

EQUITY

Conference 2025

Draft Agenda

10-12 May

Derry

EQUITY CONFERENCE 2025

Provisional Timetable

SATURDAY 10 MAY

14:00-17:30 Conference (session 1) *Guildhall*
19:00 Welcome Reception *St Columb's Hall*

SUNDAY 11 MAY

09:30-13:00 Conference (session 2) *Guildhall*
13:30-17:30 Fringe events (including lunch) *Guildhall*
19:30 Dinner *Guildhall*

MONDAY 12 MAY

09:30-13:00 Conference (session 3) *Guildhall*

CONFERENCE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Julia Carson Sims (Chair), Ian Barritt (Vice-Chair), Laurence Bouvard, Dan Edge, Su Gilroy, Marina Hampton, Isabella Jarrett, Nana St Bartholomew-Brown, Sam Swann.
Secretary: Sam Winter.

Representatives with questions on this agenda or on conference procedure can visit the Conference Business Committee (CBC) at any time during Conference – they will be stationed just in the hallway just outside the main conference hall. The CBC will also be in formal session and available for advice in the CBC room at the following times:

Saturday 10 May

TBC

Sunday 11 May

TBC

Monday 12 May

TBC

All motions submitted for inclusion in the agenda have been vetted and (where required) amended by the CBC for punctuation, grammar and style in accordance with CBC protocols.

Issues relating to whether a motion is in or out of order were considered by the March CBC and Council meetings, following discussion with the union body submitting the motion.

FRINGE EVENTS

See the conference guide for more information. Please note that the fringe will be taking place on the Sunday afternoon, in various rooms around the Guildhall and the neighbouring building (Harbour House).

Sunday 11 May

TBC

INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES

MOTION A: 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.

MOTION B: 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;
- 2) 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
- 3) establish a strategy for connecting with dance artists and engagers to ensure these resources are widely accessible, understood and effectively implemented.

MOTION C: 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.

MOTION D: 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.

MOTION E: International Solidarity 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 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.

MOTION F: Opera Deputies

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.

MOTION G: 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.

MOTION H: 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 Singers Equity Fringe Agreement.

MOTION I: 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.

MOTION J: 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.

MOTION K: Student Deputies

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.

MOTION L: 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.

MOTION M: West End Deputies

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.
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EQUALITIES COMMITTEES

MOTION A: 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.

MOTION B: 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.

MOTION C: 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 of 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.

MOTION D: 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.

MOTION E: 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.
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EAST AND SOUTH EAST

Two to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: Brighton and Sussex Branch

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.

MOTION B: Kent Branch

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.

LONDON

Two to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: London North Branch (1)

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.

MOTION B: London North Branch (2)

Equity's arts sector policy, Performance For All, champions devolution and democratisation of funding. The change in government has opened new discussions on these ideas. Labour's Creating Growth lacks both commitment to new public investment and specifics on policy, offloading most decisions to 'expert review.' A Culture Commons report on devolution and the arts generally advocates more community involvement in decision making, although sporadic.

Local authority (LA) arts spending is the greater part of overall public funding. Since 2010, successive governments have cut LA grants by 40% or more and local arts funding has fallen 48% in England, 40% in Wales, 29% in Scotland, and similarly in N. Ireland. The Tory 'levelling up' policy resulted in levelling down in London and in some areas outside London, as well.

Conference urges Council to campaign for government to recognise the arts unions as expert and indispensable in decision-making on the sector and its workforce, and to pursue Equity's specific, detailed policies to -

- 1) raise arts funding to 0.5% of GDP, with equitable rebalancing of increased resources towards regions outside London and smaller organisations;
- 2) restore LA funding and local arts departments, and make arts funding legally mandatory, increasing in line with inflation;
- 3) set up Regional Culture Councils to liaise with LAs, consisting of local practitioners and community representatives committed to the arts, and advisory boards including entertainment unions, local residents and workers;
- 4) make UK funding application processes transparent, accountable and fair; and
- 5) encourage new, publicly owned creative centres at low rents.

MOTION C: London South Branch (1)

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.

MOTION D: London South Branch (2)

Voice and accent coaches have been supporting the industry for years.

Some have found this path through acting and wanting to discover more about the voice. But despite everything they do for the industry, they are not covered by a union unless they instruct at the collegiate level.

Organisations like the Voice and Speech Training Association (VASTA) and the British Voice Association (BVA) exist for the sense of sharing information and networking, but these aren't unions.

Conference asks Council to allow vocal coaches to be part of Equity to enable them to receive the same protections and benefits as all the other professions in our industry currently represented.

MIDLANDS

One to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: Birmingham and West Midlands Branch / East Midlands Branch

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.
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NORTHERN IRELAND

One to be selected at the national meeting.

MOTION A: Foyle and West Branch

It is important that the integrity of agreements between Equity and engagers are maintained. Regarding in-house agreements, Conference believes that a clear process to deal with breaches of the agreements, prior to claims going to tribunal or small claims court, be published.

Although these processes may exist, we believe it is to the benefit of all that it is made clear to engagers that, when a significant breach occurs, there is a process which Equity is obliged to follow on behalf of its members, whilst maintaining confidentiality of the members involved wherever possible.

Conference asks that Council compiles and publicises official procedures that will be followed in the event of producers' non-compliance with their Equity in-house agreement.

This could be used to provide clarity to producers and members of the repercussions of non-compliance at different levels of breach.

MOTION B: Lagan and East Branch

Conference asks Council to review Equity's use of social media platforms.

MOTION C: Northern Ireland National Committee

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.

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

One to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: North and West Yorkshire Branch

Conference urges Council to strive to ensure that, as agreements are brought back to the bargaining table, rates and protections are enshrined for all assistant, associate, resident and rehearsal/revival roles for directors, choreographers and designers.

MOTION B: North East England Branch

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.

NORTH WEST

One to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: Greater Manchester Branch

Manchester's Gay Village and its late night entertainment are a vital part of the local economy. Manchester City Council research shows that 4,000 jobs are created by activity in the Village, and there are 36 licensed late night premises, accounting for 3% of the city's total economic activity. Drag performers are a key factor in that activity, and gay villages have a similar impact across the UK.

Recently, Manchester City Council created an 'Action Plan' for the Village. It states that 'significant stakeholder consultation was undertaken' yet we are not aware of any drag performers being included. Equity was not consulted, nor has it been by other authorities conducting similar consultations.

Late night drag and variety entertainers are at the heart of night time economies, yet face significant health and safety challenges, including a lack of public transport, poorly lit car parking spaces, and sexually orientated hate crime. These real experiences of variety workers should be reflected in any consultation.

Conference therefore calls on Council to -

- 1) lobby local authorities to recognise late night variety performers as key stakeholders and to ensure these authorities consult with Equity, enabling the voices of performers to be fully represented in any consultation or implementation of action plans into the development of the late night economy; and
- 2) lobby local authorities with responsibility for gay villages to champion unionised workplaces and the establishment of Equity house agreements for venues, with rates guidance, and to promote good practice.

MOTION B: Merseyside and Cheshire Branch

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.
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SCOTLAND

One to be selected at the national meeting.

MOTION A: Edinburgh and East of Scotland Branch

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.

MOTION B: Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch

In order to ensure that the tenets of natural justice apply to cases under Equity's Disciplinary Appeals Procedure and that respondents to a disciplinary charge have no basis to subsequently claim to the Certification Officer and/or the law courts that these tenets have not been observed, it is essential that there is a total separation between the Council and the Appeals Committee under the Rules. However, under the new Rules S13 and W8 adopted in 2022, the Council (for the first time in the history of Equity) dictates the procedures of the Appeals Committee.

Conference therefore urges Council to use its powers under Rule Z5 to propose a change to Rules S13 and W8 which ensures that these procedures are instead governed solely by the Rules and not by the Council.

Such a change will potentially save the union a great deal of money in not having to fight legal battles subsequent to decisions by the Appeals Committee.

MOTION C: Highlands and North of Scotland Branch

It has been observed that many professional ballet auditions require a fee to attend. This practice renders these opportunities inaccessible to numerous dancers, creating a barrier to entry that is not present in other areas of theatre.

Conference calls on Council to campaign for these fees to be eliminated, ensuring that ballet auditions are equitable and accessible to all aspiring dancers.

MOTION D: Scotland National Committee

Conference recognises the vital work of Equity members in Scotland and across the UK who serve as simulated patients and role-players in medical training. This work provides a crucial income stream for many performers, yet protections in this sector remain inconsistent.

Equity's Medical Role-Play Best Practice Guide offers essential guidance, but stronger regulations are needed to ensure fair pay, safe working conditions and industry-wide standards. Without proper oversight, role-players risk unfair contracts, low pay and inadequate safeguarding in high-stakes training environments.

Conference calls on Council to -

- 1) advocate for the widespread adoption of the Medical Role-Play Best Practice Guide as an industry standard;
- 2) work with medical institutions, training providers and employers to implement clear pay structures, contractual rights and safeguarding policies as outlined in the Role-Play Guide;
- 3) conduct a thorough review of pay distribution within agencies supplying medical role-players, identify any unfair practices and engage with NHS trusts and contracting organisations to develop greater transparency and accountability; and
- 4) provide enhanced support, advice and representation for members working in this field.

Stronger protections will ensure that medical role-players are treated fairly and paid properly as skilled professionals in this essential field.

SOUTH WEST

One to be selected at the regional meeting.

MOTION A: Bristol and West of England Branch

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.
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WALES

One to be selected at the national meeting.

MOTION A: Wales National Committee

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.

STANDING ORDERS

A summary is included below. For the full Standing Orders, please go to:

<https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/rules-of-the-union/standing-orders/>

TELLERS AND STEWARDS

The tellers and stewards are union staff. They examine the credentials of those attending and count the votes.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDINGS

Only the union's official comms team may take videos or any form of audio recording in the conference hall. Photography is permitted during Conference sessions, but not during voting.

FLYERS

No Councillor, Representative, other member or guest shall place any flyer on the tables in the conference hall.

AGENDA

Compositing motions The movers of motions and amendments shall be asked to co-operate with the Conference Business Committee to composite (join together) motions where possible.

Remitting motions Remitting a motion means asking Council to decide it instead of Conference. A motion which has been moved and seconded may not be remitted by the mover without the consent of Conference.

Withdrawal of motions or amendments A motion or amendment which has been moved and seconded may not be withdrawn by the mover without the consent of Conference.

Unfinished business All matters on the agenda not reached at the conclusion of the last day of Conference shall be remitted to Council.

ORDER OF DEBATE

Limitation of speeches The mover of a motion can speak for up to five minutes. The seconder and subsequent speakers, including the right of reply, can speak for up to three minutes. One minute before the end of each speaker's time a warning shall be given, and again at the end of the speaker's time.

Amendments No amendments will be accepted at Conference. Requests to withdraw a motion, to composite (join) motions, or any other request that may alter the timetable must be made to the Conference Business Committee in its committee room and not from the floor of the meeting.

Rules of debate See Rule V. in the Union's Rulebook.

ADDRESSING CONFERENCE

- Representatives and Councillors shall indicate they wish to speak by holding up a voting card.
- Representatives and Councillors shall speak to motions only when called by the Chair. They shall address the Chair and give their name and the part of the union they represent. All speakers may remain in their seat in the body of the hall, rather than speak from the rostrum, if they wish. All speakers are encouraged to speak from the rostrum, if possible, so that they can be seen by those in the hall and on the screen transmissions. Speakers who remain in their seats must wait for a roving microphone to be provided before they start speaking.
- For points of procedure, questions and formal moving/seconding of motions, Representatives and Councillors shall stay in their place when speaking and not come to the rostrum (unless invited by the Chair). They must wait for a roving microphone to be provided before they start speaking.
- No Representative or Councillor shall interrupt a speaker except on a point of procedure. In particular, there shall be no heckling of speeches.
- If the Chair stands during a debate, the Representative or Councillor speaking shall immediately give way and shall wait for the Chair's permission to continue.
- No speaker shall ask those present in the conference hall to identify themselves by means of a show of hands as a member of any group or category.

VOTING

- Only elected Representatives and members of Council shall be allowed to vote.
- All voting shall be by a show of voting cards.