

CASE STUDY: Brand design and identity

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLERS' ASSOCIATION NORTHERN IRELAND

Until Michael Carvill founded the Professional Footballers' Association Northern Ireland (PFA NI), Northern Ireland was the only region in the UK and Ireland that didn't have a body to support players in their professional and personal lives.



The Challenge

Unlike players in the English professional leagues, most players in Northern Ireland are semi-professional. Their income from the game is a fraction of that earned by their English counterparts and certainly not enough to provide a living wage while playing, or a sum they can live on once they retire from the game.

This meant that:

- 1) Players needed to be convinced of the advantages, benefits and perks of being part of an association they'd always survived without.
- 2) Membership fees had to be kept low enough to be affordable for players in smaller clubs and on very low match wages.
- 3) Players needed to see the value of membership both during and after their playing careers.

The Strategy

As the PFA NI was a new association, all messaging needed to be clear and consistent. The logo had to be instantly recognisable to footballers as that of an organisation offering a service that was both relevant and helpful to them.

We quickly decided that as the acronym 'PFA' was well known to anyone within the game due to its prominence in the English leagues, the logo itself didn't need to include the full name, although it did need to work as a standalone logo that could be used without additional text.

As we developed the logo, I introduced a player graphic to suggest an organisation for players themselves, rather than just another corporate or governing body. As the association was to include both male and female players, a generic graphic was used that didn't suggest any particular gender. I also changed the ball graphic to a more subtle illustration, allowing greater prominence for the player graphic and 'PFA'.

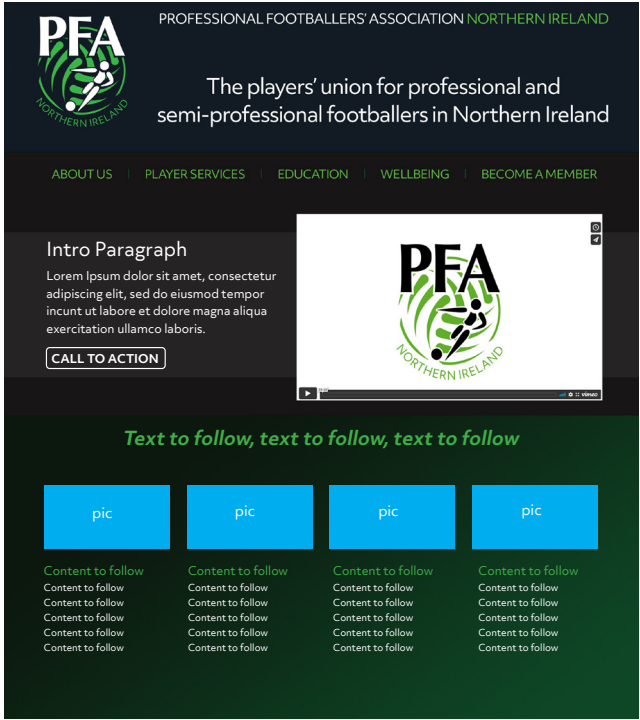
The fonts needed to be easily read and not too corporate, while not overly casual, suggesting a welcoming, dependable and professional body.



Given the political landscape of Northern Ireland, green and black were chosen as colours that would neither lean towards nor alienate any part of the community.

Once the logo was finalised, a colour palette and set of brand guidelines was produced. The PFA already had their own web designer, so we supplied them with the new guidelines along with JPEGs of how the new branding should be utilised on the website.

Initial website holding page and home page visuals



The Launch

Given that many semi-professional players with other, full-time jobs couldn't necessarily see the need for a players' association, the material around the launch had to clearly show the benefits of becoming a member. For the PFA NI to be successful it was important to gain buy-in from all players, leagues, clubs, and the Irish Football Association, so an extensive awareness campaign was created and rolled out across Northern Ireland, using club and league social media channels, email campaigns and in-person events. All of these used strong, consistent branding and clear messaging. Any partners were supplied with the brand guidelines to ensure a consistent look.

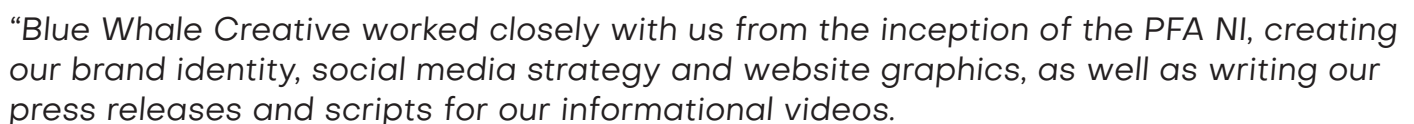
A Strategic Plan was written, designed and produced in both PDF and print format, clearly laying out the advantages of membership and the aims of the new association over the coming years. The document was sent to all clubs for distribution among their players.



The PFA NI had already connected with an animation company to make a short, simple video, introducing the association and explaining the benefits. We wrote a script that explained, clearly and concisely, the many benefits of becoming a member. Once the script was approved, we story-boarded the video for the production company.



We continue to work with the PFA NI on all forms of communication including printed marketing, social media, presentation materials, copy and content writing.



Both their quality of work and service are excellent. Blue Whale handles our ongoing marketing and PR, and help with the many different services we offer our members. They've become an invaluable partner to the PFA NI.”

Michael Carvill
Chief Executive Officer,
Professional Footballers' Association Northern Ireland

