

Marketing & Communications Update

Summary

This update relates to the 3 month period from September 2019 to November 2019.

- The service's digital focus has continued with the launch of a new Instagram account in September 2019, the development of a suite of new explainer videos for internal and external use and the issue of our first E-newsletters. Performance of the new web site continues to outstrip that of the old platform.
- The service has supported/is currently supporting 9 strategic events in October and November, with pre-event promotional campaigns and live social media coverage.
- The 16 page residents' magazine, Insight, was drafted, edited, designed and distributed to 55,000 homes w/c 11 November 2019.
- Communications plans have been developed and delivered for Connecting Pomeroy (launched 17 October 2019) and Enterprise Week (18 – 22 November 2019) as well as for a range of leisure campaigns. Work to support the cemetery memorial testing programme has also been on-going during the period.
- Brand development for the Davagh Dark Skies has progressed, with a new name for the facility now agreed and brandmark development underway. Web development has also begun.
- Development of the new draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 was also facilitated and the plan is now out for public consultation.
- Core activities in terms of general departmental and service communications, speech-writing and the management of media enquiries have continued.

Digital

Web Site

The new web site continues to perform very well, with the customer-focussed structure and simpler, more intuitive navigation demonstrating significant rises in use.

A continued approach to digital first communications will prioritise driving traffic to our website through social media and email marketing.

The service has encouraged other services to focus on a more digital approach to their marketing and communications. A recent Restart a Heart campaign, which traditionally relied on 'sign up' over the telephone during office hours, had an online form developed which allowed users to 'sign up' at any time. Feedback from the Environmental Health team praised the development of the new form, its ease of use both internally and externally and the number of people signing up online.

- Analytics show that:
 - Web traffic has increased by over 76,000 over the same period last year, with more than 446,955 page views from 5 August – 19 November 2019.
 - Leisure and bins remain the most visited pages on our website, however a digital first approach to the promotion of Enterprise Week knocked bins from its traditional second spot.
 - Web traffic to the main leisure page has increased significantly. Over the same period last year 5 August – 19 November 2018 there were 5,672 page views compared to 24,713 page views since the new website and structure went live. That is an increase in web traffic of 19,041 or over 300%.
 - a reskin of the CMIS site is now complete, with a consistent look now established.

E-Newsletter

The new web site includes a 'sign up' button to receive further information and has attracted over 650 subscribers to date.

The first E-newsletter was issued to support promotion of Halloween activities and the second focussed on the first Mid Ulster Enterprise Week.

Instagram

Instagram is the latest addition to our social media channels and is a departure in terms of content and style for our communications, appealing to a younger demographic in a more informal way.

The channel was launched in mid-September and followers have been building steadily, now standing at over 1,000.

Only 3 other councils here are using Instagram and comparatively, given number of posts and length of time the accounts have been operational, our follower numbers and overall performance in terms of content are solid (Belfast BC 12.9K, Ards and North Down 3,098K, Mid and East Antrim 2,383K).

Instagram and Facebook are now our channels of choice for consumer-facing event promotion.

Explainer Videos

A series of 6 explainer videos (short 30-60 second animated videos) have now been developed, with a mix of internal and external audiences.

The first issued to support Enterprise Week, with a further 2 for recycling and online services in the external category.

GDPR, social media policy and the benefits of working for the Council feature in the 3 internally-focussed videos.

Event Marketing & Promotion

October and November are traditionally dominated by strategic corporate events and 2019 was no different, with 9 events supported by the service.

- *Saturday 26 October: Halloween at MUSA*
- *Wednesday 30 October: Halloween Dungannon*
- *Thursday 31 October: Halloween Maghera*
- *Thursday 31 October: Halloween Coalisland*
- *Friday 22 November: Cookstown Switch-on*
- *Friday 22 November: Dungannon Switch-on*
- *Saturday 23 November: Magherafelt Market & Switch-on*
- *Sunday 24 November: remote support for Dungannon and Magherafelt events*
- *Saturday 30 November: Maghera Switch-on*
- *Sunday 1 December: Coalisland Switch-on*

Each has 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 events are being completed and will be shared at a review meeting with various event-owners.

Direct Communication: Residents' Magazine

The winter issue of Insight, the residents' magazine, was distributed to 55,000 homes in Mid Ulster w/b 11 November 2019.

The publication is now a standard 16 pages and the latest issue included:

- Investment pieces on Coalisland Public Realm, Leisure (spin studios, Dungannon LC refurbishment)
- Davagh Dark Skies Telescope
- Plastics recycling
- Christmas events, parking and shop local drive
- Enterprise Week
- Litter
- Connecting Pomeroy
- Accessibility.

Davagh Dark Skies

Pre-opening promotional activity around the new project continues, highlighting construction milestones and new developments (e.g. telescope feature in resident's magazine and on social media, the latter drawing significant positive engagement and highlighting the level of interest which exists in the new facility at Davagh).

The first stage of the brand development process has completed and presentation of the facility's new name was presented to the Development Committee in November.

The development of the facility's new web site has now to begin following a procurement exercise, and is being led by the service's Design and Digital Media Officer.

Communications Planning

Marketing and Communications' plans have been developed and delivered for:

- The official launch of Connecting Pomeroy on 17 October, including the creation of key messaging, the design of a visual identity for the project, associated artwork, development of a video in-house to support the launch and as the first of a 'before and after' library of footage, PR and social media content planning and delivery on the launch evening.
- Enterprise Week which has been heavily supported from delivery of scripts and production of radio ads, creation of web site content, securing of outdoor media, PR activity, speech-writing and messaging and, most notably, the development of substantial content for social media channels. The Enterprise Week web page was the 2nd most visited page on our web site during the campaign, relegating both bins which is consistently at the top 'most visited' list.
- A range of leisure-focussed campaigns, including:
 - Investment in new fitness studio at Cookstown Leisure Centre
 - On-going support for the new spin studios
 - Disabled parking campaign at MUSA.

A programme of cemetery memorial testing is due to commence in January 2020 and the service has been working closely with the cemetery team to refine the narrative and approach to the programme, reflecting the sensitivity of this area of work.

Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Facilitation of the process to develop the new draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 took place across September and October and the draft plan for consultation was written and presented for approval to proceed to public consultation in November.

Coordination of consultation is now on-going until 10 January 2020.

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 recycling campaign delivery with its focus on plastics, has been prominent.

Core Service Activity Levels

News releases issued in September and October 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:
September 2019	12	Environmental Services 3; Events 2; Economic Development 2; Environmental Health 2; Parks 1; Council General 1; Arts & Culture 1
October 2019	15	Events 6; Economic Development 3; Environmental Services 3;; Environmental Health 2; Parks 1; Council General 1; Arts & Culture 1

Media Enquiries

	No received	No answered in 4hrs	Fastest response time	Slowest response time	Top Topic(s)	Top Source(s)
Sept 2019	30	19	5mins	6days 3hrs 51mins	Planning 6	Dunganon Herald 9; Tyrone Courier 9
Oct 2019	15	7	19mins	15hrs 24mins	No significant topic	BBC 4; Mid Ulster Mail 3

Ursula Mezza
20 November 2019