Neighbourhood News

Final Evaluation Report for Carnegie UK Trust
by Talk About Local

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talkaboutlocal

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01 Introduction

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This Final Evaluation Report of December, 2014, builds upon the Interim Evaluation Report produced by Talk About Local for the Carnegie UK Trust in April, 2014[1]. The Interim Report was a substantive document, as rich information was emerging early on in the project life. This Final Report adds to the information reported in April and draws firm conclusions where possible/ appropriate based upon the evidence accumulated. It aims to be a single-volume evaluation for ease of use by policymakers, practitioners and funders.

1.1 Neighbourhood News – the objective

The Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT) was established in 1913 by Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, with a remit to improve the wellbeing of people throughout the UK and Ireland. The Trust believes that high-quality local news and journalism is a critical aspect of wellbeing. Local news can support democracy, accountability and transparency, connect people to places and offer new opportunities for citizen empowerment and community ownership of assets.

Neighbourhood News was launched in 2013 as a £50,000 intervention to help tackle some of the significant challenges facing the local news market in the UK and to examine how local news could be delivered differently and sustainably in the future.

1.2 The project participants

To deliver Neighbourhood News, five projects were selected by the Trust to receive £10,000 each in order to develop a local news project in their area. These participants are known as 'Carnegie Partners'. The Partners were selected through an open competition process which received nearly 80 applications. An expert, external Advisory Group supported the Trust to select the winning projects. Appendix 1 provides a list of Advisory Group members and gives details of the criteria used to select the winning projects.

Table 1 opposite provides a brief overview of the Carnegie Partners in terms of their geographic coverage and project aims:

Table 1: Carnegie Partners Overview

Project	Geographic area	Project Aim
Brixton Blog in Lambeth, South London	Brixton is a vibrant, densely populated, highly culturally, socially and economically diverse area of 65,000 people in South London	Train students and new contributors to contribute to an existing blog and print publication
Cybermoor in Alston, Cumbria	Alston is an isolated small market town of 1,200 people high in the Cumbrian hills of North West England	Overhaul an existing community website and train community reporters to contribute to it and improve local scrutiny and accountability
Digital Sentinel in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh	Wester Hailes is an area of 13,500 homes in South West Edinburgh in Scotland predominantly composed of high-density social housing built in the early 1970s	Resurrect in digital form a local community news sheet 'The Sentinel' that had been shut down for some years. Train local people to contribute to and run the site to build community cohesion and improve the image of the area
Port Talbot Magnet in Port Talbot, South Wales	Port Talbot is a small industrial town of 37,000 people in South Wales, dominated by a large steel works	Seed fund a print edition of the website of the local news co-op, the Port Talbot Magnet. Aim is to reach people who aren't online across a wider area than urban Port Talbot and produce advertising revenue leading to a self-sustaining business model
Your Harlow in Harlow, Essex	Harlow is a medium-sized 'new town' of over 80,000 people on the borders of Essex and Hertfordshire in South East England	Create a brand new news website, with substantial video content for Harlow to improve local civic affairs coverage. Project will build on the success of neighbouring Your Thurrock website and will aim to run as a sustainable entity

Chart 1: Location of Carnegie Partners

1.3 The evaluation

To maximise the learning from Neighbourhood News and identify conclusions and recommendations on the future of local journalism for policymakers, funders and practitioners, the Trust commissioned Talk About Local to carry out an independent evaluation of the programme.

The evaluation comprises:

- A detailed evaluation framework (a copy of which is provided in Appendix 2)
- Semi-structured interviews with Carnegie Partners at different stages of their project
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and a small number of local people in each of the five Carnegie Partner areas
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the online and print outputs produced by the Carnegie Partners as part of the Neighbourhood News project.

This Final Report of the evaluation builds on the detailed Interim Report, which focused on the Carnegie Partners start-up processes and early experiences. In the report, we quote partners and local interviewees directly where possible.

02 Evaluating the local media context

As we described in the Interim Report, the Trust's Neighbourhood News programme and the work of the Carnegie Partners must be considered in the context of other interventions in the local media market. There are significant and wide-ranging public interventions in this market in the UK, but these are rarely considered in the round.

2.1 Funding interventions

Current public and charitable sector financial support for local media in the UK is worth well over £250 million per annum. This includes[2]:

- BBC local radio and regional TV – £220 million per annum

- Statutory advertising in local newspapers – £45-50 million per annum

- Local TV infrastructure subsidy – £25 million

- Local TV programming buy-back subsidy – up to £5 million per annum from 2014/15

- NESTA and Technology Strategy Board Destination Local Demonstrators Programme – £2.4 million divided across four projects)

- Media Trust Community Channel – £1.1-1.5 million per annum

- NESTA and Technology Strategy Board Destination Local programme – £1 million (divided across 22 projects)

- Community Radio Fund – £0.75 million per annum

- Media Trust Local – 360 (this programme is now closed c£100,000 of a £1.89 million Big Lottery grant in 2012)

In addition, The Reuters Institute estimated that the zero-rating of VAT on newspapers is worth an estimated £600 million per annum to newspapers in reduction of their sales price, based on 2008 prices[3]. Clearly, a significant proportion of this tax benefit is derived by local newspapers.

These interventions mainly support existing media forms of print, radio and television generally produced by large businesses. However, there are some exceptions to this:

- The Destination Local programme delivered by NESTA and the Technology Strategy Board[4] provides grants to partners innovating with technology in local internet news projects

- The Community Radio Fund[5] uses funds provided by the UK Government administered by Ofcom to support small community radio projects

- The Community Channel[6] is a national TV channel offering community content.

These specific interventions which support local community media are very welcome. However, they currently account for only around 1% of the annual financial intervention in the local media market by the Government. This suggests that there remains considerable scope for more financial support to be made available to community media in the future, particularly if it is to play a more significant role in helping to sustain high-quality local news – which the findings in this evaluation report demonstrate that it has the potential to do. We support much of the Media Standards Trust report on local news innovation which calls for funds to be made available for news innovators[7].

The specific funding gaps which it appears exist are as follows:

- A platform-neutral publicly-funded support scheme for grassroots local media

- A scheme to support grassroots web-based projects with small amounts of funding of the size and type offered through Neighbourhood News.

Our experience working with Carnegie Partners since the Interim Report confirms strongly that the Neighbourhood News funding was of the right size

and on the right terms to successfully stimulate local voices – and that there is an ongoing need for this type of funding amongst grassroots media organisations.

2.2 Policy and regulatory interventions

With respect to local media, the focus of the UK Government Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) has been almost exclusively on local TV. However, this sector is facing challenges in meeting the need for local news. In September, 2014, Ofcom said that[8]:

'the nature of awarding licences for a new type of service in a competitive media market means that it is very unlikely that all channels will succeed. This is an inherent feature of the nature of awarding a large number of licences for a new service across very different parts of the UK.'

Local TV channel London Live, only months after the launch, sought a radical licence waiver from Ofcom to reduce its quota of local content and to drop its commitment to local web media for

each of the 31 London boroughs. Ofcom describes London Live as proposing:

'reducing the number of hours of local content, both first run and repeats, in order to allow different types of programming in the broadcast schedule to be substituted for the hours of local content its Programming Commitments are reduced by [9].'

London Live resubmitted a less radical proposal that was approved by Ofcom.

The CUKT team met with DCMS officials upon publication of the Neighbourhood News Interim Report in spring, 2014. We are pleased to note that DCMS has built a little upon its 2013 consultation paper on plurality and media ownership which only made passing reference to the internet[10]. In August, 2014, DCMS responded to that consultation and to the House of Lords Select Committee report. DCMS concluded[11] that in respect of local media plurality:

'Online should be included within the scope of any new measurement Framework… the scope should include all organisations that impact the news and current affairs that UK consumers

access, including both organisations that generate, gather and aggregate news, services that affect discoverability and accessibility, and professional and non-professional commentary such as bloggers and social media.'

In their report, DCMS noted that:

'In some areas,'hyperlocal' websites are a source of news for a more specific geographical area, sometimes filling the gaps in provision of news or information from other sources, becoming a new source of information for people in specific communities.'

But DCMS stopped short of any specific actions and has instead asked Ofcom to draw up a measurement framework and baseline for UK plurality covering the above.

Public policy concerns about local plurality stem from a reduction in the diversity of local voices as newspapers and radio stations close or merge. Historically, plurality policy has been about managing decline in voice. DCMS has asked Ofcom to establish a baseline against which decrease and increase can be measured along with a measurement system. As this Final Report on Neighbourhood News demonstrates, new independent local web media represents market entry by new players increasing local plurality. It is therefore imperative that the hyperlocal sector is measured and understood by Ofcom. This should build on the 2012 Communications Market Review[12] where Ofcom featured work from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded Creative Citizens project into hyperlocal media and substantively discussed the sector for the first time.

CUKT's findings from Neighbourhood News, the work by the Creative Citizens project and NESTA's Destination Local programme will therefore be critical to Ofcom as it tackles its new task in establishing a baseline and future measurement system. Ofcom has issued a call for inputs on measurement of plurality and CUKT will submit this report[13].

Alongside a local plurality baseline, an accurate one is also required of the extent of interventions in the market by the Government, the BBC, Ofcom itself, charities and others. Despite widespread discussions with academics and others since we published our Interim Report, we have not found an accurate quantification or analysis of impact of these interventions. Ofcom's powerful analytical capability should be deployed to draw up a definitive overview of public interventions in the UK local media market, their value and impact would form a more rational base for policymaking in this space in future.

Finally, in June, 2014, the BBC hosted a successful 'Revival of Local Journalism' conference in Salford and is now committed to examining how it might work more closely with a range of local media providers in future. Given the findings in this Final Report about the potential role of hyperlocal providers in meeting the demand of local news, it is critical that this sector is included in these discussions and in practical activities which emerge from this work.

03 Neighbourhood News Findings – Technology and Media Types

Key Findings from the Interim Report

- Four of the Carnegie Partners are primarily web-based news projects. The Port Talbot Magnet is a print project which is producing a monthly newspaper to add to its web-based content.

- Despite being predominantly online, the Neighbourhood News projects are local news projects first and technology ones second. This is an important distinction. The Carnegie Partners generally have sufficient technical ability to deliver news as they wish to and are suitably wary of 'nice to have' technical add-ons which drive up risk and cost.

- Most of the Carnegie Partners had been able to leverage physical or capital assets such as computers, servers, cameras, microphones, office space and equipment from other sources. This allowed the Neighbourhood News investment to focus on human resources, community engagement and news production.

- However, both Digital Sentinel and Cybermoor faced some technical difficulties in establishing their local news sites. In the case of Cybermoor, the local news project relied on third parties to input and develop its site, which resulted in significant delays in launching it.

For the Final Report, we have carried out an in-depth assessment of how the Carnegie Partners have used different media types to disseminate their content.

3.1 Web

The Partners' sites have some similarities: they are predominately text and still-image led, none of them are over-designed, in that they generally have a design adequate to their task but they are not seeking to win awards for their appearance. This is familiar to us from UK hyperlocal sites – people usually have a design that 'gets them by', it's the stories, pictures and community that attract people.

The Brixton Blog site has a multi-column look familiar to anyone who has used a blog package, currently with what a newspaper would call 'display ads' in the right-hand column, changing to social media beneath the ads. A huge amount of information is accessible from the front page. On an iPhone, it reverts to a simple, easily-navigated wordpress mobile theme. Content is updated many times daily.

Your Harlow has a newspaper website feel – with each story having a photo lead. The front page is busy with items updating constantly and many photos. The use of a serif font makes it feel a little more traditional. The site carries a diverse range of adverts on the slim right-hand column including one from the local MP. Although the site has lots of video this isn't always easy to find. Scrolling down, the front page is big with direct links to dozens of news stories. Tweets are quite prominent below the lead images. On an iPhone, it displays as on a desktop, but it works. The site is updated many times daily.

Port Talbot has a newspaper feel with one column of stories with pictures, a second of text and a third of ads. Ads are also prominent in the banner. This is largely a web version of the newspaper and is updated every few weeks roughly in line with the print cycle. On an iPhone, it displays as on a desktop.

Digital Sentinel is a recognisable blog format with a newspaper red top. The design is deliberately spartan. Most stories have a picture and there is social media integration in the side bar. There are a dozen stories on the front page. On an iPhone, the site displays as a well-executed wordpress mobile theme with pictures standing out well – this is made easier as they are not displaying much content.

The Cybermoor site is at the blog end of the spectrum with three columns beneath a banner. It has an open, not-too-busy look, with nicely executed menus and social media integration. The centre column updates with stories that are presented as text. On an iPhone, a mobile theme kicks in, stacking the desktop site into one column, although the ordering of content could perhaps be improved. There are often long gaps; sometimes weeks between articles and tweets. The front page has more information than, say, Digital Sentinel, but substantially less than the more news-focused Partners. Cybermoor has chosen to create an almost separate visitors/tourism site for Alston within the same Cybermoor URL structure and using a very similar theme.

3.2 Video

Your Harlow is distinctive amongst the Carnegie Partners in producing a large amount of video content. They have produced a remarkable 275 videos in 13 months, with viewing figures ranging from over 1000 to a dozen or less. In our experience, there are only one or two other local news websites in the UK that produce video content on this scale. Your Harlow shoot video with a simple consumer Canon HD video camera, external mic and tripod. Their targets range from cross-examination of the Harlow Council Leader on the use of bailiffs for evictions, to an interview with Ed Balls MP, coverage of local flooding problems, large crowds at the opening of a new Aldi supermarket and local sport[14]. The videos clearly have a strong public service content and are perfectly adequate in production quality to get a clear message across. Being able to avoid overly-burdensome broadcast production quality issues and regulatory overheads

allows Your Harlow and its sister site, Your Thurrock, to produce a level of video output that local TV franchisees would arguably be very satisfied with.

The Digital Sentinel in Wester Hailes has produced 34 videos during the course of the year. The most popular, with over 300 views, was the finishers of the local fun run. Other subjects covered include local interest stories, such as a woman who found a canary on her balcony and a kayaker paddling through on the canal. Our experience suggests that videos of community sporting or mass involvement events, such as carnivals, are always popular as local people look for themselves in the video.

Two interviewees in Brixton said that if there was more capacity in their project, video would be a valuable addition to their channel-mix.

A Cybermoor community reporter made a slightly tongue-in-cheek promotional film for Alston[15] which appeared on the Cybermoor visitors' site.

The low cost of using the unregulated medium of the internet means that for community media sites, such as those supported through Neighbourhood News, local video news is an entirely feasible and effective method of providing local news. In contrast, the high costs of regulated broadcast media means that local TV news via this medium is either struggling or, in most of the country, is not available. Your Harlow and its sister site, Your Thurrock, with over 2,100 films between them clearly demonstrate the significant potential for public service video news amongst the hyperlocal media sector where there are no high cost regulatory overheads.

3.3 Print

Port Talbot Magnet has produced four printed editions of their new newspaper through the Neighbourhood News project. The next edition of the newspaper is expected to both cover costs and generate a surplus, which was a key objective of the Magnet's project and is a major achievement for the team. Our interviews with local observers

suggest that the very act of delivery of a print product has been a community achievement.

> *'I admire the fact that they set about something and actually did it. It's easy to come out and say that you'll do something but to then set up a newspaper…'*

Interviewees suggest that the new print edition has given substance to the Magnet's website and has filled a '*gaping black hole*' left by the closure of the previous local paper.

One interviewee said that: '*We didn't really have a local paper before.*' He sees the South Wales papers as being very Swansea-centric and values the localness of The Magnet and the information about local events and activities as well as the news.

This was a common theme – another interviewee said that The Magnet '*has probably doubled the awareness of my charity fundraising. It's good to be involved in something for the community.*' Another noted that he has had a positive response to ads placed in the newspaper that have won him new clients. Finally, one interviewee said that having a print edition was important to people like his parents:

> *'who don't go online but look forward to it being delivered through the door.'*

3.4 Twitter

The Carnegie Partners follow a national trend we observe amongst hyperlocal news providers in

using Twitter as an increasingly crucial method of distributing content, even in deprived areas. In a very crude metric of Twitter's importance to local websites, the number of Twitter followers generally exceeds the number of daily visits to the website. Twitter is vital for engaging or attracting the attention of a particular audience. Its convenience, especially on the move, makes it an easy way to get issues in circulation and act as a curator/broker of local content which the site publisher is constantly scanning.

Brixton Blog has a large Twitter following of over 20,000 – a significant number for an outlet providing news covering only one part of one London Borough. This compares favourably with, for example, The South London Press, a traditional local paper group of three titles which has only 16,000 Twitter followers, despite a weekly newspaper readership of 214,000[16]. By comparison, the Evening Standard, which covers all 30 London Boroughs and the City has 139,000 Twitter followers on its main @standardnews account – about 4,400 per borough.

In Wester Hailes, the most deprived area amongst the Carnegie Partner projects, the number of Twitter followers (216) exceeded the regular traffic numbers to the website. In Harlow, @Your Harlow has built a Twitter following of 1,750 in a year and reports regular retweets and Twitter dialogues between the team, the local MP, local councillors and other local stakeholders. Port Talbot Magnet also has around 1,500 followers. Although it has a small following of 187 Twitter users, Cybermoor still uses this medium more frequently than it posts news stories.

3.5 Facebook

In contrast with Twitter, we did not receive strong feedback from the Carnegie Partners that Facebook was crucial to them. We note, though, that the Port Talbot Magnet has a healthy Facebook following of 1,687 for their page and 2,452 for their group, which are respectable numbers for a town of 30,000 people, possibly with some double counting[17].

Brixton Blog has 3,726 likes of its Facebook page which, interestingly isn't just fed from its Twitter stream but has some individual 'tending' and a healthy level of interaction from friends. Some stories with over 150 likes will get significant reach, although the scale is much less than Twitter for them. By comparison, South London Press on Facebook has 915 likes and an uninspiring automated set of updates with little audience interaction.

In Wester Hailes, 167 likes of their Facebook page is only about 60% of the number of Twitter followers. However an interviewee in Wester Hailes said that the team needed to encourage more residents to cross over from other local Facebook places into the Digital Sentinel blog. Facebook groups for Wester Hailes include a closed group of 800 members and 'Wester Hailes from here to there' a local history group with 2,600 members.

Cybermoor's Facebook presence (192 followers) is more geared towards their long-term community broadband project and less towards news. Your Harlow has no significant Facebook presence.

04 Neighbourhood News Findings – People

Key Findings from the Interim Report

- The Carnegie Partners have small core teams who put a lot of time into the projects.

- Partners have a much larger network of contributors who provider articles or other support.

- None of the teams are 100% full time – they all have other income-earning responsibilities that take up significant proportions of their time. This led to some capacity issues during the time-demanding start-up phase of the projects.

- By helping to meet staffing costs across the Carnegie Partner projects Neighbourhood News added capacity to deliver more local news.

- Motivating and inspiring volunteer input from the local community is key to each of the Neighbourhood News projects. The Carnegie Partners had leveraged significant volunteer contributions to the projects – to at least the same value as funds spent on paid staff.

- The substantial personal efforts made to the projects by those involved are motivated by altruism or philanthropy and a desire to either deliver professional journalism expertise in their local neighbourhood; or to support local news as a form of community work, similar to traditional community activities in church groups, youth clubs, sport teams etc.

- Each of the Carnegie Partners has strong, professional journalism skills at their core.

- Other skills, such as sales or technical skills were recruited by the Partners as required – although identifying volunteers with appropriate skills in selling adverts to support the news product had proved challenging for both the Port Talbot and Brixton projects.

- Involvement in the Carnegie Partner projects had already provided a stepping stone for some of those involved into more secure journalism jobs. This was beneficial for the individuals concerned and helps to improve the credibility of the community news sector as a whole, but it can provide challenges for the publication which loses its contributor.

- There was quite considerable variation in the speed at which the Carnegie Partners were able to mobilise their human resources in the start-up phase:

- Your Harlow began moving quickly, launching the new site immediately and recruiting contributors. It resembles a modern take on a traditional editor/contributor format, driven by one person

  – The Digital Sentinel in Wester Hailes followed more of community development approach, undertaking intensive preparation with the community before launching the new site, to try and give local contributors the skills to provide content and ensure confidence and buy-in from the community

  – Cybermoor experienced significant delays, with a gap of six months between training contributors and the launch of the website

4.1 Supply of labour

Supply of skilled people has been a critical factor in the fortunes of the Carnegie Partners during the course of the project. We look at supply in two parts – the existence of people with requisite skills (storytelling, writing, editing, motivation, organisational, sales, web, video or stills) who are inclined to work with each Partner, as well as the ability of those people to commit time.

Port Talbot Magnet, Brixton Blog and Your Harlow generally all had people with the requisite skills in their neighbourhoods to deliver an excellent hyperlocal news project. The Digital Sentinel and Cybermoor – the former a low media skill community, the latter a very small rural community – did not have indigenous skills, so had to acquire them from elsewhere. The Digital Sentinel trained local people and brought in a journalist to train and write with some success. Cybermoor brought in training, but did not have an embedded writer/journalist at its core and this combined with other challenges contributed to a limited output. Port Talbot Magnet and Brixton Blog both had initial problems finding people to sell advertising, but by the end of the project, had some success in finding salespeople.

Throughout Neighbourhood News, we found that people with the trade craft of journalism or publishing or with years of informal publishing experience added a huge amount to each Partner. This was particularly evident in Brixton, Port Talbot and Harlow. Funders looking to support future projects should give due precedent to initiatives where there someone with these skills is close to the heart of the project. This is, of course, similar to any other community-building project – the presence of someone with relevant professional experience, whether pro bono or paid, will generally add a substantial amount and contribute to a more successful project.

Brixton Blog and Port Talbot Magnet both went through phases when they were quite open about overload on the core team. This was most acute during the start-up phase where they were adding new activities to their already over-stretched portfolios. Both teams continue to be very busy and Brixton Blog is preparing for a new structure to spread the load more. Both Partners are aware of the risks of burn out. We see this general challenge quite often with outstanding local websites. Brixton Blog is now creating a new structure to provide more core capacity and seeking to crowd fund a new journalist.

Your Harlow is largely run by a one-man team who also runs the much bigger site, Your Thurrock. The site operator has a changing band of volunteers and students who work with him. Your Thurrock is now part of the Local World stable as part of their news harvesting/co-production approach. The operator now has a desk with a local paper from which he runs the two sites:

> *'We have now forged a partnership with national news organisation, Local World to take Your Thurrock to the next level.'* [18]

These types of local media remain passionate community enterprises or small businesses. The Neighbourhood News funding – and, we think, the external validation that comes with it – has enabled these sites to grow and to take another step up the ladder towards sustainability.

We were struck that on hearing a presentation from local sites – including one of the Carnegie Partners – Dr Luke McKernan Lead Curator, News and Moving Image at the British Library said that the hyperlocal scene in 2014 was: '*…very similar to the early days of newspapers pre the 18th century.'* [19]

The Digital Sentinel managed a change of team half-way through the project that also brought a successful change in approach – replacing community development specialists who had laid the groundwork for a grassroots network with a journalist who was able to write and create more content herself.

4.2 Volunteering

The majority of the Partners were able to report good levels of volunteering being levered-in. In the Interim Report, we reported that:

'As a proxy, we asked partners to record the value of paid-for labour they used and the approximate amount of volunteer input they attracted in hours. Brixton Blog reports £1,400 payment for labour, levering 112 volunteer hours (£1,557 at national average hourly wage). Port Talbot spent £2,790 with '200 hours plus' of volunteer hours (£2,780). Digital Sentinel spent £2,389.50, levering 280 hours (£3,892) and Your Harlow reported 10 post-grad students working with the team unpaid.

Although these figures are approximate, we are satisfied that the Neighbourhood News projects have so far been able to double the cash spent on wages by levering in at least the same value of volunteer time.'

We expected this to change in the second part of the project with increased volunteer time and decreased paid time. Partners haven't reported data in directly comparable formats/periods, but it's clear that the Neighbourhood News funding is still leveraging substantial volunteer time.

The level of volunteering input has varied across the projects. Brixton Blog reports paying £100 for labour per week, and each week levering two full days of volunteering, worth £222 at national averages. This is part of the Neighbourhood News aspect of their site, though not their overall volunteer time. The ratio of paid-for volunteers is higher than the first period. The Digital Sentinel levered less volunteer time than in the first period at 10 days, worth £1,112 versus £7,500 on staff. Port Talbot Magnet spent £300 on labour, but levered in 85 days of volunteering worth £9,453. Cybermoor was unable to separate out Neighbourhood News funding from and volunteering other sources/ projects. However, it spent £450 per month on paying the community reporters. We did not receive figures from Your Harlow.

From these findings, we can observe that once out of the clearly defined build stage, other sources of funding become intermingled (advertising, other grants etc) making it difficult for community-based organisations, naturally without management accounting systems, to separate out cause and effect.

Case Study – Volunteering in the community media sector

We interviewed a volunteer who worked at Brixton Blog for 18 weeks on a weekly placement while she paid herself through an NCTJ journalism course. She wanted to get out of a 'dead end job' and retrain as a journalist, so signed up to a course and fitted in the Brixton Blog as a way of building up a portfolio and gaining experience. She has since found full-time employment with Peabody housing as a Communications Officer. She still hopes to find time to return to volunteer again at the paper once she is bedded into her job. During her time at the paper, she reported on the issue of the living wage at a local cinema where staff were striking.

'On a personal level it was my 1st front page story. That was amazing, a confidence building experience'.

She had to work around though the lack of capacity of the overstretched project leaders organising a system of peer review with another volunteer to check work.

05 Neighbourhood News Findings – Output and Audience Size

Key Findings from the Interim Report

- Similar to other community news websites, the Carnegie Partners are not focused on absolute audience size to the same extent as commercial media. This is a feature of not being driven by investors or commercial advertisers to show increasing traffic

- Instead, the hyperlocal sector tends to be interested in attracting a sufficient audience to make its contributors feel the work is worth their efforts; or that the audience is the set of people that the contributors want to reach to bring about change – for instance, the local council or people who live in a specific area

- Each of the Neighbourhood News projects was demonstrating a good audience for their type of project, based upon our experience of such sites across the UK.

- Your Harlow was demonstrating a particularly impressive rate of production

- No audience statistics for the Cybermoor project were available at the Interim Report stage

- Port Talbot Magnet's new print edition appeared, by the second edition, to be having a positive influence on the organisation's online traffic

- The very different approaches and target communities of the five Carnegie Partners led to widely varying volumes of output

- The Partners reported on a broad range of popular content, ranging from traditional news stories, to community interest events, to local sport and history

- Evidence from Your Harlow suggests that traditional local news stories often attract the largest audiences, with local crime stories the five most commonly viewed stories on its site

As we noted in the Interim Report, the Carnegie Partners are running differently-sized projects and we wish to avoid simple comparison of metrics that one might use with commercial projects.

When we set up an evaluation framework for this project, we deliberately did not want to reply on pure web metrics – given the relatively different sizes and target audiences of the Partners. In discussion with the Partners, we noticed that growth of social media channels was significant for several of them. Also our second reporting period was for the three months to the end of August; a month with low audience for all hyperlocal media.

Both these factors complicate measurement. As Brixton Blog put it:

> *'[website] Audience has dropped slightly – due to editors being on holiday and less content being produced. Engagement has stayed about the same and social media audience continues to grow as we continue to learn what does best on different platforms and are selective with the stories that we choose to publish.'*

The metrics for June-August, 2014, are as follows:

	Visits	Page Views	Leading traffic source	Mobile/Tablet
Brixton Blog	116,543	196,139	Twitter	48%
Digital Sentinel	2,200	5,836	Facebook	44%
Port Talbot Magnet	9,595	15,238	Facebook	58%
Cybermoor	4,809	33,147	u/k	u/k
Your Harlow	37,741	61,687	u/k	u/k

Cybermoor's site also contains local service/ facilities booking which might explain its unusually long dwell time of 14 minutes. Brixton Blog, Your Harlow, Port Talbot were all under 1:30 seconds, which is more typical for a local news site, the Digital Sentinel was 2:34 seconds. The mobile/ tablet figures are striking, although typical for the news sector, and suggest that the Partners should prioritise themes that make their sites appear better on those devices – as we recorded above, their mobile work is fairly basic and there is a particular technical challenge if Partners wish to present advertisements there.

Port Talbot Magnet produced a 16 page newspaper distributed at the end of May to 20,000 people and a further edition at the end of August. They describe the split as 50/50 advertising and editorial. Brixton Blog also produce the Brixton Bugle monthly – 28 pages, 10,000 copies.

In addition to analysing the quantitative data, we asked the Carnegie Partners about their own perceptions of their audience size. Port Talbot Magnet was pleased with their print audience output (which was what the Neighbourhood News funding were pump priming) but felt that the effort that had gone into that had detracted from working on their online audience. Their volunteers were primarily writers and perhaps needed further support on issues such as meta data and SEO. The Digital Sentinel had hoped for more, having spent a lot of time over the year working out how to engage more people. Brixton Blog reported as above, Your Harlow was content with the audience but ambitious to increase. Cybermoor said that they did not have pre-conceptions about their audience size.

06 Neighbourhood News Findings – Impact

Key Findings from the Interim Report

- A key aim of Neighbourhood News is to examine how community media outlets can improve democratic accountability and connect people to place.

- Carnegie Partners were, from an early stage, producing content relevant to the local democratic and civic scene and stimulating community engagement.

- Topics covered by the Partners by the interim stage included benefit cuts, street lighting, local crime rates, library closures and beach access.

- Partners were also producing lighter content, for example, on local history topics or human interest stories, which was helping to engage audiences.

For this Final Report, we carried out an in-depth analysis of the content produced by each of the Carnegie Partners, and considered its contribution to local democracy and engagement.

6.1 Port Talbot Magnet

In our Interim Report, we highlighted the Magnet's coverage of local campaigns and issues such as Morfa Beach access, the closure of a local lido, council cuts, library closures, and education course changes, none of which were being covered by other news outlets.

Since the Interim Report, The Magnet has been at the heart of a campaign to prevent closure of an M4 slip road into Port Talbot. The Government had proposed to close the slip road to the motorway. Locals were very unhappy about that as it would

prevent their own access to the motorway – even although it cuts through the town. The Magnet covered the issue in the paper and accompanied the residents in a lobby to the Welsh Assembly. An interviewee said:

> 'It goes right through the town and now we are not able to use it. The Magnet gave people a voice.'

The campaign is ongoing and changes to the proposed road closure are being tested as a pilot so the issue is still very much a live one for the newspaper [20].

A local interviewee says that the campaigning focus has been important:

> '[It's] the thing which has impressed me the most. Focusing on campaigns filled a "gaping black hole" that the closure of the newspaper left and generated a lot of credibility within the community and within local organisations such as the council, police and biggest employer Tata.'

Another impactful local story for The Magnet was about access to the local Morfa beach. There was a major local campaign to stop access to the beach being restricted, but many people in the town reported to the Magnet that they first heard about the campaign when it was highlighted in their print product [21]. The campaign was successful. Meanwhile, although difficult to attribute with certainty, The Magnet feels that their coverage of local library closures did probably lead to more people becoming involved in the campaign against those changes.

A local interviewee sees the paper as a vehicle for pulling the community together to boost the local economy as well as for campaigning. He was particularly impressed by the way The Magnet has got the local business community to pull together to support it.

The advertising impact of The Magnet seems to be high according to an advertiser we interviewed:

'Some adult education classes previously could only be advertised twice a year, but now, due to lower cost of The Magnet, they are able to advertise in the newspaper and buy a big spread which involved a poster. Take up for the adult classes increased dramatically. They received about 100 phone calls of initial interest for first course. An IT course also attracted increased numbers and so is seen as a successful tool in local upskilling.'

6.2 Brixton Blog

Brixton Blog exists in an area rife with campaigns, particularly on regeneration. They found that there were so many campaigns and issues around that they felt it would be difficult to remain impartial in their reporting if they took strong editorial positions. The editorial team decided to try to remain neutral, reporting campaigns, but not driving them hard from editorial – except in exceptional cases. This is discussed a monthly editorial boards. This is, in some ways, a much more traditional newspaper approach than perhaps might be pursued through a blog. When campaigners approach them, they advise them how to campaign on issues and then report their activity in the paper. People we spoke to about Brixton's coverage of regeneration recognised and valued its impartiality.

Brixton Blog reported that a major local issue was the possible establishment of Brixton overground station. Their blog and associated social media has been the main place for people to find out about the idea and how it is developing (or not) with Transport for London.[22]

6.3 Digital Sentinel

We observed two different phases for the Digital Sentinel during their Neighbourhood News project – a cautious, slow community-development phase at the outset, then when the original team moved on to other commitments, a change to more rapid publishing. It's arguable that both were needed – the first phase to build up community confidence in the project, the second to deliver more content.

We reported at the interim stage that the Digital Sentinel had been covering a range of important civic content on issues such as street lighting in a local subway. They had also held a Twitter discussion with the police and fire services on topics such as knife crime, alcohol abuse, noisy neighbours and the police presence in the community.

In recent months, the Digital Sentinel has delivered some exemplary local civic reporting on proposals to redevelop a local park using video, obtaining quotes from local representatives, links to local campaign groups and the establishment of an evidence trail[23]. Despite this work, the Digital Sentinel team was quite self-critical about their track record in covering community issues which they described as: '*Not good enough and room for improvement.*'

However, a local housing worker we interviewed in Wester Hailes said that it was good: '*Just seeing it there online with good local content*'. She says there had been a concern that the team would not get enough content but felt they'd managed to produce a good balance between local information and news and views. She felt that there had been a 'couple of hiccups' in the continuity of the content flow prior to the new team members joining.

The Digital Sentinel has secured funding for a new community reporter post that they hope will continue and improve community coverage.

6.4 Your Harlow

In our Interim Report, we highlighted Your Harlow's diligence in covering important democratic and civic events, such as council meetings, planning committee meetings, resident group activities and disputes over unemployment figures. This coverage was being welcomed in the town and was seen as addressing an important gap.

The coverage has continued and developed in the second half of Your Harlow's Neighbourhood News project. Their Twitter stream shows interaction with local councillors and commentators and it has become an important forum for local debate. The team continues to video many council meetings.

Another key issue that Your Harlow has covered in recent months is a story around the expenses of the local MP. The site team met with the MP and are the top-listed site in a Google search on this issue.

Finally, extreme weather has been a major community event for Your Harlow, with their news videos on local flooding videos receiving about a large number of views. The BBC purchased the footage at commercial rates to show on their Look East programme.

6.5 Cybermoor

Cybermoor covered one major public interest story – the long-running local campaign to save the community ambulance. We understand that the citizen reporters contributed to local newspapers run by one of the partners Carlisle News. The new website is nicely designed, but little news content is being produced for it.

07 Neighbourhood News Findings – Community Engagement

Key Findings from Interim Report

- All Carnegie Partners had developed strong relations in the local communities in which they are based

- Initial methods of engaging with the community ranged from feedback surveys to looking into establishing a community panel

- Cybermoor, the Digital Sentinel and Port Talbot Magnet all have organisation governance structures which link them into other community groups and bodies, either formally or semi-formally

7.1 Audience engagement methods and structures

Since the Interim Report, the Carnegie Partners have undertaken significant work to engage local people in their publications and report a range of methods through which they have sought to do so.

In Wester Hailes, the Digital Sentinel hired a community canal boat for a 'networking cruise' with other local organisations. They also brought in a school group to work on news stories over a number of weeks, which led to an impactful piece, 'Our stair was on fire', by-lined to a local school pupil[24]:

'My family were woken up when a fire broke out in my stair in Murrayburn one Sunday morning last month. I was sleeping, but a passer-by saw the fire and he shouted to us: "Wake up your stair is on fire!" My sister got up and woke my mum and dad. I tried to get my stepbrother up, but he wouldn't wake up so I jumped on him! The fire was on the living room side so we all

went to sit in my room so we weren't in danger of being hurt.

A fireman came up on the ladders to make sure we were all okay.'

One 25-year Wester Hailes resident we interviewed did note that the lack of physical place for the Sentinel with a point of contact did present challenges to citizens engaging.

The Brixton Blog took a stall at the Lambeth 'county show' and also offered workshops for local people in using social media and how to write a story. Traditional methods, such as conversation with customers at the point of distribution of print products have worked well in Port Talbot and Brixton. Prior to the start of the Neighbourhood News project, the Port Talbot team had set up a newsroom in a shopping centre to reach out to people there. This was covered by the BBC[25].

Online engagement with the local community has also been important for the Carnegie Partners. The Brixton Blog Flickr Group[26] now has almost 1,000 images from 96 members and provides pictures for the website and a place for local photographers to share their work with young volunteers working with the Brixton Blog. The Port Talbot Magnet reports much photo sharing on their Facebook page and group, which they also use for call-outs to their audience for stories and ideas and to share small news items between print runs.

We asked the Carnegie Partners what proportion of 'co-created content' from volunteers and local people was directly sent to them for use and what proportion was 'harvested' by the Partners from, for instance Twitter and retweeted or linked to. Brixton Blog and Port Talbot Magnet reported that the split was around 50/50; the Digital Sentinel indicated that 25% was contributed, 75% harvested.

Cybermoor held three sessions at the local library to show people how to contribute to the new site (which also provides services and tourism information). These attracted over 40 people although interest was mainly in the tourism part of the site.

7.2 Local interest content as a community engagement tool

Any local news product that only covers serious civic issues won't engage a wide audience. Funders wishing to support local civic publishing must recognise that such content needs 'sweetening' to make it palatable for local audiences. Funders should also recognise the tensions between public service, commercial interests and just being popular. As Brixton Blog put it to us:

'Conscious that we don't just do stories which generate clicks. We try to get a balance between those and the community stories. We see the website as a community resource, we are not doing it to make big money as much for social reasons and it would lose credibility if we just chased those sorts of stories.'

An older Brixton resident we interviewed said:

'It just speaks to me. It's much more than just a blog and a newspaper… I like that it feels very home-grown. Something like this helps people retain the character of the area.'

These points relate to one of the important starting principles of Neighbourhood News – that local journalism can improve wellbeing by connecting people to places and building a sense of community cohesion, as well as addressing issues of democracy, transparency and accountability. In communities where there is effectively no media, a new media source can create bonding and, to some extent, bridge social capital by sharing common experiences and understanding in a community audience.

The Carnegie Partners have been covering a wide range of community issues that help them to engage with their audience.

A stand-out success for Digital Sentinel was coverage of the local fun run with dozens of photos. The Sentinel published good, candid photography reflecting a sense of fun and engagement [27]. Local sites often report success with such content – simply reflecting back to the community a rare communal event. People often don't know where to go on Facebook, Twitter or Flickr to share their local experience, so local events are often below the radar of a local newspaper. This gives a new local site a good opportunity to establish itself with local communal material. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh attended the fun run and showed interest both in it and the Sentinel. A local resident who we interviewed said that having a local VIP interested in the community and the Sentinel added weight to the publication's growing gravitas in a community which can be sceptical about another new initiative.

In Harlow, Your Harlow still plans a local history project if funding can be found from an arts grant maker.

Cybermoor has a series of local utilities that run on their community site such as community minibus bookings. We understand that these services account for the long average time on sites of 14 minutes. Tourism is an important business in the Lake District and Cybermoor has a functionally separate visitors/tourism site that runs under the same domain and on the same CMS as the community site. One of the Neighbourhood News community reporters made a slightly tongue-in-cheek film about Alston that appears on the visitors site and there is a wealth of information about places to stay and eat. But as the two sites are separate, there doesn't seem to be a cross over benefit that brings more people to news.

7.3 Engagement with local skills networks

Our conversations with Port Talbot suggest that they are benefitting significantly from their relationship with journalism academics and trainers at Cardiff University. At a practical level, this has involved using the Magnet co-op team as a test bed for a new local journalism tool – Little J, an R&D project funded through REACT and the Arts and Humanities Research Council investigating the future of print. The project is jointly run by Cardiff University's Centre for Community Journalism and the psychological creative agency Behaviour.[28]

Your Harlow has now become part of the induction week at the local college for the NTCJ course and has provided training for about a dozen local students and young people through this arrangement. Training is very much live and on the job, for instance coming along to report at a council meeting but taking care to manage trainees so that they aren't in at the deep end.

Brixton Blog has worked very closely with the Lambeth College to give students weekly training places on the blog team as part of Neighbourhood News. This relationship began informally in the 12-13 academic year and formalised in the 13-14 academic year.

Cybermoor's project was implemented jointly with Carlisle News (CN) and the University of Cumbria. CN saw the community reporters as part of its local talent development, one of them got a job as a result of their work.

Our experience outside Neighbourhood News suggests that this is fairly typical of the hyperlocal sector. A good number of local websites do manage to forge good relations with local journalism skills networks. The trainers/academics benefit from seeing new models of production, the local sites benefit from help and advice and sometimes student labour. However these relationships are serendipitous, not forced by a funder and generally non-commercial. It would be nearly impossible for a community news provider to construct a bid for £10,000 of funding with a financial partnership with a local college or university, given their overheads and approach to full economic costing.

7.4 Engaging with local media

The Partners didn't report substantial collaboration with other local media outlets. The only exception was Cybermoor where the community reporters they trained were used by local papers owned by Carlisle News, one of the project partners. This reinforces our view that the community media hyperlocal sector in general, and Neighbourhood News specifically, is adding to local plurality in news with distinctive new local voices. Nevertheless, the BBC's revived interest in working with other local news providers potentially offers an opportunity for hyperlocal websites to build new ties with other suppliers in their area, bringing mutual benefits and more content for local audiences.

08 Neighbourhood News Findings – Sustainability

In our judgement all the Carnegie Partner projects will continue in one form or another after the end the Neighbourhood News funding. This is a function of:

- Social capital – constructed by the Partners to sustain the volunteer effort

- Judicious management – by the Partners

- Good content attracting a growing audience

- Realisation of local funding by Partners where they wanted it – whether commercial or local grants

- Low physical capital costs – no expensive facilities to maintain, insure, repair etc

- Selection – the Advisory Group chose projects with an eye to sustainability

- Grant size – the £10,000 from CUKT was not so big as to create an unsustainable business model. It topped up and added in capacity.

The primary threat to sustainability is the time and capacity of the prime movers in each project and their ability to engage the community in further volunteering. This is similar to the hyperlocal sector in general and is in fact similar to almost any passionate, community-run project. Two of the projects reported informally to us over the past year that either the project leads or core team members were 'exhausted' or 'burned out' at different phases. This led to these projects putting in place judicious plans to manage the time of lead team members so they can take a break. In our experience of local websites across the UK, this is a common symptom of success for the website and it is common for founders or prime movers to step back for a few months while the rest of the team fills in. Then the prime mover returns in a more sustainable way.

There are some technology specific threats which will impact the whole news industry that if they come to pass will affect the web products of community news providers. These include time and place context sensitive search from mobiles where the phone serves up local content based on a closed algorithm that is hard to grasp or only open to commercial players. Or mediated Twitter streams (should Twitter switch to the Facebook model of a heavily processed news feed). The best guard for the sector against these is to keep a careful eye on traffic numbers to see if these trends have any impact when they hit and to keep a weather eye on these new technologies.

Of course, any service can be competed out by another new entrant. Two Partners mentioned a fear of predation by an incumbent publication. Another has a wary eye on a local grassroots digital service covering the same patch. Local media isn't a level playing field, given the support incumbents receive through current public funding and regulatory interventions in the market. But in recent years, incumbent locals seem to have learned how to live with grassroots local media and in Your Thurrock/Your Harlow's case with Local World, co-opt it.

8.1 Port Talbot Magnet

Port Talbot Magnet's objective was for the Neighbourhood News funding to support the start-up of a print edition which would become self-funding. The next print edition will turn a small surplus and the team remain ambitious, aiming to reduce a thicker newspaper, coming out more often.

Interviewees in Port Talbot said that they hoped the project would become properly sustainable so that it will be present in '*four, five or 10 years' time.'* Tied to this, they hope that those who have

been so committed to getting the project going can sustain their motivation for the foreseeable future, as they are its lifeblood. An interviewee would like to see more volunteers come forward, not just contributors, but also people who are experts in other relevant fields. They would also like to get local businesses more involved.

An academic we interviewed in Port Talbot said that he hoped the Magnet can continue to hone the hybrid print/online model and that they can start to pay some local news producers for content. He also wanted to highlight how the experience of the project had also given his PhD student who works on the Magnet a strong understanding and confidence in being to express and discuss issues around hyperlocal publishing.

8.2 Brixton Blog

Brixton Blog is now a well-established and successful product. Their big challenges are ones of growth. The team know that their prime movers are heavily loaded and are planning a transition to

a more broadly-based community social enterprise structure to allow critical team members to take a break. They have just begun a crowd-funding campaign for a new journalist. The Neighbourhood News funds allowed them to take on trainees, successfully and if they can keep a pipeline going this will provide important capacity for the project.

There are many opportunities for the future – a volunteer we interviewed at Brixton Blog said:

> *'It would be really great if the blog was able to have some more staff paid for a few hours. One or two members of part-time staff would mean a consistent amount of content. The capacity to have video. The printed Bugle is a really nice touch especially for older people in the community who are not used to reading the internet.'*

We interviewed a major advertiser in the Brixton Bugle, the print companion to the Brixton Blog, who is heavily networked in local businesses. She sees the potential for commercial content in the printed Brixton Bugle: she found that people didn't always read leaflets pushed through door or posted in local papers but her own research locally found that people did respond to things in the Bugle. Although that might be a 'tiny microcosm' of the whole of Brixton, she felt it offered the best possible reach for her organisation and so they paid to sponsor four pages in every issue for a year. She saw advantage in having the physical newspaper which concentrates solely on Brixton – unlike the South London Press which has a wider geography and so less coverage.

The same interviewee said:

> *'Everyone comes to get a copy, and they ask for back copies. It encompasses everybody. It would be great if they could expand and repeat the experience into other local areas'.*

She'd also like to see the Bugle being bigger with more pages and more articles. The blog's Twitter following at 19,000 is large and in an ideal world, cross-branding with the Bugle might make marketing easier.

8.3 Digital Sentinel

Wester Hailes is arguably the most deprived area covered by a Carnegie Partner. Local feedback from our interviews was positive, although the project team feels that they haven't advanced as far as they would like. We heard from local people that the area is felt to suffer from '*initiative – itis*', resulting in a natural scepticism about new activities. The replacement for the much-missed local paper appears welcome and locals credit the continued existence of the site as a success in itself. As time goes by, it will continue to slowly gather momentum. Content is quite strongly driven by the Neighbourhood News funded reporter, without only limited quantities provided directly by local people.

A local researcher we spoke to in Wester Hailes said that she'd like to see local residents coming together to manage the site as well as more people accessing it. Few people have broadband and landlines, but most people have mobile phones, therefore mobile content is important. She felt that the now-defunct Sentinel newspaper had generated a sense of community cohesion by being a campaigning vehicle which people could rally round and hoped the digital version could similarly help the community. The interviewee said that although Digital Sentinel is having an impact, it's at a threshold and not yet fully reaching everybody in the community. She felt there needs to be work to make the site a more democratic space where people could share ideas.

An AHRC project working alongside the Neighbourhood News project has secured funding for a community reporter and recruited someone through the job centre who is now publishing on the site. This person will be critical in the next stage of the project both in their own contribution, but also in helping local people gain the confidence and skills to contribute.

8.4 Your Harlow

The Your Harlow team report that the site isn't yet sustainable on its own, only alongside the Your Thurrock sister site. Your Thurrock is now in partnership with the national Local World group. The ads on Your Harlow are at present discounted to advertisers on Your Thurrock. In our view, Your Harlow is a strong product with a good track record this year, but it doesn't yet have a strong enough support team alongside the founder to be self-sustainable. Sustainability will depend on the founder, who is committed to it, continuing to have enough time as he works on Your Thurrock.

8.5 Cybermoor

Cybermoor has delivered the components for a successful local news site, but hasn't managed to pull them together, so has advanced the least of the Carnegie Partners. The project partners did not seem to gel together and in our view, the project seemed more of an administrative exercise assembling a kit of parts rather than one driven by the passion we saw in the other Carnegie Partners. This was particularly so after the three community reporters ceased to be available (either through getting a job or for personal reasons), when momentum was not re-established. We could not identify a 'journalistic lead' who was the prime motivator at the heart of the project in the community to move the project along. The project also seemed to have complicated local governance and a lack of co-ordination capacity. The website refresh arrived very late in the project life some months after the citizen reporters had been trained. But as a result of the Neighbourhood News funding, Alston has a new website for the community.

The Cybermoor website is closely tied to a very strong local community broadband project so there is potential for future development in civic reporting. One route could be, as in Wester Hailes, to seek funding, perhaps from the Arts Council or the Lottery for a new local citizen reporter to use the website and Twitter feed.

09 Conclusions and Recommendations

Digital technologies have transformed so many areas of society – commerce, communication, relationships and democracy – and the Carnegie Partners' work demonstrates how digital is changing community work. At the same time, local journalism can no longer be adequately provided by the market and public providers and in many areas, there is a real need for community-driven content to meet a democratic demand and provide a sense of place.

These twin developments present a challenge for grantors, philanthropists and policymakers – to update their view of community work in a digital age to embrace grassroots online news projects, then support and fund them on an equal footing with analogue ones.

Our headline findings are:

- Neighbourhood News has achieved its objective to 'explore how to support more accessible, pluralistic and diverse local news for citizens and communities' with four out of five Partners. The project that has not taken off has also provided learnings.

- CUKT's modest expenditure has helped create jobs as well as enhancing media plurality.

- CUKT's intervention has resulted in projects that are sustainable beyond the finding period.

In evaluating Neighbourhood News, the Carnegie UK Trust asked Talk About Local to make recommendations for policymakers and regulators, particularly Ofcom, for funders and for local news practitioners.

Policymakers and regulators, in particular Ofcom, should:

1   Welcome grassroots local media as a positive asset in contributing to media plurality. They bring a new voice and market entry at low cost at a time when the number of voices in traditional media is shrinking. At a community level, some local relevant media asking questions and bringing people together is far better than none.

2   Understand the strengths and weakness of new independent local media, track this new market and measure it accordingly as part of the new plurality regime. Grassroots local media is as different to conventional radio, TV, print and corporate websites as those media are from each other. Local grassroots media is a patchwork, but covers more towns than local TV at a fraction of the cost. Ofcom's promising initial work in the 2012 Communications Market Review needs broadening and deepening as part of the plurality measurement exercise that DCMS has set Ofcom. Ofcom should work with academics and practitioners in a quantitative and qualitative landscape review of local grassroots media as part of their plurality task.

3   Stimulate grassroots media through reworking existing support schemes that are heavily skewed to support incumbents and can act as a barrier to market entry. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government intervened heavily to support local bloggers attending and then filming local council meetings, as well as the traditional press. The DCLG could intervene to start levelling the playing field on funding, for instance to permit local authorities to spend some of their statutory advertising budgets through grassroots local media. This requires a proper overview of the significant market interventions

by the UK Government in local media and sensitive rebalancing so that undue harm is not caused to traditional media who have become dependent upon these interventions.

4   Take note of the remarkable news video output of the Your Harlow/Your Thurrock team when considering local TV, and ask whether the huge regulatory overhead of broadcast TV is worth the costs it imposes on video operators, leading to their great difficulties in delivering local video economically. Or, put another way, is some local video holding politicians to account, but of lower technical quality and unregulated better than none?

5   Facilitate greater engagement between the BBC and local news organisations. There are a number of ways in which the BBC, with its significant resources, can support the provision of independent, quality local news provision, such as: including credited hyperlocal content in Local Live newsfeeds; hosting joint training with hyperlocals; offering content for hyperlocals to use; and featuring stories on hyperlocals themselves in order to increase awareness of new and equally independent sources of local media.

Funders such as the Big Lottery, other lottery distributors, local government community funds, philanthropists, government departments should:

6   Invite proposals for the development of local grassroots media as part of existing funding programmes on improving community engagement, cohesion and local democracy.

7   Provide guidance and publicity to make it clear that existing general community support schemes – such as the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All programme – can and do support communities who want to invest in their hyperlocal website or local paper as a community asset.

8   Digest the recommendations from the recent Media Standards Trust report on local news and consider what support they might offer to these recommendations.

9   Encourage current awardees of grassroots funding programmes to include a local news element in their projects to improve local transparency, democracy and accountability.

10 When inviting and awarding grants to grassroots media, use a broadly-based selection panel with widespread media experience to reduce risk. Keep grant sizes small so as not to swamp a volunteer-led exercise.

11 Give priority to those projects which have at their centre a person with experience of informal publishing or journalism as the key driver and motivator of others in producing good material that people want to read.

12 Focus funding resources on labour and skills, as most community news projects are able to source hardware and IT equipment from other local supporters.

13 Be tolerant and understanding of delays and disruption to output as a result of real-life pressures on volunteers and the time and energy required to find people with the correct skills supplementary to core journalism skills.

Local news practitioners can learn from Neighbourhood News the following:

14 Lead volunteers or part-timers in a local media project need to manage the workloads on themselves carefully. A broadly-based, even if loosely organised, team is the best way to spread a load and build in breaks. A broad team of contributors of all sorts gives the best long-term prospects.

15 Having a strong understanding of the project's web metrics – who visits the website, from where, what they look at and for how long – will give more potential for earning and serving new audiences.

16 A cross-media approach – eg using a blog and Twitter, or print and Facebook, or video and a blog can increase audiences and deepen engagement, despite the need to duplicate effort. We see local sites building bigger audiences in short form media that signal or 'bark' their output than on the core publishing medium.

17 People who can sell advertising and raise revenue of the sort required for a local grassroots media outlet are not easy to find

and can take longer to recruit than may be anticipated. This should be reflected in any business plan.

18 Focusing resources at the point of action – to pull assets and activities together and progress work with an often diffuse set of stakeholders – is critical to successful delivery

Appendix 1: External Advisory Group members

- **Douglas White**, Head of Advocacy, CUKT (Chair)

- **Professor George Brock**, Head of Journalism, City University

- **Malcolm Dean**, Former Guardian journalist

- **Gavin Sheppard**, Director of Marketing, Media Trust

- **Seamus Dooley**, Irish Secretary, National Union of Journalists

- **Deborah Fox**, Programme Manager, NESTA, Destination Local

- **Bill Livingstone**, Trustee, CUKT

- **Ruth O'Reilly**, Editor, The Detail, Northern Ireland

- **Mandy Rhodes**, Managing Director, Holyrood Magazine

- **John Fellows**, Head of Communications, Big Lottery Fund Scotland

- **Professor Richard Sambrook**, Director of Centre for Journalism, Cardiff School of Journalism

- **Will Perrin**, Founder Director, Talk About Local

- **Sarah Hartley**, Author, Talk About Local

- **Lauren Pennycook**, Policy Officer, CUKT

- **Jim Metcalfe**, Head of Practice and Development, CUKT

Primary Selection Criteria

Fulfils an evidenced unmet need – particularly a democratic or community need (public benefit):

- Adaptability and enhancement of news

- Affordable for the duration of the funding period (12 months)

- Capacity to share learning of interest to other projects and to funders (replicability)

- Adherence to high ethical and editorial standards

- Has an impact and a feasible plan for legacy beyond the funding period

Balancing Criteria for Selecting Winning Projects

The below balancing criteria were used alongside the primary selection criteria, in order to achieve a balance of different projects across the five Carnegie Partners:

- Geographical spread of the UK and Ireland

- Platform type

- Length of time organisation has been established

- Target audience

Appendix 2: Evaluation framework for CUKT Neighbourhood News

Partner name

Questions for partners to answer	Notes for partners
	It's OK to mark N/A (not applicable) if your project isn't at that stage yet
Inputs to the project	
What grant money have you spent this period?	We shall compare this to the plan in your bid – if the plan has changed that's fine, just send us the new one.
Has the project benefited from outside expenditure – such as from a parent or sister project?	We would like to estimate the total cost of doing the project, the ability to leverage other support or assets is important to understand.
Have you made use of other pre-existing assets – such as computers or office space – that aren't funded out of the project? Very roughly, what would it cost to buy those assets new?	
How many jobs have been created by the project, including part time this period?	Several projects are paying staff freelance, part time etc
How much have you paid for people's labour – wages, freelance etc for project resources?	
Roughly how much unpaid/volunteer labour has gone into the project this period this period in days or hours?	We know that volunteers are the lifeblood of projects like this and want to understand the leverage the project delivers
Quantity of output and statistics	
If you produce printed material what was the quantity produced and successfully distributed in this period, listed per edition?	Please send a copy as a pdf to hello@talkaboutlocal.org
From your google analytics over the period, could you provide the following per day for the period:	For the first return, could you provide a starting baseline – in some cases that will be 'nil' or relate to a site that is being made over
Visits	
Page views	
Bounce rate	
Average time on site	
Pages per visit	
New visits	
Traffic sources	
Devices used	
Country of visit	
We would like to understand how people interact with your content – please give an indication of:	
Most popular content items (top five by views)	
Most commented upon content (top five)	
Outgoing links/clicks – top five	Outgoing clicks can be important for a local site as it signposts people to other local information sources.

Questions for partners to answer	Notes for partners
	It's OK to mark N/A (not applicable) if your project isn't at that stage yet
If you use Twitter to distribute your content, please tell us the follower numbers at the beginning and end of the period	Also please tell us the @name.
If you have a Facebook page or group, please tell us how many Likes or Members you had at start and end of period	Please tell us the name of the group/page so we can join. If the discussion is mainly on Facebook, then let us know and discuss some more Facebook stats.
If you have an email list for your project what was its size at start and end of the period? If you have any metrics for engagement on this list, please let us know (eg feedburner click-throughs).	Also please tell us briefly how the list works – is it manual/automatic, weekly, daily etc?
What trends do you observe in audience size and engagement using the above?	How do you think the audience is doing? Size isn't everything in a local site, what do the numbers tell you or is there something about the audience that the numbers don't communicate?
We shall work with you on an audience survey at the midpoint of the project to test people's initial reactions to the service.	
How many 'units' of content has the activity funded by the project produced in this period – posts, articles, stories, pages, videos?	We are seeking to capture what the project funds have enabled over and above what would have happened anyway. The count of these measures should be in your blog CMS or YouTube channel etc.
Can you provide all URLs at which you publish content directly under the project or indirectly through, say, RSS feeds to a Facebook page?	
How does the audience size you have achieved in this period measure against your expectations?	In highly local work, the absolute audience size needs setting in context – 100 page views in a small community might be highly significant, whereas bigger communities might expect more – if you could provide a context of community size that would help.

Feedback and engagement with your community	
What community feedback activities have you engaged in during the period?	Meetings, discussion, editorial boards, surveys etc – this can be formal or informal, promotion meetings to tell people about project or a governance system.
What positive feedback was received?	
What negative or could-do-better feedback was received?	It's really important to understand what people do and don't like about the project output. Someone is bound not to like it. Don't worry if people give negative feedback.
What community participation or co-creation in producing content occurred in the period?	That is people contributing rather than telling you what they think – sending pictures, providing stories by email, contributing to a hashtag, volunteering in the production team etc.
How much (roughly) of this was deliberate (people consciously sending things to you for publication) and how much passive, eg you harvesting other's content say from Twitter?	We are interested in how local news-gathering networks propagate and sustain by active and passive participation.
Are your audience telling you that they want a different type of content – for instance: 'We want more sport' – or do they seem broadly satisfied? Please give examples.	
At the end of the project, we shall work with you to organise a focus group in your area to discuss the projects impact	

Questions for partners to answer	Notes for partners
	It's OK to mark N/A (not applicable) if your project isn't at that stage yet
Democratic engagement	
Has there been any 'campaigning' element to this period's output? Can you describe it briefly and what the project output has contributed to it.	For instance, trying to open or close something for community benefit, persuading local elected representatives to change their mind.
To what extent have you covered local democratic issues in this period – for instance, local council bodies community governance, planning, licensing, public housing, benefits, roads etc?	CUKT is particularly interested in the impact the project has on local democratic discourse – this doesn't mean, though, that your content should only be about this – if it is, no-one will read it!
Do you think you are doing a good job in covering these community issues?	
Do you consider that your audience engaged with this 'local democracy' content – have their comments and interaction added to the sum of local knowledge about an issue? Please cite examples.	
How does the audience react to content that isn't available elsewhere – unique information that only you are producing?	We would like to understand to what extent the project is meeting a need for news locally that would otherwise go unmet.
Do you think that people who consume your content have gone on to engage with local democratic processes – eg responding to a consultation, signing a petition, going to a meeting, sending an email to the council etc?	
We shall sample your output to assess the range of issues covered, but please say if there is a particular highlight topic or issue you wish to draw to our attention.	
What interaction has other news media in the area had with your content – have they added to it, linked to it, stolen it or otherwise commented?	
Legacy and continuity	
In the second half of the project, we shall ask you if you have thought about legacy and continuity beyond the funded period.	
Awkward final question	
Do you still feel that the project is achievable within the time and budget you have available?	All projects go up and down, and it's good for us to know honestly if you feel that this isn't going to work or needs rescoping, then we can discuss how to help.

Appendix 3: Further analysis of interventions in the UK local media market

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The local media market in the UK is characterised by heavy intervention within a detailed framework of local media ownership rules.

BBC – the BBC provides a comprehensive local, regional and nation media service, targeted at localities through radio, television and the internet. The radio service targeted at geographic areas (local radio, BBC Scotland, Wales and NI) totalled over £220 million in 2013. The local television and web services are not split out, one would hope that there are some synergies between these operations. **http://www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport/2013/ executive/finances/expenditure.html**

Newspapers – for decades, papers (in print) have received a consistent income from local government for mandatory local advertising of statutory notices. Many acts of parliament prescribe that a notice is published in a local newspaper (literally 'a newspaper') when something is done under that act – this can be road closures, insolvency notices, licences etc. In a declining print advertising market, this income is steady and forms what appears to be an important part of the cash flow of local papers. Work by Professor Steven Barnett at the University of Westminster suggests that this is worth £45-50 million per annum. There is no explicit trade-off by the Government or local government that this expenditure supports public service reporting by newspapers.

VAT subsidy – Barnett also suggests that the UK VAT zero rating for newspapers is also an intervention in local media markets worth 'tens of millions'

Radio – OFCOM administer a Community Radio Fund for DCMS that makes small grants to local community radio projects. DCMS allocated £429,000 for 2012/2013, with grants averaging around £15,000.

Local TV – the UK Government is delivering on the coalition agreement commitment to stimulate local TV in the UK. The Government has chosen a route of technical and programming subsidy to achieve this goal. Precise figures are hard to come by, but website localtv reports:

> *'The BBC Trust agreed with the Government as part of the BBC's licence fee settlement in 2010 to make up to £40m available to help establish local television until March 2017. These funds include up to £25m for the establishment of the local television infrastructure, administered by the BBC Trust, and up to £15m (up to £5m per year from 2014/15) for the acquisition of Local TV content, managed by the BBC Executive.'*

http://localtv.org.uk/news/2013/ comux-announces-launch-local-tv/

Community Channel – The Media Trust, a successful charity, spends around £1.1 – 1.5 million in cash per annum to run the channel, according to its accounts. The Media Trust receives substantial support in kind from major broadcasters to distribute the Community Channel on digital TV. Media Trust also had a programme Local360 to work with community publishers of all sorts and provide publishers with skills and advice – Talk About Local has worked with Media Trust on this programme.

NESTA the innovation charity has supported hyperlocal web media through its Destination Local scheme. In 2012/13, NESTA made 10 grants of up to £50,000 to web projects to help them develop more mobile focussed services. NESTA and the Technology Strategy Board have announced a further £2 million scheme to help local online publishing innovation by larger companies.

In the UK, grant-makers in general, with the exception of NESTA and the single £1.3 million grant made to the Media Trust by Big Lottery, make few grants to community media projects. There is no UK equivalent of the Knight Foundation in the USA. The Journalism Foundation, set up by the Lebedev family survived only a year, but did make grants to several small local media projects.

In shaping this overview of the market, TAL's conversations with Professor Steven Barnett at University of Westminster, Dave Boyle of Co-operatives UK and Dave Harte of Birmingham City University and the AHRC Creative Citizens Project have been valuable, as has the advice of Jon Kingsbury at NESTA.

Endnotes

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1   http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.
    aspx?guid=dca3071c-3856-4c9d-922c-1d1ef2aaf118

2   See Appendix 3 for more detail on each of these interventions

3   http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/
    communications/Mediaplurality/ucCOMMS180613ev2.pdf

4   http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/destination-local

5   http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/radio/
    community-radio-fund/

6   http://www.communitychannel.org/

7   http://mediastandardstrust.org/mst-news/addressing-the-democratic-
    deficit-in-local-news-through-positive-plurality/

8   http://media.ofcom.org.uk/news/2014/local-tv-progress/

9   http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/estv/
    summary/condoc.pdf

10 http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_
    data/file/225790/Media_Plurality_Consultation_2013.pdf

11 http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/
    communications/Mediaplurality/Governmentresponse.pdf

12 Pages 103-111 http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/
    cmr12/CMR_UK_2012.pdf

13 http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/plurality-cfi/?utm_
    source=updates&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=media-
    plurality-cfi

14 https://www.youtube.com/user/Your Harlowfilms

15 http://youtu.be/GjkJhQ0OJwk

16 http://www.southlondonpress.co.uk/advertising.cfm

17 Facebook prefers brands and entities like newspapers to use a
    'Page' for fairly top-down communication. But many people prefer a
    Facebook 'Group' which is more peer-to-peer, although Groups are an
    older Facebook product that Facebook had hoped would be replaced
    by Pages. We find many hyperlocals with both a Page and a Group with
    an overlapping membership

18 http://www.Your Thurrock.com/Welcome-new-Thurrock/story-
    22122721-detail/story.html

19 Creative Citizens Conference, Royal College of Art 18 September 2014

20 http://www.lnpt.org/2014/04/12/emotions-run-high-at-packed-m4-
    closure-meeting/

21 http://www.lnpt.org/2013/12/11/morfa-beach-footpath-is-saved-from-
    closure/

22 http://www.brixtonblog.com/study-look-potential-opening-new-
    overground-loughborough-junction/20038

23 http://www.digitalsentinel.net/index.php/2014/05/video-
    curriemuirend-park-and-the-local-development-plan/

24 See http://www.digitalsentinel.net/index.php/2014/06/our-stair-was-
    on-fire/

25 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-22126588

26 See https://www.flickr.com/groups/brixtonblog/

27 http://www.digitalsentinel.net/index.php/2014/06/wester-hailes-fun-
    run-2014-in-photos

28 http://www.communityjournalism.co.uk/news/little-day-tests-little-j-
    with-the-port-talbot-magnet

This report was produced by Talk About Local for the Carnegie UK Trust. Talk About Local gives people the simple skills and support to find a powerful online voice for their community. This work ranges from consultancy for large international organisations to individuals and communities seeking to connect in their neighbourhoods.

For more information on Talk About Local please contact info@talkaboutlocal.org

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