

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HEADLINE – GCN Member Urban Element launches website for the Conservative European Party

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Urban Element, an internet technologies business based in Witney, Oxfordshire have recently developed a new website for the Conservative European Party. By way of 27 members, the Conservatives in Europe currently form the largest political group in Britain and therefore wanted to stand aside from the Conservative Party, with whom they shared their previous website. The new website had to inform users of current European parliamentary news and promote any current campaigns.

Peter Wilding, outlines the requirements of the Conservative European party website:

'The site will be a media centre. It is the online arm of the Conservative media office. The aim is to promote the work of Conservative MEPs in newsworthy fields, supporting audio-visual feeds, documentation, reports, polls, surveys and petitions'

Peter Wilding

The new website had to be designed with three user groups in mind; Journalists, Conservative Party Members, and individual Constituents wanting to find out what their local Conservative MEP is actively engaged in.

Each aspect of the site was designed to encourage a response from users, gaining as much information as possible to help collate people's opinions. All these items needed to be updatable by means of a Content Management System that had to be user friendly and practical enough for everyday use. Accessibility and cross-browser compatibility

were a high priority, as was close adherence to current website legislation, in order to prevent user discrimination.

The client requested a series of mock-ups, based around three very different design ideas: a political website, a design that pushed boundaries, and a design which was contemporary. Understanding the client and what they are willing to achieve being the most important part of the overall process.

Innovative and sympathetic graphic design, including feature rich content management, were incorporated into the site. Specialising in the Microsoft .NET framework, the development team built a number of bespoke components including: campaign micro sites, polls, surveys, petitions, a media gallery, and resources with each component designed so that it could interact with other components. For example, News Articles can be associated with Campaigns, putting relevant information in one place for the user.

Vigilant development and construction of the site has meant that Conservative European Party website is now: search engine friendly, cross-browser compatible, highly accessible, easily updateable (with future proof against changes in technology, such as mobile devices) and faster to download.

A content management system known as 'WebControl' was incorporated within the website - a bespoke and powerful database-driven content management tool, allowing the client to update the database-related aspects of the site. 'WebControl' is accessible online via a secure login area, meaning that the client is able to update the website at any time – and from anywhere that has internet connection. This is especially important considering the people adding information to the site have to split their time between Brussels, Strasbourg and London.

The end result has been a website that allows its users to participate in polls, surveys, and petitions as well as posting comments. All these actions can be done in conjunction with a news story or a campaign.