

GSN Best Practice Competition 2009



Application form

Applicant

Organisation, country	Communications Directorate Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, United Kingdom
Name, surname	Mark Tollitt & Emma Kiddle
Headline of best practice initiative	Muck In4Life campaign (Biodiversity)

Description of best practice initiative

<p>Describe the basis of your best practice initiative (why, what, when, where; budget in EUR).</p> <p>Muck In4Life is an exciting, innovative campaign which aims to enhance biodiversity by increasing the number and diversity of citizens involved in conservation volunteering, while also increasing awareness that being active outdoors, whether in urban green spaces or the natural environment has physical and mental health benefits.</p> <p>Through the campaign we are encouraging families and community based groups to undertake a range of outdoor volunteering activities to protect precious wildlife (from monitoring species to scrub and path clearing and creating habitats), encouraging them to get active outdoors at the same time as helping their local community.</p> <p>The campaign launched on 7 May 2009 and will run until the end of March 2010. Communications activity will be particularly focused during the summer months of 2009, enabling us to use the timely appeal of Muck In4Life conservation volunteering opportunities being the perfect way to entertain children with free, fun activities during the school summer holidays.</p> <p>The campaign runs throughout England with particular focus on five regions with a high index of the campaign target audience. The campaign budget is €1.2m.</p>
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<p>What was the main objective of the initiative and what were the results obtained (please quantify)?</p> <p>To contribute towards an increase in the proportion of volunteers in environmental volunteering by 10% by 2011 as an agreed proxy measure for increased biodiversity.</p> <p>To recruit as partners to the campaign nationwide and local conservation volunteering organisations through whom we can offer suitable volunteering activities to our target audience.</p> <p>We are carrying out pre-and post-campaign tracking research to measure the increase in conservation volunteers and expect the results of the first wave of this research in autumn 2009.</p> <p>At summer 2009, we had already recruited over 15 partner organisations at both a national and local level. This included key partner organisations such as the National Trust, RSPB and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers as well as local organisations throughout the country such as East Devon District Council and Rochdale Council. All of these groups provided information about their organisation and volunteering opportunities for the campaign website.</p>

<p>What type of media did you use (TV, radio, print, electronic)? Why this choice of media?</p> <p>This is a fully integrated campaign, using digital (campaign website at www.direct.gov.uk/muckin4life with online search activity to drive visitors to the website), regional press and radio advertising, national and regional PR and a regional events programme (where printed fliers were distributed). See attachments for visuals.</p> <p>This choice of media ensures we can raise awareness of the campaign at a national and regional level (through PR and advertising), generate enthusiasm at a local level, particularly through local case studies (regional PR) and provide practical conservation volunteering "taster sessions" through the Muck In4Life stand at regional events. At these events we will provide activities to engage children (for example, the chance for them to make a bird-feeder and explore marine species) as well as the opportunity for representatives of partner organisations to talk about their local conservation volunteering opportunities. We will complement the stand at regional events with a mobile touring van, which will be decorated with environmental images and provide more information about the campaign, with the flexibility to travel</p>
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to a high number of smaller venues (for example outside country parks visited by the target audience).

All activity promotes the campaign website as a source of further information – we will use this site to provide details of local volunteering opportunities (updated every two weeks), case studies of local people who had enjoyed the benefits of conservation volunteering and activity downloads to further enthuse children about the subject.

Please find attached examples of communications materials (the flier distributed at events, an image of the home page of the campaign website and mock ups of the events stand and the mobile touring van).

Who was the target group?

Families, including grandparents and children age 6-11. We are particularly targeted those in families who have a high propensity to be sympathetic to environmental issues. Research indicates their highest concentration is in the 5 following regions in England – South West, South East, East Midlands, East Anglia and Yorkshire and Humber.

What were the main messages?

- Muck In4Life is about having fun, being healthy and taking part in free environmental activities for all the family. There are lots of ways to get involved and anyone can join in from grandparents to children.
- You can take part in all sorts of activities to help wildlife, such as bird watching or bat spying, wild-life gardening or pond de-sludging - there is something for all ages to enjoy.
- Whether you live in a city or in the countryside, Muck In4Life has lots of fun adventures for your family. There's so much to see and you can do something to help wildlife at the same time.

Who were the partners? Did you involve other institutions/ministries/agencies/NGOs?

At a government level we worked closely with the Department of Health, particularly to build on the branding of their high profile Chang4Life campaign. The Change4Life campaign promotes the benefits for children of being active, particularly to families within the same target audience as the Muck In4Life campaign.

Charities and voluntary organisations at a national and local level (see website) are integral to the delivery of the Muck In4Life campaign. We are working closely with these groups to promote the environmental benefits of conservation volunteering to our target audience and the local opportunities with which they can get involved.

We have also secured an Olympic 'Inspire' mark from the body organising the 2012 Games in recognition of the campaigns contribution to active health and well being.

Who financed the activities, amount of finances?

The activity was financed jointly by the Defra communications and biodiversity policy teams. FY 09/10 budget will be around Euro 1.2m.

Did you experience any specific difficulties during the action that could be learned from?

We experienced challenges with the capacity of our partner organisations to meet the potential demand for volunteering opportunities requested by the target audience. To help overcome this we supported our partner organisations with training to help them manage an increased number of volunteers. We also kept partners fully sighted on the development and timing of campaign activity to ensure they were aware of when communications activity would take place and

when they could expect a particular increase in demand for the volunteering opportunities they offer.

Did you receive any feedback after your activities? Did you carry out an evaluation of the results and if yes, what was the outcome?

We will use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research to measure campaign activity. This includes:

- Pre- and post-campaign tracking research (the results of which will be published shortly).
- Monitoring PR activity (for example the number of volunteer case studies achieved , the number of articles published and positive messages conveyed about the campaign).
- Monitoring digital advertising, including click throughs to the campaign website (we received over 5000 in the first month of the campaign alone), the time visitors spent viewing content on the web pages and the number of visitors who then clicked through to partner organisations for more information.
- Feedback at the regional events – this includes feedback on the actual experience during the activities we provided on the stand, plus the innovative 'Promise Tree'. Visitors to the events stand will be able to write a promise of how they would help improve their local environment, which was then pinned to the Promise Tree for other event visitors to see.

Is any follow-up or duplication of this experience foreseen?

The campaign website will remain available at www.direct.gov.uk/muckin4life until the end of March 2010.
It is intended to run the PR, advertising and events programme again during early 2010.

Why do you consider that your proposal should be selected as the best practice initiative of the year?

This is the first campaign of its kind in England and can support any pan-EU biodiversity campaign activity leading up to 2010. We are using multimedia, innovative, engaging communications activity to raise awareness of the Muck In4Life offer and the important environmental conservation health and social messages it promotes whilst providing accessible information for our target audience about how they can get involved at a local level. We have succeeded in delivering this activity within a relatively limited budget and short timescales.

We are looking to build on the success of the initial campaign activity, to build momentum with the communications, raise further awareness of the environmental issues the campaign promotes and, crucially, to start changing attitudes and ultimately behaviours relating to the natural environment.

The Muck In4Life campaign being named as the GSN Best Practice Initiative of the year would be a most prestigious award, highlight the importance of our campaign and provide an excellent platform from which we can continue to build communications activity, particularly adding credibility as we seek to engage new partner organisations with the campaign.

Please feel free to attach any printed material, photos etc.
Send your application to the Secretariat by 10 June 2009.