

SPONGE2020: communications and engagement strategy

Communicating the benefits of SuDS to local stakeholders

Copper Consultancy



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Introduction



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About Copper

- Copper Consultancy is a specialist strategic communications and engagement consultancy
- We work on major infrastructure and development projects, helping to improve how projects are understood and perceived
- We are working with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to build local awareness and support for SPONGE2020 as a key element of Southend's climate resilience



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Southend SPONGE 2020

Key communications aims are to:

- Inform and engage the public and key local stakeholders to achieve public buy-in
- Create a supportive environment for construction
- Communicate the benefits of the project and educate the wider public about Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and environmental issues facing Southend
- Strengthen existing community links through the provision of environmentally friendly and visually appealing public places
- Encourage the implementation of adaptation measures in the homes/workplaces of local stakeholders
- Deliver long-term sustainable water management

Target audiences

- Residents and businesses directly affected by SuDS pilot sites
- Key influencers within central Southend who we want to keep informed of the proposals
- Schools/youth groups to target with wider education activity linked to the SPONGE2020 project

Strategy

- Our strategy will focus on communicating the benefits of the SPONGE2020 project and educating the public on wider climate change issues
- We will explain to stakeholders how SuDS is being implemented in Southend and keep them updated over the course of the project
- We will raise awareness of what this project is trying to achieve and how interested parties can get involved
- Through social media and a project-specific website, we will promote the project and provide relevant information on climate change, flood risks and SuDS
- We will also engage with the media, presenting a clear and tangible project story and show them why this project is important

A phased approach to implementation

Project activity will be split into three phases:

- **Phase one:** public launch
- **Phase two:** engage and inform target audiences affected by the specific areas where SuDS schemes are being brought forward
- **Phase three:** keep those directly affected by the development of SuDS solutions regularly informed of construction works

Communications tactics



Q&A document



SPONGE2020 website



Social media



Councillor and MP briefing pack

Communications tactics



Public information events



Media relations



Advertising



Direct Mail

Community engagement

We plan on focusing some of our engagement on the schools and youth groups which make up a key part of our target audience, through the following methods:

- **Education Toolkit** – an informative series of interactive activities and worksheets, which can be sent to schools and youth groups, providing information on SuDS and climate change issues
- **STEM Outreach** – identifying and contacting selected schools where the project team, supported by Copper, will deliver ‘guest lessons’ derived from our Education Toolkit



Desired outputs

As part of this project, we want to:

- Introduce SuDS to manage water flow rates and volumes of runoff to reduce the risk of flooding and reduce pollution – create attractive open spaces and better protect communities
- Deliver a successful communications programme which engages local residents, schools and businesses and makes them aware of the project benefits and their role in implementing innovative climate change adaptation measures
- Educate members of the public and provide them with up-to-date information about SuDS and climate change adaptation solutions
- Build local awareness and support for SPONGE2020, and demonstrate Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's proactive approach to implementing its own climate change solutions

Q&A

