

MEDIA TOOLKIT

EXPLORE

OPAL



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MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ WHAT'S IN THE MEDIA TOOLKIT

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“OPAL aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by getting people to engage with the natural world around them.”

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

What is news?

Before approaching your local newspaper or journalist one of the most important issues to consider is whether your story is newsworthy. In order for a story to be news, it must have at least one of the following:

Be about people

All stories have issues, but issues are BORING, so they have to be translated into human interest. News stories are all about how people are affected.

Have an angle

Your local journalist is always looking for an angle to a news story. Their aim is to be first, better or different. That should be your aim too.

Remember these three points to make a good news story:

1 New / novel / different / extreme

By definition news is something that happened today that didn't happen yesterday. Stories need to be new and unusual.

2 Community

An interesting activity and / or achievement by a group or individual from the community. This is an essential news value for local newspapers.

3 Events

Special awards, celebrity attendance (including locally known people, eg. mayor or head of fire department), large numbers, interesting locations.

When deciding what to write about, it is also worth considering what you want coverage for. For example, if you want to publicise an event in order to get people to attend, you should issue a pre-event press release one to two weeks before the event. Make sure you include all the details people will need to know such as contact numbers, location, times, etc.

You could then issue a post-event release with photos after the event to celebrate your success. If you are holding a private event, a post-event press release will be more relevant.

"...if you want to publicise an event in order to get people to attend, you should issue a pre-event press release one to two weeks before the event."

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

What are the different types of media?

Newspapers

Did you know that the regional press is the second largest advertising medium in the UK after television? Getting your story in your local newspaper can be an invaluable and cost-effective way to gain publicity for your event.

Radio and television

You can also approach local stations and programmes which might be interested in OPAL activities. You could be invited to give an interview, or a journalist may even want to attend the event on the day.

Monthly / bi-monthly / quarterly magazines specific to your type of activity

You may wish to consider specialist publications which relate to your activity – these could be magazines such as Country Life, Outdoor Enthusiast or Sea Angler. These kind of publications usually work several weeks, even months, in advance so you need to make contact with them early.



“Did you know that the regional press is the second largest advertising medium in the UK after television?”

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Talking to the media

Hints and tips!

- 1 Don't be scared** – journalists are there to do a job and they need you as much as you need them.
- 2 Always appear friendly and helpful** – remember you are representing OPAL.
- 3 Speak with conviction to get your points across** – be proud that you know the subject much better than they do.
- 4 If you receive a call** directly from the media but feel unable to deal with their enquiry, be polite but refer them to the OPAL Communications Office.
- 5 It is perfectly acceptable** to say that you / a colleague will call a journalist back if you need time to think. It is rare but occasionally a journalist will have a hidden agenda, so letting the Communications Officer deal with them first means you can be more prepared.
- 6 If you do promise to call someone back, make sure you do** – or ask the Communications Office to do so.
- 7 Respect** journalist deadlines and respond to queries in a timely fashion.
- 8 Never lose your cool** – even if you feel you are being provoked. Again it's quite reasonable to say you will call them back. This gives you thinking space and a chance to discuss it with the Communications Office.
- 9 The secret of success is preparation.** Decide in advance what your key messages are and stick to them. Ideally, you should have no more than three.

“Decide in advance what your key messages are and stick to them.”

More hints and tips! »

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Talking to the media

Hints and tips! ... continued

- 10 Never, ever, ever go off the record.** You should only ever say something that you wouldn't mind seeing on the front page of a national newspaper with your name on it.
- 11 Stay calm, clear and collected and keep smiling** – it will come across, even on radio
- 12 Practice, practice, practice!** Read newspapers and magazines, listen to broadcast interviews and learn from good and bad spokespeople
- 13 Ask questions!** You are allowed to ask a journalist exactly what they are after from you, what the context of the story is, when it is appearing, who else they are talking to etc etc.

“You are allowed to ask a journalist exactly what they are after from you.”

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Perfect press releases

A press release is the standard and most commonly used form of written communication when dealing with the media.

A release follows a structured format which allows you to convey the necessary details about your news story in a style which is easily recognised by journalists.

Most journalists receive many, many press releases every day so it's really important to make yours stand out and to make the information contained within it easily consumed; anything too fussy or over-complicated is only likely to find its way into the recycling bin!

Listed below are some tips for writing your press release and a sample release can be found at the back of this kit.

Tips

- 1** All press releases must start with 'For immediate release: day/date/month/year'.
- 2** The headline should be short and informative. When a journalist is trawling through the numerous press releases they receive, a catchy headline will grab their attention.
- 3** The five 'W's and the 'H'
Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
This is the crux of all news. Any good news story provides answers to each of these questions.
- 4** The first paragraph must be short and summarise the whole story. It must contain the 'five W's and the H' in a nutshell. You can provide further details later on. A journalist will glance at this one paragraph and make a decision on this as to whether they will read on making it the most important part of your release.
- 5** The next two to three paragraphs should repeat the story, explaining in more detail.

"... journalists receive many, many press releases every day so it's really important to make yours stand out."

More press release tips! »

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Perfect press releases ... continued

- 6** Try to keep press releases to one side of A4 paper. If it is longer than one page, use two separate numbered pages and write 'More follows...' at the bottom of page one.
- 7** Quote people: Include a short lively quote. Do not use "I" and "me" when you are quoting someone.
- 8** Keep sentences and paragraphs short and simple. Don't use flowery language and fancy words.
- 9** Good photos accompanying a press release can make all the difference to the impact of the story (refer to the next section for photographic tips and advice).
- 10** Make sure that your release is being sent to the right person, at the right address, at the right time. Give the publication a call to find out who it would be best to send it to.

"Make sure that your release is being sent to the right person, at the right address, at the right time."

Layout

The layout of the press release is just as important as the content as it allows a journalist to gain the crux of the story and your contact details at a glance. Please refer to the sample press release at the back of this pack and use it as a template for structuring your own releases.

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Photocalls

A photocall is an opportunity for journalists from your local papers to come along all at once and get the photographs and interviews they want all in one go.

Tips

- **Send out a photocall alert to your local press.** It should include information about the event; why it's taking place, when it's taking place, who will be attending, and the exact time and location of the photocall (see example photocall alert at the back of this kit)
- **Be prepared.** Be clear about what you want to say before the photocall; what is the event, why is it so important, what is it going to mean?
- **Use OPAL branded pull-up stands / posters** as a backdrop and, if you have one, wear your OPAL branded polo shirt
- **Take your own photographs** on the day, you could ask a friend or colleague to help. This is so that you have pictures to send out should anyone request images after the photocall has taken place.

If organising a photocall isn't practical, you can always take pictures and attach them to a post-event press release.

"Be clear about what you want to say before the photocall."

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Photography and filming advice

The legalities

When using photos / video for promotional purposes, it is essential to obtain the necessary documentation to protect the project legally.

There are two key documents to be completed:

- Copyright assignment
- Consent forms

Both of these documents should, ideally, be completed in advance of your event. You can obtain the forms by email from the OPAL Communications Office.

Copyright assignment

A copyright assignment should be completed by the photographer so that OPAL can retain the rights to images. This means partners can reproduce the pictures as needed over the course of the project.

Consent forms

Consent forms are vital to protect vulnerable children and adults. Not all individuals will be suitable for publicity shoots, take for example someone whose identity needs to be protected because they have been put into care.

It is also important that anyone taking part in OPAL publicity has also agreed to their image being used in a variety of ways. The consent form covers the project legally and prevents disputes further down the line.

Note!

These documents must not be ignored or bypassed. Both the project and / or partners could face severe legal implications if these procedures are not followed.

"It is also important that anyone taking part in OPAL publicity has also agreed to their image being used in a variety of ways."

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART ONE - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Please remember...

Just because you contact your local newspaper with a possible story, or supply an interview and/or images, they are in no way obliged to use it.

If a journalist turns your story down or an article is dropped at the last minute, do not be disheartened or take it personally. Most newspapers need to be scrupulous about what they run as there is not always room for everything.

Often they also need to amend pages at the last minute to make room for important breaking news stories.

If you are having trouble placing your story, please feel free to contact the OPAL Communications Officer who may be able to identify new press contacts for you to approach or offer advice on your press release.

“Most newspapers need to be scrupulous about what they run as there is not always room for everything.”

MEDIA TOOLKIT

▶ PART TWO – OPAL INFO

OPAL quote

You can use the following quote from Portfolio Director, Dr. Linda Davies, in your PR materials. Please note, this quote must not be altered in any way.

If you need a different quote on a specific subject, please contact the Communications Office for advice.

OPAL Director, Dr. Linda Davies from Imperial College London, said, *“Everyone can take part in OPAL by exploring and discovering the natural world around them. There are activities to suit all ages and abilities and everyone’s contribution is valuable. OPAL wants to inspire a new generation of nature lovers and increase environmental awareness, which has both local and global relevance.”*

Corporate Q&A

For in-depth media interviews or activity with a high profile (ie. television, national newspapers), the Communications Office can you with a copy of the *corporate Q&A*. This document outlines questions which could arise and gives details on how to answer them.

The document has been omitted from the media toolkit because of the highly sensitive nature of the information it contains.

“For in-depth media interviews or activity with a high profile the Communications Office can you with a copy of the corporate Q&A.”

Sample Press Release

Press release template (also available as a Word or PDF document)




A breath of fresh air for pupils studying local lichens

News release
For immediate release: 25 June 2020
Media contact: [name]
[organisation name]
Tel: [number] Email: [address]

As part of the national Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) scheme seeking to inspire the next generation of nature-lovers, local pupils have been examining lichen distribution on the County Durham coastline. Their findings will be showcased as artistic interpretations at an exhibition open to the public at Hartlepool English Martyrs School on Friday 11th July.

Newcastle University, an OPAL partner, invited the school to study lichens in a bid to find out more about local air quality. Lichens are a combination of a fungus and an alga that are particularly sensitive to changes in the environment so examining them can highlight differences across an area.

Dr [name], Newcastle University, said, "Encouraging pupils to take a hands-on approach to discovering the natural world around them is helping them to really appreciate the diversity of life forms that exist locally. By bringing science and the local community closer together we can benefit from a greater understanding of the environmental factors which affect us all."

The art exhibition will take place between 9am and 3pm on 11th July at Hartlepool English Martyrs School, room 123.



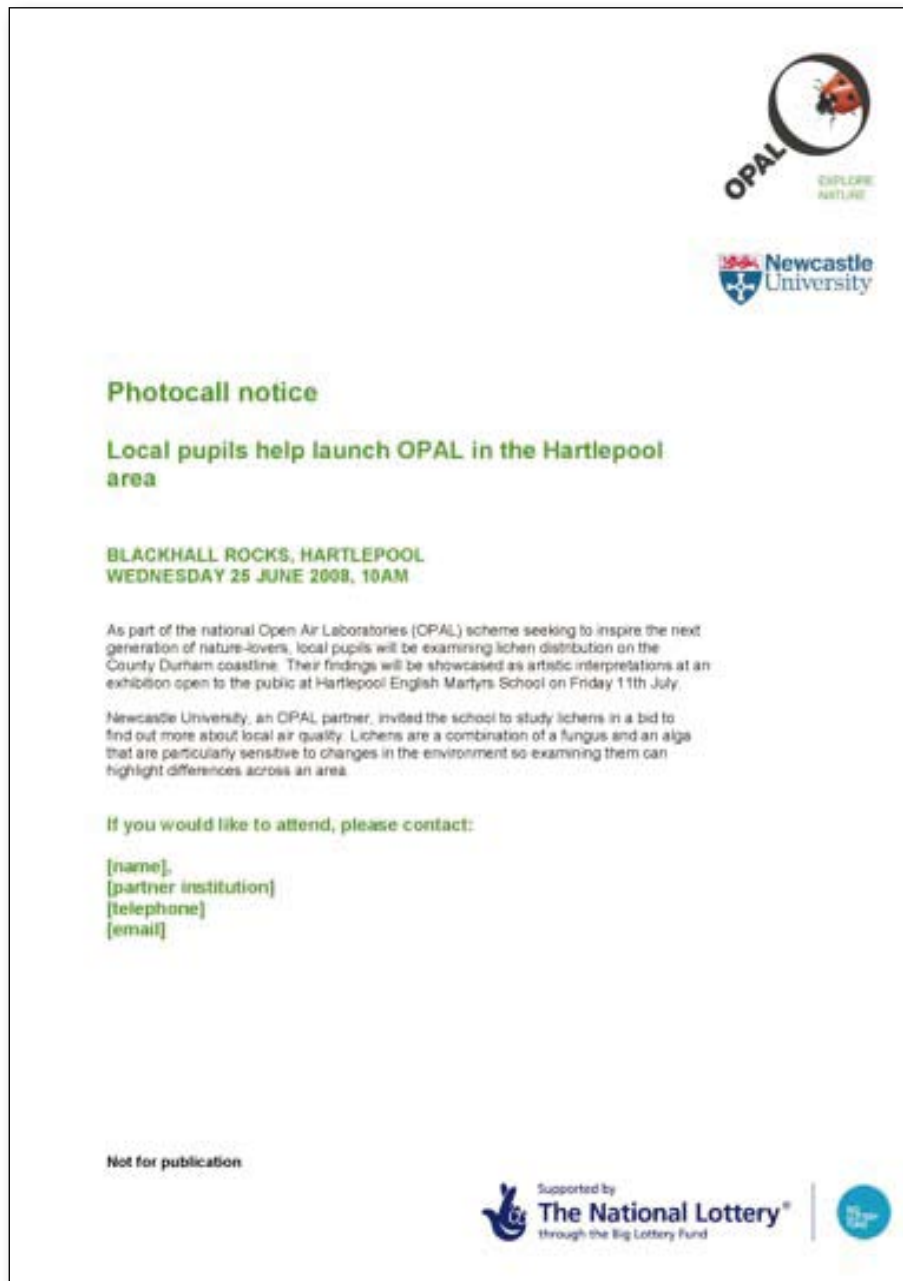
Lichens are unusual organisms of a large, dry mountain and a photograph under the microscope. They grow in the shadows that can provide a look for Newcastle with nature.

Notes to editor
1. The Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) network is a new nationwide partnership created that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect our local environments.
2. OPAL aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by connecting nature through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and rewarding anyone who wants to take part.
3. OPAL will provide the tools and materials needed for the first community-led study of the world around us. It believes that community participation is vital if the environmental movement is to make a real impact.
4. For more information, please visit www.OPALexplorenature.org.
5. The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Lives programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities, groups and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities, from local food schemes and better markets, to education projects helping create local employment. Inspire College is under the leading OPAL partnership awarded a £1.765.765 Changing Lives grant in August 2017.
6. The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery's social causes distributors, has been using such grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes since its creation in June 2000. These established by parliament on 1 December 2000.




Sample photocal alert

Photocal notice template (also available as a Word or PDF document)



The image shows a sample photocal notice template. It features the OPAL logo (a magnifying glass with a ladybug) and the Newcastle University logo in the top right corner. The text is as follows:

Photocal notice

Local pupils help launch OPAL in the Hartlepool area

**BLACKHALL ROCKS, HARTLEPOOL
WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 2008, 10AM**

As part of the national Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) scheme seeking to inspire the next generation of nature-lovers, local pupils will be examining lichen distribution on the County Durham coastline. Their findings will be showcased as artistic interpretations at an exhibition open to the public at Hartlepool English Martyrs School on Friday 11th July.



Newcastle University, an OPAL partner, invited the school to study lichens in a bid to find out more about local air quality. Lichens are a combination of a fungus and an alga that are particularly sensitive to changes in the environment so examining them can highlight differences across an area.

If you would like to attend, please contact:

[name]
[partner institution]
[telephone]
[email]

Not for publication

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MEDIA TOOLKIT
▶ APPENDICES

Branding

A suite of OPAL logos are available for partners to use on all their communications materials.

Any items featuring the OPAL logo must abide to the brand guidelines and be sent to the Communications Office for approval.

Please contact the office for more details.

