

Consultancy: Riverside Communications
 Award Entry: Consultancy Campaign of the Year
 Client: Haven Gateway Partnership/A120 Campaign
 Budget: £60,000



Local MPs Bernard Jenkin, Sir Bob Russell & Priti Patel hosting business rally with George Kieffer



Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin MP at high level roundtable with George Kieffer



Confirmation of campaign win

Overview

The brief: Riverside were appointed by the Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP) in mid 2014, following a competitive pitch. HGP is a public-private consortium made up of the local authorities of north Essex and south Suffolk, as well as the University of Essex, and businesses such as Stansted, BT, Hutchison Ports and many other local businesses. The A120 is a road that links Stansted Airport in the west to Harwich in the east, also serving the major towns of Braintree and Colchester. The specific remit of the brief was to ensure that £10m in government funds were allocated to the A120 for a full feasibility study by the time of the General Election of 2015.

Strategy: To persuade decision makers at HM Treasury, Department for Transport and Highways England that the A120 should

be given public funds for a full feasibility study to improve the road. This needed to be done by rallying local political and business support that, although strong, was fragmented.

Campaign Highlights:

- A business rally hosted by local MPs Bernard Jenkin, Sir Bob Russell and Priti Patel attended by over 120 local businesses;
- A high level roundtable in Colchester with Patrick McLoughlin MP, Secretary of State for Transport, and local business and political leaders;
- A visit by the Prime Minister to Clacton during the General Election campaign (where he indicated funds available);
- An 8 page fold out leaflet showing the potential benefits of the road if improved;

- A three minute CGI/video that demonstrated how the region could be transformed;
- A twitter feed established that attracted new support to the campaign;
- Sustained local media coverage of key announcements and events;
- New website launched: www.a120.co.uk.

Outcomes: After an ambitious 12 month campaign, as laid out below, delivered on time and within budget, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor (in his Summer Budget 2015) confirmed that the A120 would be given the required funding. In short, a £60,000 budget resulted in £10m of funding.

The Case for the A120 Enterprise Corridor



In Detail

Phase 1 – Messaging and Internal Focus

We spent a considerable amount of time on key messages to begin with– the A120 was a compelling case for investment, but HGP and its partners were trying to list every single reason the road should be improved. Furthermore, a comprehensive 150 page economic report had been produced by a team of planning and development consultants. The challenge was to boil down the campaign to three effective messages, explaining the value of an improved A120, that would resonate with political audiences:

- An extra £1.3bn in growth to the regional economy.
- Journey times improved by up to 56%.
- One of the top 10 most dangerous roads in the country made safer.

From there, we were able to put together an impressive campaign leaflet (above right) that told the story of the A120. This proved to be an invaluable tool for attracting new supporters, and convincing decision makers in Westminster and Whitehall.

Phase 2 – Mobilising Support

Political champions – Met with and persuaded three key local MPs to act as cost hosts for a cross party business rally in support of the A120. This was vital to demonstrate to not only local businesses that the A120 was being taken seriously by their local political leaders, but also

to Highways England. In the meantime, we also used opportunities such as the Autumn Statement to send briefing notes and key messages to a wider group of MPs (further afield Suffolk and Essex) who may have had an interest in the A120.

Business Support – From the beginning, we had always made clear to our client that only by establishing strong business support were infrastructure campaigns won. In addition to the extensive speaking engagements Steve Clarke was undertaking across the region (Essex Chambers of Commerce breakfast roundtables/meeting with businesses based at Stansted etc), we put together an ambitious business rally, hosted by the MPs mentioned above. We began to market the event by commissioning an e-invite to send out to our own database and supporters, but also began to use Twitter to identify and target the many other businesses in the region who had not yet heard of the campaign.

Phase 3 – Set piece events

Business Rally (Marks Tey Hotel, December 2014) – attended by over 120 local businesses. This was the event where Highways England really began to take notice of the campaign. Such was the strong level of support at this event that Essex County Council pledged £5m of matching funds towards the feasibility study. We also received word, informally, from Highways England that the A120 was now being looked at far more seriously.

High level roundtable with Secretary of State for Transport (Colchester United Stadium, February 2015) – hosted by George Kieffer, Chairman of the Haven Gateway Partnership. We identified three local business representatives to make short presentations to the SoS so that he could hear from real people who were affected by the current state of the A120. The SoS was also shown the three minute video illustrating how the region could be transformed with an improved road. He also complimented the campaign for its cross party support and the unity shown by local authorities on this matter.

Result

The Prime Minister pledged to fund the feasibility study if a Conservative Government was elected in May 2015. Official confirmation came in the Summer Budget 2015.

“Riverside were able to come in and work closely with our Partnership. By doing so, we achieved spectacular results. Their hands on approach resulted in mobilising widespread support, and ultimately achieving our ambitious campaign goals.”

Steve Clarke, Director, Haven Gateway Partnership