

Communications Plan:
Traditional Music Forum

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About Ruthless Research

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

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Introduction

The Traditional Music Forum, supported by Creative Scotland, is a network of more than 50 traditional music organisations based in Scotland, ranging from professionals to amateurs and from formal to informal groups. These include clubs, festivals, community music projects, academic institutions, promoters, agents, publishers and labels. The Traditional Music Forum aims to advocate the place for traditional music at the heart of Scottish life, and to promote the widest possible access to it.

This document is designed to set out a practical communications plan for Traditional Music Forum, based on a strategic rationale.

Objectives

Objectives of the Traditional Music Forum

The following objectives of the Traditional Music Forum are taken from the Traditional Music Forum Business Plan (2011 – 2013).

PURPOSE: The Traditional Music Forum exists to advocate for the role of traditional music at the heart of Scottish life and culture, and to make the case for the right to create, access, and participate in the traditional music of Scotland.

VISION: To see traditional music supported and developed, maintained and renewed as an integral part of Scottish culture, and made available to all who want to access it.

VALUES: The Traditional Music Forum aims, on behalf of the traditional music community in Scotland, to be:

- Visible – and available, a first point of contact;
- Vocal – a credible and authoritative advocate for traditional music;
- Valuable – an effective representative of traditional music organisations in Scotland.

MISSION: The Traditional Music Forum aims to create:

- A climate of acceptance and active support for traditional music in Scotland;
- Increased awareness among the general public of traditional music;
- An effective infrastructure for the development of traditional music, leading to greater opportunities for participation in communities throughout Scotland;
- A network of traditional music organisations.

AIMS: Traditional Music Forum plans to:

- Develop and build the organisation so that it credibly represents the sector;
- Become a coherent channel of communication between the traditional music community and Scottish government, local government, public agencies, and other civic institutions;
- Raise the profile of traditional music in the media;
- Carry out robust and credible research;
- Advise on, initiate and carry through projects aligned to the creation of an effective traditional music infrastructure.

Objectives of the Traditional Music Forum communications plan

The objectives of the Traditional Music Forum's communications plan are to:

- Set out stakeholder relationships and the current context at Traditional Music Forum;
- Translate the objectives of the Traditional Music Forum into a communications strategy;
- Propose a practical and achievable action plan for Traditional Music Forum communications going forward.

Key stakeholder groups

Based on the context outlined above, Traditional Music Forum has identified four key groups of stakeholders with whom it wants to communicate in order to achieve its objectives.

Traditional Music Forum members

Traditional Music Forum currently has a membership of c50 individuals and organisations, paying a fee of £20 per year. Traditional Music Forum wishes to communicate with current members to:

- Tell them about Traditional Music Forum activities;
- Demonstrate the worth of Traditional Music Forum membership;
- Create and maintain a network of like-minded individuals and organisations;
- Stimulate loyalty and encourage membership renewal.

The wider traditional music and traditional arts community

Traditional Music Forum wishes to communicate with members of the wider traditional music and traditional arts community to:

- Tell them about Traditional Music Forum activities;
- Work together towards shared goals;
- Create an effective traditional music infrastructure;
- Advocate for, represent and promote the sector;
- Provide a visible point of contact for interested parties;
- Encourage uptake of Traditional Music Forum membership.

The media and relevant public bodies

Traditional Music Forum wishes to communicate with the media and relevant public bodies to:

- Become a coherent channel of communication between the traditional music community and Scottish Government, local government, public agencies, and other civic institutions;
- Be a credible and authoritative advocate for the role of traditional music in Scotland;
- Make the case for the right to create, access, and participate in the traditional music of Scotland;
- Provide a visible point of contact for interested parties;
- Raise the profile of traditional music in the media.

The general public

Traditional Music Forum wishes to communicate with members of the general public to:

- Increase awareness of traditional music amongst the general public;
- Create a climate of acceptance and active support for traditional music in Scotland;
- Embed traditional music as an integral part of Scottish culture.

The current state of stakeholder relationships

Attitudes and opinions

In 2011, a stakeholder survey was undertaken to source the views of members and non-members of the Traditional Music Forum.

Levels of familiarity with the work of the Traditional Music Forum were reasonable, and were unsurprisingly higher for members (77%) than for non-members (27%).

When presented with the values and objectives of the Traditional Music Forum, the views of the members and the wider community were well aligned with the values of the Traditional Music Forum indicating that plans for the future are appropriate and relevant.

Members were particularly keen to be part of an organisation that is greater than the sum of its parts, where they can collaborate with others who share their vision and benefit from strategic activities that they would not be able to do themselves. The members were most supportive of the involvement of Traditional Music Forum with strategic activities and in particular raising the profile of traditional music, responding to current issues and representing the sector. The members felt that Traditional Music Forum should be making strategic alliances and engaging with associated industries such as tourism and education. They were also supportive of Traditional Music Forum communicating with the general public.

Just over half of members said that they were satisfied with their membership and a further third said that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Crucially, none of the members said that they were dissatisfied with their membership of the Traditional Music Forum.

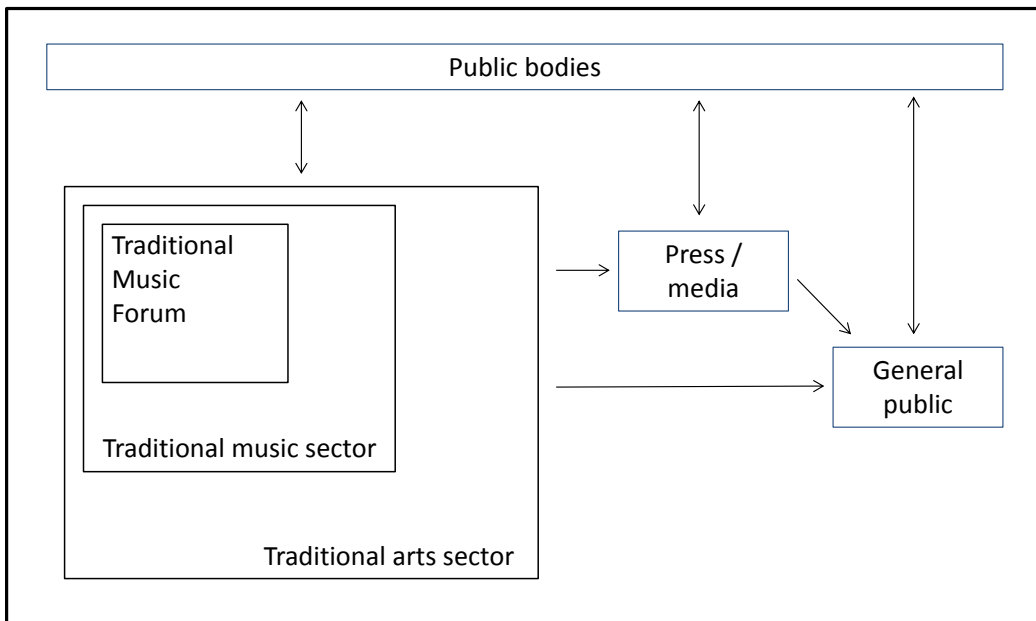
In conclusion, the Traditional Music Forum are working with all of the stakeholder groups and have undertaken significant project activity that has been welcomed by the sector, but messages about strategies and progress are not being disseminated in a sufficiently coherent manner to ensure that the broader objectives of the Traditional Music Forum are being met.

Information gaps

In particular, the evaluation showed that there Traditional Music Forum would be more effective if it was able to fill the following information gaps:

- Raise levels of awareness about work undertaken by the Traditional Music Forum;
- Demonstrate the relevance of Traditional Music Forum activities to members;
- Demonstrate the value of Traditional Music Forum membership.

Patterns of influence



Impact on Traditional Music Forum

A communications action plan has been prepared based on Traditional Music Forum working within the stated framework of influence and filling the stated information gaps. The intended impact of undertaking these actions is to:

- Improve the flow of information between Traditional Music Forum and its stakeholders;
- Raise the profile of Traditional Music Forum;
- Increase member satisfaction with Traditional Music Forum;
- Encourage new members to join Traditional Music Forum.

Potential threats to the success of the communications plan

The following threats to the success of the communications action plan relate both to threats within the Traditional Music Forum and challenges faced by its stakeholders:

- Limited resources (time, money, skills);
- Changes to the funding / policy environment;
- Competing priorities.

Communications messages underpinning the plan

To meet the requirements already outlined, it will be necessary to position Traditional Music Forum using clear, consistent, credible, and appealing communications messages that influence perceptions of the Traditional Music Forum. This should elicit a:

- Change in attitude: Traditional Music Forum is a valuable organisation, and what it represents is important.
- Change in behaviour: Stakeholders wish to interact with Traditional Music Forum.

The following key communications messages have been selected to appropriately position Traditional Music Forum for each stakeholder group and should underpin the practical communications action plan outlined in the next section.

Key communications messages for Traditional Music Forum members:

- The work of the Traditional Music Forum is relevant to you as a member;
- Traditional Music Forum represents you and your values, and is responsive to your needs;
- Traditional Music Forum is undertaking strategic work on your behalf;
- Traditional Music Forum membership is valuable to your organisation;
- Traditional Music Forum is a network that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Key communications messages for the wider traditional music and traditional arts community

- Traditional Music Forum membership could be valuable to your organisation;
- Other messages as for members.

Key communication messages for the media and relevant public bodies:

- Traditional music is an integral part of Scottish culture;
- Traditional Music Forum represents the views of the traditional music community;
- Traditional Music Forum is advocating for the right of everyone to create, access, and participate in the traditional music of Scotland;
- Traditional Music Forum is a credible expert in the area of traditional music.

Key communication messages for the general public:

- Traditional music is an integral part of Scottish culture;
- Traditional Music Forum is advocating for the right of everyone to create, access, and participate in the traditional music of Scotland.

Common factors underpinning the plan

When considering the communications action plan and preparing future communications, the following common factors underpin all activities:

- Consistency – presenting a strong, recognisable and coherent brand.
- Personality – communicating Traditional Music Forum’s passion and individuality.
- Dialogue – encouraging stakeholders to interact with Traditional Music Forum and one another.
- Collaboration – working with or within the processes of other established organisations.
- Efficiency – using content from one communications channel to feed another.
- Dynamic content – keeping content and channels current and updated.
- User generated content – encouraging stakeholders to share their information rather than generating it all internally.
- Subtlety – drawing stakeholder attention to Traditional Music Forum and its work without giving them the ‘hard sell’.