

This strategy describes the approach Dorset Highways uses to inform, alert and engage with residents, the travelling public, councillors, partner organisations and other key stakeholders.

Dorset Highways, Dorset Council's highways service, manages over 2,400 miles of roads, as well as being responsible for everything associated with the highway such as bridges & structures (incl. subways), cycleways, drainage, street lighting, bus stops, road signs & markings, traffic lights, speed limits, traffic calming measures, parking services, and winter maintenance. The service also works closely with the council's Coast & Countryside Service, which is responsible for managing around 3,000 miles of public rights of way.

The highways service is delivered through a mixed-economy approach, involving key strategic partners working collaboratively with our in-house teams. The main strategic partner is Hanson Contracting, who help deliver extensive works programmes across the highway network. Other partners include WJ Road Markings, Balfour Beatty, WSP, SSE Enterprise and Confirm.

Dorset Highways has three main operational areas:

- **Network Operations:** responsible for delivery of highways contracts, operational workforce, managing/coordinating works, sign shop, community highways and recycling of materials.
- **Infrastructure and Assets:** transport planning, transport development, bridges and structures, street lighting, transport modelling, highway improvements, road safety and asset management.
- **Parking Services:** management of parking both on-street and off-street (i.e. car parks), including the enforcement and appeals process.

This strategy's scope covers business as usual activities as well as key projects and new initiatives arising from successful external funding bids.

Professional communication

Dorset Highways has a long-standing, excellent relationship with Dorset Council's Communications Team. Working in partnership with the Communications Business Partner for Place and a team of Senior Communications Officers.

This ensures a holistic approach; that communications for the highways service is joined up with wider corporate messaging and that it is working in harmony with the Corporate Communications Strategy.

Dorset Highways overall objective is to support the delivery of the council's strategic objectives and priorities and the collective vision and purpose of 'Dorset – a great place to live, work and visit'. For the highways service, this means enabling people and vehicles to keep moving efficiently, safely and sustainably by managing highway condition, supporting safe travel and reducing traffic congestion.

Our target audiences and how to reach them

We will improve how we target audiences through use of segmentation, and tailoring channels, messaging and creative approach to the needs of each segment. There are many ways of segmenting audiences. Some of the variables are outlined below.

Residents - segmentation variables

- Mosaic¹ groups – the largest Mosaic groups in Dorset are:
 - Margaret – ‘country living’ (Mosaic group A) – 20% of Dorset households. Married and in her sixties, living together with her husband in a comfortable detached house.
Communications preferences: Web (including using her smartphone) and telephone if she can’t do what she needs to do online.
 - Rob – ‘rural reality’ (Mosaic group G) – 16% of Dorset households. Rob lives in Maiden Newton, West Dorset, is a mechanic, and is divorced with three children, one of school age.
Communications preferences: Prefers face to face. Rob has a mobile phone but generally uses his old computer at home to send out the occasional email.
 - John – ‘senior security’ (Mosaic group F) – 13% of Dorset households. Now a comfortably off homeowner, enjoying life in his later years.
Communications preferences: Prefers to ring the council to the council and speak to a “real” person but will write in if necessary.
 - Andrew – ‘prestige positions’ (Mosaic group B) – 10% of Dorset households. Married “empty nester” in his own house, living comfortably with an established professional job.
Communications preferences: Web (including from his smartphone).
 - Mildred – ‘vintage values’ (Mosaic group N) – 8% of Dorset households. Pensioner in later retirement years living on low income in social housing, reliant on the state to maintain her quality of life.
Communications preferences: Over the years Mildred has always phoned or written to the council. She also occasionally drops in. Phoning up is now her preferred way but she finds the “press 1 for this and press 2 for that” frustrating and confusing.
 - Eesha – ‘aspiring homemaker’ (Mosaic group H) – 8% of Dorset households. Married and in her thirties, living together with her children in her own house (with a mortgage!)
Communications preferences: Web (including from her smartphone) and telephone if she can’t do what she needs to do online.

¹ Mosaic is Experian’s system for geodemographic classification of households. It applies the principles of geodemography to consumer household and individual data collated from a number of government and commercial sources.

- Alicja – ‘transient renter’ (Mosaic group L) – 3% of Dorset households. Single, 20, living together with flatmates in a shared flat in Dorchester. Communications preferences: Web, (mainly from her smartphone) but also uses social media, particularly Instagram. Online lets her use Google translate if she doesn't fully understand.
 - Kelly – ‘family basics’ (Mosaic group M) – 3% of Dorset households. Living together with her new partner and children in a rented housing association property in Littlemoor. Communications preferences: Mainly smartphone (and occasionally tablet) and only telephone is she can't do what she needs to do online.
- Digital segmentation
- 1) The ‘**digital natives**’ – very digitally savvy. Don't really want to talk to the council. Happy to self-serve online. Customers that want to use online services and so we should enable them to do so, end to end.
 - 2) **Not as digitally savvy and need more confidence** to do tasks online. We need to make digital attractive to them – make it so easy and convenient to use that they feel the benefits. Customers that should use online services but may lack confidence in us – ensuring our digital offer is so attractive, it's actually easier to go online.
 - 3) **Assisted self-service**. 10-13% of residents don't have the essential digital skills for life and work. Some may have a mobile phone and be keen users of social media, for example, but no good at financial transactions or downloading information or cyber security, say. Some of these may have a fixed line broadband connection at home but don't make much use of it. We need to help them and they will grow in confidence over time. Customers that should and would like to use our online services but lack ability/knowledge – providing digital support through our front line customer service staff – supported by specialist staff only when necessary for more specialist enquiries.
 - 4) 7-10% are **completely offline** and have never been online. Likely to need other non-digital channels. May be reluctant to contact the council but are likely to need our help. Customers that either may never be able to use and access our services or should never use online services due to the nature of their query (e.g. vulnerable, homeless, very expert service.)
- Geographical segmentation: we can target residents according to where they live, using postcode targeting for social media campaigns, email newsletters, digital advertising and mailings.

Other target audiences:

- Dorset businesses
- Visitors – largely the remit of Visit Dorset, a separate marketing team within Dorset Council which focuses on promoting Dorset to visitors and supporting the leisure and tourism industry.

- Dorset MPs
- Partner organisations:
 - town & parish councils – large and small – and the DAPTC
 - blue light services: health, police, fire & rescue
 - voluntary and community sector
 - Dorset LEP, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
 - neighbouring councils
 - sector organisations (ICE, IHE, CHIT, CMI, LGA, SOLACE, APSE, etc)
 - government bodies

The role of the Communications Team

The Communications Team offer

- **Strategic communications advice** - being involved when new projects and service changes are first considered, to advise on reputational opportunities and risks.
- **Strategic and effective campaigns** - planning, delivery and evaluation to achieve outcomes in line with Dorset Highways priorities and objectives.
- **A proactive and reactive media relations service** to protect and enhance the highway service's reputation
- **Brand management** - ensuring the council's visual identity is used consistently and appropriately across the highways service
- **Crisis communications** - supporting Dorset Highways response to severe weather and acting as a member of the Severe Weather Board (winter maintenance)
- **A range of communications channels** to reach the council's various audiences and stakeholders, including systems and processes to manage those channels
- **Support, advice and training to facilitate self-service** where appropriate e.g. social media accounts, engagement activities etc
- **Graphic design** online and traditional (print)
- **Consultation** advice, planning, delivery, analysis and reporting

Communications will be:

- **Strategic:** communications colleagues will be involved in projects from the very start to ensure that all audiences and stakeholders are considered appropriately, and that clear objectives and messages are identified.
- **Prioritised:** available communications resource will be assigned to the most important projects and campaigns with a 'One Council' approach. This means we will be more proactive, and less reactive in our approach, based on strong forward planning and coordination.
- **Customer focused:** audience insight will be used to plan project communications to ensure that different audiences are reached in the ways that best meet their needs. We will ensure we use research and engagement to find out more about our audiences, to listen to them, and to respond to their needs.
- **Robustly evaluated:** we will continually test, learn and improve our communications, and we will monitor, analyse and report on the outputs and outcomes achieved by communications activity so that we know what we are achieving.

- **Delivered in partnership:** we will join up messaging and campaigns across council services and with partners wherever possible to amplify communications, achieving greater impact and using limited resources effectively and efficiently.
- **Open, honest and transparent:** we will communicate with our external audiences in a way that is open, honest and transparent, providing clear, factual information that avoids 'spin'.

Specifically, highways communications will:

- Work to protect and enhance the reputation of Dorset Council, the highways service, and its strategic partners (Hanson Contracting) by providing timely, clear, helpful and relevant information to residents, businesses and the travelling public in accessible ways, across a range of media
- Improve awareness of planned maintenance activity, and investments into the Dorset Council highway network and infrastructure, to help demonstrate how council funding is spent
- Improve awareness of the asset management approach of the service (managing expectations) and the different surfacing methods used to ensure an efficient use of resources (both financially and sustainably)
- Support programmes of work and projects being delivered from external or additional funding streams to raise the profile of Dorset Highways and its commitment of continual improvement of its highway network
- Celebrate and promote successes, achievements and innovations, particularly those which support 'Greener Highways' under the councils Climate Emergency priority
- Encourage online reporting of issues & provide access to information online, to help promote a 'Digital Dorset'

Current & upcoming activities 2020/21 - 2021/22

- A30 East Stour major drainage scheme
- Dinah's Hollow drainage works
- Active Travel Fund works
- Gillingham Growth Package (Growth Deal)
- Gillingham Principal Street construction (Housing Infrastructure Fund)
- Parking services review project
- Parley Cross link road
- Schools Travel Demand Management (behaviour change & safety)
- Structural maintenance programme – resurfacing, surface dressing, micro-asphalt
- Transforming Travel (Transforming Cities Fund joint project with BCP Council)
- Weymouth track removal (Challenge Fund)
- Winter service

More information about Dorset Council's communications approach can be found in the Corporate Communications Strategy.