

*social***streets.**

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/20

FOUNDER'S WELCOME



TABITHA STAPELY
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

“Social Streets is unique. We are a local media outlet that reaches mass audiences while delivering social and economic impact. As a not-for-profit organisation, our charitable objective is to increase participation in local community through the provision of local journalism and media training.”

Welcome to our annual report for the year ending May 2020, a year that saw us building on the growth we saw in the first year of *Roman Road LDN* and the launch of *Lady Lane Market* in partnership with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, before coronavirus disrupted operations in the last quarter.

In July 2019 we were commissioned by the local authority to develop an identity and online presence for *Lady Lane Market*, London's first women-led street market. This was co-funded by the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and City of London as part of a long-term regeneration plan for Petticoat Lane. As part of this digital marketing programme we provided one-to-one

digital training to 15 women with no or low digital skills.

In the autumn of 2019 we teamed up with Spotlight Youth Centre to offer 12 young people a taster of journalism in our Mad About Grime project.

In March 2020 we were due to publish our findings from the research we conducted into the Social Value of Local Journalism the previous year. We had asked 200 readers how local journalism impacted culture, wellbeing, community and the local economy. However due to coronavirus we delayed publishing the findings until July 2020.

Overall this was a particularly strong year for audience growth for *Roman Road LDN* second year, and saw a high of 28,728 monthly users in December 2019. We saw circa 30% of traffic coming from social referrals and 60% from organic.

During coronavirus we saw an unprecedented increase in social media followers and reader enquiries, reflecting the need for support and succour on a peer-to-peer level within the community during the crisis period.

Like many, lockdown has focused our business model. From the very beginning we have focused on developing a reader-funded model rather than rely on advertising revenue. Thanks to this we've weathered the recent storms fairly well compared to other media outlets. Going forward, we'll be investing in our Patron Scheme even more. We'll also be launching our listings service.

In the meantime, thank you to all our supporters, particularly to the 168 Patrons who have committed to donating regular amounts on a monthly basis. We are incredibly grateful and moved by this show of trust in our work. With this type of security we can continue to grow and develop our model of sustainable community journalism.

10 July 2020

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STRATEGY

Social Streets’s mission is to produce content that celebrates the value of community in all its glorious diversity; to develop a model of community journalism that is sustainable even in disadvantaged areas, and to increase the digital footprint and opportunities of local community.

	Strategic pillars	Implementation	Impact
Revenue Drivers	CREATIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To champion local heritage, culture, economy, people and places To explore the meaning and value of community, raising awareness of different voices and points of view To inspire people to engage, connect and get involved (editorial voice leans in) To have a reputation for excellence and integrity - being best not being first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning/Recognition/Reputation Community groups supported Issues tackled BAME representation Connections made Participation prompted Sense of loyalty/trust/pride Thought leadership on community journalism
	AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop local communications networks To facilitate local conversations To continually reach out to minority groups To consult with local community To identify and connect with destination visitors (heritage and culture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of magazine titles No. of subscribers/followers No. of patrons No. of page views/unique users Increase in organic traffic/SERPS Testimonials/satisfaction/consultation Audience as contributor (engagement)
	DIGITAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be the go-to community media partner To be at the forefront of digital innovation in local journalism To improve the digital footprint of local community To develop media and digital services that respond to the need of local community To innovate new packages and services that serve the needs of local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of people trained Improved web presence of local organisations No. of media partnerships Media partner to community Known as pioneers Awards, consultation work
Facilitators	OPERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To nurture key partnerships to drive procurement savings To develop technology that increases community-generated content and reduces in-house resources To apply best practice governance and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost savings in premises Community-generated content Bespoke website platform
	PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop strong relations with community stakeholders To attract talent in the field of journalism, creative media and technology To inspire the next generation to be involved in community journalism To support local talent via our Citizen Journalism Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with community stakeholders Co-production with community stakeholders No. of young people supported No. of regular contributors

ROR!

ROMAN ROAD LONDON



CREATIVITY

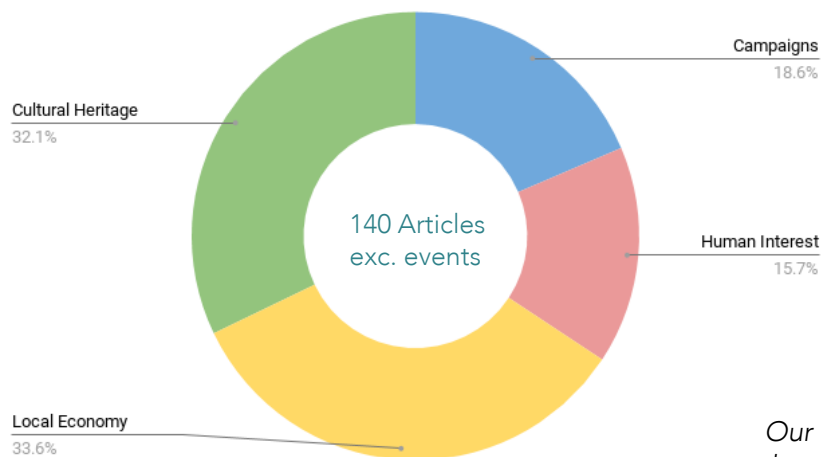
Our creative strategy is to produce high-quality content that supports and strengthens local community, socially and economically, while retaining its journalistic independence, integrity and rigour.

ECONOMIC

CULTURE & HERITAGE

Our culture and heritage content celebrates the unique narrative of place found in our local communities: East End, Suffragettes

Nearly a **third** of our content was dedicated to local culture and heritage. Our most viewed content came from our East End and Cockney content vertical, including a feature on the Krays and heritage features on two pubs. Articles on local cultural attractions including Victoria Park, Rachel Whiteread's house and the fire station were the next most popular.



LOCAL ECONOMY

Social Streets was conceived in response to failing high streets, valuing them as a vital element of community wellbeing. Celebrating the businesses that drive our local economy remains central to our work.

This year, just over a **third** of our content was dedicated to covering local organisations, and this consistently dominated our top ten content. Our most viewed content was our guide to shops that were open for business during lockdown, followed by the opening of new Italian restaurant, Kisses from Nonna.

SOCIAL

CAMPAIGNS

Our distinctive brand of community-led journalism means we cover local planning, development and environmental issues from a grassroots angle.

Nearly a **fifth** of our content was dedicated to local campaigns. The most viewed content this year was the coverage of the Council's Liveable Streets project, a series of schemes to reduce traffic and improve air pollution in Bow. We were the only local publication that published detailed coverage.

HUMAN INTEREST

Our human interest content shares the lived experiences of local people, celebrating diversity and throwing light on issues that threaten the wellbeing of the community, such as mental health, isolation, prejudice and discrimination.

Our human interest stories are not be the most viewed but they are the most remembered - and usually the most liked on social. This year, our most popular human interest stories included a portrait of Grime Gran (later picked up by national newspapers), an interview with the Black Widow, Linda Calvey, and our obituary of Susy Powlesland OBE.

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AUDIENCE

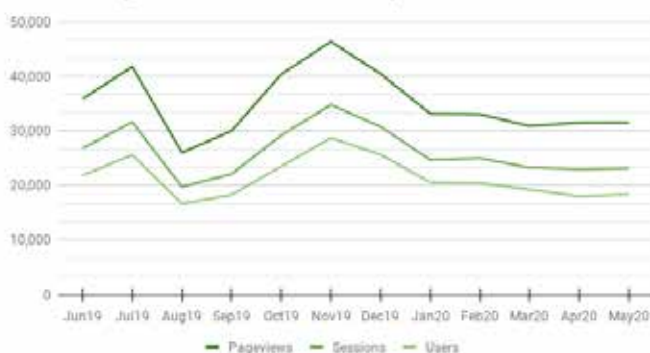
We act on behalf of the community and serve all audiences, providing a platform that reflects the diversity of our local communities and gives a voice to those less heard.

WEBSITE

During 2019-20, **233,775** Unique Users visited the website, up 52% from the previous year in which 121,999 Unique Users had visited the website. The monthly average was 21,417 Unique Users with dips in August and across Christmas when content is paused for the company's annual leave.

Traffic took a nosedive in the last quarter due to coronavirus, but we reached a high of 18,545 Organic Sessions in November 2019, up from 11,327 at the end of the previous accounting year. Organic traffic provided **63%** of traffic, up from 54% the year before.

Website Pageviews, Sessions and Unique Users YE 2020



SUBSCRIBERS

Subscribers receive a weekly email roundup of the week's top stories and upcoming events. Subscribers are the most likely audience to become Patrons.

In 2020 our subscriptions grew by 60% from 3,072 to 5,003. Most of the new subscribers came from the sticky sign-up bar on the website; a smaller percentage from competitions.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We find most of our stories on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It's also where we engage directly with our audiences and drive traffic to our proprietary website.

This year referral traffic from social media platforms accounted for 57,890 website sessions (up from 42,697 the previous year), providing 28% of our total website sessions.

Last year's strong performance on Facebook (which saw an annual increase in followers of 23%) was matched and beaten this year, with a 27% increase to 4938 followers.

However this was outperformed by Instagram where followers grew by 76% from 3,367 to 5,917. This is attributed to a dedicated content strategy for Instagram, distinct from the magazine's other content.

There was an increase in Twitter followers by 12% to 6,706 and engagement during the coronavirus lockdown as readers turned to *Roman Road LDN* for the latest local news and updates.

Social Media Followers YE 2020



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DIGITAL

We are a digital-first publishing house and committed to accelerating digital growth within local community through innovation and education.



LOCAL BUSINESSES

In partnership with London Borough of Tower Hamlets we delivered digital training and marketing programmes to Watney Market and to Lady Lane Market, a new women-led market at Petticoat Lane Markets. We trained a total of 31 small business owners with low digital skills, providing 83 hours of training and creating 58 social media platforms.

LADY LANE MARKET

We provided digital marketing training to 15 market traders as part of our Lady Lane Market initiative, delivering 45 hours of one-to-one training and 10 hours of workshop training. We optimised 34 platforms and created six new logos.

WATNEY MARKET

We trained 16 market traders and businesses at Watney Market, providing 38 hours of training. We opened 24 new platforms and optimised four existing platforms. Eleven participating businesses and market traders had no online presence before our training.

YOUNG PEOPLE

In partnership with Eastside youth centre we delivered Mad About Grime, a digital media course for young people in Bow.

Funded by Action for Bow, the course gave participants a crash course in multimedia publishing, culminating in a press night where participants were given the opportunity to interview local grime legends.

Twelve young people aged 15 to 18 learned basic skills in journalism including research, writing, interviewing and filming.

PEOPLE

As a social enterprise working to strengthen local community, we nurture and develop local talent, and offer a model of community journalism that is co-created by local people.



Intern student from Bishop Challoner School, Edna

CITIZEN JOURNALISM SCHEME

Our Citizen Journalism Scheme ensures our work is not just for but also by the local community. We offer our citizen journalists opportunities to develop media skills and raise the profile of their work. The scheme helps broaden the range and quantity of community content that we produce, allowing in-house staff to focus on more specialist journalism work.

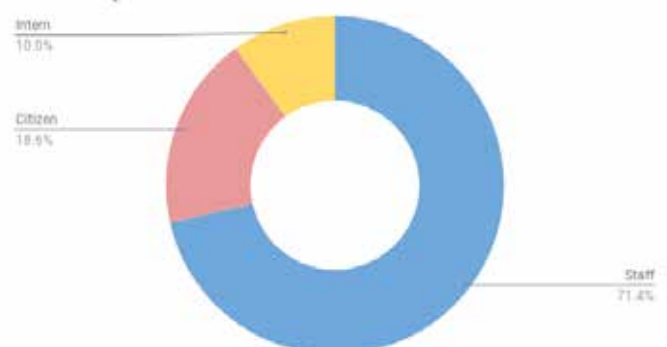
Over the last 12 months, 26 articles were produced by **15** local citizen journalists: Boyan Milouchev, Caitlin Evans, Gem Stokes, Karen Liebenguth, Kata Szabo, Lizzy Mace, Matt Ludlow, Mike Mitchell, Nicola Rushton, Oliver Rowe, Siri Christiansen, Stephen Sinclair, Tabitha Potts, Tom Keeling and Yev Kazzanik.

INTERNSHIPS

We provided a three-month internship to **three** recent graduates: Anna Lezard, Scarlet Hannington and Frankie Lister-Fell.

In the last year we offered work placements to **two** local young people: Edna Banner (16) from Bishop Challoner School and Atifah Chowdhury (15) from Mulberry UTC, who both worked at our Roman Road LDN office for a week.

Content by Resource YE 2020





OPERATIONS

We are committed to developing a model of community journalism that is sustainable in disadvantaged areas. This means deconstructing the publishing process to reduce operational costs.



Roman Road LDN's mascot, Rita the dachshund.

PREMISES

In June 2019 we moved into a small office on the first floor of Abbots Interiors on Roman Road, where we are able to stay rent free in exchange for digital marketing services.

In March 2020, all operations were moved online due to lockdown and all staff worked remotely for the last three months of the financial year.

In 2018, Mulberry UTC provided us with office space at their college on Parnell Road in return for working with their students.

In 2019, we secured premises in an empty shop on the local high street at peppercorn rent of 30% of market rate. We used this to trial Co-Lab, our community work space.

PEOPLE

In February 2020 Natasha Shah joined us as Patrons and Partners Manager. Shah has 15 years experience in branding identity and strategy, and she brings with her extensive knowledge of markets and high streets.

Shah's father started his career on a market in Portobello Road and this has left her with a life-long interest in street markets and high streets. Shah has worked on several high street regeneration projects including Church Street in Islington. Shah is also undertaking an MA in Migration & Diaspora Studies at School of Oriental and African Studies.

Shah will be developing a strategy to help *Roman Road LDN* to increase its Patron donations and business listings, and to create partnerships with local community organisations.

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REVENUE

As a social enterprise working in disadvantaged areas, we want the benefit of high-quality community journalism to be freely available to everyone. This means we will not put our content behind a paywall or membership scheme. The ongoing challenge is to develop multiple revenue streams.

PATRONS

As a community-led organisation we want to be accountable to our readers first; that's why our Patron Scheme was the first revenue model we launched.

By May 2020, income from monthly reader donations was £450 per month after fees, mostly made up of £2 and £4 payments.

First launched in March 2019, the Patron Scheme offers readers the option of donating £2, £4, £8 or £16 per month on an on-going basis.

Given the low unit fees involved, income will be slow to build but we expect this to be one of our main, and most reliable, forms of income by year five.

PARTNERS

We position ourselves as the digital media partner of choice for the local community.

This year we helped the following local organisations leverage our platforms to promote their activities to a local audience within their budget: Greenwich + Docklands International Festival, Roman Road Trust, Roman Road Bow Neighbourhood Forum, Raines School, Extinction Rebellion, Borrow-A-Bag Scheme and the uncovering of the Ayahs' home, a story later picked up by The Guardian.

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

Education

Number of businesses receiving digital training	31
Number of hours of digital training provided	83
Value of digital training provided free-of-cost to local businesses *	£4,150
Number of platforms created or improved	58
Number of young people receiving training	12
<i>Editorial</i>	
Number of young people (aged 15-25) receiving work experience	5
Number of local voluntary editorial contributors	15
Number of editorial features contributed by local volunteer contributors	26
Value of voluntary editorial contributions**	£9,100

* Value based on £50 per hour trainer

** Value based on a feature being worth £350

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FINANCES

COMPANY ACCOUNTS

Turnover	£74,070
Director's remuneration	£8,777
Staff salaries and recruitment costs	£29,145
Depreciation and other amounts written off assets	(£1,955)
Tax	£2,197.55
Profit/(loss)	£11,405

PROCUREMENT SAVINGS

Savings in rent* by exchanging services for rent at Abbotts Flooring for 12 mnths	£7,200
Value of editorial content provided by voluntary contributors	£9,100
Total savings	£16,300

* Based on value of serviced office for four to six people being valued at £600 per month

REVENUE BREAK-DOWN

Donations, <i>Roman Road LDN</i>	£214
Advertorials, <i>Roman Road LDN</i>	£1,835
Grants, <i>Roman Road LDN</i>	£35,500
Sponsorship, <i>Roman Road LDN</i>	-
Training, Social Streets	£21,120
Consultancy, Social Streets	£1,600
Services, Social Streets	£340
Total revenue	£60,609