



How to Involve the Media

Press, radio and television are very important in spreading the message of Yorkshire in Bloom. As much publicity as possible is needed to encourage people throughout the region to get involved. The Local Authority may have a media or publicity team that will help the group and the In Bloom group should keep them in touch with events and projects. The Local Authority maybe able to help with press releases and promotional material.

When planning an event, tell your local newspaper all about it. Events involving a large number of people or a particular 'newsworthy' idea may also interest your local radio or television station. Use "National Weeks" as a vehicle for publicity e.g. National Volunteer Week first week in June, National Tree Week in late November, RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, usually the fourth week in January, Compost Awareness Week second week in May, National Allotment Week normally the second week in August and National Recycling week third week in November, (dates may vary year to year)

The following guidelines will help to ensure you talk to the right person and get your message across in the most effective way.

Newspapers

Newspapers usually have two main departments – Advertising and News/Editorial

Advertising

Advertising costs money but the message you wish to promote is guaranteed to appear on the day you choose. News will appear free and features nearly always appear free, but these will only be used if the editorial staff decides to include it. Unfortunately you cannot 'book' news or a photograph, only suggest you may have an event worth featuring.

Advertising may be helpful to you if you want people to attend or take part in an event you are organising. You can either take out an advertisement on your own, or choose an 'advertorial'. The newspaper will give you some editorial space free in return for supporting advertisements from a group of individuals or businesses.

If you want to place an advertisement:

- **Think well ahead** – the paper has to have time to prepare your advertisement
- Plan what you want to say and roughly how you want your advertisement to look
- Keep it short and to the point. Space costs money!
- Include date, time, venue and contact names and numbers
- **Check costs** – advertisements are measured in single column centimetres.

NB. Local newspapers often have free "What's on" columns which advertise details of events from small groups. National newspapers and Teletext also run guides. Some of these may ask for a small charge.

News/Editorial

The Newsroom at your local paper will usually be pleased to hear of your activities and events involving people within their readership area, particularly as you are helping to improve the local environment. Sometimes they will send a photographer and/or a reporter to attend an event, but some, especially local free papers, are often run on a shoestring budget so this is far from guaranteed. If you can provide good written copy (a press release) and provide a picture, this will give you a better chance of coverage. It is always worth thinking: "Is what I'm talking about newsworthy enough?" If not, could it be part of a useful feature? One of the best ways of ensuring media coverage is to keep in regular contact with the environmental correspondent, who tends to write both news and features.

Some tips if you are contacting the newsroom to run a story:

- Contact the newsroom or ask for 'reporters'. Ideally do this a couple of days prior to the event
- Make sure your 'news' sounds interesting and is worthy of attention. Explain it in as few words as possible
- Ensure that a good spokesperson is available for the press to contact
- As far as possible, think about general current events before issuing the release (for example a news release about Yorkshire in Bloom during the week of a Royal Wedding would get little or no coverage). However if you are able to pin your story to a current event, you have much better chance of coverage
- Remember deadlines! Find out when your weekly newspaper goes to press (usually Wednesday or Thursday) and what time your evening newspaper goes to print (usually around 10am). If you send a press release right on deadline, they will not have time to cover it
- Have the five W's ready for the reporter: 'Who', 'What', 'Why', 'Where' and 'When'.

If you want a reporter or photographer to attend an event:

- Consider when you want the reporter to be there. It may make a more interesting story or photograph when you have something to show and talk about, not when you are just starting the event
- Be prepared to be flexible. If the newspaper cannot attend the event why not 'stage' something before or after?
- Give the reporter/photographer your full attention if they do attend. They have a job to do and deadlines to meet and cannot be expected to wait around
- Be prepared to write a short report if the newspaper cannot attend. This will usually be used if sent promptly whilst the event is still 'news'
- Keep in touch with your press contact. They may be interested in writing a follow-up piece.

Local Radio and Television

If you think your event will be of interest to radio and television, many of the editorial guidelines for newspapers listed above apply. In particular:

- Give at least a couple of days' notice to the newsroom
- Be concise and interesting in what you have to say
- Be prepared to be flexible to fit in with schedules and programme timings
- Designate a spokesperson. Make sure they are fully trained and adept at doing interviews and think, "Are they the best spokesperson for the campaign?"
- Think about whom to target. 'Talk' radio is often attractive because they will nearly always want your story and they will offer you plenty of airtime to do it in
- Who is your audience? The five 'W's and a real understanding of the radio's target audience will also be essential in gaining radio coverage.

Press releases

We have given you some advice on how to get newspapers; radio and television involved with your entry, and suggest that you keep them involved by issuing regular press releases. To ensure that your press release stands out, we recommend that:

- An obvious point, but one that is often overlooked – always write ‘Press Release’ across the top of the page and put the date together with any logo or crest
- Include the date to be released (for example ‘For Immediate Release’, or ‘Embargoed until 11 December 2007’)
- Get the message across with an eye-catching and punchy headline, typed in bold
- The first two paragraphs should cover the five ‘W’s: ‘Why’, ‘What’, ‘Who’, ‘When’ and ‘Where’
- Try to include a quote or testimonial from yourself, a sponsor, a local dignitary, volunteer or celebrity
- Be sure to acknowledge any donations or sponsorship you have obtained in a few lines at the end
- Another obvious one – always finish the release by writing ‘Ends’ at the bottom, or if you are using a second sheet include ‘More follows’
- Include a main contact name and phone number in case a reporter wants more information
- Ensure that the contact person is available. Include mobile numbers wherever possible as often deadlines are so tight, a missed call could lose you the publicity.

Finally, keep as many press cuttings of your releases as possible in an album or scrapbook. It will help you with your entry in Yorkshire in Bloom and is useful when approaching sponsors, as it shows the level of local coverage you have achieved.

Important: It Is Important To Get Parental Approval When Any Photos/Images Containing Children Under The Age Of 18 Are Taken