Suggested LEN Internal Communications Strategy

This document outlines some suggestions on what you could include in your internal communications strategy to help create a strong working network.

The IEN would like to work with each Network individually to ensure that the communications strategy works for them and the LEN in question.

Creating a working network is a long term goal, and these steps can be adopted as it suits each Network.

This is a living document. All input and feedback welcome.

LEN to member communication

The face of your LEN

What is your mouthpiece for your LEN?

Consider a platform that can be found by the public, such as a [Facebook Page](#) and/or a [Twitter account](#).

For getting information directly to members, a method that requires them to sign up is suggested, such as a newsletter.

Newsletters

Members Newsletter

This is where individuals discover what your LEN is doing, and how they can get involved. It goes out to LEN members to inform them of LEN work and actions as well as other pertinent information such as local green events, PPN meetings they can attend, PPN vacancies, funding opportunities, etc.

Communicating with each other

Mailing lists are an effective way to communicate. Members can use their own email addresses for these.

IEN mailing lists

Currently, the IEN holds mailing lists of people who are interested in the LEN and other environmental news in each county. These can be used by LENs to communicate.

However, it is advised that each LEN creates a mailing list that is under their control in order to be able to know every individual member on their list, and create a stronger working network.

We suggest that two mailing lists are set up, both serving separate but important functions; A members mailing list, and a mailing list for those who are involved in the groups organisation.

Members mailing list

As a network, it is important for members to be able to communicate with each other. There are many options for online platforms that members can use. Two good options to allow communication between members are: Facebook Group, Internal mailing list via Google Groups.

See how to set up a Facebook Group here, and how to set up a Google Group here.

LEN organisers mailing list

Those involved in the coordinating of the group should have a way to communicate between meetings on a separate channel from member communications. There can be occasional invites to members to ask if they would like to get involved in helping run events and other activities taken on by organisers.

You could use a Google Group as mentioned above. For immediate contact, WhatsApp groups are very useful. These use phone numbers instead of email addresses.

Cross county Communication between LENs

The IEN would like to see easy communication available between LENs nationwide, in particular between LEN organisers.

LENs could then share info on best practice, upcoming events, policy documents they are working on, and more. They could ask for help from other LENs who may have already done similar actions and can also collaborate on projects to deliver stronger outcomes.

The IEN is currently working on creating a dedicated website for LENs, which would include a structure within it for cross county communication. We will update you on this soon. At the moment, there is a private Facebook Group for use by all LEN organisers. Email catherine@ien.ie to be added to this group.

Communication between LENs and IEN

The IEN can provide structures and examples of best practice for all LENs, information on national and regional events, and funding that may be of interest to individual LENs and their members.

The LENs can provide information to the IEN on events and meetings being run by an LEN that we can promote, and successful examples of your work that can be replicated by other LENs.

Gathering Data

In order to build an effective network, it would be helpful to have a record who is involved in your group, and of their interests, as this would allow the LEN to get in touch with people regarding specific interests. It would be particularly helpful to know who in the LEN may be interested in getting involved with the Public Participation Network when there are vacancies. Here is an example of the idea in practice:

When signing up for membership, you could provide a questionnaire that members must fill in. The information gathered will be useful to your LEN as you develop your Network. Hosting these questions could be done on a membership sign up form on a website, or through customising sign up forms on Mailchimp. A sign up form could include questions such as:

- Name
- Group(s) (if applicable)
- Interests (Areas you may be interested in volunteering in)
- Expertise (subjects you are comfortable offering advice on. This does not need to only be environmental. Eg biodiversity, litter management, cycling infrastructure, marketing, funding applications, event organisation.)
- Are you available to give advice, or to volunteer locally? Advice/Volunteer/Both (Please give location for volunteering if you wish)
- Are you interested in making change through the council through the Public Participation Network? Yes/No. (If yes, you will be contacted directly when vacancies on committees are available.)
- Email address

NB: If you are gathering data (even just an email address), remember to include a disclaimer which states why you are gathering the data and what it will be used for. With each email sent, there should always be an option given to let subscribers know how to unsubscribe.

Additional ideas

Each LEN should have an official email address to allow easy contact. Ie. An email address for the group rather than that of an individual, such as sligonetwork@gmail.com. Click here to see how to create a free gmail account.

The simplest way to create a newsletter is to send your members a group email from your LENs email address. **NB:** If you are doing this, you must be sure to include every email in the 'bcc' box.

Another way to create a newsletter is to use an online newsletter software. *Suggested newsletter software:* Mailchimp.com is free and easy to use. Alternatively, you can send a group email but you must ensure that all email addresses are sent in the 'bcc' box.

Suggested software for graphic design: www.canva.com. This is a free and easy to use site which allows you to create graphics such as posters, presentations, and social media graphics.