POWERFUL CITIZEN JOURNALISM

# YOUR VOICE YOUR STORIES

Interested in writing for the first time?

FIND OUT MORE INSIDE

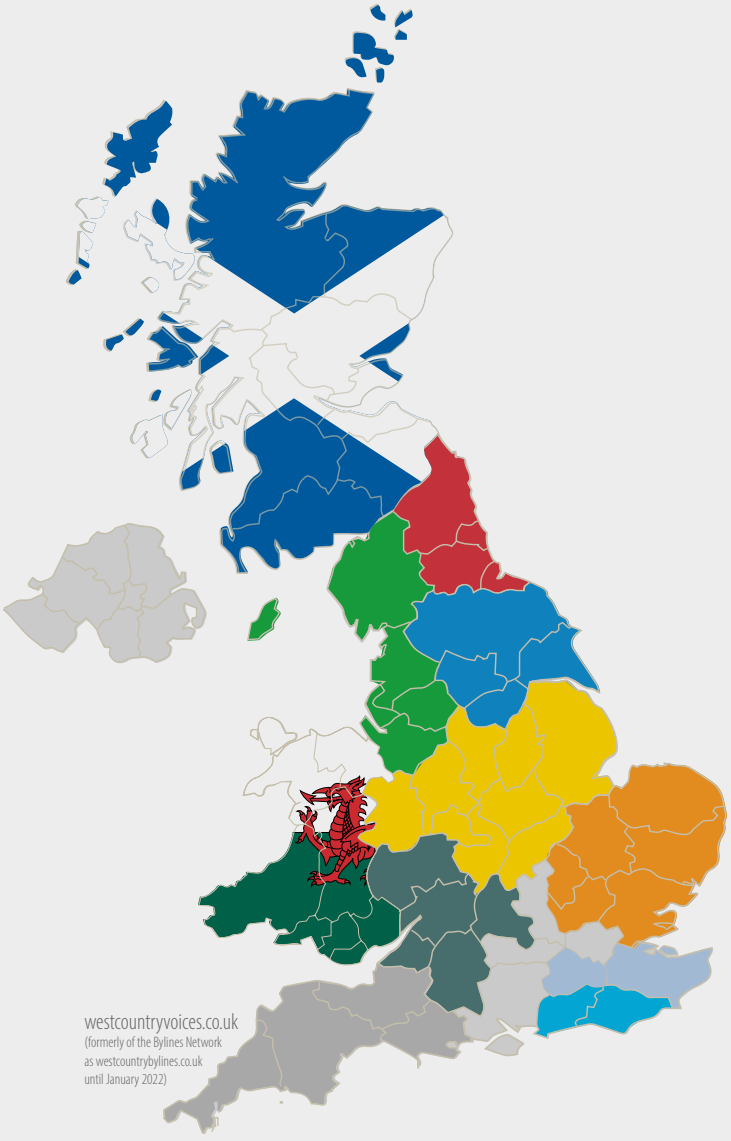
CENTRAL BYLINES

# CENTRAL BYLINES

# Who we are

Central Bylines is part of the Bylines Network, a collection of regional citizen journalism publications. There are 10 non-profit online news publications in the Network, regulated by Impress. At Central Bylines we cover the east and west Midlands, from Lincolnshire to Shropshire.

impress regulated member
publish with integrity

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Social media handles apply only to Threads, Facebook, X, Instagram and Mastodon (mastodon.social). Our preferred social media is Bluesky, where our handles match our domain names.

**From launching in 2020, our sites have been accessed by readers approaching 17 million times.**

*"I joined the online launch meeting for Central Bylines back in 2020. One of Central's founders suggested I write about a migrant rights campaign I was promoting. Pretty soon, there it was online – my first article. I barely had time to think about the lack of confidence that had held me back from writing earlier. I've contributed as a writer and editor ever since. The support from the team has always been there even during times when personal circumstances have meant I've not been able to contribute. If you have something to say then give it a go. The team will be right behind you all the way."*

Mark Vaughan

**The Bylines' aim is to publish well-written, fact-based articles and opinion pieces on subjects that are of interest to people in our area and beyond. We bring local experiences to a global audience and make sense of global events.**

We seek to bring *your* stories to life, bringing together a diverse cross-section of individuals from all walks of life, sharing expertise, knowledge and ideas.

This is made possible by our independence – both from government control and the influence of corporate interests.

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# What exactly is citizen journalism?

**At its heart, citizen journalism is about everyday people writing about the stories that matter most to them and their communities. We work with you to produce articles that reach a high professional standard.**

Citizen journalists are you – and everyone else who has a story to tell. We work with local people, the unheard, the marginalised and anyone with something to say. We help you turn your ideas into strong compelling articles and together we can share it with thousands – sometimes millions of people.

At Central Bylines we believe that everyone has the potential to be a storyteller. You may capture a powerful moment on your phone, write about local heroes or hold those in power accountable. Citizen journalism allows us all to contribute to richer, more diverse news stories.

We're not just passive consumers of news; we're active participants in shaping it. Together, we form an important community to publish the stories that often go unheard. We bring fresh perspectives and real human experiences to the forefront. After all, who better to tell the story of your world than you?

At Central we are passionate about giving you a platform. Your voice matters. Whether it's a village, a town or city; they are Your Stories, it's Your Voice.

*"I have been part of the Central Bylines team since early 2023. I started off 'helping out' but love the team spirit and the quality of the article, so much that I now consider myself an adopted Central Byliner. I help mainly behind the scenes but have contributed an article as well."*

Anna Schurer

*"Writing for Central Bylines is such a positive experience. Whether or not you're already used to writing, the Bylines community will support and encourage you, and you'll have the chance to talk about something close to your heart and enthuse others or get your message over to a wide audience."*

Jenny Kartupelis

# Writing for the first time

Are you frustrated by the word limit on social media? Do you think a topic has been ignored by the mainstream media? Or do you have something to get off your chest? You can write for us at Central Bylines.

We encourage our authors, all of whom are volunteers, to write about the things that energise them. New writers are always welcome and we invite contributions from those with specific areas of expertise as well as contributions from those with differing views and perspectives in order to encourage debate.

We are looking for articles by citizen journalists, not necessarily professionals. We do have professional journalists, but also MPs, academics, campaigners, students – and ordinary people who have something to say. You don't need to be a writer; you just need the passion.

You may feel that you're not a writer, or have never written an article, but we can help – we have a strong team of editors who are ready to help you develop an article, and we send you a writer's guide to give you a framework to work with. We work with you through our editing process – that's what citizen journalism is all about.

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# The path to publication

## write

Contact the editor-in-chief with your idea for an article, who will send you our writers' pack with all the information you need.

Why not take the first step now and tell us what you want to write about?

**editor@centralbylines.co.uk**

## edit

Send in your article to be edited. You'll get the article back and see the edits and comments for you to review.

## review

You can accept or reject edits and add any comments in your review, then send it back to the editor-in-chief. We'll work together and will publish your article only when you approve the final edit.

## proof

Then it goes to our proofing team for a final check.

## image

Our image team will search for a copyright-free cover image for the homepage.

## upload

The upload team then gets your article ready for publication and your article appears on our website.

# Meet the team

**Fran Bryant**
proofing team leader

**Andrew Cooney**
uploader, proofer, author

**Judy Copage**
editor-in-chief

**Mark Cunliffe**
social media, author

**Gemma Gould**
social media, researcher, author

**Jenny Kartupelis**
editor, author

**Fiona Kidd**
editor

**Patsy Kemp**
proofer

**Leah Levy**
editor

**Robert Postings**
editor, author

**Richard Price**
editor, author

**Anna Schurer**
uploader, images

**Paula Searle**
proofer

**Mark Vaughan**
editor, author

**Claire Webb**
proofer

**Liam Whilock**
proofer

**Jayson Winters**
uploader, images, design, author

*"I was first approached from a thread I did on X, (formerly Twitter), asking if I would be interested in turning it into an article. After I got over the initial shock of being asked, of the idea that someone was interested in what I had to say, I took the plunge and sent an email.*

*I was terrified as I had never written an article before but the team at Central were so supportive and friendly from the beginning. They allayed my fears straight away and helped me navigate the process every step of the way. I have now written 23 articles for Central Bylines and have found that I have a passion for it."*

Gemma Gould

# Becoming a writer for Central Bylines – the benefits

You'll be a published writer! You own the copyright and can do whatever you like with it. We only ask that you mention where it was first published.

If you're trying a change of direction, or are a journalism student, you can get plenty of practice and build your experience by writing for us. And that looks good on your CV.

Communities, groups and individuals – everyone – can see their voices amplified. This is about inclusivity, especially for those whose voices aren't heard in mainstream media.

You'll be part of our growing movement for participatory democratic journalism and join a community of writers across the country – the exciting alternative to the mainstream media.

*"I contacted Central Bylines in early January 2025 after an introduction by a friend and sent in a trial article. I've been amazed by the warm welcome, support and energy of the group. I've already been published. I'm buzzing with ideas and already feel I'm making a difference. I would recommend to anyone."*

Gary Gilligan

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*"I first came across Central Bylines from a post on Twitter asking for editors. I had a very warm welcome, and was also asked if I wanted to write. I felt unqualified – I had written a lot before but not journalism. I was pretty nervous when I sent in my first article. What would they think of it? I was soon reassured, the editing process emphasised the positive and constructive criticism allowed me to relax into the editing process. A positive experience!"*

Judy Copage

*"When, as an erstwhile journo, I first encountered Central Bylines I was immediately keen to support the concept of citizen journalism. With democracy creaking globally, it is more important than ever that access to the editing and publishing of impartial writing should be open to all."*

Richard Price

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*"Since I joined the Central Bylines team as an editor, everyone has been incredibly supportive and passionate. They all care deeply about making sure that everyone's voice is heard."*

Leah Levy

Æthelflæd is an obvious feminist icon. There is no glass ceiling she didn't smash or rule book she didn't tear up. But we hold her in high regard too as uniter and defender of our region. She kept it from being subsumed by Wessex and she clawed it back from Danish possession in the north and east.

She established the midsection of England as a powerful and prosperous region in its own right. Here at Central Bylines we regard her as our champion and that is why she sits at our masthead.

Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, we salute you.

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