How to do messaging and media for an action

This page contains detailed advice on planning the messaging and public media for an action, including working with the press, briefing photographers, and effectively using spokespeople. It links out to lots of other pages in the toolkit, where more detailed guidance can be found

In addition, you'll need an ("internal") comms plan to make sure your members and supporters know what's going on. More on that in the Actions shelf, here.

There's also checklist spreadsheet so you can tick the boxes off as you go (it's satisfying isn't it? □□).

M&M for an action: Checklist

This check list will lead you through all the tasks you need to consider before, during and after your action. Disclaimer: not all these tasks will be relevant to every action.

Click here to access the spreadsheet.

Go to "file" (to left-hand side corner) then click "make a copy" and rename it however you want.

You can then edit your own version of the check list

We update the checklist regularly but if you spot something out of date or you have a relevant resource we should link there, please message @lucielc on Mattermost.

□ Roles

Who will be in charge of what?

Very often, local groups don't have the luxury of having multiple people to do each job that's needed, but if you're lucky to have more than one person to deal with the communication tasks, make sure at least one of you is in touch with the rest of the action planners.

Initial Action Design

Read initial action design for detailed guidance.

This covers:

- **The outcome** - what do you want to happen as a result of your action?
- **The audience(s)** - who do you want to hear your message? The audience(s) may be different from the action's target
- **The message** - what is the central thing you want to communicate to your audience - e.g. what would you write on a banner for the action?
- **The tactics** - what is the target of your action and what is the delivery mechanism for your message?
- **The basic plan** - location, date, start time, and the "how"

And pick a clear, descriptive name

Visuals

Read Vibe and creatives elements for detailed guidance.

This could be a banner for a Facebook event or an email, graphics for social media, a leaflet etc.

Note that photos and videos are usually more successful on social media than graphics with text - which is good news if you're not a graphic designer!

Messaging

Read the full guidance on how to design your message here

It's very, very important to consider how your action will come across and prepare your public messaging. The messaging for your action will be conveyed through different means and needs to take different formats such as banners, flyers, press releases, social media posts, and interviews. It will dictate the visual design of the action - banners, placards, etc (more on that in Vibe and Creatives). It will also inform the tactics (eg people with noose around their necks standing on a block of melting ice is self explanatory).

If your action has a demand or a "call to action", this will need to be central to your message. Sometimes we deal with complex issues which we only just about understand ourselves. Think about the message if you were to show it to your parents or a neighbour. Would they get it - *without* you explaining? From this you can start to boil down your key message in as few words as possible. For example “Stop Rosebank” or “Unite to Survive”. You can refine it further as you go.

It can be useful to create a ‘Key Messaging & Factsheet’ document around an action. Do your best to ensure the activists who are going to be present at the action understand what to say if approached by the media for an interview/quote - or who the press liaison on the ground is.

Media

- Posting on social media
- Writing a press release

This section contains detailed guidance on:

- Press
- Spokesperson
- Social media
- Photographers & livestream

Press

Read How to write a press release for more detailed guidance.

Dealing with the media can seem daunting to many, but once you get your head around the role you’ll find it’s nothing to be feared! We encourage you to be confident and friendly and aim at building relationships with journalists at every opportunity.

Collect information for press releases

Collecting information for press releases is a really important part of the role and it’s really vital that all the information collected is correct. When collecting information, think about:

- What is the action? (be as specific as possible)
- Why are you doing this action? What is it highlighting? Key messaging? (Please link to any useful information and research that is relevant)
- Where and when is the action?
- Who will be doing the action and how many people?
- Is it arrestable?
- If you’re using banners, wearing printed tshirts etc, what do they say? (specifics!)

Liasing with press before an action

It’s a great idea to begin building a press list and telling your local press about your upcoming actions. This could also involve pitching stories about specific performances, personal stories etc. The idea is that we want to get these journalists warmed up and interested!

- Prepare a list of News desks in advance and save in your phone.

- Call/email media in advance of an action - ideally even before sending the press release, to pitch an exclusive. Contact your main local newspaper, your local TV stations (ITN/ITV/BBC) and radio stations (BBC usually best as this works perfect as part of a call in show).
- Get in touch with journalists you have personal contacts with and ‘tip them off’ to actions - amount of detail according to trust level, just enough to get them excited enough to come.

Check out the Media List page to find contacts.

Liaise with media on the ground during actions

If you see journalists and camera crews walking around, go over and say hello! Introduce yourself, tell them who you are, ask if they need help with anything. Take their card and ask for their contact details to add to a journalist WhatsApp chat (if you have one). Or save them to your phone.

It’s really important that we help media get to our trained spokespeople at every opportunity. Obviously, this isn’t always possible, but we should aim to have well prepared people in front of camera as much as we can. Keep an eye out!

Spokesperson

Read the Spokesperson page for detailed guidance.

A lot of press work involves coaching spokespeople and booking them in for media appearances. Things to be aware of:

- Identify people in your local/regional teams who would begood spokespeople.
- Train people using talking points for action specific messaging.
- Hold sessions for trainee and experienced spokespeople to practise answering commonly asked questions from the heart.
- Communicate urgent talking points with spokespeople (for example if something controversial just happened they will need to know what “line” XR will take on it).
- Ensure you have spokespeople who are available to take calls & make TV/radio appearances on the day of the action, and potentially the day before (if you have sent a press release in advance) and after.

Social media

Read the Social Media book for detailed guidance.

Always be sure your social media teams are prepped and ready for your action with the following:

- Timings - when is the action taking place? If it’s a public action, being sure teams are posting before and during the action. If it’s secret, be sure they know this and when

exactly to start posting.
- Relevant messaging - what’s the topline message? Are any slogans being used? What’s the Call To Action (CTA)?
- Tags and Hashtags - Do you need to tag any important people or organisations? Are any specific hashtags being used on the day? Always be sure to use one or two of the well known XR hashtags ie. #ExtinctionRebellion #RebelForTruth
- Any useful content - are there any videos, images, news stories or infographics you want posted that day? Be sure your teams have them ready to go! Be sure to also have a quick and simple way of getting video and images from the action to your social media teams for posting.

Photographers and Livestream

Read the Photography and Livestream books for detailed guidance.

Make sure you have at least one dedicated photographer lined up for the day and they've been briefed.

It is very likely that in your local group you will have some very talented amateurs, and probably at least a couple of experienced photographers.

As well as people who can shoot on DSLR, consider having people to capture high-quality mobile content, which can be instantly shared.
