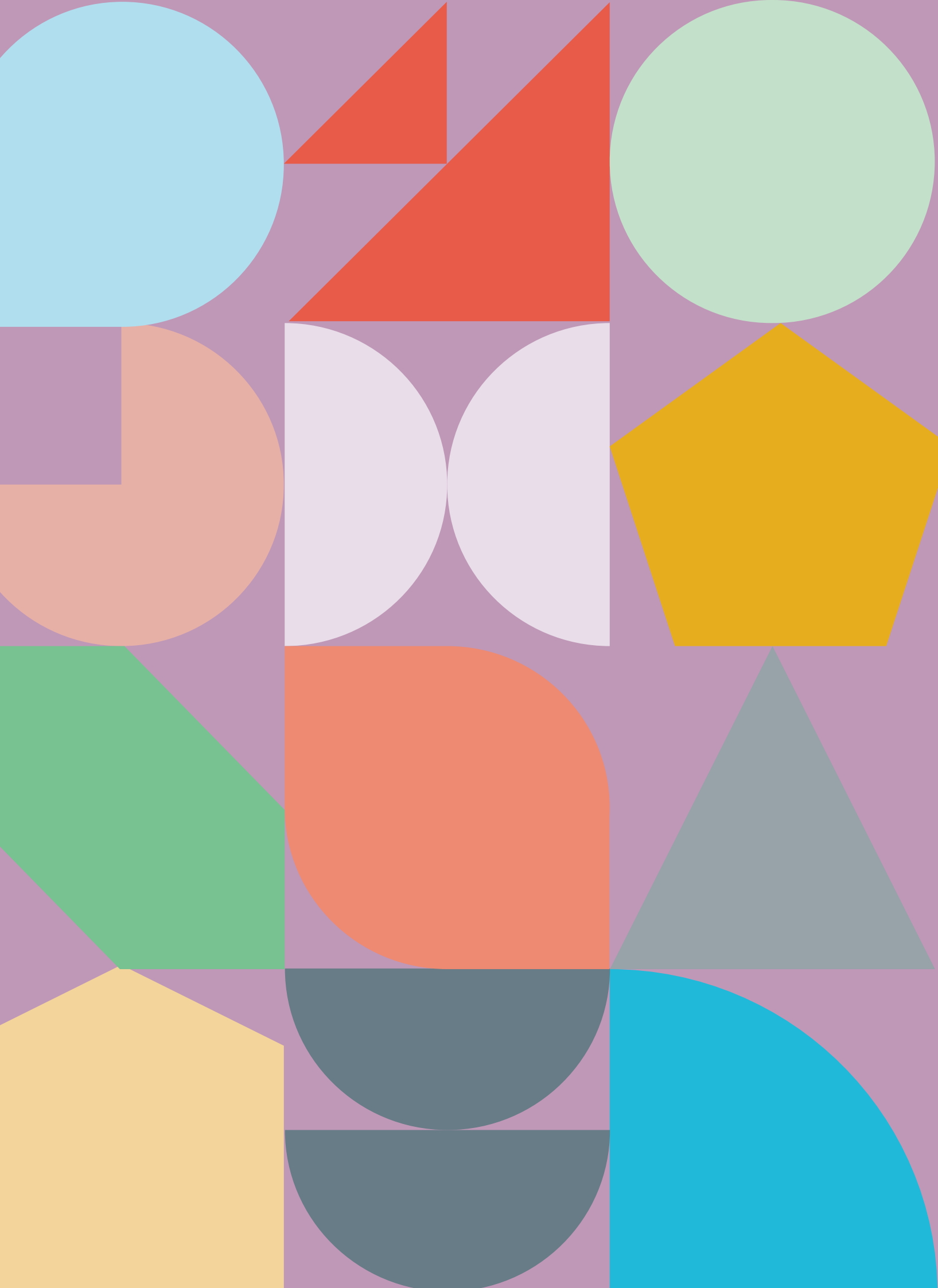


# Redesigning citizen journalism: In search of true inclusion

A Feasibility Report by  
Rachel Morris and Helen Wales  
*Bylines Cymru*  
October 2024

media  
cymru × pdr.



# Overview

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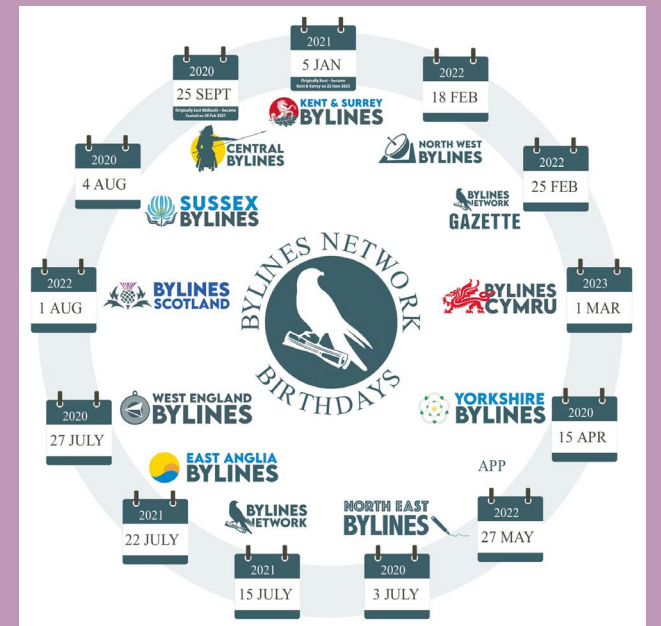
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# About us

Citizen journalism exploded in the early internet age, and was hailed as giving non-journalist members of the public the power to have their say and influence the news narrative. But ‘citizen journalism’ means different things to different people, with mobile phone footage of live events (which is arguably witnessing, not journalism) and Elon Musk’s version – hijacking the narrative and discarding long-established standards – somewhat tarnishing the brand of late.

In April 2020 the Bylines Network launched a citizen journalism publication for Yorkshire, the first of ten connected, semi-autonomous platforms covering most of the UK. We believe it’s the world’s first national citizen journalism enterprise.

The network aims to promote democracy by offering platforms to the unheard, independent of corporate media gatekeepers. It’s volunteer-run, not-for-profit, regulated by Impress – the independent monitor of the press – and a regular partner of the Public Interest News Foundation. It sprang from and is a sister to Byline Times but is financially, legally, and operationally separate.



Bylines Cymru launched on 1 March 2023 as the most recent platform in the network. It has had a distinct Welsh identity from the start, with writing mostly about Wales, by and for the people of Wales and those outside but connected to it. It’s one of only three national English-language ‘news’ publications, alongside *Nation.Cymru* and *Wales Online*. We’ve published over 600 articles by around 300 people and organisations so far.

We’ve learnt a lot since March 2023 – but we want to do more.

The project that’s the subject of this report was led by **Rachel Morris**, the Editor-in-Chief and founder of *Bylines Cymru*, and **Helen Wales**, a freelance consultant with experience of service design, organisational development, and storytelling. Our paths crossed in early 2024 and we started talking about everything we thought *Bylines Cymru* could be for Wales. This funding has allowed us to start making those conversations a reality, founded on wider and deeper conversations with people from across Wales and around the UK.

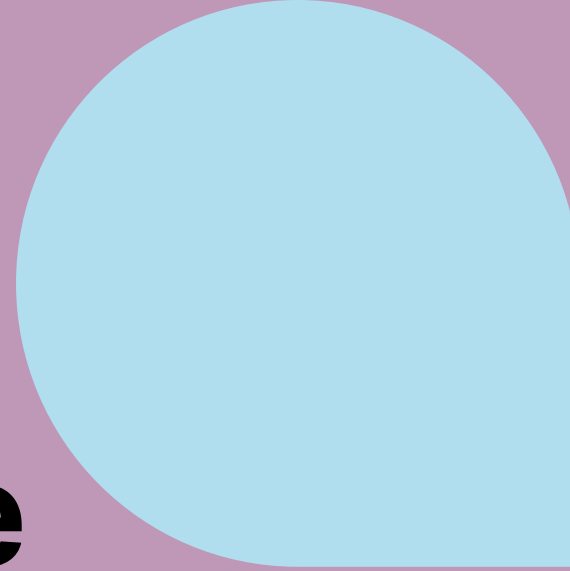
# About the project

As *Bylines Cymru* developed, we started to suspect that engagement with the opportunities we offer is largely limited to those who already have a level of confidence in writing and making their voices heard. Our writers write thoughtfully about important issues but it was clear that, while each voice is highly valued and unique, our writers are far from representative of the diverse population of Wales.

So we began to believe that opportunities to access and create news and other stories and be a citizen journalist are far from equitably available. And that those whose stories most need to be heard perhaps have the least capacity to tell them. This isn't good enough for us. It means that, in spite of our successes so far, we aren't fulfilling our potential or fully empowering that of others.

This project was designed to dive deeply into what citizen journalism *could* be for people in Wales, and how *Bylines Cymru* can become a richer platform for sharing diverse stories from across Wales and its diaspora.





# What was the perceived challenge?

Through our project, 'Redesigning citizen journalism: In search of true inclusion', we wanted to explore the potential and possibilities for citizen journalism in Wales, with a focus on bringing in more and different voices.

We reviewed our challenge statement a number of times during the project as we learnt more and refined our approach.

Pre-project: How might we, by listening to as many people and organisations in Wales as possible, redefine what citizen journalism could be through the lens of best practice, discovering what others want from it and what 'inclusivity' looks like?

Refined with PDR support: How might we create a version of citizen journalism that

- is sustainable
- more and different people in Wales want to engage with as readers and writers
- changes public discourse by challenging the status quo, encouraging participation, increasing trust, and facilitating respectful engagement with different viewpoints

End of project: How might we build a *Bylines Cymru* community that enables us to realise our full potential as a force for positive change in Wales and responds to our aims to be participatory, diverse, and sustainable?



# Our assumptions

We also wanted to dive deeper into our hunches and assumptions to work out what's really going on, what we might be able to achieve, and how we might do this.

Our core assumption was:

1. There is a 'knot' at the heart of citizen journalism: those who most need to be heard may have the least capacity to engage with citizen journalism opportunities.

We had some hunches about what barriers might exist – poverty, educational opportunities, neurodivergence, disengagement from media / news / 'the establishment', limited awareness of opportunities, lack of confidence – but suspected there would be others.

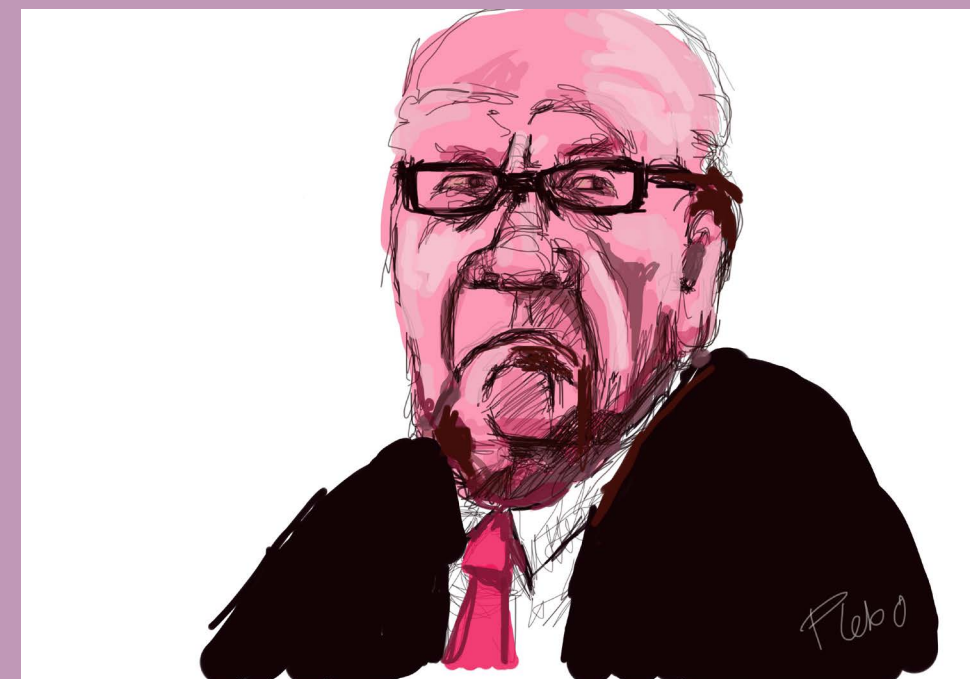
Our project was also built around other assumptions we knew we needed to test:

2. In general, our current writers are people who already have a level of confidence in writing and making their voices heard.
3. Citizen journalism has an important role to play in the news landscape of Wales.
4. *Bylines Cymru* can become a richer platform for sharing diverse stories from across Wales and its diaspora.

Media Cymru funding also enabled us to explore another challenge: our own capacity. The Bylines Network is a non-profit organisation, surviving on donations and subscriptions, and the skills and time of thousands of volunteers. The *Bylines Cymru* Editor-in-Chief is a volunteer who also works as a freelancer, so has limited capacity to step back, reflect, and act developmentally. This funding was pivotal in allowing us that time, and bringing in additional collaborative support.

Our final assumption was:

5. If we want to build *Bylines Cymru*, for Cymru, we need to develop ways of working that support sustainability and resilience, and build a community around and with the Editor-in-Chief.



# Project timeline

**Our initial plan was built around 30 research conversations. However, the project's process made us realise we'd learn more by testing and doing than only talking.**

We could also see that conversations alone wouldn't enable us to hear from different voices who were important to the project, for practical reasons and reasons of access. We decided to split the project into two phases: a research phase and a lab phase.

We expanded the range of research methods used to bring in more voices and collect information in different ways. Each phase lasted approximately six weeks, with regular opportunities to pause, gather our thoughts, review what we'd learnt, and adjust our approach. We had an extended review period between the two phases to really dive into our learning and what it might mean for us, and to plan our next steps.

We followed the double diamond structure, although our work in the 'develop' phase was designed to be deliberately exploratory and to help us keep on learning, rather than being about developing a final product. (You could say that we went back to the first diamond and honed in for more focused 'discovery' work).

We estimate that over **80 people** took part in the project. Over half of them contributed through person-to-person engagement.



# Activities

## Interactions with PDR:

- Project kick-off: 30/7
- Research session 1: 8/8
- Additional session – working with discovery phase findings: 16/8
- Research session 2: 24/9
- Report review: 23/10

## Interactions with Alacrity:

- Initial business planning exploration session: 1/10
- Follow-up session to explore potential ‘road map’ ideas: 21/10

## Research phase:

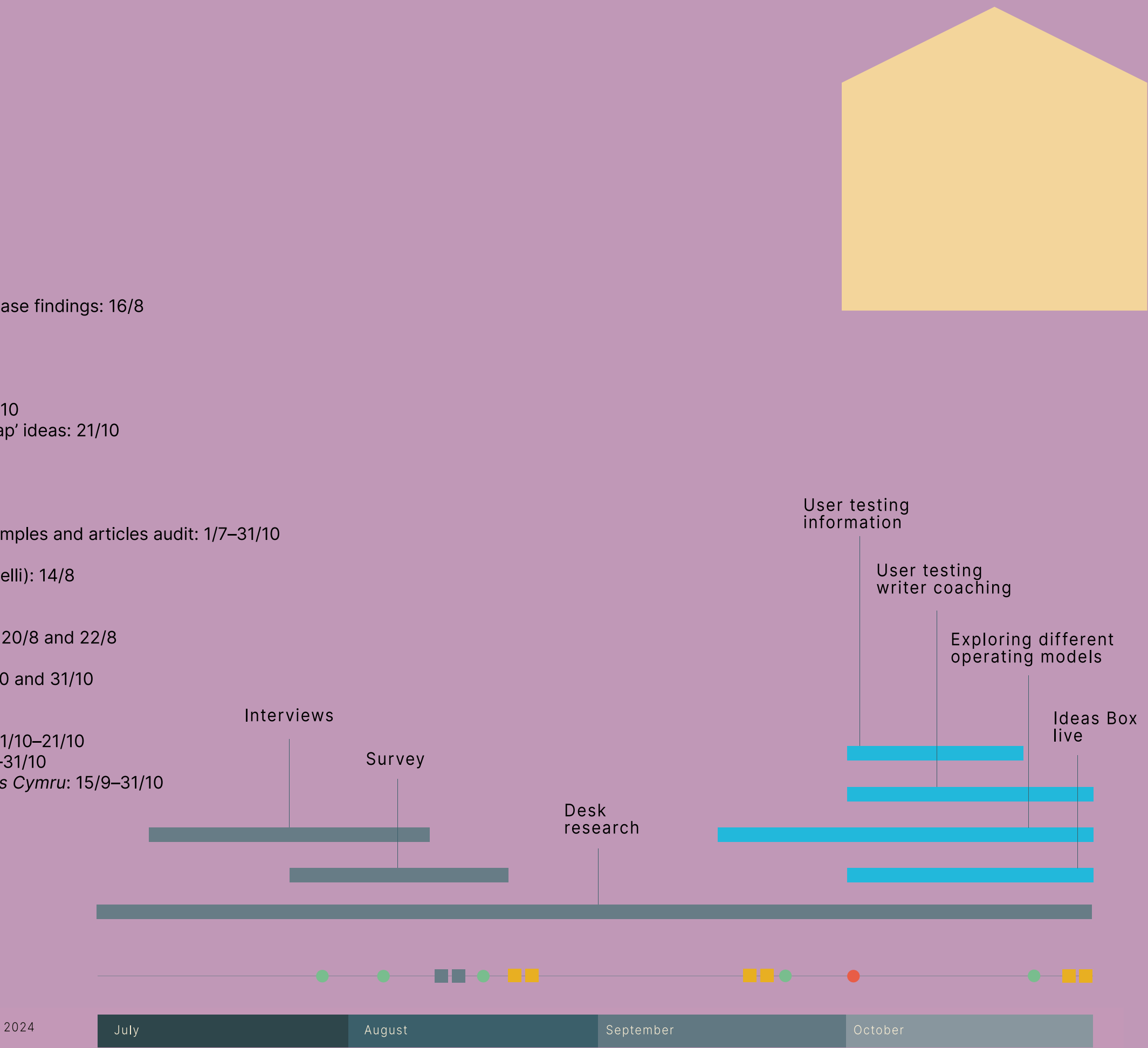
- Interviews: 8/7–13/8
- Survey: 25/7–20/8
- Desk research, including citizen journalism examples and articles audit: 1/7–31/10
- *Bylines Cymru* writers discussion group: 13/8
- Writer group workshop (People Speak Up, Llanelli): 14/8

## Key review dates (project team):

- End of discovery / research phase workshops: 20/8 and 22/8
- Lab phase planning workshops: 19/9 and 20/9
- End of project and next steps workshops: 29/10 and 31/10

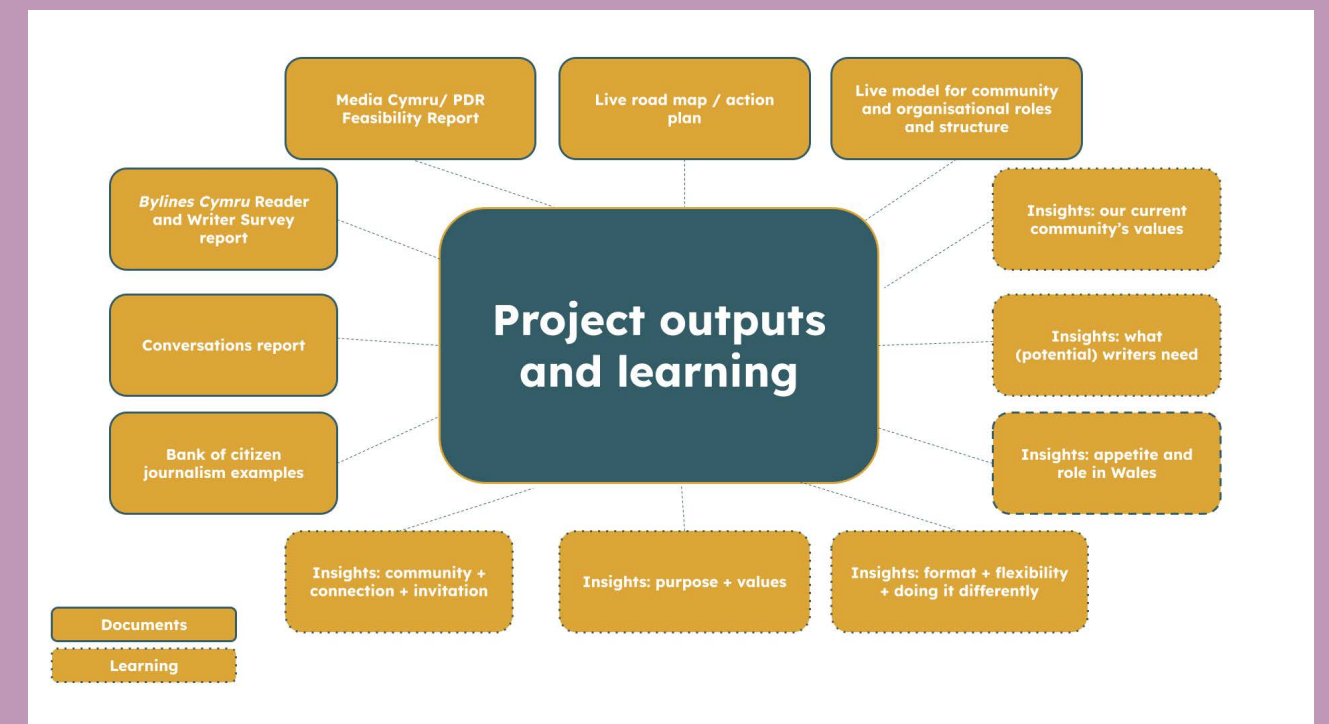
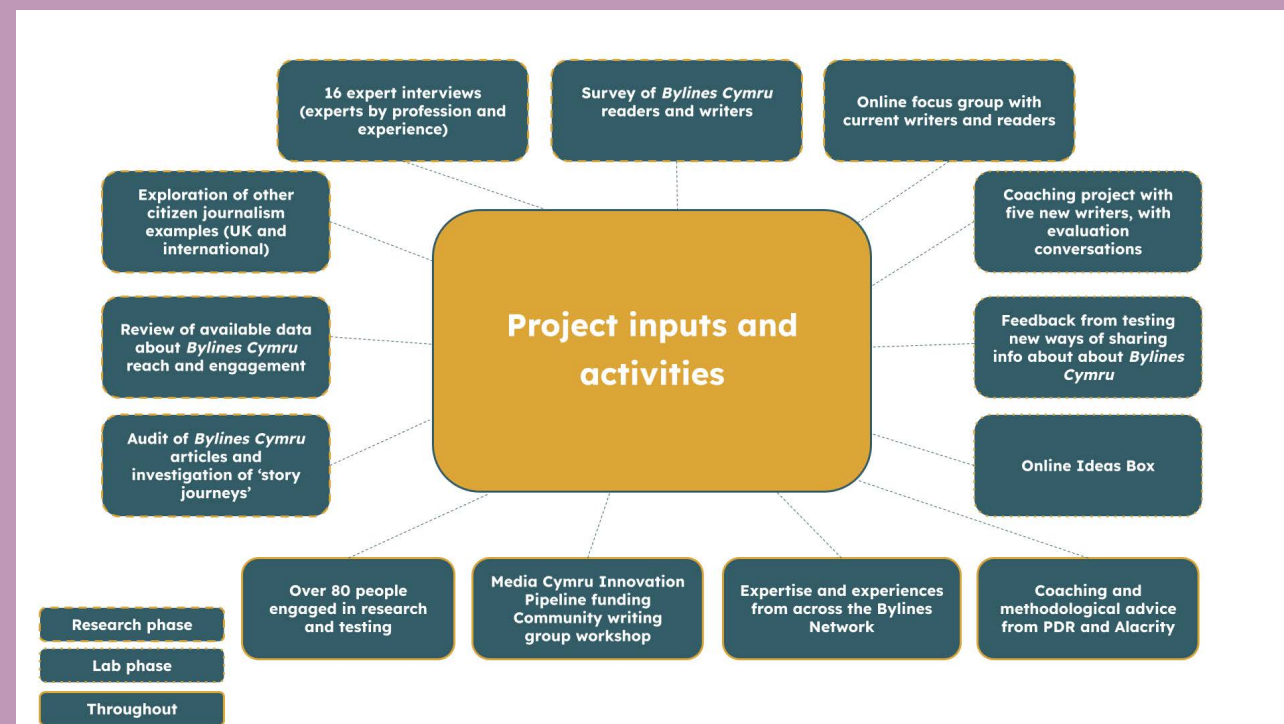
## Lab phase:

- User testing information about *Bylines Cymru*: 1/10–21/10
- User testing writer coaching approaches: 1/10–31/10
- Exploring different operating models for *Bylines Cymru*: 15/9–31/10
- Ideas Box live: 1/10–31/10





# What we did



# Our research

## Phase 1: Research (July and August)

This phase focused on understanding our context, and identifying needs and opportunities.

We conducted a range of activities to help explore the themes of citizen journalism, participation, and inclusion, and deepen understanding of the wider landscape in which our project was situated. We wanted to dive deeply into the world of citizen journalism, as well as learning what we could from related and parallel areas that share some of the values we wanted to bring to the project and *Bylines Cymru* (such as co-production and community development).

### 1. Understanding our context: conversations

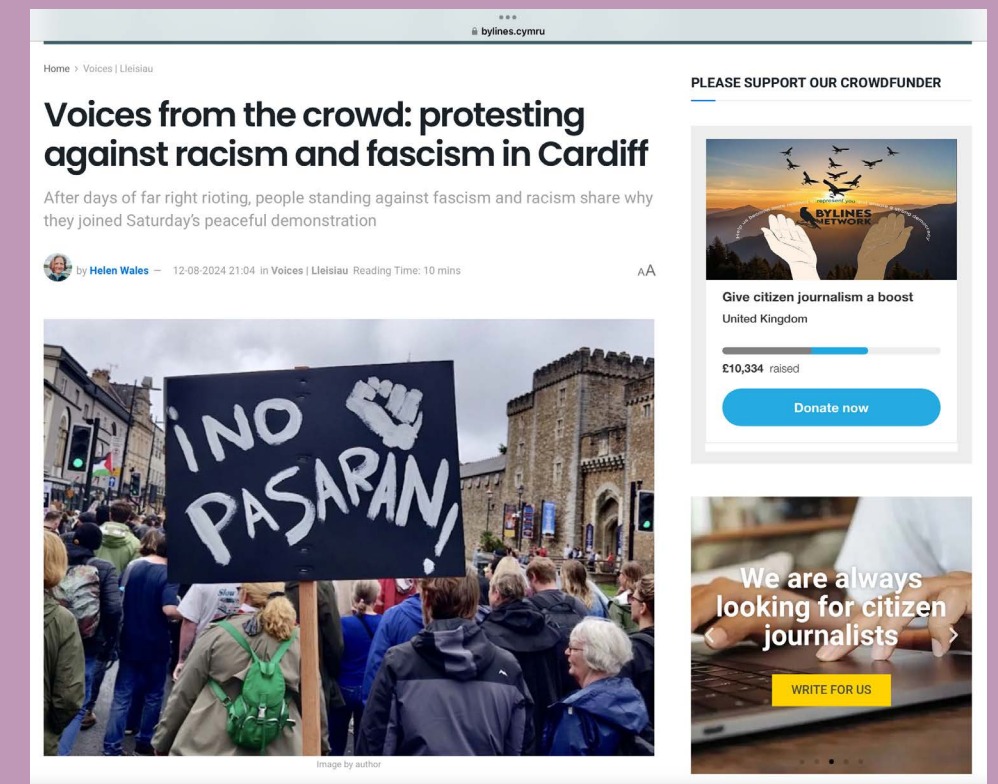
— We explored citizen journalism in Wales and beyond through **16 structured conversations with experts**. This included experts through professional work and experts through experience. Those who took part came from fields including:

- Innovations in journalism
- Citizen journalism
- Community-based / local journalism (including Welsh language)
- Participatory research
- Creating media-based opportunities for marginalised groups
- Community development
- Co-production

— We explored the Bylines Network context and drew on expertise within it through structured conversations with **four key Bylines Network team members** (leadership, inclusion, and education roles).

### 2. Understanding our context: exploring other citizen journalism models

— We explored a wide range of citizen journalism models from the UK and overseas.



### 3. Understanding our audience

— **Online survey for readers and writers (37 respondents)**. We invited current readers and writers to share their views on *Bylines Cymru* and citizen journalism, and to explore why they do (and don't) write and their experiences of being *Bylines Cymru* writers.

— **Online writer focus group (five participants)**. We invited writers and readers to join us online to discuss their experiences of *Bylines Cymru* and ideas for development within the context of the project.

— **Article audit**. We dove into our article catalogue to explore the 'journeys' that stories have been on. This included capturing how stories and writers had come to us, and reflecting on what we knew about responses to stories.

### 4. Other activities

— We ran an in-person workshop in Llanelli in partnership with People Speak Up. We joined their regular 'Story Care and Share' session for people with an interest in writing and had a lively discussion about journalism and the news landscape. This allowed us to test taking *Bylines Cymru* to a new audience.

— We reviewed available data about *Bylines Cymru* audience and contributors.

— Helen, our project consultant, also wrote for *Bylines Cymru* and became a citizen journalist to experience the process firsthand (see image above).



## Reflection and decision point (August)

We took time in August to make sense of what we'd heard and learnt. This included reviewing data, identifying and exploring emerging themes, and thinking carefully about what learning might mean for *Bylines Cymru* generally and in the project context.

We identified areas we might be able to explore in our 'lab phase', and things we wanted to learn more about. This involved prioritisation exercises, and thinking about potential impact and resource investment needed.

We also began to think about who else we needed to bring into our conversations, and who else might be involved in putting what we'd learnt into practice.

## Phase 2: Lab (September and October)

This phase focused on testing ideas that emerged from our research phase, as well as diving deeper and learning more about areas where we still felt we had significant gaps in understanding. Time was limited so we chose areas to test only what we thought would lead to the most useful learning. We focused on:

- **Writer coaching.** We invited five new writers to *Bylines Cymru* to join a short writer coaching project, testing ways of supporting new writers and gaining structured feedback.
- **Exploring our invitation.** We mocked up new ways of sharing information about *Bylines Cymru* and tested these with new audiences to explore what people want to know, what engages them, their questions, accessibility, and the kind of formats that suit them.
- **Reader views.** We set up an online Ideas Box to collect anonymous reader views, given our knowledge gap about reader perspectives.



### Volunteer Guide

There is no single definition of 'citizen journalism'. Most attempts to define it are by reference to traditional journalism, saying that citizen journalists are simply performing the same role as professional journalists – news gathering and reporting – without the benefit of training or belonging to an organisation.

And that can be your approach to citizen journalism too, if that's what you want to write (or in other ways create) stories about. But the majority of articles published by *Bylines Cymru* so far aren't 'news' in the traditional sense. We're not a traditional newspaper with non-traditional 'reporters', following the news cycle. This is a different model. We're a non-profit platform being held up by volunteers so that other volunteers can tell true stories – whatever stories they want to tell, to be more widely heard.

Our publication stands on two strong legs:

- People telling their own stories unmediated by reporters, setting the agenda and shaping the narrative, not distant billionaire press barons.
- Those stories being to a standard many papers no longer seem to bother with. We are regulated by Impress, the monitor of the independent press, and observe its [standards code](#) as to accuracy and other good practice.

We welcome as **members** anyone in, of, or in love with Wales to whom those things are important, who want to help plant seeds in news deserts and let untold truths be seen. No story, idea, or concern of merit should be homeless.

1

#### WELCOME

What *Bylines Cymru* does with and for you to a global readership

2

#### CONTRIBUTIONS

How and what to submit and what support is offered

3

#### MEMBERSHIP

Benefits of offering some attention and time to *Bylines Cymru*



*Bylines Cymru* is the newest of ten citizen journalism platforms in the Bylines Network



It was launched on 1 March 2023 by the Network and editor-in-chief Rachel Morris



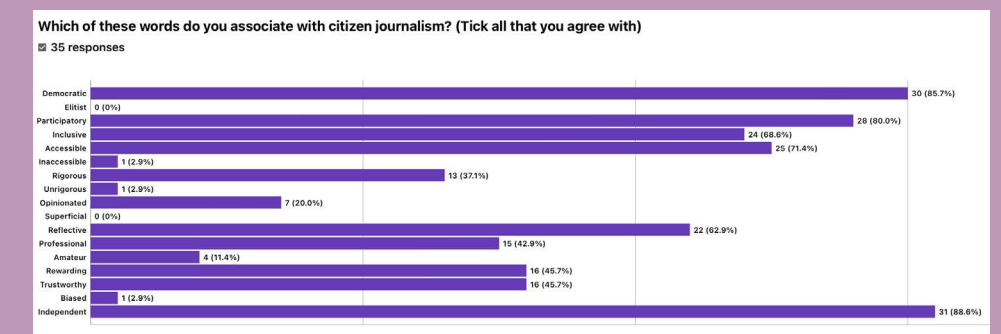
It has so far published over 550 stories by nearly 300 contributors

# What did we learn?

## Learning from our current readers and writers

We engaged with a range of experts: experts by profession, experience, and through engagement with *Bylines Cymru*. We learnt a lot and we're sharing the most important things here.

Survey question: Which of these words do you associate with citizen journalism? (tick all that apply)



### What we learnt: reader and writer survey

**Independence** is fundamental to citizen journalism. Other important qualities are that it is **participatory** and **democratic**.

Our current readers and writers support our journey to be **more inclusive and representative in the broadest sense**: contributions from a wider and more varied range of people.

*Bylines Cymru* readers and writers are actively engaged in the media but **hugely dissatisfied with the current media landscape**, both generally in the UK and specifically in Wales. Dissatisfaction is wide-ranging and links to **bias, quality, and depth**.

Articles about Wales are important, but so is **presenting the varied aspects of life across Wales**.

Support for citizen journalism is high but there is some **hesitation about quality and bias**.

Current readers and writers see a strong link between citizen journalism and **building understanding of and engagement with issues in contemporary Wales**.

Having a story that you want to share – **and feel is worth sharing** – is key to becoming a *Bylines Cymru* writer.

Many current writers were already practising and published writers. However, **writing for *Bylines Cymru* has still been beneficial**, giving them the chance to develop their skills and craft as writers and to benefit from **editorial support**.



### What people said: reader and writer survey

"I don't like that the average writer for *Bylines Cymru* is a white male, usually middle-aged and earning a comfortable wage. That being said, you're already taking steps to **diversify the authorship**, so that's great."

"It's complicated because it [citizen journalism] depends on the editor. **If not done properly it can be biased and very bad**, *Bylines* has so far been excellent but the risks are there."

"With the corporatisation of the media industry in the UK well and truly complete, the need to combat that with a **free and fair alternative** is incredibly important."

"An interesting balance seems to be opening up between *Nation.Cymru* and *Bylines Cymru*, with the former doing more topical journalism and the latter more for **big-picture thinking**."

"Having my articles published in *Bylines Cymru* was **an incredibly rewarding experience**, especially because I am passionate about issues impacting Wales and am engaged in regional political, social, and cultural discourses. Seeing my work published brought a mix of **pride and accomplishment**, along with a strong sense of **contributing to important conversations**.

For me, the publication of my article represented not just a **personal milestone** but also an **opportunity to influence public opinion and participate actively in the democratic process**. It was gratifying to know that my insights and analyses were reaching a wider audience, potentially shaping perspectives and encouraging dialogue."



# Learning from conversations with sector experts

Our conversations with experts were incredibly rich and provocative. We’ve selected four key themes to share here that really helped us share and shape the second phase of our project.

Conversations with experts:  
Some key insights

**‘Inclusion’ isn’t enough**

**“Inclusion says to me: this is our place and we invite you, which also means you can be uninvited. I always say infusion.”**

Inclusion – or infusion – needs investment: time, relationships (with individuals and potential bridge organisations), and resources. **“It’s about being authentic and genuine about genuinely wanting to hear stories.”**

True inclusion-infusion needs to move beyond contributing stories to creating opportunities to be able to play a role in building and shaping *Bylines Cymru*. This includes confronting power dynamics.

**Changing the invitation**

**“What are you doing to radically invite people to tell their stories?”**

Bringing in new and different voices includes changing the invitation. This means what information is provided, who provides it, and how.

‘Radically inviting in’ means a commitment to really understanding the space in which you’re working and engaging with audiences, using creative methods to engage, and ‘giving to get’.

The invitation to take part in citizen journalism needs to be consistent, open, authentic, and about longer-term collaboration: **“It’s about making sure they’re involved right the way through the whole process, and sharing news that’s important to them, and giving them that access.”**

**Citizen journalism – radically different?**

**“The real stories that people need to hear about are often left by the wayside. Our best way to fight against that is citizen journalism.”**

**“What are the kinds of stories we want to tell in the future that are appropriate to the challenge or situation that we’re in?”**

Citizen journalism and *Bylines Cymru* offer opportunities to tell and share different kinds of stories to those shared in the mainstream media – more nuanced, more positive, ‘outsider’ views.

This includes telling stories in different ways, as long as readers will come along on that journey ...

**The *Bylines Cymru* mission**

**“If *Bylines* is anything it has to be nuanced. In an age of easy populism, we have to be better than that.”**

**“*Bylines* want to be that point of call for when people feel frustrated or unhappy or inspired or confused or something and they feel called to share that. You want to be the people that they think of.”**

**“I get sorely disappointed with the traditional media in Wales for not actually raising what I think are the real stories in real life that we experience across Wales.”**

And on a very practical note: **“All those things are very admirable, but it comes down to who’s going to pay for it.”**



# Key themes and insights

At the end of our research phase, three themes emerged as key for us: **community**, **format**, and **purpose**. We spent time diving into why these themes matter for our work and continued to explore them throughout our lab phase. Through this process it became clear that the key theme for us at the moment is **community**.



**Community**

Citizen journalism often seems to work best when it serves a clear community. This can include having aims that move beyond public interest news, such as a social goal.

The human side of citizen journalism matters: relationships, connections, and care are central to our potential to empower and create positive change.

**Going deeper**


Building a stronger community around *Bylines Cymru* to realise our potential. We don't yet know the characteristics that will define our community so will need to learn and respond as we build it.

Roles in an expanded core team may not be those in conventional journalism.

'Inclusion' (or 'infusion') needs to be genuine, based on trust, and linked to purpose.

We think there is value in creating connection and conversation between community members, especially writers.

Getting the invitation right matters, especially for people with experience of marginalisation.



**Format**

Citizen journalism has the opportunity to be much more radical in the kind of stories that it supports, and how they are told.

'Format' means more than simple distinctions between long form written, video, and so on. It encompasses sharing news stories in different styles, thinking differently about voice and authorship, and exploring different purposes for sharing news stories.

**Going deeper**


New writers sometimes think they have to conform to a certain kind of article. This can put them off. They are often excited by the flexibility in the kind of stories they can tell with us.

We need to do more to show all the things that citizen journalism can be – by doing them.

Format shapes audience. Widening format has the potential to widen community – readers and writers. However, feedback about specific formats and preferences is often contradictory.

We need to know more about reader responses to different kinds of story and format.

Our current platform restricts our format options, though we can do more within and alongside these constraints.



**Purpose**

Everything flows from purpose and the change that you want to make in the world.

We're starting to understand the social value of our model of citizen journalism and the potential value exchange – but need to do more.

**Going deeper**

People often talk about the media as something other: 'them'. Citizen journalism aims to create an 'us' media. How can we best do this?

Our purpose is underpinned by values and what our community values: independent, nuanced, counter-establishment, participatory.

Citizen journalism can learn from the attention to voice, power, and safety in community development and co-production.

We're re-interrogating our purpose as *Bylines Cymru*, and as part of the wider Bylines Network, as we move into a new phase. We're exploring how more people can participate in those decisions.

At the end of our project, we went back to our assumptions in the light of what we'd learnt.

Assumption 1: There is a 'knot' at the heart of citizen journalism: those who most need to be heard may have the least capacity to engage with citizen journalism opportunities.

We learnt:

- There is strong support for more diversification in our existing community of readers and writers: people want to read the views of a wider range of voices.
- Many people face barriers to writing – but many still contribute.
- To do high quality inclusion-infusion work, we need to build a stronger and more sustainable core so we can support new voices, and do more outreach and engagement work.
- Relationships matter: trusted people and partners are key for encouraging new voices.
- As a volunteer-based platform, we need to dive deeper into the social value and value exchange that underpins our work. While few opposed a volunteer model, money matters – especially for people who face discrimination and structural barriers.

Assumption 2: In general, our current writers are people who already have a level of confidence in writing and making their voice heard.

We learnt:

- While this may be true for some, our discovery work presented a more nuanced view. Some people have written whilst facing real challenges – and challenges can motivate some to write.
- Many contributors, even experienced writers, found putting their work out there through *Bylines Cymru* to be a nerve-wracking experience. We shouldn't underestimate the size of the step becoming a citizen journalist is for many people.
- A supportive writing context and process for contributors, whatever stage they're at in terms of their writing journey, is key. This includes a welcoming invitation that recognises potential needs and an emphasis on flexibility of how and what to write.
- For some, 'permission' to write and having ideas validated is key.

Assumption 3: Citizen journalism has an important role to play in the news landscape of Wales.

We learnt:

- There is real dissatisfaction with the news landscape of Wales. Citizen journalism is widely supported as having the potential to create a very different landscape. This is often based on its key perceived qualities: independent, participatory, inclusive, and democratic.
- Citizen journalism has the potential to be radically different to other forms of journalism in its values, the kinds of stories it supports, and the way it works with writers.
- There is some skepticism about citizen journalism relating to perceived quality, independence, and the sustainability of values-led ventures.
- Different people interpret 'citizen journalism' differently and the term can be daunting for some potential writers. We don't have a definitive alternative, but currently prefer 'participatory citizen journalism'.
- Many see a strong link between citizen journalism (including *Bylines Cymru*) and building engagement with issues in contemporary Wales.





**Assumption 4: *Bylines Cymru* can become a richer platform for sharing diverse stories from across Wales.**

**We learnt:**

- There is a strong appetite for different stories about Wales from different voices. Many feel that the general view of Wales in the media is limited in terms of geography, politically, and a view of what it means to be Welsh.
- Working at a national level in Wales creates challenges and opportunities for *Bylines Cymru*. It can be difficult to create a nuanced and open 'national' identity and create space that values local and detailed stories as well as bigger-picture pieces. This challenge – and gap – presents a real opportunity for us.

**Assumption 5: If we want to build *Bylines* in Wales, we need to develop a different operating model that supports sustainability and builds a community around and with the Editor-in-Chief.**

**We learnt:**

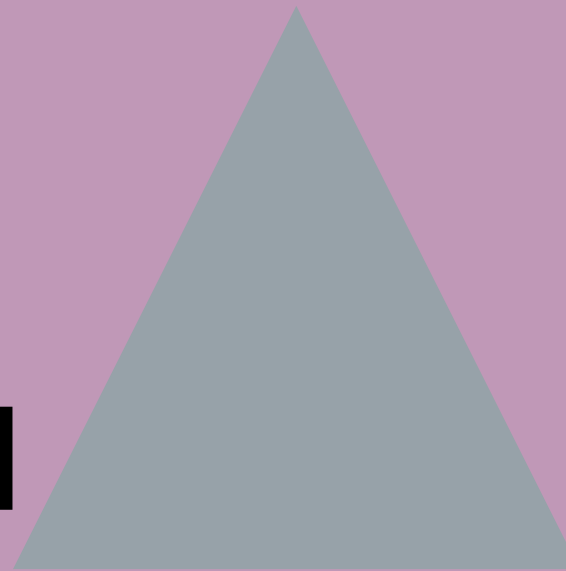
- Building a sustainable community to deliver and develop *Bylines Cymru* is a key next step. We need to expand our editorial and outreach teams. We also suspect that hierarchical models and roles more common to traditional journalism might not suit our values and the qualities our current community values, especially our drive towards being truly participatory.
- Community and connections matter. Understanding what people want and need from a *Bylines Cymru* community could help us become more sustainable and act on our commitment to inclusion-infusion. However, we need to take steps that are about learning by doing, so that we are putting actions into practice.

## Supporting new writers

We explored how to bring new writers into the *Bylines Cymru* community throughout this project. These insights draw together learning from different parts of the project, especially from writer coaching activities in the lab phase.

1. We've identified some practical quick wins: maintain the new 'about me' form for new writers, produce guidance about different kinds of articles and approaches, and share an active 'ideas wishlist'.
2. A coaching approach like the one tested in this project has real potential to develop new writers and build a broader and more engaged *Bylines Cymru* community. But we cannot of course rely solely on one person to deliver it.
3. *Bylines Cymru*'s strengths include its flexibility in terms of article style and content, as well as the editorial support it offers. This should be a selling point that can encourage new and developing writers, for example, as a 'practice ground'. But we need to understand more about how readers feel about this.
4. Relationships matter: being asked to write by someone in your network, building a relationship with the Editor-in-Chief, even connecting with other writers. But investing in relationships takes time on both sides.
5. People need to feel that their ideas are valid, that they have 'permission' to write, and that their voice matters. This needs to happen through positive human connections, not just, for example, social media call-outs.
6. Building a community of writers who can explore and develop their ideas together has real potential for positive change. This goes beyond simple writer-to-writer feedback to creating a space to develop connections, explore differences, constructively challenge, and mutually empower.
7. While it might feel like it takes more time, the value of relational approaches suggests that we should focus on identifying and working with key individuals to build our community, rather than working through established organisations.

# Outcomes and decisions



## What did you learn?

We've learnt so much from this project through talking, thinking, listening, collaborating, and doing. We'll continue to reflect on this learning, and testing assumptions and approaches. But these are the key insights at this moment in time which are shaping our plans for the next stage of our work:

1. In Wales, there is an **appetite** for citizen journalism that operates in a different way to mainstream journalism. It needs to be **independent, participatory, and democratic**. These values should be the foundation for operating models as well as content (story) development.
2. This citizen journalism needs to be more than untrained writers mimicking conventional news outlets: **different kinds of stories, told by different people and in different ways**. This is where the really exciting potential lies.
3. In spite of an appetite for different kinds of news, readers and potential writers often bring **assumptions of what a story 'should' be**. For potential writers, breaking out of this is often really exciting and liberating. We know less about reader responses, and this matters for business development.

4. Getting the **invitation** and **support** right matters. Many people, especially those who experience marginalisation, feel they lack **permission** to write, and need to have their voices and ideas **validated** – even if they're motivated by getting different voices and stories out there.

5. **Community** is key. A **relational approach**, rather than a transactional one, has an important role to play in bringing in and supporting different voices and experimentation with format. We're working on understanding what connections will tie our community together.

We still have plenty to learn, not least about questions generated by this project. Three of our key ongoing areas of enquiry are:

1. What financial models are practical, and align to our vision and values?
2. What technological infrastructure is needed to really support the potential of our model of participatory citizen journalism?
3. How can we better capture and capitalise on the social value that we create?

As we keep working and answering these questions, we want to continue to practise the approaches we've developed through this project: being user-centred, working iteratively, and being open to learning and collaboration wherever possible.

## What would you change?

We'd have loved to work more with organisational partners and community connectors in the lab phase to test the value of this way of working, but it wasn't feasible in the time available.

# What's next?

## In the short term

We've learnt a lot that we'll put into our day-to-day work at *Bylines Cymru*. We've also identified key routes for the next few months that focus on learning, doing, and developing. We're ambitious, but we'll go one step at a time.

### Route 1: Community building – participatory in practice

— We'll share and explore what we've learnt in open sessions with anyone interested in Wales, in a citizen or a professional capacity. Our current plan is for two sessions: one to share and discuss findings, and one for people who want to engage more with the 'so what?' and 'what next?' We want to identify key allies and potential contributors.

— We'll work to make *Bylines Cymru* better known.

— We'll put into practice the work we've done on roles and functions in our community, including 'community connectors' and 'story seekers'.

### Route 2: Community building – writers and readers

— We want to explore what we've learnt about how participating in citizen journalism – especially when supported through accessible and responsive coaching and mentoring – can support civic participation in Wales. We want to learn more about how it can underpin personal and social empowerment, build transformative connections and conversations, and how we can capture that in a sustainable model.

— We'll build on what we've learnt from engaging with writers and potential writers, continuing to hone our understanding of what different people need to become citizen journalists. This may include:

- Writer-to-writer story development sessions
- Opening a 'story wishlist' for anyone to add to
- Rolling out new guidance materials, continuing to test and learn
- Extending and expanding (if resources allow) our writer coaching programme, including the potential to train and support writers themselves to be coaches and mentors
- We'll keep exploring ways of learning more about who our readers are and what they want from us.

### Route 3: Finance and capacity

— We'll continue to explore potential financial models and link these to our road map. This will include exploring social value-focused approaches as well as more commercial models, including looking more deeply into how the other public interest news enterprises we discovered through this project approach funding and sustainability.

— It's clear that we can't do more without more capacity. We'll look at ways of funding the core capacity we need in our team including writer support, platform management, community development, outreach, fundraising, and steering work.



# In the longer term

We're keen not to put the cart before the horse when it comes to long-term plans and want to continue being user-centred, listening hard and testing our assumptions.

Having said that, this project has also generated a host of longer-term ideas that have made us really excited about the potential for delivering participatory citizen journalism in Wales in new ways. These include:

- Building a model of participatory citizen journalism in Wales that connects and empowers marginalised individuals and groups with a clear through-line to positive social change and cohesion. This includes looking at tech-based options for creating connections and understanding impacts.
- Building relationships with and learning from other citizen journalism and public interest news projects in the UK and around the world, perhaps including innovative and tech-based funded project collaboration.
- Creating both online and physical spaces for 'drop-in journalism' in Wales, including events and training. (The Greater Govanhill ['community newsroom'](#) offers inspiration for this approach at a hyperlocal level).
- Maximising and deepening the value and impact of individual stories and themes of interest by developing technology to create supplementary and accessible content alongside the *Bylines Cymru* website. (The *New Yorker* did this with its [New Yorker Presents](#) collage-style documentary series, creating opportunities for filmmakers, illustrators, animators, photographers, writers, and performers, and for them to work collaboratively).
- Building and connecting a local, national, and international community around participatory citizen journalism by holding the world's first citizen journalism festival, here in Wales.



# Appendices

The following items are not publicly available. Please contact [editor@bylines.cymru](mailto:editor@bylines.cymru) for more information.

- Conversations Report
- Reader and Writer Survey Report
- Citizen Journalism Examples Audit



## Project participants

Organisations represented in the conversations with experts:

BExcellence  
Building Communities Trust  
Bylines Network  
Co-Production Network for Wales  
Golwg  
Greater Govanhill  
Inclusive Journalism Cymru  
Now In A Minute  
People's Voice Media  
Scottish Beacon  
Tylorstown Welfare Hall

Conversation participants often drew on many different aspects of their experience including their current professional roles, experience as writers, and experiences of being from different groups or other aspects of their identities.

The project also engaged with:

- Current *Bylines Cymru* writers
- Current *Bylines Cymru* readers
- A small number of people interested in participating in citizen journalism
- A small number of people not engaged with *Bylines Cymru* and / or currently interested in writing for us
- Members of People Speak Up's Story Care and Share group in Llanelli

# Glossary

## Citizen journalism

News reporting and other stories – which can include interviews, memoir, reviews, campaigning, features, and creative non-fiction – researched and written by people who don't have a background / experience of traditional journalism within legacy media.

## Co-production

Co-production is when professionals work in partnership with people who have lived experience, to develop solutions to challenges in public services and communities.

## Community development

Work that seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills and knowledge needed to effect positive change within their communities, often but not always through forming social groups working towards a common agenda. "Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action." (Kenny & Connors, 2017).

## Editor-in-Chief

A publication's editorial leader with final responsibility for its operations and policies, including content, working practices, overall direction and vision, consistency, identity, and standards.

## Inclusion / infusion

Inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

The Welsh project BExcellence, a participant in our project, prefers the term 'infusion' as it spurs a more power-balanced and equality-focused model: "Inclusion says to me this is our place and we invite you, which also means you can be uninvited. I always say infusion."

## Marginalised

We have used the term 'marginalised' to express different individuals, groups, and communities who face particular structural barriers. The definition used by UKAid is helpful: "Marginalisation describes both a process, and a condition, that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life. As a condition, it can prevent individuals from actively participating. There is a multidimensional aspect, with social, economic, and political barriers all contributing to the marginalisation of an individual or group of individuals. People can be marginalised due to multiple factors: sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, displacement, conflict, or disability. Poverty is both a consequence and a cause of being marginalised."

## Participatory

Participatory approaches involve the people who are affected by a problem, or who will be affected by an action or solution, in the problem solving and design process. They favour authentic engagement, shared power, and collaborative processes.