

2 October 2014

Paper Title	Establishing a Communications Strategy
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 67.14
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Purpose of Paper:	Decision
Recommendation:	Agree the proposed three year Communications Strategy, committing to the year one communications priorities which will inform all activity from October 2014 to October 2015, including an organisation-wide marketing review to be undertaken in 2015.
Decision Required:	To agree the proposed Communications Strategy and recommend it to the Board for approval.

Impact:	<p>Impact on the Environment: Effective, strategic communication of our purpose and the NRM approach both with staff and external audiences will drive engagement, knowledge and activity that will help deliver our Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Impact on the Economy: Effective communications will improve the visibility of the role of NRW including increasing knowledge of services and support available, alongside regulation and enforcement as well as improving levels of customer care.</p> <p>Impact on Community: Effective communications will build awareness and engagement with NRW's purpose and the NRM approach with targeted audiences, as well as driving knowledge of the services, support and facilities the organisation provides.</p>
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	<p>Impact on Knowledge: The insight programme proposed as part of the strategy will increase NRW's understanding of the organisation's positioning with key audiences, satisfaction levels and data to inform strategic direction and service development.</p>
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Issue

1. An effective Communications Strategy and model for delivery is critical to Natural Resources Wales' ability to achieve its vision and build a strong customer-focused brand. This paper seeks approval for a proposed Communications Strategy, a commitment to the year one priorities and agreement on the work plan approach, to include an organisation wide review of marketing.

Summary

2. The proposed Communications Strategy has a lifespan of three years and is designed to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan. It creates a three year communications framework based on an intuitive phased delivery cycle of:

Year One	Creating the foundation October 2014 – October 2015
Year Two	Unlocking the potential October 2015 – October 2016
Year Three	High performing organisation October 2016 – October 2017

3. It will ensure that focus is given to developing a strong 'common sense' positioning for the organisation, building understanding of who we are and what we do amongst key audiences. It is designed to enable us to be creative and agile, able to move to close gaps between where we are and where we want to be as an engaged, customer focused organisation.
4. There is a need to build an integrated communications delivery approach, alongside necessary communications tools and plans (including digital), that the organisation does not currently have, particularly around evaluation and insight - all vital ingredients in planning communications activity.
5. The Communications Directorate is focused on delivery, so every effort has been made to avoid overburdening the Communications Strategy with theory and unnecessary context.

6. Public sector communications dominates the Welsh landscape and the proposed strategy is designed to ensure that NRW is able to stand out. It is intended that this innovative approach to communications will reflect the innovative nature of NRW.

Background

7. This Strategy is a living document that provides the framework through which the whole organisation will work to build awareness, understanding and trust in our organisation's story, what we stand for and what we do. It provides a strong direction that all communications activity should be working towards, helping us take every opportunity and shape it in a truly meaningful way.
8. It also recognises the role the Communications Directorate plays in the cultural development of NRW, and the need to move to a more sophisticated staff engagement approach to build belief in a vision for the organisation and a strong customer ethos.
9. The emphasis will be on creating trust and credibility in Natural Resources Wales with both internal and external audiences, avoiding at all costs the 'Hollow Brand' building results that a short-term approach would deliver. The raw material is excellent: great stories, passionate and knowledgeable staff, strong purpose and an innovative nature are all key ingredients to a potentially world leading organisation. The proposed Communications Strategy will ensure that the materials are channelled in the right way for the best outcomes.
10. This organisation's communications activity will be designed to be effective, efficient and fully evaluated in order to demonstrate the impact made. Our approach is to prioritise low and no cost campaigns over advertising, using the right tools for the right audiences to achieve high-quality and value for money results.
11. The Welsh context is fast moving and ever changing, plus communications must keep pace with the steep development curve of NRW itself. By taking a living document approach, and keeping the strategy constantly under review we are able to deliver an agile and responsive communications service.
12. Communication activity should be planned from an informed position, with data and information relating to key audiences. Year two and year three communications priorities and Work Plans will benefit from information from the proposed Insight Programme and will be developed as part of the organisation's annual business planning cycle. Like all strategies this is a starting point and success relies on the full commitment of the organisation.

13. The proposed planned approach allows us to be focused but remain able to progress opportunities and collaborations with Welsh Government and other key partners on communications activity that are of mutual benefit.
14. The communications directorate change programme will be an important step in achieving the necessary integrated delivery model and it is essential that this is completed before the end of this year so that progress can be made at a faster pace.
15. Digital communications is central to the organisation's ability to deliver effective, engaging, timely, low- cost campaigns - therefore focus will be given to the development of creative design and digital capability in terms of skills and the platforms we use.
16. There is also an acute need to fully review associated communications spend and activity across the organisation as well as marketing arrangements and activity with a view to identifying resources, efficiencies and an effective marketing delivery model.

Next Steps

- To introduce year one work plan and continue to progress September/October 2014 tasks.
- To embed Communications Strategy across the organisation.
- To share proposed Strategy and discuss shared opportunities with communications colleagues in Welsh Government and key partners.
- To finalise Directorate change programme in order to establish the integrated delivery model.

Risks

- Failure to endorse a direction for communications, as detailed in the strategy, will prevent the organisation from capitalising from the benefits of effective communications in establishing the organisation's position and achieving its vision.
- The strategy relies on the full commitment of Executive Team. Failure to ensure that the direction given in the strategy is reflected in Directorate Delivery Plans will dilute progress.
- Successful delivery of the strategy and the associated year one work plan requires a specialist, multi-disciplined communications team. Failure to restructure to support the integrated delivery model will severely impact on progress.

- A review of both marketing and associated communications activity and spend is vital. If not undertaken the organisation will not have a clear view of whether resources are being used effectively and if efficiencies are possible.

Financial Implications

17. An organisation wide review of communications and marketing resource will be used to identify a reprioritised communications budget.

Communications

18. Following approval from Executive Team and the endorsement of the Board the Communications Strategy will be shared across the organisation and steps taken to ensure that staff are empowered to play a part in successful delivery.

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Annex 1 Communication Strategy
Annex 2 Year one communications work plan