

Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership Communications Strategy

April 2007



Aims

The partnership is committed to maximising its impact on road safety by making best use of the communications channels available.

The partnership will use a well founded, research based approach to identifying key communications opportunities and will deliver, in conjunction with the activities already undertaken by the Core Partners, a targeted mix of marketing, education and public relations measures to achieve changes in both attitude and behaviour.

Direction

Within the partnership structure the Strategy Committee retain responsibility for setting the standard for the partnership.

The communications strategy seeks to embrace the vision, aims and objectives set by the Strategy Committee and shape the communications priorities to meet the demands exacted by the 'Partnership Standard'.

The communication strategy will be co-ordinated by the partnership communications manager in line with the following objectives:

- To develop the partnership communications strategy in line with the overall road safety strategies agreed by the partners.
- To offer a single point of contact to the media for issues relating to partnership enforcement and education activity.
- To reassure the public as to the benefits of partnership enforcement and education activity; making the most of local and regional media to do so.
- Where appropriate, to provide support, information and guidance to the partners when undertaking local road safety initiatives.
- To develop creative material, appropriate to the selected media channel, and reflective of the available research on influencing key target audiences; adopting national themes where practicable & working with bordering road safety partnerships where cost effective and reasonable to do so.
- To look for opportunities to link with other road safety networks / groups / organisations / associations dedicated to reducing road casualties in order to further the work partnership.
- To report to partners providing evidence of behavioural change, acceptance of the partnership's activities and compliance with the overall road safety message.

Targeted Campaigning

In order to maximise the impact that the communications activity of the partnership can have, a research based targeted approach will be employed. Identification of key user groups and the most effective communications methodology will be reliant on sound use of the best available information such as:

Research based priorities

Using internal data sources on offences detected and collision involvement will provide a basis for identification of 'at risk' road user groups. Added to this there is a great deal of available academic research, including partnership sponsored research through the University of Reading, which can clarify priority areas for intervention and inform of the underlying reasons for driver behaviour.

Socio demographic analysis

One key area for analysis that will significantly influence the choice of communications medium is the use of socio-demographic analysis. Awarded beacon status by Experian in 2006, as the first road safety partnership to adopt the Mosaic Public Sector socio demographic database tool, the partnership will continue to develop the study of socio-demographic trends to target publicity and evaluate the effectiveness of communications activity.

Public Relations

Given the high costs associated with advertising and marketing, a thorough approach to public relations activity is one of the most cost effective ways of communicating about both the values and activity of the partnership.

Editorial content from recognised news agencies is received by the public as being more critical and credible than paid for information sources. It is therefore essential that the partnership focuses sufficiently on delivering public relations activity as part of the marketing mix; this will be done with attention given to the following areas:

- It is vital for public safety that there is a thorough understanding of the consequences of road traffic collisions.
- Human error is the largest factor affecting traffic collisions, so all road users need to share responsibility for making the roads safer.
- Some activity is required to combat erroneous information in circulation.
- Responses will be longer lasting when they are based on both information and emotion.

Internet Services

For a number of years Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership has operated a corporate website which serves as the primary information portal for all partnership activities, serving up news stories, driver information, camera facts, enforcement location details and speed limit information. Alongside these functions it also has a dedicated area for members to support information sharing and a central area for documentation that is useful to partners.

A website of this type has long been recognised as being a vital part of any partnership programme, essential in communicating with and securing good will from the public. The site will continue to provide this service; including the point of public access for the partnership freedom of information publication scheme materials. The site will also conform to the appropriate standards for accessibility.

Saferroads.org has recently been developed to support additional research and information tools for partner organisations, allowing the partnership to engage very effectively with the roll-out of neighbourhood policing and the increasing demands for community responsive deployment of enforcement.

New tools are always in development with tailored collision information analysis and synchronised campaign calendar functions expected to be introduced in 2007.

Brand Identity

Given its exposure over recent years the “safer roads” logo does offer a strong sense of branding for partnership activity and every opportunity should be taken to use it. This need not only be confined to publicity material prepared by the partnership team but also on relevant materials produced locally by the partners.

All TVSRP enforcement vehicles display the logo as part of their standard livery. In addition the partners will continue to be encouraged to incorporate it in the livery of their own local authority vehicles and those of contractors acting on their behalf.

The other key branding device for the partnership is **saferroads.org**. Whilst this is strictly a web address its development as a brand identity is crucial in driving traffic to the website and should be further developed over the life of the partnership. The importance of the **saferroads.org** brand is that it can carry with it a breadth of information that is not so clearly communicated by the main partnership logo.

Given that the safer roads partnership has previously been predominantly engaged in the management of speed enforcement, there may be some requirement for brand repositioning to embrace the broader range of road safety activities engaged in by the partnership.

Analysis & Evaluation

It is important to analyse & evaluate the communication plan to ensure the target audience is being reached with appropriate and effective messages.

The evaluation will include:

- Use of website, page impressions, user sessions, number of downloads, volume of messages, e-mail activity.
- Media monitoring – including advertising value equivalents in press coverage, and an assessment of the tone of articles.
- Penetration – measured in terms of proportion of targeted road users being given opportunities to see or engage with specific campaign materials.
- Socio demographic profile analysis, where communications are targeted at particular sub sets of road users these can be analysed for trends such as crash involvement or offending behaviour to evaluate very targeted campaigns.
- Public attitude surveys will continue to provide comparator information against historic attitudes and changing attitudes influenced by partnership activity.
- Project specific evaluation studies. Where the constraints of the project allow, there will be consideration given to evaluating the effectiveness of the events or material through tailored survey or focus group work.

Communication Expenditure

A detailed budget submission on communications expenditure will be submitted to the Strategy Committee for approval in line with the annual budget cycle of the partnership.