

# SIRA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

## 1. Executive Summary

A communication strategy for SIRA will contribute to the ability of the association to service its community and achieve its objectives.

The following statements attempt to ,,,

- A. Communications should be designed and performed with the association's objectives in mind
- B. Communications are a method to maintain the association's relevance within its environment.
- C. Communications should be targeted at its intended audience reached in the most appropriate way possible
- D. For each communication, appropriate channels should be used.
- E. The efficiency of channels should be taken into account and measures should be in place to ensure a channel is maintained at a maximum efficiency level.
- F. SIRA should ensure that communications are coherent through the use of communication plans
- G. The organisation should apply an appropriate format and use appropriate language in its communications
- H. When communication plans are designed, the audience's journey is taken into consideration
- I. To ensure that the communications strategy is maintained, a governance structure should be put in place.

The communications strategy is the first step in a three phase process that leads to achieving the objectives contained within the strategy. The three steps are:

- I. Agree upon a strategy
- II. Discuss the methods, tools to achieve what is detailed in the strategy
- III. Implement and operate

## 2. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is define a strategy for SIRA's communications internally and externally.

The following are the reasons for the need of a communications strategy:

- a. **Align the organisation's strategy with its audience.** Communications tools and methods are changing and developing all the time. Especially with the advent of the internet over the last 20 years and the rise of social media over the last 10 years, the way people consume information has changed dramatically. The other trend that changes consumption patterns is the ability for audiences to consume information in more places and at any time, using mobile technology. Another trend is the way in which content is delivered: more video and interactive media.

In 1955 the prominent way for SIRA to communicate with its members was by displaying notices at the wharves and hand-delivered letters slipped under resident's doors. In 2000 communication took place by letter, posted or emailed. In the decade 2000 – 2010 many changes in the communications landscape took place. Lee Rainie shows in [this report](#) from 2010, the trends taking place (North American statistics) in that decade. Since 2010 these trends have continued for another 4-5 years.

A quick grab of some of the trends identified:

- Increasing volume of information
- Variety of information increases
- Increasing velocity of information
- Times and location of consumption changes

The following are the ways audiences require how information can be consumed:

- Consumption of information is pervasive, people graze across diverse platforms, and is obtained from different sources
- Consumption of information has become portable
- Consumption of information is becoming personalised
- Consumption of information is participatory
- Consumption of information is a social experience

- b. **The need to support the organisation's objectives through an exchange of information.** To maintain relevance within a community, an organisation needs to be able to interact with that community in an effective manner. In this discussion paper a number of aspects contributing to communication effectiveness are discussed. A discussion surrounding a communication strategy and the documenting and implementation will make those responsible for communications and others in the organisation aware. Based on the organisation will be able to implement practices, by means of guidelines, agreed procedures or policies.
- c. **The need to deliver value to the community.** An organisation can determine its own value within the community by delivering that value through services. Communications support these services but communication itself can also be a service. A communications strategy helps to support this value delivery.

### 3. Support the objects of our association and the community

Everything the association and its management does, including the way it communicates, should support its objects. For clarity sake, the objects as detailed in the constitution are included below.

(a) to secure, manage and administer improvements in matters concerning the welfare, facilities, comfort and convenience of residents of the District;

(b) to encourage and promote any necessary development of Scotland Island and adjacent mainland areas;

(c) to encourage and promote civic pride and interest in community affairs;

(d) to encourage and promote social intercourse and goodwill between the residents and residents of adjoining districts

(e) to secure reforms, prevent abuses and preserve the rights and privileges of the residents as part of the community at large;

(f) to protect and cultivate native flora and fauna and to generally preserve the natural beauty of Scotland Island;

(g) to assist in the operation and maintenance of the Scotland Island Bush Fire Brigade for the protection of property and bush land;

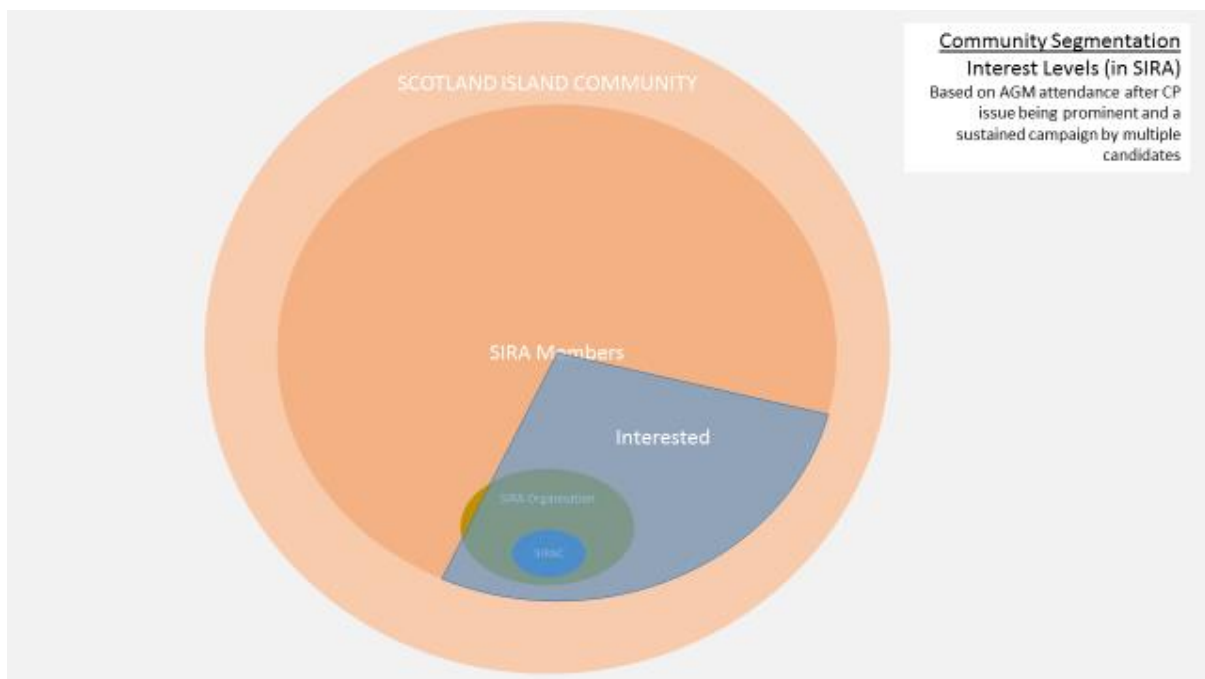
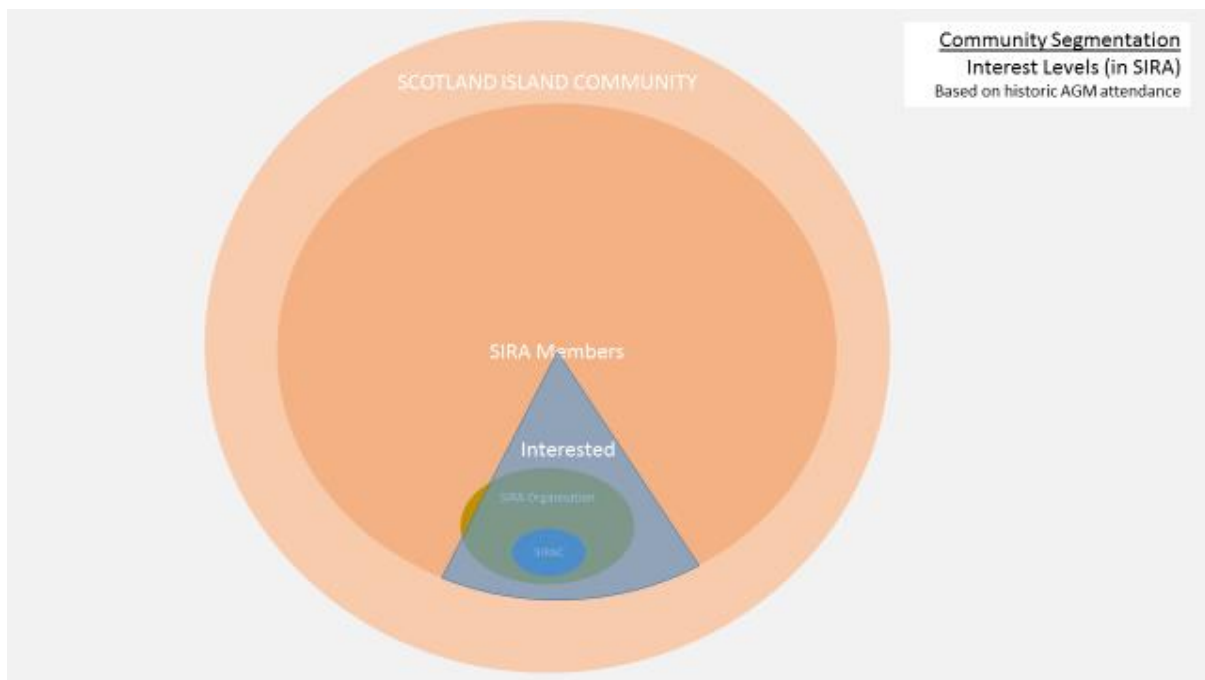
(h) to co-operate with any other body whose aims and objects are similar to this association and subscribe funds to any such body;

(i) to do all such other things as are in the opinion of the association incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the objects.

## 4. Support SIRA's place within the world around it

SIRA derives its value from the association's objects discussed above, however if the world around it doesn't feel the organisation is relevant and ignores it, the value perception will be low and with it, the actual value may be deteriorated.

The diagrams below show the potential effects communications can have on this value perception. The interest in the organisation by members of the community could be used as a measure of this value perception. In the example, it is suggested that this interest can be measured through AGM attendance.



The last AGM was attended by a significantly higher proportion of members. This is most likely due to the importance of the role of the Association in the Church Point Car Park debate (as the members perceive it), but also due to a sustained and intense social media and mouth to mouth campaign by several (groups) of members.

If communications did not take place, there would not have been a change in the interest levels, simply because SIRA's relevance would not have been highlighted.

## 5. Communication should be on target

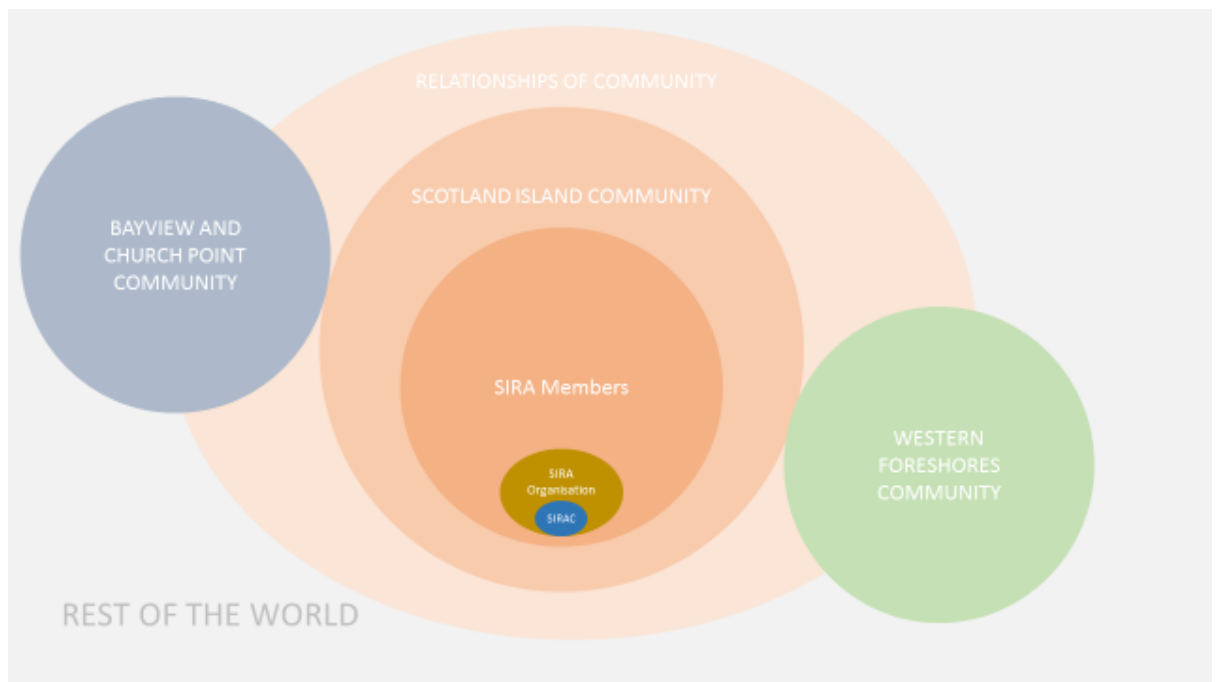
Effective communications target the audience as accurately as possible. To do this, there must be an understanding of the audience and how to target it.

### 5.1. What is SIRA's audience?

The association operates in an environment that can be seen to expand from its core, the members and outwards to larger groups of people. The association provides services to the island community and represents its members. A subset of members are actively involved within the SIRA organisation and the SIRA Committee consists of elected members to hold office within the association.

As can be seen in the diagram, audiences can overlap, but can also be mutually exclusive.

- a. SIRAC – the SIRA Committee
- b. SIRA Organisation, the committee, all subcommittees and other people providing voluntary or paid work for the association.
- c. SIRA members.
- d. Island community, which includes members but also people who are not directly members (family members, non-members, short term residents, guests and service providers).
- e. Relationships of the community, people who are connected to our community but are not members of it, friends, relatives, local government, providers of services.
- f. Our neighbouring communities.
- g. The rest of the world.



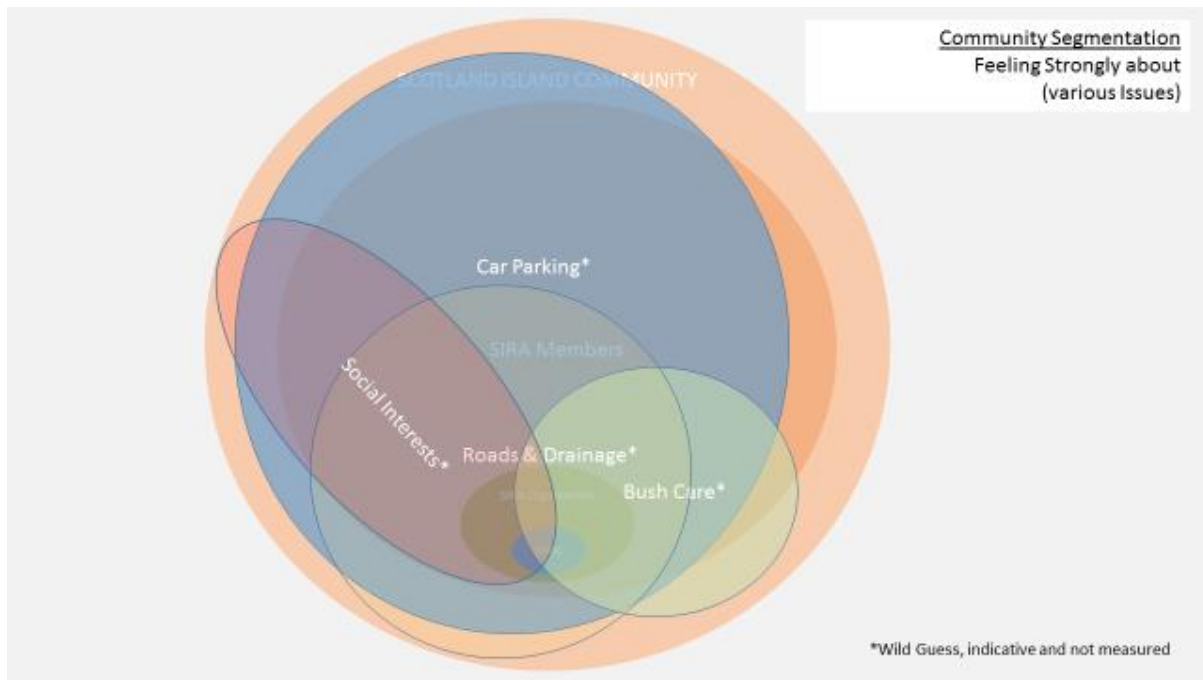
## 5.2. Targeting increases effectiveness

As discussed in the introduction, the world of information consumption has changed dramatically and people are overwhelmed with information. For information to be delivered on-target, the sender needs to keep that situation in mind. Untargeted communications are extremely ineffective and most likely a waste of resources and will result in the audience becoming conditioned to ignore it. In our own experience, think of advertisements on websites; we are able to ‘tune’ these out. To battle this issue, social networks such as Facebook and Google try to display advertisements they assume you may be interested in, based on demographics and other information they have about you.

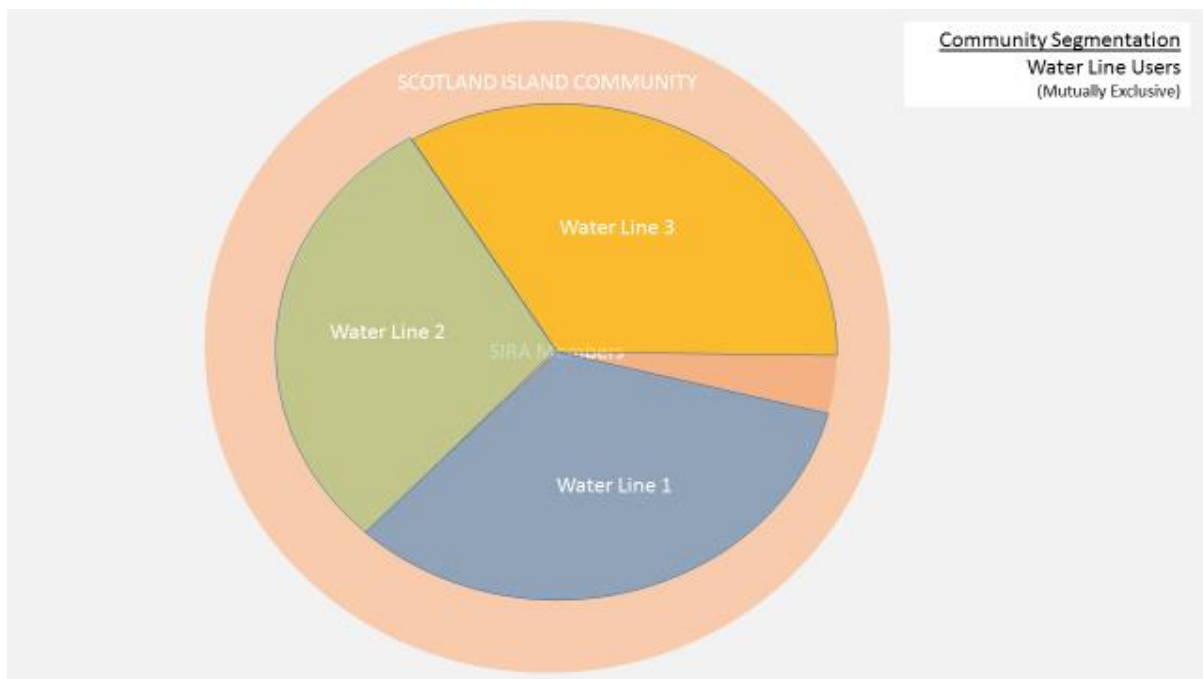
Targeted and personalised communications have a much higher level of effectiveness.

## 5.3. Segments within the Island Community

There are many ways the audience within the Island community can be segmented. Below are just a few examples.

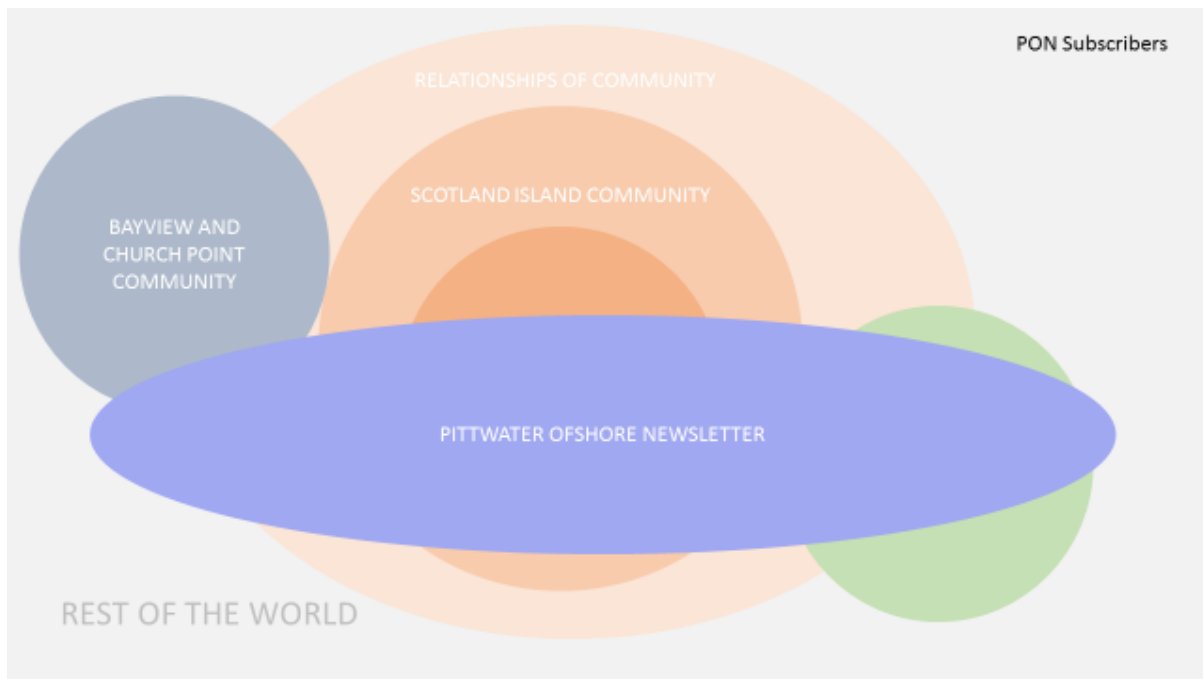


The above diagram shows the concept of 'interest segments'. Some areas attract a large group, others are smaller. The audiences overlap. Targeted communications ensure that the communications take place between relevant sender and receiver.



Sometimes there is clear separation between segments, for example in case of water line users.

## 5.4. The use of different channels for different audiences

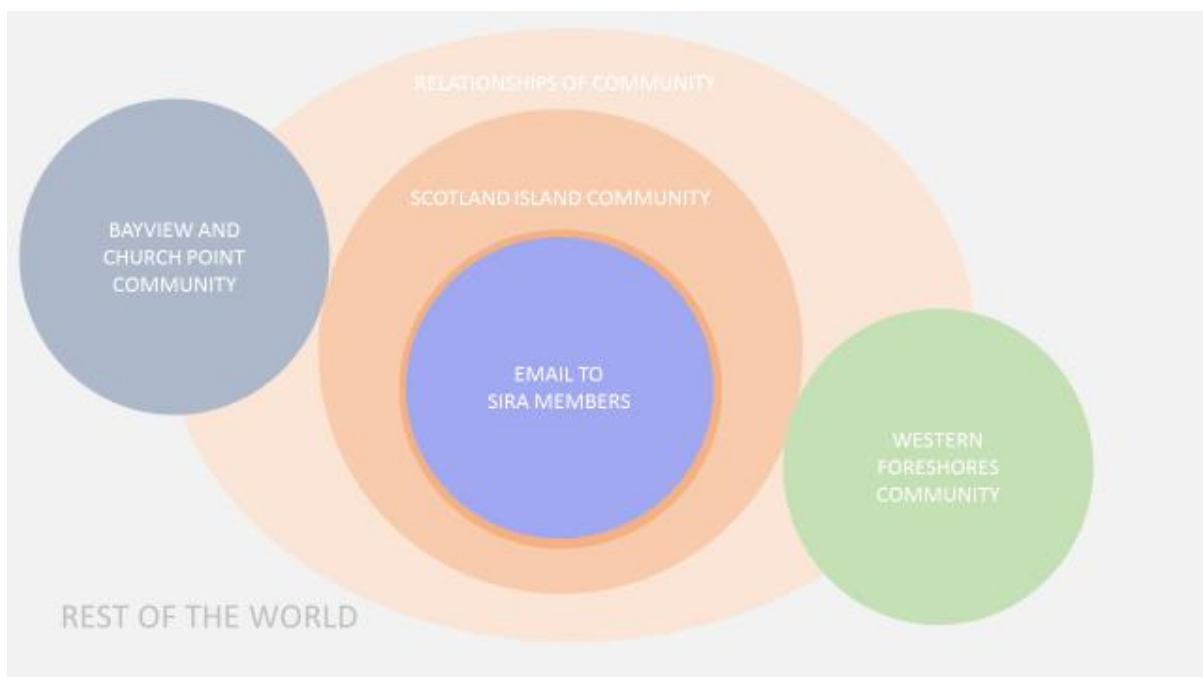


A popular channel in use by SIRA currently is the PON. The PON reaches a wide audience, including a good proportion of the Island community (based on statements made by PON editor). Sometimes the target audience is very well suited for the communication, in other instances it is not.

For example:

1. An operational message for users of water line 3 is inappropriate for the PON
2. An announcement of a new Community Initiative is well suited for the PON

Therefore, the channel used should be selected based on best fit for the intended audience.







## 6. Use of appropriate and effective Channels

In addition to audience, appropriate use of channels is determined by:

1. Delivery method
2. The level of need for interactivity
3. The efficiency of the channel

### 6.1. Delivery Method

A correct delivery method contributes to the effectiveness of the communications.

For example, **speed** may be important, in some cases post is not appropriate for a message that needs to reach its target audience quickly. Another aspect could be **accessibility**, where the audience may be in need to access information from the comfort of their home, in other cases somewhere else.

The **complexity** of the message or information also determines which delivery method will be effective. For example, a complex issue is better discussed via papers, video or face to face discussion, rather than a Facebook post or a poster at the wharves.

### 6.2. The level of interactivity

Especially in situations where community consultation is practiced, interactivity is important. If the audience doesn't get the feeling it given a chance to interact, it will feel that its opinion will not be given a chance to be heard, despite of what is stated in the communication. Some delivery methods

are extremely well suited for interactivity, both face to face forums and electronic ones, for example, are better suited than one-way communications such as newsletters.

### 6.3. Efficiency of the channel

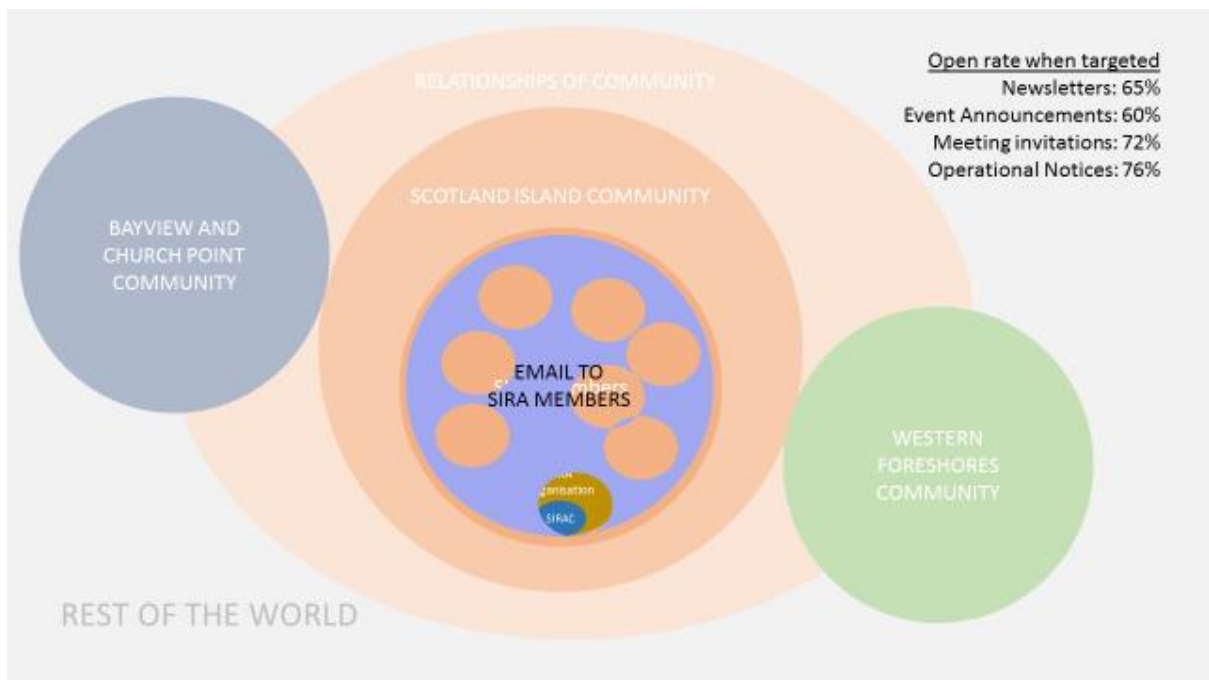
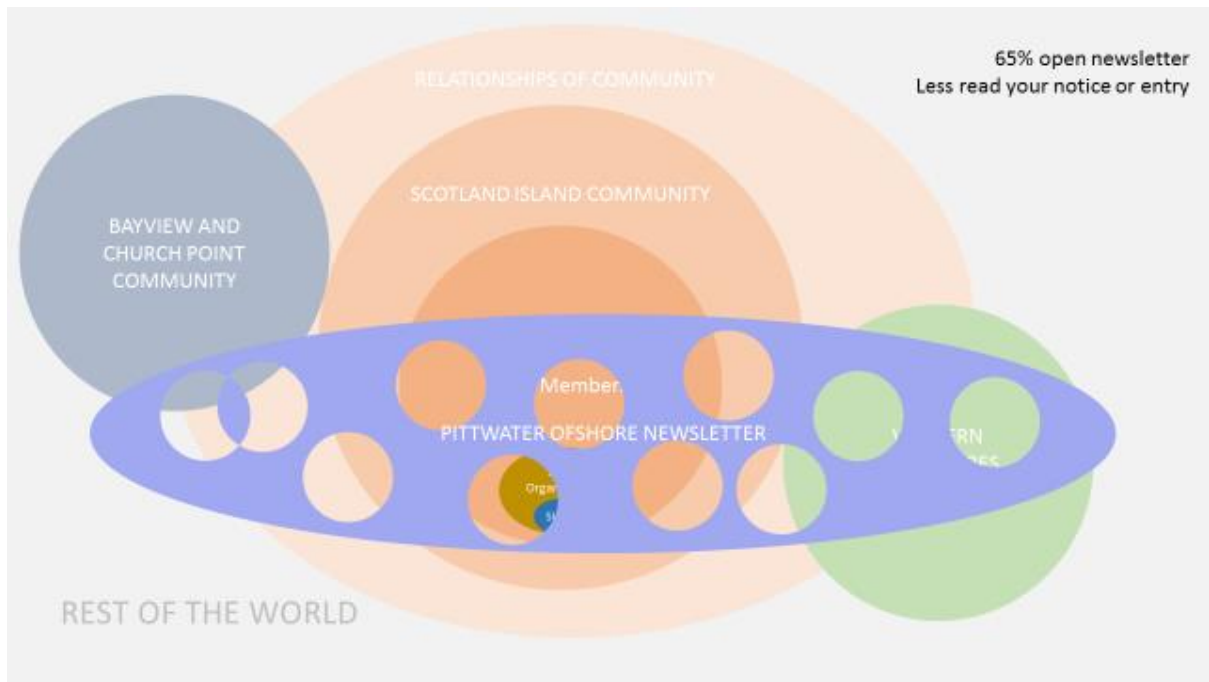
The efficiency of a channel is often overestimated. Reach does not equal information transfer. With the availability of modern tools, it is possible to measure the proportion of emails being opened. In addition, social media and websites often have measurement tools built in.

[Statistics](#) released by one of the popular online newsletter tool providers, MailChimp, show an average of 20% to 25% 'open rate' and a 3.5% 'click rate'. An **open rate** indicates the portion of recipients who actually have opened an email, however still not guaranteed to have read it's content. A **click rate** indicates the portion of recipients who have clicked links provided within the email or newsletter. Usually links are designed to take the readers somewhere else, a website, an online offer, a survey or something else.

The MailChimp statistics include those from the commercial sector and they may not be fully transferable to SIRA's 'environment. Statistics that may be more in line with what SIRA would experience, come from the Island Fire brigade. The average open rate here is around 60 - 65%. These statistics also confirm that the efficiency of delivery depends on a number of other factors, such as target audience and relevance of the communication/

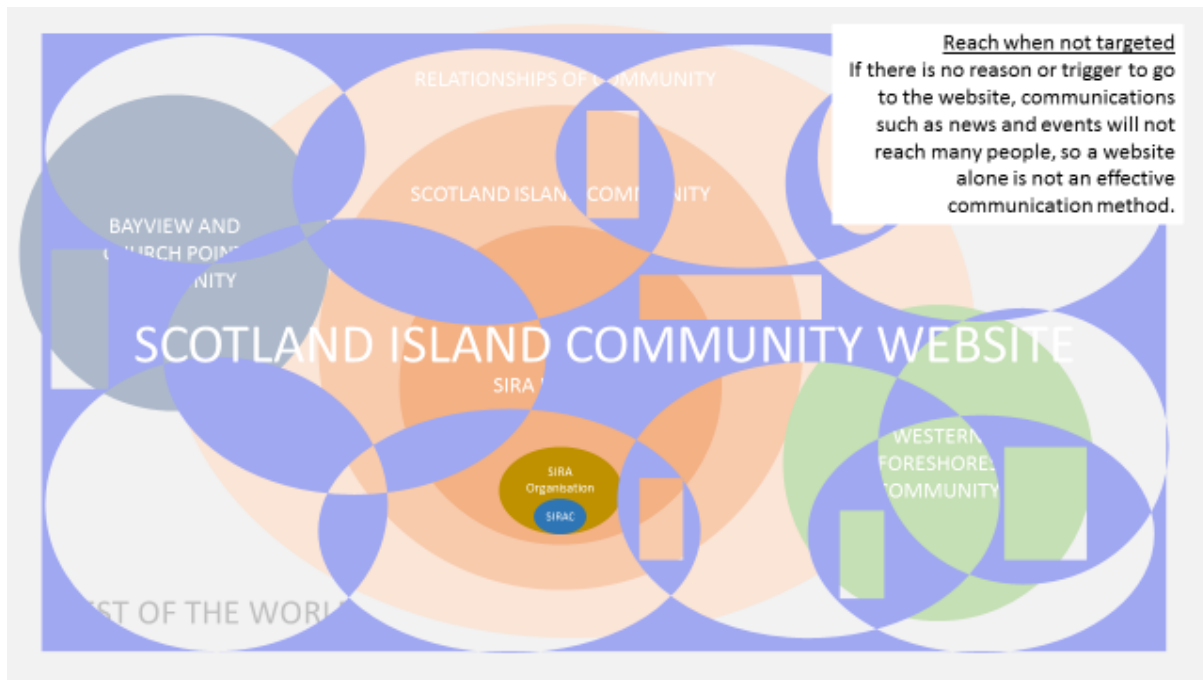
Category	Recipients	Emails opened	% Opened	% Clicked
Event Announcement	1771	965	60%	16%
Forum notification	3	2	100%	
Invoice	152	93	100%	100%
Newsletter	448	288	65%	7%
Ops - Internal	426	275	76%	38%
Payment receipt	69	42	100%	
System Message	179	148	100%	100%
Test	10	8	100%	75%
Training/Meeting	808	480	72%	18%
Event Reminder	60	46	85%	
Membership Email	421	221	100%	100%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4347</b>	<b>2568</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>79%</b>

If these statistics are translated to the reach achieved through communication channels currently used by SIRA, the picture looks something like this:



The efficiency of websites as a channel can also be measured, down to the number of page views (for each page), the time visitors hang around, how they clicked through to the website (acquisition), and much more.

Placing information on the website that expires or becomes out of date is only useful if it is combined with another channel that leads a user to the information and/or if this information becomes part of a resource for reference later on.



## 7. Coherence and audience experience and timing

In marketing, campaigns are designed in advance taking into account many factors. Costs are an important factor, however efficiency is equally important.

SIRA can make use of **communication plans**. A project, or a certain activity should include a communication plan. Each community engagement exercise should be accompanied by a communication plan. Ongoing activities and functions of the association also should be supported by a communications plan.

From the perspective of an audience, communications should be delivered in a convenient way, avoid causing annoyance and be timely.

To ensure that the association's communications stay coherent and are timed correctly, coordination of communications should be exercised by a communications function. Within SIRA this could be the Community Engagement and Communications Subcommittee.

A communications plan is based on amongst others, the following factors:

1. The frequency required
2. The timing required
3. The target audience
4. Which other communications are planned
5. The channels required
6. Dependence on other factors and communications
7. The amount of effort required and resources available.

## 8. Relevant and Interesting Content

Content marketing has been a buzz word in the marketing world for some time. It involves serving up or making available interesting content that catches the eye of an audience with the hope that this audience will go on to buy a product.

SIRA should be able to do the same in the context of the community it operates in. Interesting content would draw in more visitors and increase interest in the activities of the association.

Relevance is also important. As said before, serving content that is not relevant for the audience will result in a decrease of interest and can cause important messages not reach its intended audience.

Interesting content means different things to different people. However, there are certain types of content that perform a lot better than others. It is possible to use popular types of content to 'lure' audience to look at less interesting, but educational content that SIRA as an association would like to broadcast.

Below is another example from the SIRFB. On the left is a Facebook post that is educational and includes an image. It was seen by 67 people. On the right is a not very educational and not particularly well photographed scene (some members having lunch). It was seen by 341 people.

The image displays two Facebook posts side-by-side. The left post, dated 1 July, is from the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade and features a diagram of a property boundary. The diagram shows a slope of 50 metres leading to a 10-metre level section. Below the diagram is the NSW Rural Fire Service logo and website information. The post has 1 like and 1 share, and a red box highlights '67 people reached'. The right post, dated 6 July, is also from the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade and features a photograph of firefighters having lunch in a dining room. The post has 1 like and 1 share, and a red box highlights '341 people reached'. Both posts have a 'Boost Post' button.

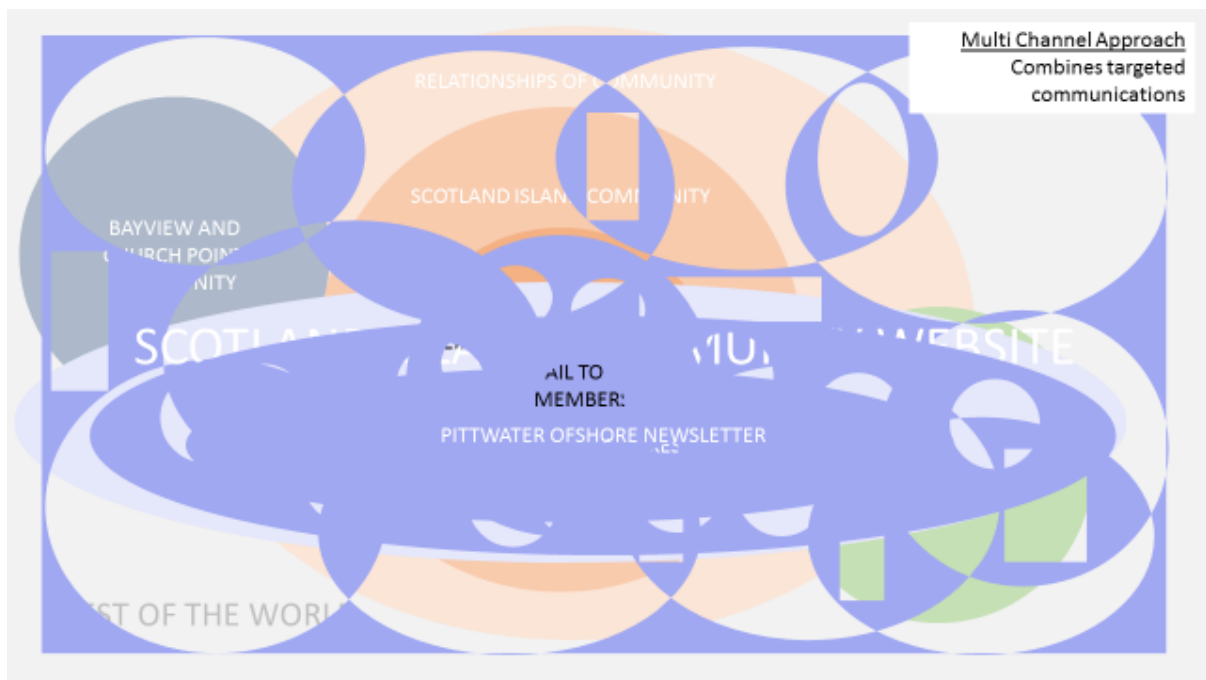
## 9. Appropriate format and language

Communications, by whomever has designed them within the organisation, carry the weight of being official on behalf of the association and help building the image of SIRA, whether this is good or bad. If the language is authoritative, this could convey an incorrect image. If the language is demeaning or inappropriate in some other way, this could affect the image of the whole organisations.

The format should be appropriate as well and in line with the image SIRA wants to convey. An amateurish-looking communication will convey an amateurish image. [Read this blog](#) by Belle Beth Cooper for more insights into improving engagement with an audience on Facebook.

## 10. Audience Journey, multi-channel approach

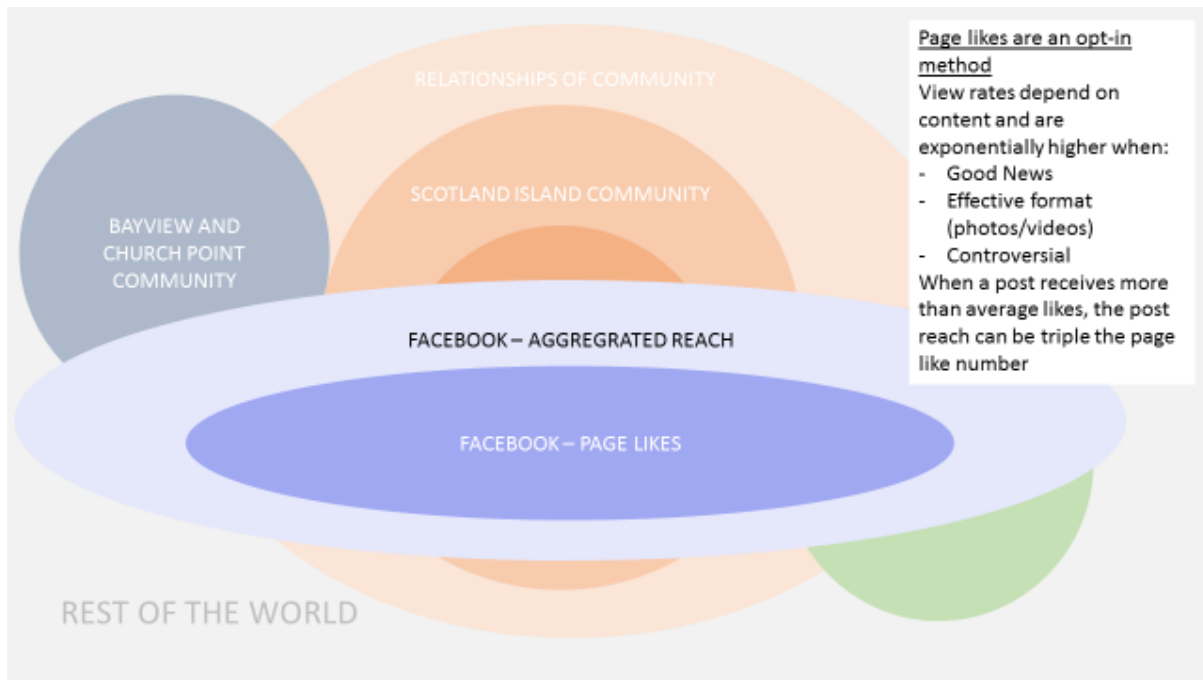
In a lot of cases, a single channel, due to its inherent inefficiencies (see discussion above), cannot be used on its own to reach the intended audience. One of the ways to achieve higher overall efficiencies, is to use a multi-channel approach. In the diagram below, the efficiency footprints of several channels are overlaid and jointly achieve a better outcome.



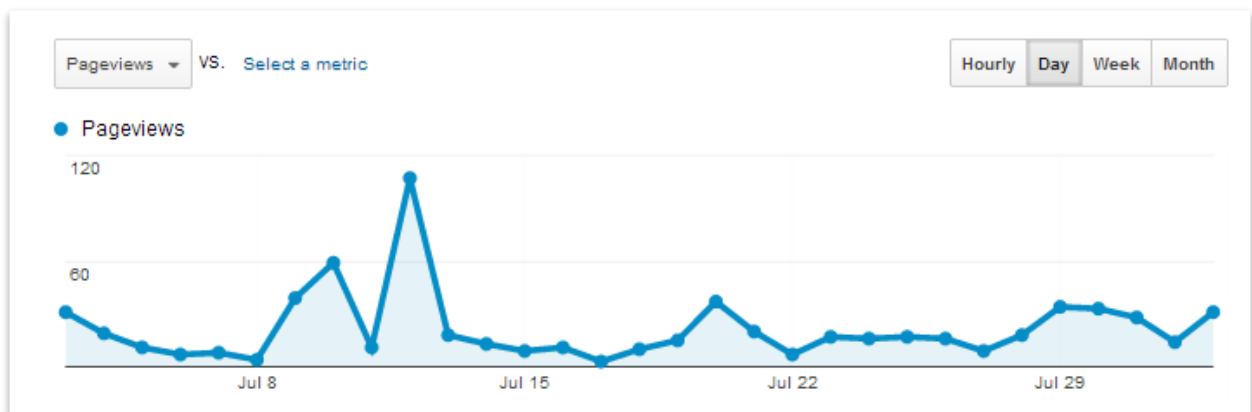
In 2014, a multi-channel approach must include social media. Social media are becoming more integrated in the daily lives of people and cannot be ignored.

Social media such as Facebook are different from email, because they are much more obvious 'opt-in'. People 'like' a page or channel because they want to see content from that source. If the content they see from that page or channel interests them they will 'share' or 'like' that content and with that pass it on to their relationships (friends).

Social media companies supply detailed information about your content and help content providers to improve and better target their communications. In the diagram shown below, the aggregated reach for well performing posts on a SIRA Facebook page with 300 page likes, could be more than three times the number of page likes (estimates derived from SIRFB Facebook page statistics).

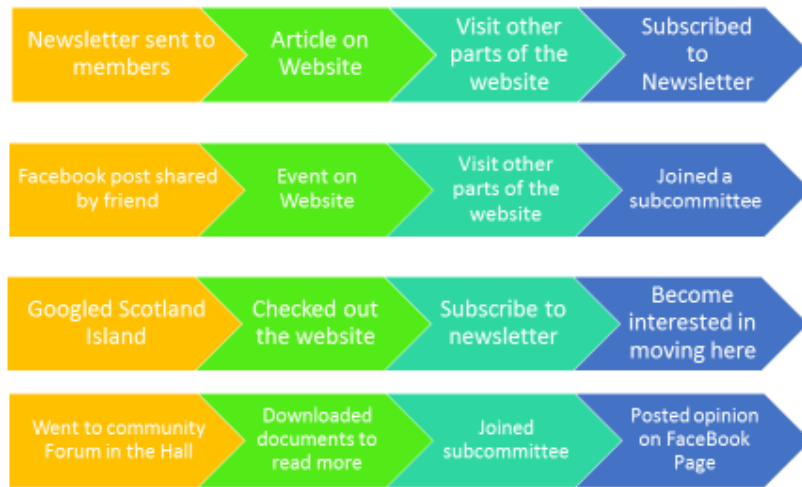


Website statistics provide insight into the efficiency of a website. Because websites are 'pull-based' instead of 'push-based' such as email, they are dependent on other channels to attract visits. In the diagram below of SIRFB website statistics, the peak on July 12 coincides with a direct email to subscribers with subsequent site visits for the purchase of dinner tickets. This is an example of a multi-channel approach containing an audience journey.



## 10.1. Audience Journeys

Audience journeys are a sequence of planned or unplanned interactions between an individual or groups of individuals and an organisation and the subsequent processing of those interactions into outcomes that benefit the organisation. In marketing and a commercial environments these are called customer journeys and they get designed to ensure the various parts of the organisation are equipped to effectively interact with that customer to offer a valuable customer experience.



In the SIRA context these journeys could be designed to suit members and other parties the organisation interacts with, with the aim to improve the experience for that individual, enhancing the perceived value and image of SIRA and enable the organisation to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

When communication plans are designed, these journeys are kept in mind and built into the plans. This is done through ensuring that the audience is given easy access to the next steps of their (planned) journey interacting with the organisation.

## 11. Govern communications

SIRA will ensure that all parts of this strategy are implemented by the organisation. In practice this means that:

1. Procedures are implemented within the organisation
2. Policies are designed and implemented
3. Structures are introduced into the organisation to support the procedures
4. A measuring mechanism is put in place to ensure that performance can be monitored.