

**AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS 2007**  
**PROJECT: HERITAGE WEEK**  
**CATEGORY: Not for Profit**

### **The Brief/Overview**

The Heritage Council took over the co-ordination of Heritage Week in 2005. The initiative has been running in Ireland for several years and is linked to European Heritage Days. The focus until 2005 was mainly on events at State Heritage (OPW) sites.

Research carried out by Millward Brown IMS in Autumn 2005 found that 36% of a representative sample of 1000 adults had heard of Heritage Week, 52% never heard of it and 12% did not know if they heard of it. Qualitative research carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes in Autumn 2005 found that in general, people thought of those who took part in Heritage Week events as 'Roy Cropper' types. It was decided to move the week back from the first week in September to the last week in August to encourage greater attendance from children and teenagers before they returned to school. This presented a greater PR challenge as the week would now clash with the height of the festival season and events such as World Culture Festival in Dunlaoghaire and The Rose of Tralee.

The aim for Heritage Week 2006 was to increase public participation in Heritage Week and encourage local community groups to run events during the week that would motivate people to take pride, celebrate and become involved their local heritage.

### **Statement of Objectives and Goals**

- ❖ Increase community involvement/participation in Heritage Week
- ❖ Increase co-ordination of the week
- ❖ Broaden the range of activities to include more outdoor/natural heritage events such as wildlife walks, outdoor events and local interest events
- ❖ Provide simple tools for community groups to organise and publicise their own events
- ❖ Use the week as a platform to raise awareness of different aspects of our heritage – natural and cultural

## **Programme Planning and Strategy**

The Heritage Council had very limited resources to co-ordinate the week and the core strategy is to build partnerships and empower stakeholders to promote and take ownership over Heritage Week.

- **Research to Benchmark Status**

Behaviour and Attitudes was commissioned to carry out qualitative research with key stakeholders to identify key problems and challenges. Most stakeholders cited poor co-ordination and poor access to information as the key issues that needed to be addressed.

Omnibus research carried out by IMS Millward Brown showed that just 36% of a representative sample of adults had heard of Heritage Week

- **Stakeholder Steering Committee**

The initial activity was to develop a steering committee of key stakeholders who would work together to achieve greater co-ordination and public participation.

The steering included the following key stakeholders:

- ❖ The network of Heritage Officers in local authorities
- ❖ DOEHLG – Parks and Wildlife Service
- ❖ DOEHLG – OPW (State Heritage Sites)
- ❖ Library Council
- ❖ DOEHLG Tidy Towns Unit
- ❖ CNCI (Cultural Institutions)
- ❖ Failte Ireland

## **Website**

[www.heritageweek.ie](http://www.heritageweek.ie) was developed as the main communications hub. It included ideas for running events, tips on how to run and publicise successful events, a facility where groups running events and Heritage Officers could register and post details of their Heritage Week events and a search engine where anyone could find details about the hundreds of events taking part in Heritage Week.

## **Media Relations**

- **Strong Focus on Local Media**

The media relations programme had a strong focus on local media. Tailored press releases for each country were issued to encourage community participation with a strong focus on achieving local print and radio coverage. Heritage Officers took part in interviews with local radio stations across the country.

National press releases were issued at various stages including registration, the run up to the week and during the week

- **Publicity Toolkit**

This was very simple and included tips for organising a successful event, a press release template which could be easily completed by filling in details of local events and county specific press contact details.

## **Logo**

- A logo was developed to give Heritage Week a clear identity.

## **Printed Materials**

- **Events Listing Booklet and Posters**

An events listing booklet was developed and distributed through local authorities, libraries and Bord Fáilte Offices. Posters were developed that community groups used to publicise their events.

## **Advertising**

- **RTE Supporting the Arts Sponsorship**

RTE providing advertising time on radio and TV through the RTE Supporting the Arts programme. John Kelly provided the voice-over for the radio advertising and images from outdoor community-led heritage initiatives were used for the TV advertising.

## **Information Line**

- ❖ An 1850 helpline was set up to answer queries people may have about organising events. Advice was given on ideas for events, insurance, venues, publicising events and many other issues

## **The Measurement Stage – Results and Evaluation**

- ❖ **1079 Press articles achieving €1,261,336 in press value as independently measured/evaluated by MediaMarket. All coverage achieved was positive**
- ❖ **Local radio coverage was excellent with every station running several pieces on Heritage Week 2006**
- ❖ **A high of over 340,000 hits to [www.heritageweek.ie](http://www.heritageweek.ie) recorded on 27<sup>th</sup> August with similar hits on the other days during the week. Overall the website was a huge success and a great resource for community groups and members of the public who wanted to take part in Heritage Week**
- ❖ **Over 900 events took place mostly organised by community groups. Activities on offer included guided tours, wildlife walks, boat trips, music, storytelling, craft master classes, bug hunts and bat walks**
- ❖ **Huge attendance was reported right around the country**
- ❖ **Huge increase in activities aimed at children and teenagers**
- ❖ **62% (up almost 100%) of adults were aware of Heritage Week, 19% were unsure if they heard of it and 19% were not aware of Heritage Week in follow-up omnibus research carried out by IMS Millward Brown in October 2007. This showed a huge increase in awareness in just one year and with a very limited budget**
- ❖ **Co-ordination of stakeholders through the Steering Group was very effective with the Heritage Officers playing a lead role in co-ordinating events in each county**
- ❖ **Stakeholder feedback research showed a marked increase in satisfaction with Heritage Week and very positive feelings about the future of the week.**

**Budget: €12,000 – €32,000**

### **Appendix:**

- 1. Sample press cuttings**
- 2. Sample pages from MediaMarket evaluation**
- 3. Sample press release**
- 4. Sample template release from toolkit**
- 5. Sample first page from toolkit**