

Eat.
Sleep.
Report.
Repeat.



ANNUAL REPORT

LATEST INFORMATION ON THE
WORK OF THE UK'S CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE FOR THE
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
NEWS SECTOR

REPORT BY MATT ABBOTT



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY JOURNALISM EMMA MEESE

“ Welcome to our annual report 2018. It's hard to believe that a year has passed since our last report, the past 12 months seem to have flown by. This year we said goodbye to our home in Bute Building, where the School of Journalism Media and Culture had been housed for 40 years, and said hello to our brand new office in Central Square, Cardiff. We hope that many of you will have the opportunity to visit us when we offer training and events in our new state of the art building over the coming year. Over the past year we have attained many goals we set for ourselves, including raising awareness of, and creating opportunities for, the members of the Independent Community News Network (ICNN).

I am incredibly proud of the fact that more than 100 quality and reputable independent news publishers have signed up to become members of ICNN this year, and we look forward to welcoming many more in 2019. Our work this year has been focussed on building solid foundations on which we can continue to grow strong relationships with our many partners across the world. Working this year with the BBC, NUJ Google, UK Government, Welsh Government, National Assembly for Wales and the European Journalism Centre, to name a few, has resulted



in new technologies, legislation and funding for the Independent Community News Sector in the UK and has created many discussions and opportunities. We must continue working in an agile and responsive way to support news publishers working in our vibrant and thriving independent community news sector. This means we are always looking for opportunities to create more jobs for journalists and to ensure the quality and standard of local journalism in the UK is the very best it can be.

I hope you enjoy reading the following highlights of our year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cardiff University for its continued support, and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

”
Emma Meese



2018: THE HEADLINES

EXCLUSIVES:

Officially launched the first ever representative body for independent community news outlets in the UK: **The Independent Community News Network (ICNN)** launched in January 2018.

The Independent Community News Network (ICNN) is now over 100 members strong

Secured €250,000 (approx. £223,000) of funding from the **Google Digital News Innovation Fund** to create new revenue streams for the community and hyperlocal news sector in partnership with UCLan.

Collaborated with Cardiff University's CAER Heritage Project, the Caer Studio and the Guerrilla Archaeology Collective to produce the unique, one-of-a-kind special edition of The Caer Times, celebrating the wonderful heritage of the Caerau Hill Fort.

Gave evidence to the **Cairncross Review** examining the sustainability of high-quality journalism in the UK and looking at how to sustain the production and distribution of high-quality journalism in a changing market.

Hosted the **biennial conference** on the future of community journalism

Trained over 1,000 people throughout the UK and Europe

Registered over 50 new independent community news outlets in 2018





THE STORY SO FAR...



Independent community and

hyperlocal news outlets are fulfilling the traditional role of the fourth estate in local civic society, complimenting the diverse range of news provision available.

The growth of these new outlets represents a shift in attitudes towards news consumption. Audiences want local knowledge, intimacy, trust, connections; they want to know who their local journalist is; they want to be involved. Audiences want what hyperlocals are offering and are increasingly turning away from the multitude of high-powered, ad-driven alternatives that are concentrated in just a few companies.

Independent community news outlets play a huge role in local democracy. In many areas they are the only journalists attending local council meetings, local planning meetings, schools, elections, magistrates' courts hearings, and holding those in power to account; helping foster shared identity and social cohesion. There are areas where, if the hyperlocal ceased to exist, town and city leaders would operate unchecked. The challenge is that the business model that sustained news production in the 20th century no longer exists. Advertising revenues have dwindled making it a very unpredictable source of income. They don't have the infrastructure or state support (VAT exemption, access to statutory public



notices) that helps to sustain larger organisations. And so, because many of these titles are run by individuals with full-time jobs and family commitments there is a very real risk of burn-out and/or collapse. However, and perhaps because of these issues, the sector has shown itself to be tenacious and innovative, constantly looking for way to modernise practices and streamline operations. The Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) exists to support this diverse sector and to promote quality journalism, help address the democratic deficit in news poor communities and help create more jobs at the local level. This year we launched the first representative body for independent community news outlets, ICNN, to lobby and advocate on behalf of publishers, and and next year, we will be testing the first phase of our Google project: Value My News - a news agency for the next generation of local news.



BUILDING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY JOURNALISM



In January 2018 The Centre for Community Journalism held its third biennial conference: **Building the Future of Community Journalism**. It was a day filled with positivity, inspiration and hope for a sector of the media that is far too often disregarded. With over 100 delegates from around the world sharing ideas, talking about their experiences and learning valuable insights from some inspirational speakers, the day was a huge success, full of positivity and vigour. The independent community news sector is alive & kicking; it is stronger than ever before, and with continued support, will forge ahead setting new challenges and breaking down barriers. During the event-filled day

we learned some valuable lessons about the importance of local journalism, how it can help empower and arguably save lives; how being in touch with communities and opening a dialogue with underrepresented groups has huge benefits for democracy and social cohesion; and how, if done right, it can breed trust and collaboration.

Among the connections we built as individual publishers, we discovered challenges akin to our own, issues and obstacles and the different methods many are taking to tackle them; we heard of innovations and learned about new techniques; were inspired and shocked by facts and case studies; and hopefully, went away with a new-found belief that hyperlocalism, that much-lauded yet out-of-fashion term that blossomed in the late noughties, still has a lot more yet to offer. Click the image below to view images from the day, To view the amazing graphic illustration of which the above image forms part of, [click here](#). To read a write up of the event, in the NUJ's Journalist magazine, [click here](#).



Tim Dixon @timdixonscoop · Jan 12
 Building the Future of Community Journalism, staged by @C4CJ, was a life-affirming occasion for publishers already up and running and an inspiration for those of us poised to take the plunge #hyperlocal #print @ICNNUK #BFCJ18



OVER 100 MEMBERS STRONG



ICNN was officially launched in January

this year, and since then we've worked tirelessly to give a voice to the independent community news sector; to support and help sustain it. We are delighted to announce that we now represent over 100 independent titles. From the Shetland Islands to the Southern tip of Cornwall, from Northern Ireland to north Wales, our members span the length and breadth of the UK.

Members of ICNN are independent of commercial, political and religious interests. They are community focused and are producing contemporaneous news content. All 102 members uphold high professional standards, including accuracy, transparency, integrity, accountability and fairness. They have committed to adhere to Ipso's Editor's Code of Practice or the Impress Standards Code and all demonstrate a clear and transparent management/ownership structure.

All our members are fully inclusive of all ethnicities and backgrounds and are non-discriminatory.

While the majority of our titles are geographically 'hyperlocal', other members represent communities of interest, such as the Ferret, or Hold the Front Page.

Nearly half of our members have either complimentary print newspapers, or publish a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly newspaper exclusively. Membership is most concentrated in London, Bristol, Cardiff and Manchester.

The south coast appears to be fertile ground for independent community news, as does the east midlands. Giving a voice to this diverse network of publishers is our goal, and in 2019 we aim to increase our membership and continue championing and providing help and guidance such as specialist legal support to our members. Director of Community Journalism at Cardiff University Emma Meese says: "A number of legislations aimed at local news publishers, such as publishing statutory notices, were created when the local news landscape looked completely different. "If we are to succeed in getting fair opportunities for our members we will have to look at these issues and fight for fair access for all."

"We were honoured to be the first member of ICNN and it's been brilliant to see it lobby and fight on behalf of so many community media organisations like ourselves. ICNN provides a vital unified voice for so many disparate communities across the UK. Can't wait for the next 100 to sign up." **John Baron - West Leeds Dispatch**

"Citizen News and Media Limited is proud to be a member of the ICNN, whose work with the BBC helped to make it possible for us to become a tier two partner." **Keith Magnum - Hackney Citizen**



ICNN MEMBERS

Click on the image to visit the webpage of each title.



TRANSPARENT AND DEMOCRATIC

ICNN is dedicated to ensuring the organisation is transparent and democratic – that it exists for all members, and not a select few. That it holds the views of the smallest publication in the same regard as those of the largest. The work of ICNN is done with the full support of its members. ICNN is administered by a committed team of journalists and academics who are passionate about independent community and hyperlocal news. ICNN is guided by a team of accomplished experts in community

and/or local journalism. The Advisory Board is an informal committee of members selected by the C4CJ’s administrative team and provides ICNN with valuable assistance and strategic advice. We believe that print is as valuable a platform as digital, and we are proud that our Advisory Board is made up of members from across publication platforms. Six members of the Board run print publications. Three members of this board also work hard to ensure our application process is fair and robust.



L-R: Alan Evans - Llanellionline.news, Mike Rawlins - MyTurriff.co.uk, Graham Breeze - MyWelshpool.co.uk / MyNewtown.co.uk, Paul Henderson - SouthMoltonNews.co.uk, Dave Toomer - Wythenshawereporter.wordpress.com, Dr Rachel Howells - founder of the Port Talbot Magnet, Una Murphy - Viewdigital.org, Darryl Chamberlain - 853london.com / Charltonchampion.co.uk, Richard Gurner - Caerphillyobserver.co.uk, Claire Flett - Rochdaleonline.co.uk, Hans Marter - Shetnews.co.uk, Simon Montgomery - Pevenseybaylife.co.uk, Richard Coulter - Localvoicenetwork.co.uk, Fiona Davidson - Theferret.scot, Edward Sills - Nailed.community, Linda Quinn - Brixtonblog.com, Michael Casey - Yourthurrock.com / Yourharlow.com, Emma Meese - Director of Community Journalism at Cardiff University, Julian Calvert - Lochsidepress.com, Clare Cook - UCLAN, and mediainnovationstudio.org, Daniel Ionescu - TheLincolnite.com, John Baron - Westleedsdispatch.com, Mark Baynes - Lovewapping.org, Keith Magnum - Hackneycitizen.co.uk

VALUE MY NEWS

In July we celebrated securing €250,000

(approx. £219,000) of funding from the Google Digital News Innovation Fund to create new revenue streams for the community and hyperlocal news sector.

The project, Value My News (VMN), will develop an innovative suite of tools enabling community and hyperlocal news publishers to make money from, and track the sale of, hyperlocal stories, while at the same time copyright existing content. This is a ground-breaking response to the issues of sustainability in the sector and the new forms of funding it provides will deliver a much-needed boost to small independent publishers across the UK. In partnership with the Media Innovation Studio (MIS) at the University of Central Lancashire, and Omni Digital, VMN will enable publishers to easily access, buy and republish high quality editorial content from community and hyperlocal news organisations across the UK.

News, produced at the grassroots level, has value further up the news food chain. By surfacing the best and most important stories, VMN will ensure that content producers receive a fair share of the revenue generated from their work. VMN will transform the sector by creating a platform to capture revenues otherwise leaking through the supply chain. It will build sustainability by creating revenue streams and by maximising the skills and expertise of the talented and dedicated pool of journalists working in the sector.

Director of ICNN and project lead Emma Meese said: "Creating a platform that will help community and hyperlocal news publishers earn more money for the work they already produce has been a dream of ours for a long time.





"Our mission is to create more jobs for journalists at a local level and to ensure the quality of grassroots journalism in the UK is the best it can be.

"I'm delighted to lead on this project as it has the potential to change the future of local news.

"Bringing independent publishers together and surfacing their content in this way has never been done before. It will allow us, for the first time, to really understand the value and the journey of hyperlocal news which is hugely exciting"

Principal Investigator for Value My News at MIS Clare Cook said: "I am inspired and excited in equal measure to work on a project that is both innovative and impactful. This is about better understanding the lived experiences of hyperlocals and bringing about real change in their revenue models."

Work on the project will begin immediately (we are far too excited to wait!).



NEWYDDIADURAETH GYMUNEDOL*

**COMMUNITY JOURNALISM (IN WALES)*

The Centre for Community Journalism is based at Cardiff University in Wales. The 'Diff, as the capital is affectionately known, is where it all started. It's where ICNN was first thought up and where it was ultimately launched earlier this year.

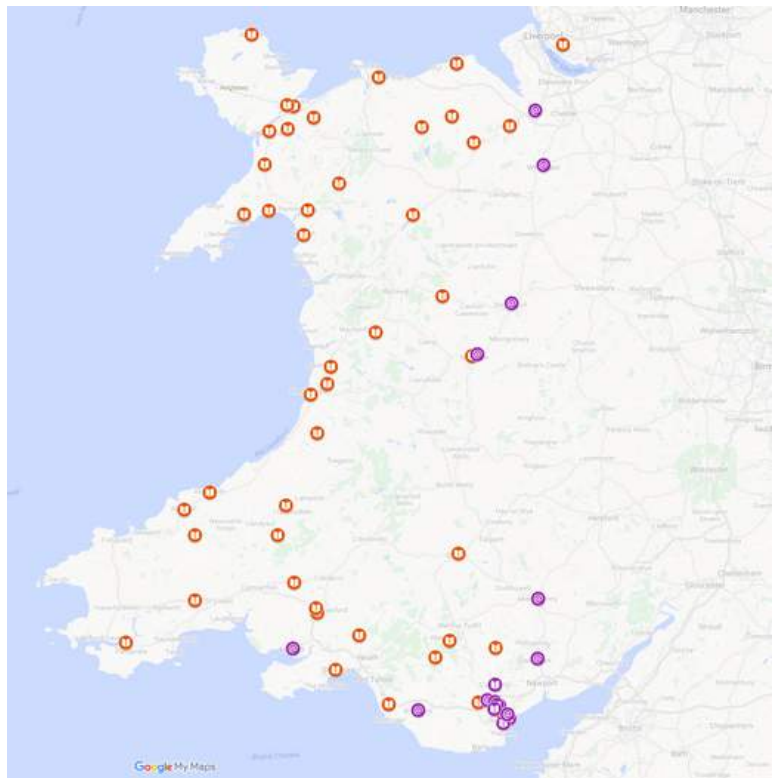
The growth of the Centre has not meant we have forgotten where we came from. In fact, a lot of our focus this year has been on domestic Welsh issues, and a lot of what we have accomplished has been because of our proximity to the corridors of Welsh power. There are 64 known hyperlocals in Wales - 46 Papurau Bro (Welsh language publications) and 18 independents (English language publications, 10 of which are members of ICNN).

Last year, to 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 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. Following on from this, we were commissioned by Welsh Government to help produce a report, in partnership with Red Box Research, to assess the state of hyperlocal journalism in Wales. The report's aim was to provide evidence as to where funding for hyperlocal journalism will have most impact; identify areas of market failure; assess how independent community and hyperlocal journalism can become more sustainable and review the supply of learning and training to support the sector. The report and subsequent policy will be announced in the new year.

.....
Interactive map detailing the distribution of English language and Welsh language hyperlocal publications, in both print and online, across the country. [Click to access.](#)

"C4CJ worked with us on an important strategic project for the Welsh Government. Their knowledge of the hyperlocal sector was second to none and their sound understanding of the sector and its future potential provided a strong foundation for our work, leading to well-researched recommendations for action. Matt and Emma were great to work with and brought great clarity and enthusiasm to the project." **Faith Graham, Director, Red Box Research**



Orange: Welsh Language / purple: English Language



NETWORKING

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 the Welsh Assembly inquiry into the future of local news, to the historic collaboration between hyperlocal and local news publishers to call on the government to tackle the northern rail crisis.

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.

LEGAL ADVICE

Members of ICNN benefit from having direct access to media law expert and co-author of the 20th edition 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 18 individual media law queries, helping our members publish with validity and accuracy & without fear of repercussion. David also wrote a clear and concise factfile on dealing with GDPR and how hyperlocals should approach it.



David Banks ✓
@DBanksy

Following

If you are a community or hyperlocal publisher, you should get signed up with [@ICNNUK](#) and [@C4CJ](#) - one of the many benefits is you get free guidance from me if you do.

10:13 AM - 20 Sep 2018



853
@853london

Following

Enormous thanks to [@DBanksy](#) and [@ICNNUK](#) for their assistance with this story, and to the 94 kind souls who help pay for [@853london](#) to report this because the local press doesn't. If you'd like to join them, visit patreon.com/853



KEY STATISTICS



Over 6,600 Twitter followers and 60,500 impressions on average per month



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



COLLABORATION

In May of this year we spoke at a conference organised by Reach plc, Newsquest and JPI Media. At the Behind Local News conference, Director of Community Journalism at Cardiff University Emma Meese provided a critical perspective on the state of collaboration between independent community news outlets and local and regional media. There wasn't enough of it, Emma said. And what there was was very one sided and persistently agitated by claims of content theft.

Collaboration has been high on our agenda in 2018. For publishers to better represent their communities it is an essential tool. Important stories demand wider audiences and without collaboration between publishers, they risk not living up to their potential of affecting meaningful change. The following month, eight northern hyperlocal news outlets, six of which are members of ICNN, took part in an unprecedented show of unity by publishing a joint article and petition alongside many local and regional titles



calling on the government to improve rail services and transport infrastructure in the north.

Following thousands of service cancellations since Northern Rail's new timetable was launched in May, which left tens of thousands of commuters stranded, and government rhetoric on the north being a transport powerhouse, the response from local and regional press was clear. 'Enough is enough' their headlines read. Behind Local News reported, "It is the first time so many titles have united to send the same message to government".

Emma said: "We believe in the value of local news. We believe it contributes to maintaining a sense of community and supporting healthy democratic engagement. Digital technologies have allowed communities to redefine the role of news in local areas. That applies to us all. The question is, what do we do about it? "This collaboration goes some way in addressing that question and we welcome the chance to share the opportunity, and any more that follow as a result, with our members."

**Enough is enough,
Mrs May – act now to
end North's rail crisis**

News organisations unite in calls to fix broken Northern rail network

We join call for better rail services and connections across Cheshire and North West

altBlackpool backs #OneNorth petition

Wythenshawe Reporter joins forces with regional press to demand action on rail misery

Comment: Join us in call to end rail chaos in North

**NORTHERN
RAIL CHAOS
TIME FOR CHANGE**



CONFERENCE AND TRAINING

Since establishing the Centre for

Community Journalism six years ago, people and organisations have turned to us to find out the latest news from the sector. Conferences are an excellent opportunity for us to showcase what community journalism in the UK has to offer, and to enter into engaging discussion and debate with others.

From Dublin to Lisbon, the topics have been varied and the interest has been high. One project we are proud to shout about is our school journalism project. Following on from a very successful pilot in two primary schools in Merthyr, we have spoken at



many conferences about the importance of educating children in media literacy. We're looking forward to working with NEU Cymru to roll this project out across Wales in 2019. The project not only teaches children to recognise news, it also teaches them the skills to tell their own stories and gives them the power to have their voices heard. They also learn to question what they read and differentiate between quality news and misinformation.

Other conferences we've attended, or spoken at, have covered issues including the future of local news, brand and influencer marketing, tackling gender inequalities and trust in journalism.



Speaking at Mojocon and the Learning Waves conferences in Ireland and the European Journalism Festival in Perugia we talked about how mobile journalism is making news creation easier and fairer. As well as offering up to date information and opportunities to engage with the sector we also offer high end training.

We teach how to shoot and edit on mobile devices, with trainees varying from primary school children to government staff. This month we partnered with Facebook to deliver training for community journalists on how to make money by using the platform.

Our hands on training has been ongoing this year with a team of volunteers in Abergavenny, who are on the cusp of launching the first Welsh language news publication in the area.

We have also participated in a number of roundtables, with leaders in the journalism sector in the UK, to address issues collaboratively.



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 or collaboration 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](https://twitter.com/C4CJ) / [@ICNNUK](https://twitter.com/ICNNUK)

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk

VIEW ALL MEMBERS OF ICNN ON AN INTERACTIVE MAP

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/interactive-map-of-icnn-member-publications

BECOME A MEMBER OF ICNN

Visit: communityjournalism.co.uk/icnn/membership-criteria

Email: Abbottm2@cardiff.ac.uk