

OGA Sub Committee Proposed Strategy for National and Area Comms.

The OGA Comms Sub Committee are looking to encourage the evolution of existing OGA communications and also to be innovative in our approach as an organisation to embrace the use of as wide a range of communication resources to meet the needs and expectations of all our members.

Why Communicate?

- To encourage participation in conversations and events by:
 - engaging members within Areas and Nationally
 - spreading awareness of what we do outside of the membership
- To secure the future of 'the fleet' by sharing the benefits of gaff rigged craft and skills in maintaining old and new gaffers. Targeting people who may become future boat owning members (post young family 40-50yrs, Young Gaffers 18-35? And Junior Gaffers <18/16?). (Young gaffers are not always from gaffer families, the whole point of aiming at younger generations is they get the bug for it and so by the time they're 40 or 50 they can encourage others to do so with good experience behind them.)
- To secure new members
- To promote mission statement and vision of OGA (don't need to be Old or Gaffer)
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- to raise external profile of OGA eg via press

Strategy

1. **Simplicity Over Complexity:** Prioritize simplicity in communication systems to avoid overcomplication and duplication of effort by Editors, ensuring accessibility for all members, especially considering the technical and content management challenges in maintaining larger centralized systems.
2. **Demographic Considerations:** Acknowledge demographic preferences, particularly the inclination towards print and 'offline' communication methods among certain groups, while also striving to broaden the organization's appeal to attract younger members.
3. **Strategic Use of Social Media:** Utilize social media platforms strategically, understanding their diverse user demographics and preferences, while empowering local areas to take ownership of their initiatives within the national strategy and 'sharing' relevant material between areas and platforms.
4. **Effective Communication and Collaboration:** Prioritize effective communication and collaboration between different areas to share knowledge and resources, ensuring a cohesive organizational identity while accommodating local needs.

Managed through Area Communications Sub-Committee meeting regularly and reporting to the ACM? Area Presidents?

5. **Exploration of Innovative Approaches:** Explore innovative approaches, such as creating a regular President's newsletter, facilitating 're-use', 'sharing' and development of existing 4,000+ digital photo library. Ensure mailouts 'push' traffic towards OGA website/social media. Target mailing to members and ensure 'call to action'.
6. **Legacy and future archives:** Ensure we do not 'lose' the print archive by moving everything online.
7. **Matched to local Areas:** Different areas have different resource availability and different member and non-member communities. Each area will have the freedom to tailor the approach within the OGA brand framework (interfaces/interactions, payment methods) agreed by Area Presidents.
8. **National / Area Responsibilities:**
National Communications: all about defining and publicising what the OGA is about, promoting the Areas, providing consolidated views of Events, Boat Register and OGA Governance (AGMs, standards, logos, etc.)
Areas Communications: all about the areas: people, events, racing, links to relevant organisations.

National OGA Communications

Website

National Home page www.oga.org.uk

- Clear idea of what the OGA is about.
- Quick links to navigate: 'Join', 'Consolidated Area and National Events', Areas and Small Boat Section

National Home page to be actively managed to ensure regular changes of images and rolling, up-to-date news/events banners.

Area 'Home' pages

- Each area should have a consistent presentation of where they are and summary of that they do, with links to whatever they then want to the detail.

Management

The Home page to be managed/curated by the National Online Manager (NOM) who will also manage/curate the OGA National Social Media presence and content. The NOM will also be available to curate the web pages of smaller Areas if there is not the resource available locally. This will be a no frills/minimal management service (parameters TBC) to ensure area content is up to date.

The NOM role will be a paid position with the NOM being a *self-employed contractor* (SEC) reporting to the National Secretary and operating under clearly defined aims and objectives, and to the National strategy. Clear expectations and outcomes must be defined and measured.

National Social Media Sites

- Facebook – responding to posts, publicizing events, Areas and gaffer-related groups, linking where appropriate to National and Area websites/social media
- Instagram – creating interest in the boats and the OGA, linking to the National website
- OGA YouTube channel - making Member videos of their boats and OGA events available to all.

Print

Gaffers Log: Cost V Circulation, maintenance of a print archive. Further work required to understand the Cost v Circulation of Gaffers Log, editorial content and the level of membership enthusiasm for this publication.

Year book: online v print. Cost v circulation.

Press: sending out ‘press releases’ and news stories (they will automatically go online).

Archiving: ongoing record of past Gaffers Log and other print issues now in the British Library.

Area Communications (print, web, email, social media, WhatsApp):

Develop content for a page for each area on ‘the National Site’ so that all areas have a consistent basic coverage which then links out to the Area’s chosen solutions.

It is not possible to have a one size fits all approach. Areas vary considerably in their requirements and available resources (content creation, editorial expertise and time). Differences are not always based on the ‘size’ of an Area.

Areas will adhere to a common National policy regarding the use of the OGA name, brand, use of language and copyright. There should be a strong National OGA identity through the Area pages whilst allowing creativity to develop the Area pages.

An Area with several people able and willing to be content creators and online editors is the East Coast OGA. Their online approach is summarised in Appendix 1

Knowledge exchange between Area Comms teams to help develop best practice to be encouraged and facilitated by GMC, agreeing to establish a permanent Comms. sub-committee as a permanent group reporting back to the Membership at the AGM.

TECHNOLOGY (*agreed observations and comments*)

Websites

- Schools Online is already provided for National and Area sites

- Schools Online provides
 - Robust and simple way for people with limited time, expertise and money to develop parts of a larger site.
 - Great support
 - Like any tool it has its idiosyncrasies. You need to learn what it will and won't do and not fight it. This will be true for any other platform.
 - Schools Online's main limitation is that it is developed by a very small team. So it will get further behind other, bigger, platforms. For this reason, we would not encourage significant investment in it.
 - It doesn't have automated links to social media, but that may be better done manually making sure to include links back to the website.
 - Anyone who isn't already familiar with another platform is encouraged to stick to Schools Online until they have time to do more.
- There are some aspects of Schools Online which may lead to the use of other technologies for some aspects in some areas:
 - clumsy user interface
 - complexity
 - can't easily re-use previously uploaded images or albums
 - can't reuse previously upload PDFs i.e. no 'library'
 - no social media 'Shares' and 'Like'
 - urls are 'ugly' to use
 - clumsy navigation - combination of tools and configuration
 - refine or remove e-news subscription on home page - not OGA branded or relevant.
- It is up to each Area to decide what works for them provided they maintain the agreed National Website Area page and promote that site for the subjects it covers.

Photo Library:

Explore the capabilities already offered to us by SmugMug. Consider purchasing an upgrade. The Boat Register uses SmugMug, which is a powerful solution for photo sharing online. See Appendix 2.

Document Library:

Explore the need for a searchable online document library, moving beyond the 'Officers' pages.

OGA Comms Sub Committee future:

The committee recommends continuing this Sub Committee. New Chair will be required, due to work commitments and an upcoming extended cruise for current Chair.

Appendix 1 – example of East Coast Comms

1. OGA website Area page: www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/about.html

1.1. East Coast About: maintains an overview of the Area including bios of Committee Members and email link to the Area Secretary.

1.2. East Coast Events: Calendar summarising events for the year and index record for each event. This index record points to a detailed page on the OGA website until booking opens for the event. It then links directly to the selected booking and payment solution. Need a simple and engaging way of consolidating event diary across Areas (beyond the current list?)

1.3. East Coast Online: replaces 'News' and 'Eastcoaster' tabs giving direct access to Area Newsletter, Eastcoaster (see point 2) Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube.

1.4. East Coast Racing: results and handicaps.

1.5. East Coast Gafflings: details of the two EC Gafflings available for hire.

2. Eastcoaster Newsletter (mixed media and channels)

2.1. Publicly accessible website www.eastcoastgaffers.org.uk with regularly updated news and articles allowing social media sharing, searchable by date, tags and categories to read, subscribe to and contribute articles/news.

2.2. Eastcoaster quarterly PDF 'download for print' digest with printed version available for those who ask (and pay) for it by post.

2.3. Mailchimp monthly campaign to all signed up EC Members summarising activity from other channels (Eastcoaster, Facebook, YouTube etc.) promoting Area and National events/news with 'call to action' for events etc.

3. Facebook Page and Private Group welcoming Member and public led conversations as well as broadcast messages, 'likes', 'follows', 'shares' etc.

4. WhatsApp

4.1. General East Coast Area conversation group for any who wish to use it

4.2. Event Chats: Groups established for specific event communications and photo sharing. Archived (including photos) and removed after the event.

5. Dedicated booking/payment service provided by Ticket Tailor

Appendix 2 – Photo library proposals

Background

The OGA has numerous images dating back to the 1960s. Several members have worked hard over the years to ensure this collection is maintained, continues to grow, is catalogued and, in many cases, scanned and/or digitised.

These collections are stored in various places, both digital and gathering dust in photo albums/boxes. Members have often discussed having an online photo library where we could store these images securely and share them more widely across the Association and the wider public. This issue was also raised at the first meeting of this online Comms. Sub-committee, 31 January, 2024.

Since 2020 when Julian & Alison Cable took over running the online Boat Register, the images relating to the Boat Register are now all stored online in SmugMug, linked with each individual boat in the Register. SmugMug is a well-established, reputable commercial photo archive/management service. The OGA pays a small, basic annual subscription for the lowest level Plan.

Proposal

The OGA upgrades to the Pro Plan for SmugMug: currently £460 per annum.

This would enable us to create a group of 'Assistants' from OGA Areas to work with Julian and Alison in developing a wider OGA photo library to include not just galleries of boats (already in the SmugMug library) but also events and other Area activity to share and, most importantly, re-use online via various channels eg Area pages/websites, Facebook, Instagram etc.

Features within the Pro Plan would also enable us to very easily create an engaging SmugMug homepage for the OGA image galleries, open for public browsing at a dedicated website address/URL linked directly from the OGA website and other online channels.

Principles to consider

Modern online/Social Media channels enable digital images to be uploaded once, stored securely and reused/shared many times. At present, the OGA is not taking advantage of this. The approach ensures metadata and copyright is always 'with' the image.

The OGA's collection of photos represents a great way to 'pull' visitors in to what the Association stands for and to share what we do/have done in the past more widely. The online library could be exploited to support recruitment and publicity via online and print channels while promoting Area activity and engagement.

Area Editors/contributors/Social Media moderators should be supported in avoiding as much duplication of effort as possible in terms of sharing photos via online channels.

Images used online by the OGA should always be assigned photographer/copyright credits.

Homepage for OGA photo galleries

SmugMug not only provides unlimited full resolution online 'cloud' storage for the OGA photo library with excellent search, security and cataloguing features but a very good, simple website designer. If we upgrade to the higher-level plan we could have an engaging collection of OGA photo galleries available for public browsing and sharing via a dedicated photo website as well as being embedded/shared via a wide range of other online and social channels. The underlying 'technology' of this is managed by SmugMug.

Testing 'embed galleries' options in Wordpress

The proposal suggested above has been trialled by the Eastcoaster Editor in consultation with Julian & Alison Cable (Boat Register Editors). A test page is available for review here:

'Sharing' as a slideshow from SmugMug using a standard **Wordpress html widget** does just that. Quick and easy, there's no options to change display of the gallery and no option to 'enlarge' individual photos, but it looks good and is generating images from a 'shared' OGA

library (upload once, use many times): captions & title from images in SmugMug are displayed in Wordpress.

Photonic plugin for Wordpress has a SmugMug integration option which is quick to set up and allows a few more display options. Captions & title from SmugMug display in 'tooltip' form and, when enlarged, at foot of image.