

Marketing & Communications Update May – August 2019

Summary

This update relates to the 4 month period from May 2019 to August 2019.

- The new web site went live on 5 August 2019 after more than 6 months of substantial work. Initial feedback and analytics are extremely positive with an increase in first time active users (+36%) and page views (+40%).
- The service supported 6 strategic events in June and August, with pre-event campaigns and live social media coverage at each.
- The 16 page residents' magazine, Insight, was drafted, edited, designed and distributed to 55,000 homes w/c 5 August 2019.
- Communications plans have been developed in outline or full for Seamus Heaney Trails Experience Pre-launch; Connecting Pomeroy; 3 leisure-related campaigns; Cemetery memorial testing programme.
- Brand development for the Davagh Dark Skies has reached initial naming and concept stages and web development work has begun.
- Core activities in terms of general departmental and service communications, speech-writing and the management of media enquiries continue.

New Web Site

The design, technical build and content review, edit and curation for the new web site has been a substantial body of work for the service.

June and July were time-critical in terms of the content element of the project and also the most challenging for a small team managing annual leave, as well as unplanned absence.

More than 800 pages of content, including hundreds of downloadable documents, were reviewed during this period for accuracy and relevance (i.e. customer focus), before being edited to suit the new site in terms of both style and mobile-responsiveness.

Go-live was scheduled for Monday 5 August and the site launched successfully that afternoon. A further two-week period of intensive activity followed to identify and remedy snags, as well as to finalise last pieces of content.

Promotional support took place online (social media channels) and offline (featured in Insight, our residents' magazine which was distributed during launch week).

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive internally and externally:

- Analytics show that in the first 10 days of the site going live (5 – 15 August 2019) the new site had 15,181 active users, 11,092 of these were first time

users of the site with a total of 77,960 page views (an increase of nearly 4000 users and 22,000 page views on the same period last year).

- In its first 2 weeks, a new 'sign up to our newsletter' function resulted in 130 registrations without any specific 'push' activity.
- In our web poll, 98.8% of users liked the site, found it easy to use and to find information, 1.2% didn't know and no respondents expressed a preference for the old site.
- Staff from across departments and services are actively engaging with the site, commenting on the ease of use and navigation, reviewing content and liaising with the service to update information. Staff have also reported positive comments from their customers (e.g. Environmental Services have reported customers commenting on ease of use and visibility of information they are seeking).

The project has been led by the Design and Digital Media Officer, whose design and wire-framing work in the initial stages saved over £5K in consultancy costs. She deserves specific mention for her role as primary liaison at all points during the process. Her valuable expertise has been commented on by the external web development team.

Event Marketing & Promotion

June was event-heavy, with 4 significant events supported by the service and a further 2 in August.

- *Cookstown Continental Market (1-2 June 2019)*
- *Tafelta Festival (21-22 June 2019)*
- *Jaipur Literary Festival (23 June 2019)*
- *FIPSeD European Coarse Angling Championship (27 – 30 June 2019)*
- *Lumarina (16 – 17 August 2019)*
- *Maghera Walled Garden (24 August 2019): Pirates and Princesses*

Each required pre-event promotional activity on and off line, together with on the ground delivery of social media content plans live at each event. Evaluations of the later events are being completed and all will be shared at a review meeting with various event-owners.

Direct Communication: Residents' Magazine

The summer issue of Insight, the residents' magazine, was distributed to 55,000 homes in Mid Ulster w/b 5 August 2019.

The publication now stretches to 16 pages and the latest issue included:

- A feature on the new council
- Investment in leisure (spin studios, Dungannon LC refurbishment)
- Davagh Dark Skies outdoor experience

- Plastics recycling
- Summer events
- First term review
- New web site.

Davagh Dark Skies

Pre-opening promotional activity around the new project continues, highlighting construction milestones and new developments (e.g. confirmation of phase 2 featured in residents' magazine).

The first stage of the brand development process has completed and presentation of initial naming and concept proposals is scheduled for the end of August.

The specification for project's web development has been completed and issued, with an appointment anticipated by early October. A web workshop has taken place in the interim to develop a content wireframe which will remove this element of the build from the externally appointed company, representing a saving of over £5K to the project.

Communications Planning

Marketing and Communications' plans, in outline or in full, have been completed for:

- Seamus Heaney Trails Experience Pre-Launch, to build awareness and anticipation of the new offering and to continue to profile Mid Ulster's investment in tourism, particularly rural tourism.
- A range of leisure-focussed campaigns, including:
 - the new Cookstown Leisure Centre Pool Pod
 - investment in spin studios at Cookstown and Greenvale Leisure Centres
 - the new partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support 'Move More Mid Ulster' which aims to promote an active lifestyle for those living with cancer.
- Connecting Pomeroy, based on milestones identifiable as part of the pre-construction and during-construction process as a starting point to build promotional and PR opportunities as the project develops.
- Town centres, developing unique value propositions for the 3 main towns as a foundation for future campaigns and to inform resource allocation.

General communications support continues to be provided across departments and services, encompassing a wide range of projects and issues. In the period under consideration, the town and village spruce up scheme and flowerbed sponsorship scheme have received notable support.

Core Service Activity Levels

News releases issued in May, June and July 2019.

Note: news releases are not an end in themselves and are often simply the core script. Further creative content and messaging evolves to suit different audiences and translates into activity across channels.

	No issued	Breakdown by service area:
May 2019	8	4 Events; 2 Council General; 1 Environment Health; 1 Parks
June 2019	18	4 Economic Development; 3 Events; 3 Environment & Property; 2 Leisure; 2 Parks; 1 Good Relations; 1 Environmental Health; 1 Public Realm; 1 Council General
July 2019	12	4 Parks; 2 Events; 2 Leisure; 1 Environmental Health; 1 Economic Development; 1 Rural Development; 1 Environment & Property

Media Enquiries

	No received	No answered in 4hrs	Fastest response time	Slowest response time	Top Topic(s)	Top Source(s)
May 2019	34	22	Immediate	4days, 2hrs, 43mins	No significant single issue enquiries during May	8 Irish News; 8 Tyrone Courier; 6 BBC; 5 Dungannon Herald
June 2019	29	22	Immediate	7hrs 42mins	9 Greenvale Hotel; 7 Bonfires	8 Irish News; 6 Tyrone Courier; 4 BBC; 4 News Letter
July 2019	27	17	Immediate	28hrs 30mins	6 July Council Meeting; 4 Bonfires	10 Irish news; 7 Tyrone Courier; 7 Dungannon Herald

Ursula Mezza
21 August 2019