

## IWC COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY

### *The Secretariat*

#### **Introduction**

The Commission began work to improve its communications capability in 2012 with the relaunch of the website. This was part of an initiative to improve transparency and increase understanding of the IWC. A communications work programme began in 2013 and is ongoing.

#### **Objectives**

The overall objectives of IWC communication work remain:

- a) Cohesion – consistent and professional presentation of the IWC.
- b) Dialogue – mechanisms to facilitate regular sharing of information across the large, internal audience.
- c) Dynamism – generation and timely dissemination of news and developments at the IWC.
- d) Accessibility – availability of succinct, easily-digestible and image-rich information about the IWC.

#### **Resources**

The work outlined below was delivered in the intersessional period (Sept-14-Oct 16) within an overall budget of £2000.

#### **Audiences**

From the beginning of this work programme in 2013, the IWC audience has been divided into three groups.

- The first is the core internal audience: the 88 member governments.
- The second is a large group comprising scientists, inter, regional and non-governmental organisations and other collaborators. As both observers and contributors to the work of the IWC, this group is treated as both an internal and external audience.
- The third group is an external audience of media and members of the public. The global reach of the IWC makes this group almost limitless.

Whilst some tailoring of material to a particular audience is essential (e.g. public correspondence) limited resources mean that much of our communications material is aimed at multiple audiences (e.g. the quarterly news bulletin).

#### **The IWC 'Brand'**

Following the logo update and introduction of a house style guide in 2014, a set of templates is now available to anyone representing the IWC. Templates include power point presentations, report covers and letterheads, and help bring coherence to the many different initiatives operating under the IWC umbrella.

This year, a special 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary version of the logo was created, to be used for a period of approximately four months, from one month ahead of IWC66 until the end of 2016. (The actual anniversary date is December 2<sup>nd</sup>).

#### **Website**

There is an ongoing programme to update the website. To meet the varying needs of website users, content is divided into three separate page levels. The first is introductory, with an emphasis on accessible language and strong supporting images. The second level provides additional detail and uses more technical language, and the third gives access to source documents (e.g. workshop reports). Not all levels are required for all topics and this longstanding approach was developed to allow flexibility.

During this intersessional period, new pages have been developed explaining the structure, governance and funding of the IWC. These are contained within a revamped 'Commission' section. The update of the 'Conservation and Management' section has been completed, with a large number of pages revised including on the different types of whaling, the Revised Management Procedure, climate change, anthropogenic sound and Conservation Management Plans. A new section has also been created on the Small Cetaceans Conservation Research Fund.

We have begun to make use of some free analytics to learn as much as possible about use of our website. This information confirms that the website is our most important communications tool. It handles up to 10,000 views per day and has attracted visitors from 235 countries. The data also shows that two of the most popular pages are the Population Estimates and Status of Whales pages and so the update will focus next on the 'Whales' section of the website.

Approximately two news features are added to the home page each month, depending on activity reported to us from around the Commission. Images are again an important component here. We are also increasingly linking to the websites of some partner organisations (e.g. IUCN, SPREP).

### **News Bulletin**

The quarterly news bulletin aims to provide a regular update on activity around the Commission and is distributed to all three audience groups (approximately 3,000 people). It has also been used in the past when schools and colleges request information about the IWC.

### **Intersessional Report**

Following a trial version in 2014, the new 'Intersessional Report Series' was launched in Sept 16. The first report was published one month before the start of IWC66. This launch edition also forms the centrepiece of the IWC's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

The new report series aims to offer something to each of the three audience groups: a succinct overview of the last two year's activity for the internal and internal/external audiences, and an accessible introduction to the IWC for media and the public. In keeping with the Commission's paperless objective, this was circulated as an electronic document. Recognising the likelihood that some would prefer to read in hard copy, it is in a print-ready format, designed to print faithfully to the original layout.

### **Subject Leaflets**

Two short leaflets have also been produced, one on the work of the Global Whale Entanglement Network and one on the work of the Small Cetaceans Conservation Research Fund. These are different in terms of format and objectives, but both aim to explain their work to an uninitiated audience, and to enthuse potential future funders.

The Intersessional Report and the two leaflets have all been produced in accordance with the IWC style guide and are the beginnings of a coherent set of 'public facing' IWC documents.

### **Media**

The majority of IWC media work is reactive at present. A set of core scripts has been developed and is used to respond to media enquiries. Press releases have been issued (e.g. on the Global Entanglement Network and the Ship Strikes Database) but significant resources are usually required to 'sell' a press release and it's judged that, at present, our focus is more effectively directed elsewhere.

### **Social Media**

The IWC currently has no social media presence. The resources required to develop and maintain a genuinely constructive presence would be relatively significant but we are continuing to explore whether there are ways of developing a low effort and low risk presence.

### **Public Correspondence**

The introduction of a semi-automated system of responding to enquiries from members of the public has proved successful in reducing the amount of public correspondence by over three-quarters. The system was introduced in 2014 and channels enquirers to information on topics of most frequent public interest. It provides members of the public with more timely information and has allowed Secretariat time to be re-directed.

### **Looking Ahead**

Immediately following the Commission meeting, communications work will focus on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IWC.

As mentioned above, the 'Whales' section of the website will be redesigned and updated as a priority. This will incorporate a set of species illustrations which have been commissioned for use in the Whale Watching Handbook, and for use more widely.

Another priority is a formal assessment of the pros, cons and resources required to maintain a worthwhile social media presence.

We will also continue to seek contacts in other regional or specialist organisations with whom we can pool communications resources, particularly in terms of proactive media work.