



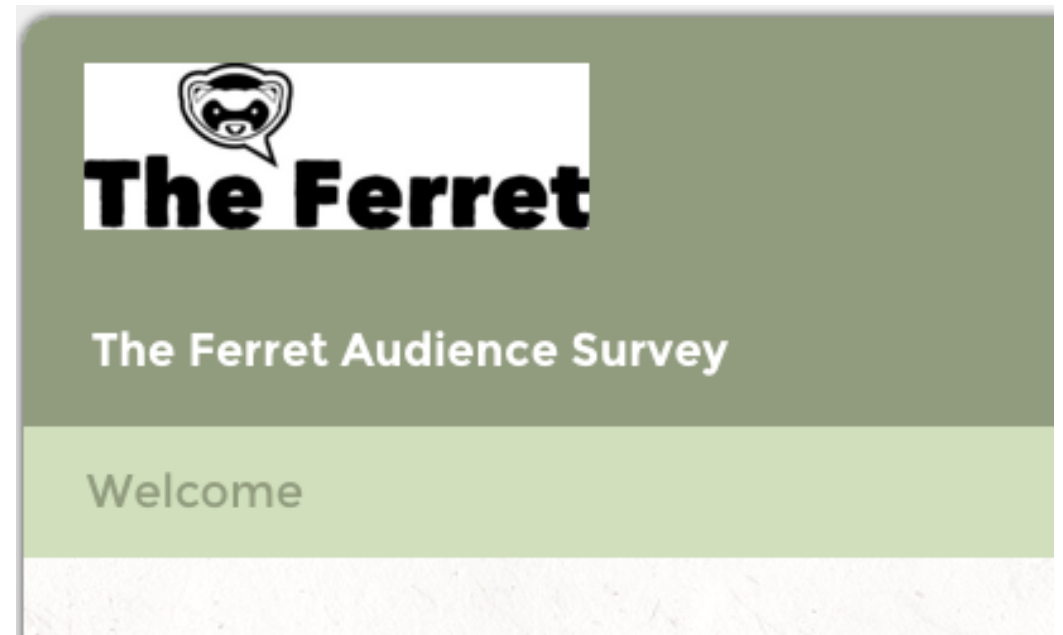
Minding the gap: Untold stories as motivation, meaning and money for investigative journalism

Dr John Price

Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies, University of Sunderland

- How have *untold stories* informed the launch and development of The Ferret – a digital investigative journalism startup?

- Interviews with Ferret journalists
- Survey of Ferret subscribers





The Ferret.scot

The Ferret is Scotland's first investigative journalism platform. Non-aligned and not-for-profit, we are dedicated to nosing up the trousers of power. We will operate as a democratic, locally owned cooperative, beholden to nobody but our readers and writers.



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Arms trade, International
Court rules UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia unlawful

Billy Briggs on June 01, 2019

The UK government broke the law by selling arms to Saudi Arabia, the Court of Appeal says in a landmark ruling.



Education
Calls to reform key school qualifications as pupils fail to progress

James McInerney on June 08, 2019

The Scottish Government is facing fresh calls for reform of key qualifications in secondary schools and colleges after analysis of official data highlighted problems with major subjects.



Environment, Politics
Climate change denier makes big donations to Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt



Crime and Justice, Politics, Society
Expert witness at Scottish neo-Nazi trials warns of more 'lone wolf' attacks

Billy Briggs on June 09, 2019

An expert on neo-Nazi has warned there could be more 'lone wolf' attacks in Scotland when political tensions are high.



Education, Fact check, Politics
Fact check: Jo Swinson's claim on education inequality

Ferret Journalists on June 14, 2019

Ferret Fact Service looks at a claim from Jo Swinson about the different levels of university access in different Scottish areas.



Environment



Arms trade, International, Politics
Concerns over Scottish Enterprise grants to Hong Kong tear gas firm

Billy Briggs on June 08, 2019

Concerns raised with the Scottish Government over its relationship with an arms company that used Hong Kong tear gas apparently used by police during clashes with protesters.



Environment
Revealed: the intensive farms polluting Scotland with ammonia

James Mann on June 09, 2019

Intensive farms are polluting Scotland with increasing amounts of ammonia gas that contribute to millions of deaths worldwide, according to figures from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.



Immigration, Housing and homelessness, Human rights
dozens of asylum seekers will be made

















 **The Ferret**

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[all categories](#) [Categories](#) [Latest](#) [Top](#)

Category	Topics
Stories	2 / week
This category is used for discussion about stories published by The Ferret.	
Ferret stuff	1 / week
Discussion about The Ferret, its organisation, how it works, and how we can improve it.	
Interesting	13
This is a public category for sharing interesting stuff from around the web. Simple.	

Latest	
 Welcome to The Ferret Community Site	0
 Ferret stuff	Now
 Nuclear firm under fire for bid to double reactor cracks	0
 Stories	4h
 Pollution watchdog using polluters to help hire staff	0
 Stories	6h
 Have you got what it takes to launch Scotland's first dedicated fact checking service?	1
 Ferret stuff ferretservice , jobs	5d
 Critics allege 'serious irregularities' with film studio application	0
 Stories	7d
 Port chief denies conflict of interest claims over new firms	0
 Stories	7d
 The Scottish streets poisoned by air pollution	0
 Stories	8d

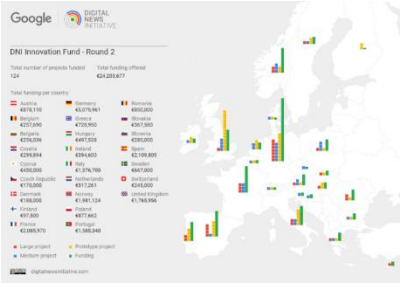


FFS
Ferret Fact Service

Funding The Ferret

Your subscription options

	Monthly Ferret	Annual Ferret	Gold Ferret
Unlimited access to stories	✓	✓	✓
Unlimited access to source material	✓	✓	✓
Exclusive email alerts	✓	✓	✓
Supporters Forum	✓	✓	✓
Transparency reports	✓	✓	✓
Vote on key editorial and management decisions	✓	✓	✓
Full text RSS feed access	✓	✓	✓
Discounted VPN offers	✓	✓	✓
3 extra gift subscriptions to share	✗	✗	✓
Cost	£3 per month Equivalent to £3 per month.	£30 per year Equivalent to £2.50 per month.	From £96 per year Equivalent to £8 per subscription.
	Subscribe	Subscribe	Subscribe



How are they doing?

- More than 1,000 paying subscribers
- Nearly 20,000 Twitter followers
- Pay £110 per day for journalism





Untold stories – story selection

“With everyone’s help and experience, and independent financial backing, we can cover important issues the mainstream media often misses.”

(The Ferret’s mission statement)



Arms trade, International, Politics

Concerns over Scottish Enterprise grants to Hong Kong tear gas firm

Billy Briggs on June 18, 2019

Concerns raised with the Scottish Government over its relationship with an arms company that sold Hong Kong tear gas apparently used by police during clashes with protestors.



Environment

Revealed: the intensive farms polluting Scotland with ammonia

Jamie Mann on June 13, 2019

Intensive farms are polluting Scotland with increasing amounts of ammonia gas that contributes to millions of deaths worldwide, according to figures from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.



Crime and Justice, Human rights

Every prisoner should have the right to vote, say human rights groups

Billy Briggs on June 10, 2019

Every prisoner in Scotland should be given the right to vote in elections, according to an independent penal reform organisation.



Asylum, Housing and homelessness, Human rights

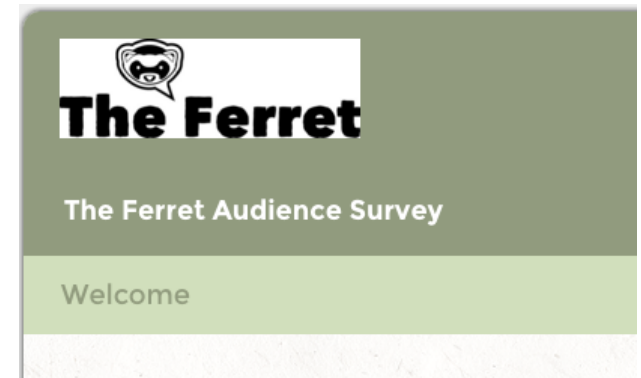
Hundreds of asylum seekers will be made homeless as Serco restarts evictions

Karin Goodwin on June 12, 2019

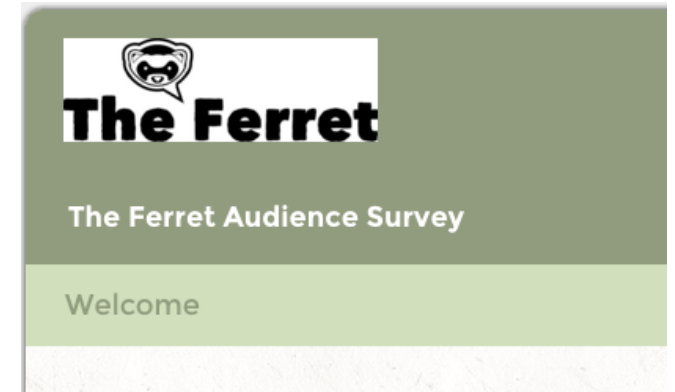
Serco's new lock changes will see about 300 people made homeless across Glasgow within months, with charities claiming they were given no warning.

“I'll be loyal as long as it focuses on untold stories while acting as an antidote to the misinformation propagated by the established media organisations.”

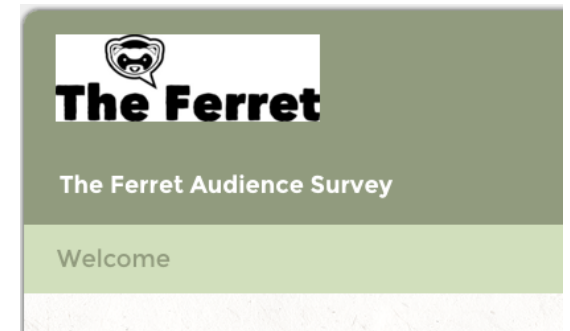
“My reason for subscribing is the range of stories that no one else is covering.”



“We need more exposure of issues impacting on many working class communities so homelessness and housing insecurity, wage and labour exploitation, social care conditions both from worker and tenant perspectives but always - as far as the articles allow - bringing in what is driving the injustice, poor standards, feeling of unaccountability etc.”



“The Ferret needs to cover not spots: If you map out coverage by mainstream media, there are definite sub regions where the 'local media' is achieving nothing and where the lens of larger publications/MSM can't be bothered lingering. Many of these not spots are in rural areas... fast becoming a 'care home' for those that can afford to retire and as young folk leave for urban work in order to live.”



Who are the subscribers?



AGE

58% over 56 – 7% under 35

EDUCATION

87% with degrees - 42% postgrad - 10% doctorates

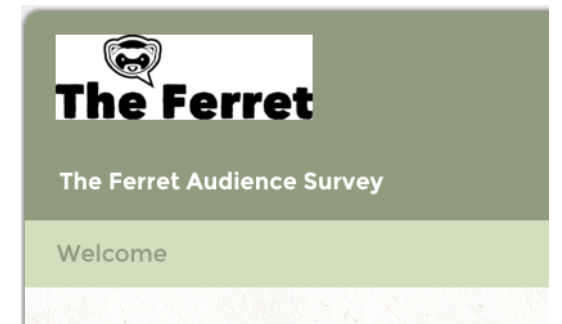
MEDIA

66% purchase national newspaper (majority Guardian/Observer)

POLITICS

37% Green - 30% SNP - 2% Conservative

‘Not surprisingly, most items are of a left-wing or liberal nature. It would be good to see some independent investigation of left-oriented organisations though, as these aren't perfect either. In other words, even more independence and objectivity please.’



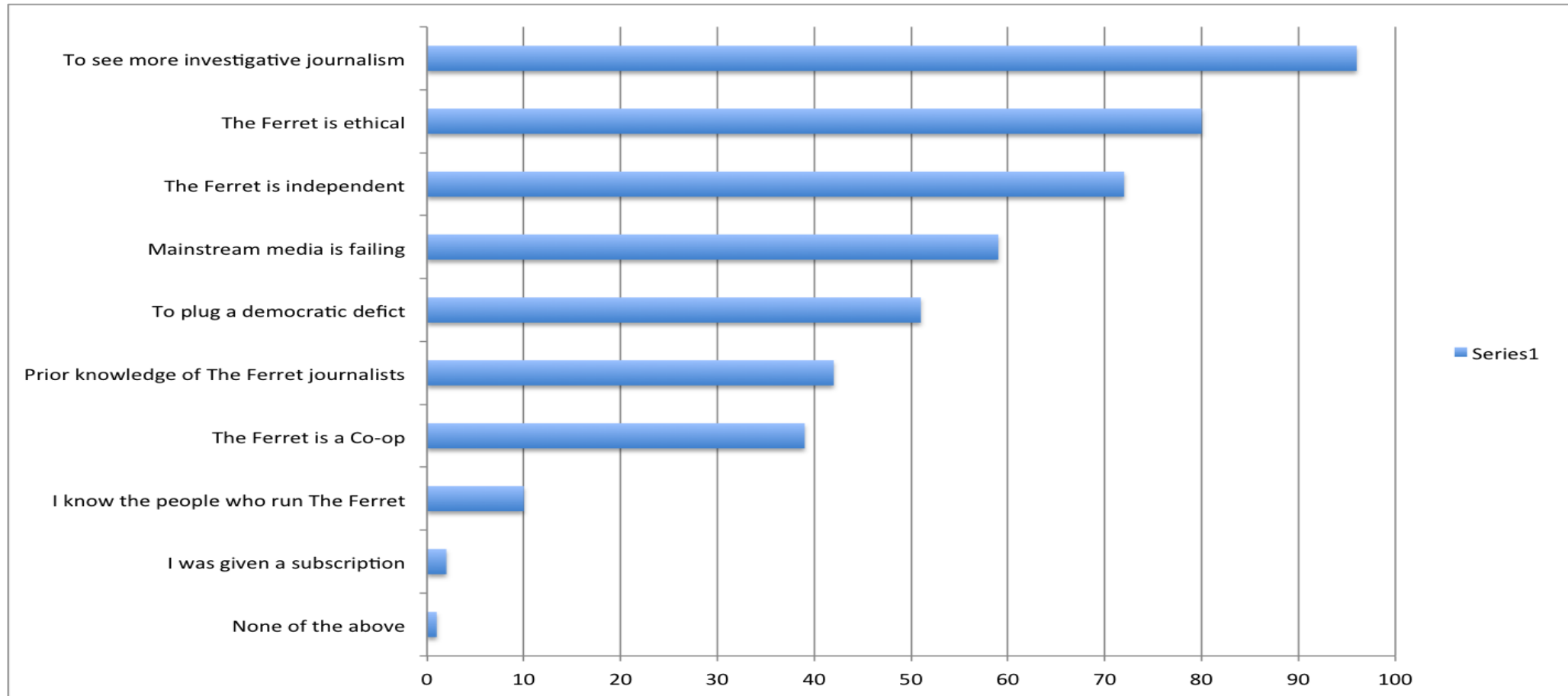
Untold Stories – Investigative Journalism

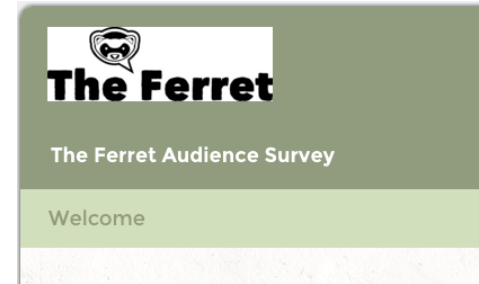
‘Investigative journalism is withering in the mainstream media and that’s important because every democracy needs a 4th estate to hold power to account. Without journalists, not aligned to any power block or base - without them constantly questioning, digging and trying to find out what’s going on, your democracy is weaker. ’

(Rob Edwards, Chair of The Ferret, interview)



Motivations for subscribing (%)





But – challenging...

I think The Ferret requires improved consistency and regularity of output...

The Ferret needs to keep uncovering corruption anywhere in Scotland but particularly in public office.

So far, none of the stories have had very high impact... it needs more high-impact investigations.

‘Members don’t pay to be members because they’re getting exclusive access to something the rest of the public is denied... De Correspondent wants its work to spread freely. It also wants you to become a member. It refuses to grant any contradiction between the two.’

Jay Rosen



Rosen, J (2017) This is what a news organization built on reader trust looks like, NiemanLab, March 28.

Untold stories – journalism ethics

- Transparency
- Co-operative
- Diversity
- Impress



Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Schedule 16 Change Protocol

Appendix 1, Part 2, Small Works and Service Rates

Date: 14 day, September 16, 2

Version: A

	Trade	Inclusive Hourly Rates (£)		
		Mon to Fri (Normal Business Hours)	Saturday (Outside of Normal Business Hours)	Sunday (Outside of Normal Business Hours)
1	Facilities Manager	£ 37.68	£ 56.52	£ 75.36
2	Estates Manager	£ 23.08	£ 34.62	£ 46.16
3	Engineer	£ 35.00	£ 52.50	£ 70.00
4	Engineering Supervisor	£ 35.00	£ 52.50	£ 70.00
5	Supervisor	£ 35.00	£ 52.50	£ 70.00
6	Plumber	£ 28.00	£ 42.00	£ 56.00

Untold stories – journalism ethics

‘The Ferret is partly about trying to answer the ethical crisis facing journalism by coming up with a model that is more trustworthy, more open, in a bid to regain public trust... We want to do things differently, we want to do things more openly and honestly so you can see exactly what we’re doing.’

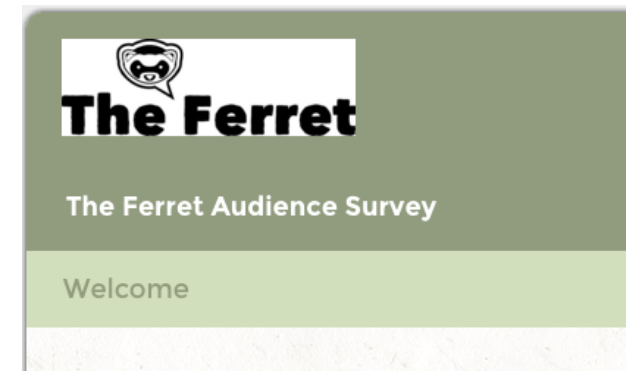
(Rob Edwards, Chair of The Ferret, interview)



Untold stories – journalism ethics

“For me it’s about The Ferret’s openness, its total independent journalism, its ability to let me have a voice.”

“My support is about continuing to see transparency around structure, sources, what money has gone where etc.”



Conclusions / issues

- Audience (and money?) for untold stories (on the left)
- Exclusivity v maximum reach - support for membership model?
- Need to balance quality and quantity
- Importance of telling untold stories in the 'right way'