

We win some help

FREELANCE

AFTER INTENSE lobbying by the NUJ and its sister unions, the UK government announced measures to help freelancers through the covid-19 crisis on 26 March. As the *Freelance* currently understands these, the **good news** is that:

- Established freelancers will be able to apply for a grant from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS);
- The amount can be 80 per cent of the average "profit" you declared to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) over the past three years;
- It will be backdated to March (we need to confirm when in March);
- HMRC will contact you to invite you to apply; and
- Under separate measures, you can apply to defer income tax, rent or mortgage payments.

The **bad news** includes:

- No money will arrive before June.
- If you have not filed a self-employed tax return for the tax years 2018 to 2019 you get no grant – though if you missed the 31 January deadline it *presently seems* you have until **23 April** to make a late filing.
- If you only have a few months' self-employment on your 2018/19 return, this income will be counted as your profit for the whole year.
- Grants will be available only to people who got more than half their income from freelancing – so if 51 per cent of your income came from shifts paid Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and 49 per cent from pure freelancing, you will get no SEISS grant.
- When this is all over any grants you receive will be counted as taxable income.

In these calculations it seems that "profit" refers to the box on your income tax return that calculates your turnover minus allowable expenses.

Intense lobbying

The UK government's earlier guarantees of wages and salaries for employees but nothing for freelancers was met with outrage. NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stan-



This cartoon first appeared in the *Guardian* on 26 March: © Steve Bell

istreet writes: "The NUJ, with the TUC and sister unions, swung into action. It was unthinkable that the government was not going to come to the aid of 5 million self-employed workers, including many in the media, just because it was difficult. This crisis has put the precarious lives of so many working people into sharp focus and responses to our Freelance Office have shown the stark reality of members whose work dried up virtually overnight. I joined a meeting with fellow trade unions and Treasury officials to thrash out the issues."

The NUJ will continue its conversations with government, alongside allied trade unions representing many freelancers – particularly the actors' union Equity, the technicians' BECTU section of Prospect, and the Musicians' Union. These all ran public campaigns to help get this support.

Universal Credit

Everyone left out by this measure will need to apply for Universal Credit. The rules for this have been "relaxed" – but there are massive backlogs in a system that the *Freelance* believes was designed in the first place to deter and delay claims.

The "monthly standard allowance" for Universal Credit (UC) is £317.82 for a single person over 25 and more if you have children, have a disability

or "need help paying your rent". In response to coronavirus, the government is waiving the "minimum income floor" – the level of monthly earnings that UC simply assumes – from 6 April. The "floor" affected what self-employed were entitled to.

Only those who have illnesses or disabilities that affect their ability to work can get the old Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). This is £73.10 a week for the over-25s.

If you do regular shifts

The government has guaranteed 80 per cent of salaries for employees. The BBC has shown best practice by promising to include those on fixed-term contracts and freelancers paid PAYE in this scheme. Other companies have not. At the time of writing, by default freelancers paid PAYE are excluded from SEISS. The NUJ has pointed out to Parliament's Treasury Committee that this is one of the major holes in the scheme.

The NUJ's Freelance Office can offer advice on contractual matters and cancelled work: see back page. It may be worth trying to claim Statutory Sick Pay at £94.25 a week, back-datable to 13 March.

If you have a limited company

Financial journalist Martin Lewis has "had it absolutely confirmed by

SOME HELP to page 3

How some freelancers are handling isolation

HOW ARE freelancers coping with self-isolation? For photographers it means no work. For some of us, it may be much like our usual work challenge...

One writes: "I downloaded Zoom for free just yesterday (they'll be having a Zoom boom just now). This means I am able to continue holding a mentoring session for young arts critics this afternoon online instead

of in person, and am reviewing a concert by livestream tonight – so it's very reassuring to see that some income streams can adapt and survive just now!

"I have also been using the hashtag **#supportfreelancers** to support a lot of freelance musicians I work with, who are in the same boat as freelance journalists."

Another writes: "I have just 'lost' a

trip to Reykjavik to report on a two-day meeting of the European Federation of Allergy & Airways Diseases Patients Association as its been cancelled. However, they're going to hold an online meeting – which I can attend from my desk at home (or the dining room table). This will involve representatives from 27 countries, and about 40 organisations.

HANDLING ISOLATION to page 2

London Freelance Branch meetings are suspended until further notice.

See back page & our website at londonfreelance.org & Twitter @NUJ_LFB for updates and continuing advice as the situation develops

The Rate for the Job

PHOTOGRAPHING trade union events and some US rates according to whopayswriters.com are included in this month's selection.

Thinking about work for a company you've not dealt with before? Look at the Rate for the Job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher. You can submit rates online at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for

First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extra uses, like the Web. These are shown as (eg) £400+100. Rates marked **X** are, in the editor's fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy ☺ few.

Broadcasting: National TV morning show, sofa-based punditry £400-700; BBC radio newsroom, 11.5 hour's production £195.

Photography: member's minimum rate, per historic photo, exclusive – a year online US\$800, per photo, waiving credit £390, per photo, with credit £195; trade union client(s), for any PR use and within internal publications – evening or one-day conference (8 hours plus processing), £500, day photographing (5 hours plus processing, editing, selection) £475-480, day conference, £430-450 **X**, trade union, 20 headshots, group photo, £367; small charity, shoot and edit video, £350 + exes **X**; large charity, for magazine feature £207; "religious client", photograph-

ing presentations £150 **X**; PR client, small pic for web, £50 **X**.

Shifts: *New Scientist*, editing day, £175; *The Diplomat*, 10 hours (subbing?) £140.

Words, per 1000: *Vice*, 2500 words @ £2000 no exes = £800; book on the band Queen, 300-word update @ \$200 US\$666; *The Register* £250; *Spectator*, print use only: interview 1000-1200 words, £250; live music review 800 words @ £200 = £250; *Guardian*, weekend magazine feature 2500 words @ £1250 = £500; *New York Times*, op-ed US\$500; *Cotswold Living*, £115 **XXXX**; US rates per 1000 words, according to whopayswriters.com: *Esquire* US\$1330; *Canadian Geographic* US\$1000; *The Atlantic*, opinion US\$560; *Bandcamp Daily*, music writing US\$530; *Christian Science Monitor*, interview US\$360.

Words, other: *Daily Mail*, feature, full-page £800. *The Times*, news page lead – £140 **X**; *Mail online*, page lead – £40 **XXXX**.



The Trireme

The Trireme is an award for the "worst conditions since I was last chained to the oars," in the words of one freelance. We continue this month with our series of national newspapers and their websites paying poorly. We note the *Mail Online* has two months in a row paid at least one freelance £40 for a page lead. This month it's joined by *The Times*, reportedly paying one journalist an unimpressive £140 for a news page lead of unspecified length. Could do better!

Photo: **A member of the Trireme Trust**

Tax rule change delayed

CHANGES to the UK tax-person's "IR35" taxation rules are now postponed until 6 April 2021. This follows determined lobbying on behalf of self-employed and small businesses in the light of the coronavirus emergency. It provides some temporary breathing space for casuals.

The changes would see every medium and large business in the UK

become responsible for correctly setting the tax status of any contract worker who invoices for their services through a limited company or legal partnership. They caused panic among media outlets that use regular casuals.

As we heard at the March London Freelance Branch meeting, which discussed working casual shifts,

number (on your NUJ membership card or Press Card) to register, but courses are free to NUJ members.

Forthcoming FEU webinars include building your brand, diversifying your portfolio, finance for freelancers, negotiation, doing a social media campaign and stress busting

some such outlets hurried to put their casuals on PAYE as staffers – and rather more just cancelled casuals' work (see page 5).

Meanwhile, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC, the tax people) have opened an "HMRC coronavirus line" for the self-employed affected by the pandemic. It's on **0030 456 3565**.

Training alert

TRAINING for freelancers continues in the form of online webinars hosted by FEU Training, the training arm of the Federation of Entertainment Unions, of which the NUJ is a part. You'll need your NUJ membership

for freelancers. Details are at www.feutrain.org/online-training

London Freelance Branch will look into running some kind of training delivered online during the coronavirus emergency, so watch this space.

© **Matt Salusbury**

Freelance Directory

Especially for freelancers who can work remotely, now is a good time to check your entry on www.freelancedirectory.org – or make one if you haven't done so already. It's the first and largest directory of freelance journalists working in or to the UK and Ireland – and entries are free to NUJ members who've told the union you are freelance.

HANDLING ISOLATION from page 1 Nightmare!

Yet another member thinks themselves lucky that though they've lost the next three months of booked work reporting on trade exhibitions in their sphere because these were cancelled, they could replace much of the income with work from home because so much was happening anyway – some of it coronavirus-generated of course.

And of course some freelancers have valuable experience to offer clients. One writes: "I decided to work from home – for a client whose office I've been going in to regularly – a week before the client decided on Friday that everyone was working from home from Monday.

"I now realise," they went on, "how useful it has been to have

been working remotely by bending the rules for years – to do my editing shifts from wherever I've found myself – from Geneva and, on one memorable occasion, from Kiev on the day the protests started in Maidan Square. (At the time the toast to 'the accession of Macedonia to the Soviet Union!' at the dinner after the trade union event there seemed like the highlight... talk about missing the story...)"

And "the market" isn't all doom. A member observes a curious phenomenon in some business-to-business publications (B2Bs). Many industries will miss their big annual conferences and exhibitions in April. For these B2Bs bring out bumper conference specials with enough advertising to see them through most of the year. The advertising was pre-

paid, so they have their money without having to attend that dreadful conference. Hurrah!

But the big industry suppliers sorely miss that opportunity to press the flesh and get their latest products into the hands of buyers. "They are desperate to get their brand recognition in time for everyone to go back work... Now some will pay top dollar for any brand recognition. We've heard some are already asking for advertising in the forthcoming 'back to normal' special. Ker-ching for the B2Bs." And ker-ching for the freelancers who've anticipated this and can pitch ideas for said "back to normal" special.

© **Mike Holderness**

● Tell us more about how it's going for you and give us tips: email isolation@londonfreelance.org

Our union lobbying for freelances

THE NUJ's Freelance Officer Pamela Morton and NUJ Freelance Industrial Council Chair Francis Sedgemore are as we go to press working flat out on lobbying for the interests of the one third of NUJ members who are freelances. The NUJ, and the trade union movement through the Trades Union Congress, continues to lobby to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus lockdown on all workers, freelance or staff.

We are supported by numerous other groups representing the self-employed. A petition to Parliament on making Statutory Sick Pay available to the self-employed had nearly 700,000 signatures as we went to press. The government responded on 28 March, not without sarcasm: "It would not be appropriate to require the self-employed to pay themselves statutory sick pay, as they are their own employer." The welfare system, the government claimed, "provides a safety net to support the self-employed."

What we did get is the grant scheme – see our report on page 1, which notes questions that the NUJ will be trying to answer. And the petition has more than enough signatures that, eventually, Parliament must debate the question it raises.

The NUJ also joined in pressing government to extend the recently-announced mortgage holiday to include a rent freeze. What we do have is an announcement from government on 18 March of "emergency legislation to suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation while this national emergency is taking place". In the meantime new court mandates for

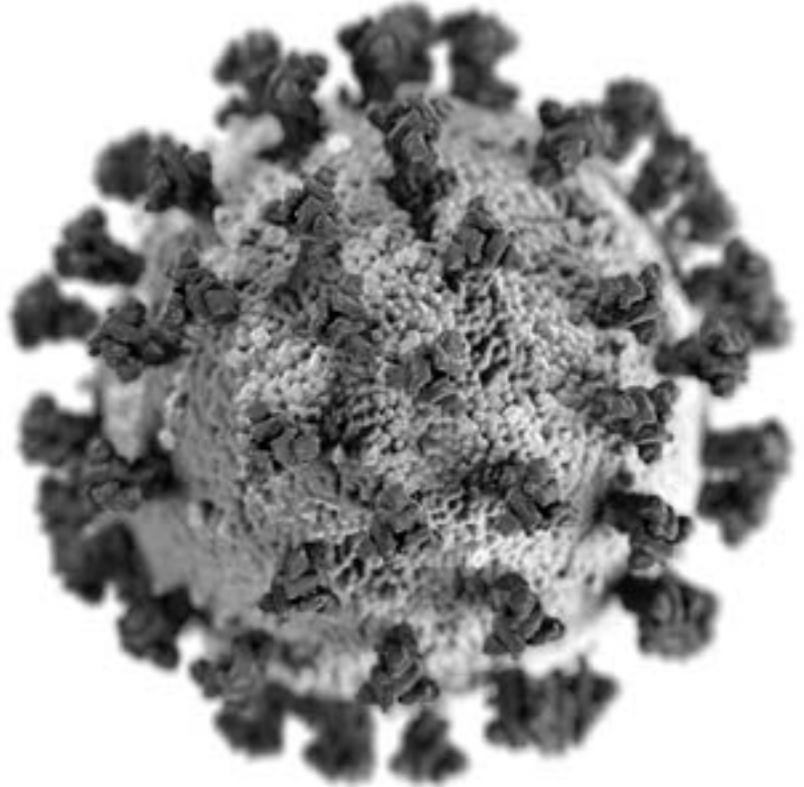
evictions are unlikely. (Incidentally, it somehow proved possible to house people homeless on the street.)

Matthew Taylor, a former Downing Street adviser who led the influential 2017 Taylor Review into employment practices and the gig economy, recently called for emergency "universal income" to include gig workers and the self-employed. He said that he saw "immediate universal income as a war necessity" (see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1708tayl.html for background on the Taylor Review).

The Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) – a union representing nominally "self-employed" gig economy workers including Deliveroo and Uber Eats riders, private hire drivers, contract cleaners and security staff – has started legal action against the government over "discriminatory" statutory sick pay and the 80 per cent income guarantee provisions for employees on PAYE.

The IWGB's "letter before action" states that "the 80 per cent wage subsidies are discriminatory against 'gig economy' and self-employed

workers under Article 14 (taken with Article 1, Protocol 1) of the European Charter on Human Rights." Article 14 "requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination." Watch this



A coronavirus

Image put in the public domain by the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

space to see whether this proceeds to Judicial Review.

For updated covid-19 advice from the NUJ and FIC please watch the NUJ news pages at www.nuj.org.uk/news and LFB's website and its Twitter feed (see back page) will also convey these updates.

© Matt Salusbury

Ireland and Continental coronavirus drill

THE GOVERNMENT of the Republic of Ireland has published a guide to applying for Pandemic Unemployment Payment. This states that "self-employed people can apply": see the guide at www.bit.ly/FL-IE-CPUP and a copy of the claim form at www.bit.ly/FL-CPUP-form

The European Federation of Jour-

nalists' Freelance Expert Group has compiled brief guidance on applying for support for freelances through the various sickness pay or unemployment benefits schemes of other EU nations.

Many of these are, unsurprisingly, much better and much more straightforward than those in the

UK. You can see it at the foot of the NUJ press release at www.bit.ly/FL-FREG

The Freelance Office has heard from at least one NUJ member based in France who has lost most of their work because they can't leave the house without "papers" that justify their journey.

As we add more information on further help available to NUJ members and, we hope, we will add links to this online at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2004help.html – and see above for support for members who live outside the UK

© Mike Holderness; additional reporting by Matt Salusbury

• See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2004help.html for links to claim forms and updates.

SOME HELP from page 1

both the Treasury and HMRC that self-employed limited company directors can be furloughed as employees on their PAYE element, even if they're the sole employee. Technically they can't then work for the firm, but can continue to perform their statutory obligations as directors." So the director can expend effort for the company, for example to claim the support for the employee's pay based on their PAYE earnings.

Earnings that they took as dividends at a lower tax rate do not count.

Community support and more

Mutual aid networks are being set up at street or neighbourhood level to help with shopping, picking up prescriptions and dog walking. Operating by email, Facebook and WhatsApp, they will have the word "mutual aid" in their title. Look out for flyers coming through your door or posted in shop windows locally.

More online

Find more stories at www.londonfreelance.org/fl including:

- Coronavirus updates
- An advice article from accountants HW Fisher
- The Internet Archive's stunningly opportunistic move against book authors' and illustrators' copyright
- Freelances who stand up for decent professional practice by clients can still get profitable outcomes...

Journalists are key workers, say cops

Journalists reporting on coronavirus-related developments are “key workers”. The National Police Chiefs Council Communications Advisory Group has circulated guidelines to police forces in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. These state plainly that “Journalists are covered as key workers. There is a public interest in keeping the population informed of the developing crisis and subsequent recovery / return to normality. Responsible journalism promotes good community relations and assists the emergency services, which is essential in the current health emergency. Journalists will be expected to carry a UK Press Card or other official record” of their status. The NPCC letter is linked from www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2004key.html – it may help to show it to officers or even security guards. Fiona Hyslop MSP is sending similar guidance to Police Scotland. Also, “journalists and broadcasters providing public service broadcasting” are defined by the Department for Education (for England) as “key workers” whose children are allowed to continue to attend school.

Don't forget Julian Assange

The extradition hearing for Julian Assange has been adjourned until May. Assange is facing 17 charges of espionage in the US for his role in leaking US Department of Defense files on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq via Wikileaks in 2010. I believe that whatever our views on Assange may be, all journalists should take note of the implications of this hearing for the freedom of the press and for public interest journalism. Watch for updates and details of any video-hearing dates.

© & photo **Matt Salusbury**



Getting financial help

UNDER the NUJ's rules, London Freelance Branch members who expect to experience hardship should contact Branch Welfare Officer Tim Dawson, who will contact the NUJ's charity NUJ Extra. If you expect serious trouble it'd be best to contact him in the near future to arrange a chat about how the Union can help, rather than waiting until you are already skint and desperate.

Just discussing in plenty of time what the problems are and what can be done can be hugely helpful.

On 24 March NUJ Extra trustees issued a statement: “We have never before witnessed times like these and hope never to do so again, but unprecedented circumstances warrant an unprecedented response.”

They have had a statutory letter warning that the value of the charity's investments has fallen by more

than 10 per cent, by more than £300,000. Despite this, “We will help those directly affected and who lose money as a result, those who contract the disease or who have to self-isolate because of it... We will assume most people can cope with a 14-day isolation... We will prioritise members: who are the sole income earner and have dependants; who have a caring role; and who have no other available support.” See www.nuj.org.uk/work/nuj-extra

Author's Emergency Fund

A £300,000 Authors' Emergency Fund has opened in response to the covid-19 emergency. It has been set up by ALCS (see page 5), the Royal Literary Fund, the TS Eliot Foundation, English PEN and Amazon UK. Grants of up to £2000 for urgent need are available, with the definition

of “authors” being kept deliberately broad. Yes, journalists are eligible. To apply, see www.societyofauthors.org/Grants/contingency-funds

The Journalists' Charity

The Journalists' Charity is a long-standing employer-led fund for those of our craft who are in urgent need. It benefits from money from the Newspaper Licensing Agency, which collects money for secondary uses of newspaper articles and passes it onto the newspaper publishers but not to the freelancers who write the articles. So don't feel shy about asking them for money. To be eligible, you must have been working as a journalist for two of the last five years, with journalism as your main source of income, in the times before covid-19 at least. To apply, see www.journalistscharity.org.uk

ILO adopts charter on harassment at work

REPRESENTATIVES from unions, national governments and employers' organisations in Geneva for last June's International Labour Conference adopted with a huge majority the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190 – on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.

The convention provides a global definition of “violence and harassment” in the context of the “world of work”, not just “employment” law. The definition refers to “unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim (to), result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm” and includes “gender-based violence and harassment”.

The convention covers all workers “irrespective of their contractual status, persons in training, including interns and apprentices, workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, job seekers

and job applicants, and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer”.

Although the Convention will only be legally binding on ILO member states until a year after being ratified (by just two nations), the process has begun. Uruguay ratified it in December. Namibia is committed to bring it into domestic legislation.

ILO experts specifically worked to ensure the convention reflected the “world of work” in the 2020s, covering those in the gig economy.

In the UK, stress management standards produced by the Health and Safety Executive state that “unacceptable behaviours” include bullying, as well as harassment, as potential stressors. Under UK law, another key factor in establishing whether a behaviour is unacceptable is how it is perceived by a victim.

Freelancers have long anecdotally told of losing work – and being harmed economically – by someone “taking against them”. ILO 190

represents significant progress towards both greater protection and recourse. Organisations need not wait for national legislation to act. Following work over several years, the International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) signed an agreement with the global AccorInvest hotel group less a fortnight after ILO 190 was adopted.

In that, Accor covers its zero-tolerance policy covers suppliers, contractors, franchise holders and guests as well as its staff. The organisational penalties could be severe, from dismissal to guests being banned as well as legal action.

The NUJ's health and safety committee is revising guidance information – available via the Freelance Office – to reflect ILO 190 and seeing how its wording can replace definitions of bullying and harassment currently in the union's rule book.

© **Adam Christie**

Moral rights violation through passing time?

WE'RE USED to the usual ways in which a publisher can violate our moral rights – derogatory treatment, or “forgetting” to credit us. But I came across a new way the other day. Let time pass, then republish your book with no changes at all – not even to say when it was originally published. For non-fiction in a fast-moving subject, or a book that uses very current anecdotes, text labelled 2020 but written ten years ago looks horribly out of date.

The book was written for a flat

fee and I don't own the copyright – a common rights grab in certain areas of non-fiction publishing. The publisher doesn't have to ask before re-using the material, and can reproduce it as much as they like as long as they don't subject it to derogatory treatment. Can doing nothing count as derogatory treatment? It's certainly damaging to my reputation if readers think I'm not aware of any changes that have taken place in the last ten years.

Presumably, the same can happen

when a publisher sells translation rights a book many years after it is first published.

I don't think we can hold publishers to account for allowing time's winged chariot to keep moving. But perhaps we could ask that if they want to reissue or translate a book more than a specified number of years after it was written, they give us the chance to update it (for a suitable fee) to avoid violation of moral rights.

© **Anne Rooney**

Control-shift!

MAKING a living working casual shifts was on the agenda at the March London Freelance Branch meeting. Our speakers were Richard Palmer – Father of Chapel (FoC, workplace-based NUJ rep) at Express Newspapers and our own Magda Ibrahim, who combines commissioned work with shifts – currently in “an absolutely brilliant job” as a shift reporter at the *Standard*. Experiences were also shared by members of the audience.

Introducing Richard and Magda, LFB co-chair Nick Renaud-Komiya explained that due to the sensitivity of some of the issues involved, this month's meeting was under the Chatham House Rule. So “It's OK to relay the things that people say here,” but not to “identify the speakers or... the organisations that they are affiliated to”.

About half Richard's role as FoC is “working hard for better conditions for casuals,” which includes helping them “fight stress.” As coronavirus began to take hold, he was fighting for sick pay for casuals – including some vulnerable to covid-19 through pre-existing conditions who needed to self-isolate. We heard how, long before covid-19 was a thing, casuals were still turning up to work when sick as they couldn't afford to take time off to recover.

At some national papers, a “huge” proportion of the workforce had been casualised – even some section editors. Photographers may be on the rota five or six days a week since the 1990s but still not on staff. A member present described doing

“exactly the same job” on casual shifts in two different offices of the same news group, “paid as a contractor, or... a paid as a casual worker”, paid “a very different way” for the two jobs.

Then there was panic over “IR35” rule changes (see page 2) leading media outlets to cut casual shifts. Whatever the outcome, such changes are stressful. We heard of the suicide last year of one regular casual (not an NUJ member). Among the many factors that seem to have contributed to them taking their own life were overwork and being extremely worried about being made redundant.

For those with young children, the night shift may fit around family life better than morning shifts. One complaint we heard from several sources is at the close of an eight-hour shift suddenly being asked to do “another four hours on top of that”. Some casuals manage to negotiate a higher rate for their overtime on the spot, while former casuals on one national's picture desk routinely worked an extra half an hour a day without being paid for it.

Another issue is that “nobody tells you anything,” we heard. A casual starting a night shift with a new client had worked out how to take three night buses to get home because they hadn't been told the company would pay their cab fare.

It's not all bad. Casuals in the Reach group earn pension rights and holiday pay, while one regular casual was happy to report that a client had remembered to invite them to the corporate Christmas party: that



made them feel they'd got “the support of your colleagues”.

Another cause for optimism was dailies expanding their websites rapidly and taking on more casuals to do “click-bait” sites. Casuals on the websites are, though, expected to work extra hours and complete more tasks – more Search Engine Optimisation than core journalism – for no extra money, with “flexible working” including more requests to do night shifts. As a result, “younger web journalists” who do casual shifts on the newspapers' websites are suddenly joining the union in greater numbers and turning up to NUJ Chapel (workplace) meetings from which they've previously stayed away.

NUJ Freelance Organiser Pamela Morton, who regrettably couldn't speak at the meeting, reminds members doing casual shifts they may be eligible for holiday pay and directs members to the NUJ's Holiday Pay campaign: see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1911holi.html

© Matt Salusbury

● Need a listening ear? UK Samaritans: 116123 (samaritans.org or see bit.ly/SuicideHelplines)

Richard Palmer and Magda Ibrahim.

Image: © Hazel Dunlop

Working well from home

We commend to you the *Guide to working well from home under self-quarantine for coronavirus*, produced by Leapers, an organisation that supports the mental health of freelancers and the self-employed. It includes “Ask ‘How are you?’” and “Remember, it's not forever.” It's at www.leapers.co/resources/little-guides/coronavirus-working-from-home

Reduced subs despite delays

In these difficult times we remind you that when times are hard you should be entitled to a reduced NUJ subscription rate, based on your income. See our guide at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2003subs.html – but be aware that staff absences at NUJ head office (predating covid-19) have led to a backlog of enquiries to the Membership Department, so they may take some time to respond. The Branch is aware of the problem and in touch with the NUJ about this. If you have contacted the Membership Department to apply for reduced contributions but have not heard from them for a while, contact the LFB's Membership Officers – see details at www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/contact.html

Writers earns £4k of ‘free money’ – sign up too!

WHOOOPS AND HOLLERS were heard in corners of the freelance writerly world around 20 March as the annual Authors' Licensing and Collecting Service (ALCS) royalty payments landed on doorsteps – digitally speaking. And they were never more welcome, of course, than now amid th'encircling gloom.

The top scorer so far this year reports £4000 hitting his bank account, which is the same top dog figure as last year. The champ enthuses: “Having missed the 2018/19 deadline for adding new works (despite which, I still received a couple of hundred), I decided to pull my finger out and be a bit more organised about logging stuff, and had been hopeful for something like my previous best of £1000. So, I was utterly gobsmacked when I checked the 2019/20 statement on Thursday evening and saw I got just over £4000. Extra gruel all round chez moi.” In the dead heat

for silver medal position we have two members chalking up £2500 apiece. Both learned this within days of losing loads of booked work.

One says, “It's enough to keep me going in terms of mortgage, heat/light/water, phone/broadband, council tax, food and hopefully petrol (assuming fewer car journeys while there's no work to go out to) for between two and three months.”

So what is it? Freelance wordsmiths can sign up to ALCS if you work for printed or digital magazines, “journals” and books mainly. The royalties are for photocopying of work whereof you legally own copyright as a self-employed “author”. ALCS sells licenses to photocopy and distributes these royalties to freelancers and to publishers.

So sign up for next year's payout at their join-here page at www.alcs.co.uk/join-alcs

The gross sum collected is approx-

tioned on a wordage basis. The payments work on a rolling three-year sequence so next year's will go back to 2018. It's “free money”! Admin takes one or two hours a year depending on your number of entries.

A couple of other freelancers collecting on a more “That'll do nicely” level noted “any ALCS money whatsoever cheers me up. Mine was £591.59”, and “Mine doubled and went into four figures this year. I've now got into the habit of updating my ALCS page the moment one of my pieces hits the news stands.” A minute a week avoids deadline panic in November and leads to much airpunching in March: “Just DO IT!”

© Phil Sutcliffe

● Photographers can stake their claims via the parallel collecting society DACS – info and how to join their “Payback 2020” scheme via www.bit.ly/FL-DACS

LONDON FREELANCE BRANCH MEETINGS

Cancellations, unprecedented times, stay safe!

DUE to the current coronavirus (covid-19) emergency and the need for social distancing, the London Freelance Branch meetings scheduled in **April, May and June** are cancelled. So is the New Members' Meeting planned for **Thursday 30 April**.

New members who need advice urgently should contact one of the Membership and New Members Secretaries, whose contacts are at www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/contact.html

The NUJ head office, where Branch meetings are normally held, was formally put on lockdown the day we went to press, until at least the middle of June.

For updates on when meetings will resume and for confirmation of themes and speakers for forthcoming meetings when they do, see the

Branch calendar web page www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html and LFB's Twitter feed [www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB](https://twitter.com/NUJ_LFB).

The *Freelance* emailed all members earlier to confirm the March meeting was on, expect email updates from us, possibly at short notice, about meetings.

LFB's Committee will be looking into the feasibility of putting at least some elements of Branch meetings online, if only recorded talks by speakers. The Branch Standing Orders (its constitution) do not as far as we are aware currently allow voting other than by a show of hands

This went to press on **31 March**
Your deadline for the May online only issue: **1 May**.

in a face-to-face meeting.

Monthly meetings of the LFB Committee continue by email, conference call and online video conferencing platform.

The Committee may empower its officers to make interim decisions where necessary, to be later confirmed or rejected by a subsequent Branch meeting.

Regular LFB meetings (when they resume) will be on the second Monday of the month, from 6.45pm to 8.45pm in the basement of the NUJ's HQ at **Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB**, accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest Tube is King's Cross or Chancery Lane. If you need the Branch to pay for care for a dependent so you can attend a meeting, contact a Branch officer.

EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

The NUJ working from home

AFTER long preparations to enable all of its operations to be run by staff working from home, the NUJ's London headquarters at Headland House went into full covid-19 shutdown on 23 March. The offices will remain closed until mid-June at least.

The NUJ switchboard number 020 7843 3700 will ask you to leave a message for Paul or Deirdre, the NUJ's receptionists, now working from home. They will call you back or put you through to whoever it is you need to talk to, who will also be working from home.

The direct line numbers for NUJ departments and officers including the Freelance Office – see www.londonfreelance.org/nujone.html – will also take you to the relevant NUJ staff working from home. Be mindful that the Freelance Office

has been inundated with calls: it may be a while before they get back.

At the time of writing, the latest Freelance Office advice on support for freelance journalists affected by the covid-19 lockdown is at www.nuj.org.uk/news/covid-19-update-from-the-nuj-freelance-office/ – it includes advice on getting financial assistance.

Expect more updates from the Freelance Office and Freelance Industrial Council, the body that deals with freelance issues in England and Wales: check www.nuj.org.uk/news and click on the tag "freelance" at the bottom of that page.

The *Freelance* online at www.londonfreelance.org/fl will link to these updates, as will the London Freelance Branch Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB](https://twitter.com/NUJ_LFB)

DELEGATE MEETING

No Delegate Meeting

AS WE went to press, NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet confirmed that Delegate Meeting (DM), the NUJ's conference, is cancelled. The next is not due until Spring 2022.

Elected officials will now stay in post until the next one, whenever that is. Meanwhile, Michelle is "investigating various technologies to maximise union democracy in this difficult time." Some sort of online consultation of delegates elected by NUJ Branches on some of the more urgent issues is possible. The pressing issue of the proposed rise in union subscription rates to avoid financial disaster comes to mind. (See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2002dm.html for background).

Within living memory, but before the dawn of the Age of Internet, the NUJ has held an emergency Special Delegate Meeting to allow delegates to vote on very urgent issues only. Such a meeting could be in London and last a single business day.

SALON

Freelance Salon

Watch this space for details of Freelance Salon – a mix of talks by experts and networking opportunities for journalists. As we went to press, a Freelance Salon with a theme of reporting on climate change is planned provisionally for an evening in July. Provisional dates are either 16 July or 21 July, with St Anne's Hall, Dean St, Soho W1 as the venue. In view of the covid-19 emergency, an announcement about the climate change reporting Freelance Salon special – and whether it is still on, postponed or in another form – is expected around the beginning of May.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

FREELANCE UNCLASSIFIEDS are **FREE** to members for non-commercial purposes. To non-members and for commercial purposes, £10 for this much. Acceptance is at the editors' whim; appearance does not imply endorsement. Comments on an advertiser? Tell us. Submit by email to unclassified@londonfreelance.org

EXPERIENCED FREELANCE available for commissions. Work experience includes Dow Jones, AFP, the BBC, the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Guardian*, *Wine Business International*, and *Decanter*. Based in Dublin and Bordeaux. Email skevany@gmail.com. Phone (Dublin) +353 (0)89 461 7146. Phone (Bordeaux) +33 (0)6 42 82 13 12.

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION service for writers: confidential, reliable, accurate, affordable. Prices start at 85p per audio minute for interviews. I have extensive experience in providing transcripts for sports writers, life history writers, and ghostwriters on a range of topics: www.trustytranscriptionists.co.uk

STRUGGLING with time management and procrastination? Experienced and qualified coach with background in journalism will help you draw up and implement a plan of action to get organized. Email: Sara Dewar sara@saradewar.co.uk

TECHNOLOGIST and freelance journalist coaches and assists colleagues that need training and refresh on databases and quality data sources in STEM, law, social sciences and current affairs, history and humanities, trademarks and patents. Prices for one-to-one sessions start from £35 per hour. Contact Brunella Longo at bl@brunellalongo.co.uk

NEED HELP WITH LAYOUT? We're experienced editorial and graphic designers (long-time NUJers): fast turnaround; no job too small (or too big); from eye-catching, dynamic layouts to meticulous "typesetting" or subbing. Andy Smith & Denise Bell: info@smithplusbell.com or telephone 07 968 588 729.

CONTACTS

Freelance office

Pamela Morton, David Ayrton 020 7843 3706
Membership via switchboard 020 7278 7916
email freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk
post 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB
Legal helpline for NUJ members in emergency only:
England, Wales and Northern Ireland 0114 241 9700
Scotland 0800 801 299
Republic of Ireland +353(0)1817 0340

Freelance editors

Mike Holderness
Matt Salusbury
email: editor@londonfreelance.org
Follow us on Twitter [www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB](https://twitter.com/NUJ_LFB)
© 2020 NUJ & authors; moral rights asserted.

FREELANCE

Branch contacts: www.londonfreelance.org/lfb
Online Freelance contents: www.londonfreelance.org/fl