

Communications Strategy

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Communication Strategy

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Vision & Key Messages
3. Name and Status
4. Internal Communications
5. External Communications
6. Methods of Delivery to External Audiences
7. Emergency Communication Plan
8. Guiding Principles
9. Monitoring Effectiveness
10. Responsibility and Review

Appendices

Appendix 1: Communications Action Plan 2010

Appendix 2: Emergency Communication Plan

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Communication Strategy is to set a framework to enable the Broads Authority to successfully raise awareness and promote understanding of the Authority – its duties, achievements and area – on a local, national and international stage. It will also enable effective and meaningful two-way communication between the Authority and its key audiences.

The Authority's core purposes are set out in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988, as amended by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. They are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Broads;
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Broads by the public; and
- to protect the interests of navigation.

None of these three purposes takes preference.

We must have regard to:

- the national importance of the Broads as an area of natural beauty and one which affords opportunities for open-air recreation;
- the desirability of protecting the natural resources of the Broads from damage; and
- the needs of agriculture and forestry and the economic and social interests of those who live or work in the Broads.

Our responsibilities are almost identical to that of a national park authority but with the additional third purpose for navigation. As well as being the local planning authority, the Authority is a navigation and harbour authority with responsibilities that include:

- maintaining the navigation area for the purposes of navigation to such standard as appears to the Authority to be reasonably required; and
- taking such steps to improve and develop it as it thinks fit.

Effective and efficient communication is essential to promote the Authority's work, to explain why the Broads is important in a national and international context and to help people value, understand and enjoy the Broads in ways which protect and enhance its special natural and cultural qualities as well as its sense of space and tranquillity. Every day the Broads Authority gives out messages about the kind of organisation we are, our values, the work we do and how we use the responsibilities we have, as well as how we treat and value our staff and visitors to the area.

Communication is a shared responsibility for all staff and members of the Broads Authority because messages are given and received by:

- the experiences people have when they contact individual members or officers or visit any Broads Authority office, Tourist Information Centre, or event/attraction;
- the way people read and hear about us in the news & media or from others;
- how people see and experience the way we work in meetings and partnerships;
- the way we consult and use the results.

This strategy is for everyone and covers all forms of communication. It will be supported by guidelines for staff and members, and will include key messages and skills.

The objectives of this strategy are:

- to set a framework to ensure that the Authority's communications activities serve its organisational objectives;
- to ensure that staff and members feel well communicated with and have a common and clear understanding of, and commitment to, what the Authority wishes to achieve in both the short-term and the longer term, as well as how it proposes to achieve these ambitions;
- to ensure that staff and Members are aware of the key messages the Authority wishes to portray through its work and are proud to be ambassadors for the Authority;

- to ensure that managers are role models for effective internal communications;
- to ensure that the Broads Authority is seen as an organisation that celebrates success and shares learning and good practice;
- to ensure staff feel consulted and involved on key issues;
- to enable the development of clear, effective channels of communication with staff, members and stakeholders, including all those who live, work, visit or otherwise take an interest in the Broads;
- to outline a media strategy that positively promotes the Broads regionally, nationally and internationally in line with the vision and goals of the Broads Authority; and
- to enable the promotion of the work of the Authority in a positive and appropriate manner to ensure that it is kept in the public eye and that the image of the Authority is one of an effective and forward looking organisation.

By supporting and enabling the Broads Authority to communicate well with all its audiences, this strategy will also help the Authority to deliver its core purposes.

2. VISION & KEY MESSAGES

The Authority's key external messages are based on its long term vision and priorities. They will be reiterated and retold using different techniques including narrative and imagery. Whilst remaining a consistent core, they may be developed and extended to fit changing objectives within the Authority.

VISION

A vision for the Broads in 2024 was developed through consultation and set out in the Broads Plan 2004, the Authority's Strategy and Management Plan, which is currently under review. The Broads Plan sets out the framework for managing the Broads over the next five to twenty years – jointly with our partner organisations – in order to deliver the aims and objectives set out in the plan. These are summarised in the supporting five-year Action Plan.

This long term vision can be distilled into the following statement:

'The Broads is an unrivalled wetland landscape of international natural and cultural importance. The Authority is committed to the integrated and sustainable management of the Broads – a wetland where there is space for nature and opportunity for people.'

The Broads is a changing place that, in response to climate and human influences, reflects an increasingly harmonious interaction of people with nature. By 2024 the special qualities of the Broads will be enhanced. The area will be well maintained, accessible and welcoming to all, with a healthy ecosystem and a strong tourist industry on land and water, that supports a vibrant local economy.'

This short vision will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised following the completion of the Broads Plan 2010 and a branding exercise which is currently being carried out on behalf of the Authority in conjunction with local businesses.

KEY MESSAGES

The Broads is:

- (1) A member of the National Park family - an international family of protected places.
- (2) Rare and special - the UK's most extensive lowland wetland.
- (3) A great place for boating and the third largest inland waterway in the UK.
- (4) Home to a rich variety of wildlife including many rare species
- (5) A welcoming place for everyone to discover and enjoy, both on land and water.

The Broads Authority:

- (6) Was set up to look after the Broads for the nation.
- (7) Is committed to managing the area in an integrated and sustainable way – socially, economically and environmentally.
- (8) Maintains the navigation area in the Broads
- (9) Works to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty
- (10) Is committed to finding ways to mitigate the effects of climate change
- (11) Works to ensure everybody can appreciate and enjoy the Broads.
- (12) Has expert staff and a renowned reputation
- (13) Delivers high quality work and good value for money
- (14) Consults stakeholders and local communities and listens to their views

These can be distilled into a more concise message for members of the public who inquire about what we do along the following lines:

“The Broads is a member of the national park family. It is the UK’s premier wetland and the 3rd largest inland waterway. The Authority’s role is to look after the area and help people enjoy its special qualities. We strive to manage the Broads in a sustainable way, working with other organisations and local people. One of our key priorities is to help the Broads adapt to the effects of climate change and sea level rise.”

3 NAME AND STATUS

The Authority’s name and status has been the subject of much debate but the Authority’s position, confirmed by DEFRA, is that:

- the Broads has status equal to a national park
- the Authority is a member of the national park family

When referring to the area, verbally or in writing, staff and members are encouraged to refer to the national park status of the Broads as much as possible and to use the term ‘a member of the national park family’. The term ‘The Broads National Park’ is not to be used. However if other people choose to refer to the area as a national park, we should not discourage them to do so. In case of doubt simply refer to the area as ‘the Broads’.

When using the name of the area and the organisation in formal written documents such as letter headings and bank account details always refer to ‘the Broads’ and ‘the Broads Authority’. The only occasion on which Norfolk and Suffolk Broads are referred to jointly is in the title of the 1988 Act.

When referring collectively to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 & the Broads Authority Act 2009 always refer to ‘the Broads Authority Acts’.

4. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

INTERNAL AUDIENCES

We want everyone working for and/or representing the Broads Authority to share the same organisational vision and priorities. Effective internal communications are vital to ensuring that our objectives – and how we go about attaining them – are not only understood but acted upon.

Staff & Volunteers

The Authority employs approximately 155 staff (including a significant number of seasonal and part-time employees and around 100 permanent full time employees). Around 250 volunteers also contribute to the work of the Authority. All are a key asset both in terms of communicating internally with each other; and representing the Authority and its work in a positive manner to external audiences.

Members

The Authority has 21 members, 19 appointed by local and national government and two appointed by the Navigation Committee. In addition there are six co-opted members appointed by the Authority to the Navigation Committee to represent different navigation interests, and five independent members appointed by the Authority to the Standards Committee. They bring valuable local knowledge, understanding and experience of their communities and interests and the concerns that lie within them. They are ambassadors for the Authority and bear a key responsibility for its work and direction.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Good internal communication is essential to ensure that staff and members:

- understand the Authority's plans, aspirations and priorities and how they contribute to achieving them;
- are well informed about the services the Broads Authority provides and how people can access them;
- are able to communicate effectively to external audiences what the Authority is doing and/or proposes to do and for what purposes;
- feel valued, well supported and motivated;
- feel able to contribute directly to organisational change and improvement;
- are proud to be ambassadors or advocates for the Authority;
- feel their successes are recognised and appreciated; and
- are consulted on and involved in key issues and feel able to influence and shape decisions.

METHODS OF DELIVERY

Staff

The following methods are currently used to facilitate effective internal communication for staff:

- a thorough induction programme for all new members of staff;
- a weekly staff briefing meeting at Dragonfly House (with minutes and notes from the Chief Executive emailed to all staff unable to attend);
- regular Directorate and Section meetings;
- regular 1:1 Discussions between line managers and individual members of staff;
- an intranet facility which provides information on Authority policies, corporate strategies and staff benefits as well as news about events within the organisation, social occasions and colleagues' achievements;
- two Staff Development Days each year involving all members of staff;
- a monthly 'celebration event' at Dragonfly House to mark significant events and encourage inter-departmental communication;
- regular Directorate newsletters;
- regular site visits by Management Team; and
- an annual Individual Performance Review.

Members

In order to perform their role effectively it is important that members are fully briefed on the work of the Authority and on all important developments. This is currently achieved through:

- an induction programme for all new members;
- reading committee papers and attendance at meetings;
- a half day Members Briefing in advance of all Broads Authority meetings;
- attendance on site visits and at training events; and
- a monthly Members Bulletin.

CONTEXT FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Evidence – good internal communications are key to strong performance**

Extensive MORI research has found that staff who are very satisfied with their jobs are five times more likely to be advocates for the company they work for. Critically, MORI research shows that being listened to contributes more significantly to staff satisfaction than other factors such as pay.

- **Organisational aims**

In the current economic climate and with public bodies facing extensive funding reviews, we are likely to find ourselves looking to consolidate our resources, be prudent in our spending and increasingly use partnerships as a vehicle for delivering essential services. This means that the effective communication of change and organisational development needs to be a priority in this strategy.

- **Results of consultation and research**

Employee Survey

A consultant was engaged in 2009 to carry out an independent Employee Survey for the Broads Authority. The level of response was very high: 73% of staff. The survey elicited a largely positive response including that:

- 94% understand the Authority's key priorities;
- 86% feel supported by their line manager if they have a problem;
- 85% attend regular team meetings; and
- 78% say they are kept in touch with what's going on.

However, the survey also identified:

- outlying staff felt less 'in touch';
- staff felt the Authority is not sufficiently proactive in getting its message across;
- messages should be more open and transparent; and
- management communication style was too 'top down'.

Investors in People Assessment 2009

The findings of an Investors in People review for the Broads Authority in December 2009 were very positive. They indicated that:

- staff felt able to introduce projects and develop initiatives within the Authority;
- the intranet was widely used and people felt well informed by it and confident they could access a wealth of information on it;
- staff felt Directors 'strive to inform...and update people as effectively as they can'; and
- all but a small group felt their achievements were recognised by management through means such as Directorate newsletters, in-house meetings and field visits although there was considered to be room for improvement in this area.

Communications Survey 2009

A survey of communications methods used by Broads Authority staff was carried out in December 2009. Just over half of permanent and permanent seasonal staff took part (50.3%). The results showed the majority of people feel well informed. A wide range of suggestions were also made which will inform the Communications Action plan.

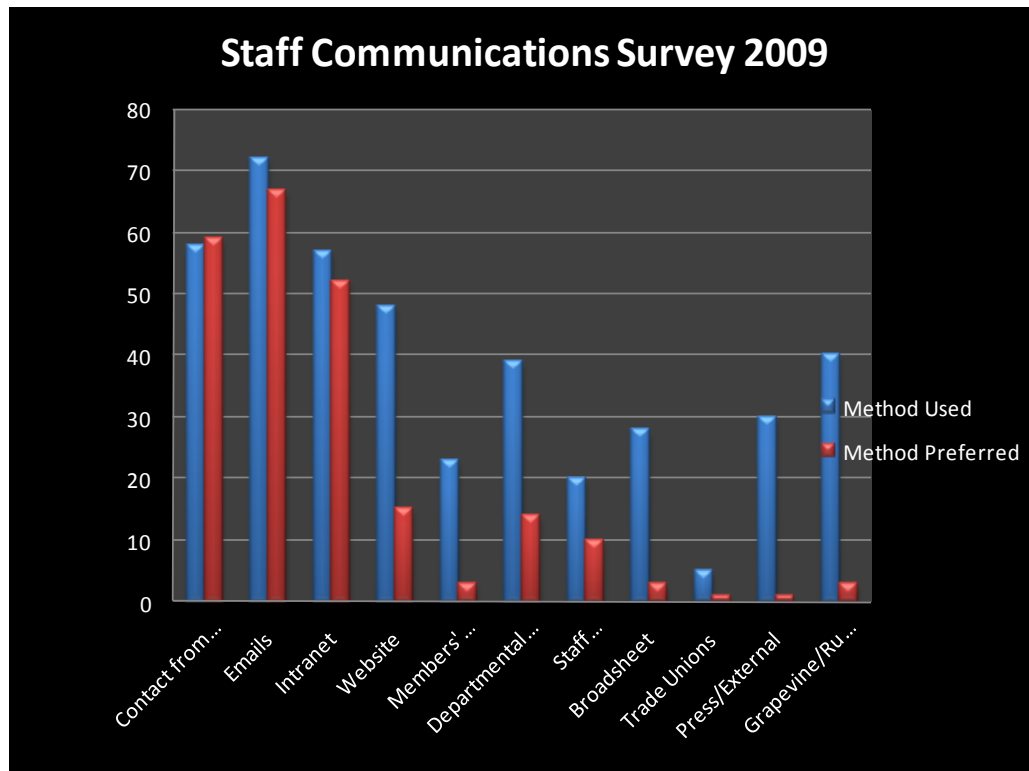
The survey compared methods currently used to inform staff of information about the Authority with their preferred methods for receiving such information. Given that approximately 50% of staff are based outside Dragonfly House this is an important way of assessing their accessibility to information.

Encouragingly the survey showed that the three ways we use most commonly to communicate – emails, personal contact from senior management and the intranet – are also the most favoured. However, a pattern of comments gathered through the survey also indicate that staff would welcome:

- a newsletter covering the whole Authority, not just individual directorates;
- weekly email of updates on work in progress, especially any that may be requested by members of the public ie moorings that are temporarily out of use, when river work will be finished etc;
- improved intranet facility with more room for news and features on staff; and
- more team building/site visits between office and field based staff.

It is also clear from the results that a large number of staff rely on 'the grapevine' or rumour and external sources such as press coverage to get information about the work of the Authority. Internal communications methods therefore clearly need to be improved to address this imbalance.

The following table shows the methods staff actually use to find information about the Authority and their preferred routes. In the survey staff were asked for a choice of three preferred routes.



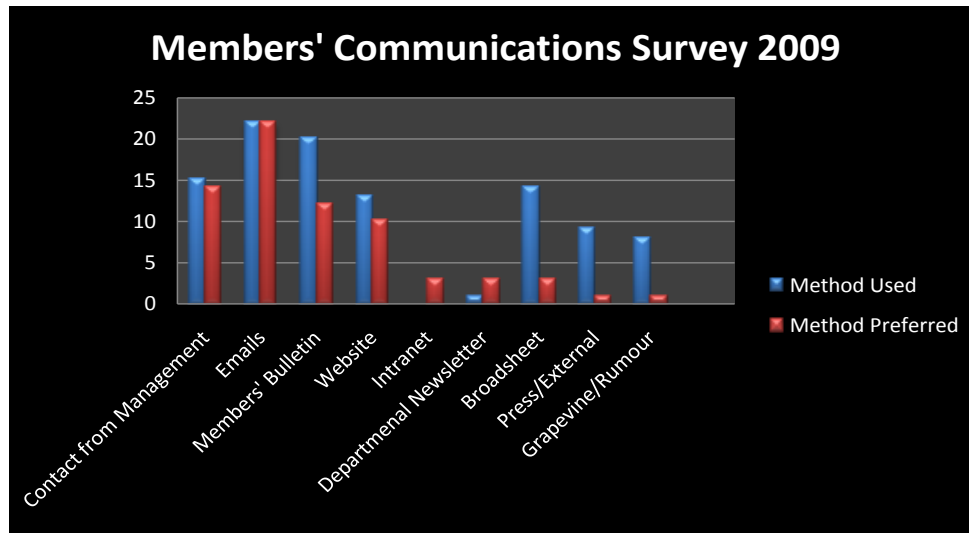
Member Feedback

A similar communications survey was carried out involving the Broads Authority's members, co-opted members and chair of the Broads Forum. This elicited a 69.6% response rate. This showed that the three main methods used for providing information about the Authority were also the three most favoured methods, although a high number were still getting information via the press and 'grapevine' first.

Feedback from Members received as part of the consultation on the Communications Strategy was extremely positive with most saying they felt well informed. However certain issues were recurrent and indicate a desire for:

- a members' section on the intranet with appropriate documents and information
- more involvement in working groups and opportunity to give feedback on key issues
- more site visits to learn about elements of Authority work and meet staff

The following table shows the actual and preferred routes used by members for accessing information about the Authority.



- **Diverse range of our workforce and location of the jobs they do.**

Of the Broads Authority's 155 permanent staff approximately half (78) are based outside Dragonfly House. In addition, there are 250 mostly field-based volunteers. Regular access to computers/laptops is therefore limited for many. Meeting these diverse communication needs so that everyone can feel well informed and supported continues to be an area for focused activity.

- **The impact of new communication technologies and changing patterns of work.**

We need to understand and recognise the ways in which greater use of mobile and digital communication can help deliver the objectives in this strategy and ensure that we use them. Although many of our staff do not have regular or direct access to the internet/intranet, most have mobile phones and some, especially seasonal staff, have expressed a wish to have some information directed to their home email addresses. This strategy aims to ensure our methods of internal communications recognise such developments and respond accordingly.

HOW WE PLAN TO DELIVER GOOD INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. Ensure that all communications methods are accessible and meet the diverse communications needs of employees and members;
2. Keep communication methods relevant and effective through regular review and evaluation;
3. Improve inter-departmental communication with an integrated newsletter;
4. Support major change and development projects with clear and consistent communication plans;

5. Support the Authority in its responsibilities for handling emergency situations with well understood and rapid communication routes, procedures and techniques;
6. Recognise and record the successes of individual staff, teams and departments;
7. Create channels for two-way communication – requesting and using feedback to drive improvement;
8. Devise methods for publicising press releases, cuttings etc on the intranet, noticeboards etc;
9. Provide information promptly and as widely as possible so that staff/members do not hear important news externally first;
10. Provide a members' facility on the intranet where members can access relevant information and communicate with each other easily.

5 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

AUDIENCES

Media and Public Relations

Communication is most effective when it is targeted. The Broads Authority has a range of audiences with differing communications needs, and will consider and use the most appropriate method for each. A summary of these audiences is set out below (not in order of importance).

People who Live and Work in and Adjacent to the Broads

This includes both those with 'doorstep access' to the Broads, who are directly related to the economy and the culture of the area, and those who live just outside the Authority's Executive Area, including landowners and residents of the large communities that are not within the Authority's Executive Area but which surround it (Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Wroxham/Hoveton, Stalham, Beccles and Bungay). These audiences have varying degrees of awareness and understanding, which it is the Authority's responsibility to promote.

'Hard to Reach' Groups

Since the last strategy was written in 2006 the Authority has targeted efforts at reaching groups including the socially excluded, elderly, ethnic communities and young people. Advances in accessible interpretation have been made; the Forest Schools project has enabled excluded youngsters in Norwich to take part in outdoor activities at Whitlingham Country Park; the Sustainable Development Fund has sponsored projects for the elderly and disabled; and the Mosaic Project has encouraged ethnic groups to enjoy the Broads on organised 'taster days'.

However more targeted research and evaluation still needs to be done into how these groups can be enabled to benefit further from access to the Broads. In recent years Norfolk has seen a number of changes in the profiles of its communities, particularly through the seasonal and permanent migration of workers from Europe. Across Norfolk alone more than 80 different languages are spoken and 35,000 people are registered

deaf or significantly hard of hearing. Many more have special communication needs because of learning difficulties.

In recognition of the diverse profile of potential Broads users, the Authority must continue to build upon and develop its efforts to make its interpretation facilities and communications inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible.

Businesses

The environment of the Broads is a key economic asset locally, regionally and nationally. Landowners and businesses, including those involved in tourism, boating and farming, are key communicators in their own right. They can, and do, work with the Authority, as well as being recipients of information.

Toll Payers

Around 10,000 people pay tolls annually to use the Broads system in their boats. Many feel passionately about the waterways and have the interests of the area close at heart. The Authority has a responsibility to communicate important safety messages to them as well as gaining their support by explaining the way it spends their money to manage the area.

Visitors

A wide range of visitors exist, from local day trippers to national and international tourists. Successful communication will enable them to appreciate and understand the area and access it appropriately and sustainably.

The form of communication this takes falls into two categories: our publications, leaflets and information are used by those who have already made the decision to visit. They also experience face to face contact with our staff. The second category are the potential visitors in the UK and abroad who need to be attracted through positive media coverage and our website.

Media

This is a key communications tool for the Authority, with a good working relationship existing both locally and nationally across a wide range of electronic, broadcast, and print media, including specialist publications for boating, tourism, ecology etc.

Local Authorities

Collaboration with county and district councils, health authorities and Norfolk Constabulary is important on many levels – sharing joint initiatives, handling issues such as public health and safety, dealing jointly with major incidents etc. In 2009 the Broads Authority joined the East of England Leaders' Board which is made up of all 52 local authorities. This has helped raise its profile regionally.

Our local government appointed members have an important role to play in feeding back Broads Authority decisions to their full councils.

In addition our liaison with parish councils is a vital communication resource for disseminating information and gaining feedback at 'grass roots' level. Parish Forum and Parish drop-in sessions introduced in 2009 have proved a great success in fostering good relations with local communities.

Partner Organisations

These include other protected areas and key stakeholders such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association, the RYA and the Broads Hire Boat Federation. Interest groups, amenity societies and other similar organisations also play key linking communication roles.

National Opinion Formers

These include civil servants, Ministers, MPs, think tanks, academics and national organisations such as the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA), Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA), Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) and Europarc (European Federation of Nature and National Parks).

Planning Applicants

The Broads Authority's in-house planning department communicates regularly with residents submitting plans for approval and interested parties responding to those plans. Planning Committee members are also frequently approached before and after committee meetings. Guidelines are in place to ensure that we are always open and transparent in handling these communications.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATIONS WITH EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

- To be recognised locally, nationally and internationally as an effective, efficient and caring organisation that produces positive results, delivers on promises and offers good value for money.
- To be seen in a positive light for our efforts to protect and care for this valuable wetland.
- To be seen by external audiences to value their views and consider them when making key decisions.
- For staff to be proud to work for the Broads Authority and for others to see us as a great organisation to work for and learn from.
- To be seen as an Authority that is in touch with the needs and priorities of all the communities with interests in the Broads.
- To ensure all communications activities support and promote equal opportunities and that all information is accessible to as many people as possible.
- To provide regular Broads users and visitors with the information they need about the area, what the Authority's role is and the opportunities they have to influence our plans and priorities.
- To promote the Broads as an excellent place to live, work and do business in order to help improve the local economy.

6 METHODS OF DELIVERY

A key element of communications success is based on the right 'fit' between medium, message and audience. The Broads Authority will refine and strengthen its existing media, detailed below, and explore new methods of delivery, always seeking to tailor these to their defined audiences and messages. Where possible evaluation will be built into communication methods to enable assessment and improvement.

The Authority has developed a good working relationship with local media which it will continue to be facilitated both proactively – by staging press events and sending out press releases – and reactively – by responding promptly to requests for information. It will seek to work collaboratively with the media wherever possible, using it to convey key messages. Guidelines for staff and members for working with the media are set out in Section 6.

However, the Broads Authority has not been as proactive in harnessing potential coverage from national and international press to date, largely due to resources. This is a key element to be the Communications Strategy going forward.

In order to enable the Authority to deal more strategically with press and PR issues a forward planning process has been developed which includes:

- (1) A rolling 12 month **Forward Communication Plan** of potentially sensitive/newsworthy items such as toll increases/sensitive planning applications. This will be developed by the Communications Manager in consultation with the Management Team (having regard to the Forward Plan for committee items) to aid the Authority in dealing with these matters in a proactive manner. This Plan will be reviewed and updated by the Management Team on a quarterly basis.
- (2) A **Proforma Checklist** will be developed from the Forward Communication Plan. This will identify forthcoming issues which are likely to be particularly contentious or create significant press interest. The Checklist must be approved by the Chief Executive and appropriate Director as a minimum, and preferably the Management Team, and will include details of:
 - the lead officer;
 - details of the issue and why it is important;
 - the key messages;
 - the target audience;
 - likely forms of media to be required (e.g. press release/event/photo opportunity/leaflet/exhibition);
 - staff briefing details; and
 - timetable.

All members of the Management Team will work regularly with staff in their teams to identify the key communications issues (both positive and negative) that are likely to arise and where appropriate record these using the Proforma Checklist.

The Authority recognises that communications are reactive as well as proactive and will ensure that it has sufficient flexibility and resources to be able to respond to situations when it is necessary to do so. It should be recognised that on occasions this may present unplanned communications opportunities.

All contacts from the media should in the first instance be channelled through the Communications Manager or, in her absence, the Press Officer or Chief Executive/appropriate Director.

Press releases will be used sparingly, and only where there is a newsworthy story which is likely to result in a high take-up of interest. All press releases should be approved by the Chief Executive and appropriate Director.

In consultation with the Communications Manager, the Chief Executive and Management Team will decide whether to respond to critical letters in the press. As a general rule the Authority will reply to such letters only where it can clearly refute the criticism or correct the information in a straightforward and factual manner which is unlikely to prolong or perpetuate the debate in the press. If this cannot be guaranteed then a response will not be sent.

Staff will not engage with Website Forums, however critical, unless there is a defamatory or libellous statement made against an individual in which case legal advice will be sought and action taken to remove the statement from the site.

All requests for a member of staff to give a live or recorded interview must be approved by the Communications Manager and Chief Executive or appropriate Director. The Authority may on occasion decline to respond to such requests where it is not considered to be in the Authority's interest to participate.

Members have an important role in promoting the work of the Broads Authority and ensuring that the Authority is correctly represented in media communications. The Chair of the Authority and Chief Executive should normally speak on behalf of the Authority, Committee chairs or lead members may also be asked by the Authority to speak to the media on specific issues. Members should discuss all media contacts with the Communications Manager in the first instance, to ensure that the Authority is correctly represented. This principle will also apply to any letters or other types of correspondence written for publication, including on websites, though this does not cover matters unrelated to the work of the Authority; neither does it preclude local authority members from speaking on behalf of their constituent local authority.

Publications

All published documents will be readily available in electronic format. The Authority aspires to reduce the amount of 'hard copy' publications it produces, for environmental and cost reasons. To this end, investigations are ongoing into means of distributing newsletters electronically and an electronic system for distributing committee papers is

currently being trialled, However, hard copy' publications will also continue to be produced because:

- audiences often do not wish to download or read from the screen information which is more than a few pages in length;
- the majority of holidaymakers/visitors to the area do not generally have access to electronic communications, although the numbers are increasing and we are investigating methods of improving online networks on the Broads.

The Authority's key publications are currently as follows:

- (1) **Annual Report.** This is a statutory requirement. The Annual Report details the activities of the Authority over the previous 12 months. It is distributed to a wide audience including all staff and members, a range of stakeholders and other public authorities and national opinion formers. Copies are also placed in local libraries and are available from Broads visitor centres.
- (2) **Broads Plan.** This is a management plan which sets out a vision and long-term (20-year) aims for the future of the Broads, as well as short-term (5-year) objectives. The Broads Authority is required to review and update it once every five years. The current Broads Plan was published in 2004 and the 2009/2010 review is due for publication in late 2010.
- (3) **Business Plan.** The Business Plan sets out how the Authority proposes to allocate its resources and work programme over a three yearly basis. It provides a link between the Broads Plan, and the day to day activities of staff and partner organisations.
- (4) **Broadcaster.** This annual magazine is aimed primarily at visitors – although many local residents also enjoy it. It is widely distributed free of charge from Broads information centres, tourist information centres, boatyards and accommodation outlets. Some boatyards put a copy on all hire boats. It includes news about the Broads and the Broads Authority, topical features, the annual events programme and accommodation guide. 130,000 copies are produced and it is mainly financed by advertising.
- (5) **Broad Sheet.** The Broad Sheet is produced for toll payers and is sent out free of charge with the annual toll reminders in February/March each year, and again in September. The February edition is an eight page, full colour publication providing news about the Broads and the Broads Authority. Approximately 13,000 copies are produced.
- (6) **Other Leaflets & Brochures.** A range of other leaflets and publications are produced as appropriate, usually on specialist topics from boating safety to events guides, after advance approval by the appropriate Director.

After approval by the Management Team and appropriate Director all requests for new publications must be discussed in the first instance with the Head of Information and Design, who will advise on the appropriate style. No publications should be outsourced or produced by other departments without prior discussion with the Communications Manager to ensure quality and consistency of information and style, and to avoid duplication. All publications must be appropriate to the purpose and market audience. They should in all cases be professionally presented and reflect the Authority's house style. The Authority will avoid producing materials which might be perceived to be unduly expensive.

All documents which contain significant amounts of text should be professionally proof-read prior to their publication.

Personal Contact

Personal contact is a highly effective communication tool. Although all types of live events are demanding in terms of time resources, the benefits of face to face communication are substantial. The Authority carries out various activities of this nature, including:

- a lively and varied events programme;
- an annual Public Meeting;
- an annual Schools Week; and
- a range of educational talks and presentations by staff.

In addition a number of members of staff deal with members of the public as part of their normal daily activities, including:

- reception staff;
- tolls staff;
- information centre staff;
- rangers; and
- development control staff.

Electronic Communication

Since the last strategy the internet has become an integral part of most people's daily lives and the Authority's corporate website has grown in use and importance accordingly. It enables us to make up-to-date information instantly available as well as enabling us to make all committee minutes and agendas available to the public.

The Authority's new 'Enjoy the Broads' tourism website is scheduled to be online by spring 2010 enabling a better service for visitors to the Broads and information tailored to their needs as holidaymakers. More innovative methods of publicity and information provision are planned including video news releases and interactive maps. The aim is to reach and engage younger audiences as well as providing the opportunity for immediate feedback and engagement with site users. The Authority's corporate site will also be upgraded making it easier to navigate. It will focus primarily on the work of the Authority, its policies and procedures.

Discussion Forum Websites

The Authority has taken the view that it is counter-productive to enter into on-line debates or conversations on Discussion Forum websites. However, such websites will be monitored and, if necessary, the contents of any contributions will be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive or appropriate Director and action taken where appropriate.

Corporate Identity/Signage, Displays etc

The Authority's corporate identity is key to all its communications: written and electronic, in publications, displays and exhibitions, on signs, panels, vehicles and staff uniforms.

The Authority has developed a strapline: 'The Broads – a member of the National Park family'. This is to be used with its logo on all marketing materials and other corporate information in order to get across a common, simple message to as wide an audience as possible.

Consultation

Two way communication should be fostered and supported by effective consultation-based working with stakeholders, partner organizations and the wider public. In this regard, the Authority has a number of important Forums which play a particularly valuable role. The Broads Forum acts as a reference group to offer advice and comment on the Authority's strategic aims and objectives. It promotes closer liaison and understanding between the various bodies and organisations which have an interest in the Broads and its wider catchment area. The Broads Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body that provides guidance on the improvement of public access in the Broads area. In addition, the Broads Tourism Forum brings together approximately 50 members from different sectors of the area's tourism industry to work together and with the Authority to raise the profile of the Broads in today's highly competitive global tourism market.

Written Communication

Despite the increase of electronic communication, it is still appropriate in some instances to correspond by letter.

Guidelines for written communication are set out below.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Dealing with the Media

Media are key allies. They are interested in getting a story but also in getting the story right. It is in the Authority's interest to work with them but to ensure that this is done in a controlled, structured way as well as working to the tighter timeframe required by the media. These guidelines apply equally to emergency and routine requests.

- (1) Remain polite and helpful, but do not give information on or off the record.
- (2) Get the full details of the information sought, and if possible some details of the story being worked on including the deadline. Write this down.
- (3) Take a careful note of the journalist's contact details (full name, post, publication/programme, mobile and land line numbers and email address).
- (4) Explain that you will pass these details on to the relevant person and that they will respond. Assure them that you will call them back to let them know the situation if an answer is going to take some time.
- (5) Contact the Communications Manager or Press Officer and relay the above information. If they are not available, contact the Head of Information and Design or your line manager. Aim to provide as much information about the situation to your colleagues as you can if it is your area of work.
- (6) A decision will be taken by the Communications Manager/Chief Executive/appropriate Director as to who will provide the information, depending on the nature of the request.
- (7) Make sure that the call is followed up. Aim for the Authority's response to be prompt and accurate.

These guidelines apply equally to members as to officers. Details should be passed on to the Communications Manager, or in her absence the Press Officer.

Email Communication

Email is an impersonal and in some respects imperfect form of communication and there are therefore some messages which it is not appropriate to send via email. This applies in particular to matters of a sensitive or contentious nature, especially where some criticism of the recipient is intended or where the recipient is likely to be disappointed or upset by the outcome. In such cases it is advised that face to face communication be used if at all possible.

It is worth bearing the following in mind when sending emails:

- only send a message you would be happy to say face to face
- assume anything you write in an email is for public consumption as it may well be forwarded to recipients you had not intended it for
- if possible never send confidential information by email
- never send an email in the heat of the moment – it is better to wait, reflect and check the tone and content before you press 'send'
- important decisions should be communicated or confirmed by letter;
- choose your words carefully – emails (internal or external) can be libellous
- avoid using block capitals – they are the email equivalent of shouting

- always delete email ‘histories’ from the bottom of emails to protect the privacy of conversations – and avoid potential embarrassment

Written Communication

Despite the increase in the use of electronic communication, it is still appropriate in some instances to correspond by letter. This applies when:

- the correspondent has written in by letter and clearly expects a reply through the same medium;
- the letter appends bulky attachments which it would be unreasonable to expect the recipient to download; or
- the letter is one of a formal nature, for example incorporating details of a contractual nature or relating to a formal complaint or dispute.

All letters should be drawn up in accordance with the standard template which is available on the intranet. They should be signed at the appropriate level by the officer dealing with the issue, and should at all times be courteous, professional and not unnecessarily lengthy.

The following guidelines apply in certain instances:

- all letters to Government Ministers or MPs (unless they are of a very routine nature) must be cleared in advance with the Chief Executive or appropriate Director; and
- all letters to the Environment Agency and/or BESL about the Broadland Flood Alleviation Strategy must be sent out in the name of or discussed in advance with the Broads Projects Coordinator, or in his absence the Director of Waterways.

Telephone Communication

Many people make their first contact with the Authority by telephone, and officers spend significant amounts of time talking on the phone, whether to clients, colleagues, suppliers or partners. It is vital to the Authority’s success therefore that its staff use the phone effectively.

First impressions are particularly important as 90% of people form 90% of their lasting impression in the first 90 seconds! Give a friendly greeting and introduce yourself. Find out the caller’s name. In order to avoid misunderstandings, speak clearly and at a measured pace and avoid jargon.

In dealing with difficult callers it is good practice to:

- allow them to ‘let off steam’ if necessary before attempting to deal with their problem;
- don’t take things personally and try not to become defensive;
- sympathise – even if the problem is not your own fault you may be able to calm a situation by telling the caller you understand and sympathise;
- work through a system process:

- build rapport;
- get the facts;
- discuss solutions; and
- if possible agree an action;
- stay in control – if the caller strays gently bring them back to the point;
- be assertive; and
- wrap up the call firmly but politely. Always say goodbye.

CONTEXT FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **The need to have a positive public image.**

Members of the public - be they visitors, toll payers etc - should always receive a high standard of customer care, however they choose to contact us, in order that they have a positive image of their Broads experience or their dealings with the Authority.

Research shows that people who are well informed about the work of an organisation tend to feel more satisfied with it, rather than feeling 'kept in the dark' about its operations. In a 2009 survey of 10,000 toll payers on the Broads 63% of those who responded said the Authority did a good job. In a similar survey in 2005 54.7% said the same – which shows that overall satisfaction with the Authority is improving. This is a trend we need to build on.

We also want the Broads to be perceived in a positive light on the national stage to attract more visitors, boost the economy and potentially attract more funding to the Authority for important projects. We want to be seen as a forward-thinking authority, promoting sustainable & quality tourism experiences in a beautiful habitat. A Broads branding exercise currently being carried out will further inform our approach to this in the future.

- **Organisational aims and aspirations**

In the current economic climate we need to be in step with other organisations and the thinking of the general public in everything we do and the messages we convey. Visibly prudent spending by the Authority and an aim to consistently offer value for money needs to be a key message.

- **The results of research and consultation.**

Communications Survey 2009

The Communications Survey highlighted a number of factors which staff and members feel could be improved in our external communications. More promotion of the positive aspects of our work was a theme of many responses as well as a desire for the Broads to be recognised on a bigger stage through more national and international publicity.

We need to be better at communicating with young people. Although we run events for all age ranges, our current website has no provision for engaging young visitors. This will be addressed with the new tourism website. We also know that, with the growth of

electronic communication, people's reading/viewing habits are changing - they want bite-sized chunks of information and lots of visual imagery. Many only scan large tracts of text. This informs the way we need to present the Authority's news and information. With tolls continuing to rise in the next few years we also need to better communicate how we are spending our money, the fact that we always aim to offer good value and that we listen to toll payers and try to address their concerns and deliver services they want.

Norfolk Tourism Survey 2009

Norfolk Tourism carried out a survey through their Visit Norfolk website to better understand what attracts people to the area and the image they have of it. The research showed that Norfolk destination websites were very influential for 31% of respondents seeking information about the area. This highlights the importance of our new tourism website, although the research also showed brochure-based marketing continues to play a strong role.

The survey results revealed that people's knowledge of what was on offer in the county was good and that the Broads were a well known attraction. The appeal of the area centred on its beautiful coastline and countryside and plenty of places to visit.

One of the themes that emerged strongly was a sense that Norfolk was slightly 'out of time' and somewhat unspoilt by modernity. It was seen as a positive attribute that Norfolk has an 'unchanged' quality and a slower pace of life which gave it a distinctive position in the tourism marketplace.

Many of the perceptions respondents had were linked to the friendliness of Norfolk people. This should be a central tenet of our communication about the Broads ie with profiles of our staff and their roles on the website and images of people at work and play around the Broads.

Norfolk Citizens' Panel Survey

The Authority took part in an IPSOS/MORI survey of Norfolk County Council's Citizens' Panel in 2006 to obtain information about the public's understanding, expectations and image of both the Authority and the Broads. Of the 3790 people who responded, 84% had visited the Broads and four in five (81%) said they were aware of the Broads Authority. At the time local newspapers were the most favoured source for information on the Broads Authority, followed by television and local radio. The tourist information centre was also seen to play an important role. There are, however, a couple of information sources which do not appear to be fully utilised: newsletters containing targeted information about the Authority and the Authority's website. At the time only 7% used the website to find information on the Authority although, as the Visit Norfolk survey indicates, a similar exercise carried out now would undoubtedly record a higher figure.

Broadcaster Survey

A survey in the 2009 edition of Broadcaster included a question asking readers whether they preferred a printed or electronic/web format for the magazine. Only a small number of people responded, presumably because they were required to post their reply slips back to the Authority. However, of those who took part, 79% said they preferred a paper

version, only 2.3% said they preferred a web/electronic format and 19% said they would like both.

Toll Payers' Survey

The Broads Authority carried out a survey of its 10,000 Toll Payers in 2009 to find out how they felt about the Authority and to help shape its plans for the future. As part of this process they were asked whether they felt the Authority let toll payers know what it is doing. Of those who responded, 78.4% said we did keep them informed. This compares with 61% in a similar survey in 2005, indicating that our communications strategy has been working and services have improved.

HOW WE PLAN TO DELIVER GOOD EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. Keep people well informed by making good use of broadcast, print and electronic media channels to give out information and news about the Broads Authority and its work
2. Improve our websites and investigate new means of disseminating information through electronic communication, including E-newsletters, text alerts for key issues & social networking
3. Provide more opportunities for people to give us feedback through our website so we can learn from their experiences and they can share their views with others
4. Improve website provision for younger audiences to educate and inspire them about the Broads
5. Offer improved web information about members and their role with the Authority
6. Demonstrate efficiency and value for money by greater use of the internet for delivering Broads Authority publications to people who choose this option
7. Explore with other public sector partners opportunities for shared communication activities
8. Continue to offer good customer service in face-to-face meetings with the public ie tourist information centres, reception staff, toll officers, information officers, rangers and events officers
9. Maintain a presence at major events locally and nationally which can promote the Authority and the Broads for example, the Norfolk Show, the Caravan and Boat Show
10. Hold an annual media event to help establish good contacts with local and national media

7 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN

An Emergency Communication Plan for the Communications Team to follow in the event of a major incident is set out in Appendix 2. A separate Emergency and Major Incident Procedure is being drawn up for all staff to follow in such a situation.

8 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Authority will endeavour to comply with the following principles in all its communications:

Clear and Effective Presentation

The Authority's messages are often complex and technical and therefore excellent graphic design and clear language are essential aids to good communication.

The Authority will not use jargon except where it is unavoidable; in such cases it will endeavour to explain the meaning. The standard of presentation should reflect the Authority's duty to protect the area's high quality as well as its status as a professional and competent organisation. It should be both appropriate and sustainable.

Accessibility and Social Inclusion

Published information will be accessible to all, and available in formats which are suitable for people with disabilities in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. All key publications can be produced in large print on request and Broadcaster is available on CD. The Authority will actively promote diversity in its communications.

Corporate Identity

All communications will be in a style which is consistent with and where appropriate portrays the Authority's overall corporate identity. This promotes a unified and consistent image of the Authority. Having been in use for more than 20 years, the Authority's dragonfly logo has become a well-recognised symbol locally and this sense of identity should be maximised. The Authority's communications should be engaging and, where appropriate, fun!

Openness, Honesty and Consistency

People respond best to communication that is honest and genuine. Inconsistency calls this into question and so messages should also be open, accurate and consistent.

Partnership Working

The Authority has long experience of working in partnership with stakeholders and others. Partnership working provides opportunities to jointly develop our communications. This will be particularly relevant as we assess the results of the branding project which the Authority is currently carrying out in conjunction with the Broads Tourism Forum.

9 MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS

A number of methods will be employed to assess the communication requirements of the Authority's audiences and gauge the effectiveness of its communication. These are set out below. It is important that this research is carried out in a strategic and consistent manner to allow annual evaluation and comparison with other similar organisations. The Employee Survey 2009 and the Communications Survey of Staff and Members informed the development of this strategy. An annual evaluation will now be carried out to review its effectiveness.

Internal Monitoring

The Management Team will monitor the effectiveness of its press and PR coverage by:

- receiving regular details of press coverage at weekly Management Team meetings and in due course cuttings will also be electronically posted onto the Intranet);
- receiving a monthly summary of press and PR coverage (this is also included in the Members Bulletin); and
- reviewing successes and failures in more depth on a quarterly basis, at the time the Forward Communication Plan is reviewed and updated.

Communication Action Plan

The Authority has a **Communication Action Plan**, which sets out how it proposes to implement this Strategy. The Action Plan for 2010/11 is set out at Appendix 1. This will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Website

The Authority monitors the number of hits on its website. This shows that 228,572 people accessed the site in 2009 compared to 189,408 the previous year (an increase of 39,164 unique users). The most popular pages are the Homepage with its regularly updated news, the Current Vacancies section and the main Boating page. We will continue to monitor both the corporate site and the new tourism website and adapt them accordingly.

Public Surveys

See above.

Media

The Authority will monitor media coverage, including the amount of take-up of press releases, the number of 'positive', 'neutral' and 'negative' stories, and whether key messages are being accurately portrayed.

Events

Success will be gauged by staff observation, written and verbal feedback and the number of people attending - including attendance figures from the Annual Public Meeting.

Staff Feedback

From telephone and face to face contacts with individuals and businesses, particularly from field staff.

10 RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW

Overall responsibility for this Communication Strategy rests with the Chief Executive, supported by the Management Team, Communications Manager, Head of Information and Design and Press Officer.

It will be reviewed and updated annually, having regard to feedback from interest groups and the results of any surveys which have been carried out.

Communication Action Plan 2010/11

Area	Action	Responsible Officer(s)
A. METHODS OF DELIVERY		
Staff: Internal Communications	Support major change and development plans with clear and consistent communications plans	Communications Manager
	Focus on staff as ambassadors for the Authority and make sure they understand and espouse key messages. Produce a small card outlining the main goals and objectives of the Authority for staff.	Communications Manager
	Hold 4 Members' Development Days a year	Management Team
	Breakdown perception of 'top down' management by improving Staff Development Days for team building, and management visiting/working with staff at their jobs and at field bases. Regular constructive feedback given to staff and recognition of achievements wherever possible.	Management Team/Section Heads
	Make Committee papers available to staff in Dragonfly House break-out area	Head of Administration
	Publish all press releases and cuttings on staff noticeboard in Dragonfly House	Head of Communications/ Press Officer

	Improve inter-departmental understanding and communication by encouraging site visits for Dragonfly House staff	Management Team/HR
	Investigate consolidating newsletters into one inter-departmental newsletter for staff and members	Communications Manager
Media and Public Relations	Provide training for selected members of staff in dealing with the press and media.	Director of Corporate Services/Communications Manager
	Establish a new Broads brand identity for use in publications and on websites including images and messages	Communications Manager/Head of Information & Design/ Head of Tourism Development
	Hold annual media event to cultivate good relationships with press locally and nationally	Communications Manager/Press Officer
	Identify potential visitor markets nationally and internationally and target publications which can attract them, including specialist magazines for boaters/birdwatchers etc	Communications Manager
	Continue to improve engagement opportunities with stakeholders, parish councils, local community groups etc	Chief Executive/ Management Team
	Review press release recipients and ensure we are targeting the right audiences	Communications Manager
	Agree positive areas of Authority's work to be proactively promoted including climate change and sustainable tourism.	Management Team/ Communications Manager

Publications	Evaluate whether current publications (especially Broad Sheet and Broadcaster) provide the best mechanism for reaching key audiences, and investigate how the Authority can get its message to a wider audience – newsletter/e-newsletters etc.	Communications Manager/ Chief Executive/ Management Team
	Develop a set of key statistics about the Broads for use by staff in giving presentations/talking to the public.	Communications Manager
	Provide FAQ sheets for front line staff and website when changes are being implemented eg Broads Act 2009, Adjacent Waters	Management Team/ Communications Manager
	Publish Communications Department workflow chart to enable all departments to timetable production of publications	Communications Manager
	Review all leaflets and brochures with a view to streamlining the number published and avoiding duplication of information	Communications Manager/Head of Information and Design
Electronic Communication: Website	Establish and launch new dedicated tourism website with targeted visitor information and sections on the history and cultural heritage of the Broads.	Communications Manager/IEG Project Manager/Head of Information & Design
	Explore and exploit new media opportunities for external audiences including social networking (Twitter/Facebook etc).	Communications Manager/Website Manager
	Improve visual impact of the corporate website through review of content and addition of photographic and video material. Also improve ease of navigation and ensure all documents are displayed as PDFs.	Communications Manager/Website Manager

	Provide feedback facility on tourism website enabling visitors to record their impressions of the Broads	IEG Project Manager
	Establish a database of website users who can be sent e-newsletters, information etc	Communications Manager/Website Manager
Electronic Communication: Intranet	Continue to build capacity and functionality of intranet facility including more staff news and photographs, a press cuttings library and member's own pages accessible through extranet	Communications Manager/IEG Project manager
	Profile teams on the intranet to give better understanding of what everyone does	Communications Manager/Press Officer
	Include articles celebrating staff achievements in departmental newsletters and on intranet	Communications Manager
Corporate Identity	Improve awareness of the Authority by promoting projects which are in progress/completed or otherwise where the Authority has spent money to carry out works on the ground.	Management Team/ Head of Information and Design
	Standardise backgrounds and signature messages for Broads Authority emails & letters	Communications Manager/Head of Information and Design
	Produce a style guide to assist in maintaining a house style for text & graphic content on uniforms, vehicles, signage, publications and documents.	Head of Information and Design

Exhibitions and Displays	Improve information and signage in TICs to make them more visible and to include dedicated racking for Broads Authority leaflets such as safety information	Visitor Services Manager/ Head of Information and Design
Events	Draw up a list of events the Authority will attend during the year ie Norfolk Show, NEC Boat and Caravan Show	Communications Manager/Head of Recreation and Tourism Development

B. MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS		
Internal Monitoring: Press Cuttings	Arrange for improved dissemination of press cuttings, including setting up an area on the Intranet to store daily scanned material	IEG Project Manager Director of Corporate Services/ Press Officer
	Investigate means of making press cuttings available to staff and members electronically	IEG Project Officer
	Procure equipment to enable recording of broadcast material about the Authority in order to review it and establish an archive	Communications Manager/Head of Administration
	Produce monthly report of press coverage to Management Team.	Communications Manager
External Monitoring: Surveys	Organise Visitor Survey to establish updated preferences for receiving information about the Broads	Communications Manager/Head of Tourism Development
Website	Regularly monitor the number of hits on the website and which pages are visited most frequently, and disseminate the information.	Head of Information Technology

Emergency Communication Plan

Introduction

In the event of an emergency or major incident in the Broads there may be an immediate and sustained need to provide timely, accurate and consistent information to the public.

This plan is designed to outline the likely roles and responsibilities of the Communications Team, whether or not we are the lead agency, and to give help and guidance on handling the situation. Such incidents could include:

- serious flooding
- a pollution incident
- a fatality or serious injury to a member/members of staff/the public
- Avian flu/Foot and Mouth outbreak

Obviously all incidents differ in their nature and our response would need to be adapted accordingly.

In most cases the Authority will not be acting alone in responding to such incidents, and will be working alongside other agencies which could include the following:

- County Council Emergency Units;
- Fire and/or Police Service;
- Coastguard and/or Maritime Accident Investigation Bureau;
- Environment Agency;
- Health and Safety Executive.

In most cases it is likely that the Authority will play a supporting rather than a leading role.

Activation, Roles and Responsibilities

The most likely way the Communications Team will be alerted is by Broads Control at Dragonfly House (during working hours) or, at all other times, the Duty Manager or the Chief Executive (who will have been alerted by the Duty Manager) or a member of the press. The first member of the Communications Team to be contacted will be the Communications Manager and, if unavailable, the Press Officer.

The Communications Manager will then establish a suitable and proportionate Communications Team to respond to the incident, either be in a lead or support capacity.

They will also decide whether to activate the Norfolk Major Emergency Media Plan, which will automatically bring in assistance from partners and set the framework for a response on a wider scale. The plan can be activated by any of the response agencies or local authorities including us.

In a major incident we are likely to do two things:

1. Offer the appropriate Communications support to the lead agency (in line with the Norfolk Major Emergency Media Plan)
2. Establish our own media response plan to deal with Broads Authority issues (if appropriate).

The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for authorising the release of information and advice to the public, on behalf of the Authority.

Follow-Up Action

The Communications Manager will deploy a Communications Team member at the scene to attend to media inquiries, if necessary.

A holding press statement will be prepared and the Website Manager will be responsible for issuing this on the intranet and updating it as the situation develops. It's important to ensure we have web capacity and capability to support the dissemination of information to the public, the media and Authority staff.

All staff, including Communications Team, should refer all requests for press statements to the Communications Manager and be fully briefed as to agreed key messages.

The Communications Manager will then:

- consult with Authority colleagues to agree key messages and ensure consistency in the collection and dissemination of information to the media;
- brief the Chief Executive, Chairman and relevant Directors who may need to give interviews to the press, radio or TV;
- deliver press updates & statements to the media, if required;
- liaise with the appropriate Directors and staff involved in the incident to keep abreast of any ongoing situation;
- maintain an ongoing liaison with any other agencies involved;
- monitor press footage in order to correct any inaccurate or potentially damaging information;
- ensure Communications Team members are available and adequately briefed to deal with the flow of press enquiries. It is important that the Authority projects a positive and balanced view throughout the process and gives appropriate reassurances that matters are under control and appropriate actions are being taken. Unhelpful or vague statements can only increase rumour and fuel unnecessary speculation.

In addition:

- The Chief Executive and Communications Manager should ensure that the Chairman and Broads Authority members are fully briefed about the incident at the earliest opportunity, since it is important, if possible, that they do not learn about it first from the press. Regular updates should be provided to members as and when appropriate;
- The Chief Executive should brief other members of staff about the incident as early as possible, and provide them with regular updates, and should instruct them not to respond to any questions from the press but to refer them to the nominated contact person(s);
- Management Team should also ensure reception staff and Information Officers are fully updated on messages for the public. They may have to answer questions such as: Do I have access to my home, Is it safe to go home, Which roads are closed?

Control Centre

For very serious incidents it may be necessary for the Authority and other agencies involved to set up a Control Centre to hold press conferences and deal with the steady flow of callers. Where the Authority is the lead body this should ideally be established at Dragonfly House, to take advantage of the Radio Room (Broads Control) and other facilities which are available on site. However if it is deemed necessary to set up a Control Centre near to the site of the incident, a village hall or similar facility can be used.

In such circumstances the Authority should ensure that the following facilities are available:

- adequate telecommunications equipment (mobile phones will normally suffice, but the reception will need to be checked);
- tables and chairs;
- Flip charts & pens;
- Laptops, printers & paper;
- toilets;
- refreshments, especially teas and coffees; and
- possibly suitable accommodation in the vicinity for visiting journalists.

Anything said at a news conference should be regarded as being on the record and for publication. In law, news conferences are regarded as public meetings with the media representing the public. This confers qualified privilege upon reports or coverage of the conference. It does not mean that news conferences have to be open to the public.

Media Access at the Scene

Representatives of the media will wish to have access to locations involved with the incident. For reasons of operational efficiency, and providing safety is not compromised, an area should be designated to give an overview of the incident.

Photos/Video

Still photos and video may be in great demand by the media, outside of that gathered by them. If appropriate, edit and release suitable material without favouritism. Ensure that such material is also available to colleagues in other agencies, who may wish to use it for their own debriefs and internal communication media.

Review

Once the incident has died down or been dealt with it is important that the Authority should review its processes to determine how well these worked, and to decide what lessons could be learnt or changes made to deal with similar incidents in the future.

It is important to involve any front-line staff in this review and also, at the earliest opportunity, to identify whether any staff may have been traumatised as a result of the incident and if so provide appropriate support, which might include independent counselling.

Contact Director

A list of contact numbers, including those of Broads Authority staff and the emergency services, is attached. (To follow).

Consultation

This Strategy has been developed with the help of the Management Team & HR department. It has been informed by staff workshops, discussions with individual staff, members and forum members and by the results of the Employee Survey 2009, Investors in People Report 2009 and Communications Strategy Surveys.