FOREST OF
BOWLAND
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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Communications Strategy 2005 - 2009

FOREST OF BOWLAND AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2005 – 2009

Supporting and enhancing the activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB through effective communications.

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Forest of Bowland AONB

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the communications strategy of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its purpose is to provide a framework and direction for communications to all audiences.

The strategy:

- Establishes a clear identity for the Forest of Bowland AONB in how it wishes to position itself in all communications activity; defends and promotes this reputation and brand to all audiences.

- Provides guidance and defines actionable goals to guide communicators and others in designing, preparing and executing communications.

- Identifies means of using communications to create, strengthen or preserve, among key audiences, opinion favourable to the attainment of AONB goals.

- Focuses the Forest of Bowland AONB message on customer, partner and stakeholder benefits (rather than focusing on facts about the organisation).

The strategy will be updated annually to ensure relevant strategic direction that promotes and supports the wider objectives of the Forest of Bowland AONB - namely to:

- Protect, conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Forest of Bowland AONB (primary aim and purpose).

- Promote the sustainable social and economic development of the area, particularly where such activity conserves and enhances the environment.

- Encourage enjoyment of the area where it is consistent with the first two objectives.

Although it is the role of the Publicity & Information officer to drive communications activity, successful implementation is in the hands of all Forest of Bowland AONB personnel. Communications cannot change perceptions in isolation – this means that there is an important role for communications in promoting good practice and skills across the organisation. For further information, help and advice, contact the Publicity & Information Officer:

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2.0 VISION

The overall vision of the strategy is:

To support and enhance the activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB through effective communications – aiming to raise awareness of the area's special landscape, wildlife, environment and management.

Q: Where do we want to be?

2005 – 2006

- Successfully promoting a strong image/profile for the AONB and the partnership.

2005 – 2009

- The local community and visitors will have access to clear, accurate and up to date information and interpretation concerning the area, enabling increased recognition and enjoyment of the area's distinctive qualities.

- The AONB will be regarded as a beacon for its leadership of the successful management and promotion of the area, in partnership with others.

- The AONB partnership will be seen as effective in its role of representing stakeholders on issues at both local and national level.

- Awareness, recognition and satisfaction among key audiences will have increased, and partners will feel better informed and involved.

- The AONB will be recognised nationally as a leading sustainable tourism destination.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the communications strategy are outlined below. References shown in brackets (N) refer specifically to key objectives within the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan, 2004 – 2009:

Image and Identity

- Secure the commitment of all stakeholders issuing publications concerning the AONB to use clear, accurate and standardised information. All communication materials must carry the Forest of Bowland AONB logo and brand identity (II2).

- Strengthen the profile of the Forest of Bowland AONB and where appropriate undertake image renewal activities (PR1).

- Ensure staff are fully informed and feel ownership of the activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

- Ensure the Publicity & Information Officer has immediate access to all relevant design guidance and materials.

Promotion

- Promote and interpret aspects of the AONB such as environmental heritage, management, communities and recreational opportunities (II1).

- Encourage the co-ordinated and sympathetic promotion of the Forest of Bowland as a tourist destination (P6).

- Promote the success and achievements of the partnership to local people and visitors (PR2).

Partnership

- Act as a strategic forum of communication between constituent statutory authorities and other interested parties in all matters relating to the AONB (P5).

- Demonstrate the added value and political benefits gained through effective partnership working (P2).

- Encourage involvement from new partners, including the private sector (P4). Encourage wider participation among existing stakeholders.

- Influence specific decisions or decision-makers around key issues.

4.0 PRINCIPLES

The following key principles apply to all communications undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Forest of Bowland AONB:

- There must be consistency in the themes, messages, tone and style that ensure a constant look and feel to all communications. In particular:
    - All AONB publicity material must reflect the organisation's corporate style and brand identity, and be instantly recognisable as being from the Forest of Bowland AONB.
    - All 3rd party publicity material regarding the AONB must include correct display of the AONB logo.

- All communication materials must be approved and signed off by the Publicity and Information Officer or an appointed member of the AONB Unit. This includes:
    - AONB publications
    - Partners' publications regarding the AONB
    - Publications/materials that are fully or part-funded by the AONB
    - Publications produced by external, non-partner organisations that intend to carry the AONB brand or logo.

- AONB communications must be honest, succinct and accurate. Clear and plain English must be used at all times.

- AONB communications must be credible with partners and stakeholders, while reflecting the corporate and political position of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

- Internal staff, partners and key stakeholders must be informed about AONB initiatives first, or simultaneously with outside audiences. They should not be surprised by what they hear about the Forest of Bowland AONB from other sources – eg. the media.

- Consultation with relevant contacts within the AONB partnership should be encouraged in all communications activity, and particularly when:
    - Formally discussing the AONB with external (non-partner) organisations, including the media.
    - Publicising the AONB via external communication channels, such as 3rd party publications and websites, etc.
    - Regarding AONB messages and/or issues that concern the AONB.
    - Regarding all printed materials, internal and external reports and presentations.

5.0 MESSAGES

The underlying message of the Forest of Bowland AONB is that:

It is an area of national and international importance because of its unspoilt and richly diverse landscape and wildlife.

This message reflects the primary aim and purpose of the AONB, as well as its definition as a designated area. In addition, a range of sub-messages - or themes - have been developed for use in cases where communications activity is required to highlight a particular role or image of the AONB, as follows:

- **A Place to Enjoy and Keep Special** – a generic and widely accessible message, encompassing the value of the AONB as a place to live, work and play, as well as its importance as a unique and precious landscape. This message should be used in the majority of cases.

- **A Special Place for Wildlife** – highlighting the rich biodiversity of the area.

- **Wild Open Spaces** – highlighting the distinctive character of the landscape; its unique sense of grandeur, tranquillity and remoteness.

- **A Living Landscape** – used to describe the landscape as a product of the interactions between people and nature; the activities that people undertake within the landscape (eg. recreation, business and agriculture); highlighting the role of people in landscape management and change.

- **A Landscape Rich in Heritage** – highlighting the historical context of the area, how it has evolved and what elements from the past contribute to the current landscape character.

- **Delicious Food and Drink** – highlighting the wide range of locally produced foodstuffs in the context of the AONB's designation as a landscape of national importance.

- **Achieving Aspirations Through Partnership** – used to celebrate the successes of the AONB partnership; the value of sharing expertise and resources; the benefits of working together towards common goals. Could also be applied in a broader context to include the local community, visitors and other public stakeholders (conveying a sense of ownership and responsibility).

- **Vibrant Local Economy** – draws attention to the link between local businesses and the AONB, both as an organisation and as a designated area. Could be used to highlight positive association with the AONB brand and to support local business initiatives (eg. Sustainable Development Fund). Can also be applied to highlight the role of the economy in creating and maintaining sustainable landscapes.

6.0 ISSUES

There are a number of issues that will affect the Forest of Bowland AONB over the next three years. It is important to consider the implications of these issues with regard to the communications strategy – some issues may have a direct influence on the way we work, others may present opportunities for publicity and promotion, for example. The following issues have been identified as relevant.

AONB Issues:

- Forest of Bowland AONB Strategy for Sustainable Tourism. The delivery of this strategy is current and ongoing, with communications set to play a fundamental role. Through the work of this strategy, the AONB has gained the EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Furthermore, the North West Development Agency (NWDA) is campaigning to position the North West as "the best tourism destination in Britain", presented as a "green region". A marketing campaign will focus on the promotion of world-class countryside, emphasising the quality of the environment. These clearly present opportunities for promoting the AONB.

- 'Sustainable Bowland' – aims to implement the high priority actions identified in the Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy action plan. Four key areas of work have been identified:
    - Develop and promote sustainable activities and experiences that promote quiet enjoyment and a greater understanding of the AONB.
    - Involve the community in developing projects that promote and interpret the area's special qualities.
    - Support the development of enterprises based on local products.
    - Develop and improve communication and involvement between the AONB and tourism enterprises and information staff.

- Bowland Festival – a partnership event incorporating a wide range of individuals and organisations. The profile of this event is growing year on year and will play a key role in raising the profile of the AONB and the partnership.

- Sustainable development fund – a fund of up to £100,000 per annum that the AONB would make available in the form of grants. How much will be available, to whom and how to apply will all need to be communicated.

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External Issues:

- Formation of a new government agency - entitled 'Natural England' – which is set to take over responsibility for protecting and enhancing English landscapes and wildlife. This 'integrated agency' will comprise DEFRA's Rural Development Service, all of English Nature and the access, recreation and landscape remit of the Countryside Agency – the aim being to make it easier for people to get information, advice and funding on country matters. Natural England will be formally established by November 2006.

- New DEFRA guidance for authorities – 'Working with our finest landscapes' – affecting National Parks, Broads and AONBs. The guidance reflects the fact that a diverse range of bodies have a direct influence on protected areas, and that such bodies often operate outside these areas themselves, but nonetheless have an impact on them. It also recognises that fulfilling the purpose of designation relies on effective collaborative working.

- Lancashire County Council restructuring and subsequent effect on the roles of the Countryside Service staff.

7.0 BRANDING

Detailed guidance on the application of the Forest of Bowland AONB brand identity is contained in the accompanying 'Graphic Standards' document. This document is dynamic and therefore subject to alteration. Reference copies are available from the Publicity & Information Officer – these *must* be returned after use, to ensure that only the most up-to-date design guidance is being applied.

Simplified guidance on use of the Forest of Bowland AONB logo is also available. This document is intended for use by non-design professionals.

The Forest of Bowland AONB brand does not simply mean the Hen Harrier logo – it is the AONB's 'personality', ie: a reflection of its values, objectives and culture as well as the structure of the organisation. Its perception is increased or reduced by every contact that people have with the AONB by whatever means. It is therefore vitally important to maintain consistency in our brand and to enhance this identity at every opportunity.

The Forest of Bowland AONB brand strategy is to:

- Provide information in a consistent and clearly branded way.
- Establish a 'family' of communication materials.
- Promote individual services and campaigns in a way that supports the overall brand of the Forest of Bowland AONB.
- Adhere to the corporate 'Graphic Standards' document when producing materials.
- Ensure all communication materials regarding the AONB, and which contain the AONB logo and/or brand identity, are approved and signed off by the Publicity & Information Officer prior to production (see section 4.0 Principles).

IMPORTANT - it is crucial to ensure that:

- The Forest of Bowland AONB brand should *only* be used to promote the AONB, unless otherwise authorised by the Publicity & Information Officer. In cases where a partner (or other) wishes to use the AONB brand, the Publicity & Information Officer *must* assume management of all necessary design and print production.
- All materials produced and/or funded by the Forest of Bowland AONB *must* include the AONB logo (see the 'Graphic Standards' document for detailed information on correct use of the logo).
- Only master artwork is used, as supplied by the Publicity & Information Officer. For instance – *never* scan the logo from leaflets or other media.
- The logo should appear on the front page of printed material unless there are specific reasons why this is not appropriate. The preferred position for the logo is top left of page – do not use the logo centred.
- The Countryside Agency logo must be used on all AONB publicity materials.
- Where appropriate, the EUROPARC logo must be used on AONB publicity materials, with reference to sustainable tourism.
- No other logos should be displayed on AONB materials unless otherwise authorised by the Publicity & Information Officer.

- The logo is *never* passed on to 3rd party organisations, individuals or businesses without prior approval from the Publicity & Information Officer. In such cases, it is important to check whether the context is appropriate for use of the AONB logo – for example:
    - What is the logo being used to help promote?
    - Where is the logo due to be displayed? (eg. print, web, signage, livery)
    - What is the expected quality and quantity of the finished product?

8.0 AUDIENCES

This section identifies key audiences with whom the AONB needs to communicate to achieve its objectives. The priority of audiences is dependant on the type communications activity in question, and specifically, what the activity aims to achieve. In this regard, it is important to recognise the role of the AONB partnership and stakeholders in reaching other audiences, in addition to our own direct communication with these audiences.

GROUP	AUDIENCE	INCLUDES
A	AONB Partnership Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)	Lancashire County Council; North Yorkshire County Council; Craven District Council; Lancaster City Council; Pendle Borough Council; Preston City Council; Ribble Valley Borough Council; Wyre Borough Council; Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils; Yorkshire Local Councils Association; The Countryside Agency; United Utilities plc; Environment Agency; English Nature; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB); Forest of Bowland Landowning and Farming Advisory Group; North West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation; The Ramblers Association; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); North West Development Agency (NWDA); AONB Unit; Lancashire Rural Futures (LRF); Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE); British Horse Society; National Farmers Union (NFU); Forestry Commission.
B1	Stakeholders	Organisations/individuals that have a stake in the area and an existing close relationship with the AONB partnership, but are not formal partners (eg. English Heritage, Highways Agency, British Heart Foundation, tourist boards).
B2	Stakeholders	Organisations/individuals that have a stake in the area but may not have an existing close relationship with the AONB partnership.

C	Visitors	Visitors to the AONB who are not local residents.
D1	Informed Public	People involved in organised community groups or residents' associations, etc, who have existing relationships with local government, stakeholders or partners.
D2	General Public	Local residents and employees (ie. those who live and work in the AONB).
E	Opinion Formers	Media, regional MPs, ministers, government departments.
F	Colleagues	Regional Assembly staff, planning bodies, consultants and suppliers, etc.
G	European Bodies	EU, MEPs, European Commission, EUROPARC Federation, etc.

More detailed breakdown of the audiences above will be assisted by ongoing work in-house to review the stakeholder networks and groups that need to be consulted (see also Guidance 12.1).

9.0 CHANNELS

The following table outlines the most appropriate communication channels to reach the audiences identified in section 8.0. Channels marked with an asterisk (*) are not currently in place and are recommended for future consideration.

CHANNEL	GROUPS TARGETED
JAC/PMG Meetings (April & October) – Important event, used for reporting back, decision-making and sharing of information. Has potential to be made more 'forward looking'.	A
Officers' Technical Committee (OTC) Meetings (April & October) – Members of the OTC also belong to the JAC. Again, this is largely a feedback meeting with reports being vetted prior to the JAC. Has potential to become a discussion forum and 'forward looking' group.	A, B1
AONB Unit Team Briefings (weekly) – Used for team updating and discussion of issues. Provides opportunity for sourcing news/ideas for PR, as well as offering support, guidance and feedback on communications.	---
Countryside Officers' Meetings (every 2 months) – used to discuss and manage activities 'on the ground', eg. project budgets and issues concerning the local community and visitors. Presents an opportunity to obtain feedback on communications, brand awareness and visitor satisfaction.	A, B1
Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Tourism Forum: Working Group and Task Groups – the structures that are responsible for the delivery of the AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	A, B1, (D1)

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Annual Conference (April) – key event at which the partnership are brought together en masse. A primary opportunity to discuss and celebrate ongoing communications activities.	A, B1
Annual Report – a key collaborative effort that celebrates the successes of the partnership in delivering the AONB Management Plan. An important annual milestone	A, B1, B2, E
Management Plan Update – used to update partners and stakeholders on the direction of the AONB partnership, its ongoing aims and objectives. A good opportunity to highlight recent successes, upcoming challenges and to give an overview of work in progress. An important means of disseminating key information and obtaining feedback.	A, B1
Tourist Boards / Groups – liaison with Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, Yorkshire Tourist Board, Lancashire Tourism Marketing Group, Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative, etc. Tourist boards/groups are both an audience and a channel – they are key stakeholders in the partnership (audience group A or B1) with high potential for influencing and engaging other audiences, particularly visitors.	C, D1, D2
Forest of Bowland AONB Website – the 'shop window' of the organisation. This channel has the potential to reach all audiences and should therefore be utilised and maintained with high priority. Future development of the website aims to improve this resource for visitors, information staff and local businesses.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, E, F, G

Promotional Literature – for example, the 'General Information' leaflet. As with the website, promotional literature has the potential to reach the majority audiences. Leaflets and brochures are especially effective tools for engaging with the public, forming a tactile 'piece' of the AONB brand identity that people can take home with them (hence, the quality of graphic design is crucial). They are also useful in providing informed stakeholders with a concise and easily accessible overview of ongoing activities.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, E, F
Bowland Festival (June) – a public celebration of the success of the partnership and the unique qualities of the AONB. An important annual milestone.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, E, F
Direct Contact – ie. telephone, email, fax, post. Never underestimate the value of personal, direct contact with key audiences. This can often be the most effective form of communication.	A, B1, B2, D1, E, F
Signage and Interpretation – one of the most publicly accessible elements of our brand identity (and arguably the most important to visitors). Other than promotional literature, this is the only element of our brand identity that people see on the ground – ie. whilst visiting the AONB. Hence, the quality of information and design is crucial.	C, D1, D2
Press Releases – used to help publicise AONB-related events and activities. See section 10.1.	A, B1, E
Local Events – attendance/presence at events within the AONB that are not directly funded or managed by the partnership. Important as a means of networking with stakeholders, visitors and residents; as well as disseminating information (eg. leaflets, promotional merchandise) and gathering information on local perceptions, issues, related campaigns, etc.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, F

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National Events – attendance/presence at national workshops, conferences and festivals that are not directly funded or managed by the partnership. Importance as a means of networking with national partners and stakeholders, and gaining insight into wider issues outside of the AONB.	A, B1, B2, E, F, G
Bowland Visitor Centre – located at Beacon Fell Country Park; provides information about the Forest of Bowland AONB to visitors via publications (eg. leaflets) and interpretation. Has significant potential for engaging with young people and schools. Requires greater prominence of AONB brand and identity.	C, D1, D2
Consultation – a valuable opportunity for two-way, direct communication with the local community. Should also be used to evaluate the success of local communication activities and monitor awareness of the Forest of Bowland AONB brand identity and key messages.	D1, D2
***Communications E-Letter** – widely distributed amongst partners, stakeholders and other key bodies on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Its function is to update recipients on the state-of-play of key communications activities, such as upcoming events and publications. Copy text should be concise and engaging, the objective being to inform the reader, while encouraging participation and/or feedback. Should include a mix of both general information and updates on specific issues / campaigns.	A, B1, B2, D1, E, F

***Guidebook** – high quality publication, aiming to provide an overview of the Forest of Bowland in terms of its wildlife, heritage, landscape and people. Would also promote opportunities for enjoyment, possibly detailing walks, things to do, places to go etc – using generic information to ensure the publication has a long shelf-life. In short, a useful booklet that people would be happy to purchase as a reference guide (or souvenir): suggested retail price £4-5.	C, D1, D2
***Visitor Guide** - a yearly publication, providing a holistic 'flavour' of the AONB. Ie. detailing things to see and do, places to visit, eat, drink and sleep, as well as events listings and highlights of the special qualities of the area. The development and funding of this channel would require input from partners and other organisations – this is dependant upon progress of the AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy and is therefore to be confirmed. It is not an immediate consideration at present (first publication would be 2007 at the earliest).	C, D1, D2
***Specialist Publications** – high quality, AONB-produced publications focusing on each of the different themes. Again, the aim is to produce useful and attractive booklets that people would be happy to purchase as a reference guide (or souvenir). Potentially produce 1 per year, or bi-annually, depending upon funding. The publications could be supported/marketed via pop-up displays at events, designed to promote specific themes.	C, D1, D2

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Sustainable Bowland – ongoing campaign, including: 1. Sense of Place toolkit, to be developed in consultation with partners and local people exploring the AONB themes. 2. 8 village attraction leaflets linked to local amenities. 3. Bowland food/local produce festival. 4. Newsletter for AONB and Tourism Staff. 5. Familiarisation briefings.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, E, F
***Annual Tourism Event** – aimed specifically at tourism businesses in the area, with the intention of promoting further joint working, as well as reviewing and celebrating the ongoing work of the Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	A, B1, B2, C, D1, D2, E, F
Bowland Tourism Environment Fund - Visitor 'pay back' scheme, aiming to encourage visitors to contribute to the financial upkeep of the AONB via donations, etc. A task group is currently looking at re-launching this scheme as one of the actions of the FOB Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Will involve AONB branded materials to communicate relevant messages to the public and to those who may wish to bid for money from the fund.	B1, B2, C, D1, D2
Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and Community Resource Centres – have potential to act as a huge resource for communicating AONB messages to a wide range of audiences. How these centres currently provide information regarding the AONB needs to be assessed and their role evaluated as part of the Forest of Bowland AONB Interpretation Strategy.	C, D1, D2

(See also Guidance 12.1).

10.0 ACTIVITIES

In general, when planning communications activities, it is worth bearing the following in mind:

- Avoid the scattergun approach. Often it is better to do less, but to do it well and to target it effectively.

- Take advantage of any support, guidance and training that is available before embarking on specialist activities such as graphic design, media work or running events.

- Where choices have to be made, concentrate on the most important and influential audiences, prioritise high impact/low cost activities.

- Never underestimate the resources involved in running any communications programme.

The following section is divided under sub-headings for ease of reference. Additional guidance is included at the end of each section.

10.1 MEDIA RELATIONS

Objectives:

- Protect and enhance the identity and reputation of the Forest of Bowland AONB.
- Raise the profile of the Forest of Bowland AONB through pro-active media contact at both local and national level.
- Increase positive media coverage.

Approach:

- Increase pro-active media relations activity.
- Target a broad range of media.
- Plan media coverage to coincide with key events, publications and other promotional activities.
- Ensure media activity is supported through the Forest of Bowland AONB website.

How Our Media Relations Work

Our media relations are jointly coordinated by Lancashire County Council (LCC), which manages press liaisons on behalf of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The AONB Publicity & Information Officer is responsible for writing all copy text for press releases. It is the role of LCC Corporate Communications to send out releases and liaise directly with the press. Some direct communication with the media is currently handled by the AONB Publicity & Information Officer - primarily when the media contact the AONB directly, and where media relations are already established. How each press release or media situation is handled can be approached on a case-by-case basis, but with the AONB Publicity & Information Officer taking a more proactive role in the management of press liaisons - the aim being to encourage a more direct relationship between the AONB Unit and the media (especially at local level).

Press releases are currently produced on an ad hoc basis – ie. in response to current newsworthy activities. It is our intention to make this approach more pro-active in future – that is, we will seek to provide stories for the media, rather than taking a broadly reactive stance to media relations. We will achieve this by:

- Maximising opportunities within all channels (section 10) as a means of sourcing potential stories for press releases.
- Encouraging forward planning in all media relations, so that coverage can be tailored to coincide with key events and activities – thereby reinforcing the publicity potential.

(See also Guidance 12.2).

10.2 PUBLICITY MATERIAL

This section includes guidance on producing a range of publicity materials. It should be read alongside the section on branding (7.0) and the accompanying 'Graphic Standards' document (available from the Publicity & Information Officer) – both of which contain advice on the overall corporate image of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Objectives:

- Design and produce a range of targeted publicity materials to promote the Forest of Bowland AONB to key audiences.
- Ensure the standardised production of all AONB publicity materials in accordance with the Forest of Bowland AONB brand identity (see 'Graphic Standards' document).
- Maximise the cost-effectiveness of producing publicity materials.

Approach:

- Develop and implement corporate guidelines for the production of publicity materials.
- Ensure all publicity materials are produced with the approval and/or involvement of the Publicity & Information Officer. This includes materials produced by partners or external organisations that carry the AONB logo.
- Ensure the format, type and quantity of publicity materials are appropriate to the target audience(s) – see also section 10.0.
- Employ the services of external specialists – for example, graphic/web designers, printers, copywriters.

(See also Guidance 12.3).

10.3 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Effective internal communications are a critical factor in the 'cultural health' of any organisation. Studies by market and opinion researchers (eg. MORI) suggest that where staff feel well informed, they are far more likely to feel involved in an organisation, understand its objectives and make best use of their skills and abilities. Furthermore, it is recognised that there is a direct link between levels of staff satisfaction and advocacy. In light of this, it is important that both staff and individual partners feel fully involved in the organisation and activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Objectives:

- To ensure staff and partners are fully informed about the business of – and issues that affect – the Forest of Bowland AONB, such as: the organisation's key objectives, messages, responsibilities, political position, ongoing and upcoming activities, etc.
- To inform staff and partners about Forest of Bowland AONB activity before external audiences.

Approach:

- Establish a single, effective internal communications channel, capable of reaching both staff and relevant partners.
- Encourage consistent messages through cascade of information.
- Make better use of all communications channels and particularly the interactive possibilities of electronic communications – discussion, consultation, education, etc.

Currently there is no single channel and no supporting cascade system for communicating with all staff and partners. It is recommended that such a channel/system should be implemented in the short term to help ensure that information is disseminated and received in a consistent way. It is suggested that e-based communications should be used for this purpose, for example:

- An online message board or forum, allowing users to securely share and discuss information. This channel requires active input from users in order to function - ie. its use must be adopted and encouraged as part of the normal working day.
- Regular email bulletins, sent via tailored e-mailing lists to relevant staff, partners and stakeholders (see 'Communications E-Letter' under section 9.0). This channel does not require active input from users, other than reading bulletins once they have been received.

11.0 EVALUATION

There is currently no formal evaluation of the work carried out by the Publicity & Information Officer and other related personnel. It is a priority for 2005 to provide and implement a system of evaluation to ensure we share learning within the AONB team to continually improve our effectiveness. It is not proposed that we introduce new communication channels solely for the purpose of evaluation - but rather that whenever possible, we maximise the use of existing channels as a means of obtaining feedback.

In general terms, we will work closely with partners and stakeholders to gather as much data as is available to help inform us about perceptions of the Forest of Bowland AONB. This information will be recorded on an ad hoc basis at team and partner meetings, and throughout the course of projects and campaigns.

Equally as important as gathering information is the communication of the findings. In this regard, we will provide regular feedback to partners and stakeholders on activities in which they are involved. The form of this feedback will depend upon the priority of the activity in question - ranging from verbal feedback via telephone or at meetings, to short summary emails, or more detailed written reports conveying the outcomes of high profile campaigns.

In addition to the general reporting of communication activities, we will undertake the following specific evaluations in the run-up to the Annual Report:

11.1 BRANDING EVALUATION

Regular 'health checks' will be carried out annually to see if the Forest of Bowland AONB brand is being applied consistently. It need not be a big exercise, but it will ensure the protection of one of our most valuable assets.

Techniques to use include:

- Pull together a collection of all the communication materials that have been produced since the last evaluation. Does it look as though they all come from the same organisation? Can you isolate where breaches of the graphic standards are occurring? Make a note of any major successes and failures, and set targets for improvement.

- Feedback from internal and external designers on use of the Forest of Bowland AONB 'Graphic Standards'. Is it clear to users what's required and what help is available? Are any necessary materials not covered by the document?

- Review of electronic communications – eg. the website – for user friendliness, design and compliance with official guidelines.

- 'Mystery Shopping' – visiting key sites within the AONB, sitting in on presentations and other spot checks on use of the 'Graphic Standards' in practice. What does it feel like to have contact with the AONB? It is conveying a consistent brand?

- Monitoring awareness of AONB messages, values, brand and image amongst key stakeholders and partners. This can be undertaken at low cost using a questionnaire, requesting feedback on:
  - What have people read/seen/heard about the Forest of Bowland AONB? For example - promotional materials, media coverage, word of mouth.
  - What materials have succeeded/failed? For example – have they attracted people's attention, or gone unnoticed?
  - What do people perceive as being the AONB's core objectives and values; its roles and responsibilities?
  - What visual elements (eg. shapes, colours, logos) do people readily associate with the AONB?
  - What adjectives would people use to describe the AONB team – for example, friendly, professional, reliable, motivated?

11.2 MEDIA RELATIONS EVALUATION

Without evaluation and monitoring it is impossible to assess how effective a media relations campaign is. Evaluation not only helps focus the activity and resources, but also provides tangible results of success. Press cuttings, statistics and achievements can be circulated amongst partners and stakeholders to help keep key issues in the spotlight.

It is recommended that an evaluation be undertaken annually, as well as in follow up to major projects and campaigns. Techniques to use include:

- Recording the number of press releases issued and take-up rates – that is, the number of press releases that have generated media coverage. These figures can be broken down by type of media - local, national and trade press, broadcast media, etc - in order to help identify which channels offer the best results.

- Collect press cuttings of all media coverage. Cuttings can be analysed by how effective they have been in getting key messages across, or by how positive, negative or neutral the coverage has been. Brief notes should be made on successes and failures, which can be used to help guide future media relations. This role is currently undertaken by the NAAONB press cutting service.

- Direct feedback from the press can provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of our media relations. At present, press liaisons are managed by the Media Officer at Lancashire County Council (LCC). It is therefore important to ensure the officer relays any feedback to the AONB Unit, and has a clear and structured means of doing so (eg. weekly or bi-weekly contact with the Publicity & Information Officer via telephone, email, etc). It is also important to obtain feedback directly from the Media Officer by asking questions such as – which of our key messages are the media most aware of, or most receptive to? Are there any wider issues, or current affairs, that could be linked to the activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB? Are there any other media campaigns being undertaken by the partnership into which promotion of the AONB could be incorporated? And quite simply, what could we be doing better?

11.3 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS EVALUATION

The effectiveness of internal communications can be evaluated in general terms on an ongoing basis – that is, making note of successes and potential improvements as part of the normal working day. Actions can be raised during weekly team briefings in order to address any failings as quickly as possible. This need not be an overtly formal or time-consuming process, but rather, should take the form of simple guidance (eg. via telephone, email), as and when necessary.

In addition to the ongoing monitoring of internal communications, we will undertake the following annual evaluation:

- Use a staff and partner survey - eg. email questionnaire - to establish benchmarks for improvement and set targets for the future. It is important that the survey does not require significant investment of time and resources, otherwise there is danger of it being perceived (somewhat ironically!) as more of a hindrance than a help. It is therefore recommended that the survey be undertaken in conjunction with the branding questionnaire (see section 11.1) – ie. both questionnaires should be incorporated into a single email or letter. All of the branding questions are directly relevant to internal communications, with the addition of the following:
  - Is everybody receiving the right information at the right time, in the right format? Check that relevant information is being cascaded (or forwarded) from managers to staff, and from the AONB team to partners and stakeholders – and vice versa. Is anybody 'out of the loop'? If so, how can we better involve them in the communications process?
  - Are people aware of key events, campaigns and other specific activities that have occurred in the last 6 months, or are due occur in the immediate future? It may be useful to include a full list of activities and invite staff/partners to mark those they are aware of, or use a scoring system to help identify which activities they are most/least aware of.
  - What are the primary channels through which staff/partners obtain and share information about the Forest of Bowland AONB? For example – the website, team meetings, publicity materials, via telephone or email, informal discussion with colleagues, etc. Again, it may be useful to provide a list of options that can be scored according to which channels are perceived to be the most/least effective.
  - Where do people perceive themselves to be within the communications hierarchy? Are they receiving first, second or third-hand information? How well informed do they feel on a day-to-day basis (eg. on a scale of 1 to 10)?
  - Note that 'familiarisation briefings' present a valuable opportunity to both evaluate and promote internal communications channels (see below).

- Informal, verbal discussion (eg. via telephone or at briefings) with a representative sample of colleagues, partners and stakeholders. This should be undertaken in addition to the survey outlined above. The purpose of the discussion is to gain direct feedback on awareness, satisfaction and perceptions of: a) the activities of the Forest of Bowland AONB; b) the service provided by the Publicity & Information Officer. Such informal discussion also provides a form of 'control' for checking the results of the survey – it is not uncommon for people, especially colleagues and partners, to apply positive bias when completing surveys of this kind. By contrast, people are more likely to speak candidly in direct conversation.

12.0 GUIDANCE

12.1 CHANNELS AND AUDIENCES

- Just because an audience is important to you, don't assume that you are important to them. Many will be suffering from information overload and you need to demonstrate your relevance to them clearly.

- It is worth thinking about the 'gatekeepers' of channels to key audiences – ie. the individuals who control and filter the dissemination of information to that audience (for example, directors' personal assistants, editors of newspapers, heads of internal communications). Understanding their needs, and making sure the purpose and content of the communication are clear, can be vital for success.

- It is not always necessary to reach every audience directly. A well-placed article in the in-house publication of a respected umbrella body may be as effective as directly mailing a report to its constituent members. This can be particularly useful if time and money are limited.

- Remember that some audiences - such as partners/stakeholders and the media - are both channels to other audiences, as well as audiences in their own right.

12.2 MEDIA RELATIONS

Dealing Directly with the Press

There may be occasions when it is necessary to liaise with the press directly – for example, if a journalist makes personal contact with the AONB Unit. In such instances, it is important to remember the following guidance:

- When dealing with a media enquiry, take down the details and ask the journalist their deadline. Call them back with a response once you have checked out the details. If you can't get a full response within the deadline, give a 'holding' comment.
- Respond promptly and politely to press enquiries: the way and speed with which you deal with them will affect the media's perception of you and the AONB - and therefore the kind of coverage we get.
- When a journalist or researcher calls, establish if they will be quoting you or if they just want a background briefing. This will help you to decide how much time to give them.
- Build up background briefings for stories you anticipate will be big news in advance. Distil the essence of each story into three or four key points and then back up the points with facts and figures.
- Avoid the use of jargon and too much technical detail when writing press releases or speaking to journalists - especially if the publication or TV/radio programme has a non-specialist audience.

- Liaise with partners on any media relations work for joint projects to ensure everyone is clear about roles and responsibilities, and where appropriate, work to an agreed protocol.

Identifying Key Media

Communicating successfully to a variety of audiences will entail identifying the key media outlets to reach those audiences. You will need to establish whom the target audiences are for the activity in question, and then select the appropriate media (or channel). They may include:

- *Specialist Press* - read by influential people in the relevant field(s). Typically small yet enthusiastic readerships.
- *National Press* - important for high profile projects, especially those that require government attention.
- *Regional Press* – primarily magazines and large regional newspapers, eg. the Manchester Evening News. Typically far more accessible than national press, yet also providing high profile coverage. Should be considered the primary channel for the majority of media activity.
- *Local Press* – small scale, often town or city-specific publications, such as local 'advertisers', some of which may be distributed free of charge. Typically the most accessible form of media, suitable for publicising small-scale activities, especially those involving local people.
- *Broadcast Media* (radio and TV) – high profile channels that are only accessible in the minority of cases – eg. when publicising activities or issues that have clear relevance to the general public as a whole. Particular care should be taken when handling live interviews – ensure the spokesperson is thoroughly briefed to deliver a clear and accurate message.
- *Electronic Media* – primarily external websites, but also includes relevant e-newsletters and magazines. Highly accessible and easy to maintain, yet there is debate over the profile and effectiveness of such media. Should be used in conjunction with other channels.

In addition to identifying key media, it is also important to target the right individual – ie. it is unlikely that a journalist will forward a press release that is of no interest to them on to the appropriate person. Below is a list of typical roles:

- *Editor* - overall content and style.
- *News Editor* - what is covered.
- *Letters Editor* - takes letters for publication, usually covering stories that have already had some coverage in the paper.
- *Features Editor/Programme Producer* - extended coverage items.
- *Forward Planning Desk* - logs upcoming events.
- *Correspondents* – writers with expertise in specialist fields (staff and freelance).
- *Picture Editor* - allocates photographers and selects pictures.
- *Reporters/Photographers* - these are the people at the 'sharp end'.

Make contact with the forward planning desk or journalist in advance - don't leave it until the day of your press announcement or event. Ask them what aspect of the story they might be interested in - you can 'float ideas' past them and they will give an indication of what they may wish to cover. Some of the specialist press will also supply forward features lists so that you know when they may be interested in covering your story. It is also a good idea to find out how journalists prefer to receive press releases and briefings - fax, post, email or via a website.

Crisis Management

If you are dealing with a negative news story, the following points should help you:

- Act quickly - a speedy response and a good statement will help limit the damage and sometimes kill off an inaccurate story altogether.
- Never say 'no comment' - if there isn't enough factual information to give out, or if there are reasons to keep the information confidential, give a holding statement which puts the story in context.
- Be honest and open. Do not try to deceive the media - they usually find out and it will make the story twice as hard to deal with.
- If there has been a genuine mistake, apologise swiftly and sincerely - and explain what you are doing to put it right.
- Make sure the appropriate spokespeople are available for interview and are fully briefed.

Writing Press Releases

A press release should summarise - in a punchy, accessible form - the key points or outcomes of the activity in question. They should rarely announce the launch of new projects: the media are more interested in results than what you are planning to do.

You must convince the press that you have something interesting to say - perhaps a new way of looking at an important issue, or something that links into an ongoing debate. Think about your story from the journalists' point of view - the key question to ask of anything you wish to publicise is 'so what?'

Journalists receive a huge amount of press releases and many inevitably end up in the bin. To help ensure yours is not among them, here are some simple guidelines for writing effective press releases:

- Use a strong headline and clear opening paragraph to capture attention.
- Think about your style - writing for the media is the opposite of writing academic reports. In press releases, you must start with your conclusions and then support this in the following paragraphs.
- Separate the main news from any really technical information (which can be attached separately as 'Notes to Editors'). Distil the essence of your activity into three or four points. Back up these points with facts and figures.
- Ensure your release covers the five essential questions - who, what, why, where and when?
- Keep it concise and simple (1 page ideal, 2 pages max) and jargon-free.
- Be concrete, factual and specific.
- Be clear on the messages you want to convey.
- Quotes can help bring the story to life.
- Ensure the press release is clearly presented, and is branded with the Forest of Bowland AONB identity.
- Include contact name and number for further information (including mobile if possible). Give the AONB website address if further information is available there.
- Make sure you are available to handle enquiries after your release has gone out.

Working with Partners

Communicating joint initiatives and successes in the media will raise the profile for all parties. Good joint working on media relations is key to this. Any joint initiatives - with public or private sector partners - should be treated as such in terms of the media relations. It is essential that early on in the project, the lead organisation is identified in terms of communications and that there is agreement about how media relations are managed.

Agreements about who does what, clearance, spokespersons and timing are essential. If the partners are not communicating well between themselves and there are not clear agreements, this will hamper opportunities for positive media coverage. The media may also pick up on any perceived hostilities or infighting and this, rather than the project, could become the story. It is advisable to work from an agreed protocol from the outset to prevent such situations.

12.3 PUBLICITY MATERIAL

General guidance:

- Done well, publicity materials can help disseminate key messages to target audiences. Done badly, they will promote a poor image of the AONB and cost us valuable time and money.
- Before you produce any specific piece of publicity material, define its purpose. As with other parts of the communication strategy, the question should be: 'why are we doing this?'
- Always have a schedule or project plan for production. Work back from your absolute final deadline and build in enough contingency time to deal with problems. If you want to be doubly safe – double your initial estimate of how long you think it will take.
- Think about the quantity of publicity material you need. Accurate estimates will reduce the cost of print and avoid storage problems. If the cost of print is uneconomic, think about electronic formats if appropriate for your target audience.
- All publicity material needs careful editing, proof reading and checking. If possible, use a fresh pair of eyes for this.
- Employ the services of specialist copywriters, designers and printers. Although this may seem more expensive in the short term, it saves valuable staff time and ensures that communications are professional and targeted, avoiding hidden waste and inefficiency.

Choosing a Format

Choosing the right format for publicity material will increase its chances of reaching and influencing the target audience. There are two basic formats available:

- *Print* – often the most popular format with many target audiences, despite the rapid development of electronic communication. It is worth thinking creatively about the format of printed material, but keep practicality in mind. For example, is it the right size/shape to be photocopied, filed on a shelf, carried in a briefcase, read on a train? With print you also need to think about what quantity of materials you will need and how these will be distributed.

- *Electronic* - becoming increasingly popular, particularly e-mail bulletins and newsletters, and Adobe Portable Document Formats (PDFs). Electronic formats are relatively low cost and have many advantages such as ease of production and distribution. Again, it is important to decide if an electronic format is the right one for your target audience. Don't confuse ease of distribution with appropriateness of medium. It is easy to send out emails en masse, but if the email is irrelevant or goes to the wrong people, it is just more junk mail.

Choosing Materials

There is a wide range of publicity materials to choose from. Here follows some of the most commonly used types:

- *Leaflets* - can be useful to promote specific activities and events. They have a relatively short shelf life, so tend to be most useful for promoting specific messages, rather than conveying information you want readers to retain long term.

- *Posters* - can also be useful to promote specific activities and events, but remember that you are relying on your target audience having the space and interest to actually display your poster. Many posters never make it onto a wall or languish on notice boards beneath more recent notices. Only use them if they serve a specific purpose in relation to your target audience.

- *Booklets* - can be a good alternative to larger publications, particularly when providing summary information. The same rules apply to the production of booklets as any other publication - they need to be well written and designed and appropriate to the target audience. Avoid the temptation to cram too much information into a booklet or to lower the production values - this often results in the booklet being difficult to read and can portray a negative image.

- *Brochures* - are most often used to promote the overall corporate aims of an organisation, or to highlight a specific initiative. Production values are usually high. They can be particularly useful when launching a new campaign. The key to success is to include enough information to make the brochure something a reader might want to keep, without overloading it with detail. It is particularly important to include key contacts.

- *Folders* - it is often useful to have a general purpose, branded folder available for publicity. You can use these for events or to send out packages of specific information, for example media packs, to key audiences.

- *Newsletters* - think about the frequency of any newsletter and whether you actually have enough interesting material to fill it regularly. It is better to produce a more infrequent but highly relevant newsletter than to send out monthly updates which contain little real news. Production values of newsletters are important.

- *Annual Reports* - a useful way of summarising a year's work to key audiences. Annual reports are typically the least read of most published documents, yet take up a disproportionate amount of time and energy for those actually producing them. Avoid too much jargon, introspection and boring photographs of people within the organisation.

- *Websites* – a core element of most communication strategies. Websites should be engaging and interesting, intuitive to use, frequently updated and open to feedback from users. The Forest of Bowland AONB website should be used in support of all other communications activity.

- *CD ROMs* - are often used to simulate web-based technology in a portable format. Just as websites should never simply be an 'online brochure', so CD ROMs should be more than simply a collection of documents, graphics and video clips, all crammed onto a CD. Think about the purpose of a CD ROM and if, when and why the target audience would use one. You will almost certainly need specialist help to produce one.

- *Videos* - can be a useful and innovative way of getting your message across, but they must be appropriate for the target audience. They are a relatively expensive way of reaching an audience and rely on specific opportunities to view them. If you do decide to produce one, you should invest the time and money to do it properly and avoid producing the stereotypical 'dull corporate video'.

- *Press Releases* - should be well written and targeted (see 10.1).

- *Promotional Devices* – there is temptation to produce a range of promotional devices such as pens, mugs and mouse mats as part of a communications strategy. These can be useful in promoting visibility but are relatively expensive and can be seen as frivolous and irrelevant. Think carefully about whether this is the best use of your communications budget.

Reproduction and Printing

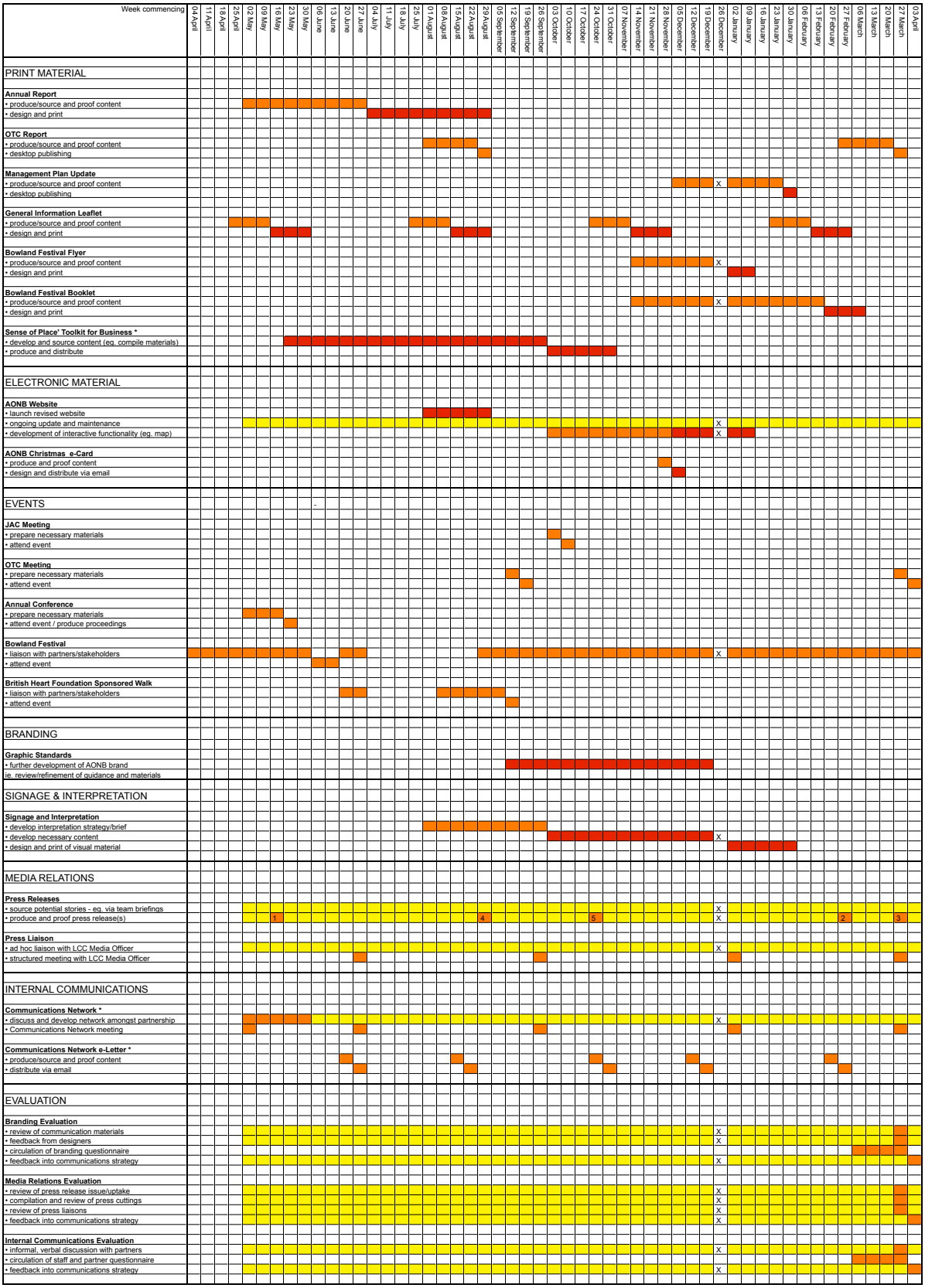
Think carefully about the quantity of publicity material that is required. The main factor will be the cost of print. There are fixed costs for preparatory work, such as preparing plates and setting up machines, which mean that small quantities can be relatively expensive to produce (unless done so digitally). Generally, the unit cost drops the more you have printed. Always ask printers for estimates based on different quantities so you can see the marginal cost.

Work out an accurate estimate of how many copies you actually need. An initial run of 500 and then a reprint of 1500 will be more expensive than getting an initial 2000 printed.

If the cost is such that it is uneconomic to print a small number, think about other formats, such as putting a PDF document on the website.

13.0 WORKPLANS

13.1 WORKPLAN: 2005 - 2006



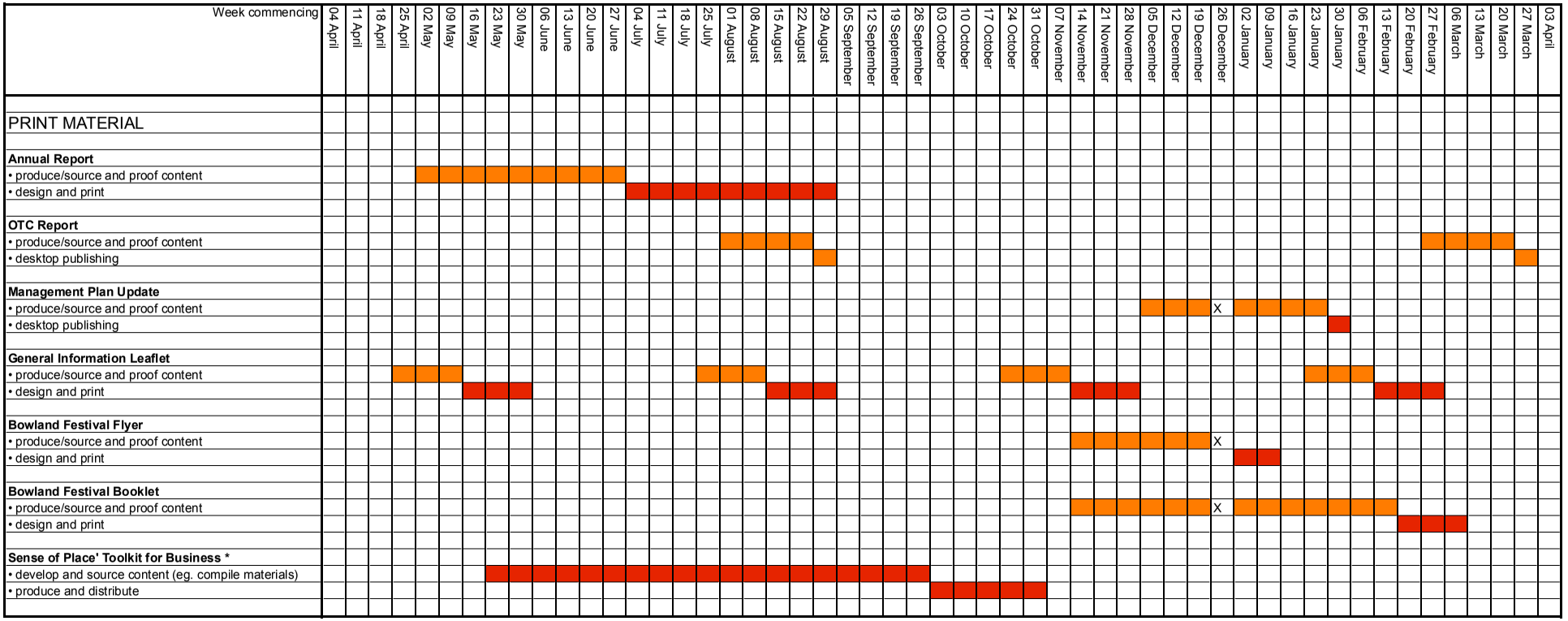
FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB: COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN 2005 - 2006

KEY

Activity undertaken by Publicity & Information Officer
Activity coordinated by Publicity & Information Officer
Ongoing or *ad hoc* activity
Press releases linked to specific activities — N

1 Publicity for launch of new website and upcoming Bowland Festival (local and national press)
2 Initial publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of flyer (local & national press) - also highlight installation of new signage (priority local press)
3 Follow-up publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of Festival Booklet (local & national press)
4 Publicity for BHF Annual Sponsored Walk - link to 'National Walking Day' - also mention availability of Annual Report, new General Information leaflet (priority local press)
5 Publicity for launch of new interactive functionality on website (local and national press)

Christmas holiday — X



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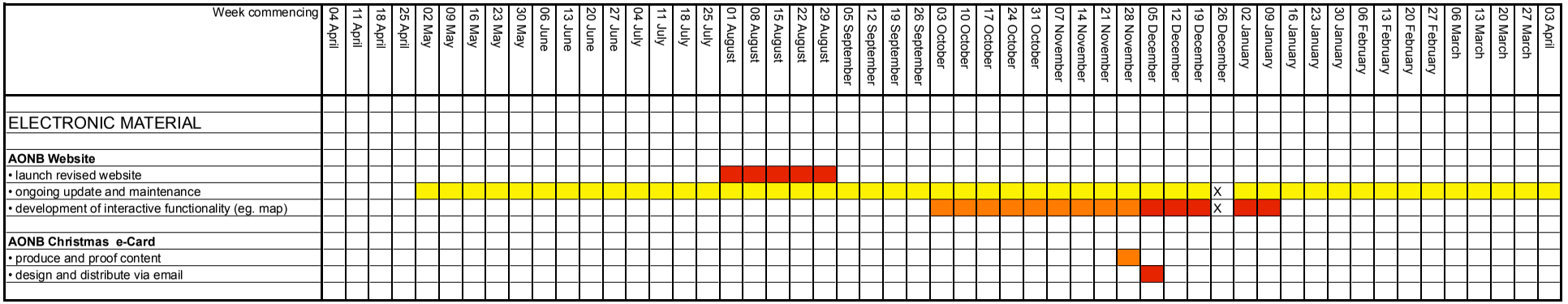

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Christmas holiday X

Week commencing	04 April	11 April	18 April	25 April	02 May	09 May	16 May	23 May	30 May	06 June	13 June	20 June	27 June	04 July	11 July	18 July	25 July	01 August	08 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	05 September	12 September	19 September	26 September	03 October	10 October	17 October	24 October	31 October	07 November	14 November	21 November	28 November	05 December	12 December	19 December	26 December	02 January	09 January	16 January	23 January	30 January	06 February	13 February	20 February	27 February	06 March	13 March	20 March	27 March	03 April
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• further development of AONB brand																																																				
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• design and print of visual material																																																			

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• ad hoc liaison with LCC Media Officer																																						X														
• structured meeting with LCC Media Officer																																																			

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5 Publicity for launch of new interactive functionality on website (local and national press)

Christmas holiday — X

Week commencing	04 April	11 April	18 April	25 April	02 May	09 May	16 May	23 May	30 May	06 June	13 June	20 June	27 June	04 July	11 July	18 July	25 July	01 August	08 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	05 September	12 September	19 September	26 September	03 October	10 October	17 October	24 October	31 October	07 November	14 November	21 November	28 November	05 December	12 December	19 December	26 December	02 January	09 January	16 January	23 January	30 January	06 February	13 February	20 February	27 February	06 March	13 March	20 March	27 March	03 April
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS																																																				
Communications Network *																																																				
• discuss and develop network amongst partnership																																						X														
• Communications Network meeting																																																			
Communications Network e-Letter *																																																			
• produce/source and proof content																																																			
• distribute via email																																																			

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB: COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN 2005 - 2006

KEY

Activity undertaken by Publicity & Information Officer
Activity coordinated by Publicity & Information Officer
Ongoing or *ad hoc* activity
Press releases linked to specific activities — N

1 Publicity for launch of new website and upcoming Bowland Festival (local and national press)
2 Initial publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of flyer (local & national press) - also highlight installation of new signage (priority local press)
3 Follow-up publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of Festival Booklet (local & national press)
4 Publicity for BHF Annual Sponsored Walk - link to 'National Walking Day' - also mention availability of Annual Report, new General Information leaflet (priority local press)
5 Publicity for launch of new interactive functionality on website (local and national press)

Christmas holiday — X

Week commencing	04 April	11 April	18 April	25 April	02 May	09 May	16 May	23 May	30 May	06 June	13 June	20 June	27 June	04 July	11 July	18 July	25 July	01 August	08 August	15 August	22 August	29 August	05 September	12 September	19 September	26 September	03 October	10 October	17 October	24 October	31 October	07 November	14 November	21 November	28 November	05 December	12 December	19 December	26 December	02 January	09 January	16 January	23 January	30 January	06 February	13 February	20 February	27 February	06 March	13 March	20 March	27 March	03 April
EVALUATION																																																				
Branding Evaluation																																																				
• review of communication materials																																						X															
• feedback from designers																																						X															
• circulation of branding questionnaire																																																				
• feedback into communications strategy																																						X															
Media Relations Evaluation																																																				
• review of press release issue/uptake																																						X															
• compilation and review of press cuttings																																						X															
• review of press liaisons																																						X															
• feedback into communications strategy																																						X															
Internal Communications Evaluation																																																			
• informal, verbal discussion with partners																																						X															
• circulation of staff and partner questionnaire																																																			
• feedback into communications strategy																																						X															

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB: COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN 2005 - 2006

KEY

Activity undertaken by Publicity & Information Officer	
Activity coordinated by Publicity & Information Officer	
Ongoing or *ad hoc* activity	
Press releases linked to specific activities	N
	1 Publicity for launch of new website and upcoming Bowland Festival (local and national press)
	2 Initial publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of flyer (local & national press) - also highlight installation of new signage (priority local press)
	3 Follow-up publicity for Bowland Festival - linked to distribution of Festival Booklet (local & national press)
	4 Publicity for BHF Annual Sponsored Walk - link to 'National Walking Day' - also mention availability of Annual Report, new General Information leaflet (priority local press)
	5 Publicity for launch of new interactive functionality on website (local and national press)
Christmas holiday	X

Forest of Bowland AONB

13.2 WORKPLAN: 2006 - 2009

The following activities should be considered in addition to those ongoing activities contained within the one-year plan (2005/06):

ACTIVITY	2006 – 2007	2007 - 2009
Print Material	• Develop and publish Forest of Bowland Guidebook/Visitor Guide • Review portfolio of walking/cycling/riding routes and publish revised maps • Develop AONB display material for use at events • Explore potential for producing AONB specialist publications, focussing on key themes • Streamline print and design using mix of internal and external resources – set targets and benchmarks; provide clear guidance	• Review Forest of Bowland Guidebook/Visitor Guide and publish updated version • Develop and publish specialist publication(s) • Produce and promote AONB events calendar
Electronic Material	• Implement new interactive content on website (eg. map) • Produce walking/cycling/riding maps for download via website	• Conduct full review of website and undertake renewal activity where necessary
Events	• Organise AONB tourism event (aimed at local businesses), to be held 2007/08 (tbc?) • Review and update Bowland Festival in line with sustainable tourism strategy	• Organise and host AONB tourism event (tbc?) • Organise 'Boosting Local Businesses' workshops – to be held 2008/09 (tbc?) • Organise series of arts/culture-based workshops, promoting understanding of landscape – to be held 2008/09
Branding	• Strengthen brand identity of AONB as a sustainable tourist destination • Develop agreed messages as part of tourism strategy	• Evaluation 'health check' of AONB brand identity and key messages

Signage & Interpretation	• Further develop interpretation/signage	• Review signage to ensure consistency with brand identity; undertake renewal activity where necessary
Media Relations	• Set targets for and undertake proactive media relations activity. • Establish directory of press contacts • Develop and implement structure for sourcing newsworthy stories • Invest in media relations training for staff	• Review and re-evaluate media relations activity; update contacts database • Develop and implement media relations service on website
Internal Communications	• Develop and implement structure for monitoring key issues affecting the AONB	
Other	• Explore potential of TICs as means of promoting AONB messages • Undertake comprehensive survey of partners, stakeholders and visitors re: AONB brand and messages	

14.0 APPENDICES

14.1 REFERENCES

The following publications have been referred to within this document:

- Defra (2005) *Working With Our Finest Landscapes – New Guidance for Authorities.* Defra Landscape Protection Branch: Bristol.

- Forest of Bowland AONB (2004) *A Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.* Lancashire County Council: Preston.

- Forest of Bowland AONB (2004) *Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, April 2004 – March 2009.* Lancashire County Council: Preston.

- Forest of Bowland AONB (2005) *Graphic Standards*. Forest of Bowland AONB Unit: Preston.

14.2 CONTACTS

(Insert table of key contacts here – ie. name, role, organisation, address, telephone, fax, mobile, email)

14.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following work is recommended for consideration as part of future communications activity:

- **Review of Brand Identity:** holistic review of brand identity and communication materials, involving image renewal/re-design where necessary. This will include:
    - Development of simplified design guidance for the AONB logo
    - Development of poster and signage templates
    - Development of additional corporate colour palettes
    - Development of templates for specialist publications (eg. Visitor Guide)
    - Re-design of Annual Report
    - Re-design of 'General Information' leaflet

- **Signage Strategy:** update and renewal of existing signage to ensure consistent application of the AONB brand identity. This will include:
    - Audit of existing signage
    - Development of interpretive themes, based upon key AONB messages
    - Sourcing and production of necessary content
    - Design of signage templates
    - Production and installation of new signage: boundary signs, village signs and waymarks.

- **Interactive Map:** design and build of an interactive map of the AONB and its surroundings. The map could be used for a wide range of applications, such as promoting tourism and recreation, advertising local businesses, route planning and 'exploring' the AONB. It could also function as an educational resource, as well an engaging means of navigating the Forest of Bowland AONB website. It should be designed so that it can be updated and maintained internally by the AONB Unit (rather than by external consultants).