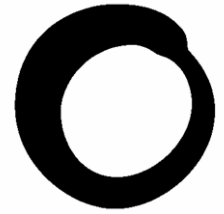


February 2004



**Friends of  
the Earth**

# Briefing

## How to organise events

The following pages provide essential information on organising events, whether they are small actions or photo opportunities designed to gain media attention; mass demonstrations and rallies which provide a focus for lots of people to get involved; or conferences and seminars where participants meet face-to-face to share ideas.

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**Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.**

**Friends of the Earth is:**

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- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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## Planning your event

### Why run a campaign event?

Actions and events can have enormous benefits for your campaign by:

- providing a range of effective tools for 'direct' communications e.g. engaging directly with our targets; involving people
- tapping into a live agenda and helping us deliver on our campaign aims and at the same time helping build your group / organisation's profile and reinforcing its values

Actions and events are also good for:

- raising awareness about a particular issue or focussing on someone else's e.g. at a big international conference
- alliance building, providing opportunities for people to participate and creating strong visual images
- communicating directly to people's emotions, as well as their intellect, so widening your appeal and encouraging people to think differently about issues
- empowering people - we can use events to communicate the excitement of campaigning - the sense of justice and hope, the feeling that great things can be achieved by ordinary people acting together
- having fun!

For whatever reason you do it, holding a successful event can say a lot about you, your group, your organisation, what you stand for and what your demands are - so the better planned it is, the more effective you're likely to be.

### The 5 W's checklist

Think through the following questions to create a basic planning framework. Whether you're planning an event involving big numbers, like a demonstration, a rally or public meeting, or an action or photo stunt where the primary objective is media coverage, the steps are the same. It's only the time frame and the numbers of people involved that will change.

The 5 Ws - Why? Who? What? Where? When? - may seem obvious, but the answers will help keep your planning on course:

- Why do you want to hold the event/action? What's the nature of the opportunity?
- Who is doing it? Who are your potential allies or partners? Who do you want to influence? Who will come to it? Participants? Who is going to do all the work?
- What kind of event do you want to run? Outdoor? Indoor? Site based? Meeting? Demo? High street action?
- Where do you want to do it (venue, site)? Where will you get your audience?
- When do you want to do it? Is it time critical? Is there an external agenda driving this? Is it weather dependent? Have you got time? Also, most importantly, how much? What's it going to cost? Where's the money going to come from?

## Do you have a good story?

If your aim is to get into the media, think about what will make them want to cover your story. Does it have a strong news hook? Is it a timely issue that's already on the news agenda? Does it have strong local relevance? Does it have clear demands and an obvious target?

## Creative actions

Brainstorm ideas. Be creative. When you have lots of ideas, test them against your checklist. Will they work? Will they fulfil your objectives? Don't try and communicate too many messages and don't make the action overly complicated. Think captions. Will it make a good picture? Think branding. How will people know who you are? Think banners, placards, props, costumes, art work.

Remember, if you want to influence the public directly, it's important not to be too confrontational. You are far more likely to get your message across if you make people think, if you're entertaining, witty, challenging, creative, informative. If you can involve kids or celebrities, all the better.



Figure 1 - Bill and Ben protest at the Chelsea Flower Show

## Roles

Recruit people to help. Look for potential participants - people with theatrical flair who don't mind drawing attention to themselves. But also find people who are highly creative or practical - as prop or costume makers, banner makers, ideas merchants, photographers. Sort out and agree roles in advance. Agree who's going to manage the event, who's going to liaise with the media, the police, who's going to be press spokesperson, etc. Don't try and do everything yourself but don't take anything on trust either.

## Recces

Always do a recce. Sometimes what seems like a good idea in the abstract falls down when you check the location. You need to think about the following:

- sightlines
- distance
- perspective - will there be room for a photographer or cameraman to get a telling shot?
- can a picture include you, your action, your banner and the name of your target (a supermarket, garage, recognisable local landmark etc)?
- what would it look like on TV as well as the printed page: interactive versus static?
- if you want to interact with the public, costumes can make actions more theatrical, less threatening and you can always take along fliers to hand out for more information.

Think about safety - for example, will your action be affected by traffic? Or could your action pose a potential danger by making people walk into the road to avoid you? Avoid obstructing the pavement. Trespass - will you have time to set up your stunt or carry out your action before being asked to leave private premises? If you're thinking about a mass demo near a site, for example, is there public access? What about permissions?

The location of your event will dictate its contents and tone. In general, if it's a generic, non-

confrontational message, or takes time to set up, you can probably do it in a public place - shopping areas, high street, public squares. If your action is aimed at a specific target, like a supermarket or garage or other business, don't be too elaborate and don't take too long to set-up. Get in quick and do it, before anyone has time to wonder what you're doing.

### Informing the Police

It's always worth informing the police if you're planning an action in a public place or a big event involving lots of people. You're not asking permission, it's more out of courtesy, but you will need police cooperation for big events anyway. If you're not breaking the law, there is no reason why you should not exercise your democratic right to protest and the police can be very helpful in directing traffic, or advising on good routes between different places, such as a rail station and rally site, for example. As a general rule, for small events such as placard actions, if you want to inform the police, you should do so one or two days in advance. But if you're planning a big event you will need their cooperation and should contact the police several months in advance.

### Trespass

If your action is on private property, you should try and negotiate to do your action before moving on. If you leave when asked, it is unlikely the police will interfere. Being thrown out of a supermarket, for example, during a peaceful protest, can be very good for the cameras! Don't interfere with customers, don't try and stop them using their local shop or garage, but there is nothing to stop you engaging with them if they're ready to listen. Outside a store is less provocative than inside and it's easier to get a photo and branding.

## Practical tips

### Costumes

If your photo stunt requires costumes or masks try novelty shops and party stores, which are good for politicians' heads, horror masks, animal heads etc. You could also try theatrical costumiers, second hand shops, local rep theatres or make your own.



Figure 2 - Local groups use tiger outfits to demonstrate against Shell



Figure 3 - Exposed Rio Tinto businessmen outside their Annual General Meeting

## Placards

A well made placard, with organisation logo, can communicate very effectively in a picture. Be aware that what you say on your placard may be defamatory - a useful document on defamation, prepared by Friends of the Earth's Legal Unit can be obtained from Friends of the Earth.

Placards should be short and snappy, not wordy or complex. Your message should be understood at a glance. Prepare your placard message and print out on A4. You can then enlarge it to A1 on a copier (using four A3 sheets). These can then be glued to thick card or polyboard. Avoid anything too heavy as you have to be able to hold up the placards in windy conditions

Alternatively, if you have the resources available, you can take your art work to a printers and they will be able to print onto A1.

## Banners

To make your own banner, use cheap flat sheets from your local market and treat them with a mixture of PVA glue (available from art shops) and water to stiffen and protect them. When dry, trace your message onto the sheet and paint in the letters with acrylic paint or kids' paint mixed with PVA. You can either use stencils for the lettering or prepare artwork on a PC, copy that onto a transparency and project it onto the sheet using an OHP. If you want a more permanent banner, use ripstop (kite making material) and emulsion paint. You could also consider applique - tracing letters onto material and then cutting them out and sewing them onto heavy cloth. This is a very time intensive method, but it does have the advantage that you can wash/clean the banner after prolonged outdoor exposure.

### Useful tools to take with you on an action are:

- rope
- string
- staple gun
- gaffer tape, masking tape
- wooden battens or poles for banners
- paint
- sheeting
- hammer/mallet
- stanley knife

See also 'Props on a shoestring' Change Your World pull out March 2000 – available at [http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how\\_tos/cyw\\_21\\_props\\_shoestring.pdf](http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/cyw_21_props_shoestring.pdf)



Figure 4 - Different placard designs used to lobby Parliament over wildlife laws

## Publicity

This is essential for your event to be a success. If you're publicising a meeting, rally, march or whatever, get fliers and posters in as many local outlets as possible - shops, libraries, social and sports clubs, pubs, wine bars, local offices. You could also do leafleting near the site or on the high street. If you can afford it, book an advert in the local paper and try and get publicity about your event in advance. Promote it through all your own and sister organisations' newsletters and literature and try and get a mention on local radio - if there are local celebrities supporting you, use them to publicise your event too.

If you're doing an action, send out an advance notice to both the broadcast and print media, with time, date, place and if necessary, a map, and a 'taster' about the planned action. Always chase up the press release with a phone call. Take along your own photographer and if the local media doesn't cover it, send your own pictures with a press release. You never know - they may have some space to fill!

See 'How to use the media' Change Your World pull out September 2002 – available at [http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how\\_tos/cyw\\_36\\_use\\_the\\_media.pdf](http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/cyw_36_use_the_media.pdf)

## Events logistics

### Mass events

Planning a large external event will involve many of the same steps as planning a small action on the high street. It's worth building the following into your planning checklist:

- booking a venue or choosing a site - site access, permissions (landowner, Council) rights of way
- dress code and whether it's suitable for kids
- distance and what kind of terrain to expect
- signage and route markers
- refreshments and food concessions
- toilets
- transport
- first aid
- liability insurance
- health and safety
- staging and tent/marquee
- info stalls
- PA and A/V systems
- something for people to do - petition signing, postcards etc
- entertainment
- litter pick
- recycling
- stewarding

Friends of the Earth Europe has produced a comprehensive event manual on organising very large events. If you would like a copy, please contact the Events Unit on 020 7490 1555 or email [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk).

## **Health and Safety**

As organiser of an event, you are responsible for keeping everyone involved in your event as safe as possible at all times, including third parties. You must make sure you are aware of your responsibilities under the law (for more information, see <http://www.hse.gov.uk>). The Health and Safety at Work Act covers anybody working with the public, paid or voluntary. Check the area before people arrive for hazards - fire hazards, tripping hazards and make sure pedestrians are kept away from cars. If your event involves lots of people it is probably worth carrying out a risk assessment – this is also a useful document to hand to police and authorities when requesting permissions as it shows you are taking your responsibilities seriously.

## **Risk assessments**

To comply with the Management of Health & Safety (Workplace) Regulations and the Health & Safety at Work Act, the activities associated with any event must be assessed to identify risks to both staff and participants. Hazards and risks which are not eliminated must be controlled, and the control measures (be they physical or procedural) must be communicated to those who will work or otherwise come into contact with the hazards.

Hazard = Something that may cause harm.

Risk = The likelihood that harm will occur and the severity of that harm.

For free leaflets on risk assessments (a guide to requirements and how to carry them out) contact the Health and Safety Executive:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/raindex.htm>

HSE Infoline tel: 08701 545500

## **Stewarding for big events**

If you are organising stewarding teams for your event, it is worth bearing the following in mind:

Stewards' primary role is to manage the participants in the event. As part of their event management responsibilities, stewards should have the ability to inform participants of:

- the route, destination and programme for the event.
- any changes made to the event, route, timings etc

## **Other roles of stewards:**

- help contribute to the atmosphere and people's sense of security at the event
- give out information
- be a conduit for information to - participants, public, organisers, emergency services

- be the eyes and ears of the event
- be reassuring to the public
- mood setting
- represent event organisers
- steering people into the format of the event - marshalling
- act as part of the team
- first aid (if designated)

**What stewards should carry with them:**

- Identification
- Communication - radio/phone
- Personal ID
- Map and programme
- Contacts list
- Water
- Suitable clothing
- Personal needs

## Planning a conference and finding venues

Planning a conference or seminar involves the same sort of basic planning framework of other events. The steps are the same – the five ws – why, who, what, where, when. It's only the time frame and the numbers of people involved that will change.

Define the event objectives and be clear about the goal. Think about:

- timings (is it time critical? Is there an external deadline?)
- venue type/location
- audience/participants
- partners
- key messages
- budget

### **Finding a venue**

Once you have agreed your event's objectives and decided on the style and type of venue you need, your next task will be to find a venue. There are several different places to start looking for a venue depending on what type of venue you need for your event. You could try your local council – they sometimes provide lists of venues in the region. Try places like

village halls, pubs with function rooms or specialised venue providers. For larger events, try clubs, large halls, leisure centres etc. Some websites that may be useful are:

<http://www.bacd.org.uk> – the British Association of Conference Destinations offers a free venue finding service – check online or call Freephone 0500 140 100

<http://www.venuemasters.co.uk> – for academic venues (useful for conferences)

<http://www.the-ultimate.co.uk> – venues for all sorts of things!

<http://www.desouza-associates.com> – venues for seminars, conferences, parties, dinners, all over the UK

### **Criteria to consider when selecting a venue**

1. Location and geographical position
  - public transport links
  - location within town/city (accessibility)
  - surrounding area
2. Venue availability
  - style (to suit target audience) academic institution? purpose built conference centre? hotel?
  - cost
  - availability of break-out rooms, size of main meeting space, number and type of meeting rooms and facilities (OHP, data projector, flip chart, whiteboard), sleeping accommodation, all on one site?
  - catering arrangements: areas for refreshment breaks and networking; dining areas – size - can delegates all eat together? Is it tied catering or independent, or do we have to do it ourselves?
  - secure office
  - registration area
  - flexibility of catering (menus and meal times)
  - crèche / child care
  - communications - phone, fax, photocopy, computers, internet access
  - access to phones for delegates
  - disabled access
  - booking arrangements and contract commitments
  - A/V equipment, PA system, power point access, screens
  - residential: layout - compact site, security, lighting, atmosphere, green space
  - standard bedrooms? en-suite premium?
  - vegetarian/vegan catering
  - social facilities: how many bars? quiet areas? separate party area?
  - licensing - licensing extension?

- ISDN line/access to computers
  - sports and leisure facilities
  - access to shops
  - banking arrangements; newspapers
  - parking
  - NB - Check general attitude, helpfulness and professionalism of venue staff
3. Cost
- Does the venue offer an all inclusive 24 hour delegate rate? Or other type of rate e.g. by room hire etc?
  - Prepare a ballpark budget before final confirmation of booking.

### **Key stages and timelines for planning a conference or seminar**

**Stage 1** : Approximately 8-10 months in advance of big conference, 3-5 months for a seminar or training days

- Set up project group to organise event and identify roles and responsibilities and ways of working; contact details
- Discuss and agree objectives and goals; prepare project specification and budget
- Agree ballpark estimates of time commitment from project team members
- Agree estimated timeline and end point
- Identify allies and satellites to project group (e.g. external experts, advisory groups etc)

### **Stage 2** :

- Work up a detailed timeline showing sequences, timelines and tasks
- Prepare venue checklist i.e. what you want venue to provide
- Research venues; do recces (i.e. visit the site); check availability; get cost estimate; shortlist venue and provisionally book venue.
- Agree date (based on availability of key speakers/external opportunity)
- Prepare draft statement of conference aims
- Prepare draft agenda and identify speakers
- Prepare draft publicity flier/invitation
- Research publicity outlets: via other organisations, allies, deadlines for specialist journals
- Research and prepare database of contacts for chairs, speakers, workshop leaders, participants/delegates
- Agree closing date for bookings

**Stage 3** : Approximately 3-5 months before the event

- Agree structure of event, work out workshop themes/format
- Develop programme agenda
- Approach speakers and workshop leaders
- Finalise publicity flier and send to printer
- Compile delegate mailing list
- Publicise through listings, journals, inserts, advertising, advance notices
- Agree media strategy and talk through with media unit

**Stage 4**

- Confirm venue booking and check cancellation insurance
- Prepare invitation letter/mail shot and booking form and mail to potential delegates
- Prepare brief for speakers and get biography details; check any special requirements (travel, children, diet, disability) and any A/V requirements
- Send confirmation to speakers/workshop leaders with logistics details, maps, agreement on fees (if appropriate) and travel expenses/arrangements
- Explore whether possible to set up media/promotional opportunities with high profile speakers to promote conference in advance
- Identify standby list of speakers/workshop leaders
- Set up registration database for delegate bookings
- Set up payments process
- Set up process for delegate fee discounts if applicable
- Prepare delegate briefing (everything they need to know about programme, venue, travel details, timetable, transport, food, social arrangements)
- Decide on conference / seminar branding (theme/logo)
- Develop any visual materials for displays/visual presentations/delegate pack folder and signage/hall dressing

**Stage 5** : Approximately 1-2 months before event

- Database respondents (contact details, booking info, payment details, workshop choice)
- Send out confirmations and advance info including delegate briefing and maps to confirmed delegates (plus intro to local customs and a guide to local weather conditions!)
- Sort out crèche arrangements
- Finalise catering arrangements
- Sort out trading/merchandise/exhibition/stalls
- Arrange for taping and transcript of conference proceedings if required

- Order photographer
- Chase up delegates/phone round/send out invitation to new mailing lists
- Allocate delegates to workshops, prepare workshop lists and allocate workshops to rooms
- Prepare delegate pack to hand out at Conference (final agenda, delegate list, speaker biography notes, delegate briefing, workshop allocation, room location, venue plan, feedback form)
- Organise party: band, catering, booze, disco etc
- Finalise transport arrangements
- Prepare signage for venue (room locations, workshop lists for room doors, direction arrows, location of main events)
- Prepare organisers task list and rota and confirm attendance helpers (ensure you have enough people to do it all!) - recruit volunteers
- Collate info on venue location (maps and transport info, restaurants etc)

**Stage 6** : Approximately 1 month before event

- Prepare master list of all attendees, when they're arriving, whether they need to be met, transport and accommodation arrangements.
- Send out press release (if appropriate)
- Finalise speaker interviews
- Close bookings and finalise delegate lists
- Prepare badges and registration lists [and personalise delegate packs]
- Confirm numbers to venue for accommodation and catering
- Prepare Conference Schedule for venue (incl. timetable, room allocation, activity, location, special requirements for venue staff, A/V, catering etc)
- Prepare a briefing for helpers - be clear about tasks and who's in charge!
- Prepare feedback form
- Prepare lighting and A/V schedule for venue technician
- Prepare workshop facilitators briefing and list of workshop participants (try to fix briefing session for workshop facilitators before start of conference)
- Prepare notices with relevant timings, room locations etc
- Book mobile phones or shortwave radios (useful for split sites!)
- Sort out payment arrangements for the day (credit card booking, money float)
- Prepare registration desk procedure notes

**Stage 7** : At the event

- Set up conference office, plenary hall and workshop rooms in advance

## How To : Organise Events

- Set up registration desk\* with master lists, badges and delegate packs
- Take duplicates of all lists, signs etc
- Prepare action form for delegate requests/message book/handover slips
- Ensure programme runs to time and that session chairs are briefed on timing
- Run through programme timings with conference venue
- Sort out procedure for handling latecomers after reg. desk closes
- Sort out payment procedure (and reimbursement for travel & others)
- Set up exhibition area with display panels and tables

### **Stage 8 : After the event**

- Transcribe proceedings
- Publicise outcomes
- Tidy up loose ends - chase payments, lost property etc
- Write thank you letters to venue, speakers, helpers etc
- Analyse feedback

### **\* Things needed for registration desk**

- travel info, taxi numbers, local maps, timetables
- opening times for all activities & catering arrangements/location
- workshop lists and locations
- workshop participation lists (if pre-booked)
- site maps
- spare delegate packs
- spare staff packs
- contacts phone numbers
- programmes
- message book/handover slips
- copies of organiser rotas/tasks
- delegate badges and spare badges, spare labels
- flip chart for announcements + message board
- blow-ups of agenda

### **Conference kit:**

Useful kit to take with you if you are organising a conference or seminar includes : paper, staplers, gaffer tape, marker pens, note books, velcro, drawing pins, photocopy paper, A3

paper for signs, blutac, sellotape, ruler, hole punch, pens, pencils, paper clips, headed paper, labels, envelopes, coloured paper, boxes for spares, rubbish sacks, petty cash tin + float, (credit card machine and vouchers), box for feedback forms, calculator

## Ideas and tactics for targeting companies

### **Create your own league tables**

Compare and contrast - produce league tables of company performances (e.g. supermarkets' policies on genetically modified organisms (GMOs)) and give a prize to the winner (best or worst company). You can do this in reality by hijacking an industry event or simply by issuing a press release.

### **Subverting industry PR**

Subvert industry award ceremonies by turning up and presenting an alternative award e.g. giving the Golden Tortoise award to Tesco, the company slowest to react to customer concerns/pressure over GMOs.

Present 'bad business awards' to corporations when they are at conferences - interrupt the proceedings to give the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) a citation and a scroll whilst handing out copies of the citation to other delegates present- and then putting campaign materials in the pigeon holes of CEOs staying at hotels for conferences.

### **Subverting the brand**

Make a campaign prop which subverts the brand/logo and use this to spoil the party at the target company's PR activities e.g. the Shell Demon, an 8 foot high costume, with a snarling head made out of the Shell logo, carrying a staff topped by a smoking planet. This was used when targeting Shell as a climate criminal in the campaign to detach Shell from the Global Climate Coalition.



Figure 5 - The Shell demon

### **Subverting the product**

The launch of Miracle-Gro peat was pre-empted by making up duplicate packaging for a product called 'Miracle-Gone', which explained the impact of industrial scale peat cutting on wildlife and the environment. The product was then launched outside garden centres to coincide with the in-store promotion of the real product.

### **Subverting the sector**

Use a generic prop to draw attention to destructive activities by a particular sector e.g. the giant inflatable chainsaw, which was used against a variety of logging companies/timber importers, and which could be customised to carry different messages.

### **Door-stepping the company**

Demonstrations outside business PR events or other activities, such as Annual General Meetings; involving leafleting shareholders and communicating a clear message through

placards and the theme of the action:

In the example pictured here, campaigners dressed as airline stewards and air hostesses leafleted shareholders outside a British Airways AGM demanding a tax on aviation fuel (shareholders were happy to take leaflets as they assumed our demonstrators were BA staff!)



Figure 6 - Campaigners dressed as airline stewards and air hostesses leafleted shareholders outside the British Airways Annual General Meeting

### Shareholder actions

Buy shares in a company and turn up at the AGM to ask questions and generally make a fuss. The Ilisu Dam campaign turned up with hundreds of Kurdish people, whose communities were affected by the proposed Dam outside the Balfour Beatty AGMs, and they played music and demonstrated outside the AGM, whilst other campaigners went inside to ask questions of the Board.



Figure 7 - Protestors line up outside an Annual General Meeting and spell out a message with t-shirts

### Debates

Invite company representatives to sit on panels at public meetings on a contentious issue and leave it to the public/participants to give the company a hard time!

## Useful resources

Friends of the Earth briefings – including “How to fake it as a photographer” and “Props on a shoestring” – are available online at [http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how\\_tos/](http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/)

Organising Local Events – Sarah Passingham – Directory of Social Change. Dec 1995 ISBN: 1873860889

Organising Special Events – Stephen Elsdon – Directory of Social Change / Charities Aid Foundation. 1 March, 2000 ISBN: 190036056X

The Event Safety Guide – a guide to health, safety and welfare at music and similar events. HSE Books HSG195 1999 ISBN: 0 7176 2453 6

Corporate Event Services – reference source for all business events – includes venues, production companies, catering, equipment hire etc. Published annually in July. ISBN: 0 9537966 2 0. See [www.eventsonline.co.uk](http://www.eventsonline.co.uk)

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