



**Draft Communications Strategy**  
**May 2007**

## **Introduction**

Leicestershire Together (LT) is the Leicestershire County Council led Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Formed in 2002, LT aims to improve the quality of life for Leicestershire people and to improve the quality and co-ordination of public services in the county.

LT, which is recognised as the “partnership of partnerships”, comprises 28 members representing different sectors, including the organisations providing key services to communities across the county.

The aim of this communications plan is to outline the ways that the objectives of the LT are communicated. It highlights the need to market LT and to maximise opportunities locally, regionally and nationally. This work has to be carried out by working closely with the relevant partners and projects to ensure that they are fully engaged in all aspects of this work.

## **Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) initiative forms part of the 10 year strategy on the future for local government produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

The LAA in Leicestershire has been developed by Leicestershire County Council on behalf of LT - and Government Office East Midlands (GOEM).

Through partnerships coming together we have agreed key priority outcomes – areas of major change that will benefit local communities, and identify the existing budgets associated with delivering these outcomes. These budgets are then “pooled” so that local partners can deliver them with less regulation and inspection thereby releasing resources. In Leicestershire this has been broken down further into 7 blocks;

- Children & Young People
- Safer Communities
- Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Older People
- Economic Development
- Cleaner & Greener

The new LAA will be in place in April 2008 - which will be informed by a new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The current Community Strategy will be replaced, developed around the three elements of sustainability - economic, social and environmental.

The new SCS will be in place by April 2008, to allow it to influence the LAA.

It is important that communications covers the wider partnership and not just LT. A communications group will be created to include representatives from the LAA themed partnerships. This group will be vital in the success of any communications both vertically and horizontally through LT.

## **Aims**

“To raise the profile of the LT and its supported projects by targeting partners, stakeholders and the people of Leicestershire.”

We will consider at all times the cost associated with marketing activities and aim to achieve the best value at all times. We want to achieve our aims through public relations activity without the need to pay for inclusion in a publication or to advertise.

## **What we communicate**

- Leicestershire Public – making a difference, things are happening where you live
- LAA partners – greater buy in, sharing resources, a “win win” situation
- Internal audience – need to know more – who we are (LT structure), what do we do, what we have achieved

Four key messages have been identified:

- Message 1 - Statutory reasons, we've got to do it
- Message 2 - Partnership works - win win  
LAA examples & other LT good news  
Sharing resources (efficiency)
- Message 3 - LT Structure (who does what) - Partnership of partnerships  
the only place to reconcile cross cutting issues
- Message 4 - Communities do benefit

## **Audiences**

There are a number of distinct audiences we are aiming to reach through a range of marketing communications activity.

The primary audience is local people and communities, with a focus upon:

- Communities of interest
- Communities of geography
- Parish Plan groups
- Neighbourhood management teams
- Community Forums

The work of the LT will have an impact on this audience in a number of respects, through strategic work, and through the support of projects and partnership opportunities.

LTs partners and stakeholders fall into two categories, the decision making bodies, including:

- Local Area Agreement (LAA) delivery block lead officers
- LT Management Board
- Strategic Senior Officers Group
- Corporate Management team
- Scrutiny
- Members

Along with the partners, whose work and involvement is through the seven themed LAA partnerships, including: Economic Development (ED), Stronger Communities (StC), Safer Communities (SfC), Healthier Communities (HC), Older People (OP), Children & Young People (CYP) and Cleaner & Greener (CG).

▪ Leicestershire County Council	)	<b>Cross</b>
▪ Leicestershire District Councils	)	<b>Cutting</b>
▪ Leicestershire District Local Strategic Partnerships	)	<b>Groups</b>
▪ Leicester Shire Economic Partnership		<b>ED</b>
▪ Leicestershire Rural Partnership		<b>StC/Cross Cutting</b>
▪ Leicestershire Cultural Strategy Forum		<b>Cross Cutting</b>
▪ Leicestershire Ethnic Minority Partnership		<b>Cross Cutting</b>
▪ Business Link & The Chamber of Commerce		<b>ED</b>
▪ Learning & Skills Council		<b>CYP</b>
▪ Leicester & Leicestershire Learning Partnership		<b>CYP</b>
▪ Leicestershire CVS's		<b>StC</b>
▪ Leicestershire PCT's		<b>HC</b>
▪ Leicestershire Constabulary		<b>SfC</b>
▪ Leicestershire Police Authority		<b>SfC</b>
▪ Leicestershire Faith Communities		<b>Cross Cutting</b>
▪ The Fire Authority		<b>SfC</b>
▪ Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership for Leicestershire		<b>CYP</b>
▪ Job Centre Plus		<b>ED</b>

The fourth group is the “lobbying” audience, which is a two way relationship in that along with spreading the message about LT good practice to a wider regional and national audience our own expertise, advice and opinions are recognised. This audience includes:

- GOEM
- Leics MPs & MEPs
- The Leicestershire private sector
- Corporate Performance Improvement Board

## **Local Communities**

### Local Press

The emphasis will be to use the local press, by proactively issuing press releases and securing specialist coverage. In order to disseminate news of LT this will be primarily through work with:

- Leicester Mercury, through their main and satellite offices
- Loughborough Echo
- NU News (Castle Donington & Kegworth)
- Melton Times
- Harborough/Lutterworth Mail
- Hinckley Times
- Coalville/Ashby Times

On occasions when projects are located close to the County borders other newspapers may be approached including:

- Nuneaton's Heartland Evening Mail
- Burton Mail (Swadlincote edition)
- Grantham Mail
- Northants Evening Telegraph (Corby edition)
- Rutland Times

Partners publications such as Leicestershire Matters, District Council, District LSP and community newsletters can also prove useful in order to get to the very heart of a local community, these will be approached where appropriate and at the discretion of the Communications Officer.

### Broadcast media

Radio should also be considered for news items and interviews, including:

- BBC Radio Leicester
- Leicester Sound
- Oak FM (Charnwood & NWL)
- Fosseway Radio (Hinckley)

When and where appropriate regional and local television should also be approached, including:

- BBC East Midlands Today
- Central News
- MATV

Press releases will be issued to all media at the same time unless there is some reason that this is inappropriate such as reacting to adverse coverage.

LT needs to secure the support of reporters and editors to this strategy. The Communications Officer will contain to maintain and establish contacts.

### Electronic Media

The [www.leicestershirevillages.com](http://www.leicestershirevillages.com) website offers another means of getting a particular story into the heart of a settlement and is being used increasingly by the Communications Officer. Stories can be targeted on single settlements, village clusters, districts or the whole County.

## **Partners & Stakeholders**

Partners and stakeholders are a clearly identified group who can be communicated through a variety of ways including e-mail alerts and meetings.

- information sessions for LCC staff, LAA, SCS, PCT, District LSPs and Police
- Conference and forum

## **LT Publications**

Producing an Annual Report, it would also be expected that the Communications Officer would have a degree of input into this and other relevant LT documents.

## **Unfavourable media coverage**

It should be acknowledged that on occasions LT will receive coverage in the media that doesn't portray the partnership in a favourable light.

The Communications Officer will make every attempt to anticipate any risks and highlight these to the Chairman, Management Board and LCC press office. A plan will be devised to minimise potential harm to the reputation of LT.

The local media will be monitored as closely as possible by the Communications Officer. On hearing/reading unwanted coverage the communications officer will draw it the attention of the Chairman and LCC Press Office. A decision will then be taken on what response is the most appropriate. LT shouldn't feel obliged to respond directly, if for example the criticism is via a single reader's letter in a newspaper.

## **Managed media opportunities**

LT on occasion set up photograph and interview opportunities for the local media. One of the benefits of such an arrangement is that LT can ensure the availability of key representatives, where appropriate the relevant Board members will be encouraged to take part in these events. All the practical arrangements for these events will be made by the Communications Officer. The services of the LCC's own photographer may also be enlisted where appropriate if the particular story is suitable, this decision will generally be made by the Communications Officer.

## **LT website**

LT's website continues to prove a useful tool for the partnership. The Communications Officer will also ensure that, through liaising with colleagues and partners, the content of the website is kept up to date.

Promotion of the LT website is to be encouraged particularly as it's a clear way of signposting anyone wanting to find out more about LT.

## **Internal Communications**

Emphasis needs to be placed on internal communications, particularly when the number of partners is considered. All the relevant board members and staff need to be aware of news relating to LT and have easy access to electronic versions of documents. LT Management Board members should be encouraged to promote the work of the partnership. Indeed the influencing and lobbying role of LT board members should not be underestimated, particularly with regard to pinpointing relevant events where LT could have a role/presence.

All LT staff will be made aware of marketing activity in meetings and a supply of publications in hard copy will be made available. In addition they will receive e-mail alerts, if they have subscribed to the LT website, alerting them to the latest news and information. New staff and partners should be actively encouraged to register with the website.

## **Branding**

A corporate LT logo and website address is being used extensively in all our marketing activity, ranging from press releases, the website, LT publications and previously carrier bags and bookmarks. Our supported projects are encouraged to include our logo on any of their own marketing material.

Ten metal plaques, outlining the support of LT for Community Access Centres, have been manufactured and it is hoped that as these centres come “on-line” that we can affix one to each of these premises.

## **Outcome**

LT have concentrated largely on PR activity to generate free editorial coverage. We will continue to proactively develop stories and react to stories covered by the media. Communications is a standard item on the Management Board agenda.

In addition to PR activity, if budgets are available, marketing/communications activity can be expanded to concentrate on audiences that cannot be reached by traditional methods.

As the work of LT develops and there are external changes the Communications Strategy will need reviewing.

In addition to this, PR and marketing activity, it is expected that Board members will continue to disseminate information on LTs work through their numerous networks which will be invaluable.

Jonathan Clarkson  
Tel: 0116 265 8117  
E-mail: [jclarkson@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jclarkson@leics.gov.uk)