Working with the Press and Media

This guide provides you with guidance and tips for working with press and media to promote your Being Human Festival event. One of the goals of the festival is to secure media coverage across the UK to elevate Being Human Festival’s message and engage the public in humanities research more broadly. While the central team will focus on getting coverage in national outlets, you can help by engaging with your local media.

The Being Human team will issue various press releases about the festival as a whole, in the months leading up to the festival. In the past we have also issued releases according to theme, event type and event location. We may feature individual events within these releases. You’ll be able to find any releases we issue on our website.

About the festival

Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, with generous support from Research England, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human Festival is the UK’s national festival of the humanities. Founded in 2014, the festival’s mission is to bring the latest research in history, literature, philosophy, art, politics, classics, languages, law and other humanities subjects to local communities around the UK. It exists to demonstrate why humanities research is vital to society and directly relevant to the lives and interests of people across the country. The festival incentivises creative and informal events, with the majority of events taking place off-campus, within local communities. Events include everything from talks and tours to comedy nights, museum lates, performances and more. Being Human Festival 2023 will take place **9–18 November**.

Being Human Festival is about…

- Democratising access to knowledge
- Empowering local communities through humanities research
- Strengthening local identities through new understandings of local history, culture and heritage
- Creating dialogues between academia and local communities
- Connecting communities to cutting-edge humanities research

Our ask to you

We are asking for your help in engaging with local and regional media outlets to raise awareness of your event, the Being Human Festival and the importance of the humanities to our everyday lives. **We strongly encourage you to work closely with your institution’s press and media team to pitch pieces and to secure press and media coverage.**
We have included some key messages from the festival that we would really like you to help us share, along with top tips for working with the media. You will also find an example press release, a template media invite and Q&A for spokespeople with further details on the festival below.

Please be sure to send any press and media coverage you receive to beinghuman@sas.ac.uk so we can highlight it on social media and ensure it is included in our records. Take a look at some of the previous media coverage of the festival on our website.

**Lessons from previous festivals**

Based on our experience, we know that the press is most interested in activities that:

- Reveal new research
- Present humanities topics in innovative or surprising ways
- Connect to broader themes and the current news agenda
- Highlight surprising local stories

We have also found that many researchers participating in the festival have had a lot of success being featured on local radio.

**Key messages**

- **Being Human** is the UK’s national festival of the humanities
- The festival encourages, supports and creates opportunities for researchers to engage with local communities to show that:
  - The humanities are vibrant, interdisciplinary, accessible and relevant to all
  - The humanities inspire and enrich our everyday lives
  - The humanities can help us to understand ourselves, our relationships with others and the challenges we face in a changing world

**Connecting research and expertise to the news**

Here are some elements that factor into newsworthiness:

- **Timeliness and novelty** – is it new or current?
- **Significance and impact** – how many people does it affect?
- **Proximity** – is it nearby, or local?
- **Prominence** – is there anyone prominent or well-known involved? Is it about a well-known place or local topic?
- **Human interest** – will it appeal to our emotions? Is it particularly humorous, or sad? Does it speak to a shared human experience?
- **Surprise quality** – is there something fun, unexpected or surprising about it?

**The Press Release**

The main aim of a news release is to provide a journalist with a complete news story that they can simply copy from your email and publish. The following structure should help you to craft a release that lets a journalist do just that…

**Title:** Summarise your activity in one attention grabbing line. Make sure this resonates with the target audience – why is this interesting to them?
First paragraph: The 5 W’s - expand on your title, using a concise summary of who, what, why, where and when. Don’t forget to mention Being Human Festival here!

Second paragraph: Expand on why the event or activity is relevant – what’s different about it? How does it connect to your local area? Is it something new or surprising? Does it cover a topic that affects a lot of people?

Third paragraph: Quote the key person in your story (probably yourself!) giving their opinion on why the event or activity is of interest to a wider audience. This is also a great time to link back to some of the festival’s key messages and to help us reiterate the value of humanities research to society.

Fourth paragraph: Add in some details on Being Human Festival. Some suggested text is:

Being Human Festival is the UK’s national festival of the humanities and returns for 2023 with the theme of ‘Rhyme or Reason’ from 9-18 November. Through a 10-day programme of big ideas, big debates and engaging activities for all ages, the festival showcases how the humanities help us understand ourselves, our relationships with others and the challenges we face in a changing world. [NAME OF YOUR EVENT OR ACTIVITY] was selected to be part of the festival by organisers, the School of Advanced Study, University of London, and festival partners the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the British Academy (BA).

In 2022 Being Human Festival encompassed a programme of 285 in-person and online events and activities in 48 towns and cities across the UK, reaching an estimated audience of over 25,000.

Fifth paragraph: Signpost to contact details, dates and times of the activity/event, location, more information etc.

Notes to editors: this section follows the news release and allows you to provide more background on your event/activity, links to photos or video, and details of your organisation. Please make sure you include the boiler plates for Being Human, the School of Advanced Study, AHRC and the British Academy. These can be found in the mock release below.

Top tips

A few general things to remember when contacting a journalist...

- Email is the best approach – add your news headline/story idea to the subject line
- Include your press release/story overview in the email itself, not as an attachment
- If you have them, include some eye-catching (and accurate!) facts, figures or statistics to the release
- Avoid jargon and any vocabulary that would not be understood by the public. Academics often write for specialists, but remember you are speaking to generalists – think about the big picture.
Where to send it

Your institutional press team should be able to advise you on recommended local outlets. Here are a few ideas about platforms you could approach. Do some research and ensure you are familiar with the tone, style, work and audience of each platform.

- Special interest/subject publications
- Regional newspapers (print and online)
- National newspapers (print and online)
- Local radio
- National radio
- BBC local news online
- Local television
- Podcasts relevant to the subject matter
- Local bloggers or “influencers”
- Special interest/subject blogs
- Online publications including The Conversation (check if your institution is a partner or funder)
- Regional online publications and websites, including Tourist Board websites (e.g., Time Out, Visit Manchester, The Londonist etc.)

These free online directories can be a helpful place to start your search:

- Media.info: https://media.info/search
- News Media Association directory: http://www.localmediauk.org

Lead times

- Monthly publications: three to six months
- Weekly newspapers: four to six weeks, (including features)
- Regional TV news: three to four weeks
- Daily newspapers: one to three days for news, two to three weeks for features
- Local radio: one to two weeks
- Blogs: two to three weeks

Example Press Release

This is based on a release from the University of Nottingham for Being Human Festival 2022. The release was picked up by several outlets including the BBC and Nottinghamshire Live.

News release
[INSERT DATE RELEASE IS BEING SENT OUT]

Rarely seen Nottingham caves to be unveiled as part of the Being Human Festival

Members of the public will have a rare opportunity to delve into the mesmerising underworld of Nottingham’s city caves as part of the Being Human Festival, the UK’s national festival of the humanities. From 10 to 13 November, visitors can explore the captivating heritage of the hidden caverns nestled beneath the city’s busy streets through a series of guided tours and talks run by the University of Nottingham.
Organised by Dr John Smith, Lecturer in Humanities from the University of Nottingham, the series will explore the historical significance of the hundreds of man-made caves that sit under the city and the fascinating stories they reveal about life in Nottingham throughout the decades. It will also include a rare tour of the cave system at Wollaton Hall, shedding light on how these remarkable underground structures were created and the various purposes they have served throughout history.

Dr John Smith said: “Nottingham’s caves are a unique part of the city’s heritage – no other British city has this underground world beneath its streets and buildings. They reveal so many stories attached to key moments in the city’s history. We’re very proud to be taking part in the Being Human Festival and to share our research on the caves with our local communities and celebrate our city and its heritage.”

Being Human Festival is the UK’s national festival of the humanities and returns for 2023 with the theme of ‘Rhyme or Reason’ from 9-18 November. Through a 10-day programme of big ideas, big debates and engaging activities for all ages, the festival showcases how the humanities help us understand ourselves, our relationships with others and the challenges we face in a changing world. The Nottingham City caves tour was selected to be part of the festival by organisers, the School of Advanced Study, University of London, and festival partners the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the British Academy (BA).

In 2022 Being Human Festival encompassed a programme of 285 in-person and online events and activities in 48 towns and cities across the UK, reaching an estimated audience of over 25,000.

Tickets for the cave tours and talks are free but visitors are required to book in advance. The festival’s full program of events can be found on the Being Human website.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. For all enquiries, please contact: [Insert details of appropriate person at your institution here]

2. Being Human Festival: 9–18 November 2023
   Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, with generous support from Research England, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human is a national celebration of humanities research. The festival highlights the ways in which the humanities can inspire and enrich our everyday lives. For more information, please visit www.beinghumanfestival.org or follow the festival on social media at @BeingHumanFest.

3. [Insert your institution boiler plate information]

4. The School of Advanced Study (SAS), University of London, is the UK’s national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities. SAS, its member institutes and specialist centres offer unparalleled resources, facilities, and academic opportunities across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. In an average year SAS welcomes 100 visiting scholars, holds 1,600 events highlighting the latest research in the humanities, receives 109 million online visits to its research resources and platforms, and hosts over 75,000 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads Being Human, the UK’s national festival of the humanities with almost 300 events in 48
towns and cities across the UK. Find out more at [www.sas.ac.uk](http://www.sas.ac.uk) or follow SAS on Twitter at @SASNews.

5. The [Arts and Humanities Research Council](https://www.arcresearch.org) is part of UK Research and Innovation. We’re the UK’s largest funder of arts and humanities research and training, investing over £100 million every year. We fund independent researchers in a wide range of subjects, including history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and many more. The research we fund provides social and cultural benefits that contribute to the economic success of the UK, as well as to the culture and welfare of societies around the world. Find out more about us at ahrc.ukri.org, or on Twitter at @ahrcpress.

6. The [British Academy](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk) is the UK’s national academy for the humanities and social sciences. We mobilise these disciplines to understand the world and shape a brighter future. We invest in researchers and projects across the UK and overseas, engage the public with fresh thinking and debates, and bring together scholars, government, business and civil society to influence policy for the benefit of everyone. [www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk)@BritishAcademy. For further information please contact Joe Christmas at the British Academy Press Office on j.christmas@thebritishacademy.ac.uk or +44 (0)20 7969 5248.

**Template pitch email**

Subject: [Insert headline]

Dear [insert name – it is important to personalise emails when working with press],

I thought you might be interested in a forthcoming event taking place at [venue name]. The event will feature [insert any prominent speaker, performer, artist names with a brief explanation of their credentials] and will focus on [insert a short, snappy description of the key theme of the event].

The event was selected to be part of Being Human, the UK’s national festival of the humanities.

More details are below. You are warmly invited to attend [be sure to mention if there will be a reception].

Please let me know if you have any questions or would be interested in speaking with some of the researchers involved.

[Insert event details here].

**Checklist**

Have you…

- Spoken with your institution’s press and communications’ team and colleagues
- Shared your event and participation in the festival across your organisation’s platforms (website, mailing list(s), social media, noticeboards etc.)
- Added the event to local press listings
- Written and distributed a press release
☐ Sent personalised pitch emails to relevant journalists, editors and producers (including local radio)
☐ Sent personalised invites to press to attend the event
☐ Considered having one of your spokespeople write a piece about the event for submission to local media outlets
☐ Considered advertising your event in local press or other outlets
☐ Considered approaching relevant podcast hosts or producers

Q&A for spokespeople

Below is a list of questions that journalists may ask you. We have provided answers to them here so that you can prepare yourself or your spokespeople for interviews. As such, these are intended for internal use only and should not be publicly posted or distributed.

1. **What is Being Human?**
   Being Human is the UK’s national festival dedicated to demonstrating the breadth, diversity and vitality of the humanities. Members of the public from across the country can attend hundreds of free events sharing the new and exciting thinking in the humanities. This year, the festival promises 10 days of big ideas, big debates and engaging activities for all, themed around ‘Rhyme or Reason’.

   Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London (SAS), with generous support from Research England, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the British Academy (BA), the festival will be held for 10 days from 9-18 November with activities held in towns and cities across the UK. For the 2023 festival, most events and activities will take place in person, with some also taking place online.

   At its heart, the festival is all about making research in the humanities – from art history to philosophy, history to classics, and literature to languages – accessible and fun for as many people as possible.

2. **Why is the festival being held this year?**
   Being Human is the UK’s only national festival dedicated to demonstrating the breadth, diversity and vitality of the humanities. The festival showcases the research taking place in universities and other research organisations and opens it up for all to enjoy. The festival is an annual fixture and is growing in ambition every year. In 2022 Being Human encompassed a programme of 285 free events and activities in 48 towns and cities across the UK, reaching an estimated audience of over 25,000.

3. **What is the partnership between SAS, AHRC and BA?**
   The School of Advanced Study, Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy are three of the main national bodies dedicated to the promotion of research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. All three organisations, in different ways, are publicly funded to support, promote and facilitate research in the humanities, so it is a natural partnership.

4. **Will the festival cost the taxpayer any money?**
   The three main organising institutes (SAS, AHRC, BA) are publicly funded, so the taxpayer has paid for the festival through this funding. The festival itself focuses on demonstrating the value of funding research in the humanities and enabling the wider public to get something back from that research. It also enables researchers to connect with the public, giving them opportunities for dialogue about their subject. For more information on how SAS, AHRC and BA are funded, please visit their websites.
5. Why do the humanities deserve our attention?

The humanities form an essential cornerstone of human knowledge, culture and understanding. They have been studied and celebrated for thousands of years and form the basis of our understanding of ourselves and our relation to the world and each other. They provide tools for communication and debate, means through which to articulate and interrogate complex ideas, and ways of understanding our past and anticipating our futures. We need the humanities now more than ever to help us address these issues and provide the means to question, interpret and explain the human condition.