Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales

Board Meeting
16 October 2013

Paper Title	**Natural Resources Wales – our approach to Corporate Communications**
Paper Reference:	**NRW B (O) 45.13 (Oct 13)**
Paper Prepared By:	Catrin Hornung, Head of Communications

Purpose of Paper:	**Discussion**
Recommendation:	To discuss and endorse our approach to corporate communications to support development of our Communications Strategy.
Decision Required:	Endorsement of approach (Principles, Objectives, Priorities and Ways of working)

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	**Impact on the Environment**: Our communications work supports delivery of our business priorities, to maintain, enhance and use our natural resources for people and communities. **Impact on the Economy**: Our communications priorities focus on key areas, for example showing how our work supports jobs and the economy. **Impact on Community**: Our communications work shows how our work benefits and protects communities all over Wales. **Impact on Knowledge**: We are committed to continually learning from our communications, to deliver better outcomes.

Issue

1. This paper sets out Natural Resources Wales' approach to corporate communications as a precursor to development of a full Communications Strategy. The Board's feedback and endorsement of the approach is required.

Summary

2. Good communications is essential in helping Natural Resources Wales deliver its priorities, outcomes and services. The corporate communications function works across the organisation – with policy and operational teams – as a strategic partner to deliver high quality and engaging communications that underpins our work.

3. The reasons why we need to communicate effectively can be summarised as:

a) To fulfil a specific legal or statutory requirement to provide public information about our work. For example, public consultations around sites that we designate or sites that we regulate.
b) As an integral 'tool' for achieving our outcomes; recognising that communications is a powerful delivery tool in its own right.
c) To help the public understand our work, especially where they are directly affected. For example, community relations work around sites such as Newborough, or contentious sites such as Bryn Compost.
d) To influence attitudes and behaviours, for example community action on preparing for flooding.
e) To promote key services for the public. For example, where groups need to take action – such as agricultural waste exemptions – or more generally where we want to raise awareness of the services we offer, such as visitor centres and recreational opportunities.
f) To inform and support the public during times of crisis. For example, our role during environmental incidents, forest fires and flooding.
g) To boost Wales' economy through, for example, promotion of our environment for recreation purposes.

Background

4. In April 2013 three communications teams from the previous three bodies came together to form one Natural Resources Wales communications team. The three organisations had adopted quite different approaches to their communications work.

5. The new team has staff based in six locations across Wales. Since April, the team has adopted new ways of working and has worked under interim arrangements, with many team members taking on different roles on a temporary basis. The team has been working to an

interim set of communications priorities, drawn from the Business Plan 2013/14 and remit letter.

6. Based on wider organisational development, the team has been developing principles, objectives, priorities and ways of working for communications work by NRW. Input from the Board at this stage will be helpful in agreeing our approach which can then be reflected in our Communications Strategy and Plans for the future.

Next Steps

7. The organisation is currently developing its Corporate Plan for the next three years. The Corporate Plan will outline the business priorities for the organisation, which will dictate our communications priorities. We will finalise the organisation's Communications Strategy based on the priorities in the Corporate Plan and Board feedback to the outlined approach.

8. We are also finalising supporting strategies for the detailed areas of work, such as digital communications. The Board has already been engaged on our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

9. Over the next few months we will also formally restructure and reshape the team to better support delivery of organisational priorities and outcomes.

Risks

10. Natural Resources Wales needs to establish itself as a credible organisation with a clear purpose, vision and priorities. It needs to be open in the way it operates, establish trust in the way it works and build a strong profile. It needs to do all of this while 'forming' itself and undergoing business transformation. Good communications and engagement underpins all of this.

11. The risks of not communicating effectively and of not establishing a single voice in the way that we work, would undermine the successful development of the organisation and the priorities we are seeking to deliver.

Financial Implications

12. Currently we have a total non-staff communications budget of circa £150,000. When finalising the communications strategy we will also take a zero-budget approach to communications campaign requirements in order to bid for sufficient funding to deliver our priorities.

Communications

13. If endorsed, the organisation will adopt this approach to all its communications activity.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

14. As outlined in our Communications principles, accessibility is one of the three cornerstones of our approach. Our principles also outline our commitment to use of accessible language, approaches that are appropriate to the intended audience and complying with relevant legislation.

Index of Appendices

Annex 1 – Proposed approach
Annex 2 – Summary of Ways of working

Annex 1

Natural Resources Wales – our communications approach (Principles, Objectives, Priorities and Ways of Working)

Introduction

1.Natural Resources Wales was formed in April 2013 with a purpose to maintain, enhance and use Wales' natural resources, now and in the future. It is the largest Government Sponsored Body in Wales and is accountable to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food.

2. As an organisation spending public money, it is vital that it operates in an accountable and open way, communicating openly and honestly with the Welsh public in order to show good value for money.

3. This approach will form the foundation of the organisation's emerging Communications Strategy.

External context

4. The communications world has changed rapidly in the last few years. With the growth of 24/7 and online media, but in particular social media networks, the 'power of the people' is now stronger than ever. Many people no longer consume news and information by traditional channels, print and broadcast. Instead, personal choice governs the way many of us receive news and interact with organisations which places more importance on the quality, relevance and creativity of content provided. Never before has communications been so immediate and never before have members of the public been able to make personal views so widely known.

5. This 'digital revolution' is already transforming how both public and private organisations provide services and meet customer needs; organisations now need to provide the same – or better - services online as they do in other traditional ways and they need to be able to respond to customer dialogue quickly and effectively.

6. Public respect and trust in public bodies and Government has declined due to a number of high-profile issues. This means that all public organisations are under heightened scrutiny and need to be more transparent and open in their communications than ever before. Because of the digital revolution already mentioned, it is easier than ever for the public to scrutinise and make their views widely known.

7. Any organisation has to take this into account in the way that it approaches its communications. Messages can no longer be controlled so tightly as in the past and communications is more about the exchange and development of ideas. Organisations need to be responsive, empowering and build networks and communities to deliver their desired outcomes and achieve their aims.

Internal context

8. The formation of Natural Resources Wales has brought together three very different cultures and organisations. Staff members have brought with them many cultural influences from previous organisations and it is taking time to replace these with new influences and therefore a new culture.

9. We have begun the process of organisational development, but it is a journey and will take time. Development of a shared understanding and commitment around a new vision, mission and supporting values is ongoing and will come to fruition through the development of the Corporate Plan.

10.We need to restructure the organisation to align our structures to reflect the organisation's priorities and bring teams together around a common purpose.

11. This work on the strategic positioning of the organisation is running in parallel with management of significant change and business transformation that, while an exciting opportunity to do things differently, is also directly impacting on staff, therefore our communications approach needs to reflect these challenges.

12. We are heavily reliant on ICT and other systems – and yet these are also in the process of being redefined and made fit for purpose for the new organisation. In the meantime, there are limitations to how technology can enable communications and engagement.

Challenges

13. Against this external and internal backdrop, there are a number of communications challenges that we are facing:

- Our remit is wide and the expectations of our many customers, partners and communities are very high.
- We need to build our profile and establish our reputation as an effective organisation that is delivering positive change. To do this, we need to be clear on the ground we want to own, which means setting priorities and avoiding 'being all things to all men'.
- We need clarity of vision, mission and values.
- We need to be able to speak with one voice on policies and strategies that are emerging.
- We need to develop our understanding and get onto the front foot in relation to the digital revolution and develop our capability to deliver our services online to interact flexibly and in 'real time' with our stakeholders and customers.
- We are currently hampered in developing our new culture by the fact that we are still working on three different ICT systems and by other technology-related issues such as interim intranet.
- Our existing intranet and website are 'day one' interim solutions, which are limited in functionality and content. There are projects in place to redevelop and improve both sites, but in the meantime there are limitations on their effectiveness.

- We are developing a culture where leaders and line managers take a visible lead for communicating and engaging with their teams. Until this culture is embedded, the organisation is overly dependent on corporate communications.

Communications principles

14.In planning and delivering communications, *all* our communications will follow some core communication principles. **Honesty, transparency** and **accessibility** will form the foundation of our communications.

Accessible language

All communications (written and verbal) will be:

- in plain language
- avoid the use of jargon
- avoid acronyms

Appropriate to the audience

We will listen to our audiences (internal and external), understand their point of view and communicate in a manner appropriate to the intended audience.

Responsible and timely

We will communicate our decisions, our impacts (both positive and negative) to the right audience at the right time.

Professional and ethical

Our communications will reflect the professional standards expected of Natural Resources Wales.

Planned at the beginning

Our communications will be planned at the beginning in order to get the right messages across to the right people in the right way at the right time.

Best use of tools/methods

We will make best use of all the tools/methods available – verbal, printed, digital – to communicate effectively with our audiences. We will keep up-to-date with industry developments and advances.

On brand (consistent) and legal

Our communications will be produced following our brand guidelines and will comply with relevant legislation, including *Freedom of Information Act 2000* and *Welsh Language Act 1993*.

Communications objectives

15.The reasons why we need to communicate effectively can be summarised as:

a) To fulfil a specific legal or statutory requirement to provide public information about our work. For example, public consultations around sites that we designate or sites that we regulate.
b) As an integral 'tool' for achieving our outcomes; recognising that communications is a powerful delivery tool in its own right.
c) To help the public understand our work, especially where they are directly affected. For example, community relations work around sites such as Newborough or contentious sites such as Bryn Compost.
d) To influence attitudes and behaviours, for example community action on preparing for flooding.
e) To promote key services for the public. For example, where groups need to take action – such as agricultural waste exemptions – or more generally where we want to raise awareness of the services we offer, such as visitor centres and recreational opportunities.
f) To inform and support the public during times of crisis. For example, our role during environmental incidents, forest fires and flooding.
g) To boost Wales' economy through, for example, promotion of our environment for recreation purposes.

Strategic approach

16.The organisation needs to work collaboratively with others to achieve its aims. To do this, communications and engagement need to be at the heart of the business; the importance of which needs to be recognised at all levels and senior leaders need to be active and vocal advocates for its importance.

17.Our approach needs to empower, enable and equip the business to engage partners, customers and communities, by building capacity and capability throughout the business. We want to:

- be responsive to the internal and external world;
- build networks that improve the way we work so that we can learn from others and work collaboratively to create a better future;
- empower our staff to engage and collaborate.

Strategic positioning and immediate priorities

18. Our first-year priorities in terms of strategic positioning are:

- Establish our credibility as the new organisation formed to maintain, enhance and use Wales' natural resources for the benefit of people and communities, now and in the future
- Establish a new relationship with Government as a body that is sponsored to help achieve shared outcomes, but is independent in its decision making, of the Welsh Government.
- Establish our credibility and integrity as an organisation by doing what we say we will do, how we say we will do it – i.e. being open, transparent and honest and good to do business with.
- Exercise our statutory duties to protect the environment in the context of a different purpose, whilst actively contributing towards Wales' economic and social prosperity.

- Deliver tangible outcomes and different ways of working on key flagship areas: flood risk management; supporting jobs and business; access and recreation; and urban environment.

Ways of working

19.The communications function has developed new ways of working for all functional areas within its current scope, which are:

- Media relations
- Government business
- Digital communications and social media
- Brand development
- Internal communications
- Corporate events
- Stakeholder engagement

20. These are summarised in Annex 2.

21. We have developed communications priorities and interim strategies for all of this work based on the first-year business plan and remit letter.

Achievements to date

22. The organisation has made good progress in the first six months in achieving its communications objectives. Notable achievements include:

- Growing our media presence around priority areas, for example: launch of NRW; Wales Coast Path one-year anniversary; Real Radio 'Wales framed' campaign to encourage people to enjoy the environment; Countryfile appearances (with more planned); good coverage for big legal cases such as Moonshine, Avocet, Pico.
- Reputational management around issues such as: Circuit of Wales, tree disease, Newborough, Glasdir flooding report.
- Establishing relationships with elected representatives locally, briefing them on issues in their constituency related to their work. Good examples include: Newborough, Glasdir flooding, Circuit of Wales.
- Managing our response to parliamentary and assembly committee inquiries, as well as Assembly Questions. These have included:
- Day One website and intranet in place (and intranet launched bilingually since). Plans now in place for full redevelopment of intranet and website to improve user experience, functionality and to migrate remaining content from legacy site.
- 84,588 unique visits to our website and 621,420 views of pages on our website
- Reached potential 3 million accounts on Twitter
- Nearly 1000 retweets and 2000 mentions on Twitter

- Responding to regular customer, assembly member and stakeholder enquiries on social media – including tree disease, flooding, illegal fishing.
- Comprehensive staff engagement programme 'The Conversation' conducted during the summer – face-to-face dialogue with 86% of staff.
- Change communications channel established for staff to give them a comprehensive picture of the entire change landscape, supported by comprehensive information pages on the intranet.
- Established internal communications channels – Yr Wythnos, Managers' Monthly Guide, change update. We have received good feedback from staff.
- Launched LGBT network – their membership increased as a result
- Attendance at Royal Welsh Show and National Eisteddfod – including busy event schedule.
- Production of 'Our purpose and priorities' publication as a summary of business plan.
- Successful engagement with stakeholders on a business as usual basis and on key issues, such as the development of our Corporate Plan; official launch event.

Longer-term Communication Strategy

23. We will use these principles, objectives, priorities and ways of working to develop an organisational communications strategy. This will entirely align to the business priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

24. More detailed digital, stakeholder and media strategies will be 'nested' within.

25. Our priorities for next year – including campaign planning and detailed messaging – will be developed in line with the Corporate Plan priorities and themes.

Annex 2

Summary of ways of working

Media relations
1. Our media relations aims to inform the public, via the media, of our work in a positive, consistent and credible way. We are doing this by developing a clear media profile for NRW during year one that encapsulates the broad remit of work but is focused on the priorities of the organisation, positioning NRW as a reliable and credible organisation that sustainably manages the resources of Wales. A media strategy supports this work, which focuses on proactive programme of media relations giving consistent and clear messages on our work. Notable successes have included tree health (in particular larch disease).

Government business
2.We have a government business protocol that sets out how we manage our response to parliamentary and assembly inquiries, how we respond to parliamentary and assembly questions and how aim to respond to our political stakeholders on our full range of accountabilities. We are adopting a proactive approach to engaging all our elected representatives across Wales, so that they understand our work for their constituents and can work with us on local issues as they arise. We are also adopting a proactive approach to how we engage with the legislative process in Wales, the UK and in Europe and are regularly engaged in consultation and scrutiny processes. Our aim is to provide the best possible advice, expertise and evidence to help politicians make their policy decisions.

Digital
3. We have developed a digital, strategy that sets out how we will design our information, transactions and digital engagement around the needs of all our users. Specifically, this includes creating a new intranet that enables communication, collaboration and transaction for our staff; continuing to develop our website to provide customers with a better quality experience; develop our overall corporate digital presence, including social media; strengthen our in-house technical capabilities; and help migrate all necessary and relevant remaining content from legacy platforms.

Brand
4. We have set up a brand project with leads from across the business to continue the work of developing our brand, develop the necessary tools to help us manage our brand and to manage brand roll-out in a cost-effective and prioritised manner.

Internal communications
5. Our internal communications priorities are to support leaders in driving organisational development through enabling engagement and information flow to and from staff. We have established a number of internal communications channels and have an interim intranet that has very limited functionality. A new interactive intranet is scheduled for April 2014. We have

developed a number of internal communications plans to support and schedule the work, for example for the change programme.

Corporate events and sponsorship

6. There are two different types of events that Natural Resources Wales attends and supports:

- High profile national events – where we have a 'corporate' presence with the aim of raising our profile, explaining our work to broader public and engaging high priority stakeholder.
- Local events – attendance at local events must be directly linked to a business objective, have clear targets and reasons for attendance and be able to prove that it is the most cost-effective way to reach this objective.

7. Our two main corporate events this year have been the Royal Welsh Show and National Eisteddfod. We are currently reviewing our attendance this year in order to learn lessons and improve for next year. Planning will start immediately once the review is complete.

8. Natural Resources Wales will sometimes support other events financially or with 'in kind' support. This form of 'sponsorship' will only be agreed if it has clear links with business priorities and outcomes we want to achieve.

Stakeholder engagement

9. The Board endorsed our stakeholder strategy in May and since then we have worked to implement the approach, embed it in the ways of working of the organisation and develop accompanying tools, for example a toolkit for stakeholder engagement. We are committed to maintaining positive relationships with our many stakeholders and partners and to engage relevant stakeholders as early as possible in planning our work.