

Working with the media



Why bother to engage the media with your research?

Overall: Provide **Impact** for your research – don't be like Fr McKenzie working on the words of a sermon no-one will hear!

- Support/enhance research in the field generally
- Your **evidence can inform action by** policymakers, businesses, NGOs, citizens
- Build **reputation** – yours and your organisation's
- Support bid for **future funding**
- Give **balance** to a story/topic or to **counteract** fake news

What's involved with writing press releases/news stories?

- Please let your comms team know **well in advance** of publication of the paper/report (ideally 4 weeks) due to the work involved and juggling with other time-sensitive tasks
- Press officer works with scientist/s on key findings of the paper, starting with a **triage sheet** of questions for you to fill in. There may be 3 or 4 drafts of a story.
- Consider if, when and which **key partners and funders** need to be consulted in the drafting process and how.
- It is likely that press releases will need to be sent to **directors** before publication

What makes a good news story?



Involve major discoveries



Have an impact on society



Feature recommendations for change in practice



Tie to a timely topic or event



Key questions for potential news stories...

- Succinctly, what are the 2/3 key standout findings from the paper?
- What is new/different about this paper, compared to previous studies?
- What was your institute's involvement in paper/report?
- Who/what is the target audience of your paper?
- What do you want them to think/feel/do as a result?
- Are there particular media publications/websites that you would ideally like your paper to be featured in?

Things to think about...

- Would it **capture the interest of a journalist?** And what would the **headline** be in a national newspaper?
- What's **new/different?** Biggest, smallest, fastest, newest? reports or news stories written on this subject?
- **Human interest** – how is it relevant to everyday lives?
- Does it pass the '**So what**' test?
- Do you have an idea that might help **improve practice or policy?** Can your publication **be timed** to coincide with a relevant event, campaign, film, day, Bill?
- Do you have **visuals** or ideas for any to illustrate findings?

What research doesn't make the news?

- It's interesting but **doesn't offer anything new** for journalists to cover, eg if it is a literature review
- It's **very niche**:
 - It focuses on very specific region, species/group or subject area
 - The **sample size is small**
 - The **discipline is not yet mature** enough
- It seems **too complex** – there must be clear messages understandable and ideally relevant to a wider audience
- It is **already published** – journalists want something new
- **You're unavailable** to answer journalist queries. They may want additional comments for their own take on the story

Don't worry if your paper isn't featured in The Guardian...

- Not all good science makes a 'good news' story
- There are **~4m scientific papers published globally** every year and only a small number get media coverage
- It's a **marathon not a sprint**. Just like long-term monitoring, it can take months or years for a subject to become a hot topic or a relationship with a journalist to result in coverage
- There are **other ways** to communicate your research to target audiences

How to communicate your research

- **Press release** (by your organisation / a partner), depending on potential for pick-up.
- **News story** (written by comms) or **blog post** (written by scientist with comms support) for organisation's website.
- **Podcast** for the website of your organisation or a partner (UKCEH has a new series, Counting the Earth, focusing on different subjects).
- **Opinion piece** for other website / key publication eg The Conversation.
- **Social media** - standalone or in conjunction with above.
- Provide **3rd party comment** on other studies / hot topics for journalists eg via Science Media Centre – **gets you known as expert in that field.**



Research in the news – UKCEH case study: Hedgerow map



England's hedges would go around Earth ten times

30 January



GETTY IMAGES | The South West has the biggest share of hedgerows

By Helen Briggs
Environment correspondent

England's hedgerows would stretch almost ten times around the Earth if lined up end to end.

That's according to a new map - the most comprehensive to date - of these historic features of the landscape.

Ecologists hope the data will lead to better protections for the much-loved lines of trees and shrubs that provide food and shelter for wildlife, and store large amounts of carbon.

Nature Notes

England's hedges 'out of this world'

England's hedgerows would stretch almost ten times around the Earth if lined up end to end, a laser scanning map has found.

The data calculates there are 240,000 miles of hedgerows in the country measuring between 3ft 4in and 20ft in height.

"We've probably got more hedgerows in England than anywhere else in the world so we're very lucky to have this huge resource," said Dr Richard Broughton of the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. "As a national policy, we're trying to expand hedgerows, and this will tell us where there are gaps in the hedgerow network that we could fill in."

About half of Britain's hedgerows, which host hundreds of insects and flowers, were lost between the 1940s and 1990s due to intensive farming and development. While the loss has slowed over the last 25 years, neglect, damage and removal remain big threats.



New map provides first accurate baseline of UK hedgerows



Researchers at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) have used aerial laser scanning to reveal a total of 390,000km of field hedgerows in England, providing the first accurate baseline of the hedgerow network.

It has been estimated that half the country's hedgerows were lost between the 1940s and 1990s in response to government policies.

But while this trend has been reversed, the researchers say lack of maintenance has led to 'gappy'



RECORD English hedgerows

Map helps to protect rural herit-hedge

BY LAUREN BEAVIS

HI-TECH laser mapping has found England has 240,000 miles of hedges.

Experts hope the map will help with the restoration of the habitats which are a haven for wildlife.

Dr Richard Broughton, from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, said: "Hedgerows are part of England's rural heritage.

"The new map enables us to see where hedgerows are sparse and identify sites for targeted planting and restoration efforts."

About half of Britain's hedgerows were lost between the 1940s and 90s.

They contain hundreds of plant species and can capture and store huge amounts of carbon.

Dr Broughton said: "they can be a real asset in helping to tackle biodiversity and climate crises."

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England's HEDGES are long enough to go around Earth 10 times! Incredible maps reveal the vast network that crosses the English countryside

- Scientists used laser pulses to identify location of hedges around England
- READ MORE: Fury as 'heavy handed' council workers chop down hedges

Science & Tech

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Our release of a hedgerow map for England, using LIDAR data, received widespread media coverage. Rich Broughton was interviewed on BBC R4 Today and there mentions in bulletins across BBC national and regional radio and articles in BBC Online, The Times, Daily Mirror, Daily Telegraph and Farmers Weekly. There was also considerable social media interest.

Contact by journalist...

- Usually via the comms team
- Can also be directly through email or phone call, a briefing or other event
- Some scientists have their own contacts and are confident to deal with them directly
- **All that is fine – please keep your comms team in the loop!**

If you're contacted by journalist...



- **Don't panic!** Please contact comms
- Don't rush to comment but **find out** their **deadline**, give a time you will respond – and try to do so by then. Many journalists are fine with email responses
- Ask them for **questions** and steer on their **angle**, plus who else they're speaking to. This will help you prepare
- Take care when giving **opinion on limitations/negative angles**. Consider there are different angles on one story
- If you aren't comfortable commenting, is there a colleague who can help that we can call instead?

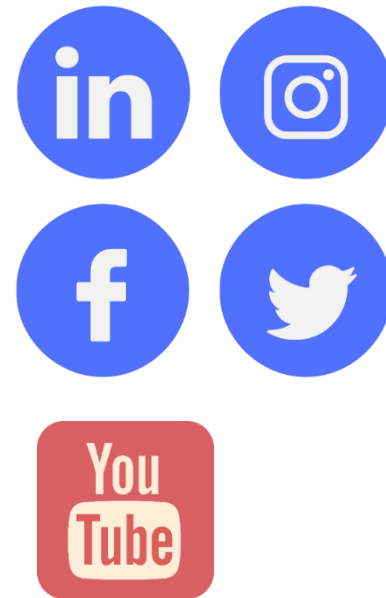
Things to remember

- The communications & engagement teams are **HERE TO HELP**
- The **more time** we have the better, ideally 4 weeks before publication if it's a press release.
- If you're approached by a journalist, **tell the press office**
- **Don't ignore** journalists, even if you feel unable to comment
- **Helpful tools** on The Hub



Social media

- Not for everyone
- Needs to be updated fairly regularly. Can be time-consuming and you may encounter unsavoury viewpoints
- Run by algorithms – what and who you engage with will largely inform what you see (but increasing prevalence of ads to ignore)
- However, it can be rewarding and useful – a place to discover information and people, and share your own information.
- If you're interested in altmetrics, then tweets and sometimes Facebook posts that link to papers will contribute to altmetrics score
- Any queries, please speak to Paulette Burns



Cyberbullying

- We want our science to have impact, including engagement with media and public, and this engagement is nearly always a positive experience for people.
- But researchers working on subjects that attract controversy are occasionally targeted by people with extreme views eg net zero. This abuse can happen without you actively promoting your research.
- Harassment could include abusive emails, social media trolling, threats to personal safety, malicious complaints to institutions or regulatory bodies, bombardment FOI requests, or libellous posts online.
- Remember any abuse you receive is not about you as a person, and is not a judgment on your work/integrity. Abusers may be ideologically opposed to your science with little understanding of it.



UKCEH has guidance on cyberbullying on its intranet site

Thank you

Any questions?

