

## Report policing incidents

OUR "Right to Report?" index of its stories on the problems faced by journalists in public order situations used to be exclusively about policing hassles for reporters covering protests. We've updated it – see [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/r2r.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/r2r.html) – and recent items have increasingly been about the cops coming to us with offers to facilitate journalist going about their work covering demos and other major events where there's likely to be police cordons. (These approaches by the police are largely the result of years of patient lobbying by the NUJ, and its Freelance Office in particular.) There's also a Police Monitoring Form on the Freelance website, at [www.londonfreelance.org/policing](http://www.londonfreelance.org/policing) – we appeal to reporters (whether NUJ members or non-members, in confidence) to catalogue via this webpage any hassles they may have encountered at the hands of the police and PCSOs while covering events.

And just as importantly in these times of apparently better relations with the police, the Police Monitoring Form is the place to report incidents of police officers being especially helpful. Had officers you encountered been briefed about the Press Card and its verifying PIN codes, for example?

# Taking on the media barons

WE MUST NOT "waste a crisis", NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet told a conference at the TUC on Taking on the Media Barons on 17 March. That would be the fallout from the News International phone-hacking scandal and the resulting discussion about what to do about press regulation.

Shadow Culture Secretary Harriet Harman opened the conference by challenging newspaper editors to come up with a system in which they would all be bound to join. Why should this be in the hands of the editors – why not include journalists? Is statutory regulation desirable?

Tony Lennon of broadcast union BECTU maintained that such regulation had not infringed freedom in the broadcasting sector. Why is it always assumed that it would do so elsewhere in the media?

Harman also looked at ways to

test whether those taking over media corporations were "fit and proper persons". Such tests, she felt, should be made *before* any applications for takeovers were made. Professor James Curran of Goldsmith's University of London suggested limiting corporations' holdings to around 15 per cent, and demanding a public interest mandate.

Pete Lazenby, Father of Chapel at the Yorkshire Post (its NUJ workplace rep) described how profits once made in local papers had been squandered, and staff cuts and production changes had combined with falling sales, lower quality, reduced coverage – and the loss of titles.

Professor Natalie Fenton from Goldsmiths College emphasised how the decline in local news is dangerous to local democracy – as she had to London Freelance Branch (see [www.londonfreelance.org/](http://www.londonfreelance.org/)

[fl/1112lev.html](http://fl/1112lev.html)). Several speakers called for new funding ideas, including subsidies.

Links were made between the declining media standards revealed by the hacking scandal and trade unions' lack of influence in the sector, stemming from Thatcher-era laws not put right under Labour.

While the conference heard of numerous failed attempts at statutory press regulation over the years, the NUJ's Irish organiser, Seamus Dooley, gave up his St Patrick's Day holiday to give a positive example: the still-imperfect but encouraging system in place in Ireland, where representatives from both the media industry and civil society serve on a more active Press Complaints Council, which heard more than 100 cases last year.

More at [www.cpb.org.uk](http://www.cpb.org.uk)

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## The Authorisation of Trafalgar

THOSE carrying out news photography in Trafalgar Square can now download a Greater London Authority "authorisation notice" to wave at uniformed "Heritage Wardens" in their red-trimmed caps and red epaulettes who may try to give us a hard time while we are working in "their" square. New Greater London Authority byelaws appear to be in effect which seem to require expensive permits for "commercial photography" and filming (see [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1202traf.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1202traf.html).) Wardens have been enthusiastically trying to enforce this. Recently a warden scared away a group making an amateur video for a friend's birthday present.

The "Authorisation Notice" is addressed to "Dear UKPCA Press Card Holder," (the PCA is the Press Card Authority, that runs the scheme under which NUJ Press Cards are issued.) So in conjunction with an *up-to-date* press card, you should be able to use the authorisation notice to stop the wardens hassling you during your news photography shoot. It's online as a pdf at <http://authorisation.notlong.com>

There may still be occasions on which photographers in the Square will need to stand their ground. The notice states that "this permission is limited to hand carried, self supported equipment" and expects photographers to comply with Wardens'

"reasonable instructions" in relation to the health, safety and welfare of people in the Square." The key word is "reasonable" – and there's a number to contact if the instructions start to get unreasonable. Parliament Square Gardens – subject to the same byelaws – are also mentioned by name in the notice.

Meanwhile in Bristol, the Bristol Film Office, following a very positive meeting with NUJ Bristol Branch, have confirmed that "media press (news) film and photography crews are not required to apply for permission to film" on Council land and property. See [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1203bfo.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1203bfo.html)

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## Pitch your photos: email a link to them

MARK Wagstaff, an art editor who has worked with monthly rock magazine *Mojo* for about 15 years, gave tips on pitching photography to editors at the London Freelance Branch meeting in March. (The *Economist's* Emily Bebbrow advised at the same meeting on pitching words: see p 3).

Mark described how *Mojo* (like a lot of periodicals) has recently seen "a shrinking of editorial teams, shrinking of reliance on the freelance writers, designers and photographers." In this climate, Mark concedes opportunities for freelance photographers to sell to magazines aren't what they were. "A lot of the stuff that's commissioned is columns and regular aspects of the magazine, front and back section stuff which now is just

being written in-house, and I guess the company now being able to hold on to copyright." *Mojo's* website doesn't yet generate much revenue, so there's almost no paid commissioning for web-only.

And *Mojo* is a "heritage rock magazine" with lots of "Beatles, Stones, Bob Dylan," so "the majority of stuff we do is archive" because "Dylan's not interested in being photographed by *Mojo* unfortunately." (But see [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1110magn.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1110magn.html) for a successful example of a syndication site for mostly 1980s rock photos founded and still run by an NUJ freelance photographer.)

Mark says there's always a market "if stuff takes our breath away" and

"there is a core of photographers that we commission" but "you have to keep plugging away" and have the patience and persistence for "dealing with breaking into that inner circle of freelancers."

Practical advice? Pitching is not so much a face-to-face thing now: "if I left my desk to talk to everyone, I wouldn't get the job done... pretty much everything these days done electronically." Mark recommends the best way to pitch to picture editors now is to "get a website, send an email with a clickable link to a website: it's really important that isn't clunky". (It should be user friendly and load quickly.)

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