

## A quick guide to engaging local media

Securing media coverage during Community Rail Week is a great way to promote the work of your partnership or group, as well as raising the profile of community rail. Your local media are any news outlets that cover the area your group works in, both online and in print, ranging from newspapers, radio and TV to websites, magazines, newsletters or blogs.

Refer to the template press release included in the toolkit and the tips in this document to construct a strong press release promoting your campaign activities.

Remember, dovetailing media coverage with other communications such as websites and social media adds an interactive element to stories and enables further interaction and involvement, increasing the reach and impact of your work.

Whenever you do get media coverage, shout about it from the rooftops – including letting us know at [news@communityrail.org.uk](mailto:news@communityrail.org.uk) – and show the world the fantastic work you are doing!

### **A good press release should:**

- Be clear, easy to read and to the point – think of the who, what, when, where, why and how.
- Have a strong news angle and core message clearly geared at the target audience. What is the thing that is new and interesting? What are the action points or concepts you want readers to buy into?
- Grab journalists' attention – use punchy language and draw the reader in through your headline and first paragraph.
- Include accurate, informative facts and figures and highlight the relevance of these.
- Include human interest and passion – use quotes to add vibrancy.
- Offer further information and opportunities for public engagement (e.g. visit our website).
- Include at least one high-quality photograph / image you have full consent to use.
- Avoid personal opinion, assumption / speculation / over-embellishment, cliches and jargon, and waffle and repetition.

Elements that might appeal to local media include:

- topical ('today' line)
- novelty (happening for the first time)
- geographically relevant (impact on communities)
- human interest
- unexpected / unusual (something out the ordinary)
- campaign (seeking local support)
- entertaining / humorous (sense of fun and light relief)
- biggest and best (awards and achievements)

If your story relates to an event or launch that you want media organisations, photographers, reporters or film crews to attend, you should send a press notice ideally about a week prior. A press notice is not a full press release, but should include a brief summary of the story, relevant details of the event and what media opportunities are available and a point of contact for on the day.

### **Process of selling a story to the media:**

Identify who to contact – make a list of news or trade media organisations and specific local, transport, environment correspondents etc.

Making an introductory call goes a long way in building media relationships.

Be prepared, bold and confident when ‘selling in’ your story – know your main news hook, key stats, context and what you’re offering. Why is your story of interest?

Email a full press release to the journalist. Copy and paste the story into the body of an email, rather than attaching it (although it’s fine to attach pictures) – CC in the main newsdesk so they also have a copy.

Show willing to help them out if they request extra information, case studies, filming opportunities, etc.

### **Giving media interviews:**

Prepare, prepare, prepare! Know what type of interview it is (pre-recorded / live / outside / studio / phone / print) and who their audience is – consider what you’ll be asked and how to respond.

Come up with your top three headline messages and practice getting these across – use powerful adjectives, inclusive language and easy to understand sentences (e.g. “The work that community rail partnerships and station groups do is incredibly important.”)

Discuss facts and figures in a meaningful and accessible way – think about how the average person would think and talk about the issue.

Use personal examples people can connect to that might help to influence their thinking or behaviour (e.g. “Sometimes navigating our railways can be daunting, especially if you’re new to it, but helping to overcome this is one of the roles that community rail can play.”)

Adopt a passionate, interesting and sensible sounding tone – talk at a calm pace but using emphasis to sound passionate – be confident and complete in your answers.



Read our '[Engaging local media: a guide for community rail groups](#)' for further advice on developing working relationships with journalists and media outlets, as well as tips on identifying and writing eye-catching stories and content.