

Communications Evaluation Report – January - March 2021

Purpose of report

This report provides a summary and analysis of the core communications activities delivered by the HotSW LEP communications team. Its purpose is to help track and measure the effectiveness of the communications in raising the profile of the LEP as the thought-leader in economic development in the HotSW area.

With limited communications resources and budget, it is vital that we understand which activities are working best for us, to inform future activity and ensure we are focusing our efforts in the right places.

Summary of communications activities

Between Jan – March, our main areas of focus for core LEP communications activity have been:

- Getting Building Fund projects
- Completion of Growth Deal projects
- Freeport bids
- LEP's Winter Business Bulletin
- Commenting on Chancellor's March budget
- 2ZERO Future Flight Challenge consortium bid

Social media performance:

- This quarter, we have increased our approach of using Twitter and LinkedIn as owned media channels to share our news stories, updates and useful content more proactively, supported by a communications calendar to ensure we have content to share each week. As a result, engagement has increased steadily on Twitter and more sharply on LinkedIn, when compared to the same period last year.
 - o On Twitter, the LEP gained 72 followers (now just over 5,000) and its tweets were seen over 46,000 times.
 - o On LinkedIn, the LEP gained 232 new followers, taking it to a total of 1,851 followers. Over half of followers are in the area, with nearly 1/3 from Exeter and nearly 1/5 from Plymouth. The LEP's engagement rate is just under 8%, which makes it very high performing when compared to the rate of 2% that the industry considers good.

Website performance:

- The LEP's main website generated similar numbers of visitors when compared to the same period in 2020, of an average of 3,000 per month. The average length of time visitors stayed was approximately 1.5 minutes, which is lower than the industry standard of 2-3 minutes.

- The biggest volume of traffic was to the Growth Hub site, receiving 13,000 per month, which is to be expected, as this is where businesses are signposted for funding and support and is the most public-facing site.
- Skills Launchpad was only launched in September 2020 but is beginning to build a good visitor base with over 10,000 visits in 2021.
- All three sites have a high bounce rate of between 60- 75%, compared to an industry average of between 20-70%. A high bounce rate could mean that people aren't finding what they are looking for and leaving the site. However, it can also mean that they've been redirected to another site, for example landing on the LEP website and being redirected to the Growth Hub, which wouldn't be a bad thing, so it needs further investigation to fully understand these figures.

Media relations performance:

In February, we introduced a new system of using Google Alerts for monitoring of media coverage. Whilst this doesn't pick up all coverage and doesn't include broadcast, it is a cost-effective way of getting a reasonable indication of the LEP's media coverage, which we can then analyse.

For February and March, Google Alerts picked up:

- 32 pieces of online media coverage
- Estimated coverage views (this means how many people have realistically read it) of 697,900
- Social shares of 1,771 (this is also a useful figure as it shows how many people have engaged with it on social media)
- Main stories covered were:
 - o Getting Building Fund projects
 - o Growth Deal projects – Ada Lovelace building and CDS in particular
 - o The two freeport bids
 - o Successful 2ZERO Future Flight challenge consortium bid
- Media coverage was spread across a range of local and business media, with BBC, SW Business Insider and Business Live the most prominent.

We don't have any comparative figures for the same period last year, and we also don't have the ability to compare to other LEPs. However, it is reasonable to conclude that this quarter has provided a very good level of media coverage in publications that are relevant for our business audience. Our approach of focusing our efforts more on a regular stream of proactive news stories around our priority areas of focus and less time on reactive comms activities has helped to deliver a consistent flow of news that will help to raise the profile and understanding of the LEP's core activities.

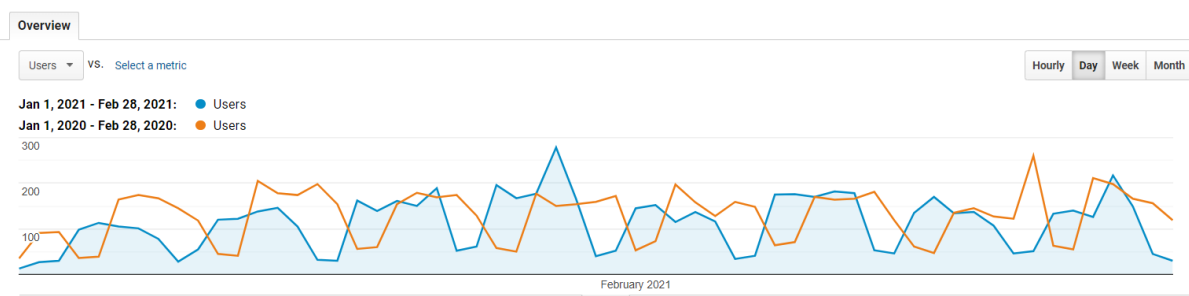
Communications priorities in April/May:

- Promoting Build Back Better
- Developing Clean Growth campaign
- Website refresh, to improve navigation

APPENDIX

Breakdown of stats

A. Website Performance Overview – www.heartofswlep.co.uk

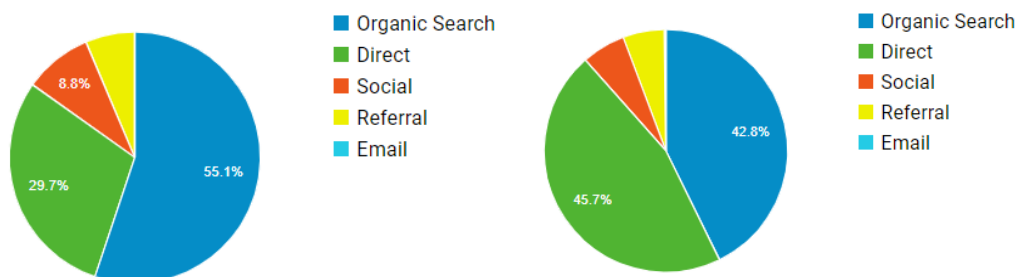


www.heartofswlep.co.uk generated similar numbers of website visitors in January and February 2021, compared to the same months in 2020.

The website traffic sources for 2021 and 2020 compared are:

Jan 1, 2021 - Feb 28, 2021

Jan 1, 2020 - Feb 28, 2020



NB – Digital industry advice is that an ideal referral ratio is a 1/3 split between direct, organic search and engagement (referral/social media) which the LEP corporate website www.heartofswlep.co.uk has achieved in 2020. As the diagrams show, there is an increase in traffic from engagement sources – the red and yellow segments, which is seen as a good trend.

Website analytics to 31 March 2021	HotSW LEP	Growth Hub	Skills Launchpad
Website visits	7,856	40,973	15,886
New visitors	7,201	31,923	6,466
Ave length of time (mins)	1:43	1:17	2:07
Ave page views	1.92	2.47	1.72
Bounce Rate	67%	61%	74%
Geography (SW%)	27%	27%	36%

Sources (direct/organic/referral)	30/55/15%	33/28/33%	61/19/20%
Range of landing pages (Homepage %)	33%	39%	11%

Website analytics for 2020	HotSW LEP	Growth Hub	Skills Launchpad
Website visits	42,495	180,044	5,128
New visitors	38,704	125,415	3,524
Ave length of time (mins)	1:57	1:53	1:50
Ave page views	2.04	2.61	2.14
Bounce Rate	67%	71.98%	67%
Geography (SW%)	28%	39%	41%
Sources (direct/organic/referral)	38/38/24%	35/29/32%	55/11/7%
Range of landing pages (Homepage %)	18%	34%	21%

B. Social Media Performance – Engagement, Activity and Following

Twitter (Jan – March 2021)

	HotSW LEP @HeartofSWLEP	Growth Hub @GrowthHubHOTSW	Skills and Careers @SkillsLaunchpad
Tweets	43	159	124
Impressions	46,200	94,200	82,700
Engagement (Click, like, retweet, comment)	499	938	976
Visits to profile	4,419	5,546	4,218
Total Followers	5,008	2,002	890

LinkedIn (Jan – March 2021)

	HotSW LEP	Growth Hub	Skills Launchpad
Impressions	16,289	8,237	14,220
Shares	64	48	295
Reactions	513	50	380
Clicks	676	148	389
Total Followers	1,857	672	398

