

The logo for the CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER. It features the text "CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019" in white on a black background, followed by "GOLD WINNER" in large, multi-colored letters (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Construction, Property or Infrastructure Campaign

Company: Weber Shandwick Scotland and CityFibre

Entry title: Building Gigabit Britain

Brief and objectives:

CityFibre is the UK's largest alternative provider of full fibre digital infrastructure. It builds, owns and operates networks across the UK, and currently holds assets in more than 50 cities nationally.

Currently, just 7 per cent of UK premises can access a full fibre connection, and until recently, services over CityFibre's networks were only available to public sector partners and businesses. However, as part of its mission to bring full fibre to 5m premises by 2025, it has partnered with Vodafone to deliver the first 1m connections to 12 towns and cities.

Communications objectives:

- Inform and enthuse Gigabit City communities about the benefits of full-fibre connectivity
- Increase demand for full-fibre roll-out amongst all users – home, business, public sector, mobile
- Manage perception of build project and maintain a positive brand profile
- Maintain policymakers' support for full-fibre roll-out and demonstrate CityFibre's leadership in digital infrastructure deployment.

The idea, research and planning:

To get close to local residents, public sector stakeholders, local government representatives and the local business community in each of the 12 cities, we:

Conducted full city audits:

These outlined key media, potential ambassadors and CSR partnerships and local digital talking points such as tech employers and recent projects or accolades (e.g Peterborough had won smart city of the year).

Commissioned quantitative research:

The survey of >2000 consumers and business users highlighted the important role the digital connectivity plays in peoples' lives and their frustration when it's slow or unreliable. It also revealed their desire to benefit more from it beyond email, social media and internet shopping.

Produced audience portraits:

Building profiles of residents at different ages and life stages, business professionals and public sector individuals representing various interests helped us identify the issues that concerned them most and map the channels they were most likely to use.

These activities led us to our platform - Digital Leaders.

Our audiences shared a desire to see their community recognised for something good, a general frustration with unreliable connectivity and an interest in digital benefits such as homeworking.

By living and working in one of the first UK locations to benefit from full fibre, our communities were leading Britain's digital transformation. Our idea was to create excitement and drive in my marking each milestone as a cause for celebration.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

A hyper-local approach combining stakeholder advocacy with targeted media engagement has been central to our success.

For each location we developed plans with at least one milestone announcement, one stakeholder engagement and one community engagement each quarter. This allowed key messages surrounding each milestone - such as dig start –to be adapted for each audience and amplified across relevant channels.

Rooted in good old-fashioned local media relations, tactics included regular Chamber of Commerce newsletters and events, local media meetings, radio interviews, stakeholder briefings, CSR partnerships with community groups and photo opportunities. We have also combined this with paid advertorial in communities where the local press has a weaker presence.

However, key to achieving success was the ability to deliver this approach at scale: across 12 cities initially, but potentially up to 70 at one time in the years to come.

By employing digital tools such as Microsoft Teams, we've created a unique approach that allows Weber Shandwick and CityFibre to work together seamlessly.

Delivery:

Using Microsoft Teams we built a 'Content Hub', enabling us to deliver hyper-local activity across numerous locations simultaneously – working as one agency-client team.

This includes:

- Planning templates
- Image bank
- Release templates – milestone releases
- Feature templates – thought leadership and business profiling
- Training tools – upskilling CityFibre’s junior team
- Incident management log.

We also use Basecamp to schedule releases, enabling us to prevent clashes, plan ahead and keep CityFibre’s senior team informed of activity at all times. This includes CityFibre’s social media agency, who we work closely with to align content calendars with milestone PR activity to maximise reach and engagement.

Measurement and evaluation:

Our aim is to reach as many people within each community as possible, so we have set an OTS target of 1.5 times the local adult population each quarter, for each city.

Between 1 January and 31 March 2019:

- 6 out of 10 live cities exceeded their target (2 are not yet in build phase)
- Total OTS in relevant local media titles for the 10 live cities = 4.9m
- OTS increased month on month since launching the content hub
- Sentiment towards CityFibre remained consistently over 90% positive
- Compared to its main competitors (Openreach, Virgin Media, Gigaclear and Hyperoptic), CityFibre enjoyed the second highest share of voice, next to Openreach – the industry incumbent.

Our learnings from this first quarter have enabled us to reallocate media spend to the areas where the local media pool does not meet the OTS target, driving continuous improvement.

Budget and campaign impact:

A budget of around £600 in fees is assigned to each city each month (based on 12 cities being deployed in active build during 2019). During January to March, our budget was £20k.

The campaign has directly contributed towards our objectives by:

- Driving enthusiasm – almost 10% of the total OTS during Q1 was generated by positive media coverage generated by others talking about CityFibre

- Driving support for the roll-out – sentiment has remained consistently high
- Maintaining policymakers' support – CityFibre has regularly been the subject of congratulatory motions in parliament. At a recent Holyrood debate, a local MSP reported: 'It is clear that CityFibre's substantial investment in locations such as Stirling, through its gigabit cities programme, and the rapid deployment of its networks have delivered huge benefits for Scotland.'
- As services become available across cities we will add to our evaluation by monitoring take up of services.