

Revision 2012 -1	5/11/2012	Mike Valiant
Revision 2013 -1	26/4/2013	Mike Valiant

**Publicity and
Marketing
Communications**

Original by

John C Fletcher
Chairman,
North West Region

Updated by

Mike Valiant (ResCom) - April 2013

1 INTRODUCTION

Canal Trusts and Societies are formed by like-minded people to achieve some agreed objective. It may be simply awareness of the history of a waterway, or preservation of it in its current state, but for many trusts and societies it is the restoration of the waterway; returning it to its original purpose as a navigation. Most groups will start small, but to win the backing of all the people and organisations likely to achieve the objective needs the support of many different “publics”.

Publicity is the technique or process of attracting the attention of a specific audience to aspects of your campaign. For that technique or process to be successful it is necessary to determine the exact nature of what it is you wish to publicise on a particular occasion.

In most corporate environments this would be termed marketing or, more correctly, marketing communications. A subset of these activities is “PR”, short for Public Relations, however in most marketing departments this is often subordinated to “press relations”; the cultivation of journalists in order to nurture positive coverage of the organisation. These same relationships may also help mitigate the reporting of potentially damaging or negative events, or so called “PR disasters”. True PR will extend to other influential groups including, for example, local councilors, MP’s, and business leaders.

Restoration groups will have varied reasons for engaging in a publicity programme, for example:

- Raising their profile so that more of the public are aware of their existence
- Encouraging more members of the public to join the group
- To raise funds
- Campaigning for protection of the canal route
- Attracting more people to social events, or to awareness events such as boat rallies
- To apply pressure on local or central government in relation to proposals or plans that may conflict with the aims of the organisation

Of course there can be many more.

For many marketing communications activities a useful mnemonic to help determine what is required from a specific piece of publicity is AIDA:

Awareness: Make a targeted audience aware of the organisation and its objectives

Interest: Get them interested in the aims and objectives of the organisation

Desire: Make them want to do some thing about it

Action: Call them to action; perhaps to join the Trust or Society, or attend a meeting or a work party.

2 MANAGING PUBLICITY

There is no right or wrong way to manage publicity but it is likely to be less effective (and appear so) unless thought is given to its management. In some organisations their instruments of management specify that, for example, only members of the Executive Committee or Board of Management may make public pronouncements on behalf of the organisation. In practice this may be by a requirement to submit all press releases and public written statements to a Member of the Executive or a Trustee. Thus, while it may have been generated elsewhere and sent out by other individuals, it has the authority of a member of the board of management. *Check the requirements of your organisation - in original documentation.* If there are no specific requirements then it is suggested that your managing body need to set down their requirements so that they “keep control” of media information and are, in consequence, more happy to take responsibility for it.

Publicity in its widest sense can become a function of every member of the organisation, but more specific publicity tasks may become the responsibility of a number of individuals. There may therefore be a “Press Officer”, an “Exhibition Officer”, a “Magazine Editor” and a “Website Editor”. There may be a “Publications Officer”, and a “Sales Officer”. A “Membership Secretary” may well generate his/her own material to recruit new members.

To an informal group it may seem pedantic, but the limits of responsibility of each of these roles needs considering by the management group so that there is no misunderstanding and the management group corporately feel happy with what is being said about “their” organisation in their name. It would be unproductive to have a Board meeting before anybody could comment on the phone to a newspaper reporter making enquiries. However, all need to know who may say what.

There is no substitute for experience and proper training in dealing with the media at first hand. If funds allow, it is always worthwhile getting the nominated media officer some appropriate training. For example, doing interviews is all about credibility and the ability of leaving your audience on your side and able to remember the message. Hesitation delivering that message or odd expressions during delivery can defeat this. Training should enable the media officer to be aware of these glitches and overcome them.

Although there are some overlaps, consideration of publicity can be divided between that which is achieved through media organisations, such as newspapers, magazines and broadcasters, and publicity that you generate and disseminate more directly.

3 MEDIA

3.1 Website

In today’s online world most members of the public wanting to know more about your canal or your organisation will “Google” it on the web. This should take them to your website where all public information about your organisation and its objectives should be available. This should include details of your waterway, why you exist as an organisation, general news,

upcoming events and activities, press releases, leaflets, maps, membership application forms, etc.

This is also likely to be the first port of call for any journalist seeking background information about your organisation in support of a story and so will support other publicity activities covered below.

To allow the website to be accessible it must have a web address, or domain name (e.g. www.canalrestoration.co.uk). You can register as many web addresses as you like but it is better to focus on just one for publicity purposes and use that in all other literature produced by the trust or society. A registration typically costs less than £5 per year per name and will often include other services. Google “domain name registration” to find suitable companies.

You may be lucky and have a volunteer who has the necessary skills to develop a web site from scratch but if not you will need to fund a professional web developer. In either case the best approach is to build the website using a Content Management System (CMS). Once set up with an initial structure and a set of appropriate templates the CMS will allow any reasonably computer literate person to create, edit and organise website content.

Many websites follow an easily navigated information structure with main headings across the top of the web page and sub-headings down the side that change as each main heading is selected. Looking at other existing restoration websites should help you to decide what layout and information structure will work best for you. Don't be over ambitious initially. It is better to have a few sections with good information than many sections with scant or no information. You can always add more sections over time as the content is developed. Avoid “page under construction” or similar messages. Most CMS systems have controls that allow you to hide pages that are not yet ready for public viewing.

As a minimum a canal society website should include:

- About us (details about the Trust or Society including membership details)
- Information about the canal or waterway (map, history, current plans, gallery, etc.)
- News (recent activities, events or local news related to the waterway)
- Events (future events and activities around the waterway)
- Contact Us

The “Contact Us” page should provide details of who to contact if the reader wants to become involved or requires more information. This should allow for various forms of communication such as an email address, a phone number and a postal address. It is a good idea to have special email addresses, such as info@restoration.co.uk, or volunteer@restoration.co.uk, which can then be forwarded to whoever is currently responsible for dealing with the specific interest generated by the publicity. These can also be used on printed literature. Email forwarding is usually included as a free service as part of a domain name registration.

It is also possible to have an enquiry form designed into the website that generates an email and removes the need for the visitor to leave the website before sending a message.

The most important aspect of a web site is to make sure it is current. There is nothing worse than visiting a website and the last item in the News section is a year old. It must be kept updated. For any active trust this should not be a problem as events, activities and other canal related news can be used to create news items.

It should be recognized that even if your website is thoroughly comprehensive and up to date, it is still essentially a passive information resource. No one may actually visit it! Just because you have added a news item or updated an event it does not mean that anyone will read it. You need to complement the website with communications that make people aware of new content and attract them to the information you have provided. You can create communications that link to the website as a whole or link to a specific piece of information on the website. You might for instance send out an email to your members reminding them their subscription is due and link to the membership section with the latest subscription rates. You will probably post details of work parties including location maps that can be highlighted by an email or "Tweet" to your volunteers. It is good practice to include the website address on any information you produce regardless of the medium used.

Try to encourage people to visit your site regularly. Apart from being up-to-date, this also means that it must be interesting. The quickest and easiest way to achieve this is by using lots of photographs which are as large as possible. Keeping up a regular story, e.g. lock construction is always a good repeat draw and photographs are the clearest demonstration of progress.

A simple measure of how good your website is can be obtained by putting the name of your waterway in a search engine such as Google. If you come up in the first five entries (note the first few maybe paid for adverts which you can ignore) then you've got a website that is seen as authoritative and a destination for information about your waterway. If there are sites listed above yours it would be worth visiting them and seeing what information they provide that gets them a higher entry. There are techniques that can be used in the website to improve your search engine ranking and, if this is important to you, there is plenty of information available on the web on how to do this.

3.2 Facebook and Twitter

If you want to attract younger volunteers then it is also worth setting up a Facebook page (www.facebook.com) which will allow your "friends" to be automatically be updated with new announcements and photos on your "wallboard". Be prepared for comments back against your posts and ensure that anyone posting on behalf of the Trust or Society stays on message and doesn't compromise the integrity of the organisation. Not everyone who becomes a "friend" may actually be friendly to the aims and objectives your organisation. Although informal responses might be appropriate, they should not be personal.

You could also establish a Twitter (www.twitter.com) account from which short messages (Tweets) can be sent to "followers" highlighting new information on the website or a change to work party arrangements, for instance. A lot of journalists follow twitter feeds and may pick up on something you've broadcast because they think it may interest their readers. This could result in a short news article so long as you're ready to provide them with any additional information they require, or in the event of TV & Radio, a spokesperson to be

interviewed. When writing a Tweet, always put a link through to the relevant page on your website.

A good website developer can arrange to generate Facebook posts and Tweets automatically from new content posted on the website.

3.3 Press releases

Press releases may be issued as a single release - the only information about a particular event or happening - or may be a series about the same event, issued one or two a week for a few weeks in the lead up to a major event. In these latter circumstances the whole series needs planning in advance with themes (e.g. [1] Historic boats attending, [2] Distinguished foreign guests, [3] Activities for all to enjoy, [4] Opening by Lord Mayor). The four themes can be linked in the "Notes for Editors" (see below) which could summarise what had been said in earlier press releases.

These days most journalists prefer to receive press releases electronically. The society's "Press Officer" should develop a list of email addresses of publications they want to target. The press release can either be created as a formatted email, or a Word document sent as an attachment. It is also a good idea to place any press releases on the website in reverse date order (latest at the top) so that even if a journalist misplaces the original they know they can pick it up from the website. Always send at least one photo of less than 1Mb, but offer to send a higher resolution version if required.

Key components of a press release are:

- WHO:** Who is issuing the press release e.g. "Canal Restoration Society Press Release"
- WHEN:** Issue Date
- TITLE:** What is it about? Snappy but informative
- WHAT:** Key points of the announcement
- MORE:** Who to contact for further information with contact details, as well as the website address. If that person is going to be on site at an event state how they can be got hold of, and when (e.g. mobile phone number).
- NOTES:** "Notes for editors" can also be included but should be in a much smaller font, and is typically a brief backgrounder on the Trust or Society issuing the release. Within an email this can just as easily be a link to the relevant page on the website. You could also provide notes about particular photo and interview opportunities - with details of what exactly may be photographed, when and where. This is particularly important if you can "mock up" an event before it takes place to give timely publicity.

The press release should stand-alone - make sense to the uninitiated without further explanation, but should not be verbose. If the main text comes out at more than 250 words consider whether you need two press releases to cover more than one issue. The

organisation's title will be at the top but it is important also to get the name of your organisation in the first sentence of the text. It reads well if it closes with a quote of a relevant VIP, such as the current chairperson or president.

It is wise to get somebody to check its contents even if your organisation doesn't require it. Two heads are better than one.

Whether "mocked up" or for real, events can be made more appealing for press photographs or television by the use of such things as fancy dress (e.g. period boaters' costume), by the use of animals (e.g. boat horse), or by the involvement of the very young, very old, or the disabled. Ensure, however, that the use of these subterfuges neither demeans the subject matter of the event or the "actors" you are using. Ensure photographers do not "create" unsafe situations to photograph, which may at best bring your organisation into disrepute or at worst provide a bad example for emulation, possibly with disastrous results for others. If you have a regular (e.g. annual) event then have a library of photographs – "one I took last year" - and mention their availability in the "Notes for Editors" of the press release, or include a link to one in the email.

All publications, TV and radio stations are bombarded with electronic information and press releases. A high percentage of these are deleted without being read and it is therefore essential to target named individuals in the media outlets. Once contact has been made with an individual journalist further contact can be cultivated, but care should be taken not to pester as he/she will not be inclined to keep in touch.

It follows that you need a personal directory of appropriate editorial contacts. If not widely publicised they can be often be obtained from the masthead (usually inside the front cover of a magazine) or from the publication's website. Check you get the editorial email addresses and not the advertising or subscription emails. It pays to keep your email and telephone contact list updated for future reference.

Remember that big media organisations are only interested in big events or stories, and most local press outlets are extremely parochial. Don't waste the time of your contacts by sending them press releases that are not likely to be relevant to their publication. If your event is very local then the local press are the most likely to respond, particularly if there is an opportunity to photograph a local personality in an unusual situation. "Mayor flings mud" might indicate the first citizen has been persuaded to drive a dredger! For smaller waterway groups it may well be that the local press and in consequence the local councillors or local MPs are the very hearts and minds they wish to influence.

Having developed rapport with a particular reporter in a news organisation you may wish to give them advance or exclusive access to a story. If so, make it quite clear to them that this is what you are doing and tell them why. Sometimes an interested or experienced reporter might create their own exclusive by responding to a press release with a series of leading questions. This is fine if you are authorized to respond, but be careful that you do not breach confidences. Never tell the press anything "in confidence" unless you really mean them to publish it. Do not make outlandish responses to tricky questions, or tell the whole truth when your organisation has already planned a timed release of information for good strategic or political reasons!

If asked to react to a negative or damaging story always take time to prepare a short statement before responding.

Many local newspapers have standard online forms on their websites for providing details of up and coming events. Make sure you know which publications would be interested in your event and then enter the appropriate information in good time for it to be publicised.

3.4 Radio & TV

If you have a very major event then it is worth sending press releases to local television stations and regional radio stations. Smaller events may be of interest to local radio stations. Some stations have regular spots dedicated to local events but these may not be created from press releases. Look to see if they have a preferred format for receiving information on events. There may be an online form to fill in that will get your event publicised.

“Talk” stations, however, are often looking for material to pad their programmes, or on which to concentrate a particular edition of a programme. Involvement with such a radio station may vary from an interview by phone (either recorded or directly on air), through attendance at studio for a similar interview face to face, to an outside broadcast with a mobile “radio car” (for which you may need a number of relevant people to be interviewed). If you’re running a sizeable event there may be an opportunity to have them broadcast from the event site. In the last case considerable preparation will be needed in terms of negotiating services and space to be provided, and also lining up a wide variety of speakers whose subject matter will only overlap minimally.

A magazine programme broadcast from “on site” could, as well as their regular slots have interviews about, for example, the event organiser or chairman, a boater who cruises extensively, a representative of a local restoration society, somebody talking about boat building, or boat hiring, or painting “roses and castles”. If you are familiar with the programme “regular slots” you may even be able to involve them.

Local TV station are often looking for some “good news” with local colour, particularly if there’s no big stories around. Opportunities to film a trip boat launch, or even a work party can result in a few minutes of fame for a few of your volunteers and raise awareness.

3.5 Press advertisements

For larger events at which you wish to attract the general public, press advertising may be appropriate if your local paper or magazine will reach an audience you otherwise couldn’t reach. Firstly make sure you’ve used the publication’s standard method of highlighting local events, usually via a form on their website. A half page advert, Thursday or Friday night in a regional paper, may cost several thousand pounds. A very small display advert (business card size) may be a hundred, but pleading poverty may enhance your negotiating position, as may putting the advertising manager in touch with commercial organisation attending your event, who may themselves be willing to buy advertising space to say that they will be at “your” event!

Having bought some advertising space, the newspaper may be “persuaded” to take more notice of your press releases, and in consequence you may find that you need to send them both to the Newsdesk and to a named individual in the advertising department. Careful use of the above measures, may, if you are lucky, result in a double page spread for a few hundred pounds. The effect on event attendances, and therefore your traders, can be dramatic!

Another way of getting a lot of coverage cheaply is to offer a competition prize which you may yourself have been able to beg. A free narrow boat holiday, or even a day hire boat for the day, may be a suitable prize. When negotiating the competition make sure the question is one which a significant proportion of “Joe Public” could answer, and make sure it is directly linked to the event - such as drawing the result on the hire boat of the donor at the event, or “on air”. Do not underestimate the work involved in begging the prize, setting up the competition with a newspaper group, and contacting the winner and liaising between winner and donor of prize.

While not attempting to stifle the press, ensure that there is an understanding that if there is any criticism of the event being reported (“We don’t want a boat rally in our back yard”) there is an adequate opportunity for you - as an advertiser - to respond with your side of the story.

Another version of advertising is an “Advertorial”. This appears to be editorial material in the paper, but it is controlled by the advertiser, usually written by a copywriter in the advertising department but with your power of veto over what appears. Again it can be linked to “taking up press releases”. The cost is usually similar to an advertisement of the same size in the same paper.

3.6 Public Websites

You will find that there are large numbers of websites in your area, all looking for information, e.g. The Best of Your local newspaper will have a website. Your local and regional Tourism Board will have a website. Make sure that all of these receive your Press Releases.

There are also lots of local and special-interest based forums. Getting your event or news onto these sites is very easy and they reach surprisingly large numbers of readers. If someone spots something of interest on your website, they will put up a link on their forum and you will suddenly get large numbers of hits out of the blue.

Finally, put lots of links to other websites on your own website and get them to link to yours.

4 INFORMATION PROVISION

Let us now turn to those areas of advertising which you more closely control yourself.

As an adjunct to press releases, or as an alternative where sustained attention is required (e.g. preservation of an old building) a group of people may target the “Letters to the Editor” page of a particular or several publications. Each communication should be from an individual and make different points. The Editor won’t print 20 similar letters. Most publications will accept “letters” by email, but if they are printed and posted you should

use different printers, and preferably not be on similar headed paper - they should be (in the main) “personal” views, although one expression may come officially from your organisation - Chairman or Press Officer.

4.1 Posters

Posters are not particularly effective if their sole aim is to advertise the existence of an organisation. If this aim is linked to advertising the subject matter of, and inviting the public to “open” meetings, then it perhaps becomes more worthwhile. In these circumstances the number to be produced will be fairly small and the distribution personal, perhaps round local libraries, village halls, marina notice boards, tourist information offices, civic buildings, and some well-wishing retailers and pubs. These adverts can be run off on a computer using any reasonable word processing package, providing the quality of the printer is good i.e. with a minimum resolution of 300 d.p.i. (dots per inch).

It is suggested that the contents could include a brief history or description of the route of “your” canal, a brief description of the organisation, a contact name, email address and telephone number, and details of the next few “open meetings”. Remember to replace posters with updated ones when the open meeting part is out of date, and consider updating the rest of the text at the same time.

It is essential to choose a font that stands out and to print them in different sizes appropriate to different display sites. Some may need to be read at a distance if, for example, they are positioned in a shop window, whereas some notice boards may only have room for a postcard sized advert. Colour adds considerably to the impact but should not be used to excess. If you have “corporate” colour scheme or a standard logo colour then use complimentary colours for information you want to highlight. You might want to consider “Day-Glo” papers suitable for laser and inkjet printers which are easily obtained and very striking.

Altogether different are the poster requirements to get the public to a major event such as a waterways festival. Large quantities are needed. While you can do these on a suitable printer yourself, it will often be easier to take the file on a USB stick to a highstreet print shop and they will run off the quantity you require very quickly. You may also want to consider a number of larger posters on rigid PVC foamboard for durability. Provided the poster is available in a suitable format (e.g. PDF) it can be scaled up and printed on the foamboard by specialist digital printers.

Since set up is the major cost, order more than you are likely to use. Consider how you will distribute these to display sites to ensure they are actually displayed. For a rally, every member of the team should be persuaded to contact their local library, education offices and town halls. These three organisation types will often take scores at a time and distribute through their networks (e.g. to all branch libraries). Using such networks saves time but you do become more dependent on remote employees and if you can afford the time a personal distribution to (e.g.) branch libraries can make a difference. A personal visit to retailers and pubs in the area will often meet with a high level of co-operation. Finally, if your budget will run to it, local authority publicity departments may be able to put you in touch with a poster distribution network. In the Manchester area, for example, there is an organisation which will distribute posters to a selection of sites and organisations which the advertiser can choose.

For charities the cost is much less than the cost of posting one to each of those destinations, even if you knew of their existence and their postal address!

Clearly such organisations have distribution timetables which have to be borne in mind when setting the deadline for poster production. Except for national events to which the public plan to go over long periods, most poster campaigns need concentrating in the very few weeks before the event. Too late and the public are already committed. Too early and the posters get covered by subsequent ones before the event occurs! It is perhaps worth aiming for posters to appear about 18 days before an event. (Internal network distribution might therefore require distribution to, for example, central library about 21 days before the event). An area can be “blitzed” 10 days before an event so that the posters are seen in locations similar to your event one week preceding your event. Reaction (hopefully), “That looks interesting. I’ll go there next week.”

If giving posters to Tourist Information Offices, they welcome smaller notices which their clients can take away. Having attracted attention with a colour poster, “take-aways” can be simply produced single colour reminders. Posters to attract the converted - the boater and his supporters - may be produced much further in advance than public posters - circulated through boat clubs, restoration societies, and IWA branches - and be produced in a similar manner to posters for your social events.

Sponsoring organisations may have their own publicity departments; they may want to check the contents of the advertisements; or they may as part of the sponsorship deal, offer professional help with poster distribution or creation. Allow time for their input - unlike you the “job” may not be top of their priorities. Also remember that they are sponsors and not organisers, and you will know the essential items the organisation of the event wishes to portray. Sponsors will be trying to get the biggest mention for the sponsoring organisation. For quickness, the exchange of emails between you, the creator of the poster, and them, the sponsor, speeds up the process considerably, and in this set of circumstances you will almost certainly find “time is of the essence”.

Include QR codes on your posters. (These are the squares of lots of smaller squares that are slowly taking over from bar codes. They can be read by smartphones.) They can be used as audioguides, e.g. along a bit of your canal, or to advertise an event with either a photo or audio recording, or put the person through to a particular section on your website. You can make simple posters yourself at zero cost to explain what is obtainable via the QR code. These can be mounted outdoors under Perspex.

4.2 Leaflets

Mention has already been made of leaflets as “take-aways” - aids to memory - supporting posters, often A5 in size. The front of these might be a simple rendering of the standard poster, while the reverse may give more details for getting to the event, car parking, or fuller details of the entertainment.

Another use for leaflets is to recruit members. A membership form may be printed on A4 and folded into 3, one panel of which can be torn off as the application to join. Make sure the applicant doesn’t lose vital information on the reverse of the tear-off piece! Make sure a fold doesn’t pass through the middle of a title!

Other panels may have a history of the canal, a map, history of the society with main aims and aspirations or methods of achieving them, or proposals for the near future. Clearly stated should be the cost of membership and what it offers. Societies which are companies and charities will have specific wording requirements, laid down, for example, in their Articles of Association.

Companies which print, usually have folding machines and having your leaflet machine folded into three costs comparatively little, saves you lots of work, and looks much neater.

To get people on to “your” canal you may produce walk leaflets - perhaps A4 folded into 3 as above, or A3 folded into 6. Maps must be clear and well drawn and only use public rights of way, or permissive routes with written consent held by your organisation. If the map is derived from copyright material a license may need be bought or copyright notice included. It is useful to indicate public transport provision, car parking and whether suitable for wheelchair access. Local authorities or Tourist Boards may be persuaded to subsidize the production. Alternatively a small charge may be made for them - to cover costs.

4.3 Books

A stage up from this is to publish books which fill gaps in the market; perhaps a book of circular walks, a guide to the canal, or a collection of historical photographs.

The outlay for a simple production with black and white illustrations can be comparatively low, but using colour generally provides much more appeal, increasing the marketability of the product. These days colour digital printing is only marginally more expensive than black and white and the additional outlay is likely to be well worth it. Remember that under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 there is a legal requirement to supply a copy to the British Library within one month of publication at the Legal Deposit Office, The British Library, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7BY. Five other libraries (the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, Cambridge University Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Library of Trinity College, Dublin and the National Library of Wales) are entitled to request a free copy within one year of publication. See www.bl.uk under information for publishers for more information.

You or your organisation can set up as a publisher and obtain an ISBN for your book at no cost - ensuring that it is consistently listed in “Books in print” - in one of its forms this is the standard reference of libraries and booksellers. There are very specific requirements about the display of the ISBN on your book. Full information including a downloadable “Important Information for Publishers” guide can be obtained from www.isbn.nielsenbook.co.uk.

As a rule of thumb it has been found that the given unit production cost should be at least doubled to give a wholesale price and tripled to give a retail price. Pricing structure has to ensure that when wholesale copies are sent out and postage added, there is still sufficient margin for the retailer to retain some profit. Your organisation may be willing to sacrifice profit for publicity purposes. Few retailers will be willing to contribute to your publicity in this way.

4.4 Videos and DVDs

Foolproof digital video cameras are now very inexpensive, and digital still cameras and smart phones often have the capability to take movies as well. Combined with the ability to upload these clips to websites such as YouTube means that most members of the public are used to watching videos on their computers and smart phones. The results however are not always suitable for promoting your organisation although short video clips may have a place on some sections of the website, particularly where 30 seconds of video can replace several photos, or a thousand words.

The production of a video specifically to support a campaign will need something more than a few short clips. As a nation we enjoy high quality television productions that are well filmed and well edited, and our tastes in video production are generally far more sophisticated than our tastes in reading. If you are going to produce a video to promote your waterway then it may pay to employ a professional video production team. This will be expensive because of the experience and training of the camera crew, commentator(s) and editor but will result in a video product that viewers will enjoy and will carry your message convincingly. Do not expect that all companies that quote a high price will produce acceptable, let alone good, work. Obtain several samples of work from each company from whom you seek a quote, and try and ensure that at least some of the samples are about a similar subject as your own.

Given the up front cost it pays to have a very clear brief on what the video is setting out to achieve. You may also want to employ professional help in developing the concept, scripting and storyboarding, but this again will increase the costs. The final video can be distributed via DVD but it is probably unrealistic to expect to recover production costs through DVD sales. With most computers and smart phones being able to download and play videos, other forms of distribution including YouTube, your website and USB sticks are probably becoming more effective than DVDs.

If your funds can't support a professional job, then you might be lucky to have contact with a competent amateur. Depending on the quality of the work it will be a critical decision as to whether the production quality is good enough for it to be used as the central plank of a campaign. A reasonable quality product can however be used to support or illustrate what you are trying to achieve and can be shared via the website.

4.5 Society newsletters and magazines

The production of newsletters and magazines is usually aimed at the members of the canal Society or Trust, but the opportunity to spread these to a wider readership should not be missed where it doesn't conflict with the perceived benefits related to a membership subscription. Content should therefore be written or chosen to also inform, educate or influence the wider audience that may include councillors, senior council officers, MPs, MEPs, past and potential sponsors, as well as waterways and local press. Local press will often re-quote from such publications as if they have personally interviewed one of the writers, without further intervention. Reports of successful open meetings may encourage others to attend and encourage more active participation amongst the membership.

It seems that the editors of canal society newsletters and magazines are often apologising for the late distribution of their publications and may carry information of supposedly future events which took place a considerable time before the membership receive it!

It is vital to set an achievable timetable for production which is well known to all involved in contributing to its content. In fact the appropriate use of two types of publication can help with this issue by using the Newsletter (or Bulletin in IWA speak) to carry timely information while the Magazine is used to provide longer articles or reports with more photographs. Using a Newsletter for intermediate communications means Magazine printing costs can be reduced by producing a fewer number per year and publication dates can be somewhat vaguer, e.g. Winter edition.

Newsletters can be a particularly low cost method of keeping members and supporters updated about recent and future events by using electronic distribution. They can be produced in a number of ways:

- a simple email where all of the content is contained in the email.
- a PDF attached to an email. This has the advantage that it will normally be formatted as an A4 document and can be printed as well, perhaps for distribution at meetings to those that have not yet joined the electronic age.
- a web page on the website which is linked to by an email. The email only need carry a brief synopsis of each topic covered in the newsletter followed by a link to the full version on the website. The IWA Bulletin uses this model.

Word processing and desktop publishing software for magazine production is now widely available, and can even be found for free, making the creation of high quality colour publications producible by anyone who is reasonably computer literate. Even without the availability of full desktop publishing facilities within the membership, buying in such a service on the high street need not be prohibitively expensive. A competent volunteer within the organisation will reduce the production cost but it may be a false economy to use a less than competent volunteer or one with inadequate software.

Particularly bear in mind that the person best able to judge the merits of various contributions may not be the best person to arrange the layout on a computer screen. The skills are different. Team work may be the answer.

It is arguable that the provision of a magazine to members is a membership service, and for those organisations which are charities it follows that the cost of producing the magazine (printing plus distribution less the income from advertising) must be born out of membership subscriptions. That is not necessarily the case with those magazines distributed to other groups listed above, where it may be argued that the production is a legitimate part of the publicity of the organisation's aims. Some magazines manage to get support from business sponsors and advertising which reduces the cost to members and leaves more funds for other purposes. However, keeping in touch with advertisers will require a volunteer to both get revised adverts and ensure the fees are paid.

With a membership of 300 or so, and perhaps 200 issues going free to local authorities and media, it is perhaps realistic to budget between £1.00 & £1.70 per issue based on a typical magazine (A5 format, 36 pages, full colour on quality paper). Larger print runs considerably reduce unit costs or allow for more ambitious production for the same cost. Also significant,

however, are the pricing structure of our mail system which is, at the time of writing, would cost 50p to post a typical A5 magazine (less than 100g and less than 5mm thick including the envelope). Copies to Councillors and local authority department heads can be distributed free by the Town Hall on receipt of a bulk delivery.

It is worth going round the stalls at national waterway shows and seeing if other Trusts and Societies have free copies of past magazine to give away which may give you ideas for production styles and content.

4.6 Talks and Presentations

Many local groups are on the look out for speakers to provide a focus for meetings. A list of organisations that might be interested in having a presentation can be collated from local newspapers, parish magazines and community websites. Typical targets for these talks would include civic societies, WI, Probus, historic societies, round table, and so on.

Make sure there is information on your website about who to contact should someone want to source a speaker. Depending on the distance you are prepared to travel there should be the opportunity to give several talks per month, especially during the winter. Most organisations are happy to reimburse travel expenses or make a donation to your trust or society in return for your providing a presenter. Obviously the focus should be on information and education rather than promotion, but no one will mind if you bring along membership leaflets and you mention work parties and promotional events. In addition the speaker should take along a donation box. Every little helps!

When taking bookings for speakers you should ascertain the duration and topic that the host organisation requires. Most will ask for the presentation to last about an hour, including time for questions, but your host should guide you on this. It pays to have a number of themed presentations already prepared that just need to be tweaked to fit the time, or requested focus.

Some audiences may be more interested in one geographic part of the canal, some in historical views, while others will be interested in reconstruction works. Views of other restoration schemes with obstructions successfully overcome are often useful to demonstrate what can be achieved. Well prepared maps will put your scheme in context nationally and help to familiarise the audience with less well known parts of "your" canal.

A core requirement will be a collection of appropriate photographs, both historic and contemporary. If they can be attractive views taken on sunny days, so much the better for promoting the waterway, but actual restoration work in progress can also galvanise enthusiasm and help recruit more members. There are numerous online repositories for digital photographs that will allow members to contribute new material as things progress. In addition, a gallery section of the website can be used to provide a range of themed photo sets such as bridges, obstacles, restoration progress on a particular section, etc.

The society will usually have to purchase at least one LCD projector and screen to be taken along to meetings, although some venues may be able to provide these. Whether the trust also purchases a laptop to run the presentations will depend on how many different speakers there are and whether they prefer to use their own laptops or share a society

owned machine. Most presenters prefer to tell the story in their own way. Using their own laptops means they can develop slide sets that suit their presentation style. It does, however, mean they have to have appropriate software for editing a presentation. While Microsoft Powerpoint is probably the most well known application for creating and managing presentation slides, there are many free alternatives such as LibreOffice Impress. Of course it is also possible to just use a set of photo images and the slideshow option in a photo viewer application. The most important element is the speaker who should be knowledgeable, confident and entertaining such that they get invited back every few years to present on progress.

4.7 Display boards and graphic panels

These can be used to demonstrate your aims or achievements at a variety of events. Good quality boards are expensive (2012 price: £90-£120) but like anything similar, contacts in the trade who are supporters may be able to save you expense. The type that use loop nylon allow you to attach your materials using hook pads (aka Velcro) which means that displays can be frequently re-arranged and updated as new materials become available. These boards look good indoors but are not always suitable for use outdoors, although even for indoor use it may be judged worthwhile to laminate photographs to prevent deterioration and finger marks which can't be removed.

For outdoor use a different solution utilising foamboard PVC panels may be more appropriate as these are relatively rain resistant but will still need to be well secured against wind effects. With digital printing even quite large panels (1.2m x 0.8m) can be obtained for under £50.

Pop-up panels (2012 prices: £65-£95) or roller banner stands (2012 prices: £100-£1,000's depending on size) can be particularly useful as they are very compact when rolled up. Smaller ones can even be taken along by speakers to other organisations to help highlight the work the Trust or Society is undertaking. A good indoor display may even result in an invitation to display in libraries, museums, and other public spaces when it is not in use at waterway events.

5 RAISING THE PROFILE

The final section is the one where we consider simply raising the profile of an organisation. Suppliers for all of the physical items can easily be found by "googling" on the web.

5.1 Banners

Consider purchasing large banners to display at your events so that the organisation is visually linked with the event. It adds additional impact to your organisation name if it appears in press and television pictures. The price can vary enormously. While a very big organisation may bring the cost down by having a large number manufactured, most organisations will only need a few. In 2012 a digitally printed colour banner 2 feet by 15 feet can be purchased for less than £50 plus carriage.

5.2 Car and boat stickers

These are a comparatively cheap way of bringing the society name repeatedly to attention. They can be of any shape or design, but one important consideration is whether you want the type which sticks to the inside of a clean window just by pressure or the type which has a glued face which sticks more permanently, but leaves an untidy residue afterwards.

5.3 Merchandising

This may be used either to raise funds and/or to publicise the organisation and retail prices may well reflect the emphasis perceived as more important by the organisation. If you require publicity then items can be sold for little more than the cost price or even given away to worthy recipients. If the main aim is fund raising then a margin can be added before retailing. Wide ranges of goods can be personalised to your organisation - pens and pencils, coasters, and desktop decorations at one end of the market - and crystal decanters, silverware and watches at the other. It is worth comparing the offerings of a number of specialist suppliers. Google "corporate gifts" for a wide range of products that can be bought with your logo emblazoned on them.

5.4 Uniform

Many societies have a "uniform". Remember that it has more impact if all members not only wear the same design, but all in the same colour. Consider the impact of a group from Waterway Recovery Group when they are all wearing their red T-shirts, compared to the same bunch wearing a variety of coloured shirts. Whatever colour you choose, make sure that it is a colour reasonably acceptable to male and female, younger and older members. Consider the logo and/or lettering position in relation to female anatomy to minimise embarrassing combinations or hiding part of your title.

One canal society has a policy that all Council Members appear at all events where they represent the organisation "in uniform". Others are encouraged to wear the "uniform" too. It helps them to feel as if they are active and integrated members of the organisation and it increases the impact of the organisation visually.

5.5 Badges

Simple cheap round badges can be produced to get a slogan across and can be distributed free to, say, children, or sold as appropriate.

It is a good idea for staff manning a stand or hosting an event to have name badges. These can be transparent badge holders into which you insert your own badges printed on paper or thin card. They usually come with clip and/or pin fixings. Slightly more expensive are logo'd name badges which have an engraved or printed logo but allow the insertion of a separately printed name and/or title on a piece of card. Top of the range professionally engraved name badges come much more expensive. It is cheapest to order a significant number with your logo on and then have them engraved with names of your staff as required.

5.6 No party politics

Activists in any organisation aiming to bring about change will undoubtedly come into contact with party politicians at both local and national level. As far as your publicity is concerned you must be seen to be evenhanded. Charities may not themselves become party political and it follows that party political statements must not be made on their behalf irrespective of the party politics of the officer making the statement. The Charity Commissioners issue leaflet CC9 – “Speaking Out - Campaigning and Political Activity by Charities”.

5.7 Be truthful

By all means put a reasonably optimistic gloss on your claims, but don't exaggerate or “go over the top”. To regular recipients of your publicity you will quickly get known as a reliable provider of information - or otherwise. In the long term wildly excessive claims won't do any good. The publicists, or somebody else in the organisation will inevitably in the long term have to go through some humiliating apologies.

5.8 Enjoy

Those who work for voluntary organisations do it because, however perverse it may appear, they enjoy what they are doing. Let that enjoyment be seen. It becomes infectious and in itself is a wonderful advertisement to others of like mind. However, enthusiasm is not the only criterion. A degree of skill is needed in implementing the process of publicity and no organisation which needs publicity can afford to have a volunteer responsible for publicity in its widest context, who cannot communicate successfully using many of the methods indicated in this chapter.

6 CONCLUSION

The brief was to be concise and comprehensive. Inevitably some matters have not been covered. This is perhaps no bad thing, for the hallmark of a good publicist is someone who can use all the established techniques and then go further, dream up new ideas or slants which have successful impact. May I respectfully suggest you try the standard techniques first, become proficient, and then literally publicise the waterways like they have never been publicised before!