

Communicating in a high profile industry The political and media challenge

John Slaughter

A question

- Why does the media focus sometimes feel like old-style music hall?

Because you never quite know where the next rotten tomato is coming from

A parallel

- Have you stopped beating your wife?
- When are you going to stop building rubbish?

Media Interest

- Some inherent hostility (reflects political attitudes)
- Some objective analysis
- Some informative
- We aim to neutralise hostility and make industry's case

Scale of questions enormous

- From Government leaks to leaky shower trays
- From eco towns to en suite bathrooms
- From state of the market to communal markets

Round the clock

- Media demands can be:
 - 24/7
 - Instant
 - Misinformed
 - Triggered by others
 - Follow the politics of the day

Floods of floods

- Why is new development being built on flood plains?



Strategies

- Being reasonable to soften the story
- Simple key message – and repeat
- Build up relationships with journalists
- Don't play tricks

Politics – or 50 ways of saying “No”

- There are 50 ways of saying “No”

And the first of these is ... “ye-ees!”

The Great Supply Chain

- We have come a long way
- No-one suggests there isn't a supply problem
- But those opposed to development have regrouped

The new resistance

- Current ways of saying “no” may include:
 - Eco-standards
 - Environmental impact
 - Design
 - Affordable housing demands
 - Garden-grabbing concerns
 - Empty homes
 - Flood risk
 - Biodiversity/ habitat

Or any combination

The national political divide

- Can be pictured as top-down v. bottom-up
- Government has supported higher delivery:
 - Via RSSs
 - PPS3
 - Housing and Planning Delivery Grant
- Opposition parties criticise as “centralising”
- Propose localism

HBF's view

- Neither top-down nor bottom-up an answer on its own
- Local partnership and engagement
- Represent the positives and the needs

Getting the message across

- Good news can be a story:
 - Timing
 - Packaging
 - Research/ evidence
 - Target right audience

Understanding the industry

- A constant issue is:
 - Understanding the business context
 - Place in the wider property market
 - Land values
 - How policy considerations impact
 - Risk and uncertainty issues
 - Why it often is not the developer's fault

Sometimes things turn out alright

- “Savage” of the HBF
- Simon Jenkins – HBF is CLG’s favourite lobbying organisation