

The Edinburgh Reporter joins The Scottish Beacon

Eighteen Scottish independent local and hyperlocal news publications are combining to create The Scottish Beacon, a new national publication.

The [Scottish Beacon news website](#) is the first collaborative journalism outlet of its kind in the country. The aim is to strengthen the independent community-based media sector and bring stories from Scotland's communities to a wider audience.

The website will spotlight articles on topics including community empowerment, social equality, local democracy and the environment – from Shetland in the north to Dumfries and Galloway in the south and of course in Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Reporter publishes news about the Scottish capital on this website as well as on social media, producing video on YouTube and Vimeo, and audio reports on [Spotify for Podcasters](#).

In addition to our online news articles which are updated several times daily, there is a monthly print newspaper which is distributed across the city and on PressReader. The Edinburgh Reporter is also delighted to be featured on Google News Showcase each day.

Phyllis Stephen Editor of The Edinburgh Reporter said: "We are delighted to be one of the founding members of The Scottish

Beacon. I very much hope that through our collaborative efforts this work will bring the importance of local news providers to the notice of decision makers at The Scottish Government. I really want at long last to have some kind of meaningful dialogue about support, financial and otherwise for all of us who strive to keep our local areas in the know.

“Our news is different from other newspapers in the city in our approach and in The Edinburgh Reporter we bring the news that is really happening in a very straightforward manner and we speak directly to the people involved.

“Our photography is one of our key strengths along with our videos which often appear quickly after events. We are also happy to announce the addition of some new members to our team this year adding more breadth to our sports coverage our food and drinks coverage.

“We are lucky to have [Bill Lothian](#) writing about local sport, Kerry on news about food and drink and [George Mair](#) for his individual in-depth articles. [Dr Charlie Ellis](#) is a coffee aficionado and writes a monthly column for the newspaper.

“[Rosemary Kaye](#) has written for us about the arts for longer than we can remember and follow [Nigel Duncan](#) who has also been writing about all manner of sport for many years now. If he is not watching hockey then you will find him casting a hopeful line on a reservoir or river bank.

“Our title offers anyone a way to be in the news and we invite all of our readers to tell us what they are involved with in the city so that we can feature their stories. Our free monthly newspaper has proven extremely successful with 6,000 copies produced and distributed. We maintained a print presence all the way through the pandemic which we know was useful to our readers.

“Our visitor numbers continue to grow, and for a very small team I think we punch way above our weight in covering what is

happening in Edinburgh. The Scottish Beacon and the work we hope it produces will help to put The Edinburgh Reporter name even higher up in people's minds."

The publications involved all have different structures and models. Some are non-profit, some are limited companies, some are sole traders. Some of the publications are only in print, others digital, and many are both. All are independently-owned and produce original journalism in the public interest, firmly rooted in serving the communities in which they are based. The site is regulated by IMPRESS (the Independent Monitor for the Press).

Other publications involved in the project at this stage include: The Bellman, Broughton Spurtle, C&B News, Clydesider, Crail Matters, The Edinburgh Reporter, Forres Local, The Ileach, Glenkens Gazette, Greater Govanhill, The Hawick Paper, Inverclyde Now, The Lochside Press, Midlothian View, Migrant Women Press, The Orkney News, Shetland News. However, with many more independent publications out there, it is expected that membership numbers will continue to grow following the launch.

The Scottish Beacon network holds regular meetings, sharing resources, skills and working together to identify collaborative investigations. Together we hope to re-invigorate local public interest news and overcome common challenges such as long-term sustainability. Many independent publications currently run on shoestring budgets, some with no income at all. The aim is to strengthen the sector, generating income and raising awareness of the value that good local journalism can bring to a community.

Rhiannon J Davies, founder of Greater Govanhill community magazine and the Scottish Beacon project said: "I truly believe that the future of journalism is collaborative. I developed the idea for this project after being inspired by similar established collaboratives in the US. But there are

some brilliant community-based publications in Scotland – I'm really excited to see what we can do together.

“There's been so many brutal cuts made by the corporate publishers to local news which mean that too often journalists working in distant newsrooms are reporting on communities they are not familiar with. It's wild that just three publishers own the vast majority of local news publications, while big tech has hoovered up much of the traditional revenues streams.

“But I keep meeting these dedicated journalists – paid and voluntary – who provide a vital local service. They're not doing it for the money, but because they care about their communities and because these stories matter.

“By collaborating on stories, and digging into national topics at a local level, we hope to amplify stories that too often go unheard, holding power to account and strengthening community voices.”

The project has been supported with funding from the Google News Initiative's Innovation Challenge Fund. As well as the innovation of the collaboration itself, the project team have worked with evaluation consultants Matter of Focus, to incorporate impact tracking software, into their work. This allows them to track the impact on the participating publications, and the independent news sector as well as on audiences.

The publication will generate revenue through a mix of different income streams including through membership fees, partnerships, advertising and grant funding. It will use the engaged membership platform Beabee to involve readers in stories and determine future projects.

Jonathan Heawood, Executive Director of the Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) said: “At PINF, we were delighted to support the pilot print issue of The Scottish Beacon – the

COP26 Special. And we're even happier to see The Scottish Beacon becoming a permanent part of the media scene. Across Scotland, independent publishers are producing excellent journalism. They need a showcase for their work, and a network to support greater collaboration. The Scottish Beacon will provide both, and we look forward to seeing it flourish."

The website has just launched today 3 August at www.scottishbeacon.com

If you want to support independent media in Scotland, and get the best quality journalism from Scotland's communities straight to your inbox, you can [sign up to the newsletter](#), or become a member at members.scottishbeacon.com/join

Follow the Scottish Beacon on social media. It is currently on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and Threads



Meeting in Glasgow of some of the founding members of Scottish Beacon – our editor Phyllis is in the centre seated at the table

