



Communications and Engagement Strategy

V2.0 Revised 09/03/2017

Purpose

1. Communications spans every aspect of work that the IFCA performs. The NWIFCA engages with a wide range of stakeholders each with specific interests and needs. To ensure that each stakeholder has a voice and is informed an efficient and comprehensive communications strategy is essential.
2. In 2015 Defra developed a revised set of Success Criteria (SC) for all IFCAs which the NWIFCA has incorporated into its Annual Plan. Success criterion one focuses on communication stating 'IFCAs are recognised and heard, balancing the economic needs of the fishery whilst working in partnership and engaging in stakeholders'. The criterion is broken down further into high level objectives (HLO) that set a baseline for success.

Table 1 - Defra HLO

Success Criteria Indicator	
SC1A	The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts reviewed and update by 31 st March each year.
SC1B	The IFCA will review its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31 st March each year.
SC1C	The IFCA will review its website by the last working day of each month.
SC1D	The IFCA will ensure the website meets the objectives of its communication strategy by 31 st March.
SC1E	The IFCA will review all Memoranda of Understanding by 31 st March each year. Will be plans in place to update MoUs to agreed timescales.
SC1F	By 31 st March each year IFCA will participate proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan.

3. To fulfil the obligations set out in SC1 it is essential to go beyond the high level objectives established in table 1. To achieve this, the communications strategy needs to have its own set of clear aims and objectives.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the NWIFCA within the district to stakeholders.
- To be accessible to all.
- To utilise the communications tools available effectively.
- To build relationships with stakeholders, both individuals and groups.
- To give stakeholders a voice and develop a dialogue.
- To inform and educate the wider community.

Objectives

- Identify the key stakeholder groups.
- Establish the core principles for communications and engagement with stakeholders.
- Analyse the communications methods available to the NWIFCA.
- Establish the state and needs of current communications methods.
- Establish a process of annual planning and review.

NWIFCA Stakeholders

4. Stakeholders are any group or individual who may affect or be affected by the Authority's actions. NWIFCAs stakeholders range from government bodies to local non-government organisations and from large commercial users to individual recreational anglers.

Stakeholder groups within the North West District can be summarised below:

Table 2 - NWIFCA Stakeholders

Stakeholder Groups	Key Stakeholders
Coastal Commercial Users	Fishing Industry Hand and Boat based, aggregate Extraction, Renewable Energies, Non Renewable Energies, Cables, Transport Links
Coastal Recreational Users	Anglers, Watersports, Boat users, Walkers/Ramblers, Equestrian groups, Birdwatchers
Conservation Groups/Organisations	RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, MCS, Local and Area Groups, Conservation Management Groups, Beach Care Groups
Coastal Partnerships	North West Coastal Forum, Morecambe Bay Partnership, Duddon Estuary Partnership, Wirral Coastal Partnership, Sefton Coast Partnership, Solway Firth Partnership
Other Regulatory Bodies	JNCC, GLA, NRW, DEFRA, FSA, Marine Scotland, SNH, Crown Estates
Delivery Partners	MMO, NE, CEFAS, EA
County Councils & Local Authorities	Cumbria, Blackpool, Lancashire, Halton, Wirral, Sefton, Cheshire West and Chester, Lancaster, Liverpool, Preston, Wyre, West Lancashire, Fylde, Barrow, South Lakeland, Allerdale, Copeland, Carlisle
Media	Local/National Newspapers, TV, Radio
General Public	Local Communities, Tourists, Local Land Owners
NWIFCA Committee Members	Councillors, MMO appointees
Staff	Officers

Principles

5. In order to deliver the best possible service and effectively meet the success criteria, the Authority has developed five principles that underpin all engagement activities the NWIFCA are involved in.
- A. Be **proportionate** both for the group being consulted/consulting and to the purpose of the engagement
 - B. Be **open, transparent and focused** with our stakeholders, being clear how their views will be used and what they may influence
 - C. Be **consistent and joined** up ensuring no group has undue influence or access, but that engagement is tailored to the commitments and interests of the audience
 - D. **Support and promote improvement** by sharing findings with other stakeholders and to improve engagement where required
 - E. Be **accountable and cost effective**, using the necessary resources and time to make a difference and properly evaluating findings

Methods and Tools

6. Table three establishes the methods and tools available to the NWIFCA and analyses the strengths and weaknesses of each. The Annual Communications Review will evaluate the use of each medium and set targets and milestones for improvement.

Table 3 - Communications Methods and Tools

Method	Strengths	Weaknesses
Social Media	Free Allows information to be distributed quickly Provides direct engagement with stakeholders Varying networks for different purposes and audiences	Requires an internet connection Not all stakeholders use it Communication is public
Website	Provides a static source of information Can be updated easily Provides an easy way to contact the IFCA Is a verifiable source Can integrate with other tools e.g. Google Forms	Requires an internet connection
Text/SMS	Can reach a large group quickly Can receive feedback on delivery rate Most people have a mobile	Cost Short message length
Email	Can reach a large audience quickly via mail merge Can carry a corporate style Easy to respond Provides a record of communication Varying implementations for security	Not all stakeholders have email Secure methods have a greater cost
Letters/Forms	Accessible to nearly every stakeholder Formal Can be sent recorded	High cost Slow both in delivery and man hours
Telephone	Accessible to nearly every stakeholder Direct Call routing allows for choice Answerphone for messages Allows for conference calls	Cost Works best when well attended Conference calls save on travel costs
Face to face (including meetings and presentations)	Allows for networking Encourages discussion Direct	Travel costs
Pamphlets/Posters	Passive Can reach a wide audience Can target stakeholders where they frequent Can educate	Production costs One way communication
Reports	Provide concise insight on a subject Can be distributed electronically and physically	
Press Releases	Large public exposure Provides access to a wider range of mediums such as TV	At the editors discretion Competing with other news
Stakeholder Database	Allows for targeting of stakeholders by interest, location or sector All data is held in one place Can produce lists with just essential information	To comply with DPA the information must be kept accurate and not held after

State and Needs of Current Communications and Engagement Methods

Website

Overview

7. The old website was no longer fit for purpose and was replaced with a WordPress based site in late November 2016. The website has content covering fisheries, conservation and general information about the IFCA. The fisheries section mainly focuses on industry and has limited information for recreational users. The managing sustainable fisheries page is currently under development with the assistance of the Science Team working on a species by species basis. The website is under constant review and news articles are added when relevant.

Needs

8. The creation of a recreational fishing page under the fisheries section is a priority. The page will include information on the Recreational Angling Strategy and clear guidance on what recreational activities require a permit.
9. To engage a non-fishing audience a list of coastal events will be established to promote engagement with the environment and community within the district.

Social Media

Overview

10. The Twitter page currently has 434 followers and gains around 4/5 per week. The amount of content put through social media is limited and could be improved upon. A Facebook page has been setup however it is yet to be populated with content. Comments on Facebook are currently set to require administrator approval before publishing due to issues with the previous page. All social media is regularly monitored.

Needs

11. The Facebook page needs populating with content and should be run alongside twitter. Regular and engaging content needs to be produced by celebrating successes and giving an insight into day to day operations. Once content is being produced on a regular basis the Twitter and Facebook pages can be put forward for verification.

Email

Overview

12. Every officer has an email. At present there is no set signature style or guidance for Officers. Enquiries can be submitted to the NWIFCA through several group inboxes and through the website.

Needs

13. A standardised email signature needs to be created. The signature should contain name, role, postal address, telephone number, links to social media and the option to register as a stakeholder.

Telephone

Overview

14. The main telephone number is directed to a digital attendant that provides several routing options. The current routing options are Carnforth Office, Fishery Office, Science, and Whitehaven. The title fisheries office is misleading and frequently permit queries are routed through. The OneNet system is currently underutilised with features such as nominated assistants and the ability to login/out not being used.

Needs

15. The digital attendant options need revising to provide a clearer description of each option.

Letters/Forms

Overview

16. Letters follow a standard format and are created from the headed letter template. Application forms are available for each permit along with guidance notes. The application forms don't follow a set design and have differing levels of complexity.

Needs

17. Application forms need revising and simplifying where possible. Use of a 'Plain English' approach could help reduce the amount of incomplete applications requiring officer attention and responses.

Stakeholder Data

Overview

18. Lists of various stakeholders were originally held in several excel sheets. A dedicated stakeholder database has been established with the ability to discern stakeholders by interest, locations, and industry. The Recreational Angling Strategy has prompted a lot of registrations from anglers which were under represented before.

Needs

19. The option to register as a stakeholder needs to be well advertised and officers should be proactive in informing interested parties.

Face to Face (Including meetings and presentations)

Overview

20. IFCA officers give speeches and presentations to interested groups when requested. A large amount of materials have already been created and span varying subjects. The current materials do not have a set theme or style and some are out of date.

Needs

21. The content needs reviewing and ensuring it is up to date. Once reviewed the content should be put into a uniform template to ensure a consistent style.

Press Releases

Overview

22. A template for press releases is in place and a list of local press contacts is kept in the communications folder.

Needs

23. Press releases are not issued very often and clear guidelines are required to establish what material goes to the press.

Reports

24. Officer reports are the main way officers communicate with the committees. All reports follow a set template and format. An Annual Plan and Report are published outlining the work performed by the IFCA. Both the Annual Plan and Report are long

Needs

25. A review of the Annual Plan and Reports formatting.

Planning and Review Process

26. By the end of March each year a Communications Report will be published, consisting of an Annual Review and an Annual Plan.

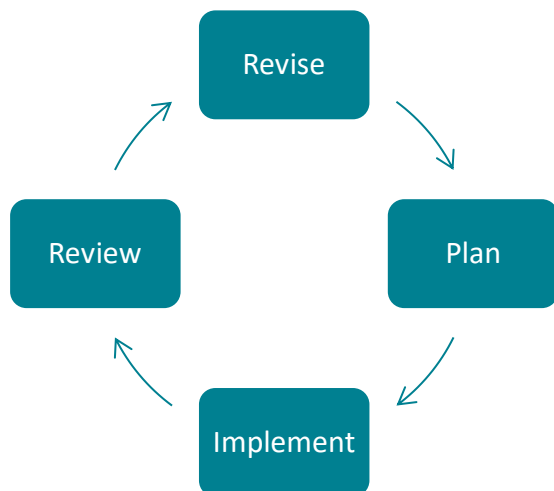


Figure 1 - The Planning and Review Process

27. The Annual Review will:
- Highlight communications work done in the previous year.
 - Reflect upon the previous plan.
 - Identify areas for improvement.
 - Raise the successes and lessons learnt.
 - Bring forward ideas and needs to the next Annual Plan.
 - Raise any potential revisions to the communications strategy.
28. The Annual Plan will:
- Establish core communications work for the next year in line with the aims of the Communications Strategy.
 - Set milestones.
 - Set aspirational communications work for if resources allow.
 - Implement improvements from the Annual Review.
29. Annex 1 shows a draft example of the Annual Communications Plan layout and Annex 2 shows a draft example of the Annual review layout.

Annex 1 - Sample Annual Communications Plan Layout

Tasks	Relevant Aims	Milestones	Status
Develop engaging and informative social media content on a regular basis showcasing the work the NWIFCA performs and championing the partnerships the NWIFCA is involved in.	A1, A2, A3, A4, A6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in twitter followers to over 800 by the end of March 2018. 2. Facebook page established and with over 200 likes by the end of March 2018. 3. Gain verified status on Twitter and Facebook by the end of March 2018. 	Ongoing Standing Item
Review the utilisation of the OneNet phone system ensuring that it is being used to its full potential.	A3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A simple user guide outlining how to use features such as login/out and out office created by July 2017. 2. Review the digital attendant recording and hunt groups by November 2017. 3. Create a call handling procedure by March 2018. 	Start June 2017
Create a recreational fisheries section on the website.	A2, A3, A6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create and populate the recreational sea angling page in cooperation with AC by the end of April 2017. 2. Create and populate the ' hobby potting' section by August 2017 	Start mid-April 2017
Create a recreational fishing guidebook explaining the necessary byelaws and permits per hobby activity.	A1, A2, A6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the first draft for review by mid-November 2017. 2. Review and implement amendments by the start of December 2017. 3. Send to print in time for hobby permit renewals for 2018. 	Started as side line work
Reach out to local interest groups and seek to build relationships.	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a list of at least 20 groups and contacts by late June 2017. 2. Make contact with a brief introduction and offer out my contact details by mid-September. 3. Where possible and invited attend groups to raise awareness and promote the work of the IFCA by March 2018. 	Started as side line work
Review application forms and guidance notes with an aim of simplifying where possible to give clear instructions.	A2, A3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Byelaw 3 application form by June 2017. 2. Implement a Byelaw 3 waiting list application form by August 2017. 3. Review the hobby permit application forms by November 2017 	Start May 2017

Reference the relevant aims within each task on the plan.

A1) To raise awareness of the NWIFCA within the district to stakeholders.

A2) To be accessible to all.

A3) To utilise the communications tools available effectively.

A4) To build relationships with stakeholders, both individuals and groups.

A5) To give stakeholders a voice and develop a dialogue.

A6) To inform and educate the wider community.

Annex 2 - Sample Annual Communications Review Matrix Layout

Review of Annual Plan 20XX-20XX			
Tasks	Were all Milestones achieved?	How did the task meet the relevant aims?	Complete/Actions Brought Forward

Reference the relevant aims within each task on the plan.

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A6) To inform and educate the wider community.

Annex 2 - Sample Annual Communications Review Matrix Layout

Review of Communications Effectiveness by Method 20XX-20XX			
Method	Particular Successes	Areas for improvement	Actions
Social Media			
Website			
Text/SMS			
Email			
Letters/Forms			
Telephone			
Face to Face			
Pamphlets/Posters			
Reports			
Press Releases			
Stakeholder Database			

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