

Writing a news story for Nation.Cymru

This document is about the kind of stories Nation.Cymru is looking for. It's important to set out what we are, but also what we aren't.

Nation.Cymru exists to fill a gap in the provision of national news about Wales, in English. Wales is already relatively well served by news about the UK as a whole. There are already a number of commercial local news providers who we don't have any interest in competing with.

We're also not interested in the daily 24/7 grind of news. Any kind of news that can be communicated by press release, such as emergency services news, or responses by political parties, are already well-covered by other media.

The stories we are looking for would therefore ideally be more in-depth, requiring at least one additional interview or revealing information not previously in the public domain.

Although we avoid local news, human interest feature articles are acceptable, particularly when they focus on an individual or individuals who have or are contributing to national issues such as Welsh politics or culture.

Any kind of local story that fits into a national narrative, or is illustrative of a wider national trend, is fine.

Stories are about people

Readers aren't generally interested in reports or measures. But they are interested in strong human-interest stories about real people. If you want to talk about the organ donation law, find someone who has had their life changed by it and tell the story *via* that person.

People will happily read a lot of 'boring' exposition about what the Welsh Assembly does if it is mixed in with a heart-warming story about how a 12-year-old boy met his donor's family.

Think about the kind of posts people will share on Facebook, because that's where a lot of your readers are going to come from.

Be objective

Don't set out to write a news story that pushes a particular agenda.

It is of course impossible to be completely objective. You choose what subject to cover, which facts to include, and how to structure them within the story.

However, you should make every effort to write a truthful, factual account of what took place. Don't include yourself, or your opinion, in the article. If you want to ask a question, find someone who will ask it for you, and quote them.

If you want to write an opinion piece, write an opinion piece. You can be as biased as you like.

Keep it short and snappy

The purpose of a news article is to communicate the facts of the story to the reader in as simple a way as possible:

- Keep sentences short and punchy and paragraphs shorter than three lines in Word.
- Use simple words and avoid jargon.
- Make it clear in the intro what your story is about.
- Include quotes so that the voices of the people in your story are heard
- Only include people in your story who are directly involved in the story

Market your stories

If an article is published and no-one reads it, there was no point writing it. We will publish your work to our followers on Twitter and Facebook, but the personal touch works wonders.

Draw attention to your article online and send it to your friends and anyone else you think may be interested. Publish it in online groups you think may be interested.

Questions to ask yourself before pursuing a story for Nation.Cymru:

Did the events I'm writing about transpire / come to light recently?

Does my story contain information that hasn't already been reported widely by other media, and that wasn't generally known to my readers beforehand?

Do I have strong evidence to back up my story? Do I have an unbiased and trustworthy source?

Is what has happened here new, unusual or unlikely? Would it surprise people?

Is the story about people and how they are affected? Is it an issue relevant to your readers?

Can you explain this story easily to your readers in 500 words or so?

Is there an element of conflict here? Are there two opposing sides who disagree with each other?

Are the people involved likely to give you interesting quotes and information?

Is the story significantly different to others already covered?

Questions to ask yourself before submitting your finished story to Nation.Cymru:

Do I have a short snappy title of five to six words or less that gives the reader a good idea of what this story is all about?

Do I have a one sentence intro paragraph of 28 words or less that is eye-catching and contains the most important information in the story?

Have I avoided going into too much detail in the intro regarding the names and locations of individuals/institutions involved in the story? Have I included them in the second or third paragraph?

Do I get into the quotes quite early in the story – at least by the fifth paragraph? Have I broken up the quotes every three paragraphs or so with some exposition?

Have I included quotes from people directly involved with both sides of the story?

Are the individuals I've quoted people who have been affected/are doing the affecting/experts in the field?

Is the information I've given earlier on in the story backed up by facts later on? Does the story stand up to scrutiny?

Have I avoided mentioning my own opinion, and deleted any adjectives that hint at my opinion?

Have I let the facts and quotes tell the story?

Have I avoided the use of jargon, council-speak, words that the reader may not understand, and words that would bore my readers or put them off reading the rest of the article?

Are all the paragraphs in the story shorter than two lines in Word in terms of length (around 35 words or so)?

Is my story of a decent length, but not too long – between 400 and 800 words or so?

Have I remembered to include the names of everyone quoted or mentioned in the story, their place of work (if relevant) and / or their address?

And finally, have I read over the article to check for any typos or mistakes? Have I put the whole thing through a spellchecker?

- Good luck! Ifan Morgan Jones, Nation.Cymru editor