

An audience based approach to communication intervention

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Abstract – Communication Interventions (CIs) are often used by the environmental and outdoor sectors to try to manage and mitigate the impacts of recreation. This research audited the CIs currently being used in Wales, reviewed the process of creating them and explored the way that audiences gather and responded to advice, instruction and guidance. It found that currently most CIs are too narrow in their delivery and do not consider behaviour change sufficiently, tending to over focus on the message. The study recommends that CIs should utilise a broad range of integrated media, linked, if possible, to direct 'points of contact'. A guide to creating effective audience based CIs is being developed using the results and recommendations.

Index Terms — Audience-based communication, Codes of conduct, Recreational impacts.

1 INTRODUCTION

Communication Interventions (CIs), such as codes of conduct and signage, are often used by the environmental and outdoor sector to try to manage and mitigate the impacts of recreation. In Wales, there is no single promoted method for creating CIs; they are usually put together on a pretty ad-hoc basis by whoever is trying to resolve the issue at the time. Skills and experience accrued from working in the field are rarely passed on from one organisation to another. Over the last three years the Countryside Council for Wales has been exploring the process of creating CIs; looking at where they are effective, what makes them work and how they can be tailored to suit their target audience.

2 METHOD

Due to the nature and diversity of the audiences targeted by CIs, the initial research [1] defined a number of generic audience groups. The groups were segmented on the basis of their interest in the site/activity in question, along with their level of experience. The segmented audience groups are outlined in table 1.

TABLE 1

AUDIENCE GROUPINGS

General users	Local
	Visitor
Special interest users	Beginner
	Experienced
	Club
Providers	Educational
	Commercial
	Resource

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These audience types were then approached to see how they gathered and responded to advice, instruction and guidance. This was done by means of point of contact questioning, focus groups and interviews with key representatives. Simultaneously, an audit was carried out of the environmental codes and CIs currently being used in Wales. The results were then categorised and a cross section of the authors were contacted to find out about the process they had gone through to create the CIs.

3 RESULTS

The research [2] found that each audience type had different needs when it came to gathering and responding to information.

These needs could be categorised to help shape and target the creation of CIs more effectively. Table 2 illustrates a general interpretation of the findings of the study.

The research also found that general users have very little knowledge of specific environmental issues. Most organisations approached produced single stream CIs such as stand-alone codes of conduct. These are often produced without extensive research into how they are to be delivered and are very rarely monitored for their effectiveness. Single stream CIs are

not particularly effective at influencing behaviour because they have very narrow penetration and do not consider behaviour change sufficiently, tending to over focus on the message.

The study [2] recommended that CIs should be:

- A broad package of media used to deliver environmental awareness-raising measures;
- Integrated into other methods of communication which relate to the site, location or event more specifically;
- Linked to 'points of contact' – people who will send the message in a 'human' way;
- Couched in simple, succinct, direct, positive and authoritative language;
- Focused on elements of the behaviour/part of an activity that needs to change to achieve the organisation's goals.

3.1 Next steps

A guide for creating effective audience specific CIs is being developed as part of the project. The content of the guide is currently being piloted and a web-based resource will soon be created. The poster will present the conclusions of this final stage of the project.

TABLE 2

GENERAL REPRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

These audiences respond:	General users	Special interest users	Providers
To:	Authority, Community	Peers, Community	Peers, Authority
By:	Direct contact	Direct contact + community of interest	Direct contact + community of interest + official channels
When:	Directly before or during the activity	In preparation for, or during, the activity	When planning, training and preparing

REFERENCES

- [1] Peter Scott Planning Services Ltd and Judith A. Annett Countryside Consultancy (2006). A new approach to Codes that promote responsible enjoyment of the countryside in Wales. CCW Policy Research Report No. 06/8. CCW, Bangor
- [2] Asken Ltd and Resources For Change Ltd (2007). Developing an Audience-Specific Guide

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