



ANNUAL REPORT

LATEST INFORMATION ON THE
WORK OF CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY'S FLAGSHIP
ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

REPORT BY MATT ABBOTT



A WORD FROM CENTRE MANAGER EMMA MEESE

“ It is my pleasure to welcome you to our annual report 2017. This year has been an incredibly busy and fruitful year for us at the Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ). Not only have we have seen the project continue to evolve and grow but we have also had the great honour of launching the Independent Community News Network (ICNN). Creating the Network is not a decision we took lightly, it took months of consultation with members of the community and hyperlocal news sector, to ensure we could provide a service that was both wanted and would add value for our members; who work tirelessly to provide excellent

quality local journalism across the UK. The positive response we received was overwhelming. After five years of working hands-on at a grassroots level it was humbling to learn that so many of you trust us to represent you on issues that matter to you. We are proud to be able to fight for change that can make a big difference to news publishers and communities from all corners of the UK.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cardiff University for its continued support and am delighted to say that the University is supporting the project financially for a further five years. I would also like to thank my colleagues Prof Justin Lewis, Matt Abbott and Cheryl Crook for their daily enthusiasm and passion, as a team we are extremely excited to work towards creating an even brighter future for the community and hyperlocal news sector in 2018.

”



2017: THE HEADLINES

EXCLUSIVES:

Launched the UK's first representative body for community and hyperlocal publishers. The Independent Community News Network (ICNN) currently has over 70 active members.

Trained over 1,000 face-to-face throughout the UK

Developed and launched the UK's first community forum for hyperlocal publishers

Worked with: BBC, NUJ, Welsh Government, Centre for Investigative Journalism, National Eisteddfod of Wales, Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ), Impress, Office of National Statistics (ONS), the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Google, Facebook, SWNS

Media coverage: Hold the Front Page, Press Gazette, WalesOnline, Journalism.co.uk, In Publishing, Nation Cymru, BBC, The Journalist, BBC Academy, Pioneer's Post

Gave evidence at the Welsh Assembly's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's inquiry into news journalism in Wales - Welsh Government recently announced a £200,000 subsidy to fund hyperlocal journalism start-ups in Wales.

Lobbied the BBC on behalf of the community and hyperlocal news sector to increase access to the Local News Partnership Scheme. Four hyperlocals were successful in accessing BBC funding, while 25 hyperlocals were successful in partnering with the BBC to receive content.





THE STORY SO FAR...



Centre for
Community
Journalism

Canolfan
Newyddiaduriaeth
Gymunedol

Trust in the media has never warranted a higher premium. The rise of Trump in the US; the fallout from the EU referendum; Grenfell – these pivotal moments have forced us to question the basic veracity of what we see, read and hear; and press regulation, in one form or another, promises to remedy what could otherwise be an epidemic. The Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) has always been passionate about promoting and stimulating trust

provide expert training and advice to community journalists, both online and face-to-face. We work with researchers within the School to apply their findings about community journalism to strengthen and inform our grassroots action. We are a strong voice for the sector, and this year we have taken the first exciting steps in establishing a representative body. The Independent Community News Network (ICNN) is the UK's first representative body for community and hyperlocal



between communities and the institutions that represent it. That is why for the past five years we have been working with communities across Wales to create or improve on community and hyperlocal news services – the very platforms that bridge the gap between people and their representatives. By the end of last year, we had worked with eight community news groups in total. Based in the Cardiff University's prestigious School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, we

publications, and the work of ICNN has already opened doors to many publications and individuals. This year we have worked closely with the BBC and the NUJ to increase opportunities for our members and other practitioners whilst also providing a space for discussion and to amplify best practice examples. Our work also saw an historic move by the Welsh Government to financially support the community and hyperlocal sector here in Wales with a £200,000 grant for journalism start-ups.



REPRESENTING THE SECTOR

THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY NEWS NETWORK

Throughout 2016 we travelled the UK consulting with community and hyperlocal journalists, policy-makers, academics and third-party organisations on the future of the community journalism. It became apparent that what the sector needed more than anything else was a voice



to unite it. In July of this year we were delighted to announce the launch of ICNN: the UK's first representative body for the community and hyperlocal news sector. The goals of ICNN are to advocate and lobby on behalf of independent news publishers across the UK.

To this end, our objectives are to increase recognition of community publishers, make representations on their behalf to policy makers, regulatory bodies, third sector funders, businesses and other

organisations, and fight for opportunities and fair treatment. In addition to lobbying and advocacy work, the network will draw upon C4CJ's ongoing research in order to inform high-quality journalism and sustainability in the local and community news sector.

We broker collaborations with industry partners to contribute to sustainable and innovative development within the sector.

We offer free consultancy services to start-ups and established publications alike on issues concerning media law guidance, funding, and new media. We already have 72 active members, including such robust titles as the Bristol Cable, Wrexham.com, West Leeds Dispatch, the Caerphilly Observer and the Lincolnite, and many, many more. All our members are independent, community-focussed, publishing contemporaneously, and adhere to the Editor's Code of Practice, and/or the Impress Standards Code. ICNN is run by members, for members, and is free at the point of entry. ICNN will have its official launch at the National Assembly for Wales Building (Senedd) on January 11th, and is being sponsored by Presiding Officer Elin Jones AM.

"Just discovered you get free legal advice from @DBanksy who co-wrote McNaes if you're a member of @ICNNUK. Great resource for any #hyperlocal trying to do the job right @cardiffuni" - JOE WILLIS, RICHMONDSHIRE TODAY



ADVOCACY



Throughout 2017, C4CJ continued working with the BBC's Local Journalism Working Group alongside major players in mainstream news including Trinity Mirror, Johnston Press, and Newsquest. As a direct result of our involvement in this process, and following months and months of negotiations, 25 independent community and hyperlocal publications have now successfully partnered with the Local News Partnership Scheme to receive content produced through the employment of Local Democracy Reporters. 18 of these are members of ICNN. In addition, four publishers have won contracts with the BBC to access funding and employ their own Local Democracy reporter. All four are active members of ICNN. While views on the scheme are mixed, we believe that the inclusion of these independent titles is evidence of just how far the sector has come over the last few years.

25

CONTENT PARTNERS

REPORTER CONTRACTS

4

As part of our advocacy work on behalf of community and hyperlocal publishers, we have been working with the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) to find solutions to issues of recognition, legitimacy and credibility. The community and hyperlocal news sector plays an increasingly important role in the modern media ecosystem, and as such practitioners should be entitled to the same benefits as members of the mainstream media. A journalist's press card is one of the most vital tools in her toolbox; without which access to important events, such as

"Hyperlocals need to be recognised in the same way as mainstream media when it comes to obtaining press cards which are often needed for access to things like elections and court."



hustings, election counts, crime scenes, is limited. We believe the more recognised journalists there are, the more accountability there will be, and that can only be a good thing. In light of this, we have met with executive members of the NUJ to discuss ways in which access to press cards can be improved to allow members of ICNN to apply.

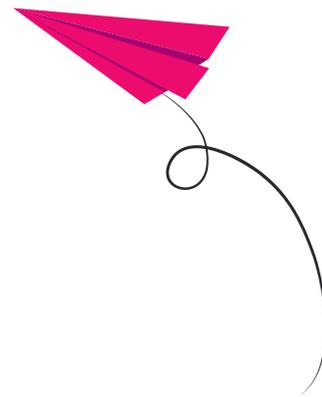


INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

Both the outreach and academic research undertaken at C4CJ over the past five years has sparked an interest in two Universities, one in Norway and the other in Sweden.

Following a visit to C4CJ a few years ago, Associate professor Lisbeth Morlandstø and Associate professor Birgit Røe Mathisen of the University of Nordland in northern Norway began investigating how a centre for local journalism could work for them. Birgit said: “Both Lisbeth and I were very inspired by C4CJ after visiting you a couple of years ago.

“We have received some money to carry put a pre-project, exploring the needs – and what tasks such a centre should have in a Norwegian Context.” She added “It will be exciting to see what the result of this work will be.”



Emma Meese spoke at their workshop in Bodø, Norway with many contributors from the local media sector in attendance. The session provided further information on the work of C4CJ. Carina Tenor of Södertörn University in Sweden, was also inspired by a visit to C4CJ earlier this year. Based on the academic research carried out by our colleague Dr Andy Williams and the outreach work of C4CJ, Carina is also looking to establish a Centre for Local Journalism. It will be a research centre and connector between the media industry and academia in a rapidly changing field.

Carina said: “We are interested in looking at sustainable business models and entrepreneurship in local journalism, local media ecologies and local democracy.” She added “The purpose of this is to make a difference. We are grateful of the opportunity to visit C4CJ and are keen to establish a centre with similar aims, which will suit the local news landscape in Sweden”.



NETWORKING AND ADVICE

Our website, social media channels and newsletter provide daily, weekly and monthly discussion on the community news sector. This year we have covered a range of issues from trust to building a social enterprise to how to leave a legacy for your community news site. We have also provided breaking news and comment on developments such as press regulation and BBC collaboration. The Centre for Community Journalism is the first point of call for community journalism and hyperlocal practitioners around the world, as well as academics, policy-makers, innovators and technologists interested in this space. We offer free advice, consultations and subbing services to new publishers, arrange mentoring projects, and regularly publish content from authors writing about hyperlocal journalism. We also champion the great work being done by individual titles.



David Banks

Members of ICNN benefit from having direct access to media law expert, and co-author of McNae's Essential Law for Journalists, David Banks offering free & impartial legal advice to our members. So far this year, we've advised on 10 individual media law queries, helping our members publish with validity and accuracy & without fear of repercussion.



KEY STATISTICS



Over 5,800 Twitter followers and 87,000 impressions on average per month



40+ blog posts published throughout the years from community journalists, academics and supporting organisations



Social media engagement from influential media commentators and users including Nieman Lab, Columbia Journalism Review, NUJ's The Journalist, Andy Dickinson, Josh Stearns, Damian Radcliffe, William Perrin, Nesta, Megan Lucero



TRAINING DEVELOPMENT & OUTREACH



In May of this year, we partnered with NUJ Training Wales to bring together faith groups and journalists from across the UK to discuss ways in which cooperation could be mutually beneficial. This ground-breaking event was attended by 88 people, 44 of whom were journalists from press, broadcast and online media. The event was bold in its goal to address a challenge that affects us all: how to understand those who are not like us, in this case in the area of faith and belief.

“**Emma Meese and Matthew Abbott of Cardiff University’s Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) delivered excellent afternoon workshops on social media use and the writing of press releases.**” **ANGELA GRAHAM, WRITER & JOURNALIST**”

As part of our commitment to the community journalism sector, we have developed a forum to help hyperlocal practitioners connect with one another. The Hyperlocal Forum was launched in April this year and has already enabled over 60 publishers and journalists to engage and learn from one another; share best practices and experiences, and meet with like-minded individuals.



We have also continued to deliver innovative and specialised training sessions on social media journalism, media law, live-streaming and even VR & immersive journalism, taking our philosophy of 'more trained journalists means better journalism' across the country.





ADDRESSING THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

This year we were invited to take part in the the National Assembly for Wales's Digital News and Information Taskforce. The goal of the Taskforce was to recommend ways in which the Assembly could deliver engaging and accessible news and information about the legislature's work.

Centre Manager Emma Meese, was a very influential voice on the Taskforce, promoting the importance of the hyperlocal news sector when talking about addressing the democratic deficit. The report: *Creating a Digital Dialogue*, encouraged the Assembly to look beyond conventional media to reach people in Wales, and brought much-valued attention to the great work of the Welsh hyperlocal news landscape and the strong digital presence throughout the country.



As the main networking, training, research, mentoring and advice organisation for community and hyperlocal publications, the C4CJ was the first organisation to give evidence at the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee (CWLCC) inquiry into News Journalism in Wales. We put forward the case that Wales was in a unique position to find innovative ways to address the withdrawal of legacy local journalism, and support the rise of grassroots community journalism. Our evidence included recommendations for a public subsidy for the hyperlocal news sector in Wales and we produced a briefing document outlining justifications for a contestable funding scheme. As a direct result of this inquiry, Plaid Cymru and Labour agreed a budget which, for the first time, included a £200,000 fund, over two years, for hyperlocal journalism start-ups.





STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Centre for Community Journalism provides a voice for the community news sector, working with and for journalists to make their case to key stakeholders. This has never been more important now that we have launched the Independent Community News Network.

So far this year, we have engaged directly with the BBC, Welsh Government, Parliament, the NUJ, the NUT, the ONS, Centre for Investigative Journalism, the Bureau of Investigate Journalism, Google, Facebook, SWNS, Hull University, Edinburgh University, UCLAN, the National Eisteddfod and Impress.

Our work has taken us to Canada, Norway, Italy and Ireland to liaise with organisations doing similar work, to promote the breadth of hyperlocal journalism here in the UK.

We sit on the steering board of NUJ Training Wales, and are active members of the IWA Media Policy Group.

And in Wales we played a key role in securing much-needed funding for hyperlocal journalism start-ups.

**Llais
Y Maes
Eisteddfod
Ynys Môn 2017**



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

“ The support for local media journalism provided by Cardiff University's Centre for Community Journalism seems to have been beneficial to hyperlocal websites...

The information sharing work that C4Cj has done around news regulation arising from the Leveson inquiry is also welcome. The high number of international learners reached through the C4CJ's Community Journalism MOOC helps to enhance Wales's reputation in this field. - KEN SKATES AM CABINET SECRETARY FOR ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE ”



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Investing in the future is of the utmost importance if we are to secure a healthy and vibrant local news sector for years to come. Ensuring future generations have access to quality journalism is essential for a thriving democratic society.

Our over arching mission is to create more jobs for journalists at a local level and to ensure that the quality of journalism at a grassroots level is the best it can be. This is where our training and support plays a pivotal role. By providing free access to quality training and resources it helps ensure that standards and values are kept high.

Of all our community engagement work in recent years North Merthyr Voice is one of our most talked about projects. The pilot programme trained primary school children in the Gurnos estate in Merthyr to become mobile journalists. The ten-week programme covered what is news, how to shoot and edit content on smartphones and tablets, the value of journalism and how to get their voices and stories heard.

It sparked a lot of interest with many, but in particular the National Union of Teachers in Wales (NUT Cymru) and Learning Waves, the training body for the Independent Commercial Radio Sector in Ireland.

This year we have been in discussions with these organisations, working on a legacy for the project which will potentially impact children across the UK.

This year, we have been looking at ways of instilling journalistic skills and values in schoolchildren, and getting them to question and verify the wealth of information they see and read online on a daily basis. This is of the utmost importance as we live in an era of fake news and stories which spread like wildfire on social media.

This work has also extended to our own students within the School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies here at Cardiff University. Matthew Abbott and Emma Meese have been running training sessions for students on many topics including exploring the value of news stories, social media and hyperlocal business models.



north **MERTHYR** voice



HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

FIND YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWS PROVIDER

Discover what's going on in your area by locating your community news service using our map, or register your own site.

Visit: www.communityjournalism.co.uk/find-a-hyperlocal

Email: Abbottm2@cardiff.ac.uk

SHARE YOUR STORY

If you have advice or a community journalism success story to share, make your voice heard by writing a guest blog post.

Email: Abbottm2@cardiff.ac.uk

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk/blog

GET TRAINED BY US

Find out more about our free training for community journalists and our bespoke commercial training for organisations and institutions.

Email: meesee@cardiff.ac.uk

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk/training

PARTNER WITH US

Have a partnership opportunity you think we should know about? Get in touch.

Email: meesee@cardiff.ac.uk Research this growing sector

We work with some of the leading UK researchers in this sector, as well as generating our own rich data and insights. Find out more.

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk/research

Discover the latest news, advice and opinion on community journalism

Follow @C4CJ · **Visit:** communityjournalism.co.uk

Visit: [communityjournalism.co.uk/blog 'C4CJ'](http://communityjournalism.co.uk/blog/C4CJ) on YouTube

JOIN THE CONVERSATION by registering on the hyperlocal forum and connect with other community journalists around the world.

Visit: <http://forum.communityjournalism.co.uk/>

