



| Press Office
PR Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your Public Relations toolkit.

Public Relations (PR) is a tool which any club can use to increase awareness, tell people about special events and activities or to help build member numbers. This toolkit will give you a basic overview of the principles of PR and how you can use it to promote your club.

It will assist you in working with the local media in a way that help you and them. From different types of local media to writing a press release, dealing with journalists in an interview and planning for activity through the year, this toolkit is a practical guide to best PR practice.

Many clubs are already involved with their local media, providing comments for newspapers, radio and even TV, benefitting them by raising their local profile.

The RYA Press Office team is always on hand to offer advice, and we hope you find the following information useful.

The Press Office Team

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PR FOR CLUBS

Why do PR?

Public Relations (PR) is about managing the reputation of your club. PR can help protect your reputation when it faces a negative issue and it can publicise positive stories to build your reputation.

The media are highly influential at a local level and having relationships with local people and businesses with knowledge of the area and its issues are essential for them. So a local club who can give a local perspective to the local media can be invaluable.

Positive local publicity can:

- Make your club stand out from other clubs in the area
- Increase goodwill with members and the local community
- Increase the profile of the club
- Help publicise the sport and boating messages to the public

What does the media want?

Dealing with the media can be a daunting prospect but it's worth remembering that:

- Journalists are only human and they need your help to do their job
- It is a two way process – a club provides material and expertise and in return, the journalist hopefully provides valuable coverage that will portray your club in a positive light

Whilst there will be times when the paper may report a negative story, the media should not be feared. By taking time to understand their needs you have every chance of turning them in to an ally.

If you work with the media on positive stories, you will benefit should you come across a negative issue because you know each other and built trust between you. Because you have a relationship, the journalist will be more willing to hear your side of the story before printing anything negative.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF LOCAL MEDIA

It is important to establish which media is the best suited to who you want to tell your story to. Here are a few examples of different types of media:

Regional daily and evening newspapers

- Very influential in the local community, often more so locally than national newspapers
- Wide circulation
- The Sports Editor would be the main point of contact for race results stories, whilst the News Editor would be your main contact for club news, special event stories

Local weekly newspapers

- Usually limited circulation covering a town or district
- May not have a dedicated Sports Editor. Use News Editor as primary contact if no Sports Editor and depending upon angle of your story
- May be more open to occasional or monthly articles

Local weekly free newspapers

- Distributed en masse in a town or district
- Vary a lot in quality and often contain quite 'lightweight' news/articles
- Advertising bias with small editorial team, may have limited editorial space
- The Editor is the main point of contact
- Often tight on budget and resources and appreciate articles, news releases and photos
- May suggest you pay to run the article – if pure editorial you shouldn't have to pay for it!

Local radio

- Commercial radio generally has little 'talk-time' and therefore fewer opportunities
- Do however run news stories, but just spend less 'air time' on them
- Local BBC stations or 'talk' radio stations offer more opportunities
- Need to identify a main point of contact as you would with a newspaper, the newsroom is a good starting point
- Local radio may be interested in competitions

Local TV

- Primary point of contact would be the forward planning department
- Contact via email and keep it short and concise, they want facts and visuals that help tell the story
- Not an 'in-depth' media

WHO TO CONTACT / WHAT TO DO

Contacting a local newspaper

When contacting a local newspaper it is important to:

- *Know who you are going to meet/speak to*, find out if there is a particular sailing/watersports contact and get their contact details – name, email address. If there isn't a specialist sailing contact speak to the sports writer/reporter or newsdesk
- Make sure you are *familiar with the paper or programme*
- *Have something to say*. As with any meeting it is important to know what you want to get from it and the points you have to make. **TIP:** write down key phrases like a short script before you call
- *Find out what the journalist wants*. If you know the kind of stories and information the local media wants, then you don't waste your time and theirs by sending irrelevant information/material

It is vitally important to remember that when you are speaking to the media nothing is ever **'OFF THE RECORD'**. Always work on the premise that anything you say to journalist may appear in print.

Opportunities for local publicity – Good news stories

Any of the following activities could achieve good local publicity:

- Event at the club e.g. opening of new premises, anniversary of club or member anniversary, open days, becoming an OnBoard club, Volvo Champion Club, running a Team15 team etc
- Staff appointments, retirements, achievements (focus on key events only)
- Sponsorship or involvement with local charity, fundraising events
- Club member stories – youngster who learnt to sail at club has won particular event, member wins an award for their activities at the club
- Visits by celebrities or notable person
- A behind the scenes story on what happens in a sailing club

This list is by no means exhaustive but gives an idea of the types of things that can be used for PR stories in the local press.

THE MEDIA TOOLBOX

The following provides an overview of some of the most commonly used PR tools. The type of activity you are doing will determine the best method to use.

It is important to remember that **PR is NOT paid for advertising**, so you **cannot guarantee** that a paper will cover your story and if the paper does run your story it may not use all of it.

News releases

- The most common way of communicating information to the media
- They need to be short and factual covering the what, when, where, why and how of the activity
- Try to include a quote that can be attributed to a spokesperson that the paper can use in the article as it adds a human element to the story

Photographs

- Photos work well with the local press who are always looking for good pictures
- A 'picture speaks a thousand words' but they need to be interesting
- If you are inviting a newspaper photographer to your event you will need to do so about a week before the event. **TIP:** have your own photographer available as well as the press may not always turn up!

Spokesperson

- Journalists like to speak to someone who can give them more details about a particular story or news item, so they can attribute a quote to them
- Decide in advance who your spokesperson is going to be. What are the key points you want to get across and decide what you don't want to say – remember nothing is ever 'off the record'

Competitions

- Papers are often open to running competitions, but remember you have to provide the prize which will usually for a specific value as specified by the paper.

Case Studies

- These are an effective way of endorsing your story
- A journalist is more likely to believe a member saying the club is great, rather than the commodore or club chairman saying it!
- Remember: the paper want a photograph of the person(s) acting as a case study!

Advertorials

- A cross between editorial written by the journalist and advertisements paid for by the advertiser
- They look a little like an editorial piece by you pay for the space (whereas pure editorial is free), which guarantees your article will be in the paper. It will usually be headed 'Advertising Promotion'

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

A newspaper seeks to grab the attention of its readers on every page. It will either be through the headline, a picture or even a graphic. Usually there's one thing which catches your eye and gets you to read more.

To get noticed your story needs to make a strong impact – quickly.

The headline

Too many people make the mistake of trying to do the journalist's job for them and write a headline to the news release as it might appear in the paper. Don't. Newspapers have sub editors to do the job and it is a matter of professional pride not to use the one you've thought of, however clever it is.

Instead, use the headline as a title. E.g. if the story is about how your club has expanded in the last year, choose a headline such as: *'Sailing club gets more local residents sailing'*

The introduction / opening paragraph

This is the key element to your press release. Look at any story in any newspaper and you will see that the key elements of the story are all revealed in the first paragraph.

"A local family enjoying an evening moored in Hamble marina escaped death by inches last night when a lorry ploughed off the pontoon into their boat."

Rather than

"Mr and Mrs Smith were settling down to a relaxing evening on board their boat 'Nightlife' with their children when they received a nasty shock that none of them would ever forget..."

A journalist will have many press releases on his or her desk every day. You have seconds to make an impact. A good test is to imagine whether whoever is reading it can immediately draw a picture from your words.

Humour, puns and witty remarks can work well at times, but stay well clear of these if you don't have a natural talent for it.

If in doubt, say to yourself **KISS** – **K**ep **I**t **S**traight and **S**imple, and always 'write to the reader'.

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE CONTINUED...

The most important reader of your release is the editor, news editor or sports editor etc. They will decide whether the information is likely to appeal to their readers.

So don't forget the need for a big impact and 'KISS'.

Remember:

- Title
- First paragraph, outlining the key elements
- Expand the story
- A quote from a key spokesperson / member
 - *Note: If you are quoting children only give limited information – e.g. name, age, home town or club they are a member of*
- Relevant club background
- Your contact details

Content

Check that where appropriate the release answers all the traditional questions:

- Who?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- What?
- How?

Always check the facts and check again. Essential and basic information like names, times and dates must be correct.

- Never assume or take anything technical for granted. Avoid jargon
- Mistakes in names or other essential information will undermine the credibility
- Read quotes out loud to make sure they sound as if someone might actually have said it

Follow- up calls

Like everyone else, journalists are busy people but a phone call can be a good way to introducing yourself. However, don't continually call them to let them know you are going to send them something, unless:

- You're offering them an exclusive
- You want to tell them about a photo opportunity
- You want to check how they'd like to receive information – email, fax or post
- You have a good relationship with the journalist and genuinely believe an advance call would be helpful

Try to avoid follow-up calls if you have already spoken to the journalist, unless you genuinely believe the release has gone astray or you have something new to add. A journalist will always call you if they need more information on the story.

EXAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Date

LOCAL SAILING CLUB GETS ONBOARD

Toes Wet Sailing Club, in Christchurch is the latest club in the region to sign up to the Royal Yachting Association's (RYA) OnBoard programme. Following the club's annual Junior Regatta (01 October 2009), young club members gathered to see the club's training centre principal Jack Black and club vice-Commodore Sid White receive the plaque from the RYA OnBoard Development Officer Penny James.

"Toes Wet Sailing Club has worked hard to achieve their OnBoard status" commented Penny. "I learnt to sail here when I was younger and the club has had a strong youth section and now the club will work with local schools to give non-sailing children the chance to try the sport."

"For the clubs who sign up it's a way of attracting more young people to experience the sport and into membership," she added.

The presentation was made following the Club's annual Junior Regatta where young people who had learnt to sail at the training centre over the past season took to the water to put their skills into practice. Over 25 young people between the ages of eight and 16 took part in the regatta, many racing for the first time having only begun to sail a few weeks previously. Among the guests were parents and local School Sports Coordinators.

Run by the RYA, OnBoard is a highly successful industry supported grass roots programme, which seeks to make sailing easier to get into for young people. Over a ten-year period the programme aims to introduce a minimum of 500,000 children to sailing and windsurfing in the UK, converting over 10 per cent of them into regular participants. So far it's nicely on track.

For more information about how to get involved in sailing visit the RYA's website www.rya.org.uk or the OnBoard website www.ruob.co.uk.

-ends-

For more information: your contact details

Notes to Editor:

E.g. details about the club / when spokesperson available for interview / photo captions

PHOTOGRAPHY TOP TIPS

Images

- Pictures paint a thousand words – BUT they must be interesting
- Good pictures work extremely well in local press
- A good picture can be the difference between a story being run or not

But what makes a good picture for press?

- It's cliché but newspaper s like pictures of children and attractive women
- Make sure you stage your pictures, don't just hope you'll get what you need – need to see faces, frame the picture – think about your background
- If it's a youth event take pictures of the kids - not the parents, coaches, trainers; the kids are the story!
- Getting people close together makes a better picture – if you have to, physically move people in to the position you want them to be in
- Get names of the people in the pictures particularly prize giving photos
- Always include a photo caption in your release about who, what in the picture
- Make sure you have high resolution images for press – 1MB is fine for sending to press

Examples



Group shots

Good or Bad?

- What is it for?
- Not a good background
- Not close enough to see faces



Good or Bad?

- Group nice and close together
- Good background with sails
- All looking at camera
- Have sign showing what event is for (visible on full size image)

PHOTOGRAPHY TOP TIPS CONTINUED...



Presentations

Good or Bad?

- Nice background
- People in shot nice and close
- Facing camera / smiling

Note:

- Make sure you name all people in the photo and their job titles



Action Shots

Good or Bad?

- Good background
- Looking at camera
- Gives sense of action and fun
- Branding poor



Good or Bad?

- Great use of colour
- Excellent branding
- Lots of people

Remember:

- The background
- Facing the camera (where appropriate)
- Peoples names (not necessary on large group shots)
- Photo is in focus
- At least 1MB
- Details of who to credit image to e.g. photographers name / club name
- Make sure branding visible and people know what the photo is about
- **IMPORTANT** - Consent forms if taking pictures of children

GETTING QUOTES

Quotes are really useful to make a story come to life. They give a third party view of an event / activity rather than you just saying it is so.

How to get a quote

- Sometimes you may have to put words in to peoples / kids mouths, so to speak, to give them an idea of what you want them to say e.g.:
 - Question would be - *So you think this has been a really great event and you're really pleased with how the team / you have done?*
 - Quote would then read: *xxx said: "It's been a really great event and I'm really pleased with how I've done today."*
- Try and have an idea of the kind of quote you would like from the person before you start asking questions, this will influence the kind of questions you ask
- Always useful to jot down a 2/3 questions before talking to them so you can keep conversation going
- Try and use open ended questions to get the person talking
- Try and get them excited about your questions so you need to be interesting and excited about talking to them
- If interviewing children always advise you are going to use info for a quote and get relevant permission from individual or parent/guardian
- You will need to get some personal information too such as name, age, home town, club, school (if applicable for story)
 - *Note: If you are quoting children only give limited information – e.g. name, age, home town or club they are a member of*

Examples of questions

- What was your favourite part of sailing today
- What would you say to other kids interested in getting in to sailing
- How do you think you did in today's race
- Why / What do you like about sailing
- When did you start sailing
- What would you say to someone thinking about getting in to sailing/windsurfing/power boating etc

MEDIA INTERVIEWS WHAT TO DO

Firstly, don't panic! Before you agree to an interview find out:

- **WHO** you are talking to – are they a specialist or general reporter, and which paper are they representing?
- **WHAT** sort of article is it going to be? (Long feature or news story)
- **WHERE** is the article going to appear? A national broadsheet, a regional paper, weekly trade journal, glossy monthly magazine, on radio?
- **WHEN** is their deadline?
- **WHY** are they calling you? There will always be a reason

Additional questions

- What do they want to know?
- How much information do they have already?
- Have they been talking to anyone else on the same subject? If so who and what did they say?
- Will you be quoted? If so, can you check the quotes and facts before publication? (you may not always get the chance to do this)

Buy yourself time

Remember you don't have to give an interview straight away. Once you have obtained as much information as you can about the journalist and article, make an excuse and offer to call them back shortly. Useful excuses include:

- I'm just heading out on the water
- I have another call holding
- You don't have immediate access to the information required

Once you've decided to do the interview, decide what you want to say beforehand. An interview is your chance to say something positive about your club. If you decide not to do the interview make sure you call the journalist and explain why not.

And remember, a journalist is always on duty. Do not say anything 'off the record'.

Interview techniques

- Plan – write down what you want to say and write it down how you would say it
- Be short and concise
- Don't be too technical – avoid jargon
- Give examples
- Be positive
- If you don't know the answer, promise to find out – don't guess!
- Don't be lead off the agreed agenda
- If you have a particular point you want to get across, don't worry about repeating yourself

DEALING WITH JOURNALISTS

Journalists have a bad reputation that is often unjustified. They can be your friend – but there are certain ‘rules’, so...

DO

- Be straight with them. Be fair, up front and positive.
- Be polite and calm, especially in tough situations. Keep control, be helpful and get back to them quickly if you can't answer a question off the top of your head
- Be sure of the statistics/dates/times/names you give them. You can always get back to them if you are unsure at the time
- Listen to the whole question before answering and get them to repeat the question or quote to which you have to respond if you don't get it first time.

DON'T

- Panic. Take time to prepare your answers carefully. Remember, you are the expert.
- Say anything you don't want to see in print or hear on air
- Use jargon. Some people may understand it whilst others may not. Don't take the risk
- Talk about a third party – that is for the third party to comment on
- Argue! The last thing you want is a confrontational situation with a journalist

NEVER EVER say, ‘no comment’. It looks like you have something to hide and they'll find comment from somewhere else which may not have the correct facts.

DEALING WITH A CRISIS

If for some reason your club finds itself involved in a major incident you may find that the press are quick to contact you.

What you need to know

- The facts - nature of incident, who, what, where, when
- Who is the primary contact for information
- What media have already been in touch
- What are your plans moving forward

Once you have the information:

- **Draft holding statement** – this will buy you time whilst all the details are pulled together (the RYA press office team can help you draft this) – common phrases used e.g. ‘our deepest sympathies go out to the family’, ‘this is a legal matter so we are unable to comment at present’
 - keep in mind who the audiences would be – local / trade media, other local clubs and centres, LEA’s, local councils etc
- Where applicable the RYA Press Office team can help **handle media enquiries** on your behalf so you can deal with the issue on the ground – just give out our contact details and we will field any calls, arrange interviews etc – in consultation with you
- We can also chat through your responses with you – **role play potential interview** scenarios to iron out any issues

Working with the RYA

- Advise RYA of contact person at the club
- If your club has its own PR team – need to ensure there is joined up communication and messages are the same from the club and from the RYA. Need to ensure joined up thinking in terms on statements, press releases – and advise RYA Press Team when statements are made / releases issued as we could get calls off back of the club communications
- If you don’t have your own PR team the RYA can assist, just advise the team of key contact for information and quotes

If media shows up:

- Where possible provide a **spokesperson** – this is your opportunity to have a voice, give your side of a story, get the facts right, put the story in context
- Where possible get **questions up front** for interview – this allows you some prep time and a flavour of where the interviewer is coming from. If you can’t get all the questions before interview make sure you get the first question.
- Have ‘your’ **key messages** in mind – remember don’t be forced in to following the interviewer’s agenda you can put your key messages across – 3 key messages is a good number to remember
- If there is time you can call the press office to run through your responses



ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or queries regarding your PR then contact the RYA press office who will be happy to offer you advice.

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