



Launching your Appeal

Before embarking on a public launch, your church should have agreed the aims and objectives of the project. You'll have discussed the shape of the project several times by this stage and should hopefully have reached a point where reservations and disagreements have been resolved and the PCC can present a united front behind the appeal.

You should also have an approved business plan, budget timetable, and a publicity plan. The Committee structures to manage the project will be established, with Committee Chair, members and clear terms of reference.

Don't underestimate the value of individual donations. Churches are unique in being open to every person in your community so you have a large 'audience' and as your project should be to benefit the community, they should be an interested audience. Whether one-off or regular giving, large or small amounts, individual donations can really add up and provide a bedrock of support. Don't forget Gift Aid and to thank your donors regularly.

Congregation

Begin with your own church congregation. Discipleship includes giving and taking responsibility for our church. The church has a long and generous history or individuals making gifts or leaving legacies to continue the work of their church. Preach and teach on discipleship, money and generosity to create an atmosphere of thanksgiving and responsibility. Appeal for gifts of money, time and talents. Everyone must give something, however large or small - they are the first group to invest in the project, they each have a role and share joint responsibility in the success of the project.

Local Individuals

However wealthy or deprived your parish is, there are potential donors working or living in your community. They should know all about the project as you should have consulted and involved them in the development of the project. Approach all the groups you consulted as well as people with known previous interest in the church or other community initiatives.

Local Community Groups

Try approaching local community groups and organisations such as the Round Table, Lions or Rotary too. Approach all of these people by first sending them a leaflet with a short letter asking for an opportunity to explain the appeal, followed up by a phone call and, if invited, a visit.

Volunteers going to 'pitch' the appeal should be open and friendly and they should emphasise the aspects of the project which will appeal most to that particular audience. Make it as easy as possible for the person/people you are visiting to make a donation; have any necessary paper-work to hand and if they aren't keen to take action on the spot, ask if/when you can contact them again. Volunteers should also be comfortable if they get a negative response!

All contacts to potential local donors should be completed before fundraising events begin (to avoid the response that help has already been given through an event).

The Wider Community

Write to all households and businesses in the parish enclosing the appeal leaflet and inviting them to a public launch event to be held in the near future. Send a similar letter to people who once lived in the parish but no longer do so, and to others who have links with the parish e.g. those who were baptised or married in the church or those with former connections to the parish. Tell them how they can donate even if they can't attend.

Local Businesses

Many people expect to do well with an appeal to local businesses, but are usually disappointed. The fact is that businesses get numerous unsolicited requests for grants or sponsorship and the smaller firms in particular may have a policy of consigning the whole lot to the bin. Unless you have a good relationship with particular firms, you will find this quite a tough nut to crack.

The situation will be different if you have someone on board who knows the local business scene well and who has the confidence and persistence to follow up his or her contacts in person. If you do decide to do a cold mailing, your district council should be able to provide a list of local firms; alternatively you will find various directories at the main reference libraries.

If possible, write to the Managing Director or Chief Executive by name. You may find it helpful to ask for a specific amount, rather than making an open-ended appeal for “any contribution, large or small”. For a local business which does not normally give money to church repairs, it may be easier to make a quick decision as to whether or not to respond to your appeal if a reasonable figure is suggested in your letter.

It is important to remember that the Gift Aid scheme is also available for corporate donors and there may be tax advantages for the company from this form of giving.

Follow Up

Whilst you need to be careful about respecting the privacy of your donors, do consider how you might be able to follow up people you encounter at your events. Could you invite them to future events, keep them updated with news of how your project is developing, thank them for their support and even convert them into a regular giver? Offer people the opportunity to sign up to keep in touch and follow your progress.



The Appeal Leaflet

The appeal leaflet should be attractive, concise and clear as to the aims of the appeal. Spell out the vision, the needs you will fulfil, the change you will achieve and how much money is needed.

The leaflet should include clear information on how to respond / donate with contact details for queries, and information on how a gift will be acknowledged (or kept anonymous if desired).

How this information is presented visually is extremely important and for this reason it is strongly recommended that you employ the services of a skilled graphic designer. The copy should also be written by someone with experience in marketing and who has passion for the project.

A good appeal leaflet should include:

- A succinct description of your organisation
- A powerful and persuasive summary of the need
- A plan of how you intend to address that need
- Exactly how much money you are looking to fundraise for
- The implications if funding is not forthcoming
- At least two photographs depicting the need or location of the project
- A method for donating and a contact address
- Your registered charity number (if applicable)