



MEDIA RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The overall communications aim of the OEP at this time is:

To establish the OEP as a trusted, credible and authoritative voice in the environment sector and establish meaningful two-way engagement with stakeholders in order to ensure the organisation has influence and impact contributing to environmental protection and improvement.

Effective media relations is a key part of establishing the credibility of the OEP, as news coverage will inform and help shape the perceptions of stakeholders and audiences. The media, particular the environment sector specialist media, should be viewed as important stakeholders.

The aim of our media relations activity is to:

Engage proactively with key media to ensure we make maximum use of opportunities to have impact and influence, and have the processes in place to ensure that all OEP interactions with the media are professional, we are represented accurately, key messages are communicated clearly and inaccuracies are challenged.

MEDIA RELATIONS OBJECTIVES

Objective	Deliverables	When	Measures
Establish independent OEP press office	OEP press office inbox	December 2021	Records of media enquiries and responses are accurate and up to date
	Agreement of working hours for press office	April 2022	Media monitoring shows OEP is quoted appropriately
	Processes for recording enquiries and responses in place	April 2022	ExCo agree Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm
			Records of media enquiries and responses are accurate and up to date

	<p>Distribution lists for media, including identification of key environment sector media</p> <p>Processes in place to ensure comms team is briefed on issues around complaints and investigations and is providing support</p>	<p>December 2021</p> <p>June 2022</p>	<p>Distribution lists in place for media are accurate and up-to-date</p> <p>Programme of internal engagement with key teams is in place and communications plans or materials are in place to support around key issues.</p> <p>Media monitoring shows OEP represented accurately and proportionately in coverage of these issues</p>
Build relationships with key media	<p>Introduction meetings with key environment sector journalists</p> <p>Media briefings for key OEP milestone activities</p>	<p>By July 2022</p> <p>May 2022</p>	<p>Meetings have taken place and been used to brief journalists on OEP's work and role</p> <p>Media briefings for key OEP milestones have been attended by key journalists and resulted in coverage of OEP's key messages and findings</p>
Media monitoring capturing coverage that is relevant and useful to the OEP	<p>Daily media update to all staff</p> <p>Monthly summary report to ExCo</p>	<p>January 2022</p> <p>July 2022</p>	<p>Daily update provides information that is of interest to staff and helps inform their work</p> <p>Monthly summary to ExCo provides useful information about media coverage to help inform their work</p>

PRESS OFFICE – WAYS OF WORKING

Media enquiries

All media enquiries are to be directed to a centralised Press Office inbox, pressoffice@theoep.org.uk, monitored by the Communications and Strategic relations team. The address is on the OEP website and will be shared with media contacts.

Any enquiries will be discussed with relevant members of staff and responses agreed at a minimum of G6 level. A decision will be made on further sign-off depending on the nature of the enquiry.

All media enquiries, responses and press releases will be recorded in the [Media Enquiries Log](#).

All staff are instructed to refer any enquiries from media organisations to the Communications and Strategic Relations team via the press office email.

Spokespeople

Statements to the media will be attributed to a named person and never a 'spokesperson'. This will show a human side to the organisation and avoid the perception of 'faceless bureaucrats'.

An appropriate spokesperson will be identified on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and subject of the statement or quote.

Current recommendation is for the Chair to be the spokesperson for strategic and political issues and the (interim) CEO for operational matters.

As the organisation grows the spokespeople list will expand reflect expertise and demonstrate the depth of knowledge and experience amongst the OEP staff.

Out of hours cover and crisis communications

We are not anticipating levels of demand from the media that would require the press office to provide cover outside of office hours. The press office inbox will therefore be monitored between 9am and 5pm Mondays to Fridays.

However, we do anticipate some situations where increased media interest in particular issues may mean that press office activity is needed outside office hours to manage reputational issues. In such circumstances, additional cover will be provided by the Communications and Strategic Relations Head of and Manager. Additional hours worked will be recorded and claimed back at a convenient future time.

In times of heightened demand for press office services, additional staff may be sought from the Chief of Staff's team to support BAU activities.

If the situation leading to the increased media interest and reputational risk is prolonged, consideration will be given to procuring support from a PR agency, to ensure appropriate resourcing and resilience. The procurement process and management of the appointed provider will be led by the Head of Communications and Strategic Relations.

Media training

Good performance in the media will contribute to the OEP being seen as a credible and trustworthy organisation. Speaking to the broadcast media will initially be limited to the Executive Committee, CEO, Chair, and, when appropriate, members of the Board.

By the end of September 2022, media training will have been delivered to support the organisation's identified spokespeople. A programme of refresher training will be developed for future delivery.

Media and Social media monitoring

Media and Social media monitoring is provided by [Kantar](#), the world's leading data, insights and consulting company.

The communications team will provide a brief daily summary of media coverage to the organisation.. This will aim to include relevant social media coverage as the OEP presence on Twitter and LinkedIn expand.

The communications team will provide a brief monthly summary report of media and social media activity to the Executive Committee. The aim of this will be to highlight any issues either directly related to the OEP or relevant to the sector that may need to be considered at strategic or tactical level.

Proactive engagement with key sector media

The communications team will proactively develop relationships with key journalists in the sector. By July 2022, the initial action to implement this will be a programme of introduction communications to ensure they know who to contact at the OEP going forward.

The relationship management with media contacts will look to seek conversations to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the organisation and opportunities for engagement.

Speaking engagements and speeches

The communications team will work with Private Office to co-ordinate speaking engagements and speeches by the OEP Chair and leadership team. We will ensure that speakers are supported with briefing notes that include up-to-date information and relevant key messages.

We aim for speaking engagements and speeches to be approached strategically and proactively by identifying speaking opportunities that present opportunities to reinforce the OEP key messages with relevant stakeholders increase influence and impact.

Proactive communication of OEP activity – investigations, complaints, scrutiny of law and targets

The Environment Act requires the OEP to make public statements in relation to specific actions it may take:

For England, section 41 of the Environment Act provides:

Public statements

(1) *Where the OEP gives an information notice or a decision notice, applies for an environmental review, judicial review or statutory review or applies to intervene in a judicial review or statutory review, it must publish a statement that –*

(a) states that the OEP has taken that step,

(b) describes the failure (or alleged failure) of a public authority to comply with environmental law in relation to which that step was taken, and

(c) sets out such further information as the OEP considers appropriate.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply if the OEP considers that in the circumstances it would not be in the public interest to publish a statement.

Similar provisions apply with respect to our Northern Ireland remit.

The Communications team will work with the Regulatory team to ensure that we meet the requirements set out in the Environment Act whenever we give an information or decision notice, make a review application (in Northern Ireland), apply for a judicial review or statutory review or apply to intervene in a judicial review or statutory review.

We will work with those colleagues to draft a notice for publication on the OEP website. We will ensure:

- The statement is published in a timely way
- The statement is accessible and in plain English
- Consideration is given to whether or not further promotion of the statement is appropriate either through social media or traditional media
- That an appropriate spokesperson is identified and briefed should we need or wish to engage with the media further on the issue
- That the OEP staff have been informed of the public statement being made

Communications support for other OEP operational functions

The Communications and Strategic Relations team will put in place appropriate arrangements with the different OEP functions to ensure they are briefed in a timely way on developing situations and cases that may require communications support. This is likely to involve members of the comms team joining regular team meetings, joining team meetings on occasion to discuss a specific issue, or joining a specific meeting or working group to focus on an issue or case.

Support for the Complaints team will be a particular focus, as Communications need to be aware of cases and issues as they develop and can also offer support around engagement with complainants. Prior knowledge of cases will assist in ensuring a timely and quality response to media enquiries.

Each case or situation will be considered on its own merits and an appropriate communications plan developed to support as needed.

Scheduling of publications and communications activity

The communications team will hold overall responsibility for agreeing publication / activity dates with teams across the OEP, taking into account external deadlines, publication and production timelines and external landscape.

To help colleagues see what is being planned, a centralised communications calendar will be developed.