Brief for applicants

Chair
Public Interest News Foundation

November 2026

Welcome

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming our next Chair.

The Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) was formed in 2019 as the first charity in the UK to support public interest news - ethical and impartial journalism that informs and empowers the public about the things that matter to all of us. Increasingly, we have focused on the urgent and pressing need for local news. We believe people in every part of the UK should benefit from public interest news that speaks to them, for them and with them.

We are looking for a Chair to lead the next phase of our development as a catalyst for a more sustainable and resilient local news sector in the UK. The vacancy arises after the very sad and sudden death of our highly valued chair, Julius Weinberg, who had played a major role in supporting PINF's growing impact. His legacy means it is an exciting time to join PINF. We are anticipating a significant period of growth having launched our ambitious new 10 year strategy in July 2025 with the aim to regenerate local news in every local authority district by 2035. Our new strategy has three clear strands: a Local News Fund, Local News Campaign and Local News Futures.

As Chair you will work closely with the Executive Director, guiding PINF's strategic development and supporting its financial sustainability whilst championing the vital role of public interest journalism in informing local communities and strengthening democracy.

We are looking for candidates who can demonstrate strategic vision, highly effective interpersonal skills, self-awareness, sound commercial acumen and a collaborative approach to building relationships with our key stakeholders including those in the philanthropic and social investment space. We need someone who brings a good understanding of what good governance looks like and who will bring an inclusive and coaching style to the Board and can get the best out of people whilst also knowing when to bring robust challenge. They must be passionate about our mission, and ambitious for what can be achieved.

The challenges facing local news are real, and democratic imperative to solve them is urgent. But so is the momentum for change. Across the UK, independent publishers, journalists, funders and communities are showing that local news can be collaborative, resilient and rooted in the public interest. New funder networks are forming to support journalism in the public interest. PINF is perfectly positioned to meet the challenge.

If you share a passion to regenerate high-quality local news and are ambitious for PINF's future, we hope you will consider applying.

Jo Adetunji and Polly Curtis, co-chairs (interim)

About us

The Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) is a UK charity supporting independent news providers, championing public interest journalism and developing sustainable local news for communities in the face of significant challenges. Its activities include research, advocacy and fundraising and it works closely with a network of over 120 local, independent, public interest news providers across the UK.

We're a small organisation with ambitious plans, and we support a collaborative network of indie publishers all around the country to best serve their communities with high-quality and highly trusted public interest news.

Local News Fund

PINF is building a Local News Fund to unlock the potential of community-first newsrooms. Emerging 21st century business models are sprouting up across the country. Trailblazing newsrooms such as Greater Govanhill have high-street shopfronts that invite the community in to share their stories, funded by events, coworking spaces and members, while The Bristol Cable is collectively owned and funded by 2,500+ people chipping in for a better city.

With hundreds of communities demanding better news providers, there is capacity for huge growth in the local news sector. We're ready to unlock patient capital to start and scale sustainable newsrooms - in service of our communities and a more resilient democracy.

You can read more about PINF here.

You can read the report of our Local News Commission here.

Our latest accounts can be found here

Our Trustees



Jo Adetunji (Acting Co-Chair)

Executive Editor, Partnerships at The Conversation UK, an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public. Before joining The Conversation UK, Jo worked as a reporter and editor at the Guardian, covering stories from UK knife crime to the Arab Spring. She was also associate editor of the Guardian's Public network, focused on the civil service. She has also written for The Times, The Independent and Telegraph newspapers.



Polly Curtis (Acting Co-Chair)

Polly spent much of her career at the Guardian where she reported on health, social affairs and education, before joining the lobby team as Whitehall Editor, writing about government and policy. She went on to be digital editor of the Guardian, then led newsrooms as Editor-in-Chief at HuffPost UK, a Partner at Tortoise Media and Managing Director at PA Media.

Her book, Behind Closed Doors, an investigation into social services in England, was published by Virago in February 2022 and was a finalist in the Orwell Prize for political writing. In it, she sets a vision for a different way that the state and communities can work together to solve problems. She is now chief executive of the cross party think tank, Demos and serves as a Non-Executive Director of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.



Alison Gow

Alison has worked in journalism for more than 30 years, and has held various roles including newspaper and website editor for Wales on Sunday, Wales Online and the Daily Post. She was Innovations Editor and Audience and Content Director, Audio and Video with Reach plc, specialising in the development and implementation of digital journalism, where she also led the award-winning Laudable Podcasts, an initiative for niche and local news audio.

A former board member and President of the Society of Editors, she was recently awarded a Fellowship of the SoE for contributions to the industry. She currently works as a media consultant and editorial leadership coach.



Isabelle Roughol

Isabelle Roughol is the publisher of investigative newsletter Democracy for Sale and creator of the podcast Broad History. She has been working in the independent media sector since 2020, focused on building sustainable news organisations where people love to work. She was previously executive editor at LinkedIn, where she led the global expansion of the platform's content products and team, and before that a reporter and editor in Cambodia, France and the United States. She holds a bachelor's of journalism from the University of Missouri and a master's of public history from Birkbeck College, University of London. She lives and works in London.



Meera Selva

Chief executive of Internews Europe, a not-for-profit organization which supports independent media and information ecosystems in over 40 countries. She is an experienced journalist who has reported from the field across Europe, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. She is also a senior research associate of the Reuters Institute and an associate fellow of Green Templeton College at the University of Oxford, and co-founder of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network.



James Westhead

Head of Engagement at Better Society Capital, the UK's leading social impact investor with a mission to mobilise more money for positive social impact. He leads on communications, policy and advocacy, and engagement with government, investors and the social sector. Previously James led external relations for the education charity Teach First, helping build it into the country's largest recruiter of graduate teachers. Prior to that, he spent twenty years as a BBC News Correspondent specialising in education, health and social affairs, including two years as the BBC's Washington correspondent.

Responsibilities of the Chair role

Main responsibilities of the Chair

The Chair provides leadership to the PINF Board with prime responsibility for ensuring it has appropriate priorities, structures and governance as well as a supportive and forward-looking culture. The Board is responsible for setting the strategic aims, objectives and direction of PINF, delegating day-to-day management to an executive team led by the Chief Executive, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation. The Chair's main role is to provide clear leadership to the Board, ensuring its effectiveness; to demonstrate an ability to set the Board agenda and lead the other non-executive directors in playing a full role in the development and determination of the organisational strategy.

Leadership

- Provide strategic counsel to the Chief Executive, helping them deliver PINF's vision and objectives while fostering a strong, collaborative relationship;
- Lead the Board, providing clarity of vision to the Board, encouraging all trustees to contribute and ensuring challenge, scrutiny and diversity of perspectives are welcomed;
- Chair quarterly board meetings, including two in-person meetings annually, fostering constructive debate, effective decision-making and strong governance;
- Attend quarterly finance committee meetings, chaired by the Treasurer, contributing to effective scrutiny of the charity's finances.
- Ensure that the organisation promotes diversity and inclusion for all its stakeholders;
- Act as an ambassador for PINF, championing independent local journalism and building influential relationships across policy, media, philanthropy and civil society;
- Ensure that the Board has the necessary and diverse range of skills, expertise and life experiences;
- Guide and oversee the approval of strategic plans and discussions on the strategic development of PIFN, ensuring that the Board has agreed strategic priorities;
- Lead in the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive, support him / her and delegate the day-to-day management of the organisation to the Chief Executive and senior team.

Governance

- Chair effective Board meetings, and ensure that appropriate Board procedures are followed;
- Ensure effective governance and efficient administration of the organisation;
- Ensure policy, financial and regulatory compliance is maintained in all areas of operation and engage the Board in risk identification and management;
- Promote the highest standards of governance, ethics, compliance within the Board and the wider organisation;
- Ensure the Board reviews, scrutinises and evaluates ways of working by PINF;
- Ensure an annual Board effectiveness review is performed and that results from the review are acted on, and oversee the delivery of the Annual Report and Accounts.

Who we are looking for

Your knowledge and experience

The successful candidate will not necessarily have a background in the journalism or charity sectors, but they should be able to demonstrate the following:

- Significant strategic leadership experience gained either in an executive or non-executive capacity in a mission driven organisation.
- An understanding of and commitment to PINF's charitable mission to regenerate local news across the UK.

Skills and abilities

- Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills and has the capacity to command the respect of PINF's key stakeholders, including senior policymakers and funders.
- Sound judgement and is able to take an objective and dispassionate view.
- Strong relationship and alliance building skills with high capacity for self-reflection.

Personal attributes

- Natural diplomat with a tactful style and sound judgement.
- A facilitative and enabling approach to non-executive leadership
- Available and willing to devote the necessary time and effort to the role and have the ability to work well and to high standards with other Trustees, advisers and executive colleagues.

Terms of appointment

Remuneration

All trustee roles, including our Chair, are voluntary with reasonable expenses incurred in fulfilling your duties fully reimbursed.

Location

Hybrid, mostly online with two board meetings per year in central London.

Time Commitment

- There are four board meetings (two of which are in person) a year.
- As Chair you will be expected to convene exceptional board meetings as necessary.
- Attend four finance committee meetings a year (1-2 hours per meeting).
- Hold regular informal/ad hoc discussions and interaction with the CEO.
- Board meetings are held in February, May, August and November.

Term of Appointment

Trustees are asked to serve an initial four-year term and may be re-appointed for a further four years, serving a maximum eight-year term in total.

Conflict of interest

All Trustees – especially the Chair – should avoid any conflict between their personal interests and those of the charity. We therefore ask all candidates to declare any known interests where these may ultimately present conflicts. These may be material conflicts of interest, give rise to a perception of conflict, or present 'optics' considerations.

How to apply

To make an application, please go to https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/public-interest-news-foundation-chair/ and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A covering letter that sets out your motivation for the role and describes the specific experience you can bring to the appointment.

We would also be grateful if you would complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Recruitment timetable

Closing date	Friday 29th January 2027
Final Panel interviews with PINF:	w/c 22nd February 2027