

Fossil Free Media Guide

A great way to attract more **attention** to your campaign, increase the **pressure** on your institution and improve the **image** of your Fossil Free campaign is through effective use of the media.

There are four main media types your group can use; **Student** Media, **Local** Media, **National** Media and **Alternative** Media.



Student Media

Getting your campus media to cover your campaign is a great way to attract more students to campaign, and let the wider student body know what you're doing.

Things you can do:

- Write an article for your campus **newspaper/magazine**. Make it fun and interesting, and don't be afraid to be controversial!
- Get some air time on your Universities **radio station**: If they have a current affairs, university news or 'drive time' shows, try and get interview live on air. Make sure you record your time on the airwaves to be shared online afterwards. (You can do this for free using <http://www.screamer-radio.com/>)
- Encourage your Universities **TV station** to film one of your exciting actions. Get them to stick it on YouTube and spread the word!

The best way to get in touch with these is to get to know someone in the editorial or news team, but if not you can just send them a **press release**.

Top Tip: An exciting press release is key to getting your story noticed. When you're emailing press releases, write the headline in the subject box. Simply putting 'Press Release' won't get the editors attention.

If you're not sure what to put in your press release, or how to lay it out, check out our online guide: peopleandplanet.org/unis/gg/media/pressreleases

Local Media

Local papers and radio love stories about young people doing interesting things, and especially photo opportunities, so it's worth getting in touch with them.

If you can **frame the story around a local issue**, such as a new link between your University and the Fossil Fuel industry, or the development of unconventional fossil fuel extraction, such as Fracking, in your local community, the more likely they are to cover your story.

When writing these stories, the journalist will have to include some background information on the issue for the reader. As a result the **general public learns about the issue directly through news stories.**

National Media

Not everyone will get a prime time TV interview or front page story but If you think your story's good enough, why not release it to the national media? You can send your press release by email or fax.

If you can **link it to a national issue** that's currently in the news, such as the opening of a new fossil fuel plant or discussion on government legislation, they'll be more likely to pick up on it! They hold stories on file, so even if you don't make it in first time, they may look you up sometime in the future.

Alternative Media

More and more people are getting their information from alternative media. Free from corporate influence, alternative media is great way to get information out to the activist network and beyond.

Websites such as Indy Media (<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/>) allow you to add your own news, or you could contact some of the hundreds of environmental and activist blogs that are online.

Background work

You will need to do a little research and get together the following information for your target media:

- **Editorial/news e-mail address** (e-mail is the preferred method of receiving news for most media outlets now).
- **Editorial/news phone & fax number.**
- **Deadline** - find out when they need stories by, as there's no point sending them news if it's too late for them to use it!
- **Name of the environment/politics/education/development correspondents.** In the case of small local, or student outfits, these will probably be the news team. It's also worth getting the details of the features editor so that you can try and get them to include a larger piece at some stage.

Now **give them a call** and introduce yourself. Explain a little about your group, what you do and why. **Tell them you're available for comment** (assuming you are) on the issues you work on, and say you will send them press releases whenever your group does interesting things. You might want to **offer to write articles on eco/social issues**, or help them put together a feature on Divestment or Fossil Fuels.

Finding a 'Hook'

Campaigners talk about finding a 'hook' - something to make a situation newsworthy and interesting. The existence of a given situation – such as climate change- does not count as news. However, changes in a given situation or the revelation of new facts about a situation are often considered as news.

Good 'hooks' include:

- Events (eg. An action on campus, a government minister speaking on Fossil Fuels)
- Anniversaries (eg anniversary of BP gulf oil disaster)
- National days (eg. Earth Day)
- Milestones (eg. X number of Universities in the UK have divested)
- Statistics reports (eg. New research/data on the dangers of Fossil Fuel)

Finding the right hook will be the most important part of your media strategy.

Other Media Techniques

As well as issuing press releases and contacting the media to cover your story there are other ways to get in the press:

Letters to the editor

- **Editors like controversial discussion going on in their letters column.** If you feel they did you or an issue an injustice in an article on Fossil Fuels, take the opportunity to write in and say so.
- **Keep it calm and intelligent** - retain the moral high ground by not descending into petty politicking. You just want to seem nice and reasonable.
- **Remember to keep to your core message**, even if they've made countless stupid points you feel desperate to rectify.
- **Always keep the readership of the newspaper in mind** - if you are writing to a local paper then global issues must have a local link.
- **Concise, amusing letters that are under 80 words long stand a very good chance of publication.** Don't try and cover too much ground in a short letter. It is better just to make one or two points clearly and emphatically, the editor might choose to cut out your most important point otherwise.
- **Look at the letters page of the publication to find out what the usual style and length is.** There is no single correct style for writing letters; it all depends on the newspaper, the subject and your objectives.

- **Always include your name and address** - some papers won't print letters without them. You can ask for your details to be withheld if you like.

What's On

Hosting an exciting public event? Maybe a debate on how Fossil Fuels are wrecking the environment, or a campaign planning meeting?

Don't forget the free 'What's On' guide in many papers and on local radio for promoting your events. As a minimum you need to give them the **Date, Time, Venue, Price, What's happening** and **Something that sounds fun.**

Interviews/Phone In

Phoning in to a radio discussion is an easy way to get some air time. Radio producers often look for interviewees last minute, so if you can build up a rapport with them they may use you in future features.

Always remember that you're in control.

- **Think through what you want to say.** Find the 3 most important bits of information and try to have a fact or two to back them up. Try rehearsing beforehand how to get these 3 points across clearly and succinctly. If they ask you other questions that aren't relevant or are an attempt to divert you - say *'I'm not here to talk about that - I'm here to tell your listeners..'*
- **Remember it's not just what you say but how you say it.** You need to sound suitably passionate, intelligent and knowledgeable. Don't swear, don't shout and don't rant. Short firm sentences will get you a long way!
- **In a recorded interview,** you can ask to give your answer again to make it clearer.
- If you're on the radio or TV, **get someone to tape you** and then sit down and honestly appraise it, but don't give yourself too hard a time. Would Joe Public who knows nothing about the subject have understood.
- You're perfectly entitled to **refuse to give interviews to journalists** who are likely to twist what you're saying against you.

Press stunts

When planning an event, keep the needs of the media in mind. They look for events that are:

- **Imaginative:** try to brainstorm creative and original ideas with your group. One of the reasons for the drop in the coverage of marches and rallies is that the media have become bored with them. Exciting actions such as mock oil clean up, or targeting a local organisation will be more likely to draw press attention.
- **Visual:** by providing a great photo opportunity, your message will gain coverage by accompanying the image.

- **Relevant:** try to come up with some clear link between the event and the issue.

This briefing covers the basics on using the media, and will mean you are able to draw more attention to your Fossil Free campaign whilst putting pressure on your institution.

If you are interested in becoming a media or press officer for your group, or if you'd like to book a media workshop on your campus, please contact either Phoebe or James on 01865 264180 or email fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org