

BRAND STORY



EXETER
LIVE BETTER

“We’ve waited a long time to celebrate our success.”



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1 INTRODUCTION

For whom is this relevant?

There are two core categories of organisations and people for whom this document has been developed:

Brand Owners; Brand Champions

And for the avoidance of doubt - the same principles and guidelines apply to all usage, online and offline.

The core structure:

“Exeter. Live Better” which will serve as the city’s signature.

Indeed, it’s our mantra.

Every day and in every way we want people to Live Better...

The critical element of this proposition is the strategy behind it.

The brand story

That is covered in full in the appropriate section in this document, and is described as “our narrative”.

It is expected to evolve, as the city’s offer grows.

Both categories of user are expected to reflect this narrative in their communications as they relate to their host location.

Although in the case of brand champions, it should of course be tailored to the particular context, needs and aspirations of the partner organisation.

When it comes to the design elements of the new brand, slightly different rules apply.

So - when and how are should these “physical” guidelines be used?

Brand Owners

The brand owners are Exeter City Council, on behalf of the broad Exeter community.

The brand owners will deploy the entire guidelines.

Brand Champions

Brand champions are external organisations, in both public and private sector, working in partnership with the city, and/or by definition promoting the city through their communications and other activity.

Brand champions will only be deploying the logotype.

We do ask that these guidelines are always taken into account when it comes to such usage – including size, positioning, and colour.

And we would also request that permission is sought to use the logotype in each instance, both at concept and sign-off stage.

That is simply to ensure that the usage is appropriate, both in terms of context and final execution.

Please do this via the contact button on the website.

We want to do all we can to communicate with consistency, and also do all we can to avoid “logo infestation”. Clutter, in other words, which can only have a negative effect on our effectiveness on behalf of our city, and everyone who lives and works here.

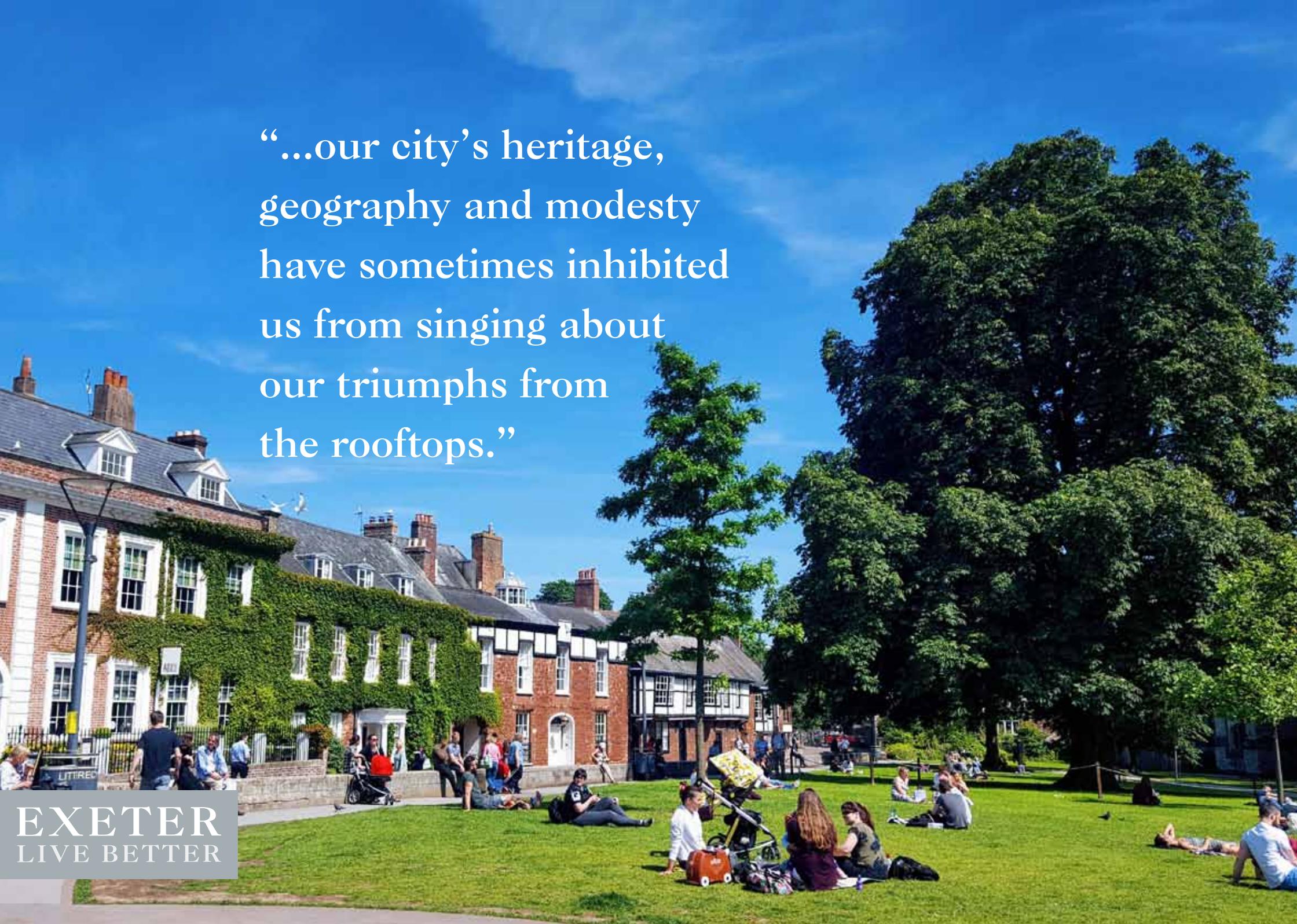
And that is in the interests of integrated presentation of the new city proposition.

“Exeter. Live Better”

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“...our city’s heritage,
geography and modesty
have sometimes inhibited
us from singing about
our triumphs from
the rooftops.”

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3 CONTEXT

Key institutions, from rugby's Exeter Chiefs to the UK leading Exeter College, are re-writing the rule book and redefining success.

From the Sport England Delivery Pilot to the city's globally renowned Russell Group University, when it comes to working together and leading the way, Exeter can genuinely claim to be a world leader.

Yet as a city, we often fail to recognise our successes for what they are.

And our city's heritage, geography and modesty have sometimes inhibited us from singing about our triumphs from the rooftops.

But we feel now is the time to acknowledge and amplify Exeter's success.

We have grown consistently over the last 100 years; our University is among the best in the UK; we offer the best retail experience in the South West; we are a Data Analytics hotspot; we lead the way in Environmental Science; and that's just the start.

We don't see our wonderful location as any barrier to that success. Indeed, we feel it enhances everything about the city, and the way we live.

In order to support our citizens and businesses, we have developed a strategic narrative for Exeter - which will also be backed by conventional elements of brand development, such as design assets, and brand guidelines.

THE NARRATIVE

The story that describes Exeter's strengths will help to explain our point of difference for the city and the surrounding area, and provide a positive backdrop to everything we all do to win competitive advantage.

Our brand story will also be used as a set of foundations, to help guide our messaging and ensure it all hangs together.

That way, it is far more likely to cut through, to be effective.

And work to address one of the real issues the city faces: the fact that for all its excellence and success, it does tend to fall into "best-kept secret" territory.

The new strategic proposition will create real salience for Exeter: greater awareness and a distinctive reputation.

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“...our effective reach needs to be truly global...”

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5 OUR OBJECTIVES

Exeter needs to be competitive in addressing a broad range of challenges, in a variety of sectors.

The following list is comprehensive, but not exhaustive:

- Use the strengths of the city to pull together with a collective narrative to achieve what wouldn't be possible alone
- Civic pride
- Enhanced reputation on a national and international level
- Ability to lobby government for more control for our citizens
- More business start-ups
- A competitive advantage for recruitment
- More established businesses/institutions – and indeed young professionals and entrepreneurs - considering Exeter as a primary relocation option
- Increase in retail visitors and tourism
- Targeted growth in key areas for the city, including applied environmental science

The breadth of objectives means, of course, that the range of target audiences we want to reach is extremely diverse, in every respect.

In more general terms –

- Internal pride
- A greater appreciation on the part of central government that Exeter (and the surrounding area) is progressive, growing and deserving of support, despite not being located in the north or east of England
- A defined proposition which will differentiate Exeter in terms of what it stands for – amongst its audiences not just within the UK, but globally. Exeter is no longer a city of regional resonance alone (although the city's leadership of the region remains an important element of its appeal)

That latter point is a central element of the strategy.

We will seek to attract inward investment and new, high salaried jobs from many of the planet's leading companies; in order to do so, Exeter will need to be fully equipped to win salience on the world stage.

Our competitive set is no longer within the region, it's more nationally such as Cambridge and Bristol; within Europe, the likes of Copenhagen, Bologna and Hamburg. Indeed, our effective reach needs to be truly global...

A photograph of a family of four—a young child, a woman, a woman, and an older man—standing in front of a red wooden fence. They are all looking upwards with expressions of awe and interest. To the left, the neck and head of a giraffe are visible, extending from the top of the frame down towards the family. The background is a solid red wall with vertical wooden planks.

“...never far away from
something beautiful.”

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7 WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

Winning awareness, building salience, challenging misconceptions – and projecting what it is that sets Exeter apart.

These are at the top of the task-list for the city's new strategic brand proposition.

The immediate temptation was to adopt the now established language of “place-making” – and try to encapsulate a broad, yet generic appeal.

We've all seen this before:

“Our city is a great place to visit, shop, work, study, invest. And its thriving cultural scene and great food and drink offer makes for a uniquely vibrant experience.”

Problem is, that's hardly differentiated. Furthermore, all great brands need to be anchored in the DNA of the product/service/offer. And such a bland formula would hardly do our wonderful city justice – either in terms of its heritage, or its aspirations.

There's also the fact that Exeter boasts little distinctive, iconic physicality. There's no Tower Bridge, or Guggenheim Museum, or Angel of the North.

So what does set Exeter apart?

As with so many successful brands, the challenge is about defining just what it stands for.

Because that's what creates a sense of being different, and piques interest and engagement.

Yes, Exeter offers those who live and work here great lifestyle opportunities.

A compact, eminently walkable centre offers great retail therapy (and now there's IKEA, of course), the cultural offer is excellent, as is the city's food and wine.

The Quay just gets better and better, with so much on offer.

Fascinating history is all around. As Arthur Mee said in the 20th century classic “The King's England”: We are never away from something old in Exeter, and indeed never far away from something beautiful.

And Exeter is well connected. Two railway lines to London, the M5, and Exeter airport means that communications are excellent. Exeter really is on the map in this respect.

But we need to move past this to the next level. And tap into what people in the 21st century are really looking for, beyond 'lifestyle' alone.

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“The Brilliant Alternative.”

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9 HOW WILL WE SET EXETER APART?

A key building block here is location.

There's a misconception that the Peninsula is where people go on holiday, or go to wind down (and ultimately die).

We need to challenge that. Taking the west coast of the United States as our model.

That part of America used to be all about lifestyle. No longer.

It's now universally accepted that San Francisco, Seattle and the rest are talent magnets, and offer a highly attractive combination of enviable lifestyle and fabulous, knowledge-driven career opportunities.

Embracing innovation, celebrating "smart". Yet highly aspirational at the broadest human level, too.

We can do the same. And ensure that successes conceived and born in Exeter are positioned as having made it not despite their home base, but because of it.

The West Coast parallel extends to the sorts of attitudes that millennials are concerned with.

Achieving genuine balance in life, and making a positive difference, where possible.

The right values and attitudes. With the common good a central goal.

In Exeter we certainly live well. Over and above everything described above, we have plenty of nice places for people to live, and a fabulous location to enjoy. There's a great sense of community, and plenty of opportunities to get active.

But over and above that, we work together. There's a real culture of collaboration.

We do things differently – in order to make things better for everyone here.

We celebrate innovation, and change.

We're immensely proud of our past (and what a past!) - but we're fully focused on the future.

There are so many specifics where we're right up there in the world rankings...

Such as..

- Environmental Science (thanks to the excellence of our University)
- Education in general
- Data analytics
- Computing/forecasting (with the Met Office at the forefront)

We're all looking for the best work-life balance. Exeter is the perfect place for the smart and ambitious.

Why put up with second best? Why accept compromise?

Our headline proposition is extremely simple. It is to position Exeter as **"The Brilliant Alternative"**

“In Exeter, we really do believe in better...”



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11 THE EXETER WAY...

As with other areas of activity, in Exeter we are proud to be different.

But not different just for the sake of it.

Rather, to make life better for our citizens; for our children; for our older people; for the environment; for the people who come here to study; for our businesses and other organisations; for our guests; for the future.

We are taking a different approach to the strategic brand task too.

Not for us a non-differentiating bland “all things to all people” approach, with logo and a million fliers at the fore.

Our approach recognises that brands are essentially cerebral.

Brands are about meaning – and that meaning is often a complex cocktail of the rational and the emotional.

And it’s the latter that is more likely to succeed in challenging misconceptions, and driving engagement.

First, our proposition.

“Exeter. The Brilliant Alternative.”

This is not a consumer “slogan” – rather a statement of what it is we want to stand for.

An organising principle, against which we can assess and guide what we do, as well as what we say.

We can show evidence for this with numerous success stories in Exeter. And if we are pitching for pilot projects, government monies, significant relocations, we can deploy that evidence in our favour.

But when we are talking to our residents, visitors, students, start-ups, SMEs, major businesses we will cite the benefits of the brilliant alternative.

That in Exeter we really do live better.

Because every outcome of our approach is geared to improvement..

Better for residents, visitors, students, start-ups, SMEs, major businesses – and also for the environment; for the future indeed. In Exeter, we really do believe in better.

Our consumer line – our mantra - will be **“Exeter. Live Better.”**

There’s a challenge inherent in that. And our city will play its full part in helping you achieve your own goals, whatever they are.

We will extend the concept of “liveability” beyond mere lifestyle – important though that is - to encompass the fundamentals of life.

Including health, wealth, wellbeing, entrepreneurial spirit, community cohesion, future focus and doing the right thing (which is where leadership in environmental science comes in, for example).

That’s the Exeter way.

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“The Brilliant Alternative.
Where you really can live
better...”

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13 OUR NARRATIVE

These ten points form the basis of our brand story

Which will evolve. As new stories become available to us, evidence that will re-invigorate and reinforce our brand, we must deploy them in the overall mix.

And please note – the examples here are just that: examples. Exeter boasts many other excellent offerings, also capable of making the case strongly.

So this narrative covers the basics – but is here to be deployed according to perspective and need.

HEADLINES

■ **History & heritage.** In Exeter, we measure time in millennia

■ We are immensely proud of our history, yet focused on the **future**

■ **Education.** Primary through secondary, and a world-class university. A smart place, which really values knowledge and innovation. And which gives all its young people the opportunity to be the best they can

■ A major outcome of that – we plan to make things better. **And we're not afraid to do things differently**

■ **Cultural offer** healthy and diverse. Food and sport are a major part of that

■ Connected and **collaborative.** We work together

■ **Successful.** Decade on decade growth since the second world war

■ **Entrepreneurial.** We offer great facilities and support for smart start-ups. Our leadership in data, our analytical skills help here

■ We're the outstanding UK **holistic offer:** we offer conventional lifestyle benefits, but together with great education; career opportunities; well-being; homes; strong community focus. And we embrace diversity totally

■ Our **location** is key to this. We're at the heart of the UK's very own version of the US west coast – offering real opportunity to the brightest and best, with an element of “doing the right thing” thrown in

In summary:

The Brilliant Alternative. Where you really can live better...

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A group of diverse young children are running happily in a grassy field. In the foreground, a young girl with dark skin and braided hair, wearing a pink and white striped shirt and blue jeans, is running towards the right with a joyful expression. Next to her, a young boy with light skin and brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and brown shorts, is also running towards the right. In the background, other children are visible, including a boy in a red, white, and blue striped shirt and a girl in a striped shirt and blue jeans. The scene is set in a bright, open field with green grass under a clear sky.

“We need to reach our children from a young age.”

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15 WHO WE WANT TO REACH

One of the interesting aspects of developing a strategic brand for a city is the breadth of audiences we need to reach.

First, the internal marketplace.

We need to start with Exeter insiders – people working for the City Council. They need to be aware, and aligned.

Then let's work to make our people, throughout the travel-to-work area, more and more Exeter Proud. And entirely confident to be seen as such.

We need to reach our children from a young age. We need to reach our apprentices and trainees. We need to reach our students. We need to reach our adults of working age. We need to reach our professional and business communities.

For us, everyone's a key stakeholder.

We need to reach the media professionals (including the PR/comms agencies), and encourage them to do all they can to talk the city up. We need to reach the brands with considerable leverage too. The leading sports clubs, the major employers, the transport providers, for example.

In terms of external reach, we have to remember that the objective of achieving profile and reputational gains for the city will in part demand that we reach selected global markets, as well as local, regional and national ones.

Selected, specific external audiences

- Government and opinion-formers at UK national level. Lobbying will be fundamental here, but the brand has a serious role to play in creating a sympathetic background; and also in addressing widely held misconceptions

- Potential leisure visitors. Including people visiting the University, and "cultural couples". By no means restricted to the UK; the Peninsula is successful at attracting European visitors, and we need to get Exeter onto more personal itineraries

- Education. Help attract the very best students, nationally and in targeted overseas markets. Important to recognise the role of parents in university choice. Also worth noting that reinforcement of those who have already made the choice can be an important brand function

- Shop Exeter. Our retail offer needs to be presented as head and shoulders above the regional competition. We need to continue to promote it throughout the west of England (in a way that is consistent with the efforts of the BID Company); we also need to reach the national retail establishment, with messages about the opportunities offered by Exeter

- "Living and Working". More and more intelligent and ambitious young people are looking for a credible alternative to London and the south-east as a base to build a home, a career, a family – a life. Other regional UK cities are already profiting from intelligent positioning of their offer as representing "another way". Exeter can and should do this too – it has an extremely strong hand to play

- The investment community. Reached primarily through personal approaches and focused PR. The brand backdrop should help enormously – especially the focus on consistent success

So – there are many target audiences, internal and external.

All need to be reached and influenced in the context of their own particular agendas and needs.

Even more important that our messaging is underpinned by **consistency of messaging – and tone.**

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a green shirt, is smiling and holding a small orange and blue card. She is standing in the aisle of a bus, talking to a driver who is wearing a blue shirt. The driver is seen from the back, looking towards the woman. The bus interior is blue, and there are windows showing a green landscape outside. A sign above the woman lists bus capacity: "17 SEATED", "17 STANDING", "17 WHEELCHAIR".

“Together we’re stronger.”

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17 WORKING TOGETHER

We need to work hard together in order to get our message out there.

And we're committed to doing this in a manner that's right for us.

Our first commitment is to being channel neutral.

Traditional media is interesting – and we will look to establish coverage via proactive PR, rather than advertising.

Digital and social media have important roles too. We we have created an online portal, anchored by the “Live Better” theme. We will also look to make good use of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (inter alia)

However, our biggest channel will be through our partnerships.

And there are three reasons for that.

First, because it's what you do as a brand that really matters. Evidence of innovation, progress, success.

And it's essentially our partners who are responsible for the vast majority of that newsworthy success.

Second, because these Exeter successes have strong brands in their own right. Capable of reaching and engaging with many of the very same people we are setting out to influence.

Third, because one of the most striking elements of the Exeter Way is the level of collaboration between the key players, whatever their sector.

Our strategy is to recruit literally hundreds of thousands of brand champions.

All those who live in the city, and the travel-to-work area. The institutions who have made their homes here. The many ambitious start-ups and SME's, and their support ecosystem. The stars of retail and hospitality; the cultural sector, in the broadest sense; and the professional firms.

There will be many ways of buying into and contributing to the promotion of the brand narrative.

- Internal communications
- HR/Recruitment activities (“Why Exeter?”)
- External marketing/newsfeed messaging
- Initiatives feeding from and supporting our strategic proposition

Details are outlined in the “narrative” section of this document.

And there are other ways too.

We have developed a suite of design-focused brand assets, and a set of guidelines as to how and when to use them.

We will offer workshops for the key people in significant organisations.

We will encourage participation in our social media activities, and we will support initiatives which clearly tie in with our strategic focus.

There's no doubt at all that in as competitive an environment as the one we operate in, “together we're stronger”.



“we tend to hide our light under a bushel. Then we hide the bushel.”

19 IN SUMMARY

THE CORE STRATEGY

Positioning

The smart, progressive city, focused on the future, with a single-minded commitment to doing things differently – for the benefit of every person, business and institution living there...

Proposition (what we want Exeter to stand for)

“Exeter. The Brilliant Alternative.”

Personality

Intelligent; Innovative; Entrepreneurial; Successful

Mantra

“Exeter. Live Better.”

Values

Responsibility; Tolerance; Respect

Tone

Quietly Confident; Understated; Optimistic

It’s not just what we say, it’s the way that we say it.

Exeter has in the past been relatively backward in coming forward.

Reluctant to trumpet its success, indeed.

As a respondent in a focus group said, “we tend to hide our light under a bushel. Then we hide the bushel.”

The seductive route in instances such as this is to shift the dial – and look to project a different character altogether. And that would be a mistake.

Brands have to be built from the DNA. Place brands particularly so.

We believe that we need to communicate more, and promote much evidence of success, and the benefits delivered as a result.

But we should be true to ourselves. And talk in the Exeter way. Which is characterised by quiet confidence; understatement; and optimism.

For more information:

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