



# PR & Media Toolkit: Community Groups



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# Introduction

This document and accompanying templates have been created by the Zero Waste Scotland PR team to support community groups with PR activity.

It is intended as a general, but not exhaustive, guide to help community groups plan and deliver PR to support their activities. In addition, the Zero Waste Scotland PR team is very happy to provide individual support and answer any questions you may have.

Please contact [PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk](mailto:PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk) in the first instance, and a member of the PR team will respond to you as soon as possible.







# What is PR?

PR is about telling your story to a wider audience, to raise awareness of your organisation and its aims. It involves a mixture of **public relations** and **media relations**.

The 'public' part refers to the key audience you wish to build a relationship with so that you can tell them your story and help achieve your objectives.

The 'media' part is about reaching that public audience, more specifically through building a relationship with journalists and the media, and using this as a vehicle by which to reach the public. Newspapers, websites, TV, radio, social media and blogs are all examples of outlets you might want to target.

# Why do PR?

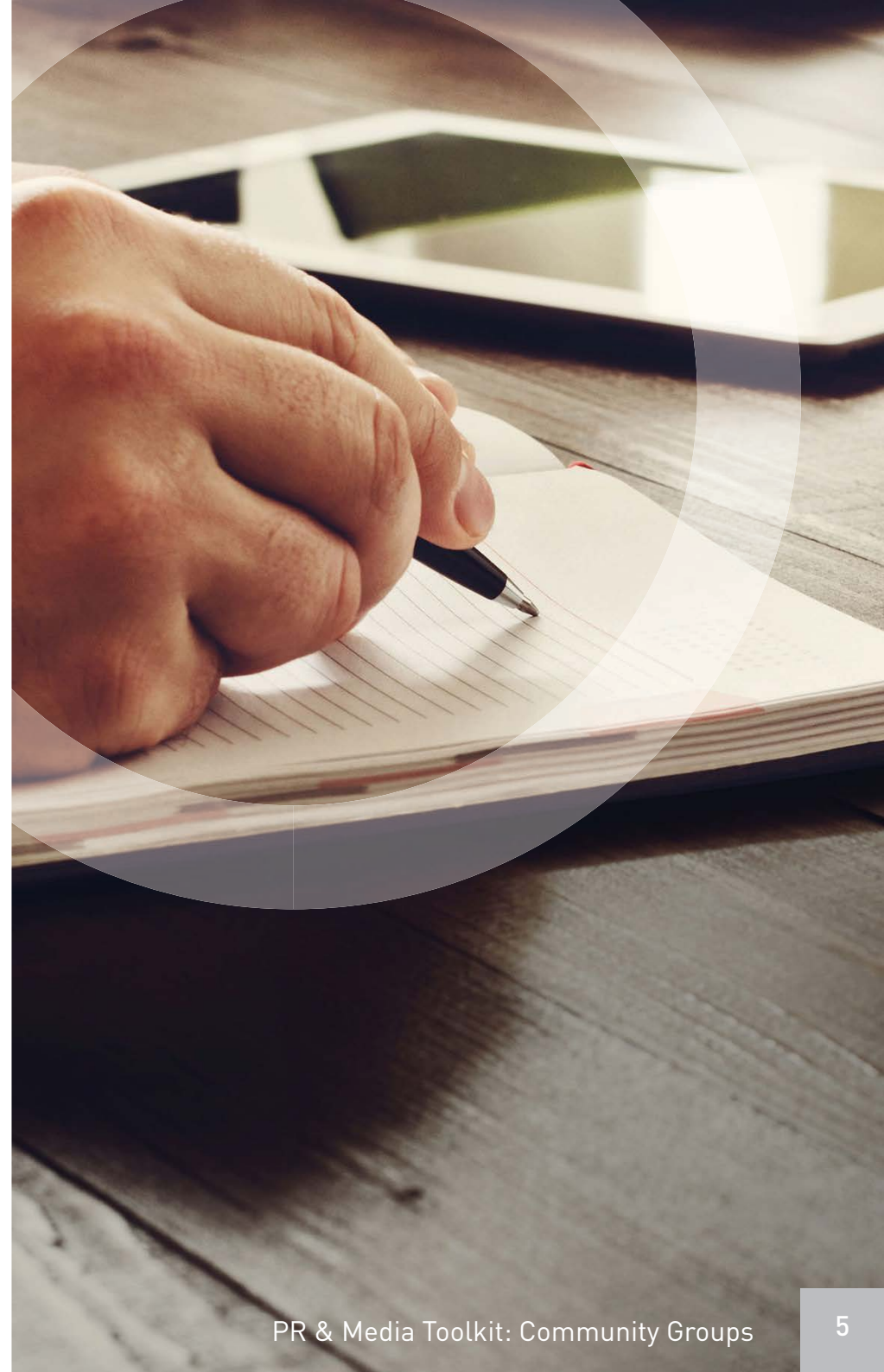
**It's free:** Good PR is cost-effective because it is (usually) free (not counting time spent of course) and can be highly influential.

**It's independent:** Your story will be published by media based solely on an independent editorial decision about its newsworthiness, making the resulting coverage more trustworthy than (otherwise paid-for) advertising. Research shows that readers tend to pay three times as much attention to editorial copy as they do to advertising.

**It's worthwhile:** Writing and issuing your own press release to even just a few local reporters can work wonders for raising awareness of your story throughout your local community, so it's worth putting time into crafting a solid press release with supportive quotes and photography wherever possible.

Good PR also has a cumulative effect, so the more you do, the bigger the picture you build of what your organisation is doing to help the community and environment.

What's more, you can keep copies of the coverage you generate as examples to illustrate annual reports, build into presentations, and share with colleagues.





# Identifying your audience

The first and most important element to consider when embarking on a piece of PR work is your **audience**.

As a rule of thumb, the two main questions you should ask yourself at the outset are:

## 1. *Who do I want to tell my story to?*

In many cases, this will be your local community/town, so your local newspaper(s) are probably your most suitable means of doing so. Most local papers also have online editions, and social media accounts for sharing stories, which are increasingly popular.



Your story may also be of interest to your wider region, particularly if the story is unusual, interesting or has a 'human interest' angle. Think about types of media other than your local newspapers. Perhaps there's a popular local blogger or community website/newsletter?

Think about the quality and relevance of the media you target, rather than quantity. Consider the breadth of the circulation area of your chosen media. Will your local newspaper(s) sufficiently cover that audience area?

Might you wish to additionally select a larger regional title, (e.g. Glasgow Evening Times, Edinburgh Evening News, Dundee Courier, Press and Journal, etc)? Could you consider your local radio station or regional TV – maybe you could offer a short interview with a spokesperson? Which websites would you like to cover your story? Could you send details to a few relevant bloggers?

How many more people could you potentially reach by sharing the details on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc? Make sure you capture all your target media in a list, like an excel document, and add to this as you build up more contacts. For further information see page 17.

Please make sure you drop the Zero Waste Scotland PR team a note of your story too by emailing [PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk](mailto:PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk)

## 2. What is it I want to tell them, or ask them to do?

In the case of community groups, some typical local news stories might include:

- Food waste recycling demos
- Swap shops
- Upcycling events
- 'Swishes'
- Pass it On Week events
- Recycle Week events
- Litter prevention initiatives







In many cases your main objective is to urge locals to take part and to encourage behaviour change (less littering, more recycling, keeping items in use) so this is the first thing you should mention at the top of your story.

You may also have news to tell of the success of an event or initiative, in which case it's good to lead with this, highlighting any key statistics/numbers related to your success, such as the volume of clothes donated, amount of money raised for charity, the size of the group who volunteered, how many people attended an event, how much litter was picked up etc.



# The press release

First of all, ensure that the story has genuine news value, otherwise PR can end up as a wasted exercise.

Think about the story from an objective point of view. Apply the 'so what?' test – is the story interesting enough that you'd choose to tell a friend about it? Do you have something 'new' or unusual to communicate, or would the story benefit readers in some way?

Then start drafting the story in the order of who (you or your customers are), what (is being announced), where (you or your customers are based) when (the event is happening) and why elements of the story.

Try to keep it to one A4 page if possible, two max, and try to include a quote in your second or third paragraph.

Add your contact details (in case an interview is required) and a short description (called a 'boilerplate') of your company (including a URL) at the end – see attached template press release for suggested format.

Try to send your press release as a personalised email with the press release in the body of the email, not as an attachment. If you can't send it as personalised emails, make sure you add your email contacts to the BCC field.





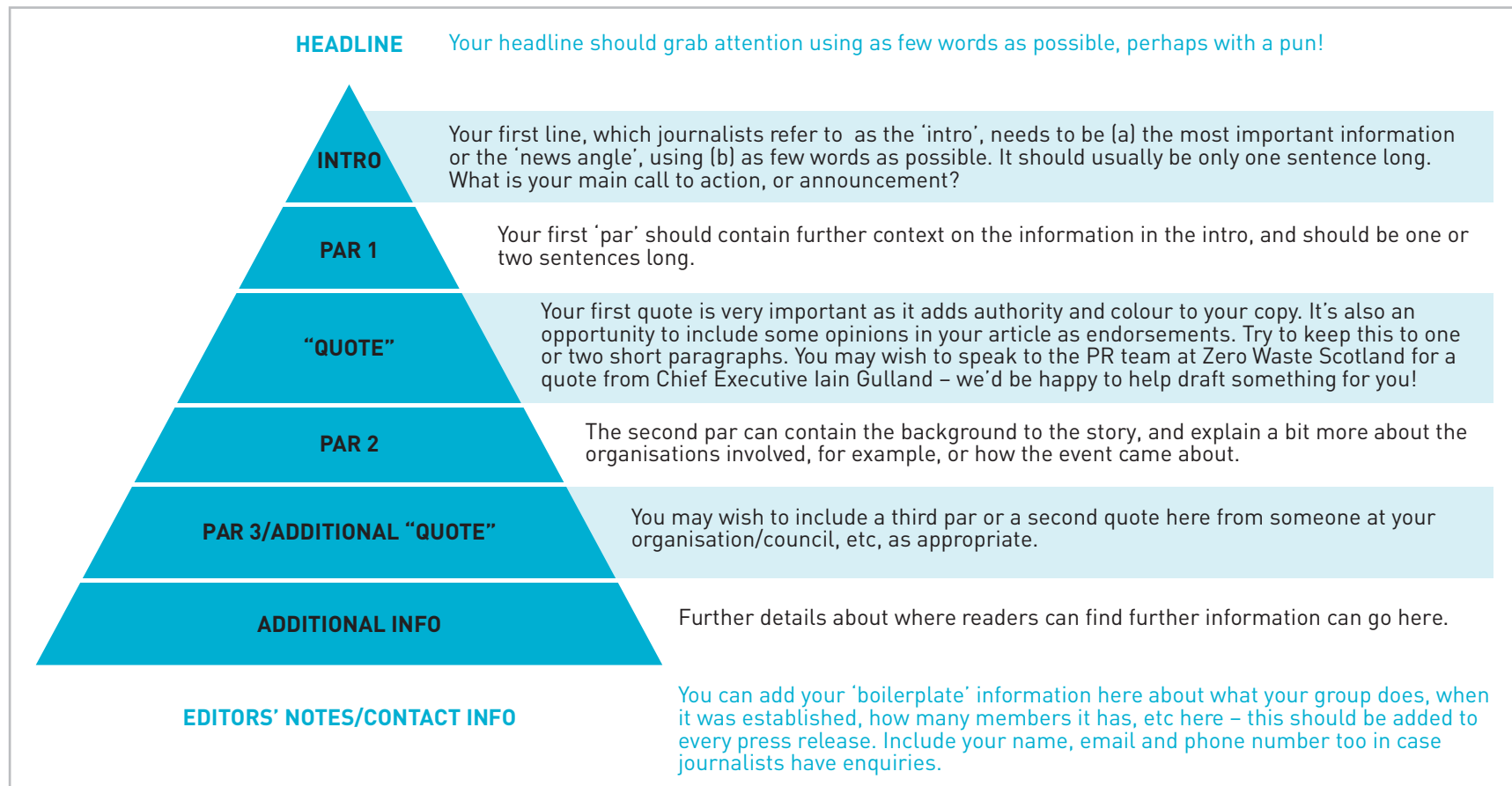
## Structuring your press release

Visualise the structure of your story as a triangle. The most information – the ‘intro’ - should appear at the top of the triangle. It should serve as an outline of your story, using as few words as possible.

If you’re unsure of what the most important info is, imagine you’re in a conversation with someone about the story. What would you tell them first? That usually helps you write the intro, then everything else flows from that, in descending order of importance.

The information in the subsequent paragraphs should become less important but more descriptive, echoing the ‘widening’ of the triangle. Not only does this structure help to grab attention, it makes it easier for subeditors to chop copy from stories from the bottom-up depending on available space.

Below is a rough outline of how to do this – see also the Zero Waste Scotland press release template guide as part of the PR toolkit.





# Planning your media approach

It's important to give your story the best chance of publication in as wide a range of relevant, quality outlets as possible. Here are a few tips:

- **Start by deciding the date on which you want your story to appear in media**

If you are promoting an event, you'll probably want to plan the media coverage to appear in advance of the event in order to drive footfall and interest. You might decide that a post-event approach would be better if it's a non-public event and you need to wait for the results to have something to announce. You could plan both, if you want to raise awareness and will have something further to announce post-event.

- **Begin planning your PR approach at least two weeks in advance of the date you plan to issue it to media contacts**

Organising the various elements (photography, social media, spokespeople, gaining agreement from everyone involved, etc) can take considerable time and perseverance and often more than you might expect, so the more time you give yourself, the better.







- **Find out the deadline of your local media outlet(s)**

Most weekly newspapers' deadlines are a few days prior to publication, so make sure you give them plenty of time to read your press release, consider images and get back to you with any further details required. If you want to give media advance notice of something but don't want them to publish it until later, just add a clear embargo at the top of your press release to highlight this (see template example).

For press release template please contact: [PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk](mailto:PR@zerowastescotland.org.uk)

Please see page 13 for an example of the Press Release template.

# Press release template

**Press Release**

*Delete this text box and insert logo here*

**Embargoed Until/For Immediate Use: 00:01 hrs Day Date Month 2016**

**Headline**

Paragraph 1 *short intro to cover the who, what, why where when*

Paragraph 2 *more information about the news story, plus any partners or more event or initiative details*

Paragraph 3 *expand on relevant details*

**Name, Position, Organisation, said:**

"Quote, quote, and quote. More quote.

"Additional point to conclude."

**Joe Bloggs, Job Role, Partner Organisation, said:**

"Quote, quote, quote, and a bit more quote."

"Additional point to conclude."

**Editor's Notes**

- Photographs show:
  - 1) From left to right: include people's names – ensure you have permission
  - 2)
- Insert further information if relevant.

For media enquiries contact:

First name Surname, Role  
t: insert landline here  
m: insert mobile here  
e: insert email here



# Photography

Good photography is really important. It can sometimes help secure coverage even for a more run-of-the-mill story.

Consider recruiting volunteers who have photography as a key skill or hobby, as this will really help you to secure good images. Always aim to have at least one good quality image available when issuing a press release.

If you have budget, you may also wish to consider hiring a professional. Speak to the PR team at Zero Waste Scotland for further advice and recommendations.

Pictures must be 'high resolution' to make them usable in print media - a minimum of 300 dpi (dots per inch) and saved in a JPEG format for best compression. Aim for a file size of 0.5 – 1Mb.

Please see page 15 for an example of the photobrief template used by the Zero Waste Scotland PR team.



# Photobrief

\* Please ensure a copy of the ZWS model release form is completed and signed by each external participating individual or their parent/guardian if under 16. Photography use may be subject to copyright restrictions – please see accompanying ZWS copyright guidance document on file and check with photographer.



<b>Date</b>	
<b>Time</b>	
<b>Photographer</b>	[name], [phone number], [email]
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location 1</li> <li>• Location 2</li> <li>• Location 3</li> </ul>
<b>Subject</b>	[details of project/photo call, etc]
<b>Description/ requirements</b>	[why do we need the pictures, are there any special requirements either now or in the future?]
<b>Props</b>	<p>[list any props required to make stronger pictures]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prop 1</li> <li>• Prop 2</li> <li>• Prop 3</li> </ul>
<b>People</b>	<p>[list all people and contact details to be included in pics]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person 1, [organisation], [phone]</li> <li>• Person 2, [organisation], [phone]</li> <li>• Person 3, [organisation], [phone]</li> </ul>
<b>Shots &amp; timing required</b>	<p>[time]am/pm [location and required shots]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description and composition details of shot(s) and people/props required</li> </ul> <p>[time]am/pm [location and required shots]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description and composition details of shot(s) and people/props required</li> </ul> <p>[time]am/pm [location and required shots]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description and composition details of shot(s) and people/props required</li> </ul>



# Developing media contacts

To create a media list:

- **Check out the papers** read by your existing target audience and make a note of the editorial contacts
- **Do an online search** for other websites reporting on your area
- **Look out for journalists** on social media sites like Twitter and follow them/contact them
- **If you have budget**, you can use one of several media databases available – more info available via the PR team

It's also a good idea to familiarise yourself with the online versions of your target media titles, as the editorial contacts can differ.

Drop a personalised email to each of your new contacts to introduce yourself and ask how they'd like to receive your stories/copy. You may also have things like spokespeople and case studies to offer.

Keep a record of everything you've offered and make sure you provide it on time.





## Distribution

Compiling a distribution list using a programme like Excel will help you to keep track of all your contacts, and you can add to this as you develop new ones.

It's helpful to have each set of data in a separate column so that you can simply cut and paste details when needed. This saves time when you're issuing a press release by email to many contacts, and you can simply cut and paste the ones you want into the 'BCC' line of your email.



# Monitoring/evaluating results

For free notification of online coverage as it appears, Google alerts is an effective means of monitoring coverage. It also serves as a good indicator of whether there may also be corresponding print coverage, if it's a newspaper website.

You can include as many search terms/key words as you like, such as the name of your group, or the event you're promoting. The alerts arrive in your email inbox with a URL(s) to the coverage.

To set up a Google alert, visit [www.google.co.uk/alerts](http://www.google.co.uk/alerts)

Google alerts can sometimes be patchy though, and a paid-for subscription is required if you wish to get a fuller picture by using a media clippings agency for example.

The Zero Waste Scotland PR team has a press cuttings agency – please feel free to check in with us any time you issue a story and we'll be happy to check for related coverage for you.







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Zero Waste Scotland exists to create a society where resources are valued and nothing is wasted. Our goal is to help Scotland realise the economic, environmental and social benefits of making best use of the world's limited natural resources. We are funded to support delivery of the Scottish Government's circular economy strategy and the EU's 2020 growth strategy.

[zerowastescotland.org.uk](http://zerowastescotland.org.uk) @ZeroWasteScot

Zero Waste Scotland is a registered company in Scotland [SC436030] Zero Waste Scotland, Ground floor, Moray House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ



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