Sound On - Recording from home

We are using a service called Cleanfeed to allow readers to record Sound On from their homes. This service is better for recording audio than Teams, Zoom or other conferencing applications as it is broadcast quality, but as a result requires the use of headphones to prevent echoes. It does not require any software to be installed.

Readers will need a broadband connection, and headphones (or preferably a headset with microphone) will be essential.

Each week the "Recorder" will send emails to the "Readers" containing the scripts and web link (URL) to connect to the Recorder's Cleanfeed session. This works through a normal browser (Google Chrome preferred, but most browsers seem to work for readers).

The script will have been scanned into a pdf document beforehand, and distributed by email to Readers (usually in two or three sections because of the overall file size[1]). Items will be numbered so that you will know in advance which ones you will read. We use three Readers for home recording, and they read items in sequence. It will be up to you to pick up your cue from the end of the previous item, because we have no method to give visual cues as we do in the studio, but the Readers have the whole script, so that they can keep track of the sequence.

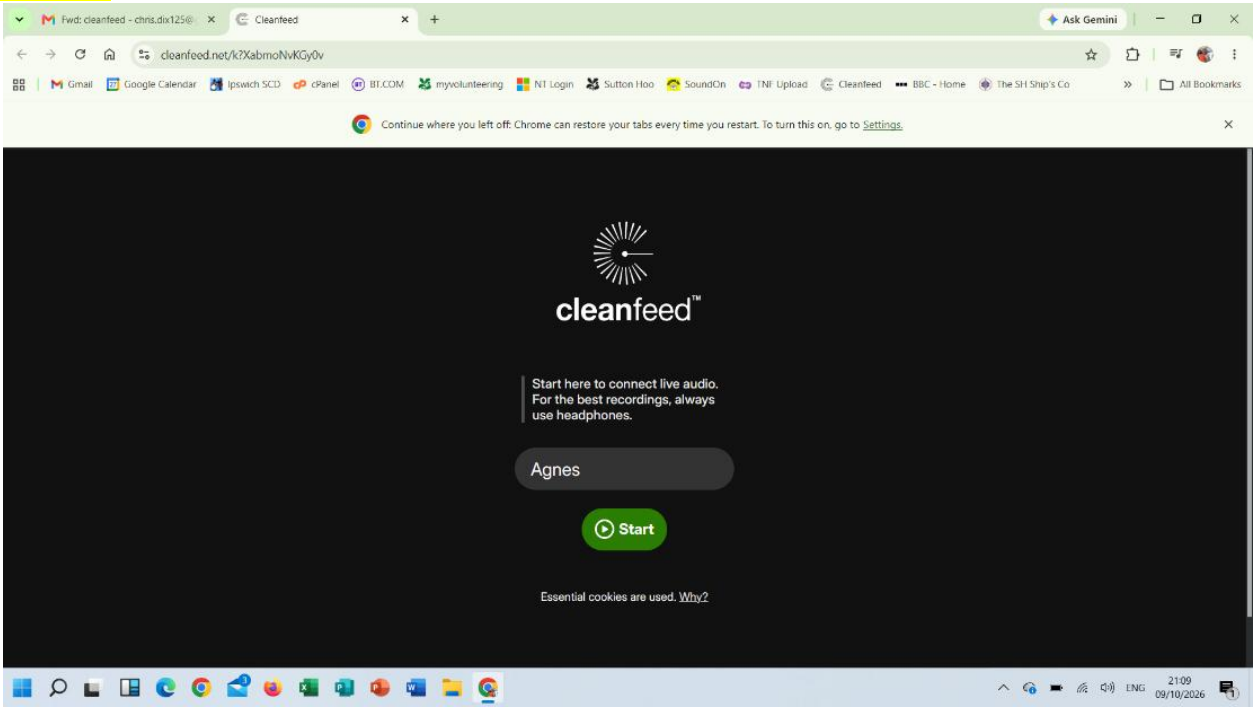
Method 1 – using just a computer

For this you will need a computer and preferably a headset with a microphone attached, or headphones as a minimum. See below if you only have headphones.

1. Plug headset into the computer and check you can hear audio in the headphones (e.g. play a music file, YouTube video, etc.). We can talk you through adjusting the microphone level if that should be necessary later. If possible, check that the microphone is working using a voice recorder if there is one installed.
2. Connect to Cleanfeed by clicking on the link (URL) you have received in the email.
   Note: the URL link is always the same, so you can bookmark it for use next time.

   A browser window will open, and you need to enter the name you wish to use during the session. This will appear on the screens of the Recorder and other Readers.

[1] File size > 7MB can get blocked by mail systems. Email is the preferred method for script distribution as it is easier for the less technical readers.

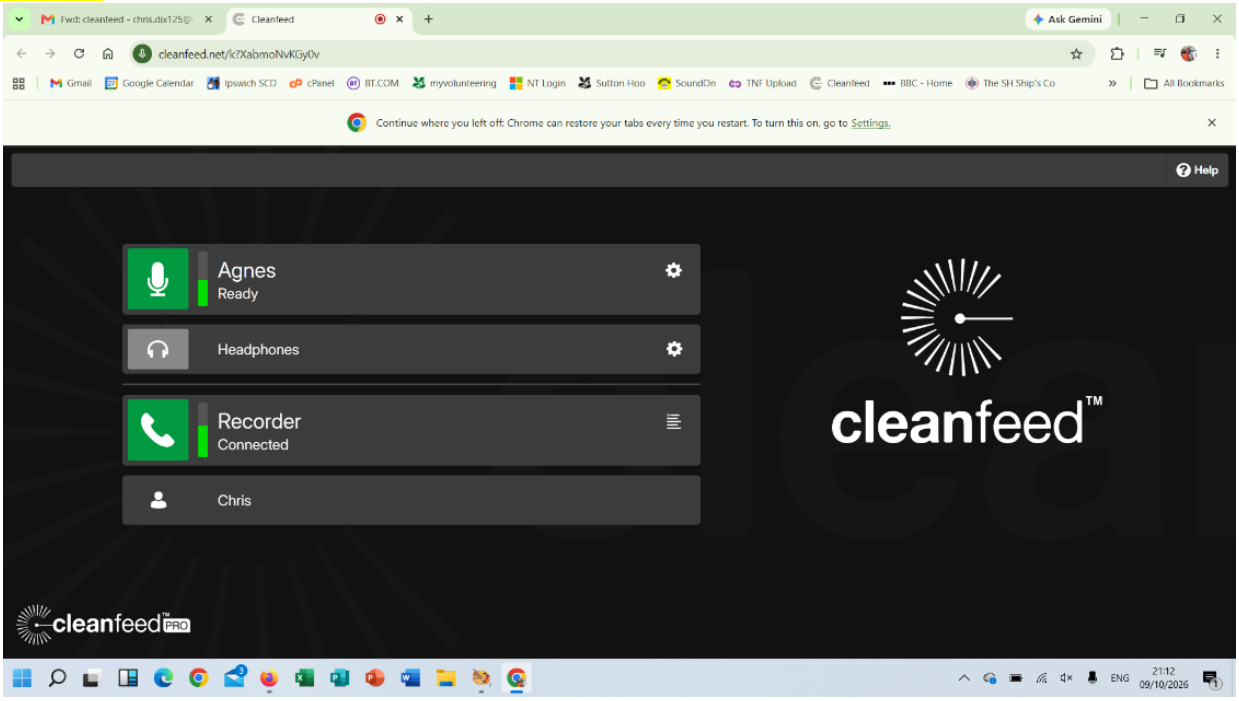


3. Click on the **Start** button.
   You may be asked if you want to share your microphone the very first time you enter the service. Obviously, this is necessary, so confirm with the option for 'always use for this connection' (the wording may vary depending on computer/system).

   A browser window will open and you should see your name at the top with a microphone symbol against a green background to the left, and a vertical sound level meter next to it. If you speak into the microphone, you should see the level on the sound meter fluctuating. Note: clicking on your line will mute your mic, and its background will go dark, but please keep it unmuted (green). The Recorder will control who is muted during the recording session.

   The grey section labelled 'Headphones' contains some audio setting options for your computer, but these should not need to be altered as the defaults should work for all normal computer configurations.

   Below this section you will see the other people on the session. The person recording will always just appear as 'Recorder' and not a name, and will display a telephone handset symbol rather than a microphone. The other readers will just appear as icons. Your screen should look like this:-



4. During the recording session, the Recorder will mute all except the person reading a news item. You will be able to hear the other readers on the session.
5. Once the Cleanfeed session has been established, it can sit in the background on the desktop.
6. Open the script document, and read items direct from your screen in sequence with the other readers.

7. You can maximise the script screen for reading; the Cleanfeed session will continue to run in background.

8. Some people use a separate device for the script, e.g. a tablet or other computer, but this is a matter of personal choice or convenience, and is not necessary.

9. **NB At the end of the recording, be sure to close down the Cleanfeed browser session or your microphone will stay open to the internet!!**

If you only have <u>headphones</u> and not a <u>headset with microphone</u>:

You **can** use the microphone built into your computer but you really need to work in a room that is well furnished to dampen the sound and reduce echoes. Use seat cushions and other soft furnishing behind and to the side of the computer, if possible, to dampen the reflections from walls and ceiling (do make sure you keep the air vents on your computer free to prevent it overheating!).

Method 2 – using a computer AND a mobile phone (or tablet)

For this you will need both a computer, from which you will read the script, AND a Smartphone or Tablet (iOS or one of the many Android devices) which will be used to connect to Cleanfeed for the recording.

1. Open the Script document on your **computer** to read from.

2. Connect headphones to your **phone** or **tablet** (to cut out the speakers) so that you can hear the others on the recording session.

3. Open the Cleanfeed email on your phone/tablet, and tap the button to connect to the Cleanfeed session as described above.

4. Place the phone directly in front of you on a sound absorbent surface such as a folded towel or cushion, and on a desk or table. The towel will reduce sound reflections from the table that may affect the recording. Choose a room with a lot of soft furnishings, if possible, to reduce echoes from the room. Do not touch or hold the phone while reading as this will add extraneous noise.

5. Read items direct from your screen in sequence with the other Readers

6. **NB At the end, be sure to close down the Cleanfeed browser session or your microphone will stay open to the internet!!**

There are other mixtures of equipment and methods possible, so I am open to other suggestions. Please contact me to discuss or for clarification. Inexpensive headsets and headphones are available on eBay and Amazon at prices from around £14 to £20. Look for USB call centre headsets with stereo headphones. We have found these to be quite good.

Before joining a recording session for the first time, it is a good idea to have a practice session. I can set this up on the fly at any convenient time. You may need to adjust the microphone volume level at your end. This is a good opportunity to do this, and I can talk you through the process.

If you would like to try any of these methods out, email or phone to set a time and I'll talk you through it.

Chris Dix

Technical Officer, Sound On