

## **West Leeds Dispatch**

### **Freelance project management/business development support**

We are so excited that the National Lottery is supporting our bid to promote community journalism through the West Leeds Dispatch (WLD), but we need help!

Our aim is to deliver a volunteer-led online and print publication which reaches the communities of West Leeds and involves them in community journalism, offering training and support for them to do that.

The Lottery funding we have secured will fund (among other things) freelance support to help manage the three-year project and develop the WLD through sponsorship, securing grants and leading in other fund-raising activities.

We know this sounds like a tall order, and it may be that we commission this support from more than one person, or even a team. Our main focus is on finding a freelancer(s) with a passion for community journalism and reaching out to communities. You need to have knowledge and expertise in strategy and project planning and have experience in fundraising and sponsorship. You will also need to be familiar with finance systems and processes.

We will be revising our existing business plan so you'll help us draft and deliver a business and project plan to secure sponsorship and other funding, as well as support the production and distribution of the print editions, which will include securing advertising. You'll also help us design the community reporter training programme, which we deliver ourselves.

The work includes:

- Working with the Project Team (our editor, chair, director and finance lead) and Board to help draft the revenue and commercial strategies. This would include drawing up a project plan with milestones and project deliverables
- Developing the WLD supporters' scheme. We already have a nucleus of supporters who make monthly payments through Patreon and Steady, we want you to build on this by contacting existing and potential new subscribers, so you'll need to be comfortable making calls and asking for support.
- Revenue-raising through sponsorship and advertising. We want you to develop and promote a suite of sponsorship packages which can be offered to businesses, organisations and interested individuals to support both the online and print versions.
- Knowledge of sources to access grants and funding. Over our six years we have benefitted from grants which we have applied for, we would expect you to know where to find future funding and to write bids and/or help us apply.
- Overseeing the financial function, including establishing a robust bookkeeping function with our accountants. We will be commissioning QuickBooks and support for its use from WYCAS (West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service). Our Project Team and Board will be trained to use it, but we'll need you to oversee our income and expenditure, ensuring financial reports are made to the Board and the finance sub-group
- Administration duties. We are a very small social enterprise run mostly by volunteers, so you will need to help with project administration, for example writing minutes and arranging your own meetings. This isn't a major part of the role.

We expect this role to be funded at £15,000 a year for three years. The Lottery is fully funding the first year with a £3,000 cumulative reduction for each of the following two years. The purpose of this

role is to generate income for the West Leeds Dispatch by the means outlined above, which includes the £9,000 difference for this role so that when the Lottery project ends, this role will be self-funding and income streams will be in place.

If you share our vision to support community journalism in West Leeds, have experience in fundraising, project management and business planning and think you can help us, drop us an email to [chair@westleedsdispatch.com](mailto:chair@westleedsdispatch.com) before noon on June 1 telling us, in no more than 500 words, what you've achieved in these areas and what you can do for us, along with your current CV. Please provide contact details of two people you've worked for who will be able to provide references for you. One of these should be your current/most recent employer.

Below is further information, if you want to ask more, contact us on the same email.

### **About us**

West Leeds Dispatch (WLD) is an online community news resource for and about the West Leeds area, it is overseen by West Leeds Community Media (WLCM), a company limited by guarantee, on a voluntary basis involving local people. It was started in 2015 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers led by former Guardian journalist John Baron, with the aim of making news more accessible to local communities and involving those communities in its delivery.

The patch covered by the WLD is an area of Leeds which includes the wards of:

- Armley
- Bramley
- Calverley
- Farsley
- Farnley
- Kirkstall
- Pudsey
- Stanningley
- Wortley

WLCM is a registered member of regulatory body IMPRESS and a founding member of the Independent Community News Network, which represents independent organisations across the country. We helped establish the first Public Interest News Foundation.

Since our site was launched, there have been more than seven million page views, we currently publish more than 25 stories a week. To enable us to do that, we have recruited, trained and supported more than 30 [community reporters](#) from many different backgrounds, who have helped tell the stories. In response to requests from readers, we also published a free print edition, which was 'sold out' within a couple of weeks.

The WLD has helped raise awareness connect people to different community organisations, events and activities. We are keen to empower communities with a voice, ensuring they are better informed and can contribute to what is happening locally and engage in democratic decision-making.

As well as publishing online news, we have held regular community news cafes, offering West Leeds residents the opportunity to meet and discuss local events and issues, suggest content, pitch articles, and become community reporters. Participants of the news cafes said they would benefit further from support and training, eg podcasting, writing and interview skills. To help us deliver this, we applied to Awards for All and were successful. With this funding, we piloted community reporters' training during 2019 drawing on the strength-based assets of the community and to further develop a wider community participatory/involvement in distributing local community news across West Leeds via the West Leeds Dispatch.

Community reporters have contributed more than 500 articles, focussing on more than 100 different community groups and initiatives in West Leeds including:

- Local news
- Campaigns
- Local initiatives

- History
- Sport
- Events

One of the aims of our bid is to increase the diversity of our community reporter cohort to reach more communities in West Leeds. We believe that the cafes and community reporter training also offer wider opportunities to empower disenfranchised communities with a voice and create more confident individuals who can contribute to the WLD.

During 2017 we launched the [Good Egg Award](#) to recognise local people who have made a positive contribution to their community, local businesses donated prizes. We had dozens of nominations highlighting the fantastic work of some incredible people in the community and celebrated with a small event. These awards brought the area's volunteering and community spirit to the forefront.

We believe that WLD reflects the diverse community in which it serves and has become the community news anchor for many people across West Leeds.

### **How we are run/governed**

We are a social enterprise company limited by guarantee. Our board currently has eight members who are all from the local community. They have a mixture of public, not-for-profit, private and third sector experience, with skills and experience including:

- Senior management in public, private and third sectors
- Journalism
- Community development
- Community engagement
- Marketing
- Event management
- Public relations
- Financial management
- Corporate governance

John Baron, our editor has 26 years' experience in journalism. He has worked for a number of local newspapers in roles ranging from reporter and sub-editor to deputy chief sub, web editor, acting deputy editor and acting editor.

He wrote for The Guardian as part of its experimental Local Project to produce online local news (Guardian in the North) and was course leader on the pioneering Journalism and Digital Media BA (Hons) at Hull School of Art and Design, which looked to widen participation in both Higher Education and journalism. He has also lectured on the prestigious Journalism Masters course at Sheffield University. He has previously worked in community development for Health For All.

The Chair, Anne Akers, is a former journalist on weekly and evening newspapers. She has worked in senior management in the NHS, including as Secretary to the Board as well as organisational leadership for communications and engagement.

### **Why we are looking for someone to develop business**

The WLD has grown in popularity, which has put a great strain on our volunteers, particularly our editor. With our vision to reach more diverse communities through virtual and print coverage, that

will be free to readers, we need regular income. Part of the Lottery funding will pay for expertise and support to help us secure this income and have a viable business model for the future.

### **Our Lottery funding**

We will receive just over £112,000 over three years, this is to deliver a volunteer-led online and print community news resource.

Over three years the West Leeds Dispatch will maximise people's skills within the community. This will draw on the collective resources, abilities, knowledge, social networks, and other community resources to help ensure that the WLD have regular local news stories to share with others through the development of their community reporters' team.

As a result, we will have:

- Increased the sharing of community news
- Increased engagement of the local community, reducing social isolation
- Engaged more community reporters
- Increased local participation in community activities particularly in hard-to-reach areas and populations

The community reporters' scheme will increase the skills and knowledge they gain including communications and writing which are transferable and beneficial and can lead to future employment opportunities.

WLCM aim to offer training to upskill people to support the senior team in their role(s) and refresher courses for community reporters and board members. We will also seek to identify further opportunities for accredited learning.

WLCM also aim to train up to 80 additional community reporters over duration of the funding, offering 60 sessions of training. WLCM and the WLD will maintain flexible approaches to exploring new opportunities and developing new partnerships. They will invest time and energy to manage existing relationships and build new relationships with donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries within their communities.

The funding will cover:

- Editorial, business development and bookkeeping support
- Print editions
- Training for community reporters

### **What sort of person are we looking for?**

That's a very good question, we're not sure, as we've never done this before! We know we need business development expertise, and someone with drive and commitment to help our enterprise become sustainable. We also need someone with good people skills who is able to network and form partnerships in the community. The ideal candidate would also be someone who shares our vision for community journalism, who has a passion for West Leeds and has the vision to help shape and develop their position moving forward.

You'll find yourself working with a friendly, flexible and supportive bunch. We'll support you and provide you with the equipment you'll need to be able to do your job. Above all, we hope you'll have fun!

We haven't specified working hours or times as this is a commission to deliver specific pieces of work. We would expect you to attend board and appropriate sub-group meetings.

### **What happens next**

We are asking people interested in applying for this role to write tell us how you can help us, with examples of what you've achieved, along with your CV, the deadline is noon on 1 June. We hope to hold interviews in person, covid restrictions permitting, failing that, we'll use Zoom.