

PRIDE AWARDS 2017

Category: Best Use of Media Relations

Company: Pagoda Porter Novelli

Entry title: Trust in the Countryside

Brief and objectives:

Scotland's stunning landscapes and valuable wildlife is at serious risk from devastating factors such as over-use and climate change. The National Trust for Scotland is guardian of some of Scotland's most fragile and at-risk landscapes and wildlife. It protects and maintains mountains and islands such as St Kilda and Ben Lawers.

Pagoda Porter Novelli was brought on board to raise awareness of this vital work and increase funding and membership. With seabirds, plants and other wildlife heading into extinction the campaign's SMART objectives were to:

- increase funds to protect fragile environments and wildlife
- increase awareness of the Trust's countryside property portfolio, wilderness landscapes without a recognisable 'point of entry'
- support the Trust's drive to increase membership, particularly from those interested in the countryside
- increase awareness of the Trust's expertise and research on topics relating to Scotland's countryside
- raise awareness of the Trust's charitable status
- achieve numerical targets including:
 - increased reach
 - improvement in quality coverage

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Using an agency was new to NTS so talking direct to the people on the ground was essential. We attended regional meetings to outline our approach and gather potential story ideas to find the most valuable and influential opportunities.

We were also given access to the NTS' own annual surveys of wildlife, including seabirds, academic papers and property maintenance schedules. It was vital throughout this period to maintain key positive relationships with NTS staff, as the organisation was undertaking a major restructure and budget overhaul.

We studied reports and anecdotal evidence from the meetings to identify some core stories that would be used for the campaign, such as declining and extinct seabirds, plants and other wildlife. We then discussed these findings with the NTS experts to ensure we had the facts to hand. Having statistics, proof and expert analysis would be essential for the influential journalists we were targeting.

Strategy and tactics, including the types and variety of media utilised, creativity and innovation:

We created a hierarchy of stories that would appeal to different media that would cover the full range of NTS countryside activity both geographically and seasonally.

- Five crucial stories were agreed that would reach the widest and most relevant audience
- Each story was relevant to a part of the NTS work that would help achieve objectives
- We went back to basics with media relations, researching key journalists and media outlets and offering exclusive stories, tailored to specific interests of high profile media. We sent few press releases as mass mailers and focused on one-to-one pitches
- It was essential, given budget and the importance of our stories, that the media were sufficiently influential to achieve wider pick-up and re-use
- Using our own story-telling expertise we pitched information, and where possible created a backup suite of materials – media release, photography, background ‘colour’ – to push all our stories further afield
- To generate the reach, we identified national and international media and journalists who influence and lead the thinking on issues facing the landscapes and wildlife of Scotland’s fragile countryside

Implementation of tactics:

Five key stories were:

- St Kilda seabirds
- the decline in Vendace fish
- Ben Lawers plant movement
- Canna eagles sitings
- Torridon invasive species replacement

Implementation

The NTS cares for the remote St Kilda islands and other important seabird hatcheries around Scotland. When the 2016 annual bird count for St Kilda recorded the virtual extinction of the kittiwake population, we knew this story was of global importance.

We pitched to the BBC for its web and online reach and then followed up with a media push to UK Nationals and special interest titles. Using the kittiwake as the focus, we were also able to ensure that NTS’s scientific and conservation role was highlighted in coverage. The fate of the kittiwake reached widely including BBC, the Times, Telegraph and Express with #kittiwake recording a reach of over 1 million unique users on Twitter.

Climate change was again the focus with a story on alpine plants on Ben Lawers which we gave exclusively to the Guardian. Essentially a science story about biological surveying became a narrative that included the hardship of scaling Scottish mountains in winter, the fragile and delicate plants that live at high altitudes and what NTS experts can tell from studying them.

Similarly, a tiny Vendace fish in a remote loch became the feature of a campaign about species survival, attracting television as well as online and print media coverage.

A key element to our stories across the contract was to find the strong visual to maximise appeal, whether this was wildlife – beavers, birds of prey or wildflowers – or mountain

scenery. By the very remoteness of much of the portfolio we were intent on making sure we had good imagery to accompany every major story.

Measurement and evaluation:

In coverage terms, we achieved:

- 148 pieces of coverage
- 89,449,590 impressions
- Top target media included: Guardian, National Geographic, Times & Sunday Times, Telegraph, Daily Record and BBC
- St Kilda story reached over 8 million
- Vendace fish reached over 1 million

Objectives and Results

- Increase funds --> Footpath Fund payment overtook £130k target for first time and increased membership
- Increase membership (measurement of online membership conversions citing countryside as the reason) --> Jan 2017: 2472 = 25% increase
- Increase awareness of expertise and research (perception shift to 'The NTS cares for our countryside and wildlife' --> From 41% strongly agree to 53% strongly agree
- Raise awareness of the Trust's charitable status --> Relative position improved to 8.52, ahead of both English NT and RSPB nationally
- Achieve numerical targets including increased reach and improvement in quality coverage (target 63) --> 180% increase in stories placed in media in 2016/17

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Pagoda Porter Novelli delivered this low budget campaign through a full focus on quality rather than quantity in order to generate interest in stories. This approach generated influential coverage which then further reached over 89 million readers and exceeded all targets agreed at the outset.

This time-limited campaign was achieved on a tight budget of £9,950 in one year. The campaign delivered beyond the expectations of the client and was instrumental in increasing membership fees and donations towards the vital work of NTS.