

# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS** **2021**



# Best Communications Campaign by a Not-for-Profit or Non-Governmental Organisation



During the Save Dublin Zoo campaign, Teneo helped raise over €2m in 48 hours in order to secure the future of Dublin Zoo.

## Campaign

*"You can't furlough an elephant" – Save Dublin Zoo campaign*

## Description of Campaign

How Dublin Zoo went from the brink of indefinite closure to capturing the hearts and minds of a nation and raising 2 million euro in 48 hours. A multifaceted communications campaign with one clear and decisive goal: raise enough money to Save Dublin Zoo.



## Public Relations Consultant

Teneo



## Client

Dublin Zoo

## Background to the Campaign

Dublin Zoo was forced to close on the 13th March 2020 due to the rapidly escalating Covid-19 situation in Ireland. The gates remained shut to the public until the June bank holiday weekend. When Dublin Zoo did reopen, it did so under strict new health and safety protocols, restricting daily visitor numbers initially to a 10% capacity.

The Zoo remained open throughout the summer and autumn at a reduced capacity until forced to close once again in late October due to Level 5 restrictions. Revenue streams in the form of gate receipts and onsite sales all but evaporated because of Covid-19. With 87% of Dublin Zoo's income coming from gate receipts, revenue declined dramatically while fixed operating costs remained high. The losses sustained during this period totalled nearly €8.2m in potential revenue, leaving Dublin Zoo in a very difficult financial position.

Despite being closed to the public for vast swathes of 2020, the dedicated animal care team was still committed to providing world-class levels of care to over 400 animals - something which will always be the top priority and non-negotiable for Dublin Zoo. The cost of providing this high standard of care is €500,000 per month. Without financial

support, Dublin Zoo was facing the prospect of indefinite closure.

On the morning of November 1st, Teneo and Dublin Zoo met to discuss what could be done to raise money to help secure the future of one of Dublin's most beloved family attractions. Dublin Zoo has held a special place in the hearts of Irish people for generations. A place where families and friends come together to connect with nature, learn about animals and be inspired together. Would this pandemic be the end of this generational attraction or would action be taken?

A decision was made. Teneo would create and launch a campaign appealing to the Irish public to raise money to Save Dublin Zoo.

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## Statement of Objectives

We identified several clear objectives which would support the primary goal of driving donations and reaching our fundraising goal.

- Create a successful public awareness campaign which resonated with and inspired a broad audience, helping drive donations to the Save Dublin Zoo campaign, in order to secure the future of the organisation. Our fundraising target was €1m.
- Create awareness for the Save Dublin Zoo Campaign utilising traditional and digital channels. Our targeted reach was 10m.
- Generate awareness and drive purchase of animal adoption packs in aid of the campaign, with the aim of selling 500 adoption packs.
- To drive people to Dublin Zoo website to learn the various ways to donate to the campaign.
- In the lead up to the launch of the Save Dublin Zoo campaign, engage with local politicians to make them aware of Dublin Zoo's financial predicament with the ultimate goal of achieving emergency government funding to assist the Zoo

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## Programme Planning and Strategy

### Target and media audiences

As a beloved Irish institution and one of the country's most famous tourist attractions, Dublin Zoo has a very broad appeal. However, the primary target audience for Dublin Zoo is families, and this informed the messaging and fundraising mechanics from early in the process.

The key media focus for the campaign was identified as national and regional. As the campaign's success depended on creating as much awareness as possible, our aim was to secure comprehensive national broadcast, online and print coverage. Family-oriented programmes such as Ireland AM and news-focused programmes like Morning Ireland were key targets.

We considered an influencer campaign where we would send merchandise and adoption packs to online personalities who may encourage our family audience to contribute to the campaign. However, we decided to focus our attention on delivering this call to action through traditional media channels, believing that if influencers felt strongly enough about the campaign, they would create organic content without being prompted.

### Phase 1 – Campaign Planning

In early November we began to assist Dublin Zoo in collating and creating the assets needed to launch the campaign, including a name that would resonate with its audiences. We agreed on "Save Dublin Zoo" as a simple, clear and effective name that doubled as a call to action.

We worked with Dublin Zoo to plan the look and feel of the video content which would be utilised on its social channels following the launch, with Teneo's copywriter drafting the scripts each Zookeeper would use in their appeal to the public.

Teneo advised Dublin Zoo on the most viable fundraising mechanics, researching the most viable crowd-funding sites and recommending merchandise that could be sold via the Dublin Zoo website, ultimately two significant contributors to the funds raised.



Teneo advised Dublin Zoo to create adoption packs of some of the most popular animals in the Zoo, which were available for purchase on the Zoo's website, and given the proximity of the campaign to Christmas these became one of the main drivers of funds.

Other activity included:

- Creating engaging content for donation pages and the Save Dublin Zoo website pages.
- Research and collate all relevant statistics on costs associated with feeding and caring for animals. It costs 100 euro a day to care for an elephant etc.

### **Key Messaging**

To achieve cut-through amongst the many worthy charity campaigns traditionally launched at this time of year, it was vital that we developed an emotive and concise narrative for Save Dublin Zoo which would resonate with the public. This needed to inform them in clear and tangible terms of the financial peril the zoo was in and outline the various ways that they could help.

Once this narrative was finalised in conjunction with the Dublin Zoo marketing team, this informed the various media materials we created for the campaign, including the press release and the copy for the Zoo's social posts.

In collaboration with the Zoo team, we selected a panel of Zoo personnel that would be available for interview on launch day and beyond. These ranged from junior members of the animal care team who would be available to speak to regional media, to Dr Christoph Schwitzer, Director of the Zoo, who we would make available for flagship national broadcast news programmes.

This panel of interviewees all undertook intensive media training from our in-house team in the weeks before the launch of the Save Dublin Zoo campaign, with the messaging for each individual tailored to the questions they were likely to face. For Dr Schwitzer and the senior keepers, this meant they were entirely comfortable in answering questions around the Zoo's financial situation.

### **Government engagement**

Ahead of the campaign, advised by Teneo, Dublin Zoo targeted local TDs to inform them of the drastic situation. Local TDs included in Tánaiste Leo Varadkar TD, leader of Sinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman TD.

Whilst engagement was ongoing with the Government prior to the launch of the campaign, no formal funding commitment had been made to Dublin Zoo. It was important that Save Dublin Zoo struck the right balance of a public campaign appealing for emergency donations, allied to a plea for government funding. Both outcomes were critical to the long-term survival of Dublin Zoo.

## **Phase 2 - Campaign Delivery**

### **PR Strategy**

We had initially discussed launching the campaign live on the Late Late Show but then changed tact in favour of a nationwide launch Wednesday 18th November. This gave the campaign a longer life in the weeklong news cycle and more opportunities to raise much needed funds.

We identified and approached our preferred media across print, broadcast and online to approach before we issued an event notice and campaign release to the wider media. Over 300 media clippings were secured including an interview for Dr Schwitzer on Euronews, a piece on the success of the campaign on the New York Times website and a segment on the reincarnation of RTE's The Den.

A key aim was to ensure the Save Dublin Zoo campaign was the major topic of discussion on national broadcast stations throughout the day. We achieved this, beginning with Morning Ireland on RTE Radio One, and ending with the Tonight Show on Virgin Media One. Other major programmes we secured interviews on included the One O'Clock News, Six One, and Nine O'Clock News on RTE One, Ireland AM, The Pat Kenny Show, and the Jennifer Zamparelli Show.

We issued the campaign press release and our Save Dublin Zoo photography on the afternoon of the 17th November, under strict embargo until the following day to ensure Christoph's interview on Morning Ireland launched the campaign nationally.

We created a bespoke press office on the day of the launch, with two of the Teneo team on the ground managing the media schedule for the designated spokespeople and two more working from home and handling the many general media queries. In accordance with Dublin Zoo's Covid-19 safety measures, we established individual interview areas for each spokesperson at different Zoo habitats.

### **Online and Social**

Once the news announcement went live, an emotional Save Dublin Zoo video was seeded out across all Dublin Zoo social media platforms. The video was designed to take the words delivered by Christoph Schwitzer on Morning Ireland to a visual, heartfelt appeal.

To drive the online conversation, we created the hashtag #SaveDublinZoo which trended in Ireland on Twitter the day the campaign launched.

As part of the integrated social media strategy for this campaign, we encouraged people to share photos of their favourite memories of Dublin Zoo. As the campaign began to grow organically online and the public created their own fundraising campaigns, we shared and engaged with anyone seen to be raising money.

As part of the wider communications strategy, social media was used to communicate ongoing thanks and words of encouragement to keep donating. Video content from keepers was prepared in advance of reaching donation goals.

### **Phase 3 - Post Launch**

The campaign continued to feature in the national media long after launch day, as donation milestones were hit; €1m in the first 12 hours, €2m within two days. We continued to operate a pro-active media office, arranging interviews in national and regional media to keep the spotlight on the campaign.

The success of the launch phase, and all the coverage that entailed, begot more success and coverage as people across Ireland rallied to raise money for the campaign in innovative ways. These fundraising efforts featured in regional media publications nationwide in the weeks following the launch, sustaining interest in the campaign well into December and helping to secure the future of Dublin Zoo.

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## **Measurement**

**Measurement and Evaluation.** Evidence that the stated objectives have been achieved. Entries should outline quantifiable and measurable results achieved from the campaign executed. 350 word limit. (289)

**Goal 1:** Create a successful public awareness campaign which resonated with and inspired a broad audience, helping drive donations to the Save Dublin Zoo campaign, in order to secure the future of the organisation. Our fundraising goal was €1m.

**Achieved:** The campaign has raised €2.86m to date. The €1m milestone was reached in the first 12 hours, with the €2m milestone hit within 48 hours.

**Goal 2:** Create awareness for the Save Dublin Zoo Campaign utilising traditional and digital channels. Our targeted reach was 10m.

**Achieved:**

- The campaign had an overall reach of 75m across print, online and broadcast media. 54 national newspapers pieces, 184 online publications including the New York Times, 23 broadcast interviews.
- The following are comparisons between 18th – 24th Nov 2019 and 18th – 24th Nov 2020
  - > Dublin Zoo's Facebook page had 2.5 times the organic reach in comparison to 2019 (Nov 18th – 24th). (1,833,904 vs 771,999)
  - > Dublin Zoo's Twitter account's organic reach was 6195% higher in 2020. (2,493,498 vs 40,247)
  - > Dublin Zoo's organic reach on Instagram was 5585% higher in 2020 (1,083,776 vs 19,403)

**Goal 3:** To drive people to Dublin Zoo website to learn the various ways to donate to the campaign.

**Achieved:** The website saw a 370% increase in traffic in comparison to the same period the previous year.

**Goal 4:** Engage with local politicians and make them aware of Dublin Zoo's financial predicament with the ultimate goal of achieving emergency government funding to assist the Zoo.

**Achieved:** The Government pledged an initial €1.1m between Dublin Zoo and Fota Island, followed by a further €3m funding soon afterwards.

When the campaign had concluded, the direct result of the strategic public relations and government engagement campaign was raising over €6.9m.



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