



# BATH RUGBY WEBSITE

DBA DEA Awards 2013  
Category: Digital  
Sub-category: Websites  
Client: Bath Rugby  
Design consultancy: Positive  
Date: July 2012

Newsletter signups

**+337%**

year-on-year

Shop sales

**+35%**

in first three months

Facebook fans

**+313%**

year-on-year

Online ticket sales

**+28%**

per match

Mobile visits

**+100%**

from first to second half  
of the season

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(230 words)

There are twelve clubs in the English rugby Premiership, the majority of which use a generic website template, offering no stand out or differentiation apart from club colours and sponsor names. By the end of 2010, Bath Rugby had a new owner Bruce Craig, new training facilities and big plans for the future. A sharper focus on their digital communications strategy was the next stage of evolution, offering a clear statement of intent to fans and stakeholders alike.

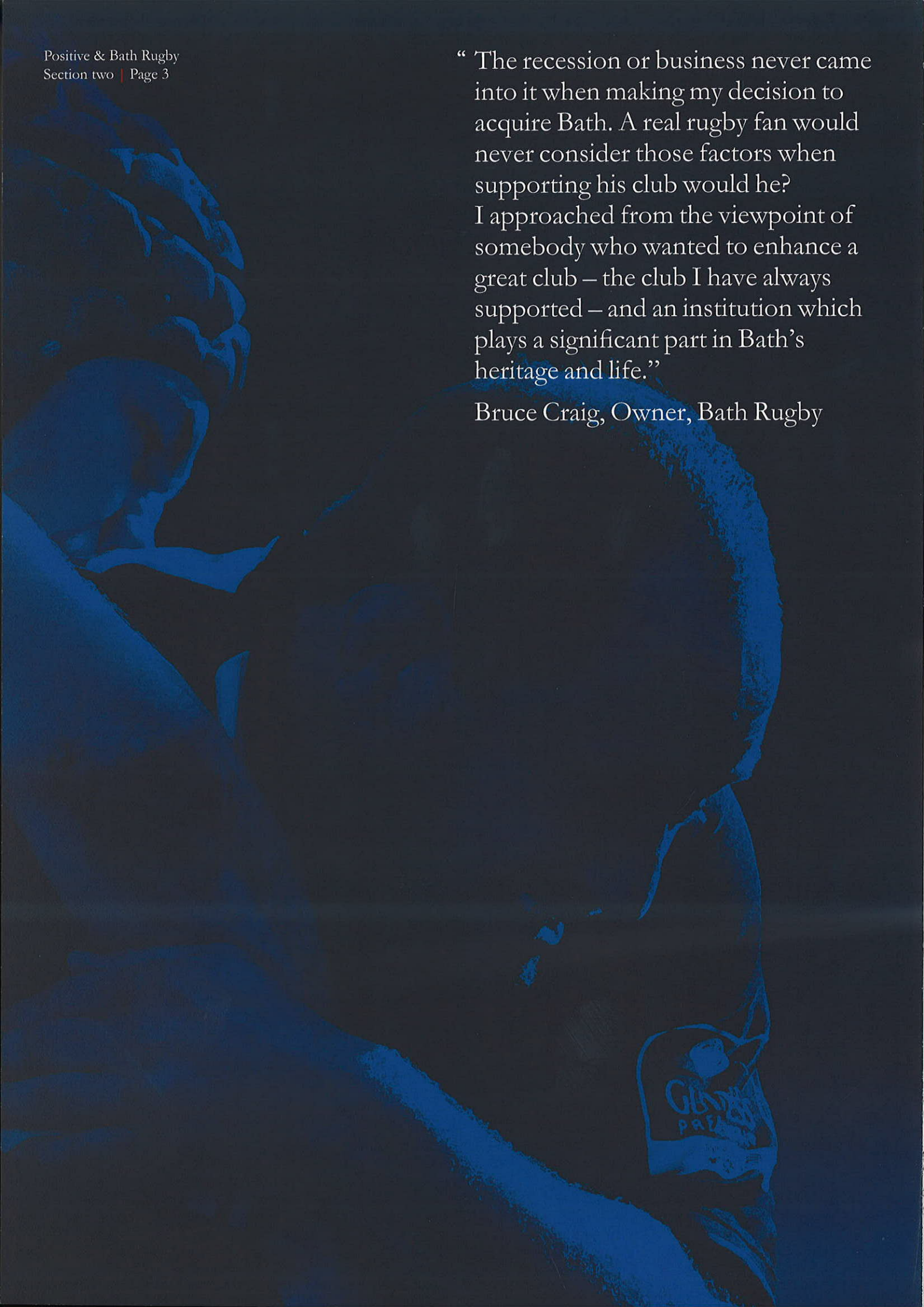
At the beginning of 2011, Positive were appointed Bath's digital partner and tasked with developing a first class website, online shop and mobile site that connected with fans, recruited new supporters, improved revenue and reflected the brand, ambition and vision of the club.

The figures over the last season have been impressive:



“ The recession or business never came into it when making my decision to acquire Bath. A real rugby fan would never consider those factors when supporting his club would he? I approached from the viewpoint of somebody who wanted to enhance a great club – the club I have always supported – and an institution which plays a significant part in Bath’s heritage and life.”

Bruce Craig, Owner, Bath Rugby



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Outline of project brief

Bath Rugby's ambitious plans place digital and social channels at the core of their communications strategy, and the fans at the heart of everything they do.

The website, shop and mobile site had clear objectives to deliver on by the end of the 2011/12 season:

- Increase user engagement
- Recruit a younger demographic – fans of the future
- Increase online ticket purchases
- Increase online turnover
- Increase access via smartphones





## Description

Bath have never been relegated from the rugby union Premier Division. Their achievements, however, have wavered and they've failed to repeat the success they experienced during the 1980s and 1990s. Fans were becoming disheartened and feeling increasingly removed from the club.

Prior to starting any work on the sites, we undertook in-depth research into fans' and stakeholders' requirements. The insight we gained was invaluable and drove the project strategy.

"I'm a fan –  
I want to see  
the rugby first"

Warren

"I care about the club  
so want to know what's  
happening to it"

Liz

## Fans:

- Wanted to feel more connected with their club
- Often perceived the site to be selling to them
- Felt content was hard to find and out of date
- Thought match-day information wasn't clear

## Sponsors:

- Wanted a more experiential feel to hospitality packages online
- Required clear travel information, wherever they were coming from
- Needed a site they could use as a valuable tool to foster client relationships

Independent research also showed that 1 in 2 supporters were unaware of the community activities that Bath Rugby is involved with, something the club felt strongly needed to be addressed.

Other clubs were leading the way on social media channels offering an opportunity to reach out to a wider and younger audience, something Bath needed to focus on.

"I need to organise  
the family diary  
around fixtures"

Neil



## Overview of market

There are twelve clubs in the UK's Aviva Rugby Premiership and whilst rugby is a popular sport, it has nowhere near the size of fan base as football – Old Trafford's stadium capacity is 76,100 whilst Bath's is currently 12,300.

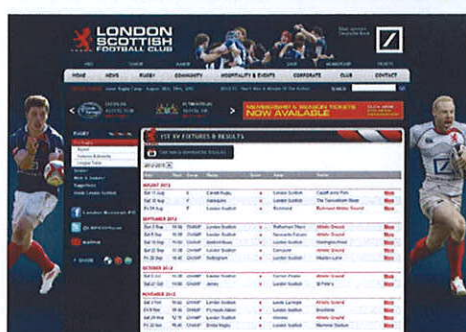
That said, it's a growing sport in the UK and the Rugby World Cup is the third largest sporting event on the planet – this offers real opportunity for the Premiership clubs to grow their fan-base and the commercial opportunities from this.

With a traditionally older demographic watching rugby, key to all development plans is the need to continue engagement with the core fan base, whilst also recruiting younger fans into the club.

The generic template the old site used offered no stand out or differentiation from other clubs.

## Project launch date

September 2011





## Outline of design solution (440 words)

Throughout the development of the new website, the needs of the fans were at the forefront of our thinking and delivery.

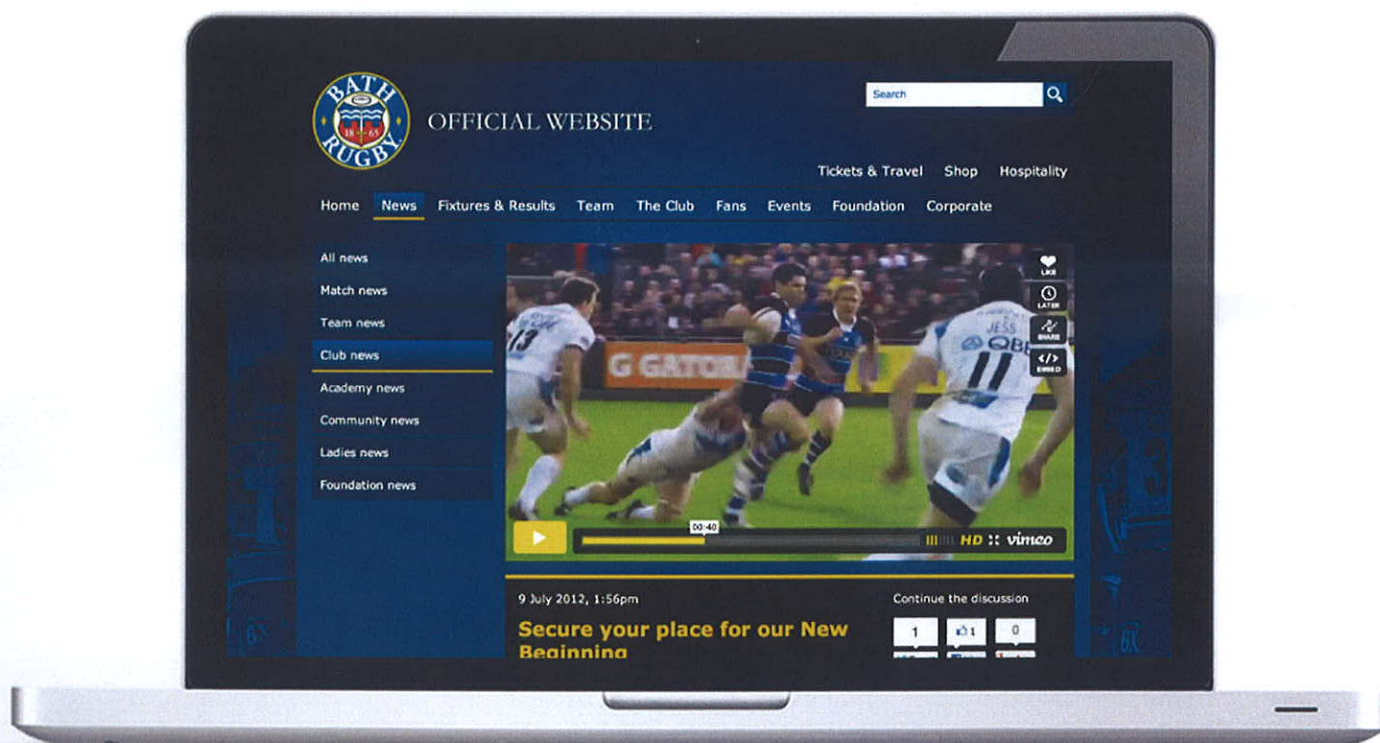
Every detail of the design and architecture of each site was based on the research findings – it was time for Bath to be brave

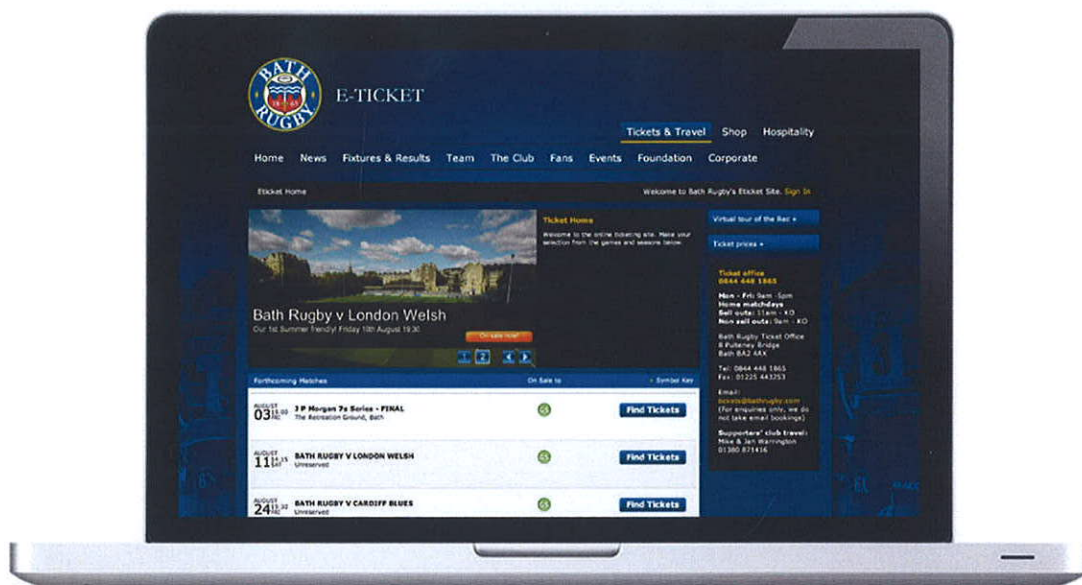
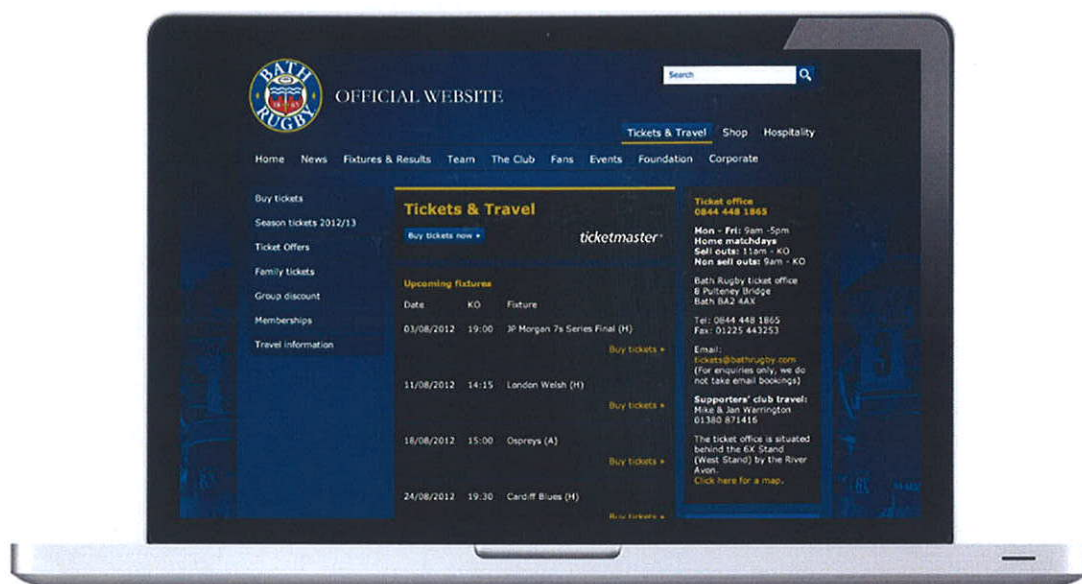
### *Website*

We stayed focused on a strict content strategy, balancing Bath's commercial objectives with information the fans really want from their club. Self-promotion banners were removed, freeing up far more screen space and offering real impact.

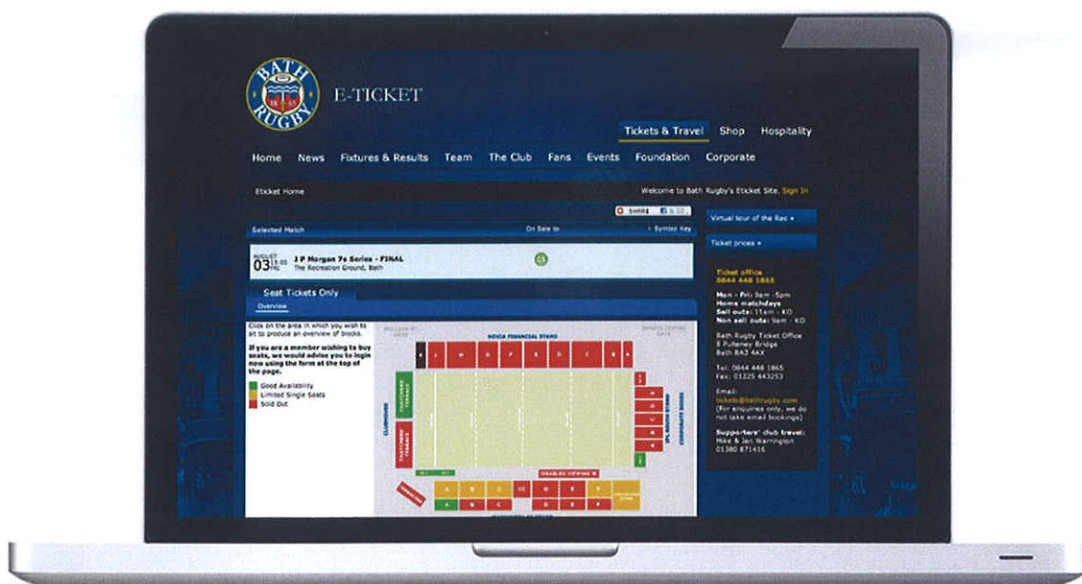
The homepage delivers fast access to future games, an overview of recent matches, media coverage, weather and travel updates.

Having mapped the weekly cycle of fan engagement within the site, video and radio content was brought into News. The psychology of immersion for fans meant they were keen to read snippets of news stories whilst watching the latest Bath TV coverage. Repeat visits were encouraged with a detailed timetable of exclusive TV coverage.





With a seamless and fully featured ticket purchasing experience, discounts and multiple payment options, there is now a genuine incentive to buy online, driving both traffic and sales through the site.

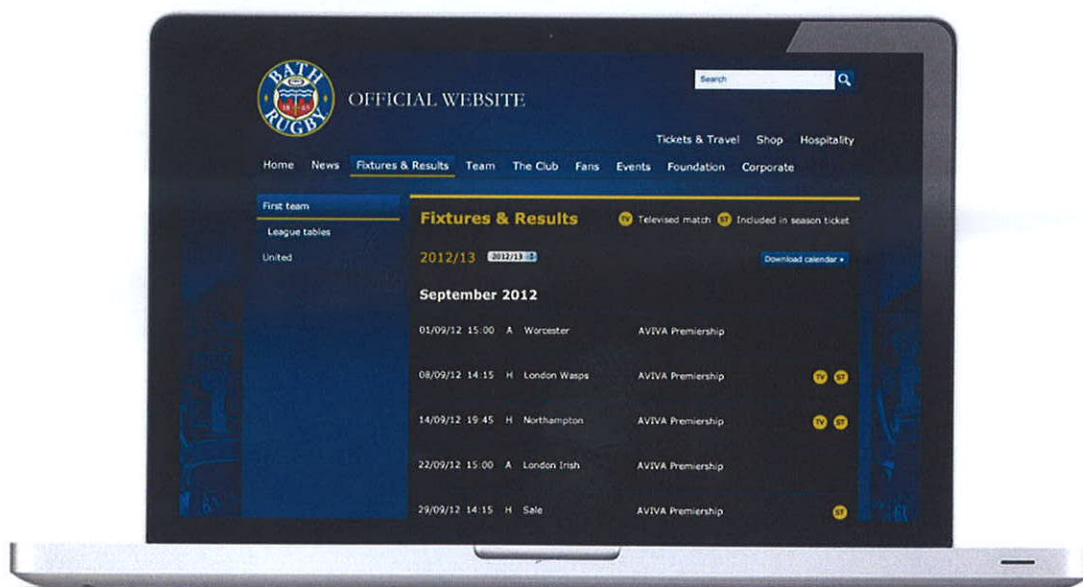
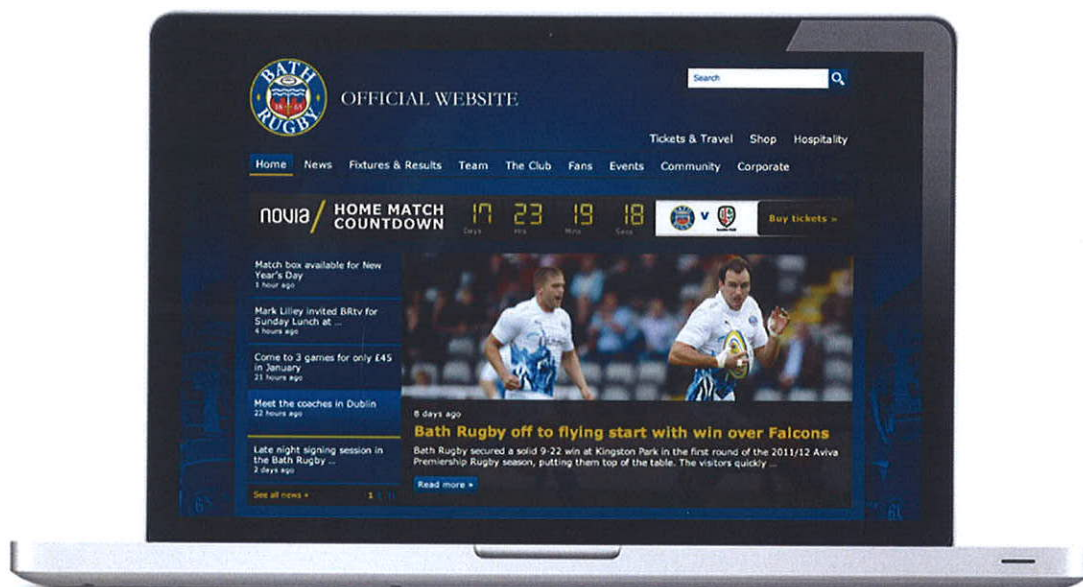




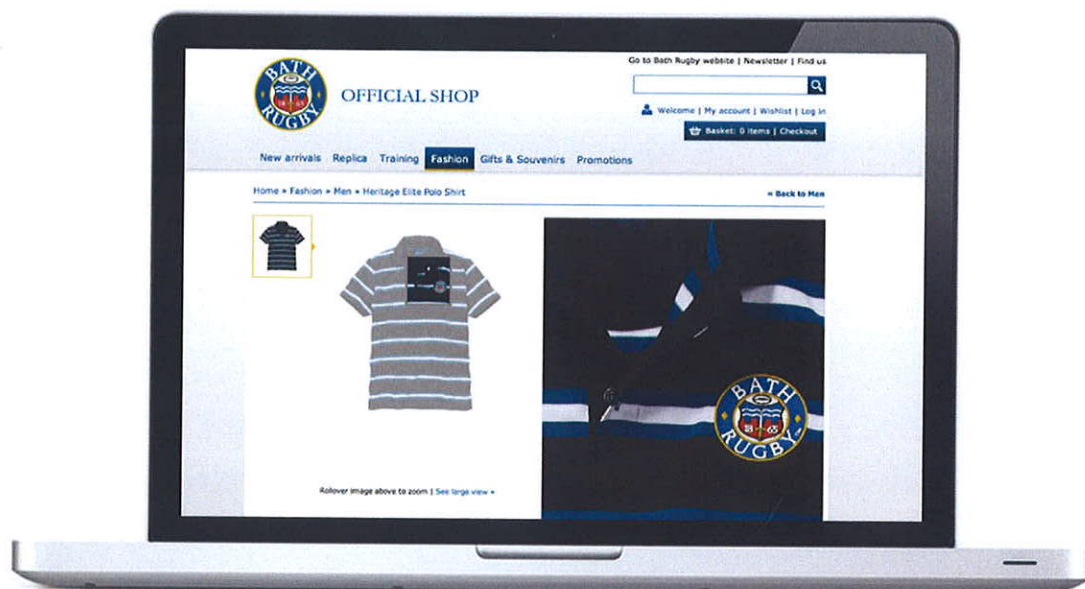
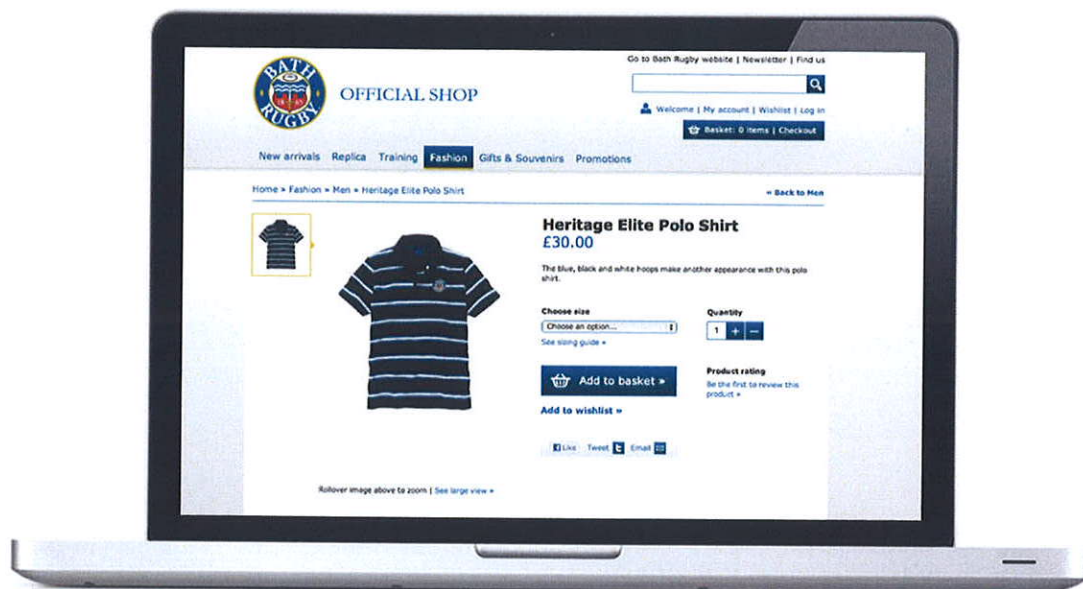


“The Bath Rugby website has really raised awareness of the Novia brand. Due to the reduction in other branding on the site, our logo really stands out and conveys the fact we are the club’s Title Partner.”

Jody Roblin, Novia Head of Marketing



With a strategy of clear, clean pages with so little commercial messaging, sponsorship space is now sold at a premium.



## Shop

We had gathered solid feedback about why fans weren't buying merchandise online, so we focussed on addressing these issues whilst creating a simple, usable shopping experience.

Pagination was reduced to ensure a core focus on the products, sizing specific guidelines for each clothing range is now included, plus high quality zoom images honing in on fabric and stitching.

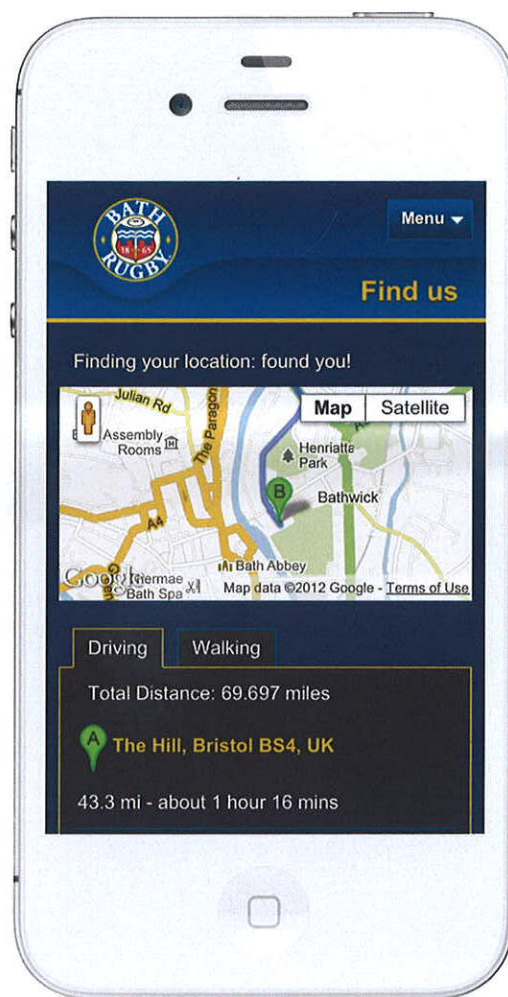
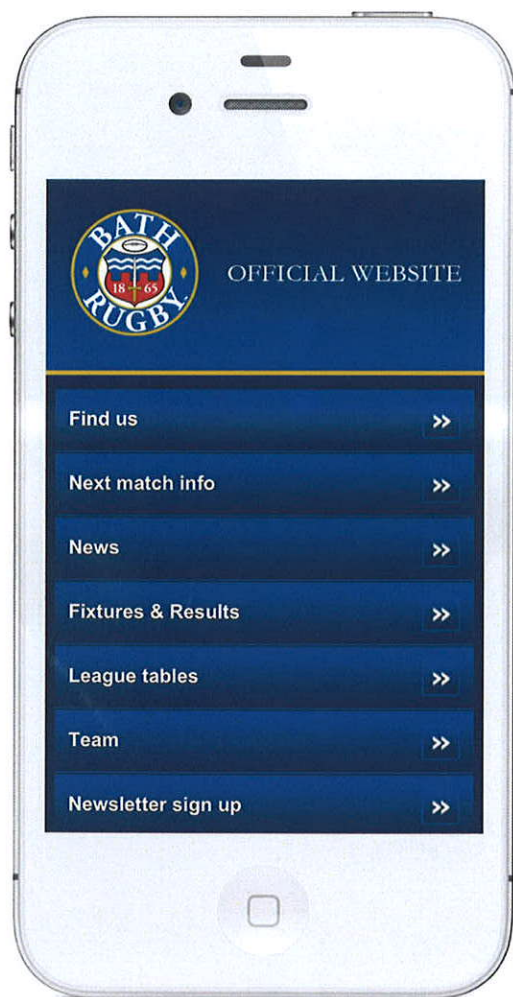
Crucially, for the first time, fans are offered free delivery and free returns, plus there are customer product reviews to provide reassurance.

PayPal has been introduced, speeding up checkout for those that have an account but don't have their credit card to hand and therefore minimising drop off.



## Mobile

Rather than attempting to deliver every feature of the main site to smartphone users, we identified key content that would be both popular and relevant to fans browsing from their mobile and would enhance their match day experience, from a GPS direction service for home and away games, to next match info and weather forecasts. Images were also restricted to those that simply added value, delivering a fast loading site – imperative for mobile.



## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### Recruitment of younger fans

The clean design of the ticketing area offers extensive information on the benefits and value of family tickets and interest has increased markedly this season with an increase per match of

**179%**

Additionally, social media plays a large part in future recruitment plans. The development of this is well under way following the social media strategy, created with the club.

### Social media development

Referrals to the website via Twitter and Facebook have grown

**53%**

year-on-year

Facebook fans have increased

**313%**

year-on-year

which is directly attributed to the way the website encourages fans to 'carry on the conversation' through Facebook.

### Increase in data capture

Data capture has been crucial to Bath's plans for increased dialogue with fans and incorporating competitions and newsletter sign up via the website, these figures needed to grow.

At the start of the season and prior to the new site going live, newsletter subscriptions stood at 8,000. By the end of this season and directly attributed to a less cluttered site,

subscriptions now stand at

**35,000**

The cleaner design not only contains less sales messaging, but provides a dedicated homepage area for partner opportunities. This means any competition has real stand out, a big incentive when attracting sponsors.

A great example of this was a homepage competition for Mallory, Bath's official timing partner, giving Mallory the presence they needed and Bath

**2,500**

new subscribers



### Increase in online ticket purchasing

With a highly visible and visually seamless link to Ticketmaster and the additional seating viewing experience prior to purchase, Bath's online ticket sales for this season were up

# 28%

per match (1,057 per game)

### Increase in shop sales

Within the first three months of the site going live, Bath saw a

# 35%

increase in online sales

Moving forward, the level of sophistication built into the system ensures the opportunities are endless. The team can now create discount and voucher codes and offer complex bundles, not only generating further revenue for the club but with real value for the fans.

### Increase in mobile usage

The new mobile site has seen

# 593,000

page visits

with 47% of traffic now coming from search – something an app wouldn't have picked up.

We saw a

# 100%

increase in mobile visits

from the first to second half of the season as awareness of the mobile site grew.

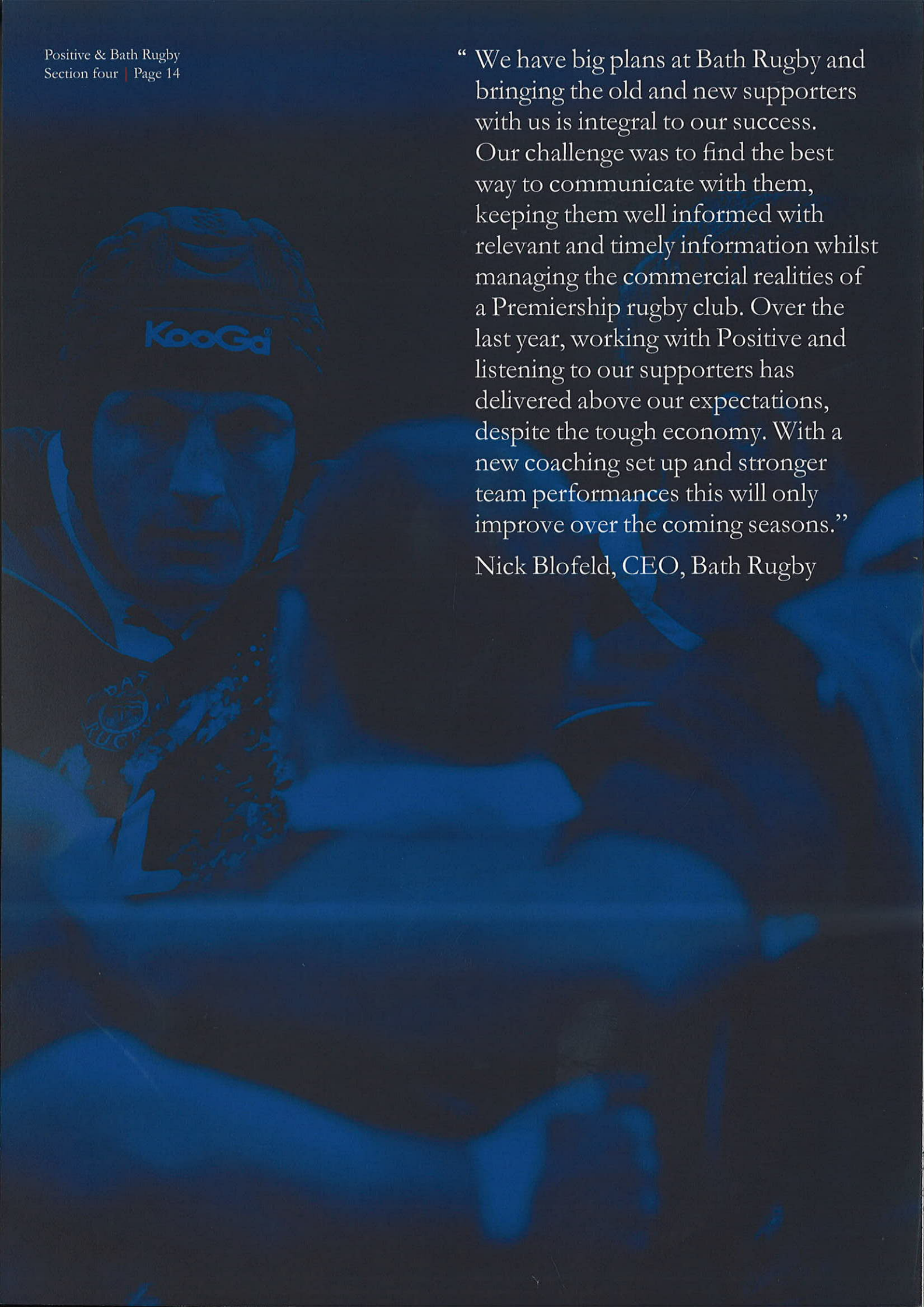
### Increase in visibility for the Bath community work

“Whilst collating information for the Parliamentary Awards, I visited Bath's website. The Community pages now stand out to me as the best within the Premiership bar none. The pages are fresh, clear and provide more customer friendly access to information. Credit to the design team...”

Wayne Morris, Head of Community Premiership Rugby

### Internal communication

The user research is now used on a regular basis to inform every element of communication from the club to the fans, and business strategy throughout.



“ We have big plans at Bath Rugby and bringing the old and new supporters with us is integral to our success. Our challenge was to find the best way to communicate with them, keeping them well informed with relevant and timely information whilst managing the commercial realities of a Premiership rugby club. Over the last year, working with Positive and listening to our supporters has delivered above our expectations, despite the tough economy. With a new coaching set up and stronger team performances this will only improve over the coming seasons.”

Nick Blofeld, CEO, Bath Rugby