

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE ULSTER SCOTS-AGENCY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The word "communication" can mean different things to different people. In the context of this document it has the following definition –

“By communication we mean the conveyance to our audiences, both internal and external, the policies and practices of the Agency which are primarily portrayed in the way we operate ie as an open, effective, results-driven non-political/non-sectarian organization dedicated to -

- promoting the study, conservation., development and use of Ulster-Scots as a living language;
- encouraging and developing the full range of its attendant culture;
- promoting an understanding of the history of the Ulster Scots.”

These underlying values should be demonstrated through all vehicles of communication adopted by the Agency– written, visual, graphic, oral, and physical and in personal communications.

2. The Vision

2.1 The overall objective behind this document is-

- *the need to draw upon all the resources of the Agency to ensure that its corporate image as an effective organisation, dedicated to assist those with an Ulster-Scots identity, is effectively portrayed to local, national and international audiences.*

2.2 The image will be secured by the recognition by key decision influencers in government, the media and other key organisations active in the Ulster-Scots movement of the importance of the Agency as a well run, cost effective and efficient way of promoting the Ulster-Scots identity. Such recognition will help attract additional resources for the long-term future of the Agency.

3 Internal and External Target Audiences

3.1 By *internal communication* we mean keeping the Board and staff of the Agency informed of the policies and practices, the objectives and targets, the successes and failures of the organization for which they work.

3.2 By *external communication* we mean the flow of information both outwards and backwards from the Agency, its funders, customers, and external audiences in what the Agency defines as its markets in –

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- Northern Ireland,
- the Republic of Ireland,
- the rest of the UK
- Europe, the USA and other parts of the world where the Ulster-Scots diaspora may be found.

3.3. This document does not cover the basic process of communication which is essential in the day to day work of individuals who work in the Agency where the individual –

- a. has a duty to ascertain facts/ information about the job which has to be done;
- b. ensures that all written requests and telephone calls to the Agency are efficiently handled as quickly as possible with follow-up calls or letters if matters cannot be resolved quickly;
- c. must co-operate with others both within the Agency and outside it to ensure high standards of performance.

3.4 In addition, all relevant supervisors are obliged to communicate information, knowledge and good working practices to staff within their control.

3.5 The adoption of successful communication procedures will clearly demonstrate that the Agency is meeting its statutory, social, and public responsibilities and objectives in relation to its legislative remit.

3.6 Clearly, the Agency needs to prioritise its communication strategy to the various audiences ie groups and individuals who the Agency determines should be aware of its developments or who have shown an interest in the Agency's area of interests. However, this will be strictly determined by resources and compliance with the Agency's three-year development plan.

3.7 But most importantly, the key decision makers in the Ulster-Scots home and world markets have to be treated as a communication priority in order to ensure that the objectives of the Agency are accorded with top status from its core government funders.

3.8 So the communication needs of the Agency could be simplified by the following definition –

- Audiences **with whom we need** to communicate effectively to –
 - Native Ulster-Scots speakers
 - DeCal and DENI in NI and DeAHGI & Dept of Education and Science in the RoI
 - N-SMC
 - Board and staff
 - Foras Na Teanga
 - NI Assembly/Dail

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- key decision makers in all target audience markets, government departments ie Department of Finance and Personnel and Education (*Northern Ireland*), Department of Finance (*Republic of Ireland*) and educationalists at all levels
- Customers, both grant recipients and information and support inquiries
- The Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies, Magee and outward through the Ulster-Scots International Research Network
- Northern Ireland members of the Westminster and European Parliaments
- Ulster-Scots partners ie U-S Heritage Council/Language Society
- Media
- NI councils and RoI councils in Ulster-Scots areas

And

- Audiences **with whom we would like** to communicate effectively to –
 - Potential new Ulster-Scots speakers or students
 - General NI and RoI public
 - General Scottish public and Ulster-Scots diaspora thereof
 - General UK public and Ulster-Scots diaspora thereof
 - Ulster-Scots worldwide diaspora
 - Cultural/historical experts worldwide.

3.9 The basis for this communication strategy will be the recommendation that the Agency puts in place an operational communications plan for the next 12 months that deals effectively with the first group, and systematically begins to communicate with priority areas in the second group.

3.10 The rationale behind this is to build on the considerable successes that the Agency has achieved over the last year to ensure effective communications for all target audiences a secure home market.

3.11 Only when the Board is confident that its communication procedures in the home market are on target should it begin to embark on extending its formal communications to the second group.

3.12 However, good communications reverberate and a likely outcome of effective communications with the first group is a natural spin-off of greater awareness with the desired audiences.

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4. Key requirements for Communication with the Agency's Target Audiences

4.1 There are certain basic requirements that are fundamental to the successful implementation of a good communications strategy. These are set out as follows –

<i>Desirable</i>	<i>Undesirable</i>
Open	Closed
Two way	One way
Timely	Late
Objective	Diffuse
Candid	Long Winded
Clear	Disjointed
Consistent	Arbitrary
Regular	Irregular

4.2 Methods of Communication

Formal

Corporate Identity
Letters
Press Releases
Media Interviews
Publications
Web Based Communications
Briefings
Articles in Magazines/Periodicals/Journals
Conferences, Seminars, Courses, Workshops
Small group meetings with selected decision-makers
One to one with key decision makers
Advertising
Exhibitions/posters
Videos/AV material/Photographic material

Informal

Telephone talks
Ad hoc meetings for discussions on topics as they arise
One to one with key influencers/decision makers
Networking at social functions
Body language
Personal image

4.3 Current Situation

4.3.1 The Agency has succeeded in quickly establishing an image for itself both in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and certain parts of the USA due mainly to the establishment of the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies and various media coverage.

4.3.2 Certainly, Ulster-Scots has found a central voice with the formation of the Agency and due to primetime TV coverage being secured on RTE and Newsnight Scotland, UTV, and BBC NI, general awareness of culture and language was been heightened in target markets over the last year.

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4.3.3 The readiness of the News Letter to run a weekly bi-lingual column since January; its agreement to run a 12-page special pullout on Ulster-Scots; the possibility of joint marketing initiatives, and its positive two-page feature on the works of Ulster-Scots poet James Fenton, shows that the Agency has secured an excellent media partner to communicate to its core NI audience.

4.3.4 However, positive articles on the Agency's corporate plan, James Fenton's works in key 'Nationalist' media such as the Irish News, Andersonstown News, the Irish language media, Lá and Foinse, shows that the Agency has been equally successful in balancing its communications.

4.3.5 Other successes are as follows –

- Setting up the first tri-lingual web site
- The Washington DC launch
- Several approaches regards to the production of Ulster-Scots videos and programmes from NI and USA
- Putting Ulster-Scots on the European map by successfully hosting one day of the recent EBUL 'Partnership for Diversity' conference; the Viareggio cultural trip and forthcoming BBC documentary; and the recent request for an interview and recording for a major Italian language magazine.
- A new media 'believer' in the language - Gerry Anderson in the Belfast Telegraph on reading Jim Fenton's Hamely Tongue.
- Attracting sufficient applications for grants awards

The Future

5. However, while the Agency is confident that it has established an identity for itself and an improved awareness for Ulster-Scots per se, there is little or no quantitative evidence, bar media clippings, to support this.

5.1 The Agency needs to investigate as quickly as possible –

- What is it's general image to key audiences and decision-makers
- Does it fit with declared objectives?
- Is the Agency seen as a all-inclusive, all-Ireland Agency?
- Is it communicating with the audiences that it needs to
- Are the right groups and individuals getting grant awards?
- Is the Agency receiving as much credit as possible for its work?

6 Communications Strategy for the Agency 1 Sept 01- 31 August 02

6.1 This section sets out the Communications Strategy that the Agency will implement for the period 1 Sept 01 – 31 August 02. The initiatives already known are shown in Annex 1 but many of the cultural event activities that will come up over the year are not shown here, or indeed, the Chairman's initiatives. Annex 2 shows the range of tools that

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are used to carry out communication initiatives and the degree of control an organisation has in their application.

6.2 The strategy proposed in this document is to build upon the successes of those initiatives and to create a further understanding of and, as appropriate, to further promote and market the objectives of the Agency. These are -

- a. to make the Agency a hub for the development of Ulster-Scots culture at all levels and wherever its services may be required;
- b. to further stimulate interest in, and the development of, Ulster-Scots culture;
- c. to assist where appropriate with advice, information, guidance and financial input those individuals who share the aims and objective of the Agency;
- d. where appropriate to enter into collaborative arrangements with those mentioned in para c above.

6.3 The underlying message of this strategy is that the Agency is the authentic voice for the Ulster Scots culture and that it will work effectively with those who wish to preserve and develop that culture by ensuring a coherent and cohesive approach to communications affecting the preservation and propagation of that culture.

6.4 The following section examines the current situation, the results expected and outline the strategies required to achieve those results

7. Results Expected

7.1 Taking into account the overall objective at para 2.1 the end result of the Agency's Communications Strategy should be -

Qualitative

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the Agency as a major force in promoting and developing Ulster Scots by

- Motivating individuals or groups to come together to share the aims of the Agency by promoting/participating in cultural activities.
- Persuading key decision influencers of the merit of the Agency's work.
- Changing negative or non-committal attitudes to the value of the Ulster-Scots tradition in the life of the society at large

Quantitative

- Compiling a list of individuals /organisations which have approached the Agency for help and/or financial assistance

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- Listing on an annual and cumulative basis the number of societies/bodies which have been formed at a local/regional/national/international level to promote Ulster-Scots culture
- Organising a number of conferences/ courses/ workshops in tune with the Agency's objectives and assess the value of these.
- Performing attitude surveys on a regular basis

These results are designed to create an understanding of the Agency's work based on its achievements through the effective use of the strategy to-

- Communicate with its various target audiences the importance of a strong Ulster-Scots cultural base which will make a positive impact on society in general and enhance the self concept of a large proportion of its population;
- Position the Agency as an essential, expert and effective organisation in contributing to the preservation and promotion of the Ulster-Scots culture
- Demonstrate that the Agency is value for money and is responsive to the needs of the community for which it was established to serve

8. STRATEGIES REQUIRED

8.1 Adoption of Priorities

8.11 At present the Agency has a plan of activities (the Corporate Plan) under each of the four main key themes of its Corporate Plan ie Linguistic Development, Culture, Education, Understanding of Ulster Scots

8.12 These activities plans are wide ranging and cannot be carried out within the period envisaged by the Corporate Plan. It is suggested that the Communications strategy should concentrate on the following two/three themes – Culture, Understanding of Ulster-Scots and Education within the 2001/2002 timetable and that the Board should assist in determining the priorities and resource allocation for the PR activities for those themes.

9. Implementation

Between Sept and Dec 2001 the emphasis should be on –

Promoting the aims of the Agency: This should be regarded as an Agency-customer activity. However continued use of general media within Northern Ireland (ie daily and weekly newspapers; TV/radio) should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the proper media impact is being assured.

Among the activities

-newsletter

-stories and features on major developments in the work of the Agency by selecting

(further comms mix to be agreed)