**OBSERVER BACKGROUND**

**Facts and figures**

* First published in 1791 by WS Bourne, the Observer is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper
* Its mission statement, carried in that first edition, declared that the paper would be: “Unbiased by prejudice – uninfluenced by party. Whose principle is independence, whose object is truth, and the dissemination of every species of knowledge that may conduce to the happiness of society”
* The Guardian Media Group bought the Observer in 1993. Of the sale, Hugo Young, chair of the Scott Trust from 1989 to 2003, said in a Guardian front-page report: “The trust safeguards will be fully extended to the Observer, which will be edited independently of the Guardian and retain its separate character”
* Today, the Observer is the only liberal, progressive Sunday newspaper in the UK
* Far from being a “print-only Sunday newspaper”, as described by Tortoise Media in recent weeks, the Observer’s journalism achieves more than 10m page views a week online, is read deeply and widely outside the UK. For example, on 4 November, two features linked to the US election achieved combined traffic of more than 1m page views, over half of which were in the US and achieved excellent attention times
* The Observer’s circulation is now around 106,000 and it remains a source of revenue. Its circulation compares favourably with the Sunday Telegraph and FT Weekend (60,000)
* Famous Observer alumni include the writers George Orwell, Kenneth Tynan, Clive James, Robert Harris, Michael Frayn, Katharine Whitehorn, Victoria Coren-Mitchell, Len Deighton, Killing Eve’s creator Luke Jennings, and the photojournalists Jane Bown and Don McCullin
* Current leading columnists include Stewart Lee, David Mitchell, Philippa Perry, Mark Kermode, Andrew Rawnsley, Miranda Sawyer, Will Hutton, Carole Cadwalladr and Nigel Slater. Jay Rayner is now leaving – because of the Tortoise deal
* The last industrial action involving Guardian journalists took place in 1971, as part of a general strike coordinated by the TUC
* Concern for human rights has been a constant feature of the Observer's long history – from rallying to the cause of the anti-slavery north during the American Civil War to George Orwell’s calls for the decolonisation of India and Africa in the 1940s
* A decade later, it championed the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, taking the unprecedented step of appointing an Africa editor. The paper’s coverage of Nelson Mandela’s trial in 1964 is credited with helping save him from the death penalty
* “The entire reason for the Scott Trust is to make sure the Guardian and the Observer exist in perpetuity. They are truly independent brands … without a proprietor and that gives us a great loyalty amongst our readers and our staff.”

*– Carolyn McCall, chief executive of the Guardian Media Group, 2006-10, GNL promotional video from 2*