

# Communications Strategy and Protocols



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# Introduction

This document sets out Hertfordshire Growth Board's Communications Strategy and Protocols. It outlines the results that the partnership aims to achieve and how effective communications and engagement will support the achievement of those outcomes.

This document intends to clarify roles and responsibilities and to provide guidance on how to handle media interest and communicate with others, both externally and internally. It aims to ensure that Hertfordshire Growth Board is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner.

In all cases, Hertfordshire Growth Board's outside communications should be:

- Open and honest
- Proactive
- Responsive
- Timely
- Accessible to all users
- SMART

## Section 1 OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Background and Context

Hertfordshire Growth Board is the way the county is working together to deliver sustainable good growth for residents, communities and businesses. With Hertfordshire's population expected to increase by 38,550 by 2043, this places increased demands for more housing, healthcare, schools and transport. This brings opportunities and challenges. Hertfordshire Growth Board is ready to respond.

Hertfordshire Growth Board is made up of the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils, the NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), Homes England, Hertfordshire Futures, the University of Hertfordshire and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Working together is how we continue our 'joint' success, create opportunities for everyone, now and in the future, and make Hertfordshire a better place to live, work and thrive.

### 1.2 Communications Principles and Objectives

Hertfordshire Growth Board understands it has a duty to provide transparent, open and accessible information about its decision-making and activities. It

has developed its own identity with a website, social media profiles and its Board Papers and Key Documents are published on its website

Its core communications principle is to raise the profile of the work of the Growth Board, its aims and achievements in driving growth and economic recovery.

Its core communication objectives are:

- To support the delivery of the key priorities identified in its Vision and Missions;
- Support dialogue with Government and investors on the growth challenges and opportunities affecting Hertfordshire with our local MPs acting as advocates in helping to deliver our Vision;
- Further strengthen the credibility and reach of the Growth Board among key stakeholders in Hertfordshire and neighbouring areas;
- Help the Growth Board to achieve the highest standards of openness and transparency;
- To be viewed as an 'exemplar' of delivery – a leader of good practice in the successful delivery of growth-related projects and priorities.

To deliver on these objectives, we will:

- Build high quality engagement and dialogue;
- Leverage the power of our Growth Board partners and their networks to communicate with residents, stakeholders and their key audiences;
- Enhance our reach and understanding of what we are trying to achieve, using internal communications channels for everyone to feel part of a collective effort;
- Strengthen our brand by gaining positive recognition of our role in delivering growth-led activities which benefit Hertfordshire, ensuring the Growth Board brand remains synonymous with credibility, integrity impact and transparency;
- Develop Growth Board campaigns of influence which are intelligence-led and are specifically targeted at influencing behaviours and decisions among key audiences (particularly government).

### **1.3 Scope**

This Communications Strategy and Protocols will apply to the following:

- Hertfordshire Growth Board members, the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils, Hertfordshire Futures, NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board and Homes England; its team; Cabinet Members and Senior Officers when referencing the work of the Growth Board; Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board (HIDB);
- Communications leads across the Growth Board partnership when promoting the work of the Growth Board;
- Partners, businesses or other organisations working in collaboration with the Growth Board.

This Communications Strategy and Protocol will apply to the following materials:

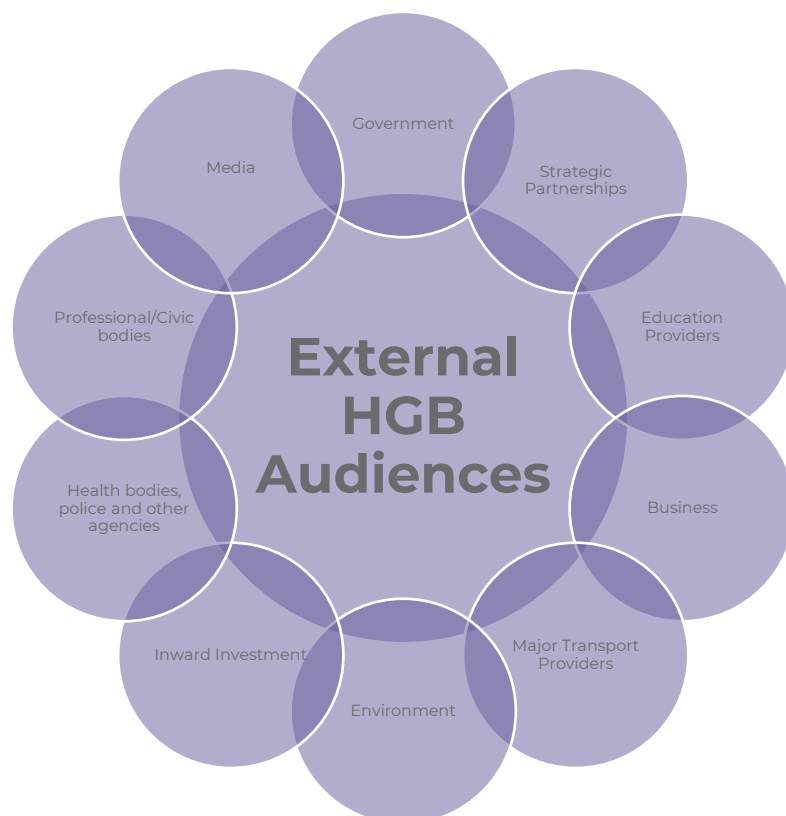
- Press releases and statements made to the media;
- Publicity by all parties such as website articles, blogs, newsletters, leaflets which reference Hertfordshire Growth Board activity or support;
- Publications which are produced by consultants contracted to Hertfordshire Growth Board.

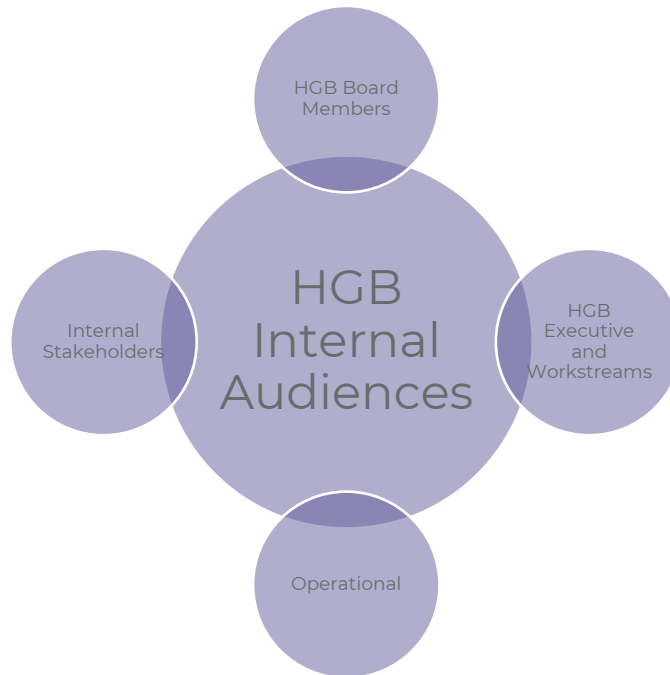
#### 1.4 Target Audiences

The ambition is for as many engaged audiences and partners as possible to understand the value of Hertfordshire Growth Board and to become its ambassadors, promoting the brand to as wide an audience reach as possible.

Key target audiences are therefore split into two categories:

1. an external list directed at Government, strategic partnerships, business, health bodies and police; civic bodies; charities; education providers; think tanks, investors and other interested external partners.
2. an internal list where there is existing buy-in through membership of the Growth Board and whose networks form a critical channel of marketing reach for the Growth Board, ensuring information is disseminated geographically and that there is feedback to Hertfordshire Growth Board.





The sub-categories are as follows:

**External:**

**Government:** All relevant Government departments via Government Ministers, SPADS and local MPs/Councillors;

**Strategic Partnerships:** County Councils Network; East of England LGA, South East England Councils, Business Board Network etc.

**Education providers:** University of Hertfordshire/FE Colleges and training institutions; schools;

**Business:** major corporates; established SMEs; research institutions (RVC/BRE/Rothamsted);

**Major transport providers:** Highways Agency; Network Rail and other rail and bus operators; Luton and Stansted Airport;

**Environment:** Environment Agency; pressure groups: Campaign to Protect Rural England; Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Lee Valley Regional Park; Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust etc.

**Inward Investment:** developers and investors via Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board (HIDB); Herts IQ Enterprise Zone;

**Health bodies, police and other agencies:** Integrated Care Board (ICB) and health providers; Police and Crime Commission; Housing associations; DWP;

**Voluntary and Community Sector:** Herts CVS, Hertfordshire Community Foundation, faith forums and general public;

**SMEs:** SMEs and start-ups via business support/membership organisations (IOD; FSB; COC; ICAEW); Business Improvement Districts (BIDS);

**Professional/Civic bodies and think tanks/lobbying groups:** TCPA, RIBA, ICAEW, Localis, DevoConnect etc

**Local residents and community groups**

**Media:** Local, Regional, National and Trade

**Internal:**

**Growth Board Members** and Herts Leaders/CEX Groups;

**Growth Board Executive and Workstreams:** Delivery Programme Steering Group; Joint Strategic Planning (JSP) and Southern and Northern (East-West) Growth Corridors; HIPP; Mission Leads

**Operational:** Heads of Communications (local authorities/Herts Futures; ICB; PCC); Heads of Service;

**Internal stakeholders:** Herts Policy & Partnership network; Hertfordshire Economic Development Group (HEDOG); Employees; Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum; Hertfordshire Property Partnership

### 1.5 Channels – How to reach these key audiences

Determining the channels through which to share communications or campaigns is essential to work out the right methodology to get the right message to the right audiences in the best way – and at the best time.

Different target markets access information in different ways, and any communication strategy needs to ensure that it uses the most appropriate channel to reach its target market. This is why many organisations use a multiplicity of channels to ensure messages are as widely disseminated as possible among local communities. Accessibility is key to ensure that those outside of the digital loop are not excluded. Appendix A sets out key channels of reach modelled on best practice.

Hertfordshire Growth Board's joint governance arrangements enables it to extend its network of reach exponentially via its partners. This is one of its most critical channels of communication, providing both excellent access to the business market as well as the local knowledge and perspective to enable a vital feedback loop which underpins the Growth Board's responsive decision-making through the inclusion of partner and grass-roots engagement. As a result it is listed here as a key channel of reach.

- Board meetings, minutes and key documents accessible via HGB website;
- HGB stakeholder e-bulletin and internal cascade; local authority newsletters to residents;
- MP/Ministerial engagement via face to face/letters; regular briefings and Westminster receptions;
- Social Media via HGB platforms and partner channels; paid-for advertising;
- Press releases distributed to local, regional, national and trade media;
- Positioning HGB key players and champions/ambassadors (e.g.: Chair, Board members and officers) as speakers at key events and conferences; interviews;
- Events – virtual or physical, staging for milestone events where target audiences are invited; sector and business-focused roundtables;
- Internal briefings for HGB partners and senior officers.

*[See Appendix 1: Communication Channels]*

### 1.6 Accessibility

This strategy will meet, as far as possible, accessibility requirements as set out by The Government Digital Service to ensure its website and associated materials can be accessed by as many people as possible. This includes those with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, and impaired hearing. This will be reviewed as new documents are created and on an ongoing basis

as part of the management of the website and the online presence for Hertfordshire Growth Board.

### **1.7 Success Criteria**

The success of this strategy should be assessed with reference to:

- improvements in Hertfordshire Growth Board's profile;
- the strength of the Hertfordshire Growth Board brand;
- the breadth and depth of Hertfordshire Growth Board's engagement with target audiences;
- outcomes in decisions made by the target audiences that truly contribute to Hertfordshire Growth Board's strategic priorities.

Key data that we will use to inform judgements on our progress and performance include:

- the range of public and private partners who are engaged in the work of Hertfordshire Growth Board and attend events;
- the frequency with which key stakeholders' advocate for the work of Hertfordshire Growth Board in their own communications;
- the number of Hertfordshire Growth Board newsletter subscribers, and the number who engage with the content of the newsletter (open rates and click-through rates);
- the number of people accessing [hertfordshiregrowthboard.com](http://hertfordshiregrowthboard.com) and the average duration of each visit;
- the number of Twitter followers, impressions and retweets;
- the number of LinkedIn connections, likes and re-posts;
- frequency and tone of coverage in local, regional, national and trade press.

## **Section 2 ORGANISATIONAL MESSAGES**

### **2.1 Our values**

- Shared progress with no person or place left behind – always seeing Hertfordshire as a whole;
- Responsible and sustainable growth without compromising people, planet or place - always managing the impacts of our actions;
- Active stewardship of place and people – always in touch with the issues that face our communities.

### **2.2 About Us (Hertfordshire Growth Board Boilerplate used as Note to Editors)**

#### **Hertfordshire Growth Board**

Hertfordshire Growth Board is the way the county is working together to deliver sustainable good growth for residents, communities and businesses. With Hertfordshire's population expected to increase by 38,550 by 2043, this places increased demands for more housing, healthcare, schools and transport. This brings opportunities and challenges. Hertfordshire Growth Board is ready to respond.

Hertfordshire Growth Board is made up of the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils, the NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB),



Homes England, Hertfordshire Futures, the University of Hertfordshire and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Working together is how we continue our 'joint' success, create opportunities for everyone, now and in the future, and make Hertfordshire a better place to live, work and thrive.

### **2.3 Hertfordshire Growth Board Partner communications**

This section sets out a series of guidelines intended to codify the approach to communications to be taken through Hertfordshire Growth Board, and to make clear the expectations of Growth Board partners.

#### **When Growth Board partners will use 'Hertfordshire Growth Board'**

The Hertfordshire Growth Board name and identity should be used by Growth Board partners to promote and publicise projects and activities and to celebrate milestones, successes and achievements. It should be used in cases where the projects/activities/achievements:

- are clearly identified in line with Hertfordshire Growth Board priorities;
- and supports Hertfordshire Growth Board key messages.

Where individual partner activities/achievements relate to Hertfordshire Growth Board priorities and messages, partners are encouraged, wherever possible, to reference that this supports the work of the wider Hertfordshire Growth Board Partnership.

#### **How Growth Board partners will use 'Hertfordshire Growth Board'**

**Publicity:** Where the Hertfordshire Growth Board name and identity are used, there is an expectation that:

- Hertfordshire Growth Board's boilerplate **2.2** and a link to the Hertfordshire Growth Board website and media contact details should be included in any 'Notes to Editors'; and
- the Hertfordshire Growth Board project team should be notified in advance – allowing them to contribute, where relevant, and to enable onward promotion.

**Social:** Hertfordshire Growth Board members and communication leads will promote Hertfordshire Growth Board through their networks on social media and through online channels, particularly LinkedIn. This should mean:

- following Hertfordshire Growth Board's LinkedIn Company Page, as well as connecting with Hertfordshire Growth Board's LinkedIn Profile;
- actively engaging with Hertfordshire Growth Board content by liking, commenting, and sharing this with wider networks to increase exposure;
- signing up to the Hertfordshire Growth Board digital newsletter and sharing this within organisations and with relevant contacts;
- keeping up to date with Hertfordshire Growth Board's press releases, which detail its activities and that of its partners, through the News section on the website.

A suite of digital assets have been created to support HGB partner digital communications. *[See Section 3]*

**Digital/web** All Growth Board partners will carry the Joint Statement at **2.2** and information about Hertfordshire Growth Board on their own website, and provide links to the Hertfordshire Growth Board website.

**Brand:** Any use of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Logo should be visible and used in accordance with the latest relevant brand guidelines.

**Media:** Requests from the media will be coordinated by the Hertfordshire Growth Board's Project Team.

### **Managing collective communications**

**Working in the open:** The success of Hertfordshire Growth Board depends upon Growth Board partners working collectively to promote areas of common interest. There is an expectation that communications leads will work in the open – sharing, communications materials by default.

**Collective planning:** Hertfordshire Growth Board project team will maintain a high-level forward plan to ensure that the use of the Hertfordshire Growth Board name and identity in Growth Board partner communications is consistent and co-ordinated. To support this, Growth Board partner communications leads will share those elements of their local communications plans that are relevant to Hertfordshire Growth Board's priorities and key messages.

Where the Hertfordshire Growth Board partnership undertakes collective communication activity – i.e. activity that is distinct from the work of individual partners – it will be the responsibility of communication leads to support this by:

- sharing local materials, stories, photos, videos etc to support the collective work; and
- promoting the collective work using their own communications channels.

**Behaviours:** It is important that Growth Board partners communicate in a way that is consistent with their membership of the Hertfordshire Growth Board partnership. All parties should aim to communicate in ways which:

- positively promote the work of the partnership, the importance of its priorities and its key messages;
- do not disadvantage other partners within the Hertfordshire Growth Board;
- upholds the Hertfordshire Growth Board group's reputation as credible, reliable and authoritative – avoiding all actions and communication that could bring the Growth Board, or individual members, into disrepute; and
- ensures that comments on the policies of other organisations, including central government, local authorities and other agencies, are objective and politically neutral.

### **2.4 Who are the Hertfordshire Growth Board partners?**

Broxbourne Borough Council  
Dacorum Borough Council  
East Herts District Council  
Hertfordshire County Council  
Hertsmere Borough Council  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
St Albans City and District Council  
Stevenage Borough Council  
Three Rivers District Council  
Watford Borough Council  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
Hertfordshire Futures

Integrated Care Board (ICB)  
University of Hertfordshire  
Police and Crime Commissioner  
Homes England

[Meet the members](#)

## **2.5 Corporate Identity**

Our communications will always use the appropriate and correct corporate identity and style as detailed in Hertfordshire Growth Board's Brand Guidelines and this Communications Strategy and Protocols. Our responses, and approach to policies and services, will be factual, objective and accurate. Comments on policies of other organisations including central government, other local authorities and agencies, will be objective and politically neutral. Requests from the media will be coordinated by Hertfordshire Growth Board's project team. Official responses will be given by Hertfordshire Growth Board's Chair/Vice Chairs or Director.

## **2.6 Tone of Voice**

Hertfordshire Growth Board is a 'collaboration for growth'. We are precise and clear in our communications and the tone of voice is positive, determined and smart. Where possible, we adopt a friendly and engaging tone, using first person (we).

# **SECTION 3 BRANDING GUIDELINES**

## **3.1**

[Branding Guidelines](#)

## **3.2 Contact**

Lucy Gravatt,  
Director of Advocacy and Partnerships  
Hertfordshire Growth Board  
T. 07747 762698 E. [lucy.gravatt@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.gravatt@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 1

### Communication channels: Part 1

GOVERNMENT DEPTS & MINISTERS/LOCAL MPs	LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEMBERS	STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROUPS & EDUCATION PROVIDERS/ TRANSPORT OPERATORS/ HEALTH AND POLICE	BUSINESS: MAJOR CORPORATES/ INSTITUTIONS	BUSINESS: ESTABLISHED SMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email/ Phonecall</li> <li>1-2-1 meetings</li> <li>Briefing Papers MP bulletins</li> <li>Events: Party Conferences; House of Commons/ Westminster receptions; sector dinners and roundtables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face to face presentations Follow up Briefing Notes; HGB Board Papers</li> <li>Events and partnership forums</li> <li>Individual stakeholder bulletins to co-ordinate messaging</li> <li>HGB website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face to face presentations</li> <li>Emails</li> <li>Individual briefings where required to provide targeted messaging</li> <li>Events (platforms/ panel discussions)</li> <li>Research and annual reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector roundtables /dinners</li> <li>Emails 1-2-1 meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business membership and support provider events</li> <li>B2B marketing</li> <li>Tailored content for partner sites</li> <li>HGB website</li> <li>Social media posts</li> <li>Paid for social media advertising</li> <li>Sponsorship</li> <li>Email marketing campaigns</li> <li>Informal networking events</li> </ul>
PROFESSIONAL & CIVIC BODIES/THINK TANKS/PRESSURE GROUPS	VOL & COMMUNITY SECTOR/HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS	EDUCATION (SCHOOLS); GENERAL PUBLIC	INTERNAL: INFLUENCERS	INTERNAL EMPLOYEES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Events (platforms/ panel discussions/ roundtables)</li> <li>Informal networking and ambassador events</li> <li>Research and annual reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Events (platforms/panel discussions/ roundtables/ partnership forums)</li> <li>Informal networking</li> <li>Research and annual reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media channels</li> <li>Email marketing campaigns/ HGB website</li> <li>Social media posts</li> <li>Paid for social media advertising</li> <li>HCC Schools Channel and Primary Times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HGB workstream/Missions updates</li> <li>Face to face presentations</li> <li>Project management access and overview</li> <li>Feedback consultations</li> <li>HGB Board Papers circulated in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intranet Lunch and Learn briefing sessions/ webinars</li> <li>Internal channels</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Email updates/staff bulletins</li> <li>HGB ambassador group (via comms leads)</li> </ul>

## Communications channels: part 2

WEBSITES	CONTENT
HGB website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish and promote co-ordinated marketing materials, such as press releases, blog articles, vlogs and board papers/key docs; livestreamed HGB meetings.</li> </ul>
Internal stakeholder websites (HCC/Districts/LEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socialise HGB project delivery and partner updates, post PR and signpost to HGB website;</li> <li>Post blog/vlogs from HGB members on shared values/activity</li> </ul>
Other external stakeholder websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socialise key concepts/updates and signpost to HGB website</li> </ul>
EMAIL	CONTENT
Project updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalised email updates from HGB Chair/Deputy Chairs to key influencers and shared with HGB CEX/Leaders Group;</li> <li>Key HGB project delivery updates and messaging socialised across partner e-bulletins</li> </ul>
HGB Partner Bulletins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular and timely HGB Vision and Missions updates to share across Local Authority areas.</li> </ul>
MEDIA & MARKETING MATERIAL	CONTENT
Press releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate HGB boilerplate and communications protocol to comms leads and dynamic content calendar; keep updated media and comms lead contacts list;</li> <li>Publish and promote coordinated HGB press releases with tailored content for key audience groups linked to key HGB Vision and Missions project milestones</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree HGB media spokespeople and key influencers for broadcast opportunities and provide proactive/reactive responses to emerging national news situations, where appropriate</li> </ul>
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socialise key HGB messaging for external and internal stakeholders ; livestreamed meeting updates.</li> </ul>
DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA	CONTENT
Digital toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a suite of social media content and digital assets to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factsheet summary</li> <li>Key audience messages and social media posts</li> <li>Digital assets; HGB logo/photos/website/social media and email banners</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
EVENTS	CONTENT
Internal and external events, meeting and networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage promotion to and within their networks using identified HGB ambassadors;</li> <li>Utilise wider networking opportunities to socialise key messages</li> </ul>

