Coimisiún na Meán

Consultation Document: Shared Island Journalism Funding Scheme

Publication date: 18 November 2026
Closing date: 2 December 2026

This document contains an outline of the Shared Ireland Journalism Scheme:

1. The scheme's Objectives;
2. The parameters of the scheme; and
3. How it will operate.

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The Consultation

This consultation document sets out the broad outline of the Shared Island Journalism Scheme. The purpose of consulting on the scheme document is to elicit the views of stakeholders about the scheme's objectives and parameters. An Coimisiún is now inviting views on the proposed approach to the scheme as part of a targeted stakeholder consultation process. The submissions received in response to this public consultation will inform An Coimisiún's decisions in respect of the final scheme.

How to Make A Submission
An Coimisiún invites you to submit your responses to the consultation questions by 12 noon on 2 December 2026. You can e-mail your response to **simf@cnam.ie**

Postal responses can be submitted to:

Shared Island Journalism Scheme Consultation,
1 Shelbourne Buildings,
Shelbourne Road,
Dublin 4,
D04 NP20.

If you have any queries in relation to this consultation, please e-mail simf@cnam.ie or phone (+353) (0)1 644 1200.

Publication of Submissions
An Coimisiún will share a summary of the submissions received in this consultation with stakeholders after the publication of a final scheme document and subject to the consideration of information that may be deemed of a personal nature, sensitive or given in confidence.

Personal Data
An Coimisiún shall comply with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"), the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other applicable data privacy laws and regulations.

An Coimisiún is obligated and committed to protecting all personal data submitted. An Coimisiún has an appointed Data Protection Officer who is registered with the Data Protection Commission. You can find out more on how An Coimisiún processes personal information in An Coimisiún's published policy at: Data protection & privacy - Coimisiún na Meán.

For this consultative process, An Coimisiún will collect the name, email address and any other personal information that is included in your response. An Coimisiún will not make publicly available your contact details, such as your address, phone number or email.

The information collected will be used only for the purposes of this consultation and for no other purpose.

Confidential Information
It is An Coimisiún's intention to share with other stakeholders a summary of submissions received in response to this consultation. Please provide any confidential information in an annex to a written submission or as an attachment if submitting your submission by e-mail. An Coimisiún will treat confidential information in line with its Consultation Guidelines - Coimisiún na Meán.

Freedom of Information
Information held by An Coimisiún is subject to its obligations under the law, including under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. An Coimisiún will consult you about information you mark as confidential before deciding on any Freedom of Information request received.

Call for Submissions

Respondents are invited to address any or all of the questions below. Submissions are not required to follow the structure of the questionnaire and may comment on any aspect of the draft Shared Island Journalism Scheme. Respondents are encouraged to provide reasons and examples to support their views where possible.

Consultation Questions

Section 1: About You

To help us understand the range of perspectives represented in this consultation, please tell us a little about yourself:

1. Your name.
2. Your email address.
3. If applicable, the name of the organisation or company you represent.
4. Your profession, role, or connection to the media sector.
5. The media platform(s) you work in or engage with (for example: print, broadcasting, online, podcasting, community media or other).

Section 2: Views on the Scheme Objectives
Please refer to Section 3.2 of the Draft Scheme.

The draft Scheme proposes a number of objectives relating to public interest journalism, shared island understanding, quality and trust, cultural exchange, skills development, plurality, Irish-language and Ulster Scots journalism, equality and diversity, and environmental sustainability.

6. To what extent do you believe the proposed objectives are appropriate and relevant for the Shared Island Journalism Scheme?
7. Are there any of the proposed objectives that you particularly support? Please explain why.
8. Are there any objectives that you believe should be amended, clarified, or given greater emphasis? Please explain your views.
9. Are there any additional objectives that you believe should be included in the Scheme? If so, please outline them and explain why.

Section 3: Views on the Scope of the Scheme

Please refer to Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the Draft Scheme.

10. What are your views on the proposed scope of the Scheme, including its focus on public interest journalism and under-reported issues?
11. Do you believe the subject areas proposed in Section 4.2 appropriately reflect the types of journalism that should be supported by the Scheme? Please explain your views.

12. Are there particular themes, issues, communities or areas of reporting that should receive greater emphasis under the Scheme? Please provide examples where possible.
13. Are there any proposed subject areas that should be amended, clarified, or removed? Please explain your reasoning.

Section 4: Views on Eligibility Criteria

Please refer to Sections 4.4 and 4.5 of the Draft Scheme.

14. What are your views on the proposed eligibility criteria for applicants?
15. Are there any eligibility requirements that should be amended, added, or removed? Please explain your recommendations.
16. What news, current affairs or community-interest issues do you consider to be substantially under-reported, at risk of under-reporting, or underserved by existing journalism? Please provide examples where possible.
17. Are there additional sectors, formats or forms of journalism that you believe should be eligible for support under the Scheme, such as photojournalism, video journalism, data journalism or other emerging forms? Please explain your views.
18. What are your views on the proposed requirements regarding public access, archiving and the re-use of funded content?

Section 5: Views on the Operation of the Scheme

Please refer to Sections 5 and 6 of the Draft Scheme.

19. What are your views on the proposed funding arrangements set out in Section 5?
20. What are your views on the proposed application, assessment and award process set out in Section 6?
21. Are there any practical or operational considerations that Coimisiún na Meán should take into account in administering the Scheme?

Section 6: Final Comments

22. Having reviewed the draft Shared Island Journalism Scheme, are there any additional comments, observations or recommendations you would like to make?

1. Foreword

Coimisiún na Meán ("An Coimisiún") is Ireland's statutory media regulator responsible for regulating broadcasters, online media and for supporting media development. An Coimisiún is committed to ensuring a thriving, diverse and creative media landscape and, further to its Media Funding and Development functions, develops and operates funding schemes to support the creation of content that informs and resonates with audiences and which also aim to support the media sector and strengthen its plurality.

The purpose of the Shared Island Journalism Funding Scheme ('the Scheme') is to provide platform-neutral support for the creation of public interest content that is currently underserved. The Scheme is content-focused and may also support relevant skills development and networking initiatives that contribute to the longer-term sustainability of the provision of high-quality public interest journalism. Through this support, the Scheme seeks to increase the volume and diversity of public interest journalism across a wide range of topics and enhance skills and capacity across the sector to help sustain coverage. It will aim to assist media service providers to regularly report on cross border issues, not just in times of crisis. It will also assist media service providers in producing both day-to-day news, current affairs and matters of community interest reporting, as well as investigative, analytical, and in-depth content on issues that are under-reported and or at risk of insufficient coverage.

Cross-platform content and collaborative projects with other regulated media service providers are encouraged under the Scheme.

2. Introduction

The Shared Island initiative was set up in 2020 and aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island, enabling broader collaboration and societal connections, working to build understanding and consensus across all communities and traditions to build consensus on a shared future.

The Shared Island Journalism Scheme ('the Scheme') supports the creation of high-quality public interest journalism, while fostering professional development and collaboration through skills training and network building activities. A key aim is to support and promote ongoing cross-border reporting and collaboration between media organisations across the island of Ireland. The Scheme is operated by An Coimisiún and funded through the Shared Island Media Fund.

The key objectives of the scheme are to support and enhance the vital role of media service providers in providing coverage of news, current affairs and matters of community interest that are currently underserved or at risk of being under-reported and to strengthen the skills, expertise, professional networks and collaborative capacity of journalists and media organisations across the island of Ireland.

In this context, the Scheme aims to support the creation of accessible high-quality public interest journalism on a diverse range of topics of relevance to citizens. It will improve access to trusted reporting on news, current affairs and matters of community interest, with a main focus on issues relating to Northern Ireland, by supporting consistent, thorough and informed coverage. Through this work, the Scheme will contribute to a more informed and engaged public, strengthen connections across media organisations and communities throughout the island, and enhance the capacity and expertise needed to report effectively on matters of shared public interest and mutual concern.

This document sets out the key elements of the Scheme in terms of the role of An Coimisiún, the objectives, scope and the operational processes. An Coimisiún will publish supporting documentation for potential applicants on funding rounds and any associated developments over the lifetime of the Scheme.

3. Role of the Commission

An Coimisiún is responsible for the management of the Scheme, including corporate governance and the disbursement of the funds. The level of funding is agreed further to the Shared Island funding programme and will be available for the two open contestable funding rounds to be operated under this Scheme. The funding allocated covers both the administration of the Scheme and funding grants.

The scheme will be implemented in accordance with State Aid Rules and as set out in the European Commission Decision of December 16, 2025, the funding will only be allocated to public interest journalism projects that provide content for a diversity of Irish audiences, including in the Irish language, and thereby fulfil the public service obligations of the scheme.

3.1 Definition of Public Interest Journalism

The definition of Public Interest Journalism for the purposes of this Scheme is "*journalism with the primary purpose of recording, investigating and explaining issues of public significance in order to engage citizens in public debate and inform democratic decision making at all levels of government*".

In this context, new journalism content that provides additional coverage of news, current affairs and/or matters of community interest based on the Scheme's objectives and that enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding across the island will be considered eligible for support.

3.2 Scheme Objectives

The objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

- **Additional Public Interest Journalism Coverage** To support and enhance the production of new high-quality public interest journalism and content on issues that are substantially under-reported or at risk of under-reporting, including Northern Ireland-related matters, cross-border issues and areas of shared all-island interest, thereby improving citizens' knowledge and understanding of public affairs and contemporary life across the island or the support required for skills training and network building to support and enhance the creation of such additional public interest journalism.
- **Shared Island Understanding** To support journalism that increases public understanding of people, communities, issues and experiences across the island of Ireland, including matters of shared significance, Northern Ireland related matters, cross-border relevance, diverse perspectives and North-South relationships, thereby strengthening informed public discourse and mutual understanding and to support training and network opportunities that builds the foundation for more consistent public interest journalism that will benefit shared island understanding into the future.
- **Quality and Trust** To support high-quality, independent, accurate, fair and trusted public interest journalism in the area of news, current affairs and matters of community interest reporting, particularly at a time when mis- and dis-information and news avoidance present significant challenges to an informed democratic society.
- **Cultural Exchange and Shared Experiences** To support journalism that reflects the diverse and shared cultures, identities, traditions, histories and contemporary experiences of communities across the island of Ireland and promotes greater awareness of matters of mutual interest and relevance including the linguistic traditions and heritage of communities across the island and that encourages collaboration between journalists, media organisations, students and content creators across jurisdictions, platforms and communities on the island of Ireland.
- **Skills and Capacity Building** To build the capacity of journalists, editors and media organisations across the island through collaboration and sharing of knowledge and develop new skills to support the consistent creation of such public interest journalism into the future.

- **Plurality** To encourage and increase the creation of public interest journalism from a diverse range of media organisations, journalists and editorial voices, ensuring audiences have access to a broad spectrum of perspectives and stories.
- **Irish Language/ Ulster Scots** To support the creation and dissemination of high-quality public interest journalism in the Irish language or Ulster Scots, including journalism that reflects the experiences and perspectives of Irish-language or Ulster Scots communities across the island of Ireland.
- **Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** To support a diversity of voices and views in public interest journalism and to fund content that is diverse.
- **Environmental Sustainability** To support and encourage best practice in environmental sustainability in the production and delivery of funded journalism and to encourage reporting that improves public understanding of sustainability-related issues where relevant.

3.3 An Coimisiún's Approach to the implementation of Funding Schemes

There are core values that underpin An Coimisiún's approach to the task of operating a scheme.

An Coimisiún is obligated to be:

- Fair – in our processes, procedures, and decisions;
- Independent – operate impartially;
- Expert – by informing ourselves through engagement, research and a commitment to professional learning;
- Accountable – in our decisions, our governance, and our resources.

4. Scope of Scheme

4.1 Public Interest Journalism

The core aim of the Scheme is to fund comprehensive, professional and publicly accessible news, current affairs and matters of community interest reporting on issues that are under-provided for at present or are at risk of such.

The more the public has access to a wide range of quality news, current affairs and matters of community interest reporting, the better-informed citizens will be on public matters.

The Shared Island Journalism Scheme will support this public interest journalism content on a platform neutral basis that is additional to what is currently being covered and meets the requirements, in terms of standards and availability, including for re-use. (See Section 4.4 Eligibility Criteria below).

4.2 Subject Matter

The Scheme will offer funding support for the creation of additional quality public interest journalism on the following:

- News, current affairs and/or matters of community interest which are substantially under-reported or are at risk of under-reporting, with a focus on Northern Ireland related matters, but also including issues affecting communities across the island of Ireland and matters with a cross-border or all-island dimension. This includes day-today news reporting or longer-form journalism pieces.

This could include reporting on matters which are under-reported on Northern Ireland issues; the impact of public policy; issues affecting rural communities; Irish-language communities; transport; the impact on Ireland of EU and global developments; sustainability; migration; marginalised groups; social and cultural affairs including arts and sports with a news focus; shared social, economic, environmental and cultural challenges across the island of Ireland; issues affecting border communities; matters involving North-South cooperation and relationships; and reporting that enhances public understanding of the diverse experiences, identities, communities and contemporary realities of life across the island of Ireland.

- Particular themes or issues which fall within this ambit.
- Content that explores issues, opportunities and challenges affecting communities across the island of Ireland, including cross-border social, cultural, economic, environmental and public policy matters, and reporting that promotes greater public understanding of diverse experiences, identities and traditions across the island.
- Any of the above content in the Irish or Ulster Scots language.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate why their proposed topic is substantially under-reported or at risk of under-reporting and how the proposed project will enhance public understanding of issues, communities, experiences or perspectives across the island of Ireland.

4.3 Funding of Skills Development and Capacity Building Activities

The Scheme will also support training and professional development initiatives, for example mentoring programmes, journalist exchanges, reporting fellowships, networking events and collaborative projects that build expertise, foster professional relationships and encourage greater cross border collaboration. The aim will be to build stronger working relationships and develop new skills to support the creation of the public interest content in the longer-term.

4.4 Eligibility Criteria

Applications to the Scheme may be submitted by media service providers of news, current affairs and matters of community interest, who must be regulated entities at the time of applying, or by a freelance journalist in partnership with such a media service provider.

The eligibility criteria set the minimum standards which must be achieved in order to be eligible to apply for funding.

a) High-Quality Standards

An Coimisiún will only fund the creation of public interest journalism that demonstrates appropriate editorial expertise, capacity and track-record and membership of the Press Council of Ireland (print and online platforms) or adherence to relevant An Coimisiún standards and Codes of Practice (broadcasting services) or other similar regulatory bodies of media service providers.

b) Public Interest Journalism Commitment

An Coimisiún will expect an applicant to demonstrate a track record of, or a plan for, a sustained commitment to news, current affairs and matters of community interest reporting and public interest journalism and to demonstrate a means to distribute that journalism to the intended audience/s. Grants will be allocated on an island wide basis via an open contestable funding round.

c) Freely Available to the Public

All funded content must be made available to other media outlets and the public free-of-charge no later than seven days after the publication by the grantee, or earlier if the grantee so wishes, and uploaded to the dedicated portal, operated on behalf of An Coimisiún. An Coimisiún will make guidance and other supports available for users, including the standards and requirements for the submission of content, to the portal. In instances where a grantee charges for access to content on their service, such as a paywall or a subscription fee, or imposes a registration requirement, the grantee must ensure that content funded by the Scheme is simultaneously freely available on that platform without restriction.

d) Access

The content funded under this funding scheme will be publicly available and will be accessible to all. Details on the obligations for accessibility of funded content across all platforms will be provided, when available.

e) Exclusions

Funding will not be available to finance:

- Activities not directly related to the creation of the additional public interest journalism and/or the training and networking initiative to build capacity and skills / knowledge to create such content;
- Existing editorial expenditure or subsidise routine editorial operations.
- The purchase of equipment or premises (capital funding);
- Depreciation.

4.5 Long-term Public Access to Funded Content

Public access to public interest journalism funded under the scheme is one of the key objectives and in the longer term, all funded public interest journalism will be available and archived, and publicly accessible to all on a central portal operated on behalf of An Coimisiún.

5. Funding

This section details the approach to funding awards under the Scheme. It also highlights An Coimisiún's obligations under EU State Aid Rules and the obligation on grantees to acknowledge the source of funding.

5.1 Allocation of Funds within the Scheme

Funds will be awarded on an open and contestable basis to applications which meet the eligibility criteria and align with the aims and objectives of the Scheme.

The funding will support proposals that fulfil the thematic content focus and/or skills and networking objectives of the Scheme. Due regard will be also given to creative and innovative proposals under the broad banner of Shared Island news, current affairs and/or matters of community interest coverage, which is substantially not provided for, or under-provided, at present. Collaboration between regulated media service providers is encouraged and will be given due regard. Coverage of such public interest topics not currently provided for will be considered under the Scheme. The plurality of sources will have regard to the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider and in this context, An Coimisiún may take appropriate measures to limit the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider that has a number of media outlets.

5.2 Grant Types

An Coimisiún shall have the flexibility to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate approach to the allocation of funding to grant applicants and has the discretion to award funding, as it sees fit.
In general, An Coimisiún will allocate grants under the Shared Island Journalism Scheme up to 95% of the eligible costs of the proposed project, and for any proposed journalism, this includes directly associated editorial and overhead costs only.

Guidance documentation will be published for each funding round and will include detailed information on the grant award levels and budget templates setting out the permitted costs under the Scheme.

5.3 Obligations Under EU State Aid Rules

An Coimisiún must operate the funding scheme in accordance with the requirements of EU State Aid Rules and are applying the SGEI Decision (EU) 2025/2630. The compliance requirements include full transparency such as the publication of funding awards on Coimisiún na Meán's website and inclusion of the Scheme in a report submitted to the European Commission every two years. The Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment are the lead on this report, and the Department will co-ordinate the return of information from An Coimisiún in this respect.

Further to Article 8 of the SGEI Decision, An Coimisiún must retain all required information regarding a funding award for the both the funding period and subsequently, for 10 years afterwards to ensure that a grant(s) can be inspected by the EC to determine compatibility with the SGEI decision.

The Scheme is intended to address identified gaps in the provision of public interest journalism relating to Northern Ireland matters, cross-border and all-island matters of shared interest and relevance affecting communities across the island. Funding will support the creation and dissemination of journalism that provides a clear public benefit, and which would otherwise be unlikely to be produced, or produced to the same extent, through market mechanisms alone. The Scheme is designed to ensure that funded content is widely accessible, contributes to media plurality and promotes informed public understanding of matters of public interest.

5.4 Funding Rounds

An Coimisiún will allocate funding using a contestable funding rounds system. The number of funding rounds, their timing and the level of funding made available will be determined by An Coimisiún.

5.5 Acknowledgement of Funding

Applicants in receipt of funding from An Coimisiún are contractually required to formally acknowledge this support in a format acceptable to An Coimisiún. An Coimisiún reserves the right to issue applicants with guidelines specifying precise requirements in this regard.

6. Application, Assessment and Awards

This section sets out the approach to the application and assessment process for the scheme and identifies the key principles informing these processes. The primary concern for An Coimisiún is that the application, assessment, and award processes are transparent, equitable and verifiable. An Coimisiún has agreed and operated broad principles in respect of these processes across funding schemes as outlined below. An Coimisiún will make information in relation to the processes and procedures for making applications, the assessment process, contracting and disbursement publicly available.

6.1 The Application Process

An Coimisiún will publish information on funding schemes and will include details on how to make submissions, eligibility information, application timeframes, details of assessment criteria and other supplementary information as deemed appropriate.

6.2 The Assessment Process

The assessment process for the Scheme consists of the following four phases:

6.2.1 Preliminary Assessment

The preliminary evaluation ensures that an applicant is eligible for funding under the scheme. The focus here is to ensure that applicants have met minimum criteria and submitted all required documentation. Any applications that do not pass the preliminary assessment stage are disqualified and are not subject to further consideration.

6.2.2 Qualitative Assessment

Each application is assessed on its own merits by an independent panel of assessors based on assessment criteria set out in An Coimisiún's guidance documentation.

6.2.3 Strategic Assessment

In instances where there are more qualifying applications than funds available, An Coimisiún will have a second evaluation phase. This will focus on achieving a balance in the overall package of funded projects in the context of the scheme objectives. The recommendations from the qualitative phase will also be considered here. Final recommendations are then submitted to the Commissioners for ratification.

6.2.4 Commissioner Ratification

The final stage sees Coimisiún na Meán ratifying the overall package of applications recommended for funding with regard to fulfilling the objectives of the funding round. The decision of the Commissioners is final. Applicants will only be notified of the outcome of their application following the completion of the assessment and ratification process.

6.3 The Award Process

Where An Coimisiún has approved an application for funding the following steps apply:

- An Coimisiún informs the applicant of the decision, setting out any condition(s) attached to the offer. An Coimisiún will make public a list of the funding offers ratified by the Commissioners.
- The successful applicant must confirm their acceptance of the offer of funding and any condition(s) attached thereto by An Coimisiún.
- A successful applicant is required to enter into a contractual agreement with An Coimisiún, on terms to be specified by An Coimisiún. Such terms include a schedule relating to the drawdown of funds by the applicant. Funds are administered by An Coimisiún in accordance with the terms of the contractual agreement.

Where An Coimisiún has rejected an application for funding, applicants are notified individually and provided with feedback on the performance of their application in the assessment process.

An Coimisiún uses a standardised points system to inform the evaluation of applications, and the feedback provided to an applicant.