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# **CAN BIG MEDIA DO 'BIG SOCIETY'?**

**A critical case study of commercial,  
convergent hyperlocal news**

**Neil Thurman, Jean-Christophe Pascal, and Paul Bradshaw**

**Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff University, 8-9 September 2011**





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 **localpeople**

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We have sites throughout the UK. Find your nearest site on the map below.



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PICTURES



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[publish](#)



#### Award winning pub throws Charity Poultry Auction event.

It is a busy time for Mark and Emily at The Gaggles of Geese Pub in Buckland Newton near Dorchester.

Story updated by [Dorch\\_People](#), at 13:05 on 27/08/11



#### Bank Holiday Music Event at Dorchester's Maumbury Rings

Dorchester's Maumbury Rings, our very own Roman Amphitheatre is home the annual Music Event this bank holiday Monday.

Story published by [Dorch\\_People](#), at 13:02 on 26/08/11



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### Local Businesses

#### Weatherbury Roofing Ltd

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Dorchester  
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### Latest Stories in Dorchester



Bank Holiday Music Event at  
Dorchester's Maumbury Rings

By [Dorch\\_People](#) at 13:02 on 26/08/11



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## **‘the Big Society’**





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## ‘the Big Society’

- “Personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility” promoted over “state control”
- Devolution of power “from politicians to *people*, from the central to the *local*”

Source: Conservative Party Election Manifesto 2010



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## **‘Local Media Action Plan’**

- Commercially-funded (TV broadcast) model
- “Existing media sector” would play a prominent role
- Encouraged by the removal of “the final local cross-media ownership rules”

Source: DCMS (2011)





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## ‘Big four’ stand to benefit

- *Newsquest, Johnston Press, Trinity Mirror and...*
- *Northcliffe Media*
- whose ‘**Local People**’ network is our case study
- A commercial local news network that leverages economies of scale
- Compared against independent local news websites that have developed without Government support







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## Most Recently Active Discussions

Sort by: Most Recently Active | Latest | Most Replies



In reply to JoeKennel's review  
use some useful descriptive  
This is...

By bluesweetpea at 20:16 on 26/08/11  
0 replies



the Old Ship Inn are looking for  
call Kelly on 01305 264455 or  
<http://tinyurl.com/3tqnad...>

By Dreamatrix at 09:25 on 28/08/11  
0 replies

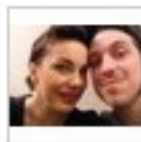


CROSSWAYS TRAVEL GROUP  
Quality coach day tours and holidays picking up in the heart of  
Dorchester and local villages. ...

By CTGCOACH at 19:36 on 25/08/11  
0 replies

## Chippenham People

Click below to see what  
they're saying:



## Latest Stories in Dorchester

Bank Holiday Music Event at  
Dorchester's Maumbury Rings

By Dorch\_People at 13:02 on 26/08/11

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ER !!

is Hardye School,  
ster, GCSE Results Day  
ch\_People at 16:53 on  
11

eat this season, with our  
o Health and Fitness  
in Dorchester  
ch\_People at 21:09 on  
11

ng pub throws Charity  
on event.  
people at 19:10 on 22/08/11

erds of woolly visitors  
ed at The Dorset County  
ch\_People at 18:13 on  
11





## Results: user penetration\*

<b>'Local People' Site</b>	<b>Jan '10</b>	<b>June '11</b>
Dalston	4.6%	14.3%
Dorchester	2.2%	8.7%

\* Registered users as a proportion of local internet population



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## Results: ‘for local people, *by* local people’?

- Vast majority of ‘stories’ written by ‘community publishers’, e.g.:
  - 75% in Chippenham
  - 73% in Dalston
- Comments on stories & discussion posts low:
  - 70-90% news items not generated a single comment
  - 54-81% discussion posts not replied to



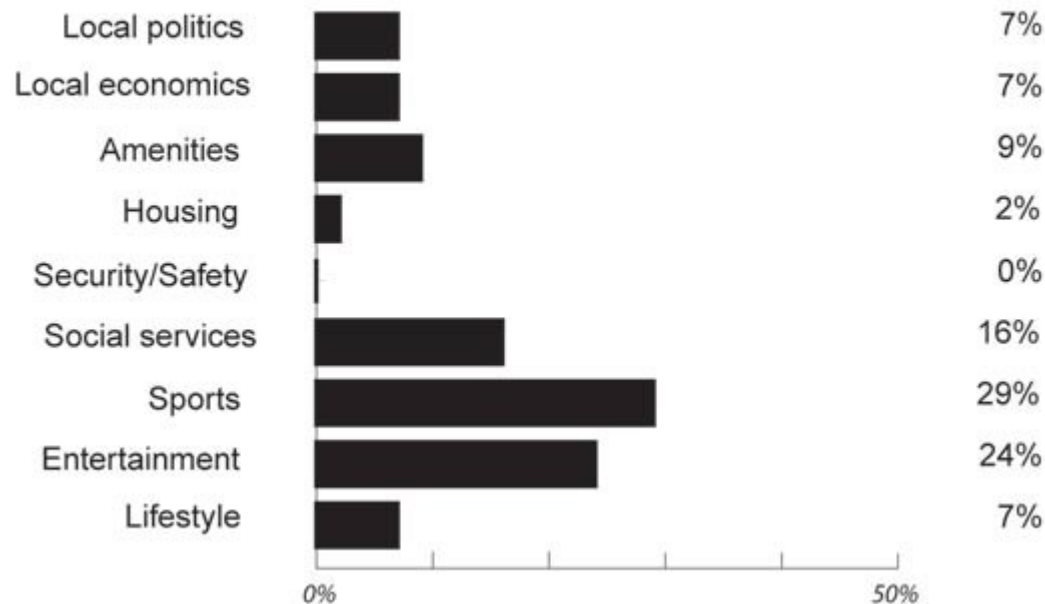


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## Results: The Issues that Matter

- 'Soft news' highly represented ('Entertainment, Sport etc'):

### Dorchester



Analysis of News stories on 'Dorchester People', Dec '09

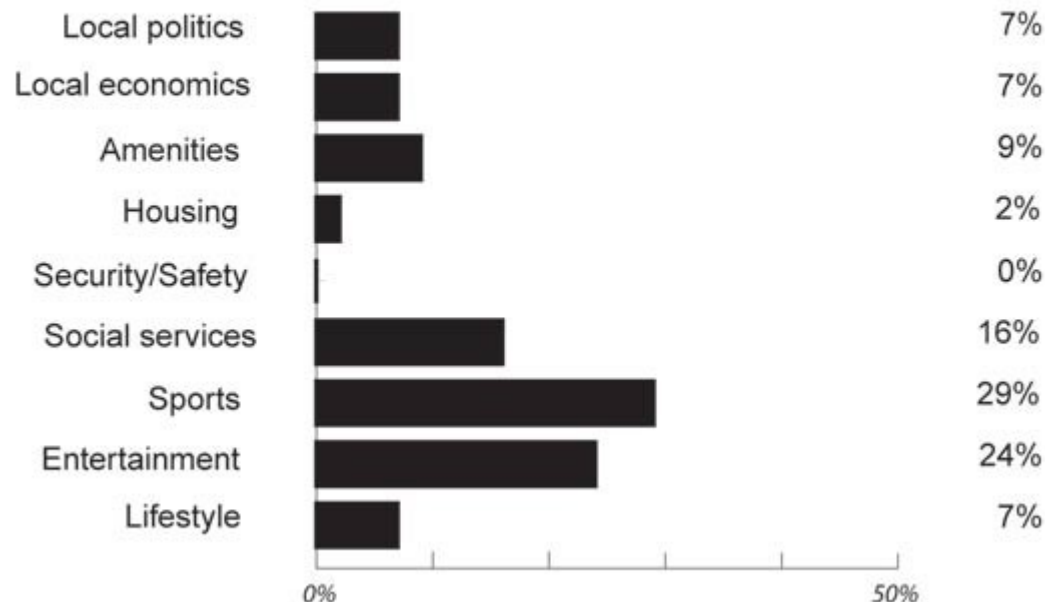


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## Results: Politically engaged?

- 'Politics' stories / discussions featured infrequently:

### Dorchester



Analysis of News stories on 'Dorchester People', Dec '09

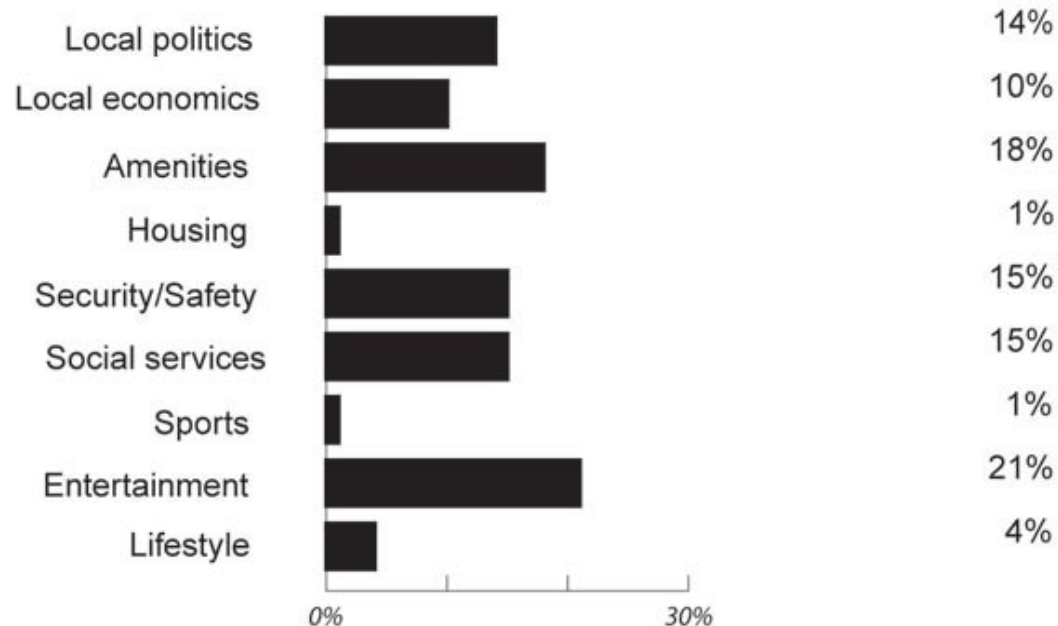


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## Results: The Issues that Matter

- Practical information popular:

### Bideford



Analysis of News stories on 'Bideford People', Dec '09



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## Results: A “local version of Facebook”?

<b>‘Local People’ Site</b>	<b>Registered users with no ‘Linked Local’ (‘Friend’)</b>
Dalston	94%
Dorchester	90%

Analysis of user interaction at four ‘Local People’ sites, Jan 2010







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## Discussion

- Dominance of print paradigm
- Community management not a priority





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BBC - Nick Booth's blog: Tr x Longton South | South of th x

www.longtonsouth.co.uk

Tue, 30 Aug 2011

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# LongtonSouth

South of the A50, Stoke-on-Trent

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**Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Mandate for Change**

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**Fire Safety Reminder for Parents**

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service are reminding parents and guardians to ensure that children...

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**More Stories**

[Witness appeal - incident in Central Forest Park, Stoke-on-Trent](#)

**Community News**

**Longton South Website is Closing Down ! (Re-Posted)**

The Following was originally posted on Saturday 23rd July, but was lost due to...

[Continue](#) [No Comments](#)

**What do you make of these Dresden RA Minutes ? (Re-Posted)**

Item reposted due to Website database corruption. You can read our ex Councillors sour...

[Continue](#) [No Comments](#)

**More Stories**

[LongtonSouth Hosting Company confirm website corruption ;-\(](#)

[LongtonSouth and Eleanor PA](#)

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It's simple, free and only takes 30 seconds!

#### Chippenham People

Click below to see what they're saying:



» Wellnessberatung «



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DISCUSS



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PICTURES



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great way to  
with you/ co

join

It's simple,  
takes 30 se

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Click below to see what  
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RATE IT



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PIC

Tired of the traffic? Cranky at the Council or just loving the locality? What  
view, tell Chippenham here!





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## Summer Drink-Drive Campaign: Wilts Police Test Thousands



By [Lois\\_Avery](#) | Wednesday, July 20, 2011, 17:11

[▶ follow](#)

In Wiltshire and Swindon 3,740 drivers were breath tested as part of the campaign, which ran throughout England and Wales last month. Of those, 94 (2.51 per cent) tested positive.

Seven hundred and twenty drivers under 25 years of age were tested in June with 13 (1.8 per cent) testing positive, significantly lower than the 3.2 per cent last year.

Acting on their suspicions, officers also tested three people believed to be under the influence of drugs whilst driving. But all three tests proved negative.

Inspector Nick Elton, Operations Manager for the Wiltshire Police Road Policing Unit, said: "This has been the most productive summer drink and drug drive campaign to date with the number of breath tests carried out locally having increased since last year, and nearly five fold since 2009.

"The 94 drink drivers who were breathalysed and arrested is still 94 too many and demonstrates that some drivers are still not heeding our advice.

He also thanked the 3,646 motorists who have been stopped and were tested negatively for their co-operation.





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“They say to me: ‘if I write it can I send it to you and then you tidy it up?’”

**- Community Publisher**







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BETA

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This website is here to help people find and run social media surgeries to support their local community and voluntary organisations. If you just want to run one on a voluntary basis get cracking - if you want to run several and find out just how well you're doing then please contact us.

## Find your nearest Social Media Surgery

The more detail you enter the more accurate the results. So if you put 'Sheffield' we will measure from the middle of Sheffield. If you tell us your street name or postcode as well then we can usually be fairly accurate. If you get weird results then add your country to the search. i.e. Sheffield, UK.

There's a Social Media Surgery in...

**Digbeth**



## Coming Up

**Wed 31 August at 5:30pm**  
**Central Birmingham** Social Media Surgery

**Mon 5 September at 5:30pm**  
**Shrewsbury** Social Media Surgery

**Tue 6 September at 5:00pm**  
**Dudley CVS** Social Media Surgery

**Wed 7 September at 5:00pm**  
**Canton** Social Media Surgery

**Tue 13 September at 5:00pm**  
**Nottingham** Social Media Surgery

**Tue 13 September at 6:00pm**  
**Darlington** Social Media Surgery

**Wed 14 September at 6:00pm**  
**Leeds** Social Media Surgery

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As soon as you [sign up](#) you can register



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## Conclusions

- Ability of “existing media sector” to revive local journalism?





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## Conclusions

- Ability of 'existing media sector' to revive local journalism?
- Commercial model unproven





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← → ↻ www.guardian.co.uk/leeds/2011/may/27/signing-off-from-guardian-leeds-the-final-post

guardian.co.uk : guardianlocal

Your search terms... Leeds Search

guardianleeds

Today's weather 15°C 8°C

Go to: Cardiff Go

Local Leeds

Previous

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## Signing off from Guardian Leeds: The final post

\* A big 'thank you' as Guardian Leeds comes to an end  
\* What next?

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The old and the new in Leeds. Time to regenerate I'm afraid Photograph: John Baron/guardian.co.uk



Posted by  
John Baron Friday 27 May  
2011 13.10 BST  
guardian.co.uk



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## Tony Walley

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### Personal Information

First Name

Tony

Home Page

<http://www.pitsnpots.co.uk>

Twitter

@pitsnpots - @Tony\_Walley

Politics



### user login

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Password: \*

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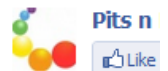
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### author information

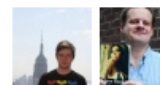
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## Conclusions

- Traditional commercial publishers and independent operators have complementary skills







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## Conclusions

- Traditional commercial publishers and independent operators have complementary skills
- Decisions on future of local media need to be based on solid research





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# THANK YOU

**Neil Thurman, Jean-Christophe Pascal, and Paul Bradshaw**

