



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Limited

Private and Confidential: NO

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LEP Strategic Communications Report

Appendices A-C refers

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Executive Summary

This report provides the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board with the Communications Framework, Stakeholder Engagement Framework, and the Communications & Stakeholder Plan for the 2021/22 financial year.

Recommendation

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is asked to:

- (i) Consider and approve both the Communications Framework and the Stakeholder Engagement Framework for business year 2021/22; and
- (ii) Note the Communications & Stakeholder Plan 2021/22.

Background and Advice

These documents set out the communications and stakeholder engagement strategies and a timetable of deliverable actions for the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership for financial year 2021/22.

COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK 2021/22 (Appendix A)

Context

- The Communications Framework sets out the rationale and principles underpinning planned communications activity for Lancashire Enterprise Partnership during financial year 2021/22.
- Communications activities in this plan have been grouped into four core areas of activity:
 - **Communications Management** – providing strategic direction and co-ordination for all communications activity, ensuring consistency in



messaging and compliance with the National Assurance Framework and other codes, and measuring the impact and effect of communications outputs.

- **Stakeholder Relations** – managing the LEP's relationships with its core stakeholders – internally and externally, with partners, across our networks, and with the business community – at local (Lancashire), regional (North West) and national (UK) levels. This also includes public affairs and advocacy activities intended to influence public policy and opinion.
 - **Media Relations** – strengthening relationships with local, regional and national media (whether print, online or broadcast) to ensure LEP messaging and influence is maximised, our reputation is enhanced, and our voice heard.
 - **Social & Digital** – making best use of the LEP website and its social media feeds (specifically Twitter and LinkedIn). The LEP website is the 'shop window' for the LEP and, coupled with our social media feeds, is an important means of engaging a wider audience, disseminating our messages and achievements, and enhancing our impact.
- None of these documents are intended to be an exhaustive list of activities. Whilst the LEP's objective must be to conduct a comprehensive programme of proactive actions to ensure the effective communication of the LEP's work and impact, it is very likely that the LEP will also have to react and respond – either to unexpected events or to seize opportunities as they present themselves.

Objectives

- The LEP plans and conducts communications activities in order to meet the following objectives:
 - Enhance its reputation and increase the effectiveness of its communications to drive Lancashire's economic growth and deliver its strategic intent
 - Ensure the LEP is a trusted source of credible, relevant and insightful intelligence regarding the Lancashire economy
 - Create and develop new partnerships to deliver its core objectives and promote existing partnership working
 - Foster a positive image of the LEP
 - Influence how the general public and key stakeholders see the LEP
 - Nurture a healthy familiarity with all those who come into contact with the LEP and the LEP's activities, its services, its people and its policies
 - Create a constructive climate for businesses for information, recognition and involvement
 - Bring the concerns of Lancashire businesses into the hub of strategic decision-making of the LEP and exert a positive influence on public policy and decision making in the region and at a national level
 - Taking our social and economic values and vision out into the world

Challenges



- In addition to setting out the LEP's communications strategy for the year ahead, this framework also identifies a number of strategic challenges in the field of communications that the LEP needs to confront and overcome. These include:
 - Measuring impact – This is a strategic challenge across all areas of LEP communications activity. It is particularly acute regarding our online presence. Currently, the LEP does not have an established way of measuring the impact of its communications or determining success in the field of communications. This, in turn, means we are unable to benchmark current performance or set accurate, quantifiable targets for improvement when it comes to most of our communications
 - Limited Capacity – The LEP has ambitious plans and a wide array of audiences and stakeholders but only a relatively small inhouse team tasked with communications. To boost the reach of the LEP's communications, bolster capability and strengthen capacity it may prove necessary to retain the services of specialist communications providers (pollsters, public affairs consultants, graphic designers, content producers).
 - Building editorial relationships – Currently, the LEP does not have a robust system in place to monitor the media (either print or broadcast) to see either where it is getting coverage, or to know what relevant and related stories are generating interest nationally or regionally. Further, the LEP needs to widen the pool of media outlets it has a relationship with, including being more ambitious regarding the national media.
 - Profile raising and differentiation – The LEP needs to raise its profile and be better at telling the story of its own success. However, the concept of a LEP is little understood outside specialist, informed audiences and the LEP would benefit from honing and refining how it talks about itself. There is a need to develop more consistent messaging across LEP projects and to taking a more co-ordinated approach to managing the flow of external communications.
 - Control and management of digital and social assets – the current contract for provision of social media and web management services is due to expire at the end of March 2021. In addition, at present neither the LEP team nor the Board have a sufficient flow of performance data regarding the LEP's website or social media feeds. This means we are unable to benchmark current performance or set accurate, quantifiable targets for improvement.
 - Plurality of stakeholders – As the Stakeholder Engagement Framework demonstrates, the LEP has a dizzying array of potential stakeholders to engage and inform, but only a comparatively small team with which to do it.
 - Distance and audience – The LEP's policy stakeholders fall into two distinct geographical groups: those in Lancashire and those in Westminster. Whilst the LEP is conscientious about managing relations with those in Lancashire, it is vital that those in Westminster (and Whitehall) are not overlooked or forgotten.



- The Communications Framework outlines proposed solutions to these strategic challenges. These include: creating a 'Communications Dashboard' to provide an overview of outputs and impact; retaining a media monitoring service; undertaking a Stakeholder Perception Audit; commissioning regular polling of Lancashire business opinion; assembling a roster of potential providers of communication support services; conducting a competitive tender process for the provision of web and social media services (and for any other services commissioned in future).
- This document is intended to be read and considered in conjunction with the **Communications Framework 2021/22**, the **Stakeholder Engagement Framework 2021/22 (see below)** and the **Communications & Stakeholder Plan 2021/22**. All are attached as appendices to this report.
- A review of LEP marketing activity will be undertaken in due course.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2021/22 (Appendix B)

- The Stakeholder Engagement Framework gives more detail on the measures the LEP will undertake to manage its relationships with its extensive array of stakeholders, lays out the rationale for (and principles underpinning) this approach, and sets an ambitious tempo of activity for the remainder of the year.
- The LEP intends to publish the Stakeholder Engagement Framework and share it with stakeholders – this will not only support the LEP's transparency goals but also stimulate dialogue and debate and allow stakeholders to feedback on the plan.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2021/22 (Appendix C)

- The Communications & Engagement Plan 2021/22 sets out a timetable of planned communications and stakeholder engagement actions that will be undertaken to relaise the ambitions set out in the two frameworks.
- Although dates and actions are accurate as of March 2021, it is expected that this timetable will evolve and expand as the year progresses. It is intended that the plan will be reviewed and updated on a monthly basis.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
N/A		



Lancashire
Enterprise Partnership

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A