

Introduction

The National Grid Company plc (NGC) owns and operates the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales.

Three years after privatisation, NGC research showed that the rural community had little knowledge of its operation. At this time, NGC wanted to construct new lines to connect gas-fired power stations to the grid; deal with demands for an increase in wayleave (an agreement between a landowner and a service provider in which the landowner permits the passage of pipes and cables through their land) and compensation payments; and establish a new Energis fibre-optic communications work.

Objective

- Demonstrate to rural communities and landowners the value, expertise and commitment of NGC
- Forge better relationships with landowners
- And then inform landowners about key developments in the new Energis project.

Strategy

A co-ordinated programme of national and regional media activity was developed. The campaign focused on subjects and issues of topical interest to the farming and rural communities. Suitable feature and news release material was identified and targeted at appropriate media. Considerable focus was placed on the achievements of NGC's six environmental education centres; these successes were communicated to the

'countryside interest' sections and environmental press to reach identified target stakeholders. In addition, media visits were arranged to environmental centres and other NGC facilities of interest.

A children's environmental competition was devised and ran in conjunction with 13 key regional newspapers. Donations, linked to the number of entries, were made to local wildlife trusts and prizes of education trips were awarded to winning schools.

Results

Extensive coverage was achieved in the media for developments such as Energis. The majority of landowners affected by the project subsequently signed wayleave agreements.

Sustained coverage for the work of NGC's environmental education centres was achieved in the regional press.

Over 10,000 entries for the children's environmental competition were received via National Grid's exhibition stands at regional shows.

