

# Promoting your community enterprise - a practical guide

Promoting your community food enterprise is absolutely vital. In the initial stages of setting up an enterprise it ensures people are aware of your idea, giving them the opportunity to share their views, show their support or voice their concerns. As community enterprises rely on widespread community engagement, getting as many people aware and on board as possible is really important. Once your enterprise is up and running, on-going publicity means that people will continue to support your enterprise and the services it provides.

The key thing to remember when promoting your enterprise is to be creative in how you go about it, from putting up posters in the area to holding special events for the whole community.

Using the media is a vital part of promoting your community food enterprise. It reaches out to a wide, loyal audience. 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.

## Opportunities for local publicity

The first opportunity for publicity in the local press could be when you are attempting to gauge support for and raise awareness about your community food enterprise idea. You can use the press as a way to keep the community up to date with how the initial setting up of the enterprise is going. For example, a community in south London attempting to save their community farm from being turned into a car park by attempting to raise money from the community through community shares kept up a steady campaign in the local media, which not only increased support for their cause and encouraged more people to invest, but raised awareness about community-ownership being a way of saving threatened local services and assets – a great hook for a journalist.

Once your enterprise has been established, an official opening is a great way to generate publicity. Flyers, posters and bulletins in local newsletters are vital for letting people know the event is happening, as well sending a press release to the local press. Ensure the opening event is visually appealing, which will be more likely to attract the interest of photographers and the television – invite your local MP or celebrity to cut a ribbon to officially open the enterprise, or invite local producers to sell their food at stalls. Using bunting, balloons or other bright marketing materials also helps.

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 – it could be the enterprise's sign or logo, or a banner.

### **Local press and 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 dailies and evening newspapers**

-have a loyal readership, wide circulation and are very influential in the local community

#### **Local weekly newspapers**

-can be difficult to get stories in as they are published less frequently – longer term planning is needed with plenty of notice given  
-better for occasional stories or articles

#### **Local free newspapers**

-varying quality and limited space

#### **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?  
-might not be in-depth coverage  
-be aware: you might not know for definite whether they intend to come until very short notice!

### **Making contact**

- 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.

## Writing a press release

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

**Headline:** Don't spend time thinking of a clever headline; sub editors will do this themselves. Use a title rather than a headline, for example '[Local celebrity] to open community-owned shop.'

**Opening paragraph:** Your 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 have you organised this event?

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

**Fourth paragraph:** Background information. This would be where you explain more about the enterprise itself, its aims and how it achieves them.

**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 any other information of interest but not strictly relevant to the press release.

**Avoid jargon:** Always assume your reader has no knowledge of your subject matter. Avoid technical language and state explicitly why what you are doing 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 sample press release can be found at the end of this guide.

## Social media

One of the most important things to remember about using social media is to use the most appropriate form for the people you are trying to reach and the message you are trying to get across. For example, letting your community know that you are holding an event by only announcing it on Twitter is probably not going to reach out to your target audience; rather, a combination of flyers in the area, announcements in local newsletters, engaging your local media, and announcements on social media sites is much more likely to reach a wider and more appropriate audience.

Although using social media can seem daunting to some people, one of the biggest hurdles to overcome is knowing which sites to visit and their audiences. Below is an overview and tips on some of the most common ways of connecting with online audiences, but it is by no means comprehensive list, which would be near endless!

With all of these sites, the best way to get started is to visit them yourself and explore how it can work for you.

## Facebook

Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) has 845 million monthly active users, with 483 million daily active users on average (as of December 2011). It is currently free to use, allowing individuals not only to connect with each other across the world, but to share their 'likes' and personal preferences. Facebook is an easy and powerful way of connecting with a wide online community by sharing information about your enterprise – from uploading photos and general information to special offers or just letting people know you exist!

Facebook lets you create a page for your enterprise, which in turn allows you to let several people be 'admins' who have the ability to edit the page – this means that your page is more likely to be updated frequently, making it interesting for people to read and ensuring all the information is up to date, encouraging people to revisit often. Through this page, you can create events and invite all your friends or people who have 'liked' your page to the event. The best way to get started on Facebook, as with all social media, is to visit the page yourself and explore the various options available.

## Twitter

Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)) allows anyone to read, write and share messages of up to 140 characters. The messages – called tweets – are public, and can be read by anyone. Twitter users can subscribe to receive your messages by following your account, which will then add your messages to their timeline – a real-time feed of all the accounts that they subscribe to.

With over a million active users and 250,000,000 tweets per day that are accessible anywhere, Twitter is a powerful, real-time way of communicating with current and potential customers. It is a way of quickly sharing information, gathering market intelligence and insights, and building relationships with people who care about your enterprise and what you're doing. The Media Trust ([www.mediatrust.org](http://www.mediatrust.org)) has some good examples of using Twitter on their 'Newsnet' website, and a good way to start is just by searching for an enterprise of your choice and seeing how they use Twitter to engage with their stakeholders.

## YouTube

YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and other video sharing sites (like Vimeo) are extremely powerful ways of telling your unique story. The rise in citizen journalism and advancements in technology now mean that wherever you are you can record short videos and upload them onto the internet using just a mobile phone; far from being put off by films that are not studio quality, amateur videos give the film an added authenticity and add to its power.

## Sample press release

# Exemplary XXXX Community Shop celebrates official opening after raising £90,000 in just six months

[DATE / TIME / ADDRESS]

XXXX Community Shop and Post Office is preparing to celebrate its official opening on X with a tea party for the whole village.

The celebrations will be kicked off by the man/woman responsible for spurring the village into action over the community-owned project, XXXX. XXXX will cut a ribbon to signify the official opening. A double-decker bus adorned with balloons will then transport villagers and well-wishers alike to XXXX for a tea party of locally-produced food and drink.

“We are delighted to be celebrating our official opening,” says XXXX. “The announcement earlier in the year that we might lose our village shop – a vital hub for the community – was a blow, but thanks to the determination and commitment of the entire village, we were able to raise the funds we needed to save it. We would like to welcome everybody to share in our celebrations, with a tea party for the whole village showcasing the best locally-produced food and drink XXXX has to offer.”

XXXX, a village of around X households, is a shining example of how co-operation within a community can overcome the challenges of the current economic climate. Faced with the closure of the village shop and post office at the start of this year, villagers sprang into action and raised £X through sales of shares, donations and fundraising in just six months. With an additional £X from the Plunkett Foundation, and support from a range of organisations, the shop is now a great success.

-ENDS

**For further information or if you would like to attend this event, please contact: XXXX on XXXXX XXXXXX or email:**

**Notes to Editor:**

**Plunkett Foundation** ([www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)) helps communities to take control of their challenges and overcome them together. We support people, predominantly in rural areas, to set up and run life-changing community co-operatives; enterprises that are owned and run democratically by large numbers of people in their community. They help people to tackle a range of issues, from isolation and loneliness to poverty, and come in many forms including shops, cafes, pubs and land-based initiatives, and everything in between.