



PUBLIC RELATIONS: USING THE MEDIA, A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Using the media is a vital part of PR. It reaches out to a wide, loyal audience, raising awareness of what you are doing and increasing sales of local food. This practical guide aims to help you establish and foster a good working relationship with journalists, from information about the various types of local media to engaging their interest through events and press releases.

If you would like some clarification on any of the information below, the team at KFMA is always happy to help.

Contact us by emailing jen@kfma.org.uk or call 07917 468255.

LOCAL MEDIA

Different types of local media have varying interests. It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with your local and regional media to enable you to target the most relevant publication or radio station. Below is some general information about different types:

Regional newspapers

- Have a loyal readership and are very influential in the local community.
- Have a wide circulation.

Local weekly newspapers

- Can be difficult to get stories in – longer term planning is needed with plenty of notice given. A good idea to have a topical theme.
- Better for occasional stories and “in season” pieces.

Local free newspapers and magazines

- Varying quality.
- Limited space.
- Will possibly suggest you pay for advertising; if your piece is purely editorial, you shouldn't have to pay. You could try to get a regular column!



Local Radio

- Radio stations that play a lot of music have limited air time for news stories; they are still worth approaching but be aware they present fewer opportunities for coverage.
- Talk-based stations are ideal – identify your local BBC radio station.

Local TV

- The forward planning department is your contact.
- Contact via email as it can be put straight in the diary if of interest.
- Ensure your email is concise and keep in mind they are only interested in visual stories: what can you offer in this respect?
- Won't be in-depth coverage.
- Be aware: you might not know for definite whether they intend to come until very short notice!

Contacting the media

- Knowing who you need to speak to is important. This will usually be the News Editor in the first instance. However, if you have read something related to your work in the publication, ask for the journalist who wrote it by name.
- Familiarise yourself with the publication or journalist's work so you can be relevant.
- Prepare what you are going to say. It can help to write down a few key phrases or bullet points of the things you wish to convey.

Remember: always assume that what you say might end up in print – nothing is ever 'off the record'.

GETTING COVERAGE: WHAT MAKES A NEWS STORY?

Defining a news story is notoriously difficult but, loosely, it's a report/event/story that is:

- Current/timely.
- Important/has impact.
- Easy for readers to identify with.



- Sensational/controversial.
- Treats conflict.
- Is generally just 'interesting'!

Turning a case study into a news story involves giving it a 'hook' – that is in line with one of the above. For example, a farmers' market can be said to be responding to increasing consumer demand for fresh, locally-grown produce – and this consumer demand can be evidenced in reports such as Making Local Food Work's Fair Food report. This gives the case study a hook – the fact that more and more people are choosing to purchase their food directly from the producer rather than through a supermarket chain is not only interesting, it demonstrates that farmers' markets are also topical and newsworthy.


The key things to include in any press release or email to the media are:

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

And, wherever possible, you need a great photo to go with it!

Remember: seasonal food recipes always make interesting copy for editors.

ORGANISING AN EVENT



This also a great ways of engaging the local press. Showcasing a new producer/ stallholder and inviting the press to sample their food is a good way of encouraging people to visit. Inviting a local celebrity or notable person to attend the launch of a new range of local produce can also be effective. Ensure the market looks really visually appealing – use bunting, flyers, balloons... and tell the press what it will look like to encourage them to send a photographer/film crew.



Invite the media to your event. Use a press release in the body of the email – not as an attachment. Make sure the title of the email is the title of your press release. If you have a generic email address, address it for the attention of the news editor or, where possible, a named journalist.

Be aware of publication deadlines and contact via email or phone in the morning to avoid stressful afternoons when journalists are rushing to get their copy in for the following day's publication. Aim to send your press release two weeks before the event and follow up with a phone call a couple of days beforehand if you have not received confirmation of attendance.

Photography is important. Ideally a press photographer will attend the event, but they can often be called away at short notice, so always have someone on hand who can take photographs on the day that can be sent to the publication afterwards. Wherever possible, stage photographs to ensure they are suitable for the publication. If you have more than one person in the shot, make sure they are standing very close together so the photo can be cropped if necessary. Think about what you want in the background of the shot – a banner with the market's name, a food stall...

WRITING PRESS RELEASES

The purpose of a press release is to grab a journalist's attention quickly. It must be factual, concise and informative.

Opening paragraph

The opening paragraph is the most important part of the press release; if it doesn't command attention in the first line the remainder will not be read. You are not telling a story, so come to the point straight away. If you are inviting the press to an event, include the date, time and location in the first paragraph.

Second paragraph

Give some more information. Why is this story relevant?

Comment

Include a quote – it gives the press release a human element.

Fourth paragraph

Background information: this is where you explain more about your market or stall, give information about location, stallholders and produce.



Contact details

Give a mobile number whenever possible. This persuades the journalist you are easy to get in touch with and means they can call you on the day if they need directions, for example.

Notes to Editors

Include any other relevant information that an editor might wish to know and point anyone needing more help with their farmers' market or anyone interested in setting up a community food enterprise in the right direction.

Avoid jargon

Always assume your reader has no knowledge of your subject matter. Avoid technical language and state explicitly why local food/community ownership is important.

Proof-read

Spelling and grammar mistakes will undermine your credibility. Read quotes aloud to make sure they sound like someone has actually said them.

A top tip for writing a press release is to imagine you're in a pay phone and you only have 20p. You need to tell the person on the end of the phone the most important things about your story. This will be your opening paragraph.

As you're talking, you find another 20p. So you can give a bit more information – why is this important? Why would other people find it interesting?

You then find another 20p. You can now give your own opinion – something personal as to why it's important. This would be your quote in the press release.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

The following press release is intended to be a guide only. Each news story will require a unique press release in order to sell it to journalists but the format will be the same, as will the information in the Notes to Editors, and the explanation of your wider aims.

Top accolades in national awards for Winchester Farmers' Market

High praise from judges as Winchester scoops Best UK Urban Farmers' Market 2011 award

Winchester Farmers' Market has been hailed as 'a beacon for other farmers' markets' in this year's National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association (FARMA) awards, which recognize the very best practice in directly connecting producer



and consumer through local food.

The results were announced at the annual Farm & More conference, at which judges praised Winchester for its 'consistent hard work, business monitoring and innovation which has maintained the market's high standards for over a decade.'

Winchester Farmers' market was established in 1999 and is now the largest farmers' market in the country, offering a range of locally-produced, high quality goods from producers in Hampshire and within ten miles of its borders. It sees 16,000 visitors each month taking advantage of the fresh farm produce, providing a real hub of the community. Its success can be attributed in part to the support it has received from Making Local Food Work (MLFW), a national programme which supports community food enterprises like farmers' markets. MLFW helped the market introduce changes last year such as a seating area in the markets and regular cooking demonstrations to add a further social dimension to the market. The judges also particularly highlighted their like for the innovative taster unit that showcases stallholders' products.

Gareth Jones, FARMA and MLFW representative, said: "The largest farmers' market in the country, Winchester refuses to rest on its laurels, but is constantly innovating and improving its customer offering."

Alex Handford, Business Manager of HFM said, "Hampshire Farmers' Market is moving with the times and we aim to do everything we can to help our producers thrive in these difficult times. For example, we've taken the Farmers' Market from the street to cyberspace, offering jute bags and Valentine's gift boxes for sale online. We also have a popular e-newsletter and growing followers on Facebook and Twitter."

--ENDS--

For press and media enquiries, contact Katherine Darling on 01993 810730 or katherine.darling@plunkett.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

More information about Hampshire Farmers' Markets can be obtained from
XXXX XXXXXX



Making Local Food Work (www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk) is a five year, £10m programme funded through the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by the Plunkett Foundation. It helps people to take ownership of their food and where it comes from by supporting a range of community food enterprises across England. Community food enterprises are businesses run by communities for their benefit, which are involved in at least one part of growing, harvesting, processing, distributing, selling or serving local food. Examples include farmers' markets, community-owned shops, community supported agriculture, country markets, food co-operatives and many others. Making Local Food Work pools the expertise of seven partner organisations including Co-operatives UK, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Country Markets Ltd, FARMA, the Plunkett Foundation, Soil Association, and Sustain to help communities gain access to good, fresh, local produce, with clear origins.

The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme is funding a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers' markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment.

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.

Big Lottery Fund Press Office: 020 7211 1888 Out of hours: 07867 500 572

Public Enquiries Line: 08454 102030 Textphone: 08456 021 659

Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

IDEAS FOR COVERAGE

As mentioned previously, there are various ways of increasing media coverage. Some further justifications for why farmers' markets are news-worthy are:

- Farmers' markets will bring a boost to the local area.
- With the recession affecting many businesses, traders often see an increase in new customers thanks to farmers' markets.



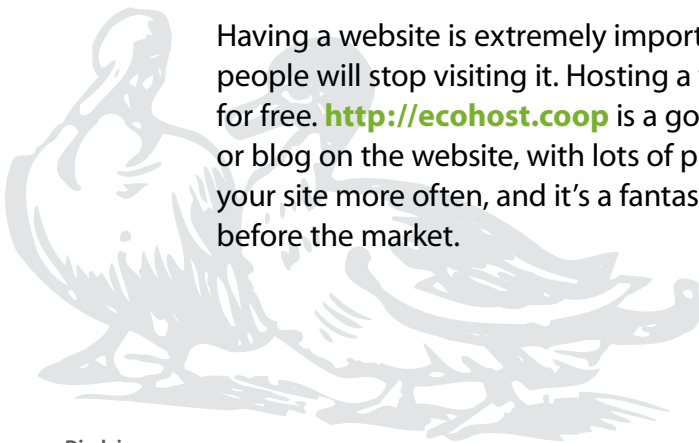
- Making Local Food Work's Retail Health Check can provide the grounds for a news story.
- Farmers' markets can undertake a report to track the success of the market over a certain period of time, or an increase in traders/customers range of produce offered.
- Farmers' Markets can hold events or have a themed market to celebrate external calendar dates such as Harvest Festival, Halloween, Easter and so on, with special invites going out to media contacts.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The internet is arguably the most important communications tool currently available to us. Not only is it usually the first port of call for people in search of information, it can be used effectively to reach out to a vast audience, not only increasing awareness of what you are doing, but also delivering actual results. There are lots of ways to use social media; the important thing to remember is that you need to use the most appropriate format for how much time you have.

The most widely used social media sites are **Facebook** (www.facebook.com) and **Twitter** (www.twitter.com) and it's really important to have a presence here.

Having a website is extremely important but it must be updated regularly otherwise people will stop visiting it. Hosting a website is not expensive, and can often be done for free. <http://ecohost.coop> is a good place to start. Having a regular news section or blog on the website, with lots of photos of produce, will encourage people to visit your site more often, and it's a fantastic way of publicising your stalls and produce before the market.



Disclaimer

The information and advice and guidance on this site is provided in good faith, and is for general purposes only, and any reliance you place on such information is therefore at your own risk. Weather conditions and seasonality may impact availability of produce and stall holder attendance at markets, and so we cannot guarantee the accuracy of all information.

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