

How to Guide:

PUBLICITY



Already around two million visitors know the way to our churches, even though Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) does not have a large marketing budget. We know that once people visit, the overall impression is positive, thanks to the care you show for the churches.

What can we do to help more people find our churches?

Website

One of the main things to get right is to have the opening times and days displayed accurately on CCT's website (and other places where the church is mentioned). If there are changes to the opening times, please let your CCT contact know as soon as possible, and how long these changes will be in place.

The church website page is a good opportunity to give people reasons to visit. What are the main points of interest?

Poster

In recent years, CCT has moved away from having too much printed materials in churches, in favour of digital media, but a poster on the notice board outside the church with a good photo and an interesting fact, could entice people to come inside. This could easily be updated and changed with the seasons. CCT templates are available for all to use, please ask your CCT contact for the materials.

Making posters

The test for A4 posters is to put them at the other side of the room and see if you can tell what the event is, where, what date and time it is and what phone number to call.

High contrast lettering is the most eye-catching and easy to read. Make sure that any photos are high quality and line drawings, using thicker than normal lines, are better. Background patterns or watermarks can destroy the clarity and are best avoided.

For roadside or hoarding posters, the same applies but you must be able to read these from at least 25 metres – so test it and see.

QR codes

Quick Response codes, or QR codes, are a type of barcode used on printed materials, which allows users to scan with their phone's camera, and link to a website. This saves having to type in a long web address. QR codes can be generated to link to specific webpages and you can generate them, for free, online or you can also ask your CCT contact to help create one.

Social media

Social media still offers a cost-effective way to engage (online) visitors. The best posts have a compelling photo and not too much text. You can use the same material for X, Facebook and Instagram, but be aware that the different platforms have different ways of working.

To get more people aware of your social media, be responsive to posts in the area where there is a connection. And there is a skill to using hashtags to link to wider interest groups. We will create a social media training video to talk you through a few tips.

Social media also helps share word of mouth. If your visitors are engaged enough to take a picture and share that with their contacts, that could lead to more visitors. What could you highlight that might help focus their attention?

Signage

An A-board that you are able to put outside when the church is open offers the chance to highlight opening hours, events, and points of interest. Be aware that the railings around the churchyard are not always CCT owned, and check any ideas with your CCT contact, who can advise whether there are any restrictions with regard to conservation or ownership before you put anything semi-permanent up. If there is a town map or plan, is the church mentioned on it? If there is a big local event happening, can the church join in?

Press and the media

Local newspapers, magazines and radio are mostly interested in new stories, events or something different or unusual. But perhaps you can think about a story that will engage. Are you looking for people whose ancestors were working or worshipping at the church? In cleaning, did you discover a hitherto overlooked detail in the church pews? It stands a higher chance of being picked up if you write it up into a press release, and your CCT contact can advise you on how to best do this.

Writing for the media

The media are looking for stories with local interest, topical, a bit quirky, and involving real people they can interview. For a newspaper article or a press release the test is to stand back and think "If I were not involved in this event, what would cause me to read an article, do I read all of an article, and do I remember the first sentence or the bit in the middle?"

All articles should contain the 'what, why, when, how, where, and who.'

The title to the article should be no more than three words.

The opening sentence should make the reader want to read on. All the key data of what it is, where it is, date and time, and how to contact for further information should be in the first paragraph.

The next paragraphs should go into further detail but in such a way that sentences could be cut out by the editor if he or she is short of space.

Towards the end include information on the church, who is running the event and details about CCT. That means that if they are short of stories they have more text that they can include.

Mention people using first name and surname and preferably those who live in the area covered by the newspaper.

As a general rule the article or press release should be no more than one sheet of A4.

Journalists are facing the same cost cutting pressures as everyone else so they welcome well written articles received electronically so that they can just edit rather than having to start from scratch.

Always try to send one photograph, again electronically.

A candid camera shot is ideal, but make sure you have permission of the people in the photograph.