highways england

Highways England
Communications Plan 2018-19

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Foreword

This is the first Highways England Communications Plan and outlines how the Communications Directorate will help the company achieve its goals during 2018-19.

Our work supports the three imperatives of safety, customer service and delivery. We will also seek to build awareness, understanding and advocacy of what we do and why, engage our staff, and enhance our corporate reputation.

This plan also outlines how the Communications Directorate will change and improve in order to produce integrated communications that reach and engage our many audiences more effectively.

Introduction

This is our first annual Communications Plan. It sets out the priorities for 2018-19 and is built around the imperatives of safety, delivery and customer service. Alongside these are our goals and core reputational themes, which include our wider contributions to the country such as economic growth, innovation and efficiency, environment and skills.

Our aim is to deliver first-class communications solutions that pave the way for Highways England to achieve its objectives. The Communications Directorate is a central corporate function with professional and skilled communicators whose job is to devise and deliver ways to engage our customers, neighbours, suppliers, stakeholders and staff about our activities.

Importantly, we need to communicate not just what we do but why we do it; we must tell a story about the benefits of our work and the outcomes for customers, communities and the country. Story telling should be central to our communication.

Highways England connects people and places, business and customers. We enable travel, jobs, new homes and economic growth. And we seek to minimise our impact on the environment and provide additional benefits to our neighbours.

All our communications activity should share a common purpose: to raise awareness and understanding, build trust and confidence, and increase engagement and advocacy. It is the perceptions of others that will define our reputation, which in turn is vital to our future.

Our audiences are numerous and may not always be ready to recognise the value of what we do. They range from the people who use our roads to the communities alongside or affected by them. Reaching them can be challenging and complex. Some can be quick to criticise - such as road user organisations, politicians and environmentalists - if we, or the suppliers working in our name, fail to listen to and understand their concerns and needs.

And despite our constant presence in the nation's day-to-day life, research shows there is low awareness of who we are or understanding of what we do. Half the population has either never heard of us or knows no more than our name.

We need to better tell our story in order to strengthen our identity and build public trust and confidence in our ability to deliver. This will be a continuing challenge as we increase activity over the next few years, with more roadworks and more schemes. We want to ensure we are well positioned to go into future road investment programmes with the necessary support, trust and respect of government, stakeholders and the public.

Currently Highways England speaks with many voices. To present ourselves as one organisation our communication needs to become more joined up. We will further develop our corporate narrative, tone of voice and brand identity to do this and we need the whole business to play its part.

When we launch new schemes, develop new policies, campaigns or strategies, or draft reports, early engagement with the communications function will help us to achieve public understanding. Identifying our specific audiences and the messages we want to convey will ensure that communication activity is planned, focussed, relevant, fully developed and correctly delivered.

In 2018-19 we want to secure the support of the business to move beyond being a transactional service provider to a reputational solutions partner, advising on and devising the best ways to present information and reach audiences. Within the directorate we are already working to improve our skills and capabilities, our tools for insight and research, and our processes for monitoring and evaluation.

We are further developing the corporate narrative and tone of voice in order to produce messaging that is engaging, evidence led and audience focussed.

We want to be a high performing directorate that is sought out and trusted to provide expert advice on the shaping of messages and the use of the myriad of communications channels - digital, social and news media in all its forms - print, broadcast and online - to reach target audiences.

Translating the company's technical and delivery work into a story about why we do what we do will make it easier for us to engage with our audiences and secure understanding, recognition and advocacy. If together we get it right, Highways England will increasingly be recognised for the benefits we bring to people's lives.

Peter Allen
Executive Director, Communications

Corporate goals for 2018-19

The corporate goals focus around our imperatives and our vision of the future. They include:

- Safety
- Transformation
- Delivery of Road Investment Strategy 1
- Development of Road Investment Strategy 2
- Customer service

The role of communications in supporting corporate priorities

Effective communication is crucial in enabling Highways England to achieve our priorities. Six key areas where communication plays a significant role are:

- developing multi-channel campaigns that seek to change the behaviours of drivers to reduce their risk of incidents and reduce KSIs
- communicating the planning, construction and delivery of complex, major and other projects in terms that explain both what we do and why, eg significant improvements in journeys
- informing drivers about road conditions and roadworks so they can better plan their journeys
- raising awareness of the company's wider contribution to communities alongside the strategic road network through our designated funds
- paving the way for the company's future plans by enhancing our reputation and positioning us as a trusted and competent delivery organisation
- helping the company meet our obligations to provide information to our shareholder (Department for Transport) and statutory bodies (Office of Rail and Road, Transport Focus)

RODE

Delivering communications to meet Highways England's goals

From the corporate goals and imperatives we have developed our core communications deliverables for 2018-19.

1. Safety

We will develop safety campaigns using insight, research, customer feedback and the expertise of safety colleagues. We will also take into account the influence of stakeholders and the perceptions they have of our safety record and priorities.

We will use a combination of marketing and advertising, media engagement and social media to reach specific audiences. We will also work with partners to amplify our messages and to help them share their positive influence, and support our regional safety coordinators who are working with regional partners on focussed campaigns. We will evaluate each campaign and implement lessons learnt.

During 2018-19 and beyond we will further develop what have proved to be our most effective safety campaigns, and launch new evidence-based ones aimed at reducing KSI figures.

Our marketing campaigns will focus on key territories including:

- Holiday periods
- Driving in the rain
- Goods vehicles
- Motorcyclists
- Close following

We will also develop marketing materials for key priorities including:

- Roadworks
- Smart motorways
- Winter driving

Smart motorways

We have to communicate our safety facts, research and activity in order to persuade others that our smart motorways are as safe as, or safer than, traditional motorways.

We will develop and implement a campaign to increase understanding of

- how to use them, including emergency areas and in breakdowns
- confidence in the safety of their design
- the customer benefits of smart motorway investment

The volume of roadworks across England will increase in 2018-19 and we will increase our messaging about driving safely through roadworks.

Learner drivers will be permitted to use English motorways from June. We will work alongside a safety campaign led by the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency. We will create an online e-learning hub and develop an app to support it, available free to all learner drivers.

We will increase focus on the freight and commercial sector as the source of most incidents that cause major delays. We will work with strategic partners and attend events to engage face-to-face with the industry about safe driving behaviour.

We will undertake further multi-channel communications around pre-journey vehicle checks and safe towing ahead of holiday periods.

We will develop further campaigns based on business needs, insight, research and a review of data provided to our creative agency, Adam & EveDDB, appointed in January 2018.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

We have a target to reduce our accident frequency rates internally and across the supply chain. We will continue to engage with colleagues and the supply chain to improve our health and safety performance, which aligns with our five year health and safety plan.

We will also put greater focus on the wellbeing of those who work for Highways England and across the supply chain. We will continue to communicate our established programme to promote physical and mental wellbeing, and organise awards events that recognise performance.

2. Customer service

Our network carries a third of all traffic and two thirds of all freight. We connect the country. But our roads are often busy places for our customers. Keeping traffic flowing is fundamental to our purpose and unexpected jams and delays are a daily risk to our reputation.

This year will see a significant increase in roadworks as six new schemes begin - joining 16 already under construction - and with it a significant increase in the risk of our customers encountering lane restrictions and slower speeds. We will focus on communicating the long-term benefits of roadworks in order to enable our customers to understand and accept the short-term inconvenience.

We will also explain better how roadworks are carried out and how we respond to incidents, to dispel perceptions that ‘nothing is happening’. We will support our operations colleagues to ensure that road users have the information they need to plan and manage safe, effective journeys.

Through media and stakeholder engagement, we will highlight how we remove roadworks over bank holidays and use the summer getaway to talk about the role our network plays in helping people get to their holiday destinations.

We will use social media to point our customers to our website, where we will host more information about how roads and structures are built and maintained.

We will support publication externally and talk internally about our customer service strategic plan, which is designed to help us meet our 90% satisfaction target. We will work to raise awareness of our Traffic Officer service to showcase the daily work they do, in order to increase recognition of the high quality service we provide and how we keep traffic moving. This will include ride-outs with key journalists and closer relationships between operational delivery and the wider business.

We will communicate the benefits of our operational excellence and innovation programmes in smoothing traffic flow and improving the management of our assets, following the positive coverage of the 60mph story in late 2017.

We will continue to gain customer insight through a range of techniques including mining digital intelligence, social listening, quantitative survey analytics and qualitative behavioural research. This will help inform and evaluate engagement, campaigns, content, digital services and the delivery of the three imperatives.

3. Delivery

Delivering the Road Investment Strategy

It is vital that we engage customers, stakeholders and local communities in the design of our proposals. Communicating the on time, on budget delivery of our schemes is equally key.

We will go beyond explaining what we have delivered (outputs), to focus on why we have done so, clearly explaining the benefits (outcomes). In particular, we will communicate the benefits of eight major improvement schemes due to open in 2018-19, including how they will increase capacity and provide more reliable journeys.

We will also use these positive outcomes to make the case for the six further major improvements starting this year, including three smart motorway schemes.

We will develop an overarching narrative that recognises the challenges for our customers of an increasing volume of roadworks, and that provides consistent messages that support our communications activity around regional schemes.

Our programme communications teams will continue to ensure that customers are kept updated on why roadworks are happening and the impact on journeys so that people can plan and prepare. We will listen to communities and stakeholders affected by major improvement proposals and ensure we take their views into account. The roll out of mobile exhibition vans across our regions will be another tool in our community engagement.

We have launched a new communications planning toolkit for major projects and will move this year to more consistent risk tracking and project communications management. We are also supporting the roll out of customer insight surveys for major schemes and gathering public opinion at a regional and project level. This will help us move to more outcome focussed evaluation.

We will work with individual schemes to show that we are good neighbours and considerate constructors, and demonstrate how we leave a positive legacy.

High Speed 2 (HS2)

At the same time that government has committed to the delivery of unprecedented levels of investment in our road network, it has also committed to constructing HS2, phase 1 of which will have 18 direct interactions with our network in the West Midlands, East Midlands and south east.

This will mean more roadworks in the short term to achieve longer term benefits of an improved, better connected transport system. We will work collaboratively with HS2 to explain to our customers how our roadworks are carefully planned and delivered to minimise disruption.

Smart motorways and expressways

Smart motorways are under scrutiny from some of our most influential stakeholders. We will continue to engage with critical audiences and develop and implement a campaign that tackles misperceptions, builds public understanding of what they are, how they work and should be used (including clarity around emergency areas and Red X signs), and the safety and journey benefits.

Expressways have the potential to be controversial and we will work closely with the business to ensure our plans and safety priorities are fully understood by our stakeholders and customers and that we manage risks.

Complex infrastructure programme

Our three complex infrastructure projects are of particular importance to the country and our reputation, nationally and even internationally.

For the Lower Thames Crossing we will actively engage with local communities, businesses, politicians and local authorities to ensure we understand their concerns and are fully prepared for the statutory consultation planned for later this year.

On the A14 we will build our engagement activity with local people around the final section of the scheme which affects Huntingdon and continue our information campaigns and events in all areas affected by the ongoing construction and traffic management.

For Stonehenge we are supporting the submission of the Development Consent Order in autumn 2018 and rolling out a programme of communications and engagement activities which build advocacy and engage local, regional and national stakeholders.

Core themes

Economic growth

We will emphasise that the development of the strategic road network is vital to the success of the UK economy and supports business productivity through safe, reliable journeys, as well as unlocking new housing and business development; providing employment opportunities, and enabling international connectivity, such as through our schemes improving connections to the ports.

As the UK Government gets ready to exit the European Union, the political focus will be on improving the country's future competitiveness. We will explain how our schemes play a role in supporting economic growth. We will also highlight schemes made possible through our growth and housing fund that further unlock housing and commercial sites.

Innovation

Highways England is a world-leader in operating and managing roads. We will work with colleagues to uncover good stories to ensure that our innovation is better understood both within the industry and with road users, so that we enhance trust and confidence that we are experts in what we do. Publishing the updates to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges over the next two years is instrumental to driving the benefits of innovation though our supply chain.

By assuming direct responsibility for managing, maintaining and improving our assets, the company will be able to co-ordinate these works more efficiently, make more informed decisions and minimise disruption.

To support this, internal communications will play a role in encouraging the business to provide better information. Better data will also help us tell more engaging stories about increased efficiency and innovation, as well as highlighting how we

make open source traffic information available to help road users plan their journeys.

Our digital team will develop a new innovation portal that will enable the company to run regular innovation challenges and competitions to solve key business problems. We will promote the portal and use individual projects to tell our innovation story, celebrating success and sharing case studies and lessons learned.

Corporate documents

An increasing focus will be to communicate Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2). We will engage with stakeholders following the DfT's response to the consultation on future funding for the strategic road network and prepare for publication of RIS2 in March 2019.

We are working with the finance team to develop the content for our flagship corporate documents such as the Delivery Plan Update and Annual Report and Accounts, due to be published in the summer. We will shape the content into a narrative that aligns with our positioning and corporate tone of voice. Our creative team will ensure it is visually engaging and meets our brand identity before the digital team share it via our web estate and social media.

Efficiency

We are supporting the launch of the finance element of the new cloud-based Oracle system that replaced System for Managing (SfM), and will continue to support staff and suppliers through portal based information, awareness sessions and more specific training for finance users.

We will support the two-year Finance and Business Services (FBS) change programme. This includes working with internal communications and creative teams to plan how we best present the messaging required. Internal communications will also help introduce the estates strategy to colleagues via workshops and the portal.

Strategic partners and supply chain

Through our strategic partnerships team, we will continue to build strong and mutually beneficial relationships with our supply chain, strategic partners and stakeholders. To inform our initiatives, we will continue to seek stakeholder insights and undertake in-depth research.

We will support the Routes to Market procurement process. This will include briefing events for those taking part in the procurement process, webinars, briefing documents and trade media engagement, as well as internal communications. We will provide guidance and advice to the commercial division on developing messaging and collateral that will assist the supply chain in delivering on our efficiency target.

Our digital team will review the existing Supply Chain Portal to develop and implement a user centred solution that meets current and future suppliers' needs and maximises on engagement opportunities provided by technology developments. This will encompass a web based service that is easy to access and manage by the company.

Our events, creative and press teams will organise, support and publicise our eighth annual Supplier Recognition Awards, which recognise operational excellence and industry leading performance. We will also support the supplier diversity forum and capacity and capability arm of the supply chain development division through a series of internal and external events and communications.

Year of Engineering

Our Year of Engineering campaign will support the company's long-term recruitment pipeline and future delivery capability. Our planning, internal and press teams are working with Human Resources (HR) on a programme of motivational events designed to inspire young people aged seven to 16, to encourage them to consider a career in engineering and specifically with Highways England.

We will promote internally the company's volunteering programme with a specific emphasis on Year of Engineering and encourage all staff to volunteer up to three days per year to meet and inspire young people. We will focus on communities within a few miles of our offices and schemes, which often include disadvantaged areas. Our communications will seek to highlight the attractions of working for us and help develop our recruitment pipeline against forecasts of a significant, national shortage of engineers in years to come.

Designated funds and the environment

We will greatly increase our external communication on the delivery and benefits of our environment and community projects. We will exploit a so far untapped source of a large number of positive stories of regional and national interest, to boost our reputation among those who live closest to - and can be most affected by - our network.

In March 2018 we achieved significant coverage for our first double glazing scheme; we will build on that with further multi-channel communication around our work on noise and air quality, and connectivity including cycling and walking.

Where our major projects and renewals schemes include noise-reducing measures such as barriers, road resurfacing and insulation, we will seek communication opportunities with regional press, partners and through our own social media.

We will work with the business to agree the brief for behaviour change experts to identify communication interventions that will help improve air quality.

We have developed a narrative that will form the backbone for our messaging. We will hold a series of stakeholder engagement events and promote the extensive range of initiatives delivered across the country.

The A14 project will provide opportunities to talk about how we preserve our heritage and archaeology, and here and on other schemes we will develop stories of national and regional interest, which will highlight Highways England as a responsible organisation.

Litter is a particular problem on our network. We will continue to deliver press and social media awareness campaigns on littering as an anti-social behaviour, highlighting the roll-out of motorway service area bins and black-on-yellow signs. We will highlight our continuing participation in Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean, following a successful campaign in 2017.

Transforming our communications

The Communications Directorate encompasses teams based across the country. Our central functions include business communications, creative services, digital, insight and strategic partnerships, internal communications, marketing and events, planning, press, and public affairs. Our regional programme teams lead the communications engagement for our Major Projects and Operations work. We also have communications business partners embedded in all other directorates, to provide the link between their work and ours.

We are undertaking a skills audit of all our people to identify the necessary training and development programme to improve skills, and make us more able and flexible to communicate effectively across different channels.

Corporate narrative

Highways England should be perceived as one organisation. To do so we need to speak with one voice. Our 'look and feel' is vital to developing the personality of our business so that people recognise us and understand what we do.

In 2017 we introduced our corporate brand narrative 'Connecting the country', a corporate video for our staff, partners and recruitment, and brand booklet 'We are Highways England'. In 2018-19 we will build on these important first steps and work with our creative agencies to fully develop our narrative, including through tone of voice and photography, to start building an identity and telling our story.

We will produce a suite of brand, visual identity and house style documents that further embed our corporate narrative. We will adopt a language and tone of voice that speaks to our audience's needs and concerns, and ensures that they understand better why we do what we do. We are commissioning new photography to support our corporate documents.

We will work with Strategy & Planning to develop a corporate reporting and publications policy and approach that provides central oversight and approval of what we publish, meets our transparency obligations, protects our reputation and makes efficient use of resources. In our corporate reporting we should speak with a single, consistent, coordinated voice that helps us develop our reputation with stakeholder audiences.

Business communications

The role of the business communications team is to protect and enhance Highways England's corporate reputation through the delivery of high quality, outcome driven integrated communications. These outputs are 'account managed' by communications business partners and business communications managers, and delivered in collaboration with the wider

communications team and the responsible directorates. The team act as the gateway into the rest of the communications directorate.

Creative

Working closely with communications business partners, the creative team will continue to deliver services to all parts of communications and other directorates. The team will work collaboratively to deliver the best possible solution on time and to the highest standard. It will create the new visual identity and all branded documents to support the corporate narrative, alongside the flagship publications of the Annual Report and Delivery Plan Update. Efficiencies in our internal capability will drive down costs to allow us to communicate more widely to our customers.

We will fully introduce a new digital asset management system that will house all our communication collateral in one central repository, accessible to all communications staff and selected media organisations. This 'creative library' will house all the company's photography, film, infographics, publications PDFs and all other associated collateral.

Digital

We will transform the quality and content of our digital presence, moving from a text-driven output to a multi-media approach that includes video, infographics and other visual materials. We will appoint digital champions to help us move beyond our own channels to engage with influencers and work with third party channels where our target audiences are to be found. Our output will be evidence led and centred on the issues about which our customers want to know. We will develop a web presence that enables our staff to share knowledge and expertise.

We will ensure that our presence and content on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other social media are well managed and appropriate for the channel, our issues and audiences. We will work with colleagues across the business, empowering them to deliver engaging and customer focussed services.

Insight

Our insight team will introduce a new, bespoke listening tool that will be transformational in terms of our ability to better understand what people are saying about us across all external channels, and to identify specific audience concerns, opportunities to communicate and reputational issues to tackle. We will continue to develop our strategic partnerships with organisations that depend on our network or can influence our reputation.

Internal

We will complete a full audit of our numerous forms of internal communication to identify the most effective channels and strengthen the senior leadership's communication and visibility with staff. We will produce a strategy that will include a suite of channels and provide direction for all internal communications across Highways England. It will segment audiences and channels to ensure that messages reach the specific, relevant audiences that we want to inform or to act as a result. The strategy will help to ensure that staff across the company better understand the channels available to support operational communication. We expect this work will have a significant impact on staff engagement scores.

Our internal communications team will work with Human Resources to organise the annual senior leadership conference in June and a round of regional management conferences in the autumn, to better inform and engage managers and staff in the wider activities and change programmes of the business.

Marketing and events

Our marketing team is working with our creative agencies to develop our corporate narrative, tone of voice and key messages that are vital to developing a consistent brand for our organisation. It will work with insight and safety colleagues to develop a further series of public, multi-channel campaigns aimed at changing the road user behaviours that are most likely to help us achieve our KSI targets and improve customer satisfaction.

We will promote and organise our presence at externally and internally organised events that will help us achieve our corporate goals and imperatives. We will work with teams across the company to develop and prioritise messages, steer activity and identify speakers. Through choosing the best platforms to engage with our key audiences, event activity will amplify message delivery. Our presence at the flagship Highways UK conference sets a standard for what we aim to achieve.

Planning and evaluation

We will further develop our planning function and processes to identify and develop our key communications priorities and ensure engagement of teams across the directorate and beyond in order to maximise impact. This Communications Plan is part of that work.

We will move towards a more outcome focussed approach to evaluation to demonstrate the effectiveness of our activity and whether we are succeeding in building reputation. Our tools include:

- **RepTrak** - twice-yearly reputation pulse survey carried out by the Reputation Institute. This shows how our reputation ranks against the rest of the UK public sector and specifically chosen benchmarks
- **Customer Insight Survey** - new online survey with a robust sample size of 21,000 respondents per year with results at regional and national levels
- **Customer Panel** - online community portal of 2,000 members
- **IPSOS Mori** annual survey of transport journalists
- **Stakeholder survey**
- **Employee engagement survey**
- **Campaign evaluation** - awareness, intended behaviour change
- **Media evaluation** - sentiment, share of voice

Press

To enhance our reputation among customers, the press team will continue to build on its predominantly proactive media engagement. Besides using popular and conventional news and trade media outlets, we will continue to develop relationships among the increasingly diverse channels used by our customers.

We will need the support and co-operation of the business to help us identify stories and provide information that enable us to communicate on corporate themes such as safety, economic growth, environment and innovation. Content is crucial.

We will look to subject matter experts to support our increasing activities with the broadcast media that reach the widest audiences. We will react in a timely way to media enquiries, again looking to the business to provide accurate, factual information on which we base our responses. In all our work we will focus far more on story-telling, by translating business outputs into the language of outcomes and benefits that interest our audiences.

Public affairs

Political audiences are among the most powerful influencers of perceptions of our business. We will build familiarity and favourability through a programme of public affairs, including building our reputation among Members of Parliament via 12 parliamentary surgeries and our quarterly regional newsletter 'The Road Ahead'.

We will connect Highways England leaders with influential stakeholders including key parliamentary committees such as transport, business and housing, communities and local government. We will submit evidence to select committees to make sure our expert voice is heard. We will connect our regional leaders with influential voices including mayors, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and chambers of commerce. We will showcase our delivery with ministers through site visits and handle parliamentary correspondence to a high standard.

Regional communications

To support the regions, within our programme and customer communications work we will complete a series of regional narratives that enable us to understand the priorities of different parts of the country, so that we position the benefits of our projects in regional contexts. We know that audiences are much more likely to engage with tailored messages that acknowledge their personal experiences and that resonate with their specific concerns.

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Developing our capacity to provide business solutions

We recognise that we need to improve our skills, capability and develop new ways of working. Projects for this year include:

Improving capability 2018-19

Becoming more insightful and informed

Project	Objectives	Benefits	Timing
Introduce listening tools	Introduce a range of social and digital media listening tools, combined with existing data sources in one dashboard, so that we can identify key influencers and respond directly to the context these influencers create	■ We better understand the sentiment of influencers from a wide range of sources ■ Data collated into a live monitoring platform enables us to identify reputational risks early and highlight opportunities for greater engagement ■ Mapping key communities and influencers against strategic projects and initiatives provides us with insight to support engagement, informs campaign development and communication planning, and helps to measure effectiveness ■ We can identify media sentiment around schemes, projects and significant press stories in a timely manner ■ We can better understand our reputation among key influencers and customers, as well as the key drivers of reputation and the impact of our communications	SPATS contract in place by start of financial year 2018-19
Develop regional profiles	Develop a national delivery narrative and series of regional narratives to explain what and how we deliver in support of our customers	■ A series of profiles will help us understand the various regional priorities and characteristics around the country so we can better explain the benefits of our work in the regional context	(i) collect the data, evidence sentiments, etc to help build the narratives (ii) develop the narratives

Review strategic KSI data for marketing campaigns	Review our KSI and behavioural change data to identify key territories for safety campaigns	■ Safety campaigns focussed on the right territories will help to reduce KSIs on the network ■ We can better develop effective creative campaigns, based on research and customer insight, that encourage and achieve behaviour change ■ Improved customer satisfaction	May - present initial ideas to board June - review complete July - plan safety campaigns from 2018 -2020
Fully develop our corporate narrative	Build on our existing narrative work to further develop our story	■ Propositions tested with key external audiences and stakeholders will help us better understand external perceptions of who we are and build the story that will land with our audiences ■ Improving our external corporate content will increase audience engagement and understanding ■ New photography will give us stronger 'people' images to support our corporate reports	Q1 Q2/Q3 Q2

Innovating our digital work

Project	Objectives	Benefits	Timing
Social media	Build on our social media customer engagement to support customer service, promote and protect our reputation as well as attract talent	■ Better engagement with customers using insight and sentiment of customers and influencers via social media ■ Better engagement with customers on channels that they use most ■ Improved multi-media content to support corporate and campaign activity ■ Improved customer satisfaction via social media ■ Better management of reputation and building of brand awareness ■ Talent attraction and improved thought leadership within the industry ■ Implement tools to support digital champions	Q2, Q3 Q3, Q4 Q1 onwards Q3/Q4 Q3/Q4 Q2/Q3 Q3

Highways England website	Interim website launched in early 2018	■ More and better information for customers and stakeholders interested in our work	
New staff intranet	Better communication with staff	■ Improved staff engagement through using a better designed, more consumer friendly and flexible intranet	Migration May/June 2018
Communications planner	Move to new intranet	■ Next iteration due summer 2018, taking on board feedback from users during winter 2017-18	Migration May/June 2018
Internal communications	Review and improve the effectiveness of our internal communication through a full audit of our existing channels and approaches	■ Understanding the expectations of the business, the internal channels we have, audience demand, and how and whether our channels work. ■ This will enable us to develop a strategy that provides a corporate, consistent, interactive and timely approach to communicating across Highways England and increases staff engagement	2018-19

Building stakeholder relationships

Project	Objectives	Benefits	Timing
Supply chain hub	Develop a supply chain hub as a microsite that hangs from our main website	■ Review the existing Supply Chain Portal to develop and implement a user centred solution that meets current and future suppliers' needs and maximises on engagement opportunities provided by technology developments. This will encompass a web based service that is easy to access and manage by the company	Q3 18/9
Transparency	Publications policy that meets transparency obligations, protects reputation and makes efficient use of resources	■ Work with Strategy & Planning and other directorates to move beyond a fragmented approach to publications, and take account also of resource needs and reputational risks, to develop a company-wide policy that meets our transparency obligations, protects reputation and reduces resource demands	By end 2018

Collaborative working within Communications

Project	Objectives	Benefits	Timing
CEB Communications Leadership Council	Assess our skills and identify areas for professional growth	■ Work with Gartner and the Communications Leadership Council to assess our skills across 13 competencies and identify areas for professional growth, next steps to improve our skills, and to facilitate development conversations between managers and staff	
Project Panther	Create an integrated and collaborative 'one Highways England' approach to comms	■ A suite of new templates and guidance to build a consistent approach across communications and help the business self-serve ■ An updated communications workflow to give clarity of our services to the business at every step of the comms process - this will help us tell better, proactive stories ■ An outcome focussed approach to communications at all levels that is better integrated and with a clear line of sight back to the business objectives, our imperatives and KPIs	Summer 2018 ■ Present to Communications Leadership Team ■ Work up processes of comms delivery teams to feed into the overarching way of working ■ Build designated areas for support and tools for ease of access ■ Communicate across the business and embed the approach Beyond summer ■ Evaluate and refine as required

Appendix - Communications channels and resources

Modern communications uses a wide variety of channels to reach audiences. We advise on which channels to use and how far ahead content needs to be prepared.

What works well for one age-related or socio-economic group may be ineffective with another. Relying solely on a press release or an all staff email to reach target audiences doesn't work; it's an approach whose days are long gone.

Owned channels (ones we control)

- Corporate website - hosts largely static content about who we are, our work, key projects, key documents and press releases, with links to social media channels
- Social media - our channels enable us to reach specific audiences in ways that work for them. We also use social media to amplify messages from partners whose content helps us to achieve our objectives. Channels include:
  - Twitter - we provide current information about traffic and network conditions via our regional accounts. We use our national account to promote corporate messages and campaigns and to signpost press announcements and website content
  - You Tube - we host a range of videos and multimedia animations to illustrate and support our core priorities and initiatives
  - Facebook - we broaden the reach of our marketing campaigns and provide audiences with rich content that supports our corporate narrative and encourages them to engage in conversation
  - LinkedIn - we use to recruit and communicate with professional audiences; we have a strong following in the highway community
  - Flickr - we host our image collections and share them with partners, customers and the media. We will improve the range of photos during 2018, with more 'people' shots of our own staff at work
  - Instagram - we present a different side of Highways England and engage with audiences by publishing rich content (primarily video and photography) that taps into our corporate narrative and supports key communications activities
  - To support this work we develop visual materials that include:
  - Infographics - we use these across our digital channels to communicate complex information in a simple and accessible way
  - Video clips - we use short video clips on channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Earned channels (ones that others control where we 'earn' our coverage)

- Print, broadcast and online news - we use our media relationships to offer content to the national, regional, consumer and industry media that we hope they will use
- Broadcast interviews - we use a range of trained spokespeople to present our messages to the broadcast media, which have the largest audiences of any channel
- Supply chain communications managers' network - we share information and collaborate through a network of supply chain communications managers
- Partnership marketing - we use partners' channels to disseminate toolkit materials and messages

Paid-for channels (ones that we pay to use)

- Advertising - we exploit a significant budget to procure slots on commercial channels including TV, video on demand, digital, broadcast radio, and 'out-of home' media. We focus mostly on safety campaigns, where repetition is key to message retention.
- Partners - we also work with partners to amplify messages with specific target audiences

Internal channels (subject to audit during 2018-19)

- Portal
- Verbal briefing tool (currently Leadership Link)
- Update
- Highway magazine
- Noticeboards and visual collateral (pull ups etc)
- Yammer
- Directorate newsletters

Channels owned by other customer-facing parts of the business outside Communications Directorate:

- Mobile services - information to customers on the move about latest traffic conditions through their mobile or smartphone devices
- Customer Contact Centre - advice and assistance to customers and road users on the operation of our network and work of the company
- Traffic England - latest status of traffic flow on our network
- Supply Chain Portal - sharing information and collaborating with our supply chain partners
- Commonplace - supporting consultations and engagement around scheme proposals

Scheme/project consultations:

- The publications, displays and materials that we produce to support the development of schemes - these also include corporate messages for example advertising/road safety campaigns and recruitment campaigns

Highways England Communications Plan summary

We recognise that we need to improve our skills, capability and develop new ways of working. Projects for this year include:

Safety

Safety is our first imperative. Following a strategic review of accident data, we will launch new evidence-based campaigns aimed at reducing KSI figures related to:

- close following
- holiday periods
- driving in the rain
- goods vehicles
- motorcyclists
- vehicle checks

Other safety-related campaigns will include:

- using smart motorways
- driving safely through roadworks
- learner driving on motorways
- physical and mental wellbeing of staff and suppliers, including awards events that recognise performance

Customer service

We will communicate what we are doing under the customer service strategic plan, which is designed to help meet our 90% satisfaction target. With more roadworks this year we will:

- explain better why roadworks are necessary and the benefits they will bring
- highlight how we respond to on-road incidents
- support our operations colleagues to ensure that road users have the information they need
- communicate the benefits of our work to smooth traffic flow and better manage our assets

We will continue to build our customer and stakeholder insight and relationships through enhanced tools and techniques that will help both inform and evaluate our activity, with a clear focus on evidence and outcomes

Delivery

Across the business we need to improve our story telling and better explain why we do what we do, and the benefits our work brings. In communications we will:

- Inform and engage customers, stakeholders and communities in the design and delivery of our schemes, going beyond saying what we are delivering (outputs) to clearly explain why and the benefits to follow (outcomes)
- develop narratives that provide wider context and consistent messages that in turn supports our communications around regional schemes
- engage with stakeholders following DfT's response to the consultation on future funding for the strategic road network and preparing for publication of RIS2 in spring 2019

Core themes

To further enhance reputation and trust, we want to widen our communications beyond project delivery to talk about our wider contribution to the country. We will:

- highlight how improving the network is vital to the national and regional economies
- uncover positive stories about innovation, to enhance trust and confidence that we are experts in what we do
- increase communication of the delivery and benefits of designated funds work including environment and community projects
- develop better visual content to illustrate our flagship corporate documents
- work with other parts of the business to support the company's recruitment pipeline, including through the Year of Engineering campaign

Transforming our communications

To improve capability we will:

- assess our skills, identify areas for professional development and undertake training
- fully develop our corporate brand narrative, tone of voice and photography, to continue building our identity, focussing on the benefits and outcomes
- complete a series of regional narratives on different parts of the country, so that we position the benefits of our projects in these regional contexts
- produce a suite of brand, visual identity and house style documents that further embed our corporate narrative
- work with other directorates to develop a corporate reporting and publications policy that provides central oversight and approval of what we publish
- introduce a new listening tool to better understand what people are saying, to identify both reputational issues and new opportunities to reach out
- improve the effectiveness of our internal communications through a full audit of existing channels and approaches
- launch a better designed, more flexible and user friendly intranet, to facilitate improved staff engagement
- move to a more outcome focussed approach to evaluation to demonstrate the communications effectiveness and whether we are building reputation
- review the supply chain portal to better meet user needs and maximise engagement opportunities provided by technological developments

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