

5. PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

Event organisers are often concerned that they won't get many visitors. In previous years, around 32% of organisers say that this is a worry and 15% report that they had fewer than expected visitors.

There are several things you can do to give your building or event the best chance at attracting visitors.

5.1. Organise an event

There is a clear link between organisers who plan events at their building and good visitor figures. Rather than simply having stewards, why not have them lead tours or organise a quiz? Could you link up with another local heritage, arts or voluntary group to put on activities or have an exhibition? Would a local school like to contribute in some way?

5.2. Do something different

If you have opened your doors for several years or run the same event, chances are visitor numbers will dwindle. This is because local people will have visited before and are looking for something new to go to. Think about what you could do differently and make sure your area coordinator knows so the new event is listed in publicity material.

5.3. If you don't ask, you don't get

You might think that to organise a special event, you need lots of cash. In fact, sometimes just asking is all you need. For example, is there a local artist or architect who you could approach to give a talk? Would a craftsperson be willing to come along and show their work? Perhaps in exchange for the chance to sell their products? If you need a bit of cash to make an event happen, would a local business sponsor you? What could you offer them in return?

5.4. Cooperate and coordinate

Find out where else is opening in your area and cooperate with them. Make sure visitors to your building know about the others in the area and likewise, ask nearby venue to tell their visitors about you. Are there leaflets you can distribute to encourage visitors to come along? Could stewards from one of the other venues give you hand if you're overwhelmed by visitors?

5.5. Timing is everything

If you are offering tours, make sure you know how long it will take to complete a 'circuit'. Have a trial run and factor in time to answer questions. If you say your walk or tour takes 30 minutes, make sure it really does so that visitors can plan their day and aren't trying to break away from the group early.

5.6. Sell your site

Make sure that the information you pass on to your area coordinator actually reflects what is happening on the day. A dry, technical description of a building is not likely to attract many visitors. Think about highlighting some interesting details about the building or area and talk about the great activities taking place. Don't give visitors unrealistic expectations though!

5.7. Generate your own publicity

Think about doing your own publicity. Don't just rely on the local leaflet or the efforts of your area coordinator. Does your group or organisation have a newsletter or an email list? Are there other organisations that could help spread the word? Would local shops or attractions put up a poster for you? What about contacting local radio or newspapers? If you decide you want to do some publicity, *make sure you let your area coordinator know.*

5.8. Writing a news release

5.8.1. Top Tips for writing a successful news release

- Make sure your news release is interesting and **newsworthy**
- Make sure the first 10 words of your press release are effective. If not the journalist may not read beyond them!
- Stick to the facts
- Avoid flowery language and excessive use of adjectives such as 'wonderful', 'fantastic' etc.
- Think about your audience. If your news release is for a local paper then make it local, e.g. mention the name of the town or area in the title of the release.
- Try to get a contact name in the paper or media outlet for you to send your release to direct.

- Call first before sending release. Get a name, email address or fax number and then send release, ideally with an image or two.
- There is no need to spend hours thinking about a great title for your release – it is unlikely to be used as the editor or sub-editor will come up with their own.
- Don't be put off by journalists appearing gruff or uninterested on the phone. They rely on people like you giving them good stories to make good copy.
- Don't forget to add your contact details.
- Remember to get permission if you are sending a news release about.
- Remember the five golden rules: Who, What, Why, Where and When.

5.8.2. Suggested news release structure

Title of release

It should be short and attention grabbing. Remember you are writing for a journalist who is likely to have hundreds of press releases pass his/her desk every week

- i. The first paragraph should open with an interesting newsworthy sentence. The first paragraph should summarise all the information you are communicating. Remember the golden rules - Who, What, Why, Where and When.
- ii. The second paragraph should contain more details and specific information. Journalist like facts and statistics so try to add interesting and eye-catching facts and figures if you can.
- iii. The third paragraph is often a quote to support the news. Quotes from politicians, particularly MSPs, Cabinet Ministers and local councillors are a good way to guarantee publication. If sending to a local paper try to make sure you get a good quote from a local politician or member of the business community. A celebrity, if you can find one, will always appeal to a news journalist.
- iv. If you are promoting a sponsored event a quote from the sponsor can also be added, although it is less likely to be used by the press.
- v. The final paragraph is often used to provide contact details, reminder of times, dates etc or sponsors details.

5.8.3. Photography

A good photograph will always help get your news release noticed. If relevant always try to make sure you include people in your photograph. Try to avoid the typical 'handshake', 'presentation', 'standing outside or beside something' photograph. Quirky, humorous photographs are more likely to be noticed as are photographs with children. N.B. If you are submitting photographs with children in them make sure you have permission from the parent or guardian. A Photographic Release form can be found in the Surveys and Forms section of the national website.

Direct link: <http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/opendays/resources.aspx?category=17>

If you cannot afford to use a professional photographer then ask around to see who is interested in photography. Try to make sure your photographs are as good as possible. Of course, in many cases the newspaper will send its own photographer out.

Most images are now digital. When sending your image to the press be careful of the size. It is a good idea to send low-resolution images first of all (72 dpi, under 100kb) but make it clear that high-resolution versions are available. Print media normally requires 300 dpi images high-resolution. Another good reason to find someone in your organisation who is interested in photography is that they will understand digital image sizes and formats.

Images for the web-based news sites do not need to be as high-resolution as those for print media but it is always worth finding out if there are specific size requirements before sending.

5.9. Word of mouth

Word of mouth is an incredibly powerful publicity tool and many DOD visitors hear about events through friends and relatives. So make sure you're telling your friends and relatives about the event you're organising and ask them to spread the word too.

5.10. Banners and balloons

On the day of your event, make sure it is clear where your building or event start point is. You have a banner and a pack of balloons to help you. These make visitors feel welcome

and can attract visitors who were passing by the building and perhaps had never heard of DOD.

Banners

You will be issued with one banner, measuring 3.5m x0.5m, made from tough blue PVC with white writing on. It can be hung horizontally or vertically and has a series of metal eyelets to help you secure it. Banners cost around £40 each so it is very important that you keep a track of where the banner is in the lead up to your event and afterwards so you can either hand it back to your area coordinator or store it until next year.

Banners need to be securely fastened to your building with string. Do not use glue, nails or anything that could damage your building. If the day is going to be windy, make sure the banner will not flap or billow out.

If you would like to place a banner near or on a public road (eg on railings beside a junction) you must discuss this with your area coordinator. Because this is an issue of public safety, departments within the local council may need to be consulted.

Balloons

You will be given 20 blue balloons with Doors Open Days written on them. They are biodegradable and should be cut down and disposed of after the event. They can be used to line the way to a hidden entrance or used to mark the point along a tour. You may need to provide string to attach the balloons.

If you have too many balloons, why not given them out to families to take away?

5.11. Location, location, location

Sites that are especially vulnerable to poor visitor numbers are those that are on their own in a remote or rural location. You will need to work especially hard to promote your event and make sure that visitors see it as worth their while making an effort to visit you.

5.12. Social networking

DOD now uses social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) to enhance its online presence. Online social networks allow people who share interests, activities and ideas to stay in touch, pass on news and share information. We know that many people hear about Doors Open Days by 'word-of-mouth', from friends, relatives, neighbours and work colleagues – social networking is the 21st century version of this.

The particular benefits of social networking include:

- Developing online communities, linking ‘building baggers’, casual visitors and those with a general interest in Scotland’s heritage and architecture, along with event organisers, building owners and media, marketing, heritage and tourism professionals.
- Creating a dialogue between these groups. This two-way communication is especially useful for creating a sense of ownership amongst DOD’s online community, and also for getting direct feedback from visitors.
- Using a mixture of stories, quizzes, polls, discussions and features, with strong interactive elements where possible.
- Linking to podcasts, film footage and photographs to supplement existing event listings, generating additional interest and inspiring visitors.
- Enabling programme details to be drip-fed as they are released to SCT, providing instant news items and points of discussion and visitor feedback.
- Alerting users to last-minute changes.

From an area coordinator’s point of view, social networking can respond to local, specific marketing needs. For example, this could include publicising a late addition to a programme, encouraging attendance at a booking event if figures are low, highlighting a wider marketing campaign, or making appeals on behalf of event organisers.

Facebook

You can find our page on Facebook by searching for ‘Doors Open Days’ at www.facebook.com. We use this site to give updates on upcoming events, post photos, and to instigate discussions. To become one of our fans, click the ‘Like’ button at the top of our Facebook page. If there’s any information you’d like us to post on the page, just get in touch!

Twitter

You can find us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/doorsopendays>. We use Twitter a little more often than Facebook: to point to interesting online articles, create dialogue with other individuals and organisations, give up-to-date information regarding events, and to build up a ‘buzz’ surrounding DOD in the weeks leading up to the event.

5.13. Spread the word!

You may want to consider putting Facebook and Twitter buttons on your websites, in your newsletters, or in your embedded email signatures, in order to strengthen the sites’ online presence, allowing easy access to the sites.

If you decide to set up a Facebook or Twitter account for your own area, please remember to link your site to ours by adding us as a 'friend' or 'follower' so that the network between us remains strong.