talked about needing, but now it seems there is the right person there who make it all happen.

Questions in the air are: Maybe a different website may have a cheaper yearly cost. Maybe we could do more of the maintenance ourselves. We need to shop around.

If the website was to be completely relaunched it wouldn't be until 2023.

There was a report from Tom Greenwood. He is the Design Co-ordinator. Looking at the magazine, merchandise, and the annual review. He is aiming for a consistent look.

It's fair to say his ideas and presentation were extremely well received!

He showed pictures of magazine covers from the 70s and from the 30s, demonstrating aspects of their style that were simple and clear.

Looking at colours he plans to use the Equity purple but also other colours for distinct campaigns.

He showed sample mock ups of magazines and posters. Using the Moret font for headings and Futura for body copy.

I commented on different versions of the logo he had used and asked if we will be sticking to the current one or having a more fluid approach. He said he would keep the current logo but maybe use a slightly different one on a magazine cover as a call back to the 30s. Everyone was enthusiastic about this.

Accessibility regarding fonts was discussed and he will be seeking advice on that.

Basically, to cut a long story short, there was great enthusiasm for his approach and ideas so far.

We discussed priorities for the remainder of 2021. Principally they are: revamping campaigns and guides that need republishing. Tom can help with design and content. We need things to recruit more people. Merchandise should be functional and sustainable. Tom has been looking at the diary and has the idea of having historical facts about the union in the diary on the days that they happened. Significant events.

In AOB, Honorary Treasurer Bryn Evans brought up the fact that when Paul Fleming appeared on BBC News a few days ago, he was billed as the GS of "Equity UK". How had that happened? It turns out it was a mistake of the BBC and they probably took it from the Twitter account. It was not a mistake at Equity's end.

I brought up the fact that Minutes from Branch Meetings used to be typed up and posted out to members. Now all is done by e-mail, but with the current system it is not possible to add attachments or images, so the minutes are just being posted on the website. Can anything be done about this?

It was exciting to hear that moves are afoot to change this and upgrade the system, possibly to Action Networks. Also, perhaps Branches could consider using Loomio! At last, recognition of the 'L' word is at the forefront!

It was suggested I write to Kate Jones to find out more details of the upgrading and what it will provide. I've done this and will report back at a later date.

I also asked if there was any further development on the proposed App.

Zoe is dealing with it. There had been a 50/50 split in reaction to it. It could cost 20/30k in development costs. Need to see if it would be worth it. Paul Fleming is very keen on the App. The question now is, what exactly would it be for? There are many ideas but its purpose needs to be clearly defined. This process is occurring via Zoe.

That was it for AOB and the next meeting will be expected in August or September.

All in all, a very positive meeting and expertly chaired by Lynda Rooke. It really felt as though things are moving.

DR