

FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

PUBLICITY POLICY

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FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

PUBLICITY POLICY

1. Introduction






1.1 The Association recognises that the dissemination of accurate information can play an important part in informing tenants, members and the wider public about the organisation and its activities. The Association acknowledges that as a Scottish public authority for the purposes of access to information legislation, the Association is accountable to the public and the public have a right to know about the Association and its work. This can be facilitated through appropriate engagement with the media. This policy statement outlines the basic principles to be adopted when undertaking publicity activities.

2. Media contact

2.1 Media contact may involve planned press releases, unsolicited approaches from the media for information or comment or requests received from the media under access to information legislation.

2.2 Planned media releases

2.2.1 Media releases can be used for a variety of occasions such as:

-  Site starts
-  Development completions
-  Official openings
-  Milestone achievements
-  New activities/initiatives

The planning and distribution of such releases will be co-ordinated by the Projects and Communications Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Director.

2.2.2 Media releases will seek to present a positive image of the activity being presented and will aim to be concise, avoid jargon and adopt plain English. They will seek to include appropriate quotes from named individuals and will be tailored to the expected audience/readership eg local community, trade specialists etc.

2.2.3 Media releases will provide a contact point for further detail and comment. This will normally be the Projects and Communications Co-ordinator.

2.2.4 Where a media release involves publicity and/or information on joint initiatives with other agencies (such as the Local Authority, Scottish Government, other Housing Associations etc) the Association will liaise with their designated media contacts as appropriate before any media release is issued.

2.2.5 In all cases the inclusion of quotes from third parties will be cleared with the individuals concerned, or their representatives, prior to their release to the media.

2.3 Unsolicited media contact

2.3.1 Anyone approached to make a media comment, or provide information to the media, on behalf of the Association should seek authorisation from the Director or Chairperson prior to issuing any information.

2.3.2 It should be remembered that information when reported out of context can be misinterpreted or deliberately misconstrued. Consideration should therefore be given to providing media information in writing rather than verbally. In addition individuals should refrain from providing “personal opinion” or information of a sensationalist nature.

2.3.3 When responding to unsolicited media contact care should be taken to ensure that the person making contact is who they claim to be. This can be done by returning phone calls and/or confirming their authenticity via their employer.

2.3.4 Care should be taken to ensure that any information provided is in line with data protection legislation and does not directly or indirectly relate to specific identifiable individuals without their consent being given .

2.4 Requests received under access to information legislation

2.4.1 The Association is designated as a Scottish public authority for the purposes of access to information legislation and must therefore respond to access to information requests received about the Association and its work.

2.4.2 If staff receive an access to information request, they must forward the request to the Data Protection Officer and the Director as soon as possible. Staff must not attempt to respond to the request themselves.


2.4.3 Information will be disclosed to the media in response to requests received, unless the information is exempt from disclosure.

2.4.4 Requests received under access to information legislation will be handled and responded to by the Association in accordance with the Association’s Access to Information Policy and Access to Information Procedure.

2.5 Damage limitation

2.5.1 In certain circumstances it may become apparent that the Association may face potentially damaging and negative media coverage. In order to manage this situation, the Director will consider a strategy to manage this situation, usually in conjunction with the Chairperson and Office Bearers.

2.5.2 Such a strategy may include the following:

-  Briefing for staff and/or committee members regarding the situation.

- A proactive media release to outline the Association's position/ interpretation.
- A prepared set of information and details which the Association is prepared to release.
- Liaison with the Association's solicitors and/or other specialist advisors as appropriate.

3. Event Management

- 3.1 Events, such as Annual General Meetings, scheme openings etc, will give an opportunity for people to obtain a perception of the Association. Prior to organising any event consideration will be given to why the event is being organised and what the Association hopes to achieve as a result of it.
- 3.2 Events will normally be co-ordinated by the Director, in conjunction with the Projects and Communications Co-ordinator. It may be appropriate to establish an ad hoc project group to assist with the planning/running of such an event. For large and/or complex events it may be appropriate to engage external assistance to plan and/or deliver activities.

4 Publications

- 4.1 The Association produces a range of publications and documents for distribution to tenants, members and the wider community. Examples include:
- Annual Reports.
 - Quarterly newsletters.
 - Event invitations and flyers.
 - Information leaflets.
 - Standard forms.
 - Questionnaires and surveys etc.
- 4.2 The production of these documents will be co-ordinated by the Projects and Communications Co-ordinator who will liaise with other staff as necessary.
- 4.3 All publications produced by the Association will seek to adopt the following standards:
- Use Arial font 12, or larger, for all main text.
 - Adopt plain English and avoid unnecessary jargon.
 - Include the Association's logo and normally the office address and phone number.
 - Include Happy to Translate logo, Scottish national Standards logo and Positive about Disabled People logo, as appropriate.
 - Include a standard statement about the Association's charitable status.
- 4.4 When using the services of external designers and/or printers care will be taken to ensure that clear instructions are provided regarding the Association's requirements and a final proof must be signed off by the Projects and

Communications Co-ordinator, or other designated staff member, prior to printing taking place.

- 4.5 The commissioning of design and print services will be in line with the Procurement Policy and Financial Regulations.

5. Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years by the Management Committee and staff are responsible for ensuring that it meets legal and good practice requirements.