

MP016: Issue 1

Public Relations Policy

Approved by Council

Date: August 2013

Review:

August 2015

Scope

This is a formal Society public relations (PR) policy recording the parameters under which the Director General can operate and providing part of the defined PR strategy to support The Society's risk assessment.

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1. Introduction

The Society attracts media attention as a result of its activities and it is important that media interest is dealt with promptly and effectively. The Society will:

- aim to acquire positive press coverage to promote objectives and to enhance its reputation.
- it will provide comment on wider matters relating to photography.
- it will seek to use the media to promote its activities.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for those employed by The Society, its Trustees and those supporting its activities as volunteers.

2. Communications

The Society does not employ a Communications or PR Manager or use an external PR agency although it may do so for specific projects. This function is vested by Council with the Director-General. Responsibilities include:

- Media relations, proactive and reactive. These may be devolved to department heads as appropriate
- Media monitoring
- PR crisis management, supported by The Society's President
- Developing communications plans for specific activities
- Reviewing Society printed materials and material published online before publication

Media relations conducted by Groups, Regions and Chapters and their print and online publishing are not specifically included as part of this role. Those groups are encouraged to take advice from the Director-General particularly where there may be an overlap with Society activities. In instances of crisis or reputational issues ALL media enquiries must be referred to the Director-General.

3. Media enquiries

All media contacts should, in the first instance, be referred to the Director-General who will coordinate an appropriate response. In many cases a department head will be asked to respond. For matters relating to The Society corporately or for comment on an issue of wider relevance the Director-General will handle these and, where appropriate, identify an additional spokesperson from Council, the Distinctions Advisory Board or a member with a relevant specialist background.

Because of the nature of the media enquiries received outside of normal working hours, including weekends, will be responded to equally promptly. The Society website includes a page for media enquiries including contact details.

4. Proactive media engagement

The Society will provide information about all its public activities to appropriate media outlets. Member-only events will be managed by the sponsoring group. All proactive media engagement will be supported by a written media release, distributed by mail or email, to relevant media, and uploaded to The Society website. It should be written appropriately and conform to The Society's house style. In most cases an image will accompany the release.

Staff, Council and Regions, Groups and Chapters should notify the Director-General of information that may be of interest to the media. For The Society's regular events and publication activities e.g. exhibitions, bursaries and Portfolio, media engagement should be planned for.

5. Reactive media engagement

Reactive media engagement will fall into two main areas:

- *Reaction from The Society* over a matter of photographic interest e.g. decease of a well-known photographer, a topical issue such as copyright. These should be referred to the Director-General for an initial response as noted in section 3. Any statement should be consistent with The Society's aims or stated position and should be based on facts. Speculation is best avoided and The Society would generally refrain from direct criticism of an individual or organisation.
- *Responding to a negative media enquiry* on a matter relating to The Society. This forms part of The Society's risk assessment and all enquiries of this nature MUST be referred immediately to the Director-General. The Director-General will contact the President and a response agreed. In such instances only the Director-General or the President would normally speak to the media. Any such conversation should be noted and kept on file.

6. Filming and photography

Any photography or filming by the media at a Society event or headquarters requires permission from The Society. For Group, Regional and Chapter events the organiser can give permission. The audience should be made aware through signage, a public announcement, or prior notification that filming is taking place.

Where staff or volunteers are to be photographed, filmed or interviewed prior consent must be obtained. For television filming the production company will usually require a release form to be signed. The Society will respect the wishes of the staff member or volunteers regarding photography or filming.

Appendix

What is PR in practice?

"Public relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

Public relations takes many forms in different organisations and comes under many titles, including public information, investor relations, public affairs, corporate communication, marketing or customer relations. To add to all the confusion, not all of these titles always relate accurately to public relations, but all of them cover at least part of what public relations is."

(Chartered Institute of Public Relations)