BRAND

Toolkit

Foreword

What is this Toolkit for?

This toolkit showcases the work undertaken by the BRAND project, it is hoped this will act as a model that can be used by other communities considering a place branding exercise.

The BRAND method is built around improving the reputation of the areas involved and unifying stakeholders; with a view to developing 'ambassador thinking' in the community.

BRAND was an Interreg IVA Ireland-Wales funded Project which began in September 2009, the aim of which was to improve the image, reputation and awareness of the partner towns and to act as a pilot to develop a methodology and process of community-led place branding which was capable of being rolled out to other places.

"A town with a positive self image will become a more sustainable place"

There are 4 main sections to the toolkit:

1. **Place Branding Theory**
   – Why brand places
2. **The BRAND Method**
   – What we did and how
3. **Case studies of Local implementation**
   – Examples of how it worked for us
4. **Key learning Points**
   – What we wish we had known at the start

Who is the Toolkit Aimed At?

- Anyone involved in community regeneration who is interested in carrying out a place branding exercise in their area.

- Academics or researchers working in the field of place branding and regeneration.

- Stakeholders from the partner towns interested in following the process carried out in their places and becoming involved in the future.

We hope you find it useful.

RHYL

HOLYHEAD

Athy

Dún Laoghaire

IRELAND

HOLYHEAD

DÚN LAOGHAIRE

RHYL

ATHY

WALES

Contents

Our Results: Case Studies of Local Implementation

Key Learning Points

Thanks

Introduction
The BRAND Project

The four project partners came together through BRAND to address a common problem; all four towns shared elements of poor/limited self image, misconceived external reputation and a shared need to improve community well being.

The Project partners:

- **Rhyl** - Denbighshire County Council, Wales
- **Holyhead** - Isle of Anglesey County Council, Wales
- **Athy** - Kildare County Council, Ireland
- **Dún Laoghaire** - Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Ireland

The **BRAND** method was built around improving the reputation of the areas thus unifying stakeholders and improving sustainability. Also, the project sought to improve the ability of the four communities to create more positive opportunities and develop 'ambassador thinking' locally.

Read more about how the project began and our goals and objectives.

A town with a ***positive*** *self image will become a more* ***sustainable*** *place.*

www.brand-project.eu

How the project began

The BRAND project was designed to fill a gap left by purely physical regeneration and to address a dislocation between physical regeneration and the perception of this.

The intention being that the town branding would complement all the capital works and regeneration that has taken place in the four towns, and communicate this good work to internal and external stakeholders, instilling a sense of pride within the four communities.

It was recognised that branding is an exercise that is not often considered by Local Authorities. Town branding is a highly complex and innovative area, that could however benefit from an input of different organisations. Working as a cross-border partnership of four towns would address this and create economies of scale. The project partners thus came together and secured funding through the Ireland-Wales INTERREG IVA Programme.

"Councils should be conscious in realising their shortcomings, and not retreating in the face of challenges, but having the imagination to do something about them"

The Goals and Objectives of the project

The project aimed to:
- To improve the image and reputation of the 4 towns- both internally & externally
- To develop a methodology by which communities can be engaged with re-branding their towns
- To create a toolkit & make it available to other areas as a template for community regeneration and relay through this both successes, pitfalls, positives and challenging aspects incurred through the process.

The BRAND Project has worked to stimulate communities, the business sector and agencies to work closely together to increase connectivity, networking and service delivery allowing a quality experience for all visitors the towns. It has aimed to develop a sense of place and pride in the place, change mind sets and improve the image of the towns from both internal and external opinion formers.

It is hoped the long term effect will be to contribute to:
- A more sustainable economy,
- A better image profile, and recognisable, saleable product,
- Better service delivery, to all customers both internal and external,
- Connective networking across the business and community sectors,
- Sustained partnership between Ireland-Wales towns fostering openness and forward thinking.

At the heart of the project is the notion that

'communities can be engaged with the rebranding of their towns'.

'communities can be engaged with the rebranding of their towns'

Why Place Branding

A 'place' can be any geographical area which has meaning to people, ranging from parks and open spaces to small tourist resorts, cities, regions and nations.

Every place, no matter how small, has an image and reputation in the eyes of the world which affects how the place is perceived internally and externally. In an increasingly globalised market when places have to compete with one another more and more, a strong positive brand image can help improve the internal confidence and the external performance of the place. Put simply, a positive place reputation builds competitiveness.

WELCOME

T O *Fabulous*

GENERIC
PLACE

Without an identity you may be just another 'great place to work, live and invest'

All four towns involved in the BRAND project shared elements of poor/limited self image, misconceived external reputation and were experiencing difficulties with the way in which they are perceived.

The partners recognised that a positive image was critical to their ability to attract people to come and live and work there, as well as to visit but equally that they needed alignment between their brand identity and image.

BRAND IMAGE - How you are viewed by others, your reputation (not controllable)
BRAND IDENTITY - Who you are and how you want project yourself (controllable)

Both image and identity are important for place branding success.

It was envisaged that understanding existing perceptions and developing strong brand identities would challenge long held views and provide the basis for economic and social renewal, contributing to the wellbeing of the places by:

- Strengthening identity, generating pride and increasing self-esteem;
- Attracting investment and growing business confidence;
- Helping with recruitment;
- Attracting visitors and creating affection;
- Enhancing opportunities for Public Diplomacy.

Essentially place-branding is about understanding what makes the place different and striving to reinforce that difference through the creation of a "sense of place" at every opportunity - unearthing and developing a place's competitive edge

Place branding can be seen as bridging the gap between the identity of a place and the image / perception that people have of that place.

When used strategically, place branding allows a place to identify where it's come from, what it's good at, what it wants to become and how it wants to be thought of. The brand identity can be used as the starting point of all design, development, and planning.
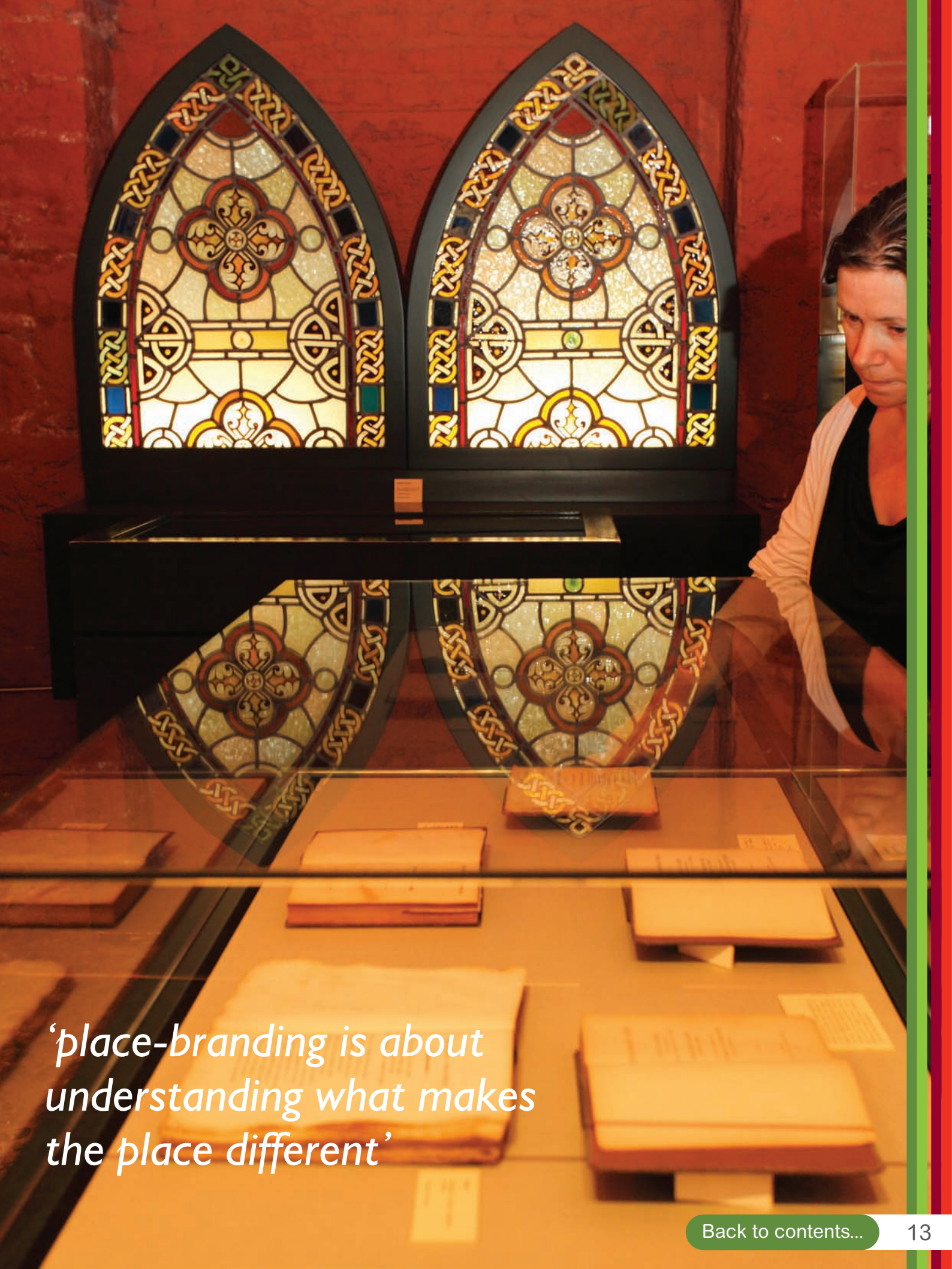
'place-branding is about understanding what makes the place different'

The BRAND Method

The method utilised by BRAND is built around uncovering the essence of a place as the basis for the new identity; bringing to light its best assets and qualities and revealing what makes it special.

Importantly, the method recognises the key role of stakeholders in the creation, development and ownership of place brands. Emphasis has been placed on stakeholder engagement and empowerment and on getting both an external and internal view of the place its aspirations, plans and importantly people's views of their 'reality' of the place.

'bringing to light its best assets and qualities and revealing what makes it special'

Having identified the need, the partners decided to appoint a suitably qualified, experienced and capable consultant/consultancy to assist in the delivery. The Partnership were looking to secure a company who could assist in identifying and developing the brand of each town through a coherent methodology to ensure that the end model was one that was equally complementary to all four towns. Following an extensive recruitment and selection process, the Project appointed Place Brand specialists 'thinkingplace' to work across all four towns for a three year period.

Each of the partners was then able to work to a shared method; supported by 'thinkingplace', experts in Place Making. As well as ensuring a consistency of approach across the four towns, 'thinkingplace' have been key to guiding the project method, mentoring the project staff and ensuring onward momentum.

In return the four towns and their project officers pushed the thinkingplace model to its limits. Thinking place had not worked in this way before so the idea of all four towns in two countries testing and adapting the method together was both challenging and creative.

'What has been vitally important has been thinkingplace's ability to build the capacity of the project officers and ensure harmonisation of approach across the four towns, each having started from very different positions'.
Arwel Jones, External Evaluator

Delivery Arrangements

BRAND appointed a Project Officer to work within each town; these Officers were part of the wider Regeneration or Community Development section within the respective Local Authorities and were responsible for the local implementation of the project and lead on the branding process.

All of the Project Officers worked closely with 'thinkingplace', it was critical for them to understand the process and the reasoning, techniques and approaches required. However you intend to implement the process, the vital role the BRAND Project Officers played highlights the need for there to be a single point driving the process forward; however this role needs to be fully supported from a senior level in order to give them the authority to undertake the necessary activities on behalf of the 'place'.

thinkingplace's role

thinkingplace were instrumental in providing a methodology which was flexible enough to be applied to four different places but yet prescriptive enough to ensure all four places arrived at the agreed destination at the same time and with a quality brand based on the reality of the place.

The Project Officers benefited from training and mentoring from thinkingplace; in order for them to be able to lead the process in their towns, there was a need for very different thinking from that which normally exists within places.

The BRAND Project Officers followed a three-phase process to developing their distinctive place brands:

1. Evidence Gathering and Brand Audit
2. Brand Development and Visual Expression
3. Action Planning and Implementation

PHASE 1

Evidence Gathering and Brand Audit

| Place Stakeholder Group | Desk Based Research | Stakeholder Interviews | Place Workshop | Immersion |

PHASE 2

BRAND Development & Visual Expression

Brand Development Session

↓

Visual Expression

| Brand Guidelines | Place Storybook | Image Bank | Showreel |

PHASE 3

Action Planning & Implementation

Place Board

Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Evidence Gathering and Brand Audit

Phase 1 in the development of a renewed brand identity is critical – the results from this phase will form the evidence base for all future work, as such, the quality of information gathered at this stage will in part determine the strength of all related work.

Phase 1 involves a critical reflection and assessment of how a place operates, its assets and offer to 'customers' and vision for the future. It is worth noting that this initial phase of the process requires significant interaction and engagement with very senior people from many organisations.

Read more about how we used the Place stakeholder Group, Desk based research, stakeholder interviews, Place Workshop and the immersion technique…
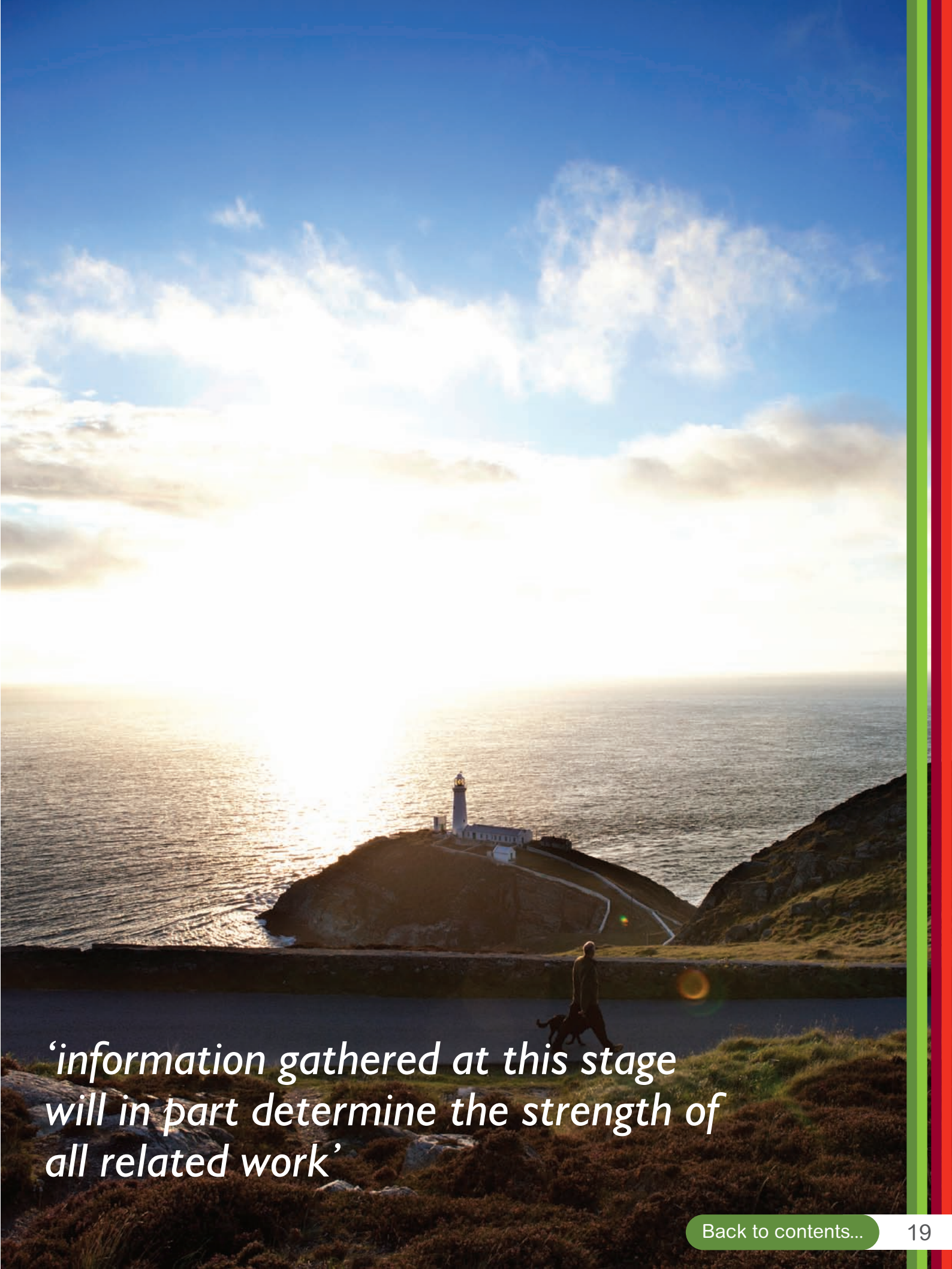
'information gathered at this stage will in part determine the strength of all related work'

Place Stakeholder Group

One of the Project Officers' first activities was to establish a local 'Steering Group' comprising between 10 and 15 senior representatives from the private, public and third sectors (with the balance being towards the private sector). Here the group benefits from having a carefully selected private sector chair, particularly if the place branding exercise is being led by the Local Authority. The role of the group is to oversee and direct the work being carried out and to review the outputs at each stage of the process.

The creation of this group is an opportunity to begin to ensure engagement with the process and to begin creating ambassadors for the place and for the process itself. The remit and purpose of the group needs to be agreed at the initial stage. For example - Will it sign off the place brand? Does it agree the action plan?

The group members will all need to sign up for 3 meetings over the first year of the work:
1. Initiation meeting,
2. Update meeting on progress and presentation of the 'big idea'
3. To review the action plan for the place.

In deciding the group membership it is worth considering the following:
- Council senior representation; member and officer
- Membership from community, business, public sector
- Membership from HE/FE, private sector, sport, health, young people as appropriate
- Try to avoid the 'usual suspects' when thinking about representation across the sectors.
- Aim high – it is important to involve people at a senior level who have influence and authority within your place.
- Keep it positive - Those involved must be passionate about the place, try to work with the positive thinkers and avoid those who contribute only negativity.

Desk Based Research

A good starting point in the evidence gathering stage is a thorough review of relevant strategic and policy documents relating to the place. This allows you to identify the key factors influencing the place now as well as to understand its aspirations for the future.

All of the audit work needs to take account of the wider place geography – don't be restricted by administrative boundaries but instead widen the view of the place to include as much of the surroundings as can reasonably be linked to that place. Look to neighbouring places and local linkages – explore how these relationships can add value to your place.

An internet search can give an alternative perspective on your place and is a very useful tool at this stage; researching different sites can give a view of how the place is viewed externally and the way in which it is portrayed on a global scale. This exercise can also be a useful method of uncovering local interest stories which could form part of the brand proposition.

From the desk based research, the most important factors can be better understood and the negative and positive aspects identified. This can act as an evidence base which you can refer back to as the process progresses.

Stakeholder Interviews

Carrying out 1-2-1 interviews with senior level people from key organisations, key decision makers, influencers and representatives of the community allows for a strategic insight and understanding of the positive and negative aspects of the place. This stage in the process is also important in developing potential place ambassadors; securing members of the Stakeholder Group and helping to build relationships which will be vital in future work.

The interviews should be semi-structured informal conversations, the aim of which is to come away with an understanding of how the interviewee's views on the place are rooted in their place experiences. Topics to think about in such interviews include:
- Perceptions (theirs and others)
- Challenges
- Strengths and assets
- Negative aspects
- Main competitors
- Communications

Immersion

This is one of the most important stages in the audit process; it involves getting to know a place by walking and driving around it, photographing it from a variety of perspectives and talking informally to people. This stage needs to be done critically, from the point of view of a new visitor. It could be worthwhile to involve members of the local Stakeholder Group at this stage in order to get a variety of perspectives on the experience. It is important to look at both the positive and negative assets; you need to be honest about the places shortcomings – and identify those which can be overcome.

In addition to highlighting the positive and negative aspects of the place, this process will also highlight the main 'touchpoints' at which customers experience the place. In addition it will also flag up areas of concern and image contamination factors which could potentially be addressed during the implementation phase.

When carrying out the immersion – it is a worthwhile exercise to undertake a number of different 'customer journeys' – viewing the place from the perspective of different potential visitors e.g. a first time tourist, a local resident on a shopping trip etc.

Place Workshop

Once the brand audit work has been completed, widening out involvement in the process allows for additional information to be gathered via place workshop(s) and provides a more robust research base. These events allow for the involvement of a large number of people, these could be run with up to 100 participants if the venue and number of facilitators allowed.

Those attending the event are asked to identify, from their perspective, what is special about the place, what are the negative things, what their aspiration would be for the place.

Audience:
- The aim is to have a group drawn from across the community, with representation from as many groups as possible, residents, young people, businesses, public sector bodies, media, sports etc.

Format:
- ½ to a full day event – it can be difficult getting businesses to attend events such as this, clever planning can help make the event more accessible. Evening workshops, half-day workshops, weekend workshops may be more successful than traditional 9-5, Monday-Friday, depending on the audience.
- The format of the workshop should actively encourage people to take part.
- Exercises should be fun and creative to engage the whole audience.
- The workshop attendees should be divided into groups of around 8-10 people to work on the exercises with one facilitator / scribe per group – this could be a role for some of the Stakeholder Group members.
- Mixing up the groups will allow interaction across the various sectors and promote more creative thinking.

Each of the four project partners carried out a community place workshop as part of their brand audit, below are some examples of exercises which were conducted:
- If (YOUR PLACE) was a well known person, who would it be and why?
- If you could take the best aspects of (YOUR PLACE) to a desert island what 10 things would you take and why?
- What are the negative aspects of (YOUR PLACE) and of these, which can be overcome and which can be ignored?
- Design a t-shirt for (YOUR PLACE)
- Now identify another well known person who represents the (YOUR PLACE) of the future?

Getting a large group together thinking and talking about the place is informative for all involved and is another useful way of widening the pool of potential ambassadors for the place and for what the process is trying to achieve.

The aim is to gather people together and create an opportunity for a wide range of people to talk about the place in a way they haven't done before. The interactivity and the exercises used help to animate the session, make it fun and provoke lively discussions about the place, what it stands for and what it should look like in the future.

BRAND

Hyrwyddo Newid Positif i'r Rhyl

Ymunwch â ni yn y Gweithdy a Chinio - Dydd Llun Mai 24ain 2010,
9.30 - 4.00, Theatr Pafiliwn, Rhyl

Promoting Positive Change for Rhyl

Join us for a Workshop and Lunch on Monday 24th May 2010,
9.30am – 4.00pm, Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl

I hawlio eich lle cysylltwch â ni drwy ffôn neu e-bost

To book your place phone or email

01824 708415

lisa.walchester@sirddinbych.gov.uk / lisa.walchester@denbighshire.gov.uk

Hyrwyddo Newid Positif i Gaergybi

Ymunwch â ni yn y Gweithdy a Chinio - Dydd Mawrth Mai 25ain 2010,
9.30 - 4.00, Canolfan Ucheldre, Caergybi

Promoting Positive Change for Holyhead

Join us for a Workshop and Lunch on Tuesday 25th May 2010,
9.30am – 4.00pm, Ucheldre Centre, Holyhead

I hawlio eich lle cysylltwch â ni drwy ffôn neu e-bost

To book your place phone or email

01248 752480

stopl@ynysmon.gov.uk / stopl@anglesey.gov.uk

Phase 2: Brand Development and Visual Expression

Through the first Phase you should have collated enough of an evidence base to be able to formulate the 'big idea' and themes which will form the 'thinking engine' of the brand for your place.

The output from this stage in the process will be the new thinking and direction for the place – expressed as the 'big idea'.

This is the most important stage in the process - The 'big idea' is reliant on the quantity and quality of the information gathered in Phase one.

Read more about 'the big idea', the role of Visual expression, Brand Guidelines Image Bank, Story Book and Show Reel…

products

environment

BIG
IDEA

communications

behaviour

25

Put aside ½ to a full day to work with the person leading on the branding process plus 2-3 other key players to concentrate on distilling your place evidence into the key idea and its themes. The aim is to collate and analyse all the information gathered through the brand audit and evidence gathering phase, and to extract from it the most important findings and the patterns which emerge. The key is to identify what you have uncovered in your research which will give your place a strong and distinctive identity over the coming years.

During the session you should:
- Review what the strategies say,
- Get a visual perspective of the place,
- Analyse the 'customer journeys',
- Think about what the brand geography looks like,
- Review how the place appears on the web,
- Recap what stakeholders had to say and
- Summarise the outputs from the place workshop.

Using flip charts and diagrams is a practical way to condense down the large amount of information gathered and link the key themes together. The aim is to express the themes and 'big idea' for the place into single words:
- Aim for 4-8 words which truly reflect the town and its aspirations.
- At the end of the session the town and area will have a 'big idea' and however many themes emerge from the process (usually 2-4).

When devising your 'big idea', be mindful of the needs of different audiences – particularly those with which your place most struggles with in terms perceptions.

The 'Big Idea' is a statement of the thinking and strategic direction to drive the brand and is not in itself a marketing strap line. Your 'big idea' should not be seen publicly, instead it should be thought of as the brand proposition with which to reference future actions. The 'big idea' needs to encapsulate the individualism and distinctiveness of the place and fully reflect the brand values identified.

It is worth bearing in mind that there are very few places which are truly UNIQUE, developing a place brand needs to be about uncovering distinctiveness.

Visual Expression

Having agreed the single, strong brand idea for the place, the next stage is to express this visually, giving it a look and feel that can be shared and used by all. The BRAND project partners each developed an individual visual identity and graphic language which allows the brand to express itself across a range of media in a flexible and dynamic form. This is more than a 'logo', it allows the place to express itself in many different ways whilst still retaining a core identity and expression.

The aim is to visually capture the essence and identity of the place; this can be achieved by means of a combination of elements such as typography, colours, photography style and a symbol.

It is critical that the company charged with formulating the visual expression truly understand the new way of thinking and brand values for the place; these have to be at the root of any visual representation of the brand.

Rhyl Toolkit

Dun Laoghaire Toolkit

Athy Toolkit

Holyhead Toolkit

Brand Guidelines

Accompanying the visual identity and graphic language, it is important to create Brand Guidelines; this will be the technical guide to the brand which will allow any organisation within the place to use the brand identity in the correct manner.

Typically such guidelines should include:

- An introduction to the brand
- The 'big idea', brand values and themes
- Visual identity do's and don'ts
- Colour palette
- Typography
- Recommendations for photography styles
- Photography do's and don'ts
- Tone of voice for copy

When introducing the brand, it is sensible for those involved in the branding process to initially keep control of the brand identity and guidelines and to oversee the production of any material utilising the visual expression and guide the graphic designers. This will ensure that the first few projects utilising the brand are of an acceptable quality and can then be used as exemplars when the visual expression is made more widely available and work is commissioned from outside of the team.

Image Bank

It is important for the new brand to be expressed through good quality imagery; we have found this to be a very powerful tool and an easy way to portray a consistent image of the place which can be adopted by various stakeholders. The new place photography should reflect the big idea with a distinctive style; it should reflect the assets of the place and surrounding area, examples include:

- Cultural & events
- Leisure and water areas
- Sports & Activities
- Historical offer / buildings
- Transport connections

- Local people
- Retail
- Nightlife

This work should begin as soon as possible after the 'Big Idea' is signed off to allow for the new style of imagery to be incorporated into the storybook.

Making the photography readily available to all organisations and stakeholders is a good way to start to disseminate the new place brand and get people to start thinking about the place in a different way, shedding new light on existing assets.

Creative direction is important at this stage, the photography needs to be in the style required by the graphic language and brand guidelines and it is worth those responsible for the visual expression being involved in providing the creative brief and direction to the photographer.

Rhyl 2011 image bank

Rhyl 2012 image bank

Dun Laoghaire image bank

Athy image bank

Place Storybook

The storybook tells the story of the place and brings the brand to life. It is important to remember that this isn't intended as marketing material or tourism brochure, rather it should be thought of as a 'brand bible' which can help all the ambassadors and champions deliver the same message about the place and its future.

Storybooks have proved to be useful when distributed to key stakeholders rather than the general public e.g. placed in locations such as CEO' reception, distributed to the relevant sections of the local council, given to members of the Place Board and used at investor events.

Rhyl Showreel

The storybook has provided a practical tool in inspiring and motivating people behind the new thinking for the place and engaging partner organisations. It articulates:

- why the brand is important,
- who it is for,
- what it delivers,
- what benefits it brings,
- the new 'place experience' and how the brand is going to influence the communications, product/services, environment and behaviour of the place
- the heritage and history of the place in the context of its future

Dun Laoghaire Showreel

Producing the storybook is an opportunity to utilise the new place imagery and graphic language, acting as an example of best practice in using the new brand style and quality.

Rhyl Storybook

Dun Laoghaire Storybook

Athy Storybook

Holyhead Storybook

Showreel

Holyhead Showreel

The production of a showreel has proven to be a valuable tool in promotion of the places and the new brand thinking, it is important that the showreel is consistent with the new place brand and reflects the big idea and themes for the place; utilising the graphic language and new imagery to bring the place story to life. This showreel can be an important tool in promoting the place and changing perceptions in a similar way to the storybook, the showreel however is in a more accessible and public-facing format aimed at internal and external audiences.

29

Phase 3: Action Planning & Implementation

The next Phase in the process is to ensure that the brand is disseminated across the place, having it adopted by as many organisations as possible and firmly embedded; this involves strong leadership and brand management so that as many projects / initiatives as possible understand, buy into and embrace the brand.

An implementation plan had to be drawn up with the Place Board to guide this phase.

'The amount of work and understanding of issues and activity to be delivered during the first 12 months of the brand embedding process is not to be underestimated. It is a critical time for the place' - thinkingplace

Read more about the Place Board, Implementation Plan and Marketing & Communications.

'The amount of work and understanding of issues and activity to be delivered during the first 12 months of the brand embedding process is not to be underestimated. It is a critical time for the place'
thinkingplace

Place Board

Although stakeholder engagement has been one of the underlying principles of the method followed by BRAND and is crucial to ensure the success of the brand and new thinking; clear leadership, brand management and governance are also necessary. In the case of the BRAND Project, the Project Officer played a vital role in the leadership of the process, assisted by the Stakeholder Group. However, it was vital for each place to develop a mechanism to drive the brand forward and take responsibility for the implementation plan. Each of the four BRAND towns developed a 'Place Board' or equivalent, this involved some members of the Stakeholder Group but membership was reviewed and new members added to ensure the group involved those who had engaged with the process, had bought into the brand and could assist in delivering the implementation plan for the future. It is important that the members of this group are enthusiastic about the place, understand the brand and are committed to the longer term vision.

Implementation Plan

When planning the implementation of the brand, it is important to remember that this does not have to be about 'new'' money or activity, every place will already be investing in various activities from regeneration and development to festivals and events. The key is to 'bend' this planned activity so that it is more in line with the new brand thinking, this means that maximum impact can be achieved without the need for significant additional spend. This could involve tweaks to planned designs for communication materials, thinking about how the brand could be applied to new public realm, influencing the type of events planned etc.

It is crucial to the success of the place brand that the organisations responsible for the majority of this planned activity are behind the brand and agree to work with it. It is therefore very important to engage and involve private sector businesses in the place plan stage and through your management arrangements (i.e. the Place Board).

Developing and agreeing an Implementation Plan for the place should involve a mixture of 'quick wins' which are more likely to focus on meeting the needs of the external audiences in repositioning the place, and longer term activities which engage local audiences and ultimately build their involvement in the future of the place.

Marketing & Communications Plan

Throughout we have stressed that place branding and placemaking are about far more than publicity. However, having a robust Marketing & Communications Plan is a very useful tool ; effective communication is crucial to the process. It is recommended then that Marketing & Communication Planning is built in to the process.

Virtual Branding - Case Study

Key Learning Points

Discover Wales'

HOLY ISLAND

CROESO I YNYS GYBI

www.visitholyisland.co.uk

tel: 01407 762004

Holy Island: twelve square miles of history, sacred places, rugged landscape, nature reserves and archaeological sites surrounded by towering cliffs and beautiful beaches. Over thousands of years people have travelled here to honour the holy places, the sacred spaces, enjoy the peace, the wildlife, the legends, the magic and re-discover themselves, but today, it's one of our best kept secrets.

COME AND DISCOVER OUR SPIRIT

DEWCH I DDARGANFOD EIN HYSBRYD

HOLYHEAD HOLY ISLAND

Our Results
– Case Studies of Local Implementation

Having developed their 'big idea' with supporting themes and 'tools' following the process outlined in the previous sections, the four BRAND towns have used these to unify stakeholders and give clear direction to their future.

The following section showcases some of the local initiatives carried out through the brand implementation plans, looking across the four sectors of the place experience;

- Product
- Communications
- Environment
- Behaviour

Newsletters

Conference videos
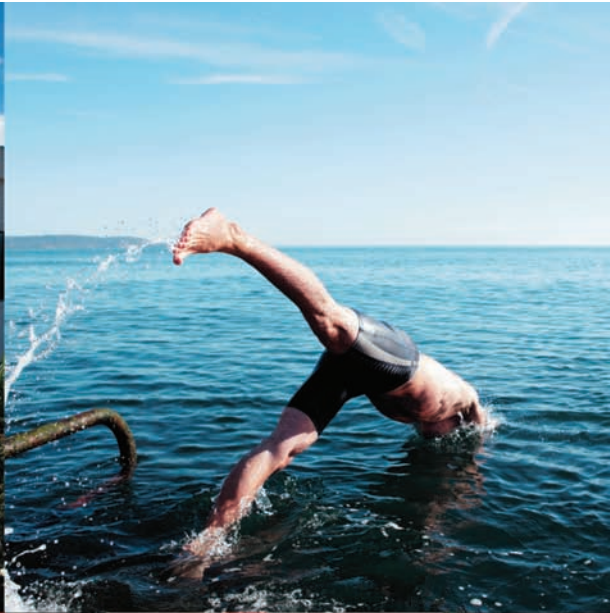
Holyhead Ambassador Programme

Challenge

Initially BRAND intended to produce a programme which would be rolled out across all 4 partners but after initial scoping it was discovered that it was more appropriate for each town to develop its own programme whilst sharing experiences with each other as the work developed. What follows here is Anglesey's journey.

According to recent figures, Anglesey attracts over 1.5 million visitors each year, who spend around £234,000,000 in the county and these figures are being further bolstered with the increasing number of cruise ships calling at Holyhead Port.

The quality of the experience Holyhead offers to visitors is a vital part of building and enhancing Holyhead and Holy Island's image. There is a need to make use of and develop local people's knowledge of the island and encourage them to become an active part of our tourism sector and an Ambassador for Holyhead & Holy Island. The Ambassador Programme was prepared to identify and train key citizens in the tourism/retail/services sector who would be a first point of contact for visitors to promote the town's new image.

Approach

The Holyhead BRAND project initially organised a Cruise Business Seminar for businesses who were interested in benefitting from this key tourism sector.

A free seminar was held in Venue Walkway and along with presentations from Anglesey Tourism and the BRAND project, and participants took part in and completed the approved training for World Host accreditation. World Host is internationally recognised and focuses on teaching people the principles and skills of customer service. The programme is so successful it is being used to train all employees involved with the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Nine businesses attended the day-long seminar, which was rounded off by an idea sharing session on creating a 'sense of place' and how to market what the town has to offer by showcasing the vast range of activities. The ideas were noted and the BRAND project passed them on to the cruise co-ordinator who is working on putting them into action.

A second event took place in March 2012, this time focusing on World International training. It was aimed at people who work in, or are in interested in working in, the tourism and hospitality sector. Thirteen people from the local area attended the event.

The certified training course focused on the international tourism industry in terms of effective communication, how to greet visitors in their own language and identifying cultural expectations. Resource materials like language guides and information booklets were presented to the group at the end of the day.

Said Louise Carswell, the trainer, "The course helps people to understand the cultural differences of visitors to Holyhead and ensure they receive a warm and international welcome".

Impact & Transferability

Will Stewart, a Warden at the Breakwater Country Park, who attended the training succinctly explained the impact of the event;

"It was a great day. It provided a wonderful setting whereby we could all share our experiences and aspirations. One of the most significant ways that the seminar helped me was furthering the vision of having a vitally important role in showing the best of our island. There were many valuable pointers given as to how we could all further maximise that role. There are many people who are endeavouring to make the island experience a special one."

A local taxi firm sent six employees to the Welcome International seminar and they all expressed how interesting and useful the course was. The firm is keen to develop their services and increase their presence on cruise ship days, and were awarded with a Taxi Ambassador card. Taxi drivers are prominent citizens in the tourism and services sectors so by showing their accredited Ambassador cards, the passengers can feel safe in the knowledge that they will receive a welcoming and courteous service.

The transferability of Ambassador Training can be modified to suit any location, paying particular attention to training times (to suit working hours of attendees) and length of the course. This style of training has been adopted in each of the BRAND Partner towns with varying success.

Insights and Learning

Both courses were given positive feedback from the participants. They all commented how useful and practical the information was. After each event, a photo of the participants with their certificates and a press release were sent out to the local media. The coverage in the local newspapers was beneficial for both the town's image and BRAND because it highlighted the efforts being made to improve customer service within the tourism industry.

It was important for the BRAND project to converse with the participants on the day and make important links. Participants still engage regularly with BRAND and a few of those people now use the BRAND visual identity in their publicity materials to promote the town's new image.

The people who completed the training now recognise the importance of being a positive ambassador for the town and surrounding area. BRAND keeps in regular contact with the participants to see how they're getting on in their organisation/business and encourages them to utilise what they have learnt. The scheme isn't simply a one day training event; it's about a dedicated and continuous commitment to being a good ambassador, many of which who will be a first point of contact for visitors to the area.

Holyhead Empty Shop Initiative

Challenge

Holyhead Town Centre has been criticised for the high number of vacant premises, run-down buildings, and a lack of offer to attract people and tourists. The latter include an increasing number of cruise ship passengers. This has been identified as the main detractor to Holyhead's current image. The Isle of Anglesey County Council had developed a "Rapid Improvement Strategy" of achieving some visible short-term improvements and action in the town centre to complement longer-term projects such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative, waterfront development, and 'Cwmni Tref.' The Empty Shops Initiative (ESI) forms an innovative pilot part of this.

The scheme was created in early 2011 as an attempt to stem the loss of retail outlets on Market Street and offer new start-up business opportunities. The BRAND Project placed an open advert inviting suitable organisations to submit proposals for new uses for vacant premises as part of the Holyhead Town Centre Rapid Improvement Strategy. Only one response was received, from Plas Cybi Partnership, a Communities First Partnership for Holyhead Town. After passing a test of due diligence, Plas Cybi was appointed to manage the initiative within an agreed budget of £16,397.

Approach

The recognised need for intervention in retail operations in Holyhead had already initiated the process of taking on empty premises at reduced rates and the BRAND Project provided an ideal platform for taking this idea forward further.

The scheme was planned for a 6 month period (until December 2011), with the last of the shop premises to be opened on October 3rd. Absentee landlords were a problem in Holyhead, yet the Plas Cybi Development Officer had managed to secure interest and a commitment from a number of property owners. A significant advantage of appointing Plas Cybi was that they are a company limited by guarantee with charitable trust status, who are based in the area, and have a team of environmental staff who have experience of property works.

Each new business tenancy for empty premises had to provide an effective business plan, with rental being set at zero or a token rate initially, gradually rising to commercial levels as the business became established and successful. Inevitably, some would fail, but the legacy of an improved retail unit would remain. One of the main conditions of the scheme was that the businesses involved should not undermine existing businesses in the town. All labour costs involved in the refurbishment work had been absorbed by Plas Cybi as part of its on-going programme of town and environmental improvements.

The buildings in question are five vacant retail units in the main shopping area of Holyhead:

63 Market Street

The first of the ESI, this is the former Fads interior decoration shop which had been standing vacant for over two years. It is in a prominent position at the entrance to Market Street and ideally placed to intercept shoppers and visitors. It has been secured rent free until the end of March 2012 and fitted out as a visitor centre and shop. The facility is called Utopia and run directly by Plas Cybi Partnership, with one full-time employee. It includes a Tourist Information Point and display units of a range of locally produced or sourced gift items, some of which are unique to the area. There is also a relatively large store room area at the back, which has been converted into an office and stock room.

46/48 Market Street

The second ESI unit had been converted into a Garra Rufa Fish Spa called Silky Soles by Plas Cybi Partnership and employed two individuals. Space had also been allocated to a local beautician for nail care, facials, etc. It was secured rent free until the end of December 2011. Following worldwide negative publicity about fish spa facilities, coupled with decreased winter trade, Silky Soles has now relocated to a smaller space in Utopia and the building has now been occupied by a Volunteer Bureau.

18/20 Market Street

The third ESI property is now occupied by another new business called Occasions Florist and the unit was secured rent free until February 2012. The property was originally occupied by a new photography business started by a person who had been made redundant. Following concerns that they were competing with an existing photography business, they were instructed to vacate and have moved to Williams Street where they still operate.

2/4+6 Market Street

These final ESI premises have been sub-let to several local businesses currently supported by the Menter a Busnes 'Ffatri Fenter Siop-y-Porth' scheme. They include a number of small hand-made jewellery makers, a Swedish Massage Therapist and an art gallery. The building has been secured at £4500 p.a. up to the end of June 2012 and will be let out to up to 10 Siop-y-Porth clients each paying £10 per week. The building also contains a number of small offices on the first floor. It is owned by Môn Properties and is known as the Eden Emporium.

Impact & Transferability

The Holyhead ESI has proved itself an effective pilot in acquiring and redeploying several retail premises in Market Street. It has enabled Plas Cybi Partnership to refurbish and occupy five empty premises and generate 5 full time jobs and 4 part time posts. This is an extremely high level of return on investment, given that the average cost of a f.t.e. post is often quoted as over £30,000. Applying the funding through a third sector organisation with charitable status has not only given Plas Cybi an effective new role but also enabled business rates to be reduced substantially during this pilot phase.

The project has received broad support by local businesses as anything that improves the appearance of the shopping area and increases footfall is generally welcomed. Furthermore, the expressions of interest in further available properties by local businesses indicates a substantial body of demand for further premises, as and when these are secured, and demonstrates the potential for growing the initiative further.

ESI has also attracted a large number of extremely positive new stories by BBC Wales, BBC Business, and local press hailing Holyhead Town Centre as a 'Phoenix Town'. The Initiative has even received a visit by Welsh Government's First Minister, Carwyn Jones AM, Minister for Regeneration, Huw Lewis AM and local MP, Albert Owen to illustrate how successful collaborative between organisations can achieve excellence and innovation. It has also won the 2012 Action for Market Town's Business and Economy Category winner as well as the Overall Wales Zone winner, being praised by judges for being "creative, imaginative and highly transferable" and being a "small investment with real achievement". The function of BRAND which, in addition to kick-starting the ESI, is becoming the hearts and minds element of town centre regeneration in Holyhead; stimulating a sense of pride and cohesion.

In terms of transferability, a similar 'pop-up' shop initiative in Dún Laoghaire has proved popular and an exchange of good practice between the two towns and the other participant towns of Rhyl and Athy was very useful.

Insights and Learning

A number of insights and learning points have been identified during the ESI and should the initiative be replicated elsewhere, these should be considered.

1. Intervention in the market place can be a tricky matter, especially where this appears to distort the general retail picture and seems to introduce an element of unfair competition. Tenants who are paying full rents and rates on business premises may regard those on low or greatly reduced tariffs as gaining an advantage. On the other hand, assisting start-up or fledgling businesses to start trading in a high street environment can benefit not only the individual business, but neighbouring ones also, by maintaining or even increasing footfall, attracting new or different customers, and generally improving the 'buzz' of the retail experience.

2. The fact that a substantial waiting list of tenants has been generated for vacant properties illustrates a considerable demand for this kind of intervention. The businesses that have been supported hitherto have indicated viability and growth potential, although the process of easing them gradually into market levels of rent and rates requires careful handling and monitoring.

3. The initial criticism of the ESI was the perceived lack of information, which resulted in some unfounded assumptions and rumours. With a pilot project such as this, where unpredictable opportunity largely shaped its development, it was not possible to keep everyone informed all of the time. It also moved quite rapidly in a relatively short time so information may have become outdated quickly. Leaflets about the ESI were produced to combat this issue and the recent reformation of a Chamber of Trade would serve as an effective voice for the traders of Holyhead and a conduit for communication internally and externally.

Holyhead and Holy Island Regeneration Newsletter

Challenge

The main intention of the BRAND project is to improve the negative perceptions of the town being encountered from residents, business owners and tourism/ hospitality sectors. With numerous projects and regeneration developments taking place across Holy Island, a common criticism from local residents was a lack of information and confusion about what was happening. This can be attributed to a number of projects not publicising their work or being marketed in a disparate and ad hoc manner. Something was needed to capture the spirit and determination for change that was prevalent across the community and a BRAND newsletter highlighting all of the positive stories, developments and images was deemed the most appropriate and the most accessible method publicise this to the whole of Holyhead and Holy Island.

Approach

The main purpose of the newsletter was to inform local people, visitors and potential investors (looking to relocate or set up business in the area) of all regeneration projects that have occurred in Holyhead and Holy Island over a 6 month period. It was also to celebrate the commitment and hard work of the people involved in the schemes and projects featured. Other publicity documents and newsletters were looked at and it was decided that a glossy magazine style was most fitting and would avoid becoming "just another bland and boring update that no one looked at". Popular mainstream magazines feature large images with minimal text and coupling this with the Holy island BRAND visual expression, this was the style that the newsletter took on. Collating all the positive news stories resulted in nine distinct categories;

Events and Activities

This section was a celebration of the hard work put in by community groups and the local authority. It was a good opportunity to recap on summer activities.

Celebs! In Holyhead

Holyhead was lucky enough to be the subject of BBC Radio 4's Mark Steel in Town comedy show, to host the live finale of S4C's 'Y Goets Fawr' television series and to be the start point of Richard Branson's 'The Swim', which featured celebrities swimming from Holyhead to Ireland. It was relevant to showcase the increase in media attention.

New Town Centre Shops

The Empty Shops Initiative (ESI) was chosen as the main feature for this page and provided BRAND and Plas Cybi (lead delivery body of ESI) with the opportunity to inform people of what the initiative is, along with short descriptions and images displaying the five shops portraying Holyhead in a new light.

New Businesses

During the research phase of the newsletter, more and more businesses opened up in and around the town. To show what a thriving place the town was becoming it was decided that the businesses needed their own page along with an eye-catching image. Contact details for each organisation were listed as a form of "free" advertising for the owners.

A Better Environment

A lot of the work by the three Communities First Partnerships and their volunteers which operate in the town has often been behind the scenes with little recognition or promotion of their success. Environmental enhancements and improvements were clearly evident including Holyhead winning the Silver Gilt in the 2011 Britain in Bloom competition.

Property Refurbishment
Despite a number of physical/capital scheme regeneration works in successfully upgrading the physical infrastructure of the town but there was a lack of recognition of who carried them out or why they were done in the first place. This page helped to overcome some of those issues.

Business Support
This page was dedicated to business support including contact details and grants available as well as information on who to contact for different training courses in the local area.

Major Development Plans
A source of information on the current situation of three large developments planned for Holyhead and Holy Island including contact details for further information.

Holyhead BRAND Project
A section dedicated to BRAND provided the perfect chance to showcase and highlight the positive work being carried out by the project.

A local design team was chosen on the basis that they were based in Holyhead and the fact that they had worked with BRAND before and so were aware of how to use the 'Toolkit'. The design team worked closely with the BRAND project throughout to develop a proof that was both inviting and vibrant with the underlying themes from the visual identity running throughout. This included the BRAND fonts, colour scheme and 'lozenge style' layout.

Newsletters were distributed to 6,200 residential properties on Holy Island as well as to businesses, community centres, large developers, and Town Councillors.

Impact & Transferability
There was a lot of positive feedback from the local community when the newsletter came out, particularly on its easy, yet informative style. It has become a useful resource to include in BRAND 'business packs' that are often given out during functions and training days organised by BRAND.

Regeneration newsletters in this style would be easily transferable to other towns, similar in population size or larger. The same format could be utilised as the headings are generic and can be easily collated. The newsletter should not be viewed as an easy or quick job as time and effort must be dedicated to getting it produced correctly.

Insights and Learning
The newsletter is a real celebration of the town and of all of the hard work being done. A lot of contact details are given in the newsletter, especially in terms of training courses and business support, so the newsletter also acts as a useful guide. Thoughts into future versions of the newsletter include-
- Use of advertising to fund the printing of the newsletter. The newsletter would then become self-sustainable.
- Inclusion of an events list.
- Inclusion of 'tear out' vouchers or phone numbers for local businesses.
- Inclusion of other leaflets which could help costings.

It is important to establish a team to produce further newsletters with deadlines and cut-off dates for the different stages as this proved hard to contain when producing the pilot.

Rhyl Showreel

Challenge

To get across Rhyl's identity and new sense of purpose in a sensory way. Not only through words but images, colour, movement and feel. Also to create engagement and excitement for Rhyl's future.

A key stage in the development of the BRAND project was to develop a 'visual expression', which will convey the identity of the place and tell the newly emergent story of Rhyl. The visual language includes all the fonts, colours, graphics and new images & photography that convey Rhyl's brand. Using this unique visual language a showreel has been produced which provides an important and valuable tool and medium for promoting the key BRAND messages.

The Showreel will be used to showcase the new Rhyl story and enables Rhyl's 'big idea' and themes to be communicated across a range of outlets throughout the town at key locations on television screens and monitors as well as being used at big events.

Approach

The brief was to produce a Showreel for Rhyl using the new brand identity and visual language. Initially the aim was for a 90 second high definition animated sequence for use on high definition television but also user friendly for PCs. An invitation to submit quotation was prepared, and this included a technical specification for the work required and also assessment criteria.

Early on in the process a discussion was had with the chosen supplier regarding the Welsh language. Initially the thought was for a bi-lingual showreel however this proved impractical as the showreel, which was intended to be visually appealing would be swamped with words. It was agreed that the English and Welsh would be separate showreels but would be capable of running back to back, spooling into each other continuously.

After agreeing the storyboard of key words and themes, the style of animation was selected from a number of different options and the music was chosen.

Once the showreel had been signed off we then had to consider how it was going to be presented i.e. on disc, usb stick. It needed to be 'on brand' and therefore it was decided to produce 100 dvds in a plastic dvd case designed in the visual language. To cater for the various target audiences of investors, residents, opinion formers and visitors we also decided to have 3 options on the dvd- to play the Welsh version on its own, the English one on its own and the Welsh and English running into each other.

Impact & Transferability

The showreel's quality speaks for itself. Over time it will become clearer exactly what impact it has had as more and more people at a local level and further a field start to see it.

Whilst any town can produce a dvd, the impact of the showreel should prove to have is strengthened by its use of the specially commissioned visual language which itself is rooted in the town's identity. It is not inflicted on the town but emerges out of the BRAND process and thus has greater buy-in.

Insights & Learning

The showreel ended up a great deal longer than we had first anticipated, partly due to the language issue- to see the English and Welsh version is 7 mins 38seconds. Where the showreel is playing on a loop on a television screen for example at the Tourist information Centre this is not a problem.

Another factor that added to the length was that the showreel will be seen by lots of different audiences so the pressure was on to include as much as Rhyl and the hinterlands as possible. Ironically the interest in the project and the keen desire of stakeholders to use the Showreel made it less focussed than the ideal 90 seconds burst originally anticipated.

In the end we considered having the longer version was satisfactory as a template from which shorter tailored versions could be produced in future. This way we can target it more directly at each key audience and use the showreel at the beginning of presentations for example.

Certain costs need to be considered when doing the showreel- the music you chose to use may need a music license purchased. The one we used was approximately £300. Also the extra costs in producing the dvds themselves plus packaging and design need to be taken into account.

Rhyl Showreel

Dun Laoghaire Showreel

Holyhead Showreel

Rhyl High Street Furniture

Challenge

To get the new brand story for Rhyl embedded in the public realm. The high street furniture in the town centre in Rhyl was being upgraded as part of the Rhyl Going Forward Programme. Plans included 10 new 'off the peg' granite benches which was hoped would sustain and enhance the character of the high street; this was seen as a perfect opportunity to see how the new brand could be used to add value and distinctiveness to the project. It was agreed that BRAND would fund the graphic designs to go on the benches with Rhyl Going Forward purchasing the actual benches.

The graphic designs on the benches had to be simple, effective, very hard wearing and not need any maintenance, but at the same time look good. Agreement had already been reached in terms of the type of benches to be purchased, which made it easier for the designer as they knew what material and space they were dealing with from the beginning.

Approach

Through the BRAND project we worked with the designers of the visual language to design the graphics for the granite benches. It was decided to have a mixture of designs with some of the benches having elements of the visual language and some containing stories relating to the history of Rhyl. In regards to the stories we had to be mindful of the bi-lingual element and decided that one side of the bench would be the English wording and the other the Welsh translation. The stories had to be succinct and clear as the amount of space was limited.

6 of the benches had the wave element of the visual language and 4 had bi-lingual stories which focused on the following; Arthur Cheetham- the "gadgeteer" who began experimenting in Rhyl with animated pictures in 1897, Pioneer of Aviation- Vivian Hewitt the first person to fly across the Irish sea from Rhyl in 1912, the ship that sails on the sand - the worlds first commercial hovercraft and the final story centred on famous people who had performed in Rhyl over the years.

Once all designs were agreed the designers worked closely with the company who were manufacturing the benches and the graphic casting for each bench. This relationship was important to ensure that the casting processes used were correct and suited the designs.

Impact & Transferability

The benches are unique to Rhyl and the designs are a reflection of the places history, values and roots but more importantly a pointer to the future. The designers we worked with took the view that each bench was an opportunity to become a piece of public art that they wanted to make interesting and entertaining for people to look at. As well as being imbedded with the new confident attitude of Rhyl's brand, showing off it's early pioneers and taking pride in who we are.

Now that these benches are in place and the designs exist any future furniture being purchased in or around the town by the council can take these designs into account, if the budget is available, which would mean the furniture throughout Rhyl would match.

Insights and Learning

When deciding which stories to have on the benches we had to take into account the amount of space available which obviously limited the amount of words we could put onto it. With this in mind it was important that the wording on the benches was not too cryptic and told the story clearly.

A month before the furniture was put in place on the high street a small exhibition area was set up in the local shopping centre where we displayed the plans for the benches. The aim of this was to inform residents and visitors of what was happening in the high street and to promote the Rhyl Going Forward initiative and the BRAND programme.

Don't waste even the most everyday opportunity. There are opportunities to spread the message or embed the brand in all types of everyday activities with very little additional spend (just some creative thinking)- e.g. repainting buildings, designing hoardings, repairing buildings, installing street furniture and lighting.

Placemaking in Dún Laoghaire Town

Challenge

The Concept of Placemaking

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to discover their needs and aspirations. This information is then used to create a common vision for that place. The vision can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, do-able improvements that can immediately bring benefits to places such as public spaces and the people who use them. Placemaking capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing. (Source: Project for Public Spaces, www.pps.org)

The Challenge for Dún Laoghaire Town

The BRAND Project came about to address the challenges faced by the towns of Rhyl, Holyhead, Athy, and Dún Laoghaire. All have undergone physical regeneration works, but continue to experience difficulties with the way in which they are perceived by residents, businesses, the tourism & hospitality sector and external opinion formers. This affects community regeneration adversely. The Project seeks to address these negative perceptions and improve the reputation of the towns by adopting a place branding methodology based on a process of community engagement.

In the case of Dún Laoghaire Town the challenge was to redirect the negativity into more positive pursuits. Frankly we needed to get away from moaning about what could have / should have been and to start appreciating what we had what was special and build on those strengths. To do this we had to initiate a number of activities for stakeholders to become engaged in that would lead to positive feedback and an enhanced and more informed sense of place.

Approach

This case study will highlight some activities where community engagement has resulted in a positive impact on the place.

At various stages of the Project there were opportunities for involvement of stakeholders, whether it was to conceptualise the place identity or to contribute to incremental improvements of the place. Our approach was to use those opportunities and sometimes bend in activities that were related but not initiated by the BRAND Project.

During the research phase of the Project a baseline study (similar to a brand audit) was undertaken by the BRAND Project Officer in conjunction with the place branding specialist company 'thinkingplace'. Individual workshops were held for local stakeholders including residents, people from the creative sector, local businesses, community groups and Council officials. The workshop activities were designed to collect their insight and knowledge of the town and identify special assets, stories, personality and elements of the place in order to develop the brand proposition and related

themes. The purpose was to take stock of the positives and negatives both from the perspective of residents and visitors. The aim was to arrive at a Big Idea for the future of the town and develop themes that could direct the activities accordingly.

The 'Big Idea' developed for Dún Laoghaire is 'Dún Laoghaire, Dublin: Dublin Bay's Cultural and Leisure Waterfront Experience', in which the themes of 'Creative Experience' and 'Linked' are embedded. The theme of 'Creative Experience' is based on the area's contemporary and historical credentials reflected in the festivals and events, the markets, architecture and the surrounding villages that animate the place and bring it to life. 'Linked' is derived from the fantastic special location of the town and its strong connectivity with Dublin City Centre, the bay and surrounding landscape.

The following model best illustrates our methodology of place branding to change perceptions of Dún Laoghaire Town:

products

environment

Dun Laoghaire, Dublin:

Dublin Bay's Cultural & Leisure Waterfront Experience

communications

behaviour

In essence the approach was not just to **communicate** how special Dún Laoghaire was guided by our new "themed" knowledge (the lower left quadrant of the model), but to engage stakeholders to change their **behaviour** (more positive and co-operative); to drive improvements to the town **environment** (via the same stakeholders); and to accentuate the importance of existing and new **products** for which the town will become renowned (such as festivals, facilities and displays).

A key aspect for us transpired to be how to interpret and use the public space and realm in the town to improve the environment, change behaviour and develop products. Here are some examples of activities that contributed to placemaking during the Project.

Bringing colour to the town using our new Visual Identity
The Project worked with stakeholders such as the Dún Laoghaire Shopping Centre, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Dún Laoghaire Business Association, Dublin Bus and Irish Rail to display posters, banners and bunting that would liven-up and bring colour to the town over the summer months. The materials used were not costly and can be re-used. The campaign messages on the materials were clearly aimed to get residents and visitors into town over the summer to enjoy and participate in a series of festivals that utilise the significant public spaces on the waterfront of the town.

The launch of 'The Metals Project'
The Metals is the historic route that once brought stone from Dalkey Quarry to the great harbour works in Dún Laoghaire. The Metals is a walk and cycle path that takes you from the beauty of Dún Laoghaire harbour to the amazing views from Dalkey and Killiney Hill. The start of the walkway was redeveloped over the lifespan of the project, in to what is now a wonderful public space with seating areas, plaza and playground. This will now be the

focus of events and create a waterfront location for locals and tourists to enjoy. This development fits well with the BRAND Project 'Big Idea' of 'Dublin Bay's leisure and waterfront experience'. The project seeks to bring the waterfront area to life, making it a useful, practical and beautiful public asset to the area.

The BRAND Project supported the Council's Architects Dept to launch and communicate this wonderful space in April 2012 to a wide range of audiences.

Destination Creation Conference
The BRAND Project in Dún Laoghaire has influenced many people and projects to think and act more positively about their place. One example of this is the Destination Creation Conference which took place on 6th and 7th March 2012 in Dún Laoghaire. This conference was conceived by An Cathaoirleach and organised by Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council. The conference theme of place making and place branding allowed the organisers to invite an impressive array of speakers both at a national and international level. See www.destinationcreation2012.com. The conference presented an opportunity to showcase the town as well as the Project.

In addition to the conference, the New York-based Project for Public Spaces were invited to hold their acclaimed training workshops titled 'How to turn a place around' in Dún Laoghaire. As part of the workshop programme, participants (many from Europe and as far away as Brazil) evaluated the public spaces in the town and gave valuable feedback to the BRAND Project with practical suggestions to continue the placemaking process.

Impact and Transferability

The impact of placemaking activities could be compared with a ripple effect. The key is to ensure that a range of manageable activities that involve a number of stakeholders take place over a short-to-medium term that will provide momentum for new initiatives. Then the word will spread. For example, the Council was approached by a private event management company who host the annual conference for the media industry in Ireland to bring their conference to Dún Laoghaire. They were not interested in the conference facilities in the local hotels, but wanted an event that 'uses' the town space. They 'heard' that things were happening in Dún Laoghaire. This conference called Mediafuture was fully subscribed (over 300 delegates) and took place on 14-15th May 2012 using the local theatre, the County Hall, the local nightclub and surrounding public spaces as its 'venue'. See www.mediafuture.ie.

The events and activities that each town/area/place organises will differ depending on the special features/opportunities of the respective areas. Those activities form the content for a place making and branding plan. What is useful is to develop and manage the plan by drawing from successful methodologies such as described in this toolkit and also those developed by organisations such as Project for Public Spaces (e.g. The Power of Ten) and thinkingplace, which are transferable from place to place.

Insights and Learning

The best way we can convey our insights and learning is maybe to anticipate possible questions and answers that the reader may have.

What is the key "ingredient" for successful placemaking and place branding?

In two words – stakeholder co-operation. The BRAND Project gave local stakeholders in Dún Laoghaire Town the opportunity to actively engage in a structured process about their area that could lead to improvements because of the active contributions from stakeholders and a diversion away from the passive-aggressive discourse that circle around the mantra of 'it is all the Council's fault'.

The Project engaged the local stakeholders like the business community, Harbour Company, Council, third level institutions, tourism sector and residents associations to sit around a table on a regular basis and discuss things that were happening in the area. It gave them a say and shared responsibility of what was happening and an involvement in local events, new developments or research that they never had before. This regular stakeholder involvement was crucial in making the Project a success and providing a structure for placemaking and branding.

Were there events organised before the BRAND Project that had a placemaking impact?

Very much so. The best example was the Festival of World Cultures (attended by more than 200,000 people annually), but the difference was that it was not integrated into a coherent message about the town and linked to other events and activities to promote the town. The learning is that you lose value if you are not able to create coherence and integration of events and activities with the Big Idea for the future of the town and you miss opportunities (available on a plate) to create a unifying visual identity.

What are the major challenges post the BRAND project to continue with the initial successes in placemaking and place branding?

The Project provided leadership and co-ordination to the stakeholders. A Stakeholders Forum is in place, but post the Project, will require people to step up to the plate and continue with the process, possibly formalising the Forum into a permanent structure for the town.

A certain element of creative flair and innovative thinking was needed in the process of this project. An effort to 'think outside the box' was always helpful in overcoming challenges or obstacles that you might be presented with. The Project Officer played a major role in stimulating ideas, researching proposals and finding solutions/options. Post the Project, stakeholders will have to find and resource role players to play an equivalent role to that of the Project Officer.

Summer is a festival
in Dún Laoghaire

www.dunlaoghaire.ie

Find your favourite festival at
dunlaoghaire.ie

Events taking place this summer:

July	
31st	Focus Ireland Triathlon
August	
1st	The Bay 10K Road Race
5th-6th	Classical Twist
6th-7th	Trains Expo
12th-14th	Festival des Bateaux
20th-21st	Chalk Festival
25th-28th	Dublin Bay Taste & Music Fest
September	
1st - 11th	Mountains to Sea, dlr Book Festival

irishrail.ie   Take the Dart to Dún Laoghaire   DART

Virtual Branding of Dún Laoghaire Town

The Challenge

The Concept of Virtual Branding

Virtual branding is the process of marketing a consistent image and message across all media available on the Internet. The Internet presents vast opportunities for products and services to reach far more people than ever possible before. From a website to social networks, there are huge opportunities within the online world for forward-thinking organisations to establish and spread the word about themselves. The internet and social media open up huge possibilities to grow and promote businesses and places. The medium is open 24/7, and there is a whole dynamic to how social media in particular works, that needs to be understood.

The Challenge for Dún Laoghaire Town

The BRAND Project provided the stakeholders of Dún Laoghaire Town with an opportunity to define a big idea for the future identity of the town together with a graphic language to distinguish the town accordingly.

At the time the image and perception of Dún Laoghaire Town was at best mixed with no dedicated communication channels to address criticism or to get the positive message across. In particular, the town had an inconsistent online presence. Depending on what key word was used for a search, varying representations of the town confronted the user.

There was a need for a Dún Laoghaire Town website and complementary social media channels that could communicate all that the town had to offer – i.e. the place brand - and that involved all the stakeholders in the process.

The challenge was thus to create a new online presence for Dún Laoghaire Town.

Our Approach

From the start we involved the stakeholder representatives (from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, Dún Laoghaire Business Association, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Chamber, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Community Forum, Dún Laoghaire Shopping Centre, Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Royal Marine Hotel and Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel) in this process to get buy-in and to ensure usability of the on-line communication channels for the key players within the town. The aim was to create a useful, functional and appropriate online presence that will benefit the place and will be sustainable into the future.

We researched the existing online offerings available for the town. A simple Google search showed that the top 3 search results were the Dún Laoghaire Business Association, IADT (Institute of Art, Design & Technology) and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. Each of these sites provided useful information about an organisation or sector in the town, but none gave the level of place specific information that would support a comprehensive place branding strategy.

Dún Laoghaire Town BRAND Project tendered for an online communications specialist to aid with setting up the online presence. Involving them at the beginning of the process was key to ensure that the correct steps were taken to target the right audiences, select the most suitable domain name and provide the most appropriate information online. The agency selected had the experience and quality of service to assist the Project to develop an online strategy, consider online marketing tools and choose appropriate online channels.

Following consultation with the Dún Laoghaire Town Stakeholders the following Virtual Branding elements were produced:

- Website
- eNewsletter
- Facebook page
- YouTube channel
- Smartphone App(s)

www.dunlaoghaire.ie

The website was designed to be a 'one stop shop' for people looking for information on Dún Laoghaire Town. The following target audiences were identified:

- Residents of Dún Laoghaire and surrounding areas
- Local businesses
- Potential Investors
- Tourists from abroad (primarily day trippers travelling from Dublin)
- Irish visitors

The website was required to be a sleek simple functional design using the graphic language for the new brand identity.

The website is a key communications channel that is available to the community in order to give updates on events, business opportunities, convey the new visual identity and photographs of the area, sign up to the newsletter and provide a searchable business listing. It is also important that this was integrated into the overall communications strategy and has links to the social media sites (Facebook and YouTube) as well as the Smartphone Apps.

The website requires constant updating and work to ensure that the information is relevant and informative. This particularly applies to events and therefore constant monitoring and evaluation is key to a successful website.

The website is built around a WordPress template which means that it can be updated and amended as required. This is a common website operating system and staff can be trained on its simple use. Dún Laoghaire also engaged an online agency (digital marketing service provider) to aid in the updating of the website, monthly monitoring reports, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and any online additions that were needed. Having a dedicated resource such as an online agency to look after the online presence has been invaluable to date. It requires a large time commitment to create a successful online presence and having the agency support ensures that the online elements are maintained to a high standard. The agency also provides monthly reports to monitor the online progress and feedback against the project objectives.

The latest report indicates the following:

- **5,300** visits per month on average
- **80%** are new users on average each month
- The user views on average **2 pages** per visit, and spend just over a **minute** on average on the site
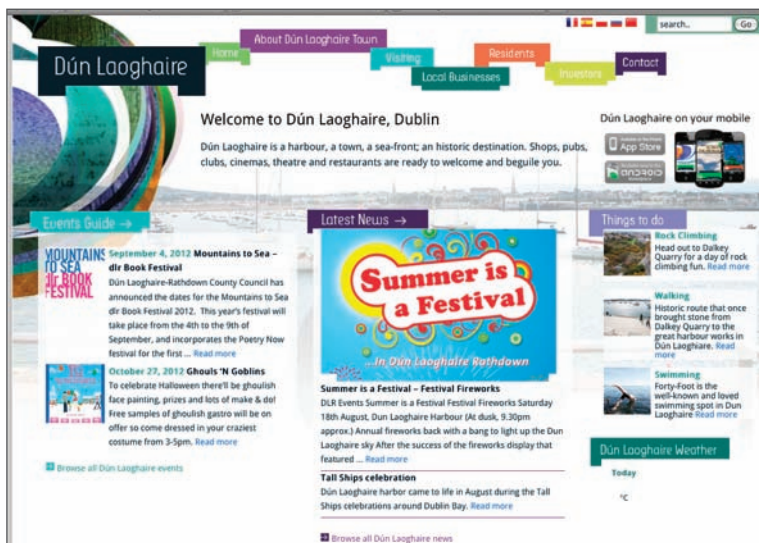
eNewsletter

Once the website was set up, an important function was to enable us to communicate with people who might be interested in upcoming news and events. This type of 'push' communication can be useful to aid in the positive relationship and perception between a person and a place. This promotes positive engagement and encourages repeat visits.

The first eNewsletter was sent to all the businesses that had listed on the website and contacts that had signed up to the newsletter via the website. It was also initially sent to all the BRAND project contacts that had been involved in the workshops and activity of the project to date.

The first eNewsletter results are as follows

774 Recipients
673 Successfully Sent
305 Opened This Campaign (39.41%)
136 Clicked A Link (17.57%)

An open rate of almost forty percent is very high for an email newsletter campaign. This shows that the recipients were happy to receive and open the content proving it was timely and relevant.

www.facebook.com/dunlaoghairetown

Social Media is now an essential part of any marketing communications plan. Facebook in particular is a useful tool to communicate with an audience on a much broader scale. It allows the place, organisation or product to converse on a regular basis with a worldwide audience as you would with a friend. You can thus send pictures and news regularly, but more importantly residents and visitors can put their pictures and stories on the "place page".

With over 900 million users worldwide, it is a well-established and adopted medium to communicate online. The page was set up as a 'place', which means that you can't send people a friend request, instead people must 'like' the page.

At present the Dún Laoghaire Facebook page has over 2,100 likes to date. The reach is over half a million people who are friends with people who have liked the page. Facebook allows real time communication with the people who have liked the page, and an update or post on the Dún Laoghaire wall will automatically appear on the signed up user's wall. This allows for photos, comments, events and real time information to be shared.

The Facebook page is integrated into the website, so people can 'like' the page from the website. Also YouTube is now integrated into the facebook page and website, allowing for a seamless integration of the online communications channels.

YouTube Channel

Google's video-sharing service YouTube, currently serves more than 4 billion video views a day and approximately 60 hours of video is now being uploaded to YouTube every minute. With statistics like this and over 70 percent of Web users visiting video-sharing sites like YouTube, it was important to explore this medium as a communications channel for Dún Laoghaire.

YouTube was incorporated into the online presence for Dún Laoghaire Town by customising a specific channel on the site. Video provides visuals and sound which add another dimension to a place that images cannot convey. Many events that take place during the year have promotional footage, which can be used on the YouTube channel to capture the true atmosphere of the event.

The channel is incorporated into the website and Facebook page, to ensure an integrated communications approach.

Smartphone App

The latest statistics show that smartphone usage and data consumption is only on the rise. 80% of humans own a mobile phone and out of the 5 billion mobile phones in the world, 1.08 billion are smartphones. With almost 90% of smartphone users use their smart phones throughout the day.

There was the opportunity in 2011 for converting content on the East Pier and The Metals (in existing audio guides, website page and maps) to a new technology by developing a comprehensive cultural tourism app for the Dún Laoghaire area. Funding for the two-tour Dún Laoghaire app came from four separate stakeholders, DLRCC Heritage Department, DLRCC Environment, Culture and Community Department, the DL Harbour Company and the Dún Laoghaire BRAND Project.

A two-tour Dún Laoghaire app had three main objectives:
1. **To produce a free introductory application about the cultural heritage of Dún Laoghaire for all smart mobile phone users**

2. **To create a template for the further development of tourism-related information (more tours, accommodation, services, events, etc) and interactive maps, within the context of rebranding of Dún Laoghaire.**

3. **To generate content for the Dún Laoghaire dedicated website. The website contains a slideshow of the two audio tours, as well as downloadable maps.**
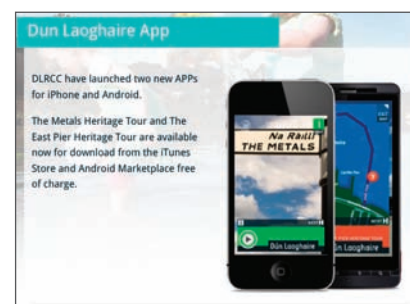
So far the Apps have 850 combined downloads. This is prior to any communications of the QR codes on each of the tourist sites, which is to follow.

The Project's targeted end result on completion is to bring DLR's rich heritage and culture to a new audience at home and abroad, bring more visitors to the area, and provide a resource for existing cultural, literary and artistic festivals, events and outlets in the county.
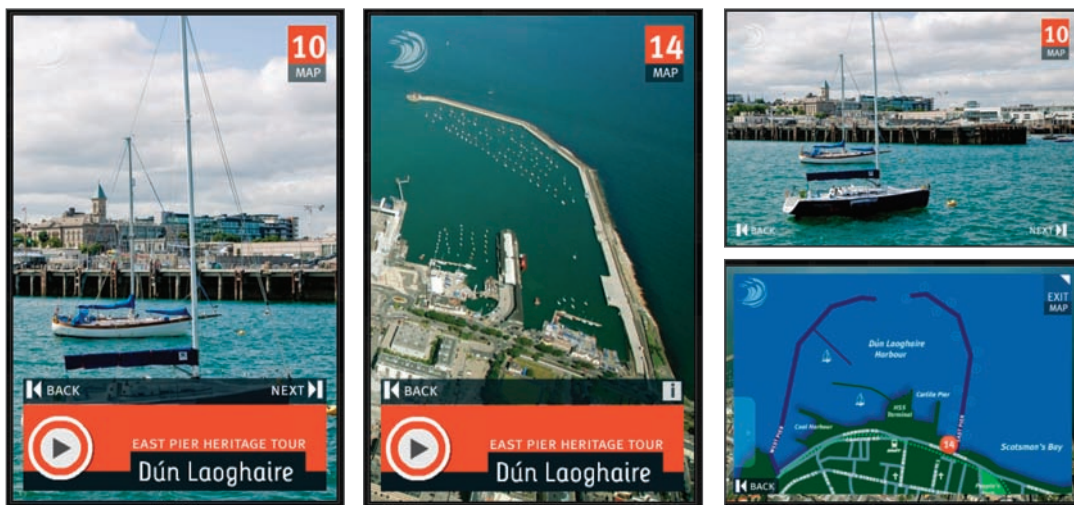
Impact and Transferability

A suite of on-line communication platforms has been developed for Dún Laoghaire Town with a consistent visual expression (branding) and a seamless integration. This was only possible by employing and leveraging the resources made available by the BRAND Project.

Its transferability is dependent on how another town/place defines its objectives for place branding. The platforms demonstrated in this case study are generic, but success will be determined by the development of an appropriate on-line strategy that meets the expectations of stakeholders (captured in the objectives for place branding).

Insights and Learning

The best way we can convey our insights and learning is maybe to anticipate possible questions and answers that the reader may have.

What are the most important on-line channels to use for place branding?

The online communications chosen for this project were deemed appropriate during the lifecycle of the project. Due to the nature of online media, this is an ever changing and transient channel of communication, where new developments and trends are happening everyday. It is important to keep up to date with new technologies and online channels, in order to keep the message relevant and top of mind. For example, Apps for Mobile handsets (smart phones and tablets) could rapidly become the new dominant communication channels.

We found that each channel we used added an aspect to our overall communications strategy.

What role did our website play in the overall communications strategy?

Our website (www.dunlaoghaire.ie) contained all the important information on businesses, attractions, events and tools for branding the town. It could be viewed as an interactive library to which all the other platforms (e.g. Facebook page, e-newsletter) reverted. Furthermore, we directed the readers and listeners to all our off-line promotions (e.g. posters, building wraps, radio ads) to our website for the detailed up-to-date information.

What role did our e-newsletter (e-zine) play in the overall communications strategy?

With most on-line communication channels, you rely on the pull factors that will attract visitors to the site or page. Therefore you are "waiting" for new visitors or more user interaction to grow the impact of the site. The e-newsletter gives you an important push factor where you get information directly to users on a regular basis via e-mail to "invite" them to visit (click) the website or social media platforms. A note of warning – push can become pushy – and therefore you have to be sure about the tolerance level of users to receive regular e-newsletters (weekly, monthly, quarterly?).

What role did our Facebook page for the town play in the overall communications strategy?

The Facebook page possibly has had the most impact by creating on-going friendly two-way communication with residents and visitors to the town. The important aspect is that users can express how they feel by merely clicking the "like" button or by loading a picture or by placing a news snippet on the wall. The Facebook page works because of the emotional attachment of users. As an example – if someone posted that it is a lovely morning in Dún Laoghaire, the reaction is almost instant with people posting likes, coffee shops inviting people to town – and especially visitors or former residents expressing a "wish I was there". Again as with the e-newsletter, care should be taken not to overuse the page – i.e. not to post too much too often, because users can easily un-friend or de-like the page!

What role did our YouTube channel for the town play in the overall communications strategy?

Our YouTube channel is a recent addition, but we have great hopes for building quality videos for the town on this repository. The first video we uploaded about a chalk festival on the East Pier in 2010 (a re-broadcast) previously went viral and currently has been viewed by more than 5,5 million times. In the case of the YouTube Dún Laoghaire Town Channel we have full control and will select the best to re-broadcast.

If you could have done more, what other on-line activities would you have included in your virtual branding strategy?

If it had been possible, it may have been beneficial to conduct on-line surveys and/or competitions. This is however only advisable once there is an understanding from your audience about what they can expect from your on-line communication.

Other options that we could have explored were to regularly update a Wiki-page on the town or post information to other sites with strong social media impacts such as Tripadvisor and RatemyArea.

What if existing websites and social media pages for a town have no specific or consistent brand identity?

We found it useful to meet with other website owners and discuss the possibilities for incorporating the place brand identity guidelines in the next upgrade of their sites. (Example: www.dun-laoghaire.com). Although we have not yet managed to reach an agreement with the large employers in the town, it is a future possibility to persuade them to have elements of the branding included in their on-line strategies.

It is more difficult to contact the "owners" of the range of social media pages that have a strong reference to the town. For this reason it is important to grow the followers ('likes') of the Town's Facebook page created by the project, so that it becomes the 'official' facebook page .

What were your most important insights and learning in the process of setting up and developing virtual branding channels?

Allow enough time to consider and develop each channel of communication.

Plan the strategy. For example ensure that the branding is correct, given your place identity objectives and the target audiences. Pay attention to detail such as the appropriate copy and tone of voice. Place a high priority on the 'buy-in' process from key stakeholders such as the Council and business organisations. As much as is possible try to deal with procedural issues at an early stage such as Council approval for hosting social media platforms.

Budget the time required to be invested on a day-to-day basis to update and refresh each platform with relevant information.

Develop each channel with its future management and resources in mind - that is to sustain the channels past the completion date of the project.
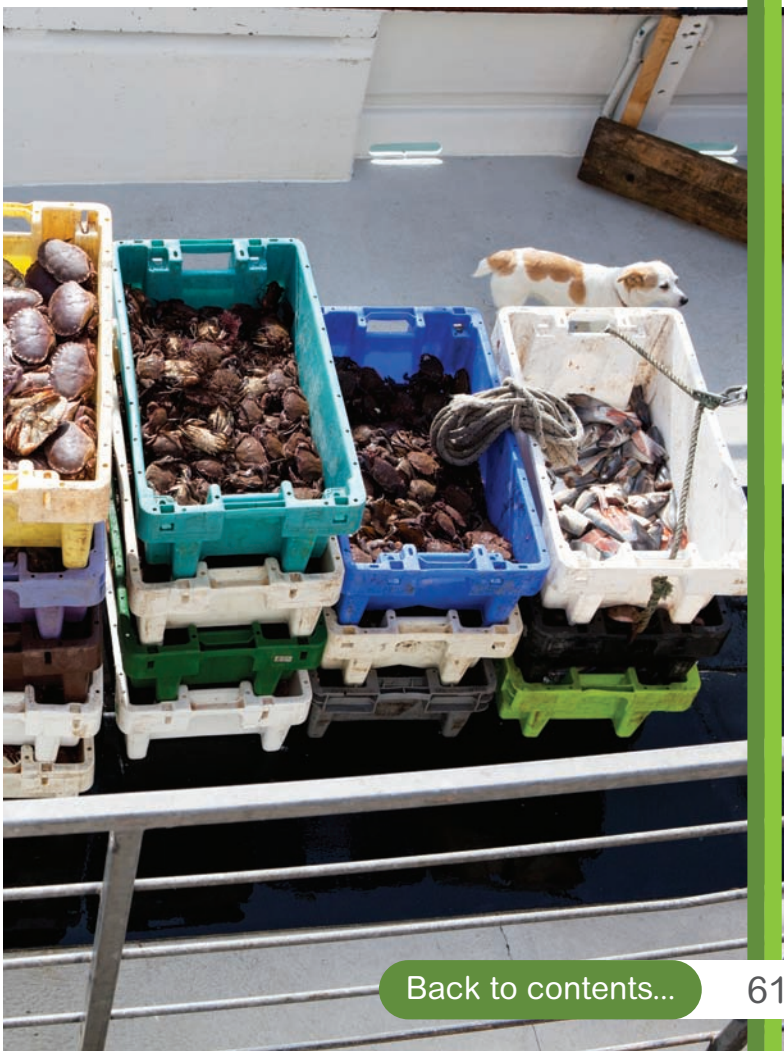
Athy Festivals & Events

Challenges

Athy had an array of event and festivals happening in the town but there was no focus to them or coordinated effort. Through the brand workshop the training consultants noticed the amount of events the town had, and the recurring theme was about celebrating Athy.

- There was no dedicated group to deliver these well or to expand the festival and events. This was highlighted as a need through the workshop process. The Athy Town Promoters were set up to focus, deliver, execute and expand the festivals and events that were already there along with creating new ones. Athy had a lot of small groups trying to deliver ideas and diluting the limited funding available to the town.
- Athy has limited bed space which impacts some events and limits the capacity to grow other events.
- Traffic congestion and traffic management was a huge issue in the town and has been a challenge for over the last 30 years. The town is a linear town with very little access to get around without using the main street. This has frustrated commuters, visitors and shop keepers and added to the negative image of the town. The economic downturn has hit the town hard with a lot of shops closing and adding to the contaminated image of the town. This is being addressed through the BRAND project and pop up shops.
- Lack of speedy decision making by key people led to frustration and the over burdening of certain member of working groups. Overcoming negative attitudes and apathy was key to the delivery of quality festivals and events. The lack of a long-term vision had an impact on Festival & Events in the economy which caused problems in going forward.
- The lack of business support to events which brought in potential new customers was apparent e.g. Festivals taking place and business having inflexible opening hours.

Approach

- The Athy Town Promoters developed a working relationship with key people to ensure the project delivery of successful events and festivals. The creation of the Athy Town Promoters provided an avenue for promoters of events to come to the table and request support, funding and assistance in running their events. The Athy Town Promoters became the ambassadors of the town and at every opportunity, delivered the promotional support to the Festival and Events which took place in Athy. The Town Promoters meet every month to ensure Festivals and events grow, and they developed a strategic marketing plan alongside with a dedicated coordination team of workers to ensure success of each event. Consultation with the community on people's needs and requirements helped to develop team spirit and involvement in festival and events.

- The promoters have seen the capacity to generate interest and tourism in Athy through event such as the National Ploughing Championships, Triathy, St Patrick's Day Parade, Kildare County Show, and the Dragon Boat Festival. The town promoters when approached by separate people with ideas about festival or events have successfully brought

  individual promoters together to deliver a quality festival such as the Irish Trad festival and the Dragon Boat festival which started off as two individual events and which would not have had a high impact on the town. Through the town promoters they were run together and this brought a great crowd into town for the festival weekend. This meant that both promoters got the best out of the weekend as well as the public and the businesses in the town.

- The development of social media campaigns and networking generated awareness in the community and educated the younger people on what was going on in the town. (Facebook/Youtube/Twitter). The creation of positive events with positive media coverage and feedback has

generated good quality publicity for the town. At one time the media wrote negative things about the town and now they ring up the BRAND Project Officer to look for news and promote events. This has been a massive change in thinking by the press and media and has had huge positive feedback for the town. It proves that is very important to build relationships in every sector to achieve a common goal.

Impact & Transferability

- The biggest impact of the festivals and events is the noticeable increase in attendance and a vibrant community spirit and involvement in the events and festivals. A huge feel good factor among the community promoters and businesses.
- The lack of self image has dissipated and is now replaced by quality communications, positive community spirit which is promoted on the wwwathy.ie website and facebook, which has a marinade of quality photos showing the atmosphere at festival and events. When every event is on and over a dedicated person uploads photos on facebook and the website which allows everyone to see what is happening in the town and to encourage them to partake in other events in Athy.
- Events such as the National Ploughing Championship which brought 80,000 people to Athy for three days in September for the last three years and the TriAthy triathlon which brought 3,500 people to the town over one weekend, have generated huge tourism and local trade.

- Athy has now been recognised and renowned for holding certain prestigious annual events and festivals which have grown year by year. Any other street, place, town or city needs to look at what they have, what they do best, and how to build on it. If other towns/ places have good festival and events they need to discover, appreciate and expand on them. Go through a similar journey by building a dedicated team to focus on such events and bring the community and business along in the process.
- After each event takes place the town promoters meet to monitor progress and report feedback. This is key to the learning process where you analyse how the event went, how to improve any areas and what went well. This allows the town promoters group to run events smoothly and more efficiently. Speedy decision making was part of the process and also key to delivery of events. The key people around the table who had the capacity to make decisions, and have the ability to deliver on them are a quality resource and valuable asset to any organisation.

Insights and learning

Athy had 'thinkingplace' come in to look at what the town had; through their eyes they could see the unique product Athy had. This developed the theme "Celebrate Athy" with all its character and diversity and allowed the dedicated team to work on it through the heading of Festival and Events.

The consultants worked on team building of key decision makers, which focused the full team to work towards one common goal. This strategy allowed for a unified approach to service delivery and eliminate disparate groups around town which were diluting the process, the focus, and the limited funding.

Through the workshops held around town the community began to explore the town's true potential and looked to exploit the resources at hand such as the river and canal which the town had turned its back on for so long. The town now celebrates the waterway by having the Dragon Boat festival, the Water Festival and the TriAthy Triathlon. These are major events which have developed and will continue to develop, creating positive energy for the town countering the once negative image we held for so long.

Recognition of the activities and festivals that were there, and the people that were trying to promote the town singlehanded was addressed and celebrated. This has led to a growth in the festival and event industry and a growth in the economy of Athy. There needs to be further development of the festival and events marketing strategy and to produce and build a buoyant economy for Athy. There needs to be a coordinated effort not just by Athy Town Promoters to attract more tourists to Athy. This should be monitored and measurable to make the festivals and events more sustainable into the future.

The town needs to maintain the new positive image it has developed and to hold on to the positive press and PR coverage and build on these areas. Through the BRAND project Athy has received national and international acclaim and this should be built on.

Athy Town Promoters

Challenges

Challenges faced by the project were to strengthen the community and business sectors and get them to engage with each other. The removal of apathy about the town from external and internal opinion formers needed addressing. This was a huge challenge identified in the pre discussions of the BRAND Application.

- Getting 'buy in' and support for the Project in the beginning was hard as the project needed to have quick wins to show positive outcomes and gather more momentum. The development and delivery of existing festivals and events. Was constrained by the number of small budgets available.

- Re-engagement with Local & National Press was an urgent requirement for the Athy town promoters as it would assist in enhancing positive press coverage for the town.

- Participation of key decision makers in the Brand Athy project and a focused view of what the town was about and what the town was good at required some thought and through the series of workshops carried out, with the assistance of thinking place a vision, focus and strategy was developed for the town.

- Getting the community and businesses to recognise the uniqueness of the town and distinctiveness, to appreciate that the town was not like all the other towns around. The community & business needed to engage with each other to promote its unique offerings to build a place experience.

Approach

- The Athy Town Promoters group was set up as a direct action from the consultation process which developed the Athy BRAND Action Plan. The agencies around the table were Kildare County Council, Athy Town Council, Tidy Towns, Kildare County Show, Age Action, the Heritage Centre, and local Community members. They all came together with one clear objective to improve on the Festival and Events, build and boost the economy in Athy, to ensure every 6 to 8 weeks something positive was happening within the locality.

- The town promoters group combined strengths, skills, expertise and resources, with a positive approach to delivery of events. Ensuring a quality product which has now branded Athy through their festival & events.

- The development of a website www.athy.ie along with a strong social media campaign generated awareness among the community and national audiences to what was happening in Athy. The local press and national press expressed interest in the activities and events in Athy which brought TV3 live to the town. Facebook/ Youtube/Twitter are all social media that are used to target a wider audience, increasing awareness & attendance which in turn boosts the economy.

- The Athy Town Promoters did not invent most of the festivals held in the town but recognised their potential and now have a marketing strategy to enhance and extract as much potential from them as possible. These include the National Ploughing Championships ,Triathy, St Patrick's Day Parade, Kildare County Show, Bluegrass Festival, and the Ernest Shackelton annual festival.

- The creation of the Athy visual identity has allowed the Town Promoter to develop awareness through literature – the Athy Story book, signage for events, promotional tools such as branding attractions/ packages/branded shopping bags/ Shop Local signs etc. The Town Promoters have engaged with local employers to develop a good relationship to ensure everyone is working together to support and provide local sponsorship.

Impact &Transferability

- The Town Promoters now have a proven record in festival and events. The impact of the group working in unison has increased attendance at events, increased community involvement, and developed a feel good factor among the community. The group have also increased visitor numbers along with foot fall at events and has increased economic benefit to the businesses in town.
- The communications links within the town through the facebook page and twitter has kept the community and visitors updated on events. The positive feedback in the local and national papers has been phenomenally successful with the town receiving increased positive imagery and publicity.
- The Athy Town Promoters have generated tourism through events – created business in the town, while supporting local businesses. A focused quality product has brought numerous famous people to Athy to partake in the events; for example Formula One driver Jenson Button attended Triathy. The publicity this generates has a huge impact on the pride of the town. This encourages the community to get more active and involved in cleaning up its area and brings about pride of place.
- The Town Promoters group are the strategic mechanism put in place to sustain the project after the initial 3 year period. The Town promoters are driven by a chairman and a dedicated team of workers, who have the heart of the town at their

core. They have secured equipment that can be used by all festival and event holders to reduce the cost implication to other promoters of events. This was seen as a necessary by product of the town promoters and a legacy of the project.
- If any other town could develop a strategic group with dedicated focused individuals, with the heart of their place or town to the fore, then this model has the ability to transfer to another town, place, or space.

Key Learning Points

None of the BRAND project partners had previous experience of place branding and as such were on a very steep learning curve, the following section highlights some of the key learning points and lessons learned over the three years of the project.

1. Places are not products, they are more complicated and complex – you can't simply recall them or take them off the shelf when it suits you.

2. The place brand must be rooted in the reality of the place – substance is key as is managing expectations.

3. The place must buy into the brand and take ownership for it to be successful.

4. Place branding involves different tools and a more innovative approach to traditional 'product' branding - it is linked to perceptions, pride and identity.

5. Brand conflict will happen - when private sector organisations are involved, their brand is more important to them than the places.

6. Authenticity is important; your place brand should reflect the story of the place – take advantage of local culture and heritage to ground the brand.

7. Don't underestimate the role increasing pride and sense of identity play in the brand.

8. Timing is critical – in some places re-development / regeneration will have to come before any branding work can be successful.

9. Embedding the place brand will be a long-term process – you won't get results overnight.

10. Resilience, patience and good humour are essential.

Read more on the importance of the Right People, getting beyond Promotion, the importance of brand leadership and the example of the Rhyl Place Board…

'Resilience, patience and good humour are essential'

The Right People

Involving the right people at the right time is vital to the success of the branding process and the quality of the brand proposition.

First, it is important that the team responsible for the process is strong and has the right skills; the experience of the BRAND Project Officers has shown the following to be key skills and experience for delivering such a process:

- Persuasion and negotiation
- Public speaking
- An awareness of marketing
- Facilitation
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Humour
- Persistence
- Project management

The BRAND experience highlights the importance of having a single person / point with the appropriate skills driving the process forward in order to maintain momentum, prevent drift and ensure the engagement of relevant people and their involvement in the journey.

Each of the BRAND Project Officers benefited from individual coaching and mentoring on a regular basis from thinkingplace, knowledge transfer from thinkingplace to the Project Officers was crucial given the varied background and experience of the Officers. Equally important was the interaction and support the Project Officers gave to one another throughout the process and the sharing of key skills and experience.

What became apparent through BRAND was the importance of engaging the Senior level officers of each Council in the process, in the case of BRAND each of the Councils played a key part in the embedding of the project in the first 12 months.

Securing the right people is also important in relation the Stakeholder Groups and Place Boards - You have to get people to believe your message so that they get behind you, you need people who are articulate and can communicate the vision well. It is important to involve people at a senior level who have influence and authority within your place.

Getting Beyond Promotion

One of the key barriers which all the Project Officers faced was in getting parties outside of the project to understand the nature of place branding and what it was hoped to achieve. The understanding that place branding is more than promotional activity is important. Local stakeholders need to see the process as deeper than simply a burst of advertising and PR. Whilst it is important to recognise the role marketing (and its component parts including promotion), plays within place branding, particularly for places such as those involved in BRAND where the reality is better than the image, publicity alone cannot build a place brand.

The whole place experience needs to be enhanced, ensuring that product/services, environment and behaviour are given equal weighting

Promotion should be viewed as the tool which enables you to communicate your brand messages but, branding relates to the wider place identity and how you keep the promise beyond the communications aspect.

This is why the BRAND method involves more than simply as the production of logos and strap-lines (although these are covered); the place brand should instead be viewed as a 'framework for change' around which the place can develop.

Brand Leadership

Places differ to products in that they are not 'owned' by any one organization and have a significant amount of activity, be that communications, public realm development or new offers, which affect the place and are being delivered at all times. It is crucial therefore to the success of a place brand that the organisations responsible for the majority of this activity are behind the brand and agree to work with it.

Place brand leadership, refers to how the place brand is led by the key stakeholders of the place, often in partnership with each other. Getting these arrangements right is important to ensure your place brand has longevity and sustainability.

The management arrangements could take many different forms but it is important that it is senior, strong, place relevant and not public sector dominated.

When thinking about implementation and brand management, there are some important things to consider:

- How will you maintain momentum beyond the initial activity and process?
- Will the town need a place brand co-ordinator on a more permanent basis to 'own' the plan, ensure delivery against it and to make things happen?
- Is it possible to identify funding that can help fill the gaps identified and focus activity on the sectors who feel the image of the place is poor?
- How does the place best use the people involved in the process to act as ambassadors for the town?

Example: Rhyl Place board

Purpose: to establish an inclusive strategic approach for the development of the place experience and reputation of Rhyl, using the new proposition and story to improve its economic competitiveness and attractiveness.

Membership:
- Denbighshire County Council
- Tourism Partnership North Wales
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Llandrillo College
- Rhyl Going Forward (Regeneration Team)
- North Wales Police
- Apollo Cinema
- Rhyl SeaQuarium
- Arriva Buses
- Anwyl Construction

Objectives:
- oversee implementation & expression of new proposition
- helping to prioritise and direct activity through the place plan
- contribute to ensure that projects appropriately influence place promotion & development
- support the work of the BRAND project officer
- identify opportunities for the brand to deliver change
- help co-ordinate and influence activity of other organisations
- act as ambassadors & spokespeople for Rhyl
- collaborate with other organisations/ partnerships to leverage activity for Rhyl
- be guardians of the brand

Role of the Chair:
- Ensuring the longevity and sustainability of the branding work
- Assisting the lead Officer including reviews of the Action plan delivery through attendance at the Place Board
- Ensuring effective operation of the Place Board including involvement and performance of members and communication of activity with the wider stakeholders.
- Lead spokesperson and ambassador for the place

A Cross-Border Perspective

Extract from a report published by Arwel Jones, Independent Evaluator

With four partners in two countries, and whose regeneration and political agendas may at times have been at different stages, it has been important for certain key strands of BRAND to be common and constant. This was facilitated initially through the support of thinkingplace, who provided a template for the process of developing ideas and identities for the partner towns. This meant that although each participant arrived at a different themed identity (Rhyl with its timeless beachscape experience, Holyhead's mix of spirit, nature and history, Athy's focus on festivals and events and community character, and Dún Laoghaire with Dublin's culture by the sea), these were created using a shared creative process.

The project has progressed to a stage where all partners have their toolkit and graphic language ready for selective use with trusted stakeholders and other partners. Sufficient good will and understanding had been built up for this to be a highly effective and focused exercise. The project officers were sufficiently well grounded in the project to provide their towns (and other partner towns) with an impressive array of coherent branding opportunities. The project had also become generally well regarded and embedded in parent organisations and other relevant bodies. Establishment of place boards, the roll-out of the Ambassador programme and other initiatives had further encouraged buy-in at the local level. Some of the main cross-border benefits related to a common methodology and an excellent working relationship between and across partner project officers and managers, resulting in their significant professional development for future roles and new ways of working.

Watch the conference videos....

- Wessell Badenhorst, opening remarks
- Simon Baily
- Carolyn Brindle
- John Till
- Angharad Wynne
- Lisa Walchester & Barry Mellor
- Patricia Berry
- James Mahon
- Felicity Roberts & Alun Roberts
- Elaine Carroll
- Derek Healy
- John Till
- Wessell Badenhorst, closing remarks

Thanks!

The BRAND project would like to thank all the businesses, residents and visitors in Rhyl, Holyhead, Dun Laoghaire and Athy who have made this project possible.

To find out more visit the following web sites

www.rhyl-wales.co.uk
www.denbighshire.gov.uk/

www.anglesey.gov.uk/

www.dunlaoghaire.ie/
www.dlrcoco.ie/

www.kildare.ie/countycouncil/index.html
www.athy.ie/