

Case study 1

Save the Vulcan – how to save pubs and influence people

The first group to be case studied in this book is the ‘Save the Vulcan’ campaign. The Vulcan Hotel was built in 1853 and was located in the centre of Cardiff, United Kingdom, but was under threat from demolition. This chapter will address the Save the Vulcan campaign to illustrate that substantial media in the first and political opportunities were open for the group, and how they managed to exploit these opportunities. However, the media and protest tactics of the group were non-confrontational, and the decisions behind the tactics were influenced by the group’s political insider status and the demographics of their supporters. The non-confrontational tactics and political opportunities led to a very sympathetic local newspaper, and this fed back into the media and protest tactics and kept them relatively non-confrontational. The Save the Vulcan campaign was created following an interview on BBC Radio Wales with the future chairperson,¹ and the subsequent involvement of another activist who joined the group upon hearing this interview. The committee that formed had a consistent core of five members. It was a Cardiff-based campaign that centred its political pressure on local politicians and publicising the campaign in the South Wales regional press, the *South Wales Echo* in particular.

The political and media backdrop

This section will detail the protest targets of the group, and the media and political backdrop to the Vulcan campaign before it began. First, the nature of the external threat to the Vulcan pub meant that the protest targets for the campaign were clear. The developer who owned the land the Vulcan resides on is described by Vulcan Activist 2 as “clearly the big bad guy” (2010). But the campaign found that the developer was immune to negative publicity and was difficult to contact directly. This meant that the campaign needed to develop a strategy that would influence the other stakeholders around the Vulcan issue who could not be ignored by the developer. This included political representatives and the brewer SA Brains who leased the pub from the developer.

The political backdrop to the campaign centres on the makeup of the parliamentary and Welsh Assembly constituency of Cardiff Central, and the council ward of Adamsdown. At the time of the campaign, the Liberal Democrats held a monopoly over centre of Cardiff where the Vulcan building sat, and they controlled Cardiff Council in coalition with Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales) (Cardiff Council 2011a, b). It should be noted that before the Save the Vulcan campaign was established, there was already a political awareness of the issue. This can be seen in transcripts from Cardiff Council debates that demonstrate a certain amount of cross party consensus on the issue. In the debate, Labour Councillor Richard Cook asks the Liberal Democrat councillor for the Vulcan’s ward at the time Nigel Howells why under his party’s administration the pub was put under threat. To which Councillor Howells answers:

I’m against the sale of the Vulcan as much as anyone. In fact, we have been running a campaign [...] to save the Vulcan (Quoted in Cardiff Council 2008a, 23–24)

A similar exchange occurred in the following month where the deputy leader of the council and Plaid Cymru councillor during this period Neil McEvoy was asked if he supported the campaign; he responds, “My personal opinion then definitely I am 100% in favour of saving the Vulcan” (Quoted in Cardiff Council 2008b, 35). This illustrates the pre-existing political opportunity to be potentially exploited by the group to gain political support for the issue. To exemplify this further, at the time of the council debates, Jenny Randerson, the then-assembly member (AM) for Cardiff Central, tabled a statement of opinion in the Welsh Assembly (National Assembly for Wales 2008). This Welsh Assembly version of a House of Commons Early Day Motion was signed by 21 of a total of 61 AMs, and covered all of the political parties. The motion clearly states that the Assembly “opposes the proposed demolition of The Vulcan Hotel in Adamsdown, Cardiff and calls on the developers to re-consider their proposals with a view to saving this historic pub” (ibid).

The political insider element of the Save the Vulcan members came from their party political affiliations. This however was not part of the publicity but was used as a tool to gain access to politicians and apply political

pressure, and it contributed greatly to the group's political opportunities. One member was a political activist for Plaid Cymru who had a personal relationship with some Plaid Cymru AMs. The other had a more influential role within the Liberal Democrats working for Jenny Willott MP and performing extensive campaign work for the MP and local party. In practice, this meant that they had an influence over the MP's photo opportunities, and what issues the local party should focus on. They exploited this political influence as an insider to its fullest, and this access certainly did not hinder the group's progress in reaching its goals. A second example of this insider influence is exemplified by presence of the AM, MP, and councillors at a public meeting set up by the Save the Vulcan campaign to gauge the level of support in the local community and the wider city (Miloudi 2009a, 10; Anon 2009c, 6). This first action helped open political opportunities and signalled to the group how much potential support they would receive from the public and politicians. These relationships had a very influential bearing on the media strategies and protest tactics of the group, as Vulcan Activist 3 states these connections "guided the way we campaigned" (2010).

The interest in the future of the Vulcan pub was also present in press coverage before the campaign began. These reports occurred outside of the sample timeframe, but it does demonstrate the importance the Vulcan story had to the local newspaper, and the potential media opportunity available to the group. The Vulcan is mentioned in a report from December 2005 about the businesses in danger of demolition because of a retail development in Cardiff city centre (Nifield 2005, 4). The Vulcan's plight is also included in an editorial from July 2007 lamenting the loss of old fashion pubs (O'Connor 2007, 20), and again in January 2008 in a story about the development of Cardiff entitled "Changing face of your city" (Nifield 2008, 16). Even though there were only 5 articles between 2005 and the end of August 2008, this shows that the issue was present, however small, in the consciousness of the local newspaper.

Further to this, the first month of newspaper articles from the sample illustrates the media platform from which the Vulcan campaign could exploit and build upon. In September 2008, there were 8 (6% of total) articles, including 5 letters to the editor (5% of total). These stories concerned issues around Cardiff's heritage and Welsh pub closures, which were mentioned in 4 and 7 (3 and 6%) articles, respectively. Also, 5 out of the 8 articles recognised Vulcan's situation as a serious issue. The prevailing media and political context around the Vulcan presented the campaign with a positive opportunity to capitalise on and exploit while attempting to save the pub from demolition. The group's relationship with the local newspaper was a positive and a productive one. The chair of the Vulcan group was an experienced campaigner and had previously run a successful campaign to save a different Cardiff pub (Anon 2008a, 21). This meant that they had pre-existing contacts with the newspaper. The close relationship built between the group and the local press meant that there was regular contact with each other. This helped in getting stories about the Vulcan published, and the local media's proximity to the issue meant there was a natural affinity to the story, as Vulcan Activist 3 observed that the "*Echo* ran pretty much every press release" (2010).

The media strategy placed an emphasis on a professionalised approach which meant creating press releases that were written concisely and succinctly as to be easily replicated by the press, thereby making a journalist's job as simple as possible. The relative lack of resources behind the Vulcan meant that tactics such as media training were not a consideration, and the group was reliant on the talents and enthusiasm of the activists involved. To keep the press interested, the group held a variety of events and created media opportunities. These events had two objectives: (1) to raise the profile of the campaign and (2) to increase the attraction of the Vulcan to visitors. This relationship is framed by Vulcan Activist 2 as "they needed us and we needed them", but stresses the importance of the press as "an important vehicle for influence" (2010). This sentiment is echoed by Vulcan Activist 3 who refers to the press as a 'mouthpiece' that is used to influence protest targets (2010). Subsequently, the Save the Vulcan group were able to raise the profile of the pub to a point where the media came to the campaign; for example, BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine visited the Vulcan twice and featured the issue in radio shows (BBC 2009a, b). No media requests were refused; in fact, they were actively exploited to keep the focus on the Vulcan and the issues in the mainstream media. The Vulcan campaign knew that there was a considerable media opportunity which was used to help open political opportunities.

Shaping the message

The media and political opportunities presented to the group would influence their choice of media and protest tactics. The basis of the Save the Vulcan campaign communication was to stress the urgency of the issue and maintain a permanent public optimism concerning the saving of the Vulcan. These were the collective action

frames of the group which were communicated using various media, from online platforms to quotes in newspapers. The use of these communication platforms were geared towards publicising the message as much as possible. The direct messages sent through emails, websites, and leaflets were unfiltered by the press and represent Save the Vulcan's messages as the group intended. The fundamental key to the group's messages is found in their name to 'Save the Vulcan'. The top-level issue of saving the pub from demolition contains deeper, underlying issues and are explained by Vulcan Activist 1 as "to keep the Vulcan open and trading where it is today" (2011). These issues were taken and presented in the group's messages, but the following examples show how these messages were tailored for different audiences:

1. To the developer – The pub sits on a large plot of land you can build around it.
2. To elected representatives – The pub is important to the local community, and you should consider the rules around planning to protect buildings of this type.
3. To the public – "Use it or lose it" (Vulcan Activist 1 2011).

What this demonstrates is that there was one message behind the campaign, but through the tailoring of messages the group could target different audiences. The transmission of the messages and the engagement with potential and existing supporters crossed technological boundaries.

Online communication

The internet was the primary communication tool used by the Save the Vulcan campaign because of digital technologies' ability to reduce the physical resources required to communicate with a lot of people. Part of the group's online communication was the use of an email list. The personal details of supporters were gathered through information provided on a written petition that would later be used to lobby the National Assembly of Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2011). The written petition contained a field for people to enter their email address, and this allowed the group to create a sizeable emailing list. The use of this list was twofold: (1) it was used to encourage participation and mobilise people into supporting the campaign and (2) the list was used to update people about the campaign. These messages were repeated in other online forms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and the Save the Vulcan blog (Save the Vulcan 2010h, 2012b, c). An example of the construction of the messages can be found in an email to the mailing list from the beginning of the campaign. The email contains a set of actions supporters could engage with, and these vary in the level of commitment they required. It meant that supporters could feel involved in the campaign through the smallest of actions. The email from November 2008, for instance, contains the following five actions that people can do:

1. Write to the heritage minister²
2. Leaflets – An appeal for people to deliver leaflets
3. Write to the press
4. Sign a petition – Both online and paper copy
5. Invite friends to the Facebook group (Vulcan Emails 12th November 2008)³

The email offers an insight into where the Vulcan group placed media coverage. Under the heading 'write to the press', the email states "we have to ensure The Vulcan's name remains in the spotlight" (ibid). This indicated that if the Vulcan pub gained and maintained a high profile the campaign will, by extension, also command press attention. It was an attempt to make the pub famous and create a symbol for the campaign and issues surrounding it. In attempting to make the pub famous the publicity does not necessarily focus on the campaign, and Vulcan Activist 3 describes the strategy as "not even publicising the campaign, just publicising the pub" (2010). In other words 'use it or lose it'. The pub was the focus and the campaign was there to highlight its plight, and this was the main goal of the Vulcan's campaign messages.

In comparison to the email list, the Save the Vulcan blog was not necessarily used to just push the campaign's agenda. It functioned as an information repository for the campaign, which Vulcan Activist 3 described as a "library" containing "all the information we had in our heads" (ibid). Similarly, the email list and the blog was used as a mobilisation platform, and replicated the messages sent to supporters (Save the Vulcan 2009i). This

meant that there was a consistency of messages across the Vulcan's publicity. The posts on the blog would point to the pub first, highlighting its importance, and place it at the forefront of the campaign. There was an emphasis on the political support behind the campaign, and any new advantages the group succeeded in getting. Finally, the issues were at the core of all communications and were reinforced through the simple act of repetition. One of the main sources of information for the blog posts were Save the Vulcan press releases, and mainstream news coverage by way of links and quotes (see Save the Vulcan 2009n, p, for example). The taking of press release content verbatim made the generation of blog posts easier. It meant that if a press release was not used by the press, it could still be seen online and kept the campaign's narrative going.

The blog post 'Changing faces at the Vulcan', for example, was reproduced from the press release of the same name (Save the Vulcan 2010a, b). The blog's messages were optimistic that the campaign would succeed, and presses the urgency that success had to be achieved as soon as possible. The blog also used mainstream media coverage to help validate the group's arguments. The website existed as a claims platform unfiltered by, and outside of, the mainstream media. The website also managed to exploit and capitalise on the political support of Jenny Randerson AM. She wrote a post for the site which repeated the key messages of the campaign:

The Vulcan is one of the few remaining genuine Cardiff pubs, and if it goes, we will lose a piece of history. Development can, and should take place around it, and this fight will continue. (2009)

This exemplifies the closeness of the campaign and the AM and the substantial political opportunity it presented. This opportunity allowed increased access and potential influence over key decision-makers. The group's political relationships will be covered further in this chapter in case studies which examine the two SA Brains protests and the Petitions Committee process, respectively.

The website represents a timeline of the progress of the group, and when political events occurred, the website offered the opportunity to define these events from the campaign's viewpoint. To illustrate this point, at the end of the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions Committee process, a report was published that made two recommendations (National Assembly for Wales 2010): (1) to introduce legislation to allow the protection of buildings for social and cultural reasons and (2) to strengthen the powers of local authorities to aid in the protection of buildings (National Assembly for Wales 2010, 9). The response of the campaign to the report was to re-emphasise the urgency of the issues and state "this is by no means the end" (Thomas quoted in Save the Vulcan 2010k). The Vulcan was also on social media, but the Twitter feed was mostly used like an electronic funnelling device driving traffic to the website by linking to posts on the blog (see Save the Vulcan 2009d, for example). This can similarly be applied to the Facebook group (Save the Vulcan 2012c). Vulcan Activist 3 ranked the usefulness of each of these online forms in terms of who they targeted. The blog was directed more at journalists because of the amount of information it contained; Facebook, on the other hand, was more useful in communicating with supporters and fellow campaigners (2010). A web presence also offers a group the opportunity to rebut negativity in the press.

Online innovations

The Vulcan campaign pushed its web presence in some innovative directions and utilised both Facebook and Google advertising to promote the issues and point people towards the Vulcan's Facebook page and website. The advantage of this type of advertising is that it can be highly targeted. For instance, the Facebook adverts were demographically targeted at people over 18 who lived in the South Wales region (Vulcan Activist 2 2010). Google adverts, on the other hand, target key search terms and websites. The Vulcan campaign used these to target the name of the developer and Cardiff tourism-related searches (Vulcan Activist 2 2009). When the name of developer was searched for in Google, a Vulcan campaign advert would appear in the results. These adverts are placed contextually and geographically in related websites, and Vulcan Activist 2 describes this as "a local context to articles read on a more global context" (2010). The disadvantage of this type of advertising however is that it costs money, but limits can be set on how much is spent. Although there are very strict rules around the text that Google and Facebook will accept, the crafting of messages in this way creates an association between the issue and protest targets in a subtle, straightforward, and focused way.

Other forms of communication

The online presence of the Save the Vulcan campaign was just one part of the group's communications. They also used the somewhat traditional method of paper leaflets. These were created and distributed on a semi-regular basis and followed the message conventions of the other forms of communication used by the group. It condensed a lot of the same information found on the website into two sides of A5. The leaflets were used to advertise events, provided background information to the campaign, and a 'what you can do' section. The leaflets include images of the Vulcan building and its sign, and these were consistently used as symbols for the campaign. They were a visual representation of what was being fought for. The back included a small action to pressurise the heritage minister in Wales.

To complement the leaflets, a newsletter was created to document the major events of the campaign and included similar information to the leaflets. In addition, the newsletter included a list of high-profile supporters, ranging from celebrities to politicians. The newsletter told the reader why the campaign should be supported. It framed the issues and solutions as common sense and not something to be opposed or ignored. The reverse of the newsletter had a special thank you for the local newspaper for their support (Save the Vulcan 2009p). This is an attempt at maintaining the group's positive relationship with the press and keep media opportunities open. Taken together, these parts of the newsletter are examples of the sizeable media and political opportunity the group worked within. These opportunities are publicised to attempt to garner more support, and in doing so increases the perception that the campaign will succeed, and gives the impression of a campaign that is larger than it might be in reality.

Campaign members in media coverage

This section closes with the Vulcan campaigners' framing of the issues in newspaper coverage. The ability to speak on an issue and the quotes the media choose to print shows, to a certain extent, how sympathetic the press was towards an issue. It follows that the more positive the press is about an issue, the more a group would be allowed to put their view of the issue across. Across the sample 32 (14% of total) members of specified protest groups appeared in the media coverage. Broken down further, 31 of these were directly quoted, and all 32 are named, and 19 expressed a positive opinion about the issues. The Vulcan campaign members who appear in media coverage maintain the urgency of the issue and emphasise the size of support. A quote from an article in December 2008 expresses this urgency, but adds optimism that the campaign will succeed: "We have six months to save The Vulcan and I am absolutely convinced we'll succeed" (Craig quoted in O'Connor 2008, 8). A sense of optimism around the probability of success is paramount if a group is to succeed in their goals. The expression of public doubt would ultimately be self-defeating and discourage people from supporting a campaign. On the other hand, urgency is often complemented by the 'feeling' behind the campaign and the amount of support offered by the public, media, and politicians. In this next quote, Vulcan Activist 1 makes a clear appeal to AMs. They emphasise the size of support and focus on the electoral sensitivity of politicians by referring to the group's supporters as 'voters':

The Assembly cannot ignore over 3,000 voters. We're urging the Assembly to do everything within its power to preserve our heritage and leave the Vulcan open. (Quoted in Anon 2009f, 3)

This is similar to what Lipsky's referred to as 'reference publics'; the quote represents a distinct use of public support as a way to influence decision-makers (1968). The group's framing of this public support was geared towards a language that politicians might be most susceptible too. In the press coverage, politicians accounted for 52 out of 233 sources (19% of total), 48 were directly quoted, and 41 were named; of the 11 not named 9 (4%) they were anonymous governmental sources. With respect to the issues, the 23 sources (10% of total) spoke positively about the Vulcan, which illustrates the level of support for the groups and the Vulcan's place on the political agenda. This political support for the campaign coupled with public backing, and a sympathetic media made for a large political and media opportunity. Opportunities of this scale allow a significant lowering of the amount of resources required for effective campaigning.

Making the most of opportunities

What's been made clear so far is that the ability of a protest group to create and exploit media and political opportunities is dependent upon the internal decisions and negotiations behind the choice of messaging, media, and protest tactics. These decisions are influenced by protest group goals and are affected by the choice of protest target, the demographics of supporters, and the sensibilities of the activists involved. This section will unpack two case studies of the planning and eventual abandonment of two Save the Vulcan protests. The reasons behind their cancellation will be made clear and will be placed into the context of political and media opportunities. The Save the Vulcan campaign's closeness to politicians and the decisions to protest provides an example of a political insider that still uses elements of an outsider strategy. It reveals a discontinuity between what the Save the Vulcan campaign had knowledge of, what the campaign told the press, and what the press knew.

The decision-making process behind protest

This section will give two examples of the planning, negotiations, and decision making behind Save the Vulcan demonstrations to illustrate how their status as potential insider influenced what they did. The first protest occurred across approximately fourteen days from beginning to end. The protest began at a Save the Vulcan meeting on 28 May 2009, and the cancellation occurred on 11 June 2009 (Vulcan Emails 28th May 2009; Cable 11th June 2009). Up until this point, the Save the Vulcan campaign had been relatively non-confrontational holding only one protest outside the Welsh Assembly's Senedd building. This event was held to hand in the Save the Vulcan petition and featured politicians and campaigners and was more of a photo opportunity than a demonstration (O'Connor 2009, 7). However, the landlord was informed that they needed to vacate the Vulcan by the 25 June (McCarthy 2009e, 2). The Vulcan was set to close towards the end of June, and there was a sense within the group that something more confrontational needed to happen. A lack of information was coming from inside the decision-making process from either the brewer or Cardiff Council. The group decided to write a letter to the leader and deputy leader of Cardiff Council giving them one week to respond with any information. The motive behind the letter, along with this request, contained a threat of something tactically more confrontational, and a draft to the rest of the group contained the following quote:

If we have heard nothing by 5th June, we and our membership will take a more direct approach to lobbying those involved to save our Victorian pub. (Vulcan Emails 29th May 2009)

This statement in and of itself created discussion within the group with one member suggesting some alternative terminology and instead of "'more direct approach' I would suggest "'more 'direct action' approach'" (ibid). This was rejected, because it was acknowledged by other group members that the term 'direct action' has the potential to cause negative reactions from protest targets and the press (ibid). The language was therefore kept relatively tempered to remain on the side of respectability. The following passage was posted to the website:

SAVE THE VULCAN – DAY OF ACTION

Date: 13 June 2009

Time: 12:00–15:00

Location: Vulcan, Cardiff It's time for action now.

Please hold this date in your diary, and once we've confirmed details we'll send info. (Save the Vulcan 2009m)

The press information about the Vulcan's imminent closure was published on the front page of the local newspaper (McCarthy 2009c, 1). At this point, divisions began to appear in what the Save the Vulcan group were being told, what the campaign told the press, and the information revealed in press articles. These divisions show themselves in the campaign wanting a public announcement about the pub, even though they were

receiving private insider reassurances. Vulcan Activist 3 states that messages were coming from political insiders that would say “things are going on behind the scenes, don’t risk it” (2010). The press was also receiving no information and not getting answers to their enquiries, as an article from the *South Wales Echo* on 30 May ends with:

No-one from Brains was available for comment.

The offices of owner Mr Rapport were contacted but the *Echo* was informed that he was abroad on holiday until Monday. (McCarthy 2009e, 2)

That same morning two downbeat press articles appeared, but the Save the Vulcan group were getting insider information that a deal was about to be struck between the council and the developer (Vulcan Emails 30th May 2009). It was the sensitivity of the stakeholders to bad public relations that the Save the Vulcan group wanted to exploit. The following day on June 1 against the backdrop of downbeat press coverage, the Vulcan group was still receiving positive information from their insider contact “It looks like the Council is about to strike a deal with Rapport⁴ and SD2,⁵ but once again, behind closed doors” (Vulcan Emails 1st June 2009). These details were being kept from campaigners, and the group was still intent on protest action if no information about the pub’s future was made public:

I think we should wait until Friday until we do anything (which is the deadline we gave them) then we’ll make a decision about what to do. (Vulcan Emails 1st June 2009)

The day after this email, political progress and information about an impending deal manifested itself in a news article. The leader of Cardiff Council, Rodney Berman, is quoted as saying “We have had positive talks leaving us with the clear impression that the pub’s lease can be extended” (Quoted in McCarthy 2009a, 3). The chairperson of the Save the Vulcan campaign in response to this change in political opportunities is to be positive about the news, but maintain the pressure on the brewer, and stress the urgency for a decision to be made in writing: “My only concern is that Brains have served a notice for them to get out at the end of the month” (Quoted in *ibid*). A representative from SA Brains also gave their opinion on the matter in the article:

Should we be able to agree terms with the other parties involved we will continue to lease the pub and would be happy to see the Brain’s name remain above the door. (Quoted in McCarthy 2009a, 3)

In private, the campaign’s reaction to SA Brain’s quote was lukewarm “From what Brains told the *Echo* it looks like they want to hang on to the pub” (Vulcan Emails 2nd June 2009). With no written confirmation of a deal between the interested parties however, the plan to hold a protest on the 13th of June remained in place (Cable 8th June 2009).

The deadline arrived and with no information forthcoming, the group decided to wait until 9 am. the next morning, just in case something had been released to the press. The following email exchange between two members of the group which makes it clear that the pause is temporary and the planning, mobilisation of supporters, and implementation of a protest should still happen:

Email 1: I’ve heard nothing from the Council re The Vulcan. Therefore we need to plan our protest...I think we should give the Council the benefit of the doubt, and give them until 9 am tomorrow morning. Then we’ll go for it :)

Email 2: Yup, let’s see the *Echo* tomorrow go from there. (Vulcan Emails 5th June 2009)

The following day the press received and printed a reassuring quote from the leader of Cardiff Council on the front page (James 2009a, 1). In reaction, the group held a meeting on the evening of the 8th June to discuss the upcoming protest and what other tactics might be employed. As a result of the positive decisions over the future of the pub, the group decided to continue with the protest opportunity and went ahead with their ‘day of action’. The impact of changing political opportunities had an influence on the protest tactics employed. There was a feeling that the action could not be too confrontational in order to avoid annoying the major stakeholders and jeopardise the negotiations. The urgency of the issue meant that the campaigners felt compelled to do something to signal their grievance. The insider status of the Vulcan campaigner began to tell at this point and during the

meeting on 8 June that the chairperson was phoned by an inside source who told them to keep supporters 'on the leash'. This comment suggests an attempt to control the group and illustrates a disadvantage of insider strategies.

Once a new lease for the pub was agreed the *South Wales Echo* ran an article entitled "A New Lease of Life" (James 2009a, 1). The article reflects the information the group had and is exemplified by the quote from a Save the Vulcan campaign member in the report:

I will only feel confident when I see a piece of paper with everyone's signatures on it. Lots of ideas and statements have been bounced around but we need something in writing. (Thomas quoted in James 2009a, 1)

Despite the positive press, there was still no conclusive written resolution to the issue. The media opportunities used by the group did help to maintain pressure on the negotiations, but it did not necessarily speed up the decision-making process. The choice of protest target then fed into the leaflets which were to be handed out on the day of the protest. The type of language used in the leaflet was heavily considered by the group. When shown the leaflet, one member commented that "It's not too angry" (Vulcan Emails 10th June 2009), and that protest planning and public language should continue so long as they are "softly, softly" (Vulcan Emails 11th June 2009).

A day later, the press ran an article proclaiming the pub had been saved for three years (McCarthy 2009d, 3). This did not necessarily meet the aims of the campaign, but they did achieve new advantages, and a temporary reprieve from demolition was a successful result. This announcement created problems with respect to the protest process, because mass mobilisation had been set in motion and the group needed to decide whether or not to go ahead with their demonstration. One member commented:

I think it might look a bit weird if there's a good story in the *Echo* tomorrow about an extended contract and we're handing out flyers on Saturday saying "The Vulcan's not safe". (Vulcan Emails 11th June 2009)

To which another campaigner responded: "My gut feeling is that we cancel" (ibid). The implication being that any conflicting or mixed messages would have damaged the overall narrative of the campaign and caused confusion among supporters and the press.

Instead, to celebrate their success, plans for a celebration were put into action, but this party would serve more than one purpose. The celebration was intended to be a message carrier, because if a large number of people attended, it would "send a really powerful message" to the protest targets of the Vulcan campaign (ibid). The Vulcan group used everything as a potential opportunity and capitalised on any symbolism the campaign created. Following the aborted protest, the influence the campaign had on decision-makers and the press was illustrated in a letter written by the Leader of Cardiff Council to the *South Wales Echo*. The letter openly praised the Save the Vulcan campaign:

I would like to pay tribute to the members of the "Save the Vulcan" campaign group for the hard work they have put in and maintained over a period of many months promoting their cause. (Berman 2009, 26)

The *South Wales Echo* was also thanked, and the combination of the Save the Vulcan campaigning actions and the press support is cited as the reason a partial solution was achieved (ibid). The group's success is viewed here as "very much a victory for 'people power'" (ibid).

The processes found in the first SA Brains protest were repeated 11 months later when it was announced that the landlady of 18 years would be leaving the pub (McCarthy 2010b, 18). The relevance of this second case study is that it demonstrates the increased proficiency of the group to mobilise and carry out a protest action. It also shows that if media and political opportunities fade over time, they can be re-opened by media and protest tactics, and reignite political and media relationships. The reaction of one of the members of the Vulcan campaign to the prospect of the pub closing exemplifies this process; they express the need to "rally the troops" (Vulcan Emails 14th March 2010). These 'troops' referred to political allies, the media, and previous supporters of the campaign. Unlike the previous protest the target of collective action was clear. In the group's view, the land owner was unresponsive to public and media pressure, but the brewer was very sensitive towards bad publicity which made them an ideal target. The choice of target was driven by media opportunities, and the press was used as a platform for political pressure.

The success of the media and protest tactics employed in the first Brains demonstration fed into the tactics of

the second protest, and the same approach as the previous planned action were utilised. The Vulcan group's tactical approach demonstrates that the decisions around what action to take were based on success and failure of previous protests. The Vulcan's initial key messages emphasised that the pub would not be closing, and that it was an economically viable business. A letter was written to send to the stakeholders of the Vulcan, Land Securities who were the developer of St. David's 2 shopping centre and SA Brains the brewer (Vulcan Emails 6th April 2010). The letter received no reply by the stated deadline and prompted one campaigner to comment: "I think we need to act fast" (Vulcan Emails 30th April 2010). In response to this comment, another member of the group agreed "it's time to raise the heat!" (ibid). The situation is described by Vulcan Activist 1 as going "very, very quiet", and that in order to provoke a response, a demonstration would have to be planned to draw attention to the issue (2011).

The proposed march was set to pass the gates of the brewery with the aim to "make our voices heard", and that the urgency of the issue would be framed as "the time to act was now" (Vulcan Activist 1 2011). There was also a boycott initiated against SA Brains products and advertised through Facebook⁶ (Vulcan Emails 1st May 2010) in the build up to the demonstration. The reasoning behind this protest was a "symbolic protest to show that Brains can't take the fantastic loyalty for granted", but was "part of the protest to bring pressure on them" (Vulcan Emails 4th May 2010). In a similar type of targeting of the reference publics when the electoral sensitivities of politicians are highlighted, a boycott of a product or service aims for the reference publics of a business, the consumers. All forms of communication and resources were used to mobilise support; the website, Facebook, and leaflets were geared towards encouraging people to participate in the protest (Save the Vulcan 2010c, f, g; Vulcan Emails 3rd May 2010).

The information contained in the messages set out the usual who, what, why, where, when, and how of the campaign and succinctly and clearly covered a lot of information in a small amount of words. The chairperson of the Vulcan campaign stressed that clear messages about a protest are paramount to the planning and potential success of a protest action. It must be noted here that this isn't necessarily the right or wrong approach; moreover, it is what worked for the Vulcan campaign based on their aims and goals. The message worked on two different levels the first was directed at supporters, and the second was targeted at the press. The press and supporters needed to know the who, what, why, where, when, and how of an action, but the press also needed to know about the logistic timings of things like photo opportunities (Vulcan Activist 1 2011). If the public and press are unsure about the exact details of what will happen on the day of the demonstration, the action runs the danger of being disparate and incoherent. The focus of the messages needed to contain a level of clarity to be successfully communicated to the press and the public.

In contrast to the first Brains protest, the relative inactivity of the group following the pubs reprieve had diminished their ability to create media opportunities. A letter to the editor written on May 1, but this letter was never published. The press release for the protest details the demonstrations time, place, and date, but puts the focus solely on the brewer. It states "ONLY BRAINS CAN STOP THE VULCAN CLOSING IN 2010" (Save the Vulcan 2010d). The group was eventually contacted by the press because of Vulcan Activist 1's positive source/journalist relationship with journalists at the *South Wales Echo* meant that they "tended to be the first person that he'd [the journalist] go to if he found out anything" (2011). Nevertheless, the initial movements towards protest action provoked Brains into a response. Their reaction was posted on the Vulcan blog where the brewer is eager to express that they are doing everything they can. In an attempt to reassure the group and, by extension, the Vulcan campaign's supporters and Brains consumers, they state:

Please be assured that we are doing everything we possibly can to keep the Vulcan open [...] Commercial contracts are by their nature confidential but as soon as we're able to release some detail we will. (Quoted in Save the Vulcan 2010e)

What happened after this development is very similar to the first SA Brains protest. Despite the positive communication from the target, nothing had been confirmed in writing, and it is for this reason that the general consensus within the group was to continue with the demonstration. One member reacts to the latest development by saying "My feeling is that we continue to pressure Brains" (Vulcan Emails 4th May 2010). The tactical aptitude of the group was to adapt to changing situations, and in this case the aim of the tactics was to maintain pressure on the protest target without being overly confrontational. The perception being that maintaining an antagonistic stance towards protest targets following positive decisions being made would have a detrimental effect on the campaign.

The group were contacted by SA Brains' public relations department and the interpretation of the conversation was as follows:

Brains are naturally VERY keen that we stop the boycott and the Demo [...] Brains are very keen to keep the peace.
(Vulcan Emails 4th May 2010)

Following this conversation, the justification of the protest action came under increased scrutiny by the members of the group. In a cost-benefit calculation the value of continuing the protest action was weighed against the consequences of holding an antagonistic stance for too long. The following day a press article entitled "Drinkers win reassurance on pub plans" was published, and included parts of the statement made to the group by SA Brains (McCarthy 2010a, 15). This caused a cancellation of the protest and the decision was communicated to supporters using SA Brains' comments to provide a positive message. The reframing of someone else's comments towards a group's messages helps to validate the aims of a protest, and generates an expectation of success. A press release was written and sent to the press on the May 7 informing them of the official cancellation of the protest (Save the Vulcan 2010i). The press release was printed on May 11 and contained quotes from the campaign:

We are obviously very happy. The pub is still under threat, but the immediate future seems safe. We planned this demonstration to say: 'We are very worried and we want you to do something.' (Thomas quoted in McCarthy 2010a, 15)

In a moment of seeming victory, the same line of messaging continues, and the quote makes the argument that the Vulcan still is not completely safe and emphasises the size and breadth of support. The focus is on the importance of the issue and how much it resonated with different audiences. The achievement of this level of influence shows the profile the Save the Vulcan campaign managed to create, and how successful its exploitation of media and political opportunities had been. To be taken seriously by the press, politicians, and the group's protest targets is due to the success of the Vulcan campaign's protest actions and communication strategy. This illustrates that to be truly effective a protest group needs to adapt quickly to external events. These external influences impacted upon the actions of the group in ways that cannot be predicted but needed to be adapted to efficiently and quickly. It demonstrates that the Save the Vulcan campaign's tactics were not confrontational; there was no blockade of the Brains brewery or a permanent lock in at the Vulcan. In many ways, it did not need to be, because the implicit threat of a mass protest and the brewer's fear of bad publicity brought enough pressure on SA Brains to get them to act.

Press representation of the Save the Vulcan campaign

The press representation of the Save the Vulcan campaign demonstrates the receptiveness of the local media to the group's messages, and the recognition of the issues in the press. It illustrates that the protest tactics of the Vulcan group were effective in gaining media coverage. It is clear from the content analysis that the press reaction to the Save the Vulcan campaign was positive, and shows the overall thematic content of the news coverage. The majority of articles came from the *South Wales Echo*, 117 (93%) compared with just 9 (7%) from the *Western Mail*. Both of these newspapers are owned by Trinity Mirror Ltd and are the only two local newspapers in the Cardiff area (Trinity Mirror plc 2011). In terms of the types of articles produced, the majority were straight journalistic pieces 53 (42%). Next and emphasising the support of the newspaper and receptive public opinion were letters to the editor appear 44 times (35%). Of these 44 letters, 6 (14%) were written by members of the campaign's committee, 2 (5%) by councillors, and one by an AM.

The vast majority of letters were written by members of the public and demonstrates the ability of the Vulcan issue to 'generate a mailbag'. The Vulcan was a relatively non-political issue and wanting to save the pub was framed as 'common sense'. Keeping an issue non-party political was a conscious approach by the Save the Vulcan campaign. The argument against party affiliation is made by the chairperson who saw party affiliation as politically damaging because "people are often put off by political parties" (Vulcan Activist 1 2011). Moreover, the expressed support for a political party means that in supporting a campaign the public may feel that they are tacitly supporting that political party or in the chair's words "it just gets too complicated" (ibid).

The most regularly occurring category of story in newspaper articles was recognition of protest, which appeared 60 times (37%). This was divided into two sub-categories of a focus on the issues and support for a campaign. There were 36 instances (22%) of a focus on the issues, which relates to the issues being explained at length. Similarly, support for a campaign occurred in articles 24 times (15%). It follows that when there is a specific focus on the issues behind a campaign the more likely that the press will support a campaign. This support is related to the amount of letters to the editor the paper published, because these letters often expressed support and recognition of the issues.

The main issue mentioned in newspaper articles was pub closures occurring 101 times (53%), and this issue was their primary concern. However, the context given to the issues was mostly superficial and lacked further context. A total of 124 out of 190 mentions (65%) of issues were treated as an overarching problem and did not explain the underlying problems in detail. Just under a quarter of instances (45 or 24%) gave more of an explanation of why the Vulcan was under threat, and 9 (5%) gave a direct chain of causality which gives all of the specific details behind the issue. The following is an example of a direct chain of causality:

In 2005, plans were submitted for the St David's 2 development which subsequently forced a Compulsory Purchase Order to be issued – SA Brain then sold up.

A city developer has since applied to build a 20-storey mixed use development of flats, shops and restaurants and the clock is now ticking. (O'Connor 2008, 8)

The quote gives the details required to understand the issue and why the Vulcan was under threat. The articles gathered expressed a positive opinion 28 times (22%). This is partly due to the large frequency of letters to the editor. Overall, only 2 negative articles (2%) appeared in the sample; both were opeds written by the same author (O'Neill 2009a, 24). This is also reflected in how sources in articles express their opinion on the issues. There were 68 of 233 sources (29%) that were positive about the issues and only 3 (1%) were negative. The sources who were most positive about the campaign were politicians. If all the different types of politicians are added together, 23 (19%) were positive about the issues. Second, members of specified protest groups spoke positively 19 times (8%), and their opinions therefore appeared relatively unfiltered. This provided a favourable media platform for the campaign to publicise its messages and create and exploit political opportunities. Aside from the issues, the sources or the newspapers do not express a great deal of opinion about the protesters themselves or the tactics used.

Non-confrontational protest tactics

The media coverage of the Vulcan's protest tactics demonstrates the impact of measured, non-confrontational tactics on the reporting of the campaign, and the extent to which the group's goals were explained. The most regularly mentioned tactic was demonstrative, and these types of tactics were mentioned 54 out of 166 times (33%). None of the Vulcan's protest tactics ever went beyond the demonstrative level because the majority of supporters were over the age of 30, and a non-confrontational approach was favoured to avoid alienating supporters. The group needed to keep supporters onside, maintain political influence, and access amidst a complicated negotiation process. Of the 54 mentions of demonstrative protest, 31 (19%) were talking specifically about the petition. A detailed examination of the submission of the Vulcan petition to the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions Committee and associated processes will be discussed later in this chapter. The number of signatories and mechanisms involved in the petitions process provided the press with a consistent and continuous narrative to anchor reports. The petition's process resulted in the creation of media opportunities because the meetings of the committee were a regular event, and there was a narrative of beginning, middle, and an end. The size of the campaign's support was often repeated in news reports, and this validated the issue and suggested solutions put forward by the Save the Vulcan group, for example:

More than 1,000 supporters have signed the petition including actor Rhys Ifans and BBC presenter John Inverdale. (Anon 2009g, 7)

This quote links closely with the second most frequently mentioned tactic as the use of celebrities which appeared 20 times (12%). This is closely related to the amount of reports containing a celebrity theme in the press (22 times or 17%). The backing of celebrities, especially Welsh celebrities, or celebrities with a

connection to Wales played a particularly salient part in news coverage. The link between the celebrity and the local area is of particular attraction to local newspapers because it provides a high-profile personality to base the story on. This support was exploited and included in the group's press release, and it helped in making the pub famous. The occasion of Welsh actor Rhys Ifans signing the petition was press released and included in the Save the Vulcan campaign's list of high-profile supporters:

Ifans joins a number of high profile people supporting the campaign, including John Inverdale, Huw Stephens, Glensys Kinnock MEP, Jenny Randerson AM, and Jenny Willott MP. (Save the Vulcan 2009I)

The local press published the press release using the same quote it included: "I am delighted Rhys has decided to support us;" it continues, "He clearly recognises the historic and ongoing importance of this Victorian pub" (Thomas quoted in *ibid*; Miloudi 2009b, 8). What the statistics and the example show is that the role of celebrities contributed to the profile of the group in the press, and the use of celebrities opens up media opportunities. The involvement of celebrities, however superficial, is clearly a tactic that can be used to create some quick publicity. It is noteworthy that a large number of articles mentioned no type of protest at all (81 or 49%). This shows that the Vulcan campaign did not have to rely on stunts or other events to get into the press.

This can also be seen in the sources and pictures used in media coverage. A total of 52 out of 233 sources (18.5%) were politicians and included all of the different types of politicians added together, from councillors to lords. This included Liberal Democrat AMs 13 times (6%); this included the constituency AM Jenny Randerson, who gave the Vulcan campaign her full support. Member of a specified protest group appear 32 times (14%) and were the highest singular source. The relationship between the Vulcan group and the local newspaper had an enormous bearing on this number. The campaign's positive relationship with the press was, to quote Vulcan Activist 1, because the media "trusted the information I was giving them" (2011). Trust and credibility are important parts of gaining press coverage and allows a protest group to comment with authority on an issue. The second most commonly used sources were the landlady and landlord (21 or 9%). They were the tenants of the Vulcan during the campaign and became minor figureheads. The landlady's image in particular accompanied several articles, and gave the campaign its human face (see McCarthy 2010b, 18, for example). The group's central focus on the pub as a place for events and photo opportunities and openness with the media helped maintain a press narrative, and made the pub a prominent symbol of the campaign.

This point is exemplified by the additional images accompanying news stories which heavily focused on the Vulcan pub as a building, and its sign. A simple image of the front of the building adorned many a newspaper article, and featured in all of the Vulcan's leaflets (Save the Vulcan 2009f; 2010g; Pitt 2009, 8). The *South Wales Echo* went as far as incorporating the sign into a logo along with the newspaper's name, which was used alongside articles about the Vulcan (*South Wales Echo* 2009). When people were featured in photographs, the Save the Vulcan committee was fairly high profile, but no one member gained a particularly prominent profile (see McCarthy 2009g, 14, for example). A greater prominence was given to the politicians and celebrities who supported and attached themselves to the campaign. The celebrities appeared in newspaper images as press shots but not necessarily in the Vulcan itself (see Lewis 2008a, 16, for example). Politicians, on the other hand, would feature in political photo opportunities that were taken in the Vulcan (see Williamson 2009, 6, for example). This made the Vulcan campaign appear as a much larger operation than it was and played into the generation of positive expectations and success.

The campaign effectively opened media and political opportunities for others to create their own publicity. The politicians who associated themselves with campaigns were exploiting these opportunities to present a more positive and socially aware public image. The campaign members divided the support of celebrities and politicians into two categories: inactive or passive and active support. Inactive meant completely ignoring the campaign; passive supporters agreed with the campaign's aims but engaged no further. Active supporters were those who spoke positively about the campaign and actively campaigned on the Vulcan group's behalf. The campaign essentially created a bandwagon which politicians and celebrities wanted to be associated with. This did however raise a concern around 'reflected glory' with Vulcan Activist 2 questioning whether or not these high-profile personalities "really care about the Vulcan" (2010). A further exploration of the active/inactive support of politicians will be discussed further on in this chapter, and the tactical reactions of the group to press coverage and political attention. The wider context of political reactions will now be explored in order to demonstrate the amount of influence and support the Vulcan campaign gained.

Political reactions to the Vulcan campaign

The level of public support from politicians for the Vulcan campaign was substantial, and it is these reactions to the group that shaped the amount of influence they had on dominant institutions. The part of this support which needs further examination is the mainstream political activities of Save the Vulcan campaign members. As mentioned, one campaigner was a member of Plaid Cymru, and another was both a member of and worked for the Liberal Democrat MP for Cardiff Central. Both of these political party affiliations offered insider access to these political parties. This provided the political opportunity to influence and pressure decision-makers from the inside. This insider access had a substantial bearing on the amount of political support the group had, and Vulcan Activist 1 admits that without this relationship the Vulcan campaign would not have been able to obtain the amount of information it did (2011). The examples of this include the blog post by Jenny Randerson AM, and a letter sent by Greg Mulholland MP (2009; Save the Vulcan 2009j). The previously mentioned statement of opinion is another example, which was covered by the press and occurred very early on in the Save the Vulcan campaign (National Assembly for Wales 2008; Lewis 2008b, 18). The statement helped create a receptive political context for the duration of the campaign.

The group went to the Plaid Cymru and Welsh Liberal Democrat conferences in 2009, and used their insider contacts to obtain stalls to publicise the campaign (Save the Vulcan 2009c). This took the campaign directly to politicians and allowed for photo opportunities and the gathering of signatories for the petition. The Cardiff Central constituency MP was particularly helpful to the group. Before the Welsh Liberal Democrat conference, they steered Party Leader at the time Nick Clegg MP towards the Vulcan pub for a photo opportunity (Save the Vulcan 2009c). The reach of the campaign stretched further than political events in the local area. In April 2009, the chairperson was invited and went to an All Party Parliamentary Group workshop on ‘How to save your local pub?’ by Liberal Democrat MP Greg Mulholland, and raising the issue to United Kingdom wide importance (Save the Vulcan 2009k). The relationship of the Vulcan campaign with politicians meant the group had a considerable amount of political influence, and this contributed to the political opportunities available to the group.

Negative political reactions and political opportunity

What has been detailed so far are positive political reactions, but not all attempts at political pressure were quite so well received. The Vulcan group’s leaflet included a tear off strip to fill in and send to the heritage minister Alun Ffred Jones AM (Save the Vulcan 2009o). The sheer amount postcards sent to the minister prompted a written response that was addressed to the campaign’s chair and was published on the group’s public Facebook page (Save the Vulcan 2009b). The group focused on one part of the letter as that they saw as particularly negative, which reads as follows:

As I have issued this response to you as campaign organiser, we will not respond further to individual postcards, I would ask that you disseminate this letter as you feel appropriate. (Jones quoted in Save the Vulcan 2009b)

In a direct response to this letter, the chair of the campaign stated: “I am not in control of which members of the electorate are sending you postcards about The Vulcan” (Vulcan Emails 25th February 2009). Throughout the letter, there are references to the ‘electorate’ and ‘voters’ again using the reference public the minister is most likely to respond to. The letter was also interpreted by the group as a refusal by the heritage minister refusing to respond to the public and was framed as such in the group’s press release (Save the Vulcan 2009g). The story ran in the press as a short news piece which stated that the minister had been “deluged with hundreds of postcards” (Anon 2009d). It prompted a debate between Vulcan members over the interpretation of the original letter and what the appropriate language should have been.

The minister’s reaction did not alter the Vulcan’s media or protest tactics, because at this point in the campaign the group had a high media profile, and they were not reliant on the support of this particular politician. The political opportunity created by the Save the Vulcan campaign had drawn together a number of political allies from a range of political parties. The consequence of the potential loss of one AM would not have closed off the political opportunity. It also did not change how the minister reacted to the group and Alun Ffred Jones AM still visited the Vulcan pub at a later date (Miloudi 2009b, 8). Furthermore, even he wanted to be seen

as engaged in the campaign, and the pressure applied by the Vulcan campaign had prompted him into making a public appearance in the pub.

Petitions committee case study

In order to illustrate further the processes and consequences of insider status and open political opportunities, it is necessary to look at the submission of the Vulcan petition to the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions Committee. The committee is made up of four AMs one from each political party in the Welsh Assembly, Labour, Plaid Cymru, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat, and one of these AMs acts as the committee's chair (National Assembly for Wales 2011). The petition was gathered through a standardised form, and its delivery to the National Assembly for Wales was through a protest event. Similar to other Save the Vulcan events, the protest was advertised through leaflets, an email list, and the press (Vulcan Emails 9th February 2009; Anon 2009f). It was arranged as a media and political opportunity outside the Senedd; the press, AMs, and public were invited to attend. The AM Jenny Randerson joined the group when they presented their evidence to the Petitions Committee. Her support for the campaign was unwavering. Before giving evidence to the committee, the Vulcan campaigners researched the backgrounds of the Petitions Committee members to gauge their receptiveness to the issue and attempted to second guess any questions. The political opportunity this represented is emphasised by three of the four committee members having already endorsed Jenny Randerson's statement of opinion calling for the protection of the Vulcan pub (National Assembly for Wales 2008). Pushing this idea of a big political opportunity further the committee's questions were leaked the Save the Vulcan campaign from an inside source.

The Vulcan petition was debated a further six times during the sampling period, and news of the Vulcan's initial reprieve in June 2009 was greeted with a "hurrah" in the Petitions Committee by Liberal Democrat AM Mike German (Quoted in National Assembly for Wales 2009a, 28). The role of the Vulcan as a symbol persisted throughout the Petitions Committee process and a committee meeting was held in the Vulcan itself in May 2009. Holding a meeting in the Vulcan for no real practical reason can be seen as a gesture by the committee to the significance of the issue. It validated the actions of the group and raised the profile and salience of the issues. The new advantages gained by taking the Petitions Committee route brought questions about heritage legislation into focus, and according to Vulcan Activist 1 this "made it a big national issue" (2011). A year following the submission of the petition a report was produced entitled "Save the Vulcan: Protection of historic buildings" (National Assembly for Wales 2010). The news articles in response to the release of the report contains quotes from the press release by Vulcan campaigner's, and are included along with quotes by the Petitions Committee chair (Save the Vulcan 2010j; Anon 2010c, 16; Lewis 2010, 13). The report recognises the size of the support the Vulcan campaign had in the following passage:

We believe that the 5,000 signatures that support this petition are testament to the fact that The Vulcan is an important building to the people of Cardiff. (National Assembly for Wales 2010, 14)

If thought about in terms of success and failure, the questions raised about legislation were an unintentional new advantage, because the original aim of the Vulcan campaign was to protect the pub from demolition. Moreover, the impact the campaign had on the committee and, by extension, the Welsh Assembly is summed up in a comment by one of the committee members during a meeting:

One of the interesting things about this petition is that it has raised huge policy issues, which were slightly hidden before. (German quoted in National Assembly for Wales 2009b, 18)

What this demonstrates is that the influence of the Vulcan's campaigning went beyond the original goal of saving the pub. It also pushed other issues onto the political agenda which would have further implications for devolved government policy.

Save the Vulcan's tactical reactions to press and political events

What has been already demonstrated is the Save the Vulcan campaign received a warm and positive reception

overall from both local newspapers and politicians. The advantage of this support was used by the Vulcan group to apply further pressure on their protest targets. The aim of the media tactic used in reaction to the aforementioned incident with the heritage minister, and the letter sent to him was to provoke the minister into a positive response to the campaign (Save the Vulcan 2009g). This type of pressure is mirrored in the group's close relationship with friendly politicians. Vulcan Activist 3 called it a "good relationship" but emphasises that by maintaining these connections, the group could not be too antagonistic for fear of "stirring up the honey pot" (2010).

The more high profile the Vulcan campaign became, there was a perceptible increase in politicians allying themselves with the campaign, and as already detailed those politicians were either actively or passively supporting the campaign. A potentially damaging example of passive support was the Labour Party's prospective parliamentary candidate for the constituency of Cardiff Central, Jenny Rathbone. In a constituency leaflet, she claims the Vulcan campaign as a Labour campaign by stating "please support our campaign" (Labour Party 2009, 3). The leaflet asks for members of the public to send letters directly to the developer in complete contrast to the Save the Vulcan campaign's tactics. In reference to Rathbone's call for people to write letters the Vulcan Activist 1 described the potential damage as "more harm than good" (2011). This represented a conflict of messaging and Rathbone's tactics differed from the main Vulcan campaign. Political party affiliation was also not part of what the Save the Vulcan campaign stood for, because it was seen as negatively differentiating a campaign as representing a particular party's ideas or policies. The leaflet prompted an angry response from the group who threatened to contact their email list to clarify the situation and to detail inaccuracies and misinformation in the leaflet. They also demanded an apology from Rathbone. The group never received a reply, and a month later, the Vulcan campaign press released the incident to clarify the non-party political affiliation of the campaign stating:

The Labour leaflet – 'The Cardiff Mail' – frames the Save the Vulcan campaign as a Labour campaign, and whilst local Labour activists have had ample opportunity to become involved in the campaign, they have chosen not to. (Save the Vulcan 2009h)

The *South Wales Echo* ran the news story under the heading "Save Vulcan campaign is 'hijacked by Labour'" (McCarthy 2009f, 19). The article contains the one and only reference to the political allegiance of the chairperson by describing them as working "for the Liberal Democrats" (ibid). This was the only time that any kind of party political affiliation was included in press coverage. The article quotes Rathbone in response to the Vulcan campaign in which she is defensive rather than conciliatory, and she argues that "we should all be united in trying to save the Vulcan but we seem to disagree on tactics" (Quoted in ibid). Rathbone's lack of direct involvement in the campaign meant that she did not have knowledge of the delicate negotiations that were taking place over the Vulcan's future. She was described by Vulcan Activist 2 as "not on message", and he speculates that she had a separate agenda to the Vulcan campaign (2010).

There was the potential, however remote, that upon the request of Rathbone letters would have been written to the developer and could have jeopardised political negotiations and created negative outcomes. The publicising of the issue had two aims: (1) Labour had misrepresented the campaign and the group wanted to clarify the situation and (2) it was an attempt to provoke Labour into a more active role. This is made clear in a statement by Vulcan Activist 1 who said that no one would have ever been excluded from the campaign because of political affiliation "we'd have welcomed her with open arms if she'd have come to us and wanted to get involved more" (2011). If Labour support had been achieved, then the Save the Vulcan campaign would have gained public backing from all of the major political parties in Wales. This co-optation of the Vulcan's campaign for political gain was a sign of their success in influencing politicians, because the issue was seen as important enough to be used to win votes. On the other hand, the significant danger to a group when this happens is a loss of control over the framing of the issue, the solutions, and the confusion produced by mixed messaging.

Following the campaigns rise to prominence in the local press and onto the political agenda made the Vulcan's tactics with respect to gaining media coverage easier. This reduced the need for substantial monetary or personnel resources. It was also easier in the sense that more journalists would approach the group with requests for information. The plight of the pub and the campaign to save it were always mentioned in this coverage (BBC 2009a, b). This media attention helped to boost support for the campaign, and after Jeremy Vine's visit, there was an increase in Twitter followers on the Save the Vulcan campaign's official feed (Save the Vulcan 2009e). The broader issue of British pubs closing meant that the Vulcan could be attached to, and brought into, a number of different stories. The Conservative Party in 2009, for instance, unveiled an initiative

entitled “Save the Great British Pub” (James 2009b, 4). The issue was applicable and appealed to people beyond the local level. The Vulcan’s success with the media is twofold. First, the Vulcan campaigners and the chair especially had a good working relationship with journalists based on trust and reliability (Vulcan Activist 1 2011). The trust between the group and journalists went both ways, because the activists needed to know that the press would report on the group’s activities positively (ibid). Second, Vulcan Activist 2 makes a more basic news agenda argument when referring to the *South Wales Echo*; he states that “they liked our stories, they liked our celebrities things like that, it helps sell their papers” (2010).

The Vulcan group’s messaging and communications was tightly controlled, and micro-managed down to the choice of which members of the group could speak to the press. Vulcan Activist 1 stressed the need for message control in a warning to other protest groups. They state that activists need to be “very careful who you let speak to the press” (2011). This opinion is based on the need for campaigners to remain ‘on message’, the reason being the press will print a newsworthy quote regardless of whether or not it carries a group’s intended message. As Vulcan Activist 1 put it, “If someone says something good the press are going to print it” (ibid). Furthermore, the Save the Vulcan group’s communications endeavoured to integrate all of their messages across various platforms. The emails to the mailing list and leaflets pointed to the Facebook group, the Twitter feed had links to the blog, and the press would help in highlighting these platforms by mentioning them in media coverage. The consequence of the *South Wales Echo*’s support meant that this information was published without criticism and demonstrates the media opportunities afforded to the campaign.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the media coverage in the local press was predominantly positive. The *South Wales Echo* gave the campaign its full support through the range of stories it ran, and the paper endeavoured to explain and highlight the issues. The campaign members actively avoided becoming celebrities themselves and instead left it to high-profile supporters, such as politicians and celebrities, to be the focus of press attention. The newspapers were actively receptive of the campaign, and this media opportunity was aided by the appeal of a local issue to a local newspaper. This was helped by the positive relationship between campaigners and members of the press. They provided the press with a variety of stories and this meant the Vulcan campaign was able to stay ‘fresh’ by creating new angles through which the story could be told. This maintained press interest throughout the campaign even though not everything was covered in the newspapers. The Save the Vulcan group’s response to events and external factors was to press release everything to keep the profile of the Vulcan as high as possible. The group took a measured approach where the threat of more confrontational actions was enough to gain new advantages from political stakeholders. A more antagonistic and confrontational approach would have had the likely outcome of alienating political allies, changing the focus of media coverage, and isolating public support. This tactical approach is coupled with the ability to write a good press release, because if the copy is simple, concise, and straightforward the press release can easily be incorporated into a news story. After a while the Vulcan campaign’s media strategy began to run itself. As the profile of the issue grew the media began to contact the group for updates and progress reports. The campaigners would endeavour to provide the press with this information, and it would subsequently be used in news reports.

Notes

1. A lot of the information and reflections included in this chapter comes from interviews with the activists involved, the field notes from the ethnography, and personal emails between the committee members and to supporters via the Save the Vulcan email list.
2. The responsibility for heritage in Wales lies with the devolved Welsh Government.
3. Emails from activists in the Vulcan committee have been used with the permission of the authors but anonymised accordingly.
4. Derek Rapport is the name of the owner of the developer Marcol Asset Management.
5. This is shorthand for St. David’s 2 a major shopping centre in the Cardiff.
6. The event has since been removed from Facebook.