



24 June 2021

Mr Conrad Mewton  
Senior Business Affairs Executive  
Pact  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Fitzrovia House  
153-157 Cleveland Street  
London W1T 6QW

Dear Conrad

Further to your letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021, please find responses below.

We agree that this is a pivotal moment for the PACT BECTU TV Drama Agreement and share a sense of urgency. Bectu is committed to finding a resolution to these matters.

As in my previous letter, I acknowledge it has been a difficult year across the industry, including for Pact member companies, many of whom were supportive of our members. Reps and officials recognise the additional costs of Covid protocols for production companies. However, it must be acknowledged that our members have strived to make these measures workable, often being seriously financially impacted due to unpaid suspensions and hiatuses.

In your letter you provide a 'reality check' for our members, who you accuse of not adhering to the agreement and abusing the overtime clause; we strongly refute this allegation. Some of the other points you raise cannot remain unaddressed and our responses are below.

**Rates inflation** – In your letter you accuse Bectu member representatives of bad faith negotiations and 'failing to engage' on rates. In early 2019 Bectu welcomed the opportunity to discuss rates with a commitment to reaching an agreement with PACT. We offered to cover an equal cost for the analyst you appointed and willingly shared our rates data with them. PACT then changed tack, conducting the rates research privately and excluding Bectu. On completion of the data gathering process PACT refused to allow Bectu to share the information with reps, preventing the union from conducting the essential consultation necessary to enter into talks.

**Improvements in terms & conditions** – you have mentioned the cap on 11-day fortnights, by 2017 the 11-day fortnight was already being phased out by most production companies. However, we do accept that the agreement has provided much needed clarification and improved terms for some departments.

One of the most contentious aspects of the agreement for our members, has been Prep & Wrap, with some PACT companies exploiting the agreement and contracting excessive extra working time to those departments where it is deemed customary, and applying prep and wrap to departments where it is not.

Bectu  
373-377 Clapham Road  
London  
SW9 9BT

020 7346 0900  
info@bectu.org.uk

bectu.org.uk

In your letter you suggested prep and wrap terms should be applied in a bespoke manner, pertaining to the needs of each production. This has never been discussed with us and is not what was agreed in 2017. The agreement should be providing consistency across all productions and a drive for local arrangements seriously undermines collective bargaining arrangements.

**Pact guidance** – This guidance is a primary cause of friction for our members and it is extremely disappointing that you have refused to withdraw it. Furthermore, you have accused crew members of being aggressive. If this is the case, we invite you to provide details so we can investigate and take appropriate action.

I would like to highlight to you again that Bectu has received reports of unreasonable and hostile behaviour from productions. As you are aware, only recently a PACT production company explicitly refused to recognise the union and insisted on crew signing contradictory terms to the agreement. The company eventually terminated the engagement of a crew member who queried the contract and withheld payment for work already delivered. We expect PACT to address and condemn this unacceptable behaviour by one of its member companies.

Regarding the Outlander dispute concerning overtime, we invited the production company to use the disputes procedure. PACT's response was: "The dispute procedure is solely for disputes arising in relation to the terms of the collective agreement and therefore cannot be used in this instance". How do you propose we resolve these challenging problems if you refuse to engage the agreement disputes procedure?

**HoDs** – In your letter you blame HoDs for not scheduling departments competently. I strongly disagree, and take exception to this point. You exhibit a failure to understand the pressures put on crew by production companies and suggesting HoDs are somehow manipulating the agreed terms is ridiculous. The idea that HoDs are pushing crew to work excessive hours just to charge overtime at the risk crew driving home fatigued is the absolute opposite of what HoDs are attempting to do and is an insult to their professionalism.

**Prep & Wrap** – You have suggested that limiting the number of Prep & Wrap hours will trigger a longer working day. This is not the case in feature films, who already have this arrangement. The same principle and working time pressures pertain to both genres.

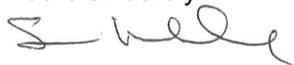
**Next steps** – You have suggested separating out the issues and departments, however Bectu reps from all branches are committed to opening discussions together, side by side.

The points we put forward in my letter of 24<sup>th</sup> May are all equally important. As a result these must all be reviewed and form part of the upcoming negotiations. As outlined in my previous letter, talks should not be unnecessarily delayed and I set a deadline of 3 months, one of which has passed. So now I propose a deadline for conclusion of negotiations of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

Like PACT, Bectu does not want the TV Drama Agreement to fail, and we are committed to achieving a positive conclusion. PACT and Bectu share a responsibility to support industry growth and success, whilst ensuring both companies and crew can benefit from new opportunities.

Shortly, I will be sending over proposed dates for an initial meeting. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Spencer MacDonal  
National Secretary