

## **Communications Evaluation Report – April to June 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 April – June, our main proactive areas of focus for core LEP communications activity have been:

- Launching the Build Back Better plan
- Launching the Blueprint for Clean Growth
- Launching new funding pots/rounds, eg. ERDF Inward Investment fund and Growing Places
- Refreshing the LEP website
- Promoting Getting Building Fund project milestones
- Promoting completion of remaining Growth Deal projects

### Social media performance

This quarter, we have continued 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 remained strong on both platforms.

#### Twitter

- The LEP gained around 10 followers/month (now a total of 5,035 followers).
- During this three-month period, the LEP earned around 543 impressions per day – down slightly from 549 impressions/day the previous quarter, but this drop is due to activity being lower during the six-week pre-election period covering April.
- June saw the highest ever reach on Twitter, with 23.4k impressions (around 780/day), helped by the launch of the Clean Growth campaign and the CBI Conference.

#### LinkedIn

- On LinkedIn, the LEP gained around 100 new followers, taking it to a total of 1,954 followers. Over half of these are in the area, with nearly 1/3 from Exeter and nearly 1/5 from Plymouth.

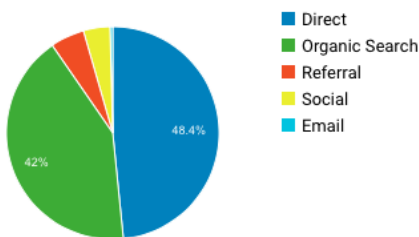
- The LEP’s engagement rate is on average around 8%, with peaks of between 10-15% for key announcements, such as the launch of Build Back Better and the Blueprint for Clean Growth, which makes it a very high performing channel when compared to the rate of 2% that the industry considers good.

HotSW LEP website performance

Analysis shows that the LEP website still has work to do, to improve its performance and engagement levels, although the recent refresh of the site has helped.

- The average length of time visitors stayed was between 1-2 minutes, which is lower than the industry standard of 2-3 minutes.
- The Growth Hub received the overall highest volume of traffic during the period, receiving an average of 6,880 visitors per month. This result is not unsurprising, as this is the most public-facing site.
- All three sites (main LEP site, Growth Hub, Skills Launchpad) have a high bounce rate of between 60- 75%, somewhat above the industry average. 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. We are continuing to interpret and understand this data.
- The LEP website saw an increase in of 1.2% in new visitors during this quarter compared to the first quarter of this year – with a total of 86.1% new visitors and just under 14% return visitors. Websites should aim for around 30% return visitors on average, so this figure needs exploring further to understand why visitors aren’t coming back.
- What is interesting (and reassuring) to see is the increase in web traffic around key periods of LEP communications activity. There were clear, significant spikes linked to the following:
  - o SW Business Insider panel discussion on Build Back Better
  - o LEP monthly newsletters being issued
  - o Launch of Clean Growth Blueprint & Race to Zero pledge press release

Website sources (ie. how visitors to the website found us):



NB – Digital industry advice is that an ideal referral ratio is a 1/3 split between direct, organic search and engagement (referral/social media). This means there is work to do to encourage visitors to the website from other platforms.

Website analytics from April to 30 June 2021	HotSW LEP	Growth Hub	Skills Launchpad*
Website visits	12,857	55,496	Not available
New visitors	12,086	44,008	Not available
Ave length of time (mins)	1:29	4.02	Not available
Ave page views	1.88	2.47	Not available
Bounce Rate	67.85%	61.33%	Not available
Sources (direct/organic/referral)	48/42/10%	33/28/33%	Not available
Range of landing pages (Homepage %)	33%	39%	Not available

\* Analytics have not been provided this quarter, due to staff illness in the Skills team

### Monthly e-newsletter:

Minor tweaks have been made to the LEP e-newsletter during the last six months:

- Having a regular publication schedule set for the last week of every month
- Reducing the overall number of stories to bring it in line with the industry recommendation of between 6-8 stories
- Focusing on the key areas the LEP wants to promote and be known for

The number of subscribers to the newsletter is around 1,600. The open rate is an average of around 25%, which is slightly lower than the industry average of 32%. One of the key tasks in the next six months is to undertake a more fundamental review of the newsletter to see if we can address this. The stories that are most clicked on tend to be those about funding opportunities, so with fewer of these on the horizon, the purpose and focus of the newsletter will need to be considered.

### Media relations performance:

We currently use Google Alerts to keep track of media coverage. Whilst this doesn't pick up all coverage or include broadcast media, it gives a reasonable basic indication of where the LEP is featuring and which subjects the media are most interested in, and is a free to use service. We are currently investigating other low-cost options that could provide the LEP with a more complete monitoring service and more detailed analytics.

Media coverage was slightly lower this quarter, due to the six-week pre-election period, which meant that fewer stories were issued either by the LEP or partners where we would have been mentioned in their releases.

Therefore, between April – June, the alerts picked up:

- 19 pieces of online media coverage (only 3 pieces of coverage during April) – this compares to 32 pieces last quarter
- Estimated coverage views (this means how many people have realistically read it) of 568,000
- Social shares of 430 (this is also a useful figure as it shows how many people have engaged with it on social media)
- Main stories covered were:

- Getting Building Fund and Growth Deal project milestones, including A382 link road Newton Abbot, Taunton Station regeneration, Northam Burrows, Plymouth Railway station, Plymouth industrial park
- Launch of Build Back Better
- Media coverage was spread across a range of local and business media, with local 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 media coverage has been reasonable this quarter, achieving coverage in publications that are relevant for our business audience.

With the Growth Deal and GBF funded projects coming to an end, we will need to develop a more targeted approach, identifying areas of importance for the LEP to focus on for media coverage, such as key sectors and the Clean Growth campaign.

### **Communications priorities July-September**

- Finalise and begin delivering five-month Clean Growth campaign
- Create more of a sector focus for the communications – eg. marine, aerospace, nuclear, rural
- Support new Head of Communications & Partnership to develop a more robust communications plan, following the outcome of the LEP Review
- Complete LEP website update and move onto updated CMS platform