

Dealing with the Media

First things first!

Before throwing yourself into media work consider some basic questions:

What's the aim of your action?

Don't spend lots of time on press work unless that's one of the points of doing the action! If however the action is (at least partly) aimed at getting media coverage then it's worth thinking about which media to target, and how.

But, even if you don't actually want media coverage it's worth preparing a Media Release - just in case any turn up. You're also more likely to get your message across (rather than some skewed sensationalism) if you give the journalists your side of the story.

What's your angle?

How are you going to portray who you are and what you're doing? Does your media angle fit into the wider aims of the campaign?

Who will talk to the media?

Work this out beforehand so that the Media liaison person can prepare some sound-bites and revise the basic facts. The perfect person for the job is someone who is friendly, confident, able to be firm and good with words.

Top Tip:

When you are planning an action remember to check out the deadlines of the newspapers in your area.

Which media? Any media?

Local newspapers and radio will cover virtually anything that is at least a little exciting. The telly is more choosy, and you'll need to come up with something fairly big to get them interested. National media are more difficult to get involved (but easier if you're doing your action in London).

Think about which of the above media you want to attract and then develop your media strategy. Ask yourself the following:

What message do we want the media to pass on? Concentrate on three or four simple key messages.

Is your activity/action sexy enough, or is it enough of a current topic to be of interest to the national media? Or is it only going to interest local and alternative media? Take a look at similar stories that national media have run in the past – is yours as exciting as those? If your action relates to another news headline (eg taxes raised on 4x4s) draw attention to it in your Media Release.

Are there going to be colourful, dynamic images? Photographers and the telly will only bother to turn up if you're offering something with a good visual impact, and ideally controversial or topical.

Do you know which journalists to contact directly? Ask other activists which journalists are friendly and likely to do a positive write up - try these first.

Alternative Media

Don't forget to let 'our' media know.

Post your stories on

Earth First: www.earthfirst.org.uk

Climate Indymedia: www.climateimc.org

Do you know where to send your News Releases? Make an up-to-date list of email addresses, fax and telephone numbers of your selected media. You can look up their email addresses on the web or ring them up and ask for their email address.

News Releases

Journalists are snowed under by media releases – make sure yours stands out. Grab attention with a punchy headline and first paragraph. The rest has to be clear and snappy too, whilst containing all the key information.

- ✓ Send your News Release by email, or if you print them out then **use A4 paper, typed**. Put your group's name (and logo) along with the words NEWS or MEDIA RELEASE at the top.
- ✓ **Keep it short and simple** - one or two pages only, but make sure that all the facts are there.
- ✓ Make up a good headline: something short and concise.
- ✓ **The news angle should be in the introduction to your press release.**
Cover the 5 big points: **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY**. Eg: (*who:*) Local people (*when:*) today (*what:*) took action to (*why:*) cut climate changing emissions.
- ✓ Look at how articles in local papers are written, then **write your media release in such a way that it can be used as an article with only minor or no changes**. Local papers often do this.
- ✓ **It's not a rant!** Focus on the facts most relevant to your action. You can go into more detail put this at the end under “Notes for the Editor”.
- ✓ **Add a snappy quote or two**, for example: have somebody famous saying “Climate Chaos is happening” and somebody involved in the action explaining what you're doing and why.
- ✓ **Include your contact numbers** on the release – ensure the phones are working, and that the person answering the phone is prepared.
- ✓ **Add details of picture opportunities** - put in a time and place along with a short, visual and enticing description of what will happen.
- ✓ Send the media release by email and fax (if you can). **Follow it up with a phone call** - “Just wanted to check our Media Release arrived ok”.

Climate change activists blockade Hartlepool nuclear power station

For immediate release: **August 22nd 2006**

from Reclaim Power: <http://www.reclaimpower.org.uk>

Email: reclaimpower101@xxxxxx

On-site mobile: **xxxxxx** Stills/footage: **xxxxxx**

Early this morning, activists from climate change pressure group **ReclaimPower** (1) blocked the main entrance of Hartlepool nuclear power station, Teesside (2). Using locks and other equipment six activists successfully closed the main entrance and unfurled a large banner with the words 'No More', in response to government and nuclear industry plans to build a new generation of nuclear power stations (3).

Darren Locke from Reclaim Power said, 'Nuclear power is not a solution to climate change. Whilst it may be true that nuclear power results in fewer greenhouse gas emissions than burning fossil fuels, nuclear power produces deadly waste which remains radioactive for thousands of years. We have no way to get rid of it. The nuclear industry has had almost 50 years to find a solution to the nuclear waste problem and has failed to do so.'

'The government says that our only option is to accept nuclear power with all its health and environmental problems,' continued Darren. But we do have another option: to reduce our energy consumption, and to get the power we do need from clean, safe renewable sources like wind and solar.'

This action is part of a series of actions by Reclaim Power highlighting our reliance on fossil fuels and the need to replace them with clean, safe renewable energy sources.

-ENDS-

Contact Reclaim Power activists on site on xxxxx. Stills/footage:xxxx

NOTES:

1.This action was carried out by autonomous activists in support of climate campaign group Reclaim Power <http://www.reclaimpower.org.uk>

2.Hartlepool nuclear power station (owned by British Energy) is due for decommissioning in 2014, but it's likely that the site will be proposed as a site for building a new nuclear power station. According to the nuclear lobby the most viable sites for new nuclear power stations are likely to be adjacent to existing nuclear power plants (see the Government's Energy Review 2006 for more details <http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file32007.pdf>)

3.See the Energy Review 2006. British Energy is likely to be part of any consortium building and running the new generation of nuclear power stations.

Climate change activists occupy Didcot power station

July 5th 2006: For immediate release

Early this morning activists from climate change pressure group Reclaim Power occupied a lighting tower at Didcot power station in Oxfordshire. Three climbers scaled the tower and unfurled a 50-foot orange and black banner with the words 'Climate Crime'. They plan to remain there for several hours in a peaceful but visually dramatic action to highlight the role of coal-fired power stations in climate change.

Lyn Barth from Reclaim Power said, "This is a shot across the bows for the coal industry. Coal produces more greenhouse gases than any other form of electricity generation. The future isn't in fossil fuels or nuclear. The future is in reducing our energy consumption and sustainable alternative energy. Otherwise we leave a legacy of destruction to our children."

Campaigners are concerned that the government and companies like the owners of Didcot power station, RWE/npower, are failing to take serious action on climate change.

Ms Barth continued: "It is up to individuals to force them to stop their emissions before the planet reaches a catastrophe."

This is not the first time Didcot has been targeted by protestors against climate change. The action against Didcot is part of a series of actions, which include the publicly announced occupation planned for Britain's largest coal power station, Drax in Yorkshire, during the Camp for Climate Action.

-END-

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE. Contact us for further details XXXXX

NOTES:

1. This action was carried out by autonomous activists in support of climate campaign group Reclaim Power (www.reclaimpower.org.uk).

For further information contact: xxxxxxxxxx The climbers may be reached on the following mobiles: xxxxxxxx.

2. Didcot A power station (owned by German transnational RWE who also own npower in the UK) burns around 3.7m tonnes of coal a year (from company leaflet 'Didcot Power Stations') and produces around 4.9m tonnes of CO₂ (Friends of the Earth, 2004). Recently Didcot A power station came under fire for seeking to disposing of ash by-products from coal burning in environmentally sensitive areas – in particular from Save Radley Lakes campaigners (www.saveradleylakes.org.uk).

Interviews

Being interviewed can be a nerve-wrecking experience, but it doesn't have to be. If you want a good write-up make sure that the media speak to people who know what they're talking about. The best way of doing that is to offer them interviewees who have prepared for this.

Interviews with the press are usually more relaxed and slower than with the radio or TV, but the same principles apply:

- **Know your facts** - take some notes, and read them before your interview. Then take a deep breath, and relax.
- **Know your audience** – you can go into more detail if you'll be on Radio 4, but if you're going to be on the local pop music station you'll need some seriously snappy sound-bites.
- **Decide on two or three key messages.** Keep these in mind, and stick to getting them across. Eg: Climate Chaos is happening; we all need to take responsibility; the action target is a climate criminal because...
- **Think about what questions you may be asked** and how you will answer them.
- **Paint a picture, tell a story** – avoid statistics or long lists. People understand polar bears better than friction factors of polar ice-sheets.
- **Avoid jargon or technical language** - speak clear, simple English.
- **If you do not understand a question, ask the journalist to repeat or explain it.** Do not be drawn into topics you know nothing about - you have good reasons to take action, feel free to remind the interviewer of that.

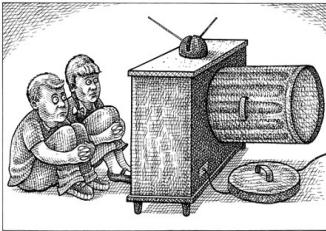
Radio and TV Interviews

In addition to the above, bear the following in mind:

- **Ask whether the interview is live or recorded** - if it's recorded you may be able to have another go if you mess things up.
- **Speak clearly and more slowly** than usual.
- **Vary your tone** - it needs to match your message. Let your natural enthusiasm come over – this is one of your main strengths.
- **Talk to the interviewer and make eye contact** with them, ignore the microphone and camera.
- They may only use a really short clip from the interview - as little as 4 or 5 seconds, so **make sure you have some sound bites prepared** - snappy phrases that cover your 2 -3 main points.

Preparing for TV and Photographs

If you're planning an action with the intent of getting into the media think beforehand about how your spectacle will come across to tv viewers and



people reading the paper. You'll have to come up with something really sexy (or have a good sense of timing) to get tv interested in what you're doing. Sort yourselves out with a sympathetic but good photographer who can get high quality digital or prints to the newspapers quickly.

Media and Actions

Actions often rely on secrecy in order to achieve their goals, but how do you make sure the media will be there without giving them all the details beforehand? If a reporter already knows that you do interesting actions then s/he may be willing to be on stand-by without knowing any more.

Most of the time we just have to make a decision on whether or not it's too risky to tell the media in advance. Remember: 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 of your action while doing this.

- Writing “EMBARGOED UNTIL <TIME>” at the top of the media release isn't enough to guarantee that the media will respect your security.

If you don't want to risk telling the media before the action then take a media contact list with you on the action and phone them as soon as you are there. Or have someone in an office to send out press releases for you when you give them the signal. (But make sure they don't send out the releases before you tell them to - all sorts of things can go wrong!)

Providing your own pictures and video footage

If you have the skills and equipment you can post your own pictures and videos of the action on a website. If you want the media to use these then you'll have to make sure that:

- they are of high quality (look good, and at least 300dpi for stills)
- available immediately - ideally while the action is still going on.

Remember to check photos and footage for anything dodgy (eg could look bad if portrayed out of context by the media, or of use to the police).

Using the Letters page

Letters to the press can be an effective way of getting your message out to people, particularly local papers where you have a good chance of being published.

- Keep letters short and to the point. They shouldn't be a big rant, but come over as being reasonable.
- Focus on getting a few points across clearly. If you have lots of points to make you could split them between different letter writers.
- Letters are more likely to be published if they contain personal or professional knowledge or experience - so mention these.

Media Contacts

Local Media

You can find contacts for many local newspapers at

- www.planningsanity.co.uk/media/news.htm

Alternative media

Find out about local/national newsletters and email lists. Here are two:

- Schnews - national weekly email newsletter: www.schnews.org.uk
- Rising Ride news sheet: info@risingtide.org.uk

Websites where you can post your story yourself:

- www.earthfirst.org.uk
- www.indymedia.org.uk
- www.climateimc.org

National Media Contacts

This list was up-to-date in July 2007. Do check that these are still correct before sending out your press release!

Television and Radio

The BBC

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

Today Programme

BBC Radio 4
Room G630, Stage 6
Television Centre
Wood Lane
London W12 7RJ
Email form:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/contact/>

Broadcasting House

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

PM

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

ITN

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

Channel 4

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

National Papers

The Guardian

The Editor
The Guardian
119 Farringdon Road
LONDON EC1R 3ER

letters@guardian.co.uk
Fax: 020 7837 4530

The Independent

Letters to The Editor
The Independent
191 Marsh Wall
LONDON E14 9RS
letters@independent.co.uk
Fax: 020 7005 2056

The Times

The Editor
The Times
1 Pennington Street
LONDON E98 1TA
letters@thetimes.co.uk
Fax: 020 7782 5046

The Financial Times

The Editor
The Financial Times
Number One Southwark Bridge
LONDON SE1 9HL
letters.editor@ft.com
Fax: 020 7873 5938

The Daily Telegraph

The Editor
Daily Telegraph
1 Canada Square
LONDON E14 5DT
dtletters@telegraph.co.uk
Web: www.telegraph.co.uk
Fax: 020 7538 6455

The Daily Mail

Daily Mail Readers' Letters
2 Derry Street
LONDON W8 5TT
letters@dailymail.co.uk

Fax: 020 7937 7493

The Daily Express

Letters to The Editor
Daily Express
245 Blackfriars Road
LONDON SE1 9UX
expressletters@express.co.uk
Fax: 020 7620 1643

The Evening Standard

The Editor
Evening Standard
PO Box 2309
LONDON W8 5EE
letters@standard.co.uk
Fax: 020 7938 7147

The Daily Mirror

Letters Editor
Daily Mirror
One Canada Square
LONDON E14 5AP
mailbox@mirror.co.uk
Fax: 020 7293 3975

The Sun

The Letters Editor
The Sun
1 Virginia Street
LONDON E98 1SL
Email: letters@the-sun.co.uk
Fax: 020 7782 4170

The Scotsman

Letters to the editor
Barclay House,
108 Holyrood Road,
Edinburgh EH8 8AS
Email: enquiries@scotsman.com
Tel: 0131 620 8620
Web: www.scotsman.com

The Herald

Letters to the editor
200 Renfield Street
Glasgow
SCOTLAND G2 3QB
Email: letters@theherald.co.uk
Tel: 0141 302 7000
Web: www.theherald.co.uk

Sunday Papers**The Observer**

Letters to the editor
119 Farringdon Road
London EC1R 3ER
E-mail : lletters@observer.co.uk
Fax : 020 7713 4279
Web: www.observer.co.uk

Independent on Sunday

Letters to the editor
1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London E14 5DL
E-mail : letters@independent.co.uk or
newseditor@independent.co.uk
Web: www.independent.co.uk

The Sunday Telegraph

Letters to the editor
1 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London E14 5DL
Email: stletters@telegraph.co.uk

The Sunday Times

Letters to the editor
1 Pennington Street
London E98 1ST
Email: letters@sunday-times.co.uk
Web: www.sunday-times.co.uk
Tel: 020 7782 5000

Scotland on Sunday

Barclay House,
108 Holyrood Road,
Edinburgh EH8 8AS
Tel: 0131 620 8620
Web:
<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/>

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