

# On frame

Internal communications, branding and corporate reporting all benefit from photography. **Brittany Golob** examines the world of corporate photography

When photographer Toby Smith became interested in photographing energy assets across Great Britain's most remote landscapes, he found that access, above all else, was the inhibiting factor. After determining that most of Scotland's renewable energy production sites are owned by SSE, he approached the company to inquire whether it would employ a photographer in a corporate capacity. Thus was the origin of the Renewables Project, a dual personal and corporate project undertaken with the support of Getty Reportage, an arm of Getty Images. Smith says, "I went straight to their communications director and effectively told him what I wanted to do with the story. I told him his branding was really boring within the type of industry he represented. I was visually fascinated by the sites and I wanted to tell that story. I said he should fund it. In exchange I would allow them to associate with the work and allow them editorial selection."

Serendipitously, the comms director was an amateur photographer who understood the benefits of having a professional photographer highlight sites that had previously gone unseen. Smith spent three months accruing a bank of images from which SSE could illustrate annual reports, internal communications and marketing collateral. The remaining images became editorial property of Smith and Getty Reportage, who have since sold the project to a number of publications.

The phrase 'corporate photography' evokes a banal, even cliché serious of images of office meetings and conference room functions. In practice, corporate photography can show a side of the company that most audiences cannot access. Just as Smith gave SSE a literal view from the top of a windmill, so too can corporate photography exemplify a company's brand, personality, internal culture or assets in a visually compelling manner.

Getty Reportage, a five-year-old entity within editorial photography behemoth Getty Images, provides editorial support and leverage for photojournalists while simultaneously catering to companies seeking high-quality photographers.

Vice president of Getty Images Aidan Sullivan says, "Knowing how difficult it is in this market to get assignment works for traditional

photojournalism, we try and take those very well-known, experienced photographers and present them to a corporate market. What we've found is when clients see the level of expertise of the photographers we represent, they clearly get very excited."

This arrangement gives photojournalists entrée to otherwise inaccessible sites, like China's renewable energy infrastructure, but also provides the photographer with a body of work available for editorial use and allows the commissioning company a unique and exclusive communications tool.

The use of photography for corporate communications has not been revolutionary since Lewis Hines and the rest of America's New Deal photographers clambered onto the steel girders of skyscrapers or delved down into mines to photograph industry during the Great Depression.

In today's recession, corporate photography is equally important. It enables a company to draw its audience into the subject on a personal and relatable level. Joe Hale, head of corporate branding and communications says of The Soldier's Charity rebrand's use of photography, "We wanted the imagery to have a sincerity and a grit to it. It's human and it's striking, it gives communications a punch and expresses a serious message about incredibly emotional and very human conditions."

Similarly, Steven Taylor, MD of Raw, a Mancunian design studio, says of the use of photography in the Wolverhampton Wanderer's recent rebrand, "We wanted to do something that was much more authentic and that told the true story of Wolverhampton and of Wolves fans at the matches and outside of matches. You can see that Wolverhampton touches people's lives." They enlisted the services of photography studio, SM2 to photograph fans in their homes, around Wolverhampton and at Molineux Stadium. The results are striking and, according to Matt Grayson, Wolves' head of communications, "give people a good sense of who we are and what we stand for."

While photography can evoke a sense of shared



The diverse uses of corporate photography as seen in the British Safety Council rebrand, Bank of Scotland's photo contest, Getty Reportage, Wolverhampton's rebrand and the Green Energy Awards.

humanity while engaging the audience with the brand, it also has the capability of exemplifying the organisation's core message. If that means fostering a football club's fanbase or harnessing the power of nature for an energy provider, for the Bank of Scotland that equates to reconnecting a brand with its history and traditional audience to regenerate the business after years of detachment.

When the Bank of Scotland was decoupled from its parent company in 2011, a brand launch was rung in by a photo competition called "Slice of Scottish Life." Eithne Anderson, head of marketing communications at Lloyds and Bank of Scotland,

says "The ambition was to add a contemporary, empathetic and energetic feel to our brand that would reach out to people the length and breadth of Scotland. Photography was key to this ambition as it has the ability to bring an insightful headline to life and convey a message in a very genuine, authentic and natural way." Street photographer Matt Stuart handled the professional shoots, but the contest was populated by contributions from amateurs. Photography, Anderson says, enabled the brand to establish a distinctive tone of voice. The bank has vastly improved its awareness, a phenomenon largely credited to the photography campaign. ▶