Robin Whitlock is a freelance journalist based in the South West of England, UK, specializing in environmental issues, particularly climate change and renewable energy. He has been a correspondent for Renewable Energy Magazine since 2011 and has also written for a number of other environmental and clean energy magazines and websites, including Interesting Engineering, Solar Thermal Magazine, Energy & Environmental Management, and Renewable Energy Focus. Other specialist interests include sustainable transport – particularly the coach and bus and rail sectors and green motoring.

British media history began in the 17th century with the “corantos” – periodically distributed bulletins containing scraps of news from the European mainland that was mostly borrowed from similar publications overseas and translated into English. These eight-page newsletters were often censored by royal command according to Andrew Marr, in his semi-autobiographical history of the British media My Trade (2004). The censorship continued after the English Civil War, mainly under the direction of former spy Roger L’Estrange, who was specially appointed by Charles II as the country’s official censor. However, with the retirement of the royal court to Oxford in 1665, in order to escape the Great Plague, the first proper “newspaper,” the Oxford Gazette, appeared. This in turn gave birth to the London Gazette when the court returned to London. By the 1700s, a proper newspaper market had been established in London and thus the British media was born.

As they expanded, the media coverage of a whole range of issues grew. However, for most of their life, the media have often only really featured the environment in the form of various issues directly affecting the health of local populations, such as various agricultural matters, water and air pollution, incidences of plague, and complaints about the emissions of factory chimneys and so forth.

The December 14, 1750, edition of the Edinburgh Courant, for example, mentioned a “contagious distemper, which has raged very much in several villages,” while editions of The Scotsman, from its early years in the 1870s right through to the 1930s and beyond, carried regular local stories of polluted rivers and lakes, including the River Dee in 1891, the Tyne in 1922, Loch Lomond in 1928, the Esk in 1931, and the Whitadder in 1938. In May 1938, The Scotsman also reported complaints from local people about “the pollution of the atmosphere by smoke from
industrial and domestic chimneys” being a risk to health. In essence then, up until the Second World War at least, the environment was only really an issue in circumstances where local people complained about nuisance, usually pollution, with fishermen being particularly vocal where rivers were affected.

Environmental journalism as we know it today was virtually non-existent until the 1960s, stimulated by the publication of books on particular issues such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, but also assisted by its roots in the nature writing of people such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, and John Muir. Although largely delivered in book form, this subsequently gave rise to an environmental discourse in the media largely focused on wildlife conservation, protection of habitats, and so on. In many ways, this “mainstream” aspect of environmentalism has been the major focus of both newspapers and, later, broadcast journalism. It is also the aspect that many on the Right of British politics would prefer the media to focus on, to the exclusion of other, more awkward issues that present a challenge to the status quo, the British “elite,” and to British and international capitalism.

Unfortunately for these critics, and human society in general, human behavior has consequences, for good or ill. It is now beyond doubt that climate change has become the most serious environmental issue facing us today. The Right has continually tried to downplay and deny climate change, but as it has become increasingly an existential concern, even the Right has had to sit up and take notice.

It was this that motivated Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, herself a scientist, to intervene in 1988. “It is possible that we have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself,” she warned in a speech to the Royal Society. Thatcher studied chemistry at school in Oxford, wrote a dissertation on X-ray crystallography of gramicidin just after the Second World War, and subsequently spent four years working at British Xylonite Plastics and in Lyon as an industrial chemist, before she became a politician (Agar, 2011). This gave her an advantage over many other ministers trying to understand the issue.

With that speech, large-scale concern about the environment, as we experience it in the British media today, finally began to grow.

As Anabela Carvalho and Jacquelin Burgess (2005) discuss in great depth in their paper “Cultural Circuits of Climate Change in UK Broadsheet Newspapers, 1985–2003,” the media play a central role in how news of the various challenges and risks to our society is conveyed to the populace at large. This in turn stimulates competition among scientists, politicians, pressure groups, businesses, and media professionals around how best to discuss these issues in the media. Of these various figures, politicians play the most powerful and effective role. It is the task of the media, across a range of issues, not just the environment, to test and challenge perceptions and behavior – “to hold power to account” as the saying often goes – but this can itself be problematic when media outlets themselves have their own particular ideological perspectives. With regard to climate change particularly, many UK mainstream newspapers have in many ways generally tended to underestimate the risk, much to the annoyance of scientists attempting to point out the risks our society now faces. In a related trait, papers have also avoided the question of blame, choosing to avoid criticism of established economic, political, and social norms as potential or actual contributors to the problem.

For a while, Margaret Thatcher’s intervention on climate change disrupted this general trend of understatement and avoidance of blame. It stimulated an increase in media coverage of the issue, as well as a change in tone. Climate change was henceforth presented by the media in general, correctly, as a major threat to human society, citing strong scientific claims and impact scenarios. *The Independent*, for example, had largely ignored climate change previously, but following Thatcher’s speech, the paper began to magnify it, reporting Met Office predictions of
The British experience

“global-scale floods,” and a temperature rise of 5.2 °C over the next 50–100 years. The Times followed suit with headlines such as “Upheaval to climate ‘imminent’” and “Can we stop Britain drowning?”

But this change of tone didn’t last for long. When some publications began to realize the extent of the various political, economic, and social measures that would be necessary to avert the worst effects of climate change, the tone of environmental reporting began to switch back to the “safer” topics of wildlife conservation and agriculture and so forth. Not entirely though. The more conservative papers, such as The Telegraph and The Times, began to challenge the science, even exhibiting outright climate change denialism. A common accusation among Right-leaning papers was that “when challenged by the decision-makers . . . the climatologists lack all proof.”

More left-leaning papers, such as The Guardian, maintained their stance on climate change, while Margaret Thatcher meanwhile continued to frame the debate through 1989 and 1990, for example, in speeches to the United Nations in 1990 in which she warned: “It is life itself that we must battle to preserve,” and that “the challenge for our negotiators is as great as for any disarmament treaty.”

Nevertheless, a clear divide between Left- and Right-leaning papers became evident, a divide that, although lessening, continues today. While The Independent and The Guardian in particular accepted the science, the Right-leaning broadsheets, along with most of the tabloids, scorned environmentalism and dismissed climate change. The general tactic was often to “delegitimize” scientific claims by referring to “sentimentality,” “mysticism,” and “green Stalinism.” In this way, the conservative press remained loyal to free market individualism and the maintenance of existing norms.

However, since the advent of the millennium, it has been the worsening climate situation itself that has tended to influence the conversation in the media. The result has been a noticeable theme of urgency, exacerbated by severe flooding and heat waves. Media outlets have begun to discuss potential “causal links” between extreme weather events and climate change. Nevertheless, a great many climate scientists remain frustrated by the attitudes of certain sections of the media, particularly those outlets aligned to the political right.

“Sadly, it appears that some of these newspapers are now carrying out a cull of writers who choose not to reflect the uninformed prejudices of their editors and proprietors,” British climate scientist Bob Ward wrote in an op-ed in 2016. “Last summer, the environment editor of the Sun, Ben Jackson, left the newspaper and was not replaced. This was the culmination of a slow slide in the newspaper’s coverage of climate change and other environmental problems since James Murdoch left its parent company, News International (now News UK), in the wake of the phone hacking scandal.”

In 2015, the year before Ben Jackson’s departure from The Sun and two days before the COP21 climate talks, The Telegraph fired one of its environmental journalists, Geoffrey Lean, who promptly lambasted the paper, accusing it of “pushing him out” on account of his passionate coverage of climate issues. Despite having a worthy energy correspondent in Emily Gosden for a number of years, before she moved across to The Times (replaced by Jillian Ambrose), The Telegraph has thus attracted controversy over the years, not helped by its employment of the climate change deniers James Delingpole and Christopher Booker as columnists. Delingpole has since left the paper for the right-wing Breitbart website. Booker, whom Guardian journalist and author George Monbiot once described as a “replicant, remotely controlled by an evil genius,” retained his employment until he passed away in July 2019.

For most environmentalists, The Guardian is the paper they will first turn to. The paper’s stance, particularly on climate, carried forward by internationally known environmental journalists, columnists, and authors such as John Vidal, George Monbiot, Leo Hickman, Fiona Harvey,
and Damian Carrington, also won it the SEAL Environmental Journalism Award in 2017. Meanwhile, outside what may be called the “mainstream media,” a thriving online environmental media has emerged with the rise of the Internet. In the vanguard of this wave of Internet environmental reporting are websites such as Business Green, edited by James Murray, and the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), directed by former BBC Science and Environment correspondent Richard Black. A plethora of other websites have now emerged covering the whole range of environmental topics and providing stiff competition to the mainstream print media.

However, things are changing. The rise of online reporting carries new risks for established titles.

“We had far less focus online when I started,” Sarah Robinson says, discussing environmental journalism and journalism generally in fact. “We’d write the paper and then on the Friday we’d put all our stuff online, it would go on throughout the week but it was an afterthought. It can’t be an afterthought now.”

Sarah Robinson was Chief Reporter at the Weston Mercury, the local paper covering Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset. She wasn’t an “environmental journalist” as such, but the environment does feature occasionally as a local issue in the Mercury, particularly since the newspaper adopted Sarah’s idea for a “Cleaner Coastlines” campaign after she approached her editor on the matter. Watching wildlife videos was the instigator for this. After she watched with horror a video in which a turtle swam through the water with plastic straws poking out of its orifices, and consequently thinking about the amount of plastic littering Weston’s beaches during the summer, she realized that something could be done locally to stem the tide of plastic detritus clogging our coastlines and polluting the oceans. Interestingly, almost instantly, the Mercury received a press release from Debbie Apsted of the local “Surfers Against Sewage” group, announcing their own intention to launch a campaign. The two organizations teamed up with North Somerset Council, and the campaign moved swiftly onwards from there.

The Mercury is a typical regional paper, of which there are over 300 across the UK. Although it has pushed the plastic issue into local mainstream discussion, it can’t, ordinarily, afford to specialize on environmental issues. However, increasingly the most pressing issue facing its staff is the same as that facing other journalists who do specialize in the environment.

One of those journalists is Rob Edwards, a freelance journalist with more than 30 years’ experience, having written for a great many well-known publications, including the New Statesman, The Observer, The Mail, The Sunday Times, Scotland on Sunday, the Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald, the Edinburgh Evening News and many others. Since 1999, he has been the environment editor of the Sunday Herald and a correspondent for New Scientist and The Guardian. He cofounded a new investigative journalism platform called The Ferret and has given many talks, chaired conferences, and appeared widely on radio and television, as well as co-authoring three books.

Although Rob cautions that he is more familiar with the situation in Scotland and less familiar with the situation in the UK, the effect of the drift towards online reporting has undoubtedly been the same all over the UK, and for the same reasons.

“In Scotland, environmental journalists have come and gone,” Rob says. “There have been five or six at some point, now there are only two – me and the BBC. That’s not to do with interest in the topic, it’s to do with the fact that newspapers are shrinking. The newspaper industry is in a much worse state now than I’ve ever known it. Newspapers are struggling or dying because of the digital revolution. But there is a blossoming of online digital initiatives, one of which I am very closely involved with called The Ferret in Scotland, which are trying to find a sustainable, economic way of paying for journalism. There’s pluses and minuses there. The digital revolution
The British experience

has swept away many of the old models of journalism and we still haven’t found new ones that we know will work, but there are lots of things that look quite promising, including The Ferret.”

The effect of online competition has made the task of making journalism economically sustainable even more complicated, and environmental journalists certainly aren’t immune from that.

“Like most people in my profession, as time goes on, I am working harder and being paid less,” says Rob. “I think that’s the case with most journalists. That means people are leaving the industry, going to do other things; it means they are having to write more things more quickly. I’ve heard of journalists who are hired by news agencies to write three stories an hour. You can do that, but only by cutting and pasting press releases that you’ve found online. That isn’t journalism, as British investigative journalist Nick Davies has observed, it’s ‘churnalism.’ But that’s very tempting for newspaper proprietors who want to make profits by turning around more copy, faster. So, the challenge I think is maintaining quality, accuracy, and good reporting in an age where the resources to fund such things are declining.”

Alongside the wider question of how journalists generally conduct their business, the role of the environmental journalist has changed over the years as well. As virtually everyone on the planet is now aware, the environmental situation has changed completely since the early years of the media, and therefore so too has the nature of environmental reporting.

“Interest in the topic, I think, has increased hugely,” says Rob. “One looks at The Guardian. I don’t know how many environmental correspondents they have now, but it’s at least five or six people or more that specialize in environmental things, as do a lot of the main big papers. Although in the past, as an environmental journalist, I felt something of an endangered species, these days it is recognized as one of the main topics you have to cover along with industry, economy, foreign policy, or health. Environment is seen by many, not all perhaps, editors as one of the key things they have to cover. When I started off, the idea that pollution from fossil fuels could be changing the climate was seen as the marginal concern of a few eccentrics,” Rob recalls. “Now, it’s a mainstream concern, agreed by most scientists and on which most governments are committed to taking action. That’s been a complete and dramatic change over the years and obviously that means there’s more for environment writers to do.”

Aside from global warming, the role of the environmental journalist might be imagined by the layman as being something rather quaint and twee and romantic. However, it is often far from being that.

“A lot of people say, ‘Environmental journalist, oh that must be good, you must see lots of nice places,’” says Rob. “Actually, you go and see lots of polluted places. One of my first tasks, when I was working for Scotland on Sunday many years ago, was someone ringing me up and saying I should go to this place because a fish farm has been illegally dumping dead fish in a pit in the ground. So, I did. It was very unpleasant. All you had to do to find this pit was to follow your nose. Another job I had to do was to go and see factory-farmed chicken. Like a lot of environmental journalists, I certainly care about the environment, but you spend a lot of time looking at it where it’s been damaged.”

One thing that hasn’t changed that much over the years is the way in which journalists, and many other people perhaps, gravitate towards an interest in the environment. Apart from the current situation in which mainstream media publications are now almost under an obligation to report environmental issues, the major motivating factor remains personal interest, that is to say the impact a particular issue has on a particular individual.

For Sarah Robinson, it was shock at what she saw on television, accompanied by an awareness of the effect of plastic pollution right on her home turf, on the beach and around the streets in Weston-super-Mare.
“In order to write about environmental issues, I think you’ve got to really care about it in the first place,” she says. “I would say I don’t think it comes up a lot in local papers, I think it’s a national issue that can be hard to localize. You’ve got to really dig hard to find local figures and that kind of thing, and to be honest, with understaffed newsrooms it’s not a huge priority. Environmental issues can be seen as quite niche in a way that talking about housing isn’t. Everyone cares about the houses that are being built down the road. As a reporter, I think you’ve got to have a personal interest in it, because if you don’t, you’re not necessarily going to get the clicks and the hits online.”

The Cleaner Coastlines campaign succeeded beyond Sarah’s expectations. The Mercury luckily managed to tap into a national stream of consciousness and concern that was already rising by the time the BBC’s Blue Planet series featured on TV. The paper launched the campaign the weekend before the BBC documentary.

“And then everything exploded,” Sarah says, laughing. “In terms of getting teams of people at a beach clean, that was brilliant, for the first one. Two people with the same idea at the same time and being able to work really closely together. And also, people with very different skillsets, Debbie [Apt to Surfers Against Sewage] is great at going and seeing businesses, and I am great at writing about it, and through the Mercury we get the publicity, and that’s crucial really. Then there’s been a general increase in activity and that kind of thing. I think so much has been happening that we’re not aware of, and I think there are loads of people who have no idea about our campaign, but they are aware of the issues and making their own little changes. You notice things, like when you go to a restaurant where you used to get plastic straws and instead you get given a paper one. The campaign has taken off in a huge way and we’re talking now about how you can keep that going and not just, ‘Hey we got accreditation,’ that’s great but it’s how can we sustain that. We’re very much talking about trying to get more people to take on projects. That very much makes it more of a community project, taking it to another level, making Weston truly plastic-free. I don’t want to downplay what the Mercury does in Weston; it plays a big role and I think the publicity it’s given it has meant we’ve been able to go to businesses and say, ‘We’ll get you coverage and ensure that you’ll get publicized,’ and that’s been a help as well.”

Sarah believes that the main problem with most environmental issues, such as climate change or fracking, is that they can be incredibly complex and that, because of that, most ordinary people believe that it’s not something they can do anything about particularly. But plastic is different, because it’s right there in front of you. And this is the main reason why the Mercury’s Cleaner Coastlines campaign has been so successful.

“I think things like general climate change or global warming, everyone’s aware of it, but feel that it’s out of their control, so while they’re aware of it, you feel ‘I can’t do anything’ and switch off, I think, a little bit,” Sarah says. “With the plastic thing, everyone knows about it. I walk past people in the High Street now and everybody would have some kind of thought on it. People come up to me . . . every single person has an opinion and is very aware of it, and they’re very involved actually, and trying to do something about it. I think that’s why plastic pollution is a popular kind of movement, everyone has got something they think they can do, and can take their own actions and encourage others to do that too. I think that’s a really good thing.”

However, Sarah believes also that one of the main beneficial aspects of the online revolution is that it has increased “shareability,” such that if people hear about seagulls on Steepholm, one of the islets in the Bristol Channel visible from Weston’s beach, being caught up in plastic detritus, they can then say to their friends and neighbors, “Wow, this is shocking, you need to read this, what can we do about it?” Sarah says that social media in particular have introduced a new element, things like polls and graphics, something that has only started to appear over the last two or three years. “That is a big thing, we think about it all the time – what is the headline
The British experience

and what do you put on social media and how do you get the interactions you’re looking for and that kind of thing.”

For Rob Edwards, the motivating factor was something that happened to him when he was a kid – the construction of the M25 orbital ring-road around London in the 1960s. He was living in Chorley Wood at the time. The Government wanted to build the road through the woods behind his house. The road stopped the badgers getting into his back garden, and the project struck him as a very bad idea.

“That’s when it started,” he says. “When I was at university, I got involved with Friends of the Earth and other conservation groups. When I came to Edinburgh in 1977, I was initially involved with the Scottish campaign to resist the atomic menace. So, I’ve taken a very long interest in the environment, in my very early years, teens and 20s, as a campaigner and for the last forty years as a journalist, since the early 80s.”

For Rob then, the motivating factor was something that directly affected him and his life when he was young, and this is the way in which most other people get involved, as Sarah Robinson’s experience also confirms.

“Environmental issues that directly affect people, whether they be housing developments or wind farm developments or big new incinerators or anyone faced with any major new development that’s going to change their view, the wildlife they can see, the parks they can walk in, or the open spaces they can appreciate, that’s the way most people experience environmental awakening,” Rob adds. “Local planning disputes, of which there are hundreds all the time, are the things that get people started caring about the environment. Allied to that, there is a huge, particularly British perhaps, love of animals, wildlife, plant life, which is why environmental groups that protect birds or flowers or animals have huge memberships and huge support. You start worrying about the squirrel in your garden or the rabbits in the field and end up worrying about climate change as you learn and become educated and realize these things are all connected.”

There are a number of routes into the profession. Sarah Robinson took a degree in History at York University and then, not knowing quite what she wanted to do, followed it up with work experience at various papers and magazines. She then did an NCTJ (National Council for the Training of Journalists) general qualification in journalism and subsequently started at the Weston Mercury in February 2013.

Isabella Kaminski had been interested in environmental things for a long time before she became a journalist. She was always interested in where her electricity came from and what happened to her rubbish after she threw it away. Although she started off in journalism by writing about education, she subsequently became freelance and, having realized she could now write about whatever she wanted, started writing about environmental issues, following up stories that interested her personally and then writing about the environment full-time. Her entry into the profession was initially via a master’s in International Journalism at Cardiff University, followed by an NCTJ exam. Her specialty is environmental law and regulation.

Gina Clarke is a freelance journalist who became interested in the environment after attending a conference in Trieste, Italy, when she was 19. The city has a large science park and environmental school and it also helped that Gina’s colleagues were themselves environmental journalists. Gina’s particular interest is energy and the effect of cryptocurrency on the energy sector. With the increasing reduction in staff journalists, many of those who enter or choose to remain in the profession are now freelance. Indeed, the 6,897 registered freelance members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) now account for a significant percent of the membership.

“I would say I moved from becoming a news journalist to a community journalist and then by default an environmental journalist because all communities are concerned about their
environments,” Gina says. “I am so inspired by the video journalism going on today. Blue Planet alone is responsible for so many people recycling more when just years before we thought people’s tolerance of recycling issues was growing and people weren’t as shocked anymore. A bit like horror films. It’s amazing to see that with the advance of people watching video on the move, they’re equally as open to watching campaigning issues as they are their favorite TV program.”

In 2014, Gina moved sideways into PR for a while, because it paid more. She also worked as the digital coordinator for the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). IEMA implemented a huge campaign called “The Perfect Storm,” where its experts predicted that the world is now at a turning point in which demand is outstripping supply, particularly in the energy sector.

Rob Edwards just happened to realize, as a campaigner in his 20s, that writing about the environment was the thing he enjoyed most. He began editing magazines and writing articles and soon found himself writing opinion pieces for The Scotsman and The Herald and other Scottish publications. From there, he gravitated towards writing for the New Statesman and for a social work magazine called Social Work Today, and then many other publications. By that time, he had decided completely that it was writing that most excited him. Many environmental journalists working as freelancers often get started in the same way as Rob – simply by writing about their environmental issues and concerns and then seeing where that leads.

Rob has two recommendations for those interested in becoming environmental journalists. The first of these he describes as a cynical, joke answer – “fall in love with someone who earns serious money” – but his main piece of advice is simply to write about things you care about.

What’s coming next? How will environmental journalism change in the years ahead?

Rob says he doesn’t have any particular idea about this at present, but he is sure that if it does change, those changes will be huge, and he shares a sense with many other journalists that the way in which we tell stories has to change.

“Every time you learn to deal with a new app or piece of software or a new way of doing things, something else comes along,” he says. “It’s extremely fast-changing. I don’t think we’ve worked out yet how to do news as effectively, there’s a lot of people doing interesting things, but it’s not as good as it could be. We need to look at new ways of storytelling that involve multimedia that bring together words and sound and music and pictures, and probably holograms, 3D, those kinds of things. The way that stories are told, to interest and inform people, is bound to change hugely, so that by the time my children are my age it will be very different I am sure. The important thing for me, and this is probably an axe to grind, is that serious investigative journalism that is interested in facts and accuracy and fairness, which I think are cardinal principles, doesn’t come cheap. It needs to be funded, and the trouble with the digital revolution is that people expect a lot for free. This is one of the reasons why the old model of the media is disintegrating. We do need to find ways to replace that and its very important for the future that a group of people are employed to check facts to report what’s happening in the world accurately and what’s happening with the environment accurately, which is part of the process that The Ferret is involved in.”

Gina Clarke also feels that the media need to find new ways to tell stories, as does Isabella Kaminski.

“I think we use video and social media more and more,” Gina says. “We’re finally telling stories instead of just quoting statistics and that’s really hitting home. I think we’ll have more quiet campaigners, eco-warriors in the home who just start to change one thing, for example not using straws, and before long, their friends will do the same. We need to spread the word that small actions can count.”
For Gina, the main challenge is trying to get people excited about changing their lives and she feels that one of the main necessities, in order to do this, is to put people or animals at the heart of it, like any good story. It’s also important, she says, not to get bogged down by statistics.

“A good stat is great, but a mountain of stats can lose the point of the story,” she says. “As a freelance journalist, you’re always going to work harder to get the story out there, but it also means that you care more. Otherwise, why else would you be working on it? So, I think editors do appreciate your enthusiasm, passion, and expertise.”

Isabella Kaminski has noticed some environmental subjects have become more mainstream over the years, with the national papers taking more notice of the topic than they would have done before. However, she thinks that sometimes environmental discussion can become quite faddy, in that, for example, society last year was talking about plastic in the ocean but this year that subject has exploded such that everyone is now talking about it. She wonders whether next year people will still be talking about it to the same extent as they are now. Like Gina, she feels that the media need to constantly find new ways of telling the same stories.

“It’s easy to feel that you’re banging on about a particular subject,” Isabella says. “Public attention for new subjects tends to be quite short, whereas environmental problems go on for years and are quite big policy problems, so you have to think of novel ways of taking the conversation on and putting it in the forefront of people’s minds, which can be quite difficult. Climate change for example, it’s still a problem, but it comes up quite sporadically and the solutions are quite big solutions.”

Isabella says that the risk, particularly with regard to climate change, is that you end up telling the same story again and again and therefore that you have to come up with new ways of presenting the same problem, because the problem is still going on, but in a way that is still interesting to people, which is quite hard.

“Getting the information is easier,” she says. “There’s a lot of that online. There are huge datasets available. The FOI act has been wonderful. There’s a huge trove of information out there, so it’s what you do with it and how you process it. I think it helps if you really care about the subject. I think that’s true of all specialist journalism fields. It also helps to be optimistic, even if what you’re writing about feels quite pessimistic.

“That’s what people really need to hear – good stories.”

References


All personal interviews were conducted in 2018.