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**Devon and Cornwall
Branch**

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Minutes of the Equity Devon & Cornwall General Branch meeting held on Zoom on Sunday 13th July 2021 4pm

Present: David Richey, Sarah McCourt, Tank Sherman, Jill Lamede, Michael Terry, Tara Casey, Stefan Antoniuk, Anthony Blakesley, Vivien Jones, Barrie West, Joan Beveridge, Lynda Rooke, Nick Diprose, Tigger Blaize, Sarah Fanet, Katie Bottoms, Nigel Howells

Apologies: Laura Jury

Minutes of the last Branch Meeting – No corrections.

Matters Arising and Updates on Actions:

ACTION: Members to vote.

Laura Jury was voted onto the Director's Committee. It is great to have someone from our branch on that.

ACTION: DR to report to Kate Jones that we've had a few people who did not receive the email about the meeting.

Our branch was one of the first to use the new Action Network emailing system. It crashed shortly afterwards (no link!) but is now back up and running so all problems should be resolved.

ACTION: DR to enquire about cost of engraving SMC contact current recipient and Cygnet.

£2.50 for a plaque we stick on the bottom ourselves and engraving. £6.50 for postage. We will need to make a decisions about whether we replace the cup when space runs out for remove the plaques.

Workshop

The meeting began with an excellent trans awareness workshop from Tigger Blaize which members found really useful.

Chair's Report (Dave Richey):

Jill Birch's (one of our founder members) partner has recently died. Discussion around sending flowers and a condolence card.

ACTION: Committee to find out if she is accepting flowers, and then arrange an appropriate condolence message to be sent.

South West Councillor's Report (Lynda Rooke):

Benevolent Fund latest Total allocated in 2021 £39,821.03 for subs. Grants: nos helped 741 Total since 01.01.2020 subs and welfare grants £1,289,324.75

Recorded media is still dealing with Covid occurrences and the suspension of TV productions. Discussions continue with the Casting Directors' Guild (CDG) on Best Practice for Self-Taping and zoom castings/auditions. Live performance: Karrim Jalali was introduced to Council as the new Low/No Pay Organiser. He has had a number of meetings with fringe producers, Spotlight (hoping to progress minimum terms and conditions for advertising of live productions) and London Fashion week (min payment terms for next year and transport at night for models working on the event).

He has also been supporting members and producers on Covid protocols and a safe return to work.

Mike Day reported that variety had been looking more optimistic in recent weeks, with entertainment and hospitality reopening with limited capacities. Circuses have been touring since the middle of May and so far no reports of them being close down. Cruises have returned with limited capacities, some companies were insisting on everyone (passengers, crew, entertainers) being double vaccinated. Some had provided jabs on board. The General Secretary mentioned that one of the major problems was the shutdown of live productions. There had not been shutdowns because of outbreaks or positive tests but instead it was as a consequence of members being pinged.

Political and communications, Louise McMullan said the Channel 4 consultation was running until September and we were trying to co-ordinate our responses with other groups and unions campaigning on this.

Response to the Health Secretary's statement on changes to self isolation rules was ongoing. Officials are also monitoring Government announcements on re-opening and self isolation in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Higher Education arts funding cuts, a response by the Universities Minister Michelle Donelan to the joint letter Equity drafted (signed by Unite, Unison, BECTU, MU and others), dismissed the concern and stated that the 'income lost would account for approximately 0.05% of the estimated total income' of higher education providers. In the next stage of campaigning Equity will challenge this figure and is also approaching sympathetic Conservative MP's who are also concerned with the impact of these cuts and are willing to support our call for a reversal of this decision.

Equalities and Inclusion: Work has included our active support for the Early Day Motion demanding govt. action to address the endemic discrimination faced by pregnant women. Pregnant Then Screwed appeal was being heard in court and we would hear something soon.

Maureen and Paul met with a group of Jewish members on 16th June to a) outline the historical and contemporary position of the union on the Middle East and b) ask for their engagement in a dedicated body of work to tackle anti-semitism across the entertainment industry.

Ian Manborde and staff have been meeting and dealing with both members and non-members who formed part of the group who gave testimony to the Guardian re Noel Clark allegations. Those individuals have been signposted to the relevant support networks and the meeting will feed into the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) round table on sexual harassment in the creative industries.

Becky Reese (Head of Finance and Operations) is leading the re-development of Guild House, in 2 phases firstly, the staff work spaces and then secondly, the area for members.

Rule Book Working Party, the objects, powers and duties of the union in the current rule book are being revised to aims and powers and this is in consultation with Elizabeth George the union's barrister, to make a dramatic simplification and clarification of the current wordy provision. The proposals and timeline were noted by Council.

Motions referred to Council from the Screen and New Media Committee were passed, these included Covid safety and also better protection of our Supporting Artists with calls to amend the Employment Agency Regulations. Another motion requested that Equity join with the MU in calling for better equitable remuneration rights in streamed and online media to be included in the UK copyright act. However, this was opposed. John Barclay and Paul Fleming both stressed the union's position being one of collective bargaining but where this was not possible in such rare cases as sometimes occurred with Audio, then the union would continue to lobby and monitor the government's implementation of the Beijing Treaty. The SCNM also presented a motion referring

to Equity's Green New Deal Network and the recommendation that staff and activists involved in Equity business should avoid short haul air travel where possible, this was passed.

The SW All Member Meeting sent a motion about better safety at venues and parking spaces being provided to allow a convenient and safe loading and unloading of equipment for members. This was supported and is being referred to individual branches to campaign where necessary for implementation at venues.

East of Scotland Branch's motion calling for the recognition of the different needs and challenges of the 3 nations and that membership size should not be the only factor to influence the allocation of staffing and resources. This was passed.

Northern England All Member Meeting criticised the dance industry for using Equity/ITC minimum rates as the default rate and urged the union to campaign for pay progression awareness in the industry. This was passed and will be discussed by the Dance Committee at first instance.

Bristol & West General Branch proposal for Eltjo de Vries to be the Equity representative at the Bridgwater Trades Council was passed.

Devon & Cornwall General Branch motion calling on Council to produce a document to give clear guidance and guidelines for activists and officers advising as to how and when they are able to express their personal opinions on subjects. Special media guidance for branches and committees is now ready to be circulated, as will guidance for new officers. Council felt that it is important that officers are able to hold personal opinions and they can be publicly expressed, as long as the audience are clear in which capacity they are speaking.

A draft Provisional Agenda for the Special Representative Conference (SRC) was approved, to be held on 26th and 27th September 2021.

Results of recent Committee elections were presented and congratulations go to those elected and commiserations to those who didn't. If you didn't get elected please don't be put off from standing again.

Tim Gale and Mary Hooley (Manchester Office) are to retire, their dedicated service to the union was noted and grateful thanks given.

The TUC Congress 2021 will happen from 12th September until 14th September. Paul Fleming as General Secretary will be nominated to be on the TUC General Council and I will be attending as a representative of the union.

Equity will also affiliate to the Mechanics Institute in Manchester at a cost of £50 per annum.

Stephanie Greer (Northern Area Councillor) and David Johns (Audio Councillor) gave a detailed presentation under Policy Development on how the union can better support working class members. This sparked a full discussion for an hour around how better to support members from working class backgrounds.

Plymouth Film Studio is moving ahead, with Nina Sarlarka Inward Investment and Enterprise Manager at Plymouth City Council has got her staff onto this (Benamin Stein, iMayflower Project Officer) calling a meeting at the end of July. Meeting will include University of Plymouth, Plymouth City College, Marjon, Plymouth College of Art, and Fiona Francombe who started Bristol Bottleyard will also be popping in. So this is really positive.

Treasurers Report (Mike Terry):

£852.00 in account. We've now received £25 from Equity for Torbay Trades Council Membership. We've also had £119 from Equity based on our number of branch members and another £60 for telephone and online expenses.

Tintagel Storyteller's Award Subcommittee report:

Nick Mallard from the Rotary Club has made a donation of £25 towards the book fund, and several other anonymous donations have been received from branch members. The committee have started to contact schools, but most are likely to reply once they return at beginning of September.

Secretary's Report (Sarah McCourt):

Campaigns: you will have seen on twitter and facebook that we are currently campaigning for Ace Ruele an actor and motion capture specialist who was born in the UK but is facing being deported to Jamaica where he has no right of residency or citizenship. And so please do sign that petition, it is really important. Secondly we are also continuing to lobby the government about Brexit and the visa situation. There are posts on twitter and facebook, so please do get involved if you can and reshare.

I was unable to attend the Torbay Trades Council this month and Mike Terry attended in my stead. (MT) gave Sarah's report and the meeting discussed the difficulties of getting things done as it is a very small group.

Report to the Trades Council:

Safety

Equity is continuing on to work on safety for creative workers, especially those identifying as women. Devon & Cornwall branch are in the early stages of organising an online event for venues and creative workers about safety.

Brexit

Continued campaign around visas and performing in Europe: Members are lobbying their MP's to fix the Brexit crisis in the entertainment sector.

Deportation

Equity is also running a petition to end the threat of deportation facing member, Ace Ruele. Give Ace a chance! Stop the harassment and threat of deportation facing Ace Ruele | Megaphone UK

Higher Education

Equity General Secretary Paul Fleming sent an open letter to the Education Secretary about the proposed 50% funding cuts to arts subjects in Higher Education Equity - Open letter to Education Secretary opposing funding cuts in creative higher education. We are now waiting for the outcome of the government consultation.

Equality and Diversity/Health & Safety:

Covered under workshop and Secretary's Report

Walk On:

Nothing to Report

AOB - none

Date and Time of Next Branch Meeting: TBC – August is usually our Summer Social

Summary of ACTIONS:

ACTION: Committee to find out if Jill Birch is accepting flowers, and then arrange an appropriate condolence message to be sent.

If you find yourself in a position where you feel you would benefit from talking things through for support and to help you find ways to deal with things troubling you, you can set up a conversation with Stefan Antoniuk by contacting email stefanantoniuk@hotmail.com; phone 07484 789521. Stefan is a qualified counselor/psychotherapist providing pastoral services for Equity Devon and Cornwall branch.