

# **Working with the national and local media**

**Environmental Protection UK  
Rugby: 21 April 2010**

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[www.cleanairinlondon.org](http://www.cleanairinlondon.org)**

# Summary

**Working with the national and local media is an essential part of any lobbying or public understanding campaign**

- **The media deserves our respect**
- **Different media channels and their characteristics**
- **Finding a story: who, what, where, when and why?**
- **Things you should be ready to talk about**
- **Preparation: what message(s) do you want to get across?**
- **Possible 'hooks' for UK air quality**
- **Things to bear in mind**

**Please encourage local/national media interest in air quality**



**Heavy traffic in Brompton Road, London**  
Brompton Road in London looking eastwards with Harrods ahead

## **The media deserves our respect**

*How did you find out about the news?*

- **Extraordinary ability to put the story into a few words**
- **Pressure to ‘sell’ papers and/or attract an audience**
- **The need to find a story and/or a ‘hook’**
- **Usually keen to present both sides of a story**
- **Air quality is technical: NO<sub>2</sub>/x and μg/m<sup>3</sup>...**
- **Short of resources**
- **Short of time with tight deadlines**
- **Bombarded constantly by ideas and media releases**
- **The editor has the final say!**

# **Different media channels and their characteristics**

## **The written word**

- **Blogging: you write it!**
- **Comment pieces: you write it**
- **Letters: you...**
- **Newspapers: fixed word length e.g. 500 or 750 words**
- **Specialist publications: more technical; longer lead times**
- **Online material: fixed word length**
- **Twitter (and Facebook): immediate, powerful but needs filtering**

## **The spoken word**

- **Television: often recorded – one sentence sound bites. Pause**
- **YouTube: you can do it – one minute or 10?**
- **Radio: often live – opportunity to say more... Use notes. Pause**

**Local and national media are both important**

# Finding a story: who, what, where, when and why?

See [www.delicious.com/CleanAirLondon](http://www.delicious.com/CleanAirLondon)

- **Chelsea choked by its tractors (Observer, 2006)**  
*Yummy mummies watch out: your gas-guzzlers are polluting your own streets and a ban may not be too far away*
- **Pollution puts Britain in dock (Metro, 2007)**  
*Britain is in trouble for breaking the limit on levels of a noxious pollutant gas*
- **We're choking to deaths while the government dithers (Independent, 2008)**
- **UK tops league for toxic traffic fumes (Sunday Times, 2009)**  
*We have the worst road pollution in Europe*
- **Government may countermand Boris Johnson over air quality fears (Guardian, 2009)**  
*Ministers could challenge London mayor as concern mounts that failure to meet European directives on air quality may lead to £300m of fines*
- **Premature deaths caused by London pollution three times higher than claimed (Guardian, 2009)**
- *Campaign group writes to health secretary Alan Johnson calling for clarification of impact of poor air quality in capital*
- **Boris Johnston row with ministers over pollution 'was covered up' (Evening Standard, 2009)**  
*A row between Boris Johnson and ministers over spiralling air pollution in London is being covered up, campaigners claim*
- **Deaths: 35,000. 59,000? (Air Quality Bulletin, 2010)**
- **UK air pollution causes 50,000 early deaths a year, say MPs (Guardian, 2010)**  
*Minute particles from burning fuel can shorten lives by up to nine years, according to the environmental audit committee*

## **Environmental Audit Committee media release on the publication of its report into poor air quality**

**Tim Yeo MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee said:**

*"Air pollution probably causes more deaths than passive smoking, traffic accidents or obesity, yet it receives very little attention from Government or the media.*

*"In the worst affected areas this invisible killer could be taking years off the lives of people most at risk, such as those with asthma.*

*"The large EU fines we face, if we don't get to grips with this problem, should now focus Ministers' minds.*

*"Much more needs to be done to save lives and reduce the enormous burden air pollution is placing on the NHS."*

# Things you should be ready to talk about

**Who, what, where, when, why?**

- **Air quality is much worse than most of us have realised**
- **Concentrations and trends**
- **Health impact e.g. premature deaths; average years lost**
- **Legal framework and current enforcement action**
- **Sources e.g. diesel emissions; inner low emission zones**
- **Solutions: technology; behavioural change (adaptation and mitigation); political will**
- **The opportunity: health; co-benefits with climate change**

**But each case is different: preparation is key**



## **Preparation: what message(s) do you want to get across?**

- **Did they contact you or vice versa?**
- **What story are they interested in?**
- **When is their deadline?**
- **What's the format? Will it be live or recorded?**
- **Where? The studio, the street, calling you at home. What should you wear and is a photo wanted**
- **What message(s) do you want to get across?**
- **Write your message(s) out as bullet points. Aide memoire**
- **Rehearse what you want to say. Be yourself/relaxed**
- **Send a media release with a few points or summary to contacts. Quotes. Check you facts and include sources**

## The value of a good website

- **The value of a campaign website (and Twitter)**
- **Making it easier for others: ‘access’ and ‘speed’**
- **Making it easier for yourself: ‘filing’ and ‘emailing’**
- **Scaleable: get the best bandwidth you can afford**
- **Publishing ‘content’: letters, updates and research**
- **Sharing ‘favourites’ and highlighting media coverage**
- **Tracking progress: search engine rankings**
- **The value of a *BlackBerry* and building email lists**

## Possible 'hooks' for UK air quality

- Premature deaths in your local area due to 'long-term' exposure to dangerous airborne particles
- Breaches of NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> (and other?) limit values
- UK time extension for PM<sub>10</sub> or escalated legal action
- AQSR 2010 enters into force on 11 June 2010
- 27 July (2010/2011) 2012: start of the Olympic Games
- Smog alerts and bonfire night warnings
- Congestion charging and low emission zones coming and/or going
- Local incinerators, waste plants and airports
- Conferences, events, publications or consultations

## Things to bear in mind

- **One silly comment can undo years of goodwill**
- **Don't expect every (any?) story to be published**
- **Your story may not be time critical i.e. it can wait**
- **Respond helpfully within minutes. Warn re NO<sub>2</sub>/x; μg/m<sup>3</sup>**
- **Respect embargoes and confidentiality**
- **'On' and 'off the record'. Agree upfront. Spokesperson?**
- **Take care to avoid jargon, libel (and slander) and/or 'risk'**
- **Ask to submit your quotes by email and/or check them so there's no scope for misunderstanding**
- **Don't expect to see a draft of the journalist's story**
- **Build good relationships with local politicians/ organisations since they may refer enquiries to you**
- **Refer non-local enquires to Ed Dearnley. Liaise with Ed**
- **Seek professional media training. Be persistent and patient**

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