

## **SMT March 2018**

### **Marketing & Communications Update**

#### **Service Marketing**

##### **Events**

Significant support was provided for the delivery of the International Women's Day events, both of which were at capacity in terms of numbers and very well-received. An evaluation will follow.

(It is worth noting the issue which arose as a result of the focus of the Burnavon event and its disconnect to the International Women's Day theme which was 'Press For Progress'. There was scope for much broader negative discussion, but the matter was contained swiftly).

Members of the Marketing and Communications team delivered social media at both events, as well as at the first of two civic receptions being held in March.

##### **Economic Development**

Proposition, messaging, design concepts and communications approach have been developed for the new Magherafelt craft development programme.

The team is now supporting the first of the Magherafelt Makers' Markets which takes place on Easter Saturday.

Planning meetings have been held with all 3 town centre managers and an overarching marketing action plan (2018-2019) for the 5 town centres is being developed for presentation in April.

##### **Culture & Arts**

###### *Burnavon*

- The Burnavon summer programme was completed at the end of February.
- The associated promotional plan continues to be implemented.

###### *Seamus Heaney HomePlace*

- The marketing plan for the current season's event programme (Jan – April) continues to be implemented, and there is specific support also for the 'Operation Sweet-talk' street theatre event which takes place in Magherafelt on Easter Saturday.
- 3 social media training sessions have now been delivered to HomePlace staff since January to help ensure a more hands-on approach to the facility's channels by the staff

###### *Say Hello To More*

Tourism and Marketing and Communications submitted separate applications in January to avail of funding for the latest RoI 'Say Hello To More' campaign (one

application for Mid Ulster generally, with a focus on The Hill of the O'Neill, Seamus Heaney HomePlace and one specifically for Seamus Heaney HomePlace).

The total monies allocated was close to £10K with 75% funded via the scheme.

An integrated campaign was developed, targeting border counties (Monaghan/Cavan/Donegal), using press, radio and digital, and building in spring offers from the Mid Ulster tourism trade to encourage short spring and Easter breaks. Mid Ulster also featured in an Irish Independent Say Hello To More supplement.

This has proved to be a positive example of collaborative, cross-service working, optimising spend and taking a holistic approach to the positioning of our key visitor attractions.

#### *Heart of Ancient Ulster Brand Development*

A brand development proposal to deliver against the second strand of the Tourism Strategy (History and Heritage) has also been produced.

While this strand consists of disparate sites and locations which all need to be held under a consistent brand banner, there are two substantial products under the Council's control which are at the core of the 'Heart of Ancient Ulster' proposition: The Hill of The O'Neill, Dungannon and the Davagh Dark Sky Observatory and Visitor Centre.

Decisions around the development of the heritage brand have now reached a time-critical stage given that the Davagh Dark Sky project has received funding (even if the project start is to be delayed) and that The Hill of The O'Neill's positioning as a heritage product needs to be reviewed and its branding refreshed.

## **Leisure & Outdoor Recreation**

### *General*

The service continues to work to support the delivery of existing programmes, but also as part of both the leisure improvement objective working group.

February saw a first round of data analysis meetings with all leisure facilities, which is key to the development of a new, evidence-based marketing strategy.

On the Parks side, a practical marketing workshop has been held with to help create ownership among the team and gather initial information for the service's marketing strategy and action plan. Data analysis is also taking place which will provide customer insight and feed into the plan.

A customer survey for each of the leisure facilities has been completed and they are scheduled to go live on Friday 16 March.

As an output of the improvement objective work, the team will also be developing an integrated marketing plan for the health and well-being programmes delivered by leisure and environmental health in the year ahead.

Communications is also feeding into the leisure review, with initial staff briefing documents completed and an engagement and communications plan drafted.

### **Route Optimisation**

Given the magnitude of the changes to bin collections in the Magherafelt area at the end of January, and the potential for negative customer feedback and associated media coverage, credit is due to all the staff involved in the route optimisation project which was implemented smoothly.

There was no negative press and communication via social media channels was positive, with significant numbers of people sharing content, which undoubtedly helped to raise awareness of the changes.

### **Core Service Activity Levels**

*News releases issued in January and February.*

*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.*

	<b>No issued</b>	<b>Breakdown by service area:</b>
<b>Jan 18</b>	12	Environmental Health 2; SHHP 2; Leisure 2; Tourism 1; Environmental Services 1; Parks 1; Burnavon 1; Finance 1; Environmental Health & Leisure 1.
<b>Feb 18</b>	16	Burnavon 3; Economic Development 2; Environmental Health 2; Tourism 1; Hill of the O'Neill 1; Chair 1; SHHP 1; Community Development 1; Finance 1; Sustainability 1; Environmental Services 1; Environmental Health & Leisure 1.

### *Media Enquiries*

	<b>No received</b>	<b>No answered in 4hrs</b>	<b>Fastest response time</b>	<b>Slowest response time</b>	<b>Top Topic(s)</b>	<b>Top Source(s)</b>
<b>Jan 18</b>	22	11	16mins	11hrs 23mins	Planning (5)	Dugannon Herald (5), Tyrone Courier (5)
<b>Feb 18</b>	23	17	2mins	14hrs 20mins	Rates (3) Planning (3)	Irish News (5), Dugannon Herald (5), Derry Post (5)

### **Corporate**

#### **Internal communications**

In Focus news letter to be issued w/c 19 March.

Next team brief to issue after the Easter break.

Some initial development work is also taking place to try and address the difficulties in conveying the content of policies to front-facing employees, particularly in Environmental Services.

### **Community Plan**

The first Mid Ulster Community Plan Communications and Engagement Strategy was drafted in February.

### **Insight: Residents' Magazine**

The next residents' magazine will be distributed w/c 23 April 2018, with content supporting corporate and service priorities, as well as improvement objectives.

### **Strategic Projects**

*Davagh Dark Sky Observatory and Visitor Centre* – initial work has begun on the development of a marketing strategy and action plan for the Davagh project.

*Village Renewal and Capital Projects* – there are a substantial volume of capital projects being delivered and planned for the in-coming year and a timetable of promotional activity is under development.

### **News Release Publication Summary**

A summary of the news releases issued, their publication rates across local papers is provided below for November 2017 through to January 2018.

#### *General Observations*

Stories with the strongest news values perform best (e.g. people-focussed, broad local appeal, 'first, last, highest, lowest', good visual interest). These are generally also those which have significance for the organisation and so their use as editorial carries weight as third party endorsement.

Those stories which perform less well are those with little real newsworthiness, those which are tired or 'repeats' or could more properly be considered 'advertising presented as editorial'.

While the Derry Post has the lowest publication rate, it is the most focussed on a specific geographic area (the northern part of the district, specifically Magherafelt, Maghera and the settlements immediately surrounding them) and therefore more discerning about covering anything beyond those areas. This means that while it remains a target for Cookstown stories also, only the strongest of these are carried. It is also the paper least likely to carry general Mid Ulster stories.

The Tyrone Times publication rate reflects the paper's current status, with no dedicated editorial staff.

The Mid Ulster Mail's coverage can fluctuate also given it now only has one reporter and a remote, centralised editorial team.

High level statistics for the months November to January are provided below.

## **November 2017**

- 30 news releases issued.
- 11 stories received 100% coverage
  - Christmas events across all towns
  - Dungannon Leisure Centre consultation
  - digital seminars
  - Dungannon Market Square improvement scheme.
- 5 stories were published in all but 1 target publication
  - Small Business Saturday
  - Eco-School success
  - CouchTo5K,
  - Online Dog Licensing
  - Mid Ulster confirmed as most entrepreneurial region.
- 4 stories performed less well, accounting for 19% of the non-publication rate
  - Council lobbies to keep Cookstown depot open (repeated)
  - Council calls for new business starts to go for it (niche audience)
  - planning decisions demonstrate sustainable development in action (little general interest)
  - report it function on Binovation app (timing of release with post-event activity and Market Square scheme adversely impacted performance).
- 124 possible articles. 84 published. 67.7% overall publication rate. Adjust for those stories performing less well and the publication rate rises to 86.7%.

<b>Title</b>	<b>No published/no of potential articles</b>	<b>% publication rate</b>
Mid Ulster Mail	14/23	60.9%
Mid Ulster Mail (SD)	14/21	70%
Derry Post	11/18	61.1%
Tyrone Courier	18/24	75%
Tyrone Times	11/20	55%
Dungannon Herald	16/21	72.2%

## December 2017

- 17 news releases issued
- 5 stories received 100% coverage
  - Post event coverage for Christmas events
  - BBC Radio Ulster Broadcast from the Burnavon
  - Seamus Heaney HomePlace Christmas poem and new programme.
- 5 stories were published in all but 1 target publication
  - Christmas recycling
  - Chair's Christmas message
  - Heart of Ancient Ulster LPS consultation
  - Post event civic awards
- 1 story performed less well, accounting for 8% of the non-publication rate
  - Council launches language policies (adversely impacted by timing of release in midst of Christmas coverage).
- Worth noting the challenge of stories competing for space amongst advertising in December.
- 75 possible articles. 51 published. 68% overall publication rate. Adjust for those stories performing less well and the publication rate rises to 76%.

Title	No published/no of potential articles	% publication rate
Mid Ulster Mail	13/14	92.9%
Mid Ulster Mail (SD)	13/14	92.9%
Derry Post	4/11	36.4%
Tyrone Courier	8/13	61.5%
Tyrone Times	9/12	75%
Dungannon Herald	7/11	63.6%

## January 2018

- 12 news releases issued.
- 4 stories received 100% coverage
  - New bin collections for Magherafelt area
  - Seamus Heaney HomePlace Burns programme
  - Cookstown Health Fair
  - New Milltown play park (joint issue with NIHE).
- 3 news releases received coverage in all but 1 target publication
  - Moneymore Recreation Centre refurbishment
  - Successful men's health programme in Dungannon Leisure Centre
  - Launch of visitor guide.
- 3 stories performed less well and accounted for 17.6% of non-published stories

- PLATO EBR programme (niche)
  - Burns celebration at the Burnavon (repeat)
  - Council encouragement for people to respond to affordable warmth scheme consultation (little newsworthiness, particularly given council was largely in agreement with the proposed changes to the scheme).
- 51 possible articles. 30 published. 58.8% overall publication rate. Adjust for those stories performing less well and the publication rate rises to 76.4%.

Title	No published/no of potential articles	% publication rate
Mid Ulster Mail	6/9	66.7%
Mid Ulster Mail (SD)	6/9	66.7%
Derry Post	4/8	50%
Tyrone Courier	5/8	62.5%
Tyrone Times	4/6	66.7%
Dungannon Herald	5/8	62.5%

*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.*

## February 2018

- 16 news releases issued.
- 5 stories received 100% coverage
  - International Women's Day events
  - Response to Heart of Ancient Ulster LPS consultation
  - Fuel Stamp Scheme
  - Rates Rise
  - Mid Term Break Voted Favourite Seamus Heaney poem
- 5 news releases received coverage in all but 1 target publication
  - Westlands Home exhibition in the Burnavon
  - Children's Bee Safe programme
  - Community Health & Well-being fair
  - International Women's Day event (second)
  - Appointment of Desertcreat contractor.
- 2 (related) stories performed less well and accounted for 6.3% of non-published stories
  - Craft workshops at the Bridewell and Saturday Kids Club at the Bridewell (second release a repeat of the first and both are more accurately advertising than editorial).
- 79 possible articles. 58 published. 73.4% overall publication rate. Adjust for those stories performing less well and the publication rate rises to 79.7%.

Title	No published/no of potential articles	% publication rate
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Mid Ulster Mail	14/14	100%
Mid Ulster Mail (SD)	13/15	86.7%
Derry Post	7/11	63.6%
Tyrone Courier	8/11	72.7%
Tyrone Times	7/14	50%
Dungannon Herald	8/11	72.7%

*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.*

### **Action Points**

- Continue to monitor publication rates.
- Review releases carried on a weekly basis and, when merited, follow up non-publication with editorial staff.
- Introduce target of a 70% overall publication rate.
- Undertake a new round of engagement with local editors.
- Consider opportunities to strengthen weaker stories through stronger presentation (e.g. headline and opening paras, writing style, news angle) to increase publication rate.
- Consider non-issue of releases in cases where the subject matter is niche, has little broad appeal or is more suitable for an advertising-only approach.