Project Communications and Marketing Plan

Castlefield Viaduct – August ’26 to February ‘27

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This is an abridged version of a longer comms & marketing plan for Castlefield Viaduct Project Board approval on the approach.

- The entire plan can be found here.
- Comms Q&As and key messages can be found here.

Please note, the plan and comms messages are with the wider project team too for comments and feedback.

Objective

There is one clear objective for our external comms during this period:

Grow support for phase two of Castlefield Viaduct, and the wider vision, between the design phase and the start of construction in 2027

Audiences

Our key target audiences for external comms activity are primarily those whom we want to grow awareness and understanding among of our plans, and broader vision. Our aim is to grow their support and positive sentiment towards our work on Castlefield Viaduct, resulting in advocacy and vocal support for the project as well as financial support.

Local Castlefield residents and community groups	
Why they’re important	They’re who we’re creating the viaduct for. They’re the people who will benefit from it the most and those who we’ve engaged with throughout the pilot phase to gather feedback to shape the future development of the viaduct. Several community groups and organisations are already engaged with the viaduct through our public engagement work and partner plots.
What action we want them to take	• Continue to visit and engage with the viaduct during the current phase • Advocate for our plans and benefits they’ll bring to people • Support through individual giving online or on the viaduct
Where we’ll reach them	Channels: Local media, property social media channels, property web content, onsite marketing, visitor-facing staff, partner comms channels particularly via Castlefield Forum.

Public sector	
Why they're important	Opportunity to show the effectiveness of NT in bringing in funding and making change happen – this can help with future partnerships and funding asks. They will be gatekeepers for larger scale funding opportunities. Will also be approvers of upcoming planning applications. Viaduct can support local policy aims and add value to new developments in Castlefield so need them to help us mutually influence design. National Highways are funding the design and planning stage of phase two with funding agreed in principle for the capital works.
What action we want them to take	• Advocate for our plans and benefits they'll bring – • Help us to connect our plans with wider plans for Castlefield and ensure we add value (enable future funding) • Keep momentum going towards bigger vision – trusted partner that gets things done • Support big vision through larger scale funding pipeline • Approve subsequent planning applications
Where we'll reach them	Channels: Meetings with key stakeholders. VIP event. Local and national media, comms collaboration (e.g. funding announcements).

Private sector	
Why they're important	Financial support from the private sector will be particularly important for the long term and permanent vision for the viaduct.
What action we want them to take	• Support through funding • Advocate for our plans and benefits they'll bring
Where we'll reach them	Channels: VIP events, local and national media, partner and supplier comms channels

Media	
Why they're important	Our key stakeholders (outlined above) are likely to follow the local, regional and national media, using it to gauge opinion on events, public sentiment and the general news of the day. Creating a drum beat of comms through this audience, will be vital in positioning the project and growing support.
What action we want them to take	• Continue to support our media opportunities and press stories through positive and timely coverage • Help us to relay our messages accurately, improving understanding of our phased approach to the project • Approach us directly for statements on any contentious issues, seeing us the authority on the project
Where we'll reach them	Channels: Print, broadcast and online, including Manchester Evening News, ITV Granada, BBC North West, BBC Radio Manchester, Place North West, Guardian, Telegraph, i, Evening Standard, Daily Mail, national TV channels.

Key messages

See link at top of this document for this detail – currently subject to project team feedback and input.

Funders and partners

Collaboration with our partners and key stakeholders will help us to widen our reach, demonstrate that partner working is at the heart of our project approach and grow support from others who have a part to play in the future of the viaduct.

Acknowledging our funders will not only satisfy our funder commitments but also demonstrate that NT is serious about the project and able to bring in wider funding support. However, we still need to make it clear that to achieve the full vision we need commitment, including pledged funding, from GMCA and MCC.

For phase two, our key funders, partners and stakeholders are summarised in the full plan which is linked to at the top of this document.

Tactical delivery

We'll prioritise our resource on the following to achieve our marcomms objectives. The milestones highlighted in blue are not managed by external comms, but may impact our alignment of messaging, tactics and proposed timings:

Period	Summary of comms story focus	Summary of external comms messages
2026/27		
	Castlefield ops staff meeting on impacts of phase 2	
	Announcement of funding and design development of phase 2. Tempered to ensure it isn't pitched as a 'done deal' and is clear on the distinction between phase 2 and broader vision. Funding need for vision (and possibly phase 2 TBC) included.	- National Highways funding received. - Phase two will develop second half of viaduct. - Subject to planning approval (and further funding TBC). - A step forward but funding and support still needed for the bigger and longer-term vision. - Viaduct to remain open to the public until the end of the year at least.
	Community vision consultant 'closing the loop' event and poss. corporate/stakeholder event	
	Possible announcement of local authority funding, depending on outcome of June meeting. TBC.	- Funding received. - Phase two will develop second half of viaduct. - Subject to planning approval. - A step forward but funding and support still needed for the bigger and longer-term vision. - Viaduct to remain open to the public until the end of the year at least.
	Planning app submitted and detailed design of phase two reveal. Clarifies distinction between phase 2 and broader vision. Funding need for vision (and possibly phase 2 TBC) included.	- Planning app now submitted and one step closer to phase two - Detailed design for phase two with key highlights included - Viaduct operating hours to change from September for autumn and winter
	Operations reduction and changes to opening	
	Planning app approved	

	Planning app approved and building contractor announced.	- Confirmed timings of build starting and whether viaduct will remain open - Indication of expected completion (season, not month, to allow for flex) - Highlighting funding need and support for bigger vision
	Media event for 'boots on ground' with build starting	- TBC closer to time

Once the construction and launch timeline is confirmed for Phase Two, our regional and national marcomms planning and delivery will be developed further.

Key channels

See link at top of this document for this detail – currently subject to project team feedback and input.

Evaluation

See link at top of this document for this detail – currently subject to project team feedback and input.