

Area 9 Asset Support Contract

Service Information

Annex 3

Communications

SERVICE INFORMATION FOR ASC
ANNEX 3
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3 COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Any reference to the Highways Agency shall be taken to mean the *Employer* in the first instance.
- 3.1.2 The *Employer* has an overarching communications strategy, which places emphasis on planned and targeted communications across all areas of the *Employer's* work. Better, more accessible communications is a key part of putting customers first.
- 3.1.3 The strategy places a clear, consistent Highways Agency visual identity and “brand” as central to all publicity. This means that while the *Provider* delivers the service “on the ground”, the *Employer* will remain as the public face and will have control over the wording and design of all publicity material. The *Employer* also publishes an annual communications plan which sets key themes and messages for the coming year. All communication activity should support these key themes which are important for building the Highways Agency “brand”.
- 3.1.4 The Highways Agency’s Communications Group will advise the *Service Manager* and the *Provider* on all communication issues. All handling of national and specialist media will be led by the national press office within the Communications Group. The *Employer's* regional press officers will lead and advise on handling of regional media, with support from the Regional News Network (RNN) where appropriate. RNN support will include issuing press notices, dealing with media enquiries, managing media attendance at events, and other support as requested by the regional press officers or national press office.
- 3.1.5 Any corporate communications or publicity activity undertaken by the *Provider* on behalf of the *Employer* requires prior discussion with and approval from the Communications Group, before any action is undertaken by the *Provider*.

3.2 Media Relations

- 3.2.1 Any proposals for media contact or opportunities should be discussed and approved with the Communications Group prior to any action taken by the *Provider*. The *Provider* shall retain contact with the Communications Group, and RNN where instructed to do so, throughout the process.
- 3.2.2 Any publicity activity for works which are being carried out by any supplier on behalf of the *Employer* must make the client-supplier relationship clearly explicit. For example, a contractor must make clear that it is working on behalf of the *Employer*, and, where relevant, that the *Employer* is funding that Scheme of work. It must not present a Scheme that it is working on in isolation from the fact that they are working for the *Employer*.

- 3.2.3 The *Employer* shall have the first option to issue press notices and generate other publicity about work on its behalf, for example offering media interviews or placing articles in the press. If a contract award is being announced or a new service launched, the *Provider* will not release any information until the *Employer* has made its own announcement to the media. If the *Employer* does not wish to issue a press notice, it will discuss with the supplier and agree an appropriate media handling plan with the *Provider*.
- 3.2.4 The *Provider* must pass all media enquiries to the *Employer's* press officers or RNN where instructed to do so, immediately, and notify the *Service Manager*. No comments or interviews are to be given to the media without prior permission from the *Service Manager*, and the *Employer's* national or regional press officer.
- 3.2.5 The RTMC Contractor shall pass all media enquiries to the *Provider*, immediately. No comments or interviews will be given to the media by the RTMC. The *Provider* must pass all enquiries received from the RTMC Contractor to *Employer's* press officers or RNN as required in 3.2.4.
- 3.2.6 The *Provider* will inform the *Service Manager* and the *Employer's* national press office or regional press officer as soon as possible about any possible reactive or proactive media opportunities that include, but are not limited to, sensitive issues that may attract media interest. All communication strategies and plans developed by the *Provider* must be agreed in consultation with the Highways Agency's Communications Group and the *Service Manager* prior to any activities being undertaken.
- 3.2.7 The *Provider* shall assist the *Employer's* press officers (and where instructed RNN) with information to enable advance notice to be given to the media and stakeholders for maintenance work, road closures, etc. The *Provider* shall take all necessary action to ensure that drivers and other road users are aware of the road works or closures before commencing their journeys. The *Provider* must consult with the *Employer's* press officers who will advise on these issues. The *Provider* must agree the extent of any information and publicity requirements with the *Service Manager* and Highways Agency Communication Group through the development of scheme communication plans. Any information and publicity requirements must observe any spending or operational restrictions in force at that time.
- 3.2.8 The *Employer's* national or regional press officers (or RNN as commissioned by them) are responsible for arranging any visits to any location within the area network by journalists, photographers or film crews. All arrangements for all facilities, attendees and the like, are the responsibility of the *Provider*. Exact and detailed requirements will be provided by the *Service Manager*.
- 3.2.9 For media interviews in connection with the *Employer's* projects, any spokespeople for the *Provider* shall refer to themselves as speaking on behalf of the *Employer*. Use of the *Provider's* spokespeople will be limited to

operational matters where the *Employer's* staff are unavailable. The *Employer's* staff will conduct interviews that may involve policy issues.

3.3 Community Relations

- 3.3.1 The *Service Manager*, on advice from the Highways Agency Communications Group (or where agreed RNN) will approve the text for all newsletters, information materials and significant correspondence being issued to community groups or individuals. At the same time the *Service Manager* and *Provider* must observe any spending or operational restrictions that apply to this, and any other communications, marketing and publicity activities, in force at that time.
- 3.3.2 The *Provider* must keep the *Employer's* regional press officer (or where instructed RNN) and the *Service Manager* informed of any significant community issues.
- 3.3.3 The *Provider* shall inform the *Service Manager* about any public meetings being held to discuss area network issues.
- 3.3.4 The *Provider* shall liaise with the *Service Manager* before accepting any invitations to appear at public meetings or events related to the area network.

3.4 Branding, Marketing, and Publicity

- 3.4.1 The *Provider* must ensure that they conform to the *Employer's* visual identity and branding policy and technical specifications, including for the preparation and production of all information and communications materials including signs and works signage. These are set out in '*The Highways Agency's visual identity specifications: What you need to know*'; this document is referenced in Annex 18 and further information is available from the local Highways Agency media services teams. All material must be approved by the *Service Manager*. When drafting text the *Provider* must also follow the *Employer's* specifications as set out in '*Writing with style: The Highways Agency's tone of voice and style guide*' – also available via the local Highways Agency media services teams.
- 3.4.2 All dedicated operations vehicles must be branded correctly using the *Employer's* visual identity specifications and branding only. The requirements for suppliers are outlined in the publication setting out the Highways Agency's visual identity specifications as required at 3.4.1.
- 3.4.3 Branding requirements also apply to letters, emails, personal protection equipment, PowerPoint presentations, leaflets, newsletters, statutory notices and all other materials. For a full list of where supplier logos can and cannot be used, refer to the *Employer's* visual identity specifications document. The *Employer's* branding must be present on all scheme-related materials.

- 3.4.4 Design issues are the responsibility of the *Employer's* media services team. The *Provider* shall seek, follow and implement this advice. The contact details for each Highways Agency media services team can be found in the documentation setting out the *Employer's* visual identity specifications.
- 3.4.5 The *Provider* shall assist the *Service Manager* with regular information updates for the *Employer's* website. All text must be cleared before issue to ensure efficient co-ordination of publicity and communications efforts. All material relating to Schemes on the *Provider's* or other external websites (i.e. non *Employer* websites) must make clear the relationship of the *Employer* to Schemes and that the supplier is working on behalf of the *Employer* on the Scheme, or that the Scheme is funded by the *Employer*.
- 3.4.6 The *Provider* shall not set up independent websites or develop independent logos or branding for the *Employer's* Schemes or projects.
- 3.4.7 The *Provider* will undertake such information and communications activity commensurate with major closures as agreed, while observing any spending or operational restrictions in force at that time. Within any such constraints the *Provider* must take all necessary action to ensure that drivers and other stakeholders are aware of the closure before commencing their journeys. The *Provider* will agree the extent of such communication and publicity with the *Service Manager* and Highways Agency Communications Group through the development of agreed scheme communication plans. Wherever possible these plans must make use of pre-approved existing material that has been produced (e.g. DfT-produced safety resources).
- 3.4.8 Any requests for communications or marketing activity raised by the *Employer's* area or project teams, or *the* *Service Manager*, should be referred by the *Provider* to their Highways Agency regional press officer or Highways Agency Communications Group representative for approval in the first instance.

3.5 General

- 3.5.1 Media and community liaison issues will be an agenda item at the monthly review meetings. Whenever key milestones and/or proposed changes to the communications plan are to be discussed the meetings should include the *Employer's* regional press officers.
- 3.5.2 The *Provider* shall include a section on communications in its monthly report to the *Service Manager*. This includes a review of all proactive and reactive media contact (and coverage where known), any agreed publicity and advertising, and community liaison work. The *Provider* is not required to purchase a media monitoring or cuttings service in order to prepare the monthly report or as part of this contract.
- 3.5.3 The *Provider* shall work with the *Service Manager* with advice from the *Employer's* regional press officers to create an area communication plan.

The objectives and outcomes of the plan will be set by the *Employer*. In drawing up the plan, the *Provider* and the *Service Manager* will identify the key groups of customers and interested parties they need to communicate with. The *Provider* and *Service Manager* will ensure these groups have the information they need in a way, and at a time, that suits their needs using agreed communications channels. They will ensure that customers have the opportunity to have their say and feedback to them on what the *Employer* is doing as a result.

3.5.4 The Highways Agency Communications Group will provide the following:

- (1) Advice on media handling issues
- (2) Response to national media enquiries
- (3) Advice on area communication plans
- (4) Media handling for events and ministerial visits,
- (5) Media handling for negative/crisis issues,
- (6) Draft statements where required,
- (7) “Lines to take” to be updated throughout the contract period,
- (8) Contributions to customer and community communications if required, and
- (9) Advice on communications, marketing and publicity (e.g. advance notice of traffic management) compliant with any spending constraints in place at the time.

3.5.5 Highways Agency Communications Group (and RNN where instructed) will require the following:

- (1) Regular liaison with the *Provider* and the *Service Manager*,
- (2) The setting up of a communications group to meet on a regular basis to discuss public relations and community liaison issues,
- (3) A basic fact sheet and route map to be available for issue to the media as required; and
- (4) A commitment to regular and open communication with any website team.