



An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association



ROADS Services Training Group

LOCAL AUTHORITY ROADS CONFERENCE and EXHIBITION - 2022

Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Sligo May 2022



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LOCAL AUTHORITY ROADS CONFERENCE and EXHIBITION – 2022

Enhancing your project through good communications

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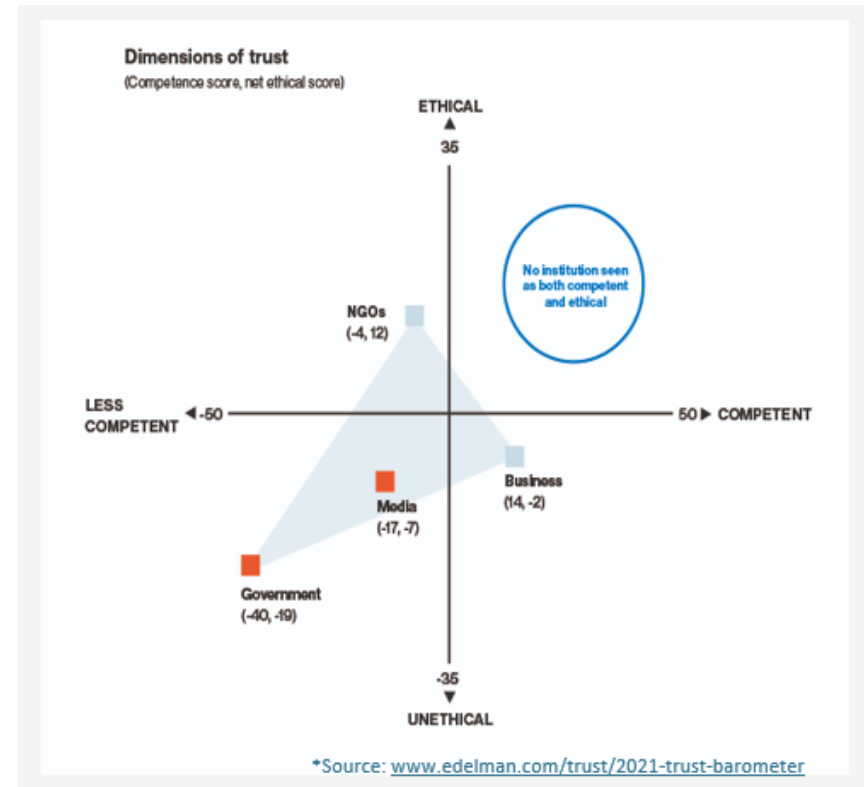
Agenda

- Why communicate?
- Best practice
- Who is responsible for communications?
- Key Takeaways

WHY COMMUNICATE?

1. Successful projects rely on trust

- Projects involve change. Without Trust, it is near impossible to implement change.
- Trust is a two-way process. When the Council demonstrates Trust to its stakeholders, they better understand and accept temporary disruption.
- Today, people grant their trust based on two distinct attributes*:
 1. Competence - delivering on promises
 2. Ethical behaviour - doing the right thing and working to improve society



2. There is no longer a 'radar?'

Failure to promote the Council's role in a project:

- ❑ Wrongly gives recognition only to the contractors / suppliers delivering on behalf of the Council
- ❑ Reduces public recognition that their Council is doing its job and delivering essential infrastructure
- ❑ Allows project misinformation / disinformation to circulate
- ❑ Feeds into poor public opinion or misconceptions about the Council, which impacts
 - Public Trust
 - Council's reputation
 - Staff morale

3. The public expects their Council to communicate what it is doing

The internet has been transformative.

Then Covid-19 changed how / when organisations communicate.

The public now has a heightened expectation for even more information.

Expectations for communications are higher than ever – Government, Employers, etc are communicating with audiences more than ever before and that expectation will continue - and is increasing

People are more involved and engaged in their communities now, and so take a greater interest in projects in their locality

Barriers and resistance to online / virtual engagement are gone – resulting in increased consumption of information by new and enlarged audiences

Mobile use, Broadband and Working From Home means people are more connected and therefore accessing more information than ever before

4. The Irish public loves News!

- *“Some 70% of Irish respondents said they were extremely or very interested in news, an increase of 5% on 2020 figures, and significantly higher than the EU average (60%); the UK (51%) and North America (54%).”*

Irish people more tuned into the news than EU, British, and US counterparts



The number of Irish consumers paying for news subscriptions or access increased by four percentage points, to 16%. Picture: Larry Cummins



WED, 23 JUN, 2021 - 10:48

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40320221.html>

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland – DCU Research - January 2022

Irish people more interested in news than people in other countries



Most people said they tend to disagree that they can trust news on social media in Ireland, but levels of trust appear to have increased in Ireland compared to 2020. File Picture

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40789503.html>

- ❑ 70% of people in Ireland ‘extremely’ or ‘very interested’ in news
- ❑ High-income earners ‘extremely’ or ‘very interested’ in news in 2021.
- ❑ Gap with low earners closing - 2020 saw a 25% difference, compared with 14% in 2021.
- ❑ Education plays role regarding Trust in social media
- ❑ Ireland and the UK have highest concerns for what is real / fake on Internet
- ❑ Gap between Irish men and Irish women’s interest in news is closing
 - women more likely than Irish men to share news
 - men more likely to share opinions on news
- ❑ Women in Ireland, compared to women in the UK, Denmark, Austria and Greece:
 - 25% - highest number - access news once a day
 - 5% - lowest levels - “not very” or “not at all” interested in news; UK was highest at 12%

5. We are online more than ever

Irish people online more than ever

- ❑ Majority go online via smartphones (95%) with only 75% on laptops
- ❑ 33%+ almost always online - that's +6% on 2020
- ❑ 89% go online every day or almost every day
- ❑ Only 6% of people over 16 in Ireland have never used the internet

Social Media (SM): 95 minutes per person per day on average!

facebook

- 63% own accounts
- Primarily Female users
- Most popular SM for over 65s
- 1.8 m users Every Day



700,000 use Twitter every day
92% of Journalists use it daily
26% of all age 15+ use Twitter
31% of people own accounts



- 48% own accounts
- 2,603,600 users in Ireland
- 54% aged 18-34



Most popular for social
messaging
79% use it daily



- 21% own accounts
- Fastest growing SM platform
- 58% use it daily – up 15% since 2020

6. Enhance the reputation of your Council and your projects

Promoting the Council's role and ownership of your projects:

- ❑ Tells people where to get additional – accurate – project information
- ❑ Provides context for projects and shows joined-up approach
- ❑ Means the public understands what you were doing and why if a major issue / crisis occurs
- ❑ Improves visibility of the Council to the public & rate payers as a valuable driver and investor in public infrastructure projects; and delivery of day-to-day roads services
- ❑ Increases awareness of public investment and use of LPT in communities

BEST PRACTICE: 6 TIPS

1. Leave Nothing to Chance

- ❑ **Nothing is “under the radar”** anymore: 24/7 news cycle, social media, citizen journalism...
- ❑ Anticipate risks and mitigate for them: include communications in your **Project Risk Register**
- ❑ Get ahead of problems / issues
- ❑ Ensure Communications is on the **Agenda**
 - weekly project meetings
 - monthly / quarterly project board meetings
- ❑ Include communications and specific responsibilities in your supplier **contracts**

2. Celebrate and promote good news

You are doing GREAT WORK that BENEFITS PEOPLE: so tell them about it!

Local Media have to fill the talk shows and newspaper.

Give them **good news** to satisfy that need

You don't always need a lengthy press release – or any press release!

A simple photo – from your phone – with a caption is perfect for web, SM and local media

Engage with your Communications Office

3. Branding and promotion

Targeted and planned branding and promotion of Roads Services **will benefit your Council by** demonstrating **good use of public funds**

Increases public understanding of Local Government by **showing** people what their Council is doing – literally providing hundreds of services for travel, leisure & tourism

Shows communities / businesses that their LPT, Rates and other taxes are providing essential services such as Active Travel, Roads & Footpath maintenance and Cycleways to support and enhance their community - therefore providing them with **Value for Money**

Highlight the essential role of Local Government in actively contributing to communities and the economy

Remember: Branding is more than a logo

- ❑ Ensure correct Council name, logo/crest, corporate colours and font - on signage, PPE, letters, leaflets, emails, website, vans
- ❑ Be proactive and helpful with providing information to your audiences – don't have it dragged out of you
- ❑ Take a professional and consistent approach to websites and publications – involve your Communications Office
- ❑ Attitude and behaviour of Council staff and contractors engaging with the public leaves a strong impression – ensure it's a good one!

4. Be Accessible to ALL

- ❑ Make short (30-60 second) videos on mobile phones to SHOW what you are doing and the progress made – for web, media, SM
- ❑ Audiences – AND YOU - have very little time so keep it short & simple – half-page letters, infographics, images
- ❑ Use Plain English
 - 17% - that's one-in-six people in Ireland has a literacy difficulty (ref. OECD)
- ❑ What other languages should you employ?
 - 11.6% of our population in Ireland is non-Irish nationals – and may not read / speak English or Irish (ref. CSO 2016 census)
- ❑ Reach people with disabilities – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines; sign-language; Braille; Audio; etc

5. Know your audiences



Joanne, 27, IT Consultant, Single, Runs, Eats out with friends, drinks gin & white wine, lives in Cork City



Margaret, 78, Retired Teacher, Grandmother of 6, visits library weekly, Listens to Lyric FM, lives in rural village



Young Family - Gary & Clíodhna – parents of Cian & Ciara both in primary school. Early 40s, live in Lucan; Gary fulltime Engineer; Clíodhna part-time nurse

Audience Personas

6. Use relevant channels to reach them



- ❑ Social Media – many choices who is where?
- ❑ Posters?
- ❑ Direct Mail - Council newsletter, fliers – or paperless?
- ❑ Local Newspapers
- ❑ Local Radio
- ❑ Website?
- ❑ Word of Mouth
- ❑ Councillors
- ❑ Notice Boards
- ❑ Other Council Staff

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMUNICATIONS?

Project Manager and Internal Staff

- ❑ The Project Manager (PM) is responsible for ensuring a **Project Communications Plan** is developed and implemented; and aligned to the overall Project Plan
- ❑ **Enlist comms experts** to support you in developing & implementing your plans (e.g. Communications Officer, Graphic Design, etc)
- ❑ Brief your **Council's Customer Care team / reception staff and Communications Office regularly** – for incoming queries
- ❑ **All Project Team members are responsible** for positive project communications – including by their behaviour and interaction with one another e.g. speaking respectfully, avoiding foul language, engaging / assisting commuters, residents, stakeholders, etc
- ❑ All project staff should have **basic messaging** – what is happening, why, how long will it take



Your Contractors



On site, a senior member of the project team should be assigned as Stakeholder Liaison for on-the-spot queries

Tell them how / where to direct queries from media, politicians, etc

Ensure that they acknowledge who they are working for on all signs and literature, i.e. "Working on behalf of XX County / City Council"

The **Council's branding should be visible, prominent and superior** to a contractor's branding – on site signage, letters to local residents, website, etc...

Include all of the above in your **supplier contracts**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Checklist

- ❑ The **public expects information** about projects in their area – the `radar' is gone!
- ❑ Every project needs a **communications plan** and somebody to drive / lead it
- ❑ Enlist your **professional Communications** colleague(s)
- ❑ **All of the project team** has a role in delivering communications
- ❑ Be accessible and relevant - use Plain English and other languages
- ❑ If **you** don't tell people, **somebody else** will ...
- ❑ ... and they might get it **wrong**, or intentionally circulate **disinformation**

Communications is a win-win for your project and those you serve

County Council gets €3m for new footpath schemes and cycleways

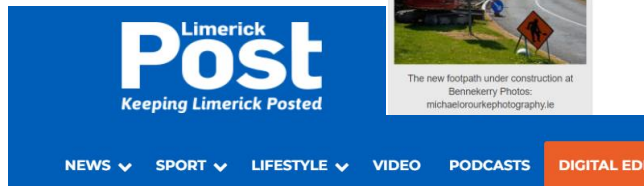


Coolaney, County Sligo.

The Sligo Champion



The new footpath under construction at Bennekerry. Photos: michaelorourkephotography.ie



Home > Limerick > Council funding for Clarina footpath repairs

Limerick News Local News

Council funding for Clarina footpath repairs

By Alan Jacques - April 11, 2022

Demonstrates **Respect**: your work should not be a secret from those it serves / benefits – so celebrate your success!

Provides **channels** for communities and stakeholders to **engage with the Council**

Positions the Council as the source of **reliable information**

Promotes project **Need** – context for what is happening and why

Highlights the **Benefits** of projects / activities

Earns **Trust in & Respect** for Local Government activities

Questions?
