

Brooke Story Strategy

Final Draft

22 April 2022

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Why a Story Strategy?

Brooke's new global strategy, 'A life worth living', was launched in 2022. In it we set out our goals to transform equine welfare in communities, increase the visibility and inclusion of working equids, and develop sustainable animal health systems. The stories we tell are an intrinsic part of that strategy - without them we have no way to bring our strategy to life, and connect our audiences to our work. They are also how we shift the narrative about what Brooke is, and does, in the short and the long term. As discovered in the latest audience research, supporters are not just motivated by the immediate tangibles of supporting an animal, they also find powerful motivation and an enduring rationale in Brooke's "smart narrative" – they see the charity enabling improvements in the welfare of working animals by applying pragmatic solutions that consider long-term consequences, and we need a story strategy to match this shifting narrative.

Making a better, kinder, fairer world for working animals takes a global movement for change. People who believe in our vision and share our values belong in our movement. Our stories must inspire them to join us, and stay with us.

Through the stories we tell, people who join our cause will know that their support delivers meaningful impact to the lives of horses, donkeys and mules, and the communities that depend on them.

The Story Strategy creates a step change in how we plan and collect content and meet ambitions of growing a global movement for change. It will provide stories that will accurately reflect, in detail, the work Brooke does in the field, the lives of the animals we help, and the support network of people around those animals.

The Wider Content strategy



Our Content Strategy Quadrant (above) shows how the overall strategy is made up of different parts. This covers all aspects of how we plan, create, manage and publish content. The Story Strategy is the editorial quadrant.

The Story Strategy focuses on providing rich stories from the field to help Brooke design engaging content that will reach the eyes, ears, minds and hearts of the supporters, potential supporters and professionals we interact with.

It does not aim to create finished content for multiple platforms, or dictate on which platforms and how this finished content will be shared - these areas are covered in the other sections of the Content Strategy. Instead, it will provide all the raw ingredients teams need to create the finished content that they use to engage, inspire and communicate with their specific audiences.

How the Story Strategy will help content creators

By content creators we mean anyone creating audience facing materials. As our bank of stories increases with [fuller story packages](#), and more individual story assets (photos, case studies, etc), content creators will be able to take from this bank the rich, raw materials needed to craft stories to inspire responses from multiple audiences. While the higher quality and depth of these stories will make it easier to craft them into finished content, it will be the responsibility of those content creators to re-package and use stories to craft their external communications.

To help with this, the other elements of the content strategy will explore how we work with the Audience Engagement Framework (the hotspots) to frame our work for our key audiences. Neither the Story Strategy or the overall content strategy will replace the hotspots, or Audience Engagement Framework. They will however help us revise the hotspots as we test and learn from the results using them. The hotspots are still our key distillation of Brooke's work that we can use to clearly communicate with our target audiences, without telling them everything about ourselves all of the time. The Audience Engagement Framework gives us a base when creating the 'Experience' side of our core content strategy. Again, the story strategy will provide the raw ingredients we need to effectively illustrate the hotspot themes.

[Learn more about the Audience Engagement Framework here](#)

The Story Strategy doesn't focus on what tactics we use to engage with our audiences, instead it provides the materials to create and maintain engagement, as well as giving us the wherewithal so that this next generation of Brooke stories will help to more clearly define some of the areas of uncertainty we encounter when telling stories, such as who the focus is (e.g. animal or human) and how we accurately describe what we do in terms of our programmatic work (e.g. direct treatment vs direct intervention).

Story Strategy - Objectives

Define our editorial mission

To create stories that are consistent and universally useful for Brooke teams to create engaging content for all of our audiences. This will be achieved by defining [what Brooke stories are](#).

Define our tone of voice

Separate to our overall brand tone of voice, we need a tone of voice in our stories so that they can be easily adapted into audience facing content that is engaging. We will achieve this through our [Pillars](#), specifically parts one and two.

Ensure that our stories are fit for purpose

To date, case studies have lacked the detail needed to capture the hearts and minds of our audiences. This had led to finished content to fill in the gaps, which often meant it didn't accurately illustrate the work. Through the [Pillars](#) (parts 3 and 4) we will create processes that join the dots between initial planning, collecting stories, and the finished content we produce.

Create stories with more detail and long term focus

To date, case studies we have gathered or received from the field are effective, but often capture just one moment in time, and cover one aspect of the story. This means their use in various forms of finished content is very limited and therefore not as cost-effective as raw story materials that can be used multiple times. To build on this, we need to be able to look at a story as a long term. This will be achieved through the design of the [Story Cycle](#).

Create stories with richer detail

The strategy will deliver richer detail through the [Story Cycle](#), and also through having dedicated story gatherers, storytelling training for staff, and increased engagement with the communities we work with, providing them with channels to share their own stories in their own words.

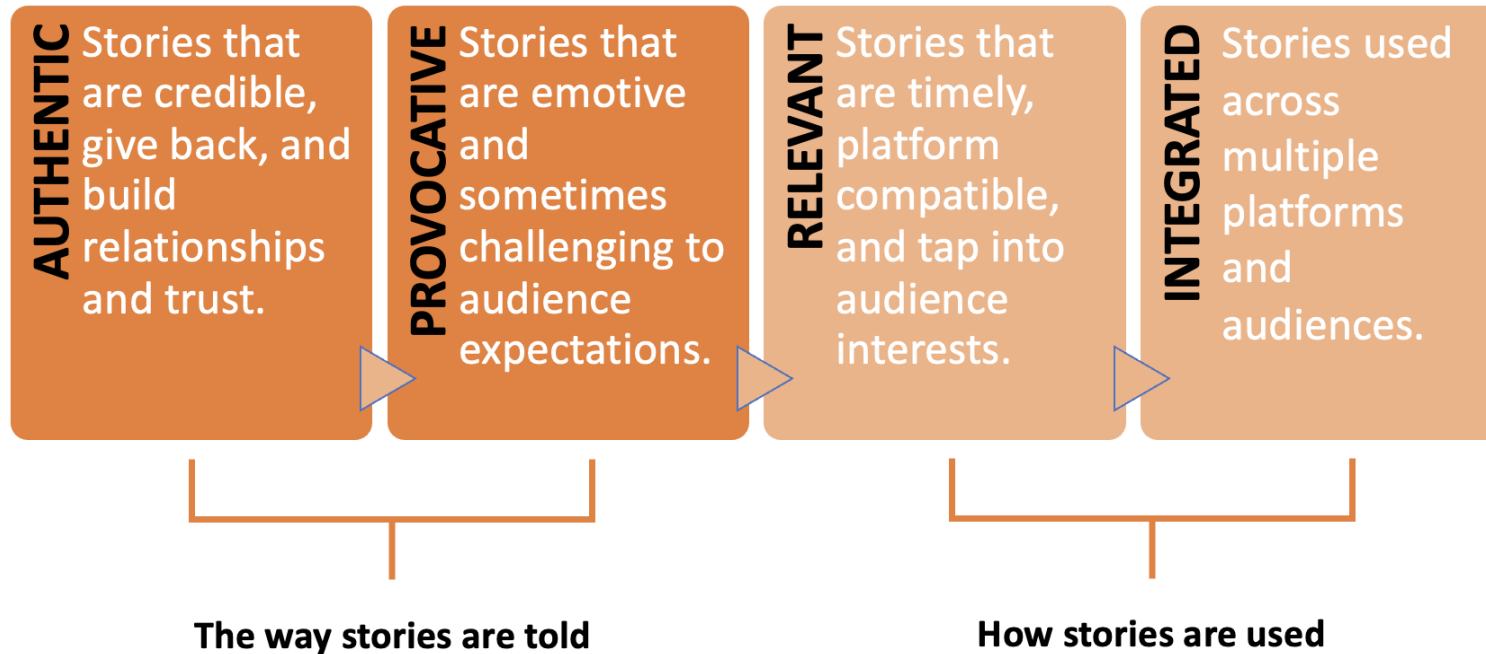
The evolution in storytelling at Brooke that the new strategy brings can be demonstrated by defining where we were and where we are going:

From...	To...
Stories from the field that often have no focus on any particular character, or only focus on one character	A named animal or animals featuring at the centre of the story, detailing their personality, their physical and psychological states, and their needs. Around them, we paint detailed pictures of the relevant people and environments, as well as the wider context of the animal welfare situation in their country, and how all of this affects the animals.
Stories that work for one or two audiences	Stories that are so rich in detail and contain multiple, editable materials that they can be written in multiple ways to create bespoke materials for multiple audiences.
Stories that can only be used to illustrate one or two topics	Case studies that can be written up to work with any of the hotspots and still provide detailed and emotive stories.
Briefs from just one person or team	Briefs that are created with input from the entire 'content group' and which will therefore have further use beyond the initial or primary need.
Stories that show a narrow moment in time	Stories that we follow through time, creating a clear beginning, middle and end, and show the long term sustainable change as well as immediate impact.
Brand guidelines that don't provide guidance in storytelling	A section in the brand guidelines for storytelling, to promote consistency in how we tell our organisational story (to be completed).

Story Strategy: the pillars.

These pillars hold up the strategy, and help us to define what actions and practicalities we need to meet our story ambitions.

We have four pillars:



The pillars are divided into the **ways** stories are told and how they feel to the audience; authentic and provocative, and **how** stories are used; relevant and integrated.

We will deliver these pillars through The Practicalities - a series of actions and tools - but to help explain the pillars in a little more detail here is further explanation and some examples.

AUTHENTIC



Authentic stories feel believable to audiences, which helps develop their relationship to Brooke as it builds trust and shows them what we are doing and gives them a sense of intimacy. You help build authentic stories by showing the long-term narrative arc of a story; beginning, middle and end.

Authenticity is achieved in a variety of ways, from sharing stories told by contributors, to giving an 'insider' view of what it is like to be someone working for or impacted by Brooke, to showing natural animal behaviours and moments of the animal and human bond.



PROVOCATIVE

We want to generate a reaction in our audiences - this might be indignation, sadness, joy or empathy and more - but the important thing is that we provoke.

Sometimes we will also be challenging. This might be in the types of stories we tell, the ways we tell them, or even in sharing something our audiences have not told us they like but which we suspect they may find engaging and provoking. We will use our stories to educate, and even change perceptions about locations of groups of people.

Our stories will be used not just to ask for something, but also to give back and engage, provoking emotions without asking for anything in return.

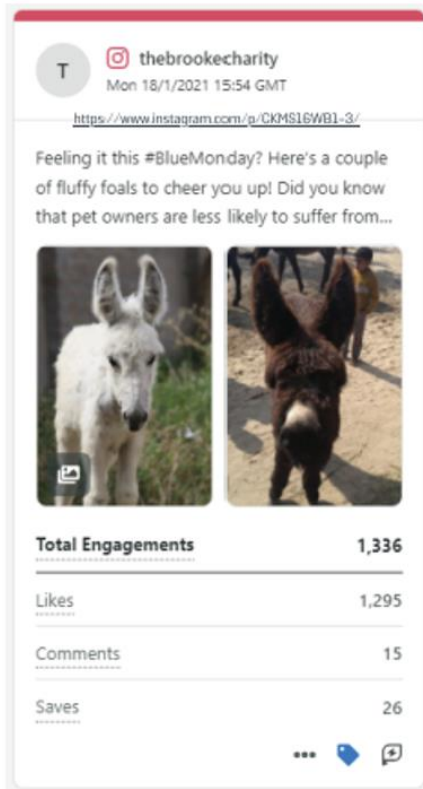
We need to show animals suffering to provoke sadness and indignation, and on the other end of the scale something like our Christmas film which uses fun and cute animation to spark joy and curiosity.

RELEVANT

Being relevant is about being timely, sensitive to platform differences, and listening to what our audiences are engaging with over both the short and long term. It links closely with the 'Experience' part of the content strategy

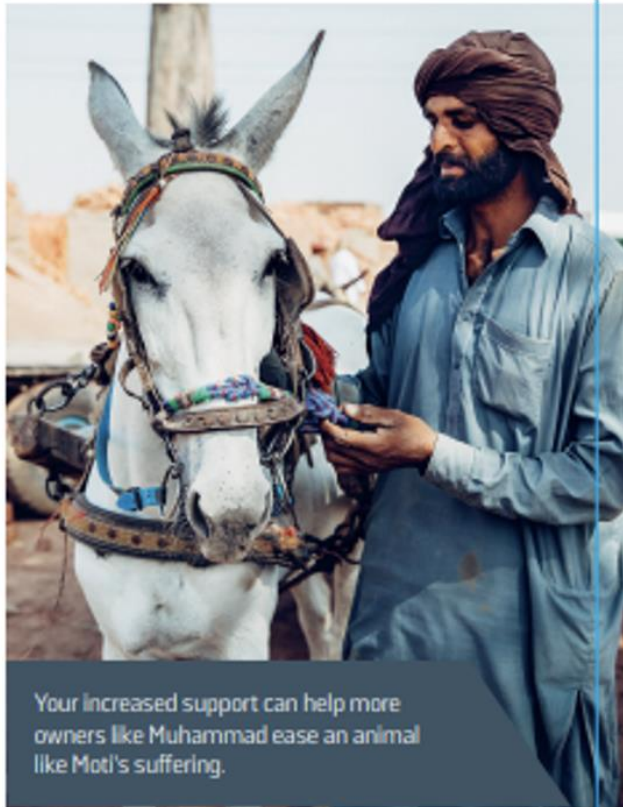
For example, in the short term, we might release a story into the online space that fits with an event taking place over one day which has captured a public mood and is being discussed widely on social media. This may be in a planned or reactive way.

Over the long term, we might realise that our audiences are prepared to engage with longer-form stories sent over email at the weekends, and so choose to release this content on Saturday mornings.



CUTIE
INFORMATIVE
RELEVANT (HASHTAG USED)





Your increased support can help more owners like Muhammad ease an animal like Moti's suffering.

INTEGRATED

Stories are one of the brand signifiers for Brooke. To help achieve better brand recognition and story awareness, we want to have integrated stories that are used across multiple platforms and audiences. This will sometimes happen simultaneously, and sometimes separately.

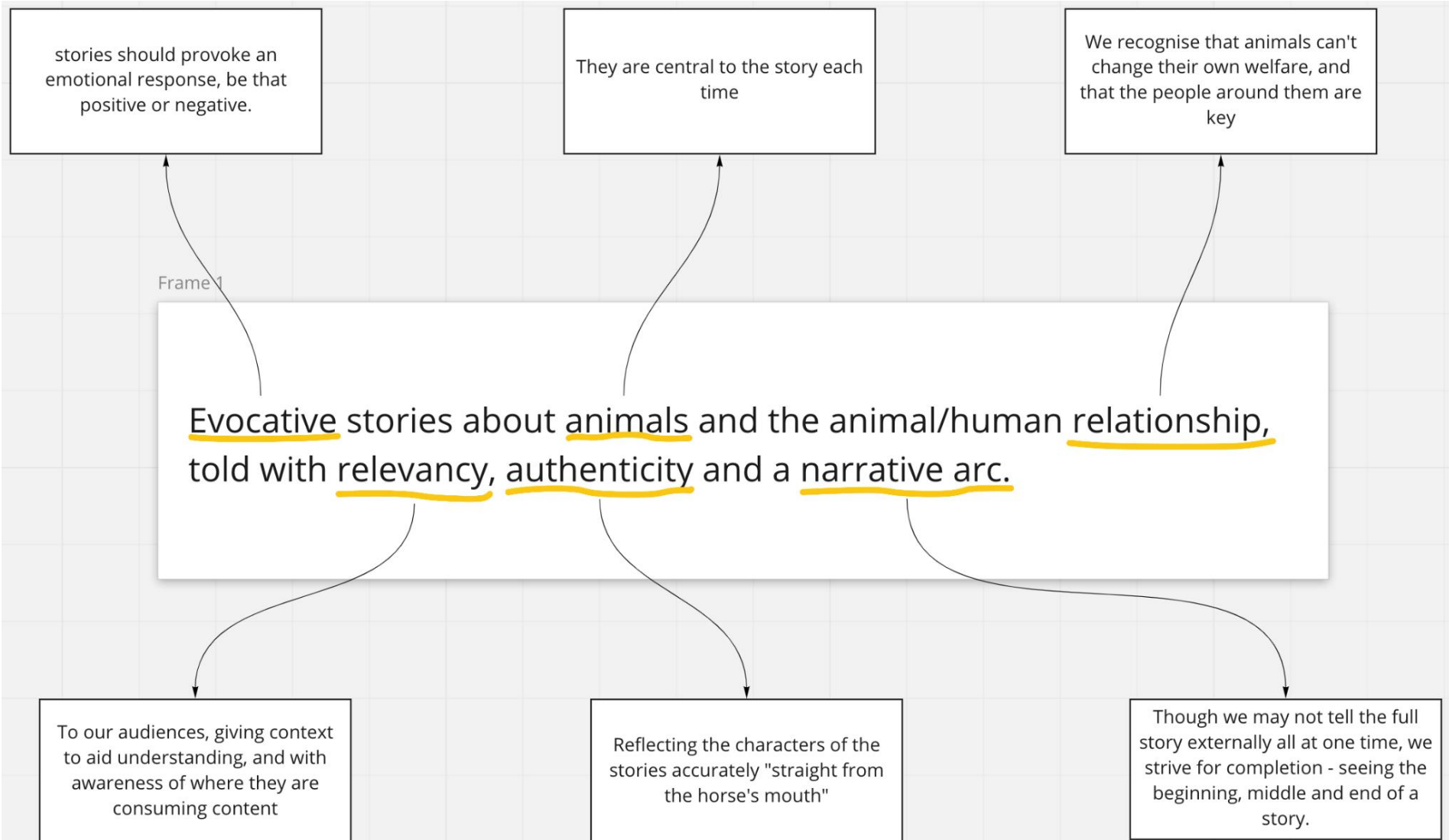
In order to achieve this the content team will provide a Story Planning calendar, key themed Story Packs that all content creators in the content working group will be able to access and use for their various needs, and long-term storytelling materials that allow us to share the full story cycle with audiences.

What are Brooke stories?

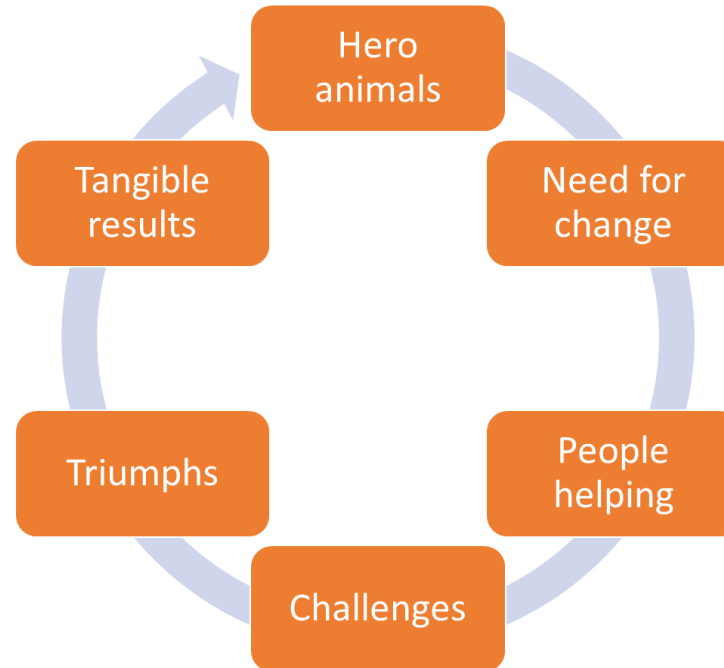
At Brooke, stories are the rich multimedia materials that bring our organisation to life. They can be used to create awareness, build consideration to support, and deepen engagement with us, as well as provide qualitative evidence to demonstrate our impact. Stories are the raw materials that we use to create content and can include photographs, film footage, text, audio recordings and more. Content is the finished pieces of communications that we create using stories - tweet, appeal, short film, social media post, etc.

To help define what Brooke stories are, we have created this sentence, intended to distil Brooke stories into one, memorable line, which we can use to review our stories.

Evocative stories about animals and the animal/human relationship, told with relevancy, authenticity and a narrative arc.



The story cycle.



Stories are how we engage with other people around the world, and are our most powerful communications tool. As human beings, stories which have a beginning, middle and end are intrinsically satisfying to us. We want this 'narrative arc' to be completed, and full stories told in this way are more memorable and engaging to us.

We want our supporters and other audiences to experience more of the narrative arc over time as they move through different levels of engagement with us. However, for content Brooke puts out externally we won't present all parts of the story cycle at once. For example, an appeal is likely to only focus on the 'Need for change' or 'Challenges' section, but we will be collecting content for the other sections of the cycle so that we can tell the rest of the story at a different time, such as a follow up with an audience so that they are provided with the materials that close the loop of a story in a way that is satisfying to them.

When we gather stories from our programmes, we will strive to deliver a full narrative journey which provides the critical information needed to communicate our work, along with an emotional narrative. Collecting content to create rich stories can and will take place over an extended period of time, reflecting how our work needs to take time to achieve lasting change, and illustrating our 'smart narrative' that supporters find so engaging.

Hero animals	There should be a working equine at the centre of the story with a clear role within the story. A single animal is ideal. If it's multiple animals, the story will be clear on who they are, what they do and why their contribution is valued.
Need for change	The issue/problem to be resolved. Again this needs to be clear on the needs of the animal or animals, and how it affects their physical and psychological health. This is likely to be the most provocative part of the story arc.
People helping	This will be a range of people, including the humans who work with and/or own the working equines, Brooke Staff, community members, partners, vets and people creating change at a wider level, like policy makers.
Challenges	While the process of change happens there will be challenges to be overcome, both expected and unexpected, this stage of the story will document these within the process of implementing change.
Triumphs	While the process of change happens there will also be positives, which will also be documented.
Tangible results	The resolution of the story, including the benefits to equines and humans, but also any areas of further change needed.

Example Story:

This example story aims to illustrate the amount of detail we are aiming for in order to tell a full story, hitting most if not all of the areas of the pillars. In future, stories will be presented in a similar way through pre-planned 'story packs'.

We have tried to provide examples of how this detail could be used in external communications, but in the journey of raw stories to finished content for a particular platform or piece of Comms there will still need to be further creative development, where calls to action are developed and stories are adapted to meet the needs of that creative work. Guidance for this is in the brand style guide and audience engagement framework, and will be developed as part of the wider content strategy.

This story is fabricated, and necessarily omits details that would make this document very long. It is not a suggested finished piece of content, but is instead designed to showcase some of the details we wish to include in stories going forward.



ELI the donkey

Story Cycle elements

Hero: Eli the donkey

Need for change:

-DST poses threat of theft, so a shelter is needed.

- Harnessing and tethering methods are hurting him/causing injury.

People helping: His owners, Brooke, partners and community

Challenges: Sourcing materials and gaining knowledge of build.

Triumphs: Materials sourced, family gain knowledge of construction as well as nutrition

Tangible results: A stable is built and new crops with byproducts for animal feed are grown



Synopsis

Eli is a water carrying donkey living in rural Kenya. His family rely on him to supply them with water for cooking, cleaning and farming their own food as well as produce to sell at market.

He is suffering because of limited feed and bad handling, and also faces and existential threat due to the Donkey Skin trade.

After seeing a Brooke led workshop on equine management his family built him a secure place to live but also learned what else they could grow to help keep him healthy.

NEED FOR CHANGE AND CHALLENGES

- Eli has injuries caused by bad harnesses and tight fitting restraints.
- Eli also has cuts on his ears because ear mutilation is common in his community to help identify animals.
- Eli is malnourished because his owners aren't aware of the best feed for him, or cannot afford animal feed.

LARGE SCALE NEED FOR CHANGE; AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT (wider issues)

Hundreds of donkeys from Eli's community have been stolen and spent their final days in cramped inhumane slaughterhouses, before being killed for their skins. This could so easily be the fate of Eli without help





PEOPLE HELPING

Mohamed and Clemencia live in a rural area with their 5 children and 3 donkeys. The family depend on Eli but recognise they need to protect him. They need to learn about his welfare needs (from Brooke, partners or school) and make some changes to ensure his safety.





TRIUMPHS AND TANGIBLE RESULTS

- Happy donkeys in secure housing protected from the Donkey Skin Trade - with help from Brooke and Partners - seen in action below.
- Eli now works in better comfort thanks to improved handling skills, and better food and access to water. His owners feel better equipped and have a closer bond with Eli as a result
- Eli's injuries are healed, and the next generation of foals no longer have cut ears.

KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN SHAPING YOUR STORY CYCLE - SPECIAL HUMAN/ANIMAL BONDS AND RELATIONSHIPS AND ANIMALS BEING ANIMALS - WHY WE CARE/WHY WE LOVE THEM, WHY WE WANT TO TELL STORIES ABOUT THEM AND PROTECT THEM:



A SPECIAL BOND
Eli and his family have moments together, that show the bond between them, as well as the symbiotic relationship



CHILDREN AND ELI
Find out what the children of the family think of Eli, their role in taking care of him and how different their lives would turn out to be without him.





DONKEYS BEING DONKEYS

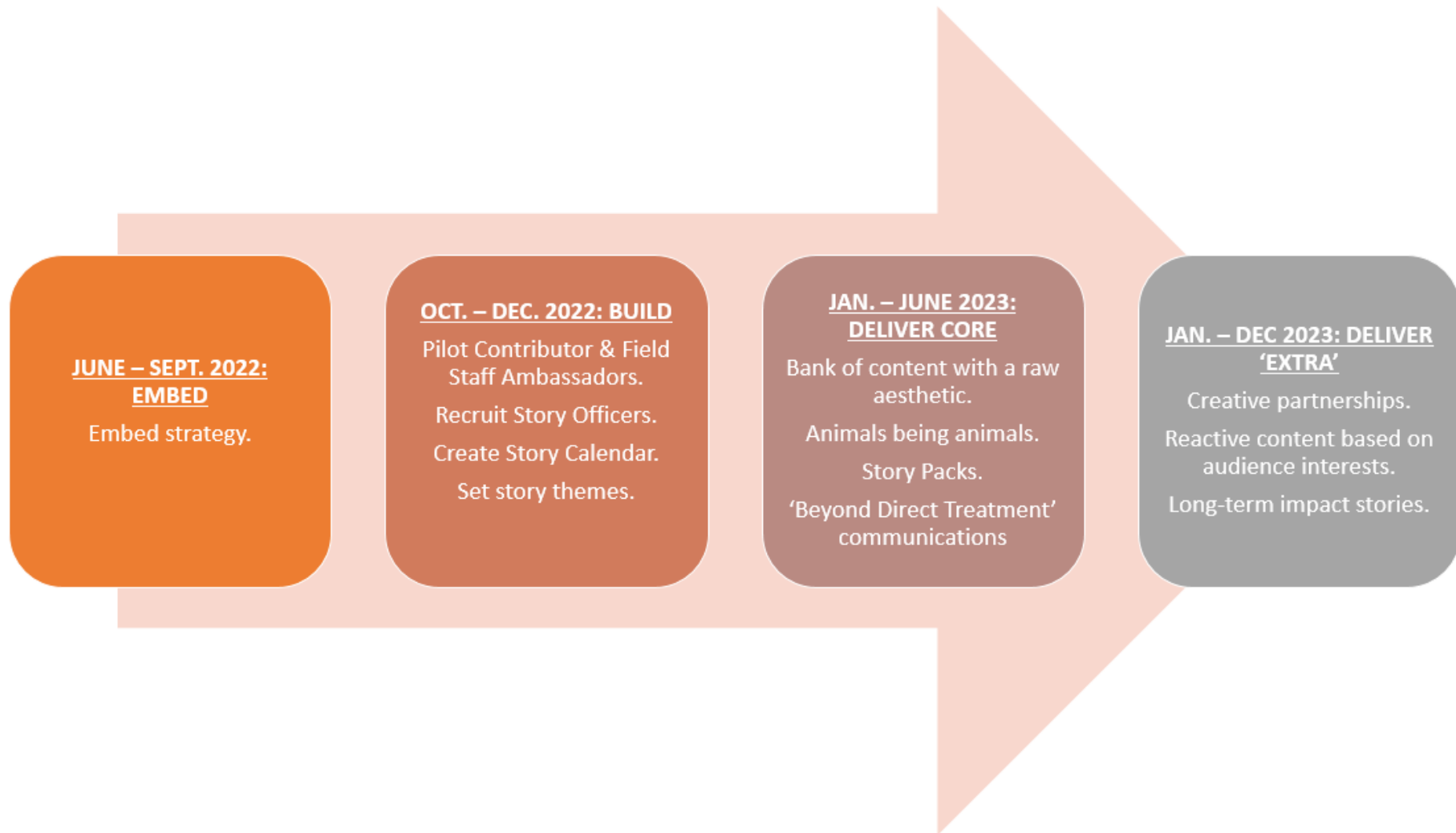
When Eli gets back from a day's work carrying water, he is free to roll, eat grass and socialise with his donkey family.

Natural behaviour in donkeys is one of their 5 domains and essential for good welfare.

Eli lives with two other donkeys - a female called Winny and her foal, Esther.



Key actions timeline



Practicalities, dependencies and risks

[The Practicalities are set out in a separate document](#) to make sure this main strategy document is succinct. It outlines the objectives, actions, supporting tools and metrics that we will use to deliver the ambitions outlined in the Pillars.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TO BE CREATED (OR REFRESHED) FOR THE PRACTICALITIES FOR ALL PILLARS

- Checklist for how we tell our brand story - to be added to Style Guide. (Sensitive subjects list will be integrated once created) IN PROGRESS
- Adapted and completed version of the 'Comms Manual' (CHANGE NAME) IN PROGRESS
- [Story Calendar template.](#)
- [Story calendar planning process.](#)
- [Content working group meeting agenda.](#)
- Story Pack template (example).
- [Shoot brief template.](#)
- [Consent process](#) (The Ethical Story Policy has now been integrated into this)
- [Story selection checklist.](#)

FAQs.

How will I use this strategy?

The Media and Content team will provide you with Story Packs which contain the narrative journey and are updated as this is added to. You can then use these packs to create your own content.

Our ambition is that the narrative journey is experienced by everyone who engages with Brooke, but mostly they will not do this through one piece of content because not every piece of content we create will include the full narrative journey. Instead, they will experience the narrative journey within their journey as a supporter, or as someone who engages with Brooke content.

How does this integrate with the content strategy?

The content strategy covers all aspects of how we plan, create, manage and publish content (see diagram on p.X). The story strategy focuses on the editorial side of content at Brooke, providing rich raw stories from the field to help Brooke design engaging content that will reach the eyes, ears, minds and hearts of the supporters, potential supporters and professionals we interact with. It aims to answer some key questions:

What is our editorial mission?

What is our point of view?

What is our voice and tone?

It also aims to provide our key audiences with what they want to know about Brooke and its work. The other parts of content strategy are experience, structure and process. Experience is closely linked to Editorial, and will naturally come next in the process from raw story to finished piece of communications.

More information on the other aspects of Brooke's content strategy can be found here [This will be hyperlinked when available]

Which audiences is this strategy for?

In short, all of them. However we need to prioritise how this strategy will help Brooke meet points of the organisational goal to 'Build a Movement for Change' as part of the new strategy i.e. We will:

- Focus on supporter needs and motivations and put them at the heart of our planning.
- Inspire and mobilise supporters around shared values, building a sense of movement and shared purpose.
- Use audience insights to drive decision making and improve supporter experience.
- Become master storytellers and inspire supporters and partners to act on issues, where they can genuinely make a difference.

Because of this, our main audience will be new and existing supporters so that we can help achieve the Fundcomm Department Goals of:

- Significantly increase the number of supporters & partners, who are motivated to join our movement for change.
- Inspire our growing movement of supporters and partners to dedicate more money, time and energy to our shared goals.
- Raise the visibility of Brooke's brand and reach and engage target audiences through the media and owned channels.

However we still aim to be able to better communicate with professional audiences on our issues based communications strands - Contribution of working equids to sustainable development, and Animal health systems strengthening.

We need new content now - what's happening whilst this is being embedded?

We already have plans for two content collection trips in 2022, including one alongside the creation of a new DRTV ad for Brooke, working with First Engagement and a soon to be appointed media agency. Alongside this, in the two years we haven't been able to travel, we have been able to work with ICOs and freelancers, briefing remotely, and obtaining fresh new Brooke stories. This will continue throughout 2022 and beyond.

Aren't ICOs Story Officers?

No. ICOs have multifaceted Communications roles in their organisations. It varies between countries, but they often have a great deal of responsibility beyond story gathering, including content creation, social media, press communications, advocacy, M&E reporting and other aspects of coordination. Much of their work is office based, and when they do get out to the field it's often for short trips where there is a limitation on what can be gathered. Story Officers will have roles entirely dedicated to story gathering. They will have the time and flexibility to embed themselves in animal owning communities to create the rich and detailed stories we need.

Who will manage the story officers?

The workload will be managed by the content team at Brooke UK, with their assignments and briefs created with consultation with the content group.