

Celebrating local independent journalism

The Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) was launched in 2019 and works with UK colleagues to establish the contribution that local independent journalism makes to society.

The organisation is committed to supporting local news providers and has offered funding grants to many during the pandemic. As a local independent publication The Edinburgh Reporter has an interest in what PINF says and does.

In Scotland the government established a Public Interest Journalism Working Group to find ways of developing a sustainable future for such journalism. The group made several recommendations in its report published in November 2021 including that the government should work with stakeholders to establish a Scottish Public Interest Journalism Institute. This is envisaged as a body which coordinates new initiatives, including offering grant funding to support a diverse and pluralistic media in Scotland.

What is public interest news? One definition used by the working group is news which “informs members of the public about matters of relevance to their role and responsibilities as citizens and enables members of local communities to become aware of and understand matters of common concern to them as members of their community and which promotes their involvement and cooperation in such matters and community

cohesion accordingly”.

As part of their support for the local news sector PINF commissioned a series of films showcasing the work of several member organisations around the UK.

This is a trailer for the series:

Jonathan Heawood Director of PINF said: “I love watching Emilie’s films, and meeting this fascinating group of publishers and journalists. I love seeing how warmly and sensitively they engage with everyone they meet. There’s something really remarkable about this. At first, I couldn’t quite work out what it was. And then I realised. No-one else does this. No-one else in a community is *responsible* for that community in quite the same way as a truly local news publisher.

“Of course, there are teachers and doctors and councillors and social workers and shopkeepers and employers and police officers and others, all of whom care for the community and take some responsibility for it. But no-one else has the job of describing the community back to itself; of taking people’s lives and turning them into stories. This is the unique role of the local news provider.

“Whilst big, corporate publishers do this from long distance, independent publishers do it whilst living in the community itself. This can create tensions, but it can also create opportunities for independent publishers to be more thoughtful in their journalism, and more respectful in how they deal with the people around them.

“I’m proud to work with the publishers in these films, and I hope you enjoy watching them as much as I do.”