

# Scottish committee members resign en masse amid Equity row

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Five members of Equity’s Scottish National Committee have resigned, amid a continuing row over the handling of a staff restructure at the union.

Earlier this month, the committee described a recent redundancy in the union’s Glasgow office as “wholly unjustified and unnecessary”. The five individuals have now said Equity’s management of the members’ campaign for its reversal led them to resign their posts.

General secretary Paul W Fleming called the resignations “a matter of enormous regret”.

Tensions within the union have been growing since December, when redundancy proceedings were first announced by Fleming. The cost-cutting measures were put in place to secure Equity's future, Fleming said, but included the loss of long-standing staff member Lorne Boswell.

Members in Scotland and Northern Ireland have voiced strong opposition to the changes, which include a revision of responsibilities in the two countries and resulted in Boswell's redundancy.

Last week, Equity hit back at some campaigners opposing the restructure, [claiming staff members had been subject to hate mail](#) and that inaccurate information had been distributed.

The union's statement, which condemned "reckless" behaviour and abusive language, said the actions of some activists had "brought the union into disrepute".

Its publication was followed shortly after by the five committee-member resignations, from actors Andy Clark, Julie Coombe, Sarah McCardie, Kirstin McLean and John Sampson.

Sampson has sat on the Scottish National Committee since 2003. In a resignation letter, he criticised Equity for pursuing redundancies while the furlough scheme was still in place, and said the events could contribute to the "break-up and fragmentation" of the union.

McLean's resignation letter said the handling of Boswell's redundancy had led her to step away from the union.

"The willingness to defend it is no more," she said.

In response to the resignations, Fleming said: "Right now Equity members rightly expect their union to be focused on the biggest challenge ever to face our industries and consequently our union. It's incredibly frustrating that

significant time and resource has been spent not on comradely, good-faith debate, but instead needlessly combating repeated mistruths and now highly personal abuse around Equity's staff restructuring.

“It is of course a matter of enormous regret that some members of the Scottish National Committee feel that they cannot continue in their work, with a focus on serving members at this time of crisis. We thank them for their good work over the duration of their term.

“We will continue with our hard work advancing members' terms and conditions, campaigning for meaningful government support both from Westminster and Edinburgh, and ensuring Equity is in fit shape to survive for another 90 years as an independent, strong trade union.”