

Dealing with the Media



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Most people get almost all their news and information from mainstream media. This means that for many projects it can be useful to be reported on in newspapers and on the local TV and radio.

Using the media can help you win your campaign. But there are some important things you should bear in mind when you are preparing contact with the media.

Plan a media strategy

With a little planning you'll have more success in getting your message across. Preparation gives you a chance to set the agenda, not just respond to events. *Don't just engage the media because you can – always use your media work strategically. Ask whether engaging with the media is the best way to get across your message, and if so, how that can be done best.*

First of all: you need a **clear aim**. Why contact the media? What message are you trying to convey? Generally an *unclear aim results in an unclear message*. Don't forget: however complicated the arguments for your campaign are you need to keep them simple when using the mainstream media.

Now decide who your **target audience** is. Who is your message aimed at? If you know this then you'll know which media to contact. To raise public awareness you may decide to use mainstream TV, radio and print media. But do you aim locally, regionally or nationally? If for example you want contractors to know that their efforts to fell local woodland will be resisted, thus increasing their costs, then the trade press might be most appropriate.

Finally, think about your **tactics**. What can you do to get the media to cover the story? You could publish a report, hold a dramatic press stunt, or take direct action. Is there a symbolic date, event or location that will add weight to your message and make it more interesting to the media?



Jargon buster

- ◆ **News Release or Media Release:** (Sometimes called Press Release) a short written announcement sent to the news media, in the hope they'll print your story or ask you for an interview.
- ◆ **Deadline:** The time by which you have to get your news release to the media.
- ◆ **Embargo:** A time you set before which journalists should not publish information from your news release.
- ◆ **Photo opportunity, Photo shoot:** A staged, visual scene set up for the media to photograph or film.
- ◆ **Notes To The Editor:** A section at the end of the news release for non-essential details, e.g. about your group, technical details.
- ◆ **Soundbite:** A phrase which sounds good on radio or TV – often containing three words or ideas grouped together.
- ◆ **Media Stunt (aka Media Tarding):** A stunt designed specifically for the media.
- ◆ **Picture Desk / Picture Editor:** The staff that allocate photographers to stories.

Compile your media contacts list

Do a reality check and ask yourselves *who will be likely to run our story?* Are they possibly sympathetic to your cause? The Daily Telegraph is unlikely to run a story about an animal sanctuary in Upper Lowerton, but the Lowerton Post and BBC Radio Lowershire should be interested.

Usually local and regional media are the most likely to cover you, and because they can have high circulation in their areas they're worth dealing with. Start by finding out which papers, radio and TV channels cover your area. Check the Yellow Pages, and look at the contact details in newspapers and the list at the end of this briefing.

Compile a list of potential media contacts – get up to date details for the news desk by ringing

them all up and double checking their phone numbers and email addresses. Read, watch and listen to the local media and ask other campaigners in your area to find out which journalists may be sympathetic – then make a list with the names of people who cover particular topics or localities and their telephone, fax and email addresses. Remember to keep this list up to date, and share it with other groups in your area.

Campaigns often attract freelance journalists and photographers sympathetic to the cause. They can provide lots of help and advice, so make good use of them. If possible get to know individual reporters – if they like and trust you then your stories are more likely to become news.

Write your news release

Deadlines and timing

When planning your news release the first thing to find out is when the deadline is. All media have deadlines – make sure they get your news release in good time. As a rule of thumb for events: for weekly local papers get news releases in several days before the deadline (but *after* the previous issue has come out). For a daily newspaper get your release in by lunch time the day before publication. If you're aiming for TV or radio it's best to try to get on the morning or evening news, so time your event accordingly. A lunchtime event will miss the peak breakfast and mid-morning audiences and may be knocked off the news agenda before the 'drive time' evening slot.

A major event should be news released about two weeks to ten days before (marked 'Forward Planning'), then again 2-4 days before. For weekly newspapers and magazines do a news release two weeks before, and then 2-3 days before the deadline. Giving the media time to plan makes it more likely you'll have a photographer or camera crew show up at your event.

Sometimes it's not possible to news release your actions – this is discussed in *Media and actions* below.

Note that the picture desk often has different deadlines from the news desk, so check this out if you are trying to get photographic coverage.

News release basics

Because news releases are aimed at the news pages they should contain news (not opinions or rants!). **News is about something happening, rather than somebody saying something** (unless that somebody happens to be famous). If you want coverage in the news pages then think about how you can create events, e.g. a public meeting, a colourful protest, a petition. You can then use these 'news events' to help get your message across.

One side only

The news release is generally less than one side – more information won't fit into the average news article.



Send your news releases directly to the news desk by email, or to a journalist known to cover this sort of news (see *Distribute your news release* below). If you're arranging a photo opportunity send the release to the picture desk or Picture Editor as well. Don't forget that journalists have to plough their way through hundreds of news releases every day, so make sure yours stands out:

- ✓ Go for an eye-catching headline, then grab their attention in the first sentence with the main points – always include all of the *five W's*: **Who, What, Where, When** and **Why** (not necessarily in that order, but do put them all in the first sentence, or at least the first paragraph, e.g.: (*who:*) Local people (*when:*) today (*what:*) took action (*where:*) in the town centre (*why:*) to cut climate changing emissions).
- ✓ After that, keep it **short** – ideally one A4 page. Sentences and paragraphs should be short – stick to 'hard facts' and avoid opinions, rants or blethering.
- ✓ If there are lots of details to go in the news release then add them at the bottom under '**Notes to Editors**'.
- ✓ **Add a snappy quote or two**, for example: have somebody famous saying "Climate Chaos is happening" and somebody involved in the campaign explaining what your group is doing and why.
- ✓ At the end, in the 'Notes to Editors', write a short paragraph with some **background to your group or campaign**.
- ✓ **Include your contact numbers** on the release – ensure the phones are working, and that the person answering the phone is fully prepared – do they know the contents of the news release, have some background and know what's currently happening?
- ✓ **Add details of picture opportunities** – give them a time and place along with a short, visual and enticing description of what will happen.
- ✓ Look at how your target radio stations and newspapers write their reports. Follow their style as closely as you can. If you do it well your news releases may be copied without any changes whatsoever – this is ideal as it lets you present your story how you want to.
- ✓ Reporters will mainly look at attractive or familiar releases. Try a distinctive header or logo, an unusual (but readable!) font, or coloured paper. Do regular (but interesting) news releases, so that reporters will recognise your group's releases.

Example of a news release

News Release 6th May 2008:

BASF UK HQ currently completely blockaded by protesters

This morning thirty protesters from Earth First! have shut down the BASF UK headquarters (1) at Cheadle Hulme near Manchester (2), to highlight the company's role in pushing GM onto our plates. BASF is planning to run the UK's only trial of GM crops this year, a trial of blight resistant potatoes. (3)

The protesters arrived early in the morning at the flagship offices and have since been blockading the gate by sitting in front of it and locking on using d-locks and other equipment. They are successfully preventing any staff from entering and are demanding the company pull out of GM immediately. They have also hung a giant 30 x 10ft banner reading "No To GM". The protesters are planning to blockade the gate for several hours.

Mary Sunderland from Earth First! said: "GM has no part to play in our future: it's a dangerous, unwanted and unproven technology geared towards maximising profits for multinational corporations such as BASF. It is not the answer to food shortages, hunger or climate change. The real solution is to change now to a sustainable farming system and to distribute resources fairly around the world."

The bio-tech industry claims GM will feed the world's poor, but experts disagree. A major new study published in April shows that modified soya produces 10% less food than its conventional equivalent, confirming earlier studies showing the same trend. The study finds that the process of modification depresses productivity. (4)

This revelation came just a week after the biggest study of its kind ever conducted, the International Assessment of Agricultural Science, concluded that GM was not an answer to world hunger. The UN study, conducted by over 400 scientists and approved by over 54 governments is a sobering account of the failure of industrial farming. The key message of the report is that small-scale farmers and agro-ecological methods provide the way forward to avert the current food crisis and deal with the effects of climate change.(5)

Neil Ross from Earth First! adds: "It's time for everyone who is concerned about the future of our food and environment to stand up again and to say 'No to GM'. When five years ago 86 per cent of the UK public said that they did not want GM foods the government and bio-tech industry brushed those concerns aside as unscientific. Science is now proving that we were right to oppose GM. Thanks to the courage of many ordinary people who ripped up GM crops our countryside has been GM free for the past four years. (6) We are determined to keep it that way. The message to BASF and the government couldn't be clearer. Stop wasting money on GM (7) and start investing in the real solutions to hunger: small-scale organic farming and equitable trade."

Notes for Editors

[edited to fit this briefing]

- (1) BASF is the world's leading chemical company.
- (2) [Directions to BASF HQ in Cheadle Hulme].
- (3) [Information on BASF's blight resistant potato trials in the UK]
- (4) [Information on a study carried out in the US grain belt]
- (5) [Information and link to UN report on sustainable farming]
- (6) When GM crop trials started in the UK in 1998, no one could have predicted the public opposition to it. Within just 5 years, all GM companies including Monsanto, Syngenta and Bayer had retreated from Britain, numerous field trials had been destroyed and a moratorium against GM crop growing had been imposed. 10 years later, Britain is still free from any commercial growing of GM crops. This opposition has also sparked massive resistance elsewhere in Europe.
- (7) Using the Freedom of Information Act Friends of the Earth managed to obtain partial information in October 2007 which shows that the Government gave at least £50 million a year for research into GM crops and food, compared with £1.6 million for research into organic agriculture in spite of repeated promises to promote sustainable farming.

The five Ws

The five Ws are all in the first paragraph.

Notes to Editor

Background information for future reference, and in case the editor wants to do a feature on your group or topic.

Photos and Interviews

If you want to offer live interviews or photos include contact details and directions.

Distribute your news release

You can email, hand deliver or fax your news release. Posting it is really not a good idea – it may not get there on time and it could get lost in their internal mail system. If you email the news release put it in the email as plain text, but attach a document or PDF too.

If you fax or email the release, phone up and check that they have it. Even if you are sure that it arrived OK it's a good excuse for drawing attention to your story.

If you take the news release directly to the offices ask to see the News Editor, and give it to them personally. Try to strike up a conversation with them so that they'll remember you.

News release checklist

- ✓ Stick to the deadline
- ✓ Keep it short
- ✓ Have clever, appropriate, headlines
- ✓ Put key details in first paragraph – the five W's – who, what, where, when and why
- ✓ Use quotes, snappy soundbites
- ✓ Do you need Notes to Editors?
- ✓ Have you got pictures? Will you have photo-opportunities?
- ✓ Ideally email the release, phone to check they received it.



Follow up on a story

Cultivate relationships with journalists – if you get a good write up, phone up the journalist and tell them that you liked the article. Suggest future items about what your group is doing that they might want to cover. Remember to contact them directly the next time you are planning something and invite them to a briefing and a photo shoot.

A negative or bad write up isn't the end of the world. If at all possible phone up the journalist, tell them that you were pleased to see an article on your group or action, but that you felt they missed or misunderstood some points, and that you'd like to meet them to set the record straight. It's important to be diplomatic and to give them the impression that they can get an interesting story out of this (or better: a series of interesting stories). If the journalist thinks that you just want to complain, you're not likely to see them again.

If, after trying to talk to a journalist who did a negative write up, you get another negative article from them, look for another journalist to talk to. It's rarely (if ever) worth the effort of complaining to the Press Complaints Commission, but you may feel it worthwhile to get lots of people to complain to the paper. Send out another news release as soon as possible putting your side of the story across, and write a letter to the Editor, asking them to publish it as your 'right to reply'.

Interviews

Sooner or later you'll be asked to give an interview. When this happens it's important to take a couple of moments to prepare yourself. After taking a few deep breaths remind yourself of the main arguments and prepare your soundbites (see box) so that you're ready for your interview.

Interviewers often focus on personalities and personal details. They can be more interested in your personal life (what they call *the human angle*) than the details of your campaign. You may wish to politely but firmly refuse to divulge personal details and point out that lifestyle is not the issue here: the campaign is far more interesting to the readers/listeners/viewers.

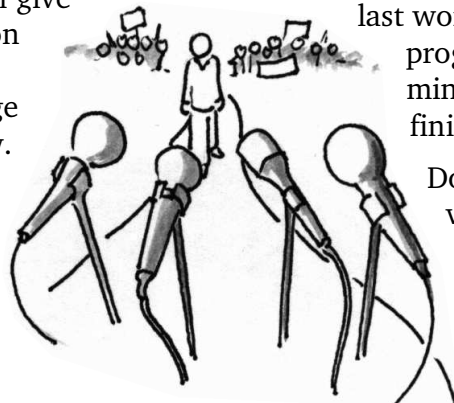
If journalists feel you're holding back, they may resort to saying things like "your campaign needs this coverage – I'm doing you a favour". Don't be intimidated, and never lose sight of the fact that you are actually doing them a favour – it's your group providing the interesting material that the media need! Always be firm, and think about what you want to say before you are interviewed.

Somehow **radio and TV interviews** seem more scary than a reporter with a notepad. Don't worry about being nervous, it's perfectly normal to feel this way. Just make sure you are prepared. Remember, most people talk more quickly when they're nervous, so take a deep breath and try to talk slowly and clearly. Listen to your voice and make sure to *vary your tone* – it needs to match your message. Let your natural enthusiasm come over – it's one of your main strengths.

A good tip is to talk to the *interviewer* – *make eye contact with them*. Ignore the microphone or camera.

Before being interviewed ask about the questions and how much time you have to get your point across. Usually you will get a vague answer, so do insist. You can point out that if you know what the questions will be you can give a better interview (your mileage on this one will vary). Don't be surprised if they completely change the questions during the interview.

It's a good idea to watch or listen to the programme you will be appearing on a few times before the interview. This will give you an idea of what to expect: is the presenter sympathetic or challen-



Get your message heard:

- ★ Keep it simple – think of **no more than 3 points** that you want to get across. Too many points confuse the listener and make the issue sound complicated.
- ★ Use **repetition** – say your key points over and over, but rephrase them each time.
- ★ Prepare some **soundbites** – short, snappy and memorable phrases or sentences that get your message across. An advantage of using soundbites is that the media may only use a 4 or 5 second clip from the interview. If you say your soundbites then you have a chance of getting your message across.
- ★ **Grouping things in lists of three** sounds good in interviews and looks good in print: "this development will kill our community, our environment and our jobs!"
- ★ If several of you are to be interviewed then **agree on a common strategy and key points** so you don't contradict each other.

ging, perhaps even aggressive towards guests? Think of tactics for dealing with his/her style, and practice them with friends.

If you are being interrupted by the presenter or other guests politely and patiently ask to be allowed to finish your point. But always remain polite to the presenter – the audience's sympathy will invariably be with the host and it's important not to lose the goodwill of those listening. When there are several guests with opposing views make sure to ask the presenter to give you the last word. The last words in a programme stick in the audience's minds – so a good soundbite to finish on can work well.

Don't avoid answering controversial or difficult questions – it'll make you sound like a politician (as you can guess that comes across as untrustworthy).

If the interviewer is trivialising the issue, or asking foolish questions (e.g. about lifestyle) tell them so, and point them to the real issues. *Politician's answers* where you avoid the question and answer another question instead can sometimes work, but be careful you don't sound slimy.

If you are being attacked for something (“your campaign is costing the area jobs”), be prepared to turn it round (“this development will cost the area a valuable recreational resource. We have drawn up a plan of how more jobs can be created without taking away the kids' play area!”)

In a recorded interview don't be afraid to pause

to think about how to answer a question – this will be edited out. It's also useful to remember that distressing coughing fits sound awful on tape. If you really mess things up in an interview that is being recorded you can go for a bit of a cough. They will edit the phlegm out of the tape and take it from the last question. You can also ask to have another bash at the question. Do it until you feel happy with the interview.

Finally, a tip from the BBC: avoid drinking dairy milk before interviews (even in coffee or tea). Milk forms mucous and you'll end up clearing your throat during the interview.

Photo shoots and TV cameras

Arty angles?

Think about how to make your event look more interesting for the TV and photographers. For example, if you have forty people cycling down the road, get the camera operators to lie down in front of the cyclists and take a picture from below, through the spokes.

Photo shoots and TV coverage can be tricky. The camera operator will often try to get you to do what they think will make a good picture. Frequently it's something that will make you look silly, or even give a negative impression of your campaign. If you are expecting cameras, or have invited them, spend a few minutes thinking about shots that would work well, and the kind of things they may ask you to do (and whether you are prepared to do them). Camera operators are used to people being so in awe of the camera that they'll do anything, so they can be quite annoyed if you refuse to follow their instructions.

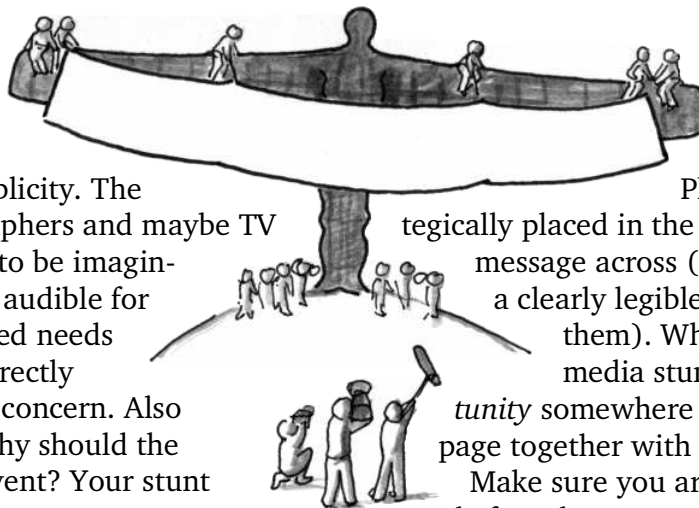
In our experience they cheer up quickly when provided with a better shot – so be polite, friendly and above all firm, explaining that if they wait around for a couple of minutes they will get something far better.

Photographers generally go for an impression of multitude. That could be a flock of cakes on a table at a fund raiser or lots of people up cranes: think of something that will give an impression of mass. TV cameras on the other hand prefer movement, particularly anything out of the ordinary like tree climbing, throwing custard tarts at people (but not something “boring” like a demo or somebody handing out leaflets). If you are doing something that looks relatively boring like handing out leaflets then get somebody to do it on stilts, or do a short theatre piece describing what you are fighting against. You can do the same for stills cameras.

A good way around all these problems is to produce your own stills or video, or get a trusted freelancer to do it for you. They must be of a very high standard to be accepted, but it is well worth it. Phone up and talk to your press contacts or the picture editor – ask what format and resolution they want them in.



Media stunts



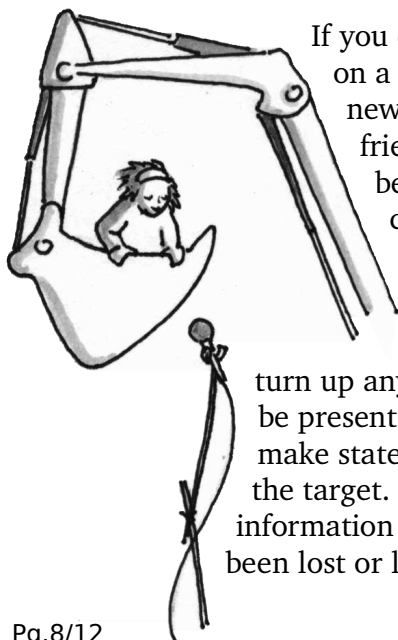
A media stunt is an event created for maximum publicity. The aim is to attract photographers and maybe TV and radio, so you'll need to be imaginative, visual and possibly audible for radio. The image presented needs to be clear, simple and directly connected to the issue of concern. Also think about the hook – why should the media turn out for this event? Your stunt needs to be relevant to the current news agenda.

Pictures taken at media stunts often appear without a story, just with a simple caption. So the picture itself must tell the story. Keep it

simple and focused. Placards or banners strategically placed in the picture help to get the message across (particularly if they have a clearly legible website address on them). When news releasing media stunts, put *Photo Opportunity* somewhere clearly visible on the page together with the time and place. Make sure you are ready and set up before the cameras arrive (eg tell the journalists to turn up 15 minutes after the whole thing is due to start). Have copies of your news release on hand to give to those photographers and journalists who turn up, even if you've already sent them one beforehand.

Media and direct action

If you want the press to cover “Top Secret” direct actions then **don't rely on embargoes** (see box) to keep your actions secret. It's better to talk to a sympathetic journalist, telling them that there will be a really good story, and that they can come along. If you have built up a good relationship with a journalist, and have fed them lots of good stories, they should be happy to cover the story, even if they don't know what it is about. Don't tell them what it is unless you are really, really, really sure that you can trust them (i.e. almost never!)



If you don't want a journalist along on a “Top Secret” action, send out a news release (or talk to your friendly journalist) a few days before with a few juicy, but very carefully chosen, hints. Let them know when you will release a full news release – usually as soon as the action has started.

When doing an action designate a confident person to deal with the media. Do this even if you haven't invited any journalists – they might turn up anyway. Refer all media to that person. The media liaison doesn't have to be present – they could be on the end of a phone. They should be prepared to make statements and counter any false claims that may be made by the police or the target. The media liaison should also be able to fax, email or hand out further information – including the original news releases since these will probably have been lost or left in the office.

Embargoes

Writing “EMBARGOED UNTIL ...” at the top of the news release is a way of asking journalists not to publish the contents of your release until that date and time.

This isn't enough to guarantee that the media will respect your security.

It's the media's job to get different viewpoints, and they may well pass on details of your action to the police or to the target before you've even started.

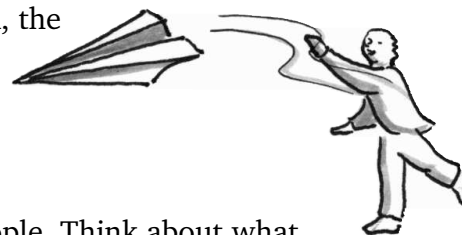
Other ways to use the media

Don't rely on news releases and press stunts alone, but consider the following:

The letters page – writing a letter to the editor can be a good way of getting your view across without it being edited too much. Luckily local papers thrive on publishing letters – it saves writing articles and they can appear to care about local viewpoints.

Your letter should be concise and to the point – a short letter is more likely to be published than a long one. Letters referring to something in the previous edition of the paper may also be more likely to be printed. Send the letter promptly, e.g. if a weekly paper comes out on Thursday, get the letter to them by the Monday. Most newspapers want a postal address even if you email or fax it. Finally, remember to re-read and check your letter before you submit it. Get someone else to read it too.

If there's a lot of letters about something your group is involved in, the paper may well take more notice of your news releases, or even approach you for a story. So get your pens out and write lots of letters, and get friends and family to write as well!



Radio phone-ins are another good way of reaching lots of people. Think about what you are going to say before you phone in. Write down one to three key points you want to get across and stick to them. Get friends to phone in as well – it increases the chances of someone getting on air.

Some groups have someone pretending to be from the 'other side' to make outrageous comments about the topic. “Who cares about chopping down the woods. The two jobs that the development will create are far more important than the kids that play there!” They use this to air the most controversial elements of whatever it is you are campaigning against. (Some find this unethical, but do remember that this trick is one used regularly by large organisations and businesses when dealing with opposition in local communities).

Taking a longer view

If you are planning to try for consistent media exposure during your campaign then you should prepare your media strategy. As well as asking yourself the questions from the beginning of this briefing (*what's your aim, who's your target audience, what tactics will you use to gain media coverage?*) you should also consider how the whole media campaign will develop.

Particularly at the start of a campaign you may send out news releases with no great hope of them being used, but with the aim of getting yourselves recognised in the news room, or of providing information that may be useful to journalists later on when they do pick up on your story.

If you send out news releases regularly you must make sure that each release has a different angle, something new: it doesn't have to be completely new – a minor development in the story will suffice. If there's nothing new to write about you could simply organise a photo opportunity to highlight a part of your message that hasn't yet been reported on.

Be aware that media attitudes towards your campaign may change over time in response to changing situations – think ahead and have some responses to foreseeable events prepared.

If you want to find out more about developing strategies generally then have a look at our briefing on *Planning your Campaign*.

Unwelcome media attention

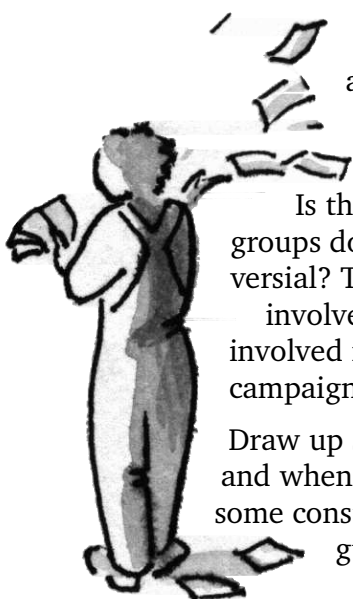
Sometimes groups or projects experience unwelcome press attention – your group may wish to keep a low profile, or perhaps the press has cooked up a story and you're the scapegoats (see box).

The problem with unwanted media attention is that it is usually unexpected. Forward-planning is the best thing you can do to avoid the worst effects of unwelcome press attention. It's important not to be paranoid – most groups won't ever have this kind of attention, and even if they did it would represent nothing more than an uncomfortable article or two. If you think the media may potentially be interested in investigating your group then half an hour's preparation now may save days of hard work in the future.

If a journalist thinks there might be a story, they will search for background information about the group and the people involved. They will check their archives to see whether you have been reported on before. They will also look at your website and publications. After this basic research they will probably contact your group to get more information and ask for a few quotes. Be aware that they may not tell you that they are journalists looking for a story. They may pose as someone interested in joining your group, wanting your help or perhaps pretend to be an academic doing research. If your group is a limited company (like a co-op, or charitable company limited by guarantee etc) they can get the home addresses of your directors from Companies House (www.companies-house.gov.uk), and may well visit or phone them at home. Search the internet (google, facebook and the BBC news search function on news.bbc.co.uk) for your directors' names and consider any information that you find there.

Is there any aspect of what your group does, or what affiliated or similar groups do that could be seen by the likes of The Sun or The Mail as being controversial? This is likely to be the point that the media will latch onto. If you are involved in animal rights you may be asked about industrial sabotage. If you are involved in traffic issues you may be asked about street parties. If you are campaigning against Genetic Manipulation you may be asked about crop-pulling...

Draw up some guidelines about talking to the press. Who should talk to the press and when? Are you happy making statements over the phone or should there be some consultation within the group about any statements to be made? Print the guidelines out and put them up near the phone.



In August 2002 the National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns was awarded £340,000 by the Lottery Community Fund. The Daily Mail ran a story: "Is this the barmiest Lottery Handout of them all?" as part of their campaign against refugees. The Home Secretary tried to get the funders to withdraw the grant, and the lottery funding bodies have since been reformed to give the government more direct control over grant making decisions.

Dealing with unwanted media attention

Make an assessment before anything happens – is your group likely to be targeted by journalists? If so draw up a plan of how to deal with unwanted press attention.

If someone from the media (or a suspected reporter) calls, take control of the situation:

- ◆ Find out who they are – ask for ID, write down the details and office contact number.
- ◆ What do they want? Find out as much information as you can without giving anything away.
- ◆ Don't be pressured into answering their questions. Tell them your media liaison will get in touch with them or that they will be sent a written statement.
- ◆ Do not pass on telephone numbers or contact details for other people without first checking.

A sceptical look at the mainstream media

“Misreported, distorted, misquoted / we'll quote you on things that you never said / put this pencil to your head / and kill your revolution dead...” *Chumbawamba*

Almost all of the world's media (most probably your local rag too) is owned by just a handful of media giants. These corporations also own and invest in the big businesses that are often the cause of many of the problems we are challenging.

Always remember that your aims aren't the same as the media corporation's. You want to let people know about what is happening and why. Publishers want to sell papers and advertising to make maximum profit out of your “news”. This means that the mainstream media work on the assumption that readers, listeners and viewers don't want to be bothered with details. Sensationalism sells, so expect your story to be stripped down to the most exciting elements and turned into entertainment. Reasons, background and even central facts will usually be left out in order to focus on whatever colourful imagery the media decides is the flavour of the day.

We'd like to be able to say that there is a difference between the broadsheets and the tabloids,

but more often than not there isn't. The broadsheets may print more column inches, but they're not likely to have that much more hard information.

This makes for quite a depressing picture – but don't give up. Think about making your own media: leaflets, newsletters, magazines, stickers, graffiti (see our briefing *Good Publicity and Outreach* for ideas) and use existing alternative media – see the list at the end of this info-sheet. When you're making the news yourself, you realise that what is portrayed in the media often bears little or no resemblance to what is really happening.

If you do decide to use mainstream media to get your message across, think carefully about how to do it and how you can benefit from it. Be prepared to play their game. How much you decide to play the game will depend on who you are dealing with, and how sympathetic they are to your cause.

Who to avoid, who to go to

- ◆ **The Guardian**, particularly Wednesday's Social section, (mark it for the attention of particular editors) can be worth trying. Be careful: even 'progressive' editors like John Vidal have written negative articles about decent campaigns.
- ◆ **The Independent** is also worth trying, particularly on climate change issues. It can be difficult to predict what other themes they may be interested in.
- ◆ **The Times**, particularly **The Sunday Times** has often been accused of printing downright lies. There is a strong feeling that if they want to print a story about what you are doing, they will do so – whether or not you talk to them. Some campaigners have been shocked by what they felt to be The Times implying that they are murderous terrorists. Beware also the Times' sister paper **The Mirror** (although The Mirror is a lot better than **The Sun**).
- ◆ **The Mail** has also been accused of twisting stories heavily in order to make them sensationalist, but worth trying on GM issues.
- ◆ Journalists from The Sun, The Mail and The Times have in our experience all claimed to be from The Guardian in the hope of getting a better reception. Don't be afraid to ask for an NUJ card (if they haven't got one, they're likely to be private detectives or security services). Whoever they are from, if you feel uncomfortable with any journalist you should always send them away.

Media Contacts

TV and Radio

The BBC

Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA
newsonline@bbc.co.uk
(general news)

Today Programme

BBC Radio 4
TV Centre, Wood Lane
London W12 7RJ
Email form: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/contact

Broadcasting House

BBC Radio 4
Broadcasting House
London W1A 1AA
bh@bbc.co.uk

PM

BBC Radio 4
Broadcasting House
London W1A 1AA
pm@bbc.co.uk

ITN

200 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8XZ
Tel: 020 7430 4700
Fax: 020 7430 4868
editor@itn.co.uk

Channel 4 News

200 Gray's Inn Rd
London WC1X 8XZ
Fax: 020 7430 4607
news@channel4.com

National Papers

The Guardian

119 Farringdon Road
London EC1R 3ER
letters@guardian.co.uk
Fax: 020 7837 4530

The Independent

191 Marsh Wall
London E14 9RS
letters@independent.co.uk
Fax: 020 7005 2056

The Times

1 Pennington Street
London E98 1TA
letters@thetimes.co.uk
Fax: 020 7782 5046

The Financial Times

1 Southwark Bridge
London SE1 9HL
letters.editor@ft.com
Fax: 020 7873 5938

The Daily Telegraph

1 Canada Square
London E14 5DT
dtletters@telegraph.co.uk
Fax: 020 7538 6455

The Daily Mail

2 Derry Street
London W8 5TT
letters@dailymail.co.uk
Fax: 020 7937 7493

The Daily Express

245 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 9UX
expressletters@express.co.uk
Fax: 020 7620 1643

Evening Standard

PO Box 2309
London W8 5EE
letters@standard.co.uk
Fax: 020 7938 7147

The Herald

200 Renfield Street
Glasgow G2 3QB
letters@theherald.co.uk
Tel: 0141 302 7000

The Daily Mirror

One Canada Square
London E14 5AP
mailbox@mirror.co.uk
Fax: 020 7293 3975

The Sun

1 Virginia Street
London E98 1SL
letters@the-sun.co.uk
Fax: 020 7782 4170

The Scotsman

Barclay House,
108 Holyrood Road,
Edinburgh EH8 8AS
enquiries@scotsman.com
Tel: 0131 620 8620

Sunday Papers

The Observer

119 Farringdon Road
London EC1R 3ER
letters@observer.co.uk
Fax : 020 7713 4279

Independent on Sunday

1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London E14 5DL
newseditor@independent.co.uk

Sunday Telegraph

1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London E14 5DL
stletters@telegraph.co.uk

The Sunday Times

1 Pennington Street
London E98 1ST
letters@sunday-times.co.uk
Tel: 020 7782 5000

Scotland on Sunday

Barclay House,
108 Holyrood Road,
Edinburgh EH8 8AS
Tel: 0131 620 8620

Online Lists of Media Contacts

- ♦ www.newspapersoc.org.uk for local papers;
- ♦ www.radio-now.co.uk for all radio stations;
- ♦ www.mediauk.com for details of radio, TV and print media outlets.

Independent media

Don't forget the independent media! Let them know about what you are doing if you think it is relevant to their readers.

- ★ www.urban75.com
- ★ www.schnews.org.uk
- ★ www.indymedia.org.uk
- ★ www.earthfirst.org.uk

For more briefings and training workshops see:
www.seedsforchange.org.uk

