

**Agenda Item No: 7**

**Communicating the Benefits of Growth**

*To:* **JSGIC**

*Date:* **21<sup>st</sup> July 2010**

*From:* **Laura Halstead, Communications Manager**

*Purpose:* **FOR STEER**

To update Committee members on current and planned communications activities over the coming months, and to ask for any suggestions on additional future activity.

*Recommendation:* **To review the paper and provide any suggestions for improvements.**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 At the last JSGIC meeting (April 2010) there was a request from committee members to bring forward a paper regarding communication of the wider growth agenda. This paper draws together the successes we have had in the past and looks forward to the work we plan to undertake in the future, in a rapidly changing political and economic climate.

1.2 In 2008 we created the Cambridgeshire Horizons Communications and Community Engagement Strategy for 2009-2011. In September 2008 this document was approved by the Horizons Board and we have been working hard to implement over the past two years. This paper outlines our successes so far, and looks at our communications priorities to March 2011.

1.3 At the last Main Board Meeting (1<sup>st</sup> July 2010) an update on the Community Engagement element of the Strategy was presented, and the following areas of work were agreed:

- Helping to draft community engagement strategies with the local authorities.
- Helping to organise community forums.
- Delivering a renewable energy awareness raising campaign.
- Continuing other community engagement via online and PR means.

## **2.0 Results to date**

2.1 In our original Strategy we identified 15 key areas for evaluation. An update on progress against these 15 targets can be found in Annex 1.

2.2 Overall, our refreshed website has been a success, with increased visitor numbers and a far greater range of information available online. The project has also made significant ongoing cost savings because we can now update the website ourselves, allowing us to respond to the current ever changing agenda.

2.3 Horizons and the growth agenda still have a strong presence in the press, and we have expanded our social media offering as well.

2.4 Marketing costs have been reduced through careful procurement, and wherever possible projects are carried out on a staff time only cost basis.

## **3.0 Looking forward**

3.1 Over the coming months through to March 2011, we will be focussing our communication efforts on the following projects:

### **3.2 Renewables Energy awareness raising strategy**

As agreed at the Horizons Board meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 we will be working with the local authorities and Renewables East to carry out a renewable energy awareness raising campaign across the county to raise awareness and dispel myths about renewable energy technology. It is important to carry out this campaign now to ensure local residents have the right information they require prior to further public consultation on the major development sites, which will include proposals for renewable energy solutions.

### **3.3 Social media**

To further develop our successful work within the field of social media, we will continue to run our Twitter site (@CambsHorizons), which currently has 330 followers, and endeavour to obtain more followers. We will also upload all video content created for our website onto our YouTube channel as well (Horizons100) to share it with the widest audience possible. As new social media channels develop we will evaluate them for potential usage.

### **3.4 Reactive PR**

Given the current pace of policy and market change in the area of housing and planning, we will undoubtedly be called upon by the media to comment on various growth-related issues. Where appropriate, we will react to these requests and provide quotes and information, always working in partnership with the local authorities.

We will also proactively monitor all media coverage relating to growth in Cambridgeshire, and coordinate partnership responses where required to correct factual inaccuracies or further promote growth.

### **3.5 Proactive PR**

Working with our partners we will seek opportunities to further promote growth-related activities in Cambridgeshire to the local, trade and national press. In particular, we will look for feature opportunities to help explain the need for growth and outline plans for what will be happening in the future.

### **3.6 Speaker opportunities**

The Communications Manager will continue to seek further opportunities for Sir David Trippier, Alex Plant, John Williamson and the team to speak at conferences and events to raise awareness of the growth agenda in Cambridgeshire, and of the importance of Cambridgeshire as a net contributor to the UK's GDP.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

4.1 Whilst elements of the growth agenda are currently in a state of flux, we propose to maintain a steady flow of communication, without pushing any major campaigns, aside from the renewable energy awareness raising strategy.

#### **5.0 Recommendation**

5.1 We would welcome the views of JSGIC members on the issues raised in this paper. In particular it would be helpful to hear views on how we can make the best use of available resources to maximise the value of communications around growth, and to receive feedback on our actions and results to date. .

## Annex 1: Evaluation results to date

- **All members of partner organisations working on the growth agenda will have a clear and accurate knowledge of what Cambridgeshire Horizons' does, and gives consistent messages about the growth agenda.**

Following on from a series of lunchtime briefing sessions for officers, and many appearances at member and officer events and meetings, I believe that Horizons has successfully communicated its role and purpose to stakeholders over the past two years. We will continue to check any copy written by third parties relating to Horizons to ensure it presents the right information and image, and attend meetings and briefings where required.

- **Media coverage (across all forms of media) will increase by 10%.**

In 2008 Cambridgeshire Horizons achieved £91,805 worth of coverage in the media, whilst in 2009 we achieved £146,793. For the first six months of 2010 we have achieved £60,672 of coverage. Therefore in 2009 we achieved 62% more coverage, 42% above target.

It would be fair to note that some of the increases could be due to the implementation of a more robust media monitoring system, as well as an increase in trade press coverage, which commands a higher value.

- **Media coverage will be more positive and include more of our key messages.**

Key Horizons staff have all received media training to ensure the continued promotion of our key messages in all interviews and media briefings. On the whole, Horizons have not been at the centre of any major negative media coverage (which has previously been the case).

- **Online coverage and multi-media coverage will increase by 20%.**

Online coverage now accounts for approximately 34% of our coverage by volume compared to 25% in 2009. Records of online coverage prior to 2008 are limited; therefore it would be difficult to make comparisons prior to this date.

- **The new Horizons website will appear on the front page of search engine listings for all selected key words.**

Our progression through the ranks of search engine listings is going well. As of July 2010, a link to our website appeared on the front page of Google for the following key words:

- Cambridgeshire Horizons (top result)

- Cambs Horizons (top result)

- Horizons
- Growth in Cambridgeshire
- Northstowe
- North West Cambridge (page 2 result)
- Market Towns Cambridgeshire
- Cambridge Southern Fringe (2<sup>nd</sup> result)
- Cambridge East
- Housing Growth Fund (2<sup>nd</sup> result)
- Cambridgeshire Quality Charter (top result)

We also rank well for these key words on Bing, Yahoo and Ask Jeeves.

- **Visitors numbers to the Horizons website and dwell time will increase every quarter by 5% upon implementation of the new website.**

When the Horizons website was first re-launched in January 2009 visitor numbers have increased by 20% (on average) per day, with significant peaks of activity around major PR announcements and events. The website is updated at least two times per week, often more, to ensure it remains as up-to-date as possible.

On the whole, dwell time on the site has remained steady over the past 18 months. We therefore need to put renewed effort into adding new content onto our website that engages visitors for longer, such as increased video content.

- **Partnership use of the Horizons website and intranet will increase by 30%.**

After careful monitoring of the use of the Horizons intranet site (used for the storage of meeting papers and large documents), we took the decision to shut down the site to save ongoing costs. If required in the future, the Horizons website has the capacity to create new intranet file storage areas at no additional cost.

- **Full distribution records for Horizons publications will be kept, and circulation will increase by 10%.**

To reduce our carbon footprint we now direct as many people as possible to our website, which keeps a record of how many people our publications pages automatically, therefore also saving staff time.

- **The new partnership e-newsletter will be distributed to 40% more people, and achieve a 45% read rating and a click through of 6%.**

The e-newsletter has been redesigned and branded as “Growth in Cambridgeshire” e-newsletter and now shares a much broader range of stories with the readers. Unfortunately, latest click through figures were unavailable at the time of writing this report, but previously they had been well above national averages.

- **All queries to the Horizons website and general telephone line will be logged and then answered within ten working days.**

The Admin Team manage all general queries via the website and general telephone line and have a process in place to ensure responses go out within ten days.

- **Awareness of Cambridgeshire Horizons will rise to at least 15% of the local population by 2011.**

As yet no further research has taken place to update this figure. Going forward we will carefully consider the aims and objectives of any future research, and run any potential proposals via the Horizons Board, prior to commissioning to ensure best use of funds.

- **The Horizons conference will reach 97% capacity, and reduce drop-out/no show rates to 15%.**

In 2010, the Horizons conference reached just over 100% capacity with standing room only for the events team. No shows rates were reduced to around 15% (the conference is overbooked to allow for this).

- **Exhibitor numbers at the conference will increase by 20%.**

Exhibitor bookings for the last year have not increased by 20%, however all exhibition space has been booked to full capacity. A reduction in exhibition space has not enabled this expansion to occur as planned.

- **40% of visitors to the Horizons conference will complete a feedback form.**

We have not yet been able to reach 40% feedback on our conference, but we have managed to achieve this for other training events throughout the year. Online feedback forms initially increased feedback, but this year numbers have slightly dropped off again, therefore we need to dedicate more time and effort to this in the future.

- **The number of community and stakeholder events will increase by 30%.**

As we are working in close partnership with the local authorities, Horizons is no longer carrying out independent community and stakeholder events, unless specifically requested to do so (e.g. to provide a briefing to the

Environment Agency). Instead we are focussing our efforts on partnership activities, such as the north west Cambridge Community Forum.