



About the WGGB

Formed in 1959 The Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) is a TUC affiliated trade union that represents professional writers in the UK. We organise in the following sectors, film, television, animation, theatre, radio, books and videogames and have national agreements covering television, radio, film and theatre. We have 2,291 members including 1218 film and TV screenwriters.

WGGB has a typical union structure, led by a General Secretary and elected Officers and Executive Council representing our organising sectors and UK regions. Currently we have six members of staff, Ellie Peers (General Secretary), Lesley Gannon (Assistant General Secretary), Kate Glasspool (Union Organiser), John Sailing (Union Organiser), Sarah Woodley (Communications Manager) and Rose Cooney (Administrator Membership), we hope to have a new Organising Assistant in post by early 2019.

We work collectively with trade unions and writer's organisations both here and abroad, including (but not limited to) the Trade Union Congress (TUC), International Affiliation of Writers' Guilds, Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU), Performers' Alliance, British Copyright Council, British Screen Advisory Council, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE), Filmmakers' Alliance, and World Intellectual Property Organisation.

Below is an update on some of the key negotiations and activities undertaken by the WGGB to defend and improve the working lives of UK scriptwriters since November 2017.

Brexit and the Creative Industries

We continue to lobby the UK Government but frustratingly it seems we are no nearer a deal with the EU. A 'no deal' scenario is now being factored into guidance produced by Government. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DDCMC) released a technical paper in July aptly named *Broadcasting and video on demand if there's no Brexit deal*, it offered little reassurance. Reaffirming what we already know that companies will need to obtain additional licences to transmit to and from EU countries if they are not part of the Europe Convention on Transfrontier Television (ECTT). There is little clarity on what Government will do to resolve the deep concerns that many of the estimated 700 TV channels based in the UK, who produce programming for consumption outside of the UK, will move their operations into the EU.

In addition, guidance produced by the Intellectual Property Office on *Copyright if there is no Brexit Deal* and *IP if there is no Brexit deal* highlight further challenges for UK writers and content producers.

In our previous report to the FSE and IAWG in 2017, we referenced the WGGB briefing paper for MP's. Although there seems now to be a better understanding of the creative industry's concerns this has not translated into these issues moving higher up the UK Government's Brexit negotiation agenda.

For example, to date there is no update on whether free movement of creatives working in broadcasting, television, theatre or videogames will continue in a no-deal scenario. This is a key concern for the industry and one that is not being addressed by our Government in Brexit negotiations.

Watch this space, because everything may change tomorrow (or not).

BBC & BBC Studios

BBC Studios now includes BBC Worldwide and are part of the WGGB/PMA/BBC TV forum, which is a negotiating body setting out the terms screenwriters are contracted on at the BBC.

New channel BBC Scotland (6pm-12midnight) was given the green light by Ofcom this year. We have negotiated contractual terms for scriptwriters applicable to BBC4, and protections have been agreed to protect script fees for *River City* writers.

Following serious issues across some of the major soaps, we have met with programme executives from all the major soaps at the BBC to address issues about working practices (unacceptable number of rewrites, unrealistic deadlines, bullying) and the BBC/PMA/WGGB have agreed *Guidelines for Best Practice in Working with Writers on BBC Continuing Drama Series (Casualty, EastEnders, Holby City, River City, Doctors)*

We have submitted a pay claim to uplift minimum fees for 2018/19.

BBC - radio

Increases of 2% (2018) and a further 2% from 1st November have been agreed with the BBC and a new deal for Radio Podcasts has been agreed.

ITV

We met with ITV programme executives, to address the disparity in fees between ITV's two soaps and other issues of concern relating to working practices. This resulted in an increase in script and transmission fees for 2018 and 2019 and a commitment to improve the working practices (we will be monitoring this). We have submitted a pay claim to uplift minimum fees for 2018/19.

WGGB continues to support the WGAE in their long dispute with ITV Plc over the lack of meaningful dialogue following recognition which has now exposed discriminatory practices. WGGB, BECTU and WGAE demonstrated outside the ITV AGM in May.

Pact

Television

Negotiations to create a new tripartite television agreement continue with Pact, the trade body for independent cinema and television producers in the UK. A further WGGB/PMA SVOD proposal has been submitted and further negotiations are planned in October.

Film

Pact film negotiations have stalled whilst we submit revised terms for the contracting of film screenwriters on non-studio productions.

BFI Locked Box Scheme – film

Up to a 37.5% share of British Film Institute's recouped income from these BFI funded film productions is put into a locked box, where it is held by the BFI and available to be drawn down for developing and producing future film projects. This money is available to the creative team, with minimum shares of 12.5% each to the writer and director (and more by agreement). The writer and director can individually access this money to fund development of further projects – with or without the other film-makers involved in the first production. In 2017 there was £100,000 collected in the locked box for writers. We are reviewing the Locked Box for 2018.

Equality & diversity – campaign

In May 2018, we released the (177 page) report [Gender Inequality and Screenwriters](#), funded by ALCS and authored by Alexis Kreager with Stephen Follows.

Our key findings were that;

- Female-written films and TV programmes do well critically and with audiences, but women writers are being denied the same opportunities as their male colleagues.
- Bias and specific hiring and monitoring problems within the film and TV industries are creating a self-sustaining loop of gender inequality
- If we want an equal society, we need to end this discrimination against women screenwriters.

On the back of the report, we launched the [Equality Writes](#) campaign.

Key aims of the campaign are;

- For the industry to work with us to effect positive change
- Programme-level TV equality monitoring data to be released.

- Public funders to pledge a 50/50 split between male and female-written films by 2020.

To date we have already achieved;

- National and international press coverage,
- High profile support including trade unions, politicians, famous scriptwriters,
- Set up and attended a series of meetings with the leading broadcasters' commissioners and equality officers,
- Set up and attended a series of meetings with film funders, who agree with 50/50 by 2020, we are working with on how to achieve this.
- Met with Creative Diversity Network about the failing *Project Diamond* and discussions of whether the project will ever be able to produce programme level data
- Set up a new Equality Forum at the BBC
- Set up a WGGB equality and diversity committee increasing union activism amongst our membership.

For inequality to be addressed the television industry must publish programme level data. Given the failings of Project Diamond we (alongside other creative unions/organisations) will be putting pressure on the regulatory body (Ofcom) to achieve the publication of programme level data and broadcaster transparency.

Bullying & Harassment

We have developed and supported the BFI/BAFTA set of [Principles for the prevention of bullying and harassment in the screen industries](#) which also includes a new helpline run by the Film and TV Charity. We also support the UK Theatre /SOLT campaign to [Encourage safer more supportive working practices in theatre](#).

We are continuing to negotiate with major broadcasters to expand existing bullying & harassment policies to include freelancers. This work was already in hand pre-Weinstein as we were already aware that there is a serious issue of widespread bullying across the creative industry (see Federation of Entertainment Unions [Creating Without Conflict](#) campaign). The *Creating Without Conflict* campaign has been updated and a revised guide is in production with a major event being planned for January 2019.

All Party Parliamentary Groups

Performers Alliance (Musicians Union, Equity & WGGB)

A tripartite lobbying event was held to highlight the mental health issues effecting freelancers working in the creative industry. Held in the House of Commons, the event was attended by MPs. Moving forward, WGGB will be producing guidance and support to our members on this issue.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling: social class and the Creative Industries; Performers Alliance is going to launch an inquiry and event into socio-economic discrimination in the creative industry.

Writers APPG (led by ALCS)

We have already submitted written evidence to the Writers APPG inquiry into writers' earnings in the UK and will be submitting oral evidence in late October.

The above is a snapshot of the work WGGB has been undertaking over the past year and reinforces the fact that WGGB is a pro-active trade union effecting positive change for writers in the UK.

Ellie Peers
WGGB General Secretary