

RURAL PERTH AND KINROSS LEADER PROGRAMME

Communication Plan

2014-2017

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March 2014



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Rural Perth and Kinross, Communication Plan 2014 - 2017

Summary

Rural Perth and Kinross Leader Programme Local Action Group (LAG) have commissioned Community Enterprise (BOLD) to produce a Communication Plan to promote their priorities for the new funding programme for 2014 onwards.

The overarching aim of the strategy is

“To support individuals, organisations and communities in rural Perth & Kinross to be stronger, more confident and inclusive to lead or contribute to local economic and community development”

Background

The basis for this document comes from a focus group and survey responses with community organisations within the Rural Perth and Kinross area. The aim of the Communication Plan is to provide a framework from which LAG can begin to engage communities and organisations for:

1. The launch of the Leader Programme
2. The ongoing engagement and uptake of funding from Leader from community organisations
3. The launch and beyond (Years 2 – 3)

This document will focus firstly on points 1 and 2, with a loose reference to the possibilities of strategic engagement in Years 2 and 3. Given the nature of the Programme, it is hoped that Years 2 and 3 would gather momentum and a clear direction would be provided by engaged members and interested parties as time goes on.

This Communication Plan is based on gathering momentum and consistency. It is understood with the given resources the group is unable to achieve everything it wants in the first few months – and that instead it grows relatively slowly and flexibly. Word of Mouth will play a large part in engagement.

Communication Phases

| Phase 1 (April – December 2014) | Phase 2 (Jan 2015) | Phase 3 (January onwards) |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Awareness raising to community organisations and businesses | | |
| Engagement of potential recipients for Programme Launch | | |
| | | Momentum Gathering for rest of funding programme |

| Proposed Methods of Engagement |
|---|
| Content Building |
| Event Facilitation: Showcasing rural innovation and practical solutions |
| Social Media |
| Email Marketing |
| Showcasing Rural Innovation |
| Photography to highlight issues |

The key to engagement is clarity of purpose and vision. It is also managing expectations. There are limited resources over a period of time and the Leader Programme needs to be clear as to what it can offer interested parties. Therefore engagement must always have a call to action for those who respond to do.

Communication Plan

The benefit of having deployed a survey in the Rural Perth and Kinross area is that those who have responded will feel actively engaged to date. By reflecting the thoughts of those in the LAG area, it is likely that take-up of the programme is greater. Once the priorities are set, it is key that they are promoted and disseminated in a variety of ways including social media, face to face events and through traditional marketing methods to promote further engagement of the wider community.

The survey elicited 219 responses the majority of whom were individuals, community groups and private sector businesses. Landscape and natural environment, active people and communities were valued most and should be built upon. Poor broadband reach and a lack of good jobs were highlighted as the biggest problems in the area.

For the economy, the renovation of empty properties in towns and villages was regarded as the greatest priority for investment, with investment in rural broadband being the next. In the environment, the key priority was further developing cycle routes followed by sustainable transport. Capacity building for business, and developing services for young people were clear issues identified by respondents.

Though just a snapshot from a population of 96,000 those 219 respondents have identified their priorities. Each of those has already engaged and will have a network that could engage further prospective applicants. 54 respondents have uploaded their contact details for further information about the programme.

As a result of the survey, the LAG now have a clear direction as to the priorities and issues perceived by Rural Perth and Kinross respondents. Once set, each priority can be used as the basis for the engagement both on and offline.

The Market

In order to engage with the right audience, it is key to identify the areas of interest within Rural Perth and Kinross as well as to identify those priorities as chosen by the respondents in the PKLAG survey.

As documented in the Rural Perth and Kinross Strategy from Community Enterprise, the demographics and socio-economic structure that makes up the area can be split into the following areas.

Sectors:

Tourism, Agriculture, Rural Transport, Fuel Poverty, Environment, Agriculture, Food & Drink, Forestry, Renewable Energy

Demographic:

Elderly, Young People, Parents, Self-employed

The aim of this document is to engage with those within the community that may be able to provide solutions to issues that arise within the different sectors. It is therefore key to identify all of the existing organisations who work with the particular demographics in the Rural Perth and Kinross area and to communicate with them appropriately.

Phase 1

Content Building and Information Sharing

The LAG member's networks are incredibly important in filtering information, so buy-in from them to amplify relevant information is key. Therefore providing appropriate content for them to share is a priority. Developing engaging content can include existing case studies from other programmes including online film interviews. Creating a hierarchy for content; splitting the content into different sectors as above means that those particular sectors can be targeted via social media and email marketing for inspiring information that is specifically relevant to them.

The list below could help to seed the content building and provide the basis for identifying which similar themes and projects have been successful elsewhere.

Key priorities identified by the LAG for the Rural Perth and Kinross area:

- Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

The results of these priorities could lead to applications to

- Support small and medium businesses and community/social enterprise
- Support supply chain and joint working initiatives in the key sectors of food and drink, forestry, tourism, and renewables
- Promote Rural Perth & Kinross as a place to invest and develop business
- Up-skilling IT/digital skills (eg internet, social media)
- Support skills development including rural skills particularly for young people
- Develop community broadband networks and mobile access
- Develop rural transport initiatives
- Renovate empty or in need of improvement village/town centre properties

Or to:

- Develop or enhance access to landscape and natural environment through for example development of path and cycle routes
- Enhance access to or develop local services including rural transport, facilities and community spaces
- Promote and support community ownership of assets including business premises
- Develop community-based support and learning networks to share skills and resources
- Develop community support services including community development officers and access to specialised expertise

- Support joint working initiatives across sector or themes
- Support initiatives for young people
- Support recognition of community achievements and best practices

In order to find those organisations who will be able to lead on potential projects, promotion of the programme must start with the member network of the Local Action Group. If all members agree to amplify any social media promotion, the online proliferation will happen much quicker. In addition, identifying the actual different groups of interest who may benefit within the community can ensure they are targeted with the appropriate information for instance; tourism, young people, technology, transport, education.

Any website should be able to hold much of this content, must be easy to navigate and highlight the needs of any users; downloadable or online application forms and guidelines; inspiring stories from other communities; links to social media channels.

Local newspapers will also play an important role and could feature a regular themed column outlining priorities, how others elsewhere have solved issues, and a call to action by those in the community to respond and apply for funding.

Because of the nature of rural communities, it is important that the LAG engages both on and offline. The LAG has already shown it wants to actively listen to the communities to identify their priorities – therefore in the run up to the launch of the programme it is key that it promotes the priorities in order to promote community-led applications. Flyers and brochures with simple language can be developed for any offline events.

Event Facilitation: Showcasing rural innovation and practical solutions

Face to Face events will be important in supporting online information sharing. We would suggest that LAG members present to their networks and appropriate sector events throughout the coming months. Also, Leader staff can provide surgeries at these sector specific events inspire innovation and practical solutions to rural issues. Visual examples and content can be used to illustrate how communities may be able to develop projects that solve problems they face in their area, and/ or projects can be invited to present and workshop at local events.

Social Media

Through the initial process social media accounts were set up by BOLD to disseminate the survey, and ‘test the waters’ in terms of initial engagement. Twitter was well received, although Facebook has had a lot less uptake. It is highly likely that engagement will increase significantly once the programme has launched, as organisations wishing to benefit from Leader Funding will become more prominent. Therefore at this stage, it is beneficial that we seeded these accounts with appropriate content, and our recommendation would be to further develop these prior to launch as information providers, and methods of directly engaging with a targeted audience. Further information about different uses of social media can be found on page 16. A budget will need to be put next to this for ensuring management of social media accounts and resulting training. It would also be advisable to invest in a communications strategy to oversee the building and disseminating of content.

Email Marketing

We suggest that community groups and businesses in the Rural Perth and Kinross area are encouraged to sign up to a monthly newsletter. Already, we have the 54 contact details from the survey. Email marketing will outline dates and times for events and or surgeries and can be done affordably through online tools such as 'mailchimp'.

Showcasing Rural Innovation

One of the core aspects of the LAG is to showcase examples of practical solutions to problems that those in rural areas face, learning from other Leader programmes with similar priorities will help this. As a result, the LAG could acknowledge a monthly online showcase for groups throughout Scotland and Europe who have come up with ideas either to implement or concrete solutions that have actively worked to solve rural issues.

These solutions can be promoted by all of the Leader programmes using social media, the PK Leader website and in local press. These solutions could be sought by theme. These could become a main feature on the website with short interviews on film and descriptors of the problem and their approach to solving it. These could also feature in regular columns in local press. The launch of the programme can showcase some of these in person.

Photography to Highlight Issues and Solutions

'Photo Statements'

By inviting people to have a photo taken of an issue they are currently facing and then upload it to Flickr or to send it directly to the LAG would give an immediate visible presence of the people with whom you would like to engage, and enables others to identify with them. There is an example of this being used elsewhere and is good for direct impact, 'seeing' a voice, direct engagement and is light on internal resources. The benefit of the Leader programme is that you could have a before and after – a photograph showing the 'problem' and an after shot of them showing the solution.



Phase 2 | Leader Programme Launch (January 2015)

This event will be a showcase for all rural issues that have been prioritised over the previous months. This would be a platform from which innovative solutions to rural issues can be celebrated, and could bring successful applicants from other areas to present either in person or via film to the launch participants. The launch event can also be a place to connect those in need with those who have the ability to help.

The event itself should have the ability to interact with it for those who aren't there in person. This can be done via twitter and YouTube – the benefit of these methods is that they can be recycled and used in the future for awareness-raising.

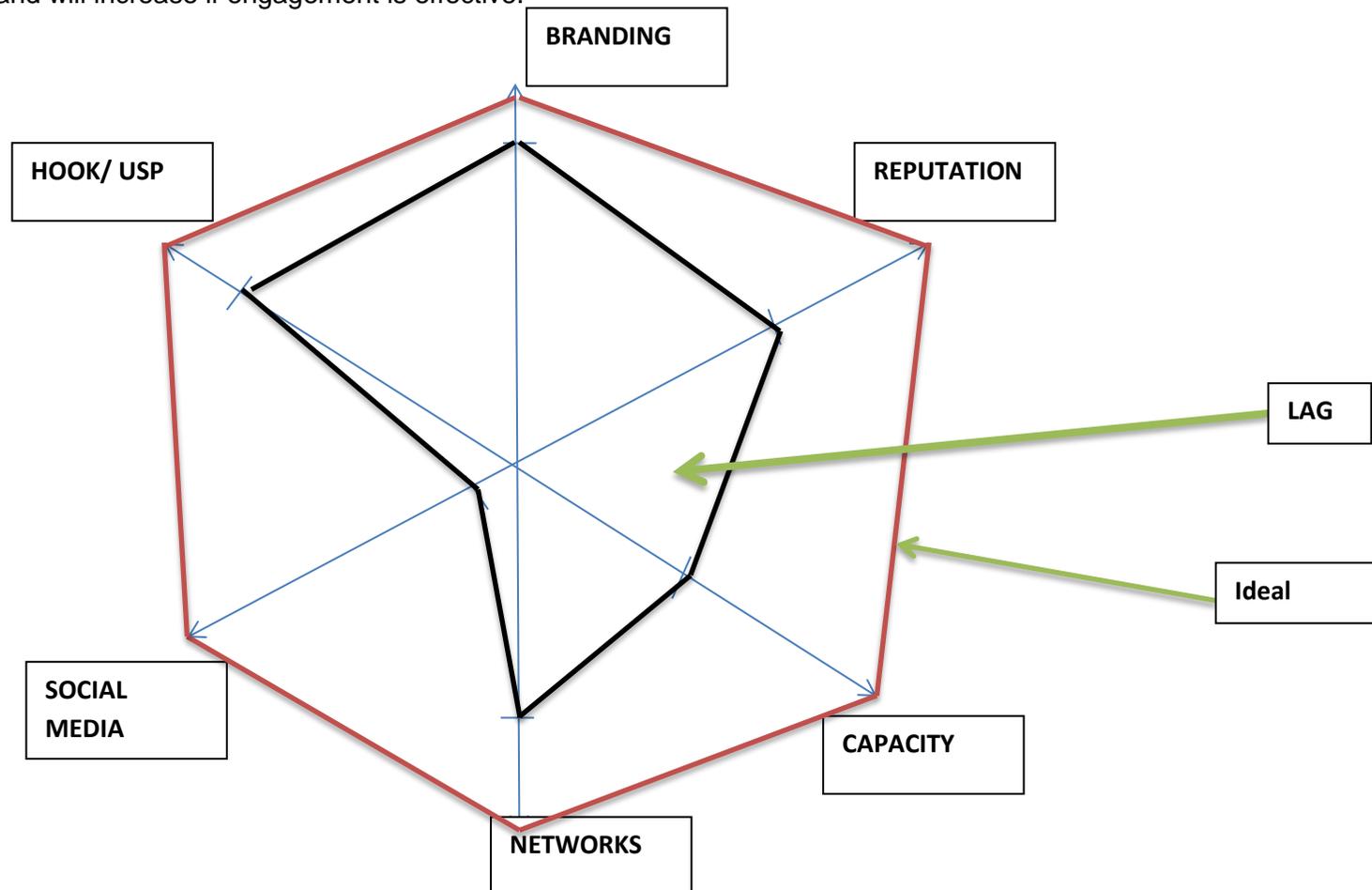
The run up to the launch (from April) can be used to seed information about the Programme via social media and email marketing, to recruit participants and contributors.

Phase 3 | Post Launch

The preceding months to the launch will have raised awareness of the Leader Programme. There will be examples of practical solutions, and the impact that other Leader projects have had elsewhere. The aim at this stage is to provide inspiring content that will inspire communities to come forward with their own innovative ways of responding to particular problems in their area.

Appendix 1 – Engagement Chart

The aim of the Engagement Chart is to identify where an organisation is based on the significant aspects that help an organisation or idea to engage effectively. By charting where the organisation is on each section, you can ascertain which areas to focus development on. In this instance, the LAG has a good hook/ USP for engagement; providing funding and support for innovative solutions. It also has a strong brand, reputation and networks. It really needs to focus its efforts on growing its social media for engagement. Its capacity and reputation is medium, and will increase if engagement is effective.



Brand

The brand includes both visual identity and language. The visual identity has already been determined as Leader is a European programme. The benefit of this is that its reputation is well known and respected, so the most important steps are understanding the key messages and priorities, and exactly who to communicate them to. Because the LAG is made up of a series of network and member organisations, this again makes things more simple. It is imperative that the group establish an identity and tone of voice which can then determine how they communicate to the wider community consistently to build an engaged following.

Reputation

Reputation and credibility is regarded as key in launching the Leader programme in Rural Perth and Kinross to the public and rural networks. There are already a large number of engaged organisations who are part of the Local Action Group, and it is imperative that these organisations spread the word effectively through their networks if they are going to want to gain traction.

For those who don't know of the Leader Programme or who haven't engaged with it, it will be an important aspect of content building to evidence impact from other programmes.

Capacity

Capacity was given a score of 3, which takes into account the scope of work that is required. This score can increase if the LAG members network are engaged to amplify the content.

A proportion of the engagement can be done online. Though there will be a considerable % of the rural population without broadband it is still a relatively resource light tool to engage with at least a small %, particularly those aged between 16 and 25. 10% of the over 55's use Facebook and so use of this medium might be able to attract a few of this age group. The other benefit of online engagement is that if you engage correctly, those inspired by the subject matter will let others know and others will engage with the 'campaign' and process in the meantime.

For offline engagement, the use of LAG member networks and core staff will be crucial in terms of engaging with regional events.

Networks

It was established that the networks the group has contacts with is quite high, scoring a 4. This is a great resource from which to build upon and still leaves a margin for improvement. So far relatively few groups have responded with a note of interest for the parliament, but this isn't surprising given that the key messaging hasn't been put out yet.

These networks can be split into the following:

Tourism

- Perth & Kinross Tourism Partnership
- Visit Scotland

Agriculture and Forestry

- National Farmers Union
- Scottish Lands and Estates
- Forestry Commission Scotland

Communities

- Highland Perthshire Communities Partnership
- Kinross-shire Partnership
- Crieff and Upper Strathearn Partnership
- Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Services
- Coupar Angus Regeneration Trust

Business

- Federation of Small Businesses
- Perthshire Chamber of Commerce
- Scottish Enterprise

Education

- Perth College UHI

Local Authority

- Perth & Kinross Council

Social Media

As inferred above, social media is a relatively low-resource method of engagement. As long as the brand, tone of voice and key messages are adhered to this can be used to;

- disseminate wider information on the PK Leader Programme
- broadcast successful applicants
- disseminate information about other successful projects throughout Scotland and in Europe
- Communicate with mainstream media about current activities of PK LAG

The score the group was given for their social media engagement at present is 1. This can be steadily grown as time goes on by utilising the major social media channels. Though rural broadband coverage is currently low – it should be at 85% of the country by the end of 2016 and 95% by 2017/2018. In addition, there is a growing number of smart phone users who have coverage with 3G so don't depend on WIFI specifically. So, it would be good to develop a social media presence from now – even if coverage is going to be relatively low for much of the country for the time being through WIFI, particularly as people's usage of social media is increasingly via smartphone.

Facebook

Facebook is particularly useful at building the 'personality' of an organisation or business. People can be quite passive in their use of Facebook, but just because individuals aren't actively responding to materials doesn't mean that those materials aren't being read and questioned. Opinions can still form. Therefore it is an ideal medium with which to post very visual data, whether it is film or photographic materials – also 'infographs' or visual data about particular themes and options. It can also be used to publish latest information and news that has been published via the website. It can also share information from existing rural parliaments, stories and best practice. The benefit of Facebook is that because it is visual, it lends itself well to YouTube (film), Vine (film) and Instagram, very visual methods of communicating online.

One way of engaging through Facebook is through the means of Facebook advertising. This is a method that targets people's interests and ages specifically and invites conversation, rather than one-sided advertising. A client wanted us to find 100 Brits who had been to Iceland in the last 2 years. Through an organic campaign we found 40 individuals in three weeks. After using Facebook advertising we found the next 60 in one week. All of the individuals were drawn onto the Facebook page, from which we were able to converse – and they were able to show what kind of organisation they were. It would be key to have a 'call to action' based on this.

Twitter

Twitter is a great tool for activism and engaging people in debate about rural issues. It is also a great tool for engaging with member organisations to activate their members. Whereas Facebook is much more of a passive method of communication, twitter is very active. It is a great research tool to see who else is interested in what your subject, and also to engage with those individuals/ organisations. This raises the profile and also the level of debate or discussion that you want to seed.

Google+

Google+ is relatively unused in the UK at the moment. However, it is soon going to be 'plugged' by Google and is likely to be a much used network in the next two years or so. The benefit of Google+ is that it is linked to YouTube and has the ability to film debates/ seminars live as well as to advertise them through their events section. It is also a very good community building tool. I would suggest beginning to use this method over the coming year.

Hook

The hook of the PK Leader programme is that it offers funding and support for communities to solve practical problems in their area.

This is a clear subject matter for engagement. The crucial task for PK Leader at this moment is to evidence the impact that has been made elsewhere for similar areas, and to highlight what those communities have achieved with their funding. Identifying the main priorities and using those as themes to highlight successful projects will sow the seeds to start up their own practical approaches.