

EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Press & Media

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is recognised that an organisation's wider reputation, as well as its standing within its own local and professional communities, is heavily influenced by its coverage in the media. Similarly, the media has the power to either instil or damage public confidence in and understanding of an organisation, its aims and its services.
- 1.2. It is important for the Lothian Group to capitalise on the opportunities presented by a 24/7 media culture. This means being prepared to respond effectively to potentially damaging coverage and proactively seek opportunities to promote the work we do at Lothian.
- 1.3. Lothian is committed to developing and maintaining good relations with the local, regional and national media, including online and trade press. Lothian will take a proactive approach to publicising its own good news, as well as offering an efficient, timely and responsive service to all media enquiries received.
- 1.4. Lothian as a municipally owned company, must remain politically impartial at all times.

2. Scope & Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a consistent and planned approach to liaison between Lothian and the media.
- Maximise opportunities to project a positive image and promote key messages to large audiences.
- Minimise the publication or broadcast of false or misleading information about Lothian.
- Acknowledge the important role of the media in providing information to the public on services provided by Lothian.

2.2. This policy applies to all contacts made with the media, either initiated proactively or dealt with on a reactive basis.

2.3. The policy applies to all employees of the Lothian Group.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. The Communications Director is responsible for advising on the contents of this policy.

- 3.2. All employees' are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of, and adhere to, this policy.
- 3.3. On occasion, it may be necessary for Lothian to utilise its external media consultant / partner in extreme circumstances. However, Lothian retains full ownership and sign off of all statements or comments made to the media.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. The definition of **media** includes print media (such as newspapers and magazines), **online media** (including web-based publishing) and **broadcast media** (including radio, television and their representatives, such as production companies) and **social media** (including Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites, online message boards and forums and blog sites).
- 4.2. **Purdah** - the period of time from when an election is announced until after the election is held. Lothian as a municipally owned company, must remain politically impartial at all time and must be especially careful about comments made or activities undertaken during the pre-election period.

- 4.3. This policy applies to contact with local, regional, national and international media.
- 4.4. This policy applies to mainstream media as well as specialist and trade publications.

5. Dealing with Media Calls & Enquiries

- 5.1. It is normal practice for the media to approach the organisation's Communications Team with any media enquiries in the first instance. However, there may be occasions when approaches are made directly to teams or individual employees'. This may be because the journalist requires a quick response or because he / she has retained the name and contact number of an employee who has been interviewed in the past. On very rare occasions, this may be done deliberately in order for the journalist to bypass the official route for media enquiries and to extract information or comment from employees' whilst unprepared and 'off-guard'. **Employees' at all levels should be vigilant around this at all times.**
- 5.2. Should the media directly approach a team or an individual employee it is **vital that no information or comment** is made to the journalist at this point. Instead, the employee handling the call / enquiry should refer it immediately on to the Communications Team.

5.3. This is essential for a number of reasons, namely:

- To ensure that the enquiry is dealt with appropriately, thoroughly, and within given deadlines.
- To ensure that any information given is accurate, informative and a balanced response is reflected in the resulting media coverage.
- To ensure that any response or comment given is in line with policy and has received approval from the appropriate director.
- To ensure that the Communications Team can monitor any resulting coverage.

6. Issuing News Releases

6.1. News releases will only be issued by the Communications Team. These will be logged and the media monitored for any resulting coverage.

6.2. In instances where organisations are working on a project in partnership, the project lead should make the Communications Team aware that media coverage is likely to be generated or input from the internal team is needed, depending on which organisation has agreed to

lead on the media work. Respective press office contacts should be shared in order that follow-up media handling arrangements can be clarified. Finally, no news release should be issued without sign-off from all of the organisations involved – **the position must always be pre-agreed with the Communications team.**

7. Responding to Media Enquiries Reactively

7.1. On occasions where the media make an unsolicited approach to Lothian, the matter should be dealt with by the Communications Team, as set out in section 5 above.

8. Anticipating & Reporting Negative Publicity

8.1. Where an individual is aware of an issue which is likely to result in negative publicity of any level, the Communications Team should be informed as soon as possible. The team will be able to advise on whether any preparatory work or holding statements are necessary and deal with the longer term approach to media relations around the particular issue.

8.2. The following is a list of examples of typical issues where the team would need to be informed and is not exhaustive:

- MSPs, Councillors, employees or members of the public approaching the media with a complaint against Lothian.
- Misconduct, or allegations of misconduct made against a particular employee.
- Network / Service changes which have the potential to be seen as 'cuts'.
- Loss of data or breaches of GDPR.

9. Emergencies & Major Incidents

9.1. In the event of an emergency or incident which necessitates input from Lothian, the Communications Team will work alongside the Business Continuity Officer, Directorship and communications professionals from other statutory organisations (such as the City of Edinburgh Council, Mid/East/West Lothian Councils, emergency services etc.), in line with Business Continuity procedures. As in other instances, employees' should not

Speak directly to the media unless instructed to do so by the Communications Team.

10. Requests for Filming & Photography

10.1. Requests for the media or other external organisations to take photographs or footage on any Lothian premises should be referred to the Communications Team for consideration.

10.2. In certain circumstances, permission to photograph or film the exterior of a building linked to Lothian, may not be necessary. Where this does occur and a member of staff becomes aware, it is good practice to alert the Communications Team so resulting media coverage can be monitored. It is also good practice to ensure that Management at the site are informed so that they are aware of what is happening also.

11. Advice & Support for Media Handling

11.1. The Communications Team is able to offer advice to employees' on all media related issues, including generating positive coverage and handling of any issues or incidents which are likely to result in negative coverage.

11.2. The Communications Team can also offer advice on undertaking interviews of all kinds (press, radio, TV etc.), including identifying any potential pitfalls and how to utilise this limited amount of airtime or column to best effect.

12. Monitoring Compliance

12.1. Media coverage monitoring is in place which allows the Communication Team to record any media coverage and how this was achieved, i.e. whether this was proactive or reactive coverage. The team monitor the number of publications covering a story, take press clippings and circulate a weekly update to the Directors and any relevant employees’.

13. Version Control

Version No.	Date of Change	Change made by:	Key Amendments
V1.0	29/10/2019	C Cheyne	Published

V2.0	22/12/2023	G Marshall	Reviewed, no changes required
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