



PR Guidelines

Inspiration and ideas for generating local PR

bikeweek



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for generating local PR

About this guide

Use this Bike Week Guide to Generating Local PR for inspiration and ideas. The guide contains information in the following areas:

Introduction to PR

Generating your own PR

Managing press interviews

Photography

Targeting broadcast media

The aim of this PR Toolkit is to provide you with tools and ideas on how to generate local media coverage.

It contains everything you need to know about generating your own local PR, from information about local media, how to do media interviews and managing media relationships. This PR Toolkit also contains templates of suggested materials for you to tailor and send to your local media.

Ultimately, the aim of this Toolkit is to make it as simple, easy and time efficient as possible for you to promote your event through the media in your local area.

Some of you may be very familiar with your local media or may already work with communication teams at your local council to do local PR. However, in order to make this Toolkit as useful as possible to everyone, we have included as much information and kept it as clear, concise and self explanatory as possible.



01

What is PR, and why should I do it?

In conjunction with other marketing disciplines, such as advertising, direct marketing and sales; public relations is a technique which can be employed to raise awareness, build links with the local community and, ultimately, encourage cycling for everyone.

Public relations can either mean events such as open days or other activity which takes you out into the local community or media relations activity where you use the media to target your consumers. For the purposes of this PR Toolkit we will be dealing primarily with media relations.

01



01.1

What is Media Relations?

This is an area of PR that focuses specifically on promoting key messages in the media about your message or brand. The advantage of using media relations as opposed to advertising is that communications dealt with in this way are often viewed as unbiased by the public.

In this way, a feature in a local newspaper highlighting the benefits of cycling will be taken as an independent, third party view in a way that an advert may not be. The flipside of this is that you cannot control what the media say about you in the same way that you have copy control over advertising. However, if you are confident about your message and communicate with the media in the right way, you can manipulate the situation to ensure the best possible outcome.

Additionally, whilst achieving positive editorial coverage may require time investment on your part, unlike advertising it does not require actual financial investment.

01.2

Why communicate with the media?

The key purpose in communicating with the media is to generate positive PR for your cycling event(s). It is important to define your objectives at the outset, whether they are raising awareness of local cycle paths, specifically driving an increase in employees cycling to work or building positive links with the local community. You may find that it is a combination of all three and that a long term communications campaign, raising awareness of cycling and creating positive associations with cycling within the local community, will ultimately end up increasing the numbers of employees cycling to work.

A longer editorial piece gives you the opportunity to expand on your messages. In turn, regional and local media are often keen to present themselves as responsible to the local community and may welcome the opportunity to use your stories.

Generating your own local PR

02

02.1 Local media

Every area has different levels of local media. Some areas are very well served by local media and will have a number of local newspapers, local radio stations and a local TV station. Some bigger towns or cities may not have a local paper that is dedicated to their specific area and you may instead have to target a larger regional paper.

Never under-estimate the influence that local newspapers have. They are widely read by all age-groups and demographics and are always looking for stories about people, places and events in their circulation area. They are far more likely to run a story if they have a relevant photographic opportunity, especially if the picture shows local people.



02.2 How to target local media

Building good relationships with your local media is essential. They will help to 'drip-feed' information about local cycling opportunities and keep cycling in the public eye. By maintaining good relationships with them on a day-to-day basis, you can call on them when some positive coverage is needed.

Local media publish local stories for local people. Human interest is the bread and butter of all local newspapers; people want to read about what happens to other people in their local area – real life stories. Journalists will look for the human interest element in even the most complicated issues to explain to the person on the street how it might affect them.

The media will only report on a certain number of stories on the same topic so it's not necessary to bombard them all the time.

02.3 What is newsworthy?

News is constantly changing. It's a story that's new, unusual, important, impressive, outstanding or different to the audience you are writing for. Sometimes you need to package your information up to make it more interesting and to find a hook on which to 'hang' it.

It might be a topicality angle such as rising fuel costs or childhood obesity – or something that's going to affect the local community directly such as the opening of a new cycle route or the installation of a new bike shed at a local eatery.

Finding a strong news angle will go a long way to ensuring interest from the media. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to find your news angle:

- Is it a first?
- Is it new?
- Is it the biggest or the best?
- What does it mean for the local community?
- Does it involve local people?

02.4

Building successful press relationships

Always remember that media relations is a competition. Newsrooms are flooded with press releases, so yours is one amongst many – even a small local newspaper will receive 50 or more press releases each day. That's why you have to work hard at making your message relevant and interesting to a particular media outlet. If you can package a story with additional items, you might have a bigger chance of getting your story noticed. Do you have something for them to photograph? Is there a local cycling club member or an expert member of staff they can interview?

The following points offer tips on how to build successful relationships with the press:



Know your local media

Know and understand the media you are targeting and get a feel for their agenda and audience by reading the press regularly and noting down names of relevant journalists.

Establish and maintain contact

The media needs you to fill their pages as much as you need them to promote your message, so press relations should be reviewed as a partnership. Make journalists aware of your events and invite them along, giving them plenty of advance warning.

Importantly, PR contacts should keep a record of all media messages, friendly correspondents, and previous media contact (content and timing) and save any press coverage for reference.

Use real people

Journalists want to talk to real people to bring a story to life, so identify people who would be willing to speak to the media about their story. Perhaps a local family who cycle to school or a person who cycles to work every day, and would be happy to speak to the media about the benefits?

Find out and adhere to deadlines

Always establish a journalist's deadline and work towards it. If you miss it, you risk not having your story used or your side of the story included. Local newspapers often have different deadlines to national titles and to each other, so check for each one. For example many local papers are weekly. If you miss their deadline by a day, they won't be able to use your story until over a week later, by which time it is old news.

Be available

As inconvenient as it may seem, always be available to a journalist. Include as many contact details as possible on any press releases or packs.

Think widely – don't just target the news pages

Although the news pages may be the most obvious place to communicate your messages, other sections can prove useful:

- Letters to Editors – respond to a recent article by writing a letter to the newspaper's editor.

- Health pages – for some of the 'softer' messages such as a feature on the health benefits of cycling.
- Local radio phone-ins – Radio phone-ins cover a multitude of subjects. Approach relevant radio producers with ideas that you believe would make good phone-ins. Feel free to contribute when the shows are aired.

Get your timing right

- Target your stories for slow news days/months. These timings are usually 'Sunday for Monday' and the holiday seasons.
- Send an invite to local journalists to let them know an event is coming up so they can plan for it in their diaries. This is especially true with TV as they have a limited number of crews available.
- Tailor how to submit information to different journalist's requirements. Some will prefer email, some a phone call. It is best to establish which and stick to this method to ensure the information reaches them.

Managing press interviews

03



03.1 Why do an interview?

Offering to do interviews will make your story more appealing to most media. Additionally, if you establish good relationships with your local media they may call on you to provide comment or do an interview on a related topic.

03.2 Preparation

Preparation really is everything – you do not want to be stumbling over questions in the interview itself. Be prepared with facts and figures in order to respond to questions and rehearse your messages / answers. Set your own agenda for the interview and stick to it.

For this:

- Decide on your 'headline' – the thing that you absolutely must get across in the interview.
- Identify a maximum of three core messages.
- Think of examples and anecdotes that are short and relevant, and ensure you know all details.
- Remember to keep it simple – and don't be sidetracked.

Prior to the interview, ask for a list of the questions the reporter wishes to ask or at least a note of the broad areas for discussion. They don't have to provide this information but most will be more than happy to oblige.

03.3 The interview

Remember, this is not an informal conversation no matter how interested the journalist appears and how 'off the record' they claim the conversation is.

Some do's and don'ts:

Do...

- Prepare. Memorise and use key messages when speaking.
- Listen carefully to questions.
- Answer, as far as reasonable, the journalist's question.
- Say if you don't know the answer to a question — don't risk a guess.
- Stay in control — don't allow the reporter to choose your words or repeat contentious terms that they may use.
- Reinforce what you want the reporter to know.

Don't...

- Say 'this is off the record...' — things said during an interview may not be considered "off the record" by all parts of the media.
- Assume prior knowledge when answering questions — journalists appreciate it when you take time to explain.
- Let your guard down. 'Getting chatty' is a tactic used by some parts of the media to get you to say things that you don't want to say.
- Feel tempted to fill the silence — some journalists may use this as a tactic to get interviewees to say more than they want to. Once you have finished what you want to say stop speaking and wait for the next question.

However, do remember that the media are usually your friends and most are not out there to trip you up! All they want to do is report a story as accurately and truthfully as possible.

03.4 Unplanned 'interviews'

There may be occasions when you are asked for comment without having the opportunity to prepare. If a journalist calls and asks for your thoughts on a topic, we suggest the following course of action:

- Acknowledge that you are happy to comment and establish the exact nature of the subject they are referring to.
- Ask them to call back shortly.
- Use this time to gather your thoughts and check facts on the subject in question.
- Note your key points down and have them to hand when you return the call.
- When being interviewed or giving your comments, remember the advice given in the Interview section above.



04.1 Different types of press materials

There are two main types of press materials you will issue – press releases and photocall notices:

Photocall notices: are issued in advance of an event or 'launch' to invite the media to come and cover the story. A photocall is a great way of generating local press coverage if you have something really visual the local newspaper can photograph or a TV crew can film.

Press releases: are issued on the day the story 'breaks' or the event happens. If there is a visual element to the story, sending accompanying pictures may be the difference between it being used and not being used.

For example, if you were holding a local bike ride to raise money for charity, a photocall would be issued in advance to invite local media along to the event and a press release would be issued on the day of the event to tell the press what happened and possibly include pictures of the event.

04.2 Writing for the media

When writing for the media it is important to remember how many press releases and photocalls are received by the press therefore it is important to make yours as attention-grabbing as possible.

04

Press
materials

04.3 The pyramid approach

This is a useful technique to use when preparing a story for a press release. Imagine it as a pyramid, with the most important information at the top and additional details provided progressively down to the base – in the order of key, core, quote, background and supplementary:

The content of a press release is seldom used in its entirety, so prepare the information in priority order. This then makes it easier for the news editor to cut your copy to suit the space available, and still retain the essence of your message and story.

Here are a few top tips:

- Develop a headline which sums up the message in one snappy sentence or phrase. Try to be bold, original and creative with your title.
- After the headline, the most important feature of your press release is the introductory paragraph. It must attract the readers' attention and summarise the story using the five W's. These are:

WHO?
(is involved?)

WHAT?
is happening?)

WHERE?
(is it happening?)

WHEN?
(is it happening?)

WHY?
(should anyone be interested?)



04.3 (continued)

- Make your release short. Keep it simple and use short sentences. Avoid jargon.
- Prioritise the facts putting the most important information first

[Key](#)

[Core](#)

[Quote](#)

[Background](#)

[Supplementary information](#)

- Consider not only the words but also how they are laid out on the paper. Attractive and thoughtful layout of press releases pays dividends. Keep the paragraphs short and try never to split a paragraph between pages.
- Put 'Ends' at the foot of the last page and include full contact details for the relevant person at your club. Make sure you are available to take calls when the press release goes out.
- After the 'Ends' of your press release include any supplementary information in 'Notes to Editors' to recap on the background of the subject of the release.
- Include a date. Journalists need to know your press release is current and not old news so always include a date.



05

Photography

05.1 Using a photographer

If you decide to use a professional photographer you can usually find one through your local newspaper, who will be able to give you the names of local freelancers they use. Remember to give the photographer a proper brief detailing exactly the sort of pictures you want and how you want to receive them. The photographer may have their own relationships with local media in which case it may make sense for them to send the images directly.

05.2 Taking your own photography

If you decide to take your own pictures, use a digital camera or smartphone and remember that photographs should be supplied to press at a high resolution (at least 300dpi) as a jpeg or a tiff. This is essentially the standard a photograph needs to be to look good when printed. If you supply at a lower resolution, the photo could look blurred and grainy. Set up the photograph to convey the image or message that's important to you. The worst possible photos are 'firing squads' where everyone in the picture is lined up and staring into the camera – but if that's all you have, make sure you know who everyone is in the photograph, and emphasise local interest. If at all possible, a more interesting shot or unusual shot should be included, which will catch the attention of both the editor – and the reader. Remember not to send images to radio or TV – it's surprisingly easily done!

05.3 Getting the right consent

All people included in any images that you distribute must have given their consent for you to do so. All children under the age of 16 must have a photography consent form completed and signed by their parent or legal guardian. These consent forms should be kept on file for reference.



06

Targeting broadcast media



06.1 Radio

Radio offers good regional and local opportunities. On a local level it can be used very specifically and target a town or area.

It is a high frequency medium allowing you to talk regularly with your audience. Its main strength is the strong relationship built with the listeners, becoming a voice for the local community and speaking at a personal level.

Unless it is a talk station (as opposed to a music station), most radio stations are news based rather than features based. When targeting radio, remember it is an audio medium. If you can offer an interview with someone to accompany your story it is much more likely to get picked up.

06.2 Television

Don't forget about local and regional television stations when thinking about who would be interested in your story. Whilst they contain mostly 'hard news' there is still opportunity to target news programmes. Often at the end of a news bulletin they will include an 'And finally' story which is fun, light hearted and relevant to the local community. Television can be a particularly good choice if you are organising an event that provides real filming potential, such as a new mountain bike centre opening or cycling lessons. When targeting TV stations remember to do so in advance and ask for the forward planning desk. Local and regional stations often have a limited number of crew so if they know in advance your event is happening they can plan for crews to be there.

07

Communication



07.1 Approvals

Existing communication protocols with local council press offices should still be adhered to. Please check with your local council press office or other PR/communication contacts to check before communicating with the media.