

Website, Marketing and Development

November 2017 NEC Meeting

Current Position

- Sunmaia who were hosting the old new website have gone out of business. So this has now disappeared and no further costs for it should be incurred.
- Development of the new new website is currently on my PC as it is easier to work locally.
- A prototype showing ideas for the new website will be ready to go online in the next month or so.
- Our target audience, even if they are not in their teens and twenties, use mobile to access the internet more than desktop. So the primary design will be mobile friendly. Using responsive design so it adapts when viewed on larger screens.
- As we move towards going live the budget for hosting needs to be confirmed. A budget of £250pa has previously appeared in the accounts and I would expect it to be in this region to cover hosting, plugins, security, etc.
- A key part of the work so far has been research and planning. This has lead to ideas we need to discuss.
- We need to think about the image of our organisation, what we want to achieve with our website and the rest of our marketing. Thinking about the inspirational speaker at the National AGM and how this can really be a new way forward.
- So – there are proposals for some major changes coming...

Our Marketing Image

- Our objective is to be found by people looking for a social group like ours.
- And we have got to face up to the fact that we have got a major problem with our name – or names...
- Plus – doesn't mean anything. Far too common a word, can't search for it. Far too many other organisations we can be confused with.
- Plus Groups – same problems as Plus
- 18 Plus – still gets used. Outdated. No longer our official name. Obvious search problems!
- Active Plus – name of a well established organisation. Aims to help elderly and housebound people be more active and get some exercise. Risks of confusion...
- National Federation of Plus Areas – what a mouthful. Too long. No one is going to use it. No one would search for it. And again doesn't mean anything, no indication of what we do.
- Suggest we need a new marketing identity. Not suggesting make a formal change to the name of the organisation with all the hassle of changing bank accounts, etc. But establish a brand under which we sell ourselves.
- This new marketing identity should be a name which describes us and attracts people.
- And the opposite of "Plus" - it should be highly effective in Google search.

- We would need to get logo and graphics designed for the new identity. So we have got a proper, consistent national image. One of the things which our AGM speaker emphasised we were falling down on.
- We would need a budget for all that of about £1000.
- In the past we have had several different examples and had a vote on it at the National AGM. Do we really want to do that?
- Are our existing members the right people to judge our new image? Mostly they are not the people we are trying to reach.
- I would propose to picking a professional designer who works in this type of area, understands what we want to achieve and just go with it.
- At the end of the day, whether the existing members like the new image is not what counts.
- What counts is results. Proof of pudding.
- And our primary object is to generate national level enquiries.
- I would not initially plan to have groups or events on the shop window site. We are selling ourselves as a national organisation, so we need to play down how thin we have really got.
- All that will remain on Mark's site which will remain in place as internal information for existing members.

Opening New Groups and Expanding

- We will use enquiries and visits to the site to map the density of interest.
- If people are near an existing group, they will get a reply directing them to it. If not, they will get a holding reply.
- We then use that to plan the priority areas for opening new groups – where there are the greatest number of people interested.
- How do we start groups where they are needed? We will need a plan on how we can open new groups which are not close to existing groups.
- And how will we run those new groups, especially if they are a long way from existing groups?
- Certain groups have been very successful. But always because they are driven by one or two really dedicated people. We always say we need to copy that. But it just hasn't worked. Few people are that dedicated and we can't clone them
- So we need another way forward...
- Propose a completely different way forward from what we have tried before – volunteering with Plus.

A Different Approach to Getting Organisers

- How about as well as recruiting members in the usual way, we actually offer volunteer "jobs". With a proper job description and offer real benefits in the form of training,

experience and references that will help our volunteers get real paid jobs. There are volunteer job sites on which we can do this to link in as well.

- Many people are struggling to find work and are looking for work experience opportunities to help them get started or to progress.
- We would need to have everything set up first and to really take it seriously and plan to deliver. It would mean we would genuinely need to give something back. But think it's possible.
- We would need to offer training, support doing roles, and to be willing to act as referees when our volunteers apply for jobs outside. Many of us have relevant work experience and would be able to give references.
- So we advertise we can offer all those things in exchange for people's time as volunteers. Activities, Treasurer, Membership, Publicity, Administrator, all need the same skills as real world jobs. So we could really sell the advantages of volunteering or work experience with Plus.
- And there are opportunities to progress to higher levels of management in Plus – on area and national committees.

A New Hope

- Plan to launch the new site at National AGM. Hope will be generating enquiries over spring and summer next year. People who want to join and people who want to volunteer.
- So if we think we can go with this, we would probably need a volunteer event after summer holidays next year, probably mid- September.
- Leading up to new groups launching in the autumn.
- And possibly this could be the way forward to really transform things. We were told at the last National AGM we could do it.
- Let's try.