

Musicians'
Union



39th Delegate Conference

Carried Motions

2021

Important information – please read

2021 Delegate Conference

All the Motions shown were carried by the 39th Musicians' Union Delegate Conference, as amended by the Standing Orders Committee.

Motion 1
London Region
Universal Basic Income

During the pandemic, freelance musicians have had very little support from the government at a time when a significant portion of their income has been lost. MU stats show 38% of our members have not been able to access any government support during the pandemic and that 19% of our members are considering leaving their music careers due to the financial instability caused by the pandemic. One desperately needed solution is the introduction of a universal basic income.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is the principle of giving a fixed amount from the government to every citizen. If musicians could access UBI they could have support during their creation process between records, shows or other related engagements. UBI would support musicians through periods of illness where they are unable to undertake work and would work alongside other key welfare support packages to ensure everyone is on a level playing field, so disability benefits, child benefits etc. would still continue.

Conference notes the 'Intermittence Du Spectacle' provided in France whereby if musicians fulfil minimum required hours of work a year, they can be protected in periods without work and recognises that this may be an interim solution.

Conference urges the Executive Committee to express full support for the introduction of UBI and to campaign for its introduction throughout the United Kingdom.

Motion 2
North of England Region
New Arenas

Conference notes with dismay that in some areas, millions of pounds are being spent on new arenas, while older buildings which could be successfully repurposed face dereliction or demolition.

Conference calls on the EC to work with other interested parties such as the Music Venue Trust (MVT) and local Music Boards to lobby for refurbishment of such existing buildings, prioritising and recognising the local arts scenes and infrastructure, thereby saving a great deal of money which could be used for cultural or educational good.

Motion 3
North of England Region
Climate Emergency

Current scientific consensus suggests that the future ability of Planet Earth to support all life is threatened by human damage to the climate and ecology. Conference requests the EC to develop strategies for the music industry and contribute to strategies in the creative and leisure sector, to tackle both the immediate emergency and the generic long-term transformation to a carbon neutral existence and environmentally sustainable future.

The strategies should consider the following elements:

- No one should lose their livelihood during or after the transition to a carbon neutral existence.
 - Those affected by the changes should not suffer diminished employment conditions, opportunities, prosperity and happiness.
 - Socio-economic equality needs to be safeguarded and promoted.
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Motion 4
North of England Region
To consider joining ArtsMinds

The 2020 public health emergency has meant that many musicians have had no work or music related activities. This has highlighted the need for mental health support.

Conference requests the EC to consider MU joining ArtsMinds - a collaborative initiative involving BAPAM (British Association of Performing Arts Medicine), Equity, Spotlight and The Stage. This would combine many resources available for performers and creative practitioners facing mental health issues.

Motion 5

North of England Region Post-Covid Recovery Taskforce

Conference realises the difficulties for musicians over the past 18 months in respect of the cessation of live work and most studio recording work due to the Covid pandemic. Conference also recognises that many musicians have 'fallen through the cracks' of government schemes and are either living on very low incomes or are destitute.

Given the challenges that musicians now face across the UK in coping not only with devastating effects of the Covid pandemic on work prospects but also with a deep economic recession and the limiting touring impacts of Brexit, conference asks that the EC lead a Post Covid Recovery Task Force of MU officials, activists and representatives from music industry bodies and the Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) to create a viable strategic plan to lobby government effectively for musicians post 2021 and to empower and support them back to work.

Motion 7

North of England Region Music Education

Conference notes with concern that music education has been under pressure in state schools for years and that this pressure and the associated inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Conference calls on the EC to campaign around access to quality music education for all. In particular focusing on:

- Reversing the trend in many primary schools to rely on point and click websites to deliver music education rather than a skilled workforce.
 - Defending the place of music in the curriculum as schools look to 'catch up'.
 - Reversing the decline in music uptake at GCSE and A-level, and ensuring music is included in the Ebacc.
 - Ensuring access to instrumental lessons regardless of ability to pay.
 - Taking similar steps in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland whose systems are different but experience similar challenges.
 - Promotion of music as a viable creative career to young people.
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Motion 8

North of England Region Alliance for Full Employment/Economic recovery and Culture

Bold measures - including generous public funding - to create new cultural opportunities for people in communities right across Britain needs to be part of a wider economic recovery package. Economic recovery from Covid-19 gives us an opportunity to develop practical initiatives - nationally, regionally and locally - to ensure participation in cultural activities is taken for granted by all in equal measure, regardless of social class and ethnic background.

Conference calls on the EC to support the aims of the "Alliance for Full Employment" and work with other supporters to achieve them. Furthermore, conference recognises that the culture sector has an equal role to play in Britain's economic recovery as any other sector.

Motion 9

East and South East England Region Tax Relief

Conference requests the Executive Committee develop and implement a strategy to lobby government to introduce tax relief and/or benefit strategies for individual freelance professional musicians as practised in other countries.

Motion 10

Wales and South West England Region Webinars

We ask the EC to look at the idea of more webinars to be published on the MU web site.

Conference notes that the MU has done a huge amount of work and currently has a wealth of information and resources available on the MU website for members to access. Conference calls on the EC to explore the idea of expanding our resources further to include more information that can be accessed by many who find visual and audible learning easier and more accessible.

Since March 2020 we have been getting used to using these formats more and more. Many are finding this a convenient and user-friendly way to access information, training and advice at a time that is convenient for members. For members who find traditional forms of learning more difficult, webinars (pre-recorded or recordable) allow listening and watching at a pace that works for all. We ask the EC to look at covering subjects such as contracts, risk assessments,

copyright, Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL)/Performing Rights Society (PRS), and so much more in a format that members can access at their own pace.

Motion 11

Scotland and Northern Ireland Region Support Acts

Gig fees are a recurring theme in live-music activity, and we acknowledge that the issue of payments to support acts can be an especially complex one, given the variety and size of occasions and venues where artists might be considered as 'support'.

We also acknowledge that support acts can benefit from selling merch and that they are entitled to 20% of PRS royalties from each show.

Nevertheless, we also believe that a support act provides an identifiable service to a show/ tour and should receive direct remuneration instead of having to rely on other sources of income to make their performances financially viable.

Whilst merch sales and PRS royalties might benefit support acts playing in large arenas, they do not often generate significant income in smaller venues. Nevertheless, in those venues, support fees are often only around £50-£100. This is the same amount as was the case 40, or even 50 years ago. Conference requests the EC takes a fresh look at fees for support acts.

Consequently, we propose the EC devise and publish some 'best practice' guidance for engaging support acts. Whilst this guidance might stipulate a variety of rates to reflect different gigs and venue capacities, its primary purpose would be to uphold the central principle that a musical performance is a valuable service - and one that engagers should be prepared to pay fair rates for.

Motion 12

Scotland and Northern Ireland Region Maternity Birth Grant Support

Conference notes that having children poses unique challenges for self-employed musicians. Many self-employed and freelance members aren't eligible for Statutory Maternity Allowance, and most need to take considerable amounts of time off to care for new-borns.

This often causes musicians to 'fall off the radar' and lose engagements or students to more-available musicians. The financial implications of this coupled with the cost of providing for children can place a huge financial burden on parents.

The costs and impact of multiple birth-pregnancies:

The MU currently provides maternity or parental grants of £250 to members each time they have a child, without limitation. However, in cases where the pregnancy results in multiple births, still only one grant of £250 is payable - even where both parents are actively engaged in their child's care and are full members.

The current rate of UK multiple-births pregnancies is only around three per hundred. Given that they are relatively uncommon, the amount of the grant, and the size of MU membership, a change of policy on this issue would offer significant help to members who have multiple birth pregnancies at a relatively low cost to the Union.

Conference therefore urges that this policy is changed to provide £250 maternity/parental grants on a 'per-child' basis in the case of multiple births.

In addition, Conference asks the EC to review and consider expanding maternity benefits to assist musicians in continuing their music careers. These enhancements could include subscription holidays for the period of maternity leave (1 year), pausing membership without breaking the membership continuity, and increasing the amount of the grant. Conference also asks the EC to review how maternity/paternity support is inclusive to same-sex and non-binary parents. Conference requests EC to review what provision and support is given to members who go through miscarriage or stillbirth.

Motion 14

Midlands Region Climate Emergency

MU members are currently facing a unique set of challenges, one of which is the existential threat of a global climate catastrophe.

The MU is one of the organizations featuring on the "Music Declares Emergency" declarers list. As part of the declaration, it has pledged to "making our businesses ecologically sustainable and regenerative".

Amidst a global climate and ecological emergency, the MU has a unique opportunity to put the question of the environment at the heart of its agenda and lead the way within the music industry by taking action on its pledge.

In an effort to enable members to keep making music by avoiding a global climate and ecological catastrophe, we ask the EC to:

1. seek specialist independent advice and works out a clear, binding, organization-wide environmental policy.
 2. seek specialist independent advice to review its internal practices and, where possible, mediates any adverse effects of these on the environment.
 3. seek specialist independent advice to come up with ways to promote sustainability within the music sector.
 4. seek specialist independent advice that includes information about how to divest from fossil fuels.
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